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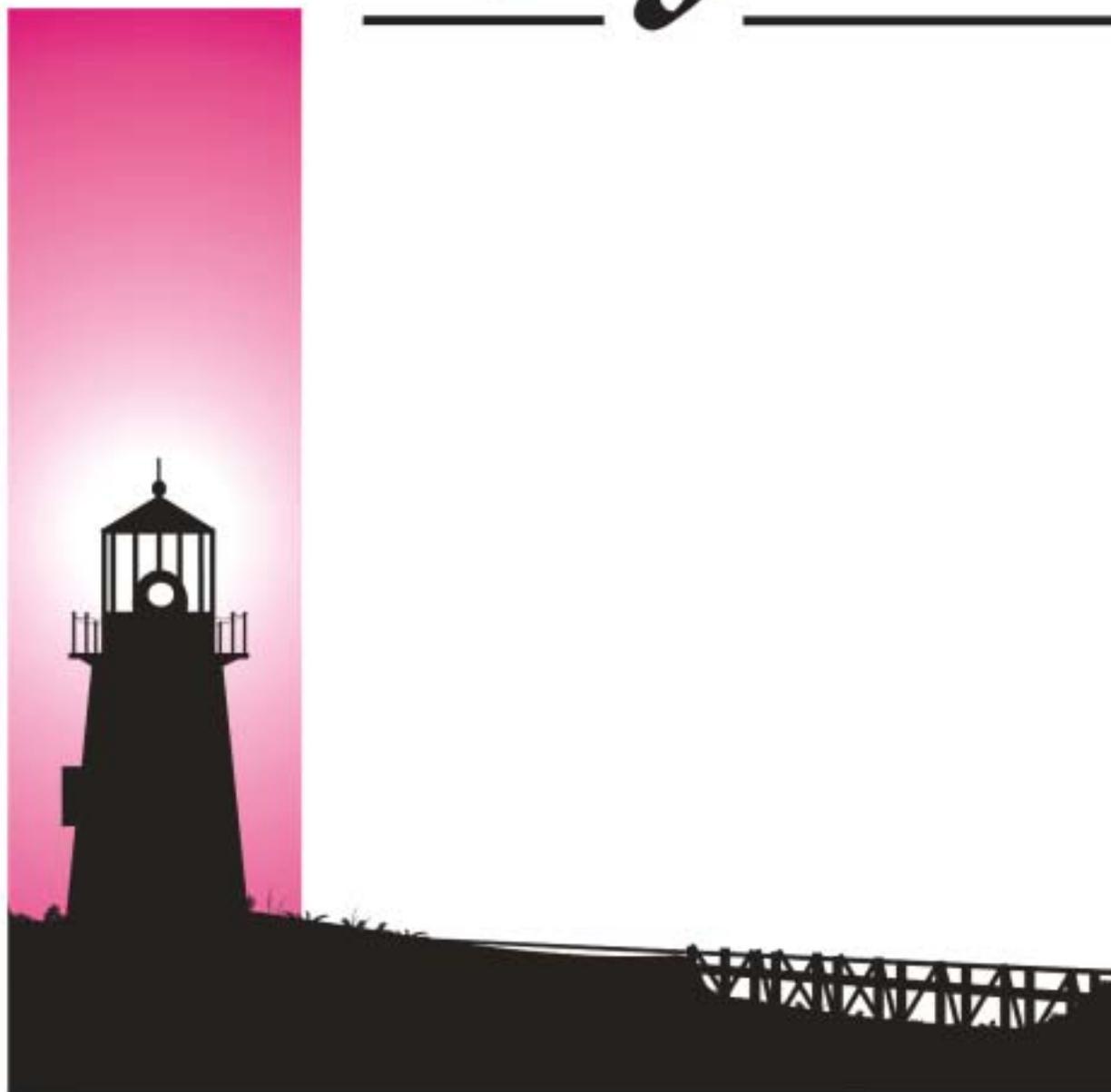


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BEACON LIGHTS

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Speaking the Truth

by Aaron J. Cleveland



“1. A false statement deliberately presented as being true; falsehood. 2. Something meant to deceive or give a wrong impression.” This, according to the American Heritage Dictionary Second College Edition of 1982, is part of the definition of the word “lie” when it is used as a noun. It serves as a starting point in our examination of the sin of lying, or as the ninth commandment has it, bearing false witness.

It is clear from all of God’s Word that the sin of bearing false witness is a great evil. As we read in Proverbs 12:22a, “Lying lips are abomination to the Lord.” In Proverbs 6:16-19 we read of six things which the Lord hates and seven which are an abomination unto Him. The central hated sin is “a proud look.” And next are several evils which proceed from that root sin of pride, including “a lying tongue” and “a false witness that speaketh lies.” The inspired David writes in Psalm 101:7, “He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.”

Lying is a terrible sin for a number of reasons. First of all, it is a violation of the ninth commandment. We must understand that the ninth commandment (as well as the other nine) requires of us more than mere outward obedience. We do not obey this commandment by simply refraining from only speaking lies. When we examine our thoughts, we find that we are constantly breaking this commandment in our thoughts. Hardly a moment goes by when we are not rashly judging, slandering, or backbiting our neighbors within our thoughts. We are constantly sinning in our inward violation of the ninth commandment.

Secondly, lying is a terrible sin because of who God, our Father, is. He is a God of truth. “He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he” (Deut. 32:4). From Psalm 33:4 we know that “the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth.” God hates the lie because it is contrary to His very being. When we lie, we do so against the God of truth, to whose image we are becoming more and more conformable (Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 115).

Thirdly, lying is a terrible sin because, in principal, all sin is the lie. When, for example, we take God’s name in vain in violation of the third commandment, we have created in our own minds a false reality concerning who God is. We have lied to ourselves about God and how we are to love Him. We sinfully say within ourselves, “God will not mind if we take His name in vain. It is no big deal. He does not really command that this sin is to be punished with death.” And so we are guilty of the sin of lying no matter what commandment we break, because in breaking these commandments we have constructed in our minds a false reality about the truth concerning God and what He requires of us. Within ourselves we pervert the truth about God into a lie which appeals to our sinful natures.

We have our sinful natures because of the fall of our first father, Adam. Our first parents fell into sin through the instigation of the devil. The devil, according to John 8:44, is “the father” of the lie. In part that verse reads, “He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” We must not underestimate the appeal of the lie within us. According to our old man we delight in the lie because we are the spiritual children of the devil. As long as we are alive, we are involved in a fierce struggle with the enemy of the lie within us. If we are honest with ourselves, we can see how easily and how often we fall into the sin of bearing false witness against our neighbor. When we fall into this sin, we demonstrate our hatred for the brother to whom or about whom we are lying. Once we have fanned the flames of hatred for the brother within our thoughts, our bearing false witness may take many external forms.

As young people, it is a great temptation to lie to and deceive those in positions of authority. We may lie to our parents about where we have been or what we have been doing. We may deceive our teachers by cheating on a test or homework assignment. Let us remember that we can lie without even speaking a word. We do this when we deliberately conceal the truth about a matter or misrepresent the truth in order that we may deceive. We lie when we silently take credit for something which we did not do. We lie when we refuse to confess a sin which we have committed.

**we can lie without even
speaking a word.**

And if we do not lie directly to those in positions of authority, often we are found lying about them so that we might ruin their good reputation. In the Catechism's explanation of what is required in the ninth commandment, the sins of backbiting and slander are mentioned. A slanderer is one who spreads a lie about his neighbor with the intent that he may ruin his good reputation. We may think that if we damage the reputation of one in authority over us, we no longer have to submit to his authority and we are free to do as we please. A backbiter is one who spreads an evil report about his neighbor which is true or partly true. A backbiter may very well be speaking the truth about his neighbor, but once again, he is doing so with the intent of smearing the name of his neighbor. He does not speak that truth in love for the neighbor. Quite often we are motivated to backbite against a neighbor in the hopes that by lowering his name, we may have a higher standing. Both the slanderer and the backbiter are guilty of violating the ninth commandment, even though the backbiter may be speaking the truth. This is true because the positive requirement of this commandment is that "I defend and promote, as much as I am able, the honor and good character of my neighbor" (Q & A 112, Heidelberg Catechism). Sometimes promoting the good character of a neighbor means concealing an unflattering incident in that neighbor's life.

As we have mentioned before, we find that we delight to live in the lie when we are living according to our old man. In our new man, we cannot lie. Colossians 3:9,10 explains this truth: "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Ephesians 4:22-25 explains this more and emphasizes the activity of the new man. When we are putting on the new man, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," we "speak every man truth with his neighbor." When we live out of the new man we love the truth about God and we speak it. Likewise, we love our neighbor and speak the truth to him and about him.

It is a fierce battle which we experience within ourselves between the old man and the new man. It is true that, in principle, that old man is defeated. However, as long as we are alive on this earth we must put down that old man. A section of the Canons of Dordrecht explains how sometimes we can fall deeply into sin when we are not putting down the old man, but living according to its lusts. God can sometimes allow us to fall deeply into the sin of lying also. Article 4 of the Fifth Head of Doctrine reads:

Although the weakness of the flesh cannot prevail against the power of God, who confirms and preserves true believers in a state of grace, yet converts are not always so influenced and actuated by the Spirit of God, as not in some particular instances sinfully to deviate from the guidance of divine grace, so as to be seduced by, and comply with the lusts of the flesh; they must, therefore, be constant in watching and prayer, that they be not led into temptation. When these are neglected, they are not only liable to be drawn into great and heinous sins, by Satan, the world and the flesh, but sometimes by the righteous permission of God actually fall into these evils. This, the lamentable fall of David, Peter, and other saints described in Holy Scripture, demonstrates.

