

Beacon Lights

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*“Praise His majesty Understandingly;
God is King alone On His holy throne,
Issues His commands To all heathen lands.
Lo, the princes all Gather at His call;
His the shields of earth, His the power, the worth;
He, the God on high, Is our Helper nigh.”*

Psalter #418, verse 3

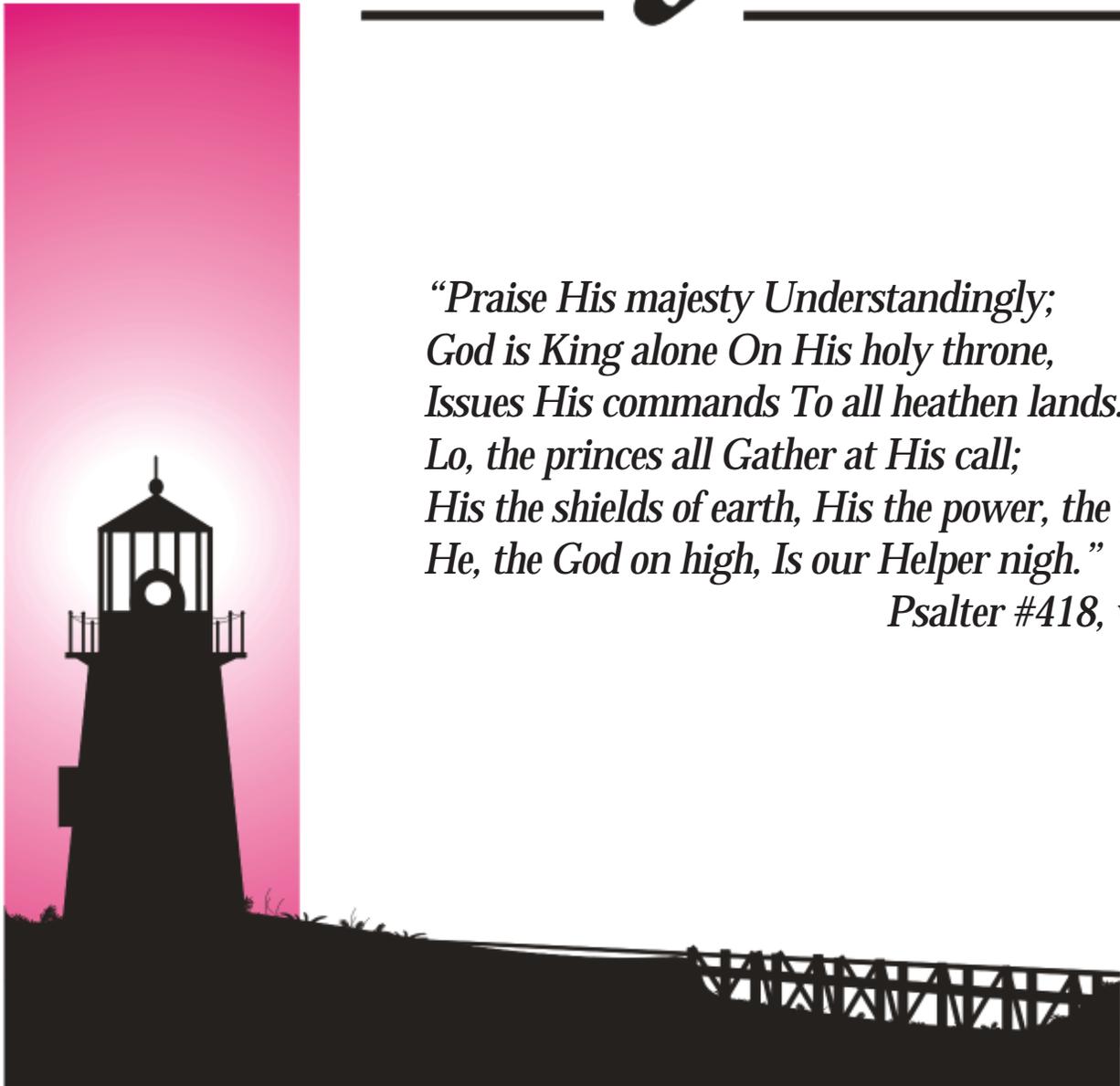


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Praise His Majesty: Psalm Arrangements for Beginning Pianists



by John Huizenga

This past year, the Reformed Free Publishing Association published a gem that I am confident will sparkle for years to come. It was not another fine theological work that this worthy publisher made available to us, but rather a music book prepared by Marilyn DeVries. I could compare it to the little seed stone implanted in a child; that, over time, grows into a beautiful pearl.

The value of this work probably stands out especially to me at this time because my oldest daughter recently began piano lessons and it thrills my heart to hear her play the tunes that her young soul has already grown to love. I also have enjoyed using the book to enjoy the Psalms with my limited experience at the piano. It is my prayer that many children will be able to develop their musical talents with *The Psalter*, and that a renewed love for *The Psalter* will grow in the next generation.

This publication renews in me a desire to see more material written or produced from a Protestant Reformed perspective for use in instructing children. One such area would be reading material for the schools. At this time, our school staff is looking for better material for our reading curriculum. What a blessing it would be to have beginning readers for our children that would give God the glory due unto His name! There must be passages of Scripture that could be selected to correspond with the development of reading skills.

Our churches have matured and enjoyed a rest that gives us the resources to prepare and develop such material, even as Solomon built the temple of God. *Praise His Majesty* is one example of this kind of work, and it has been done very well. I thank the Lord that He has been pleased to make this book available to us, and I hope and pray that there are more to come. ❖

Book Review

The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers: Sovereign Grace in the Covenant

reviewed by Aaron J. Cleveland

The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers: Sovereign Grace in the Covenant, by David J. Engelsma. Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2005. 239 pages.

As the title expresses, the covenant of God and the place of the children of believers in that covenant are the central contents of this book. As the author states in the preface, the occasion for this book

is “the appearance in conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches of a grievous heresy—one of the most dangerous threats to the gospel of grace since Dordt” (Preface, p. ix). This heresy is the “federal vision,” described by the author as “covenantal universalism.” The error is serious because it “denies justification by faith alone and, with this fundamental doctrine of the gospel, all the doctrines of grace—the “Five Points” of Calvinism” (p. ix).

The purpose of the book is to tear out by the root the heresy of the federal vision and along with it the false teaching of justification by faith and works. The “biblical, confessional truth concerning the covenant of God” (p. x) and the place of children in that covenant are set forth. Throughout the book both the Canons of Dordt and the Westminster Standards are used not only to show how this heresy is condemned by the creeds, but how the doctrine of the covenant as it has been developed and is confessed in the Protestant Reformed Churches is in harmony with the confessions.

It is fitting that this book is written by a Protestant Reformed office bearer and especially a Protestant Reformed Professor of Theology. All Protestant Reformed office bearers, when they sign the Formula of Subscription, promise before the Lord that they “heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine, contained in the Confession and Catechism of the Reformed Churches, together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine, made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-’19, do fully agree with the Word of God.” This commits them “diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same by [their] public preaching or writing.” Moreover by signing the Formula they declare that they “not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine and particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned Synod, but that [they] are disposed to refute and contradict these, and to exert [them]selves in keeping the Church free from such errors.”

Especially are Protestant Reformed Professors of Theology to do this. The Form for the Installation of Professors of Theology charges the professor to “expound to them (the seminary students) the mysteries of the faith; caution them in regard to the errors and heresies of the old, but especially of the new day.” No doubt the heresy of the “federal vision” is one of the errors of the day which must be refuted and contradicted so that our Protestant Reformed Churches are kept free from

this error and others in the Reformed tradition may be warned of the consequences of maintaining the doctrine of a conditional covenant.

the author convincingly sets forth the comfort that is to be found in this article for godly parents whose infants or even their unborn children are taken in death.

I found a couple of chapters of this book to be particularly interesting. The first was Chapter 4 about the Canons of Dordt, 1, Article 17. This article deals with children of believers whom God is pleased “to call out of this life in their infancy.” The author admits to disagreeing quite strongly with his seminary professor, the Rev. Herman Hoeksema, about the value and comfort found in this article. No doubt he would also not fully agree with the treatment that Prof. Homer Hoeksema gives this article as found in *The Voice of Our Fathers*, on pages 267-280. Whatever position one may take regarding the doctrinal value of this article, everyone must admit that the author convincingly sets forth the comfort that is to be found in this article for godly parents whose infants or even their unborn children are taken in death.

The third part of the book, dealing with “The Netherlands Reformed Objection”, I also found to be quite interesting. After first dealing with “The Baptist Objection” in Part II of the book, Prof. Engelsma refutes the Netherlands Reformed position that believers must view their children as being unregenerated and “under the sphere of the covenant” rather than “in the covenant” (p. 60).

The consequences of maintaining this view are frightening. Just how does an unregenerated child pray? (p. 61). How are little unregenerated children to obey the fifth commandment? (p. 64). How are admittedly unconverted young people to make confession of their faith before the consistory? (p. 70). How is it possible for confessing unbelievers to have full membership in the church? (p. 73). This position is confusing to say the least.

A paragraph quoted from the book illustrates the affect that the Netherlands Reformed covenant doctrine has on their Christian school education.

The covenant doctrine of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations and like-minded churches radically affects the Christian day school education of these churches and parents. This is spelled out in the 1988 statement of purpose and philosophy of education of the Plymouth Christian Elementary School, a school owned by the First Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Grand Rapids, Michigan. In this school, “the education of children should proceed on the principle that they are in an unregenerate state, until evidence of saving grace clearly appear[s]... But though the religious education of children should proceed on the ground that they are destitute of grace, it ought ever to be used as a means of grace.”

