

Beacon Lights

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*"Enter into his gates
with thanksgiving, and
into his courts with praise:
be thankful unto him,
and bless his name."*

Psalm 100:4

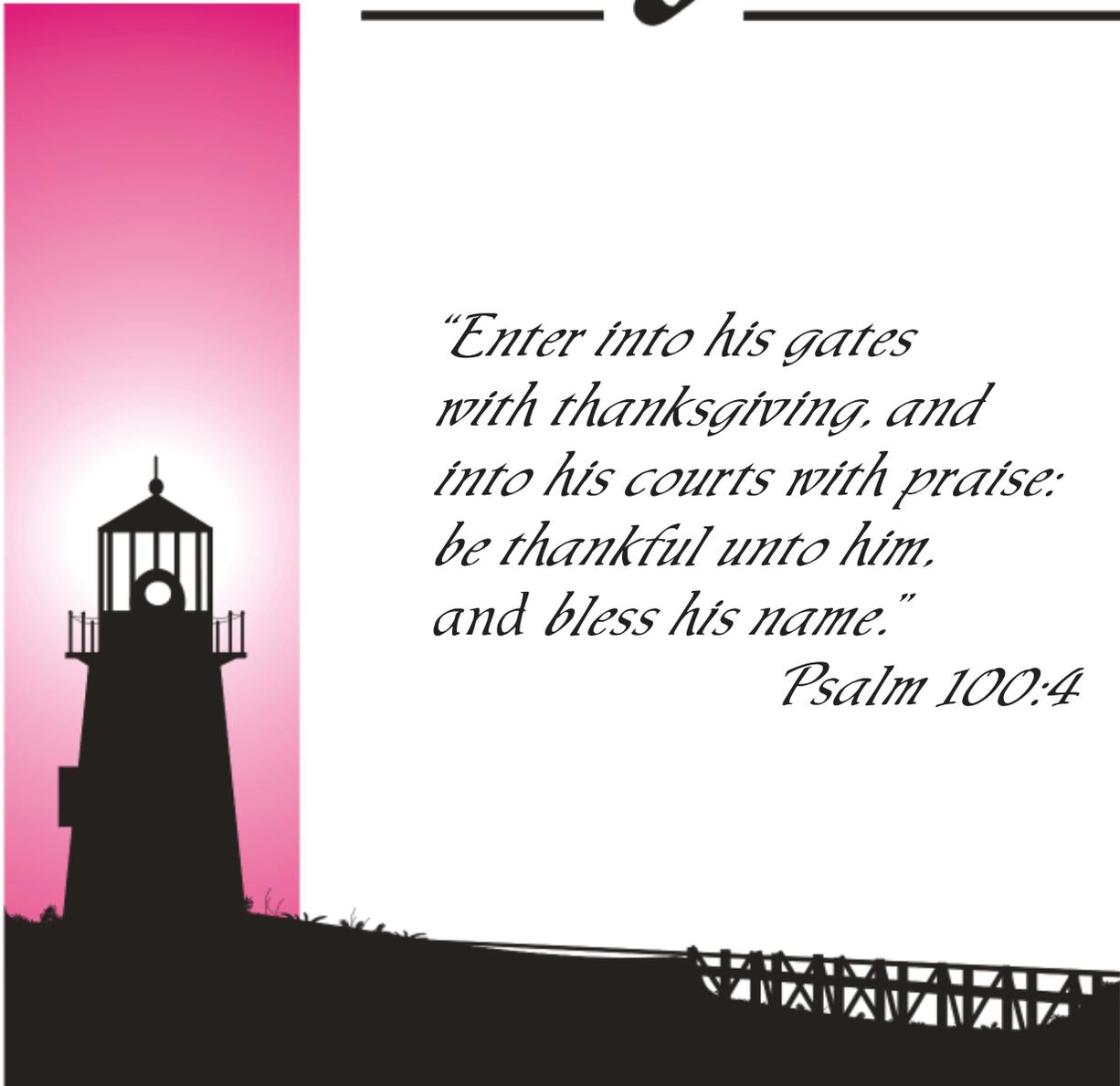


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Glory Worked In Us Through Afflictions

by Randy Vaalburg



There are many different and difficult circumstances that Christian young people face today. Times of discouragement might come when you don't do as well in school as you had hoped or as your parents had expected. Or, the situation might be that you begin to wonder whether it is even in God's plan for you ever to enter into holy marriage. You might be at a time in your life when it seems like you do not have many friends. Or, maybe you have been mocked, ignored, or shunned in ways that make one feel not liked—possibly even for standing up for what is right and not joining others in the way of sin.

During our short pilgrimage on this earth, it is important for us to keep holding tightly onto the truth that everything is under the Lord's providential care. All things, including any great difficulties we face, work for our good (Rom. 8:28). It may sometimes seem to us that this is not the case. We can think that our troubles are pointless and only harming us. Or, we might foolishly start to believe that we are the only Christians whose faith needs to be proved while it seems to us that the faith of peers around us do not. However, all of God's children undergo chastening, for if they didn't, they would not be His legitimate sons and daughters (Heb. 12:8)! The afflictions that God sends to us in His perfect love and wisdom vary for each one of us, and come at different times in our lives, but come they will.

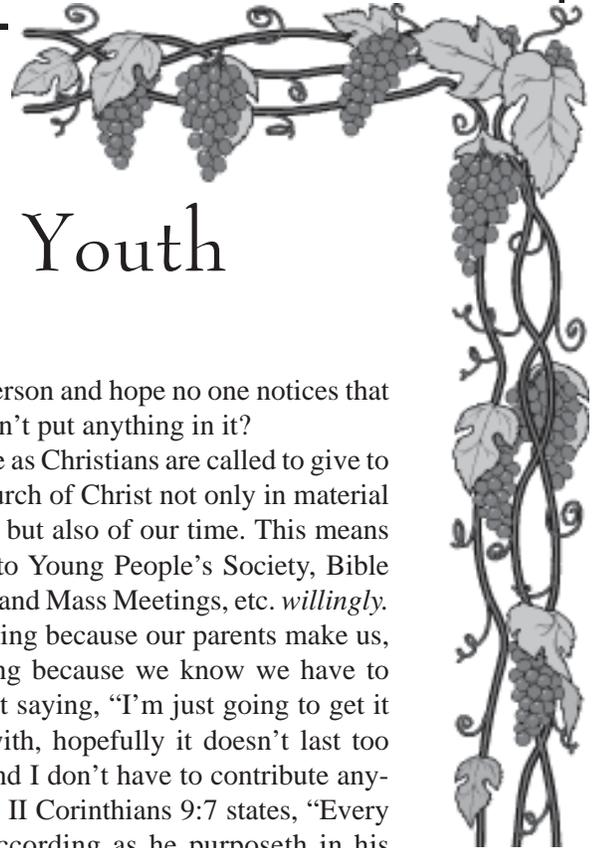
...our difficulties work, or
prepare us, for the heavenly
glory that will be revealed in
us.

Holy Scripture promises blessings and grace in our earthly lives through troubles and sorrows. Even more than that, our present afflictions work for us heavenly glory (2 Cor. 4:17-18)! Understand, they do not earn for us salvation. Rather, our difficulties work, or prepare, us for the heavenly glory that will be revealed in us. How do they do this? Why must we be prepared for heaven? We need preparation because we are still much too carnally-minded. We are not yet spiritually

ready for the heavenly place that Christ is preparing for us. So great is that place that the Apostle has said, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9). Before going there, it pleases God to have us go through a life-long process of spiritual cleansing. Part of the way that He does this is through difficulties and sufferings in our earthly lives. God does this in love as part of His work of salvation in us. He uses trying circumstances to remove the impurities of sin from our lives. Like the goldsmith who heats up the gold to bring the impurities to the surface to be removed, so the Master Workman's testing makes our sinful impurities obvious to us. Then, by His grace, we repent and turn from them (1 Pet. 1:6-7). God gives us earthly pictures of this in creation as well. For example, God sends seasonal fires on prairies to destroy acres of dead grass. Where the fire burned, new grass sprouts up, providing more nourishment for animals. Where the fire didn't burn, dry, worthless, dead stalks of grass remain. Again, fire—chastening—was the purifying influence on dead grass—sin. The result was new grass—spiritual growth. This spiritual growth strengthens us to put to death our old man of sin. We all like sheep have gone astray, each one going our own way. But, after affliction, by His grace, we keep His Word (Ps. 119:67).

Difficulties test our faith. And, the testing of our faith works in us patience (Jas. 1:3). Our faith becomes stronger and less easily shaken by life's troubles. Then, great difficulties that await us in the future will be less likely to disturb our souls. Over time, we are more and more able to see with the eye of faith that the Lord will deliver us out of all our troubles (Ps. 34:19). We begin to see that the "sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). ❖

Fruitful Branches



Serving the Lord as Youth

by Jeanine Boeve

How the Lord has blessed us! What a privilege it is to be raised in a Christian home with God-fearing parents and to sit under the preaching of the gospel every week.

Have you ever stopped to think how the Lord has blessed us? We have much more than we need. Are we content with what He has given to us in our life or are we yearning for more? How are we serving the Lord? Are we giving Him the praise and thanks we owe?

We are reminded of Christ's words in Matthew 6:19ff where he says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal..." How often we forget this! We are to seek the things of God and His Kingdom and not of the world, for everything on this earth will be destroyed! Seek the heavenly things! Are we giving as we ought to collections of God's Church, or do we spend frivolously during the week, forgetting about the collection plate that will be passed by us on Sunday? Then, when it does come by, do we quickly pass it over to the

next person and hope no one notices that we didn't put anything in it?

