

Beacon Lights

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“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

1 Peter 5:8

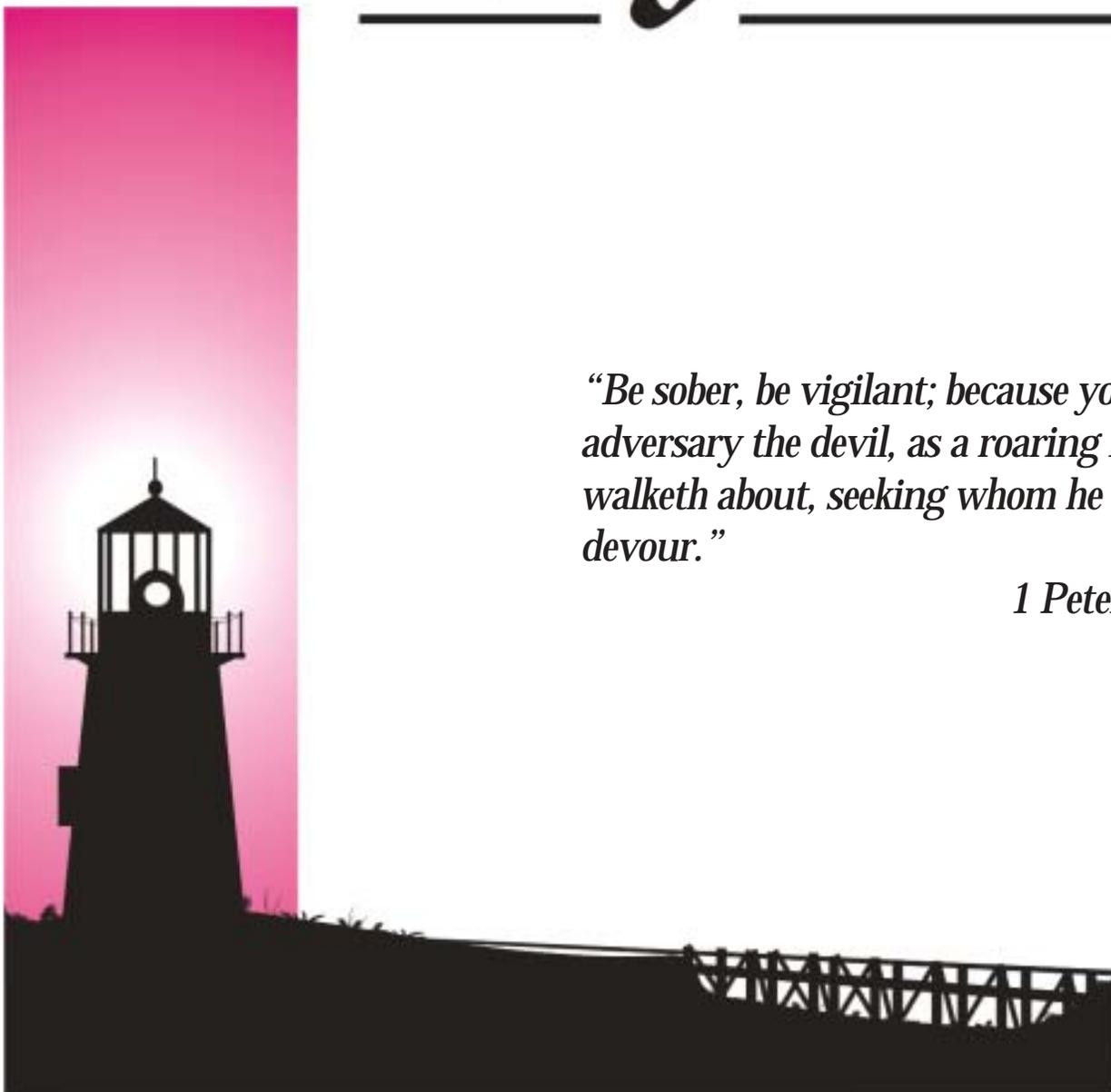


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BEACON LIGHTS

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Editorial

Spiritual Predators Prowl the Web



by John Huizenga

Herds of zebras, wildebeests, and gazelles surround the hungry lion, but his eyes and ears are alert for one that stands alone. Even a strong, healthy wildebeest could be taken down with some skill and strategy if it can be dealt with alone. So it is with the spiritual predator. He is hungry. His soul is empty, and he has been unable to fill the void with anything that satisfies. Like Satan who has now taught him his ways, he goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He seeks to fill his empty soul with the souls of men. His only goal is to devour. He is not interested in sport and meeting his match. He is not interested in those who stand united with others in God's word. It is not worth the effort when easier prey abounds for the alert predator. The devil took on Christ himself when he thought Christ to be at his weakest. There is not a man who is safe from such attacks. The devil has many servants, and as predators, they hunger continually, and seek those who are vulnerable to them, especially those who try to stand alone on their own strength.

Faith is the key to our safety from spiritual predators. It is knowledge given by God and nurtured within us through our parents and the church. Perhaps it could be compared to that sense or instinct that is nurtured in the young gazelle from birth to live and survive as a member of the herd. It is more than just knowing about the great truths of God's word, but it is loving these doctrines, living out of them, and growing in our knowledge along with all the other growth we experience in life.

That faith is a living, growing part of God's people that must be constantly nourished. God gives to each one of us his word to cherish and study on our own. But God is pleased to use the preaching of that word in his church as the chief means of nourishing that faith. Within the church our souls are virtually bathed in the heritage of doctrines that saints before us, after careful study of God's word, have come to know, love, and express for our spiritual nourishment. Here in the church, in living fellowship with saints around you and with God himself, like a young gazelle in the center of the herd, alert to its every move and collective awareness of the world around, you are safe.

Like sheep, however, we wander and find ourselves standing alone and exposed. Of course there are countless ways in which we foolishly expose ourselves to danger. We fight with fellow saints, we selfishly seek what we want apart from God's word and the church, we get too busy, etc. In recent years a whole new world has been opened up for exploration, play, work, learning, and yes...hunting. The Internet has proven to be an ideal stalking grounds for the spiritual predator. It is ideal because, like a net, it is capable of gathering a host of living active minds to display on the computer monitor of the predator. He watches as they chat together with their messages. When he finds a whole group, he scans them, watches for those most vulnerable, and moves in for a kill. The attack comes not with a frightening roar, but rather a seemingly innocent question. He comes with comments that draw attention. He gauges responses, carefully sifts through their thinking, and probes for soft spots. Feasting on them is only a matter of engaging them in conversation with the age-old question: "hath God said?"

On the Internet, such dialog between the predator and unsuspecting prey is not restricted by time, place, or interference from others. The predator can stalk and play his prey whenever he has time to sit at his computer. Everything he needs is in one physical place: his computer. Searching the whole world requires no physical effort; and no physical contact is necessary. The predator is able to remain virtually invisible.

Not only does the Internet bring stalking to a new level for the predator, the fields are teeming with young minds giddy with the delight of a whole new world to explore. Often they are alone at their computer in their own room. Few shepherds have found the wide, fertile plains, and if they have, are busy exploring on their own, or are busy tending the flocks in their old pastures. In the meantime the news of new land passes quickly among the lambs, and they flock to this new land of plenty. Here they play games, do their homework, explore the world, shop, chat with friends, and exercise their spiritual wings as they carry on Bible discussions with others.

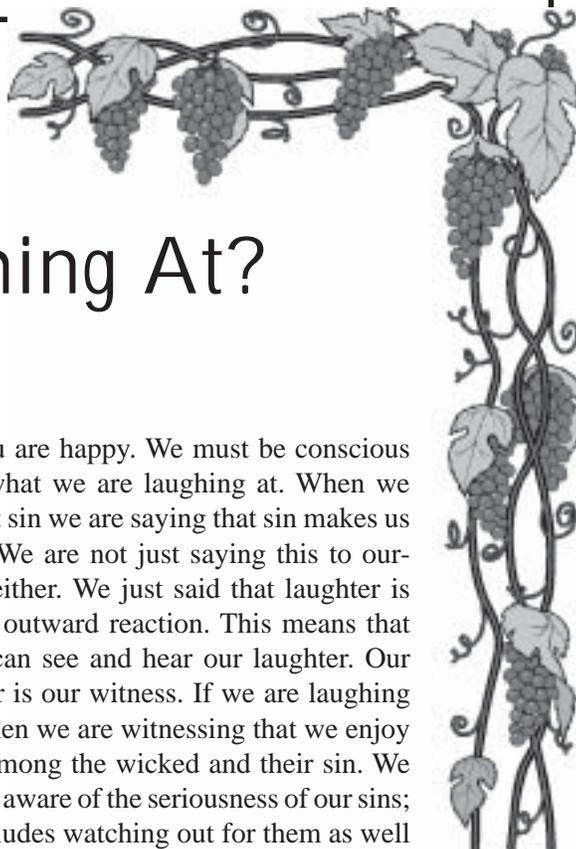
The discerning Christian is careful to avoid the places on the Internet where it is obvious no Christian belongs. But even in Bible discussions with others, we need to be on guard, because here the devil is able to strike at our mind, attitudes, and thinking with consequences that last for generations. What are some signs that one with whom you are discussing your faith may be a spiritual predator? 1) He trusts in his own strength—his mind, his education, his clever rhetoric—and is reluctant to bring God's word. When he does bring God's word, it is out of context, and presented as though one interpretation is as good as any. 2) He is proud. He uses his wit to expose weakness in his prey, and instill a sense of foolishness, so that they step closer lest they appear to be afraid. He quickly ridicules the shepherds and questions their wisdom. 3) He constantly challenges you to stand on your own and distance yourself from the guidance and instruction that you have trusted.