The high school and college age young people of the PRC ought to attempt to read this book.

Those who believe and love the doctrine of the unconditional covenant of grace as it has been developed and is maintained in the Protestant Reformed Churches will find this book valuable and comforting. By the grace of God, it is the privilege of the PRC to maintain this doctrine in the midst of rapid departure concerning the truth of God’s sovereign grace. The high school and college age young people of the PRC ought to attempt to read this book. While it is by no means an “easy read,” with the doctrinal preaching and excellent catechism instruction that Protestant Reformed youth receive, the book will aid them in an understanding of our doctrinal heritage.

Parents, and especially newly married couples expecting a child or with young children, will find the book beneficial as well. It is very important in the instruction and discipline of children to have a proper understanding of their place in the covenant. This book helps lay the foundation for proper child rearing and the obligation of believing parents to instruct their children in the fear of the Lord. ❖

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

Consider the Creation

When I In Awesome Wonder...

Michigan’s Golden Coast

Seiche

by Deane Wassink

Have you ever sat in a bathtub and pushed your body back and forth so that the water forms a big wave sloshing from end to end? If you think of Lake Michigan as a giant bathtub the giant wave that forms is known as a “seiche” (pronounced “say-sh”).

A seiche occurs when the wind from a heavy thunderstorm like a supercell with extreme barometric changes literally stacks the water ahead of itself against

the shore. When the storm front is past, the water sloshes back the other way to hit the opposite shore. It goes back and forth until it loses energy. Seeing that Lake Michigan is 118 miles wide and 307 miles long you can see that this sloshing effect covers quite a distance. It is especially noticeable when the topography such as a narrow harbor or shallow depth forces the wave higher.

A seiche is such an interesting event because it resembles a tidal wave in the ocean or even a tsunami. The difference is that it is on an inland freshwater lake that is much smaller. It seems that seiches occur rather frequently in the one to two foot range—which is hardly noticeable. However in severe storms they can reach the height of four to five feet, and even ten feet in extreme events. Also, it must be remembered that the water level is different from the wave level. If there is a ten foot seiche the height of the waves is on top of that. As a result, the total height of the water crashing into shore can be sixteen to eighteen feet high.

When a seiche builds against the shore ahead of a storm the water level on the opposite side of the lake drops at the same time. The reason is obvious, the water is pushed from one side of the lake to the other side.

There are some amazing stories about seiche events, some of which even resulted in serious damage and loss of life.

On April 7, 1893 a gale pushed a seiche of four to five feet high into the port of Chicago causing serious damage to many boats. At the same time in St. Joseph, Michigan it pushed inland seven hundred feet past the normal high water mark on the shore.

On June 26, 1954 a ten foot high seiche slammed into Chicago sweeping seven people off a dock to their deaths.

An especially interesting story occurred in Muskegon, Michigan. On May 30, 1998 a giant thunderstorm known as a “derecho” (pronounced “deretcho”) tore across the Great Lakes causing tremendous damage with its tornado strength straight line winds. A tugboat crew saw the storm approaching and headed into the Muskegon harbor for safety. They felt the seiche pick them up and go past them. When the front of the storm passed the crew turned the boat around to head out of the harbor. The returning slosh of the seiche as it was focused by the narrow channel was so high and violent that it overturned the tugboat! Thankfully, the crew was rescued without serious injury or loss of life.

Even though most of us never think of the possibility of a seiche, all of the lakeshore communities have to keep it in mind when they plan for harbor and shoreline development.

I might think twice the next time I am tempted to go on a pier or breakwater when a storm is coming. No wonder there are deaths every year from storm watchers who go out on the piers.

A seiche reminds me of the way trials often hit us and seem to be overwhelming. Suddenly, it seems, accidents, sickness, death or temptation come to us and threaten to sweep us away and drown us. Our only hope in those times is that we are standing on the Rock, Christ, that is higher than any “seiche” that might seek to destroy our faith. No matter what may come our way, we are safe in Him. In fact, He turns trials and trouble to our good. Are you standing on your own or on the Rock? It is my prayer that you come to know Him as your Savior.

Don't Come To My Church

*Don't come to my church,
If you don't have sin.
Just stay on your perch,
And, don't come within.*

*Don't sit in the pew,
Looking down your nose.
Eschewing the few,
Who may have plain clothes.*

*Don't sing in the choir,
If you're not prostrate.
Your heart's not on fire,
For God Who is great.*

*We do welcome those,
Who know they're forgiven.
Whose humbleness shows,
From grace freely given. ❖*

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

2006 Convention Highlights

by Dan Holstege

In my last article (January 2006), I explained the purpose and basic function of the Federation Board. The Board serves as a central guide and coordinator of the works and activities done by and for the young people of our denomination. Much of this work simply involves the normal tasks and decisions necessary for managing any organization. For example, we look at financial reports which have to do with the *Beacon Lights*, PR Scholarship Fund, or convention. We approve the expenditures of these groups, give them financial support when needed, and nominate officers. These are the ordinary tasks that must be done in order to keep the Federation running smoothly in all its parts. One of the important parts that needs year-long attendance is the Young Peoples' Convention which I would like to spend some time talking about.

The PRYP Convention has been an annual tradition in our denomination since the late 1930s and early 1940s. Along with the Federation of Young People's Societies, which emerged at the same time, it was viewed as a very worthwhile event which encouraged spiritual growth, friendship and fellowship among the young people. Since the humble beginnings of the PRC, it has been a very small denomination, and thus, from the beginning it has been important for its people to cling tightly to each other. In the late 1930s, concerned members saw the need for activities and events which would provide good opportunities for their young people to meet others of the same faith and walk of life. The convention was born as an excellent way to do this, and it has remained such for over sixty years. At the convention, Protestant Reformed young people from all around the country and from Canada are able to meet others of their age who have the same beliefs. They share experiences together which serve their spiritual growth and bind many of them together with the ties of Christian friendship. Having gone to four conventions myself, I can truly say that this is the case. The PRYP Convention is an event of inestimable value for the lives of our young people.

The PRYP Convention is an event
of inestimable value for the lives
of our young people.

Having said all this, let's take a look at this year's convention which is being hosted by the Doon and Hull churches. First of all, as with all conventions, there will be a spiritual theme around which everything is centered. This year's theme will be "Running the Race," a phrase based on Hebrews 12:1. There we read, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." This is the text, then, which will form the basis for the speeches as well. The first speech will be given by Rev. G. Eriks who will look at the course on which we are running. In the second speech, Rev. A. Brummel will address the discipline that is required of us runners. Finally, in the third speech, Rev. D. Overway will speak on the strength we runners need in order to be victorious. These speeches will undoubtedly address the young people in their particular age and station of life. They will be an excellent opportunity for them to learn and grow spiritually side by side with each other. In addition to the speeches, the young people will have the opportunity to look into God's Word themselves in discussion groups. They will study and discuss certain topics and see what the Bible has to say about them.

After beginning each day with these discussion groups, the young people will have opportunity to enjoy some pretty interesting activities! The organizers of this year's events intend to give conventioners a good-sized dose of what it means to have fun in Iowa! On Tuesday, conventioners will discover themselves drifting down the Rock River right in the heart of Lyon County (for

those of you familiar with the area). I'm told that they may discover some roving cattle on their way, but I don't think there's any need to worry ☺. On Wednesday, conventioners are in for a good ole' time with what is being called "Iowa's Almost Anything Goes." I think for the parents' sake we must emphasize the "almost" part of the name. However, for you conventioners, consider the possibilities! Included in this will be a fire-fighting tournament, a dunking tank, and rounds of volleyball like you've never played it before—in the mud! Finally, on Thursday, conventioners go off to the fair, but not to any ordinary fair. At this country fair you will be creating the entertainment yourselves. Let's just say there won't be any "No Touching" signs by the hog and cattle pens!

On each night after the speech, there will be plenty more time for fun and fellowship. As you are all deeply pondering the speeches and discussing them with your new and old friends, you can see how the message applies to you when you participate in further events. During events like mixers, hayrides, bonfires, and sports, you can enjoy activities and fellowship "with so great a cloud of witnesses," and begin running "with patience the race that is set before us." On the last night, Thursday, the traditional banquet will conclude the convention, and late Friday morning the conventioners will have to part ways.

So on behalf of the Fed Board and the host churches, I strongly encourage the young people from all our churches to attend the convention, and I ask the parents to urge them to go too. Our Protestant Reformed Churches have always been a small band that desperately needs there to be friendship and communion among its members. The PRYP Convention is one outstanding way to form Christian friendships with those of the same faith. In addition, it is a whole week dedicated to the benefit of the young people. They are fed with the Word of God as it applies directly to them, and they are given times of fun and excitement to enjoy God's world and apply His Word to their behavior. The Iowa group has done a great job so far, and they would love to see a good turnout, so get ready to make the trip to beautiful Northwest Iowa where spiritual edification and Christian fellowship await you. ❖

Dan is a member of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

What I Owe My Minister

I owe him respect as the ambassador of God, sent to teach me a better way of living than the selfish, sordid existence I might be guilty of, but for his guidance.

I owe him trust, that he may be free to serve the church unhampered by fault-finding and criticism.

I owe my minister prayer, that God may make his services a blessing to everyone with whom he comes in contact.

I owe my minister the protection of kindly silence by refraining from repeating in his presence the slander or unkind gossip that would worry him and prevent him from doing his best.

I owe him enough of my time to help him in his work whenever he may need me.

I owe him encouragement when vexations and annoyances make his work difficult.

I owe my minister consideration not to interrupt and hinder his work by financial worry.