We as Christians are called to give to the church of Christ not only in material things, but also of our time. This means going to Young People's Society, Bible Study, and Mass Meetings, etc. *willingly*. Not going because our parents make us, or going because we know we have to go. Not saying, "I'm just going to get it over with, hopefully it doesn't last too long and I don't have to contribute anything." II Corinthians 9:7 states, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." God has so graciously given us these means, and we are called to use them with a cheerful heart. Let us attend Society, Bible Study and Mass Meetings to grow in the knowledge of Christ our Savior, eager to learn more about God.

Giving of our time also includes visiting the sick and elderly saints of our church.

This must not be left for our parents to do, or for the "older" saints of the church, but we also are members of Christ's body and it is our duty (Rom. 12). We need to make time to do this. Go with friends, bring a comforting word, sing with these saints! Visiting them gives us the opportunity to grow in the faith! There is so much we can learn from them! It not only lifts their spirits but lifts ours as well and above all—God is glorified!

We as Christians are called to give to the church of Christ not only in material things, but also of our time.

What a privilege we have in our day and age to be able to serve the Lord freely. Let's use it! Give God the thanks and praise for all our blessings everyday!

“Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into

his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name.” Psalm 100:4 ❖

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

Story Time

The Fourth Man

A Story from the Time of the Afscheiding

by P. S. Kuiper

translated by Rev. Cornelius Hanko

Chapter 16

A Night Attack On Hilversum

The Secession was spreading and matters that had to do with the relationships between the Secessionist and the authorities were coming to a head. A small congregation of Secessionists had been organized in Hilversum, the small village where the events of this book take place. A Rev. Buddingh, a rather eccentric and old-fashioned minister, but a faithful preacher of the Scriptures, had offered to come to Hilversum to preach. The Secessionists knew it would provoke deeper anger among the people, but were determined to have him anyway.

The following Saturday was past.¹ Barely had the bell in the imposing medieval tower of Bunschoten rung its twelve strokes, and a farm wagon rattled through the dark streets of the town and stopped in front of a small house. The driver jumped with a limber jump from the seat and knocked softly but sharply on the closed shutters.

“Jan, are you ready?” he asked in a hushed voice. He waited a few seconds and then a sleepy voice droned, “I’m coming, Jacob.”

The reed chair in the small room creak loudly and the huge frame of Jan Barten Hartog, commonly called Jan Borde, appeared.² He stretched himself again so that his hairy fists almost touched the ceiling, and then carefully reached over the cupboard bed.³

Evertje Wildeman opened her eyes and looked at her gigantic husband with concern. “Jan, is it really so necessary that you go in the middle of the night?”

He nodded earnestly. “It is, wife! The Hilversum brethren have begged the minister to come tomorrow. But it is far too dangerous for him to show himself on the streets there during the day! Therefore it is safer to go already tonight.”

“And therefore the strongest man of Bunschoten and Spakenburg must go along,” Evertje added.

“God goes with us,” answered her husband simply. Together they glanced a moment at the wooden crib, in which little Bartje slept, their youngest who was barely two weeks old. “Soon he can probably be baptized,” whispered his mother, deeply moved.

Again there was a tapping at the windows, so that Adrian, the oldest child, was awakened. “Just go back to sleep, son, and take good care of your mother today. Good-bye, wife.”

“Go with God,” sounded from the cupboard bed. Jan Hartog cautiously closed the outside door behind him and soon after he stood with his friend, Jacob Baas on the road.

It was quite a spectacle to see the two men standing next to each other. Baas actually was of normal height, but he looked like a dwarf next to this giant. Yet together they formed the soul of the Secession in Bunschoten. Together they were the first ones to leave the Hervormde Kerk at the end of the year. Three months later they were followed by their wives and a few others.

“Jan,” whispered the driver, “from now on I am going to entrust the horses to you. You know they mean a lot to me.”⁴

“And you take care of my wife and children, who mean a lot to me.” For a moment a laugh broke out on the drawn face of Jacob Baas, then he laid his hand on

the huge hand of his friend. "I promise you that, Jan! And... the Lord be with you!"

He gave the reins of the horses to Hartog and after a short farewell disappeared in the darkness. The new driver grunted a reassuring word to the horses, climbed on the seat and shook hands with the two men who sat right behind the driver's seat.

They were Jacobus Beukers, the village teacher, who supported the Secession with heart and soul, and Reverend Buddingh. Huibert Jacobus Buddingh was, even as most of the Secession ministers, still very young, just 26 years old. But because of his remarkable official dress, which he tenaciously maintained, he looked much older.⁵

Shortly after the beginning of the Secession, he had laid down his office in the Hervormde congregation of the Walcher Biggekerke⁶ and had joined the Secession movement. Now he traveled throughout the entire country preaching everywhere and organizing churches. Despite his peculiarities and wanderings, he was loved by many. Like all his colleagues, he was hunted like a wild animal.

The horses soon entrusted themselves entirely to Jan Hartog. Adroitly he steered the wagon to the main street. "We will be getting out of the town without being seen," Teacher Beukers mumbled as they slowly passed the city hall.

But at that very moment the door of the building swung open and two men came out. They were Dirk Koelewijn, the village policeman, and Gijs Nagel, the night watchman. As soon as the wagon came into sight they headed directly for it. The policeman laid his hand on the pole of the wagon. "You're out pretty late, Hartog?" he asked in a quiet tone.

"You can see that, Koelewijn," answered the giant, just as calm as his interrogator. "Tonight we are bringing the minister to another town."

The policeman, casting a sharp glance at the minister, slowly nodded. "We need not know more, men. God go with you!"

He stepped aside and saluted. "Safe return!" Gijs Nagel added emphatically. Thereupon he went on his first round. And the night watchman went home to sleep.

Reverend Buddingh had listened to all this in silent amazement. When the wagon continued on its way he turned to Teacher Beukers. "What a strange man! Lately I have had to deal with a lot of policemen, but never has one saluted me, much less greeted me in a Christian manner. What does all this mean?" The instructor smiled. "Dirk De Booi—that is what he is usually called around here—is indeed an unusual case. When we began to hold

our meetings, Mayor Hoolwerf ordered him to go and listen to see if a seditious spirit could be detected among us. Since then he has rarely missed a meeting. He even sings the psalms along with us. Instead of a menace he has become a protection to us. And Gijs Nagel faithfully reads the writings of the Secessionists. I am convinced that they will soon join us."

Reverend Buddingh was moved by what he heard. "Here we plainly see the power of the Holy Spirit, Brother Beukers! But I fear that this will cost them their positions."

Alas, the Teacher could not deny this. Secessionist policemen and night watchmen are simply not tolerated by a "tolerant" authority.

Now that they were outside of Bunschoten, Den Hartog allowed the horses to go into a trot, so that temporarily a further discussion proved impossible.

Soon the wagon swerved to the right into the broad Eempolder Street. On this short June night, darkness was only for a very short time, and a full moon flanked with stars lit up the flat polder in a fantastic glow. It quieted the three men on the wagon still more. At Eembrugge they carefully crossed the Eem, the outlines of the Gooi forests vaguely rising up directly before them. They now swerved off to Baarn and quietly passed through the town without meeting a soul, which was not disappointing to them.

Soon they came to the road to Hilversum. Here Jan Hartog stopped the wagon for a moment, so that the horses could rest and the men could stretch their legs.

The landscape had now undergone a complete change. The thick forest of trees hid most of the moon and starlight, and the small, newly paved road to Hilversum looked like a dark, mysterious tunnel.

"Give me the broad acres!" muttered the driver.

"Indeed," agreed Teacher Beukers, "This area could shut you in, Reverend, for you are accustomed to the flat country around Zeeland."

"That is true," answered the minister, "but I was born and grew up in Rhenen. This reminds me of my home." Silently they inhaled the aroma of the forest. The night still surrounded them, protecting them but also full of mysteries.

"Let us carry on," Hartog finally broke the silence. "They are expecting us."

Soon the wheels rattled on the rough streets. The last stretch was reached.

A night attack on Hilversum...!

With the sword of the Spirit... ❖

¹ This was, of course, the Saturday after the events described in the last chapter, when the elders of the congregation of Hilversum had decided to take Rev. Buddingh's offer to preach for them.

² Jan, his wife Evertje, and the others mentioned in this chapter, were all members of the new Secessionist congregation in Bunschoten.

³ Beds were often in cupboards in the wall of these small Dutch homes to conserve space. They were folded down for

use, and folded up against the wall during the day. Doors could be closed so that they could not be seen during waking hours.

⁴ Jacob Baas did not go along on this trip, but lent his horses and buggy to Jan Hartog.

⁵ In the last chapter mentioned was made of Rev. Buddingh's eccentricity, especially in his dress. He wore the clothes that preachers wore 100 or more years before the Secession took place. He probably did this as a protest against the modernistic tendencies in the State Church.

⁶ The name of a church.

Pastor Profile

Rev. Rodney Miersma

edited by Kris Moelker

On May 2, 1945, Rev. Rodney Miersma was born in Luverne, Minnesota. His parents are Henry and Ann Miersma who now live in Rock Valley, Iowa. Rev Miersma grew up in Edgerton, Minnesota.

While he was growing up, Rev Miersma attended the Free Christian School in Edgerton, Minnesota through the eighth grade. Then he attended Southwest Minnesota Christian High School. After he graduated from high school, Rev. Miersma attended college at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois, his freshman year. He finished his other three years at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa.