When a predator appears, God's people must stand together upon his word. Help one another. Search the Scriptures and expose the lies. Use the mind God has given you to think for yourself, but always in the light of Scripture. When new and attractive ideas are set forth, find out first what our forefathers did. Discuss questions with your parents, teachers, and pastors. We are foolish to think that they have never faced such questions before. When we ignore or minimize what the other members of the church have

learned and built up doctrinally so that we can proudly display our own knowledge, we are foolish and proud. We stand proudly alone, and are sure to fall.

Even though the Internet provides some advantages for the predator, it also provides advantages to God's people who walk by the same faith that has preserved the church through all history. The Internet provides powerful tools to search God's word, articles to help in Bible study, and opportunities to discuss God's word with believers all over the world. The Internet opens up a new world, but we may not forget that God calls us to live in and serve a local congregation of believers. It is only when we stand united in faith with Christ our head, and the church, his body, will we withstand him who goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. ❖

Fruitful Branches



What Are We Laughing At?

by Jenny VanDonselaar

In John 15:11 we read, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." However, in Proverbs 14:13 we read, "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness." One might be tempted to ask how scripture can contradict itself so openly. These texts are speaking about two different kinds of happiness; earthly laughter and spiritual joy. The first verse says "my joy," referring to God's joy and then speaks of our joy which must be in accordance with God's joy. The second refers to the happiness that will have an end, earthly happiness. It is essential for us to understand that scripture expresses for us a definite separation between the world and the life of the antithesis. These two verses contrast the empty, momentary laughter of the world and the perfect, everlasting joy from God. Today we are going to look at these two types of joy under the subject, "What Are We Laughing At?" We will consider these three points; Worldly Laughter, Fleeing From This Laughter, and Heavenly Joy.

Laughter is an everyday thing for us; it comes naturally. It is also natural for us to sin and to have sinful thoughts. This makes it very hard for us to restrain from laughing at sin. Think about laughter for a minute. Literally it is to make an outward sound or motion to show

that you are happy. We must be conscious about what we are laughing at. When we laugh at sin we are saying that sin makes us happy. We are not just saying this to ourselves either. We just said that laughter is also an outward reaction. This means that others can see and hear our laughter. Our laughter is our witness. If we are laughing at sin then we are witnessing that we enjoy being among the wicked and their sin. We must be aware of the seriousness of our sins; this includes watching out for them as well as fleeing from them. Next time you hear yourself laughing think about what was just said, and whether or not it was worth laughing about. Pay close attention to what makes you laugh; is it something that is actually funny, or is it something that smoothes sin over, trying to make it look okay?

Let us stop and consider this morning what made you laugh already today. Did you, perhaps, laugh at a comment that was made at the expense of someone else's pain? Were you laughing at a joke about the actions of worldly people? Think about all of the jokes you know. How many of them are about sex? When you laugh at these types of things then you are either laughing at a

spiritual thing in a wicked way or you are laughing at sin. Did we laugh mockingly? Was the person being mocked someone who should be respected? How often do we mock teachers, ministers, or even the elderly? How often do we find pleasure in the sins of drunkenness, drug use, or other such sins that defile the body? Do these sinful activities make us laugh and bring us joy? All of these things will make you happy, but do they last? When you wake up with a hangover are you still happy? Consider judgment day; is the world still going to take pleasure in its sin then? The world loves its sin and takes pleasure in wickedness now. Are we trying to smooth that same sin over by joking about it? The world laughs at sin believing that it has everything under control. But, worldly laughter is uncontrollable and empty. This is especially true as the world laughs louder. This type of pleasure is easily forgotten. We can't remember half of the things that made us laugh yesterday. These sinful pleasures cannot satisfy. They trap you, pulling you deeper and deeper, making you want more, even after you realize that they will only hurt you.

When we confide in this laughter, we stop serving God and striving for his delights. We share the world in happiness when we follow wicked joys. We stand with wicked men who take delight in each other's corruption; laughing and rejoicing in wicked conduct. This type of comfort is vain; completely empty. Sin may seem like it is benefiting you; the high you get off drugs and alcohol, or the 8th hour you get out of by lying. These actually lead to a much worse punishment than an 8th hour and far less satisfaction than what you can receive from satisfying your lusts. When we start joking about sin, and allow immorality to become entertainment or even a joke, we are holding the hand of the world. In doing this we are supporting the world and saying, "Come on, let's help pull each other along." The world will gladly pull us along, they like to see us sin. The devil also smiles as he watches another child try to leave the protection of God's hand.

Going along with the world and acting like sin really isn't that bad hardens us, we don't see sin as such an offense against God anymore. Our consciences become callused and we don't feel any more guilt. How many of us have experienced this with smoking? Nobody likes smoking the first time they try it. People usually cough and choke over it. As they continue to do it they grow to like it and become addicted to it. They naturally justify it and eventually believe that it really isn't bad. These sins will totally ruin us and take over our lives if we do

not stop them. We cannot just cover them up and live in hypocrisy. It is the believer's responsibility to flee from the flesh and place his heart and complete trust on Christ. This is not done by ignoring temptations with entertainment, but doing the opposite of that sin. There are several things we can do to keep our minds on spiritual things.

**When we catch ourselves
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When we catch ourselves laughing we should consider who we are with, or where we are at. If this same thing happened or was said at church, would you be laughing? Who is laughing with you? Would your parents, teachers, or ministers laugh? Think about why you started laughing in the first place. Is it something nasty or demeaning that came to your mind?

If this is true, then where is your mind? We are called not only to stop our sins, but also to flee from them and to do the opposite. When you do good, and follow after Christ, he will keep you away from evil. For example; if we regularly listen to godly music we will be less likely to turn the radio to worldly music that praises sin rather than God. Look at your mindset right now. Do you find yourself making excuses? Are we thinking I'm basically a good person, I try to be nice to everyone, and I'm not as bad as so and so? Do we think that since we are teenagers we are free to live how we want because some day we will be mature and then we'll know better? Our youth is not a time to enjoy sin. We are not made free in sin. Sin is actually the worst kind of slavery, it is the bondage of the will. We are not free in choosing which sins we will partake in and when. We have a conscience now, we know right from wrong. Let's turn to true freedom and lead a life that is pleasing to God.

Ephesians 5:4 reads; "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks."

**...we need to start out with
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poor company.**

As Christians we must have courage to fight against our personal sins. The Holy Spirit gives the elect the obligation to live righteously. We are called to remove our habits of sin in our old man and to take up the cross of Christ, making godly habits. First we need to start out with separating ourselves from poor company. Distancing yourselves from these people is rejecting their sins and their lifestyle. Do we think if we sin just a little, it is not so bad? There is no such thing *as* a little sin. Christ had to suffer for every sin in the lives of his people, no matter how small they seem to us because they are still offences to God. We may not think sin is only slightly wicked. When something indecent and shameful is said or done, we should blush and feel out of place rather than laugh. Laughter shows that we love this pleasure so much that we are willing to disobey God, the heavenly Father. Courage to fight against our sins comes from this Father alone. Only if we turn to him will we have strength to overcome the temptations of the devil.

How do we receive this help? Prayer; prayer will keep you in the right mind and far from sin. Through prayer God grants the grace and comfort necessary for every battle. Our prayers should be for deliverance of covetousness; to keep us from being selfish and desiring the things which give us worldly comfort and joy.

(Mr. Van Uffelen told me about an article in the last *Beacon Lights* called “A Reminder Past Due.” This article ties in very well with this speech and I think it would be good for all of us to read it. In this article Stephen Griess says, “The vain and sinful things we laugh at and talk about are just our selfishness that has crept from our hearts to our mouths.” This is the selfishness we need to leave with our old man.)

...do we know the
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books of the Bible, and the
names of the prophets and
the apostles?

We cannot depend on prayer alone. Asking without taking any action is faith without works, which is dead. Our works should be the searching through the Holy Scriptures. By better knowing the word of God we can withstand temptations as Jesus did. In Psalm 101 David

says, “I will not know a wicked person; him that hath an high look and a proud heart, will not I suffer.” Can we say this with him or do we know the blasphemous jokes, or sayings and people from movies better than the books of the Bible, and the names of the prophets and the apostles?

Although Christians are called to be holy, they still fall into sin. You will not be perfect until you reach the final glory in heaven. Our sinful nature causes us to fall into temptations and to enjoy them until our conscience pricks us. But the true child of God will always have a way out of temptation. God will always give us a way to escape. This is why God, in his justice, must prick our hearts when we fall into grievous sins. A true child may even fall away from God for a time, but God will always draw him back.

