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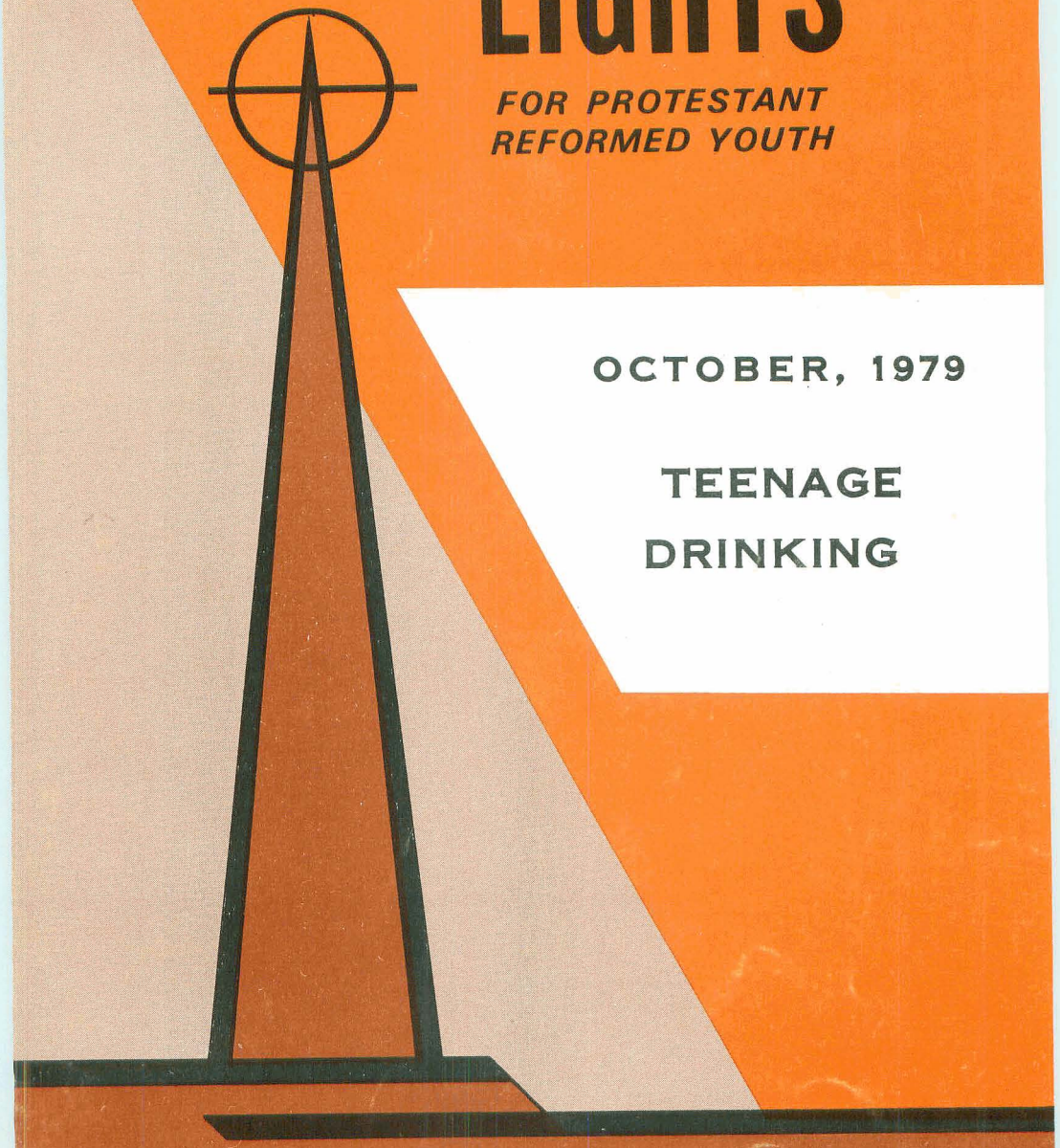

OCTOBER, 1979

TEENAGE DRINKING

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Editorial

HONOR AND THE PROMISE

by David M. Harbach

The motivation for writing this article arises from the observation that we need to remind ourselves of the meaning of the word "honor". More importantly we need to remind ourselves of how to honor. I have only to look at the numerous instances in my own life where I have failed to honor a fellow saint, to see that the importance of this word has slowly been pushed aside or pushed into the background of our daily life. Perhaps I can put it this way, we don't care to honor our neighbor because the word has little meaning to us. I assure you the word honor is extremely important and worth our time learning the meaning.

Webster defines the word honor as 1. a high regard or great esteem given, received or enjoyed, 2. a keen sense of right and wrong, e.g., he conducts himself with honor, 3. something done or given as a token or act of respect. Words similar in meaning are deference, defer, respect, reverence, and obeisance. Deference means 1. a yielding in opinion, judgement or wishes, 2. courteous regard or respect. Defer means to be respectful, e.g., she defers to her father's wishes or decisions. Respect means to feel or to show honor or esteem for. Reverence means a feeling or attitude of deep respect, love, and awe. Obeisance means an attitude to show respect or reverence.

In order to give a complete picture let us consider one word that has the opposite meaning, the word contempt. Contempt means 1. the feeling or actions of a person toward something he considers low, worthless, or beneath notice; scorn, 2. the punishable act of showing disrespect for the authority or dignity of a court, as by disobedience and unruliness. The meaning becomes more clear when we change the second definition to read, "the damnable act of showing disrespect for the authority or dignity of a fellow saint as by disobedience and unruliness.

Our study of the word honor as it is used in God's Word will focus on three passages, Exodus 20:12, Ephesians 6:1-3, and Matthew 15:4-6. All three passages concern the meaning and importance of the word honor as it is used in the fifth commandment of God. before we begin

this study in the Holy Scriptures, a few words of explanation are needed.

You get the impression from the dictionary's definition of the word honor that all men are capable of showing respect, reverence and deference. The reason for this is the definition does not take into consideration the point of view of the child of God. From an outward point of view the definition is correct for all men. At least outwardly we can see in the world of men respect for authority. Outwardly children do obey their parents and those in authority over them. Yet, let us not be fooled into thinking that all men are always showing honor. Certainly the antonym of honor is true in the world. We see that there is much contempt present in the world. Children openly hate their parents. They defy their parents, rebel against their parents, and even sue their parents. But the question arises, Is natural man able to show honor? We must reply, No. Natural man, unregenerated man, cannot show honor. The reason why he cannot show honor lies in the true definition of the word. Understand that only God's children can show honor. Understand also that the word honor has its most important meaning as it is used in the fifth commandment.

