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ARMED WITH COURAGE

A soldier returns from war. Without regard for his own life he has protected his buddies from the onslaughts of the enemy; he is a hero. He has been armed with courage.

Courage: He has met danger and has not flinched. Courage has made an ordinary man a hero.

Yet the courage which turned this ordinary soldier into a hero is meager in comparison to the courage which every child of God needs to face the obstacle of each new day. To be armed with courage is to stand prepared, able, and willing, through God’s grace, against the daily onslaughts of the devil.

For the devil is a subtle beast, more clever than any creature, save those under the protecting wing of Jehovah. The devil is clever and he has allies:

Chief among those allies is the weakness of our own flesh. The fact of our salvation, peerless though it really is, does not prevent the devil from tempting us into wickedness. Though we are saved, we are sinners saved, and in this life cannot faultlessly function as children of God. Thus, while being children of God to glory, we are yet children of Adam, and so the devil has his chief ally.

The weakness of our humanity gives rise to the effectiveness of the Devil’s other ally, namely, the sin without us. There can be no doubt in the mind of the child of God but that we live in world rotted to the core, roiling and rejoicing in the filth of its own iniquity. But the horror of this iniquity lies in its pervasiveness.

It is a part of our homes and our lives through radio and television. All too easily we are hypnotized into immobility, and as soon as we are immobilized into non-discrimination, into passively following the crowd, the devil has achieved a victory. For we are different, and ought to be unique. Thus the invasion and perversion of our hearts and minds by the mass media is both defeating and dangerous.

And this still is not all. The brazen, earthy appeal of the world to the weakness of the flesh is still there. Less intrusive perhaps, and probably less persuasive than the subtle perversions of mind and heart. the physical affections of the world are still appealing to the base nature of man, and will become even more so as the end nears. For we are facing the period of the last desperate persecution of the Church by the forces of Darkness.

Basically, the devil engages in two types of persecution:

The first of course is the traditional conform-to-sin-or-I-burn-you-at-the-stake type of persecution. There will never be any lack of this type of course, not as long as the active antipathy between world and Church continues to exist in this life.

Nevertheless, the evil one is not stupid, and by this time has realized that the traditional type of persecution tends to strengthen and disseminate the Church rather than destroy it. The best that physical destruction can do is accelerate souls into glory. After all, what Christian would choose a life of pain over an eternity of glory?

So then, what is there? Perhaps the quality of living. To a Christian, physical death is not much of a condemnation, but a condemnation to life can be appallingly merciless. To live perpetually apart, to see loved ones eroded and destroyed from within, to see the Church of God wither and appear to die as a gourd forgotten on the vine in winter, this is a much more heart-rending persecution. To be demeaned and eroded from within, to have minds and will benumbed by the common media, to lose jobs and wealth, to lose position and standing, to lose acceptance and love, in short, to stand utterly alone, without the quality of life; this is heartrending persecution.

Already on the horizon can be seen the creeping, all-pervasive black cloud of persecution. The employment a child of God can get is steadily shrinking, the need and desire for public aid (for example, parochial aid) is increasing. To live with only your weary soul for company is nearly impossible, yet the saints will persevere.
Where, then, in the midst of all this, is the Christian to get his strength and courage for each day?

By virtue of our Christianity we are already armed with the "whole armour of God": Truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the word of God (Eph. 6:11ff.). So armed, we can stand, we will stand, with courage to face each new day as the Church marches to glory.

But we cannot stand with courage unless we are well aware of what we are armed with and how to use this armament. An intrinsic part of this awareness must be the ability to discriminate – between good and evil, of course, and between habit and belief.

Discrimination implies the ability to change when necessary, but to change habit, never belief.

Being armed with courage also requires a functioning sense of values. The key word here is functioning. We all know what is right, and what ought to be required of us, but few of us function in this awareness. It is too easy to say: "Oh, well, just this once won't hurt," or "I know it's wrong, that's the important thing." meanwhile forgetting that sin is a cancer, viciously eating away the flesh of purity – in this generation and the next. We too often forget the fact that our little slip today could be our children's destruction tomorrow. The next generation could be the last – it's up to us with the hand of our heavenly Father ever over us to arm that generation. Let us arm it with courage.

Finally, to be armed with courage implies faith: Faith in the strength God has given us, faith in the promises of God – and that they will indeed come to pass, and faith that the Church will persevere until He comes in glory upon the heavenly clouds.

What a promise! To him that overcomes will be given a crown of life in Christ! Then surely the sufferings of this life are not to be compared to the glory which is to come. Let us stand then, in the day of persecution, to the eternity of glory which is ours:

Armed with courage.

C. R.

From the Federation Board

The Federation Board would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the Young People's Society of Hudsonville Church for the time and effort which they furnished in order to make this past convention a great success. We realize the responsibility as well as the great privilege it is for one society to sponsor a convention.

- The fruits of your labors, as well as those of Rev. Woudenberg, Prof. Hanko and Rev. Engelsma, are evidenced by our confession. . . . "It was good for us to have been there."

We would also like to thank the retiring board members for their dedication throughout the past two years. We as young people do not always realize the hard work and diligence which it requires to be a member of the Federation Board. Therefore, on behalf of the young people, we would like you to know that we appreciate your efforts and we wish you God's blessing.

Sincerely,

THE FEDERATION BOARD
Carol Dykstra, Sec'y

Pat Kamps Moody has served our young people and our Lord long and well as subscription manager of our magazine. Having left the staff to get married, we want to thank her sincerely for a job well done and wish her God's fullest blessings in the future.

Thank you so much.

With Christian greetings,

THE FEDERATION BOARD
Karyn Kuiper, Sec'y

Two

BEACON LIGHTS
FEATURE
Sunday School in the Protestant Reformed Churches
MR. D. DOEZEMA

This is the second of three articles by Mr. Doezema on the topic of Sunday Schools.

2.

In the last issue we attempted to show that Sunday School teachers, though not called by God officially through the church institute, do, nevertheless, perform an important work in the church. Through their instruction the covenant seed gains familiarity with the Bible stories, and acquires a deeper insight into these stories. But this is only the beginning.

