

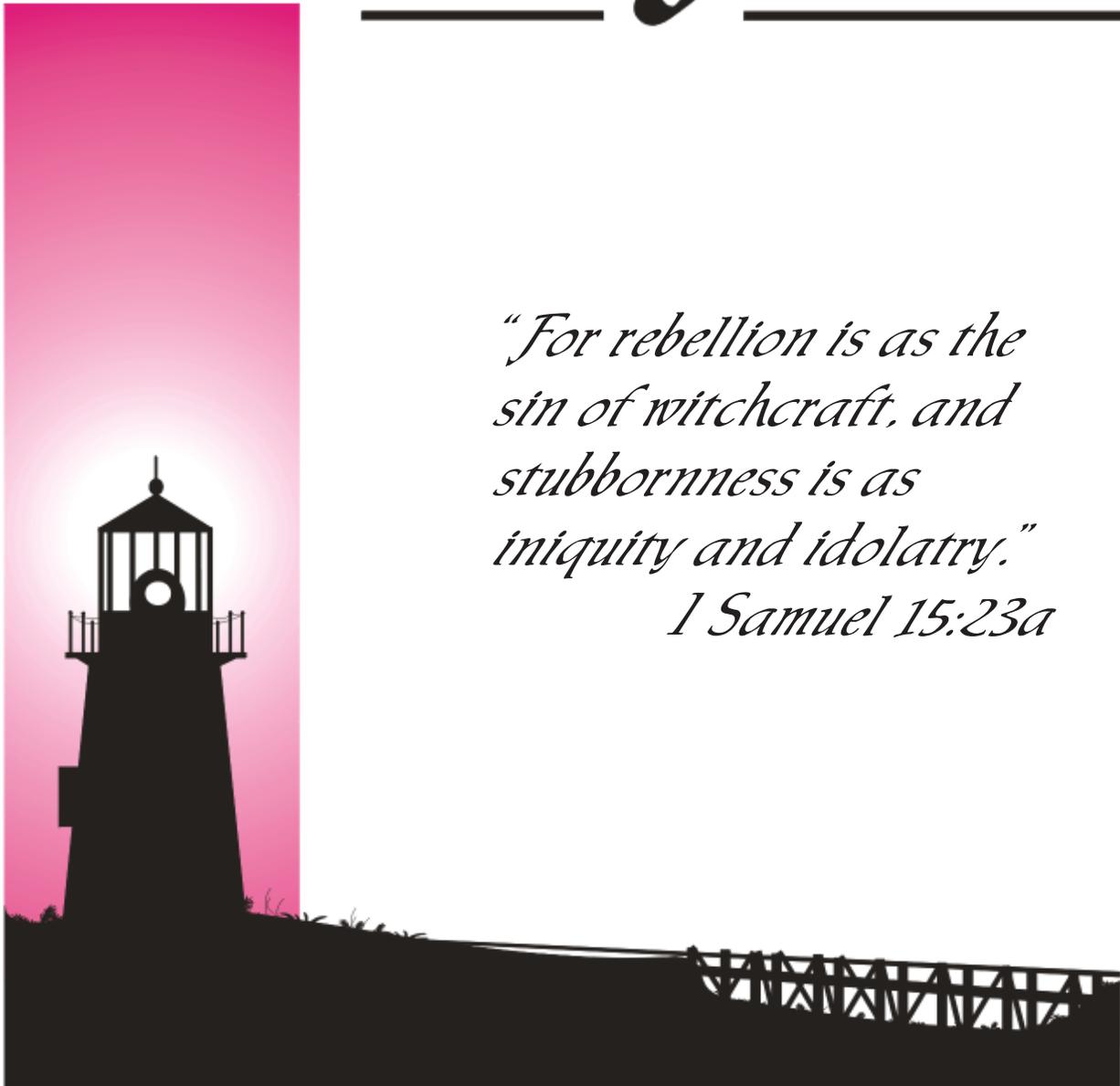
# Beacon Lights

June  
2002

Volume LXI  
Number 6

*"For rebellion is as the  
sin of witchcraft, and  
stubbornness is as  
iniquity and idolatry."*

*1 Samuel 15:23a*



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# A Little Isn't So Bad (?)



by Randy Vaalburg

**I**ntentionally or unconsciously, this argument can often be used by Christians in an attempt to justify one's actions. A young Christian may rationalize under-age drinking, wrongful sharing of school work, attending movies, telling dirty jokes, or disobedience to parents. The older Christian may justify (a little) excess drinking, coveting material things, watching movies or television sitcoms with acting, or reading novels while "skimming" the violent or lustful scenes. Problem is, A-Little-Isn't-So-Bad-Thinking *is* very bad.

The argument is especially harmful because it may outwardly seem to be a valid argument. One may reason "Everybody's doing it. So, it won't be bad for me to do that a little bit." This can make "sense" to us when our spiritual senses have become dulled because we have not been fighting the good fight against sin as we ought.

A-Little-Isn't-So-Bad-Thinking may seem to ring true because the harmful effects of sin in one's life can appear for a short time and then seem to go completely away, or appear later, or appear but go unnoticed. But, appearances can be deceiving. How?

First, the harmful effects of sin may become obvious for a short time and then appear to go completely away. But, this is not always the case. For example, a young person watches a movie. She is disgusted for giving in to this sin. She may repent, but the bad scenes pop into her head for the next couple of days and she works hard to force them out again. A week goes by. Finally, by the grace of God, peace. But, the damage has been done. She knows and experiences peace with God over the matter, however, the scenes can be recalled years later and vex her soul. They have left a scar in the mind.

Second, the harmful effects of sin may not immediately become obvious to us, but appear later. We must remember the biblical truth that we often reap what we sow (Job 4:8). And, just as seeds that grow in the earth do not become obvious to the physical eye until they have had days to grow, so the seeds of sin we sometimes plant may not appear to our spiritual eyes until much later. In the mean time, the "hidden" sins may have festered out of view, growing like a weed in the soil. For example, a young person goes out to drink "a little" too much with some friends one night. No damage done—all in fun. Yet, the lust to commit the same sin has been aroused in his sinful flesh. He finds it more and more difficult to say "No" to committing the same sin with peers again. And, the desire grows until he succumbs to his sinful flesh once again. Maybe he says one more time and that's it! But, he does it again and again. He realizes at last that he has become a slave to that sin and how living without repentance after the first transgression led him deeper into sin and further away from God.

Finally, sins can be present with us but go completely unnoticed. This may be the greatest danger of all. David prayed "Cleanse thou me from secret faults" (Ps. 19:12), making known to us that we hide sins from ourselves. Jeremiah confirmed this when he said that "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). We can't even know our own hearts well enough to see some of the sins hidden within the deep recesses of them. Our prayers ought to often include what David's did. Then we will see our sins, repent, turn away from them, and more and more enjoy close communion with God.

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The root problem with A-Little-Isn't-So-Bad-Thinking is that it is directed toward self rather than toward God. Its standard is based on what others are doing rather than the Law of God. Its focus is "God wouldn't mind if I just..." rather than humbly asking the question "Would doing this offend my heavenly Father?" And, as we have seen in the examples above, the consequences of sin are often greater than supposed.

There is a way to escape being corrupted by A-Little-Isn't-So-Bad-Thinking: rely on the great and precious promises of God. II Peter 1:4 states: "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." God can and will guide us through the many temptations in life by His great and precious promises. His divine power has made us one in Christ that we might live godly before Him. Godly living in His grace allows us to escape the corruption and lust of the world. ❖

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## Letter to the Editor

# Living In Sin!

by Don Aardema

**W**hen I was a young man back in early 1950, smoking was the cool thing to do, however, we were warned not to start smoking until we reached the age of 21, otherwise it might stunt our growth.

Now 50 years later we learn that smoking is a devastating health problem. Smoking of tobacco products is the leading cause of avoidable deaths in the United States. Smoking kills more Americans than AIDS, alcohol, drugs, murders, suicides and motor vehicle accidents. Thousands more die from tobacco related causes, such as fire caused by smoking, not to mention second-hand smoke exposure.

In the Bible we read: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own." I Corinthians 6:19. ❖

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*Don Aardema is a life-long member of Doon Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa.*

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# The Fourth Man

## A Story from the Time of the Afscheiding

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

### Chapter 19

#### Sunday Morning

*Rev. Buddingh had been brought to Hilversum during the night so that his presence in the village would not be detected. He was to preach to the Secessionist congregation the next morning, and the congregation knew that, if his presence were known, the town authorities would try to prevent him from preaching. The men who brought him thought they had succeeded in keeping his coming a secret, but Constable Van Huizen had witnessed it all while on his night patrol. He had reported what he had seen to the mayor and both had gone to the town clerk, Mr. Perk, the man who wielded real power in the village and who hated the Secessionists. Plans were now being laid to prevent the Secessionists from meeting.*

“Arise! Attention! March!”