It is a frightening thing to witness one who has been given over to the sin of lying. What started out as one lie to hide another sin, soon becomes a stack of lies and an elaborate web of deceit. So perverted

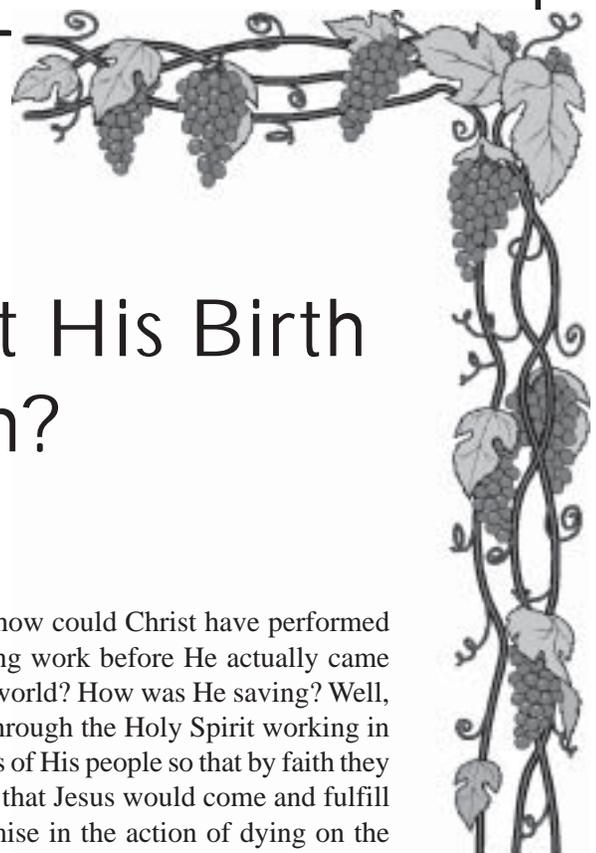
can the reality of a liar become, that he is able to speak the lie and seem to be fully convinced in himself that it was the truth. The sin of lying is not something to be toyed with.

“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds” (Col. 3:9). Do not indulge that old man by speaking a few “white lies.” Don’t think that you can begin to walk down the slope of deceit and not fall into the pit. Put on the new man which loves God and the neighbor and delights to speak the truth. By faith we do speak the truth in love. When living out of the new man we grow in our love for God and in our love for our fellow members of the body of Christ. And when we love God and the neighbor, we love the truth and speak of it and confess it.

Psalter 24, verses 1 & 2

*Who, O Lord, with Thee abiding, in Thy house shall be Thy guest?
Who, his feet to Zion turning, in Thy holy hill shall rest?
He that ever walks uprightly, does the right without a fear,
When he speaks, he speaks not lightly, but with truth and love sincere.
He that slanders not his brother, does no evil to a friend;
To reproaches of another he refuses to attend.
Wicked men win not his favor, but the good who fear the Lord;
From his vows he will not waver, tho’ it bring him sad reward. ❖*

Fruitful Branches



Was Christ the Savior at His Birth or at His Death?

by Jonathan and David Mahtani

Jonathan & David submitted this essay in 10th grade Bible at Trinity Christian School.

Christ’s salvation began from eternity and will only be finished when He comes finally to bring us to glory.

Christ’s salvation is taking place from eternity. It did not just take place at the death of Jesus. How then could those before His death be saved? From the foundation of the world was the Lamb of God slain (Rev. 13:8). This means God saved and is saving His people from all eternity.

But how could Christ have performed His saving work before He actually came into the world? How was He saving? Well, clearly through the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of His people so that by faith they believed that Jesus would come and fulfill His promise in the action of dying on the cross and rising and ascending and promising to come again. This is clear from I Peter 1:10-12 which tells us that the Spirit of Christ was in the Old Testament prophets. Also I Corinthians 10:4 teaches us that Christ was the Rock that followed God’s

people in the Old Testament. Also Jesus Himself says in John 8:56 that Abraham saw the day of Jesus and rejoiced in it.

Again, how could those before Christ actually have been saved? In believing that Christ would come and that He will for sure save. After all that is the same also for us. The Bible says if any believes, he or she will be saved. This was true then and is true now. But how were people back then saved if Christ had not died for them yet? By believing, they were saved, as I have already said. God promised to send His Son to die and His promise could not be broken. Therefore Christ was sure to come and His coming was the fulfillment of God's promise to save.

This fulfillment, however, was only part of His salvation. After all, He has promised to come again to bring His people to glory. The apostle Paul says in I Corinthians

15 that if only in this life we have hope, we are of all men most miserable. Christ must return for His saving work to be really complete.

The promise cannot be broken so it is as good as done. His salvation really in a sense is finished because it is sure to happen, but it is not complete in that we are still waiting for perfection in heaven.

Christ is therefore the Savior from eternity. He was not starting to save at His birth or at His death, but He is from all eternity the Savior. He saved in the Old Testament, and He is saving now in the New Testament. But the reality is that His saving work continues from all eternity and we now await the time He brings us to glory.



Jonathan and David attend the Protestant Reformed Mission in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where their father is missionary.

Story Time

The Fourth Man

A Story from the Time of the Afscheiding

by P. S. Kuiper

translated by Rev. Cornelius Hanko

Chapter 7 A City on a Mountain

(Editor's Note: The author is giving us pictures of different aspects of life in the Netherlands in the early 1800s. But, while giving us these snapshots, as it were, he is also giving us information on the vast religious differences in the Netherlands, which led to the Separation of 1834 under Hendrik De Cock. In the last chapter we read of a new baby that had been born into the home of Evert and Sijtje Splint with the help of the old midwife, Gerritje Jansen. The need for wine to rub down the new baby required that Evert go to the local taverns in

"The Devil's Corner," which trip brought thirsty men to the door of Evert's house. They were soon chased away by the flinty old midwife, but were almost sure to return after the midwife left. The story picks up with her departure.)

"Good, that catty person is gone!" sighed Antje. "We do not talk about grown persons like that, Antje," her father admonished her sharply. "The midwife did her work faithfully this afternoon. For that matter, you willingly helped her, little girl." Antje colored and dropped her head.

"Now let's call the other children, Evert." Mother suggested. "Koen, you go and call them," ordered father. In a moment they all stood around the new little

brother: Grietje, Aagje, Betje, and the thin Krentje, all stood by their father in quiet amazement. Finally, father laid little Berend in mother's arms and told the children to go and sit at the table.

They quietly enjoyed their simple weaver's meal. However, their eyes wandered again and again to mother and little Berend. Their father read a portion from the Bible slowly and hesitantly—he could not read very well—and thanked the Lord for His blessings of that day. It was a prayer on the very edge of "Devil's Corner."¹

After the meal Antje and Grietje quickly cleared the table. Mother told of the neighbors who had been at the door. "Who exactly were they, Antje?" asked father with a drawn face.

Janus the Sickie, Kobus the Curl-lip and Jan of Cross-eyed Lijsie," answered the girl without hesitation. She did not know them by their real names, but only by their nicknames.

"The midwife sent them on their way, but after a while they will come back. They are now sitting by Norbert Majoor, seeing the baby there," Mother added.

"Exactly," was all that father said. While the youngest four children recited their prayers by mother and then went to their sleep corners,² Splint sat at the table and stared at the opposite wall pondering what to do. His first inclination was simply to send them away when they came. He knew all three of them. At heart they were not bad fellows, but they were slaves to drink. Had he not been exactly the same in his earlier years, until God had led him to meet Sijtje? Through her he had learned to seek and find his comfort only in Jesus even in the bitterest poverty.

Should he then not speak of that comfort to these men, who in a double way were so very poor? Could he not show his thankfulness to God in another way than in the way these men celebrated the birth of a child—by drinking with them and boasting of his new son? Suddenly an idea came to him. He went to the cupboard and took six cents out of the little moneybox.

"Koen," he motioned to the oldest, "run as fast as you can to the Eemnesserstraat³ and buy three cigars at two cents a piece."

The boy looked up in amazement at this strange errand, but he obediently took the money, put on his cap and slipped out the door.

His wooden shoes beat loudly on the rough pavement of the Langend,⁴ but the noise soon died away.

In fifteen minutes he was back with the cigars. Panting, he laid them in his father's hands, who nodded ap-

provingly and laid them in the cupboard. The bottle of brandy that still stood on the table ended up in the same place.

"Antje and Koen,⁵ you should put on your good clothes, because church starts at eight."

That was true, too. With all the exciting events they had almost forgotten that it was Good Friday.

"Aren't you going along, father?" asked Koen.

"No, dummy; father has to stay with mother," Antje snapped back. "Who was it that talked a little while ago about a catty woman?" mocked her brother.

"If I may have a word with the young man and the young lady; it is already seven forty five."

The firm sound of father's voice silenced them at once. Five minutes later brother and sister left in the direction of Church.

As the clock struck eight the three men knocked at the door. Splint swung it open. "We came to see the little one." "That is very sociable," said Splint with a smile. "Come in and have a seat."

With a loud noise the men came in, greeted the mother boisterously, quickly cast a glance at Berendje, who kept sucking undisturbed, and flopped down at the table, their legs far apart.