In discussing the importance of Sunday School we could not fail to call attention to the program of memory work. There's little doubt that this constitutes one of the most important aspects of Sunday School. The importance of committing to memory as much of Scripture as we possibly can, simply cannot be overemphasized. God's Word should be very close to our hearts. There are many passages that are so beautiful, so full of comfort and instruction for God's people, that to have them fixed in one's memory would be of untold value to the child of God. The Sunday School papers this year provide two verses to be studied each week. One is part of a passage which is to be learned in its entirety. The other is a verse which illustrates a truth brought out in the lesson story. We feel that both of these are important. By the end of the season, the students will have not only a Bible passage memorized, but also various scattered proof-texts which cannot help but aid them in their later dealings with Scripture, whether that be in Societies or in their own individual Bible study. To my knowledge, catechetical instruction does not include the memorization of verses on the systematized level of the Sunday School. The day schools undoubtedly provide it, as do, perhaps, some homes. But even if one were to assume that children memorize a great deal of Scripture in the schools, and that every single home had a systematic program of memorization, it cannot possibly be argued that a little more would be useless. It's more likely true, though, that some parents would tend to neglect this all-important area of instruction, and are, therefore, happy that the Sunday School provides both the program and the incentive.

That brings us to what we consider the most important service performed by the Sunday School, namely, that it provides opportunity for the parents to busy themselves, with their children, in a study of God's Word and a discussion of those things which pertain to God's kingdom. Now, I'm not a parent, myself, so I can't speak from experience. But it seems to me that as the children become older and go off to school, it would become increasingly difficult to sit down with them and study the Bible. The temptation would be to limit that "study" to the reading of a chapter at the supper table. I cannot help but think that if, were I a parent, would be pretty thankful that the Sunday School provided something with and towards which to work. The Sunday School papers deal with the Bible from the historical-chronological point of view. I, as a parent, could, therefore, use those papers to study the historical narrative with my children. I could read the Bible passage to them, study the lesson story in the paper with them, memorize the verses with them, and review both the story and the verses.

It is, of course, the duty of the parents to instruct their children in the fear of the Lord. Concerning the commandments of God, we read in Deut. 6:7, "thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." "To see these children, when come to the years of discretion, instructed and brought up in" the truths of God's Word is, and should be, of primary concern to covenant parents. And yet, we have our own sinful natures with which to contend. It's all too easy to be so busy with "pressing" matters, that there's no time left to do that which should come first. Perhaps we even feel somewhat unqualified and would prefer to leave this instruction to
the catechism and the school. Fact is, though, we are qualified; and for the degree to which we are deficient, shame on us. As adults, we should have a knowledge of and “feel” for God’s Word that reflects the years spent in catechism, society and under the preaching of the Word on the Sabbath. I dare say that, with few exceptions, the qualifications are there. But the same cannot always be said about the will. And that’s where Sunday School could come in. Just as we attend the various Societies to provide ourselves opportunity to be busy with spiritual things, we could make use of the Sunday School program to serve not only as a stimulus for, but also an aid in our instruction of our children.

I hope I’ve made myself clear. It’s something that I find to be true in myself. And I figure that others must experience somewhat the same thing – I’m not all that different. Permit me to illustrate, for the sake of emphasis and clarity. It happens that I make a point of preparing rather thoroughly for Mr. and Mrs. Society Bible discussions. Now, even though I am well aware of the fact that I profit immensely from this study, I know very well that, were it not for the fact that Society was meeting soon, I would have been just too busy to have spent time studying that chapter, or any chapter, in depth. Society, therefore, was of great benefit to me because it forced me to do something that I otherwise would have neglected. And I think that I would experience the same sort of thing in connection with instruction of my children. I would find myself busy almost every night and would, thus, rationalize away my responsibility as a parent. But with that Sunday School paper staring me in the face, I would be forced to have second thoughts. If I encouraged my children to take Sunday School seriously, and if I took it seriously myself, then I believe that I would pick up that paper and go to work. That lesson, you see, would not only give me some content with which to work with my children, but it would also provide me with a goal, something towards which to work, namely, an understanding of the lesson and a mastery of the verses. As I said, I’m sure it would help me; and I can’t help but think that others would find the same thing to be true if they would only give it a try.

It goes without saying, therefore, that I find an important place for Sunday School, as a society, within our churches. It is not, as we mentioned before, on a level with catechism. Attendance at catechism is required, as is attendance at church services. Sunday School, on the other hand, is a voluntary sort of thing. And yet, it seems to me that parents are saying something about themselves and their sense of values if they do not send their children to Sunday School, and send them well prepared.

So far we’ve dealt only with the proper attitude of parents toward Sunday School. How about that of the church? I imagine that in all of our churches, Sunday School teachers are approved by the consistory. This is as it should be. The teachers are giving instruction to the covenant seed. It’s important that this instruction be given by those who understand the truth, who have no leanings toward the lie. The consistory is, naturally, in a much better position to pass judgment on the spiritual qualifications of prospective teachers than is the superintendent of Sunday School. But I would think that this ought not to be the extent of the consistory’s concern. Even though the Sunday School is not the organ of the consistory, through which it provides instruction for the youth of the church, the consistory should have an interest in that instruction, an interest that goes beyond mere approval of prospective teachers. They should visit Sunday School classes periodically, as well as the teachers’ meetings. A visit to the teachers’ meeting will, doubtless, make the superintendent squirm; and visits to the classes will do the same for the teachers. But that’s all right. It keeps them “on their toes.” Besides, it tells the pupils something about the importance of Sunday School. Most importantly, with respect to that instruction being given, the consistory cannot be too careful. We could mention, incidentally, that at First Church, at least, the minister visits the classes occasionally. In my opinion that does a lot for the children. If the minister thinks that Sunday School is important, then, certainly, they should too.

What do you know about that? We still need more space. How about it, Mr. Editor, can you squeeze us in again next time?

Most assuredly. Ed.
CONVENTION REVIEW

JANE VAN MAANEN

The 1970 convention is now over, but its memories will last (at least until next year).

It began on Wednesday, August 19, when the conventioneers met at Hudsonville church for registration. Many old friends again met and many new ones were found. Then off to our newly adopted homes for a good night of sleep, which would be needed.

Late registration was at 8:00 the next morning at the church. Randy Meyer called the Business meeting to order at 9:30. Marilyn Jonker gave a piano solo for the special number. After noon lunch, everybody went to Hughes Park for the Sports Mixer. Everyone was smiling at 6:45 for the convention picture at Unity Gym. As a group, it must be said, we didn't look too bad, it could've been worse. From the gym, everyone went over to the Hudsonville Reformed Church for the formal Mass meeting. Beth Westra presented a flute solo and the Doon Young People's Society had a girls' trio present their special number. Rev. B. Woudenberg gave the address on the theme "Strangers in a Strange Land" — Their Origin.