Exodus 20:12, "Honour thy father and mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." The second table of the law finds its roots in the first table of the law dealing with our relation to God. The second table of the law deals with our relation to the neighbor. We love our neighbor for God's sake. At the beginning of the second table of the law we find the command that speaks to children. We honor our parents for God's sake because He has determined that they be our parents. Only believing children can honor their parents because in so doing they are loving God. Only God's children can love Him who has given them that wonderful love in their hearts. To honor our parents implies our loving God.

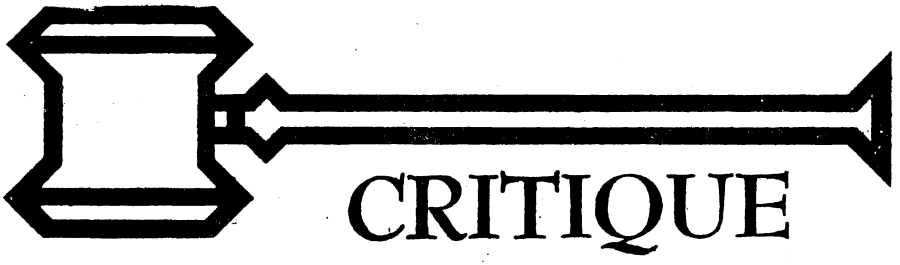
The fifth commandment is the first commandment with promise. Ephesians 6:1-3, "Children obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." We have seen that only God's children can honor their parents. We see in Ephesians that only God's children can and do receive the promise of long life. However, I must point out the fact that the word honor must be taken in the spiritual sense. By our spiritual act of honoring our parents we receive the promise of long life. We become aware of the fact of the spiritual aspect of the promise itself. The regenerated heart tells the believing child that he or she shall have a

long life. That long life in the spiritual sense is eternal life in the new heavens and the new earth. Therefore, we see the fulfillment of this promise in the new heavens and the new earth, where we shall see God in Christ face to face.

The importance of the word honor can also be seen from the account in Matthew 15:4-6, "For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." Jesus rebukes the scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem who had come to him complaining about His disciples, who had transgressed the law. Jesus rebukes the hypocrites of Jerusalem for violating the law themselves. How did they violate the Law? A child who gave all he could spare to the treasury, which they considered the most worthy cause, was free from assisting his parents when they needed help. Jesus points out the fact that to deny our parents service or relief is the same as cursing them and is therefore an act worthy of death. This sin is as terrible as showing contempt for our parents. The keeping of the fifth commandment carries a promise, but the violation of the fifth commandment carries a curse unto death. Jesus himself shows us the importance and blessedness of honoring our parents.

In conclusion, I would like to quote Lord's Day 39, question and answer 104 of the Heidelburg Catechism. "What doth God require in the fifth commandment? That I show all honor, love and fidelity, to my father and mother, and all in authority over me, and submit myself to their good instruction and correction, with due obedience; and also patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand." May we, by the grace of God, so honor our parents that our days may be long in the new heavens and new earth.

We take this opportunity to publicly thank Cindi Dykstra of our Hope Church, Walker, Michigan, for all her time spent on behalf of compiling the "News From, For, and About Our Churches." Through her faithful and often thankless labors, we have been able to keep informed on current happenings in our denomination. Thanks for a job well done!



A Look at Teenage Drinking

by Ben Wigger

This country in which we live has many problems facing it. And many of these problems are not simple, but rather, very complex. It was not too long ago that I came across an article which stated that "there is no clearer guage of a society's frustration than the extent to which it throws simplistic laws at complex problems".

According to that quote we Americans are one of the most frustrated nations on earth.

Now several states are caught up in perhaps one of the saddest of all efforts to legislate a quick fix to a problem of immense complexity. Legislatures are trying to solve the problem of widespread teen-age drinking of alcohol by raising the legal drinking age. For a legislature to lift the "legal" drinking age to twenty and expect to solve the problem of drinking in high school is about as futile as having the city council of a flood-ravaged town pass a resolution forbidding it to rain.

The shocking truth is that authorities now estimate that over one million teen-agers drink to excess, and that over three million drink themselves into trouble with school authorities and the police. A recent survey at one affluent New York City area public high school found only two of 108 teen-agers who said they did not drink.

Those arguing for a higher legal drinking age claim that 18 year old seniors in high school buy alcohol and pass it on to 14 and 15 year olds. There is, of course, some truth to this. But the grim truth is that the legal age for drinking has very little to do with the availability of alcoholic beverages in and around the high schools of America. An eighteen year old who wants to favor a sixteen year old girl with a bottle of gin will steal it from home or get a twenty year old buddy to get it for

him.

The real shame of all of this seems to be that as a country we are content to sit back and believe that the complications of modern life can be made sweet again with a piece of legislation here and a constitutional amendment there.

But this is not intended to take a look at the pros and cons of the teen-age legal drinking age, but rather, we should look at the problem and how it affects us.

As Christian young people, we are not insensitive to the problems that are facing others. This whole area of alcohol abuse cannot simply be put on the back burner to let simmer for awhile. We must be sincere to our own conscience and admit that the problem does carry over into our own lives as well.

It would be so handy if we could say that being a Christian makes us somehow immune from the world about us, and in particular, this problem.

The world tries to reason the entire difficulty away by blaming, among other things, American affluence. Could it be that too many high schoolers are driving cars and carrying around allowances so huge that they can buy wine or vodka, or marijuana without mom or dad wondering where the money went.

Or they point to the deterioration of the American home. Could it be that the American family has deteriorated to a point where parents exercise little or no discipline. If a teacher called a home forty years ago and said, "Your child has been drinking", that child was in for a terrible time. The teacher who makes that call today runs the risk of being attacked by the drinking student and sued by the parents for "slander".

There is some truth to these arguments. But as Believers we must look at this from a spiritual view-point.

And with the spiritual view-point in mind, we realize the problem is man's sinful nature, and more personally, our sinful nature.