With a shock Maarten and Koen were torn from their deep sleep. They rubbed their eyes and wondered where they were. When they saw the harsh yet roguish face of Manus Rebel<sup>1</sup> above them they were reminded at once of all that had happened: how they had lain in the half used haystack of Gijbert Haan! The old night watchman himself had steered them there the past night, because it was too late to go home.

“How late is it?” asked Koen with a yawn.

“It is eight thirty, sir lieutenant colonel,” answered the hussar in a friendly tone. “In a half hour the gentlemen are expected for roll call. Will you therefore please get up like an old blunderbuss? or do I need to help you?”

Both friends seemed to feel little need for a “helping hand,” for they quickly got up. They washed themselves thoroughly at the pump from which Manus Rebel pumped plenty of water, so that the last feeling of sleepiness completely disappeared.

Back by the haystack the hussar handed Maarten his Sunday clothes and shoes, while he smiled at the wondering look on the face of the boy. “Your father brought them when you were still sitting on your roost. Your full dress uniform, Sir.”

Koen put on his usual clothes. “I am always in full dress uniform,” he joked, but his laugh was a bit sad. As poor weaver’s sons they had no Sunday clothes, still less shoes.

Still feeling somewhat strange by all that was happening, Maarten stooped to tie his shoestrings. Koen was already looking curiously over the farm. People were starting to enter the rear of the house through the small half-door.<sup>2</sup> Dancing in impatience Koen waited until his friend had finished dressing, then both boys followed Manus Rebel to the side door.

☆☆☆☆☆

The dim passageway was full of men. The boys knew most of them, but there were also strangers among them. The news that a minister would preach in Hilversum had spread secretly throughout the area. Secessionists from the neighboring places had stealthily entered the town that morning: from Naarden, Huizen, Buusum’s Graveland, yes, even from Loosdrecht. Hunger for the Word of God enabled them to face all difficulties and risks.

Reverend Buddingh stood like a janitor at the door of the meeting place and held back all the men, “First the women must be properly seated,” he ordered determinedly. Some of the men complained about that, especially Manus Rebel, but Jan Hartog grinned broadly and preserved a good spirit among them. The man from Bunschoten knew that this was one of the peculiarities of the minister.

The two boys were also held back; they were disappointed, but also a bit proud that they were counted among the men.

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Finally also the “stronger sex” could enter. Koen and Maarten looked in amazement. Gijsbert Haan and his helpers, in order to seat such a large crowd, had brought out the strangest of seats. The boys were each taken by the hand of their fathers, and, after a lot of moving about, Maarten got to sit on a stone milk crock, while Koen was happy to learn that his seat was a foot-warmer.

Along the side wall stood a small table, set on an apple box. That was the “pulpit.” Behind it stood a kitchen chair.

Suddenly the bustling stopped. Reverend Buddingh and the consistory stepped forward.

Manus Rebel closed the door and took his seat on a worn out saddle that he had discovered on the farm. “The nicest seat for a hussar,” he whispered to his neighbor.

Then it became perfectly quiet in the back part of the house of Gijsbert Haan. Reverend Buddingh had shaken the hand of Tijmen Grootveld<sup>3</sup> and then, with hands folded in front of him, had taken his place behind his table.

“Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made the heaven and the earth.”

Loud and clear his voice rang through the low area. Then he spread out his hands and pronounced the benediction. The small congregation answered with the singing of a psalm, in which instructor Beuker led the singing. After that the minister read the law slowly and impressively. After each commandment he waited a moment and allowed his eyes to pass over the audience, who almost held their breath. Never had they been so impressed by the commandments. Again a humble psalm rang out in response to the law.

Reverend Buddingh chose the third chapter of the prophet Daniel and read it. It was the history of Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego, who refused to worship the golden image of king Nebuchadnezzar and were cast into the fiery furnace, but were protected by an angel.

The voice of Reverend Buddingh was overwhelming. Koen and Maarten were edified as they followed the history with their father, although it was well-known to them. It was as if they themselves were witnessing it. Even the adults felt that.

Everyone understood why the minister had chosen that passage of Scripture in this time of persecution and oppression. A deep feeling of peace fell upon the lowly group in the back of the house. God would protect them from all dangers!

Suddenly they became aware of how great and how close these dangers were.

When Reverend Buddingh had closed the Staten Bijbel<sup>4</sup> and was ready to lead in prayer, Manus Rebel suddenly rose up from his saddle. He saluted and spoke as an officer with a trembling voice: “Reverend, I fear there is danger!”

All became quiet as a mouse. Then also the others noticed the sound that the sharp ears of the old watchman had first picked up: the sound of a growing noise outside the farm.

A minute later the outside door was forced open and a voice shouted, “In the name of the king, open up!”

It was the voice of Mayor Barend Andriessen.

☆☆☆☆

For a moment panic threatened to break out. But the quiet voice of the minister, who called to those present to keep courage, served as oil on stormy waters.

Gijsbert Haan was white as a sheet, but had gained control of himself by the time he went to the door. Manus Rebel wanted to accompany him, but the elder asked him to stay inside. He knew that the hussar did not always use the best language, especially not when he was excited. And the authorities of the town deserved to be received with respect.

Calmly he opened the door and with a quiet glance viewed the situation.

Across from him stood, besides Mayor Andriessen, Perk the town clerk, Constable Van Huizen and Jacob van Wielick, the bailiff of the courthouse. At the gate stood the ceman De Nooij, who held back a number of curious people.

Before the mayor could speak a word, Van Huizen took a bold step forward.

“You will hang now, Haan,” he crowed triumphantly, “If you want to outdo Gregorious van Huizen you have to get up earlier in the morning. Ha-ha!”

Gijsbert Haan did not consider Van Huizen worthy of as much as a glance, and he looked without fear at the mayor. “Good morning, your honor! What can I do for you?”

Van Huizen crept into his shell and even the mayor became somewhat uncertain by this calm reaction of the home owner.

“Hm ... it was brought to my attention that an unlawful religious meeting is being held here.”

Gijsbert Haan pushed the door wide open and stepped aside. “Convince yourself, mayor; the church is open to everyone.”

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The men entered the room, while De Nooij, after warning the crowd, joined them. With deadly calm the congregation saw the five men come into their midst.

The mayor opened his mouth and closed it again, and looked irresolutely at Albertus Perk. Perk had in the meantime allowed his eyes to pass speedily over the meeting place. "There are surely more than twenty present here, your honor," he growled with grim satisfaction, and winked at Jacob van Wielick.

Jacob van Wielick handed the town clerk an old, yellow document that dated back to the time of Napoleon. It contained the law that every gathering of more than twenty persons held without the approval of the government was declared to be illegal. The French occupation officers had thought the law would prevent all opposition by the Hollanders. This forgotten regulation was now used in free Netherlands against the Secessionists.<sup>5</sup> Albertus Perk now thrust the paper in the shaking hands of the mayor. He cleared his throat and began to read with a trembling voice: "In the name of the king! No association or society of any kind of more than twenty ... twenty per ... persons, with ... with..."<sup>6</sup>

He got no farther. His nerves had taken complete mastery over him, and he dropped his head helplessly.

At that moment, to the surprise of every one, Reverend Buddingh came forward. "Mayor, shall I read it?"

Totally bewildered now, the mayor looked at the minister, and even the town clerk seemed to be struck dumb.

"After all, that law has already been read to me so often that I know the contents by heart," added Reverend Buddingh. "You forbid us in the name of the king to serve our God, but we must obey the King of kings rather than men! Congregation, let us sing verses 1 through 3 of Psalm 27."

Jan Hartog immediately began the singing with his strong voice. The congregation sang the first verse still somewhat uncertainly, but putting themselves completely into it, the next two verses rang forth:

*When evil doers came to make my life their prey,  
They stumbled in their shame and fell in sore dismay:  
Though hosts make war on every side, still fearless I in  
God confide.*

*My one request has been, and still this prayer I raise,  
That I may dwell within God's house through all my days,  
Jehovah's beauty to admire, and in His temple to inquire.*

During the singing the mayor had left, followed by the town clerk and the bailiff. However, both the policemen were given a signal to remain. They were witnesses

of the fact that the minister shortly after prayed for the king and also for the mayor in his congregational prayers.