Splint calmly took a seat by them, while mother looked concerned at her children, who restlessly turned about in their sleep. "So, Norbert and Vita have received a child on the same day that Sijtje and I did," Splint opened the conversation.

"Yes," answered Janus the Sickie, "only by the Nortons it is a little girl and by you there is a little boy."

"That can become a nice team," grinned Jan of Cross-eyed Lijsje.

"No mate," burst forth the voice of Kobus the Curl-lip, "Norton and Vita are Catholics and where there are two faiths on one pillow the devil lies between them."⁶

"At least that is what the pastor says," retorted Jan dryly, upon which the other two burst out laughing.

"Was that child well?" asked Splint, who wanted to turn the discussion in another direction.

Now the merriment of the guests quieted for a moment.

"It seemed to me in very poor condition," mumbled Janus. "They had the priest come while we were there to be sure that the baby was baptized.⁷ One never knows." For a moment all was quiet. Mother glanced in a stealthy way at Berendje.

Then the guests decided that it was time to bring up the reason for their visit.

“You can well imagine that Norton was not in a good mood. We got only one refresher. I thought to myself that a person cannot walk on one leg, you know?”

After this suggestion all three looked at their host with expectation, but he quietly ignored their look.

“You all know that I have not drunk liquor for many years now,” he said slowly and with emphasis.

“That can very well be,” grinned Jan, “but we need to have the wagon greased regularly, you have to reckon with others as well as yourself.”

“Or are you not happy with your son, Evert?”

“That I surely am,” said Splint with conviction. “You can see that, Jan.”

Having said that, he went to the cupboard, took out three cigars and laid them down before his guests.

“Light up,” he invited his guests with a laugh.

The three weavers stared at him with a blank look.

“Amazing,” stammered Kobus, “cigars for lords. We look like our bosses. Imagine that!”

Splint supplied the light for their cigars and sat down with the men. Quietly he began to explain to them why he did not drink any more and what a blessing that had been for his family. It followed that he also spoke of matters regarding his faith. But Evert Splint did not use learned words.

He did not understand them himself, and much less did his audience. He spoke to his neighbors in his own language, which was also theirs.⁸ They listened without interfering with his speech a single time. When he was finished, they silently got up, reluctantly went to the door and, after a short greeting, left the poor weaver’s dwelling.

Drawing on their cigars, they pulled into the “Devil’s Corner,” where they attracted a lot of attention. “That reformed Evert is a strange cut-bean, but he is not mean,” remarked Jan of Cross-eyed Lijsie. The others agreed, but what they thought, only God knew.

The following morning the inhabitants of the Langend saw the priest Jacobus Reuvers again enter the little dwelling of Norbert Majoor.

An hour later the sad news spread from mouth to mouth that little Susanna had died.

This was not strange news in the neighborhood. Of every three weaver’s children born, one died within a half year. Yet, for a time it was oppressively quiet. A few days later the parents brought their little daughter to St. Jan’s cemetery in Laren, for the Roman Catholics did not yet have their own burial place.⁹

The following evening Splint visited the neighbors living across the way. Vita sat quietly in a corner with the rosary in her hands. “Mr. Priest says that our Susanna is now a little angel in heaven,” she whispered.

Norbert began once more to show his natural alertness. “I received eight guilders from the death fund,” he confided to his neighbor. “To be honest I can make good use of that money, Evert.”

But Splint spoke to Norbert and Vita that evening about the only comfort in life and in death.

His visit naturally did not pass unnoticed. All that the Splint family did and said was commonly known. A city on a mountain cannot remain hidden.

¹ “The Devil’s Corner” was the title of the last chapter. It referred to a part of the village in which all the taverns were located and where the town drunks gathered.

² The houses of the poor did not have bedrooms, for the houses were too small. Usually these houses had something like cupboards in the walls into which the children could crawl to sleep.

³ The name of a street in the village.

⁴ The street on which the Splints lived.

⁵ These were the two oldest children.

⁶ This is an old Dutch proverb which describes the grief and trouble in a home where husband and wife are not united in their faith and worship.

⁷ The Roman Catholic Church baptizes all babies who seem to be about to die immediately. The reason for this is that the Roman Catholic Church believes in baptismal regeneration; i.e., that baptism actually regenerates.

⁸ This was characteristic of the people who later went with De Cock. They were a very pious people, but, for the most part, of the lowly workers, the poor, and the uneducated.

⁹ In the days which the book describes, each church had its own cemetery. And, although Roman Catholics were permitted some recognition, nevertheless, the Reformed Church was still the State Church and only Reformed Church buildings were permitted cemeteries. ❖

Reverend Gise Van Baren

edited by Kris Moelker

On May 3, 1932, Rev. Gise Van Baren became the son of John and Grace Van Baren. He was born at home in South Holland, Illinois.

As a boy, Rev. Van Baren attended South Holland Christian School. When he started attending this school, it was a two-room school with eight grades. It had out-houses for toilets, and a pump was used on the school grounds for their water supply. After grade school, Rev. Van Baren attended Illiana Christian High School in Lansing, Illinois.

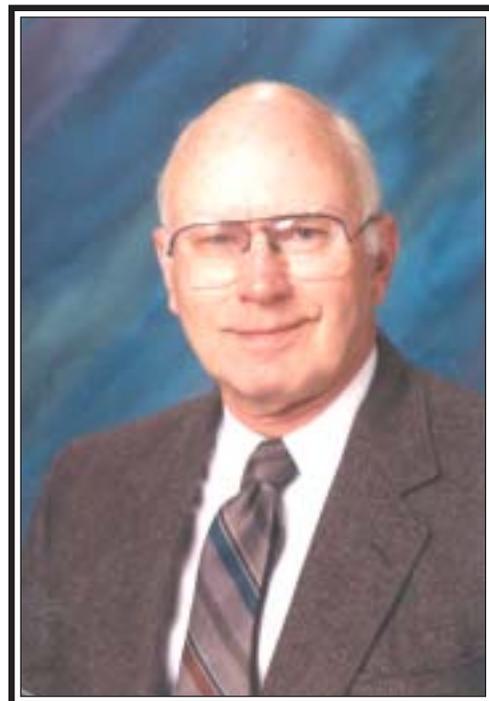
While he was growing up, Rev. Van Baren's hobbies were collecting coins and postage stamps. Today he still has these collections, but his biggest hobby now is working on the Internet and the PRC web site.

Rev. Van Baren believes that the peer pressure he experienced as a teenager was not much different than the peer pressure young people experience today. There are just so many other evils available to young people today. Peer pressure can lead young people to do things which were not even available when Rev. Van Baren was a young person.

During high school, the Lord led Rev. Van Baren to begin to consider preparing for the ministry. After he graduated from high school, Rev. Van Baren enrolled in the pre-sem course at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

After he graduated from Calvin College, Rev. Van Baren continued his education at the Protestant Reformed Seminary. His parents were pleased when they learned that he desired to enter the Seminary. He was a student at the Seminary at the time of the split of 1953. The most memorable events of these years were the debates and discussions which centered around the issues of the split.

During the time of the split, Rev. Van Baren remembers hearing Rev. De Wolf's sermons which caused much



debate in the churches. He also was able to hear the court trial concerning the property of First Church in Grand Rapids.

On January 25, 1956, Rev. Van Baren married Clara Buiter. They were married in South Holland, Illinois. The Lord has blessed them with four sons and four daughters who are all married. They also currently have twenty-four grandchildren.

Rev. Van Baren was ordained in October, 1956. His first charge was in Doon, Iowa, where he labored for 5 1/2 years. When his work in Doon was finished, the Lord called him to labor in Randolph, Wisconsin. After 3 1/2 years of preaching the Word in Randolph, the Lord called Rev. Van Baren to labor in First Church in Grand Rap-

ids, Michigan. After 12 years of labor in First, the Lord sent him to Hudsonville, Michigan. He served the church in Hudsonville for 17 years. His last charge was in Loveland, Colorado, where he labored for 5 1/2 years until he became a Minister Emeritus in 1999.

One of Rev. Van Baren's most memorable experiences in teaching the children in catechism was teaching the very young children. He was teaching them how Abraham and Sarah did not have Isaac until Abraham was 100 years old. He remembers: "One little boy pointed out that they had a cow which had a calf every year. Quite a comparison!"

During his ministry, it has been very rewarding for Rev. Van Baren to hear the young people make confession of their faith and also marry in the Lord.

After the split of 1953, the Protestant Reformed Churches faced other controversies. Rev. Van Baren re-

members the controversies regarding the care of Rev. Herman Hoeksema. He also has memories of the questions concerning divorce and remarriage.

Rev. Van Baren has advice for men considering the calling to be ministers of the Word. "They should think and pray carefully about this. It is a blessed calling, but involves also hard work and oftentimes great strife."

