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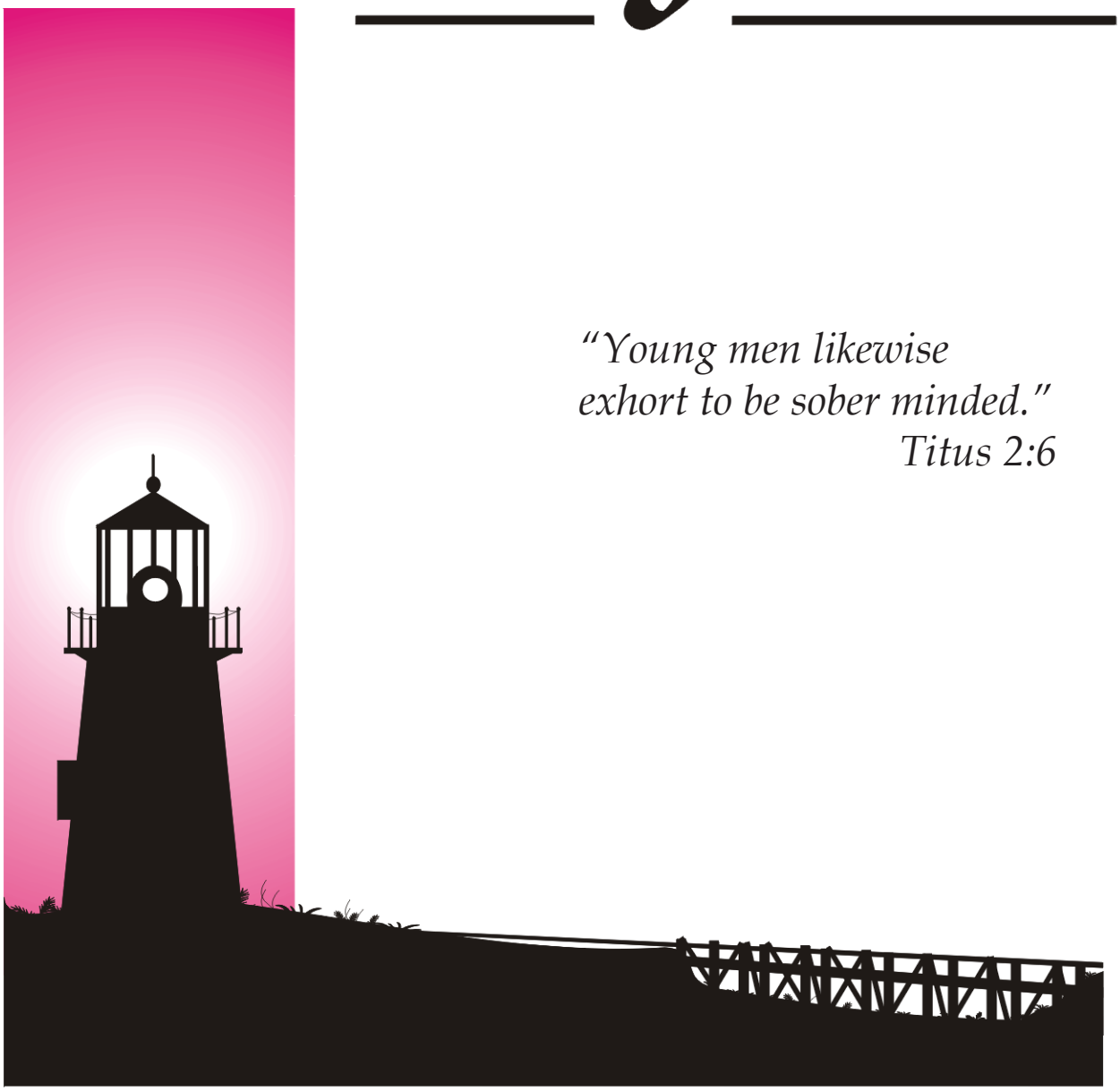

"Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded."
Titus 2:6

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New Year's Exhortation to Young Men: Be Sober Minded

by Nathan Langerak

"Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded." Titus 2:6

Sobriety of mind is a virtue that the Scripture exhorts upon all believers. In the book of Titus the Scriptures say, to young and old, to office bearer and layman, to male and female, "be sober minded." Titus 1:8 says that a bishop must be "sober." Titus 2:2 exhorts the aged men to be "sober." Titus 2:4 instructs the aged women to "teach the young women to be sober," and thus implies that it a duty of both the aged and the young women. Here in Titus 2:6, however, the Apostle addresses himself to the young men specifically and simply says, "Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded."

The corrupt culture in which we live, a culture that falls under the condemnation of Scripture in Titus 2:12 as godless and full of worldly lusts, vigorously promotes the idea that the young men must indulge themselves in all the pleasures that this culture has to offer, whether that be the excesses of entertainment, the excesses of sexual relationships, the excesses of alcoholic beverages, and the list could go on. Young men must be everything but sober minded, according this idea.

Especially during the holiday season, when the world is busy with their parties and consumed by their eating and drinking, does the message come to young men that they must join with the world in their drunken revelry. There are the work parties; Christmas parties; the New Year's parties; the football parties; and the general gatherings. Perhaps, and God forbid that this is the case; there are even those in the church that behave like the world and think nothing of having a drunken party at their own house. The message is clear, "Young men need not be sober minded."

This situation is not new for the young men of the church. In fact, it is in view of temptations that faced the young men of the churches of Crete that the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, instructs Titus to exhort the young men of the churches to be sober minded.

The churches of Crete were located on the island of Crete in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea just south of the peninsula of Greece. It was one of the many provinces in the massive Roman Empire that ruled the civilized world of that day from Britain to North Africa and from Spain to Palestine. It was an empire that offered all the worldly delights that one could imagine. Rome conquered, and in her conquering Rome absorbed not only land and people, but also all the vices and abominations of those lands and people. In Rome and in her provinces was everything that delighted the eyes, inflamed the heart, and stirred up the lusts. It was a world that was remarkably similar to our own in its godlessness and wickedness. In contrast to that world's and our own world's fundamental message to the young men, the Apostle teaches sobriety of mind. The Spirit has an exhortation here for young men, a New Year's exhortation for young men: be sober minded.

A sober mind is a fundamental principle of a young man's life in the world, a principle out of which flows the godly life of that young man. A sober mind is the fruit of the regenerated heart—a spiritual virtue—and thus it is a peculiarly Christian, I say, a Reformed Christian, virtue. The Apostle says of himself and to Titus, and of all believers that they were sometimes, that is, in the past, foolish, disobedient, and deceived—they were of an unsound mind; they were unregenerate (Titus 3:3). But now are we saved by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost (Titus 3:5). The sober mind is the gift of

the Holy Ghost by regeneration. It is the mind that is alive to spiritual realities and understands spiritual things spiritually.