The temptations of this world really aren't so difficult when we remember that we are only pilgrims and strangers in this world and do not have the expectations, goals, and values as if we are the citizens of it. Your citizenship is in the kingdom of heaven; you don't need to find satisfaction in this strange, desert land. This is abiding by the antithesis and living according to the lines that God has drawn for us, not our own boundaries, which we tend to stretch. Our lines should match with God's and should be very definite and clear. Psalm 16 speaks of these lines; saying that they are good and are in places large and pleasant. This psalm also says that they are marked out carefully by your Father who shall never move.

Make sure that your lines never move. The devil is working very hard and very subtly. He will try to get us to stretch our lines until they burst. The devil is working particularly hard on us as young people. He knows that you are the future church. Be on your guard. Where were you last night? Where were you last Friday night? Where was I? Were we unequally yoked with the world, in their entertainment and laughter? Were our lines in the midst of the world, or were they even fading, and almost erased like the world who believes they are free in their sin? If this is so then we are not delighting in God. Even by putting too much delight in basketball and TV programs we are saying that we don't care about God anymore than the wicked do.

Some of us have already made a confession of our faith and many of us will make this confession soon. But are you making this confession because you are expected to since you are nearing the end of catechism? Are you thinking about what your confession means?

This confession shows you to be a mature Christian who lives in accordance with your confession because it is heartfelt. This confession shows that you have a mature faith to trust in God for grace. Living this true confession will and should turn the world away from you. You must be ready to be spit upon as Christ was. He suffered much more than we ever will, physically and spiritually as he delivered you from eternal damnation.

**Christians are the only
ones who can enjoy life.**

Does this mean that your life may only be suffering and trials? Is the Christian unable to have fun in this world? No. Actually, Christians are the only ones who can enjoy life. What do we find to be joyful and what brings delight to us in this life? You find joy in a life of thankfulness to God for salvation. Are we trying to walk in all good works and striving for this holiness in order to make ourselves happy? This is not thankfulness or submission to the will of God.

We make these excuses because our human nature does not want to get rid of our fun. We can easily point out the faults of other people, and sometimes we like to do this because we think that it makes us look better. But it's hard to look at our own flaws and see our own sin. How many of you are laughing at this message right now? I don't like to hear this, but I need to. We are called to examine ourselves, not our neighbor.

We need to get rid of our excuses and hindrances. These hindrances may not only be those things which are wicked in themselves; we also need to be careful that our own lives don't get in the way. Anything in our life, even if it is legitimate on its own, can turn you away from God if you let it out of place.

**Do your friends help you to
be kind, respectful, and
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Or do your friends cause
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What is your hindrance? Is it the music you listen to, the movies you attend? How you use your time, partying, perhaps? Or the wrong friends? Do your friends help you to be kind, respectful, and fear God rather than man? Or do your friends cause you to mix with the world so that you have carnal views and are self-centered? We should be willing to keep the Sabbath Day even though we won't make as much money. We should be willing to stay away from foul language and laughing at dirty jokes even though this will cause us to be the one laughed at. And we should be willing to strive to keep the truth even though we are surrounded by the lies of the world.

So what should make you happy and what should make you laugh? Salvation. Salvation is your comfort and should make you jump for joy. Christ's atonement for your sins should make you burst with songs of praise and laughter. This laughter is your joy, this laughter is good for you. Your joy should also be in making God happy. God is well pleased when you obey and strive after what is right. Find joy in keeping his commandments and love his law. III John 1:4 tells us that God has no greater joy than to hear that his children are walking in the truth. If you find your joy in this promise of salvation and the return of the Lord then you will have the incentive for holy living.

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Proverbs 28:20 tells us that only the faithful receive God's blessing. And Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The Spirit works in you both this will and the doing of such good works that will please your Father. In this alone can you find true, everlasting joy; the joy that grows from the union with your Father and comes from within, the joy that completely satisfies and does not need the support of man.

This joy is deep and sure, it may have an outward appearance of sorrow because of the trials on this earth, but it is far richer than an outward joy skimming over

deep sorrow and pain. This deep sorrow and pain is so deep because it has no comfort. Your earthly sorrows are comforted by the sure and amazing promises of God. He is faithful and he preserves you as his witness. He gives you strength to withstand temptations and the struggle of trials. He will bless your troubles and cause them to work together for the good of your salvation.

Joy in God is a very important part of your lives. This joy is the power which will keep you from sinful delights. This is the true joy of God's grace in you as a condition in your heart because it is given to you and worked in you by the Holy Spirit. This is true for every elect child. This gives you reason to live in joy no mat-

ter what your circumstances are and reason to do all to the glory of God. Your joy is shown in a godly attitude and a holy conversation.

Is God your pleasure, joy, or satisfaction? Do you have so much joy in God and everything that he is, has done, and does for you that you overflow with joy, rejoicing and singing praises? This is the joy God provides so that you may witness. This is the joy God delights in. This is your joy. ❖

A chapel speech given by Jenny VanDonselaar, a junior at Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Church Family

Our Calling to Witness

by Phil Kalsbeek

Every Christian, young or old, must be a witness for his (her) Lord. Isaiah 43:10, 12 speaks of that Christian witness: "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shown, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God." How we witness is a key element in our role to witness. We are God's witnesses chosen by him as servants of him.

Witnessing is defined by Prof. Hanko in his *Standard Bearer* article on Christian witnessing in the May 15, 1973 issue: "Witnessing is the calling of the church of Christ to testify through her members of the riches of the Word of God to those with whom these members come into contact, believing that God will use that Word according to his own purpose in Christ." We must think of ourselves as those who carry a candle as expressed in Matthew 5:14-16. "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house." Our "candles" must remain lit and be carried by us wherever

we go and must shine in whatever we do. That light shines when we walk and talk as members of Christ's church in the world. But, often our candles are hidden or at best shine very dimly. As we go about our witnessing we are to be delighted in what we represent for we represent Christ, the one who chose us before the foundations of the world. This should not be a burden for us to bear, but a joy to delight in. We are called to let our light shine and glorify God through this.

We receive the content of our witness on the Lord's Day as we sit under the preaching of God's Word and hear his commandments read. We carry that Word with us throughout the week as we work, sit in our homes, attend school, etc. Obeying God's commandments is a witness to those around us of the love of Jesus Christ in our hearts. That is conveyed in our conversation, what we do, and where we go. Our dress is a witness of what we believe and confess. Does tight, skimpy fitting clothing reflect that we are his? Do baggy pants hung low on one's hips reveal that Christ is our Lord? Does cursing and swearing tell others that we have the love of Christ in our hearts? What about the off-color joke we told or laughed at?

Our calling to witness is not easy, but we are called to witness nevertheless. To witness for the truth and how

we do that begins in the home and with our friends. We cannot be a good witness when we are with friends who do not share that common goal to be a witness. The fear of being looked down on may affect our witness but that should not hinder us. Our lights can glow brightly in church or as we sing in church or in a school choir. They glow when we find it easy or non-confrontational to witness. But, when we are out with friends, at work, or face trials and temptations our lights can quickly go out. In order to witness we must know the God of whom we testify and what his Word teaches about our witness. We must be able to give an answer to someone when he asks about the hope that is within us. We must not be caught in places and in circumstances where it is impossible to

give a good witness for your Lord. Wild parties, theaters, dances, are some examples where it is impossible for a Christian to let his light shine before men.

Witnessing is used by God to bring his people to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We must make it our desire to let your light shine every moment, and not only take advantage of the obvious situations to witness. Also we can plan ways to talk of our faith to others even when they do not ask us about it. We must not come across as better than others, but humbly ask God to use us in his service. ❖

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

Gem of the Month

The Mercies of Christ

*The place I inhabit, God's footstool is called;
The soil, the sea, and the air.
When the earth yields its fruit, it belongs not to me;
It's a gift for God's creatures to share.
If he sends to me millions, or only a bit—
He's entrusted it into my care,
Whether money or talent or kindness to show,
For his glory I know it is there.*

*Lord, help me to show the mercies of Christ
As upon this, thy footstool, I tread.
May I not view as mine the blessings bestowed
But strive to serve others instead.
Give me grace that humility shows, never pride,
May I seek by my Lord to be led.
Esteeming my neighbor far above self,
He to glorify Jesus, my head.*

Thelma Westra

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

“A Psalter–Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God”
by John Huizenga (Reprinted from July 1998)

July 16 Read Psalm 65

Psalm 65:11-13 We come to the end of this Psalm of praise to our God. We have seen many truths found in it. None is so precious to us than the truth of our salvation. We find this in these last verses as the harvest is discussed. The harvest comes at the end of time and God by his servants will gather the elect and bring them to glory. This truth should and must cause us to be joyful. It should help us be joyful when the way in which God leads us is hard and rocky. It should cause us to be joyful when the wicked seek to do us harm. We need to express the joy of our salvation to those who are around us. Our neighbors must know by our lives that we are indeed the blessed happy ones who have been chosen by God and redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. People of God are you shouting for joy; are you singing God’s praises? Sing Psalters 167: 3-4, 169:2-3, and 171:3.