Rev. Van Baren feels that the young people should consider Scripture and the confessions more and place much less emphasis on sports. He is encouraged to see the young people attending church faithfully and learning their catechism lessons well. ❖

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

Gem of the Month

That Hand

by Heath Bleyenbergh

*The hand of him was large and ominous
and in its presence they all quaked with fear
for then they knew that they had done amiss
that hand, that grasp: at times no one seemed near.
All day and night that hand would not release
they struggled, squirmed, but all to no avail
for in that hand the pressure would increase
what could they do? for all was doomed to fail.*

*Yet in that hand a gentle warmth resides
a ray, a light, a constant source of hope
assuring me that in the troublous times
the cares and burdens all to it I throw
What then! shall I in ignorance be free?
No Way! for by His hand he leadeth me.*

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Skip Hunter

May 1 Read Genesis 1:1-8

In the beginning is the way the Bible and the book of Genesis begins. Some have declared the first part of this book not needed for the church of today. But this book of the Bible was given to the church of all ages to teach them about the beginning of many things. We see the beginning of the world of course. We do not need endless space shuttles and expensive telescopes in order to discover the origin of all things. It is written right here in this book in language so plain that even the youngest of children can tell us about the origin of the universe. We can and do find the origin of time. Time as it is expressed today was set forth on the first day of creation. God put all of the universe in motion for us to use to “glorify and enjoy Him forever.” Let us do that and let us remember to study “In the beginning...” Sing Psalter 404:1-2.

May 2 Read Genesis 1:9-19

On the first day of creation God created the light. This light is needed for the products of the second day—plants. The process of photosynthesis began on the second day as the plants soaked in the light and used it to produce glucose and oxygen. God’s creation was a working creation. Those plants form the basis for all food chains today. On the fourth day He gave to us the sun, moon and stars. I encourage you to consider these heavenly bodies as they proclaim not only the glory of God but also the way of salvation for us. Look to the plants and stars and find the glory of the Lord proclaimed from day to day. Sing Psalter 404:3-5.

May 3 Read Genesis 1:20-25

As God created He saw that it was good. We find this pronouncement after many of acts of creation. It was not man’s pronouncement on God’s work. It was His own. It was good because it fit the purpose for which He made it, that is, to glorify Him. We also find four little words at the end of verse 24: “and it was so.” There was no process begun so that in a few years one organism evolved into another. No, when God spake it happened even as He spake! In John 1 we read, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. God’s Word was powerful because it was He. The powerful Word of creation placed each animal on the face of the earth in its own place as we are told in the Belgic Confession Article 12. (I encourage you to look at that article.) Each animal, large and small, was created to proclaim God’s glory in the way that it lives. Let us find out those proclamations of His glory as we consider the creation daily. Sing Psalter 14:1-4.

May 4 Read Genesis 1:26-31

On the final day of creation God created its crown—man. After readying the whole earth, God placed upon it man. Man with the two-fold command: subdue and have dominion over the cre-

ation and be fruitful and multiply. Are we carrying out our God-given calling? Even though sin has ruined the perfection of creation, we are still commanded to be stewards over it. We must not waste what God has given to us. We must use it to His glory. We must not be concerned about overpopulation; we must bring forth the covenant seed to fill the quiver God has given to us. God has given to us a calling on and in His creation. Are we carrying it out? Are we doing it to His honor and glory alone? Let us never live our lives on this earth for our good, but rather let us live them according to the command of God and for His honor and glory alone. Sing Psalter 14:5-7.

May 5 Read Genesis 2:1-7

Chapter two serves as a review and a further amplification of the creation week. But there are also some beginnings here, too. We find in the reading for today the first Sabbath. God gave the order of the Sabbath which, except for the day it is held, is to last until we experience that blessed eternal Sabbath in heaven. Are we preparing to rest from our labors tomorrow? Are we preparing to teach even our littlest children what rest means? Are we preparing to put away our earthly pleasures and entertainments so that we may give the whole of the day into the worship of our Creator? Man was created to use the Sabbath as it was ordained by God. The fourth commandment centers around the reason for the creation of the Sabbath and its application to our lives. Next to the destruction of the idea of creation stands the destruction of the idea of the Sabbath as ordained by God. Let us glorify Him by keeping His Sabbath holy. Sing Psalter 256:1, 2, and 5.

May 6 Read Genesis 2:8-14

God prepared for the first man the garden of Eden. In this garden was all that a man needed in order to nourish himself. This garden is a picture of the heavenly Eden which God’s people will inhabit with all the saints. In that heavenly Eden will be all that we need for nourishment. We will not go to heaven by our own works. We, like Adam, will be placed in that Eden. In each Eden was placed a tree of life. Man forfeited the right to the tree of life on earth, but by God’s grace he will daily partake of that heavenly tree of life. As we see the picture of the earthly creation painted before our eyes, we see that it serves as a background for the beauty of the grace of God found in Christ Jesus. Let us not long for the earthly Eden which will never be found; let us long for the heavenly Eden where we will dwell in sweet communion with the Lamb and His bride. Sing Psalter 285:1-4.

May 7 Read Genesis 2:15-20

Have you ever wondered how each animal got its name? Why when we think of giraffe we only have a conception of one animal in mind? God gave to Adam the perfect knowledge to name

each animal. Yes, these were the names that God had ordained for them. Of this there can be no doubt. But yet Adam named them as they were presented to him. Throughout history these names have been passed down and translated into many languages. But the names still fit as given by Adam. The animal world of creation serves to glorify God even as the plant and astronomical world. Consider it and learn more about God's glory. But in this creation we see that Adam did not find his help meet. That was to be found elsewhere. Sing Psalter 360.

May 8 Read Genesis 2:21-25

We closed yesterday's devotional with the thought that Adam did not find his help meet in the world of animals. God used the naming to show him that he needed someone to be his help meet. Here we see another beginning. This is the beginning of marriage. Marriage is the gift of God which shows to us the mystery of Christ and His church. The way of marriage is that a man seeks a wife. Not any wife but the wife of God's choosing. Woman was created by God from man. This headship principal should guide us in our marriages as well as in our daily lives. In the beginning of that marriage we see Adam and Eve living in true wedded bliss. In that bliss we see the blessedness of not only godly marriages on earth but the one great marriage in heaven. Marriage is a good thing. Let us only use it for God's glory. Sing Psalter 125:1-5.

May 9 Read Genesis 3:1-7

Once again we see another beginning. In these verses is recounted the beginning of sin. First of all we see Eve doubting what God told her and falling into Satan's trap. We see Satan trying to retaliate through God's creation for his banishment in heaven. And we see Adam and Eve trying to cover themselves for their sin after seeing their nakedness. From all of this we must see our lot in this life. Sin is part of our life, and we cannot escape it. We cannot ignore it, and we cannot hide it. We must do all that we can to flee from it. As Adam and Eve found out, one sin leads to another. Is there no hope? Yes, there is. By God's grace He has given to us a remedy for this beginning of sin. It will be found in tomorrow's reading. Sing Psalter 224.

May 10 Read Genesis 3:8-15

Yesterday we found out about the beginning of sin. Today we found out about the remedy. Adam and Eve tried works righteousness to alleviate the effects of sin. They tried to cover their nakedness by the fig leaves which they sewed together. This is often our lot as well. Even little children become adept at trying to hide sin. But as we all know and have experienced, we cannot hide our sin from God. We find a comfort in this section. It is found in another beginning. In verse fifteen we have the first promise of a Savior. This Savior will crush the head of Satan in order to redeem us from our sins. Let us stop trying to cover our sins by our own works, and let us throw ourselves upon the mercies of Christ. Let this be our prayer now and always. May we never forget to add to each prayer, "Forgive us our sins." Let us never forget to bring our individual sins to our God in prayer. Sing Psalter 140.

May 11 Read Genesis 3:16-20

Sin has consequences. We see that in the passage we read for today, and we see that in our lives. For Eve, childbirth would be painful. She and all women with her would be reminded of the

fall with each baby that would be brought forth. We must remember that this pronouncement took place just after Eve was told that from her seed the Christ would come! Trying to evade this consequence would have bitter fruit. Adam was told that work would be laborious for him. He, too, could not evade work, but rather it must be done in order that his daily bread and that of his family's could be gained. Also the ultimate consequence of their sin was announced. They would die and not continue to live because of their sin. We must realize that this is also for us. The original sin had consequences for Adam and his seed. Our sins have consequences for us and sometimes for those that we love. Once again we must be admonished to flee Satan and all forms of sin. Sing Psalter 2.

May 12 Read Genesis 3:21-24

God left Adam and Eve with a symbol of His grace. He killed animals and with these sacrifices covered their nakedness. This was not the work righteousness of man, but rather it was a picture of the blood sacrifice of Christ. The animal skins did a far superior job of covering their nakedness than the flimsy fig leaves. Because Adam and Eve forfeited life in Eden, God set them outside of the garden. He made sure that they did not return with the cherubim. Adam as the representative of man was placed out of Paradise until we are all brought to the heavenly Paradise. The way to that Paradise will only be opened by the work of Christ on the cross. Sing Psalter 20.

May 13 Read Genesis 4:1-8

Adam and Eve began to obey God's command to be fruitful and multiply. In doing so, they brought forth two sons. These two sons showed to us two more beginnings. We see first of all the beginning of the idea of election and reprobation, and we also see the beginning of the antithesis. We also get a picture of the right way and the wrong way to worship God. Abel worshiped God correctly when he offered his lamb in the proper attitude. Cain tried do it his way. God was not pleased with Cain's manner of worship and told him so. What about us? How are we worshipping God today? Are we worshipping as He has commanded us? Or are we trying to worship Him in a way that is pleasing to our flesh? As we worship today, let us only bring the sacrifice that is pleasing to God. Sing Psalter 305.