Reverend Buddingh took as the text for his sermon verse 25 of the chapter he had read:

"Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt: and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

They all were encouraged and comforted by the sermon, and even the smallest among them understood somewhat the marvel of that which took place there that morning.

After the service Gijsbert Haan invited those who had come from other places to have dinner with them, for the minister would preach also in the afternoon. The others could return to their homes without hindrance.

Peace seemed to have returned to the town. But when a few windows on Gijsbert Haan's farm were shattered later in the day, after the services in the other churches, it became evident that it was a false peace.

It was the quiet before the storm. ❖

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<sup>1</sup> Manus Rebel was a retired army officer who had helped the men bringing Rev. Buddingh get through the town without being seen—or so they thought. He still enjoyed speaking in military terms and exercising the authority he possessed when an officer. He now earned a bit of money by being night watchman.

<sup>2</sup> Some of our readers may be acquainted with a "half-door," for it was common on barns. The door was split in half horizontally and each half could be opened separately from the other. Such doors were frequently called "Dutch doors," and were found on houses in the Netherlands as well as on barns.

<sup>3</sup> Prior to the minister entering the pulpit, one elder would shake the minister's hand. This is still done in our Canada churches.

<sup>4</sup> The Dutch authorized version of the Bible. It had been authorized by the great Synod of Dordt and is still used in the Netherlands in conservative churches, although in the Netherlands as in our country, the Authorized Version has been replaced in many churches by more modern translations.

<sup>5</sup> The reference to this law is historical fact. The French did make such a law, and it was used against the Secessionists repeatedly.

<sup>6</sup> Our readers will recall that the mayor had not been in favor of attempting to disrupt the Secessionists' meeting, but had been persuaded to do it by the forcefulness of Albertus Perk.

# Rev. Michael De Vries

edited by Kris Moelker

Rev. Michael De Vries hails from “the tall corn state” of Iowa. He was born on July 31, 1953, during very troubled times in the Protestant Reformed Churches. He was born in Oskaloosa, Iowa, the first child of Vernon and Marilyn De Vries. He and his family were originally members of the Pella Protestant Reformed Church. In Pella, the conditional—theology controversy took a heavy toll, and our church there was almost destroyed. For a few years his family continued with the vast majority of the congregation, which was led to leave the Protestant Reformed denomination. In 1961, this congregation disbanded and he and his family were members of the Christian Reformed Church, and then, the Reformed Church in America. In the late sixties, in the providence of God, the Protestant Reformed congregation in Pella revived, and Rev. De Vries, in his mid-teens at that time, and his family returned early in 1969. They rejoiced in the preaching of God’s sovereign, particular grace, which doctrine they had always loved.

Rev. De Vries grew up on a farm, where his mother still lives. Until his early high school years, he planned on a career related to agriculture. He attended one of the last two operating one-room country schoolhouses in the state of Iowa for grade K-6, and then attended the public schools in Knoxville, Iowa. After high school graduation, he attended Central College (R.C.A.) in Pella for one year. Then, in 1972, he moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan and enrolled in the Pre-seminary Department of our Protestant Reformed Seminary. He also attended classes at Calvin College and Grand Valley State College.

Rev. De Vries had very little trouble with peer pressure as a teenager, largely due to the fact that he had a small number of good Christian friends. How important it is that our young people are able to say with the Psalmist: “I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts,” Psalm 119:63.

In the fall of 1972, a fellow pre-sem student, the now Rev. Ron Cammenga, introduced Rev. De Vries to his girlfriend’s sister, Dawn De Jong, a member of Southwest PRC. After a two and a half year courtship, they were married on June 6, 1975. Dawn has been a tremendous help and encouragement to him while in Seminary and during the years of his ministry. The Lord has given them four children: Jeff, Connie, Russ, and Karen. Jeff married Angie Schipper in August 2001. He and his wife, Connie, and Karen live in the Grand Rapids area. Russ lives near his parents in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

At about age fifteen, Rev. De Vries had begun to consider studying for the ministry. His family encouraged him in that direction. Rev. De Vries recalls a conversation he had with Rev. J. Kortering who was in Pella on classical appointment. Rev. Kortering also encouraged him to prayerfully consider entering the ministry.

Rev. De Vries has many wonderful memories of his years in pre-seminary and seminary. There were many hilarious times with his other pre-sem housemates as they lived, first in the “ghetto” on Donald Place in Grand Rapids, and then in the old Hope Church parsonage. One incident he will never forget occurred in Prof. H.C. Hoeksema’s 8:00 A.M. Latin Grammar class. When Rev. De Vries began to doze off, he was startled awake when Prof. Hoeksema slammed a Psalter down on the table in front of him. Rev. De Vries almost jumped out of his chair to the sound of Prof. Hoeksema’s booming laughter. Needless to say, Rev. De Vries hesitated even to blink in Prof. Hoeksema’s classes after that. A highlight of the seminary years was when the seminary move was made in January of 1974, from the basement of First PRC to the beautiful new facility on “Seminary Hill” in Grandville. Rev. De Vries was a member of the first class that graduated from the newly formed Pre-seminary Department at that time. He graduated from Seminary in 1978.

It was a wonderful surprise for Candidate De Vries to receive the call from his wife’s home church and the



congregation where they and their three children were members, Southwest PRC in Grandville. Rev. De Vries was ordained into the ministry on Reformation Day, October 31, 1978, and labored at Southwest for six and one half years. In 1985, he accepted the call to Edgerton, Minnesota where he served almost ten years. The De Vries children spent their formative years in this small farming community. When Rev. De Vries accepted the call to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, their oldest son, Jeff, decided to remain in Minnesota. Rev. De Vries has now served in Canada for seven years. In the last year they went from having three of their children in the parsonage to having an empty nest. But the warm fellowship of their “church family” in Edmonton has made this adjustment much easier than they anticipated.

Rev. De Vries has found that one of the most blessed and rewarding things to witness in the life of the church is the reality of the communion of the saints. That is a truth we confess each Lord’s Day in the Apostolic Creed. It is a truth that is easy for us to take for granted. But what a tremendous blessing it is to experience and witness that mutual love and care of God’s people for each

other, for Christ’s sake! How vital it is that our children and young people also strive to manifest that love and care for each other!

In his own ministry, he is thankful to God for the wise, faithful, zealous men with whom he has served in the consistory in each congregation. What a blessing it is to labor together, in peace and unity, seeking the welfare of the flock!

Since being in the ministry Rev. De Vries has had little time for hobbies. He has always been an avid reader. He and his wife have always enjoyed watching high school and college basketball, especially when their children were playing. During the years in Minnesota, he enjoyed caring for their vegetable garden each summer, as well as deer hunting every fall with his sons. Since being in Canada, the De Vries’ love spending an occasional day or two in the Canadian Rockies, hiking, and spotting wildlife.

Rev. De Vries believes that all of our young men should prayerfully consider whether they may have the gifts and abilities needed for the ministry, and whether God is calling them to prepare for the ministry. In these last times the need is great for faithful preachers of the Word! It is an awesome calling! But the grace of God is sufficient for humble men of God who look to Him for their strength.

We are truly living in the perilous times of which Scripture warns. The temptations faced by our young people are many. The society in which we live is self-centered and pleasure-loving. The unparalleled prosperity in which most of our young people have grown up has only aggravated the situation. What a heartache to pastors, parents, and fellow church members when some of our young people can appear to be “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.” Thankfully, our faithful God is pleased to show many of them the folly of that way.

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How urgent it is that our homes be strong in the truth, and that parents insist upon the church and the activities of the church being at the center of our lives.

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How urgent it is that our homes be strong in the truth, and that parents insist upon the church and the activities of the church being at the center of our lives. Rev. De Vries encourages our young people to use their time and talents in the life of the church. How wonderful it is to see many of our young people who are spiritually sensitive, who prepare for and participate in Young People's Society, who find their delight in the things of God's

kingdom. Rev. De Vries urges our young people and young adults to attend our conventions and retreats when possible. What tremendous opportunities these are for spiritual growth, for rich fellowship, for forming sometimes life-long friendships and relationships. ❖

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

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## Church Family

# Called To Be A Light Even When It Hurts

by Sandy Bisbee

One of the hardest barriers to overcome when knowing that we are the elect of God, is the knowledge that our family members may not be. When we truly have heart conviction from God, we acknowledge that apart from Him it is impossible to know peace, joy and hope.