July 17 Read Psalm 66

Psalm 66:1-2 Once again we have a song of praise before us. Once more we are called to make a joyful noise to our mighty God. The content of our songs are directed as well in these verses. We must only sing songs which proclaim the honor of God’s name. As we examine songs we hear in the church world today we see many kinds. We see those that proclaim a gospel other than that found in the Word of God. We find those that extol man and his glory. We find others which trivialize God and his attributes. These kinds of songs we may not use to worship God either in church or in our daily life. Our songs must only be those which extol the honor of God’s name and his works. Our praise of him must be glorious because he is the God of all glory. Songs about God are numerous. The number of songs which glorify God is less. Let us be discerning as we sing songs of praise and glory to the honor of God’s name. Sing Psalter 173:1.

July 18 Read Daniel 4:28-37

Psalm 66:3 This verse continues to show to us what the content of the praise of our God should be. It shows us that our God is so majestic that even the heathen must confess that he is God alone. In our Scripture reading today we see Nebuchadnezzar being forced to confess that Jehovah is God. He did not want to do it. It was not of himself that he said the words of Daniel 4. But even this great king saw that God alone

was God of heaven and earth. What about us? Are our confessions forced? I hope not! I hope that by grace we can look at the wonders of God and be able to confess his greatness. Let us pray for that grace. Sing Psalter 173:2.

July 19 Read Isaiah 24:1-14

Psalm 66:4 The fact found in this verse of Psalm 66 and in the passage from Isaiah is that the world will worship and sing unto God. How is this possible? It is only possible as the gospel is spread throughout the world. God commanded the church in Acts 1 to preach to the uttermost parts of the earth. We are part of God’s church. This is our calling. Are we listening for calls for help? Are we looking to find the neighbor who needs the truths that God has given to us? It is easy for us to say all the world must praise God. Is it easy for us to know that God may and will use us to bring the gospel of his name to them? Let us make this part of our prayers today. Let us want to have God’s name spread to the four corners of the earth, and especially let us want those distinctive truths with which he has so graciously entrusted us, to be spread to all lands. Sing Psalter 173:3.

July 20 Read Revelation 7:9-17

Psalm 66:5 The Psalms are replete with commands for the child of God. Here is another one. We are commanded to come and see the works of the Lord. Yesterday we were called to the house of God. Did you go? Were you blessed with the goodness of the Lord in his house? We are also commanded to look around this world and see what God is doing. John was given a glimpse of the future while on the island of Patmos. We are given to see that activity and terrible works of God as we look for the day of Christ’s return. Even as I write this two months in advance, I am sure that something will happen in the world which should cause us to stop and notice the work of God upon man. Are you watching, people of God? Are you listening to what God is telling you through *his* works? Sing Psalter 173:4.

July 21 Read Exodus 14:21-31

Psalm 66:6 One of the reasons for the manner of the deliverance of the children of Israel from the Egyptians was for instruction. God’s people then were to learn from his marvelous ways so that they could rejoice in him. We, too, must learn from Israel’s journey through the Red Sea. We must know

the history involved, and this means we must study. We must also seek to see God's purpose in such a deliverance. Egypt did not learn through ten plagues upon its land. They still did not see God as God. There was no grace for them to do this. In Israel there were those who were hard-hearted and were not ready to confess that God was the I AM. Even in the church of today there are those who need this kind of instruction so that they can learn to rejoice in the God of our salvation. Are we studying? Are we learning? Are we rejoicing? Sing Psalter 173:5.

July 22 Read Acts 4:23-31

Psalm 66:7 God's people have faced troublous times ever since sin entered this world. Abel had to undergo the torments of Cain and was eventually killed by Cain. Enoch was taken by God even as he preached the Word to the wicked world. Noah preached as he built the ark. This list goes on and on. The Scripture passage for today speaks of the persecution brought upon the early church. After Peter and John had been released from prison and returned to the church, they gave thanks for the deliverance that God had given them from the wicked. We, too, either are or will be oppressed by those that hate God. They are rebellious against him and his people. But we need not fear. God sees all those and he will protect us and bring us safely through each trial and tribulation that comes upon us. Sing Psalter 173:6.

July 23 Read Genesis 39:1-6

Psalm 66:8-9 Joseph must have felt very alone in Egypt. He had no one to turn to except God. But God was all he needed. God would not let Joseph's soul be moved by any wickedness in Egypt. God would keep his feet on the path of life which would take him to heaven. We know little of Joseph's worship except that he must have worshipped. This can be ascertained by his responses to his brothers when he revealed himself to them. Joseph must have blessed God daily and praised him for the strength that God gave him during his trying times. We can trust that God as well. He is our God. He will keep our souls and not allow our feet to be moved. Each day let us bless him and thank him for the goodness he has shown to us. Sing Psalter 175:1.

July 24 Read I Thessalonians 2:1-12

Psalm 66:10-12 These verses are a continuation of the way in which God leads his people. That way often contains many trials which afflict both our bodies and souls. He sometimes leads us on the way of sickness. Some of God's people are riddled with cancer or some other disease. This takes faith to realize that it is for our profit. Others have trials of financial hardship. Some live in countries where the government is hostile toward God and his cause. Through these trials God refines his people even as a metal smith refines metal by the fire of the forge. God does not let us pass through these trials alone. No, he is right there by our sides taking us through these things and bringing us safely to the heavenly Jerusalem. We need to remember these things even as we lie on the sick

bed, or we attend to the dying friend or relative. This is for our profit and for God's glory. Sing Psalter 174:1.

July 25 Read Micah 6:6-16

Psalm 66:13-15 Tomorrow we go to church. That should give us great pleasure. What will be our attitude toward going to church and keeping the Sabbath. Are we desirous of those who use the Sabbath for their benefit and pleasure. Are we unhappy when we worship in the way God has commanded us? If we are, we have already forgotten the deliverance he has given to us in trials. We have forgotten all the benefits he has bestowed upon us starting with salvation and including physical good. Worship is a time of speaking well of our God. It is a time of bowing before our sovereign King in humble submission. God is the God who keeps us from all evil. How will we thank him tomorrow? David speaks often about worship in the Psalms. It must have weighed heavily upon his soul. Does it weigh upon ours? Are we content to worship the king in the way he has appointed? Sing the second stanzas of Psalters 174 and 175.

July 26 Read I Timothy 1:12-17

Psalm 66:16-17 How many of us can tell the story of our salvation like the apostle Paul? How many of us were murderers of God's covenant people and became ministers of the gospel? Paul had quite a story to tell. So do we. Oh, outwardly we might not seem as bad as Paul, but our natures are the same. We would kill if we saw it would be for our benefit except God's grace prevent us. We have a story to tell of our salvation. Do we tell it? Or do we hide the glorious truth of the gospel? What do your neighbors know about your church attendance today? Have you forgone some pleasure today in order to keep the fourth commandment? David was glad to tell of all that God had done for him. So was Paul. Are we? Sing Psalter 175:3.

July 27 Read Jonah 2

Psalm 66:18-19 I never tire of reading Jonah 2. I pray that I may be able to pray such a beautiful prayer of gratitude when God delivers me from my sin. I hope that I do not have to go through the depths that Jonah did. But if I do, I pray that God will be as gracious to me as he was to Jonah. God does hear our prayers. He also answers them. His answers may not be our wishes, but his answers will be good for us. Of that I am confident. As we begin another week of work let us put aside the sin that besets us. Let us go to God in prayer knowing that he will hear us and will answer us. His answer will be good and will be a blessing for us. Sing Psalter 174:3

July 28 Read Psalm 66

Psalm 66:20 We come to the end of this Psalm of praise. The psalmist has taken us through life's trials, he has shown us our sin, and he has made known that deliverance is only by the hand of God. He ends the Psalm as he begins it. He praises God. Do we do that? Today is a week day. Do we remember that this is also a day that God has made? Do we remember that we are to rejoice and be glad in it for *his* sake? David could praise God because he had tasted of God's goodness.

Look around you, people of God, most of us must realize that we have more than we need. All of us must praise God for the realization of our salvation. Praising God must come easy to us no matter what our station and calling in this life is. Praise God, people of God. Praise him, young people. He has done wonderful things for us. Sing the fourth stanzas of Psalms 174 and 175.

July 29 Read Psalm 67

Psalm 67:1-2 Verse 1 makes a statement of desire. This should be the desire of all God's people. We must desire the mercy, blessing, and favor of God. We need these things. The reason is given in the second verse. The reason is very different than what we might expect. We might think we need God's favor in order to prosper or to endure upon this earth. We may even think that we need his favor for our salvation. This is true, but it is not the reason given here. We need God's favor so that his name may be known throughout the earth. This must be done so that Christ will come. This gives to us the impetus for mission work. Are we answering the call? Do we desire Jehovah's favor so that we can spread his name to the four corners of the earth? We need to ponder this idea and respond to it so that God's Name will be magnified. Sing the first stanza of Psalms 176, 177, and 178.

July 30 Read Matthew 25:31-46.

Psalm 67:3-5 Praising God seems like a good thing to do, doesn't it? It even seems like it could be pretty easy to do most of the time. Singing for joy can be very enjoyable to the

people of God. Think of the pleasure we get from hearing or singing some of the majestic songs of God. Do we sing for joy because God is coming as our judge? True, we know that he will judge the wicked, and this brings us much comfort, especially those of us who have to face persecution from the wicked. How ready are we to face our judge? How confident are we of hearing, "Well done thou good and faithful servant?" Will it be said of us that because we have helped the least of these we have helped Christ? Our praises can only be praises when our actions match the words that we sing. Sing the second stanza of Psalms 176 and 177 and stanzas 2 and 3 of Psalm 178.

