

Beacon

Lights

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*“a man’s life consisteth not
in the abundance of the things
which he possesseth.”*

Luke 12:15b

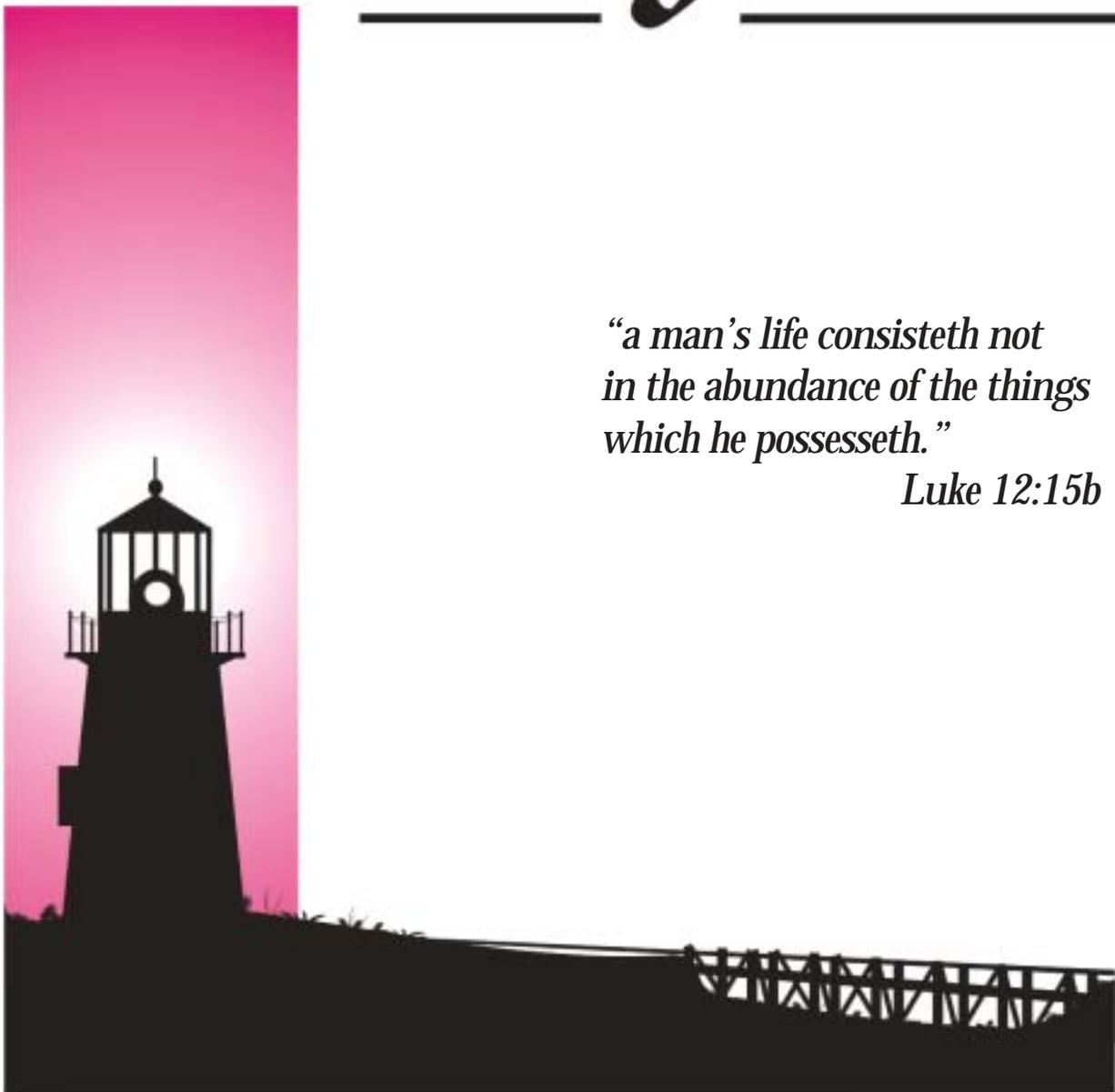


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BEACON LIGHTS

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Thanksgiving – 1941

by Rev. C. Hanko

Scene One

A magnificent edifice of the most modern construction, adorned with the last word in modern furnishing.

A large, steaming, golden brown turkey graces the center of the dining room table, set off by two candlesticks and surrounded with heavy silverware and costly china.

Two bright-eyed children sit at opposite sides of the table, while father and mother take their respective places at opposite ends. Sweet potatoes, vegetables of various kinds, jams, jellies, and cranberry sauce, all help to round out the meal.

“Mother, we’ve had a very good year, stocks are climbing, business is good, everything we have undertaken was marked by success. We have much to be thankful for.”

Would it be speaking out of turn to suggest with all due reticence that Lazarus lies at the gate, cold, hungry, dirty and full of festering sores?

Thou Fool!

Scene Two

A simple yet attractive home, neat and well kept, bespeaking a man of moderate means.

On the table stands a platter with the remains of a check or two, while the greasy faces of happy children protrude out of a towel snugly tied about their necks.

Father is speaking: “Conditions are much better than a year ago; prices may be steadily climbing but wages are also on the incline, and there is ample work for anyone who cares to work. We’ve acted accordingly; given to the Church, to benevolent organizations and other needy causes.”

With that thought in mind he turns unto himself and says, “Lord, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, I ..., I ..., I ...

But it remained for another to be justified rather than he.

Scene Three

A small cottage which has withstood the spring rains, the drought of summer and the frost of winter for many seasons.

The threshold is worn, the door creaks on its hinges, the furnishings in the room speak of years of service.

At the old, round table near the window sits an old woman, the light shining on her silvered hair, tightly drawn back from a care-worn, wrinkled face.

No abundance here; no happy feasting. Her husband has gone on before her, and left her to bide the time in her simplicity and loneliness. But man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Someone had very thoughtfully brought her a plate of chicken broth, which having been emptied, is now pushed aside, while she folds her hands over her Bible.

The Book lies open at the sixty-second Psalm; the silence of the room seems to take up the words:

*My soul in silence waits for God;
My Savior He has proved;
He only is my Rock and Tower;
I never shall be moved.*

As smoke from the incense, this prayer mingles with the prayers of all saints and fills the Sanctuary where angels worship.

*My honor is secure with God,
My Savior He is known;
My refuge and my Rock of strength
Are found in God alone.
For God has spoken o're and o're
And unto me has shown;
That saving power and lasting strength
Belong to Him alone. ❖*

This was the editorial from the November, 1941 issue of Beacon Lights

www.beaconlights.org

Yes, the *Beacon Lights* that has been a source of guidance to the youth of our churches through the printed page now shines around the world via the World Wide Web. It is our prayer that God may use this extension to guide others through the darkness and storm of this world to the truth of sovereign grace in Christ alone.

Most of the old issues from the 1940's to the 1970's as well as an index covering issues from 1941 to 2000, can be viewed at this site, downloaded onto your own computer, or printed out. You can also request a copy on CD or DVD. The project of scanning all the old issues is not yet complete, however, but it is progressing nicely and those interested in doing some research can start doing so with what is available. It is our goal to have all the scanning finished by the end of the winter. This will be available on the web site as soon as it is complete. We will continue working with that material to make it thoroughly searchable with a computer. This final version may require another year of work.

Story Time

The Gift (3)

by Tom Cammenga

He remembered wanting to scream. *Of course there is something you can do! Make her better! You're a doctor, that's what you do!* If only it had been that easy.

His wife had been so strong through it all. She had been a very religious woman and it seemed that this enabled her to face this trial with confidence. She would read her Bible often and after she had become increasingly weak, she asked him to read it aloud to her. And so for what seemed like hours and only for her sake he read the words. He could see it gave his wife great comfort but it meant nothing to him. In fact, the more he read the more bitterness seemed to creep into his heart and soul. The more he read of God's faithfulness and love for His

people the more he became hardened to it and almost sickened by it.

The day before she died she had asked him to read some more but he just couldn't do it. He had had enough of the "good book" and could take no more.

"I can't do it anymore Jenny. I can't sit here and pretend that I am content with the fact that you are dying. If God is such a good and gracious God as you say, why is He doing this to you? Why can't He just leave us alone?" By this time he was seething with rage and contempt, struggling to remain coherent. The anxiety of the past weeks was finally taking its toll.

Though in the past days she had grown increasingly weak so that she even struggled to speak, for a few brief moments she was nothing but fire and brimstone.

“William!” she said sternly. “How can you say such things? You are doing nothing but feeling sorry for yourself and I won’t have any of it. God is with me now just as much as He has always been. He didn’t send this because He hates me; He sent it because He loves me.” And then the tears began to slowly form in the corners of her eyes. “This is the way He has chosen to take me home...and I can’t wait to go.” Her voice began to fail and betray her truly weakened state. “Part of me doesn’t want to leave you...but I truly want to go home.” Her hand trembled as she weakly reached out to touch him. “For all these years I have prayed that my home...would be yours too. Even now I am sure that it is,” she said as her voice faltered and her eyes began to close. “I...love you...so much,” she whispered as exhaustion finally overtook her.

Those words, though he had not realized it at the time, had fractured, if only slightly, the wall that he had built and maintained over all the years between himself and his wife and God. Those words were also the last that she would speak on this earth.

“And I...love you too,” he had replied as tears of grief, anger, and confusion streamed down his cheeks, falling from his chin to the sheet that covered the bed.

He had stayed at the hospital then and kept silent vigil beside her bed until shortly after 2:30 p.m. the following afternoon when she had quietly slipped away. There was no extraordinary drama to it nor was there the bustling of doctors and nurses in an attempt to revive her. Her breathing had simply ceased and then she was gone, leaving the room in silence except for the quiet sobs of the old man who knelt at the bedside of the love of his life.

* * * * *

It all seemed so long ago, almost as if in another life time even though it had only been three days. As neither of them had any family and they had no children, the funeral arrangements had been very simple. He had only had to endure a very brief time of visitation and had insisted that there be no service. The pastor of the church his wife had attended for so long had attempted to convince him differently but in the end he had remained firm in his desire to say good-bye to his beloved alone. At least he had thought he would be alone. Who would have guessed that a complete stranger would come along and for a few hours anyway, laugh and cry with him?

And even more unfeasible, that he himself would pray. He hadn’t simply listened to the words that the young man had spoken in the fading light of the day but he had actually prayed along with him. He recalled with a touch of embarrassment how direct the young man had been in praying that God would turn his heart toward Him and save him, a complete stranger.

His wife would often say that the Lord worked in mysterious ways. As he watched through the sliding door the first raindrops begin to fall on the patio in the backyard he supposed that it was true. Or was it? He just didn’t know what to think anymore. The reality that he faced right now was that he was lonely, confused, and experiencing grief the like of which he had no idea was possible. If only she were here to help him sort his way through this.

But she was gone. He still had difficulty comprehending that. It seemed that at any moment she would come through the door announcing that she was home in her cheerful voice and begin to clean up the house and go about her daily chores or ask him to help her unload the groceries.

Suddenly for no apparent reason he remembered her Bible. Actually she had two. One was worn and tattered and even falling apart. That one was tucked away in her closet. The other was quite new; in fact he had bought it for her just recently not realizing just how much she loved that old Bible. She had put it away though and had begun using the new Bible he now knew simply to make him happy. That was her way. If he recalled correctly he had put it on her nightstand when he had returned from the hospital the day she had died.

Not knowing exactly why, he walked into the bedroom and slowly picked up the Bible in his right hand. Ever so gently he ran the fingers of his left hand over the cover and then wrapped both arms around it and clutched it to his chest. It still smelled like her. In his mind he could still see her sitting in her chair reading it.

So enthralled was he that the ringing of the doorbell did not at first permeate his thoughts. Abruptly he realized what the intruding sound was. He laid the Bible back on the nightstand, turned, and headed for the front door, his heart in his throat, wondering who it could be. There was the fleeting thought that maybe this had all indeed been a dream, or more accurately, a terrible nightmare. ❖

Tom is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Zeeland, Michigan.

Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem

by Andrew Tanis

Psalm 122:6-7: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces."

David, in this text, is speaking of how important it is that prayer is made for the peace of Jerusalem. Why is this peace such a concern for him? We are told in Scripture that there was much war in Israel during David's reign. The nations about Israel were constantly making war with Israel. David's strong desire for peace was of a different nature, although the wars were a concern for him. This desire of which he speaks in this psalm was a concern for the church, as he thinks about church life, and the relationship of believers in the church to one another. David understood this need for peace in the church, and the need is ever increasing as we approach the end of time.