We are faced with a world that grows more wicked every day. And sometimes we find ourselves wondering how God can hold His judgement back any longer. There is no doubt that we are in the last times. Luke 21:31-34: "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."

So what can we do about this problem as it affects each of us? I believe the only place for us to begin is on our knees before God in prayer asking for His forgiveness. The strength we need to overcome any temptation is received from God only after we confess our sins and turn our way from them.

Paul speaks of our being imitators of God in Ephesians, and this is something we can ask ourselves often. Do our actions reveal us to be imitators of our Heavenly Father?

Can others see the love that I have for Him when I drink?

The world cares not one bit for God. And she will sink deeper and deeper into sin until God says it is enough. We must stand fast and fight against all temptation, not just this one concerning alcohol. It is our calling as the Church of Jesus Christ.

MY NEW PASTORAL WORK

by Rev. Michael De Vries

"Feed the flock of God which is among you..." I Peter 5:2a

As a young minister, one immediately feels the awesome responsibility to Jesus Christ in connection with one's care of the congregation. Christ commissioned Peter to "feed my sheep" and "feed my lambs" (John 21:15-17). This commission is given to every minister of the gospel. And as is so evident from the Scriptures, "feeding the sheep" involves more than the official preaching of the Word on Sunday. Pastoral work concerns the private application of the Word. It is the preaching of the Word to the individual sheep of Christ. In Acts 20 the Apostle Paul describes his ministry in Ephesus as "teaching publicly, and *from house to house.*" vs. 20. (emphasis mine, MDV). Thus, pastoral work concerns the official, spiritual, individual care of the members of the congregation.

That care of the individual members of the congregation involves a broad range of problems and situations. It is as complex as life itself. It involves comforting and encouraging the sick, the afflicted, the grieving. It involves instructing and guiding the troubled, the confused,

the distressed. It involves exhorting and admonishing in love those who are walking in ways of sin.

Of course the pastoral labors of a minister depend much upon the size of the congregation in which he is called to labor, as well as the particular character of the congregation. Being the pastor at Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, a congregation of approximately 70 families, I have had a considerable amount of pastoral work in the short time I've been in the ministry. Many times pastoral work is toilsome, discouraging, very difficult labor. Yet, my experience has been that pastoral work is very rewarding, and that I have received a great blessing in these labors.

I have been asked upon more than one occasion, in connection with particular situations, "Isn't it very difficult for you to know what to say?" And my first inclination might be to answer: "Yes, it is very difficult." Looking only at myself that would be true. I would feel very inadequate at times. I might ask myself, "What can I, such a young, inexperienced pastor, say to God's people who are in very difficult circumstances that can comfort them, encourage them?"

But that is not, and may never be the case in the life of a faithful pastor. Why? Because I come to God's people, not with my own thoughts, not with trite words of my own, but *only* and *always* with the Word of God! It is certainly true that my words, my advice, my counsel would be of very little help to God's people. But I do not, and I may not come with my word, with my advice and opinions. By God's grace I come to God's people in need saying: "Thus saith the Lord!"

I have sometimes thought that it would be good to have more study in the area of Pastoral Work in our seminary. But, of course, no matter how much time were spent considering different problems and situations that might come up, one could not begin to treat the vast multitude of such problems and situations. And really every situation is unique. It concerns specific persons and specific circumstances, and must, therefore, be considered individually also. The point is that there can be no hard and fast rules for specific types of cases — say this to every sick person, say this to everyone walking in ways of sin, say this to every couple experiencing marital problems. That's why in Seminary we concentrate upon the principles of pastoral labor. And a fundamental principle is: *Always Bring The Word!*

A Pastor who always, without fail, heeds that principle does not dread pastoral work, does not question it, does not neglect it. But rather, he considers pastoral work an important part of his calling as a minister of the gospel. And that principle never fails! From my brief experience in pastoral work, already I am assured of that. No matter

what the problem is, no matter what the situation is, God's Word is the answer. Oh, there are problems I cannot treat. Sometimes God's people need hospitalization or medication, etc. for either physical or mental problems. Nevertheless, ultimately the care is the Word.

And it has been very striking for me to see how God's Word speaks to His people in every conceivable situation. That is particularly true of the Psalms. The Psalms speak to us in every conceivable situation of life in which we may find ourselves. Our lives and experiences are reflected in that of the Psalmist.

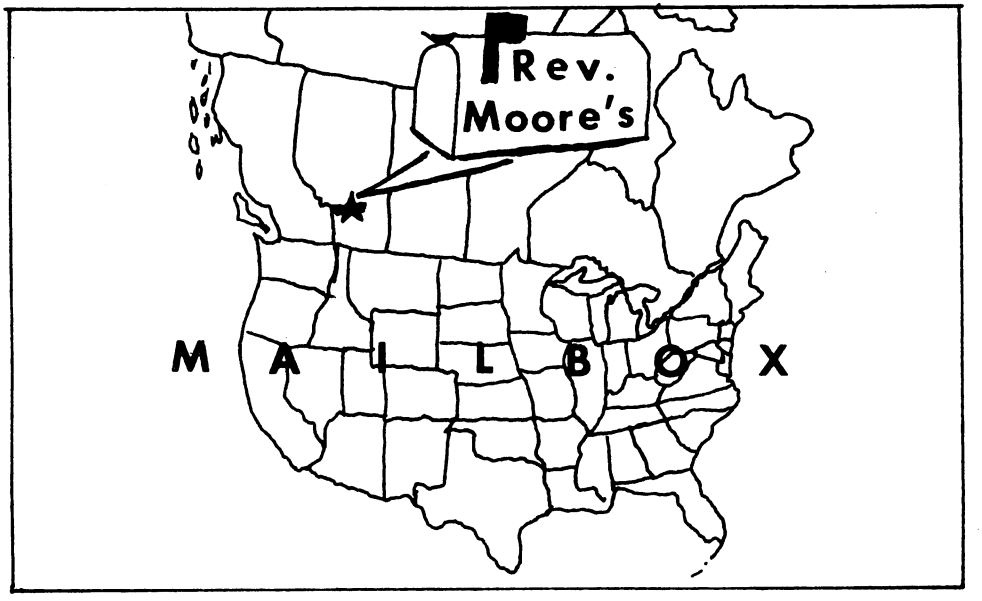
This fact has especially impressed upon me the necessity of the pastor's being familiar with the Scriptures. My qualification, my competence to do pastoral work is to be found in the fact that I'm a minister of the *Word*. And, therefore, pastoral work among the members of the congregation goes hand in hand with the official preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

Finally, all this implies that I, as a pastor, must depend upon Christ in all my pastoral work. I must labor as Christ's ambassador, as one authorized and qualified by Christ to labor as a shepherd to His sheep. I must labor as one responsible for those sheep before Christ's face. I, and every faithful pastor, must have a deep sense of dependence upon Christ. That means that I pray! My life, and the life of every faithful pastor, must be a life of prayer.

