# Beacon Lights

August
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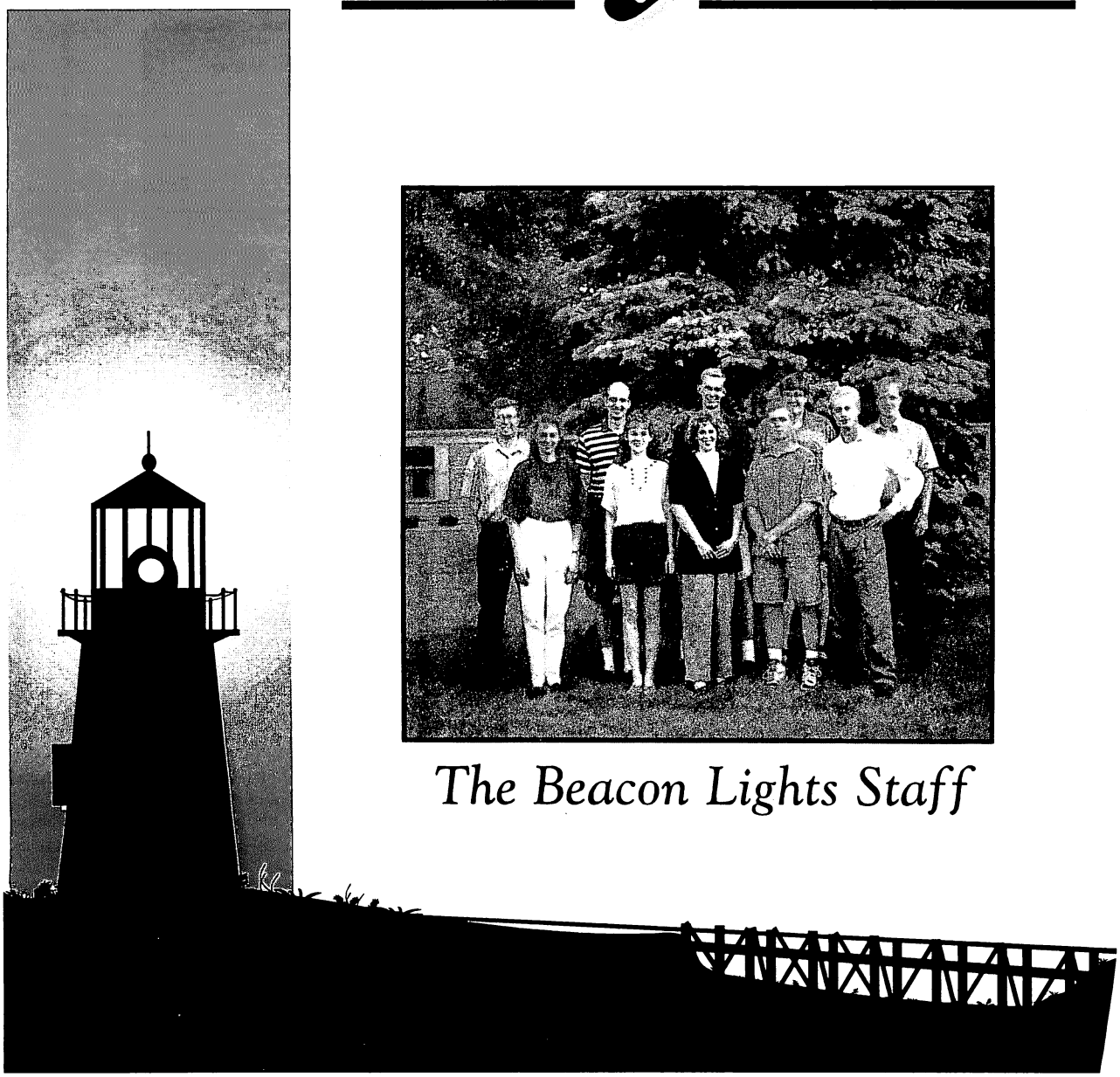
*The Beacon Lights Staff*



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*PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE FEDERATION OF PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETIES*

# From the Editor—

By the time this issue reaches you I will have tended the lighthouse as *Beacon Light* editor for six months. Time has gone quickly and many things have happend. What a challenge, what a joy! I hope you are finding the *Beacon Lights* to be an edifying publication.

One of the major events for myself was getting a teaching position in Randolph, Wisconsin, my home town, at Faith Christian School. At first it appeared as though I would have to give up my position as editor. I really did not want to give it up so I proposed a plan to my staff that would make it possible for me to be editor from Randolph, and they were willing to give it a try.

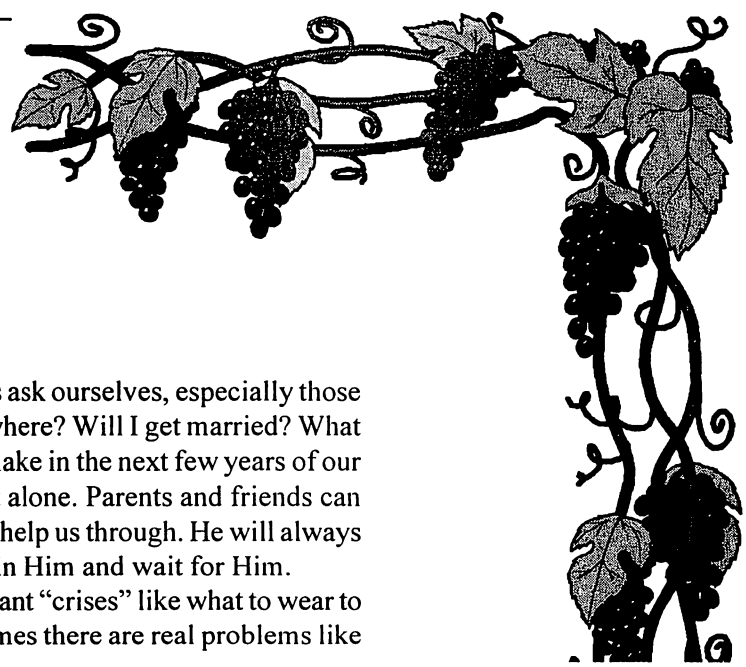
The plan includes using a tele-conference system that has been made available to us for the monthly meetings, using email for file transfer and other correspondence, and some reorganization. We are glad that technology has kept up with our ambitions for the *Beacon Lights*!

The use of email not only makes long distance editor work possible but it will also make our Church News more up to date especially if more bulletin clerks are able to send bulletins via email. Email also cuts down on legwork and is more efficient.

There are also disadvantages. I will really miss being with my staff at the meetings. They are a great boost to a weary editor. We hope to have at least three meetings together in Grand Rapids to maintain some of the fellowship.

We hope this works out and covet your prayers as we continue our work on the *Beacon Lights* in the fear of the Lord. ❖

## Fruitful Branches



# No Worries

by Lora Van Uffelen

What will the future bring? This is a question many of us ask ourselves, especially those of us who are in high school. Will I go to college, and if so, where? Will I get married? What kind of job will I have? There are many decisions we must make in the next few years of our lives. But don't get all stressed out about them! We are not alone. Parents and friends can help make choices and encourage us, but above all, God will help us through. He will always be there to lead and guide us. We just have to put our trust in Him and wait for Him.

We often worry about the future, mostly about insignificant "crises" like what to wear to the banquet or how to earn enough money for a car. Sometimes there are real problems like

whether or not a loved one will live another day. In Matthew 6:25, Jesus tells us, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on."

Today we don't have to worry about having food, clothing, or shelter; our tables are always heaped with steaming dishes, our closets bulge with impressive wardrobes, and we live in nice cozy homes. But not too long ago, Christians really had to take this verse to heart. I'm talking about the Great Depression. When we read about this in history books, it seems like a long time ago, but many of our grandparents can still remember it.

A couple of years ago, my grandpa wrote a letter about his experience as a child in the Depression. His father, like most men at that time, lost his job and had no way of earning money to support his family. Their family was separated when they lost their house to the mortgage company. My grandpa moved with his mother and sister to their grandparents' farm in the country while his father had to stay in the city to look for employment.

Eventually, the family was able to live together again in a tiny apartment above a clothing store. As was typical of most apartments at that time, there was no central heating; it was heated by one coal burning stove which also went to sleep at night. There was no heat at all in the bathroom, and the bedrooms were freezing. Many families shared houses or apartments with aunts and uncles, cousins, grandparents, and, unfortunately, rats.

My grandpa's family had a 1924 Model T Ford, but they didn't use it all winter because they couldn't afford gas and repairs. They walked where they had to go, although, with no money, there weren't too many reasons to go out.

Many people had to pick up their rations of basic food staples like beans, milk, and flour from food stations.

The children got maybe one small present at Christmas, but nothing on birthdays. They wore potato sack dresses, or mended hand-me-downs. My grandpa remembers his mother making him a winter coat out of a man's winter coat.

This should make us feel pretty guilty. We look at how much we have, and realize that we don't have to worry at all about having enough food, clothing, or shelter. We forget the meaning of the word "necessities" and interpret it as a different outfit for every day of the month, at least one vacation a year, or going out for dinner on weekends.

Earthly pleasures aren't what should be important to us. "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matthew 6:32). In this same chapter, Jesus reminds us of how God takes care of the birds and the lilies. If he cares for them, how much more precious in his eyes are his own children. If we trust in Him, He will provide us with all we need.

The Christians living at the time of the Depression were drawn close to God and had to rely on Him constantly, they could not provide themselves with everything. Perhaps it would be good for all of us to experience real need. We should realize that it is very possible that we could still be living in the last days, when Christians will be persecuted as never before. We will not have all the comforts we have today. During those difficult days, we will have to trust God more than ever before. Maybe then we would be humbled, and realize that we are not masters of our own future, but receive everything we have as a gift from God.