Is this peace our experience today? We've all heard of that dreadful "grapevine." Sins of gossip and slander are common to all of us. All of us have used our sharp tongues to spread hurtful news about a brother or sister. Sure, all of God's people fall into sin. Sometimes, these sins are very dreadful sins. Those who fall dreadfully are often the victims of the slander of the grapevine, which brings another question to mind. How can those who have fallen so far have peace with God, when the latest news going around in their own circles is a reminder of what they have done? On top of that, they are afflicted in their own conscience, and fight against a sinful flesh that loves that sin. These people need to be assured of the forgiveness of sin, just as much as those "who have no sin." True peace is hard to find when people bite and devour one another with their words.

Perhaps we don't associate ourselves with this gossip chain. Maybe there is another way that we destroy our brothers and sisters in Christ. One way that comes to mind is the sin of hypocrisy. Perhaps we have that accusatory finger. We can think that we do service to someone by going to them and screaming, "REPENT! REPENT!" at the top of our lungs. We often make that our righteousness before God.

We must be careful in the way that we go to someone who has sinned. We go to them in love, knowing our own depravity, and truly desiring their repentance. The sins of slander and hypocrisy are the most common ways we destroy others with our tongues. This is what James speaks of in Chapter 3 of his book when he says, "the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and is set on fire of hell," and again, "the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." He also goes on to tell us that there is "confusion and every evil work" where the tongue is used in this way (Verse 16).

Sure, it's easy for us to long for peace if we are the victims of the gossip and slander, but it is equally important to pray for the peace of Jerusalem even when we have peace in our individual lives. After the words of the text considered, David gave the reason why we must always be fervent in our prayers for peace. We desire peace, not so we can feel good about ourselves and forget the rest, but "for my brethren and companion's sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee" (Verse 8). That is why it is a deep need of ours as well as it was for Old Testament Israel to dwell in sweet accord.

What is it to have this peace, and who has this peace? This peace is the experience of the child of God whose only comfort is that he belongs to Christ. It is the feeling of joy that overwhelms the prodigal son as he is welcomed home, and embraced by the loving arms of his father. It is the experience of the believer as he stands washed in the blood of the Lamb. Only those whose sins are not imputed to them can experience this peace.

Where do we find this peace? This peace is found in the Prince of Peace, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He alone can give us the wisdom and peace from above. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace with them that make peace" (James 3:17-18). It speaks of the bless-

ing of being a peacemaker. In order to make peace, this peace must already dwell in you by God's sovereign grace.

Does this peace fill your heart today? Perhaps there is unrest in your soul because of your sin. Do you feel crushed underneath the burden of guilt on your shoulders? Does the cloud of doubt and despair hide the light of day? Do you feel unworthy to have the peace and joy of salvation? Be assured that your redemption lies in the cross of Christ, and then with boldness, in the confi-

dence of faith, approach the throne of grace in prayer. Salvation is for those who know their unworthiness, but who confess that the Lamb is worthy. His righteousness is imputed to us, because He took our sins and nailed it to His cross. Living in this assurance, we dwell in unity in the church, and "there the Lord commands His blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalm 133:3). ❖

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

Memoir of Rev. C. Hanko

Rev. C. Hanko

Chapter 17

Moving

edited by Karen Van Baren

Another unique experience in Oak Lawn was our constant moving from one rented house to the next. In the ten years we spent there we moved seven times, and once found ourselves without a home for a few weeks.

The first house the consistory rented for us was in the east part of the town, and was surrounded by trees. For a refrigerator, the house had a box in the pantry window where food could be kept when the weather was moderate, not too hot and not too cold. The basement stairway came out in the dining room. At the very foot of those steps was the coal pile. It was simply impossible to come out of the basement without carrying the coal dust on our feet on to the dining room rug.

One of the rooms upstairs was made into a study, but the study was so cold in the winter that a heater had to be purchased to keep the room warm. The big problem there was that the house was surrounded by trees, so that no sunlight could penetrate through the trees. The result was that all the furniture showed signs of mold, white spots appearing in the varnish.

So after a little more than a year we moved to a small house next to the CR church. The rooms in this house were small, with the exception of the kitchen. The bedrooms had room only for a bed. Six people could sit in

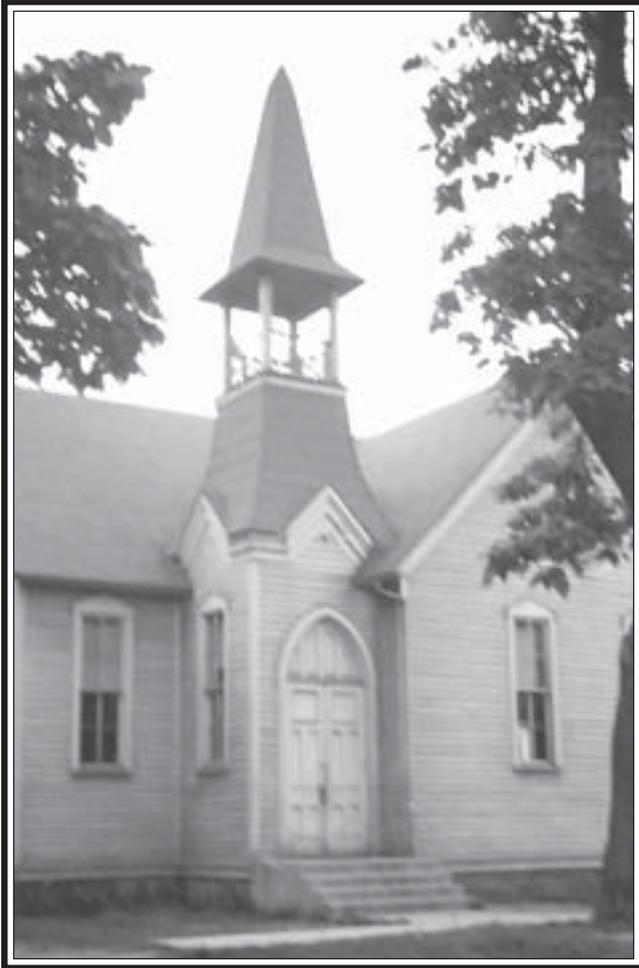
the living room, with nothing but a narrow aisle between them.

The minister of the church next door saw Herm outside one day and asked him whether he was going to be a minister when he grew up. He answered, "No, I'm going to be a deacon." We wondered whether he thought that this paid better. When Herm was old enough he began school in Evergreen Park. The first day he came out of the bus shouting, "I have a nice teacher!" He was all set to go again.

He had already taken a keen interest in reading. It intrigued him that letters made words and words had meaning. At three years of age, he had a little cloth book that he knew by heart, turning the pages exactly when he reached the bottom. More than one person asked, "Can he read?" After he started school, he liked to sound out words on sign boards, utterly pleased to have learned the meaning of another word.

Herm had found a new world for himself in school. But Fred was left home with his sister and felt completely lost. There seemed nothing for him to do.

I once read a Dutch book called "Children's Sorrows." It pointed out with examples how minor incidents that seem to us of little importance can mean so much to a child. I recall that on a Christmas day Elaine had received a new doll. She was so proud of it that she wanted



Oak Lawn Church

to take it along to the Christmas program. As we were stepping into the car she dropped it in the water that ran along the curb. There was no real damage done to her doll, but she felt bad nevertheless.

Once, when I was reading the Bible, I came across the name of Levi. I stopped and asked the boys whether they knew who Levi was. Fred answered, "Sure, he is the Jew who sells calves to Mr. Kort." On another occasion the "Church News" had questions for children to answer. One of them was, "Do our churches believe in election?" Herm thought a while, but Fred answered, "Sure, Herm, Dad voted for Wilkie."

It was also here that Fred was hit by an automobile while crossing the street, but was not seriously hurt. Here Elaine, at the age of about two, had a kidney infection. The doctor exhausted all his means to cure her. Finally he called me into his office and said, "You're going to lose your girl." He knew of but one possible remedy. "Give her a pan of water to play with and encourage her

to drink it." So Lans had a pan of water and a cup in her crib and she played with water.¹ She also drank plenty, so that it came out almost as fast as it went in. That was the means God used to restore her health.

After a year or two, the owner of this house wanted us out. So I scouted the streets. My daily walk consisted of looking for a house. In the whole town there was but one vacant house, and that had never been finished. It was built of cement blocks, still plainly visible. It had wooden steps in the front and the back. There was no basement, but there was an opening in the back of the house, a crawl space where the oil tank was kept. An oil burner heated the downstairs. The upstairs was unfinished, like an attic, and had no heat. Saturday night came around. On Monday, our time was up for the house we lived in. It was then that the banker came and offered the unfinished house to us, which we took reluctantly, only for want of something better.

The men of the congregation with trucks came to move us. Dick Kort had a load of living room furniture on his truck, and Herm and I sat in back, holding lamps and the like. We had warned him to go slowly over the railroad tracks, because some of the furniture might fall off. He took us very literally, for when we came to the tracks, the truck hardly moved. What he did not realize was that the train was coming at about seventy miles an hour, rapidly approaching us. Herm and I did not know whether we should jump or stay put, but we stayed. The truck was barely over the tracks when the train whistled by. The engineer could only shake his head. And we breathed a prayer of thanksgiving.

This house needed a lot of cleaning. The previous renters had kept chickens in the attic. The attic had to be cleaned up and made fit for a bedroom for the boys, and a study. A small section at the front of the attic was set off for a study. It had a small potbelly stove to furnish the heat.

Here we learned what pests mosquitoes can be in the summer time. Somehow the pesky critters came through the screens like a plague. One mosquito can pester all night long. So before we went to bed we would round them all up, as much as possible, on the front room ceiling for one grand slaughter.

Here we also learned about the trials involved in a bad septic tank. Sometimes the odor from that miserable thing was so bad, that one night my mother, who was staying with us, came dashing out of the bedroom with a cry: "No one can stand it in there."

Our Polish neighbor was far from friendly. His house stood not ten feet from ours, separated by a fence and a driveway. When we moved in he welcomed us by saying, "You live on that side of the fence, and I live on this side. We'll both mind our own business." When Uncle Walt came into Oak Lawn and inquired as to where we lived, he was accompanied by a policeman to the very door to see whether he was welcome.²

Soon an opportunity arose to move to a better house one block east. While the previous house was referred to as "the block house," this one was referred to as "the shingle house". This one had central heating and many other advantages. The attic was somewhat better, and the boys slept in it.

The kids had a lot of room to play at the shingle house. There was a large field next to the house and thick woods behind. The neighbor kids were not the best of companions, but the boys did get along with them. Here, at Easter time, Elaine was given two newly born ducks, which she fed and cared for. Gradually they grew and wandered around the yard. But before long they were out on the road, so Elaine took them by their necks and led them back home. When they wandered too far, we brought them to a farm, where one was accidentally killed. We had the other for Thanksgiving dinner.

We lived here when Alice (we called her Allie) was born. Almost from the first day of this fourth pregnancy, Mom was not well. Her heart gave her problems, but there were also other complications. The doctor warned us that this baby would not be born in his office, as was generally the case. For this one we had to go to the hospital.

When the time came, we did go to the hospital. I was called into the delivery room shortly after Allie was born because Mother had gone into shock. The head nurse attended her without leaving the room from 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. until 8:00 a.m. Since this was a Catholic hospital, the nurse never ceased praying even as she went about her duties. It appeared for some time as if we would lose Mom. But the Lord spared her for us.

Mother seemed to be recovering gradually, but on the ninth day she had another attack. At the time we thought it was a heart attack. And it might have been related. But later it was diagnosed as an epileptic seizure.

Complete recovery was slow. Aunt Lucy came out yet to help us for a while.³ The shingle house was in the hands of a real estate agent, who wanted to put us out already before Allie was born, but realized that this was

impossible. So as soon as Mom was able to get around, pressure was put on us to find another house.

This led us to a house "out in the prairie," right in the center of a section of land that had almost no houses. The owners, the Draismas, had built a house next door, and were renting this one out. After some consideration we decided to move out there.

In the prairie house, Allie liked to scoot through the house on a small cart. The basement door did not close readily. It always needed an extra push. One time it was left slightly ajar and Allie managed to open it. The next thing, cart and Allie rolled down the steps and against the basement wall. Yet no serious damage was done.

Here she also learned to walk. She was about two or three years old, when on a summer day she was outside and could not be found. All who were home joined in the hunt. Even Mrs. Draisma joined with us in scouting the neighborhood. When she finally went into her house, she found Allie on the kitchen table licking her fingers after sticking them in the sugar bowl.

The Veldmans came by street car to church on Sunday. Sometimes they would stop in to visit. The older kids were afraid of Mrs. Veldman, but Allie would go up to her and ask, "Play Old Maid with me, Mrs. Veldman?" This she willingly did.

While I was filling a classical appointment in Randolph, a bad storm struck Oak Lawn with severe lightning, which split a tree, not far from our home on the prairie. Rain came down in torrents, so that it poured in by the doors and windows of the house.