Prayer is, of course, necessary for all of God's people, but it is especially necessary for the pastor. That's evident from the Scriptures. The prophets and apostles were men of prayer. Even our Lord Jesus Christ on more than one occasion was constrained to withdraw from the people to be by Himself to pray.

As a young pastor, it is through prayer and the Word of God that I am able to perform pastoral work. At times, of myself, I would surely falter; I would not even dare to begin my labors. But I pray, pray concerning specific members of the congregation, specific needs, and specific situations. I pray concerning my own needs and my own weaknesses. Strengthened by prayer and armed with the Word of God, I am able to proceed with my work. And through that way of prayer and of faithfully expounding and applying the Word, I have the confidence that God's people hear the voice of their Good Shepherd.

Do not fail to remember your pastor in your personal prayers. He needs your prayers. Ask your heavenly Father to strengthen and encourage him, to grant him all that he needs to be a faithful pastor, that your congregation might be blessed and the cause of God's kingdom might be furthered.



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What is your opinion on applause at singspirations? This question I received some time ago, and now I had best get on with the answer. I understand that the question concerns special numbers at the singspirations. At the very outset, I would have to say that I am opposed to such applause. The reasons, I believe, are quite evident. Let us briefly look at them.

In the first place, we may ask the question, Why do we have singspirations, and why do we attend them? We may answer from Scripture; "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord: Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Ephesians 5:18-21. We notice in this passage that one sings together to make melody in one's heart to the Lord. This is possible only as the Lord gives us a humble heart — for only then do we make melody to the Lord.

In the second place, we sing together to give thanks for all things unto God in the name of Jesus Christ. And this requires according to Christ a submitting of one to another in the fear of God. This rather than an exalting of one over another and a fear of man. I will write a bit more on this idea as we go on in this answer. Further the Psalms are filled with the reasons we sing, principle of these is the following: "I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being." Psalm 146:2. This is repeated often in the Psalms. We sing to sing praises unto the Lord. And for "the glory of the Lord."

These principles of Scripture I believe are understood. However, to applaud for

special numbers at singspirations is in direct contradiction to this instruction of our Lord. Applause is the word of man in appreciation for an activity of man. Do not assume that by applauding an individual or group we are expressing gratitude to God. God gives us many means for this, the chief means is prayer, and as noted above we have the means of singing. Besides which there is the godly life and other ways.

Surely it is not wrong to thank God for the talents He gives His children and even to express this in our prayers, also at singspirations. But the special number is no more worthy of praise than the monotone singing from his heart in the audience.

To separate a certain person for special applause is to have respect of persons. This becomes practically manifest when one engages in the practice of applauding special numbers. The better the number — the greater the applause. It cannot be helped. The result shall be hurt feelings, a comparison of one of God's children to another — and finally a striving to perfect one's talent for the purpose of pleasing an audience to receive their applause. This will happen because this appeals to our flesh. Then rather than "submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God", one will be involved in the sin of exalting himself one over another in the fear of man. And that which was pleasing to God is made an abomination to Him. We then are in danger of becoming as the Pharisees who prayed before men to be seen of them, etc.

Let us then use our talents only for the praise of God. And let us be mindful that even this activity is only possible because Christ has worked in our hearts His work of salvation, and gives us grace to be thankful and to sing the praises of the living God. Then we need not the applause of man for joy — Our joy is alone in the Lord!

TEST YOUR MEMORY

1. How many stones did the Israelites take out of Jordan and set up as a memorial? Joshua 4:20
2. What was Joshua told to do that he might have good success? Joshua 1:8
3. Where did the children of Israel first camp after crossing the Jordan? Joshua 4:19
4. What city near Ai did Israel fight with at the same time? Joshua 8:17
5. Which of the tribes of Israel inherited land on both sides of the Jordan River? Joshua 22:7
6. How long did a killer who fled to a city of refuge have to stay? Joshua 20:6
7. Who was told to be strong and of good courage? Joshua 1:1, 6
8. What was Achan's penalty for his sin? Joshua 7:24-25
9. How much of the land that God promised Israel did he give them? Joshua 21:43
10. Who claimed to have wholly followed the Lord? Joshua 14:6-8

Experiencing the Catholicity of the Church

"I believe an holy catholic church" is the confession of the Church of Jesus Christ. Experiencing first hand what it confesses is not always the experience of each member. Miss Marjorie Martin, a retired lecturer of teachers' colleges, from Sidney, Australia, was asked to contribute some thoughts on experiencing this "holy catholic church" for this issue. She has visited many churches of Reformed and similar outlooks, and her extended tour of the United States has brought her to all but one Protestant Reformed Church. She is a member of the Ryd Reformed Presbyterian Church of Sidney, Australia.

by Marjorie Martin

In the last few years, I have been very blest in that I have visited quite a few branches of the true church. This included the Ryde Reformed Presbyterian Church of Sydney, Australia (to which I belong); the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Queensland, Australia; the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Christchurch, New Zealand; and also in 1977 and 1978 I visited 19 Protestant Reformed Churches in the U.S.A. and Canada.

These are all churches that bear the most important distinguishing mark of the true church — the spiritual body of Christ (Ephesians 1:23) — that of the pure preaching of the Word of God.[1] **These are truly Reformed churches where the preaching is faithful to Scripture and to Reformed Confessions.**

This was indeed a unique and remarkable experience. There was much edification and enrichment, as I heard the preaching and testimonies, and had such joyous times experiencing communion and fellowship with the saints; as these are assemblies of God's people, true believers, the elect and their seed, gathered by the Son of God; and as He dwells with them and in them (Romans 8:9, 10); one joyed in knowing He was with us and of being brethren, partakers of His covenant blessings.