The sober mind, therefore, is a principle of life rooted in right knowledge, a right knowledge that at its very heart is the knowledge of God as he is revealed in Jesus Christ in the Scriptures. Is this not what the Apostle himself indicates when he says of himself in Titus 1:1 that his very commission was to preach the word of God? He was a sober minded man. Was this not the fountain of the sound speech, and, therefore, of the sound mind of the young minister Titus? As respected his doctrine, he was "uncorrupt." Is this not what is the root of a sober minded elder in the church according to Titus 1:9? He "holds fast the faithful word as he hath been taught?" Is this not the explanation of the sound mind of the aged man? He is first sound in faith (Titus 2:2). And does not this fact, the knowledge of the Word of God, explain the sound mind of the aged women who with all diligence teach the young women godly sobriety? Those women have a deep love for and knowledge of the Word of God (Titus 2:5).

Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.

To be sober minded is to be a young man of knowledge, the knowledge of the Scriptures, and particularly as those Scriptures are properly interpreted by the Reformed Confessions. Young men who would be sober minded must be young men who are readers and students of the Scriptures. Read and study the Scripture for society life. This New Year begins a new half of the society season after the Christmas break. If we have not devoted ourselves diligently in the past half of the year to the study of the word of God, then let us be resolved as sober minded young men to study the word of God, wherein is revealed the true knowledge of God. Read and study the Scriptures for Catechism. Study the word of God as that is explained by faithful servants of God in the good books of the RFPA and in the good Reformed magazines like the *Beacon Lights* and the *Standard Bearer*.

Be sober minded. Be knowledgeable in the Word of God.

It is out of this knowledge of the word of God that the sober minded, young man assesses himself honestly and faithfully with regard to his spiritual condition in the light of the Word of God. What am I? I am a totally depraved sinner who, outside of God's grace, is totally incapable of any good and inclined to all evil. That is the sobering reality for every young man. It puts all the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life into perspective, the sobering perspective of sin and the judgment of God on that sin. The sober minded young man recognizes the power of sin, the power of sin in one's own life, and constantly flees to the Christ he knows from the Scriptures for forgiveness and deliverance.

Young men, be sober minded. Know your sin.

The young man's sober assessment of himself in the light of the Word of God, however, does not end with the realization and confession of his own sinfulness. Totally depraved is not the only description of what he is. He is also regenerated by the grace of God through the operation of the Holy Spirit that flows from God's eternal decree of election, and is performed on the basis of and in the power of Christ's death. He has been chosen; he has been justified; he has been sanctified; he is an heir of eternal life. Do not forget that this exhortation to sobriety comes in the book of Titus that also teaches of "God's elect" (Titus 1:1), of Jesus Christ who "gave himself for us" to redeem us (Titus 2:14), of our "washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5), of our justification (Titus 3:7), and of the "hope of eternal life" (Titus 1:2; 3:7). This is the sobering truth of the marvelous wonder of our salvation in Jesus Christ, the Christ whose birth we just celebrated recently, and whose birth the world and the ungodly mock by their intoxication with wickedness.

Be sober minded. Know your salvation.

The sober minded young man, one who knows the truth of the word of God and in the light of that truth knows his own sin and his own salvation, is a young man who has his eye firmly fixed in all of his life on the end, or the goal. To be sober minded is to look for the goal.

That goal may be the end of this earthly life when one is yet a young man. Jesus Christ comes for each one of us personally in our deaths. The Lord in his goodness and infinite wisdom takes young people to glory. There is a plaque that hangs in the entranceway of Covenant Christian High School where I

attended. That plaque hangs in memory of several students of the high school that were taken to glory in their youth. On that plaque is aptly quoted from Ecclesiastes 12:1 "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." The sober young man is clear in his thinking regarding the end, even the end of his own earthly life, in view of the reality of God, of sin, of salvation, and of the goal. There is not time, as the world tells us, to live it up. Our thoughts as young men ought not to be: "in our youth we can live it up a little bit and in a little while after we are older, we will be soberminded. To be sober minded is the virtue of old men and old women."

"Exhort to be sober minded, says the Apostle." Exhort young men to be sober minded—sober minded as young men.

The ultimate goal of all things, however, is the coming of Jesus Christ and the glorification of God in the new heavens and new earth. We look, says the Apostle, for the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, "that blessed hope." The ultimate reality, the reality that the world shutters to consider, is the reality of the end of this present world and the coming of the new and glorious world where only righteousness and peace shall dwell. This earth and heaven where we now live is the present world. This is a world fallen in sin and cursed by God. There is another world coming. It is the world to which all the elect are heirs. It is the world of sober minded young men. It is the world where there will be not excess, wickedness, or unsound minds. It is the world of the new heaven and the new earth. To be sober minded to live in this present ungodly world with a view to and in hope of the world to come. That is the glorious—sobering—reality among the frivolity and excess of the world's celebrations.

Be sober minded. Look for the goal. Look for the coming of Jesus Christ.

The sober minded young man expresses his sober mind in sober conduct.

Soberness of mind should not be confused with the extreme of asceticism. Asceticism is an evil doctrine that teaches that there is sin in things and that we may not enjoy the good gifts that God has given to us in his providence. There were those who taught this in the church at that time. They forbade men and women to marry and taught that the people of God had to keep themselves from food (1 Tim. 4:3). You might say that asceticism teaches that in order to be true Christian we must live apart from society like monks and hermits, and eat only the barest essentials, and live in poverty. We can enjoy the good gifts that God gives to us by receiving them with thanksgiving and praise to God.

Sober behavior, sober behavior for the young man, is not asceticism.

On the other extreme, the sober mind is contrasted in Scripture with the drunken mind. Sobriety is not being drunk with wine. It is an evidence of the world's principle of life—eat, drink, and be merry—that the standard of a successful party is how drunk they got, or in how much depraved behavior they engaged.

Sober conduct is not wickedness, drunkenness, and excess.

In contrast to these two extremes, a sober mind evidences itself in self-control and restraint—restraint from sin, evil, and evil associates with godlessness and ungodly people, even those who perhaps claim to be Christian and Reformed but evidence by their conduct that they are those whom the Apostle describes in Titus 1:16, "They profess that the know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." We run not with the world in their "lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries" (1 Peter 4:3).