Friday morning came bright and early. Seven o'clock, everyone climbed on the busses for the ride to Silver Lake. Once at the lake the dunes offered a full day of fun. Even though we did get wet, and couldn't find our stomachs at times, I'm sure all agree the dune rides were great! After our picnic lunches, the dunes offered a good place to sleep. But if you got a little hot all you had to do was run down into the cool water (but then you had to climb back up again). At 6:00, everybody was eagerly waiting for supper, and then homeward again.

Saturday began at 8:00 with a delicious pancake breakfast, and then small discussion groups followed. After noon lunch, the East-West ballgames (battles?) began, even the girls gave it a try. The informal mass meeting was in the Hope School gym; Prof. Hanko gave the address on "Their Calling." An instrumental trio gave the special number. Afterwards the bonfire was lit, lunch was served, and a mass sing-along was begun.

Sunday morning came a little too quick for most of the conventioneers. But everyone met at the Chapel of the Pines for the sunrise service and discussion groups. The afternoon was left free for visiting or catching up on some of the lost sleep. After the church service that night Ed Ophoff led a very inspiring singspiration, where several special numbers were given. Many young people welcomed the conventioneers to their homes for lunch, afterwards.

Few realized that Monday had already come. After a late swim in Lake Michigan, the final business meeting came to order. Voting for the new Board members was taken care of before everybody left to get ready for the banquet. At 6:30 the Finial was ready and the final meeting of the convention began. Mixed feelings were among all, some sad that it would all be over soon and others glad for all the fun they did have. Rev. D. Engelsma gave the final address on "Their Destiny;" Jane Van Maanen gave the special number for Hull Young People's Society and Bruce Lubbers gave a saxophone solo. Randy Meyer performed his final duty as President by announcing Gary Bouwkamp as the newly elected President. Gary took over his new duties and announced that the 1971 convention would be in South Holland, Illinois. In the traditional closing, everyone sang "God Be With You Till We Meet Again," and everyone said a final good-bye with hope of seeing each other again next year.
As has become traditional we wish to share some of the thoughts of the convention with our readers. We therefore present a summary of the three major speeches given during this convention.

STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND – Their Origin

REV. B. WOUDENBERG

“For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.” I CHRONICLES 29:15

The theme chosen for this convention is a strange theme for young people. To be a stranger is hardly a young person’s inclination. If there is one thing that young people normally desire it is to be at home and accepted by the crowd. They want to belong almost more than anything else.

And yet the teachings of Scripture are clear. We find it in our theme text and in other places too, as Psalm 39:12, “I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were”, or Hebrews 11:13, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” And we could go on. There can be little doubt but that your theme is a good one and even a courageous one to consider if you take it seriously.

But what does it mean? What is it to be a stranger in this world?

To try to discover, let us go back to a day when there was no such calling, the days of perfection in Paradise.

In Paradise Adam and Eve were completely and properly at home. They belonged to the world and the world belonged to them. They spent their lives filled with the wonder of the newly created world rejoicing in its greatness, and so it was intended to be.

Scripture indicates some of the peacefulness of their relationships when it says in Genesis 2:25, “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”

Now we in our sex-orientated world may be inclined to give all kinds of erotic connotations to this; but in actuality it simply reflects upon the fact that clothing speaks, the clothing we wear tells something about what we are inside.

It is so of us, and so was it of Adam and Eve. They had nothing of which to be ashamed. They were not ashamed of their bodies, and neither were they of any of their thoughts. As they went about together in the Garden of Eden day after day, there was not one thought that crossed their minds which they felt compelled to hide from each other. They were free to share their lives together completely without fear or reservation. And then in the cool of the evening they would go together to eat of the Tree of Life; and as they did God would come, and they would share their thoughts with Him too, in wonder, filled with awe and worship.

But when the fall came, it became different. Immediately we read, Genesis 3:7, “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.” You know what it meant. All we have to do is read on into verses 8-13, “And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. . . . And he said, who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” Openness and honesty, just so fast, were gone. Each had to try to escape from what they thought and what they had done. Shame had entered to plague their souls.

It is this that has characterized the world ever since. Beginning with Satan’s suggestion to Eve and passed on through Adam all men have been moved by that great dream, “I shall be as God.” Each one, in his own terms and according to his own
values but nevertheless very really, wants to be the greatest, to tower head and shoulders above everyone else, to be able to do whatever he desires just as God does. It has become one of the deepest, most overwhelming preoccupations of the human soul.

But these are not the kind of thoughts that you can share with others. You can’t come up to another person and tell him that you want to beat him out, that you want to be greater than he, that you want to use him in life for your own advancement and glory. And you can’t tell this to God either. It means that a man is left lonely and isolated in life. His deepest and most cherished thoughts he can not share with others. He is alone; and loneliness hurts.

And yet there is something heady about it, something that will not let go. It’s a matter of being human, a matter of belonging, which we all want so badly. There is something about trying, about trying to become like God, which captivates our imagination and holds us even if in the end we must fail. And even if we do fail, at least we can pretend, we can act as though we succeed so that, if we do it well, no one will really know. It’s a lonely way to go. One has to hide his real feelings and thoughts, bury them deep so that no one will suspect. But that is what the world is like, and we want to belong to it, we want to be at home in it, we want so badly to belong.

— Until, that is, one basic truth strikes home into the heart, this truth, “Christ died for me!”

Yes, that is it, that simple statement of the basic fact of the Gospel. I know you have all heard it almost as long as you can remember. But don’t let the familiarity cover up the power of those words. It’s like this.

If there is one thing that keeps us tied up in life, it is that terrible, inescapable feeling of shame, of guilt for what we really are.

To be sure, we try to get rid of it, we try all kinds of things. We try what Adam and Eve did, pointing our fingers at someone else and saying, “There is the one who is really at fault.” Or we try covering up, compensating for the fact that we are really guilty sinners by doing other things that are good. And, if nothing else, we can always pretend, shouting long enough and loud enough about what others might consider our good points in the hope that our plugging conscience will be stilled. If others think us good, surely we can’t really be all that bad.

But it doesn’t work. In fact, the more we succeed in impressing this world, the closer we come to it; the more we try to feel at home with it, the more we feel that emptiness inside. We are only a pretense, we are living a lie, it’s hypocrisy, that’s all. Our true self is hidden. We become lonely in our dishonesty, and loneliness hurts.

And then it happens. There comes the time in the life of each one of God’s children when Christ speaks to them and says, “My little child, you don’t have to hide the fact that you have sinned. I know that it is so. But your importance to me does not depend upon what you are or what you have done. You are an object of my love for but one reason, God the Father gave you to me in eternity. And I have proved it by dying for your sin before you were ever born. Its guilt is now gone.”