It's one thing to tell of God's saving grace to those family members who have never shown any interest in the things of God. They either reject the message outright, as well as you, or the message they hear may be the seed planted that draws them to the Savior. It becomes much more difficult however, when we understand and embrace the sovereign grace of God while some of our family members are steeped in a man-made, works oriented gospel for salvation. They may be our own parents or grand parents. They have been church members for many years. But the gospel message they have heard and come to believe is altogether dependent upon what man can do for God. We see their passion for God and their zeal for good works. How do we know whether or not they are God's own? So what if they believe a gospel message that is strange to you and unbiblical. Is it wrong to leave them where they are? After all you've tried to tell them whom God truly loves. They became very angry with you, and accused and reviled you. They told you that you don't know God at all until you can

realize that God is not a respecter of persons. They say that the God they serve loves all of humanity and that Christ died on the cross for the sins of the whole world.

Now you've done it! You've driven a wedge between your family, and family members are choosing up sides. But wait, was it you who drove that wedge or was it the truth? God assures us that the Word is power unto life and unto death. He promises that the truth will divide. Where does this leave us? What is our responsibility as a child of the King? We love our family, and we hate confrontation. Can't we just leave them alone and tell ourselves that if they are God's elect, then God will draw them to Himself? Is this showing love for our family? Do we really want to leave especially them in darkness and death, when we have been brought into the glorious Light and Life?

Our confidence and assurance must rest with the Lord. We are called to be ambassadors for the truth. When we hide from the truth that God has revealed to us because it makes us unpopular and unwelcome, we dishonor God and ourselves. How are we showing love to our family if we allow them to continue in darkness, which will bring them death? Yes, we love our families and we don't want them to hate us, but our focus must be on their eternal good. We may never know what seeds of truth we plant today that may appear unfruitful but may be used by God to save our lost loved ones. ❖

# Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter  
reprinted from June/July 1993 *Beacon Lights*

## **June 1 Read Proverbs 3:19-26**

Young people are you confident in what you do? Or are you afraid that whatever you do may turn out wrong? This portion of scripture has much to say on that matter. The first part shows the power of God. The second part shows the necessity of trusting in Him. Finally the last part shows the blessings of such trust. We do not have to be afraid when we sleep or any other time in our lives. Jehovah is our confidence. Sing or read Psalter 65.

## **June 2 Read Acts 9:36-42**

Do you wonder how you can be thankful for the salvation God has given you? The third part of the catechism is about that idea. Dorcas found a way to express her thanks to God for His wonderful work. She helped those who were in need around her. Dorcas used her ability to work with her hands to help others and to glorify God. Are we helping others with our abilities? Are we glorifying God as we do it? Think about that, people of God. We must be thankful to God for our salvation. Sing or read Psalter 377, especially stanzas 1, 2 and 7.

## **June 3 Read Isaiah 65:17-25**

Some of you will travel this summer and enjoy God's creation. Some people are fascinated by the trees in our land. Some of these trees are for food: in others we see a picture of the majesty of God. God also gives us trees as a picture of the blessedness of being a child of God. Some trees are known for life spans of hundreds of years. God uses this to describe for us our lives in heaven. When we remember that the trees are only a picture, we see how much God will bless us in glory. Enjoy the trees this summer, but don't forget to see their beautiful picture. Sing or read Psalter 2.

## **June 4 Read Acts 15:12-18**

Satan wishes the Word of God to be silenced. He uses many means to accomplish that goal. Is he using you? He probably is not using us the way he used the girl in

Philippi, but he definitely will use any means possible to stop the spread of the gospel. Are our actions means that Satan can use to stop others from attending our churches and hearing the truth? Do people see in us God's handiwork or Satan's handiwork? If we are being used by Satan to stop the spread of the gospel, let us fall to our knees and ask God to forgive us this sin and ask Him to use us to spread His gospel. Sing or read Psalter 141.

## **June 5 Read Acts 15:19-25**

Could you sing God's praises while you are being tortured for doing His work? If someone mocks you for keeping the sabbath day or attending a Christian school, could you praise God for that? Paul and Silas did. They sang while their bruised and bleeding bodies were bound mercilessly in the stocks. They sang God's praises in that condition. How about US? Do God's praises come easily to our lips? Sing or read Psalter 13 especially 1-3 and 7.

## **June 6 Read Acts 15:25-34**

The gospel will never return unto God empty; there will always be results. The familiar account which you read shows how God uses works of his people for his glory. The catechism uses this language: "that, by our godly conversation, others may be gained to Christ." How godly is our daily walk? Will God wish to use it to bring others to Christ? We have been given His Word to use. Let it permeate each part of our daily lives. Sing or read Psalter 68.

## **June 7 Acts 15:35-40**

God uses many means for his people's advantage. Here it is a little matter of Roman citizenship. Sometimes we wonder why God's providence works the way it does. Sometimes we cannot fathom His way. But yet we must always know His way is best. Paul must have had this quite often in his work as missionary. Many things happened to him which would have us scratching our heads

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and wondering. We must see that God's ways are best and work to our good. Let us not ask why too often. Let us say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Sing or read Psalter 62, especially stanzas 1 and 2.

**June 8 Read Genesis 15:1-6**

There are two little words which appear often in Scripture. These two words are always full of great comfort to me. These words are "fear not." Abraham had a great worry. He felt that God's covenant line would be broken because he had no children. He did not see how God was going to make in him a great nation. God came to Abraham and told him not to worry about things. He told him to "Fear not." Abraham believed and God counted that to him for righteousness. Sing or read Psalter 66, especially stanzas 1-3.

**June 9 Read Exodus 14:8-14**

Israel thought itself trapped in a trap from which there was no escape. The Red Sea, mountains, and Pharaoh's host doomed them to death. Moses spoke the words of verse 13. In it he speaks of salvation. God's salvation is great. He can save us from all kinds of situations. We must let Him fight for us. We must hold our peace and see the salvation of the Lord. Are you perplexed or frightened by something in your life? Fear not, stand still, hold your peace, and see the salvation of our great God. Sing or read Psalter 249, especially stanzas 1, 3, 4 and 6.

**June 10 Read Deuteronomy 1:19-25**

Moses was recounting to Israel their history. In it he brings up the shameful day at Kadesh-Barnea where Israel refused to do the work of the Lord. They thought the work too hard for them even after they had been encouraged by God's Word to fear not. What about us? Do we, as workers in God's kingdom, fear the work as being too hard? Do we rebel against God as Israel rebelled? We don't have to. With God saying "fear not," what more do we need? Sing or read Psalter 7.

**June 11 Read Isaiah 51:1-8**

Do you seek righteousness? Do you seek the Lord? Are you troubled because of this? Sometimes these troubles come from within, and sometimes these troubles come from without. That is not unusual for the people of God. Scripture records many places where God's people are troubled because they sought the Lord. In today's passage God gives us much comfort for these afflictions. We are told not to fear those from without because their end is sure. We also need not fear them because God's salvation is everlasting. Sing or read Psalter 73, especially stanzas 1, 2 and 6.

**June 12 Read Luke 2:8-15**

There are many instances of the comforting words "fear not" in the Christmas story. Angels came to Zecharias, to Mary, and to Joseph with these words of comfort about the Word of comfort. God also sent angels to the shepherds with these words. The shepherds are a picture of the Church. It had been over four hundred years since Malachi was written. The people of God felt need of comfort and God sent it. What a comfort he sent as we can plainly see in the message of the angels to the shepherds! That message is ours! Turn to it often when you feel the need and fear not. Sing or read Psalter 71, especially stanzas 1, 3 and 5.

**June 13 Read Luke 12:27-40**

In these verses Christ gives us instruction about our daily lives. The first instruction is to seek the kingdom of God. Christ then tells us that by way of such earnest seeking all our physical cares will be met. Often we worry about both of these things. We feel a lack of assurance about God's kingdom in our hearts. We wonder if we are really saved. According to verse twelve we need not worry about such things. It is God's will that His people come to eternal life. When we put that worry out of our mind, the second worry, too, will vanish. Sing or read Psalter 75 especially stanzas 1, and 4-6.

**June 14 Read Matthew 28:1-8**

The small band of Christ's followers had spent a very restless Sabbath. They did not know what would happen to them now that Christ had been killed. They worried about their own lives. The women went to the tomb that Sunday to finish the task of embalming their Lord. They did it out of love for Jesus. When they saw the angel, all of their fears leaped to their faces. The angel saw the fear and spoke the comforting words "fear not." The reaction of the women is found in the word "joy" in verse eight. What about us? Do we still react with joy over Christ's resurrection? Or do we still have many fears? Take the angel's words to heart; they are for us as well as the women. Sing or read Psalter 77, especially stanzas 1, 3 and 5.