During the split of 1953, Rev. Miersma was eight years old. Both sides of the split attended the same school for one year. During recess and noon hour the effects of the split were evident in the activity on the playground. Vivid in his mind is the playing of cops and robbers; with the "Hoeksema Group" being the cops and the "De Wolf Group" being the robbers.

As a teenager, Rev Miersma doesn't remember experiencing much of any peer pressure. He was born and raised on the farm so he knew what had to be done and simply did it. This also was true for the social and religious aspects of life. He knew what he believed and others respected him for it and didn't try to convince him otherwise. Rev. Miersma says this would be a good lesson for young people of today as well. Young people who know the Scriptures and their catechism well will be able to stand firm upon this knowledge and will not



be easily moved by temptation or peer pressure. Those who back off from learning the Scriptures will become easy prey. Today it is all the more important for teens to know where they stand because peer pressure seems to be stronger and comes from many more directions.

**Those who back off from
learning the Scriptures will
become easy prey.**

While he was growing up, reading was Rev. Miersma's favorite pastime. While he was doing chores on the farm, he would have a book with him. He would also read in bed late into the night. Now he enjoys wood-working as a hobby even though he doesn't have much time for it.

On September 1, 1967, Rev. Miersma married Sharon Van Dyke. The Lord has blessed their marriage with one son whose name is Eric.

Even though he did not know it at the time, Rev. Miersma was being led by the Lord to the ministry when he was a small child. When people saw him at church on Sunday wearing his suit and tie they would say, "You would make a fine minister." Even though Rev. Miersma wasn't interested while he was a teen, Rev. Woudenberg did encourage him to enter the ministry. He also had two uncles and a brother-in-law in the ministry. The Lord in His own way and time brought all these circumstances together under the direction of the Spirit to lead Rev. Miersma to the ministry.

When they knew of his desire to enter the seminary, Rev. Miersma's parents and grandparents were very happy and thankful for an answer to their prayers.

When asked about the most memorable event of his years in seminary, Rev. Miersma says practice preaching stands out as it does for most seminary students. It struck fear and terror in even the bravest student while he was practice preaching to see the professors pull strange looking faces and hastily write down notes.

In 1971, Rev. Miersma was ordained and began his labors in Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Isabel, South Dakota. He labored in Isabel until 1978, when the Lord called him to go to Pella, Iowa where he labored until 1980. In 1981, the Lord sent him to First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan where he labored for seven years. When his labors in Holland, Michigan were finished, the Lord called him to become the

pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of New Zealand. He labored in New Zealand until 1996, when the Lord sent him to his current charge in Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada.

Concerning his memorable experiences with teaching young children in catechism, Rev. Miersma recalls some of the conditions under which he taught in New Zealand. He had to travel to the catechumen's homes. He taught catechism in bedrooms with budgies chirping in his ear, and in living rooms with a dog or cat at his feet. There was no central heating in these homes so he also had to keep putting wood in the fireplace in order to stay warm.

One of the most rewarding things for Rev. Miersma to witness in the life of the church is seeing the children he has baptized grow, mature, make confession of faith, marry, and then be privileged to baptize their children. This shows the covenant faithfulness of our God in gathering His people in their generations.

To men who are considering the ministry of the Word to be their calling, Rev. Miersma advises them to make this a matter of prayer before the Lord. "The calling to the ministry is for life, therefore, one needs God's guidance and direction to enter the ministry, and then all through one's life as a minister."

As far as the thinking, attitudes and behavior of our young people is concerned, Rev. Miersma would like to see changes. Entertainment is far too important in the lives of young people today. It seems that they give far more attention to movies, TV, videos and computers than what is spiritually healthy. Things that were at one time unthinkable are now becoming commonplace. Much of

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important in the lives of
young people today.**

these activities are sinful and they take away precious time that could be spent with God's Word in private study and in society.

Rev. Miersma is encouraged that our young people for the most part remain faithful to the truth taught in our churches. This is evident in the slow but steady growth of our churches because our young people stay, marry and raise a new generation of God's children. ❖

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

When I In Awesome Wonder...
The Golden Coast Of Michigan
The Changing Shore
by Deane Wassink

Erosion. Accretion. Erosion. Accretion. Erosion. Accretion. The movement of the sand upon the shore, blown by wind and carried by waves, is a constant reminder of the changeableness of this life; of our need to rest upon a firm foundation.

Working day after day at the same site along the golden beaches, I am amazed at the drastic changes that occur in a short period of time. When walking down the beach the surface is dry inland and very difficult to walk in. Along the water's edge, it is damp, hard packed earth. At times this hard area is broad and flat. Other times, in the same spot, the waves tickle your feet when you walk between the water and a small cliff up to three feet high. The cliff has become the boundary between the soft dry sand and the water's edge. In a single day, thousands of cubic yards of sand can be moved in just a hundred feet of beach.

Over the years, tremendous changes can occur. Once forested dunes can be washed into the lake. Or, new dunes can form up to several hundred feet tall. In fact, the largest are nearly five hundred feet tall, like the Sleeping Bear dunes west of Traverse City.

One of the most fascinating examples of these changes is the movement of a stream bed as the water flows into the lake from inland. It can build a channel parallel the shore for hundreds of feet. Then the dike between the stream and the shore can break, and, combined with the wave action, cause the stream to flow completely the opposite direction.

When a group of fathers and sons from our church hiked along the shore, we all enjoyed looking for fish and driftwood along this stream. The next day, the stream flowed into the lake nearly 300 feet north of where it had the day before.

Only a few people have the opportunity to build upon the shore. Some do not like to admit it, but building upon the dunes can be a very risky and expensive proposition. In a ten year period during the sixties and seventies the

width of the shore went from the widest in recent memory to having completely disappeared, with waves lapping at the base of the dunes. In some places the lake moved inland over three hundred feet. The houses and goods of the owners fell into the lake. We find pieces of the houses buried in the sand when the eroding winds reveal them.

There are only two ways to be completely sure that a house will stay in place. Either one must build way back from the edge of the dune in an area not susceptible to erosion, or, one must put pilings down to the bedrock clay to support the house.

By this time you see the application very clearly. Jesus is the Rock upon which we must build our house, our spiritual house. Our lives are filled with constant change: birth, death, friends, mistakes, accidents, sin, pain, suffering, riches, poverty.... We have nothing stable in our lives apart from Christ. We may not build our house upon the sand, like the foolish man. Instead, we must build upon the Rock, which is our Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is our sure foundation. We know Him through His Word, written and preached. Through His Word and by His gift of faith we are tied to the Rock. Thus we are made wise. And when the final great storm of life buffets us, that is, when we face death, we will be unmoved. We will stand sure. Praise to God! We will stand Rock solid with the waves swirling around us. We will be saved. God give us that faith, we pray.

*When the winds of pain buffet me,
When sickness lays me low,
In bed when Thy mercy I cannot see,
And it seems that friends all did go,
Be Thou my protection.*

*When the storms of life are raging,
When friends and loved ones forsake,
In loneliness and sorrow,
When it seems there is no tomorrow,
Be Thou my strength.*

*When temptation seeks to corrupt,
When daily cares my meditations interrupt,
In times when no light in the tunnel I see,
If waves and waves wash over me,
Be Thou my foundation.*

*When death stands at the door,
When on life's sea I'll be no more,
When I my last breath do take
So I on earth no more awake
Be Thou my hope.*

*In Thee I find my strength and song,
In Thee my comfort all the day long.
In trial Thou art my protection.
In Thee is my hope and my foundation.
Thou art my God.*

*In Thee will I find my joy in that great day,
When in brightness all my sins are washed away. ❖*

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

Gem of the Month

Submission to the Will of God

*Our Father, which art in heaven!
Let our will at all times be submissive to Thine!
So work by the Spirit of trusting and humble sonship
in our hearts, that we may at all times believe
that Thy will is good and wise and holy and righteous
and conducive unto the salvation of Thy children.
For we know the perversion and rebellion of heart.
We are conscious of the old operation of rebellious
sin within our members. Even though we are the recipients
of Thy grace, even though Thou didst renew us and
quicken us with new life, through our Lord Jesus Christ,
and even though we have a delight in Thy will according
to the inner man of us, we feel, that the fire of enmity,
that once set us in opposition and rebellion against Thy
holy Will, is still smoldering within us....
Father, we no more trust our own will....*

We feel, how inclined we still are to follow our own judgment instead of Thy precepts; to carry out our own desires instead of Thy commandments; to choose our own way instead of humbly following after Thee....

And, therefore, our Father, we pray: Blend our will with Thine and teach us always from the heart to say: Thy will be done!

If the night grows dark and the storms of life howl about our head; if the way becomes steep and it seems that all things are against us; if the enemy reviles and reproaches and fills us with shame; if suffering is our lot and it seems that our punishment is there every morning; if sorrow and grief, trouble and anguish of soul is our portion in life; if Thy way and Thy thought become so high for us, that we cannot understand them; and if the cross should become so heavy that we would be inclined to shake it from our shoulders; then, when our feet would slip and our hearts would rise against Thee in rebellion....

Then, Father, we pray, teach us to resign our own will and judgment of the way; to believe that all is well, as long as Father holds our right hand; that Thy ways are better than ours; and to follow our Saviour in the darkness of Gethsemane's night, to struggle in prayer till all is peace and the cry is wrested from our deepest hearts: Abba Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from us, but not our will, but Thy will be done!

Father, our Father!