In the winter, we could skate all around in the ditches. In the spring, water seeped into the basement of the house, so that I had to care for the furnace by riding in the kids' cart to the furnace through a foot of water.

While we lived "on the prairie," it happened that a load of pigs and steers tipped over on 103rd Street, sending the pigs and steers all over the open field. Cowboys came from the slaughterhouse to catch them. They had three steers locked in our garage, but the steers forced the doors and burst out. It took all night to round up the wandering steers and pigs.

Here we had all the "modern conveniences" of a farm in the country. A short distance south of the house stood a neat, clean outhouse, out of which, at one time, the neighbor girl's doll had to be fetched. In the basement we had a coal stove for heating water for the wash. The water was so hard that it had to be broken with lye before it was fit for the wash. On Saturday night, the wash tub came out for the family bath.

In the spring time, the road to 95th was so muddy, that more than one car had to be lifted out of the mud and boards pushed under to get them under way. Even Grandpa Griffioen's big LaSalle settled comfortably in the mud. Sometimes we had to leave our car on the road and walk the last distance to the house.

It was there that Mr. Rooda gave us a runt pig. We scoured the neighborhood for planks and two by fours to build a pen. The pig grew very well on the refuse from our house and the neighbor's. Mr. Ryan Regnerus butchered the pig for us, and the hams were smoked in Chicago Heights.⁴

The boys found work in the summer for a farmer about a half mile away. Although weeding and hoeing was tedious work, they did make a bit of money. Later they worked for a farmer much farther away, where they went on their bikes. Today they still look back to the work at that last place as a bit of slavery. They worked sixty hours a week and made ten cents an hour.

And it was here that Lans started kindergarten. The first day she came home with a different attitude from Herm's. When asked about school, her only remark was, "It's alright, but only eight years of that." At first the children all took the Oak Lawn school bus to school. But after a couple of years, the boys walked the one and a half miles to school. Herm was put off the bus for rowdiness, and the bus driver would not let him on unless he talked with me. I thought it better to let him walk to learn his lesson. But it went well and we saved twenty cents a week on bus costs. A committee from the school board came to plead with us to let the boys ride again, because they needed the money. But so did we, and so the children continued to walk. From my study window I could see them cross the highway to the east. At that time, we had no concern for their safety. It often took them a half-hour to roam through the open field for a half-mile, but we did not mind that.

One day while walking home, Fred had his eyes closed, while Herm was giving him directions where to go. Mistaking the directions, Fred landed in the ditch that was partially filled with water.

On another occasion, the weather had turned very cold. At that time Elaine was still taking the bus, so Mom went the half-mile down the road to meet her. When she came to her, Lans was calmly sliding on the ice. I went to meet the boys and help them home. They were walking with their backs to the wind. When they saw me, they could not possibly figure out why I was there. But I did shield them from the wind through the open field.

Later, Evergreen Park School no longer had room for the children from Oak Lawn. So the bus had to take them to Roseland. Some of the children got on the bus at 7:00 in the morning and did not get home until 5:00 at night. Ours were some of the last ones to get on. But it was a long, dangerous ride in a packed bus, which hardly had standing room. When the train was approaching in Roseland, the driver still ventured to get through ahead of the train by speeding up the bus, almost bringing the gates down on the bus.

We got along well with our neighbors, the Draismas. We even had a telephone together, so that when there was a call for them we buzzed, and one or the other came over. Although they were Christian Reformed, they allowed their son John, who was Elaine's age, to come along with us for catechism.

But after a few years the Draismas decided to rent out the house they lived in, and to return to their former home. That meant that we had to go house hunting again. This time, the consistory decided to bring an end to our wanderings by purchasing a house in town.

After some searching, a house was found at a reasonable cost with four large rooms (two with bay windows) downstairs, and four rooms upstairs (two with bay windows), with a large tower that extended one story higher. This house also had a fairly large basement with an automatic coal stoker.

The consistory decided to buy this house from an elderly woman, who lived alone in it, for \$6,000. This meant that \$600 had to be brought up as a down payment. So the consistory went out one day to collect from the members of the congregation. That evening they came to the parsonage, and spread out on the dining room table nickels, dimes, quarters, half dollars, and also paper money. Obviously this cash had come from money saved for doctor bills, or from children's banks. It was enough to make a person weep to see how generously out of their poverty the congregation had brought up the needed \$600 for the new parsonage.

But our problems were not yet over. When the time came to move, the old lady did not want to get out of her house. In the meantime, we were being pressured by the owners of the house we were living in, and they were being pressured by those who waited to move, all down the line. So one day we came home to discover that our neighbors had been forced out, and had come to move in with us. That was a bit too much. So we called the men of the congregation to haul out our furniture. It was brought to the church, except for two beds, and a kitchen



Oak Lawn Parsonage

table and chairs, which were brought to a real estate office next to Rutger's home. This had previously been a chicken coop, and still was not much better, but it did give us a roof over our heads.

Must a wife and mother take all that? One would expect that she would pack up and find more comfortable quarters. One would say that surely that is too much to require of any woman, but she took it in stride without a single complaint.

Not only were we having trouble finding a settled home, we were having trouble finding reliable transportation. On our way back to Oak Lawn in 1938, we were struck by another car near Hudsonville. We had a carful, since Aunt Corie and her two children rode back with us. The other car was approaching us in our lane, so I tried desperately to get far enough off the road to avoid him. Just as I thought we had safely passed him, he struck the back part of the Chevy, swung it around and turned it on its side.

No one was seriously hurt, but we were all well shaken up. The police encouraged us to find ways and means to continue on our way home. So we obtained a car from Grandpa Griffioen. We later returned to Michigan, where we bought a Ford V8.

On the way home it became evident already that this car had been in an accident, as the front wheel was out of line. But that was a minor thing, compared to the problem of the water pump howling for lack of oil. The starter failed to work most of the time. No mechanic seemed to

be able to find the cause of the trouble. No replacements solved the problem. Often, we were compelled to push the car onto the road and wait for someone to give us a push to get started. Later, Uncle Pete solved this problem with a five cent washer.⁵

But an even more serious problem was the radiator that often steamed and spouted water like a small geyser. This could happen any time. We might go half way to Grand Rapids without trouble, and then suddenly the water would spurt out over the car. On a trip to Iowa, we had so much trouble that we stopped in a garage, where the gaskets were replaced. No trouble, until we started back on our way home. On a trip to Waupun, Uncle Clyde thought he fixed it.⁶ He had replaced the cap of the radiator, so that the water no longer spouted out. When we came to Milwaukee on our way home, the engine was so hot, that even after a long delay, I still cracked both engine heads when I added water.

This was, in a sense, a low spot in our lives. While we made our home in a chicken coop, the Ford V8, which gave plenty of trouble as long as we had it, finally gave out completely. John Buijer chopped the broken heads off the engine of the car, brought the radiator away to be boiled out in acid, and did everything possible to make the car serviceable again.⁷ We had no car, we had no real home, yet we did have the family complete and well, so we still had reason to give thanks.

A few weeks went by, and the chilly weather of October was crowding in on us. So I decided to bring the family to Michigan, and to come to Oak Lawn on weekends. When I told the real estate man of our plans, he strongly objected. He suggested that I wait until 5:00 p.m. In the meantime, he must have gotten busy. By 5:00 p.m. he had the papers for the house, and had the consent of the old lady to get out. In two days we were busy cleaning the house and preparing to move in.

This house with a tower had a special appeal to the kids. When Christmas approached, each one secretly planned to hide his or her presents, purchased for others with a few dimes, in the tower room.

This house had a beautiful hawthorn tree, which attracted many sightseers in the spring. Its huge branches spread horizontally so that the kids could play in it. In the back yard was a cherry tree, which attracted the small wrens that sang their hearts out in the morning. And it had a chicken coop, in which Mr. Rooda placed seven chickens, which were actually the culls from his flock. Only one of them produced an egg a day, but the others made good eating.

But the Lord sent more trials our way. In the spring, just before Easter Sunday, Lans came home with scarlet fever. But it was so light, that no one noticed. The result, however, was that Allie, Fred and I all came down with it on Easter Sunday. I did manage to preach, but was ready to go to bed soon after. Doctor Gasteyer came to check up on Allie, and immediately asked about the other sick in the family. We were quarantined, so Herm had to get out of the house to stay with the Ryan Regnerus family until we were released from quarantine. Many neighbors refused to walk past our house and objected to Mother coming into the stores. Rev. Ophoff came all the way from Grand Rapids to see us.

Since I had to take time off for recovery, as soon as I was able, I began to paint the house. This was a big undertaking, but I managed to do all of it, except for the tower, for which I needed help. Later I managed to paint the church, which sorely needed some paint.

In the summer Mom had health problems that brought her to the University hospital in Chicago. There she underwent a series of tests and X-rays. Since the Depression was still a problem, even for hospitals, we had to pay at every stop along the way. Because of my low salary we were paying far less than people with money. The outcome of the tests was that Mom had to undergo surgery. At the time I was placed in the waiting room and told that I would be called when the surgery was completed. I went up there at 8:00 in the morning, and heard nothing by 2:00 in the afternoon. Becoming deeply concerned, I looked around for someone to give me a bit of information. I was met by a nurse, who was surprised that no one had contacted me, since mother had been brought down already at 11:30.

This proved to be a long stay in the hospital, for her leg infection demanded a private room, a special nurse around the clock, and doses of penicillin every eight hours. This was a newly discovered drug, very expensive, and had to come from New York. For six weeks Mom was in the hospital, at least four weeks longer than expected. But the head nurse told me at the outset that if I had any financial problem I should come and see her. When I met her in the hall, I told her that I was coming to see her. She responded: "I should think you would." The outcome was that \$60 dollars came in the mail without any name attached, the deacons brought up \$150, and the hospital settled for \$300. The Lord certainly provides in time of need. He has never allowed his children to go hungry.

During these weeks Elaine decided to become a "convert" at the neighborhood mission church. Every morning she would disappear for about an hour. She never wanted to say where she had been. Finally the big night came when the group was giving a public program. Elaine wanted to get dressed up, but Aunt Corie, who was staying with us, saw no good reason for that.⁸ So in her shabby clothes Elaine again disappeared. She returned with a shepherd she had made with a clothespin, and a few other items.

Now the time had come for Herm's graduation from the elementary school. He needed white pants, but we could not afford to buy any. So we borrowed a pair. To this day I am still a bit ashamed, because the pant legs had to be folded up so high that they showed the high cuff even when he wore it. But Herm did not seem to mind.

We were nicely settled in this home owned by the church and needed no longer to fear the threat of moving. But in the fall of the year 1945, I received a call from Manhattan, Montana. I had received numerous calls while in Oak Lawn, but actually never dared to leave. Every time I had a call, Mr. ____ felt in his heart that I should accept it. Rather than letting him try to run the congregation, I stayed until he left. After he and his family left I felt free to accept a call to another congregation. ❖

Endnotes

¹ The family gave Elaine this nickname.

² Uncle Walt was a brother of Mrs. Hanko.

³ Aunt Lucy was Rev. Hanko's sister and the mother of Rev. Woudenberg and Herm Woudenberg.

⁴ Mr. Regnerus was the father of the late Louis and Jacob Regnerus.

⁵ Uncle Pete was a brother-in-law of Mrs. Hanko and the father of the Reitsmas.

⁶ Uncle Clyde was a brother-in-law of Mrs. Hanko who owned a car dealership in Waupun, Wisconsin.

⁷ John Buiter was a member of the church in Oak Lawn and the father of John Buiter, Al Buiter and Clara Van Baren.

⁸ Corie was a sister of Rev. Hanko and the mother of John VanderWoude and Florence Corson. ❖

Karen is a member of Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois, and a granddaughter of Rev. C. Hanko.

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

“A Psalter–Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God”
by Chester Hunter

November 16 Read Dan 6:10-23

Psalm 37:32-33 Most of us should know the story of Daniel in the lion’s den well. Could we be put in the lion’s dens of today for worshipping our God in the way he commands us? The wicked watch us just as hard as they watched Daniel. Will they find us in church, in the catechism room, in the society room discussing God’s Word? Just being there is not enough and does not please God though it does make Satan happy. Or worse will they find us in the bar, on the dance floor, watching the movie in whatever form? The wicked are watching. What do they see? Jehovah will be with us when the wicked attack but our sin does rise up against us. Sing Psalter 99:1.