They will think it strange. Do not be surprised when you turn down the invitations to their parties that the world thinks it very strange and they speak evil of you. That, too, the sober minded young man realizes: "and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). This belongs to the lot of those who have been separated from the world, have been called to Jesus Christ, and who are taught by the grace of God "that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:12, 13). ❖

Thank You

Dear John,

Thank you for your courage in publishing your editorial in the November, 2007 *Beacon Lights* titled "Smoke -filled Rooms—Let's Move on."

We are in total agreement with your expressed views.

In Christian love,
Joe & Mary Schutz
2706 S. Early Dawn Lane
Spokane Valley, Washington

Dear John,

What a delightful experience to read your article in the youth magazine. You addressed a critical problem.

I recall when we were visiting different Protestant Reformed Churches, that I saw the pail for butts at the back door. It almost dissuaded us from attending the P.R. Church.

As recently as this past Sunday, I had a disappointing experience. We have a fine young elder. I had heard several months ago that he had stopped smoking. Then Sunday I saw him in the circle of smokers. I was so disappointed. This circle of men gather after church to have their smokes. It is strange that they are bound together with a cigarette.

I wish that our two elders who smoke would quite. It would strengthen their witness before me.

When our daughter had to change schools for her 10th grader she addressed the principal at Covenant on the subject of smoking. It was a frightening prospect to place her daughter in a school where smoking was not more severely frowned upon.

I hope your article has a wide reading. Thank you for placing the matter so clearly before us all.

Yours truly,
Peter J. Breen

Memory Book

Tom Cammenga

Some time ago as I sat in church waiting for the morning service to begin I began to page through the Psalter. Not looking for anything specific I began with the first number and went through it page by page. As I went along I realized very quickly that for many of the songs I could immediately determine the tune in my head and knew many of the words without even looking. I remember as a young boy one of my teachers saying that when we were older we would know many of the songs in the Psalter. In fact, she told us there were many elderly saints who knew them all by heart. Well, I could hardly imagine that this could be possible. I had a difficult time imagining having to learn one single song in its entirety much less the entire Psalter. I was pretty sure she was just trying to give us some motivation to learn the particular song we were working on and it wasn't really working for me. Eventually though, I learned that song and many, many others.

It wasn't long before I realized that as I went along I was reliving a number of memories. In fact, many of the songs I turned to held very specific memories while others were a bit more general. All in all however, it seemed to me that rather than simply paging through the Psalter, I was paging through my own personal memory book. These seem to be the rage lately and I must admit they are very nice. Many women and girls even attend

parties that center around the making of these books. If you have never seen one, they are similar to a photo album except a little more detailed and decked out with fancy borders, poems, and other writing. Although the memory book I held in my hands didn't have the visual frills that one of these memory books might have, the memories it evoked were and are very precious. Allow me to share some of them with you.

#1 – One of the very first songs I learned as a boy in school. I recall the teacher explaining how we were like trees planted by the riverside, nourished and taken care of by God.

#7 – Another of the early songs I learned. Each time we sang it I would picture a hallway with large pocket watches that didn't work floating by. It wasn't until I was older that I realized that the watches spoken of in the song were not those that told time.

#27 – I remember the Sunday school kids singing this song at the dedication of the new church building in Holland a few years ago. I was struck very deeply by the last verse, "The lines are fallen unto me in places large and fair; a goodly heritage is mine, marked out with gracious care." I was a member of Holland PRC all my life until about 2 years ago when we transferred to Faith PRC. The saints there will always hold a special place in my heart.

#29 – There are times in this life when it seems that I simply can't wait to go home as I am sure is the case with all children of God. It may be after a particularly difficult day or week or maybe even an especially moving sermon. Whatever the case, this song often comes to mind and brings great comfort when that longing embraces my heart.

#53 – Which of us didn't learn the words to this song as children and yet not fully understand and come to love them deeply until we had grown older? What incredible comfort there is in knowing and confessing that the Lord is our Shepherd.

#55 – I chose this song for a song service in Holland some years ago specifically because a number of saints there were going through difficulties. I recall having a difficult time reading the first line of the first verse ("The Lord my Shepherd holds me within His tender care, and with His flock He folds me, No want shall find me there.") because I so hoped that God would use those words to bring comfort to all who needed it.

#114 – As a boy I sang this song many times not having any idea what a hart was. In fact, I assumed it was another way of spelling heart. Suffice it to say that the song made much more sense once I figured out that a hart was a deer.

#128 – I can't count the number of times I sang this song for programs and chapels in celebration of Reformation Day. Not until I learned about Martin Luther however did the song truly come alive.

#140 – When I was young a loved one had fallen into sin and though I was too young to understand the circumstances I vividly recall singing this song to myself as I wept, desiring only that they would confess their sin and be forgiven. As I grew older I realized that this must be the petition I raise for myself as well. God be merciful to me!

#163 – Although this song itself is not "The Song of Simeon" it is the tune. Each time I hear it I can't help but picture an old man cradling the Savior in his arms. I dare say those arms had never felt such strength as then.

#169 – Once again, I can't recall the number of times this song was sung for programs and chapels in celebration of Thanksgiving. When I hear it I never fail to picture a large cornucopia filled with fruit as this was one of our art projects in my early years in school.

#203 – I remember this being the first song I was able to differentiate the various parts and more specifically the tenor part. I was so thrilled!

#213 – I don't recall specifically why he had to leave although I believe he had forgotten to take a certain medication, but Rev. Heys had us sing every verse of this song one time in church so that he could do whatever it was he had forgotten to do. I don't recall if he was back before we were finished or not.

#227 – Professor Gritters preached a sermon on this Psalm (84) at Grandma Veldman's funeral. I recall he placed special emphasis on her opening her eyes in heaven after her weary night on earth and exclaiming, "How lovely Thy tabernacles are!" Given the difficult way in which the Lord led her in the last years of her life and knowing Grandma, it would not surprise me if this had been the case.

#251 – Although I didn't take more than a year of piano lessons, through much work I taught myself to play

this song. Mind you I wouldn't be able to do it today but there was a time when I could.

#266 – This is the very first song I can remember learning in school and oh how I loved to sing it.

#278 – I am still unable to sing more than a few lines of this song without my voice breaking and tears welling in my eyes. As our family waited in the nursery at Southwest PRC for the funeral for my nephew Dan to begin we decided that rather than sit in silence we should sing some songs. This was one of them. I recall my niece grasping my left hand as I clung to my wife's shoulder with my right hand. It was such a difficult song to sing at the time but oh how it brought comfort to the wounded and battered souls gathered in that small room.