We have tasted the goodness of Thy house and the blessedness of keeping Thy precepts and of walking in Thy way! And there is within us the strong desire to walk, not only according to some but according to all of Thy commandments. We long to see our mind and our heart, our will and our judgment in completest submission of

*loving obedience to Thy will. And we long for the time
when all rebellion in all the universe shall be suppressed,
when our own hearts and the hearts of wicked men shall
no more rise in rebellion against Thy will, when Thy will
shall be obeyed in all the universe as it is now in heaven.
For that day of perfection we long and strive....
But, Father, Thou knowest and we, too, realize how
weak we are. There is but a small principle of obedience
in the hearts of the most holy of us. Sin cleaves to us
and surrounds us. Temptation besets us, now beckoning
sweetly, now threatening fiercely, to make us depart from
Thy way and to disobey Thy will. Alone we are weak.
In our own strength we shall fail and surely fall....
Weak and frail and prone to wander we are from within....
Danger and strong enemies threaten from without....
Abba, Father, we do not trust in self!
But Thou art mighty and Thy grace is sufficient unto all things.
Dwell within us, through the grace of our blessed
Redeemer; sanctify our minds, incline our hearts and
make them steadfast, work within us to will and to do of
Thy Good pleasure. Protect and keep us and deliver us
from the wiles of the devil and from the snares set by
evil men on our way....
And destroy the works of evil men....
Till the day come, when all shall be in obedient submission
to Thee, and Thy will is performed in all the heavens and the earth!
And Thou shalt be all and in all!
Father, our Father!
Thy will be done concerning us!
Thy will be done by us!
Thy will be done about us!
Everywhere and forever!
Abba, Father! ❖*

*A Prayer by Rev. Herman Hoeksema
reprinted from the Standard Bearer Vol. 3,
p. 170-171.*

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter
reprinted from March 1993 *Beacon Lights*

March 1 Read Daniel 6:1-11

Are we as regular in prayer as Daniel was? Now I don't mean mechanically regular: I mean do we bring our needs and cares to God in prayer regularly. Because Daniel was trapped, he went to His God in prayer often. Look at the last three words of verse 10. I believe Daniel was regular and not mechanical in prayer otherwise he would have found no help from God. Do we address our heavenly Father in all situations? Or do we just look to Him in times of trouble? We must pray without ceasing for all things. Sing or read Psalter 11.

March 2 Read Romans 8:24-20

Do we always confess the words of verse 28? Young people, do you believe that all things work for your good? What is good? Good must pertain to our salvation. All things in our lives are used by God to further our salvation in Christ. Can we confess this in the hospital? Do we confess this at the grave site? Is this our hope in times of turmoil in our lives? All things work for our good. Praise the Lord. Sing or read Psalter 408, especially stanza 3.

March 3 Read II Chronicles 36: 14-21

Israel of the Old Testament was given many ceremonial laws concerning the Sabbath. One of these was that every seven years the land was to lie fallow. This was to signify the rest of the Sabbath day that God instituted during creation. Israel in their greed disobeyed, bringing on them the wrath of God. We read in verse 21 that the land had to enjoy its Sabbath. What about us? Do we in our greed for more things of this world, including recreation, refuse to give the Sabbath its due? We will lose the favor of Jehovah if this is our attitude to the Lord's day. Sing or read Psalter 320.

March 4 Read II Corinthians 6:14-18

Yesterday we spent part of the day in fellowship with fellow saints. What about today and the rest of the week? True we must be in the world, and that means many times we must rub elbows with unbelievers. But do we place ourselves in situations where we become unequally yoked with them? Do we confess that we are the temple of the living God? Sing or read Psalter 248, especially stanzas 1-4.

March 5 Read Psalm 119:9-16

Almost every verse of Psalm 119 has a word which is a synonym for the Law of God. There are many verses of application for our lives. But that is the law of God or the ten commandments. Through the proper use of God's commandments, we can walk according to His will. The first four commandments deal with our love for God; the last six deal with our love for the neighbor. By diligently following God's law, we can assure ourselves of His favor. Sing or read Psalter 42.

March 6 Read Matthew 4:1-10

Young people, do you worship Jehovah God alone? Do we have other interests that intrude on our worship of God? Remember worship is not reserved for Sundays alone. We must worship every minute of our lives. Do we trust in God for all things for both body and soul? If we do, then we keep the first commandment. If we do, the devil will go away from us. Sing or read Psalter 391, especially stanza 3.

March 7 Read Jeremiah 10:1-10

How do we worship Jehovah? Do we make images of Him in our minds? Do we pick out attributes of God that we are comfortable with and ignore those we would rather not deal with? You know what I mean. It's easy to say "God is love" but not "God is judge."

Our worship must confess that God is true, living, and sovereign over all. Our worship must be from the heart and not from the lips. Israel was reprimanded many times for lip-service; what about us? Sing or read Psalter 308, especially stanzas 1-3.

March 8 Read Matthew 5:33-37

How do we speak about God? Is our speech full of profanity—even mild profanity? Do we speak of spiritual things lightly—even using them in jokes? None of us like our names used in stories that promote evil about us. Do we do that to God? Are we guilty of taking God’s name in vain? We must reverence that name. We must treat it like we treat our most treasured earthly possession. He has given His name to us so that we can worship Him. Let us use it with fear and reverence. Sing or read Psalter 164.

March 9 Read Isaiah 58:1-3; 13-14

It will be Sunday tomorrow. Are we preparing today? Were our plans of today such that tomorrow we can set aside all our cares of the world and concentrate on the worship of Jehovah? Is the whole house ready to worship God? Do our friends know what to expect of us on the Sabbath? God has given to us six days in which we can carry out the business of caring for our needs. He has reserved one day so that He can be worshiped by His creatures. There are many practical aspects to this commandment; but I think they can be summed up in the thought “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” Sing or read Psalter 348, especially stanzas 1-3.

March 10 Read Romans 13:1-7

Young people, do think that you are old enough that the fifth commandment no longer applies to you? Are father and mother old-fashioned and do not have to be listened to? If you are living away from home, do you have any responsibility to this commandment? Of course you do, and of course I do. This commandment speaks about all authority—all those whom it has pleased God to place over us. We never escape the demands of the fifth commandment, and this is a good thing. This commandment has a promise. Our days will be long in heaven. Is this our joy? Sing or read Psalter 84.

March 11 Read James 1:17-25

“Thou shalt not kill” This seems easy enough to keep, doesn’t it. Have you read the words of Lord’s Day 40 lately? We realize that shedding blood is only

one way to break this commandment. Do we realize that when our anger comes forth against one another we have transgressed this commandment? We must see that we use our tongues quite often and kill the brother. Notice verses 20-22. We must love the brother in all things and at all times. Then and only then can we keep this commandment. Sing or read Psalter 386, especially stanzas 1 and 4.

March 12 Read I Corinthians 6:15-20

The negative aspects of the seventh commandment bring God’s wrath in this life. Unholy marriages are full of strife. Impure actions bring disease and other consequences. How do we look at this commandment positively? We must realize that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. In order not to quench the Holy Spirit, we must keep our bodies pure. This includes actions, words, and dress. According to verse 20 we keep the seventh commandment when we glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits. Sing or read Psalter 143, especially stanzas 1 and 2.

March 13 Read Nehemiah 5:1-13

Israel had returned from captivity, and soon some in the nation stole from their brethren. They stole by taking advantage of the brother and not caring for their needs. Stealing, we know, is wrong though at times we participate in it. But this commandment also is not kept when we do not promote the advantage of the neighbor. When we take advantage of our friends, we steal from them and from God’s honor and glory. The last part of the Heidelberg Catechism speaks of helping the poor as a way of keeping this commandment. Is that so hard? Sing or read Psalter 26, especially stanzas 1 and 5.

March 14 Read Proverbs 11:11-14

We are full of conversation. All of us speak to others and about others often. How do we do that? Are we talebearers? Do we love the neighbor as ourselves in our conversations? Much damage has been done in the church when this commandment is broken. Teachers bemoan the fact that students don’t love the brother or sister and use their tongues to show this hatred. Our speech can bring glory to God or Satan. Which is it? Sing or read Psalter 394, especially stanzas 1 and 2.

March 15 Read Romans 7:14-25

Coveting is an inward sin. Coveting means we are not happy with God in the lives He has chosen for us.

After we are guilty of coveting someone else's place in the world, we try to take it from them. We must constantly remind ourselves to be content and happy with our life. This is not easy; but it is the tenth commandment. When we walk in the tenth commandment, it will be easier to keep the others. Sing or read Psalter 81, especially stanzas 1, 3 and 4.

March 16 Read Jonah 2

Young people, are your life's plans working out the way you want them to? Are you happy the way things are going? Jonah had a plan. He was going to preach to God's people. It was an admirable plan except for one thing. It was not God's plan. God took extreme measures with Jonah. God will take extreme measures with us if we do not look to Him to order our lives. We must listen to Him, and then He will bless us. Sing or read Psalter 101, especially stanzas 1 and 4.

March 17 Read Ephesians 2:4-10

Grace! What a beautiful word. We use it to describe many actions in this world. But the word has much more meaning than earthly actions. It is the word which gives us hope in this life. Without it we are nothing. For it is by grace we are saved. Grace is God's unmerited favor towards His people whereby by our deserving punishment was poured out on Christ and we receive the promise of eternal life. Thanks be to God for this wonderful word! Sing or read Psalm 112, especially stanzas 3 and 4.