I owe my minister my attention when I go to church, that he may not be annoyed by seeing my careless, inattentive actions indicating that I am not interested in what he is saying. ❖

Reprinted from the November 1954 Beacon Lights.

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

reprinted from April '97 by Chester Hunter

April 1 Read Psalm 15

Psalm 15:1 What a beautiful Psalm to use in our preparations for going to church next Sunday. What does it take to appear before the almighty covenant God? Do the questions in verse one appear on your lips? Do you desire to dwell in God's tabernacle? Do you desire to dwell in His holy hill? David assumes that our answer is yes. He does not allow for not having these desires. He wants God to tell him how it can be possible to attain such a goal. The rest of the Psalm which we shall consider will instruct us in the life of gratitude for our salvation through Christ. This can only be because if the rest of the Psalm were conditions we would all fail miserably and not be able to go to heaven. Let us make these desires ours and thank God for giving us His Son as the way of our salvation. Sing Psalter 25:1 and 26:1

April 2 Read Isaiah 33:13-22

Psalm 15:2 The first description of the man who will abide in God's tabernacle is found in this verse. The man must walk uprightly and work righteousness. In his daily life he must seek to do only the good. There may no appearance of evil be found in his life and character. A businessman must be upright in all of his dealings. Every employee must give an honest day's work. A student must study in a way that no hint of cheating or rebellion toward the teacher clouds his reputation. What about us, people of God? Do we strive to thank God for our salvation by walking uprightly? There is also a second characteristic. We must speak the truth in our heart. Some may say what good is this; shouldn't we speak the truth so it is heard? The answer to that is, "Of course." But Scripture also teaches us that out of the heart come the issues of life. We will not speak the truth outwardly if we do not speak it inwardly. Pray for such grace today and every day. Sing Psalter 24:1 and 26:2

April 3 Read Galatians 5:13-15

Psalm 15:3 Yesterday's verse told us that we must speak the truth in our hearts. Today's verse tells us about speaking the truth outwardly. Take the time today to read the Heidelberg Catechism's exposition on the ninth commandment. It speaks of loving the truth and speaking about it uprightly. This love of the truth must be for God and the neighbor. Yesterday's verse emphasized love for God. Today's verse speaks of love for the neighbor. Children and young people how do you speak about your fellow students? How do you speak about your parents and teachers? Members of God's church, are your

mouths constantly full of love for every other member of that church? God expects no less from us if we are to abide in His holy hill. Sing Psalter 25:2 and 26:3.

April 4 Read James 2:1-9

Psalm 15:4 People of God, who are your companions? Who do you wish to be seen with in this world? What is your fascination of the wicked? Do you honor those who have no use for God? Do you go with them because it is convenient to do so? What about the members of the church? Do they "play second fiddle" to other "friends" that you may have? Do you find excuses to avoid God's people so that you can socialize with those who you find physically more desirable? We must remember that physically we were unsavory in God's eyes. Read Ezekiel 16:3-9 sometime to see this. Our friends and companions must be those who love God's truth with their whole heart. By doing this we will be ready to dwell in His tabernacles. Sing Psalter 16:4 and Psalter 24:2, 25:3 and 26:4.

April 5 Read Psalm 15

Psalm 15:5 This final verse in the qualifications of an upright man again instructs us in our duty to our neighbor. In keeping the eighth commandment, we show our love to our neighbor. Sometimes we must go against good business sense to do so. Sometimes we must put our own desires aside for a while so that we reflect God's love upon us toward our neighbors. What can we do for our neighbor? Or to use the language of Jesus in the parable of the Good Samaritan, to whom can we be a neighbor? There is a beautiful promise found at the end of this verse. When we make the qualifications of an upright man ours, we will never be moved from God tabernacle on His holy hill. Let us ask for grace to live lives pleasing to Him looking to our eternal reward in heaven. Sing Psalter 24:3, 25:4, and 26:5

April 6 Read Psalm 16

Psalm 16:1 This Psalm begins with a plea of preservation from David to God. David had many troubles throughout his life. When we look at David's experiences, we should be able to see parallels in our lives. We, too, are afflicted on every side when we confess the name of our God with our mouths and our lives. David bases his plea on the fact of his trust in God. Is God our trust? As we enter the house of God today, what is our reason for doing so? Is it because we trust Him to provide for us no matter what our situation in this life is? Do we desire to worship Him in the confident trust that He will supply our

every need? Let us only trust in Him who is our help and our deliverer. Sing Psalters 27:1 and 29:1.

April 7 Read Jeremiah 31:1-14

Psalm 16:2 The late Rev. Harbach writes of the last clause of the verse that the Hebrew original says that it is to be understood “O my Goodness there is nothing above Thee.” God’s goodness is beyond our comprehension. Sometimes we make light of it using the phrase “my goodness”. We have no goodness of ourselves. Even our best works are as filthy rags. But God, He is good, and He is the only good. This is the God who is our Jehovah—our covenant God. Is this our confession as we make our way to school or work today? Was this our confession in our work today? God is good; let us thank Him for it and confess daily that “The Lord is our LORD. Sing Psalters 27:1 and 30:1.

April 8 Read Acts 2:41-47

Psalm 16:3 Young people, in whom do you delight? Which boy or girl do you count as your special friend? Why do you count them as a friend? Is it because they have some physical or emotional characteristic which you find attractive? Our question must be is that special boy or girl a saint? Is he or she one that confesses the same God you do? It does matter, you know. Questions like this are important and may have a large impact on the rest of your life. After all, our life does not end here on this earth. Our lives on this earth need to be reflections of that life we wish to have in heaven. Make it part of your daily prayers, as do your parents. that your delight may be in the saints that God has placed around us. Sing Psalter 27:2.

April 9 Read II Chronicles 33:1-11

Psalm 16:4 Reading through the Old Testament provides us with ample evidence that God hates idolatry and will not allow it to go unpunished. The first and second commandments deal with the various aspects of this sin. God warned His people often about falling into this sin, and because of this sin both the nations of Israel and Judah were led into captivity. What about us? What about the idols we worship? When the minister preaches on the second commandment, is it easy for us to see that we are guilty of the sin of idol worship? If we do not seek forgiveness, God will chastise us for this sin. If we do not leave it, it will eventually weaken the spiritual character of our family and God will led us into captivity. Pray often for the grace to flee idolatry, and work to flee this sin. Sing Psalter 27:3.

April 10 Read Numbers 18:20-24

Psalm 16:5 Each of us has a lot in life. Each of us has a little niche in the history of this world. Each of our lots have been ordained by almighty God. David first of all confesses that the Lord is His inheritance. We will look more at this idea tomorrow. Today we must see that it is God that sets our little corner for us. This does not make us robots carrying out the whim and desire of a remote maker. No, God the living creator has made us for His glory. It is He that shows us the way we must go. This should give to us great confidence as we face hardship and struggle. This should give us confidence as we look

to make decisions about the life ahead that to us lies unknown. We need to be glad that Jehovah is our portion, and we should know that He will be our portion forever. Sing Psalter 27:4 and 30:1.

April 11 Read Isaiah 58:8-14

Psalm 16:6 A goodly heritage is ours from eternity! This inheritance is not riches, influence, or tremendous power in this world. This inheritance is not able to be taxed or taken from us by unscrupulous men. This inheritance is given to us by God. It is insured by God. This inheritance is salvation. This inheritance is given to us in the pleasantness of the church. The verse tells us that it is a goodly heritage. Earlier this month we saw that goodness was an attribute of God. He imputes that attribute to our heritage-salvation. People of God, is your trust squarely founded on the salvation that is your heritage from almighty and everlasting God? This was David’s confession; is it ours? Sing Psalter 27:5 and 30:2.

April 12 Read Luke 2:36-39

Psalm 16:7 Because of his goodly heritage, David praises God. We see that he does this day and night. In the passage you read, we say that the aged saint Anna made God’s word her delight. We often see that our elderly saints in the church make God their delight no matter what the hour. This should not be confined to them. We who are younger should be driven to seek God’s Word by ourselves no matter what the clock says. The night is often a time of terror. Often death comes at night. Robbers and thieves choose the darkness of night to do their evil deeds. God’s people do not need to worry. Because their hearts tell them that God has given them good counsel. Young people, you need to seek God often. Sing Psalter 28:1 and 29:1.

April 13 Read Proverbs 12:1-8

Psalm 16:8 It is easy to say that we have put God before us today because it is Sunday. If we cannot say this today, when can we say it? But what about last night and the night before? As we sought entertainment, was God before us? We know He saw what we did, but did we put Him before us? Did His word govern our choice of entertainment and friends? If we fell into sin in the last two days, it was probably because we did not put Him before us. Before we go to church today, we better stop and examine our lives this past week. If God was not before us, we better pray for the grace to do better this week and then go and worship Him. Otherwise, our worship will not be true. We also have His promise that if we put Him before us we will not be moved. Sing Psalter 28:2 and 30:3.

April 14 Read Romans 5:1-11

Psalm 16:9 Is God before us as we begin this work week? If we have placed Him before us we will be glad because we can be assured that we will prosper in this week. It may not necessarily be physical prosperity, but there will be prosperity nevertheless. We also have the basis for our hope. In Romans we read that “hope maketh not ashamed.” This is not hope in which there is no basis. This is hope that is based squarely on the promises of God who changes not. Our hope is found in the

blessedness of our salvation. This is not an abstract doctrinal tenet. This is practical theology. We hope in the promises of God knowing that they will come to pass for our profit and His glory. Sing Psalter 28:3 and 29:2.