My Grandpa summed up his experiences in the Depression by saying:

> I knew that we were poor and had no money for anything except the bare essentials, but this realization somehow didn't matter. Our home was spiritual. Our life was tough, but we knew that we were in the care of our heavenly Father and that He would provide for our *needs*. My father and mother loved God and our Protestant Reformed Churches, and this was our focus. We never felt "poor," we had our faith and the preaching of God's Word to sustain us.

We have so much to thank God for, and nothing to complain about. We must learn not to place so much emphasis on earthly possessions. Jesus says it all in Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

How do we seek the kingdom of God? We have to love and trust Jesus Christ, and draw near to Him in prayer. A song I learned a long time ago keeps coming back to me: "Why worry when you can pray? Trust Jesus, He'll be your stay. Don't be a doubting Thomas, rest fully on his promise. Why worry, worry, worry, worry, when you can pray?" ❖

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*Lora is a student at Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

# We like the Little Lights

Dear Editor,

I would like you to print in *Beacon Lights* some pictures of people and churches in Jamaica and we would like to see some of your members in church. My favorite page in *Beacon Lights* is the kid's page.

Novia Jackson, Bluefields Jamaica

Dear Editor,

I would like you to print in the *Beacon Lights* something very important like Bible Quizzes. Connie Meyer's "Little Lights" needs to have even one more page.

Venessa Jones, Beeston Springs Jamaica

Dear Editor,

I would like to see more puzzles.

Andrew C. Tomlinson, Bluefields Jamaica

Dear Editor,

I would like you to print more Church News, Kid's page, and Church Family.

Horatio O. Tomlinson, Bluefields Jamaica

Dear Editor,

I would like you to print in the *Beacon Lights* something very important about when a person meets a friend at the restaurant and they begin talking about Christ and the person does not know Christ. What would you do if it was you?

Peta-gaye Tomlinson, Bluefields Jamaica

**Response**

Thank you for your great ideas for the *Beacon Lights*. We are encouraged to hear that you like the "Little Lights" and we are working on some more puzzles and Bible quizzes.

Talking to other people that we meet about Christ is a very important topic. That is one of the ways in which God takes His lost sheep into the fold to be with the rest of His people. First you need to answer the questions they ask as best you can. Let them know that you have peace in your life and show them how Christ works in your life by being kind and helping others in need. Read the Bible together if you can and invite them to church to hear Christ speak through the preaching. Be patient if they do not want to come to Church right away but still want to talk. Pray for them every day. If that person looses interest in talking about Christ and does things that are contrary to God's commandments even though you tell them that God is not pleased with those things, then you must not be close friends with them and tell them that you can't be friends with God's enemies. "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). ❖

# The Blessed Pregnancy

by J.P. de Klerk

This has really happened to a young Christian woman, who was born in The Netherlands, but lives in new Zealand.

One afternoon she went to her local general practitioner and during the consultation he said to her, "Nelly, I am not quite happy with what I have seen so far...I don't want to upset you, but I think, that it will be wise if you go to the health center in town for some thorough tests."

"But I feel quite well. I have not had the problems I heard others always talking about. I am sometimes tired, but I think that is natural and it will pass I guess."

"Yes, and I may be wrong, but we have to play it safe haven't we?" he said with a friendly smile.

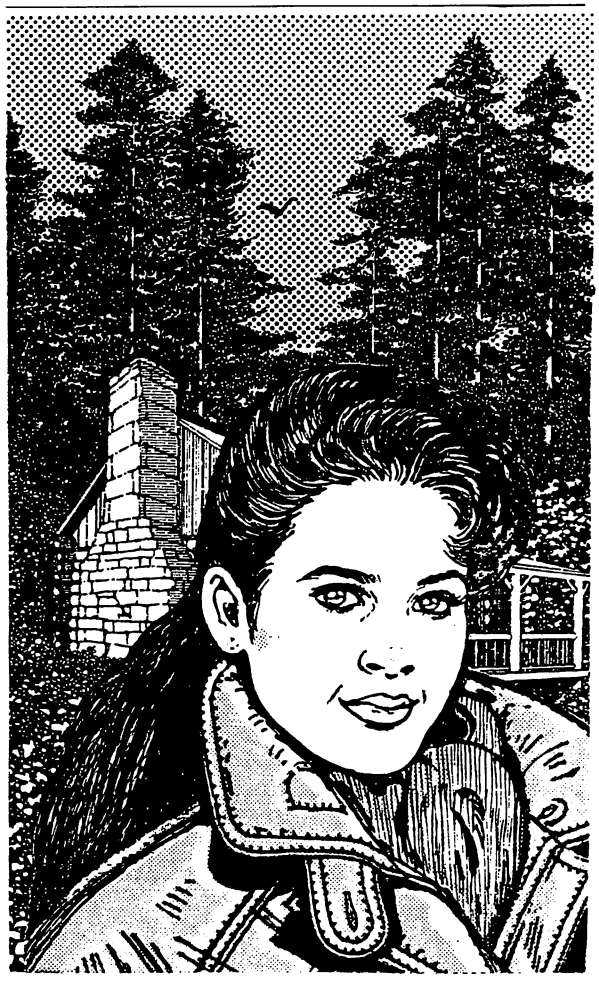
He walked with her to the door.

They looked at a distant hawk climbing gracefully up the clouds, then soaring away. Rising like spikes all over the countryside, pines clothed the mountains in dark green.

She went the following day and everybody was kind and helpful. She was told that a report about samples and X-ray photos would be sent to her doctor in the village. He would take up contact with her later.

She did some shopping, bought blue cod for dinner (which her husband Henry liked so much) and went home in a good mood. She noticed the well-kept barn was filled with fresh hay.

Within 24 hours the doctor came himself to the farmhouse. Henry and Nelly were amazed, but he told them, that she had to go to the hospital and he would bring her there straight away. That was the message. In a hurry they packed some clothes in a suitcase and there they went. The doctor explained, "You have an acute nephritis, that means a kidney infection"...antibiotics...a diet...more tests...



In effect Nelly had to stay four weeks, till the day that she received a visit from two specialists who tol

her, "We have studied and discussed your case carefully. We regret that we can not bring you better news. You see, your chances to survive your pregnancy are almost nil. Your kidneys would not be able to stand all the tension. We suggest, that you allow us to remove the fetus immediately."

Nelly got the feeling, that she plunged into a ravine. This was not at all what she expected to hear. She abhorred abortions! Terminating the life of an unborn child went against all that was holy in the eyes of her and her husband. She was willing to risk her life for her child.

Two days later she went home, with the warning, "Think about it and let us know what you are going to do. Hurry."

Henry and Nelly talked and prayed together, visited the minister of their church and decided to ask a second opinion, of another specialist, but he did not give them much hope either. They went to see an elderly doctor, who was well-known for his anti-abortion vies. He said, "Yes, it is serious, but I think we could wait and see till the seventh month. God will be with you."

Every day a sample of Nelly's urine had to go to a laboratory. So it was done and one month after another passed by, but suddenly the doctor was at the phone and asked them to come and see him. He had *good news*. As soon as they sat down in his study, he asked, "Do you believe in miracles? Well I do now. Madam, your kidneys are healed. The baby can be born in the normal way. Praise God."

It happened indeed. Exactly at the right date, a healthy baby girl was born and they called her Theodora—a gift from God. Nelly could feed her herself. This was more than she had hoped and prayed for... ❖

*J.P. de Klerk is a journalist and author from the Protestant Reformed Church of New Zealand.*

## Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

# Mosquito Mediation

by John Huizenga

Mosquitoes by the score ascend
from out the stagnant pools
like fog they hover, shimmer, hum
and melt into the weeds when sun
at midday shines most bright.

Thirsting for the blood of life
mosquitoes wait for evening cool.
If there's no blood before weeks end
its life will be no more.

A rustling stirs the grass nearby
wings instantly a'blur
mosquitoes float out from the cover
and join the singing throng above
filled with frenzy by the smell
of warm rich blood of life,
yet careful not to be detected
by the pulsing, living skin

they hover, waver, find a spot,
zig zag, back track, zoom in now,
careful, gentle, land, but softly
pause, prod, brace, poke,
drink until the belly's full,

fly away, a loaded tanker
happy as a lark,
equipped to seed with young
the stagnant pools at dark.

Arms a'flapping, slapping, clapping;
I try to enjoy a cool ev'ning breeze, but,
mosquitoes come from everywhere
to spoil, embroil, and tease.

Harumph, I go inside;
a prisn'er in my home.
With a Psalm and a prayer, I go to bed
and slowly drift,
drift down,
to sleep.

High,
thin,
drawing nearer,
nearer, louder, piercing singing
dragging from my eyes the sleep
that mosquito is back, my ear to tweek!

Where are you, crazy bug? I shout!.
I'll flip the lights and wait you out.
You drink my blood, you steal my sleep,
I'll get that good-for-nothing bug!

Why? O why did God create this bug?

This pesky, loathsome, leachy creature.
Is this a part creation cursed?
Punishment? Chastisement?
Reminder that this earthly life
is not the one for which we hope?

O why did God create this bug?

That Psalm I read ... what was it that it said?
Let's see ... it said:
"But I am a worm, and no man;
A reproach of men, and despised of the people"
(Psalm 22:6)

"I am"
Who?
Me?
Am I?

Am I a worm, am I a slug?
Am I a mosquito, that most miserable bug?
A frail, sickly, pesky bug,
that lives to drink dark blood?