**June 15 Read Revelation 1:10-20**

John had been exiled on the island of Patmos for doing the work of God. While he was there, Christ came to him. Even John, the beloved disciple, fell at His feet in fear. Then Jesus spoke to him those comforting words "fear not." Jesus comes to us with the same words. As we have seen over the past few days those words came to God's people in many situations. Those are also God's words to us as God's people. We need not be afraid be-

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cause He is with us. In Revelation, John writes of many seemingly distressing situations for the Church. They are not distressing when we remember to fear not. Pray for this comfort young people. Pray for it for yourselves but also for others of the Church of God. Fear not. Sing or read Psalter 397, especially stanzas 1, 5 and 8.

**June 16 Read Genesis 34:1-4, 27-30**

June is traditionally the month of marriages. What about you young people; is that your desire? I hope it is. God has given us marriage a beautiful picture of the relationship of Christ and the Church. But how are you dating? If you are dating the way Dinah dated, be assured that God will bring upon you the troubles that Jacob's family encountered in this chapter. This chapter teaches a strong lesson. Do you want a blessing upon your dating and marriage? Then, young men and women, do not seek your dates and mates among unbelievers. Sing or read Psalter 271, especially stanzas 2 and 3.

**June 17 Read I Corinthians 13**

This is often called the great chapter on love. It is, too. As children of God we must examine the kind of love spoken about in this chapter. Love is easily spoken about. What kind of love is spoken of in this chapter? The answer is easy—the love of Christ. Yesterday we spoke about marriage. If the true love of Christ cannot be found between you and someone else, do not date them. If you do not date them, you won't have to worry about marrying them. We must make sure the love of Christ is found in us at all times. The love of Christ must characterize all of our life. Read the chapter again and examine your life in its light. Sing or read Psalter 11.

**June 18 Read Amos 5:1-9**

Young people do you look at God's creation often? Are you given to lying on your back at night and looking at the stars? Do you enjoy the beauty of nature? Summertime is a good time for this experience. Why should we do that? We should look at creation because God gives pictures of Himself. We can learn about our Creator in His creation. The chapter says to seek the Lord and we shall live. As we look in creation we will want to go to God's Word and see what He is saying about Himself. Seek the Lord, young people, even as you enjoy His creation. Sing or read Psalter 15.

**June 19 Read Amos 5:8-15**

Amos wrote these words to a people who were going astray. The prophecies concerning Israel's captivity were increasing. But yet the call came to the people of God to repent. These calls are summed up in verses thirteen

and fourteen of this chapter. These verses illustrate for us the great truth of the antithesis. We are called to live an antithetical walk in which we seek good and hate evil. What about it? Are we doing that? Are we seeking the good things God has given us? Are we fleeing the evil? Sing or read Psalter 260, especially stanzas 1, 3 and 5.

**June 20 Read Ecclesiastes 5:1-7**

These are fitting words to use as we approach the house of God today. Are we ready to hear what the Lord will say? Are our offerings given with thanksgiving? Do we sing in a way that is pleasing to the Lord? Going to church is serious. We cannot treat it any other way. When we step into His presence, we need to be ready to worship. We must be holy as we worship, for God is holy. Above all, as we worship we must fear God. Sing or read Psalter 225.

**June 21 Read Galatians 5:1-13**

Do we use Christian liberty correctly? Do we use our Christian liberty to mask a multitude of sins? I hope not. That is not the idea of the Holy Spirit through Paul in this chapter. Some of the early church had the idea that they could "sin that grace may abound." The Holy Spirit said, "Definitely not!" We have liberty to live lives not bound by the Old Testament law. But that same liberty allows us to live in a way in which we love God, keep His commandments, and then love one another. That is the way we must use our Christian liberty. Sing or read Psalter 84.

**June 22 Read Esther 2:15-20**

Have you ever heard such a wicked commandment as is given in verse 20? Is this the way a child of God should act? Are we so ashamed of our salvation that we hide who we are? Must we fear Satan and the world so much that we hide our true identity? Hopefully the answer, young people, is obvious. We must show who we are all the time to all people. We may never be so ashamed of the gospel of Christ that we hide it. Paul states this in Romans 1:16. He was ready to show who he was even to a wicked emperor in Rome who could take his life. Are you Esthers trying to win the favor of the world, or Pauls trying to show your love for God? Sing or read Psalter 261.

**June 23 Read Hebrews 13:1-6**

How does verse one strike you? Before you say, "No problem," answer this question. Is every one in church your brother, or do you pick and choose? These words of Hebrews' author should cause us to stop and think. Are we willing to give a hand to anyone who needs our

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assistance? Christ puts many circumstances in front of us so that we have opportunity to show His mercy. Do we use those opportunities or will we say at the end of time, "When did I see thee hungering, thirsting, naked, etc." We must show love to all of our brethren in Christ all of the time. Sing or read Psalter 25.

**June 24 Read Hebrews 13:7-9, 17-21**

Do you know what verse eight means? Is there room for boredom in our church lives with such a statement? Does this statement bring great comfort and stability in our lives? I hope the answer to the second question is no and to the third yes. I hope this because then we can serve God in our lives and worship in peace. We will not need to wonder if our worship needs to be updated. We will not need to wonder if the Bible is time bound. We can be assured that the Word of God is changeless and in Him is no shadow of turning. With this confidence we can honor those who have the rule over us in church knowing that they are placed there by God. Sing or read Psalter 245, especially stanzas 1, 2 and 5.

**June 25 Read Ezekiel 28:1-10**

What a horrible thing the prince of Tyrus had said! He claimed for himself God's authority. This was the sin of Satan; this was the sin of Adam and Eve; this was the sin of those at the tower of Babel; this is the sin of those today who belong to the New Age. People of God, are you tempted by some of the New Age philosophies? Some of them sound pretty nice. But when you get to the root of them you see that they wish to set themselves up as God. Try those philosophies against the Word of God and then run to the shadow of His wings. Sing or read Psalter 248, especially stanzas 1, 3 and 4.

**June 26 Read I John 4:1-6**

Notice the connection between this passage and yesterday's. The Old and New Testaments are both relevant for today's Christian. Not one word needs to be left out or changed. In fact, if you leave one word out, you will have nothing with which to try the spirits. As we draw nearer and nearer to the end of time we must be constantly putting this commandment into action. One of the signs of the end will be those who say, "Lo, here is Christ or there is Christ." We must be able to discern those who are antichristian and be ready to walk in the spirit of truth. Are you trying the spirits? Sing or read Psalter 321.

**June 27 Read Ezra 9**

Do we blush as we bring our sins to God? We should, because God is holy. We are no different than the people of Israel that returned from captivity. We have been

brought back from sin through Christ's death on the cross, but yet we still do those things we know we should not. We had better go to our God in prayer. We can do this in the confidence that God will show His grace to us. He has given us a nail in his holy place. Just as a nail secures a board in a building, grace assures us of our place in the Church. Pray for forgiveness and the grace that brings it. Sing or read Psalter 83.

**June 28 Read I Peter 1:1-5**

What a glorious Word God gives to His elect. We are begotten to a lively hope. Our hope is not dead. Our hope is based on the living Christ. What can be more sure than that? Are we looking for that incorruptible inheritance? Are we building up treasures in heaven? We can have no doubts, you know. We are kept by the power of God. Christ's work for us on the cross is sure. What a glorious thought that is! Live in that assurance, waiting the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sing or read Psalter 28.

**June 29 Read Habakkuk 3**

In this prayer Habakkuk recounts the works of God as He brought judgment upon the wicked. He sees the destruction brought by God even in the world of plants and animals. In verse 16 he says he was frightened by all of it. Habakkuk knew that such judgment was because of sin among God's people. How about us? Do we see God's judgment in the world around us? Do we see so-called acts of nature as the hand of God? Habakkuk was not afraid. In the last two verses he talks of his joy because God is his salvation. Do we have the same confidence? Sing or read Psalter 37.

**June 30 Read I Timothy 2:1-8**

Do you mention government leaders in your prayers? If you do, do you pray for their salvation? These are the two aspects in these verses. True, we must not imagine that God will allow the sinful acts of leaders to go unpunished. Leaders that permit evil to triumph are not doing good in God's sight. Yet, we must pray for them. We pray so the Church may have rest as long as possible. We also pray for the salvation of those whom God will save. When Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." He prayed for the centurion. Pray for your leaders because it is God's command. Sing or read Psalter 223.

# The Psychological Effects of Music

by Melissa Van Baren

If you have been following the Music articles, you have noticed that we have brought the brief historical sketch of music up until the present. This means that we are to start to consider a different sphere of music. What I would like to consider next is the psychological effects of music. Music plays a very intriguing role in the mind, and I think that it would be interesting to consider what different studies have revealed about this role and how the results of the studies compare to the Word of God and the Psalms we sing.