April 15 Read I Corinthians 15:51-58

Psalm 16:10 People of God, do any of you fear death? Sometimes this question is asked of the aged saint who knows that his time on this earth is short. Young people need to be asked this question as well. They need to know that death is not fearful. David faced death quite often throughout his life. His hope in God told him that even though his body would be laid in the grave there was something more glorious than life on this earth waiting for Him. He knew that God would take his soul to glory. The church has the resurrection of Christ on which to base this belief. It is its hope and confidence. People of God, is it yours? Do you confess that you know that God will deliver your soul from death? Sing Psalter 28:4 and 29:3.

April 16 Read Psalm 16

Psalm 16:11 This verse is a continuation of yesterday's verse. Not only will our soul be delivered from the grave, but there is life for us at the right hand of God. There is a completeness of joy that we can never experience in this world. Each of us has pleasures which delight us greatly. These pleasures cannot match the pleasure that will be ours before the throne of God. The pleasures on this earth are temporal; some even die or break. The pleasures in heaven are forever. People of God, don't let anyone fool you into thinking that heaven is only a state of mind. Heaven is a place where you and the whole church will throng around the throne of God singing His praises. Thanks be to God! Sing Psalter 28:5 and 30:3.

April 17 Read Psalm 17

Psalm 17:1 Once again we read a Psalm that is a prayer. David obviously prays this as he is being bothered by enemies. The words I wish us to consider today are found at the end of verse one. Here David describes his prayer as one "that goeth not out of feigned lips." It should be our desire that our prayers come from true lips. If we bow our heads in prayer and not mean what we say, our prayers will go, as it were, no higher than the ceiling of the room in which we are praying. We must pray from a true heart. We must earnestly mean what we pray. We cannot begin the day by saying one thing to God while all the while we have plans to do the very opposite. God will not be mocked as we pray. He will not answer a prayer that comes from a deceitful person. Let us pray earnestly and truthfully now and always. Sing Psalter 33:1.

April 18 Read Genesis 6:1-8

Psalm 17:2 Do we dare ask God to look at us with His all-seeing eyes and ask Him to pass judgment on us? That is what David does in this verse. David knows that the only way he can ask this is through the mercy found only in Christ. He asks this because he must throw himself upon God's throne of justice to avenge him of his enemies. David like Noah knows that he can find grace only in God's eyes. It cannot be found in himself or in any other. Once again I ask, do we dare to ask

God to judge us? As we go throughout the day which lies ahead or we look back at the day that is past, let us remember that our God is the righteous judge. Sing Psalter 32:1

April 19 Read I Peter 1:1-9

Psalm 17:3 David knew as he prayed that God had constantly tried his faith. He also trusted in God to deliver him from each trial and to bring him safely through them. We might despair and say, "How could David say such things?" knowing full well the sins into which David fell. But that should give us great comfort. If David could say the words of our text then God can deliver us from all sin into which we fall by His grace. Rejoice when you are tried, people of God! Our Father will deliver us. We can confidently go to the throne of grace knowing that we are cleansed by the blood of Christ. Sing Psalter 31: 1-2.

April 20 Read Proverbs 2:10-22

Psalm 17:4 Yesterday we say that it was only by the work of Christ that we can confidently approach the throne of grace. David continues that theme in today's verse. David realized that it was Satan who was behind all of his enemies' attempts to cause him to fall. We must know that, too. Satan would like nothing more than to have one of God's sheep to fall into the deepest of sins. We, like David, must know that the only way of escape is through the word of God. We have that word written for us in the Bible. We must make it our constant companion in this life. From the earliest reader to the oldest man or woman among us, God's word must be our delight daily. Is it yours? If not, pray that it might be. Sing Psalter 32:2.

April 21 Read II Samuel 22:31-40

Psalm 17:5 People of God, do you confess that the path that you walk is the path of God? Are you conscious of this fact as you look at the week that lies ahead? Do you make your plans with the words *Deo Volentia* (if the Lord wills) ringing in your heads? When you plan to do something, young people, do you plan an activity with the realization that God is with you wherever you go, whatever you do, and with whomever you do it? In order to ask God to not let your feet slip, you must not be walking knowingly in the paths of sin. We must be walking in His ways in order to make such a request. Such a request is necessary seeing that we are weak and sinful men. Let us pray this daily and let us conscientiously walk in the way of Jehovah. Sing Psalter 33:2.

April 22 Read Luke 18:1-8

Psalm 17:6 When a little child runs into the house and calls for mother, he does this knowing that if mom can hear him, she will answer. He also knows that if he goes to his father with a problem, Dad will fix it. It is this childlike faith and confidence that we must have as the children of the heavenly Father. David exhibits this in today's verse. He knows that God will hear him and answer him in his distress. This must be our confidence as well each time that we bow our heads in prayer. This is the confidence of faith. This is the confidence that we have through the faith given to us by Christ. Let us

pray with confidence resting assured that the answer to our prayer will be good. Sing Psalter 33:3.

April 23 Read Jeremiah 32:16-22

Psalm 17:7 In this verse David extols the goodness of God's loving-kindness as it is exhibited in the salvation that He has wrought for us. He calls that loving-kindness marvelous. As we stop and ponder this fact, think about all the sins that we commit whether in thought, word, or deed. Think about the depths of evil into which we plunge ourselves. Then think about the fact that God has delivered us from those sins and that great depth of evil. Truly His loving-kindness is marvelous! First of all, let us confess that fact with our mouths. Secondly, let us give thanks in prayer for such deliverance. Finally, let us live lives of gratitude for this deliverance by walking in accordance to the law of God. Sing third stanza of Psalter 31 and stanza 4 of Psalter 33.

April 24 Read Zechariah 2:6-13

Psalm 17:8 In this verse we have two figures of speech to help us understand the grace of God. First of all we have the phrase the apple of thy eye. God loves us as He loves Himself. When we use this figure, we are asking God to care for us in a way that only He can. In the second figure we have that of a hen and her chicks. Just as a hen will gather her chicks under her wings at any sight of danger, so David prays that God will keep him that safe. We can be comforted that in whatever situation we may find ourselves, God will care for us. His word is true and He is faithful. Sing Psalter 31:4.

April 25 Read II Timothy 4:14-18

Psalm 17:9 Yesterday we saw how great God's care is for His people. He loves them so much that He sent His Son to die on the cross for them. In today's verse we again see the enemy that we face. Parents, are you conscious of the wicked world into which you send your children? Do you do all that you can to protect them from evil? You must start with prayer. Then you must teach them God's word. Then you must by example show them how to keep from evil. Finally, you must discipline those who fall into sin. God protects our children and us from evil but only in the way of walking in His word. Sing Psalter 33:4.

April 26 Read II Peter 2:1-10

Psalm 17:10 Another description of the wicked is given in this verse. It is a very graphic picture. I believe that we see an example of an Hebrew parallelism here. The fat spoken of in the first part of the verse is a picture of the pride of man. Wicked man proudly proclaims that he is his own savior. Wicked man has no need of a crucified Christ for salvation because he can do it all. How sad is the picture of the death of the wicked. Let us learn from his folly and walk in the wisdom of God's law. Even though his way may seem good now, it only leads to destruction. We must pray that pride never reigns in our hearts and that we only look to Christ for our salvation. Sing Psalter 31:5.

April 27 Read I Peter 5:1-11

Psalm 17:11-12 Most of us if not all of us have never met a lion as we walked about on our daily journeys. But yet most of us probably know what would happen if we would. We have seen pictures of lions, we may have seen them in zoos, or we may have seen them on videotape or film in the wild. A lion's reputation is that he is a fierce hard fighting animal. David and Peter make the comparison of a lion to Satan for our benefit. They knew of the helplessness of the child of God before the devil in his own strength. Adam and Eve could not stand; countless others have not stood. We need God to help us fight the lions that roam the streets today. Young people, you cannot fight the lions that Satan sends out after you by your own power. Acknowledge this and walk in God's ways alone. Then only will Satan slink back into his den beaten and defeated. Sing Psalter 31:5.

April 28 Read Revelation 22:13-21

Psalm 17:13 David expresses the truth of God's sovereignty in this verse. David knows that God uses the wicked to carry out His plans for the salvation of His people. David's prayer then is one of confidence. He prays for deliverance knowing that God is in control. We, too, must do this. We must pray for deliverance from the wicked around us. Then we must live lives of gratitude. I cannot express this enough. In our world we easily forget to thank those who help us. We must never forget to thank God through the way He has commanded us to use, that is to live God-fearing lives always. In the living of that kind of life, we know that God will bless us. Sing Psalter 31:5.

April 29 Read Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

Psalm 17:14 In this verse we again see the end of those whose "god is their belly". The wicked may live a life which appears fulfilling on this earth. They may seem to have it all while the child of God who struggles to live righteously seems to struggle just to survive. But when they die all that they have accomplished is left to the evil children they leave behind. They have laid up treasure to earthly riches which "moth and rust doth corrupt." The child of God, however, has treasure in heaven. Sure he leaves earthly goods behind. But they are not his inheritance. Our inheritance is in heaven as we sit at the feet of Jesus. Let this be our comfort even now as we live in this vale of tears. Sing Psalter 31:6.

April 30 Read Psalm 17

Psalm 17:15 We close this month with the beautiful last verse in this Psalm. Read it again. Is this your desire? I am sure that our aged saints would quickly say yes. But we who are younger must also have the same desire. This does not limit our lives. This does not make us able to do nothing here on this earth. But rather, this is the possibility to live. Our desire to awake before the face of God who sees all is all the comfort we need to live in this wicked world. People of God, do not despair. God will take care of us in this life and bring us to glory where we will be satisfied with the good things from Him "from whom all blessings flow!" Sing Psalter 31:7, 32:4 and 33:5.