You see, we of all people don’t have to hide, we don’t have to pretend to be what we are not, we can admit that we are nothing but sinners without being ashamed.

How Jesus sought to drive this point home. Matthew 5:3-6, “Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . Blessed are they who mourn . . . Blessed are the meek . . . Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.” Or in Matthew 9:10-13, “And it came to pass as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” We who are Christians do not need to pretend to be righteous and perfect people. We must not. Our place is to be confessing sinners, those who can openly speak of our own sinfulness with the problems and needs which go with it.
We can be honest to each other because the guilt of our sin is all gone.

It opens up before us a whole new manner of life, a kind of life that is strange to this world and alien. The world cannot stand honesty, it cannot stand the truth about itself; it has to pretend; and all who belong to the world are accordingly swept into the cold isolated loneliness of this pretense. But we are strangers to that, or should be. We don't have to blame others, we don't have to pretend, we don't have to hide. While yet sinners, we have become the friends of God and can speak honestly to Him concerning our sins.

This is the life of the covenant. It means we can be open and honest to each other also. Becoming strangers to this world, we enter into the possibility of honest fellowship with each other. May God grant us that fellowship at this convention together.

STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND – The Calling

PROF. H. HANKO

The calling to be strangers in a strange land is not an easy one.

It is difficult because the calling which comes to us from Scripture is completely contrary to all our nature. It is a calling which we can fulfill only by grace. It is difficult because it requires a great deal of wisdom. It is not easy to discern what this calling is. Especially the nature of the times in which we live make wisdom essential to the fulfillment of this calling. It is difficult because it appears that the fulfillment of it requires some extremely radical changes in our lives. It remains a question whether we are prepared to effect such changes. It is much easier to listen to this speech and go our own way after all.

There is an urgency about the calling in spite of its difficulties. To cease to be strangers in a strange land is to become a citizen of this world being comfortably at home here. It is to become a part of the world of sin. To cease to be strangers is to forget that we are called to look for the return of Christ Jesus our Lord. This is a denial of all our faith.

The Principles Involved

The calling which comes to us rests upon the fact that we are citizens of the kingdom of heaven who are called to live for a time in the world. The whole idea has an earthly analogy. The analogy is not as forceful in our day when the world shrinks in size and when there is an increasing conformity of custom among all the people of the globe. But if we could, in our minds, transport ourselves back a century or so, we can gain some inkling of the force of this, if, a century ago, a citizen from the Netherlands travelled to this land and lived here for a short while, he would be, in the strictest sense of the word a stranger in a strange land. He would be forced to live among a people who were so different from him in every respect that any possibility of contact with them was impossible. He would live among a people who dressed differently from his manner of dress; who ate different foods which had no appeal to him; who spoke a different language completely unintelligible to him; who lived by customs and mores which were foreign to his way of thinking. These differences constituted an insurmountable barrier. He would be a stranger. The result would be that he would have to remain a pilgrim while he sojourned in this land; a pilgrim who looked forward eagerly to the day when he would return to his fatherland, the land of his birth and citizenship, the land of his own people where he could "be at home."

Spiritually this is true of God's people. It was not always so. God's people too are born a part of this world and "feel at home" here in the world. But God has made them strangers. This is a work of divine grace. We have not chosen to be strangers. We have not joined voluntarily the company of those who are strangers. The reality is much more profound. God has created a new man when He has saved us. He has changed us completely and radically. He has overcome us by grace and made us, in actual fact, citizens of the kingdom of heaven. We have our home and
citizenship in heaven, for we have been born again from heaven. We have the life of heaven within us. The whole pattern of our life is determined by the principles and truths of the home which is ours in heaven and which we shall, some day, enter. We have not seen this home; we have only the word of our Father that it is very beautiful and wonderful. But we have the assurance that it is indeed ours, for our Father has given us Christ to secure that home for us.

While we remain in the world therefore, we are strangers. The barrier that divides us from the world is very real—though spiritual. It is an insurmountable barrier for the world lives a life which is determined in the dark corridors of hell. We live a life governed by the principles of heaven.

We are however, called to be strangers while we are in this world. We might have the impression that because we are strangers in a strange land, and because this world is the strange land, therefore our calling is to have as little to do with the world as possible. This has been tried from time to time in the Church. There have been monks who saw their calling to be limited to the dark and damp walls of a monastery's cell. There have been those who have sought some kind of geographic isolation from the world where they could live alone.

This is not our calling. There are various reasons for this. One is that the escape from the world is not as simple as all that. One could almost wish that it were. How easy it would then be to be a stranger in the world. All one would have to do is to establish a community of like-minded people on some distant island or on some high mountain. But it can't be done. And it can't be done because the world from which we must be strangers is to be found inside of us—in our flesh. And we take that flesh with us wherever we go.

Another reason is that we would, if we ran out of the world, be turning our backs on God's world. God created this world. It still belongs to Him. We may not despise it. We may not sneer at that which God has made.

This world which God has made and which He still owns is first of all the creation itself with its trees and flowers and rocks. Secondly, this world which God has made includes the powers of the creation which are harnessed by men and which are used in man's splendid inventions. Radios are God's. So are automobiles. Thirdly, the institutions of life belong to God. The institution of marriage is God's. So is the institution of government. So are the institutions of parenthood and labor. Fourthly, the arts, so-called, are also God's gifts which He has given for the use of men. These creatures are all good. They are given by God. They must be used as gifts of God insofar as that is possible. They must be enjoyed. They must be used to glorify the God Who owns them.

But there are a couple of additional truths which need saying at this point. One of these is that we know from Scripture that all this creation is temporary. God's intent is not that it should last forever. We are repeatedly reminded by Scripture that there shall come a time when all this creation and everything in it shall be utterly destroyed. God wants it that way. This profoundly influences our use of them. This has much to do with our calling.

A second truth is that we also know from Scripture that God does not intend that His people ever possess a great deal of these earthly possessions which belong to God's world. Most of the creation belongs to the wicked. God wills this too. This is not a fact to be lamented. This is not something which arouses sadness in the soul of the Christian. He faces this as a fact of life. Almost all God's world is in the hands of wicked men who dominate it and control it. And as time goes on and we near the end, this shall become increasingly true. There will be presently no room at all in all the world for the people of God.

A third truth is that the wicked always corrupt all God's gifts. There is no exception to this whatsoever. The wicked world is dedicated, in sin and spiritual darkness, to steal this world from God and to de-throne the God of heaven and earth and throw Christ out of the creation. This is their goal because they hate God and Christ with implacable hatred. This is true because they have a desire to sin as much as they possibly can and escape the judgment which comes from an angry God.