The effects of music on the human mind have been widely recognized. Some have said “Music is the way to the soul,” and “Music is for when there are no words to speak.” How true that is! Music has power! Great POWER! It can touch the “untouchable soul.” God works through music but so does the devil. The devil catches many people through the snare of music without them even realizing it.

On a positive note, the notes and the words flowing from the lips of the choirs have touched many, even to tears. Music has the power to do many things. God has designed it that way. “Music has charms to soothe a savage beast, to soften rocks, or bend a knotted oak”—William Congreve. What an outstanding statement! To calm a savage beast—WOW! Not very many things can do that. We see just this in the example of David’s playing the harp before Saul. The harp was able to calm the evil spirits. “And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him” (I Samuel 16:23). It certainly is something to consider when studying music!

Music can serve many purposes. It can be used in therapy, and for teaching. Most of all though, music stirs up emotions. It can bring anything from anger, to gladness, to joy, and then back to sorrow. In just one piece of music, you can be brought to the highest peaks of joy and then plummeted down again. It can be like a whirlwind. Stirring up feelings of love and feelings of hate. Music can be evil and cause evil thoughts, words, or deeds. This is seen in the passage of Isaiah 32:7 “The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right.”

The thoughts considered in this article make me wonder if a well balanced variety of music is a good, or if perhaps we should only be listen to certain types of music. This is one of the many things that I hope to bring up in my next couple of articles.

Do you notice the effects of music upon you? Were you aware that music could affect you so much and in so many ways? I wasn’t, so I think this topic is something that could be educational to all, both young (even while in the womb) and old. I would like to discuss our use of music in the next few articles.

“Praise ye the Lord, Praise God in His sanctuary: praise Him in the firmament of His power. Praise Him for His mighty acts: praise Him according to his excellent greatness. Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet: praise Him with the psaltery and harp. Praise Him with the timbrel and dance: praise Him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise Him upon the loud cymbals: praise Him upon the high sounding cymbals. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord: praise ye the Lord.” Psalm 150. ❖

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

When I In Awesome Wonder...  
The Golden Coast Of Michigan  
Silent Friends

by Deane Wassink

I had a close encounter some time ago with some reclusive fellows of the strong silent type. I'm sure you know some people like that. They keep their thoughts to themselves. They rarely speak or let their feelings show with a smile. They usually look like they have a frown. Once you get to know them, they usually indicate their thoughts with subtle clues that take a long time to learn—in fact, maybe only their children can read them.

While working on the beach in the southwest corner of Lake Michigan where the borders of Michigan and Indiana meet I saw a gathering of large, black birds near the water. I quietly walked over to them and found a group of vultures, turkey vultures, feeding on carrion—a two and a half foot long lake trout, that had washed up on the shore during the night.

If you have never seen turkey vultures before, they are very large (turkey sized) black birds with naked, pink, heads and necks; large hooked beaks for tearing flesh and big curved claws on thick toes. “Cute” would not enter into a description of this bird. They have big broad wings designed to ride the wind and the thermals in the countryside and lakeshore with minimal effort. The wings are about five to six feet from tip to tip and one foot in breadth.

These birds are not very rare, but are very difficult to get close to. Few people, other than birders, are aware of the fact that these birds live in West Michigan. The uninformed take them to be hawks floating in the sky. Their nests are located in remote, nearly inaccessible areas. They are easily distinguished in flight, however, because their wings form an upright “V shape with the tips slightly curving in towards each other. A hawk or eagle, on the other hand, have a flat, rounded “W” shape when in flight. I have shown my children an old trick to remind yourself of the shape. Place your palms together and touch your elbows together. Now open your hands leaving your wrists touching. The resulting shape looks

like a vulture's wings when in flight. Once I learned that trick, I've found that there are many more turkey vultures in the area than I would have guessed. In fact, I see them almost weekly during the summer. I have only been close to them twice in my life. The time I am describing, and thirty years ago, when I surprised five of them feeding on a dead rabbit in the back of my father's blueberry farm.

I have a friend in Northern Ireland who keeps a “hooded vulture” along with nearly forty birds of prey including hawks, eagles and owls. He claims that the vulture is the smartest of them all. In fact, it can remember if food has been hidden by a dish. It will flip the dish over to get at the food. In classrooms, the bird will shuffle around the room picking food out of the children's fingers without hurting them.

The wind was blowing stiffly inland from the lake. Eight large black shapes rose from behind some tall, ragged, white pines standing like sentinels along the top edge of the dune. They floated silently over to the dead fish, their wings set into the wind, floating, not flapping. I quietly and slowly walked forward. I knelt behind the dead fish. These great birds hovered in midair scarcely flapping their broad wings fifteen feet away. Two of them advanced toward the fish and landed on the ground in front of me. I can't resist naming them “Hook” and “Buggy”. They stood very upright, over two feet tall. Their “shoulders” were hunched up and their bald heads were set down between them.

They waddled along a few steps and stood still, looking at me, slowly blinking. There they stood, waiting. Waiting. Waiting. I hardly dared to breathe. Their brothers were floating silently overhead, their motionless wings were soundless. I wanted to say “Hi guys, how are you doing!” It remained dead silent. Then, I moved (I guess they won the stare-down) to see if I could startle them.

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It took quite a bit of movement on my part to get them to spread their wings and lift off the ground. They slowly rose off the ground without flapping. When I retreated, they all settled in for the feast watching me warily.

This “gathering” of these fine fellows was unlike any other birds I have met. They did not flutter about and chatter like blue jays and chickadees. They were more like a solemn group of black robed undertakers quietly going about their grisly business. I left them there. I didn’t have the heart to break up their feast again. I have never forgotten the visit.

The church, like the world of birds, is made up of many different kinds of saints. Some are like cheerful chirping sparrows. Others are like wise old owls. The saints in church range from clucking, brightly colored old hens to somber silent types who quietly take care of business unruffled by the activities of the rest of the flock. Maybe those silent types have bald heads too.

Do you appreciate the colorful variety of the bird kingdom? I find it interesting that we can thrill to the

endless variations of the creation while showing intolerance for fellow saints who are different than we are. Imagine that we can mock or show irritation and distrust of a member of the body of Christ. Sometimes their behavior, color or family history sets us off. Then we talk about it in our homes and with our friends. All this can be directed toward a brother for whom Christ shed His blood on the cross. What a shame! We all sin. Shouldn’t our attitude be one of tolerance, kindness and forgiveness toward each other? Do you have the same appreciation for the wide variety of characters in your fellow saints?

After meeting my “silent friends” I am convinced the Lord of heaven and earth delights in the comical diversity of His creatures. If I think about it, that is true of my spiritual friends, too.

What kind of a bird are you? ❖

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

Gem of the Month

*I asked God for Strength that I might achieve  
I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey...  
I asked for health that I might do greater things  
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things...  
I asked for riches, that I might be happy  
I was given poverty that I might be wise...  
I asked for power that I might have the praise of men  
I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God...  
I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life  
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things...  
I got nothing that I asked for  
—but everything I had hoped for.  
Almost despite myself my unspoken prayers were answered  
I am among all men, most richly blessed!*

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*A poem found by one of our readers in a “real old book.” The caption reads: “This one was the prayer of an unknown Confederate soldier. He found it, I believe, in an old church in South Carolina.”*

# The First Pointer on the Spiritual Roadmap: Having Only One God

by Rev. Doug Kuiper



*“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”*  
Exodus 20:3

*“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”*  
Deuteronomy 6:4-5

**Y**oung people, we were reminded that in our spiritual journey, we need a roadmap. That roadmap is God's law. So we come now to examine the first direction given us on our journey. You know well what that direction is. It is the first commandment: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

When God says, “before me,” we must not think that He is allowing us to have other gods, so long as we do not consider them as important or great as He is. “Before me” means, “in my sight; before my face.” It is as though He were saying, “I forbid you to have and to serve any other god; and because I am the all-seeing and all-knowing God, I will know if you are doing that!”

The reason why we must not have any other god is very simple: there is only one God. Scripture teaches that there is only one Creator, there is only one Savior, and there is only one Lord. Therefore, there can be only one God! Certain Scripture passages teach this clearly. “I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God” (Isaiah 44:6); “Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any” (Isaiah 44:8); “...there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else” (Isaiah 45:21b, 22); “...we know that an idol is

nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one” (I Corinthians 8:4b).