March 18 Read Ruth 2:8-14

Do our actions show that God blesses us? Can those around us see the work of God in our lives? Boaz could see that in Ruth. He said of Ruth that she trusted in God and dwelt beneath His wings. What about us? Does our everyday life show that we trust God or do we try to hide our faith and act like the reprobate? The difference is obvious. What do men see in us? Sing or read Psalter 92, especially stanzas 3 and 8.

March 19 Read Colossians 1:12-20

Is it necessary for the church to have a day set aside for Thanksgiving? I hope not. Paul commands the church at Colosse to give thanks to the Father. Then he gives reasons for the expression of thankfulness. The primary reason is the salvation wrought for us by Christ through the cross. Must we wait for November to thank God for that? I hope not. If we don't wait, then we will remember to thank God for all the gifts

he has given us. Sing or read Psalter 405, especially stanzas 6 and 7.

March 20 Read I Samuel 3:1-10

Have you uttered the words today, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth?" In Samuel's time God often came to His people directly. Since Christ has sent His Spirit upon us, we no longer have such direct contact with the Lord. But we must ask for God to speak to us. And speak He does. The Bible is full of the Word of the Lord for us. Are we searching the Scriptures to find it? Are we listening to His Word? Sing or read 323, stanzas 1 and 2.

March 21 Read I Thessalonians 5:1-11

Do you listen to God as He speaks to the church through the news of the world's happenings? When there is a devastating storm, do we hear God's voice? When war breaks out, does the red horse leap into our mind's eye? What about disease and famine? Paul said to the Thessalonians that they must watch the times and the seasons. This is also the Word of the Holy Spirit to us. Watch, pray, and listen to God's Word in the world around you. Then comfort each other with the knowledge that Christ comes quickly. Sing or read Psalter 28, especially stanzas 4 and 5.

March 22 Read I Kings 21:1-7

Naboth received death for his refusal to sell his vineyard to Ahab. The king would have made him a rich man for his small plot of land. He said no, and, by the instrumentality of wicked Jezebel, he lost not only his vineyard but also his life. But Naboth did not die for a vineyard. He died because he confessed his faith in the inheritance given to him by Jehovah. What about us? Do we sell the inheritance of the Reformed truth? God forbid it happen to us even if death threaten. Sing or read Psalter 80, especially stanzas 1, 5 and 9.

March 23 Read II Thessalonians 1:3-12

Yesterday we spoke of death coming to the child of God because of his confession of faith. Does that trouble us? It shouldn't if we believe the Word of God we just read. Evil will be punished; good will triumph. Why? Not only for our sake but more importantly that the name of God be glorified in us. Sing or read Psalter 88 especially stanzas 1 and 2.

March 24 Read Ezra 8:21-23

When Ezra returned to the promised land, he knew there would be dangers in the way. Yet he was not ashamed to ask God to help him bring the people to

Canaan. Is this our confession, young people? Are you ashamed to ask help from God? In your study of history you have learned of many services governments provide for their citizens. Are these your hope for your future life? Ezra realized that his help was in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. Do we? Sing or read Psalter 75, especially stanzas 1, 2 and 6.

March 25 Read I Timothy 3:1-13

Young people, do you want to be in consistency? This may seem to be a strange question, especially considering the age of some of you. Yet, your lives, young men, should show forth the qualities of elders and deacons. There is a word to you, young women, as possible mates of office bearers. It is God's will that his church be ruled by godly men. Each generation must provide men who fit the qualifications of these verses. Do you desire it? Even if it is not God's will for you any time in your life, you must be ready to serve. Sing or read Psalter 367, especially stanza 1.

March 26 Read Esther 2:5-10

Sometimes we wonder about God's purpose in including the book of Esther in the canon of Scripture. We look at unbelieving Mordecai and Esther and wonder what God's message is for us in this book. It is not hard to see the message. We see God's providence for His church. The heathen raged in the form of Haman, but yet God delivered His church. That is the message for us. God is near to us even though Satan desires to destroy us. Make that your thought as you read Esther and you will have no trouble. Sing or read Psalter 99, especially stanzas 1, 2 and 5.

March 27 Read I Timothy 3:14-17

Are we happy about God-fearing homes, diligent catechism instruction and preaching, and covenant schools? Paul reminds Timothy of his upbringing under the hands of Mother Eunice and Grandmother Lois. It was an upbringing full of spiritual things. The basis of that upbringing was the inspired, infallible Scriptures. That is the basis of the covenant home, true church, and covenant schools. Are you happy for them? Then give God the praise from Whom all blessings flow. Sing or read Psalter 89, especially stanzas 1 and 4.

March 28 Read Psalm 74:12-23

For us in the northern hemisphere March can mark a turning point in the seasons. Even though we know that there is plenty of time for winter storms to strike,

spring is near. As children of God we can gain instruction in that. Even though wickedness abounds around us and we fear that Christ will never return, we know that God is King of all. Christ will come and take us to that New Jerusalem; that place of eternal spring. Sing or read Psalter 402, especially stanzas 1 and 5.

March 29 Read Mark 6:1-6

Young people, how do you receive those who encourage or admonish you in things of Jehovah? Are we like the people of Jesus' hometown who, because of their unbelief, would not make it possible for mighty works to be done. If someone encourages us using the Word of God, are we grateful for their concern over our spiritual life? If someone admonishes us for our sins, are we thankful that someone cares that we do not fall prey to Satan? Be glad God has given us fellow saints who help to bear the burdens of others. Above all, do not despise them. Sing or read Psalter 370.

March 30 Read Joshua 1:1-9

Are the words of Joshua 1 only for leaders? Impossible! The Bible is written for all the elect of all ages. It is true that these were the words of God to Joshua as he began his work as Israel's leader, but look again at verses 7-9. Are not these verses very applicable to us? Shouldn't we be strong and courageous to observe and do God's law? Shouldn't the law not depart out of our mouths so that we meditate in it day and night? Don't we have the promise that God will be with us wherever we go? Sing or read Psalter 40:1, 4-6.

March 31 Read Ephesians 5:15-21

How is the singing coming? Are you delighting in the Psalter numbers at the end of the meditations? Or is singing something we do grudgingly; not remembering that it is an expression of gratitude to our heavenly Father for all He has given us? In Ephesians 5 the context is given in verse 1 where it tells us to be followers of God as children. Then the chapter gives us application of that concept. Verses 19 and 20 relate to our singing. Should we love it? Yes! Will we do it in heaven? Yes! Are you happy about it? Sing or read Psalter 409.

Through the Bond of Christ We Are United

by Melissa Van Baren

Just recently a few of us traveled to Tasmania for the Evangelical Presbyterian Church camp. It was such an edifying experience I wanted to share it. I also hope that in sharing it, it will help our young people as we “Look to the Future.” This was a very special trip for me and I only hope you can taste even just a small amount of it.

I know what the apostle Paul means when he writes to all the different Churches encouraging them in the gospel. He encourages them to grow in the Word. How he longs for those churches and longs to be with them. “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now... For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:3-8). That too was my feeling as I left the churches in Australia. I am so glad that I had the chance to fellowship with them in the gospel. I continue to pray that God will grow and prosper them in the works of His law.

God blessed many of us through the camp. Our eyes were opened more. We saw a glimpse of God’s glory and majesty of the church of all ages in perfect harmony together with Christ in heaven. What a glorious and blessed thing that will be to have perfect communion with them and be able to sing and praise God perfectly!

Our trip started off by meeting some of the saints in the church of Launsesten. It is a small church in comparison to most of our churches, but yet it still seemed overwhelming to meet them and learn all their names. This was just the budding of many great friendships. We didn’t remember most of the names but the faces stuck with us. Then after both morning and evening services, some of the names started to stick. It also helped that we were able to fellowship at someone’s house after the ser-

vices with the smaller group and learned a core group of people.

After that night, the “Americans” traveled around a bit more and then after a few days camp was upon us. Time to meet more people! Camp started off with the usual registration. There were 70 people registered—one of their bigger groups yet! With registration complete, we headed off to camp in their “big buses.” Camp was one and a half to two hours away. This ride gave us time to get to know some of the people better—a bit of bonding went on here between all of us and we came out with some really great friendships. Before we knew it, we were at camp and unpacking. The girls were all to stay down one hall and the guys another. There was anywhere from 5-10 people in a room. Talk about Bonding! The rest of the day was pretty much free time—more time to grow in our friendships and get to know one another better. In fact, they even taught the “Americans” how to play some Aussie “footie” (or at least how to kick it)! A lot of laughter and good fun came out of that experience! Dinner (or “tea” as they called it) followed with more free time after that. We had devotions before and after every meal led by one of the gentlemen there. We found their way of devotions unique in that for prayer you had to stand—something we weren’t quite used to and that did take a little getting used too. The young people helped with this by leading the devotions. It wasn’t just reading the Bible but also explaining the passage a bit and then singing and praying (as I mentioned before). What a neat way for those young men to grow and practice leading not only for their future homes but also for the church.

Saturday included more free time and some organized games. Also the first speech (or study) seemed to bring an official start to the camp. The study was delivered by Rev. Shand on “Maintaining the Ancient Land

Marks.” In this study, he stressed the importance of holding on and teaching our reformed heritage and learning about the past to help us in the future. He said in order for us to be strong in the future we need to know about our past churches and see their strengths (and sometimes mistakes) to learn from them to make us even stronger. After this study, we had discussion on this and broke off into our divided groups. We were given sheets with questions that we had to discuss among ourselves. This, I thought, helped reinforce the study and what was said and helped us apply it. These discussions were after every speech and were very enjoyable—it would be great if we could get something like this at our conventions. The rest of the night was more free time and an early night to help us prepare and be prepared for the Sabbath. We did play some organized games before bed, though. A few of us were signed up to play (one of the most torturous inventions of a game) chubby bunnies. Just to let you know—the American girls took home the champion title and the American guys fell in second place. The game was one some of us hope to never repeat again—and also marshmallows don’t sound too appealing anymore! The night ended with that.