November 17 Read Psalm 37:34-40

Psalm 37:34 This verse serves as a summary to the Psalm. First we are called upon to wait on the Lord. This can be very hard at times. Sometimes we are like Jacob and want to do the Lord’s work for him. Secondly we are called to keep His way. This goes hand in hand with the first admonition. We must learn that it is not our way that is the right way, but it is the Lord’s way we must follow. This way is summed up in the two commandments which summarize the law. We are to love the Lord our God, and we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. What is the reward for waiting upon Jehovah and keeping His way? That reward is twofold. First of all we will have eternal life in heaven. What more could we want? Secondly we will see the wicked who seemed to have the preeminence in this life brought to their eternal reward. God is good and knows how to give good gifts to his people. Sing Psalter 99:2 and 101:4.

November 18 Read II Kings 9:30-37

Psalm 37:35-36 These two verses are an expansion upon the last part of verse 34. What should our response be to such a work of God. Our response should not be one characterized by revenge, but rather we should be comforted that God does care for His people and that His promises are sure. We read about the end of Jezebel. To the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, her death must

have brought relief. But it should have also brought renewed zeal in serving Jehovah whose promises are sure. When we see the wicked’s destruction does it fill us with confidence that His ways are sure? It should. Sing Psalter 99:3.

November 19 Read II Timothy 4:1-8

Psalm 37:37-38 David continues with the contrast of the end of the wicked and that of the righteous. Paul in his epistle to Timothy speaks of that peace that he expects to receive. He has faced Satan in many forms. He is awaiting sentence at the hands of a cruel ruler. He believes that no matter what man decides to be his fate, God is sovereign and God will reward him either in this life or the life to come. Are we living the life of the perfect and upright man? Are we anxiously awaiting the end of this life and the beginning of the promised peace which is in heaven? Let us pray for that peace, and let us pray for the grace to live a life of sanctification on this earth. Sing Psalter 99:4 and 101:5.

November 20 Read II Kings 6:8-18

Psalm 37:39-40 People of God, do you believe that God is your strength in times of trouble? Do you confess this as you lie on the hospital bed wondering what will be the outcome of surgery. Do you confess this as you look over your finances and wonder how you will make ends meet? Do you confess this when you are faced with a situation in which you must admonish someone for walking in a sinful way? Satan uses these and other like situations to put the elect in trouble today. These are the battles we must fight. Are we trusting in Him in all ways and at all times? Do we have the hearty confidence that He will deliver us from all evil? It is not an if-then proposition. It is a statement of fact from a sovereign God that He helps us because we trust in Him. That trust is based upon the unshakable faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us praise God from whom all blessings flow. Sing Psalter 99:5.

November 21 Read Psalm 38:1-14

Psalm 38:1 This Psalm of David is a prayer to God. In some Bibles the title added to it is “A Psalm of David,” to

bring to remembrance. Throughout the Psalm, David confesses that because of his sin he has lead a hard life. He does this not to complain that God has not treated him fairly. Rather he wants to throw himself on the mercies of God his salvation. In the first verse he realizes that the life he has lead is worthy of rebuke and chastening in God's displeasure. If David, the man after God's own heart, realized this, what about us? Are we aware exactly what kind of life we lead? Are we ready to confess all of our sins and ask for God's forgiveness? People of God of all ages, we must examine our lives and realize the depths of sin to which we fall. Then we must throw ourselves upon God's mercies. Sing Psalter 102:1.

November 22 Read I Chronicles 21:1-8

Psalm 38:2-3 The Bible reading for the next several days is the familiar account of David numbering the people. While I do not know that this forms the background for Psalm 38, it appears that some like experience of David brought about the penning of this penitential Psalm. David confesses that the hard times he has experienced were brought about by God. He does not blame them on some wicked man though we know that wicked men sought David's destruction often. His sin caused him much grief in life, and he knew it. People of God, do we confess that our sins are the cause of our miseries in this life? Do we see that the hand of God rests upon us because of our sins which testify of our unfaithfulness? This is necessary for the child of God. The first part of our Heidelberg Catechism testifies to this. Let us confess our sins before God and seek to walk in a new and holy life. Sing Psalter 102:2.

November 23 Read I Chronicles 21:9-13

Psalm 38:4-6 David continues with the litany of troubles to which his sin had brought him. He is not doing this out of self pity. He is not doing this to condemn God which might be our reaction at times. He is doing this because the only way of deliverance for him and us must be the complete knowledge of our misery and the confession of that misery. This is not the works righteousness of the Middle Age monk. This is the way of salvation ordained by God. Notice the words David uses to express the depths of his misery. He sinks under its heavy load. His physical condition is affected by his sin. Nothing he does throughout the day can erase the thoughts of his sin. All appears hopeless, except David knows his God is merciful. Do you? Sing Psalter 102:3.

November 24 Read I Chronicles 21:14-17

Psalm 38:7-9 These three verses are a continuation of the depths of misery into which David has been plunged by God on account of his sin. In verse 8, he speaks that his spiritual condition has caused him to cry out in pain. He cannot see a way of escape in his own life and way. He needs something more. In verse 9, he lays out all of his

troubles before God. This is a prayer, young people. Do you pray this way? Do you confess your sins before God in prayer? Are your prayers specific in nature, or are they a few mumbled words of embarrassment that say nothing. This prayer of David was pleasing before God and was answered by God. Let us pray for forgiveness of all our sins. Sing Psalter 102:4.

November 25 Read Matthew 26:27-56

Psalm 38:10-11 Young people, do you feel deserted at times by those whom you account as friends? David had that experience. His son rebelled against him, and in that rebellion one of his best friends, Hushai, deserted him. Our Bible reading for today accounts for us the Jesus's experience during the night in which He was betrayed. As He prays in the garden, his inner circle sleeps. David is a type of Christ. We can see Christ in some of his experiences. Christ became a man like us. Why? So that He could undergo the wrath of God for our sins. Christ was like us in all points except sin. Do we go to Him often in prayer? Do we seek the help of our elder brother? This is the only way out for sinners like us. Pray to God through Christ for forgiveness of sin and experience the mercy afforded us. Sing Psalter 102:5.

November 26 Read Mark 15:53-62

Psalm 38:12-14 In this text we again see David as a type of Christ. As Christ stood before the Sanhedren, He was silent not answering the false charges against Him. David had the same experience. He did not answer because he knew he was being chastised by God for his sin. Christ underwent the false accusations not for His sin, because He had none, but for ours. Because Christ experienced the suffering that Friday evening, we have the assurance of salvation. The wicked will mock us and accuse us falsely now and in the future. We must undergo this chastening because of our sin. By grace let us bow our heads and place our trust in Christ our redeemer. Sing Psalter 102:5.

November 27 Read Psalm 38:15-22

Psalm 38:15-16 This section begins with the word "for". In our English grammar the word "for" is used to give a reason. What was David's reason for his ability to withstand those who would spitefully use him. That reason was because he could hope in the Lord. This was not the wishy-washly hope of the world. This was the hope that maketh not ashamed. This was the hope which came from a faith in the covenant God. David prayed as he was mocked for he knew that the only way of deliverance for him was if God would sustain him in his trials. Do you have that hope, people of God? Do you have faith to trust in the covenant God? If we do, we will never fall. Today, we readers celebrate Thanksgiving. Let us be truly thankful for the good spiritual gifts God has given us. Sing Psalter 103:1.

November 28 Read Job 31:33-40

Psalm 38:17-18 Christian people, are you truly sorry for your sin? Are you sorry for committing those things which violate the law of our holy God? Or are we only sorry for the consequences of our sin? There is a big difference. If we are only sorry for the consequences, we will sin again but try not to be caught in our sin. Look at those who abuse alcohol or drugs. Their sorrow is only because they may be caught by the law. They will look for ways to avoid the law while indulging in their lusts. We can be no better. True sorrow is first of all that we realize that we have sinned against God and are no longer worthy to be called his sons. Secondly true sorrow means that we resolve to walk a new and holy life. Let us be truly sorrowful for our sins; God will bless us. Sing Psalter 103:2.

November 29 Read I Peter 3:8-18

Psalm 38:19-20 Young people, do you follow that which is good. Could you be convicted in court for doing what is right because of a preponderance of evidence. David was. Daniel was. Christ was. Can we add our name to that list? If we can, we must expect persecution from those who hate the good. We can be afflicted by Satan's children on every

side. This should be the experience of every child of God no matter his age. Let us be busy in well doing. Not so that we can obtain our salvation by our works, but because we are thankful for salvation that has been given us by God. Let us be convicted in Satan's court for doing good, and we will be found in God's court singing praise to the Lamb who lives for ever. Sing Psalter 103:3.

November 30 Read Isaiah 12

Psalm 38:21-22 David finishes this Psalm with the plea that God will not forsake him. He prays that God will be with him at all times. He prays that Jehovah will help him quickly. We need to make this plea a part of our daily prayers. We, too, are buffeted on every side by the storms of evil. We, too, have those around us that seek to do us harm. We, too, are tempted by a multitude of evils. Are you praying, people of God, for deliverance? Are these kinds of prayers part of your life, young people? Like David we need God to help us. David knows to whom he prays. It is the Lord of his salvation. It is Christ through whom he can do all things. Let us pray now for such deliverance, and let us pray always for this help. God will hear us because he is the God of our salvation. Sing Psalter 103:4.

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

"A Psalter-Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God"
by Chester Hunter

December 1 Read Psalm 39

Psalm 39:1 People of God, do we watch our tongues at all times? This seems to be the theme of this Psalm. David, in this first verse, seems to take an impossible task upon himself. This is a task that we must undertake as well. It seems to be that one of the identifying marks of the age we live in is to use our tongues in a sinful way. David wants to be careful when he is around the wicked. What about us? Do we watch the words of our mouth when we are around the wicked? Can the wicked tell that we are different by what we say and especially by what we don't say? Like David we must watch our tongues and not use them to sin against our God. Sing Psalters 104:1 and 105:1.

December 2 Read Luke 1:5-20

Psalm 39:2 In the passage we read for today, we are reminded that Christmas is coming. What does that mean for us? It is not in our natures to just keep quiet, but if we did what would be our thoughts? David kept quiet for awhile. He spoke neither good or evil. He thought that this would be good for him. In doing this he could not escape knowing his sins and miseries. Zacharias also kept quiet for awhile; though his quietness was put upon him by God for the sin of unbelief. He did not believe God's word about a son and he became deaf and dumb for nine long months. I think his sorrow was stirred as well as he realized his folly in not believing that with God nothing is impossible. What about us? Do we see our sin? Do we realize our need for a savior

even during this time of the year? Let us be quiet for awhile and ponder these things. Sing Psalters 104:2 and 105:3.

December 3 Read Luke 1:59-80

Psalm 39:3 While being quiet, David had time to think of things. Zacharias did as well. When their silence was ended, they had the same reaction, They had to speak. We have Zacharias's thoughts in writing for us to read as we did today. Notice the adoration which he gives to God. I am sure that David had the same fire burning in him. As he thought on many things, he knew this-that all things speak of God's glory and he must as well. How about us? Do we see that the glory of God is to be found all around us? As we work, whether with our hands or with our minds, do we see that God must be glorified? In the world of nature around us God has given to us many testimonies of His glory. Do we see them and react to them? Let us think on these things and praise God "from whom all blessing flow". Sing Psalter 105:3.

December 4 Read Job 4:12-21

Psalm 39:4 Young people, do you know how physically frail you are? Do you know that compared to much of God's creation, you do not amount to much? Look at the mountains as they stand as monuments to God's greatness and power. How do you measure up? Compare your life span with creation; you are nothing but a breath. Sometimes youth thinks himself invincible. Most of us have had occasion to be brought face to face with the truth that God may take a youth's life at any time. David makes the request of God that he does in this verse because David knew his own sinful nature. David's nature, and ours, likes to boast in how great we are and how we will never come to harm. Our times are in God's hands, and we must never forget it. Only God is immortal. Let us think on this truth, and see how it affects our lives. Sing Psalters 104:3, 105:4 and 107:1.

December 5 Read Isaiah 64:1-8

Psalm 39:5 David continues the thought of yesterday's verse. It is the last part to which I call your attention. The word vanity in Scripture means emptiness or nothingness. Do you think the sports stars of today's world use these words? Do you think those men who desecrate the Sabbath and then claim to give God glory for their victories would conclude that man in his best state is nothing? Should the child of God elevate these men with the glory that we give them? Look at our walls and closets? How many Sabbath breakers adorn those walls and the clothes we wear? Do we forget that even man in his best state is vanity? Let us ponder these things and look at our lives and see if we need to make changes. Sing Psalters 104:4, 105:5, and 107:2.

December 6 Read Ecclesiastes 3:16-22

Psalm 39:6 Man is constantly building monuments to his greatness. Look at the streets, buildings, companies around you. How many of them are named after some man?