Yes, I'm a sinner
a worthless, wretched worm.
Sins overwhelm me, I need Thee, I thirst
I thirst for Thy blood, the blood of Thy Son

shed on the cross to cover my sin,
the blood of One risen, the blood of my Lord,
a spiritual blood, the blood of my life,
I drink in the preaching of Thy Holy Word.

# A Godly Marriage

*"A prudent wife is from the Lord,"*
*King Solomon has said,*
*And unto him that findeth one,*
*Who of the Lord is led*
*To search out one who fears His Name,*
*That man shall not be put to shame.*

*For marriage is a picture of*
*Christ and His bride, the church;*
*So godly men must ever strive*
*When for a mate they search*
*To first of all seek inward beauty,*
*Love of the Lord, fervor for duty.*

*The home established in His fear*
*Where peace and joy abide,*
*Where Christ is honored, and His will*
*Rules all—whate'er betide:*
*That home the Lord will surely bless.*
*He'll prove to them His faithfulness.*

*by Thelma Westra*

Thy people all over the world cry to Thee,
like a cloud of mosquitoes, one desire they heed,
drawn near to the cross by deep knowledge of sin,
knowing that Thy blood alone will atone.

A mass of mosquitoes, a mass of deep sorrows,
a cloud of sighing, crying, and dying;
transformed by Christ's blood to a beautiful bride,
we wait for the day when we'll stand at His side.

Wonderful grace, the love of my God
for a sinner and wretched mosquito like me.

Can I comprehend? Could I ever say:
"I love you, mosquito, my blood is for you?"

Help me to hear when mosquitoes do sing
of Thy sovereign grace and Thy free-flowing love.
One drink of Thy blood, the new life is in me,
cause me to live that new life from above. ❖

*John is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.*

## Gem of the Month

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."
Ecclesiastes 12:1

*In countless childhoods all the same*
*A voice rolls forth with power sublime.*
*It calls to us in our springtime.*
*Remember Him from Whom you came.*

*Through youth the vicious seeds are sown*
*In name of light and playful mirth.*
*They sprout up in a cold, hard earth.*
*Remember you are not your own.*

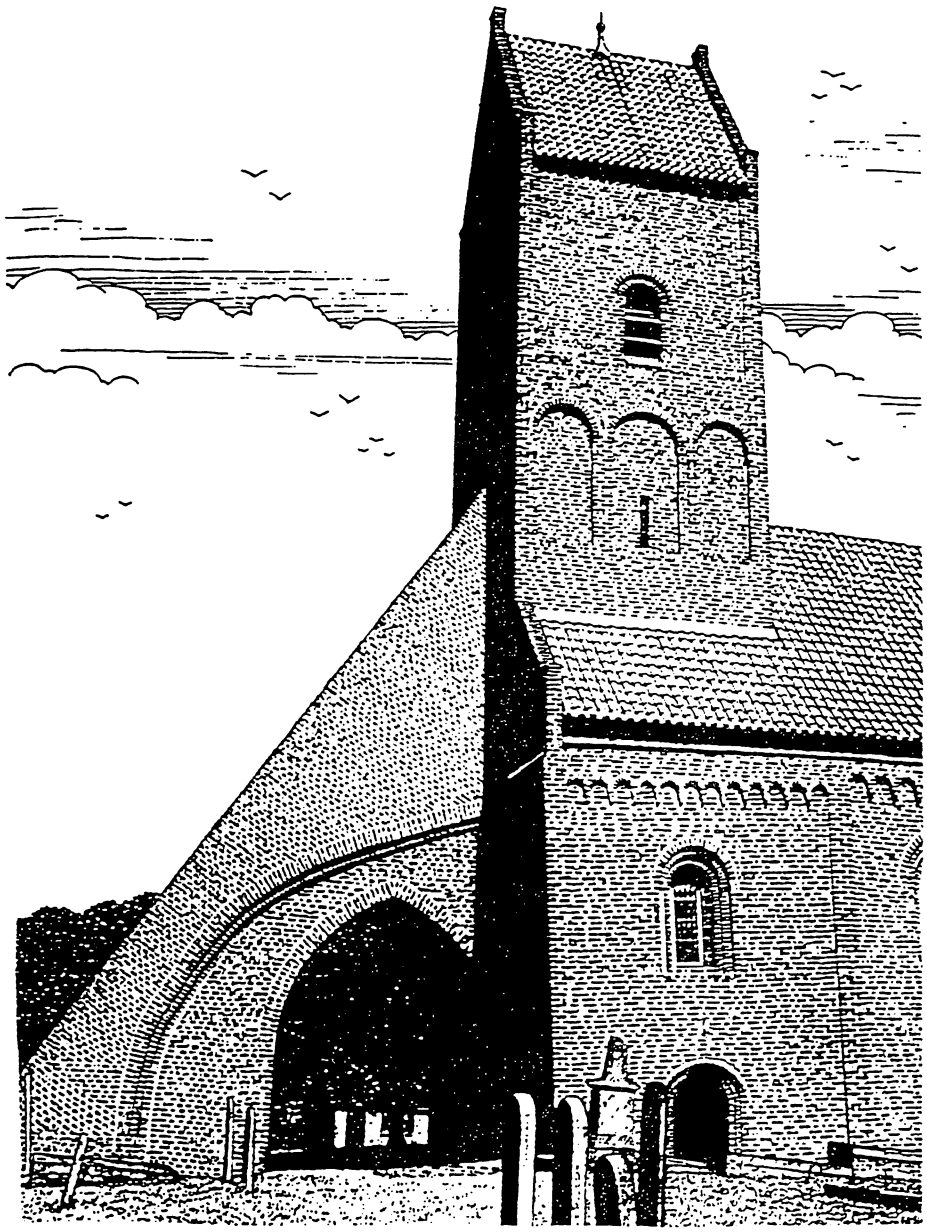
*So what if I the world befriend?*
*We're young but once and life is sweet.*
*So much to do. So much to meet.*
*Remember life will swiftly end.*

*Time's flow runs out like some short song.*
*We all shall reap what we have sown,*
*When standing at the Judges throne.*
*Remember God when you are young.*

*by Allen Baird*

# A Buttress Church

by J.P. de Klerk



In the Eastern part of the Dutch province of Groningen, close to the coast of the Wadden-Sea, you can find the village of *Bierum*.

The soil has weak spots here and there, which has always been a problem for the construction of big buildings.

So, this Reformed State Church (Nederlands Hervormde Kerk) is famous because of the enormous *buttress*, to support the building and in particular the tower.

This church is made of thousands of bricks in 1200, partly romanesque and partly gothic. The tower has a saddle-roof.

Inside there is a very old carved pulpit. There is a beautiful organ, built in 1792.

The majority of the population of Bierum is Reformed, but divided in different groups with different doctrines. ❖

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*J.P. de Klerk is a journalist and author from the Protestant Reformed Church of New Zealand.*

# Watching Daily At My Gates

by Skip Hunter
*Reprinted from June 1994* Beacon Lights

## August 1

**Acts 4:31-37**

John and Peter had just been freed by the elders and priests in Jerusalem. They had gone back to the church and reported God's goodness to them. After a prayer of thanksgiving and request for the boldness to speak Christ's name, they receive a striking answer of an earthquake and the Holy Ghost. They then begin to live out of their faith. What about us? Do we live by faith? Do we love the brother and care for his needs? Are we Barnabases and are we willing to help all the kingdom causes in whatever ways God has blessed us? Sing or read Psalter 203.

## August 2

**Acts 5:1-11**

Into yesterday's beautiful scene Satan reared his ugly head. He did this by using the sin of pride. Ananias and Sapphira not having the love of Christ in their hearts desired the praise of men. This is a sin common to us all. We live in the generation of "me first." We like to see our names in print for what we have done. Sometimes we go so far as to take credit away from our God. Ananias and Sapphira's deaths served as a great warning to the church in Jerusalem, and they should warn us as well to walk only in God's ways and not our own. Sing or read Psalter 104 especially stanzas 1-3, 7, 8, and 10.

## August 3

**Acts 5:12-24**

Words of this life! What life? Is it the life of this world which is full of sin and rebellion? Is it the life that causes people to wait for the weekend so that they can carry out their plans of sin? No, the life of verse 20 is the life that Christ gives of Himself. It is eternal life obtained by grace through faith. It is the life that sustains us during our sojourn on this wicked world. This life helps us to choose the good and abhor the evil. This is the promise of the new Jerusalem where we will enjoy life in heaven with all the saints singing praises unto our Redeemer, the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world! Do you look for this life? Sing or read Psalter 32.

## August 4

**Acts 4:25-33**

Young people, can you take the words of verse 29 on your lips and live those words? Do you want to obey God and not man? That's what Peter did at the possible cost of his life. Sometimes we receive a "little" ridicule because we choose the paths of Jehovah over the fun of this world. I write "little" because in comparison to what Peter was going through our griefs are very small. Choosing the ways of God means that we will obey all of His laws in all aspects of our lives. Young and old alike must make these conscious choices every day of our lives. Choosing anything but God's ways are to choose the path of Satan. Where do you like to walk? Sing or read Psalter 232.

## August 5

**Acts 5:34-42**

Verse 41 recounts the apostles' reaction to being beaten and whipped by the council. They rejoiced that they could suffer shame for the name of God. This is a whole lot different than the pride exhibited in the first part of this chapter. There are two examples for us to follow in this chapter. We must pick one or the other. If we pick the first, the end is destruction in the everlasting fires of hell. If we choose the second, we will experience the blessings of God both in this life and the life to come. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Sing or read Psalter 210.