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

“A Psalter–Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God”

by John Huizenga

Using this devotional in the classroom

The idea for using the Psalter in connection with the Psalms in these devotionals grew out of my devotions with the children in my classroom. I find that the Psalms are suited well for class devotions because the vivid picture language of the Psalms quickly capture the attention of children. These pictures are the means whereby God instructs us in deep and profound truths about Himself and man. In my classroom the children take turns twice each day reading a verse from the Psalms. Then they ask questions about words or phrases they do not understand. Often the Psalter helps sort through difficult wording and supplies alternative words. When the class is comfortable with the meaning of words and idea of the verse, we find the verse to sing in the Psalter. When we do it this way, the children pay more attention to the words in the Psalter. My hope is that this devotional may help teachers as they prepare for class devotions with the Psalms.

Recommended method for using these devotionals: read the text, read the words of the Psalter number, read the devotional, sing the Psalter number.

May 1 Psalm 18; a Psalm of Gratitude

This month we will meditate upon Psalm 18, the psalm of gratitude. David had suffered many grievous things in his life. Especially difficult were the years of fleeing from king Saul and the rebellion of Israel against him. We become weary with David when we read about his troubles with Saul. In this Psalm David compares this time of trouble to a raging storm in which he is at the verge of drowning at sea. He knows God to be the sovereign author of the storm, yet it is the waves resulting from the storm that are compared to his enemies. From this distressing situation God saves him, and David, thinking back on all the mercies of God, sings this song of gratitude and praise. Read through this psalm and learn the tunes of Psalter numbers 34, 35, and 36. Read also 2 Samuel 22 which is nearly identical to Psalm 18.

May 2 Psalm 18:1, 2; Psalter 34:1

Do you stand immovable upon a high, solid place without fear having confidence that nothing can harm you? When we are young, we do sometimes feel invincible. Yet there are times of trouble when everything quickly disintegrates. Harsh words, insecurity, loneliness, uncertainty, and temptations easily disarm our defenses. The world will show you how to build your-

self up temporarily with money, self esteem, and the deception of alcohol or drugs, but the believer has something infinitely greater. God Himself, the Creator of the whole world, dwells within His people and takes them to be His children. He delivers from the despair of this world of sin and death, and takes us into His covenant friendship. We sing “I love the Lord.” He is my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my strength, my buckler, my high tower. With strong horns a mountain goat fends off a roaring lion, so with the salvation we know, we conquer every foe.

May 3 Psalm 18:3; Psalter 34:2

To “call upon the LORD” means to pray to God. The covenant fellowship we have with God and our salvation is experienced only when we actively pray. The rock, fortress, buckler, and horn are mere words and ideas that bring no true comfort if we do not commune with the God of our salvation. Trouble in our life makes the idea of a rock and fortress very real. In times of trouble we must not look to every other possible help before coming at last to God. No, we must turn to God right away. Psalter reads “when troubles thicken around me close.” These words make us think of being attacked by a suffocating swarm of bees. Knowing that God will deliver, we also mingle praise with our prayer for help.

May 4 Psalm 18:4-6; Psalter 34:3

The word “sorrows” has the idea of being tied up with ropes and squeezed as would happen if you were captured by the enemy in a battle. They “compassed me about.” We can imagine the helpless and fearful feeling. The words “death” and “hell” make it clear that this capture will end in certain death without a mighty deliverer. Who is the enemy that has taken such a deadly hold? It is Satan and the power of sin. Like a raging flood, sin quickly surrounds and rushes in to drown. When the guilt and afflictions bring us to our knees, God hears our prayer and in His great love and mercy, lifts us out of our distress. Though God is in sovereign control even of the sin within us, we are responsible and can only confess that we have brought the terrors of sin upon ourselves. In this way of sin and deliverance, God reveals his justice and mercy.

May 5 Psalm 18:7, 8; Psalter 34:4

God is pleased also to reveal his wrath and anger in the way of the sin and deliverance of His people. Floods can seem mighty and unstoppable but when God hears the prayer of His

child in distress, the very foundations of the earth shake. Fierce anger is often described in God's word as fire and smoke coming from the nostrils. Sometimes this picture of anger and power is used in stories about dragons. In the Bible, this is a vivid picture of God's wrath. God comes in sovereign power and righteous anger. He reveals His power and righteousness through all the earth in the way of saving His people from the clutches of Satan. Never was the anger and power of God against sin revealed more clearly than in the darkness and earthquake at the time of Jesus' death on the cross. Let us remember that this is the salvation worked in our heart.

May 6 Psalm 18:9-10; Psalter 34:5

The black swirling clouds of a thunderstorm also describe the majesty of God and His anger against sin and evil. In the consciousness of our own sin and guilt the holy presence of God bears down with a darkened face. He comes quickly as though riding on the wings of the wind and with great majesty and power as on the wings of a cherub. The darkness of the storm does not prevent His coming, He comes straight through. The wings of the cherub also remind the child of God of the ark of the covenant where God came to His people in covenant mercy. We need not be afraid as we bow humbly in His presence.

May 7 Psalm 18:11-12; Psalter 34:6

The angry face of God is terrible, but far more terrifying it is when God hides his face Psalm 104:29. The "secret place" and "pavilion" of God is a thick veil that separates men from the light of God's presence. In deep distress we may ask "where is God?" Jesus cried out in the darkness "my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But God hides his face only to reveal with more brilliance His glory. As the lightning instantly lights up the black sky, so God's glory breaks through with power and majesty. Christ has forever ripped the veil that separates sinful man from the holy God. In Him we see the brightness of His glory as the bright and sunny day.

May 8 Psalm 18:13, 14; Psalter 34:7

Thunder is the voice of God. We can explain thunder scientifically, but we must never suppose that it is produced merely by natural causes independent of the sovereign will of God. God is the supreme governor of all things. In the thunder He speaks of His nearness and power to overthrow the enemies of His children. In the thunder he speaks judgment and anger to the wicked. All the noise, wind, violent hail and lightning of a storm is a picture of God's mighty work of salvation in Christ.

May 9 Psalm 18:15; Psalter 34:8

In verse four David described the presence of ungodly men as a flood surrounding him. When Jehovah God comes, He drives the flood waters away and exposes the river bottoms and even the very sources of all the water. The Psalter does not capture the idea of this verse when it speaks of the torrents of water sweeping the world's foundations bare. No, the windy blast of God drives the water away as at the time when Israel crossed the Red Sea. God cleanses His people from sin and drives the enemy far away.

May 10 Psalm 18:16-18; Psalter 34:9

We have no escape from the power of sin and distress except God comes to deliver. God, having driven away the waters, reaches down in tender mercy to take and pull us out from between walls of water. Those many waters are the strong enemy; an enemy too strong for us and filled with hate, but weak and helpless before God. God comes in sovereign power and strength. He is our "stay" or support. He delivers us from the "whelming waves of bitter hate and sore distress." God delivers us from the power of sin working in our depraved nature, and He daily delivers us from the temptations and sins which would bring us to eternal hell. Christ has taken upon Himself the curse due unto us.

May 11 Psalm 18:19, 20; Psalter 34:10

In contrast to the squeezing death grip and bondage of the enemy, God sets us free and places us in a "large place." From the dungeon of sin, we are placed in the open prairie of God's grace. Why does God do this for us? Not because of anything we have done of ourselves. God saves us first of all because "he delighted in me." God's love, His free and sovereign grace is at the very heart of all that God does to His children. He loves them and makes them His own in His only begotten Son Jesus Christ. David now sings forth of the blessings which flow out of God's love for His children. Because God loves His children, he imputes righteousness upon them and justly rewards them according to their righteousness. Having been cleansed by the blood of Christ, the wicked can no longer bring our sins before us to ridicule our trust in God.

May 12 Psalm 18:21-24; Psalter 35:1

We now have a new Psalter number to sing which speaks of the blessings we receive in Christ and instruction for the life we must live. We must remember here that David had been falsely accused by his enemies of sin and treachery. We must remember also that David is a type of Christ who was falsely accused. Christ alone could claim perfect righteousness before the holy God in the face of all the accusations of His enemies. In Christ alone, then, we come with a clear conscience. God is pleased to give us in this life a taste of heavenly blessings in the way of a godly walk before Him. Though you know yourself a sinner, may the wicked never have the opportunity to accuse you of an ungodly, dishonest, and rebellious life style.

May 13 Psalm 18:25, 26; Psalter 35:2

God is pleased to use the experiences in our lives in light of His word to reveal His attributes to us. God is merciful. He reveals His mercy in the blood of Christ, by reaching down to take us out of the pit and bondage of sin. We can read God's Word of salvation and hear the gospel proclaimed faithfully from the pulpits, but we do not really know God's mercy if we do not in turn show mercy to the neighbor. If we treat our brother or sister in the Lord as the ungrateful servant treated his fellow servant in the parable Jesus told, then it is clear that we still do not know the mercy of God. If we stubbornly walk in sin, we will not know and find comfort in the righteousness of God in Christ. God is pure, that is, without defilement and

holy. Psalm 19:9 says that “the fear of the LORD is clean.” The word translated “clean” is the same word translated “pure” in today’s devotional. Be assured, that an ungodly walk will meet with chastisement from God.

May 14 Psalm 18:27, 28; Psalter 35:3

Experience shows that the merciful and upright and pure are often severely afflicted while the wicked strut about in pride. We may wonder whether it is true that God shows mercy to the merciful. Lest our sinful mind quickly conclude that God is not true to His word, we are taught that God is pleased to bring us into affliction in order to show us the greatness of His love by delivering us in the time appointed by God. We are also assured that God will reveal His power and wrath to the proud by casting them down. In the darkness of affliction, wait patiently for the flash of God’s grace as He lights a candle to give joy and peace in its soft warm glow.