May 14 Read Genesis 4:9-15

Because God reprimanded Cain for his manner of worship, Cain became angry at Abel for his obedience of God. Here we see another beginning. The true church will always be persecuted for its proper worship of God. They will not be persecuted by the out-and-out heathen, but rather they will be persecuted by those who either may call themselves church or those who once were a part of that church. People of God, expect persecution if you are worshipping God in the manner which He has commanded. This has been a fact since the death of Abel, this was told to the disciples and us by Christ, and this is found to be one of the signs of the end times. Remember that those who are persecuted for Christ's sake are the blessed ones. Sing Psalter 146:1-4.

May 15 Read Genesis 4:16-24

We see what was Cain's response to his punishment. He thumbed his nose at God and went to live a life of more evil and wickedness. Worst of all he taught his children to walk in this way. We see the beginning of sins against the seventh command-

ment as Lamech took unto himself two wives. We also see Lamech's boasting to his family of his wickedness. We also see his children using God's creation. It was a use that was not expressly condemned by Scripture, but because of its inclusion with the sins of Lamech it appears that their use was for their glory and not God's. We must see in these men's sins as well as in all sin the way we should not choose. Sing Psalter 146:5-8.

May 16 Read Genesis 4:25-5:8

Seth was given to Adam and Eve to provide solace in the death of Abel. God cares for His people and knows how to comfort them. Adam and Eve probably deeply missed their God-fearing son Abel. But God did not forget his promise to them. God also provided them with Enos. In his life time, public worship was common as the family joined together and worshiped their covenant God. Worship must be precious to us. Worship is not an individual activity but is an activity of the communion of saints. True, we must worship God in our private devotions, but corporate worship is commanded by God. May we seek to worship God as He gives to us this blessed privilege. Sing Psalter 246.

May 17 Read Genesis 5:8-20

In these verses we see the line of the covenant beginning to form. The idea of the covenant will be more formally introduced later in the book of Genesis, but its beginnings are found here. God's covenant with His people is a beautiful idea. It is found in keeping the commandment to be fruitful and multiply. In this way God carries out His covenant promises to His people. God elects in the line of the covenant; He also gives much comfort when we walk in the way of the covenant. As we seek God-fearing children let us remember that in them we are given the blessings of the covenant. Sing Psalter 27.

May 18 Read Genesis 5:21-27

In this reading we are introduced to two notable men in the covenant line. The world all knows Methuselah as the oldest man recorded in history. Think of the phrase "as old as Methuselah." The world does not know Methuselah for a more important idea. That idea was that he was elect from the beginning of the world and walked in his old age in the ways of God. The second man is known by the church as the "man who walked with God." The writer of Hebrews says that he pleased God by faith. Jude calls him a prophet. Do we seek to please God in our lives? Do we wish to walk with God now and throughout eternity? Walking with God is pleasing to Him and is commanded by Him. Let us seek to please God and to walk with Him. Sing Psalter 190.

May 19 Read Genesis 5:28-32

Two more men found in the line of the covenant are introduced in these verses. First of all we find Lamech. He is notable because he saw the wickedness of this world and saw comfort in the line of continued covenant generations. He named his son Noah, saying that he "shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands." Lamech could see the world's wickedness and was given comfort by God in his son's birth. These men of chapter five walked and talked with Jehovah. He heard their prayers and answered them. Lamech prayed for a son to comfort him and his prayer was answer. People of God including our beloved young people, go to God in your troubles. Pray for comfort even as you battle the wickedness of this world. Rest assured that He will send a comforting answer. Sing Psalter 202.

May 20 Read Genesis 6:1-4

Parents, whom are your young people dating? Are they going out to see the daughters and sons of men? Fair though they be, they will do nothing but lead our beloved young people astray. Even sons and daughters of those who think of God differently from how He makes Himself known in the Scriptures are to be avoided. Parents, take an active role in the choices of your young people. The sons of God had awful experiences when they sought the daughters of men. Your sons and daughters more than likely will have the same awful experience. God will not let His covenant promises be trampled by those who have no use for them. Young people, do not be fooled by the world. Satan seeks to destroy you even as you date those who have no use for the God of the Bible. (By the way, was your date in church with you today? Was he or she with you twice?) Sing Psalter 1.

May 21 Read Genesis 6:5-13

As the world grew more and more wicked, God was ready to put the next part of His plan into motion. Through Noah, who found grace in the eyes of God, He determined to save His Church and provide for us another picture in the carrying out of the plan for our salvation. Noah did not let his sons see the daughters of man. Noah walked with God in this matter. No, neither he nor his sons were perfect as we full well know. But he walked with God nonetheless. Noah found grace in God's eyes because by grace he looked for it. The world did not look for that grace; no, they hated that grace. Seek grace people of God, and seek it only in God's eyes. Sing Psalter 253.

May 22 Read Genesis 6:14-22

God gave to Noah the plans for the ark. Noah obeyed and carried them out. Man, throughout the ages, has tried to figure out what that ark looked like. They have tried to figure out how all of those animals would fit into that ark. Some have dismissed the whole idea as foolishness and a myth. Noah did not laugh at God's command. Oh, he may have wondered how it was possible, even as others of God's people have wondered about those things which seem impossible. But Noah knew that all things are possible with God. Reread verse 22. We need to make this our theme throughout our lives. We must do according to all that God commands us. In this way we will find grace in His eyes. Sing Psalter 76.

May 23 Read Genesis 7:1-10

We see the words "God commanded" twice in these verses. We also see that Noah obeyed the commands of God. What about the wicked? What were they doing? They were doing what the wicked always do when God's people obey Him. They laugh and mock us to scorn. Noah preached to them with each blow of his hammer. As that ark grew larger and larger the laughter grew louder and louder. What did Noah do? He obeyed God and continued to build and with each stroke of his hammer he condemned the world and found grace for his family and him. As the laughing grew louder and louder, all of a sudden it stopped! Why? Because the first drops of rain the world ever knew began to fall upon the ark with Noah and his family safe inside. Sing Psalter 150.

May 24 Read Genesis 7:11-16

As the rain came down and the water from the fountains of the deep rose over the earth, Noah and his family were found safe in the ark. Noah had a picture of God keeping His promises as those

animals came to him even as God commanded him to put them into the ark. Some of the wicked laughter may have been stilled for a while as those animals appeared, but it was not enough. There was no grace to be found in them. Noah and his family were safe in the ark, shut in by God. This shutting in is symbolic of God protecting His church from the storms of this life. No flood of troubles can overwhelm us when we are kept by God's hand within in His church. Do not seek to leave that church, young people; there is no safety found outside of it. Do what God commands and rest in safety. Sing Psalter 248.

May 25 Read Genesis 7:17-24

Do you ever imagine what drowning must be like? Maybe some of you have had a near-drowning experience. Now think what it must have been like as your children and other loved ones were drowning around you and you could not help them. The wicked were drowned by the wrath of God in that flood. God destroyed that first world by water even as He called it out of the water. As we know this is a picture of the destruction yet to come. Fire is coming to destroy the wicked at the end of time. First of all it will be this world that will be destroyed by fire, and then the fire of God's wrath will burn the wicked in hell. Does this make us complacent? It better not! It better make us fall to our knees and ask for forgiveness from our sins and for deliverance from the judgment to come. Sing Psalter 285.

May 26 Read Genesis 8:1-5

What a beautiful four words are found in the beginning of this chapter. No, God had not forgotten Noah. He never forgets His people even as an earthly father does not forget his beloved sons or daughters, or a mother forgets her sucking child. God remembered Noah. Even though it may have appeared to Noah during those 150 days that he was forgotten by God, he most certainly was not. God remembered Noah just as He remembers each of those whom He has ordained to eternal life. Oh, Noah had to wait to be set back on dry land, just as we must wait for our eternal home in heaven. Let us pray that God will remember us daily. Sing Psalter 289:1-4.

May 27 Read Genesis 8:6-12

Does it seem that God moves too slow for us, people of God? Imagine how Noah must have felt. Even though his children were grown, they must have been urging him to open the ark and to let them out. Noah, however, trusted in God. He sent the raven and dove out in their turns. He interpreted their return and the olive branch that was brought back to him. Noah and his family had to learn patience. He, and we, must learn that God's ways are not our ways. When we are tempted to run ahead of God, we should think about Noah patiently letting out the birds, patiently awaiting their return, and then letting them out again. Do we have that patience? Let us seek for it today as we worship. Let us seek patience with the way that God leads us in our daily lives. Sing Psalter 290:1-5.

May 28 Read Genesis 8:13-17

Noah removed the covering from the ark and saw that the ground looked dry and the water was gone. Did they get to leave? No, for almost two more months they had to wait until God told Noah that now he and his family could leave the ark. We may wonder what they saw. We may wonder what they thought. These details are not provided us in this account. Why? The answer is

simple. They are not necessary for our salvation. Not only could Noah leave the ark, he was commanded by God to let the animals out. God did not leave Noah helpless in this. He commanded that the animals be let out so that they could multiply. We know that this was for man's good. God cares for His people. He cared for them with the ark, He cared for them when they left the ark, and He cares for us now. Let us thank and praise Him for all the care that He gives to us. Sing Psalter 347.

May 29 Read Genesis 8:18-22

As Noah and his family left the ark, what was the first thing that they did? Noah built an altar and they worshiped God in thanksgiving. This aspect of worship was not possible while they were on the ark. But now it was. Think about what Noah did for a moment. He took one of each one of those precious clean beasts and offered them unto God. This was not 10 percent; it was almost 17 percent! Do we show that amount of gratitude to our heavenly Father for His care over us? Are we truly thankful for the salvation that He has given to us in His Son? Noah's offering was pleasing to God because it was done with a right heart. God promised never to destroy the world in this way again. God gave to Noah and to us the changing of the seasons to help us to remember His care over the church as found on that ark. Sing Psalter 62.