#283 – Fitting it is I suppose that this song be next on the list. In January of 2007 we gathered as family to celebrate the 40th anniversary of my wife's parents. As this was one of the songs sung at their wedding we also sang it on this night. About a month later we sang it once again at my father-in-law's funeral. Another song I have a very difficult time singing but what a wonderful testimony to God's grace and mercy. "Good is the Lord and full of kind compassion, most slow to anger, plenteous in love; rich is His grace to all that humbly seek Him, boundless and endless as the heav'ns above."

#333 – The first song I can recall learning for Sunday School. I was quite sure that if we sang it every week I would be tired of it by the end of the year. We did and I was. And yet now I love it.

#345 – Psalm 121 was the favorite Bible passage of my Grandpa Bylsma. He was called home when I was in 3rd grade and his was the first funeral I can really remember. My teacher was Mr. Quenga and every morning we had a period of time that we would sing a number of songs chosen by children in the class. The day after the funeral I chose this song. Somehow Mr. Quenga knew the significance of this Psalm and made mention of it to the class. I remember not being able to sing much of the song but I hummed along with the class. I was a bit afraid that Mr. Quenga might be angry with me for not singing but honestly I think I was more afraid of the class seeing me cry.

#383 – I believe we sang this song at the open house that Holland PRC held for Rev. Heys when he retired from the ministry. If I recall correctly it was one of his favorite Psalter numbers. How often we need to be reminded of the beautiful words found in this song, "My life in all its perfect plan was ordered ere my days began."

#391 – For any who have witnessed the dawn of a new day while in the midst of the creation this song has very real meaning. I happen to be a hunter and many mornings I have sat in my tree stand and thought of this song as the sun began to rise and the forest came to life. What a beautiful prayer with which to begin each day, confessing our reliance on our heavenly Father and our confidence in his good will for us.

#434 – Last but certainly not least we have the rendition of the Lord's Prayer written by Rev. Heys. I recall that many years ago Professor Hanko preached in Holland PRC and though I can't say for sure (I am not known for my amazing memory) I believe his sermon had to do with the young in the church and what would happen to the church once the older members were gone. Whether or not that was the sermon he preached I vividly recall him choosing this song for the last number and being so moved by the singing of it that he requested we sing it again. I was a bit surprised by the request but was so glad for it too because it sounded wonderful.

Yes, there are many other memories that I found in this book as I paged through it but I suppose that is enough for now. As I conclude I am struck with a feeling of incredible thankfulness to God for the Psalter that we have. It is amazing to me that so many of the songs, as I have illustrated, can bring both tears of sorrow as well as tears of joy at the same time. That we can weep in our sorrow and at the same time be lifted up by the grace and mercy of God is simply wonderful.

So take a few minutes sometime and page through your memory book. Read the words in the various songs and be reminded of God's grace to you and his covenant faithfulness. And if you are so inclined, share those memories with others. But above all, give thanks and praise to God for them. he alone is worthy. ❖

Tom is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

Watching Daily At My Gates

Reprint from December 2001
by Cornelius Jonker

January 5 Read Exodus 10:1-6

The fearful plague of thunderings and hail had ceased, and once again we read that Pharaoh hardened his heart. This was sovereignly ordained by God, for he instructed Moses to go again to Pharaoh in order to reveal to him and all people the power of God. Moses then describes the impending plague of locusts. God further commands Moses to tell his children and his children's children the mighty works of God that they might know that he is the Lord. This is our holy calling as well. Do our children realize how great a God we serve? In the measure that we as parents, or teachers, or any other capacity, respect and hold the name of God in reverential fear, so will our children and pupils. What a great blessing for us that our God is a covenant God and what a privilege as well as a solemn responsibility it is to bring forth children and instruct them in the way of the Lord. Psalter 213:1-3.

January 6 Read Exodus 10:7-11

The servants of Pharaoh who were well aware of all that was transpiring in the land, finally advised their king in carefully chosen words to let the men go and serve the Lord their God. They realized that their country was almost in ruins. Pharaoh asked Moses who would go, and Moses, aware of Pharaoh's deceptions, replied that every soul plus their flocks and herds would go. That answer was not acceptable to Pharaoh and in anger he drove Moses and Aaron from his presence. Even as Moses insisted that every member of every family must be included in the worship of Jehovah, so must we with our families, from the youngest to the oldest attend divine worship. As soon as little children can sit reasonably still, they must be under the official preaching of the Word. The Spirit can and does speak also to their little hearts. We must have none of "children's church" in place of the preaching of the gospel. As we worship today, thank God that there are no Pharaohs to prevent us from worshiping him as he commands us, and count it a privilege to live in a land that yet allows us the freedom of worship. Psalter 349:1-3.

January 7 Read Exodus 10:12-20

Moses left the courts of Pharaoh and in obedience to God's command, stretched out his rod over the land of Egypt to bring about the eighth plague, namely hordes of locusts. It was such an incredible host, that one could look out and see nothing but locusts devouring every bit of grass, leaves and vegetation. Under this mighty demonstration of God's power, Pharaoh hastily calls for Moses and Aaron to exclaim that he has sinned and prays that his sin be forgiven this once. We see here another instance of the wicked calling upon God, not in repentance for all his sins, but for immediate relief from the awful locusts. In Proverbs 28:9 we read, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." How about your prayers, dear reader? Young people, do you make time for personal prayers? Not a hasty, almost memorized prayer, but sincere confession of all sins, and especially specific sins to which you are prone. There is forgiveness at the foot of the cross, for God beholds his people in Christ and imputes to them his righteousness. Pray, people of God, with a sincere heart for "the prayer of the upright is his delight." Proverbs 15:8(b), Psalter 31:1-3.

January 8 Read Exodus 10:21-23

The Lord isn't finished with Pharaoh and his host as yet. He will show his awesome power and judgment against this proud ruler by sovereignly hardening his heart even though Pharaoh willfully and deliberately shakes his fist, as it were, in the face of the Almighty. The ninth plague is inflicted upon the land of Egypt. A darkness settled on the land, so black, so thick, and so dense that it could be felt. No light could pierce it, and it brought to a standstill all movement for three days. It had to speak powerfully to the Egyptians who considered the sun to be a god. This darkness pictured to Pharaoh that his cup of iniquity was full and spoke of the judgment to come in that place of outer darkness. These three days of darkness and the three hours of darkness at Christ's crucifixion spoke of God's holy wrath against the wicked. What about you and I dear reader? Can we boast that we are not like these people? We deserve no less than they for we read in Eph. 2:3, "(we) were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." How humbling, but listen further in that same passage: "But God who is rich in mercy…hath quickened us together in Christ." That's the gospel, that's our only hope and comfort. "For by grace are ye saved through faith." Pray that God will strengthen our faith that we may walk as children of the light. Psalter 71:1, 2, 5.