What does it mean? If the man is alive, it may cause him to fall into the sin of pride if he hasn't already. If he is in heaven, he probably wishes that these things would not bear his name because he realizes that all glory must be given to God. If he is in hell, he knows nothing at all except the terrible torment his sin has brought on him. If we are busy in this life making much money, do we realize that after we die we don't have it anymore. David saw this truth and so did Solomon. They realized that making fame and fortune accounts for nothing in God's eyes. We must think on these things and ask God to give us the proper perspective on our lives. Let us do that as we prepare to enter His house of worship tomorrow. Sing Psalters 104:5 and 105:6.

December 7 Read Joel 3:9-17

Psalm 39:7 It is the Sabbath, God's day of rest. It is a day to stop our worldly labors and rejoice in the day that God has given us to glorify Him. Our verse today is fitting for this purpose. For what do we wait? Are we waiting for the Lord to take us to the eternal Sabbath in heaven whether that be by death or by the end of all things? Are we waiting for Him to show us His way in our lives. We must wait for the Lord. David gives to us the reason in the last part of this verse. We must wait for Him because He only is our hope and salvation. There is nothing else in which we can hope and expect it to come to pass. Use this day well to ponder these things, people of God. Parents, speak of these things to your children and young people. Young people, is God your hope? Do you have anything else to wait for? Sing Psalters 104:6 and 106:1.

December 8 Read Daniel 9:16-19

Psalm 39:8 David realizes that it is only by the way of forgiveness from sin that he could have any hope. Daniel, while in the hands of his captors, realizes the same thing. Daniel also realizes that it is because of Israel's sin that they are in such a state. He also knows that only by confession and forgiveness will they be delivered from captivity. People of God, do you realize this truth? Does the fact of confession and forgiveness ring in your ears daily? Are we willing to confess our sins before God? If we won't, He will bring chastisement upon us until we confess this truth. Sin is no laughing matter. It must be forgiven, and it can only be forgiven by our Father in heaven. Keep us from sin, O Lord and lead us in right paths. Sing Psalters 104:7 and 106:2.

December 9 Read Job 2:1-13

Psalm 39:9 Job was stricken by Satan with God's permission. Job goes to the ash pile to mourn his distress and wonder why this affliction was upon him. After all wasn't he the man who was "a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" How could this happen to him. He sacrificed daily for himself and his children. Why was this happening to him? Eventually it was revealed

to Job that this was God's doing and was for his profit. Do we realize this? When calamities come, do we realize that it is the hand of God upon us for our profit? Or do we lash out at those around us, or against the world, or even against God? We must be silent and know that God does all things for the good of them that love him as Paul teaches us in Romans 8:28. Sing Psalter 104:7.

December 10 Read Proverbs 3:1-12

Psalm 39:10 In yesterday's meditation we saw that affliction in this life may be chastisement from our heavenly Father who knows what is good for us. Does David seem to be too bold to make the request of today's verse? Does he know better than God? Can we tell God that we have suffered enough, and it is time to stop? The answer, of course, is no but David does it because he knows that God is a God of mercy. He has experienced the mercy of God in the past and he knows that God will hear his prayer. Remember that he confessed his sin. This is necessary. There will be no mercy from God without confession. We, too, by God's grace through Christ can pray to have God's strokes taken from us. We, too, have tasted of God's mercies which are great. God will hear our prayers and answer them in His grace. Sing Psalter 106:2.

December 11 Read Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

Psalm 39:11 If you watch a moth through its whole life cycle, you would discover that its beauty is truly fleeting. This is the picture of us and our beauty gotten by sin when it is chastised by the touchstone of God's justice. What we think to be beautiful in and about ourselves is nothing and emptiness before the hand of Almighty God. This is not something that happens to a few in this life; our text tells us that every man is vanity. Solomon who learned the principle from his father, tells us that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." How do we respond to these truths? Are we puffed up with pride and try to hide behind our manmade beauty? Or do we with humbleness of heart bow before God and say, "O God how great thou art!". Sing Psalters 104:8 and 106:3.

December 12 Read Hebrews 13:10-21

Psalm 39:12 People of God, do you confess with David that you are a stranger here on this earth? As you shop for Christmas presents does that truth show? Or are we convinced that this world is our home and we need to have as many of its delights as we can? David was living in Jerusalem. God had given him peace from his enemies. No foreign nation threaten his home; yet he knew that this earth was not his abiding place. He knew that this was still the "valley of the shadow of death." Because he knew this, he wept and prayed for God to deliver him. Is this our desire, people of God? Do we wish to leave this place and go to heaven? Are we praying "thy kingdom come" in all sincerity? This world is not our home; we look for that city whose

builder and maker is God. We can do that through our Lord Jesus Christ who lived in this world and died for His people. Let these be our thoughts as we look to celebrate His birth. Sing Psalters 104:9, 106:4-5, and 107:3-4.

December 13 Read Psalm 39

Psalm 39:13 David asked God to spare him before death took him. David must have wanted to do more in God's kingdom. He must have felt that his work was not finished yet. Is our work in the kingdom finished on this earth? Are we doing any work in the kingdom? Do we have any work to do in the kingdom of Christ? We most certainly have kingdom work to do in this life! While all are not ministers, or elders, or deacons, all have been given work to do. Each saint from the youngest child to the eldest white-headed grandfather has a calling to do in this life. We must seek out that calling by the study of God's word and by prayer. Then we must carry out that calling. We may not shirk our responsibility. We may not bury our talent in the sand as the unprofitable servant did. We must all glorify Him and do the work He has given us. Let us pray for the grace to do this while we have breath. Sing Psalter 104:10 and 106:6.

December 14 Read Psalm 40:1-5

Psalm 40:1 To me this Psalm is a continuation of the previous one. David finds the answer to his prayer of Psalm 39. He does this by waiting patiently. Do we wait patiently? Young people, are you too eager to grow up and do adult activities instead of waiting for God's time? Parents, are you impatient concerning God's will for your life and the life of your family? Aged saints, is it hard for you to wait for your path into glory? We must wait with patience. Why? Because our times are in God's hands. It is He that has ordained the carrying out of our life. If we try to run ahead of Him, like Jacob, we will meet with disastrous results. Wait upon the Lord and He will bring **His** way to pass for us. Sing Psalter 108:1 and 111:1.

December 15 Read Isaiah 12

Psalm 40:2 In waiting for Jehovah, David received the blessedness of salvation. As Christmas approaches, are we thinking about salvation's blessings? Do we remember that the babe in the manger becomes the accursed one on the cross. Christ died the painful death of the cross to lift us out of the horrible pit of sin. He died that our feet might be established upon the rock of His truths and that our goings might be established in this life. Are we thinking of these things? Are we looking to commemorate these things on Christmas? Salvation is a wonderful gift. It is appropriate to think of how we received it at this time of the year. Let us look beyond the world's supposed joy and look to the joy of our salvation. Sing Psalters 108:2.

Study Guide on the Book of Judges (4)

by Rev. Douglas Kuiper

Week 14

Judges 13:1-25: Samson's Birth and Call

Samson was unique among the judges. He alone was a Nazarite. His strength was legendary, and still is. And he delivered Israel singlehandedly—Gideon fought with just a few, but Samson fought alone. In all these ways, he was a picture of Jesus Christ.

Samson also was the last of the judges—apart from Samuel. But Samuel's judgeship (I Samuel 7:15ff) was less a deliverance of Israel from her enemies, than it was a causing Israel to walk in the fear of God. Samson was the last of the judges to deliver Israel from her great oppressor, the Philistines.

Yet his work was only a beginning. It was too great for even the great Samson. The finishing of this work required a king—David would be the one finally and completely to subdue the Philistines.

That God would use Samson in a unique way to achieve great things for His covenant people is evident already in this chapter. God announces Samson's birth to a barren mother. He requires of Samson's parents that they raise their child a Nazarite from birth. What a picture, again, of the salvation He gave us in Christ, whose birth to a virgin already indicated that He would be unique—the savior of the church, the head of elect humanity!

Verse 1: Israel's oppression

1. Is this the same, or a different, oppression of Israel by the Philistines than that mentioned in Judges 10:6-7?
2. What part of Israel especially is oppressed by the Philistines?
3. How does it become apparent that Israel's oppression was especially miserable?

Verses 2-23: The announcement of Samson's birth.

1. Why is it significant that Samson's mother was barren?
2. Using a Bible dictionary, find the meaning of the name "Samson."
3. Using a Bible commentary, study verse 18 and explain what the angel means that his name is "secret."
4. How, and why, did the angel of the Lord do "wonderously" (vs. 19)?
5. This was a time of great idolatry. Is there any indication that Samson's parents also were weak in faith, or not?

Verses 4, 5, 7, 14: Samson the Nazarite from birth

1. What, really, was a Nazarite? Using a Bible dictionary, find what the word means. What fundamental truth did the Nazarite show Israel?
2. To what three special laws were Nazarites bound? How did these three particularly illustrate the fundamental truth that the Nazarite meant to show Israel?
3. Why was Samson bound only to two of them?
4. Why was his mother bound to one of them, during her pregnancy?
5. Were most Nazarites made Nazarites from birth, for life? If not, what was true of most Nazarites? Why was Samson different?
6. In this respect especially, Samson was a picture of Jesus Christ. But how? Was Christ a Nazarite? If not, how was Samson as a Nazarite a picture of Christ?

Verses 24-25: Samson's birth and growth

1. Where are Zorah and Eshtaol?
2. What does it mean that the Spirit of the LORD began to move Samson?

Week 15

Judges 14:1-20: Samson's Marriage to a Philistine Woman

We noted last week that Samson was unique as regards his birth, his being a Nazarite, and his strength. But he stands out also as a sinner. Scripture records one great sin of Gideon as judge (Judges 8:22ff); but it indicates that Samson battled another great sin, his whole life.

Having noted last week that Samson is a picture of Christ, we now note that, as a sinner, he fails as a picture of Christ. Christ was without sin. And Christ devotes Himself to one woman, whom He makes godly—His church (pictured in Israel), not the world (pictured by the Philistines).

So, we must take warning from Samson's sins. Particularly, let us not dilly dally with the young men and women of the world! Let us find our life mates in the church.

And yet, the gospel includes this...God uses sin to accomplish His purpose (Acts 4:27-28)! What a comfort to us, who, like Samson, are truly God's children, and yet constantly battle with sin.

Verses 1-7: Samson's desire to marry a woman of Timnath

1. Was Samson right in desiring to marry this woman?
2. Were his parents right in discouraging him from doing so? Were they right in taking her for him?
3. What is the point of the phrase in verse 4, "it was of the LORD"?

Verse 6: Samson's great strength

1. Find other indications in chapters 14-16 that Samson is noted for his strength.
2. What explains Samson's strength?
3. What was significant about Samson killing a lion? Is this in any way a picture of the work of Christ?

Verses 8-20: Samson's marriage

1. What impression do these verses give about Samson's wife?
2. How should we evaluate Samson's killing of 30 men, verse 19? Was it spite? Personal vengeance? Or is this too an indication of his faith (Hebrews 11:32)?

Week 16

Judges 15:1-20: Samson's Judgeship

Here are recorded Samson's amazing feats, his acts of war against the Philistines. To do these things, God had raised him up, and equipped him.

Are we capable of fighting our enemies with the vengeance Samson had? Relying on the power of God in Jesus Christ, are we valiant in fighting our spiritual battles? You can say that not all of us are Samsons, and that God gave Samson unique gifts. Perhaps it is better to say that God gave Samson unique opportunities—the battles he fought were more public, and the casualties more extensive, than appears to be the case with the battles which we fight. But we must all fight. And the power to fight is found in Christ. Do we have the same hatred for God's enemies? Do we have the same love for God's cause?

Christ did. Samson is a picture of Christ. Christ defeated some, already while He lived, in pronouncing upon them the woes and judgments that would certainly come upon them for their sin and unbelief.

Verses 1-8: Samson avenging himself for his wife being given to another

1. Samson says he was more blameless than the Philistines (vs. 3). Was he really? Or was he wrong to kill these people? What help does verse 18 give in answering these questions?
2. Find passages in Scripture that speak of "vengeance," and study them; on the basis of them, discuss what vengeance is, and who is permitted to avenge God's people of the wrongs we suffer.
3. How is Samson here a picture of Christ, particularly of Christ as judge?

Verses 9-17: Samson at Lehi

1. What is significant about the men of Judah coming to arrest Samson, rather than defending him?
2. What is the explanation for the great destruction which he worked that day? How does the weapon which he used underscore this?
3. What does "Ramath-lehi" mean (vs 17)?

Verses 18-20: Samson's thirst

1. Explain verse 18—was Samson despairing? Complaining? Praying? Trusting?

2. Did the water really come out of the jaw? Why or why not?
3. What does Enhakkore mean?
4. Of what other incident recorded in Scripture, involving the Great Judge, does this one remind you?