July 31 Read Revelation 19:1-9

Psalm 67:6-7 What is the final outcome of our praising God in a proper way and with a proper heart? God will bless us. I am sure that this blessing is both physical and spiritual. Oh, we do not look on physical things the way the Old Testament saint had to. Christ has come and has fulfilled all of those ideas. But yet our life on this earth is affected by our attitude toward God and his commands. He also blesses us spiritually in this life. We receive comfort from reading and hearing God's word. We also feel the assurance that our prayers have reached his ears. We also read that the ends of the earth will fear God. We saw this was a reason for the expressions found in the first verse of this Psalm. God wants his gospel to go forth and it will be by way of God's people bringing proper praise to their maker. Is this our prayer and desire? Sing the third stanza of Psalms 176 and 177 and stanza four of Psalm 178.

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

"A Psalm-Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God"
by Skip Hunter (Reprinted from August 1998)

August 1 Read Psalm 68:1-14

Psalm 68:1-2 One source says that this is a prayer at the moving of the ark. These first verses seem to indicate this as they parallel the words in Numbers 10:33-36. David moved the ark into Jerusalem soon after he became king. He wanted this symbol of God's presence close to him and the center of his kingdom. It is a prayer that we need to consider even as God's enemies make war on the church today and in the days to come. It seems as we are at peace, but it is a false peace.

Satan is preparing his forces to wage all out war against God and his church. Let us prepare for such war by arming ourselves with the Sword of the Spirit. Let us include in our daily prayers the request that God destroy his enemies. With this prayer we also pray "Thy kingdom come." Sing Psalm 179:1.
August 2 Read I Thessalonians 5:16-28

Psalm 68:3 Today's verse stands in contrast with those of yesterday. We see this first of all by the word *but* with which the verse begins. We also see the contrast in the content of the

materials. While God's enemies are being destroyed, the righteous are rejoicing. Why is this the case? We rejoice not at the destruction of those who make our life miserable. That can never be the source of any exultation on our part. Our rejoicing is that God's enemies are destroyed! By this destruction his name is glorified. He receives all power, and glory, and strength because he is God. We must rejoice in his exaltation. Today is his day. There is no better day to rejoice in God's greatness. We must use this day for his good. We must never take this day for our pleasure or advancement. To do that is to despise the glory of the Lord. We need this admonition in this day and age. We easily fall in the trap of using Sunday for our own good. Let God's name be exalted and let it be done all the day. Sing Psalter 179:1.

August 3 Read Revelation 5:1-14

Psalm 68:4 This verse gives to us the manner in which we are to be glad and rejoice before God. We are to do it by singing. The verse also gives the content of such singing. We are to extol the God of the heavens and earth. We are to make sure that his greatness permeates every word of the songs that we sing in praise to his name. We see the word JAH in the verse. According to my research this is an abbreviation of God's covenant name Jehovah. Therefore our songs are not just about any god, they are about and for the God who has called us by name and has promised to us eternal life. This is a precious heritage. We must sing about it daily. Our songs serve to glorify him and to thank him for the wonderful work of salvation which he has done for us. Let us sing to Jehovah our God! Sing Psalter 179:2.

August 4 Read I Kings 17:17-24

Psalm 68:5 If it is not enough that our God is creator of all things, if it is not enough that our God is sovereign over all that occurs on this earth, if it is not enough that our God has established a gracious covenant with us, our God cares for those in distress. We see in this verse this typified in widows and orphans. A widow's lot was very difficult in Israel. This was so because man's sin caused him to disobey God's commands concerning widows. If you are distressed in this life, do not despair. God is on your side. He hears your prayers in heaven. Pray to him. Cast your burdens upon him. Call upon his holy name in heaven. He will hear you. He will judge your cause and do it righteously. Cast your cares upon God for he whose eye is on the sparrow cares for you. Sing Psalter 179:3.

August 5 Read Obadiah 1-9

Psalm 68:6 We will be reading this short book during this month. For some of us it might be the first time. There are some thoughts which we would do well to contemplate and take to heart. Edom, Esau's ancestors, were a constant thorn in the flesh to Israel. It was Edom who formed the cheering section as Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and took Israel into captivity. It was Edom's lot to live in the dry wilderness south-east of Israel. It was his lot precisely because of whom he was. Esau is the epitome of the reprobate. It is of Edom that God says he hates them. It was Edom through Esau who sold

the birthright blessing. Rebellious Edom was sentenced to live in a dry land. It was dry physically, but it was also dry spiritually. Edom serves in contrast to the people of God. God's people have the blessedness of covenant communion with God and each other. God's people have been redeemed from the confinement of sin. For this we must be thankful. We can do this even as we pray the prayer of this Psalm. Sing Psalter 179:4.

August 6 Read Numbers 10:33-36

Psalm 68:7 This verse is linked to verse 8. David confesses that it was God who led Israel through the wilderness. It was God that was its leader and guide. Today's reading was alluded to earlier this month. This small ceremony took place every time Israel moved at God's command. It is worthwhile that we too realize that God is our leader and guide. Decisions made about our futures must only be made after calling upon Jehovah. As our college-age young people prepare for the coming year, they must see that career decisions must only be made in accordance to God's will. They and their parents must call upon his name before they make plans for the future. Fathers must ask God to go before them as they lead their families down life's paths. People of God, do you confess God as your leader? Then call upon him daily to guide you and obey his commands. Sing Psalter 180:1.

August 7 Read Habakkuk 3:1-13

Psalm 68:8 At the close of the previous verse the word *Selah* is found in our Bibles. It is thought that this word was used to indicate a pause or musical interlude. The next thought of David is that as God led Israel the whole earth trembled at his majesty. Even Mt. Sinai acknowledged that the Lord he is God. God's presence going before us is an awesome force. Nothing can stand in his way. We must acknowledge his presence in our lives. We do this by going to him in prayer. We do this by reading and meditating upon his word. We do this by singing and listening to the songs of Zion. And after doing all these things, we obey him. The heavens, the earth, and even mountains obey the sovereign God. We must as well. Sing Psalter 180:1.

August 8 Read James 5:7-11

Psalm 68:9 Those of us who live in areas in which rain or the lack of it is significant can understand this verse of Scripture very well. As Israel lived in an area in which rain was intermittent at best, they, too, could understand God's message to them. As they lived in the time of types and shadows, rain was a very clear picture of God's blessing. They needed both the early and latter rain to insure the success of their crops. When the time without rain stretched longer and longer the people began to weary of life. When God sent that needed rain, Israel was reassured that their God was Jehovah. While we no longer live in the time of the types and shadows, we still need the blessing of Jehovah. Periods of times without the sense of that blessing may weary us. Receiving that blessing helps to confirm us in knowing that we are God's inherit-

ance. Let us pray for spiritual rain to refresh our lives. Sing Psalter 180:2.

August 9 Read John 12:1-8

Psalm 68:10 These words are fitting for us to consider on this Lord's Day. Most of us have opportunity to contribute to the cause of the care of the poor. With what attitude are we giving today? Are we like the widow who gave her all, or are we like the Pharisee who gave so that all could see him? God cares for the poor. He cares for them both spiritually and physically. He has prepared for us poor sinners a place in his inheritance. What is our expression of gratitude for such a place? Are we giving from the heart? Let us examine our giving in this day. Let us look at both the gift and the motive. We must remember what God has given us and then thank him from whom all blessings flows. Sing Psalter 180:2.

August 10 Read John 1:1-14

Psalm 68:11 The Word is a wonderful thing. It is the speech of God. He has revealed it to us in his Son. We have it written for us in the inspired Scriptures. That Word is powerful. Scripture testifies that it is sharper than a two-edged sword. By that Word the worlds were created. By that Word salvation was wrought for the elect. Are you among the company of those who publish that word? Do you speak of those things which you heard in the house of God yesterday? The minister is not the only one commanded to speak the Word of God. He is ordained to office of ministry. One of the important callings of that office is to speak that Word officially on the Sabbath. But all of God's people have the office of all believers. One of the important callings of that office is to speak the Word day in and day out. Are you speaking the Word? Sing Psalter 180:3.

August 11 Read Judges 4:10-17

Psalm 68:12 One of our thoughts yesterday was that God's Word is powerful. Reading through Israel's history will give much evidence of that fact. Our verse for today talks about kings fleeing. It was very evident to Israel and should be evident to us that it was by God's Word that this was accomplished. Today our enemies will flee at the use of God's Word. Jesus showed us the way as He answered the devil with the Word. We must learn that Word so that we can be ready to answer all those who oppose us. There is reward for faithful Bible study. It will not be the physical rewards that Israel received, but it will be the spiritual blessing of those who conquer God's and their enemies by using the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Sing Psalter 180:4.