January 9 Read Exodus 10:24-29

The darkness was lifted from Egypt and Pharaoh summons Moses into his presence once more. The terror of that sea of blackness had subsided and so he makes one more attempt to bargain with the Almighty. He agreed to let the people go, including their little ones, but insisted that the flocks and herds be left behind. In his stubborn rebellion he seeks to retain their herds as hostages to insure the peoples' return. When Moses adamantly maintains that not even a hoof be left

behind, Pharaoh in great fury tells him to leave and threatens to slay him if he returns. This should not surprise us, for from the beginning of time, the church has faced persecution and death from the world. Moses was not frightened by the king's threat, and neither should we be if facing a similar threat, for God is on our side. Most of us live in an environment in which our lives are not threatened because of our faith, but beware lest we become complacent. Satan works diligently in many subtle ways to destroy the church. Our comfort and assurance is that the God who hardened Pharaoh's heart to deliver his people, and to show his almighty power, is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and he will be our Guide even unto death. Psalter 203:1, 2, 5.

January 10 Read Exodus 11:1-10

The first three verses of this chapter must be considered parenthetical and could better read, "Now the Lord had said to Moses…." Pharaoh is told that the final plague to descend upon Egypt would be the death of every firstborn in the land and describes the great outcry of sorrow coming from every home. In contrast to this, he states that not even a dog would dare to make a sound against the Israelites. He further predicts that Pharaoh and his servants will not only permit the people to go, but will actually bow down to Moses and thrust the Israelites out of Egypt. He then leaves Pharaoh's presence in great anger. None of this has any effect on the king. He is determined to go in his wicked way and refuses to obey God. But God is on the throne and controls every step of this process in order to show his power and judgment upon the wicked and his mercy to Israel, his firstborn son. What a privilege is ours to serve him. Let us resolve to honor him today by walking in thankful obedience. Psalter 207:1-4.

January 11 Read Exodus 12:1-10

The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron to give specific instructions for their impending departure from Egypt after the last manifestation of his power and wrath would be poured out upon that land. This departure was an event of such importance that even the month in which they were to leave would be the beginning of months on their religious calendar. A lamb with no defects must be selected on the tenth day, kept apart until the fourteenth day, and then be killed with its blood sprinkled on the lintel and side posts of their doors. The lamb must be roasted with fire and eaten in haste with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. All this had significance for the children of Israel as we shall see later in the chapter. These instructions were divinely given by a holy and sovereign God, who rightly demands that we obey him and worship him as he commands. As churches, we are committed to the "regulative principle" of worship. Only those elements of worship are permitted that are prescribed by Scripture. Nothing else may be introduced as part of the worship. Young people and children who will be taking your place in the church, hold fast to this principle, cherish it with all your heart, for only then will God be pleased to bless us. Psalter 222:1, 2, 7.

January 12 Read Exodus 12:11-20

Here we have the institution of the Passover. It was first of all a sacrifice, pointing to the fact that the people of Israel were in themselves no better than the Egyptians. They must be covered by the blood of the lamb to satisfy God's justice. The Passover lamb in itself could not do this, but only as it pointed to Christ the true Lamb of God. The Passover was also a meal. They had to have sustenance for the journey that would be undertaken, but it was more than that. As his covenant people, they partook of Christ and had fellowship with him. The bitter herbs reminded them of their bondage, while the unleavened bread signified the purging out of the old leaven of sin and their becoming a holy people unto the Lord. This was all typical, of course. The reality is the church redeemed through the sacrifice of the true Lamb of God on Calvary's cross. Read the description of the church in L.D. 21, Q.A. 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism and thankfully say from the heart "that I am and forever shall remain a living member thereof." Psalter 374:1, 3, 5.

January 13 Read Exodus 12:21-28

In obedience to God's command, Moses called the elders of Israel together and related to them all that God spoke to him regarding the Passover preparations and their coming deliverance. They in turn must inform the congregation. He spelled out exactly what they must do and surely explained the great significance of all these instructions. Each thing had its typical and deeper meaning, with the lamb as the central theme. It had to be perfect; its blood must be shed and sprinkled on the lintel and side posts of the door; not a bone could be broken; the people must eat it, and none must remain to be defiled. Space will not suffice to reveal all that this momentous occasion signified, but God in his great mercy showed that the only way that an unworthy people could possibly be redeemed was through the covering of the blood. When the destroyer saw the blood he would pass over that house. What was the people's reaction when they heard this? We read that they "bowed the head and worshipped". Today we will hear that same gospel of the Lamb who was slain for his beloved church. Shall we not also bow our heads and worship with unspeakable gratitude for so great a salvation? Psalter 269:1-4.

January 14 Read Exodus 12:29-36

It was midnight on the Lord's clock and the tenth and last plague was visited upon the Egyptians. Every firstborn in the land from the palace to the prison was struck with death, with no family excluded, plus the firstborn of their cattle. Gone was the wicked pride and rebellion of King Pharaoh. His spirit for the first time is broken, and although his mind is as dark as ever, he is forced to acknowledge that Jehovah is God. He calls for Moses and Aaron yet that night and tells them to leave the country along with the Israelites, their children and their herds. The Egyptians likewise urged the people to depart, and true to the word of the Lord to Moses at the burning bush, they willingly gave jewelry and clothing to the

Israelites plus anything else for which they asked. There are many references throughout Scripture of Israel being called out of Egypt and is rich with typology. Even as the nation of Israel, whom God called his firstborn Son (Ex. 4:22) is called out of bondage and sin, so God's firstborn Son, Jesus Christ, is also called out of Egypt (Matt. 2:15) and must die to satisfy the justice of God and redeem his church. Is that firstborn Son your Savior and Lord, dear reader? Then pray for grace to leave the Egypt of this world and consecrate your life to his service. Psalter 289:1, 14, 15.

January 15 Read Exodus 12:37-42

What a memorable night that was when this huge multitude of people began their exodus from the land of Egypt. No more lashes from the overseer's whips and no more servitude in bondage. It is estimated that some two million souls laden with spoil from the Egyptians, plus much cattle began this journey. We read that the sojourning of the children of Israel who dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. Now they leave in haste which meant that they could only take unleavened bread for their journey. Much significance is given to this exodus as a wonderwork of the Lord and the people are instructed to observe this great deliverance throughout their generations. Every step of the way the Lord reminded the Israelites of his glorious redemption by signs and wonders. He also reminds the church today of that same redemption through the finished work of Christ Jesus. We are reminded of it through partaking of the Lord's Supper and through the preaching of the Word. Treasure it, people of God, young and old and instruct your children accordingly. Psalter 191:5, 6, 7.