May 30 Read Genesis 9:1-7

God gave to Noah some new beginnings after the flood. It appears that it was now proper for man to use the animals for meat. He also tells to us the punishment for those who murder. No more mark like Cain had, but now those who killed were to be killed in punishment for their sin. The beginning of the ceremonial law was made, as man was forbidden to eat the blood of those animals. Already now they were to see in that blood the blood of the lamb that was killed for them and us at Calvary. One thing stayed the same, however. Did you notice that the first and last verse of this section was the command to be fruitful and multiply? This was God's command to Adam. This was God's command to Noah. This was God's command to the whole church of the old dispensation. And this is God's command to the church today. Sing Psalter 88.

May 31 Read Genesis 9:8-17

Here in these verses we find the formal announcement of God's covenant with His church. We have seen indications of this covenant in past chapters, but now we have it in more detail. God will continue to unfold His covenant with His people throughout the old dispensation. Even the church of today must seek to learn and to walk in that covenant. God did not make that covenant an abstract thought. No, that covenant was full of life for the people of God. In the brilliance and beauty of the rainbow, Noah, his sons, and the church of all ages can count the colors and see that they are seven-the number of God and His church. Seven is that beautiful covenant number as shown in the rainbow to Noah and to all of the church that followed him. Let us enjoy rainbows this summer, and let us see in them the sign of the covenant. Sing Psalter 241:1, 3, 7-9.

An Introduction to the History of Music

by Melissa Van Baren

I have been asked to write the music articles that Beth DeVries had been writing since she will be moving to Northern Ireland to get married. I would like to try something new. What I am planning on doing is starting with the history of music and leading into other things pertaining to music. For instance, the affect of music on the body, different types of music and maybe what type of music we as young people should be involved in. First, though, I would like to work on the history of music.

As many may (or may not) have noticed, music is very much a part of our culture today. Every nation, country, and city is filled with music. There are all kinds of music—that which praises God and that which is slanderous, vulgar, and even blasphemous. Every person can associate with music. It is the one bridge between all nationalities and languages. Just think about it—it is the one “language” everyone can understand. Any one can understand notes, music, and harmony, whether he be German, Dutch, Italian, Indian, or African. It may not always be the same type of music but it’s there. From the beginning of time to the end of the world there is and will be music.

Music has become so ingrained into our cultures that I fear we don’t even recognize its prominent effect on the world and church today. I dare say that it is the most powerful tool used by Satan and God alike. In some ways it may seem as gentle as a lamb but it roars through our culture like a lion. What better way to tempt people but through music? It easily sneaks its way through the church world as a fox in sheep’s clothing. It looks safe, but is it? Also, ever notice how subconsciously horrible, wicked music is forced upon you? It’s in the dentist office, super markets, and malls. Although on the other

end of the spectrum, God has created His own natural music in the creation around us. The birds, crickets, and frogs form God’s own natural orchestra. It is a beautiful natural music. We are bombarded on all sides with music, some pleasing some displeasing. Just look around,

The birds, crickets, and frogs
form God’s own natural
orchestra.

have you ever noticed *all* the places music is prominent and how much it has affected you?

We wake up in the morning and the alarm goes off. What do we hear? In the background of the commercials, what do you hear? As the day progresses and you get your children ready for school or maybe you yourself are getting ready and are listening to the weather report, have you ever noticed what is in the background? As you hop into the car and are driving along, you probably watch in amazement as a beater pulls up next to you seemingly only powered by sound waves. As you drop your children (or brothers and sisters) off at school, you may have noticed they start their day with...singing. You head off to the doctors office and sitting in the waiting room you hear people talking and babies screaming and, well, what else? After the doctors office, you have a few things you need to pick up at the mall. Have you ever noticed what is so quietly being

played overhead? The few purchases having been made you head home. What better way to relax but in your garden? The birds are singing and the sun is shining and maybe you find yourself...humming? Before you know it though, school's out for the day and supper time has quickly approached and devotions are being done and you pick up a Psalter. Then comes bed time and the little baby just won't quiet. What is more soothing to that precious one than a lull-a-bye. Music is with us from morning till night and from cradle till grave, music surrounds us.

Music varies in type, purpose and use. It affects our moods, our thoughts, and well, our life. It's amazing to think about how many ways music affects and enters our lives. How has this come to be and who is to be credited for a good portion of this? In other words, was music from the time of Adam on or was it invented? If it was invented, then how did Adam praise God? Those are just a few things to consider before my next article. ❖

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

Church Family

The *Beacon Lights*: Covenant Communication

by John Huizenga

The doctrine of the covenant is precious to the child of God. It is essential for his or her life. God revealed Himself as a covenant God to Adam and Eve and to every saint born into this world. The covenant is the relationship we enjoy with God, the life we have in Christ, and the life that will be made full and complete in heaven. At the heart of the doctrine of the covenant is the relationship of friendship.

What does *Beacon Lights* have to do with the covenant? Is it because *Beacon Lights* is a publication that has articles about Christian living? Is it because *Beacon Lights* includes articles that warn against a walk of life that departs from covenantal friendship? *Beacon Lights* does these things, but I believe that "communication" is the function that most closely relates this publication to the doctrine of the covenant.

There can be no covenant friendship without communication. We establish friendships by sharing our thoughts, desires, and ideas. The intimate bond of marriage quickly disintegrates when the husband and wife

stop talking with one another. God speaks to His people and we speak to our God. The Word of God is our salvation and we are called to give God continual praise. "Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel" (Psalm 22:23).

our covenantal life with one
another is covenantal life
with God

Covenant communication is not limited to personal relationships with God. It also includes our fellowship with one another. God has fellowship with His people as

the body of Christ. God makes it clear to us that our covenantal life with one another is covenantal life with God. In Matthew 25:40 we read of this truth in the words of our Lord, “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

As believers, we manifest our love for God, our covenant fellowship with Him, in the love we show to our own family members. This love and fellowship must also be manifest between families within the church and finally to the people of God wherever they are found. In fact, we are called to love even our enemies, though we can never enter into covenant fellowship with the wicked.

Beacon Lights is one way for believers to manifest covenant friendship with others who are within their own church, and also with those who live in different states and countries of the world. It serves to inform the young people about the annual conventions where our young people gather and have fellowship with one another. *Beacon Lights* is a means for mature saints to speak words of comfort or guidance to the saints who are not as mature and it is also a means for the youth to make known their concerns and spiritual growth. *Beacon Lights* is a place where everyone in the church can fellowship together in the way of writing or reading.

The rubrics in *Beacon Lights* provide a variety of ways to communicate as believers. The editorials bring up various issues or doctrines for consideration and meditation. These are written mostly by the associate editors but our readers are also welcomed to submit an editorial. The “Fruitful Branches” rubric is a place especially for our younger writers where they can demonstrate their development in spiritual growth and knowledge. “Story Time” gives us examples of God’s faithfulness in the every day lives of God’s people. The devotionals are written by volunteers to encourage daily meditation upon God’s Word and worshiping in song. Music is a very important part of our worship and daily life. It is also a powerful tool in the hands of the devil. The music rubric is provided to encourage and enhance our fellowship in song. God manifests His attributes and glory in the creation so we have a rubric devoted to developing our understanding of God’s Word in creation. We would like to have more writing about our mission work, but simply do not have someone to organize and solicit this material. The “Church Family” rubric is for articles having to do specifically with the covenant fel-

lowship of believers within the church. We would like to have more articles that have to do with our church history. “Little Lights” is a page especially for our youngest readers encouraging them to enter into and participate in the covenant fellowship of the church. The last page is reserved for news that is important in the spiritual life of the church.

Gathering articles, printing, and distributing *Beacon Lights* requires many hours of work. I want to encourage anyone who is interested in writing or doing other work related to the covenant fellowship of the church to offer your help. You can send ideas, articles, stories, or poems to me at 621 Williams St., Randolph WI, 53956. You can call me at (920) 326-6186. You can send email to huizenga@jefnet.com We need older saints to write words of guidance, instruction, and comfort. We need younger saints to write words that testify of God’s faithfulness in continued generations. We as people of God must speak of God’s faithfulness through trials. We need to rejoice together in our salvation. Let us use the means we have to grow in the covenant friendship we have in Christ. ❖

John is a member of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin and is the editor of Beacon Lights.



When I In Awesome Wonder...
The Golden Coast Of Michigan
Graceful Seagulls

by Deane Wassink

Raucous, fighting, clumsy, irritating eater of scraps and dead fish: until the seagull is in the air, it is not an impressive bird, but with all air under its wings, it becomes a glorious reflection of the symmetry and grace of our Creator.

Today I leaned against the wind atop a sixty-foot dune. With the wind roaring past me, a platoon of seagulls floated past me in perfect formation, pure white against the gray clouds, moving without flapping their wings, so slowly I could keep up with them at a slow walk, a picture of peace and tranquility in the storm. They thrived in a situation that would have beaten most birds to the ground exhausted and injured.

Seagulls are scavengers. Even though there are several different species native to Michigan they are all janitors of the shoreline. They travel great distance to find food. In fact, I've seen them travel 15 to 20 miles inland to find food in a flooded field, or even a dump. But for safety they often spend the night floating on the water. During many evenings flocks can be seen heading toward the sunset from their daytime foraging to sleep in the waves.