Services were held at the camp and some of the church members were able to join us. The day was a quieter day. People engaged in discussions, singing etc. We also had some questions to fill out among our groups and since most of them were about the EPC—we were not able to help out much. Sunday ended with time for the group to put questions to the pastors. I found this most interesting because it was intriguing to know that some of the same questions that bother our young people also are a concern to them too! This further helped in our growing together. The topic I thought was most interesting, and that we spent the most time on, was Music! There were questions as to what we should be listening to, exclusive psalmody etc. It was a wonderful discussion from which I gleaned some more information for some of my usual articles on music.

Monday was our only trip away from the camp. We went to this mountain type of thing called “The Nut.” After hiking up this and climbing back down we had the option of going shopping, swimming, or just hanging around. It was extremely cold but some of us (a SMALL group of us) decided to brave the Tasman Sea. Brrrr! After everything went numb it wasn’t so bad! Others stood and watched us like we were crazy and there were some that did some shopping. It was nice to get away from the camp for a little bit. We stayed around for most

of the afternoon and then headed back to the camp. Since it was New Years Eve a special “tea” was planned. We all had to dress up western for the dinner. It was great—us Americans almost felt like we were at home! We had “pig on the spit” or in our terms—a pig roast. The night ended by ringing in the New Year around the camp fire set up. We had sparklers and poppers which made for a colorful evening. I was a nice way to ring it in—with all of our new Christian friends. It definitely made you count your blessings!

Tuesday was another laid back day because we had “heaps” more free time. Just to give us a bit of time to relax from the late night before. In free time, we worked on our footie skills, played soccer, volleyball and even basketball. They just thought that was spectacular and would love to come visit us just to play basketball—it’s not a terribly popular sport out there. By this time, we knew quite a few of the people very well and were just having a ball being able to socialize with them. We also had our next in the series of speeches. This one given by Pastor Connors entitled “Grip that Baton and Go!” This study made a lasting impression on most of us at the camp—it was a strong and stirring message directed at us, the young people. Pastor Connors portrayed the picture of a runner in the relay race passing on the baton. This was a picture of us in our life of a Christian and how we are to grip that baton with a white knuckled grip and pass it on. The baton was a picture of the truth of God developed through the ages. The runners were our parents/grandparents running before us and passing on that baton to us—who eventually have to grip that baton and pass it complete to our children. It was a neat, but in some ways terrifying, thought. The fact that *we* are responsible to grip that baton, continue with strength in that race, and pass it on complete and unharmed to our children. This was a very heart-felt message—the whole importance of our beliefs, past and faith in God. How it was, is and must continue to be pertinent to us and the church through the ages. Wow, what a responsibility! Like I said, this had a very important message to portray to us as young people. After the study we again had some discussion and then some organized games.

Wednesday was the last full day of camp. The end sort of loomed above us most of the day. It made for a terrible sad but yet wonderful day. This day we also had more free time and the last of our speeches. This one entitled “The Dawning of the Day” by Rev. Shand. This speech told us to watch for the coming of Christ which is our Future: that we are to pray for this but also we are

to prepare for that too. We are to cloth ourselves with Christ's righteousness and be ready for His second coming. This also was something wonderful for us to consider! How we should be busy in the work of the Kingdom and not be caught unready. So, with that last message we concluded all our studies! It was very timely to hear all those messages. The young people enjoyed them greatly. It was nice that the focus of the whole camp was around those things and the speeches and not the speeches scheduled around the activities. It was also nice to have the speech and discussion of the speech almost every-day (minus one, which was the day we went away from the camp). I also enjoyed all the free time it gave us. We had time to fellowship more instead of getting bused everywhere and shuffled off to this activity and that. It was great and if anyone can get the chance to go down there for the next camp in two years I highly recommend that you do. It's a very edifying and eye opening experience. It can change your perspective on life.

Which brings me to the last day—a very sad one indeed! A time when we had to part with some of our wonderful and new close friends. We exchanged many addresses and lots of tears were shed (especially by us because we weren't sure if we were ever going to see some of them again). We all parted with promises to write and many thanks to God for the impressions that those people made on our hearts! It was wonderful to be able to grow in the gospel with them too even though they were from all the way around the world! God richly blessed many of us through that experience and I am thankful I had the chance to get to know and grow with them.

This just brings to mind one of the many Psalter numbers:

*With joy I heard my Friends exclaim,
Come let us in God's temple meet;
Within they gates, O Zion blest,
Shall ever stand our willing feet.*

(Psalter #350, vs. 1)

May we ever be glad and joyful and willing with our friends in Christ to go to God's temple no matter where those friends may be! ❖

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

Our Trials

by Bonnie Lynn Boer

*God gives us many trials that
We think we cannot bear
But to worry is not the answer,
For we know we're in His care.
There's sickness all around us and
Our loved ones chances may seem dim,
But remember we're His children
So just keep on trusting Him.
Our body's weak and frail and our
Hearts are burdened too,
But since Christ is on our side,
There's no reason to be blue!
We know that up in Heaven all
Our pains will go away, and
Heaven lasts forever, that is
Where we'll always stay.
But while we're here on earth,
Our Lord's praises we must raise!
We must thank our heavenly Father
For giving use these days.
Now we know that this is hard,
For God's plan we do not know,
But with Christ we have the confidence
That we're safe now here below.*

Bonnie is a freshman at Heritage Christian High School, in Lansing, Illinois.

Giving in God's House

by John Kalsbeck

Last month we considered the importance of personal giving. We emphasized the idea that proper giving is rooted in the love of God. When that love is in our hearts we then feel the desire to give liberally as we have been blessed. The burden of this present article is to consider the methods used in our churches to encourage Christian giving.

In article 11 of our Church Order we read that “the consistory, as representing the congregation, shall also be bound to provide for the proper support of its Ministers. Years ago one method used to collect the needed funds was to divide the church into a number of various sections and to charge a certain amount to those who sat in those sections. Thus the more desirable seats were purchased by the rich for the larger sums of money. Another method used by some churches to collect some of these necessary funds was and is by church sponsored bazaars, lotteries, soup suppers and auctions. It seems like some people need earthly stimulants to help them loosen the strings of their purses. Thankfully, none of these methods are practiced in our churches.

How then can the church through its consistory encourage the congregation to give as they should for the support of the minister?

The method most often used today is that of the budget. Churches who use the budget system try to estimate their yearly expenses. They add up the minister's salary, the Synodical assessments, and the various anticipated expenses and divide the total by the number of families in the church. This amount is then divided by the number of weeks in the year to determine the amount each person is obligated to pay per week to meet the running expenses of the congregation. Such a budget is indeed needed in order that the church be able to meet its obligations. A budget system presented by the consistory, approved by the congregation, and rigorously followed throughout the year provides system and order in the Church of Jesus Christ. It's wise and orderly for a country, a business, a family to make periodic budgets and to

try to live within such a budget. A country so foolish to repeatedly ignore such budget restrictions finds itself in a bankrupt situation such as our country faces today. So also with the church. God is a God of order, and He demands order in His church.

...a budget system has one and only one purpose and that is to bring order to the church in its financial affairs.

Some who object to a budget system argue that it is nothing more than a tax system. Rich and poor alike are required to pay the same amount. Such a system is unfair. It destroys, so they say, responsible giving because the rich pay the budget and often refuse to pay more. And the poor are required to pay more than they can afford.

It must be remembered that a budget system has one and only one purpose and that is to bring order to the church in its financial affairs. A budget is not designed to force people to give. If that were so why do our deacons so often have to admonish individual members of the congregation to meet their financial obligations?

(In Volumes IX and X of the *Standard Bearer*, Rev. Ophoff carries on a rather lengthy debate with a Mr. Hoekstra on the budget question. Some interesting arguments are presented in support of the budget and also against the budget system.)

Approximately seven years ago I happened to be in a church of another denomination for a wedding service. In the songbook rack in front of me I found a mimeographed sheet with the envelope numbers for the church budget. Behind each number was a column containing the amount of money given by the person who had that particular number. Of course, the names of the people

were not included on the sheet. A second column contained the amount that particular account was behind or ahead. Thus, #47 had so far given \$125 and was behind \$500. And #83 had given \$500 which was more than the budget called for and so on.

This example was cited in order to turn our attention to the envelope system. This system is a method that is used in many churches to collect the budget. Each member is given a box of envelopes that has a given number. Each Sunday the budget payment or donation is inserted into one of the envelopes and deposited in the collection plate. The deacons then keep a careful record of the amount each member has paid throughout the year.

What was done above, is an obvious misuse of the envelope system. What right does a consistory have to make public the giving habits of individual congregational members? Many of them were below the amount expected for that time of the year. Apparently it was an attempt to shame the poor giver to meet his budget obligation and to encourage the more prosperous to try to outdo each other and to see who could give the most. I personally hope that none of our own congregations have had to resort to such tactics. Such action is coercive and does not promote giving out of love for God.