January 16 Read Exodus 12:43-51

This passage relates the Lord's instructions to Moses regarding the ordinance of the Passover prior to their departure from Egypt. Only those who bore the sign of the covenant could partake of the paschal lamb. The Lord was very meticulous in describing who was allowed to participate in this solemn occasion. To desecrate the eating of the Passover lamb was a profaning of the ordinance. To partake in faith was a most blessed privilege. We read that the children of Israel did as the Lord commanded. Young people, we realize that parents, pastors and elders encourage you to publicly profess your faith in Christ. When this occurs, it is a cause for them and the entire church to rejoice. But do you realize that Christ himself said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32). What an incentive! May you by God's grace be led to fully participate in the communion of the saints. Psalter 112:1-3.

January 17 Read Exodus 13:1-10

God is determined, and rightly so, that his work of redemption be remembered, not only by the people that actually left the bondage of Egypt, but by their generations as well. How the Lord stressed that this deliverance was brought about by him alone! Twice he states that with a strong hand he brought them out of Egypt. His claim on Israel is absolute for they are his people whom he actually called his firstborn son (Ex. 4:22). He established the ordinance of the feast of unleavened bread, a seven day event culminating in a feast to the Lord. It would be a sign upon their hand, a memorial between their eyes, and a law in their mouth. Tell this to thy son, the Lord says, that they may see in picture form, the deliverance from sin, the earthly pilgrimage through the desert to the heavenly Canaan, and how it all points to Christ. Without his perfect sacrifice, there could be no pardon for sins, no redemption and no hope of eternal glory. But he satisfied God's justice and he "ever liveth to make intercession for us" Rom. 7:25. Remember this, people of God, and be sure to tell your children. Psalter 215:1-3.

January 18 Read Exodus 13:11-16

One more ordinance God established to be observed, when he brought Israel into the land of Canaan, was the consecration of the firstborn. All the firstborn sons of the nation and every firstborn male animal were to be consecrated to the Lord. The firstlings of all clean beasts were to be sacrificed, but the firstborn of unclean animals such as donkeys were to be redeemed, or bought back by sacrificing a lamb in its place. And once again the Lord stresses the point that when their sons asked the meaning of this ordinance, the parents must instruct them of the great deliverance from the house of bondage by the strength of the Lord. Also that the Lord slew all the firstborn of Egypt but in his mercy spared Israel's firstborn. Therefore every firstborn male shall be called holy to the Lord. The parents are required to redeem them with a sacrifice. We too, as God's people are redeemed; not with sacrifices, of silver and gold, "but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot." Having that knowledge then, shall we not walk each day, whether we are young or old, in a manner consistent with that confession? Psalter 111:1, 3, 4.

January 19 Read Exodus 13:17-22

One might think that the Lord would lead this tremendous host by the shortest possible route to the promised land of Canaan. But the Lord in his wisdom had many reasons not to do so. The shortest route meant military encounters with the Philistines and although the people acquired some weapons, they were not ready for battle. They must first undergo a long period of training and learn many spiritual lessons in the wilderness. Many other reasons will unfold as we delve into their long desert journey. God never forsakes his people, but leads them each step of the way. The Israelites had their pillar of cloud and fire. We have God's Word which is a lamp to our feet and a light upon our path. Sometimes God leads us in a way of pain, sorrow or trials, and although it is difficult for our flesh to bear, yet we know it is for our good and we must with patience wait on him, praying, "thy will be done." Psalter 210:1, 4, 5.

January 20 Read Exodus 14:1-12

We may ask, why did the Lord lead the children of Israel into a situation in which Pharaoh would believe they were hopelessly trapped? One answer is given that the Lord purposed to harden Pharaoh's heart which will lead him to his final destruction. Another is that he will be "honoured upon Pharaoh" thereby glorifying his own name. We also read of the first instance of Israel murmuring against the Lord when they see the Egyptians coming after them with an army. The Lord deliberately leads them into an impossible situation so that they may realize that they cannot rely on their own strength to deliver them. Trapped between the mountains and the Red Sea, there was no avenue of escape except by divine deliverance. We too are encompassed by a mountain of sin and a sea of guilt and there is no hope for deliverance, except for the regenerating grace of God in our hearts giving us new life and the desire to serve him. Pray for grace each day to walk in thankful obedience. Psalter 352:1-4.

January 21 Read Exodus 14:13-18

Moses reacted to the people's rebellion by saying, "Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord". He answers them that this will be the last they will see of the Egyptians. At the same time he must have cried to the Lord, for the Lord said, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." Then he instructs Moses to lift up his rod and divide the sea. The Lord twice states that he will have the honor upon Pharaoh and that the Egyptians must acknowledge that he is the Lord. We see multitudes today feverishly pursuing the fame, riches and pleasures that the world has to offer, but it all leads to destruction. Are we listening to the words of Moses, "Fear not, and see the salvation of the Lord"? Then follows the Lord's command, "Go forward." Let us also follow this command by faith with him as our guide, and strive to bring glory to his name. Psalter 375: 1, 3, 4.

January 22 Read Exodus 14:19-22

What a marvelous occurrence took place in this passage of Scripture. First of all the leading pillar of fire which was the manifestation of Christ's presence moved behind the children of Israel and was a shining light to them, but darkness to the Egyptians. The effect of this separation by the Lord was that the enemy could not come near his people. When Moses stretched out his rod the waters divided, making walls on both sides forming a dry path in the midst of the Red Sea. Unbelievers in their folly try to find natural causes for this phenomena,but this was a wonder, a marvelous sign of the power of God, who leads his people by his grace. This was also an act of faith on the part of Israel, for we read in Hebrews 11:29, "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land." It is also typical of baptism as we read in the prayer of the baptism form: "(thou) has led thy people Israel through the midst of the Sea upon dry ground, by which baptism was signified". Read this beautiful form, children and young people. Cherish your covenant sign and do not bring shame to it by sinful actions. Thank God for his mercy in choosing you and walk as one of his professing children. Psalter 143:1, 3.

January 23 Read Exodus 14:23-31

We read of the final destruction and judgment of Pharaoh and his army. Although the last plague had broken his resistance, yet he was not humbled in true repentance. When he heard that Israel was encamped by the Red Sea, he was determined by wicked hatred to pursue and return them to slavery. This was God's doing, as he hardened Pharaoh's heart because he will show his power over this evil tyrant. It was a disaster for the Egyptians as they in their folly pursued Israel in the sea. When the Israelites were safely across the water, Moses is instructed to stretch out his hand that the waters might engulf and drown the Egyptians. God is glorified in the salvation of his people and the destruction of the enemy. The reaction of Israel was that they feared the Lord and believed. Oh, not every one possessed faith and believed, but those whom God chose from all eternity did. Can you say, dear reader, as the father of the demon possessed son said to Jesus, "Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief"? Then you have everything! Psalter 342:1-3.