I have often wondered where seagulls lay their eggs and keep their young. The answer is quite striking. You will not find their nests just anywhere along the shore. They look for very secluded and protected areas. Islands off the shore such as North or South Manitou Island are a favorite place. Secluded sand dunes, bluffs, or even in dumps or wastewater treatment lagoons are suitable, wherever there is little traffic and danger.

Upon closer examination they have been created to fill their place perfectly in the creation. Their shape is highly aerodynamic with streamlined shape and long, tapered wings that resemble our sailplanes. They can ride

the thermals (or the up drafts) off the dune cliffs of the shoreline for hours on end without getting tired. Their beaks are made to rip and tear the flesh of fish washed up on shore. Their webbed feet enable them to move easily in the water.

Indeed, one is reminded that the Lord changes our hearts to enable us to soar upon the winds of the storms of life. He equips us to deal with what ever trials He sovereignly sends upon us. Trials that would dash to pieces the faithless on the rocks below. In response to pain and suffering, the Psalmist says, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest." (Ps 55:7) I like to picture the seagull flying into the sunset to rest, safe, rocked to sleep upon the rolling swells. In fact, to remind me of the Lord's care and protection from the storms of life I keep a cluster of seagull feathers on my desk, feathers that I picked up on the beach.

*Lord give me grace to ride the gale,
To soar when my strength will only fail.
Winds and storms in life will come,
So is the promise to Thy chosen ones.*

*A shallow life of peace I do not desire,
Where storms do not come, nor dangers fire.
Only in storms do my wings sail,
Thy grace I know in the waves of the gale.*

*The rougher the storm, the higher we sail,
By Thy grace delivered from the fear of hell.
When I, by my strength, would sink and go under,
Enable me on faith's wings to taste of Thy wonder. ❖*

Deane is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

The Marks of the True Church

by Rev. Ronald Hanko

Reprinted from the mission newsletter circulated in the UK by Covenant PRC.

That the true church of Christ can be found in the world is evident from Christ's promise: "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). But how and where do we find that true church in order that we may join ourselves to it in obedience to Hebrews 10:25?

That question of membership is the more urgent in light of the fact that the true church is not represented by one church or denomination, as we showed in the last issue. With the abundance of different churches and denominations around, which are we to join? The answer is that we are to join ourselves to that church which is most faithful to Christ and therefore purest (though never perfectly pure) in doctrine, life and practice.

Thus we speak of the *marks of the church*. These are marks that indicate the extent to which a church is true to Christ and to His Word. Insofar as a church has these marks, it is part of the true church of Christ. Any "church" that lacks these marks has become the false church, a "synagogue of Satan."

There is some debate about the number and nature of these marks. The *Belgic Confession of Faith* mentions the pure preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments according to Christ's command, and the faithful carrying out of Christian discipline in the church (Matt. 28:19, 20; I Cor. 11:23-34; Matt. 16:18, 19). Some would add to or substitute for the third, biblical worship.

It is evident, however, that all these add up to one mark, that *everything* in the church is done in obedience to Christ. As the *Belgic Confession* says, the true church is where "all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the church" (Art. 29).

Whether we speak of one or several marks, these things are marks of the true church because they are marks of the *presence of Christ* in the church. That is the thing that matters. If Christ is not present (Rev. 1:12, 13; 2:5) then all the church does is in vain and membership is pointless. It cannot even be called *church* if Christ is not there.

We must remember this in bringing up our children. If the marks of Christ's presence are hardly to be found in a particular church, what hope have we there for our children? Only Christ, by His presence, is able to save them and show them the way.

Properly carried out, the preaching is *Christ Himself speaking in the church*.

That the marks of the true church are marks of the presence of Christ is especially evident in connection with the preaching of the gospel. Properly carried out, the preaching is *Christ Himself speaking in the church* (Jn. 10:27; I Cor. 1:23, 24; Eph. 2:17). Pure Biblical preaching is proof, therefore of Christ's presence. The same is true of sacraments and discipline.

That these are marks of *Christ's* presence must be emphasised. We do not join the church because of the members—because of their godly conduct or friendliness, as important as those things are. We join the church in order to follow Christ, the only Savior and bishop of our souls. ❖

Rev. Hanko is missionary/pastor of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland.

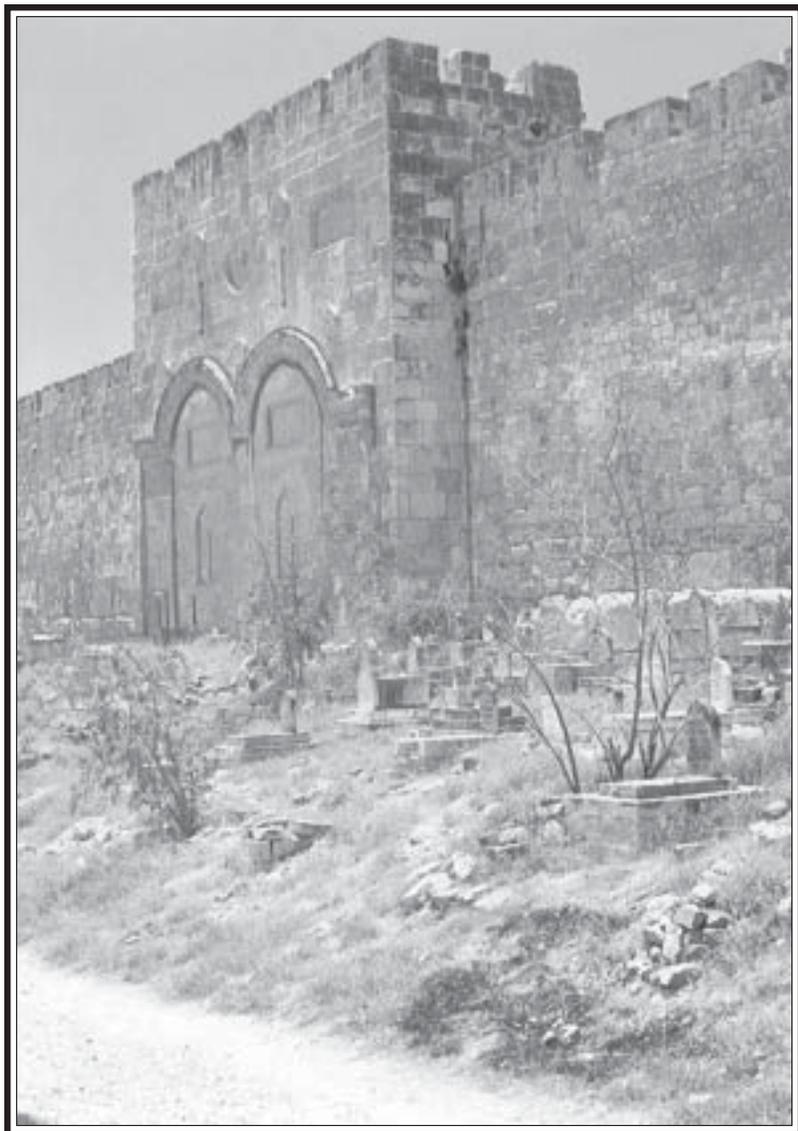
The Golden Gate in Jerusalem

By J.P. de Klerk

This famous gate was built by master builders from Byzantium (Constantinople, nowadays called Istanbul), which in 330 became the capital of the Roman Empire under the Christian em-

peror Constantine the Great. They traveled to many countries and had great influence on the architecture of many buildings from the fourth until the fifteenth century . However, the Turks captured Jerusalem in 637 (Kalif Omar) and his successor (Abd El Malik)

built a big mosque and closed the “golden gate” with bricks. This was meant to demonstrate his anti-Christian and anti-Jew feelings. In 1099, Jerusalem was captured by the crusaders from Europe, who wanted to restore the “golden gate,” but in 1187, Sultan Saladijn came with his armies and took possession of the city and declared the place where in the past the last temple had been “Haram esj-Sjerief,” a holy center of the Moslems. In 1517, the Turks took over officially and kept the city until the first world war, when the British army occupied Palestine. They remained there until 1948, when the state of Israel was founded. The brick wall, which you see nowadays on pictures, was built by Soliman in the years 1526-1539, of which the “golden gate” is a part. In fact the whole of Jerusalem was over the centuries built, destroyed and rebuilt, layer upon layer, on the ruins made by several enemies of the Jews. The name of the gate at this place is not sure; in old documents other names and other places have been mentioned. Also, the whole of Jerusalem is nowadays not at the same place as “the city of David,” which was destroyed completely (See Micah 3:12). ❖



J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from Ashherst, New Zealand.

Church News

BAPTISMS

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Faith Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Aric Bleyenbergh—
Byron Center, MI

Colin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jim VerHey—Edgerton, MN

Alexander Jon, son of Mr. & Mrs. Chris Groenhof—
Georgetown, MI

Alyssa Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Meinzer—
Georgetown, MI

Collin Matthew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matt VanOverloop—
Holland, MI

Joshua Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Rob Zolen—Hudsonville,
MI

Samuel Joel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Lubbers—
Hudsonville, MI

Noah Douglas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ted Andringa—South
Holland, IL

Joshua Douglas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Duane Bruinsma—
South Holland, IL

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"...and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Romans 10:10

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

Jason Gunnink—Byron Center, MI

Jonathan Oosterhouse—Hope, MI

Wendy Hoekstra—Hull, IA

Kimberly Keizer—Hull, IA

Brian VanMaanen—Hull, IA

Kristin DeJong—Peace, IL

Tara Zandstra—Southeast, MI

MARRIAGES

"...and they twain shall be one flesh."