And so they always do only one thing, they take God's gifts and they make these gifts dirty and obscene. They can do
nothing else. Always they make every gift of God serve their sinful purposes. They rape God's world and destroy it. They make radio and television tools to propagate the lie and serve their own sinful pleasures. They destroy marriage, for it becomes a tool to satisfy the lusts of the flesh. They always corrupt and destroy.

Yet they make a world which is glittering and attractive from the viewpoint of sin. They create a structure which is alluring and enticing and which plucks at the flesh almost irresistibly. They present the world of sin as the only intelligent way to live.

It is in the light of these principles that our calling must be defined.

A Definition of the Calling

There is a negative aspect to the calling to be Strangers in a Strange Land. This is not surprising. Our calling is antithetical. And an antithetical calling always has a negative aspect.

To understand this we must understand that Scripture defines this "way of life" which the world lives as a certain kind of pattern. It is in keeping with their spiritual nature, for they are totally wicked. This way of life must never, in any respect, be a pattern for our lives. In the totality of our lives we must be different from this spiritual point of view. Their whole life, in all its parts, is dedicated to sin. If we are truly strangers, this is a way of life foreign to us. From a spiritual point of view we cannot live like they do.

This can be demonstrated in almost every area of life. The wicked world has a certain way of life when it comes to dress. Especially is this true in our day. There is an unholy emphasis upon the importance of beautiful clothes not only, but there is a prevailing immodesty of dress which is a way of life foreign to the Christian. The practices of courtesies and dating in the world are geared to their understanding of marriage. These practices are unacceptable to us. Their language is blasphemous and obscene, a perpetual recitation of the lie. Their use of radio and television is thoroughly corrupt and by it they despoil a gift of God. The Christian rejects all this.

There are two areas which I want to discuss with you particularly. The one is music. Music is a most wonderful gift of God. It is eminently suited to glorify God. It is a powerful vehicle for telling of God's works, reciting His glory, praying in confession of sin or in bringing our needs. It is a powerful instrument to move, excite, bring peace and joy, communicate God's beauty in a unique way. The gift is corrupted by the world. The world creates a music which, in its words, not only, but also in its tunes, beat, tempo, rhythm, harmony, etc., arouses passions, sinful lusts and moves one in ways of wicked thoughts and desire. It speaks in an emotional way that sex is the main thing in life, that pleasure is the chief end of man, that love is mere physical attraction. It conveys a whole philosophy of life utterly godless and is a part of a way of life born in hell. How sad it is that young people of God's covenant are more attracted to this music than to the music of the Church. It is a question of being strangers in a strange land.

Another is the whole area of the stewardship of our possessions. This is a broad issue involving the whole question of the pursuit of entertainment, the spending of leisure time, the accumulation of this world's goods. It involves the whole question of a system of values—weighing in the scales of God what is important in life and what is not. It is true indeed that life is not drab and colorless, without any fun. But it is also true that fun in life is not to be found in draining the cup of earthly pleasure. Happiness is to be found in the service of the Lord God. Nor is a valid protest against the materialism of the age to be found in the hippie and drug culture among societies' dropouts. It is to be found in a life that has a pattern other than that of a wicked world in which we must spend the years of our sojourn.

But our calling is a positive one.

Our life is not a series of "don'ts." We would be sadly wrong and grossly misleading if we took this position. Perhaps we older ones have sometimes left you with that impression. We ought not to do this. We have a positive calling and we are unfaithful to God if we ignore it.

This calling is, quite naturally, to use God's world in such a way that we are spiritually different from the world of wickedness. It is to use God's world ac-
cording to a "pattern of life" laid down in Scripture. It is to use God's world according to principles and laws which belong to the kingdom of heaven.

All this takes into account the fact that this world is passing. It takes into account that we shall possess less and less of it as time moves on. It takes into account the fact that we seek a heavenly city which is built by God and which is our eternal destination.

Taking these things into account our calling consists in using the world of God to seek the cause of the kingdom of Jesus Christ as that cause is manifested in the world. And that cause of Jesus Christ manifested in the world is not a cause which embraces the whole world and which results in social renewal of all life's institutions. It is the cause of the Church of Christ, of the preaching of the gospel, of the work of missions, of the education of the children of the covenant in Christian schools; in short, of all that belongs to the salvation of the people of God. Every gift of God must be used to further that cause. To use it differently is to sin. We are strangers in a strange land when we seek the city which hath foundations with the gifts God has given us. We have not two callings: one to seek heaven and another to enjoy the earth. We have one calling: to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness; to seek the things which are above; to seek them with all that we are and possess.

There are several concrete suggestions with which we conclude.

We must, as young people, encourage the development of creative writing, painting, music, etc. in our circles. There was a time when BEACON LIGHTS did some of this. We should do it again. The young people must, with proper spiritual guidance from their parents, pastors and youth advisors, speak out on the issues of the day which particularly concern them. And BEACON LIGHTS is a proper organ for just this. These issues would be drug abuse, music, dating and courtship, conscientious objection to war, etc. There must be more involvement of our young people in the activities of the church. Again, perhaps we older ones may be somewhat at fault. We have feared that young people would assume work not rightly theirs. But there is much to be done and few to do it. There is room for the energy of our covenant youth in the work of the Church.

It all comes down to one essential principle. We must learn to be different; learn to be strangers in the truest sense of the word; dare, with the courage of faith in Christ, to be different. And all this begins with the Word of God and prayer. If this speech serves no other purpose, let it serve this purpose at least — that it urge you to live close to the Word of God in Scripture study and prayer. The rest is all vain ultimately unless we begin here. Each of us must find time in our lives for our own devotions. Without such time our best efforts are fruitless. We must find time to seek the strength, the wisdom, the courage, the understanding we need from Scripture and from God Who has called us. There is the pattern for our lives. There is the fountain of grace by which alone we can fulfill our calling.

STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND – Their Destiny

REV. DAVID ENGELSMA

Beloved young people in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Long ago, a man had a vision. He saw injustice, oppression, and all wickedness banished from the world. He saw the coming day of the deliverance of the poor and of the meek, long repressed. He saw an earth of blessed, perfect peace, an earth in which the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the kid; an earth of glorious rest for men, for swords will be beaten into ploughshares and there will be no strifes or war. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain," says God. You may share in that wonderful vision yourself, by reading Isaiah 11.