Week 17

Judges 16:1-31 - Samson's Fall and Death

Last week we noted Samson's victories while alive; this week his victories in death. Last week his great zeal for God's cause; this week his personal falls again. What a picture of a child of God, battling against sin not only outwardly but inwardly! Speaking for all God's children, Paul wrote in Romans 7:21-25: "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."

Yes, that is how it is. We serve the law of sin. So doing, we bring on ourselves misery. Israel did as a nation. Samson did personally. And this misery of sin leads us to see that our only hope is in Christ. And it leads us to long for everlasting life in heaven! Samson was delivered. Paul was delivered. We too shall be delivered!

Samson fell in battle. He gave his life for the cause. And he received the victor's crown, the reward of grace - for he believed (Hebrews 11:32).

Verses 1-3: Samson in Gaza

1. What purpose did the gates of a city serve in Biblical times? And what is significant about Samson carrying these gates away?
2. How does Samson appear here as a picture of Jesus Christ?

Verses 4-21: Samson and Delilah

1. List and discuss Samson's various sins, recorded in these verses. Notice also the progression in his sin. How could this progression in sin have been stopped?
2. Why did God lead Samson into temptation and let him fall?
3. Why did Samson think that, after his hair was cut off, he could go out as at other times, and free himself (vs. 20); and why did God depart from him at this time, but not earlier?
4. How did Christ deal with temptation, and how ought we deal with the temptations that Samson faced?

Verses 22-31: Samson's death

1. In verse 28 Samson prays that he might be "avenged." Was this a proper, godly prayer, or not? What reasons do you have for your answer?
2. Murder and suicide are sins against the sixth commandment. Was Samson's death sin against the sixth commandment in any respect? If not, why not?
3. In what respects is the death of Samson a picture of the death of Christ?
4. What lesson does his death, and his willingness to die, have for us in the spiritual battles that we fight? ❖

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The Course We Run

by Rev. Steven R. Key

The topic we consider today falls under the main theme of the Convention, "Running the Race." Hebrews 12, verses 1 and 2, from which text the theme is taken, is a passage that builds upon what was

written in chapter 11. And Hebrews 11 is the chapter of that great cloud of witnesses, those who lived by faith, received a good report of God their Savior, and now await *our* perfection with them. Hebrews 12 points to those

who have run the race before us. They now stand lining the course that you and I must run. They are cheering us on, as it were. And we look at them and are encouraged and challenged, even excited to accomplish what they were able to accomplish before us. That is the picture, very briefly, of the text.

I am called to speak specifically of THE COURSE that we run. You understand that when we come before a theme that speaks of running the race, we are dealing with a figure of speech. God addresses His Word to us in language that we can understand, and uses figures taken from our earthly life to set before us spiritual realities. So it is also with this idea of running a race. Greek culture put no little emphasis on sports. The Olympic games have their origins in ancient Greece and were well-known events to the early New Testament Christians. Those games consisted almost entirely of what we know as track events. Running and horse races were the leading events. But the idea of the Christian life as running a race predates the Olympic games. Already the Psalms in Psalm 119:32, shows us the confession of the believer, who says, *“I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.”* And the Song of Solomon presents the church, the Bride of Christ, as running after the One Whom she loves. So this evening we give some thought to the race that we run as Christians, and particularly the course that we run.

A Difficult Course

The race that you are called to run must be run on a difficult course. We don't run on a nice track, but on an obstacle course. When our whole life is compared to a race, the figure puts us in a giant stadium. You live your life in a giant stadium. That stadium is this world. The race that you run is found on a course marked by all the obstacles that characterize this world. It is a world of sin and darkness, of sicknesses and pains, a world filled temptations and sorrows.

It is striking that the word translated *race* in Hebrews 12:1 is the Greek word which translated literally would be *agony*. It is a contest in which you participate only through much agony. In addition, the course runs uphill. Your life as a Christian is a life that travels a narrow path taking you uphill, toward sights unseen. It leads toward that city that has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. The track to that goal is not only narrow, but it is elevated high off the ground, so that you must be very careful not to fall off, either to the right hand or to the left. To the right hand you would fall into the bondage of legalism or of works-righteousness, which would

rob you of your freedom in Christ; but to the left hand there are all the enticements of the world, those pleasures of sin which are only for a season and which lead to destruction.

Still more, the path on which you must run is not a smooth track, but a track filled with large stones that you have to carefully climb over or go around on what seems to be a treacherous ledge. And besides those boulders, there are pitfalls and water holes that you must wade through very carefully—especially because some of those pits are not merely muddy, but full of quicksand that would drag you down and suck your life out of you. And while you are climbing uphill, it isn't even a steady climb, but you have some areas of the course that are steeper than others, and some in fact which require you to climb sheer cliffs, relying on the help of those who have gone before and who will show you how to do so safely.

And when I speak of having to run a race on an obstacle course, I would be remiss if I didn't warn you that you will be running this race in a hostile environment! Oh yes, there is that cloud of witnesses cheering you on. You must focus on them. You must stick as close as possible to those who are on your side. But you are running the race in an enemy stadium, one still under the possession of the prince of this world, the wicked one. Let me tell you, in fact, about that wicked one. For a time he had access to heaven, to that city to which we travel. He doesn't any more. When Christ accomplished His perfect work on the cross and was exalted to heaven, the devil and his angels were cast out. Revelation 12 tells us about those happenings. But then we read this in Revelation 12:13-17: *“And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.”* The reference there is to his persecution of the church from which Christ came forth. *“And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.”* Does that mean that she now has no difficulties? Listen. *“And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”*

Oh yes, you run this race before a hostile crowd. I don't mean to imply that they always openly express their hatred against us. Often they pretend to be friends. They may even run along side us for a little while. But all the while their purpose is to prevent us from finishing the race. We are constantly confronted by obstacles. You must run on a difficult course.

Furthermore, the course that we run is a course that requires endurance. That also is emphasized by the idea of a race.

The difficulty of our course is denoted by several other figures in Scripture. Sometimes our Christian life is likened to a wrestling match. We are told in Ephesians 6:12, "*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*" Wrestling requires strength, agility, and a certain knowledge of technique in the exerted effort to conquer the opponent. Other times in Scripture the Christian's course is compared to a battle. We are called as soldiers of Jesus Christ—not to fight with any earthly weapons, but to bear hardship, not being entangled with the affairs of this life, but to fight the good fight of faith (II Timothy 2:3; I Timothy 6:12). And we understand that a soldier is subject to great dangers.

But in running a race the body is taxed for endurance. Intense exertion is required for this long run. It demands not merely speed of foot, but the strongest powers of physical endurance, a healthy heart and strong lungs.

You may have noticed that Hebrews 12:1 speaks of the need to run with *patience*. The nature of this course is not one for sprinting. The course is of different lengths for each of us. Paul Noorman undoubtedly would have been here with us tonight, but he had finished his race. The length of his run wasn't very long. You don't know how long the course is for you. It may be 80 more years long. It may not be much longer than what you have already run. But the fact is that the course is not one made for sprinting. Some of us are naturally inclined to running short distances at a fast pace. I was never a long-distance runner. I didn't have the lung capacity for it. I was a sprinter. But you can't sprint an obstacle course. You may "make tracks" for a little ways, but you're constantly running up against obstacles in this course. So it becomes an endurance race.

Moreover, we run this race with many hindrances of our own. Hebrews 12:1 admonishes us to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.

What the text calls *every weight* is anything that hinders us during our race, anything which dulls our spiritual senses, anything that stifles our spiritual appetite or chokes our prayer life. There are many, many things that hinder us, aren't there, so many daily cares and anxieties. And *the sin which doth so easily beset us*—if we had to run this race alone, we would never make it! We would soon become exhausted and fall over the side to our own destruction. Or we would quit and say, "It's not worth it." Yes, if it were left to us, we would never finish the race, and we would never obtain the crown of victory. But this race is not a man-made and humanly contrived race.

A Course Divinely Appointed

We run on a course appointed by God. Hebrews 12:1 speaks of "*the race that is set before us.*" That's a race *appointed, determined* for us. It was appointed for us from eternity. You were created by God and recreated in Christ Jesus to run this race that was determined from before the foundation of the world as the way to glory for the people of God.

It is the race initiated by God Himself in paradise when He put enmity between the seed of the serpent and the Seed of the woman. All through the Old Testament God's people had to run this same race. They ran by faith. They ran as those of whom the world is not worthy. In grace God has surrounded us with that great cloud of witnesses. They are before us as examples of faith: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, yes, even the former harlot whom God redeemed, Rahab. There was Samson as well as David, and thousands of others who cannot be named for lack of time. They were all sinners saved by grace, who also ran the race and by faith obtained victory. They ran with their eyes fixed on the goal, the heavenly country and the promised Seed through Whom they would obtain that goal. Their testimony through the Scriptures is this: He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities; but we have been kept by the power of His grace.

That same race is now yours, appointed by God for you. It is yours as Protestant Reformed young people. Mind you, it is an amazing thing that you are addressed by God here as contestants in this race. It isn't because you are so good, so strong naturally. It isn't because God saw in you an ability to run such a race. It isn't of anything in you. Moreover, your life isn't set on this course because of what you decided. You didn't decide to join the team. You haven't volunteered.

God chose you and set you on this course. Do you believe that? God took you who were dead in trespasses and sins, and breathed into you the breath of life. He sent His Son to redeem you. He quickened you, made you alive by the regenerating work of His Holy Spirit. And so He called you and made you willing to endure this hardship.

Moreover He equips you with everything necessary for this great endurance run. You run, therefore, as those redeemed by Christ, created and sanctified in Him in order that you might enter this course, run the race, and obtain the victory. You must know that. Because all along the course it is necessary to look to Jesus the author and finisher of your faith.

Know also that God has determined the exact course that each one of you shall run. I already talked about the hardships and difficulties that must be faced on this course. But each of you shall face different difficulties and obstacles. Some of you have already faced particular trials and afflictions. Some of you shall face great difficulties and sorrows. Each of you will face particular temptations, even though with every temptation God shall also “*make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*” (I Corinthians 10:13). Some—trying foolishly to seek your own course—will fall into grievous sins, yet to be restored by the wonder work of God’s grace. But you who are Christ’s will run, following the course marked out for you, until you reach the goal and receive the victor’s crown. But we must say still more about this course being appointed.

That the course is appointed by God means not simply that He has made us contestants in this race and determined the course itself, but He also has determined how we must run the race.

If you and I are runners in this race, we must run as God has instructed us by His Holy Spirit. In all contests there are rules. If a contestant breaks the rules on the way to the goal, he is disqualified. For us those rules are set down in the infallible Word of truth. They are set before us by the authority of Him Who alone has the right to determine the rules of the course. So definitive are those rules, that we read in II Timothy 2:5, “*And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.*” That means no one receives the crown of victory, except according to the laws laid down for the contest. It is not the mere running of the race, therefore, that secures the prize, but it is whether you have run as *God* would have you run.

There are those who would run the course to heaven. But they want to choose their own course, select their own pace, and set their own rules. That is why, Scripture tells us, when you look at the broad picture many run, but few obtain the prize. You have to run the course marked out in the Scriptures of truth, and confirmed in the example of Jesus. Then there will be found in you a stretching out yourself to walk in His fear, to live to His praise, and to enjoy His fellowship. In you will come to expression the confession of Psalm 119:32, “*I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.*”

Then the work of the blessed Spirit of Christ will be found thriving in your soul. For to do this, you see, you must have the life of Christ in your soul. To be able to run is of divine grace, the power of Christ’s life in you. To endure in the running you must have a continual supply of His grace, bestowed from the fulness of your covenant Head. To persevere requires the strength of Christ continually being made perfect in your weakness. But so you are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

That means, of course, that Jesus is not set before you as a mere example, as one of the great cloud of witnesses cheering you on. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith, the One in Whom you put your trust. Nothing will divert our minds from the many hindrances and temptations except faith and trust in Christ Jesus. And when verse 2 of Hebrews 12 speaks of Jesus as the Author and Finisher of our faith, He is that because He ran our race. For the joy that was set before Him, He fulfilled all righteousness, enduring the cross for us.

The race that He ran was one that we could not run. Oh yes, there is an aspect of His race that we still must endure today. He had to endure the troubles and sorrows of this life, even persecution at the hands of wicked men, which troubles we must also face. But even then our suffering does not compare with what He had to endure. We suffer as sinners, you see. He was the Sinless One. But His race was one that we could not run. For on His course was an obstacle that we could never have overcome. In fact, that obstacle was on His course because of us. In His path was the cross. Every step along the way He was conscious of the fact that He was drawing closer and closer to the cross, where the fullest expression of God’s curse was seen. That cross marked God’s curse. And that curse was there because of our sins, yours and mine. Christ took our curse upon Himself and endured.