Matthew 19:5

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Steve Bylsma and Miss Rosie Kuiper—Faith, MI

Mr. Andy Baas and Miss Ruth Veldman—Grandville, MI

Mark Your Calendars!

for May 21-24

Discipleship: *Our Calling*

Rev. Gritters- Cost of Discipleship

Rev. Spriensma- Rewards of Discipleship

Plan to visit:

New Jersey and Covenant Protestant
Reformed Church for fellowship and
fun at Long Beach Island.

Covenant Protestant Reformed
Young People's Society

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Triple Layer Leap (2)

Karen felt a lump growing in her throat. She blinked away a tear. She had always thought herself to be a good friend. But now look at what she had done to Laurie! She was glad Laurie was only wet and not hurt.

"It's okay, Karen, really. I shouldn't have tried to jump," Laurie said with a shiver. "Besides, the water wasn't very deep."

"But it was my idea," Karen argued, and added in her thoughts—it was my mean idea.

Karen helped Laurie gather her school things. "Let's go home," she said. "C'mon, I'll walk with you."

The two set off down the street. But with each squish of Laurie's soggy sneakers, Karen felt worse and worse. Finally they arrived at Laurie's house. "Thanks for walking home with me."

"You're welcome," Karen said, "but I wish I could do more. I'm so sorry!" Now it was Karen's turn to look at her friend with very sad eyes.

"It's okay," Laurie smiled, "I'll dry off. See ya tomorrow in school!"

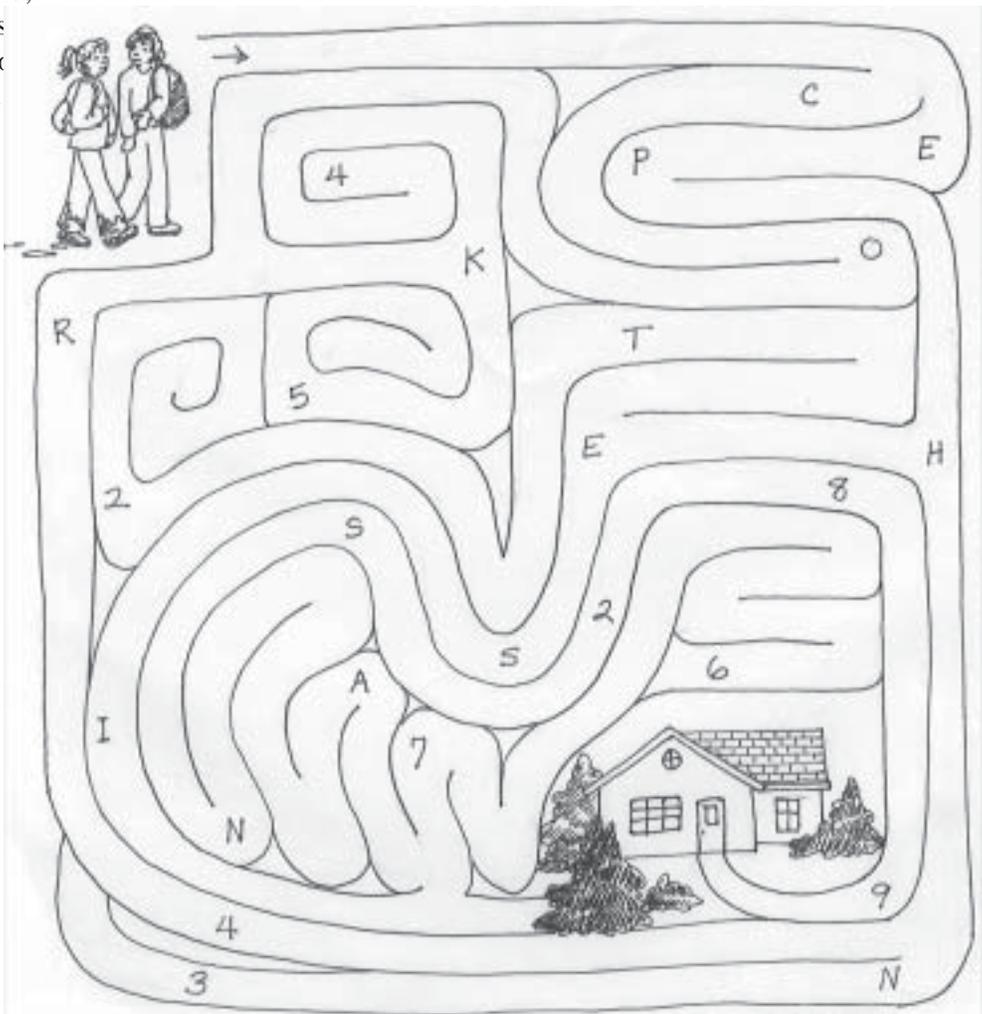
"See ya." Karen turned back toward the street. She stared ahead as she walked. She had time to think. And pray. "Oh Lord, please forgive me!" she whispered. Several tears made their way down Karen's cheeks, and now no blinking could stop them. She remembered the text: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." There could certainly be no boasting in works for her! She knew what she was by herself—a sinner. Indeed, salvation is by grace alone. *(to be continued)* ❖

Connie is the mother of 5 children and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Puzzle

Help Karen and Laurie find their way to Laurie's house. Along the path, discover where the text is found that Karen remembered in the story above.

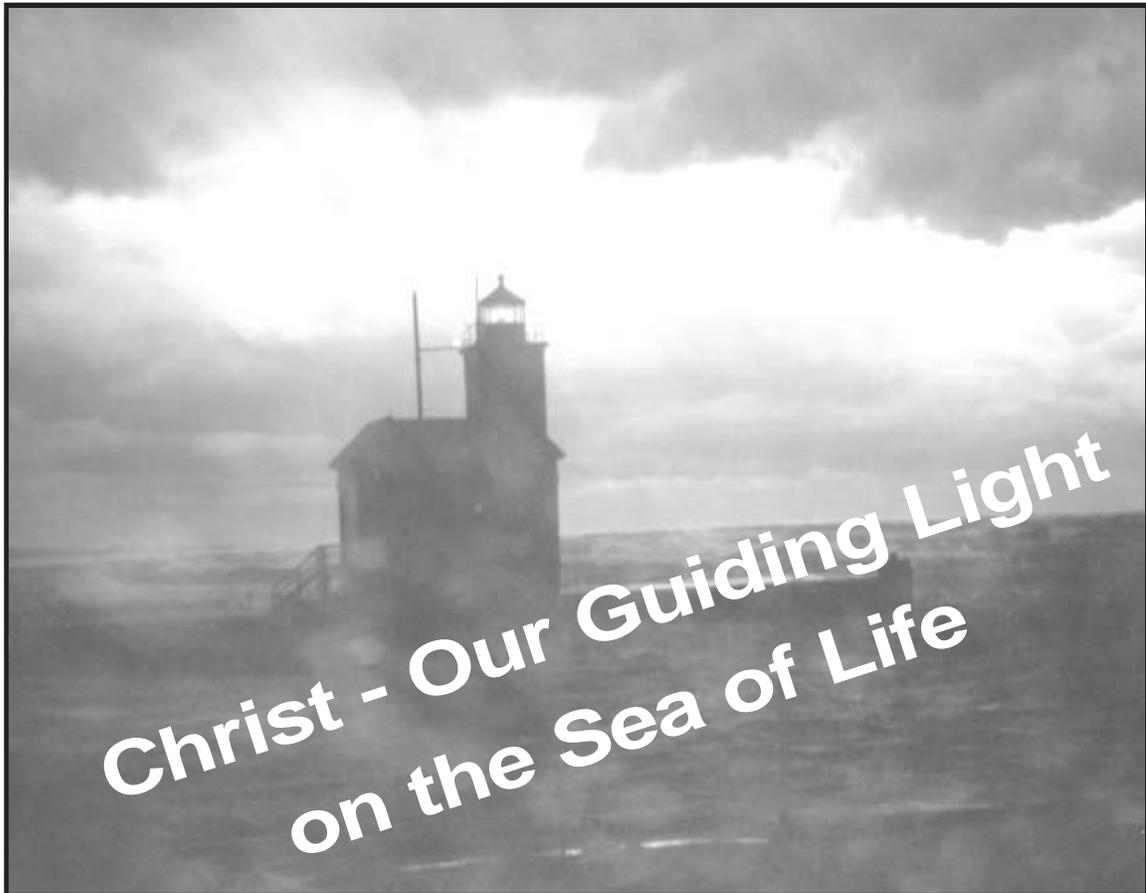
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2001 YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONVENTION

AUGUST 13-17, 2001

LAKE ANN BAPTIST CAMP

NEAR TRAVERSE CITY, MI

Hosted by First Protestant Reformed Church
of Holland, Michigan Young People's Society

SPEAKERS: Revs. Bekkering, Eriks, & Van Overloop

REGISTRATION HAS BEGUN - PLAN NOW TO ATTEND!

*Check out the **2001 Convention** link on our church website for pictures,
more details, and a registration form you can print off: www.hollandprc.org*