Later, another man had a similar vision. It was a vision of a new heaven and a new earth in which all things have been made new; of a world of unsurpassable beauty, defying all efforts exhaustively to describe it beforehand; of a world without
tears, without sorrow, without crying, without pain, without death; of a world without any defilement, without any abomination-worker, without any lie; of a world of peace among all the peoples and nations: of a world of glittering glory, the glory of God Himself. You may share that vision by reading Revelation 21 and 22.

These visions were true, authentic and reliable. There have been, and still are, many empty dreams and hallucinatory visions. "These words," however, "are true and faithful." They set forth your destiny, you who are strangers now in an alien land. This will be your future, your end. It is certain, as certain as the truth and faithfulness of God in Jesus Christ, Who has prepared this destiny, Who promises it to you, Who now leads you to it, and Who will on a Day give it to you.

The glorious future envisioned by prophets and apostles in the Scripture is held out to us who are strangers in a strange land. As strangers, we are people who are not at home on the earth; people whose hearts are not set on this earthly life or anything it offers; people whose one and only hope is elsewhere, on another land, another life; people who therefore with all their energy seek and desire the other. We are strangers in an alien land for two reasons. By the grace of God, we have been delivered already from the sin and death that rule and destroy this earth and this present earthly life. Sin corrupts the present creation in every part. This life is nothing but a continual death, as the prayer of our "Form for the Administration of Baptism" expresses it. To a land and life so befouled and doomed, we are foreigners — thank God! Secondly, by the same grace of God, we are already citizens of the Kingdom of heaven, and we now possess and enjoy the life of that Kingdom. We have been born again from above with the life of the Kingdom to come and, thus, have been translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. Now, nothing else satisfies besides the perfection of that Kingdom. Strangers, in the sense of God's Word and the theme of this Convention, are also men, women, and children of all nations, colors, and languages who in the whole of their earthly life possess the lifestyle of the heavenly Kingdom, reject the way of life of the people of the earth, and thus show themselves to be different, radically different, from those at home here on earth.

These people have a destiny. A "destiny" is a future that has been determined and prepared for someone and that someday will be his forever. It is someone's end. "Destiny" is similar to "destination." "Destination" is the place towards which one is going, the goal to which he is striving. When we speak of the destination of the strangers, we emphasize that the strangers are consciously travelling towards their destiny. They know what it is and they grasp for it. This brings out that the topic, "Destiny," on which I speak, is an integral part of the subject of this Convention, "Strangers in a Strange Land." A stranger is a pilgrim. And a pilgrim is not someone who has gotten lost and who wanders confusedly about, but he is one who is travelling to a destination, one who is going on directly to his destiny. Think of Christian in Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress. He was the man going to the Celestial City, the man with a destiny and a destination.

We may give a three-fold description of that destiny of the strangers. First, our destiny is heaven. It is the perfect, sinless life we have with God in the soul after death. It is the life with God that is consummated when the body is raised from the dead and enters into that perfect life also. It is the joyous life, the beautiful life, the glorious life, the everlasting life of the whole man, body and soul. Secondly, our destiny is the new creation, the new heavens and earth. When the Bible says that heaven is our destiny, it does not mean a vague, bodiless, "spiritual" (and fundamentally uninteresting!) existence forever "up there." In fact, Scripture does not make much of the life of the believer with God after death and before the restitution of all things. This is because Scripture sees our destiny as the new world, the world renewed by the power of Jesus Christ and fashioned with a new form, patterned after Him. It holds before us a new creation, of brute creatures, of lakes and mountains, of skies and fields, of trees and flowers, of animals, of the elect human race from all nations. It promises us a world of peace and harmony, of laughter and joy, of health and vibrancy, of work, of culture, of knowledge. This crea-
tion will be the present creation—renewed through fire. Now, you are strangers in the earth; someday, you will be at home on this earth. This is the teaching of Romans 8 and II Peter 3, to say nothing of the prophecies of the Old Testament. Thirdly, our destiny is God, God Himself, God in Jesus Christ. Without this, ours would be a worthless destiny, not worth being pilgrims for, no matter what else it might consist of. God is our destiny and destination. We are going to have God, the fulness of God in Jesus Christ. We are going to have His life and riches. We are going to have Him, in covenant fellowship. The Westminster Shorter Catechism expressed that God is the destiny of the strangers in its first question: "What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." Having God makes heaven, heaven, and makes the new creation worth desiring. Isaiah pointed to this in chapter 11 when he wrote that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God. The theme text of this Convention, I Chronicles 29:15, expresses the same thing, for David says of the people of God that they are "strangers before thee [God]." The Hebrew preposition translated "before," literally means "towards," so that David says that we are "strangers towards God," a most beautiful thought.

The reality of being a stranger, therefore, begins and ends in God. The beginning of our being strangers is God's election of us in eternity. He elected us to be strangers in the world, and in the election gave us the destiny of heaven. This is evident in the very word, pre-destination. By the death of His Son, God gives us the right to be strangers with a heavenly destiny. By His Spirit, God separates us from the world unto Himself. And He Himself is the goal we are to achieve, our end.

This destiny is not obtainable in this life or on this earth. It simply is not here. It is beyond this life. It stands behind the ruins of the present form of creation. It will be ours after this history ends. If anyone ever tells you of a dream or vision in which the destiny of God's people lies in this life or on this earth, he is, at that point, a deceitful prophet. Our hope may not be directed to this life, therefore. Neither our longing nor our expectation is fixed on the present life on earth. This is the confession of the theme-text: "our days on the earth are as a shadow and there is no expectation" (not "none abiding," as our version has it). It is a mistake to become subtle at this point and to say, "Yes, we are strangers to the sinfulness of the present world, but not to the earth itself, to the earthly life, and to the contents of the earthly life." Scripture is plain: "our days on the earth are as a shadow" (I Chron. 29:15); "[they] confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:13).

The earthly future of the strangers, in stark contrast with their heavenly destiny, is dark and threatening. There is a sense in which this is of universal application. The life of all men and the existence of the world at large are racked by sickness and war and end in death and decay. For this reason the hope of the non-stranger, the man who is at home here, is vain. But it is uniquely the pilgrim who faces a foreboding future on earth. The future is dark for him because he is a foreigner in the world. He is a God-lover in a God-hating world. He is a citizen of heaven in a country where Satan is god and prince. The world hates foreigners. Always, the child of God suffers tribulation. The Church of the last days will endure the persecution inflicted by the world-power of Antichrist. Suffering, bitterly painful suffering, is inevitable for the stranger. Indeed, it is an essential part of being a stranger. You must know this and expect this, so that the experience of it does not turn you from your course to the heavenly destination. Think of the misery of the lives of the pilgrims before you, Abraham, Jacob, and the others. Consider Jesus, the Great Stranger in an alien land.