January 24 Read Exodus 15:1-13

When Moses and the people of Israel fully comprehended the amazing deliverance that the Lord accomplished on their behalf, they couldn't contain themselves and burst into a mighty chorus of praise. They were free, free to live their lives unshackled by cruel taskmasters. Led by Moses, the hills echoed with this inspired psalm of praise that extolled God and him alone. "He is a man of war," they sang. He destroyed the enemy. His right hand dashed them in pieces; his wrath burned them as straw; by his breath the waters served to both kill the enemy, but save his people. This forerunner of the Psalms gives all the glory to God, extolling his greatness, revealing his wrath, but showing mercy to his redeemed people. We read in James 5:13, "Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." Let us do likewise. God gave us songs to sing and reasons to sing them. Moses' psalm of praise pointed to salvation in Christ. Let us join their chorus too and sing, "The Lord is my strength and song and he is become my salvation." Psalter 290:1, 2, 8.

January 25 Read Exodus 15:14-21

Sometimes we tend to worry about the future. We see wars and unrest, increasing wickedness in the world, and impending persecution of the church rearing its ugly head. The church is so small. What will our children and grandchildren have to face in their lives? The Lord is well aware of this, even as he knew that the children of Israel would face many formidable enemies on their journey to Canaan. What do we hear the mighty chorus of the Israelites sing? "Fear grips Philistia, Edom is dismayed, Moab trembles, the Canaanites melt with fear." The Israelites were given this assurance as they began their pilgrimage to the earthly Canaan. We too have this assurance on our way to the heavenly Canaan, and although

our journey may be difficult at times for the flesh, we can confidently say with the apostle Paul in Rom. 8:31, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" That alone is our hope and comfort. Psalter 137:1, 2, 6.

January 26 Read Exodus 15:22-27

The Israelites began their journey into the desert. In these first three days, the scenery began to change from one of fertile plains of Egypt to barren expanses of wilderness. They began their journey with confidence and probably expected that ahead of them lay only a smooth road into Canaan. But now comes the trials. Their supply of water is exhausted, they are tired and thirsty, and when they came to Marah they found water but it was so bitter they could not drink it. So they murmur against Moses, but in actuality they murmured against Christ who was the antetype of Moses and who leads his people out of sin and death. The Lord instructs Moses to cast a tree into the waters and miraculously they were made sweet. We too tend to murmur when we encounter disappointments and trials in our lives. This is sinful, for when we are led through the wilderness of trouble and bitterness, it is to prove and test us that our faith may be made stronger. Pray for grace to patiently endure afflictions knowing that all things work together for our good. Psalter 329:1, 2, 4.

January 27 Read Exodus 16:1-8

After a restful stay at Elim for about a month, the children of Israel resumed their journey into the wilderness. Their supply of food soon ran out and again they murmured, this time very sinfully, exclaiming that they would rather had died in Egypt with their stomachs full than to die from hunger in this wilderness. How soon they forgot the wonder works of God and his promise that he would lead them to the promised land. We must not believe that every one, head for head, murmured. While the majority complained, the remnant prayed. The Lord tells Moses that he will rain bread from heaven in the morning and provide flesh in the evening for their daily sustenance. That bread from heaven was a material substance that gave physical nourishment. It was a picture of the true bread from heaven of which you may partake today in faith as you attend divine worship and hear the preaching of the Word. Christ is that living bread. Hear him today. May we truly hunger for that bread and be filled with thanksgiving and praise to God for such a great salvation. Psalter 311:1, 2, 5.

January 28 Read Exodus 16:9-21

Before the people could actually see and eat the manna that the Lord would provide, they must assemble and behold the glory of God in the cloud. This indicated that the manna was a very evident sign of the presence of the Lord as the God of their salvation. The giving of the manna not only would sustain them physically, but was also meant to be a trial of their faith. Every day they must gather it, an omer per person, which amounted to about five pints each. None of it might be left until the morning since it would then decay and become rancid as many found out. This meant that each day anew they were completely dependent on God for their existence. Many received it as only physical food, but to those who believed, the manna served as a means to strengthen their faith and to confess "that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord," Deut. 8:3. May that be our confession as well, trusting him not only to supply our daily bread, but above all, grace to walk in thankfulness and obedience unto him. Psalter 292:1, 3, 4, 5.

January 29 Read Exodus 16:22-31

In this passage we read about a special provision made for the Sabbath. God instituted the Sabbath in Paradise and we read no more of it until now, but we should not assume that the people were unfamiliar with it. However, now the Lord gives a precept that called for its strict observance in the cessation of all manual labor. To that end, no manna would fall on the Sabbath and the people were to gather a double portion on the previous day, which would be miraculously preserved. The Lord instituted this day as a day of rest from all weekly toil, a holy day, consecrated to him and his service. How do you celebrate the Sabbath, dear reader? Let us remind ourselves what the Lord says in Is. 58:13 & 14: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Psalter 320:1-5.

January 30 Read Exodus 16:32-36

This chapter has dealt with the wondrous provision of manna for the children of Israel. It now concludes with instructions from the Lord to fill a container with an omer of manna to be preserved in a sacred place, namely the ark of the testimony. We know that the ark was not yet constructed, so although these verses deal with the issue of manna, this command was probably given to Moses after the tabernacle was built. It was important for the generations following to learn about this manna and all that it signified. It was truly a physical, life sustaining bread, but most importantly it pointed to Christ who is the bread of life. There is life only in Christ. He took away the guilt of our sins and merited eternal life for all his own. Through faith we are ingrafted into him. Therefore the people must teach their generations the wonderful works of God. Young people, feast on that hidden manna, the Word of God. Parents, teach your children how privileged they are as his covenant seed, and never cease to instill in them the greatness and goodness of our God. Psalter 81:1, 2, 4.