This is one of the dangers that can easily result in the use of the envelope system. The question that comes to mind is “Why did the church begin using such a system?” Did it originate because the members refused to meet their budget responsibilities? Or was the envelope system adopted in order that the deacons could in this way find out who the poor were so that they could go to them to give them the mercies of Christ? If the first answer is true then the envelope system is nothing more than a means to force church members to meet their obligations. Is force a proper means for the church of Christ to use in this instance? Oh, it’ll probably work. God’s people will give, regardless, but those who lack the love of Christ in their hearts will now give just to keep up appearances. If the envelope system was adopted in order to find out who the poor are then the deacons must have been blind. Surely there are other better ways in which to seek out and find the poor. Personal visits by elders and deacons alike often help them to see who are the poor and needy.

On the other hand, I have heard of a congregation who gave up the envelope system just because the deacons had become weary in the work of visiting delinquent members and admonishing them. By disregarding the envelope system they no longer knew which mem-

bers were falling behind in their budget responsibilities and didn’t have to visit them anymore.

I personally wonder if Christ would put His divine stamp of approval on the envelope system? With the inherent dangers of misusing such a system a congregation would be wise to forgo the use of the envelope system. It’s a shame that an envelope system has to be used to extort the budget when giving should be a happy exercise of faith.

Why not then use the tithe? There is no doubt at all in my mind that were each individual child of God to give to the church a tenth of all he made the congregations would have a surplus. The tithe was an Old Testament practice, and part of Israel’s ceremonial law. Since it was the law, Israel was obligated to pay it faithfully. The tithe amounted to one-tenth of a person’s crops, herds, and/or wages. In Israel the tithe was to be used to take care of the needs of the Levites and priests. Even before Israel developed into the nation, the patriarch Abraham paid a tenth of the spoil of his victory over Chadorlaomer to Melchizedek, king of Salem.

**We must give in the New
Testament church “as God
has prospered” us.**

Many arguments may be advanced in favor of the tithe but such a system is not one the New Testament church should use. Tithing is certainly a systematic way of giving yet it violates the exhortation of Paul to the Corinthians, “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by himself in store, as God has prospered him” (I Cor. 16:1-2). We must give in the New Testament church “as God has prospered” us. For many the tithe would then be an easy, cheap way out of paying what he should. For others the tithe might be an extreme and unfair burden. (For more information on tithing read Rev. G. Ophoff’s three articles in Vol. 17 of the *Standard Bearer*, pp. 358, 383, and 430).

I believe the same objection can also be directed at our budget system. For some the budget is an easy way out and for others it may be an extreme and unfair burden. Financial inequities are found also among God’s people. There are rich and poor alike in the Church of God here on this earth. For this very reason our churches

have set up benevolent funds and take poor collections every Sunday. The wealthy members use this means to help the poor. They pay their budget faithfully and fulfill the calling to lay in store as God has prospered them by giving liberally to this fund. And the poor who are unable to pay their budget must go to the deacons with their need and receive the mercies of Christ so that they can meet their budget obligations. Such is the God ordained way. The problem many of our deaconates face is that our poor often find it far easier and less embarrassing to receive help from the government, forgetting, that the mercies of the wicked are cruel. Perhaps the deacons sometimes find it less work to allow individuals to do this also.

...the poor who are unable to pay their budget must go to the deacons with their need and receive the mercies of Christ so that they can meet their budget obligations.

Giving in God's house demands of us certain obligations. Rich and poor alike need to pay their budgets—no more and no less. In the way of giving and receiving alms the wealthy member humbly gives as he is blessed and the poor humbly receives in his need. This system obviously is grounded in the love of God. Only where that love is in existence will it work. Then there will be no need for an envelope system and no need for repeated admonitions from the pulpit. Scripture clearly tells us that it is more blessed to give than it is to receive. Let's remember this and give as we are prospered. ❖

John is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan. This article is reprinted from Beacon Lights, Volume 40, #10, p. 10.

In Memory

by Bonnie Lynn Boer

*Life is hard when you lose someone you love,
But we all know that person is in heaven above.
Times are rough and tears are shed,
But Christ alone will be our stead.
We may not understand the things He's planned,
But remember, we're in the palm of His hand.
God will take us through times that be rough,
so put your trust in Him alone—He's enough!
He will give light to guide our way,
He alone will be our stay.
As we lay this loved one down,
Do not fret: Christ's love abounds.
We know she's in a better place,
Experiencing the fullness of God's grace.
No more pains are hers to share,
All is well when you're up there.
Our loved one will not be forgot,
But Christ will fill our empty spot.
"Give thanks in all" is our command,
Christ is head, In Him we'll stand.*

In memory of Mrs. Pat Haak of our South Holland Protestant Reformed Church and Mrs. Carolyn Houck of our Peace Protestant Reformed Church.

Bonnie is a freshman at Heritage Christian High School, in Lansing, Illinois.



God's Law: A Young Person's Spiritual Roadmap

by Rev. Doug Kuiper

*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?
by taking heed thereto according to thy word.
Psalm 119:9*

Young people, you have either recently gotten a driver's license, or you hope to get one soon.

I have a question for you new or prospective drivers: when you come to an intersection in the road, how will you know which way to go?

The car will not make that choice for you. It will only go where you steer it. *YOU* are in the driver's seat.

The point is this: when you get behind that wheel for the first time after getting your license; when you get behind that wheel for the first time driving alone, with no one else in the car to help guide you; *YOU* must know 1) where you are going, and 2) how to get there, or at least, how to read a map. Else you will get lost!

The same thing is true spiritually. That is the point of the text quoted above.

The question of the text ought to be our question, as young people: by what means, or with what tool, can a young man be sure that his way is pure?

The Psalmist asked that question, not because he was a father who needed to know how to direct his children; not because he was a teacher or preacher, wanting to know how best to guide the youth of the church; but because he was the young person, whose **ONE GOAL** was this: **BE PLEASING TO GOD!** This was his destination.

How old this young person was doesn't matter. The Hebrew word translated "young man" is used other places to refer to people in their young teens (Joseph, Ishmael), as well as to people who are parents, but still rather young (Absalom). But the point is that he had not yet attained the degree of wisdom and level of sanctification that is generally thought to characterize an old man. He was faced with the temptations that youth have always faced, and face today.

"Youth puts men where two ways meet," wrote John Calvin, in his commentary on Psalm 119:9. That is, the time of your youth is the time when you come to many intersections. Some of them are major intersections: shall I get drunk, or not? Fornicate, or not? Defend the name of my God which my friend just blasphemed, or not? Put the pedal to the metal and see if I can do 100 with Dad's car and get away from the cop who just saw me, or not? The choices you make will have consequences! Other intersections may seem more minor: shall I tell a white lie, or not? Sneak out of the house in the middle of the night just once, or not? Believe what my college prof. just told me about mistakes in the Bible or not? Watch the same movie that the other guys at work are going to watch tonight, so I can help them review it tomorrow, or not? But even at these intersections which seem more minor, the choice will have consequences.

Roads which intersect generally do not lead to the same destination. They go in different directions. It doesn't matter whether the intersection seems big or small. So it is with our spiritual road, our life. We can travel in only one direction at a time—to heaven, or to hell. You say, "Which direction we are headed in is God's determination." True enough. We marvel at the doctrine of election, and confess the doctrine of reprobation with fear and trembling, for it reveals the unyielding justice of our God!

Still, I ask you what road you **LIVE** as though you are on? And whether you live in the **SERVICE** of God, and to His glory? As far as you are concerned, that must be **YOUR** goal in life, as covenant youth in God's church.

A clean way—the way on which the Psalmist desired to walk—is a way which is free from sin, from all that would hinder us in serving God and showing love to Him, and a way that would bring honor and glory to His name.

This is the way that brings joy and blessing to all who walk in it, even young people!

This is the way which manifests that God has placed us on the road to heaven, and that we are eagerly looking to reach our destination!

Is this the way that you desire to walk in? Then, realizing that you find yourself at times on the wrong road, the Psalmist's question becomes ours: "How shall I be sure that my way is clean?"

The roadmap is the Word of God.

You know that Psalm 119 speaks primarily of God's law. So in verse 9, the phrase "thy word" refers not to the Word of God generally, not to all of Scripture, but particularly to the *law* of God. The Psalmist knew that law, for it was recorded in the first five books of the Bible, which Moses had penned.

God's law is His will regarding how we live. It tells us what to do (love God with our whole being, and our neighbor as ourselves) and what not to do (serve idols or graven images, take God's name in vain, profane the Sabbath, show disrespect to any in authority, kill, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, covet).

God's law is negative, warning us against sins to which we are all prone by nature; and it is positive, showing us clearly how to live in a way that pleases God.

So God's law is a trustworthy roadmap as we live in a way that brings honor and glory to God. It will surely point us to the way which pleases Him! Using it we will certainly arrive at our destination!

We must take heed to that law. We must know it, love it, and observe it from our heart.

If you say you desire to live as God's child, but ignore His law, you will never experience the joy and peace that He gives His children.

If you say you desire to live as God's child, but ignore His law, you will never experience the joy and peace that He gives His children. If you claim to be His child, but do not live like one, your actions show that your words meant nothing. You will never reach the destination that you claim to be heading for. If your home is in Northwest Iowa, and you tell your parents that you are going to Chicago, but you turn west as soon as you get to I80 or I90, you will never get to Chicago.

In order better to take heed to God's law, we are going to examine it. I know, you studied it in Heidelberg Catechism class, and you hear sermons based on it regularly. That is good, too. Are you thankful for those opportunities?

But we are also going to examine it in a series of articles, in which we apply it particularly to the young people of the church, and remind ourselves that in the way of KEEPING the law, our way will be cleansed, and we will enjoy blessings from God! ❖

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin.