No, the destiny of the spiritual strangers is not here. It is bound up with the coming of Jesus Christ on the clouds of heaven. Then, and only then, will the visions of Isaiah and John be realized. Then, there will be a creation in which God is all in all. Then, we will be raised to enjoy God in perfect fellowship. All of this will be the mighty work of our Lord Jesus Christ, graciously giving us our eternal destiny.

You have a destiny and a destination. You know what it is and you desire it. It
is heaven, the new world, God Himself in the Lord Jesus. Having a destiny and destination is vital to your present life in the world. The importance of it is evident from the life and culture of the youth of our age, exemplified in the hippie, who lack a destiny and destination. This lack explains their empty, destructive, wicked life. Theirs is a life without a destination. They are going nowhere, because they have nowhere to go. They are aimless, confused, wandering. Modern youth sees no destiny for himself or for the world. In his own mind, he is an accidental particle of living matter that burns for a bright moment in the darkness of endless time. To him, the history of the world is a freakish wave on the endless roll of the oceans of nature's blind development. The result is hedonism and despair, the hippie and the yippie. The parents of the present generation are indeed largely to blame for this, although not in the way that the present generation supposes. The parents gave them no destiny and destination by raising them outside the covenant of God, by rearing them under the theory of evolution, and by adopting the philosophy, at least in practice, that the present life is all there is. Parents have sowed the wind of a God-less upbringing of their children and now reap the whirlwind of youth that are hope-less and, therefore, pleasure-mad, violent, evil.

It is incomprehensible to me that those whom God has delivered from this most wretched misery can flaunt the badges by which the hopeless generation distinguish themselves, e.g., the long hair of the young men.

It is incomprehensible to me that those with a destiny in the world can revel in the abandoned, nihilistic music of the youth without God in the world, or abide the gospel of sex, violence, and despair preached by rock.

It is incomprehensible to me that one who has caught a glimpse of the new world could blow his mind with drugs.

God has saved you exactly from this wretchedness. He has given you a destiny. It is this destiny that makes you and keeps you a stranger in the world. I am referring now to your own conscious, willing choice to be a stranger and to continue to be a stranger to the very end. God graciously, sovereignly made you strangers and keeps you strangers. He did this and does this by election, by the cross, by the rebirth, by the sanctifying Spirit. But God works in such a way that you become willing to be a stranger. You want to be a stranger. You confess that you are a stranger. You live as a stranger and fight to live as one. Now, the thing that makes you willingly a stranger in the earth is the destiny, the destination. For the sake of the goal you shall some day reach, you now choose and persevere in the pilgrim-life. In Bunyan's parable, why did Christian endure his hard pilgrimage? Why did he despise the alluring wares of Vanity Fair? Because he had his eye, and heart, on the destination, the Celestial City. Indeed, it was because of that "destiny" that he set out at all. Why does the child of God live out his life as a stranger on the earth? Because he wants to go to heaven. Hebrews 11 makes plain this vital, practical importance of the knowledge of the destiny. Abraham sojourned because he looked for a city. The patriarchs confessed themselves pilgrims because they desired a better country, a heavenly.

One implication of this importance of the destination to stimulate the children of God to live as strangers is that it makes clear what relevant preaching is in our day, preaching relevant to youth. Young people sometimes complain that the preaching is not relevant to their lives. There may be truth in this criticism. We ministers ought to examine our preaching, both the public and the private, whether we apply the gospel to the needs of youth in these wild times. Young people, on the other hand, ought to ask themselves whether they speak with the minister and the elders about their temptations and difficulties, so that the minister and elders can know them. If, however, the complaint against irrelevant preaching means to disparage preaching of the gospel, preaching of doctrine, preaching the Word of God as it is in the Bible, the complaint rests on a mistake. The mistake is to suppose that a sermon about heaven, about the new world that is about to be established, about God as He is revealed in Jesus, is not relevant to the life of a young man or young woman in a world of free "love," war, drugs, unsympathetic parents, learning, racial strife, marriage,
and revolution. The fact is that it is just such a sermon that is relevant because it proclaims the glorious destiny and destination which will attract you and thus maintain you as strangers on earth, that is, cause you to live rightly and happily over against free “love,” revolution and drugs and in marriage, the home, the State, and the Church.

What effect will the desire for this destiny have on a man’s life? What is the stranger-life like? It does not consist of the avoidance of all earthly things, as much as possible. To interpret the life of spiritual strangers this way has been a temptation in the Church always. The long history of monasticism proves this. This notion still shows itself in the Church. It is the thought that lies behind the dour disparagement of earthly pleasure as such. The sexual relationship in marriage, according to this outlook on the life of the Christian, is merely permissible and then only with a view to begetting children. The joy of the intimacy of marriage is carnality. We may eat, but as soon as we enjoy the experience we have become earthly minded. It is this erroneous conception of what it means to live as a stranger that places all human activity that is not directly related to the Church beyond the pale. It is suspicious of learning and the arts.

The life of a stranger, the life lived under the sign of the eternal destiny of heaven, the new world, and God in Christ, will be a full, energetic life. What the stranger does, he does with all his heart. He abounds in the work of the Lord because he knows that his labor is not in vain. It will be a life in which he uses and enjoys every legitimate creature to the glory of God in Christ. 1 Peter 2 teaches that the life of a stranger does not consist of flight from the mundane areas of civil government, labor, and marriage. Rather, the child of God is called to be a citizen, an employee, and a husband as a stranger. 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 describes the life of a stranger as a using of the world without abusing it.

Two warnings are in order. The stranger will keep himself from sin. This is how he lives as a stranger. Although the citizens of the land we pass through namely adultery and fornication “free love,” and although they engage in it openly and unashamedly, we regard it as God does, as sin, and hate it and flee from it. Although men justify insubordination to authority, the stranger regards all refusal to submit to authority, whether of parents, of husband, of the civil government, of the employer, or of the elders as sin, as rebellion against the authority of God in the exalted Jesus Christ. Those who impenitently walk in sin, whether inside or outside the institute of the Church, have hell as their destiny. They are not strangers and will not share the destiny of strangers. Being of the world, they will perish with the world. The life of the stranger is holy in that it is separate from sin. Secondly, the stranger will never allow any thing to replace God as the goal of his life. He will never allow a thing to siphon off some of the desire with which he desires God in Christ. His life is holy in that it is consecrated to God. Here is an evil that weakens and mars us. With respect to this, parents among us fail, so that they rear children to tend to be at home in this world. Life is made to center, after all, on things, earthly things, and on the pleasure earthly things can give us. The evidence of the strength of this evil is, as always, luxurious living. We then indulge in, and even feel that we need, luxurious food, lavish drink, palatial houses with such elaborate furnishings that neither we nor our children dare live in them, and even fabulous church buildings. The admonition sounded by the church father, Hermas, in The Shepherd applies to us: “You know that you, the servants of God, live in a foreign land, for your city is far from this city. If then you know your city, in which you are going to dwell, why do you prepare here fields and costly establishments and buildings and dwellings which are to no purpose. He who prepares these things for this city cannot go back home to his own city.”