August 12 Read Psalm 68:1-14

Psalm 68:13-14 These verses need some research in order to decipher the various expressions found in them. I will leave that for you to do. Maybe that will be a good Sabbath day exercise? The thrust of the verse however is that it was only by the power of Jehovah that Israel was successful in its battles with the wicked kings. There were times in which it looked as if there was no hope, but then Israel won. Think of the battle of Ai. Because of sin Israel lost. But when God was acknowl-

edged as God, they were victorious over their enemies. We must ponder and take these truths to heart. We must put the truth that God is God into action in our lives. God will not be pleased with a life that ignores him and his decrees. Daily we need to pray for guidance in this matter. If we leave God and his commands out of our lives, he will leave us. For the child of God he will return, but often he will return in the way of chastisement. Think on these things, people of God. Keep God and his decrees at the forefront of your lives and thoughts. Sing Psalter 180:5.

August 13 Read Psalm 68:15-27

Psalm 68:15 David begins a new section with this verse. He speaks of the hill of God. This hill is Zion. This is the place where Abraham offered up Isaac. This is the place where the angel of death stopped during the plague punishing David and Israel for the sin of numbering the people. The hill of Bashan was reported to be one of fertile lands and beautiful scenery. Spiritually Zion, the church, is fertile and beautiful. David moved the ark to this place because he wanted the symbol of God's presence found on this place. Is the church a beautiful place for us? Do we long to enter its doors? It is beautiful because God is there. Let us look forward to our day of worship in that place. Sing Psalter 180:6.

August 14 Read Psalm 24

Psalm 68:16 David continues his discussion on the hill of God. There are those who look down upon the church. They say there is salvation in other ways and in other religions. There are those who say that salvation does not necessarily have to come through the blood of the Lamb. Some want to disregard the idea of the church as the body of Christ, and they wish to worship in other places or in other ways than he has commanded. This verse tells us that God has chosen Zion in which to dwell. God has ordained the place and manner of worship. Even when those around us tell us that to worship in the God-ordained way is not necessary, we must remember that God desires to dwell in Zion. Sing Psalter 180:6.

August 15 Read II Kings 6:8-18

Psalm 68:17 The world likes to boast in numbers. They look at the size of their armies and the numbers of their weapons. The rich man likes to boast of the amount of his wealth. We could add much to this list of the abundance of things. We, too, fall into this sin. We either think that because we have a multitude of something we will prosper, or we despair because we see nothing but trouble ahead of us. Scripture, in countless places, speaks of the multitudes of God's angels. These angels watch over and protect his church. They sang at creation, they witnessed the giving of the law at Sinai, and they rejoiced over the death and resurrection of Christ. They await the day in which God brings all the church together into heaven. Do not despair, people of God. He has given his angels charge over us, and they will keep us even unto the end. Sing Psalter 180:7.

Rev. C. Hanko

Chapter 25

Redlands, California — 1964–1971

edited by Karen Van Baren

Editor's notes: Hope PRC of Redlands, California welcomed the Hankos warmly in 1964. Their care of the Hankos became even more evident when Mrs. Hanko suffered a debilitating stroke a few months after their arrival. The congregation's fellowship and love sustained the Hankos during this trying time.

In 1964, at the age of 57, I felt that the time had come to make a change. I had received a call from our church in Redlands, California for the second time since I had been in First Church. A smaller congregation would be less work and less tension, also for Mom. We thought we might be able to do a bit more traveling and thus have more contact with the other churches.

It seemed after our trip to Jamaica that it was comparatively easy to break with First Church, where we had spent sixteen years, and go to Redlands.

Since we had a large house on Bates Street, and were informed that the house in Redlands was small, we had to dispose of everything that we could not use there.

It was in June that Mom, Allie and I pulled out, leaving Fred and Ruth's family and Rich and Elaine's family behind. We stopped in Doon, where Herm was minister, and spent a little time with his family. And then on to California.

Already when we were coming down the Cajon Pass we saw and smelled the filthy, yellow smog that hung over the valley. How different this was from the 50s when looking down on Redlands from the hills, the whole area with all its color and flowers looked almost like the Garden of Eden. And now—smog.

We received a hearty welcome, but for the first six weeks I wondered whether I could take the change in climate. Every morning I woke up with a headache. When we made a trip to the mountains to escape the smog, the

situation upon our return was even worse. But we did adjust, and we learned to live with it. The warmth and friendliness of the members of the congregation made up for any breathing problem that we might have had.

Sunday mornings after the service we were invited with the whole Feenstra family to the home of Thys and Jeanette. Sunday evenings we were invited to the Gritters, the Gaastras, the Van Uffelens, the Van Voorthuysens, or the Van Meeterens.¹ Mom was urged to become a Sunday School teacher, which she also enjoyed.

But the strain of the past years had taken its toll. Mom had been repeatedly in Blodgett Hospital during our stay in Michigan. She had her varicose veins removed, she had occasional kidney infections, and from time to time her heart would make breathing difficult. She also had occasional seizures, for which she took Dilantin. Very often she complained of tiredness, yet she forced herself to carry on.

Looking back, one wonders how much of a strain the 1953 controversy was on her. Always in the past, as well as during this difficult time, she had shown her confidence in me and my decisions. I recall riding along a slippery road in Godfrey Canyon in Montana one night. Suddenly we met a sharp turn over the railroad tracks. Because it came so unexpectedly, and because it was so slippery, I said, "I can't make it." She responded, "O, yes, you can." And we did. This confidence meant a great deal to me in our life together.

Sometimes I wonder what would have happened in the days before 1953 if she and the family had not stood so firmly with me. I would never have joined the opposition, but the burden would have seemed unbearable. Throughout the controversy we had peace and harmony at home.

When we left Grand Rapids, Dr. Avery said that he would not allow us to choose a doctor in Redlands, but that he would have one ready to take care of us. He chose Dr. Fallows, who was very proud of the fact that THE Dr. Avery, chairman of the American Medical Association, would choose him. Therefore, he was very ready to come over any time we needed him.

About six months after we came to Redlands, one would say just enough time for the congregation to get to know her, Mom had a stroke. How suddenly, even in a split second, all our hopes and plans were shattered. It was on Tuesday morning, the first week of the new year. We had finished breakfast and I had suggested that we do a bit of shopping for the consistory visit scheduled for that evening.

Mother went to the bedroom to get ready to go. I sat in the breakfast nook waiting for her to return. It was only after she seemed to stay away a long time that I got up to see what was delaying her. She lay unconscious on the floor by the bedroom window. I thought it was a heart attack and called the doctor to inform him. He came immediately. He took one look and informed me that it was a stroke. Already then, her left arm was limp. We laid her on the bed and waited for the ambulance. I followed with my car as they took her to the San Bernardino Catholic Hospital.

It is difficult to describe the next four weeks. Mother returned to consciousness, but could not talk. We tried to have her write, but that also was impossible. From day to day we saw no change. The hospital gave us no information. To all appearances, she either would not live long or would remain a total invalid. It was only after the twenty-third day that she seemed to rally and show improvement.

Herm and Wilm came out at once. Wilm took over in the home and Herm preached for me. Charlie and Sena Van Dyken, my sister and her husband, also came for a short visit.

After Herm and Wilm, Ruth came with two of her children, Carrie and Freddie, to spend some time with us. And after she left, Elaine came with her two youngest. After a few weeks, Rich came with the two older kids. At a time like that one realizes in a very special way how wonderful it is to have children who are willing to step in and help in time of need. The very fact that they were there made the load so much easier to bear. That meant so much to Mother and me, and also to Allie.

After 28 days, Mother was ready to come home. One can imagine what an adjustment that took for her, who

had always been so very active. That was a severe trial for her during the entire nine years that she was still with us. Yet she rarely complained. Now she had to sit and watch, content with nothing more than her daily exercises. For some time we went to therapy, which did give her so much improvement that she could walk with a cane.

The congregation was very understanding and helpful. More than one expressed their appreciation for the fact that they had learned to know her as she was before the stroke. Many offered their services. Thys and Jeanette brought over a wheel chair. Don Feenstra, son of Thys and Jeanette, would stop in on his way from work, sit down in a chair right by the door, chat a little while and then go on. Sometimes he would call that he had corn or some other vegetable fresh from the garden.

Mom was taking physical therapy from a woman who was a Seventh Day Adventist. She also took speech therapy at the University. Little Barb Van Voorthuysen, daughter of Everett and Audrey, would sit by her and try to help her. She would say, "Say Barbie." And Mom would try to say it. At first Mom could say nothing but "pretty" whenever she tried to talk. Later she was able to use a few words, but actually her ability to speak or write never came back. She had a keen memory, knew exactly what was going on, but could not express herself.² The fact that she was impaired on her left side was a trial, but it was far worse that she could not communicate.

We communicated with her by signs and by trying to figure out what she meant. That was difficult, because sometimes it would be so simple and so obvious. We would be sweating and struggling and trying to guess, but we were nowhere near figuring out what she was trying to say. Sometimes she got the impression we did not want to understand. And I could see that too, because it was so obvious when it finally did come out what she meant.³

After we were in Redlands a few years I had surgery for a hernia and prostate problems. Once again Herm and Wilm willingly came out to be with us and to fill the pulpit in my absence. In the meantime, in 1965, Herm had accepted the call to the seminary and had moved to the old First church parsonage on Bates Street, where the family lived until their house was built near Hope Church.

When we were packing books in Michigan to send them by mail to Redlands, we placed all the books in the same size boxes. Each box weighed about 70 pounds.