## August 6

**Psalm 68:1-6**

Our God is the God of those who appear down-trodden in this life. Is that you? Are you seemingly out of it? Why is that? If it is the path that God has chosen for you, then rejoice and sing unto Him Who is in heaven. You can do that because according to verse 5 even though you may not have a father, mother, wife, or husband on this earth, you do have a protector. That protector is Jehovah Whose name is far above all other names. What a comfort this is. This comfort is far above anything we can find on this earth and in this life. Thanks be to God! Sing or read Psalter 347.

## August 7

**Psalm 68:7-16**

Do you live on the hill of God? Do you dwell there in complete confidence that God will provide all of your needs? Are you able to rely completely on the God Who protected the whole nation of Israel on its journey from Egypt to Canaan? His is the beauty of the church. By way of faithful church attendance and participation, we receive the assurance of our salvation and place in glory. God has given us this place of refuge from the evils of the world. Flee to that church, rejoice in its beauty, and love that church. Sing or read Psalter 133.

## August 8

**Psalm 68:17-20**

The Psalmist extols the greatness of God throughout this Psalm. In verse 19 he proclaims God to be blessed. That should be our confession as well. We must constantly see in God all things which are worthy of our praise. We do not do this of ourselves but we do this because He makes us able to say, "Blessed be the Lord." We must always confess that He daily gives us benefits. As we come to the end of each day, we must look back and say, "What great things has God given me today! What a great God I have! Blessed be Jehovah's name from this time forth and forever more!" Sing or read Psalter 197.

## August 9

**Psalm 68:21-28**

There are times when we feel that confessing God's name before men has no benefits. We feel that we are wasting our time. This verse tells us different. The world notices a person who confesses God's name and that confession. Sometimes they persecute such a person, and the day is coming when they may kill such a person, but they do notice. If we think we stand on our own merits, we will fall. If we pray the words of verse 28, then we will stand now, and then stand before our glorious God in heaven. All strength is from Him Who strengthens the feeblest of hands. Sing or read Psalter 181.

## August 10

**Psalm 68:29-35**

Are you a singing people? Do you love to sing forth the praises of Him Who rides in the heavens? Do you lift up your voice in song to Him Whose strength is in the clouds? If you do not like to sing, why not? Do you think your voice isn't good enough? Doesn't Christ have the power to take our poorly sung songs and make them acceptable to God? Do you think the songs of Zion aren't fun to sing? Maybe we better reexamine our motives for singing. Singing is one of the ways we thank God for our salvation. Are we thankful? If we are, we should sing. We will be singing in heaven, and we must sing on this earth. Sing or read Psalter 269.

## August 11

**Revelation 2:1-7**

People of God, have you lost your first love? For some of us that first love was exhibited as we listened with rapt interest to the Bible stories told by our parents or kindergarten teachers. For others the love was hearing the Reformed faith preached for the first time. Have we lost that love? The church of Ephesus had, and had to be rebuked for that sin. Do we need to rededicate ourselves to the love of God and His truths? Do we need to go back to our love for the Scriptures? Do we have other loves that get in the way of our love for God and His word? We must hear the word of the Holy Spirit and return to our first love. Sing or read Psalter 34 especially stanzas 1, 2, and 10.

## August 12

**Revelation 2:8-11**

People of God, do you long to be like the church at Smyrna? This church seemingly had all sorts of troubles. They were very poor, they had to fight troubles from those who said they, too, were people of God, and they had other kinds of persecution to fear. Do you long for those situations in life? Smyrna also had the testimony in being rich in the Word of God. This is one of the churches who was not rebuked by the Spirit. This church is a model for us to follow even as we head into the days of Antichrist. Let us be faithful and prepare for the day when we will be given the crown of life. Sing or read Psalter 35 especially stanzas 1 and 3-5.

## August 13

**Revelation 2:12-17**

People of God, do you hold fast the most glorious name of Jehovah even when you are being ridiculed? Have you denied the faith when tempted with an evil of this world? The church at Pergamos had held fast the faith even when at least one of their numbers was put to death for the faith. As we mingle with the world in this week, are we willing to proclaim His name in front of any with whom we come into contact? There is a battle to fight, but we do not fight it by concealing the name of the Captain of our salvation. Sing or read Psalter 352.

## August 14

**Revelation 2:18-29**

People of God, do you live according to the belief of the truth presented in verse 23? Do you believe that God knows all that is in our minds and hearts? Do you believe that in the day of judgment that we will be held accountable for our actions in this life? If you believe this truth, do you live out of this truth? This is quite an awesome thing! Not only does God know what we think, do, or speak, but He will also ask us about them when we appear before the judgment seat of Christ! The members in the church at Thyatira had to be reminded of this truth and we do as well. Let us listen to what the Spirit says to the church of all ages in this matter. Sing or read Psalter 383.

## August 15

**Revelation 3:1-6**

People of God, are you Christian in more than bearing the name? That was the sin of the church of Sardis. They had the name but they did not live out of that name. It does us no good to say we are people of God if we do not show by our lives that we are

people of God. We need to remember all that we have been taught and use all that we have been taught in our lives. We must be Christians, that is those who are anointed out of all the people of the world. In every aspect of our lives. Let us watch and live lives of those worthy of the white robes given to the righteous. Sing or read Psalter 356.

## August 16

**Revelation 3:7-13**

People of God, are you zealous to spread the gospel to the four corners of this world? Are we like the church at Philadelphia looking for open doors to proclaim the word of God? This church like that at Smyrna found no rebuke in their message from Christ. They had been faithful with the work placed before them. They were good stewards of the truths found in God's word and were carrying out the mandate to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel." It was not easy for them, but they were doing it in the strength of the name of the Most High. This is our calling; are we doing it? Do we wish to be pillars in the living temple of God? Sing or read Psalter 264 especially stanzas 1-4.

## August 17

**Revelation 3:14-22**

People of God, do you like it when God chastens you? We should, you know. God only chastens those whom He loves. He desires them to walk in His ways and so at times He takes the shepherd's rod and staff and brings us back into the ways of righteousness. Sometimes His chastening seems grievous, but we must realize it is for our profit. The church at Laodicea was chaffing under the chastening of God. In fact the church hated it so much that it was in danger of losing its candlestick. What a horrible thing! Listen, people of God, for His message in all you life and watch until the day of His coming. Sing or read Psalter 329.

## August 18

**Deuteronomy 18:1-8**

In the Old Testament times priests and Levites were separated for the work of ministry. They each had various duties to carry out for the worship of Jehovah. God set them apart and did not allow them to have any land to work for their daily bread. They were to be supported through the offerings brought to the tabernacle or temple. We have the same opportunity to support the preaching of the name of the Lord our God. Do we take advantage of the opportunity? Are we truly a giving people—supporting the cause of preaching the gospel to the nations? Our duty extends beyond supporting the local pastor. We must also support the training of such men as well as missionaries that take the word to the four corners or the world. Sing or read Psalter 183.

## August 19

**Deuteronomy 18:9-14**

We live in the land which Jehovah has given us. This land like Canaan has the abominations of the nations found in it. All around us are the gods of the people whose king is Satan. Do we follow these gods? Do we listen to the music Satan has given his people? Do we allow our children to walk in the fire of Satan? God commands us that we not walk in the ways of the world. Our young men and fathers must not do the things and want the things that the world's young men and fathers do and want. Our young women and mothers must not do the things and want the things that the world's young women and mothers do and want. Our God commands that we be perfect as we walk in His ways. Sing or read Psalter 308.

## August 20

**Deuteronomy 18:15-22**

The Prophet of verse 15 has come to this world. We are required to listen to the words of Christ and are responsible when we do not follow them. One of those words is that He is coming again! The Prophet will return to this world and will require of us an accounting for all that we have done or said. How will we know that it is He? We will know even as the signs of the times come to pass as He has told us in Matthew 24 and throughout the book of Revelation. His words are "true and righteousness altogether" as confessed in Psalm 19. Watch young people and live lives that show that you are watching for the return of the Prophet. Sing or read Psalter 162.

## August 21

**I Corinthians 2:1-5**

Three days ago, the Lord willing, you sat under the preaching of the word of God. What did you hear? Was it the pure preaching that proclaims Jesus Christ crucified for the sins of His people? Here Paul declares that the preaching of the Word, even though it may not be with the eloquence of a silver-tongued orator, must contain that element. Were you moved by that message, and did it give you hope as you live in this wicked world? Preaching is important to the child of God as it is that message that proclaims Christ to us as no other means for our salvation. Hold the preaching dear, people of God, and seek the pure preaching of the Word. Sing or read Psalter 348.

## August 22

**I Corinthians 2:6-10**

Do you know what a blessing the Holy Spirit is for us? Our God's ways are incomprehensible and past finding out. Yet by the Holy Spirit Who searches and knows the deep things of God's counsel we know the way to our salvation. We may not understand how God Who is perfect can love such wretched sinners as we are. But we can understand that He sent His only begotten Son to die for us. And by faith we can believe that truth and live in the way of the wisdom of God as well as putting aside the wisdom of this world. Thank God for the work of the Spirit, and thank God for His wisdom. Sing or read Psalter 287.

## August 23

**I Corinthians 2:11-16**

Do you use your "mind of Christ?" Every child of God has that mind. Do we use it as we go about our daily work? When we speak, do we use the words of Christ or the words of the world?

When we sing, whose songs do we sing, those of Satan or those of Christ? When we make decisions concerning our life, upon what standard or philosophy do we base those decisions? God has freely made us spiritual men, do we live as spiritual men, or do we live as natural man governed by his father Satan? Sing or read Psalter 70.