May 15 Psalm 18:29, 30; Psalter 35:4

David was an expert warrior. He was brave and strong. In this Psalm he thinks upon a time when he had penetrated an enemy army and leaped over a wall to take a city. Even here where it would be easy for David to imagine he had some glory in himself, he attributes everything to God. Remembering what God had done in the past, and understanding that all his trials and difficulties were from the hand of God, David says that God’s way is perfect. His word is His word of promise. It is a word that is “tried.” His word is not full of conditions, contradictions, and unkept promises, but it is pure like refined gold. He is always faithful. The child of God who knows God by the faith worked in his heart finds great comfort in God. The Lord is a buckler, a shield, and our strength.

Church Profile

History of Hope PRC, Walker, Michigan

Ninety years ago the area west of Grand Rapids, Michigan was a farming community quite isolated by the Grand River wending its way from south to north. People of Reformed persuasion living within its confines had to travel some miles north to the area of Walker or take a ferry west across the river to satisfy their need for spiritual nourishment on the Sabbath Day. Travel was slow and arduous in those days of horse and buggy or sleigh, and with no nearby bridge as yet, crossing the river was often not a practical option. These conditions prompted the Dutch farmers in the area to meet for a midweek service at the home of Mr. Richard Newhouse, on January 23, 1916.

Twenty-one people gathered to hear a sermon by Rev. J. R. Brink. After the service these church fathers unanimously voted to form a Christian Reformed mission station in the Riverbend area. Only four and a half months later on June 8, 1916, with two elders, one deacon, and truly memorable joy, five families and five individuals organized as the congregation of Hope Christian Reformed Church. Thus began another church of Jesus Christ which by His grace would fill the spiritual needs of many of His children to His glory.

The group continued to meet at the Newhouse home as well as the Riverbend schoolhouse. In fair summer weather they gathered under a large tree in the Newhouse yard for the afternoon service in Dutch. Although the body of Hope mainly consisted of poor farmers at this time, they were industrious folk. Before the next year was out, these words concerning them appeared in *The Banner*:

December 5 will long be remembered by the members...

Upon the evening of that day a goodly number of people gathered to commemorate the goodness and mercy of God, “the Giver of all good and perfect gifts,” to dedicate their new house of worship...

The Banner, Dec. 13, 1917

Written by Rev. Brink who helped the fledgling congregation of Hope to organize, the article goes on to commend the neat and sturdy cement block construction of the edifice, complete with stables and opera chairs, along with its commendable price (even for those days) only about \$2000. With much of this expense already donated, including a used pulpit from La Grave Avenue CRC and

a communion set from First Kalamazoo, it was “not a bad record for a church only a year and a half old.” The grateful members of Hope CRC completed the dedication of their building with cake and chocolate milk.

Dutch thriftiness contributed to their ability to build a sanctuary in a relatively short time, but supporting a minister on a regular basis was another matter. They were content with a supply of seminary students and visiting ministers until they were able to accept this responsibility too. Finally almost six years later Candidate George M. Ophoff came over to help them. He was installed in January 1922.

Although the congregation now consisted of twenty-four families and was happy to receive the Word from their own preacher, they soon would be sorely tested. The Christian Reformed decision of 1924 to embrace the doctrine of common grace loomed close at hand. Rev. Ophoff had become convinced of the error of the three points of common grace already while in seminary. His position was no secret as he joined Rev H. Hoeksema in the editorship of a new publication, *The Standard Bearer*, a paper dedicated to promoting this view. Rev. Ophoff would faithfully, boldly, and zealously lead his little flock into greener pastures if need be.

The need came.

On January 19, 1925 a special consistory meeting was held in the little cement block church at Riverbend. In the hands of the consistory lay an ultimatum from Classis Grand Rapids West. Would Rev. Ophoff “...declare himself unequivocally whether he is in full agreement, yes or no, with the three points of the Synod of Kalamazoo.” Classis demanded an answer in less than forty-eight hours from the time the consistory meeting would be held, but not even twenty-four were necessary.

With firm resolve Rev. Ophoff expressed his negative answer. He would not subscribe to the three points of common grace, and, except for two deacons, his consistory would stand with him. Classis was informed. One week later a special meeting was held at the parsonage to inform the congregation of the consistory’s actions. At this meeting the decision was made to promote the continuation of the true church of Christ at Hope in opposition to the doctrine of common grace. Two new deacons were elected to replace the two that stayed with the CRC.

Thus the little church of Hope joined the ranks of First Kalamazoo and the largest CRC congregation, Eastern Avenue of Grand Rapids, as they had also refused to accept the doctrine of common grace. All three were promptly expelled from the CRC by their respective classes and their office bearers were deposed. Together these outcast churches organized as the Protestant Christian Reformed Churches. As such, they appealed to the next available CRC Synod in 1926, but their appeal was rejected. Now the break was complete and in November of 1926 a new denomination was officially formed - the Protestant Reformed Churches of America. Rev. Ophoff and the consistory of Hope took an active part in these events.

The comely little cement block building and parsonage of Hope was lost to the members who stayed with the CRC, but not without strife, as the following incident that occurred shortly after the split attests. Rev. Ophoff had already begun to deliver his Sunday morning sermon when two men appeared in the sanctuary and marched down the center aisle towards the pulpit with an obvious intent to disrupt the service and take the church. The men involved were two elders from Alpine

Avenue CRC and a CRC minister from Jenison. The members of Hope who had stayed with the CRC had appealed to Alpine for help—thus the plan to seize the church. Nevertheless, in the power of the Word, Rev. Ophoff continued to preach without pause. The men stopped, turned around, and left. The



CRC group met instead at the home of one of their members for the next five months.

In the meantime, the Protestant Reformed members of Eastern Avenue lost their sanctuary to the CRC. With this precedent, Hope CRC would not be so easily put off. “Possession is nine points of the law,” a lawyer advised the CRC group. Several men entered and camped out in the basement of the locked church in an effort to establish this possession, which they achieved. A sheriff informed each Protestant Reformed household that the church was no longer theirs.

After the final transfer of property to the CRC, however, there was another attempt of transfer that was far more serious. Under the preaching of the truth Hope PRC grew and flourished while Hope CRC did not. Their membership dwindled to the point of near disbandment. Rev. Vande Kieft had taken up residence in the former parsonage occupied by Rev. Ophoff. Rev. Vande Kieft tried to help his little CRC group by attempting to persuade the young catechumens of Hope PRC to come over to them instead. While Rev. Ophoff taught his catechism class in the Riverbend schoolhouse one day, in knowledge of this and in great concern that the young people of his flock understand the issues of the split in their church clearly and properly, he spontaneously decided to set forth the situation “straight from the horse’s mouth.” He called the class to stand up and he marched them across the road to his former parsonage. Rev. Vande Kieft was entertaining guests at the time so there was no place in the living room for them to sit, but no matter. Rev. Vande Kieft welcomed them into his home while Rev. Ophoff told his young people to sit down on the floor. The ministers then debated the issues in front of the catechism class and the guests. No transfers of membership occurred at that time.

The small faithful group of Hope PRC continued to meet in the Riverbend schoolhouse for the next four and a half years, a stone’s throw away from their former sanctuary, until they built another church in 1930 on Wilson Avenue near Riverbend. The congregation continued to flourish in this edifice under the blessing of God and the faithful pastors He sent them. These early undershepherds who served after Rev. Ophoff’s faithful labors in Hope were the Reverends Hubert DeWolf, John Heys, and Herman Hanko. This second building would also see the final discontinuation of Dutch services in 1931, an offering of clothes and money to impoverished brethren in the Netherlands in 1948, and in 1952 the use of individual communion cups instead of one larger one

partaken of by all—a sampling of indications of their growth and the changing times. But this neat little white church building would also know controversy and division as well as did the first sanctuary of Hope.

On December 18, 1950, continuing its steadfast hold on the truth of Scripture, the consistory of Hope formally approved the Declaration of Principles in order to combat the lie of a conditional promise in baptism. Nevertheless, the ensuing schism in the Protestant Reformed denomination over this issue had a significant impact on the congregation. From a membership of forty families in early 1953, fifteen families had left by early 1954. Despite the congregation’s smaller size and the resulting difficulties between families and friends, the grace of God was evident in the preservation of His true church as manifested at Hope. The Lord used the faithful labors of Rev. Heys to lead them through these troublous times, as well as the distinctive preaching of Rev. H. Hanko, which served to build up the congregation after the split and keep the members from being negatively influenced by those who had left.

Throughout the history of Hope God has graciously shown His covenant faithfulness to His people there, as the following highlights testify. First, the Lord has continued to bless the congregation with sound and edifying proclamation of the Word in also sending them these men to labor among them: the Reverends Herman Veldman, Jason Kortering, Ronald Van Overloop, Richard Flikkema, James Slopsema, Russell Dykstra, and James Laning.

Secondly, God has granted Hope with continuous growth, primarily internal. By 1963 fifty-five families belonged to Hope. A third edifice needed to be built in 1965 to hold the burgeoning membership, and this building is their place of worship today. But the growth continued beyond this structure. Three daughter congregations were also formed: Faith PRC in 1973, Grandville PRC in 1984, and Grace PRC in 1995. The 2005 directory lists 446 souls as comprising the congregation of Hope.