These churches are in four countries and are part of the holy catholic church. **For the church of Christ is catholic, i.e. universal** and international in character and scope. While its universality is limited by sovereign election, "the church extends over all the world, embraces the whole human race and is gathered from the beginning of the world even unto the end and from every nation, tribe and tongue." [2]

One warns of the false use of the words "Catholic Church" by the Romish "Church", which regards itself and teaches that it is the only true church and is deluding so many weak so-called Protestants into her ecumenical programs. One warns of the rapid spread of her power and influence in the religious and political spheres and notes the high acclaim and even obeisance given by national leaders to the Pope. The Roman Catholic Church uses the name christian, but many of her doctrines, especially some

vital ones, and practices are anti-Scriptural. Christ's Name is greatly dishonoured. The sufficiency of His death, as a sacrifice for all the sins of His people, is denied. There is a bowing down and worship of the bread god of the Mass, which bread they say is changed into the actual body of Christ — the whole of Christ's body, blood, soul and divinity. This bread wafer, termed the "host" or "victim", "Christ Himself", they claim is presented as a sacrifice for sins of the living and the dead. The Mass, therefore, is a most blasphemous ritual! And there are other idolatrous practices and lying doctrines, such as the cult of the Virgin Mary.

Also the true catholicity of the church is antithetical to the ecuminism of the World Council of Churches who are trying to establish a universal "church", which is rather an amalgamation of apostate churches. As they are increasingly associated with Roman Catholicism, one surely sees the development of the counterfeit "church" of the anti-christian kingdom, depicted in Revelations 17.

Saints of the true catholic church in history were martyred, burnt at the stake, because they denied the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the bread and wine of the mass. **Let us, of the present holy catholic church, always be on our guard, in days of encroaching Romanism, gross apostasy, and false ecuminism,** and pray for grace always to stand fast to the truth of Scripture and to Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

There is a unity and oneness in the church of God. The church of all ages and from all nations is essentially one. "The members of this church are perfectly united in a bond of spiritual affinity and fellowship, so that they form one spiritual body." [3] "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another," Romans 12:5. The unity of the church is a unity of the body of Christ and therefore of her Head, a unity of the Spirit and of faith. All are one in Christ Jesus. So catholic and comprehensively universal is our Lord Jesus Christ, (Ephesians 1:10) that as He is the Head of the church. in Him the church is truly universal. [4] For in Christ, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ." Galations 3:28.

The true church in the world today, it would seem, is small and **one must remember the Lord's people in several countries suffering persecution.** In some African countries, e.g. Uganda, saints have been tortured and many died for the Lord in recent times. Even now, we hear this is so in Ethiopia. Widespread are anti-religious campaigns against Christians in Communist countries. In some, e.g. Mozambique, they are not allowed to meet for worship.

The churches I visited, therefore, are among those greatly privileged in these days. They are in countries where there is freedom to preach God's Word faithfully, to assemble to hear this preaching and to possess the Scriptures. Such are priceless privileges for which the saints, deprived of these, fervently long. How we of such greatly blest churches should thank God for His goodness to us and seek with all our heart to glorify Him!

I visited but a very small portion o the true church on earth today, bu sufficient to give me a deeper awarenes of the universality of the church. Thi brought home to me more forcefully, som **wondrous spiritual truths.** The ver existence of the holy catholic church is o tremendous significance. There is th body of Christ gathered in this generatio and made manifest on earth. **"Thi gathering of the church in every genera tion is the great wonder-work of God i history.** It is not too much to say, that it i more marvelous than the work of Creation It lies beyond the scope of our power an comprehension." [5] So we must bow be-

fore the Most High God acknowledging with reverent awe, that **God, He is God, the absolute Lord**, as we consider **the wonder of sovereign grace, salvation and election.** God, in His omnipotence, great love and favour to His people, brought about their resurrection from death in sin and re-created them in His own image. He brings His people out of the human race, which is in the midst of death, is polluted and defiled, guilty and damnable, lying under the wrath of God and at enmity against Him, into His church, which is living, justified, eternally righteous, a royal priesthood, holy, consecrated to God. **The mighty Lord, God the Son, made this possible by the shedding of His blood on the Cross.** O, the love of Christ, that He assumed, in God's judgment, the place of the elect on the accursed tree, removing their guilt, redeeming them, imputing His righteousness and holiness to them and the right to be God's people and live in His house forever.

These churches were established by God alone. Men cannot organize a church or establish a spiritual fellowship even though it be by the preaching of the Word, that the church is gathered; it is by the wonder-work of grace that God alone brings about, through Jesus Christ our Lord, by His Spirit and Word.

So, on being with the saints in these churches one is humbled and joys as one's thoughts dwell on the **wonders of election and salvation.** Here we are, "a chosen generation," some of the people of God, of the seed of Abraham! We praise God for the Spirit's working of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ in us; regenerating us and applying this redemption, purchased by Christ, to us. For it is an unspeakable great blessing to be of the people of God, and such blessedness, we of these churches have in common. Why us out of the teeming millions of mankind? It is of God's sovereign good pleasure and great mercy! O, the treasures of grace which are opened to so few! Of all mankind we, His people, are the only blest people. Surely we should be a thankful, holy people! Rightly then, do we hear in these churches the Lord's Name magnified and voices uplifted singing His praises with thanksgiving and joy. May they continually abound in such praise and worship.

Also there is a deeper consciousness of the glorious **covenant of God with His people** whom He has chosen in Jesus Christ; not only in His electing and redeeming them, but also in the living eternal relationship of friendship He has with them. How immeasurable is the love of our Covenant Father for us! How great is His faithfulness! We are "the flock of His People," "the apple of His eye." He has said: "...I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands" Isaiah 49:16. Christ preserves His church as a spark in an ocean, as a flock of sheep among wolves. We are kept by the power of God, I Peter 1:5. He will always care for us and protect us. We praise Him, that **by His Spirit** He sustains, upholds and **sanctifies us, thus enabling us to grow in grace and is bringing us to glory.** What dignities and privileges we have as God's sons; surely we must publish and declare His works that the Lord's Name be glorified!