Therefore, God forbids us in the first commandment to pretend that there is any other god; to think we know of another; to trust in another; to serve another; to pray to another.

And, by implication, God commands us *positively* to love Him alone, with all our heart, soul, and mind. That is, because Jehovah is the only God, we must *confess* Him to be the only God. He must be the only one whom we know as God, whom we call God, whom we worship, to whom we pray, and in whom we trust.

That is the first direction on our spiritual journey.

Now let us examine our lives to see whether we are obeying this commandment, or not.

Our first reaction might be to think that we always obey it. After all, Jehovah is the One to Whom we pray, and the One of Whom we have learned from our youth. We certainly do not have any images of idol gods in our homes, to which we bow down. Not we, but atheists and pagans,<sup>1</sup> such as Hindus and Moslems, violate this commandment. So we might think.

But wait a moment—this thinking is wrong!

We know this thinking is wrong when we remember that the ten commandments are addressed to God's church and covenant people. The law was given to Israel, the church in the wilderness, whom God delivered out of the bondage of Egypt. To US comes the command to have no other gods!

We also know this thinking is wrong when we consider Israel's history. How often did God's people not fall into the sin of idolatry! God's covenant people, delivered from bondage in Egypt, served Baal (read Judges

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2, 3, 6, 8, 10; I Samuel 7:4, 12:10; I Kings 16:30ff). Even King Solomon, of all people, served idols (I Kings 11:7-8). If God's people in the Old Testament committed this sin, we surely must guard against it, too. For good reason did the apostle Paul say to the Corinthian church, and through Paul the Holy Spirit says to the Church in every age, "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry" (I Corinthians 10:14).

Wherefore you, my dearly beloved young people in the Protestant Reformed Churches and elsewhere, flee from idolatry! It is a danger for you, that you have another god! Obey the first commandment of God's law!

Surely this requires us to love spiritual things above earthly things. To participate in earthly activities—work, sports, and other recreations—is not wrong. But to love them more than God, and than spiritual things, is idolatry! And we show our tendency to break this first commandment when sports take priority over catechism, and when we know the stats of every major league baseball player better than we know our Bible memory work for school.

We also are in danger of trusting in things other than God. We trust in our money—it will care for us throughout life. We trust in our popularity, or some other gift—it will get us out of trouble. We trust in our parents, or other human beings—they will not let us down. Our doctors will help us get better. This is idolatry. Let us trust in God alone, praying to Him in all of our needs, and believing that He cares for us as His dear children!

Perhaps we have become caught up with the thrill of guessing the future—checking the horoscope in the newspaper, or paying a little money to have the fortuneteller at the county fair tell us our fortune, just for fun. Beware! Our Heidelberg Catechism, answer 94, classifies "sorcery, soothsaying, superstition" as idolatry, and rightly so. God has determined the future; let us trust Him to bring it to pass.

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that is idolatry—exalting  
ourselves, and our wisdom,  
above God's.

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The words of the prophet Samuel to king Saul show us that every one of us has committed idolatry: "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as

iniquity and idolatry" (I Samuel 15:23a). Every time we sin, we in essence say to God, "I know better than you how to live my life." And that is idolatry—exalting ourselves, and our wisdom, above God's.

Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry!

This is the first indicator of direction on our spiritual roadmap!

This points us to the way to enjoy happiness with God, and avoid the misery and destruction of hell! This shows us how we can bring glory and honor to God!

Nobody who hates Jehovah will experience Jehovah's love in return. Jehovah hates idolaters. No idolater will inherit the kingdom of God (I Corinthians 6:9ff; Galatians 5:19ff).

That leaves us without hope, doesn't it? We have seen that we ARE idolaters. Then we will never reach heaven, and will never bring glory to God!

But wait—Jesus Christ bore our sin for us. God does not see us who have true faith in Christ as being guilty of idolatry, but as being righteous! He will still bring us to heaven!

And in bringing us to heaven, God will work in our hearts already now the desire to love and serve Him alone. Christ also gives us the power to love and serve Jehovah alone. As Israel was delivered from Egypt, we are delivered from the power of idolatry, and can begin to obey this commandment!

It is true that idolatry is all around us, and even still in us. We are not yet made perfect.

But let us flee from idolatry, and love and serve Jehovah alone, to show our gratitude for what He has done for us. ❖

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<sup>1</sup> Atheists are those who say there is no god, and therefore do not acknowledge Jehovah to be God. Pagans are followers of religions which worship other gods. Some of them have images of other gods to which they bow down. Others worship the sun, or some other creature.

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

# Confession of Faith (1)

by Rev. Cammenga

*Reprinted from the Standard Bearer, v. 65, pp. 187-189*

One of the most joyful occasions in the church is the public confession of faith of the young people. For the pastor and elders there is no more joyful occasion than when young people come to the consistory room to make confession of faith before the consistory, when that confession is approved, and when young men and young women stand up in the congregation publicly to acknowledge faith in Jesus Christ. This joy is shared by the parents of the young people, and by the whole congregation, who witness the confession.

Joy over the confession of faith of our young people is due to the fact that their confession of faith is an outstanding evidence of positive fruit of the labors of the church. Many prayers have been offered on behalf of these youths. Much labor has been bestowed in their instruction by parents, by Christian school teachers, by pastor and elders. Confession of faith is tangible evidence that these labors have not been in vain, but have been blessed by the Lord.

In the next several articles in this rubric, it is our intention to discuss confession of faith. The first couple of articles will be of an introductory nature. In subsequent articles it is our intention to discuss the significance of confession of faith by examining the three questions in the back of *The Psalter*, which are asked at the time of public confession of faith.

## Confession Not A Matter Of “Joining The Church”

A common misconception in connection with confession of faith is that by public confession one “joins the church.” Public confession is viewed as the act of being “received into the church.” As long as one has not made confession of faith, he is essentially not a member of the church.

There have been serious results in churches which have fostered this conception of confession of faith. This view has been carried out to excuse the living of a blatantly wicked life on the part of those who have not yet made confession of faith because, after all, they are not

yet really members of the church. These young people go to movies, attend dances, take part in wild parties, become drunken, and make public spectacles of themselves, but the elders do nothing because these young people have not yet become members of the church. Since they have not yet made confession of faith, and probably not yet had the “experience” that precedes confession of faith, they need not be expected to live the holy life of a member of the church in full communion.

The view that confession of faith is essentially a matter of “joining the church” is seriously mistaken. It is a view that is fundamentally Baptist and ought not to be the way confession of faith is viewed in a Reformed church. The fact is that by virtue of their baptism the infants of believers are already members of the church. That is brought out very clearly in the first question that is asked parents at the time they present their child for baptism: “Whether you acknowledge, that although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, *as* members of His church ought to be baptized?” The Heidelberg Catechism, in Q.A. 74, teaches that baptism is a sign of the truth that the infants of believers are “also admitted into the Christian church . . .”

Confession of faith is emphatically not to be viewed as an act of joining the church. Instead, the significance of public confession of faith is that those who are already members of the church publicly acknowledge that membership and publicly assume the duties and privileges involved in that membership. A baptized member of the church is an undeveloped and immature member. During his childhood and youth he matures, not only physically and psychologically, but also spiritually. At the time when he arrives at spiritual maturity, the time when he understands the privileges and obligations of church membership and is readily willing to assume these, he ought to make confession of faith.

We may draw on an analogy to make our point clear. Our children are members of our country. They are as much citizens of the United States (or Canada, Singapore,

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Northern Ireland, New Zealand, or whatever other country) as we are. No one would deny that my three-year-old daughter is a citizen of the United States, as much a citizen as I am. But children are immature citizens, citizens who, because of their immaturity, do not enjoy the rights and privileges, nor have the same obligations, as mature citizens. Although fully members of our country, our children may not vote, hold office, obtain a driver's license, and it is not expected of them that they pay taxes. This analogy may be applied to the church, which is the kingdom of God. There is a difference in the kingdom of God between those citizens who are young and immature and those citizens who have arrived at years of discretion and may be considered to be mature members of the church.

### **A Privilege And A Responsibility**

For those young people who have arrived at years of discretion, public confession of faith is both a sacred privilege and a solemn responsibility.

The young person who makes confession of faith ought to count it a great privilege that he may make confession of faith. What a privilege of grace that God in His goodness caused him to be born to believing parents and brought up in a covenant home! What a privilege of grace that he should for many years come under the means of grace, hear the preaching of the gospel, and receive instruction in the truth! What a privilege that he should be able to identify himself with the cause of God and of Jesus Christ in the world! What a privilege that he should be able to confess the name of Christ with the mouth! We don't deserve these blessings! We have no right to have faith or any of the blessings of salvation which are ours through faith! Confession of faith is a privilege of the highest order, a privilege of grace.