Where We Stand

A Sudden and Unexpected Coming

by Rev. Ronald Hanko

Reprinted from the Loveland PRC newsletter.

If the "rapture" is not secret, why do we read of Christ's coming as sudden and unexpected (I Thess. 5:1-9)? He comes, Scripture says, as a thief in the night (Matt. 24:34; II Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3; 16:15). What could be more secret or unexpected than that?

The truth is that Christ comes as a unexpected thief *only in relation to the ungodly and unbelieving*. I Thessalonians 5:1-9 makes this abundantly clear. There Paul speaks of "them," the ungodly, in distinction from "you," that is, the saints. He tells us that *inescapable destruction* shall come upon *them* (vs. 3), "but ye, brethren

ren, are *not* in darkness that the day should overtake you *as a thief*" (vs. 4).

The wicked are not expecting the final judgment and the coming of Christ. Though many of them have heard that He is coming and know that God will judge the world, they hold this truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:16). They are the scoffers of whom Peter speaks (II Pet. 3:1-8). Because God does not pour out His wrath on them immediately they conclude He will not judge them at all. Nor do they recognize the judgments He *does* send on them now as *judgments* (AIDS, earthquakes, famines, wars).

Such people are also found in the church. There they are represented by the five foolish virgins of Matthew 25 (vss. 1-13). When Christ does come they are sound asleep, and without oil, and are *excluded* from the wedding feast as a result. They belong to the church and have the name of believers (virgins), but are in fact hypocrites and unbelievers.

God's people are *not* taken completely unawares (further proof that the "rapture" is not secret), and are in

fact, though always imperfectly, watching and waiting for the coming of Christ, believing that He shall certainly come as He has promised. They are not in the darkness of unbelief and sin, as I Thessalonians 5:4 reminds us.

Nevertheless, even they do not know the day or hour of Christ's coming (Matt. 24:36, 42; 25:13; Mk. 13:32). To them also Christ says, "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh" (Matt. 24:44).

For this reason we have the urgent calling to watch and wait and pray. Matthew 25:13 speaks of that calling. So does I Thessalonians 5: "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.... Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (vss. 6, 8).

This warning is needed! The five "wise" virgins are also sleeping when the bridegroom comes (Matt. 25:5). They have oil in their lamps (the Biblical symbol of the Spirit of God), but they themselves are slumbering. It is with this in mind that Jesus says in another place, "When

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the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Lk. 18:8) and that in connection with a call to fervent, frequent prayer.

That we need this warning should be evident in the fact that we are often careless, and live as though Christ will never come. Indeed, the thought of His coming *right*

now, more often than not would fill us with dismay. Let us then watch and pray, that we enter *not* into temptation. ❖

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

Church History

A Church In Macedonia

by J.P. deKlerk

Macedonia is one of the small countries which has been part of Yugoslavia, bordering on Albania, the Kara mountains, but in the South on the Gulf of Thessalonica.

It has a long and dramatic history, part of which can be found in the New Testament, because after the conquest by Alexander the Great (356-323 before Christ) Macedonia became a province of the Romans and the Apostle Paul was called to go there (Acts 16:9) with Luke, Silas and Timothy. They arrived in the harbor-city of Neapolis.

The people speak a Servo-Croatian dialect nowadays; a mixture of words from Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey.

In the capital Skopje, we find the oldest Eastern Orthodox Church, namely the so-called St. Panteleimon Church of Neresi. Founded by Christians from Constantinople in 1054, the building was finished in 1164 after Christ. As you can see, the building is different from all others. These Christians were strongly anti-Roman Catholic. They had no crosses inside or outside the building. The bricks were handmade. The building has survived many wars and earthquakes.

The most important theologian in the history of this Church has been Cyrillus Lukaris (1572-1638) who brought Calvinism into the Church and strengthened it against Roman Catholic monks from France. He exchanged Confessions of Faith with the Reformed Church in Geneva. He had several conferences with like-minded ministers from England and The Netherlands, as a result of which the St. Panteleimon Church of Neresi adopted the Heidelberg Catechism.

However, the Roman Catholics, as well as the Moslems, hated Lukaris, and some monks organized a plot against him. He was captured and banned from Macedonia. He was brought on board a ship to Constantinople; on its way he was murdered by soldiers of the Sultan of Constantinople. After that the majority of the Church council decided to break with Calvinism. They founded an independent Macedonian Orthodox Church, which has a friendly relationship with the Romanian and the Servian Orthodox Churches. Today they have a few immigrant sister churches in the USA and South America.

In the church services the emphasis is laid on Easter and the grace of God, with great thankfulness and joy. The members are known to excel in neighborly love and they care especially for sick and old people. They avoid conflicts with other Christians. ❖

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



"LITTLE LIGHTS"

March 23, 1567

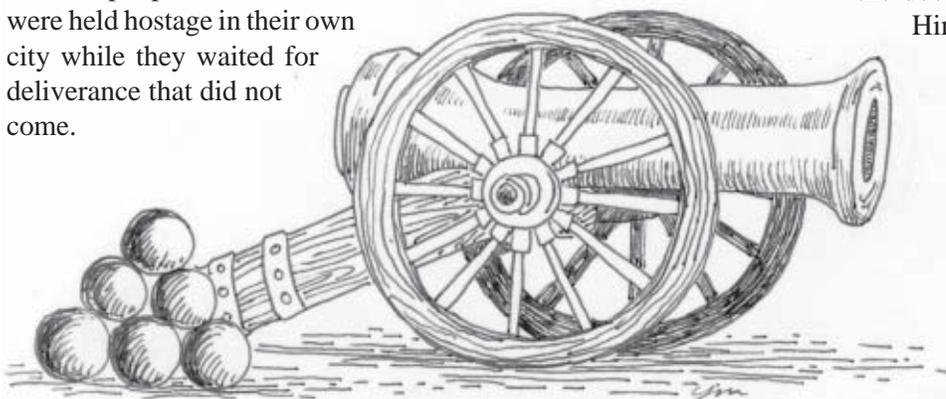
... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

It was Palm Sunday. But there were no triumphant shouts in the city of Valenciennes on this day in 1567. No songs of celebration rang through her streets. The Word was preached. It was preached in boldness and in truth by one of her faithful pastors, Guido de Brés. But that was the only sound that went forth at this moment in Valenciennes. An eerie stillness crouched outside the sanctuary of the town.

It was not always so. How busily the city had thrived in the truth! With joy the citizens embraced the newly-found doctrines of the Reformation. They loved it. They came by the thousands in open fields to hear the faithful preaching of the Word.

But there were kings and regents who would not allow this. They hated it. They sent soldiers to surround the city and lay siege to it. They sent canons in readiness to break down her gates and walls. For weeks in advance the preparations were made, and the people of Valenciennes were held hostage in their own city while they waited for deliverance that did not come.



But the king and his regent especially hated their preacher, Guido de Brés. He was the same Guido de Brés who wrote the Belgic Confession of Faith. He was the same Guido de Brés who evaded his captors countless times before, and who was so hated that they burned a fake person made of wood and straw—wishing it was him! Now this same Guido de Brés preached the comforting Word of the Scriptures to his nervous and fearful flock in Valenciennes.

Boom! Bang! The sermon was interrupted by the sound of crashing canon balls and war. The attack on

the city had begun! The steeple bells played a mournful Psalm while the noise and destruction ensued. In three hours it was over and all was quiet again. Valenciennes was overcome.

Would de Brés evade his captors one more time? He and four others had a plan. Be let down from the wall...meet in the woods...hire a boat—but they were recognized and caught. Their captors could not contain their joy! No, they made sure the faithful pastor would never escape again.

Guido de Brés died with a confession of courage and grace upon his lips. A confession as strong and sure as the Confession of Faith he had written for all of us to embrace. As he was led away to his death he said to his fellow-prisoners, "I have been condemned to death for the doctrine of the Son of God. Praise be to Him. I am happy. I never dared to think that God would do me such an honor." ❖

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

Look up the Belgic Confession of Faith in the back of *The Psalter*. There are 37 articles in this confession. What two words do you find at the beginning of almost every one of these articles?

These are special words. Only because of Christ's work in us can they be true!

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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:
Rhonda Mae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Kaiser—Byron Center, MI
Melitta Tatyana, daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Nathan Brummel—Cornerstone, IN
Levi James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Kuiper—Faith, MI
Mackenzie Joy and Jayden Christopher children of Mr. & Mrs. Carl Kalsbeek—Faith, MI
Haley Noel, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Scholten—Faith, MI
Seth Christian, son of Mr. & Mrs. Geoff Penna—Georgetown, MI
Meghan Sue, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Wes Fisher—Georgetown, MI
Grace Lillian, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Lubbers—Georgetown, MI
Titus James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Bleyenbergh—Hope, MI
Kamryn Jean, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David Jessup—Hope, MI
Sadie Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Smits—South Holland, IL
Crystal Faye, daughter of Rev. & Mrs. Allen Brummel—South Holland, IL
Alaina Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Phil Baas—Southwest, MI
Correction: Amanda Joyce, daughter of Hilary Wiersma—Doon, IA

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:
Chad Kamminga—Georgetown, MI
Becky TerAvest—Georgetown, MI
Dan Kerkstra—Georgetown, MI
Brad Schut—Georgetown, MI
Monica Bodbyl—Southwest, MI
Brent Looyenga—Southwest, MI

MARRIAGES

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

Matthew 19:5

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:
Mr. Gregory Musch and Miss Jolene Wiersma—Peace, IL
Mr. Jordan VanderKolk and Miss Rachelle Boone—Southwest, MI