We praise God, that **Christ is King of kings and Lord of all and is the Head and King of the church.** And that He indwells the church and its members by His Spirit. One is aware, one visiting the churches, that here Christ must have the pre-eminence and also of our oneness in Him. **We have a catholic Lord**, who is rich over all who call upon Him, and a **catholic Spirit, that dwells in the church in all nations.** Because of this, national, cultural, racial and other differences between saints in the universal church fade into insignificance and our union in Christ transcends all natural relationships. What delightful **communion of saints** was experienced! On meeting the saints of each denomination, one immediately feels at one with them even though we meet for

the first time. There is a marked feeling of spiritual affinity and family relatedness. Yes, one feels we are all of the same family — God's family. "Now, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and the household of God." Ephesians 21:24.

Such loving kindness was shown to me and wonderful hospitality. I was welcomed so graciously and made to feel at home at once. I stayed in 17 different Protestant Reformed homes for about 2 days as a rule, but a longer time in some and such good care was shown me and such excellent fare was fed me! Also there were outings, drives in the mountains, sight-seeing trips, picnics, etc., arranged for me. Much interest and gracious response was shown in my slide showing about Australia. I have received much kindness and been shown much generosity on my stay in Hudsonville in 1978, 1979 in the way of loan of furniture, china and other needful things; as well as heart-warming kindness, hospitality and care for me and my welfare from many Protestant Reformed folk. The love of Christ has surely been shown to me through many of His dear saints and the wonderful fellowship enjoyed with the saints of all the denominations visited.

Heard in all these churches was, **the pure preaching of the Word of God.** This is the most priceless possession — the truth, the Word of God, the Scriptures. Therefore, here, one hears God speak, whereas in vast numbers of so-called Christian churches, lying doctrines are preached and there is a famine for the Word of God. How great is the responsibility of these churches to maintain pure doctrine, the truth, in these days of great apostasy! How urgent is the need to watch and pray for grace to preserve the purest preaching and instruction!

The churches also preach a catholic gospel [6] i.e. a gospel which is to be preached to all nations, as there is support for or undertaking of **missionary work**, preaching the gospel in other places and nations in the world, in obedience to Christ's command.

It is the **Authorized version of the Bible** — that precious Protestant jewel — which is used exclusively in these churches. It is beyond dispute, that the blessings of Christ's Spirit has attended the preaching of the Word from this version.

One observes the fruits of the indwelling Spirit of Christ in many of the saints with their godly walk, their humility, the awareness of their sinfulness and longing after **holiness.** Such holiness is a gift of grace and such are holy only in Jesus Christ, the Lord. It is His holiness imputed and is dependent on sanctifying by His Spirit. Saints are not only to bear God's name, but His image and it is a necessity for a believer to grow in holiness. Indeed holiness is needed for the comfort of a believer. And holiness brings its own high enjoyment. **True catholicity lies in holiness.** It is a truly catholic virtue. [7] He has chosen us "that we should be holy and without blame." Ephesians 1:4. So the church is consecrated to God, and holy as to calling. "For it is written, be ye holy, as I am holy" I Peter 1:16. May the Lord give us grace to be holy in this corrupt and evil age and strengthen us to stand against the wiles of the devil, the "old man" in us, and the world.

Writing of experiencing the blest communion of saints, brings one to think again of the **members of the Universal church with us, who are persecuted for Christ's sake** and it seems these are many, with many martyrs today. One reads in the April 15th **Standard Bearer**, of persecution of Christians in Rhodesia, where rebel forces of the so-called Patriotic Front are fighting not only to take over the country, but to wipe out the Christian faith. There are congregations which can no longer safely meet in buildings for worship. One reads of a

congregation of 60-70 men, women and children, made to lie flat on the ground and beaten with sticks by terrorists and their Bibles burnt. In Mozambique, a denomination of 50,000 members are not allowed to hold services in premises or the open air. "Christian" schools have been nationalized. There are widespread restrictions on churches and clergy as part of anti-religious campaigns of Communist governments. There has been slaughter of Christians in Uganda under Idi Amin and, in the last three years hundreds, perhaps thousands are said to have been killed in Ethiopia for their religious beliefs, and this persecution is occurring there right now! One reads recently of Christians being killed, because they refused to give the clenched fist Communist salute. Such events are common. [8] Christians are now imprisoned, tortured and dying for their faith. Let us pray for our brethren in persecution.

What of us, their privileged brethren with all the freedom and benefits we have? Let us remember, "**UNTO WHOMSOEVER MUCH IS GIVEN, OF HIM SHALL MUCH BE REQUIRED** (Luke 13:48). With prosperity, easily comes spiritual laxity, hardening and backsliding. Young folk of the church especially seem to be under attack by the devil, to compromise with the world, in these corrupt times. One hears for example, of Sabbath breaking by some young folk of the church; playing games, swimming and having picnics on Sunday. The Lord says; Isaiah 58:13, 14, "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, not finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord...." Note well the depth of committment to spiritual matters the Lord requires on the Sabbath. O, Lord, give us grace to obey thy law and keep thy commandments, as this is thy will for us, for Thou hast said, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" John 14:14.

Now is the time for us saints to examine ourselves. Our calling is to be an obedient friend servant of God, who has the law of God in his heart, that delights to do His will and sing His praises and is wholly consecrated to God. Is this us? Nothing less is good enough. Faith without works is dead. James 2:26. **We must earnestly seek after holiness.** We must put sinful ways and thoughts out of our lives and by prayer, seek God's strength and enabling, to live holy lives for Him. Also **we must diligently study the Word and hear it preached.** Are we **learning God's Word and hiding it in our hearts** so that we might not sin against Him and for strength and comfort? The Scriptures may be taken from us some day!

Are we ready to suffer for Christ? Is our faith strong enough, so that we would stand fast for the Lord and the truth, even unto death, as some of our brethren are doing now? While we have the promises that His grace is sufficient for us and that He will never leave us, we are exhorted **right now to strengthen our faith by using the means of grace**, and to grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and in our love to Him.

Great is our reward as a holy walk means communion with God and this is a saint's greatest joy. Also He tells us; "blessed" are we, when we suffer for Christ's sake. Matthew 5:11. How unspeakably blest are we all then — the saints of the holy catholic church throughout the world — for we are more than conquerors through the blood of Christ and the Omnipotent God fights for us!