## August 24

**Proverbs 11:1-6**

Do you value your righteousness, young people? No, not the righteousness that you have gained yourselves. We are not righteous except for the gift that God has given us. Your righteousness must show in your daily lives. As you work this summer, are you giving your employer a just day's work? Are you showing your righteousness by the entertainment that you choose whether it be during the day or during the night? Living in the righteousness that we have been graciously given will preserve us in whatever place we find ourselves. Thank God for such a gift and live out of that gift. Sing or read Psalter 187.

## August 25

**Proverbs 11:7-11**

Some of us may have had to attend the funeral of a loved one in the past months, or we may have to attend a funeral in the near future. For the child of God there is great hope in death. A hope that the wicked cannot understand now and will not achieve in the future. We have the hope and confidence of eternal life. Is that your hope, young people? Do you view death as the passageway to eternal life, an escape from this vale of sorrows? The wicked's end of Hell is sure; but so is the believer's hope of heaven. Sing or read Psalter 136.

## August 26

**Proverbs 11:12-16**

Paul in Ephesians 4:15 sums up Proverbs 11:13. Do you speak the truth in love, people of God? The phrase "in love" is very important here. We can speak the truth about someone without loving that person. We are quick to defend ourselves when we gossip by saying that what we said was the truth about a person or his deeds. But yet we do not follow the exposition of the ninth commandment about promoting the honor of our neighbor. We quite often know things that are best kept to ourselves. We must do that if we truly love God and our neighbor. Sing or read Psalter 104 especially stanzas 1, 6, and 9.

## August 27

**Proverbs 11:17-21**

Do you sow righteousness in you daily life? As you go through each day, do you seek the opportunity to sow righteousness? Young people, as you seek fellowship and entertainment, what kinds of seeds are you sowing? The wild oats of evil are never blessed by God in this life or in the life to come. As you work are you sowing righteousness in your relationships with your employer or fellow workers? There is a great reward in the sowing of righteousness. That reward is contentment now and life eternal in the future. These rewards are not possible consequences in sowing righteousness but rather they are sure because they are the rewards promised by God. Sing or read Psalter 99 especially stanzas 2-5.

## August 28

**Proverbs 11:22-26**

Do you care for the poor, people of God? These verses have much to say about our responsibility to help those less blessed than ourselves. First of all we see that we do it because God says that it is good. Next we care for the poor because we see that God will bless our care of the poor. Finally we see that there are great spiritual benefits when we make the care of the poor our business. Jesus Himself told us that we have the poor among us always. He also told us that when we help the least of the brethren, we are helping Christ. We have the incentive and the model; let us seek out the poor and display the mercies of Christ to them. Sing or read Psalter 133 especially stanzas 1, 2, 11, and 12.

## August 29

**Proverbs 11:27-31**

Are you a soul winner? Sometimes we think this odd terminology for a Reformed Christian. But yet Solomon by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit calls us to win souls. This soul winning is not the idea that we on our own make men Christians. It is not our works or efforts that persuades a man to walk in the way of Christ. To believe that would go against the testimony of Scripture. But rather our daily lives must be examples so that those around us will know of the hope of our calling. Our lives of righteousness may very well be the means God uses to draw others to Him. Sing or read Psalter 172.

## August 30

**Psalm 1**

As we consider God's creation in the summer time we cannot help but be struck by trees. Wherever there is a little water, some sort of tree grows. Sometimes they are the majestic oaks or redwoods. Sometimes the humble Chinese elm or olive trees make their home by a water source. All trees have some things in common. Their roots seek out water so that they can produce fruit. Trees have another thing in common. God gives them to us as a picture of the righteous man. The righteous man is placed by the water of life. His roots must seek it out. Consider the trees this summer, but also consider your calling to be like the tree and bring forth fruit. Sing or read Psalter 2.

## August 31

**Malachi 1:1-5**

God loved Jacob. What a precious thought, for in loving Jacob He loves us. We believe that God has elected His people in the lines of continued generations. In the Old Dispensation that was mainly from the line of Jacob or Israel. The truth of the covenant in continued generations still holds today. We can take great comfort in that fact. We believe that our covenant God loves us as elect and saves us. Sing or read Psalter 166 especially stanzas 3-6.

# Lost—a Thinking-Cap
## Part 2

Rev. H. Hoeksema

*It is striking to note that this was written in 1921, just shortly before this "Thinking-Cap" spoken of, was needed by so many in a most significant way in 1924. Now 70 years later, with added temptations such as unprecedented material wealth, television, and entertainment, this is again a reminder to be diligent.*

*The article ended last time where it was shown that the loss of the Thinking-Cap involves a loss of doctrinal knowledge, this being the first reason why it is a deplorable loss.*

But there is more. This becoming estranged from sound Reformed doctrine among our young people, will ultimately have to reflect upon the church as such. It will lower its doctrinal standard. It will cause a condition in which doctrinal instruction and doctrinal preaching will become gradually more difficult, ultimately impossible. For with the loss of the thinking-cap the element will be growing in the church that have lost their hold upon doctrine. It is not only that they dislike doctrine but they actually understand no more. When the preaching is doctrinal they fail to grasp it. They have no hold upon a doctrinal sermon. They leave the church without having been edified, for the simple reason that they have not understood the preaching of the Word. Their cry is for a different type of preaching. They like, they gradually demand topical rather than doctrinal and exegetical sermons. When the minister preaches on a live topic they can grasp it. When he expounds the Word to them they neither understand nor enjoy it. They begin to characterize the preaching as dry, intellectual, dead, impractical. And the minister will ultimately have to fall for this demand, for the simple reason that he must come down to the level of his audience. You may see the beginning of this tendency today, even in our own church. And, therefore, not only will doctrinal knowledge be lost among an ever-growing element in the church, but the preaching itself, the doctrinal standard of the church will have to be lowered to meet the wants of the people. The loss of the thing-cap is, indeed, a deplorable loss.

In the third place, this loss will lead us back into the hierarchy of Roman Catholicism, in which the clergy know it all, and rule with undisputed sway, and the laity are the accursed mass that know not the law. This may seem strange at first, for it is exactly what we do not want. We are rather democratic in spirit. But the hard fact is no different. If our people wean away, too, from even a general knowledge of church government, the only element in the church that can judge about things ecclesiastical and doctrinal is the educated clergy. Even now you may hear it every once in a while that the people cannot judge about a certain matter. They are told that they must be silent. And this condition will grow upon us according as it becomes actually more true that the common laity have no knowledge of doctrine. If, however, they would have knowledge, so that they can take an active part and not let others do all the thinking and judging for them, they will need the thinking-cap. The loss of the thinking-cap leads to ecclesiastical hierarchy. Even as education is deemed indispensable for the democratic form of government, so sound knowledge is an indispensable requisite for the maintenance of the Presbyterian form of government in the church. The loss of the thinking-cap is indeed deplorable.

And, lastly, this loss of the thinking-cap will weaken us in our fight against downright unbelief in the world. And we may expect that this fight is coming upon us more and more in the future. There was a time that the

battle was one between protagonists of different doctrines within the church itself. It was a battle between Arminianism and Calvinism, between supra and infra. But the more the lines are drawn distinctly and sharply, the more these little battles will give way to the great battle that is coming between the world and God's people, between faith and infidelity, between light and darkness. It will be a battle, not for this or that minor principle, but for the Word of God, for the very faith itself. But a mistake he makes who would now draw the conclusion that for this very reason we must cease to emphasize distinctive and minor principles, and only keep the large principles of Christianity in the broad sense. On the contrary, it is more than ever necessary that we emphasize and keep the truth in all its specific nature. We must not become less Reformed and more Christian, but more Reformed and stronger Christians. Otherwise we will be but poorly prepared and armored to defend ourselves against the oncoming tide of unbelief and before we know it we will be swept off our feet by it. The loss of the thinking-cap is deplorable, because it will weaken the church in its battle with the forces of darkness.

III. But the question that is of prime importance is still to be answered. It is: What can be done to restore that valuable thinking cap?

In answer to this question, I would say in the first place: our young men must simply put that cap on again. In connection with this first point, the remark must be repeated which Prof. Kuiper made in "The Banner" years ago, when he discussed the necessity of Americanizing our churches: The only way to do it is to do it. And to urge you to do it, I have attempted to show you the importance of the thinking-cap and the deplorableness of its absence. You must fight the battle against the desire and tendency to spend all your spare time in seeking enjoyment rather than education. You must begin to read, to read more than novels, to study books of a more substantial nature. You must patronize with your presence programs of an intellectual and educational character rather than socials and banquets. They must become possible again. And they will become possible once more if you show your interest. This may, at first, be a difficult battle to fight. The lost interest will naturally only gradually return. But the longer you fight the battle, the more the old interest will be quickened. The more you study, the more intimately you will become acquainted with the doctrine of the church, the finer your hold will become upon that doctrine, the deeper and livelier your interest will be. And, therefore, if you must admit the importance of the thinking-cap, put it on again. The only way to do it is to do it!

In the second place, our leaders, ministers and otherwise, that would lead our young men in the right direction, must not too easily lend their ear to the cry for less doctrine. Rather must they emphasize the necessity of doctrine, and, therefore, the necessity of the thinking-cap. We must have doctrinal preaching. We must continue to emphasize the necessity of catechetical instruction. We must continue to emphasize the necessity of preparing for catechism. We must urge our young people to read, to investigate. In short, they that would lead our young men must not be carried away with the stream and follow the line of least resistance. But they must lead them in the direction of sound and full doctrinal knowledge.