In the third place, the Lord has privileged Hope to be involved in missions. In 1958 a pamphlet publication and distribution effort began and developed into the Reformed Witness Committee. The RWC continues to mail sermon tapes and PRC literature to several foreign countries and to many places in the US. In 1974 Hope was named the calling church for home missionary. Rev. R. Harbach accepted the call to labor in Texas and then in British Columbia. In 1978 elder Dewey Engelsma

assisted with mission labors in Singapore. From December 1977 to August 1978 Rev. R. Van Overloop labored in the OPC of New Zealand. In 1979 Rev. S. Houck began to labor in the Lansing, Michigan area and in 1992 Rev. Kortering began to serve as associate pastor in Singapore until his emeritus, and Rev. A. DenHartog served there from 2001 to 2005. The labors of these brethren have given the Hope congregation a clearer understanding of the meaning of the confession, “I believe an holy catholic church.”

Finally, God’s covenant faithfulness is evident from the Lord’s calling of many sons of Hope to the gospel ministry. The late seventies and early eighties saw the “old guard” of faithful ministers of the Word leaving full, active service and a new generation of young men taking their place. In the same period five young men from Hope entered the ministry and another one prior to that time. They are the Reverends David Engelsma, Ken-

neth Koole, Ronald Hanko, Kenneth Hanko, Russell Dykstra, and Charles Terpstra. In the 1990s another son of the congregation, Doug Kuiper, along with two newer members, James Laning and Daniel Kleyn, entered the ministry, later followed by David Overway and William Langerak.

At present Hope is being fed spiritually by means of the faithful labors of Rev. James Laning, a 1997 seminary graduate. Hope rejoices that the pure Word is preached by her pastor, the sacraments and church discipline are faithfully administered, the children of the covenant are given sound catechism instruction, and the societies enjoy growth in their understanding of the Scriptures.

Surely, we as saints of the church universal may lift up our voices in praise to our God and express, “It is of the LORD’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new each morning: great is thy faithfulness” (Lam. 3:22, 23). ❖

Memoir of Rev. C. Hanko

Rev. C. Hanko

Chapter 11

Trouble in the Seminary

edited by Karen Van Baren

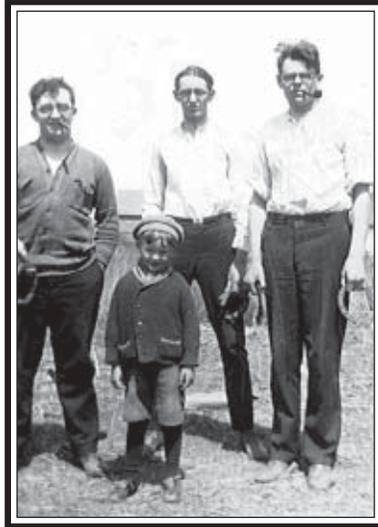
Editor’s note: Rev. Hanko continues his story with the beginnings of the Protestant Reformed Theological School. The first year was a difficult one as problems arose quickly in the faculty and student body.

For some time already I had felt a call to the ministry, more particularly to be a missionary in some foreign field. It was with this in mind that I had enrolled in a seminary preparatory course in Calvin College. But now that the controversy with Rev. Hoeksema had come to a head, and I had become a defender of his position, I spoke to him about my problem. At that time he told me that the intention of the combined consistories of the Protestant Christian Reformed Churches, as we were then called, was to start a seminary as soon as the second semester in Calvin was ended. He also informed me that they would need missionaries and urged me to

look forward to attending classes in our own seminary as soon as the school was opened.

A call went out for men who were interested in seminary training. God sent ten men to appear before the consistory of the Eastern Avenue Protestant CRC to seek entrance into the seminary and all ten were accepted. A unique group it was. Five were married men, two of them with families; five were single. They ranged in age from teenagers to middle-aged men. Some had a year or more of college training; others had received only an elementary school education. The married men were: Andrew De Vries, Arie Griffioen (my future father-in-law), Andrew Kuyvenhoven from Kalamazoo, William Verhil and Gerrit Vos. The younger single men, besides myself, were: Gerard Borduin, John Griffioen, Richard Veldman and Leonard Vermeer.

The three ministers, Rev. Danhof, Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Ophoff readily agreed to instruct these men to serve in our churches. They made a schedule according to which Rev. Hoeksema was to teach on Monday afternoon: Greek Reading, New Testament Exegesis, Hermeneutics and New Testament History. A separate class was held for Beginner's Greek. Rev. Ophoff consented to teach on Wednesday afternoon: Hebrew Grammar, Old Testament Exegesis, Old Testament History and English Composition. Rev. Danhof would come from Kalamazoo by interurban train on Friday morning to teach Introduction to Dogmatics, Dogmatics, Homiletics and Church History.



Richrd Veldman, Cornelius Hanko, and Gerrit Vos in Doon, 1928-29.

The meeting place was not ideal, nothing like our present seminary. The class met in the basement of the Eastern Avenue Church in a large assembly room with seating capacity for about two hundred people. There were no desks, no tables for writing. There was one advantage, a platform with a pulpit. But we had no library; not even one reference work. For books we had to go elsewhere or purchase our own. But no one seemed to mind.

Let me add that we did not make use of these facilities for very long. In December we lost the church property and had to find another meeting place. There was an old elementary schoolhouse in the Kalamazoo Ave., Oakdale St. area. This was about to be torn down, but the second floor was made available to us for our use. Andrew Kuyvenhoven took advantage of this and moved his small family into part of the second floor. There was one room with desks and chalkboard that became our classroom. This was little better than our former facilities, but it would serve our purpose.

There was great enthusiasm among both professors and students as the school opened in the first week of June 1925. This was a new venture and all were eager to see the reformation grow. Besides, there would be a great need for preaching and ministers when new churches were organized. All went to work with determination and zeal, prayerfully seeking the guidance and blessing of the Lord upon their work.

But a cloud did hang over the seminary. There was a rift among the professors, which soon became evident to the students. Somehow a tension had developed par-

ticularly between Rev. Danhof and Rev. Hoeksema. Was it jealousy on the part of Rev. Danhof, since he was the senior minister and Rev. Hoeksema was receiving the requests to lecture at various places? Was it a clash of personalities now that they worked so closely together? We did not know.

We did know that Rev. Danhof had two nephews, Ralph and Benjamin Danhof, who also had joined our churches. Benjamin Danhof had been minister in Allendale, had withdrawn from the CRC and had taken a few families with him. Later he received a call from our Hull congregation, which he readily accepted. Ralph Danhof had come to us as a candidate for the ministry in the CRC.

Rev. Henry Danhof wanted the consistory of Eastern Ave. to start a new congregation consisting of members of Eastern Avenue, who lived in the Dennis Ave. area, so that Ralph Danhof could serve there. This, the consistory refused to do for the simple reason that already there were other requests for organization, and these churches would need to be supplied. Soon Ralph was requested to work in Waupun, Wisconsin. He did agree to this.

One more incident ought to be related. Two young men of the Eastern Avenue congregation had seen Ralph Danhof coming out of a theater. They reported this to their consistory. Rev. Henry Danhof heard of this and demanded that, because Ralph was a candidate, this matter should be treated by the combined consistories. The consistory of Eastern Avenue insisted that this was a case of discipline and belonged to their jurisdiction. This small incident helped to disturb the already troubled waters.

On the very first Friday morning that Rev. Henry Danhof began his classes he informed the students that he did not intend to come all the way from Kalamazoo to Grand Rapids to teach four subjects. Also, he felt that the students must be prepared for the ministry as fast as possible. He would teach from nine to five, with an hour break for lunch, thus covering eight subjects, four more than he was asked to teach.

The result was that the students diligently took down extensive notes all day Friday. In order to preserve them, we had to type these notes out the very next day. Since this was Saturday and some of the men worked, that gave

no time for preparing for the classes of Rev. Hoeksema on Monday. When students complained to Rev. Hoeksema, he quite properly answered with a shrug of the shoulders, "That is not my problem. I expect you to be prepared for my classes."

Rev. Hoeksema was a very capable teacher. It was a pleasure to attend his classes and receive his instruction. For Rev. Ophoff, this was an entirely new venture. He had some new subjects, such as Hebrew Grammar and Old Testament Exegesis. But he also applied himself with diligence, working far harder than any of us realized. Rev. Danhof, as well as being a theologian, had a very broad knowledge of many subjects, among which was astronomy. This also became evident in his teaching.

Texts were assigned to all the students with the intention that, as soon as sermons were prepared, they could be delivered in practice preaching sessions. These sessions were held on Friday. Before the end of the school year students were being sent out to speak a word of edification in the churches. Both professors and students realized that these fledglings were not capable of making a thorough exegesis of a text, but the need was there. But that did not mean that the professors spared us. Our sermons and delivery were sharply criticized. I recall one incident in which Rev. Danhof told one student that he had put everything he knew in one sermon; he had left nothing for another sermon. On another occasion, a student was told by Rev. Hoeksema to put his sermon in a drawer, lock the drawer and throw away the key. But our serious efforts were also appreciated and valuable advice was given to improve the message or delivery.

The churches graciously understood and were appreciative, mainly glad to be supplied on the Sabbath. They encouraged the men as much as possible.

The janitor came in, took one look
and asked in a surprised tone,
"What are you boys doing here." I
answered, "I am going to preach."

My first venture into preaching occurred when I was 19 years of age, on a Sunday morning in Byron Center. I took a friend with me, and we arrived a bit early. We stood by the coal stove in the Town Hall, where the church was meeting, since as yet no one else had arrived. The janitor came in, took one look and asked in a

surprised tone, "What are you boys doing here." I answered, "I am going to preach." With still greater surprise the man asked, "You, preach?!" When I arrived in the consistory room, one of the elders looked askance at the "preacher." The other, reading his mind said, "It's all right. Rev. Hoeksema said so."