While I was carrying a box to a truck, I felt the hernia break through. As time went on it became increasingly worse, especially while I stood to preach. So the time had come to do something about it. The doctor was sure that this was also the right time to take care of the prostate, although I had sensed no problem there. Some years later, while in Bradenton, Florida, I was advised to have this checked; I was told the doctor in Redlands had done a good job.

I was in a semi-private room in the hospital in Redlands. Next to me was a man with a very bad heart, but he refused to remain in bed. He was always roaming about the room, even at night, cautiously looking for the nurse to be sure to be back in bed when she came into the room. One day he went out on the porch. There he had a heart attack, and was bellowing like a bull. The nurses got him back in his bed, but no one was eager to give him mouth to mouth. He did come to after a bit. The head nurse said to him, "Heaven doesn't want you, Hell isn't ready for you, and we have to put up with you." A few days later he was sent home.

A skeptic arrived, but refused to be in the same room with a minister. The head nurse told him that they had no private room available for him, that he should wait, and in the meantime be content where he was. Reluctantly he consented, but never said much. He did have to listen to those who came to read to me from the Bible or from some religious literature. One day after someone left, he remarked, "Dry as dirt, but keep it up." After a few days a private room was available but when they told him he could move he said, "Don't take me away from my buddy. I want to stay here." He was moved to a private room, but later sent me a subscription to a San Bernardino daily. What could have gone on in that mind?

I made my regular visits to classis west and to the annual meeting of synod. The only synod meeting I missed was in 1965, the year Mother had her stroke.

In the years of 1967 to 1969 I stayed with Fred and Ruth whenever classis met in the Midwest. They had moved from Michigan to Doon where Fred taught. They later returned to Michigan where Fred taught in Hope School.

I recall particularly one winter in Doon when the snow was piled fifteen to eighteen feet high along the roads. When the wind blew, the roads were closed by drifts. That usually happened on Thursday, causing school to close for the rest of the week.

I also recall one winter when I stayed with Rev. Jason Kortering in Hull, Iowa. On a Sunday afternoon an

elder came into the consistory room and said, "We are due for a heavy snow storm. The geese came to my farm, ate their fill, and headed south." That evening we called the airport and were told that all planes were on schedule. The next morning, Rev. Kortering started out with me to Sioux Falls, South Dakota while the snow was steadily falling. At Rock Rapids, we called the airport again and were informed, "All planes are on schedule." When we came to Sioux Falls it was snowing so hard and the snow was so deep that we could not even reach the terminal. I stayed over in Sioux Falls, while it took Rev. Kortering three hours to get home again.

Then there was the time that I never made it to Iowa. When I arrived in Denver for a layover, I was informed that Sioux Falls airport was fogged in. I called Bill Griess from our Loveland church, took him and his wife out for dinner and stayed there for the night. The next day the airport was still fogged in, so I returned to Redlands. Mission not accomplished.

On another occasion, classis was in South Holland, Illinois. Thys Feenstra and I arrived by plane over Chicago, but could not land because of a tornado sweeping through the south side. Our plane went to Kansas City, where we had supper. At four in the morning we arrived in Chicago, where members of South Holland were patiently waiting. After an hour or two of sleep we went to classis. That evening we finished at about ten o'clock. We had to help the two delegates from Lynden meet up with their wives, who had gone to Grand Rapids. So Thys and I drove the men to Grand Rapids, arriving there about five o'clock in the morning. I slept a few hours, but got up in time to see the grandkids off to school. That afternoon we managed to get a plane to Denver. But in Denver we had to wait until midnight before we could get a plane to San Bernardino. Another night without sleep. Mother had stayed by Mrs. John Van Uffelen while I was gone, so I picked her up and then went to bed. Thys discovered that Jeanette had gone to Oceanside in southern California. He drove out there, but when he arrived he was so tired that he fell asleep in his chair with a cup of coffee in his hand.

When we went to synod by car we usually went with the three of us, Mother, Allie and I. When we went by plane, Mother and I would go. The wheelchair went with us. We usually stayed by Rich and Elaine as long as the synod met. It could be quite warm in Michigan at synod time, but we always enjoyed the visit.

Every year we made a trip to Lynden, Washington, either for church visitation, or for pulpit exchange, or

both. On those trips we got to see much of the northern California coast, the Oregon coast, Crater Lake and parts of Washington. Mother enjoyed traveling, especially with the Feenstras. Jeanette understood her fully. They would sit in the back seat, point to some landmark, or just smile knowingly at one another.

I always enjoyed going to Lynden. Although I never was minister there, that congregation was always close to my heart. We saw them when they were but a small struggling group, without a minister and hardly able to survive. Every time they received a decline to a call their hopes would once more be shattered. On one occasion of our visit they were about to give up. When I read another decline, they were so disappointed that they sat and wept. They were not able to sing throughout the service. Afterward one said, “We worked so hard to keep our children in the church, and now no minister wants to come here.” Eventually, Rev. Bernard Woudenberg did take the call and did a lot to build up that congregation. Today they have their own church edifice and are well-established.

While I was in Redlands, I had an occasional classical appointment in one of the churches of classis west. While I was away, Mother would stay at the Feenstras or at George and Epka Joostens.⁴ The Joostens were very good to her, treating her with utmost care and concern. I recall one appointment in particular which was in Aberdeen, South Dakota. I was so weary at that time that I had written Rich and Elaine that I was coming to their house a week before I filled the appointment. I wanted no one to know that I was there, because I wanted to rest. As soon as the plane was airborne, I fell asleep and did not wake up until we arrived in Chicago. That week of rest did me a lot of good. After my stay with Rich and Elaine, I stayed two weeks with Mr. Hauck in Aberdeen.⁵

When I came to Redlands, there were not many young people. But there was a younger generation gradually growing up. As soon as it was feasible, I took seven young people by Greyhound to the young people’s convention in Grand Rapids. This was a healthy experience for them, for they realized that there were many more young people in other churches who were PR. Some of these girls have made their permanent home in Grand Rapids.

I enjoyed my ministry there, and for the most part it was also well received. Not too long after I left, a school was started and is still doing well today.

After seven years, the time had come to make a change. We went to Redlands in June of 1964 and left

there in October of 1971. I had received a call from Southwest the year before. I had had the letter of acceptance in my pocket, but circumstances made me decide to tear up the letter and write a decline. A year later, I felt free to go, this time to Hudsonville.

Throughout the years, some of the old pillars of the Redlands Church have entered into the Rest. I am thinking of the Gaastras, the senior Van Voorthuysens, the Van Meeterens, the Vander Veens, and the Van Uffelens. One generation comes and another goes. And God’s covenant continues from age to age the same. ❖

Endnotes

¹ Many descendants of these early members of Redlands are found throughout our churches.

² This inability to communicate is called aphasia.

³ A letter Rev. Hanco wrote to his son in September of 1963 reads as follows, “ Mom is very discouraged. Often she cries, often she expresses her eagerness to die, often she feels that she is nothing but a burden to all of us. At times she is cheerful, at times she puts forth a new valiant effort, but she would like very much to withdraw herself from company—because as she says, she can’t talk anyway. It certainly takes a lot of grace to bear such a cross. Gradually she feels that she will never talk again, never use her hand again, never be of any good to any of us. And that makes it so very hard. But she does know, and I’m sure she rests in the fact that God’s way is always good.”

⁴ The Joostens were the parents of Bill Joostens of Grandville PRC.

⁵ This Mr. Hauck was the father of Don Hauck, Sr. of Southeast Church.

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

Reformed Education: The Christian School as Demand of the Covenant

Two reviews of *Reformed Education:
The Christian School as Demand of the Covenant*
by Professor David Engelsma.

Available for \$8.95 from:
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Book review first published in *The Evangelical Presbyterian* (of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia) January, 2002.

Professor Engelsma's book on Reformed education, first published in 1977, now appears in a revised edition. A thoughtful chapter analyzing the present trend toward home education has been added. Those parents of Presbyterian and Reformed conviction who are inclined toward home education, would be well served to obtain this book and consider the arguments presented in it.

The Professor approaches his subject covenantally. The basis for Christian education is the covenant. Believing parents are to educate the children of the covenant in obedience to the demands of God's covenant. The covenant is defined as "the relationship of friendship between God and his people in Jesus Christ. It is a vibrant relationship of mutual knowledge and love, represented in Scripture not as a lifeless contract but as marriage, or as a father-child relationship. For us men and women and children, it is the enjoyment of salvation and life itself. It is the greatest good, the chief end of man, and the purpose both of creation and redemption." Three essential aspects of the covenant are shown to apply to the way we view education—in it God gives us work to do—by it God gathers up the whole of his creation—and God establishes his covenant with believ-

ers and their children in the line of continued generations.

Then the Christian day school is shown to be one of the demands of God's covenant for believing parents who take up their responsibility and calling to rear their children in the education and admonition of the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 6:4, Deut. 6:1-9).