In the third place, our societies and leagues must not be allured to follow the tendency of the time. Too often this is done. In order to increase or maintain the membership of the society the programs are often spoiled. Members that are not prepared when they should be, and when they have no legal excuse to offer, are excused and tolerated nevertheless. The result is, that the programs are frequently not carried out or are carried out very defectively. This must not be done. It is for the interest of the very life of the society that every member takes an active interest. It is better to have a smaller and stronger society in which every member is prepared in time, than to have the entire society degenerate because of the negligence of some members. The same is true of the League. The course pursued last winter is detrimental. Because lectures and educational programs attracted no crowd, it was decided to change the programs and offer programs chiefly of an entertaining nature. This catering to a wrong tendency is fatal. For those that do like something more substantial receive nothing, and those that absolutely refuse to put on the thinking-cap were followed. If our young people are to regain the thinking-cap, if they are to set themselves to serious study and investigation once more, it is necessary that we offer them something that necessitates its use.

There are other things that might be mentioned in this connection. But my time is more than taken. I will close with returning to my first remark: the only way to do it is to do it. Ultimately, all will depend upon the attitude of our young men themselves. Read, study, investigate, get away from that craving for amusement and nothing but enjoyment. For, your position in the church

the position of the church itself in the world, the establishment of God's covenant, the glory of our covenant God are at stake! Let us wake up to the importance of sound doctrine, to the realization of putting on our thinking-caps again, and let us stand shoulder to shoulder in our battle for clear, definite, strong and full Reformed truth! ❖

C-H-U-R-C-H F-A-M-I-L-Y

## [F] - Forgiveness

# "A City of Two Tales"

by Tom Bergman

In the city, it was a bright summer afternoon. A few puffy, white clouds rolled overhead, but otherwise dotted with only a few of the flying sort. Crisp blue sky everywhere seemed so warm and inviting. No rain, no storm, no gray. It was blue—bright blue—with a few feathery, painted clouds. Amazing how weather can affect moods! And that day, the friendly sun had good effect. It warmed the lives and hearts of the citizens of the city.

Women were outside strolling through the marketplace. Cantaloupe, red grapes, and juicy strawberries were in season. Vegetables also were brimming with flavor. The green-leafed varieties were as crisp as ever. The tomatoes were full and firm, not too ripe or spotted. The women made their purchases (with a little argument about the prices). These groceries were about to become family dinners later in the evening.

The men were still working outside. Friendly chatter filled the site of construction for the new church. Much of the brickwork was already finished. A few legs dangled from the roof where the final nails were being pounded. Down the street, beyond the jeweler's and the watchmaker's shops, the town doctor was relieving a few young children with the wonders of modern medicine. A few cuts and bruises- nothing serious. The baker was serious, though. An important task it was to make sure that the lovely aroma wafted into the street to lure unsuspecting customers inside to order some of his pastries and breads.

The rest of the community was busy as well. The blacksmith and cobbler labored hard, making music with the sounds of their hammers. Children played; dogs ran amuck through the alleys. Grandmothers visited while the wise men of the city kicked back to spin story after story about the fish and deer that seem important at the time but are forgotten the next day. A busy marketplace, thriving shops, and the sounds of laughter. This is the first tale.

The tale of a city that prospers so well, even the streets are scrubbed clean. Our own church life can be that way. God promises blessings for those who live well in unity with one another. These blessings are so marvelous and dear, even some silly tale about a picture-perfect day in a spotless, happy town cannot compare. Life in the church, the body of Christ, is supposed to be like that. God's love to us, being reflected through us towards each other, in turn reflecting our relationship with God himself. The blessedness of that life we must desire with all our hearts. And the church will receive this when the heart is turned for God and His righteousness. It is a sworn

promise from God who created heaven and earth by the power of His Word. But, things can get ugly.

The clouds that had danced lazily across the midday sky were beginning to pile up. Cumulus clouds can do that, you know. They can fracture and wisp away as fair weather clouds, or begin to gather and hint of a coming rain shower. Well, the "hint" was unmistakable.

Hammers started to land on thumbs. Bread in the ovens burned to a crisp, leaving only blackened shells. Stray dogs bit the children, spreading screams and disease throughout. Lemons rotted in the baskets while lettuce wilted in the heat. Worst of all, rumors began flying. The breeze was kicking up a little dust, and was all too willing to fling around those rough accusations along with the rest of the debris. Some of the wealthier shopkeepers bore the brunt of this attack. The rumor was that they had been overcharging for their goods and hoarding the town's economy to themselves, creating poverty for the rest. True or not, the word spread like wildfire. And each person who heard was quick to add his own little tidbit to the rumor.

The good jeweler had done nothing wrong. He was as honest as the day is long, and yet his reputation was shot to pieces. He friends treated him like dirt. Families sided with families. Extended families bonded together and the whole city became as polarized as night and day.

Things might have been better had they kept to themselves. Travelers passing by the city might have had no inclination concerning the feud taking place inside the city gates. Yet, strange behavior that it was, the matter soon became public. Instead of a calm, just settlement, irrational thought took over. Instead of realizing that the injustice was minor and repairable, hurtful darts replaced soothing words. Instead of maintaining the integrity of the city, the aggressors (or victims?—it was too hard to tell) took it upon themselves to cement the hard feelings.

Then, when it seemed as though it could not get any worse, the oddest thing happened. Reeeeeaaaaally odd. Whoever had an empty hand grabbed paint. Buckets and buckets of paint. Dashing outside the gate with it, they vandalized their own city walls with clashing colors. Names were painted in dishonor- reputations marred. Graffiti and revenge marred that lovely afternoon. All around the city wall, names were scarred by such labels as "idiot," "moron," "cheater," and "bum."

Never mind that the paint had been intended for a useful purpose (the interior walls of the church). Never mind that the paint could have at least been used for something constructive. No, it was used for a more permanent and deadly job.

What was the point? Who knows? What it did accomplish was to show everyone on the outside the sin on the inside. Disarray, disorder, and hatred: supremely evident to all.

This is the second tale. To go back to the first tale (which we all want) we need to add a happy ending. Even when sins toward one another are committed, there must be forgiveness. Forgive! When a party is sorry and desires peaceful, godly agreement, forgive. Forget that the sin was ever committed. Forgive! When they apologize and cry, treat them as if they were perfect all along. That is how God treats *His* own. He remembers not their sins and imputes to them the righteousness of Christ. He sees all we do, of course, but in judgment through Christ's blood, he sees us as sinless. Sinless like our joint-heir Jesus Christ. Life in the church is meant to reflect that relationship in an earthly way. We need to live with a lot less pride. Without forgiveness, notice what happens. A feud doesn't bury itself. Accusation burn and infect and we end up vandalizing our own city walls for all to see. Not only do the church members witness the atrocities, but outsiders as well. That is no way to witness. That is no way to shine for Christ's Spirit that dwells within us.

Is the town in the story make-believe? Not really. The city of two tales is Hebron. In Holy Scripture, the name Hebron has both historical and spiritual significance. Its title signifies "communion." The city's name means "to be restored to fellowship with God." Remember when David sinned by taking a second wife? Going from bad to worse, David then disobeyed God's guiding hand and fled into Philistia to escape Saul and his gang. Sin after sin after sin. No plea for forgiveness; therefore, no forgiveness. But when David was brought to his knees in acknowledgment before the merciful God, he was restored. Returned to favor, David was sent to *Hebron* for his first coronation, as king over Judah.

Young people, be restored to communion with each other and with God. Forgive and be forgiven. ❖

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*Tom is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.*

# Hudson Taylor

a book review by John Huizenga

Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret, *by Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor, edited and revised by Gregg Lewis. Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 1990. Also available from OMF Books: 2 Cluny Road, Singapore 1025, Republic of Singapore; 404 South Church Street, Robesonia, PA 19551; 1058 Avenue Road, Toronto, ON M5N 2C6, Canada; and at other Overseas Missionary Fellowship centers.*

This book is a biography of Hudson Taylor who was a pioneer missionary in China from 1853 to 1905. He was born in 1832 and raised in England by devoutly religious parents. After some spiritually turbulent teenage years he left for China at the age of 21 under the auspices of the Chinese Evangelism Society. His tearful mother was the only one to see him off, and he was the only passenger on the cargo ship.

On March 1, 1854 he landed on the shores of China in the middle of a bitter civil war. "Not a single person was there to meet him. Not even a stranger to shake his hand in welcome. In fact, no one in Shanghai knew he was coming. And not a soul on the entire continent knew his name. He later wrote: 'mingled with thankfulness for deliverance from many dangers and joy at finding myself at last on Chinese soil came a vivid realization of the great distance between me and those I loved, and that I was a stranger in a strange land'" (43).

Unable to find the contact man which he was told he would find there, he met someone from the London Mission and after much difficulty managed to acquire a room to live in. His goal was to bring the gospel beyond the coastal cities and into the remote regions of China where the gospel had not yet been heard by the millions of people living there. Gradually, after many setbacks, sorrows and pain he founded the China Inland Mission and began to recruit others to help bring the gospel deep into the enormous continent. During the last years of his life, after some 50 years of work, the Mission mushroomed into a worldwide ministry that drew laborers from around the world. By 1900 there were 750 Mission members and 700 Chinese workers and 13,000 people had been baptized.

Then in 1900 the Boxer Rebellion brought death and bloodshed to many Christians and mission laborers in China but the church continued to grow. The Communist rule after WWII brought more hardship but the Seed of God's Word which had been planted there continued to grow underground and recently has become more visible in recent years as we hear about the millions of Christians who still worship in secret in their homes.

Such mission work requires people who are willing to sacrifice. Hudson Taylor "realized that if the millions of China were to be evangelized, there would have to be a vast increase in self-denial and self-sacrifice upon the part of Christians at home. But how could he ask and urge others to do what he was not practicing himself? So he deliberately stripped his life, on all sides, of every appearance of self-consideration and self-indulgence" (229-230). When he began to work with the Chinese, he was all things to all men and became a Chinese as much as possible. Mr. Taylor also believed firmly in the principle of raising money in simplicity. He would make his need known to God in prayer, and God supplied the mission with every need.