Another student had to preach at Hope Church at Riverbend where Rev. Ophoff was minister. He was standing in the consistory room when he noticed the organist coming through with a Psalter in her hand. He asked the consistory, "Are the services in English this morning? Rev. Ophoff told me that they were to be in Dutch." One of the elders looked at him in amazement and remarked, "What does Rev. Ophoff have to say about our services? You evidently belong in the schoolhouse across the road (where Hope Protestant CRC was meeting)."

On Monday, Rev. Hoeksema always eagerly awaited the report of the students on their experiences the previous day. The same young man who had gone to the wrong church remarked one day, "The services lasted only an hour. I did not know what more to say, so I said 'Amen'." Rev. Hoeksema responded with a smile, "That's right. When you are finished, quit. Do not try to drag your sermon out."

Another small incident gave the students occasion for a hearty laugh at their professor. Rev. Ophoff had to come from the southwest part of the city near John Ball Park. On this particular morning something held him up so that we were watching for him through the window. He soon appeared in his car, but two police officers on motorcycles drove right up behind him. He stepped out of his car and urged them to give him a ticket, explaining, "Hurry, I'm late and I must get to my students." The officers were so completely baffled by his reaction that they passed off the incident with a mere warning to stay within the speed limit.

But the tension mentioned before remained. In the early months of 1926, Rev. Danhof took aside three or four of the students and invited each one individually to accompany him to the Midwest the next summer to organize churches. When any one of them raised the objection that he had just begun to preach or was actually not capable of preaching a Dutch sermon, all objections were brushed aside with the answer, "You can help." Evidently, he wanted to go out on his own.

A combined consistory meeting was planned for the third week in May. Rev. Benjamin Danhof came a week earlier and met with three of the students in the home of

his parents. Evidently the subject of the theological school was brought up and these students must have complained that Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Ophoff showed partiality to some students. A protest was drawn up and signed. Rev. Henry Danhof was informed of this protest by phone and remarked merely, "Do what you will, but keep me out of it."

The next day other students were informed of what had happened and were asked to sign the protest. The fact was that this was something entirely new to the other students, and the document did not have a single ground. One of the students informed Rev. Hoeksema of this protest, so that before beginning his class on Monday he told the class about the document, stating that these students had not contacted him or Rev. Ophoff before presenting their charges. He gave those who had signed the document opportunity to withdraw their signatures in a written statement. One student withdrew his name. The other two refused.

The next day the combined consistories met in Kalamazoo. A committee was appointed to deal with the protest. Each student in turn was called before this committee and asked about affairs in the school and whether he thought one or the other professor had shown any particular prejudice. The final result was that the protest was cast out. But the school term came to a sudden halt.

In August another meeting of the combined consistories was held in which Rev. Danhof was reconciled with the other professors and promised to continue teaching in the school. Also, at the meeting the name Protestant Reformed Churches in America was adopted.

But soon after that Rev. Henry Danhof informed the faculty that he would no longer teach in the school, nor would he write in the *Standard Bearer*. In other words, he had withdrawn himself completely from our fellowship. His church would be an independent congregation.

To add insult to injury, Rev. Danhof rented the Woodmen Hall on Wealthy Street near Eastern Ave. Church where he publicly revealed all his grievances. Not only a goodly number of our people were present, but also four professors from Calvin College. Shortly after this, Rev. Hoeksema went to Kalamazoo where he publicly answered the charges that Rev. Danhof had made against him. One can imagine the delight of outsiders in seeing our churches crumble already at the outset. Rumors ran wild that we would not last long. Some gave us five years, some ten years. Others thought that the entire movement would die out at the death of Rev. Hoeksema.

In spite of evil predictions, God has preserved and blessed us even until this very day!

Rev. Danhof eventually went back to the CRC on the condition that he would not have to sign the Three Points. He would not ask for any ministerial status except that he would like to have the privilege of preaching the Dutch service in his church. This was allowed but he had no other duties or functions in the church. It did not take long and he was criticizing the preacher. He soon was suspended for a second time.

Now the two remaining ministers, Rev. Ophoff and Rev. Hoeksma, were burdened with more work. As if their load had not already all but exceeded capacity, they now were called upon to take over all the classes in the Theological School. They also took over most of the writing for the *Standard Bearer*. George Ophoff, son of Rev. Ophoff, once made the remark, "One thing that stands out in my memory of my dad is the light that shone from under the door of his study almost all night."

Rev. Benjamin Danhof went back to Hull and placed a notice in the town paper, stating that his congregation was not, and had never been affiliated with the PRC. He also announced from the pulpit that the congregation had become independent. There were some members who objected to this, but those who approached the consistory on this matter were placed under censure. A congregational meeting was called to decide whether or not to return to the CRC. One of the members that was under censure attended that meeting and was told to leave. He

he took hold of a leg of a chair,
lifted the chair and dared Rev.
Danhof to throw him out.

refused. Rev. Danhof started toward him to force him to leave, but he took hold of a leg of a chair, lifted the chair and dared Rev. Danhof to throw him out. The minister drew back and the man was allowed to remain. The congregation, which formerly had consisted of about thirty-eight families, was now reduced to twelve families that remained loyal to us. The others returned to the CRC, and offered the new church edifice and the parsonage with the debt of \$12,000 to the faithful remnant. Although especially during the Depression this was a great burden to them, they bore it willingly. Today they have a new church building and have become a large and thriving congregation. Ralph Danhof also returned to the CRC.

Obviously the Lord no longer had any purpose with these men in our churches. Under the blessing of the Lord the work could well go on without them. As it did. ❖

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

Church News

Church News

BAPTISMS

“For the promise is unto you and your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Acts 2:39

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

- Katelyn Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Keith Zevenbergen—Doon, IA
- Lucas Samuel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Fennema—Edgerton, MN
- Zoe Lauren, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jan Zeldenrust—Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
- Reagon Heath and Ashton Heath, twin sons of Mr. & Mrs. Heath Jurgens—Georgetown, MI
- Justin Micah, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Hanko—Grace, MI
- Michael John, son of Mr. & Mrs. John DeVries—Grandville, MI
- Braylon James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Mingerink—Grandville, MI
- Elsha Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Derek Clossen—Hudsonville, MI
- Pierce Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Travis Groeneweg—Hull, IA
- Andrew Reece, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ed Tolsma—Loveland, CO
- Aliyah Sanae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. John Tolsma—Loveland, CO
- Morgan Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Craig Poortinga—Loveland, CO
- Daniella Belen, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Barry Boer—South Holland, IL
- Lily Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Todd Groenendyk—Southwest, MI
- Cole Randall, son of Mr. & Mrs. Randy Dykstra—Trinity, MI
- Clarissa Reis, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Phil VanBaren—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

Proverbs 22:6

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

- Daniel Bos—Georgetown, MI
- Katherina Streyle—Hope, MI
- Greg Kalsbeek—Hope, MI
- Lee Kooienga—Loveland, CO
- Paul Fowler—Loveland, CO
- Robert Span—Lynden, WA
- Matthew Span—Lynden, WA

MARRIAGES

“For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” Psalm 48:14

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Frank Hiskes and Miss Gina Verburg—Peace, IL

Little Lights puzzle:

Find the following words in the puzzle below. Look up Proverbs 21:1 to see how all these words are used in that verse.

as hand heart in is it king's
rivers turneth water will

T	N	H	U	R	N	S
A	H	T	L	L	I	W
S	R	E	V	I	R	A
G	D	N	A	H	L	T
N	G	R	K	R	W	E
I	H	U	D	W	T	R
K	A	T	V	I	K	H

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

A Turn of Events: from Chaos to Comfort (Part 2)

There was more chaos in the land in 1560. Two leading men had been expelled from the Protestant town of Heidelberg, Germany: one, the Lutheran Dr. Hesshuss, for his extreme hostility towards the other, a Calvinist. But even with Hesshuss gone, the controversy between the Lutheran view of the Lord's Supper and the Calvinist view could still cause trouble. The people had a newfound love for the Reformed faith and were growing in their understanding of the truth, but many were still ignorant about much doctrine. The printing process was new, and not everyone owned a Bible, and not many catechism books had been written. The catechisms that were available were either too short or too long to be of use in teaching children. The result was much confusion for those who were trying to teach and for those who were trying to learn.

Electoral Frederick III saw the need. As ruler of the land, he had only recently come upon the throne. He was a very educated man and had been brought up in the best of Catholic schools, for his father was a strict Roman Catholic. So how was it that Frederick saw the need

for teaching Reformed doctrine to the church and its children in Heidelberg and beyond?

As a young man he began to see the corruption and hypocrisy that was in the church of Rome. As a young prince it was proper that he marry a young princess—even if she was a Lutheran one. It was not long until he was converted to Protestantism. Frederick's father was not happy about this conversion though, and he kept Frederick, his wife, and the children they would have nearly penniless for many years. At times this royal family lived as the poorest of the paupers in the land, persecuted by their own father.

But now Frederick's father was dead, and so was the former elector of Heidelberg. Now it was Frederick's lot to rule in Heidelberg, Germany. It was in the providence of God that he saw the need for teaching doctrine to the youth of the church, and it was in the providence of God that he would have the will and the means to do something about it.

With Hesshuss and another professor gone, Heidelberg needed a preacher and a professor to replace them. Frederick knew that Heidelberg was an important city for the work of the Reformation. Not just any preacher and professor would do. But who?

God was preparing two men—two young men—even now for the work. They would boldly and faithfully preach and teach the doctrines of Scripture in truth. They would work to teach those doctrines to the church and its children in an understandable way, and to settle the matter between Calvinists and Lutherans. They would work to change the chaos and confusion into comfort and order. Such would be the turn of events... ❖



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

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