He endured for the joy that was set before Him, the joy which included the salvation of His Church, the Bride which He loves. Sustained by the clear truth that the only way to glory is the way of perfect obedience, even through suffering, Jesus ran the race, being obedient even to the death of the cross. He fixed His eyes on the joy that was set before Him and endured the cross, despising the shame.

Are you afraid of shame, of being rejected by others? If you run this course, you will suffer shame. You will be rejected by some of your peers. Some may even have to suffer rejection of family members. Your fellow employees and neighbors will heap shame upon you. That's a fact of life, because this race leads down the narrow way, the way that is not popular, a way that is exclusive—not to skin color or nationality, not to male or female, not to rich or poor; but exclusive to those who belong to Christ. You always have plenty of opportunities to escape that shame and to gain the praise of men. You will be asked to go places and to do things that would take you off course and inflict injury upon your own conscience. You will be asked to compromise principles which you may not compromise. Always the question stands before you, "Will you have the praise of men, or the praise of God?"

Christ, too, faced shame. He faced not only the shame of His earthly peers, the shame of the world, but He faced the shame of the cross! That shame of rejection that we fear, Christ took willingly upon Himself. He despised the shame! He didn't succumb to it; He did not compromise to "save face" among men; He did not faint because of it. He considered it worthless in comparison to the joy that was set before Him. He scorned that shame! It meant nothing to Him. He scorned that shame for our salvation. He died in order to bring us to God.

He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. He stands before us on this course at the very beginning, as the Starter of the race. There is that great cloud of witnesses alongside the course, cheering us on. But from the very beginning of the race, there stands our Lord Christ as the Starter of the race. Before the time of the "starter's pistol," all those who were in the race had to look at the starter. The starter was in place, the runners set, and all fixed their eyes upon that starter. At the moment he dropped his glove or handkerchief, off they went. Look to Jesus. Take your eyes off Him, and you will falter. From the very beginning look to Him, Who is the Author of your faith. Look at all that He has done for you.

Look at the relationship He has established with you. Look at the price He paid for you. Then run.

But look to Him also as the Finisher of your faith. As Jesus stands at the beginning of the course, so He stands as the end, the Rewarder of all those Who run to Him. Keep your eyes upon Him throughout the course of the race. Don't let the enemy distract you. Don't let them entice you to their wells of poison when you are feeling tired. Look to Him Who sits upon the throne, King of all, Lord of your life.

We run the race and are assured of the victory in Him. It is in that light, in that victory, that you run the race. You are on a course marked out by Christ's bloody victory, a victory He obtained as your Head, your Redeemer. Remember that. It is an amazing course, appointed you by God's grace.

A Course With A Tremendous Goal

Finally, young people, I remind you just briefly that we run this race on a course that has a tremendous goal. The goal is perfection.

What a contrast to the goal which is common to man. The Bible both in Proverbs and in Isaiah speaks of the goal toward which man naturally runs. "*Their feet run to evil*" (Proverbs 1:16; Isaiah 59:7). Peter uses terms a little more graphic in I Peter 4:4 when he speaks of those outside of Christ running toward "*excess of riot*" (I Peter 4:4). And you know that it is easy for us, taking our eyes off the goal that God has set before us, to head toward the wrong goal. Examples are set before us repeatedly in the Scriptures, and we know them as well from our own experience. The prophecy of Haggai, to mention one example, is a stark reminder. There the people of God are found focusing upon themselves, upon their own things. Their goal was their own earthly prosperity. God sent His prophet, in fact, to rebuke them, to call them to repentance, and to remind them of their calling to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and not to run after the things of this world. How quickly we take our eyes off the goal.

The goal, however, that God has set before us is the beauty of holiness, the glory of God coming to expression in our lives—and that perfectly. The new man in Christ knows instinctively that, when God gave His Son to save His people from their sins, that salvation was to be perfect. What else can the inspired apostle Peter mean when he writes to us in II Peter 1:4, "*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.*"

To be *partakers of the divine nature*—that is what is set before us.

Which is to say that the goal is not merely heaven. All would like to go to heaven, if they can determine their own way there and what heaven will be like. The essence of our salvation is not that we are excused from going to hell, and taken into a tremendously beautiful place called heaven. Certainly that is part of our salvation. But the essence of heaven is not what will be seen outwardly, but the enjoyment in body and soul of perfect fellowship with the living God through Jesus Christ our Lord. To use the language of Psalm 27, it is to “*dwell in the house of the LORD*” in the fellowship of His perfect love, and “*to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.*”

Apart from the enjoyment of His love and fellowship, all the outward beauty of heaven would be lost. So the goal of the race is that fellowship with the Holy One through Christ in the state of perfection. It is to glorify and praise Him as prophets, to serve Him as priests, walking forever in good works, to reign in perfect freedom over all the works of His hands, and to do so perfectly.

But at the goal there is also a prize. That prize is a crown, the crown of victory. It is the crown of life everlasting which the Lord has promised to all those who love Him. It is the crown of glory that never fades away.

In those moments when you are struggling, and find yourself nearly exhausted from your exertions in the race, look to that prize, held in the hands of your Savior. Do so in your youth. Because that crown of glory is worn by Him Who has run this race for you and has obtained the victory for you. A glimpse by faith of that glorious crown and of Him Who owns that crown as your Friend and elder Brother will revive you like a cup of water given to those who are midway through a marathon. When divine grace gives you wisdom to have respect unto the recompense—the payoff—of the reward, then you will find that even bearing the reproach of Christ is greater riches than all the treasures of this world.

Press on. Forgetting those things that are behind, reach forward. For He Who has given you to run this race will also see you through to the accomplishment of His work of grace in you. ❖

Rev. Key is pastor of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull Iowa. This article was given as a speech at the Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention at Dordt College on July 24, 2006.

My Mother's Bible

*1. This book is all that's left me now, –
Tears will unbidden start, –
With faltering lip and throbbing brow
I press it to my heart.*

*For many generations past
Here is our family tree;
My mother's hands this Bible clasped,
She, dying, gave it me.*

*2. A-h! well do I remember those
Whose names these records bear;
Who round the hearthstone used to close,
After the evening prayer,
And speak of what these pages said
In tones my heart would thrill!
Though they are with the silent dead,
Here are they living still!*

*3. My father read this holy book
To brothers, sisters, dear;
How calm was my poor mother's look,
Who loved God's word to hear!
Her angel face, – I see it yet!
What thronging memories come!
Again that little group is met
Within the walls of home!*

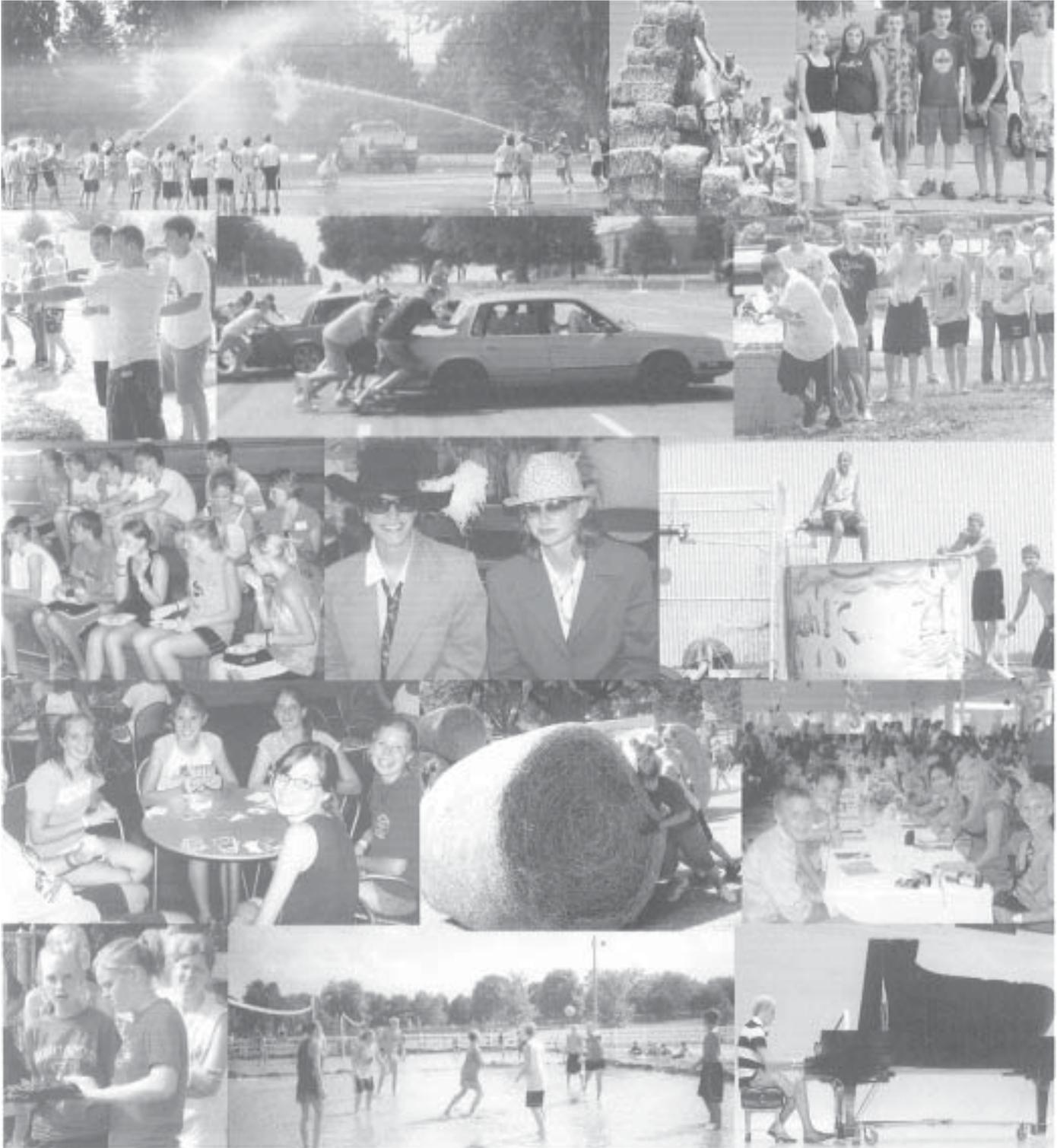
*4. Thou truest friend man ever knew,
Thy constancy I've tried;
When all were false, I found thee true,
My counselor and guide.
The mines of earth no treasures give
That could this volume buy;
In teaching me the way to live,
It taught me how to die.*

*by George P. Morris (b. 1802, d. 1864)
from McGuffey's Fifth Reader page 351*

Young People's



Convention Pictures

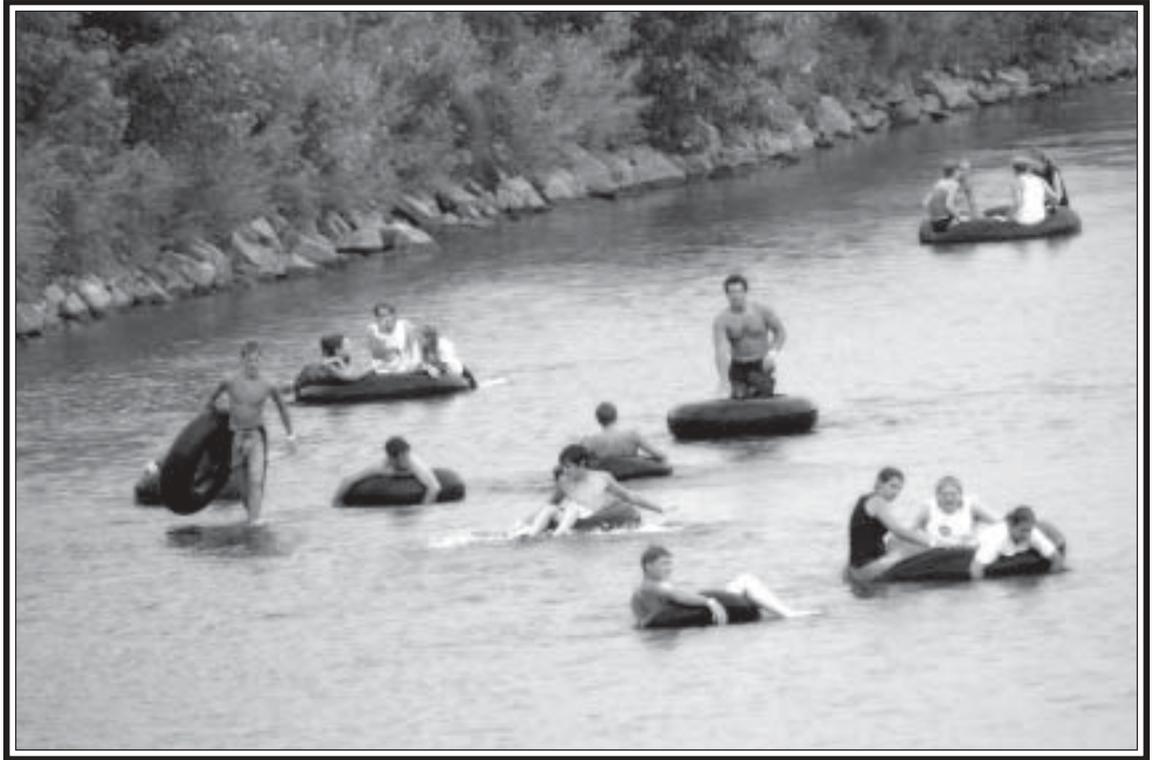




Seth Kalsbeek, Ben Kuiper, Tom VanderScaff, and Jon Pastoor get excited for the convention.