Abundant joy it will be when we will be in the perfected catholic church, as John beheld: "lo, a great multitude, which no man could number of all nations,

and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb,..." in the kingdom of heaven in the new creation. Revelations 7:9. May His Name be exalted and receive all praise and glory now and forever!

1. **Reformed Docmatics**, H. Hoeksema, RFPA, page 620.
2. Ibid page 607.
3. Ibid page 602.
4. Ibid page 608.
5. Ibid page 584.
6. Ibid page 611.
7. Ibid page 612
8. **Australian Beacon**, March, 1979, (Amnesty International spokesman)

CONVENTION REVIEW

by Carolyn Van Baren

Almost 300 Young People and chaps met at Hope Christian School in Redlands, California, Monday, July 23, 1979. All these excited young people, representing all the Protestant Reformed churches in America, were gathering together for the 39th Annual P.R.Y.P. Convention. The convention theme was "Redeeming the Time" taken from Ephesians 5:15-16.

For the easterners, the California heat was a shock. As cabin sign-up and lunch were being taken care of at Hope School a few kids tried a game of basketball, but after a little while they too were looking for a little bit of shade. Buses left for Pine Summit Camp, near Big Bear Lake, later in the afternoon.

Arrival at the camp brought kids and luggage and excitement! Everybody found their cabin and settled in a little. The chapel was then filled for greetings and announcements. Quiet hour was at 10:00, then followed by cabin time at 11:30. Of course, that didn't mean activities for the day were over. Cabin friends talked about the past year and picked up friendships where they were left off last year.

Tuesday morning the sky was bright blue and the mountain air cool and fresh. Conventioneers headed to the chapel for devotions. This became a habit during the week. Before each meal everybody met at the chapel; scripture reading and prayer were handled by a member of Redlands society. Alvern then gave announcements and dismissed a cabin for K.P. duty. The remainder would join together in song until the meal was ready to be served.

Breakfast was served and tables cleaned. The convention picture was taken and once more we headed to the chapel. Rev. Hanko

introduced the first discussion topic: "Covenant friendship and the Golden Rule", afterwhich the group divided up for discussion. The Delegate Board had their first meeting immediately following the discussion groups.

After lunch, the pool was open for the swimmers. Volleyball and basketball were played. For the brave kids, earthball was played. Later in the afternoon, an obstacle course was run. To make things challenging, about eight kids had their ankles tied together, then ran in a row up a hill, through tires, over a log, around a swing, down a hill to the finish line. No one had to ask who ran. It was obvious by the rope burns around the ankles of about fifty kids!

Dinner was served at 5:30. There was time to clean up and at 7:30 young people, chaps, and visitors from church gathered to hear Rev. Kamps speak on "Redeeming the Time in the Age of Ignorance." Directly after the speach, everyone went to Victory Circle where we could have a Bon-Fire-Sing-Along. Ten o'clock was quiet time and kids had to whisper or else be indoors. Adults were served coffee in the lodge, giving them a chance to visit. By 11:30, things were pretty dead at the camp. All those active bodies were a bit weary after a long busy day.

Wednesday morning came quickly. Devotions, announcements and singing preceeded breakfast. After breakfast, people put on their hiking shoes. The 20 minute "walk" to the ski lift on Moonridge ended up being an hour-long uphill (mountain really) hike. Grumbling and sighs were heard until eyes could see the Alpine Slide. Suddenly steps became faster. Conventioneers were given a chance to take a chairlift up the mountain. At the top, each person was given a sled with wheels under it. The sled was taken down a cement track to where the chairlift started. When everybody that wanted to go down the chairlift had gone at least once we headed to the chairlift that went to the top of the mountain. The ride up took better than a half hour. Once at the top, it was with awe one looked around and saw a creation of nature wrought by God's hand. It was in this setting that lunch was served and small groups were formed to discuss "The Role of Women in the Church." After a well enjoyed discussion, one group at a time left the mountain for the ride down and long hike back to the camp. About twenty-five of us talked a man with a pickup truck into taking a load of tired kids. Once back at camp, people inspected their sunburn, took showers or a quick nap. By 5:30 everyone was back to camp waiting in line for dinner.

Rev. Dale Kuiper spoke to the group that gathered in the chapel

Wednesday night on "Redeeming the Time: During the Sex Revolution." After the speech kids walked around for awhile; but by 11:30 pretty much everybody was sleeping.

Thursday morning turned out to be as beautiful as the days we had already spent at the camp. By now, meeting in the chapel and heading to the lodge afterward were automatic. After breakfast, we once again gathered in the chapel where Rev. Hanko introduced our final discussion topic, "Are We Spiritually Honest With Ourselves?" After discussion groups, the delegates met to vote on constitution changes and new board officers.

Lunch was a hamburg fry. This was followed by the Girls' East-West ball game. The East let the West slip by, winning with one run! The girls game was followed by the guys. The swimming pool was open at this time also.

Shower water was about 40° by 3:30 which shows how early some people get started cleaning up for the *Big Night*!

By five one could look in amazement at the great looking guys and girls dressed up. Would you believe it was the same kids that looked like they only owned jeans all week. An excellent meal was served. Then an hour was spent talking, followed by gathering once more in the chapel. Rev. Miersma addressed the group gathered on "Redeeming the Time in a Fun-loving Generation." Twelve o'clock was curfew!

Friday morning everybody had to be packed with luggage ready to be *on* the buses before breakfast. After breakfast, cabins were cleaned and inspected. By 10:00, 300 excited kids were heading down the mountain to the coast. After a few minor problems, like broke down buses, everyone arrived at the ocean. Hotdogs, pop, and chips were served. The big moment had arrived! The conventioneers went after the waves; some willingly, some found the water with the help of five other kids! The afternoon was spent body surfing, playing volleyball, and roller skating along the shore. The afternoon in sunny Southern California wore everyone out. The buses to Ontario High were pretty quiet!

Dinner was served by the mothers of Redlands. Farewells were said, and buses left back to Redlands or the airport.

Another convention came to a close. With it are many memories of friends, discussions, speeches and activities. Each one, as we sang "God Be With You Till We Meet Again", had thoughts of God's faithfulness to us as His covenant youth running through our minds. And we know God will be with each of us on our way and someday reunite us together again.