So what was Hudson Taylor's spiritual secret? Daily, hourly fellowship with God, personal prayer and faithful meditation on God's Word. "The hardest part of a missionary career, Hudson Taylor admitted, was to maintain regular, prayerful Bible study. 'Satan will always find you something to do,' he would say, 'when you ought to be occupied about that, if it is only arranging a window blind."

Though most of us are not called to do such mission work, we are all part of the one Church which does mission work and we must all be active in it in prayer and self-sacrifice. A strong mission Church begins with young people who read good books about missionaries and learn as much as they can about mission work. Learn about the needs of those who have been called to do work in foreign lands and do what you can to help them. Many of our own cities here in the United States are being starved of the gospel. The harvest is still white and the laborers are still few. ❖

*John is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.*

# When God Doesn't Make Sense

a book review by Pastor Bruce Davis

Dr. James Dobson, a well-known psychologist, writer and host of the Focus on the Family radio broadcast, has recently written a book entitled *When God Doesn't Make Sense* (1993, Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers). He seeks to equip Christians to handle their trials and afflictions in this life and to assure God's people that they are in the constant care of the One Who is worthy of their trust even when they do not fully understand their difficult circumstances. He has a genuine and sincere concern to help God's hurting people and to equip them to handle their adversity in this vale of tears through faith in the Lord according to His Word. The call of this book is a call to trust the Lord despite our not fully understanding His ways in our lives.

There is much in the book that is good and true. Dr. Dobson affirms that because God is great and incomprehensible and infinite it is arrogant to seek to fully understand God's ways. He holds before us as the object of our faith the one, true, living God Who is eternal, unchanging, and abounding in lovingkindness and faithfulness toward His people.

He speaks sharply against those who say that following Jesus Christ is a fool-proof insurance policy against the storms of life. He rejects simplistic platitudes that seek to explain the unsearchable ways of God. He states that we will not always have the answers to the "why" questions that arise from our hard circumstances. He opposes glib answers to the awesome questions of human suffering and reliance on feelings and passions in order to understand God's ways. Dr. Dobson takes issue with the health and wealth movement and the signs and wonders movement. He stands against all who would claim that Christians have the power and right to enjoy trouble-free living. He affirms the biblical teaching that godly people are not exempt from hardship and pain and difficulties.

Dr. Dobson includes some great stories and illustrations from his own life and from the lives of others that have to do with God's providential dealings in love and faithfulness with His people in times of great trials and tests of faith. He relates these anecdotes in order to call God's people to faith in the Lord Whose precious promises never fail.

As Reformed Christians we are in hearty agreement with Dr. Dobson on the above-stated points; but regrettably that which is bad and false in the book far outweighs the good and true. Even though Dr. Dobson is sincere and well-intentioned in wanting to help sorrowing and struggling Christians, much of what he writes is unbiblical and therefore not helpful to Christians experiencing God's frowning providence.

First of all, the title of the book is defective; for God always makes sense. The problem is not that God does not make sense; the problem is that we do not fully understand what God is doing as He makes sense by executing His sovereign, eternal, and perfect counsel in His providential dealings with us. He shows Himself to be a God of order and not a God of confusion as He works all things according to the counsel of His own will.

Dr. Dobson shows his Arminian convictions by speaking favorable of the Campus Crusade for Christ evangelistic tract called "The Four Spiritual Laws." In commenting on the first so-called spiritual law, "God loves you and offers you a wonderful plan for your life," Dr. Dobson claims that this is a scriptural principle and certainly true, but the Bible claims that this is not a scriptural principle and certainly untrue.

Dr. Dobson speaks of Christians who lose God during a period of spiritual confusion, who become estranged from the God they no longer understand or trust and who are cut off from the true vine and thus lose their nourishment and strengthening. He claims that Jesus spoke of this relationship in John 15:5-6, but our Lord is not speaking of true Christians who are cut off from their saving union with Him. He is speaking of those who profess union with Him but who in reality have never been grafted into Him by grace through faith. They and they alone are the ones who are like branches that are cast out, withered, gathered and thrown into the fire to burn. True Christians will never be cut off from their union with Jesus Christ, the True Vine. He will abide in them and they in Him forever.

Dr. Dobson approvingly quotes a liberal theologian who defined faith as "Holding on to uncertainties with passionate conviction," but true, God-given, Holy Spiri

wrought faith holds on to certainties, for it is a sure knowledge of and hearty confidence in God and His Word. Dr. Dobson himself defines faith as "hanging tough when the evidence would have us bail out," but the Bible opposes that definition of faith with its own: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," (Hebrews 11:1).

Dr. Dobson wrongly exalts the will of man. He claims that "our faith must be grounded in the solid commitment of the will," but were we to do this we would be most miserable; the Bible never calls us to ground our faith in our own will. He writes that his grandparents are in heaven today because of the perseverance of their faith, but are they not in heaven today because of God's grace enabling them to persevere? Who gets the glory, God or man? Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord! He calls people to "choose to trust God by the exercise of the will He has placed within you," but what about the total depravity of man? What about the gracious and powerful work of the Holy Spirit which alone enables man to believe in the Lord unto salvation? These biblical realities are nowhere mentioned by Dr. Dobson as he calls people to trust the Lord. He asks, "Will we permit the Lord to use our weakness, our disability, our disappointment, our inadequacy, to accomplish His purposes?" As if the Lord won't be able to accomplish His purpose for us without our permission! "But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him" (Job 23:13-14).

Dr. Dobson is so taken up with his focus on man as he observes many fine examples of Christian living that the testimonies recorded or mentioned in the book are man-centered and not God-centered, focusing on man's will and prayer and actions. At one point he writes that he admires a particular person greatly and believes that the Lord must feel the same; but where in the Bible do we find God admiring others? God alone is worthy to be admired! God only do we admire! He does not admire us!

Dr. Dobson again shows that his theology is not that of the Reformed creeds and confessions by making a distinction between faith and trust. In the context of suffering in the Christian life, he claims that it is possible to have faith in God without trusting Him; but to have true faith in God is to truly trust Him. The Bible makes no such distinction.

Dr. Dobson confuses miracles with God's kind and unusual providences. Miracles are signs and wonders that are redemptive in purpose, and the example Dr. Dobson gives of a miracle is not really a miracle according to the Bible.

Dr. Dobson gives an emphatic "No" to the question, "Has God sent the AIDS epidemic as a punishment for homosexual behavior?" In explaining away the judgment of God against homosexuality, he sounds like a deist as he writes of God's having moral laws that are real and predictable and violated at great peril apart from the direct and sovereign intervention of God Whose wrath is presently being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

Dr. Dobson blurs the antithesis between the church and the world by holding up an unbeliever as a good role model and source of encouragement for Christians. He takes a well-known scientist from England who is ungodly by profession and life and calls us to learn how to handle hardship by the way this man has learned to handle hardship; but the world does not teach the church how to live. We do not look to the world for instruction in living the Christian life. What fellowship does the church have with the world? None at all!

As Dr. Dobson discusses the pain of having children not following in the faith of their parents and the efficacy of prayer by parents on behalf of their children, he concludes that God will not force Himself on anyone. According to Dr. Dobson, God waits on man to find out what man will do in response to God's offer of salvation. Whether man is saved or not depends on man and not on God. Dr. Dobson vainly tries to comfort parents by speaking of conditional salvation. "To claim this great salvation, there is a condition. An individual must reach out and take it," but God's fulfilling His sovereign and saving purposes in covenant families and in the line of continued generations is in no way dependent on what man does or does not do. Man-centered comfort is no comfort at all!

In this connection Dr. Dobson quotes John White with great approval: "We may not ask Him (God) to force a man, woman, or child to love and trust Him. To deliver them from overwhelming temptation: yes. To give them every opportunity: yes. To reveal His beauty, His tenderness, His forgiveness: yes. But to force a man against his will to bow the knee: not in this life. And to force a man to trust Him: never." Dr. Dobson then goes on to say, "The Lord will not save a person against his will, but He has a thousand ways of making him more willing." So Dr. Dobson acknowledges that God can and does make a man more willing to believe, but he stops short of saying what the Bible does, that God makes dead sinners

willing to believe through the regenerating and life-giving work of the Holy Spirit. It is God Who effectively opens the hearts of His people to believe. God completely breaks down their sinful resistance to Him by irresistible grace so that they are willing to believe in the day of His power. Dr. Dobson professes belief in One Who "will not ride roughshod over the will of any other individual. He deals respectfully with each person and seeks to attract him or her to Himself." But this is not the God of the Bible Who sovereignly and effectually accomplishes His purposes of salvation and judgment in the lives of His creatures. He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. Dr. Dobson professes to believe in a very nice God Who is mindful of His manners and very respectful as He defers to the rights and choices and will of man. He will not interfere with man's choices in order to bring about His own sovereign desire and purpose for individuals; but this is not the God and Father of Jesus Christ the Lord. The God of biblical revelation "hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all," (Psalm 103:19). "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Daniel 4:35).

Dr. Dobson is given to speculation without biblical warrant. He wonders if "perhaps a high ranking demon is assigned to each church and every Christian college, as Frank Peretti suggested in *This Present Darkness*." In speaking of the influence of his great grandfather and his commitment to prayer, Dr. Dobson wonders "if my great grandfather is smiling at me from somewhere." As if God's people in heaven gaze down on earth to observe what is going on rather than gazing unceasingly on the glory of the Lord!

Dr. Dobson counsels that it is at times reasonable, given adverse and hard circumstances, for us to become bitter against the Lord; but is it ever reasonable to become embittered against the Lord? Of course not!