The young people playing human foosball.





The conventioneers floating on tubes down the Rock River.

Playing broomball on a soapy tarp.





Doing the car push during team competitions.

Transporting the young people to the activities.





Teams competing in stacking hay bails the highest.

Young people attempting to stuff a greased pig into a trash can.



The "Kleverpark" Church In Haarlem

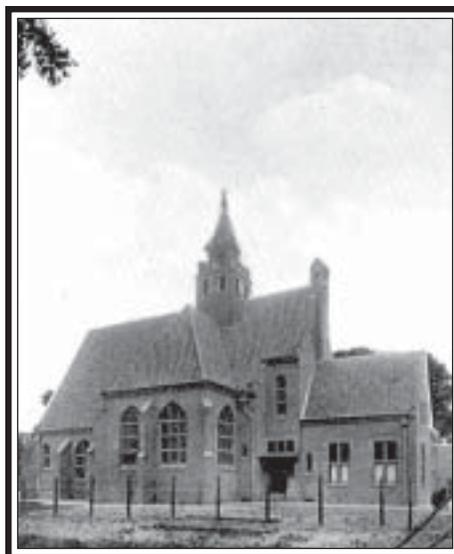
by J. P. de Klerk

This picture was taken the day the building was finished on behalf of the State Reformed Church of the Dutch city of Haarlem. The name was chosen because of the park which surrounded it. Next to the entrance the rooms for the gatherings of elders and deacons, the minister's room (for study and consultations), and the room for babies before they were baptized. Like all the other State Reformed churches, about 11% of the members are leaving since it has united with the Reformed and Lutheran churches in "Samen op weg" (together on our way); modernism ruins the basis of these churches. The majority of the inhabitants of Haarlem are Roman Catholic.

Haarlem was founded in the eleventh century by a Dutch Count who built a fortress. It became a town in 1245, at the river the Spaarne, in what later became the province North Holland.

In the days of Prince William I of Orange, Haarlem (1572) was 7 months besieged by the Spanish army. The Reformed garrison refused to give the city over to the Spanish Roman Catholic king of Spain (Philip II) who wanted to crush the Reformed faith. Food became scarce, ammunition used up. Half of the defense forces were killed, and several soldiers replaced by courageous inhabitants. They lost the battle.

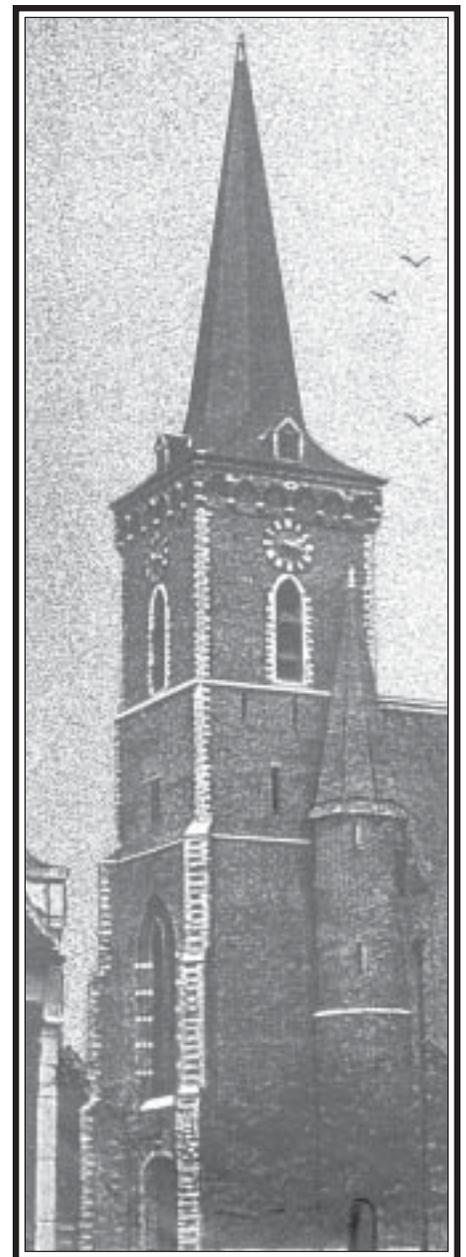
At the end of the sixteenth century, Haarlem became a center of the textile industry because many Huguenots came from France to The Netherlands and they were specialists in making fine linen, velvet and Gobelin tapestry. ❖



In Dreischor

by J. P. de Klerk

This is the tower of the big State Reformed Church of the small Dutch city of Dreischor (municipality Brouwershaven) in the province of Zeeland known as a modernist parish. The building had been under construction from the fourteenth until the sixteenth century. It stands on the ruins of the castle Windenburg



that was built in the Middle Ages. Several kinds of bricks have been used of different shapes and colors. The church has two naves and several halls of an unusual shape.

In the past, Dreischor has been an island and was called a high manor (“hoge heerlijk-held”) of the nobelmen, and the owner had rights and duties, preroga-

tives and options. Dykes were built and roads made, loans given, etc.

The word Dreischor is given because there were three big dykes coming together at that place (dialect, drei means three). Agriculture was mainly flax, which was in great demand for the fabrication of linen. ❖

The Small Pier

by J. P. de Klerk

These days quiet places of natural beauty are in demand. There is too much noise, too much shocking news, too many problems to be solved, and too many obstacles in life to be overcome. This peaceful place is a fine, simple retreat, unspoiled by dirt, and plenty of fish (trout and eels).

The Namu-namu lake is one of the hundreds spread all over New Zealand, closed off from the rivers, and filled up by rain water from the surrounding virgin hills. It is good for swimming and fishing or going around in a

rowing scull. You can write a poem or a letter, read or study. Fantails and silvereyes will fly around you to catch insects from between the long grass. That is why my son, Theo, took a photo of the old small pier at this spot. It was early in the morning and the sun was not yet in the sky that lovely summer day. ❖

J.P. de Klerk is a writer and journalist in Ashhurst, New Zealand.



Church News

BAPTISMS

"For the promise is unto you and your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2:39

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Simon Theodore, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ted Brummel—Faith, MI

Maci Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Greg Holstege—Faith, MI

Jaxon Trey, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Pipe—Faith, MI

Joelle Nicol, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jared Dykstra—Georgetown, MI

Alayna Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Ensink—Georgetown, MI

Payton Jaye, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Frank Tolsma—Georgetown, MI

Wesley Thomas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tom VanDenTop—Grace, MI

Nicholas Alexander, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nick Kleyn—Grace, MI

Carl David, son of Rev. & Mrs. Richard Smit—Immanuel, Alberta, CAN

Anna Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chris Bauer—Peace, IL

Kyle Andrew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Michael DeJong—Peace, IL

Isiah Sean, son of Emily DeJong—Peace, IL

Kathryn Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Buiters—Redlands, CA

Chloe Erika and Aiden Timothy, twins of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Pipe—Southeast, MI

Abby Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Matt Kuiper—Southwest, MI

Adam James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Potjer—Southwest, MI

Megan Ruth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Murray Geertsma—Wingham, Ontario, CAN

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Proverbs 22:6

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

Elizabeth Koll—Byron Center, MI

Tyler Schimmel—Georgetown, MI

Blake Wierenga—Georgetown, MI

Joshua Mulder—Edmonton, Alberta, CAN

Joanna Bevaart—Immanuel, Alberta, CAN

Melissa Tolsma—Immanuel, Alberta, CAN

Jade Regnerus—Randolph, WI

Paige Swan—South Holland, IL

Brandon Huisinga—South Holland, IL

MARRIAGES

"For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." Psalm 48:14

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

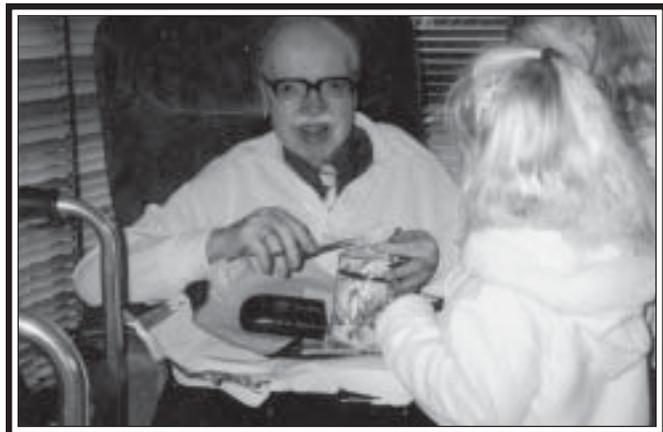
Mr. Eric Doezema and Miss Tonya Wittingen—Faith, MI

Mr. Justin Miersma and Miss Maria Cleveland—Hope, MI

Mr. Jeremiah Busscher and Miss Courtney Brummel—Hudsonville, MI

Mr. Eric Armendariz and Miss Brandy Dykshorn—Peace, IL

A long time writer for *Beacon Lights*, J. P. de Klerk, was taken to glory on September 20 at the age of 81. Mr. de Klerk had a big place in his heart for the youth of the church and willingly gave of himself to bring our readers a sense of the faith of our forefathers in the Netherlands. The picture shows him with some of his grandchildren in May of 2003.



Martin Luther (2): Lightning Strike

Clouds gathered and darkened. A storm brewed in the air. A young, traveling university student bent his head and held his cap in place as raindrops started to pelt the ground and a gust of wind swept over his path. It was a warm day in July. Thunderstorms were not frequent in the land of Germany, but neither were they unheard of. They were cause for concern, though. In 1505, storms were not merely storms. Thunder was not merely loud noise. Thunder was the voice of an angry God. His judgments were surely near those within the hearing of such displeasure. Besides that, elves and other such mysterious gnomes might be lurking behind the next tree or bend in the road. The twenty-one-year-old law student crouched a little more as he heard the rumble of thunder in the distance. He hurried on his way back to school.

The storm strengthened. Suddenly the young man sensed something strange, but it was only for a moment. There was no time to consider what it might mean. A clap of thunder exploded in his ears as a bolt of lightning knocked him to the ground. Yet, he was not left speechless.

“St. Anne, help me! I will become a monk,” he cried out. All his life he had been taught to seek help from departed saints. He had been taught that salvation de-



BEACON LIGHTS

“LITTLE LIGHTS”

... let it shine !

by Connie Meyer

ended not on the cross of Christ alone, but also on one’s own works of penance and pilgrimage. He was a very conscientious young man. He worked for his salvation with all his heart, but it never seemed to be enough. This grieved him deeply. And now—a bolt of lightning from God! He was terror stricken.

Whether from wind, rain, or dread, he began to shake. A vow was a vow. He was alive—to become a monk. He slowly rose and continued on his way, knowing his path in life was forever changed. Yet this young law student, named Martin Luther, could not know how very different his way in life would truly be. God, indeed, controlled every lightning bolt and drop of rain. Martin was alive for a very special work and purpose. ❖

Find the following underlined words from Psalm 135:7 in the puzzle below:

“He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasuries.”

V	A	P	O	U	R	S	M	R	S
F	C	A	S	D	N	A	B	E	G
L	O	B	G	N	F	H	I	U	N
T	S	R	A	E	P	R	V	N	I
D	N	I	W	C	U	W	O	D	N
U	E	N	D	S	B	D	N	M	T
I	F	G	A	A	E	A	R	T	H
H	T	E	S	U	A	C	H	K	G
M	R	T	E	I	O	U	T	R	I
T	G	H	T	E	K	A	M	I	L

Connie is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.

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"Living Sacrifices of Thankfulness"

Romans 12: 1-2

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

August 13 - 17, 2007

Temptation

We must put on the whole armor of God, seeking grace to withstand temptation; not conforming to, but rather standing fast in a corrupt world.

Prayer

Prayer is the chief part of thankfulness.

Victory in Christ

Our Christian walk must be as shining lights and a godly witness in this corrupt world.

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