The Christian school is defined as: "an association of believing parents carrying out a significant part of this calling to God to rear the children through a like minded believer who is both called of God to this vital task and capable of instruction that specifically pertains to the school." The professor proceeds to defend the covenant as the basis of Christian schooling, to treat the question of whether home schooling is an appropriate or adequate means of fulfilling our covenantal duty, and then to apply the covenantal basis in some practical areas of concern; such as, whether or not covenantal schools should be parent controlled or parochial church schools, whose children should be allowed to attend, and how the children of the school should be viewed. The professor's conclusion with respect to home schooling will be of interest; he writes: "Even though home-schooling of their children might be possible for a few, specially gifted parents whose circumstances provide the time that is needed, home-schooling is still not an option. In the covenant, all ought to work together in establishing and maintaining good Christian schools for the benefit of all the parents and children of the covenant community ... Covenantal thinking recons with the future good of coming generations. Perhaps we can adequately educate our children at home. But will they be able to educate their children—our grand children—at home?"

In further chapters we find a treatment of "Scripture in the Schools," "Reformed Education and Culture," "The Protestant Reformed Teacher," (don't be deterred by the limitation—the principles will apply to any and

every serious Reformed teacher) and “The Goal of Reformed Education.” This latter chapter covers this goal as regards the child, the kingdom of God, and the glory of God.

For those of us who are seriously interested in true Christian education (and I expect that is every member of the EPC—without exception) this book is a **MUST READ**.

The congregations of the EPC may not, as yet, be large enough to raise schools, and for the time being we must continue to do the best we can with what we have, but this certainly does not allow us to neglect our covenantal duties toward our children. Rather, it means we have something to be actively, and collectively working toward. We must be praying and labouring toward the time when it will be possible to raise up covenantal schools in all our fellowships—and that, in turn, means we must maintain our convictions, commitment and preparedness. It will help if we all **READ THIS BOOK!**

Book review first published in *The Outlook* (devoted to the exposition & defense of the Reformed Faith) Reviewer: Rev. Jerome Julien (Stated Clerk for URC) June 2002

The title of this book may turn off some readers, thinking it is for teachers, or that it will take such an outdated view of education that it would not be relevant. First, it is for everyone: teachers (and they must read it), parents who seek to be faithful to their covenant responsibilities or who wonder what the purpose of Christian education is, students old enough to think and discuss this time-honored part of covenant-life. Further, it is not old-fashioned in approach, it is a

return to the teaching of Scripture. This is sorely needed in an age where secularism has invaded even the Christian schools. Also, anyone who knows Professor Engelsma’s writings, knows they are always relevant.

Originally given as lectures for the benefit of teachers in the Protestant Reformed

Christian schools, and published in 1977, they have been somewhat revised but not expanded. The concluding bibliography gives many suggestions for further reading. Professor Engelsma begins by explaining the covenantal basis of Christian education. The school, he states, arises from the demand of God’s covenant. Perhaps homeschoolers will not like what he says about that practice, however, his concern about curriculum is a valid one. Instead of closing the book at that point they should read on. They will certainly learn something!

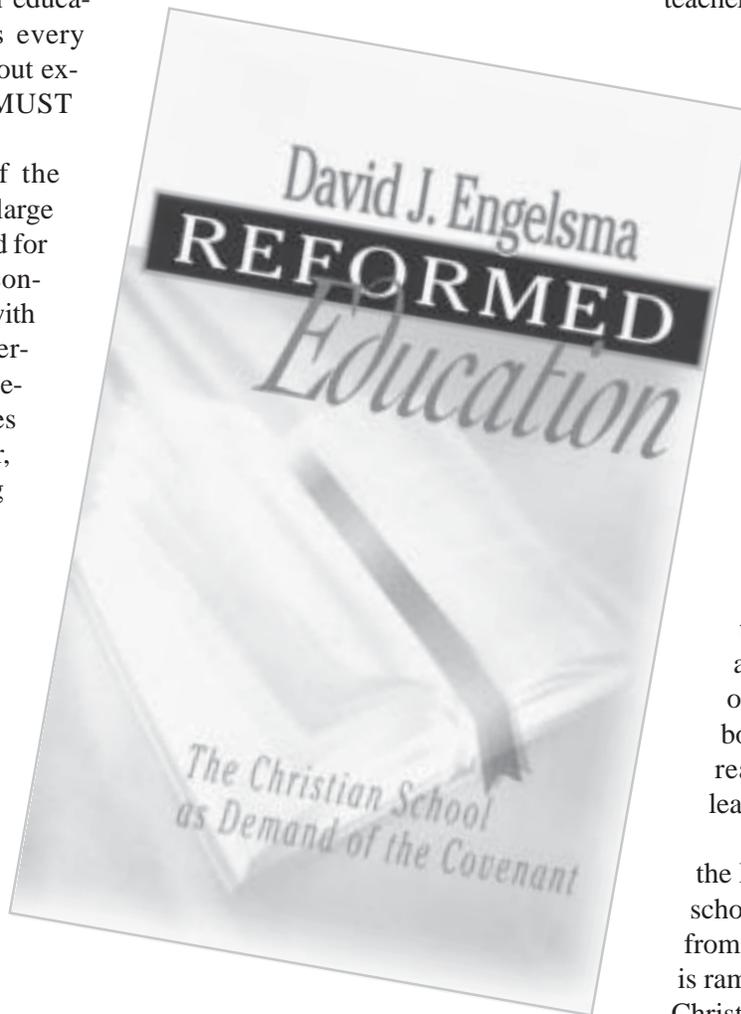
His chapter on the place of the Bible and confessions in the school is important. He stays far from the Fundamentalism which is rampant in some schools called Christian.

Boldly he addresses Reformed education in relation to culture as he writes about the dangerous temptation of world-flight and the nearly unknown concept of the antithesis in today’s church world.

The section on the place of the teacher must be read again by teacher and parent alike.

The final chapter on the goal of Reformed education is a gem in many ways.

Not much has been published on this particular approach to Reformed education. May this little volume fill the gap! ❖



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:

- Brook Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Darren Vink—First, MI
Caitlin Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jack Brands—Grandville, MI
Calvin Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brian Huizinga—Grandville, MI
Brayden Matthew, son of Miss Sarah DeVries—Grandville, MI
Jerod Lawrence, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeremy Venlet—Hudsonville, MI
Zachary Tyler, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brent Looyenga—Hudsonville, MI
Kylan Shawn, son of Mr. & Mrs. Shane Davelaar—Hull, IA
Willow Kae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Postma—Hull, IA
Reid Alan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Travis Groeneweg—Hull, IA
Jessica Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Andringa—Hull, IA
Sarah Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bill Moore—Loveland, CO
Kate Irene, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Marty DeVries—Randolph, WI
Kayla Dawn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Howerzyl—Redlands, CA
Makayla Janelle, daughter of Mrs. Mary Tolbert—Redlands, CA
Aiden James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ben Zandstra—Southwest, MI
Keaton Jeffrey, son of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Petroelje—Southwest, MI
Adult baptism was administered to Crystal Dyer—Georgetown, MI

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:

- Todd Moelker—Byron Center, MI
Adam Meyerdirk—First, MI
Tim Thompson—First, MI
Jeff Thompson—First, MI
Sarah DeVries—Grandville, MI
Brian Hilt—Hull, IA
Brandon Kroese—Hull, IA
Zachary Van Ginkel—Hull, IA
Cassy Andringa—Hull, IA
Kassandra Heynen—Hull, IA
Katie Oostra—Hull, IA
Michon Gritters—Hull, IA
Kayla Van Den Top—Hull, IA
Jason Butler—Southwest, MI
Jared DeVries—Southwest, MI
Katelyn Hofman—Southwest, MI
Anna Mae Kamps—Southwest, MI
Nicholas Schipper—Southwest, MI
Andrew VanDonselaar—Southwest, MI
Lisa VanPutten—Southwest, MI

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. Tim Boverhof and Miss Pam Klaassens—Byron Center, MI
Mr. Greg Kalsbeek and Miss Lexi Dams—Hudsonville, MI
Mr. Joel Bodbyl and Miss Laura VanPutten—Southwest, MI
Mr. Ben Bomers and Miss Emily Wassink—Trinity, MI

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

The Acorn

... let it shine !

by Connie Meyer

Rustled by an autumn breeze,
the acorn fell to rest
near a mouse who promptly pleased
to take it for her nest.

Till a squirrel 'mid harvest haste,
who found the acorn sweet,
buried it for later taste
as winter's coldest meat.

Crouching by, a fox's eye
caught sight of nut and mouse.
Pouncing high, he heard her cry
and took her to his house.

Yet in all his hurriedness
he failed to see the gloom
of the shadow hawk wings press
upon their prey in doom.

But a little nudge next spring,
and through the ground a poke—
seedling first and then sapling,
and finally an oak!

There a den of smaller bones,
the mouse was added more,
and the acorn, left on stones
will rot inside its core.

Now the acorn's planted deep,
with none to know its place,
none to eat, and none to keep;
what evidence to trace?

Life and death, and you and me—
don't be afraid, but awed,
for in all these things we see
THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

C. L. M.

Find the following underlined words in the puzzle below:

Lord's Day 10, Q & A 28

What advantage is it to us to know that God has created, and by his providence doth still uphold all things?

That we may be patient in adversity; thankful in prosperity; and that in all things, which may hereafter befall us, we place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father, that nothing shall separate us from his love; since all creatures are so in his hand, that without his will they cannot so much as move.



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

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