What Do We Owe Our Country?

by Randall J. Groenendyk

What would your answer be if I asked you this question: "What is the best country in the world?" If you're like most other Americans, you would probably automatically answer, "the United States." Simple, right? Well, what if I were to then ask you, "What do we owe our country?" A little tougher question to answer, huh?

Some people might respond by saying that we owe our country our total and unquestioning support. You've probably run into persons like these before — they're the ones who shout "My country, right or wrong!", and have bumper stickers on their cars which read, "America, Love It Or Leave It!"

Other people, though, might insist that we owe our country loyalty and support only when we agree with what it does. In other words, if the government tells us to do something which we disagree with, we may disobey the government by ignoring or rebelling against the command. You've probably also seen or heard of these kinds of people — they're the ones who, for example, in the 1960's, burned their draft cards and made bonfires out of American flags.

So what do we owe our country? How would *you* answer the question, "What do we owe our country?" I think that we can get at the answer to this question by keeping in mind two main ideas.

First, we must remember that our government has been given the right to rule over us by God. The government receives its authority and legitimacy from God. To put it another way, the government rules over us in the place of God; the government is God's servant, so to speak. Read what Paul has to say about this in Romans 13:1, 2.

> "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment."

Did you catch that? Paul is saying here that when we disobey the government, we are at the same time disobeying God. Rebelling against the government is the same thing as rebelling against God!

Practically speaking, what does this mean for us? It means that

when the government asks us to pay our taxes, we pay them. It means that we must show honor and respect to our elected officials. It means that if the government makes a decision which we disagree with, although we may protest vehemently, in the end, we must peacefully submit to the wishes of the authorities. In short, it means that we owe our country loyalty, support, and obedience, for that is the will and command of God.

However, we must also bear in mind a second main idea: that although it is our Christian duty to obey the government, we are first of all citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. Our ultimate loyalty is not to the government of the United States, but to God. After all, we are only pilgrims and strangers in this land; our final home is in Heaven.

Thus, we should obey the government at all times, *except* when it asks or commands us to do something that conflicts with the Law of God and our Christian principles. In that case, we have absolutely no choice but to obey God and disobey the government.

For example, of Congress would pass a law prohibiting us from meeting together and holding worship services, we would simply have no choice but to disobey that law by meeting secretly in homes, schools, or wherever it would be possible to gather together and worship God without being caught.

The Bible, too, provides us with a good example of how Christians may sometimes have to disobey man and government in order to obey God. We are all familiar with the story of Daniel, who disobeyed the law of King Darius which banned all prayer in the country. Daniel ignored that law and prayed anyway, knowing full well that he would be severely punished for doing so.

How then should we answer the question, "What do we owe our country?" We may say that since the government has received its authority from God, we owe it our support and compliance in all things, as long as it does not require us to do anything that violates our Christian beliefs and principles. If, however, we are commanded by the government to act contrary to the Law of God, then it is our Christian calling to disobey the government and obey God.

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NEWS From, For, and About Our Churches

by Linda Kaiser

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

First Church of Edmonton has received the papers of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Wieringa and their son from the Bethel Christian Reformed Church of Lacombe.

The membership of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Monsma has been received from Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Church.

At his request, the membership papers of Mr. David Zandstra were transferred to the Lynden Church.

Faith Church has received the membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Schipper and daughter, Christine Joy, from Hope; Mr. and Mrs. Al Kaptein and three baptized children from Hope; Mrs. Susan (Besselsen) Noorman from Hope; and Mrs. Marilyn Bylsma from First Church of Grand Rapids.

Hope Church has sent the membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Korhorn to Southeast, Miss Sharon Kooima to Hull, Rev. and Mrs. Van Overloop and five baptized children to South Holland, Mrs. Doug Pastoor (nee JoAnn Van Uffelen) to Redlands, and Mr. Mark Engelsma to Hudsonville.

First Church, Grand Rapids, has sent the membership papers of Mr. Douglas Pastoor to Redlands, and Mr. and Mrs. Jack DeVries and two baptized children to Southeast.

MARRIAGES

Harold and Mary Veldman were united in holy marriage on June 2.

The marriage ceremony of Mr. Doug Pastoor and Miss JoAnn Van Uffelen took place on June 13 in Hudsonville Church.

Mr. Richard Noorman and Miss Sue Besselsen were united in marriage on June 21 at Faith Church.

On August 16 the marriage of Miss Beth Huber and Mr. Charles Van Meeteren took place at Faith Church.

Barry Gritters and Lori Kortering were united in marriage on Aug. 23 in Hope Church in Redlands.

The wedding ceremony of Roger William Veldman and Anne Lynn Doezema took place on Aug. 30 in First Church, Grand Rapids.

The wedding ceremony of Mary Jane Holstege and Douglas John Prince took place in Hudsonville Church on Sept. 14.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Holland Church presented a lecture on June 26 in their church by Prof. Robert Decker on "The Church's Calling to Missions and the Believers' Calling to Witness."

The congregation at Holland celebrated its fiftieth anniversary of God's Covenant Faithfulness on July 3.

A clothing drive was held at Hope School on July 17-18 for our people in Jamaica.

South Holland held the installation of their missionary to Birmingham, Alabama, — Rev. R. Van Overloop — on July 27.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTIVITIES

Southwest Church sponsored a chicken barbecue on June 2. Proceeds for the 1979 convention.

A singspiration was held at Southwest Church on June 10 sponsored by the Southwest Young People's Society to help defray the convention expense.

The Jr. Young People's Society of Hope, Grand Rapids, sponsored a workathon the week of June 11-16. Donations

were for the 1979 young people's convention.

A canoe trip on the White River, sponsored by the Federation Board, was held on Sat., July 7.

A pre-convention singspiration was held on July 15 in the Calvin College Fine Arts Auditorium.

Area young people attended a beach party, sponsored by the Federation Board, on Aug. 18 at Hofmaster State Park.

A convention picture party was held at Hope School on Aug. 24.

A Federation Board-sponsored singspiration was held at Faith Church on Aug. 26. The theme: "Children are a Heritage of the Lord."

A Fall Retreat was held on Sept. 14-15, sponsored by the Federation Board, at Camp Manitou-Lin.

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