Besides being a privilege, confession of faith is also a responsibility. It is not only an honor to be able to confess our faith publicly, but it is also our duty before God.

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There are those who question or deny this responsibility of making public confession of faith in the church. There are many denominations which maintain that the church does not have the right to require such a confession. This is the position of those who are advocating paedocommunion today, that is, child communion, that children ought to be granted the right to partake of the Lord's Supper. A few centuries ago, the Arminians in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands denied that the church had the authority to insist on a public confession of faith in the congregation prior to admittance to the Lord's Supper. These people point out that nowhere does Scripture explicitly require this confession of the young people when they arrive at years of discretion and before they are allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper. How can this practice in our churches be maintained, therefore? And on what grounds do we base the responsibility to make public confession of faith?

### **Basis For Public Confession Of Faith**

The basis for public confession of faith, although not explicit in Scripture, is certainly implicit. Public confession of faith is one of those things which, to use the language of *The Westminster Confession Of Faith*, "... by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture ..."

The responsibility to make public confession is based, first of all, on the general calling that the Scriptures place upon God's people to confess His name in the world. Many passages of Scripture could be cited which bring out this calling. Christ Himself says in Matthew 10:32, 33: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." In Romans 10:9, 10 the Apostle writes, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him

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from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

There certainly is nothing strange or un-Biblical in the fact that the church should require of adult members a confession of faith. This is something to which the Word of God everywhere calls us. Confession of our faith is simply part of the Christian life.

A second reason why Reformed churches have always insisted on a public confession of faith by the young people has to do specifically with the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. The question whether the church has the authority to demand a confession of faith is closely bound up with our view of the sacrament. Those in the past who denied this right to the church maintained what is called “open” or “free” admission to the Lord’s table.

They maintained that attendance at the Lord’s Supper is exclusively a matter of the personal conscience of the individual attending. Whether or not he would partake was his private decision. Those who maintained the right of the church to require a public confession of faith of those who would come to the Lord’s Supper did so because they maintained that attendance at the Lord’s table, besides being a personal matter, was also subject to the jurisdiction of the church. They emphasized the duty of the consistory to “fence,” that is, to supervise the administration of the sacrament.

Next time we will discuss this matter of the supervision of the Lord’s Supper by the consistory, and the implications of this for public confession of faith. ❖

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*Rev. Cammenga is pastor of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.*

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## Church News

# Church News

### BAPTISMS

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

*Mark 16:16*

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:  
Brennen, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tom Cammenga—Holland, MI

Silas Jon, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jim Geerlings—Hope, MI

Trevor Thomas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Minderhoud—  
Hope, MI

Emily Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Rutgers—Hope, MI

Ethan Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Haveman—  
Hudsonville, MI

Alexander James, son of Mr. & Mrs. David Linker—  
Lacombe, Canada

Timothy Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Clyde Brown - Peace, IL

Jacob David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Moore—Peace, IL

Andrew James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Arthur DeJong—South  
Holland, IL

Kayla Sue, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Andy Dykstra—South  
Holland, IL

Olivia Sue, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Lindsey—South  
Holland, IL

Blake Douglas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Zylstra—South  
Holland, IL

### 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:

Ryan Tolsma—Edmonton, Canada

Stacey Ovis—Edmonton, Canada

Cindy Tolsma—Lacombe, Canada

### MARRIAGES

*“...and they twain shall be one flesh.”*

*Matthew 19:5*

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Mitchell Kamps and Miss Sarah Rutgers—Hope, MI

July 10, 1553

# "LITTLE LIGHTS"

... *let it shine!*

by Connie Meyer

Trumpets blew. Banners flew. A new Queen for England—Hooray!

But the crown weighed heavily upon the head of the sixteen-year-old girl. It was a time of great upheaval in government and religion. A King ruled here and promoted the cause of the Reformation. A Queen ruled there and promoted the cause of the Catholic Church. It was not an easy time to wear a crown.

But Lady Jane Grey, as young as she was, learned her lessons well. With an education that rivaled the noblest of princes, she also knew Latin, Italian, French, and Greek. A very accomplished young lady, you say? Yes, but there's more. She also knew the doctrines of the Reformation. She knew them and she loved them, though not everyone around her did.

It was not by her choice that she was crowned Queen on July 10, 1553. Young and learned she was, and also docile and submissive. She did as her father-in-law told her to do. Thus she became Queen for only nine days. She was not the closest relative to the throne. Her cousin, Princess Mary, was closer. Lady Jane was quickly overthrown.

Her cousin Mary did not love the doctrines of the Reformation. Mary loved the Catholic Church and even became known as "Bloody" Mary later on. Many a Reformed person was killed under her reign. Lady Jane Grey would be one of them.

It was for political reasons, including Jane's attempt to be Queen, that Mary would have her beheaded. But Jane's embracing of the Reformation did not improve her situation with Mary.

Would Lady Jane convert to Catholicism? They would see. A Catholic priest, Master Feckenham, came to question the young woman only four days before she was to be executed. Would she give in?

*Feckenham:* Why is doing good works necessary for salvation, and believing alone is not enough?

*Jane:* I deny that, for faith alone saves. It is proper for Christians to do good works, but they do not profit us to salvation. We are all unprofitable servants, and it is only faith in Christ's blood that saves.

*Feckenham:* How many sacraments are there?

*Jane:* Two; baptism and the Lord's supper.

*Feckenham:* No, there are seven.

*Jane:* Where do you find that in Scripture?

*Feckenham:* Well, we will talk of that later. But what is signified by your two sacraments?

*Jane:* By baptism I am washed and regenerated by the Spirit, and that washing is a token to me that I am a child of God. The Lord's Supper is a sure seal and testimony that I am made, by Christ's blood, a partaker of the everlasting kingdom.

*Feckenham:* But don't you receive the very body and blood of Christ in that bread?

*Jane:* No surely, I do not...

*Feckenham:* Why then does Christ say: "Take, eat, this is my body?" Do we need any plainer words?

*Jane:* I grant that He says that, but He also says: "I am the vine, I am the door," yet He was never a vine nor door...\*

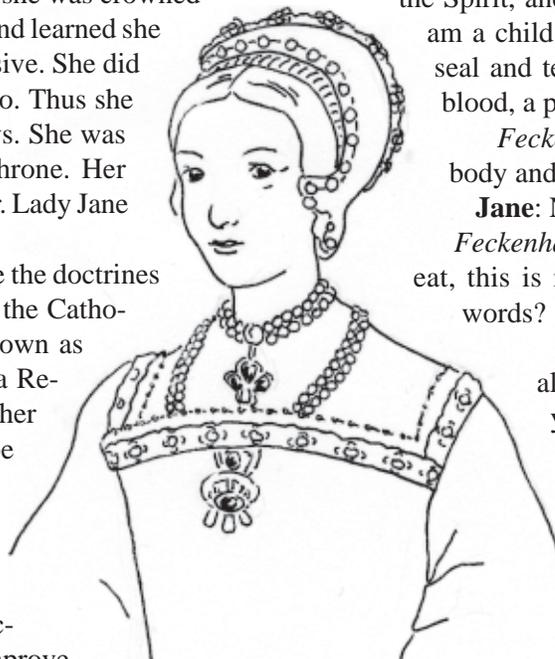
Thus went their conversation, and thus Lady Jane remained firm in her faith. Indeed, she learned her lessons well.

★★★★★

"...and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" I Peter 3:15. ❖

*\*This is a paraphrased version of only part of their conversation. The entire dialogue as recorded by Jane's own hand can be found in The Protestant Reformation; Major Documents edited by Lewis W. Spitz, Concordia Publishing House, 1997.*

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



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Registration forms for the 2002 Convention have been mailed to all the churches. Please see your Young People's leader for a copy of the form. Forms are also available on the convention web site [www.georgetown-prc.org](http://www.georgetown-prc.org). Please register as soon as possible.

**Activities:** Water skiing, basketball, indoor game room, tubing, skateboard park, low ropes course, climbing wall, high ropes course with zip line, kayaks, canoes, horseshoes, wake board, and beach volleyball



Text: I Timothy 4:12, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

Theme: "Youth, Examples of Godliness"

**Speakers:**

Rev. Gritters "In Word and Conversation"  
Rev. Haak "In Charity and Spirit"  
Rev. Terpstra "In Faith and Purity"

Theme Song: Psalter # 322 all 4 verses

Please see the web site for more information:  
[www.georgetown-prc.org](http://www.georgetown-prc.org)