Dr. Dobson ends this book in a most pathetic and blasphemous way. In dealing with people who are angry and bitter against God for their hardships that have come to them in God's providence, he counsels that some of these people "need to forgive God for those heartaches that are charged to His account." Dr. Dobson pleads not to be misunderstood at this point, but it is very easy to understand what he is saying. Even though Dr. Dobson asserts that God has done no wrong, he believes that forgiving God for what He is putting one through will enable the person to become cleansed of bitterness and anger. Dr. Dobson calls this "reconciliation" and claims that it is the only way one will ever be entirely free.

He then cites an event from the life of Corrie ten Boom who was held prisoner in concentration camps in WWII. He claims that she would have understood the advice he is giving (forgiving God at times). In the event described Corrie ten Boom, by God's grace and in obedience to His Word, forgave a man who, as a cruel prison guard, had inflicted much pain on her and her family. In response to his repentance and seeking her forgiveness, she forgave him in the name of Jesus Christ. Dr. Dobson concludes, "Corrie forgave a guard who shared responsibility for the deaths of her family members; surely, we can forgive the King of the universe who sent his only Son to die as an atonement for our sins." But where in the Bible are we commanded to forgive God? Forgive the King of the universe? Forgive the One Who does all things well? Forgive the One Whose ways are perfect? Forgive the One Who is light and in Whom no darkness dwells at all? Forgive God Whose glory fills heaven and earth? What an abominable and odious suggestion. "Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the Lord's name is to be praised," (Psalm 113:2-3).

Although there are some good things said by Dr. Dobson in this book, there are as well so many erroneous, misleading and unbiblical assertions that the present reviewer does not recommend this book; there is too much chaff in with the wheat, and it is not worth trying to sift through the book in a most discerning way to glean a few nuggets of gold out of all the fool's gold present. It is astounding that J.I. Packer and R.C. Sproul, two prominent Reformed theologians, would heartily recommend the book as they do on the back cover.

I would recommend instead of this book other books that deal with the same subject but which are theologically sound and thus trustworthy: *The Mystery of Providence* by John Flavel; *Behind a Frowning Providence* by John J. Murray; *A Divine Cordial*, an exposition of Romans 8:28, by Thomas Watson; *The Crook in the Lot*, on the sovereignty of God in the afflictions of men, by Thomas Boston; and *When God's Children Suffer* by Horatius Bonar. ❖

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*Pastor Davis is minister at Grand Valley Orthodox Christian Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan.*

# "LITTLE LIGHTS"

## . . . let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

### Two Little Fingers

*[The following story is true; only the names have been changed.]*

"Can we play outside, Mom?" asked little Jennie and Treasa as they finished their after-school snack.

"Sure," answered their mother. She was glad the weather was nice and the girls could spend some of their energy outdoors. It was a particularly beautiful day.

The girls played for a short time and then came running back inside. Mother was concerned for a moment, but then realized they were simply playing. She smiled as they went outside again. She watched the sisters laughing and giggling and enjoying each other's company. Then they came running back inside once more.

Somehow the doll buggy they were playing with had overturned, leaving Treasa with two badly hurt fingers. In screams of fear and pain both girls were frantic as they showed their mother what had happened.

An hour later Treasa and her mother were at the doctor's office, waiting to be helped. They sat together on a cushioned table in one of the examining rooms with Treasa leaning against her mother. Mother gently stroked Treasa's arm in an attempt to relax her.

"Mom," said Treasa in a small, shaky voice, "I would be so nervous if I were here all alone."

Mother held her a little tighter and reassured her, "Oh, you don't have to worry, I'll stay by you the whole time. I won't ever leave you." But as she said those words she hoped and prayed she would truly be able to fulfill them. What if, for some reason, she really would have to leave? She realized her daughter needed more than a human to be with her. People can fail, but there is One Who *never* fails.

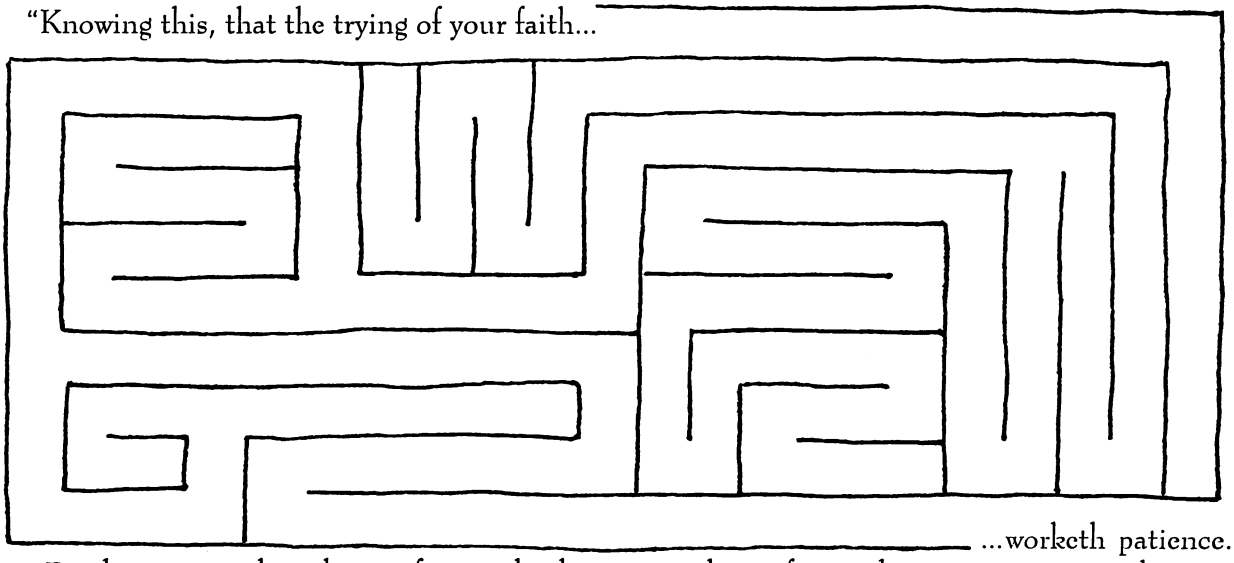
"Treasa, there is another reason why you don't have to be afraid. God is with you. He is with us right now, and He will *never* leave us."

And indeed, He was with them. Treasa was calm and brave, and the doctors were able to help her fingers begin to heal.

Sometimes, even when we're little, God works patience in us by the trying of our faith. ❖

*Connie is the mother of 5 children and attends Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.*

"Knowing this, that the trying of your faith...



...worketh patience.

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

James 1:3, 4.

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# *Church News*

## BIRTHS *"Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord."* *Psalm 127:3*

**LOVELAND, CO**

The Lord has blessed Rod & Kim Griess with the birth of a daughter, Dana Lynn.

**LYNDEN, WA**

Megan Jannique was born to Mr. & Mrs. Marvin Molenkamp.

Mr. & Mrs. DeHoog rejoice in the birth of a daughter, Raquel Lynn.

**PELLA, IA**

Kevin & Lisa Rowe were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Rachel Lee Ann.

Chuck & Jan Pawloski rejoice in the birth of a daughter, Kristen Leigh.

**SAN LUIS VALLEY, CO**

Dr. & Mrs. Roy Slice were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Kathleen Anne.

**RANDLOPH, WI**

Dave & Jody Buiter rejoice in the birth of a son, Andrew Scott.

David Ronald was born to Dave & Jennie Braaksma.

**REDLANDS, CA**

The Lord has graciously blessed Glen & Beth Feenstra with a son, Bruce Henry.

## BAPTISMS *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."* *Mark 16:16*

**HOPE, MI**

Baptism was administered to Branden Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Moelker.

**HUDSONVILLE, MI**

Mr. & Mrs. Henry DeJong presented their twins, Bradley Allan and Calvin Lewis for baptism.

Jacob Tyler, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Hugg, was presented for baptism.

**RANDOLPH, WI**

Holy baptism was administered to Michael John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dirk Westra , Andrew Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Buiter, and David Ronald son of Dave & Jennie Braaksma.

## CONFESSIONS OF FAITH *"...and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."* *Romans 10:10*

**GRANDVILLE, MI**

Kara Koerner & Todd Cammenga have made their profession of faith public.

**HUDSONVILLE, MI**

Brian VanderKolk has made public his profession in Jesus Christ.

**HULL, IA**

Lane Brummel has professed his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**LOVELAND, CO**

Jason Scritchfield has made his profession in the Lord Jesus public.

**LYNDEN, WA**

The Lynden congregation has witnessed the profession of faith of Heidi Blok, Matthew Boonstra, Emily denHartog, Janice Meyer, William Smit, and Naomi Solmon.

**PEACE, IL**

Before her congregation, Jennifer Poortinga has professed her faith in the Lord.

## MARRIAGES *"...and they twain shall be one flesh."* *Matthew 19:5*

**FAITH, MI**

Tim Engen & Gwennen Kalsbeek were joined in holy matrimony.

**LYNDEN, WA**

Chad Stuit and Erika Kalsbeek were joined in marriage.

**PEACE, IL**

Joined in marriage were Jay Martz & Terri Kizer.

## MEMBERSHIP TRANSFERS

To Faith, MI from South Grandville CRC—Tamara Kuiper (VanderKlok).

To Holland, MI from Faith, MI—Kristen Tavera.

To Peace, IL from Redland, CA—Mr. Edward Heeter.

To Peace, IL from South Holland, IL—Mr. & Mrs. Edward Stowie & childern.

To Randolph, WI from Faith, MI—Mr. & Mrs. Bob Buiter & three baptized children.