But what positive form will the life of young people take, young people who are strangers on the earth? Concretely, what calling does God have for them? What is there for them to do? In our day, the notion prevails that if anything worthwhile is to be done, the young people must do it. Young people suffer the delusion that they must undertake, as young people, the most grandiose projects. They suppose that
it is their solemn duty to dismantle the State and to put it back together again, for the first time, in the right way. Within the Church also, young people of college age feel themselves called to take apart the entire structure of the Church and to restructure it according to their wisdom. Mirabile dictu, the adults acquiesce in this overweening pride and foster the delusion. This notion finds expression in the slogan, “Never trust anyone over 30.” All of this nonsense rests on the supposition that the goal of human life is youth. After 30, one is burned out and has only the prospect of passing time, desperately trying to emulate the young. The fact is that the goal of human life, in the light of Scripture, is not youth but maturity, the grown-up man and woman. Wisdom and understanding are not bound up with youth, but with the hearty head. When the Psalmist looks back on his youth, he does not see it as the apex of his life, which he longs to regain, but he says, “sins of youth remember not.” If I may put Scripture’s thought in the language of our time, the Biblical injunction is, “Never trust anyone under 30.” The implication of this for the question, “What are youth to do?,” is this, that the calling of youth is to prepare! Be busy growing up! Be active gaining maturity! Now is the time for you to prepare yourself to be a teacher, a scholar, an elder, a citizen, a husband, a wife, a parent, and all of these after a Godly manner.

But is there then no valuable work for youth to do now? Yes, there is. But why is it assumed that this has to be work of a bombastic, showy, and dramatic nature? This is an assumption that appears in the Church. The youth have to save souls and do mission work. They must accomplish alleviation of racial tension. They must participate in widely advertised marches for this cause and the other. Youth itself is haunted by a sense of failure, if it has not done or is not constantly doing these things. I am reminded of the mistake of Elijah, who thought that God had to be in the great wind, the mighty earthquake, or the blazing fire. But he found that God was in the still, small voice. The work to which God calls young people, young people who are strangers, is the work of honoring their parents. Remembering my own youth and casting a cursory glance about at young people today, I conclude that this is demanding work and will take up much of a young person’s time and energy. The work to which God calls youth of the covenant is the work of loving God and the neighbor. There are young men and young women among you that have need, real need. Help them. There are some that are lonely. Befriend them. There are some that are walking in sin, perhaps. Rebuke them; give them no peace until they repent and walk again with you as strangers.

The life of a pilgrim, or stranger, in the world is difficult. The stranger is sustained, not only by the prospect of the wonderful destination that he will reach along the way of pilgrimage, but also by the enjoyment already in this life of the destiny that is his. There is a beginning already now of the enjoyment of our destiny. Our destiny is fellowship with God, in the face of Jesus Christ. We begin to have this sweet communion, through faith, already in this life. Therefore, the Psalmist said, “I am a stranger with Thee” (Psalm 39:12). A stranger, yes. This means tears. But already now, “with Thee,” “with God.” This means joy, unspeakable joy. Already now, on the pilgrimage. And this works faithfulness to the very end. No, by this God works faithfulness in you, to the very end. God is the origin of the strangers. God is the end. God is the One Who leads you from the beginning to the end. He will keep you, so that you enjoy the destiny He has prepared for you.

I thank you.
news

from, for, and about our churches

KAREN LUBBERS

There does not seem to be an over abundance of news this month. Maybe everyone is too busy adjusting to school life again or else recovering from a busy, busy summer. Hopefully, next month will be better—with your help!

From South Holland, Illinois:

Confession of faith was made by Beverly De Yong, Linda Vraegh, Phil Van Baren, and Sharon Zandstra.

Two families have joined this congregation: Mr. and Mrs. Ed Stouwie, Janice, who is also a confessing member, and three baptized children and also Mr. and Mrs. Menno Poortenga and four baptized children.

On Sept. 4 Rev. Lubbers and Rev. Elliot visited the congregation to show slides, to speak about the Jamaican mission field, and describe the type of work to be done there.

Already the young people are preparing for the 1971 Convention! On Sept. 23 they sponsored a beef dinner in their church with the proceeds of $200 going for the Convention.

The John Haak family transferred to the church in Holland, Mich. and Barb Zandstra to the church in Loveland. Anna Boer's papers were received from the church in Holland, Mich.

From Hudsonville, Michigan:

The summer Sunday School sessions ended this year in early September. The church is one of the few to conduct Sunday School during the summer.

A quote from a special letter from the young people to their congregation: "... we as the Hudsonville young people and our leaders have felt the greatest impact from the [Convention] week. It has drawn us closer together and caused us to know and understand one another better as members of Christ... our sincere appreciation to all of you who have helped so much..."

From Hope in Walker, Michigan:

Hope's biggest news item may be expressed simply by quoting from their bulletin of Sept. 27: "Rev. and Mrs. Kortering and family express appreciation for the farewell program of Friday evening and the generous gift. The Congregation will remain in our prayers..." On Tuesday, Sept. 29, Rev. and Mrs. Kortering and family left for Hull, Iowa.

After a month of furlough, Don Jonker returned to his station in Panama.

Larry Koole's address is:
Sp. Larry Koole 380-52-3836
Co. B. 2nd Bn, 61st Inf.
Fort Carson, Colorado 80913

Other Church News:

The Sunday School Mass Meeting was held on September 30 in Hope Church with Rev. Veldman as speaker.

September 23 ended the clothing drive carried out in the Grand Rapids area for the Jamaican people.

On September 2 Rev. Lubbers was installed as our churches' only missionary. The harvest is great but the reapers so very few; yet the Lord provides for his own. This work deserves our many prayers.

News from Covenant Chr. High:

Covenant now has 125 students and 7 faculty members. Mr. Tim Heemstra, a graduate from Calvin College, has joined the staff and teaches mathematics.

On September 24, four students from East Christian, a Grand Rapids high school, visited the school and various classes.

Good News from, for, and about all of us: "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." I John 4:7.