January 31 Read Exodus 17:1-7

The Lord led the people of Israel in a southerly direction through rugged mountainous terrain, devoid of vegetation, to a place called Rephidim. They found no water for themselves, their children and their cattle. They were hot, tired, dusty and

thirsty. Instead of prayerfully looking to the Lord for help, who had wondrously sustained them thus far, the majority of the people demanded that Moses give them water. And to compound their sinful murmuring, they say in effect, "you have brought us out of Egypt to kill us with thirst" and were ready to stone him. When Moses cried to the Lord, he is told to take the elders and his rod and go to the rock at Horeb. There he must strike the rock to obtain water. Jehovah's presence in the cloud and the elders beside Moses confirmed the importance of the occasion. The rock was smitten and water gushed out. This was a picture of Christ, the rock who was smitten of God for our sins and from whom proceedeth living waters. What is your reaction, people of God, when your faith is tried? Do you rebel and murmur, or prayerfully and patiently pray for grace to be submissive and wait upon him? May God grant us that patience that endures to the end. Psalter 60:1, 3, 4.

February 1 Read Exodus 17:8-16

The Amalekites, who were descendants of Esau, attacked the Israelites while they were at Rephidim. We read in Deuteronomy 25:17 and 18 that they struck down all who lagged behind when they were faint and weary, and significantly, the reason is given that the Amalekites feared not God. A band of men was chosen and proceeded to fight Amalek. Moses took the rod of God in his hand and stood on a hill. When the rod was stretched out, Israel prevailed; when the rod was let down, Amalek prevailed. This rod was the symbol of the power of God. The lifting up and letting down of the rod testified that they were fighting the battle of the Lord against Amalek who opposed him. It also showed that they could not win in their own strength, and it proved that the victory was not theirs but Jehovah's. This is true for us, too, as God's people. We are called upon daily to fight the battle of faith. If we attempt to do so in our own power, we will fail. Only through faith, which is a gift of God, can we prevail. Significantly the Lord commands a memorial to be written for the church of all ages that Amalek is a prototype of the powers of darkness which war against it. An altar is erected and called: "Jehovah, my Banner." Hold that banner before you, people of God, as you march to that heavenly Canaan. Psalter 353:1-3.

February 2 Read Exodus 18:1-6

We have an account here of the meeting of Moses and his father-in-law, Jethro. Jethro, also called Reuel, was the priest of Midian and is believed to be a descendant of Abraham through Keturah. He brings with him Moses' wife and two sons. We are informed in these verses that Moses had sent Zipporah with her children back to Jethro, most likely after the occurrence at the inn in chapter 4:25. Jethro is a God-fearing priest and, although the historic line of the covenant is continued with Jacob, we see that it does not immediately die out in other generations. Moses had lived with Jethro for forty years while God prepared him for the arduous task of leading Israel out of bondage and up to Canaan. The names of his two sons are given, and it is interesting to note the meaning of them. Gershom means "stranger" which Moses experienced in the land of Median, away from his own people. Eliezer means "The Lord is my help and will deliver me from the sword of Pharaoh". Most of us don't follow this custom, but there's much to be said for both parents and children when a name is chosen with a godly connotation. Psalter 360:1, 4, 5.

February 3 Read Exodus 18:7-12

Even in Midian the news had come to Jethro's ears about the mighty deliverance wrought by God for his people Israel. Now as he sat in Moses' tent, Moses carefully recounted in detail all what had transpired in the land of Egypt up to the present time. Upon hearing all of this, Jethro breaks forth with a joyful exclamation: "Blessed be the Lord who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians". Then, as a priest in his own right, he offered a sacrifice of burnt offerings to the Lord. Aaron and all the elders of Israel were summoned to this sacred service after which they ate bread before the Lord. What a beautiful and solemn occasion! Today being the Lord's day, we have the same privilege. We bring the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart (Ps. 51:17), which is acceptable to God. We also feast on the bread of life, which is the Word of God, and break forth with a doxology of praise, "Blest be the Lord our father's God." That is a great blessing, people of God, a reason for joyful thanksgiving and it is a solemn responsibility to faithfully use these means. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation" (Heb. 2:3). Psalter 266:1-3.

February 4 Read Exodus 18:13-27

The very next morning after the sacrificial feast offered by Jethro, Moses resumed his duties as lawgiver and judge of the people. Jethro observed how dedicated Moses was to this task and how much work it involved from morning to evening. Being a man of wisdom, Jethro soon realized that this burden was too heavy for Moses. He proposed that if God approved, able men should be selected from the people to judge small matters between persons, and any great matters or necessary spiritual guidance be handled by Moses. Moses wisely went with this matter to the Lord as Jethro proposed. The result was that a workable system was put into practice thereby lifting an almost impossible burden of work from Moses. God saw to it that Jethro appeared in that moment of history to make a necessary change. God is aware of all our problems and heartaches that burden us. He may not send a Jethro into our lives to solve our difficulties, but he does say, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." I Peter 5:6, 7. Psalter 398:1-3.

The Gift (7)[1]

by Tom Cammenga

A few days later the old man sat at the table in his kitchen having coffee with Janet. Having seen her outside earlier straightening a few things up in the yard he had noticed that although she was going through the motions something just didn't seem right. Thinking that maybe she was distracted for some reason he had called out the back door to her to come over for a cup of coffee with the hope he could determine if there was anything wrong. Besides, he needed someone to talk to anyway.

"Oh this tastes wonderful Mr. Michealson," Janet said as she wrapped her cold hands around the steaming mug of coffee. "I didn't realize it was so cold outside but I wanted to get the hoses put away and the sandbox toys cleaned up before the weather gets bad."

She slowly brought the mug up to her lips and took a small sip. "Mmmm, that hits the spot. I actually have some bulbs that I have to get planted too but I don't know if I am going to get time today." She paused then and distantly watched the steam from the coffee gently rise into the air and disappear.

The old man looked at her from across the table over his own cup of coffee and before she said anymore had the feeling that he would soon find out whatever it was that was bothering her. He decided not to say anything and simply waited for her to continue.

"I got a call from Ruth's doctor a little while ago and he wants Jack and me to come into the office at 4:00 p.m.," she said as she slowly traced the top of the mug with the index finger of her left hand.

For a couple of weeks Ruth, the oldest of their children at fourteen, had been complaining of soreness in the upper part of her left leg. They had not thought much of it until earlier in the week when it had begun to swell a bit. An appointment was made and although the doctor had not seemed overly concerned he had ordered some tests done and told them that he would be in touch with them when the results came back. Just before they left he had mentioned that there was a slight possibility that it could be something serious but more than likely it was simply the result of a muscle sprain or some other type of injury.

"He wouldn't tell me anything over the phone. He said that he really wanted to talk to both of us in the office." The concern for her daughter, now quite visible on her face, was suddenly replaced by concern for the old man as she looked across the table at him.

Upon hearing of the request of the doctor that Janet and her husband come into the office the old man was immediately taken back to that terrible day that he and Jenny had been informed of the cancer that would soon take her away from him. In an instant he relived that day as well as the many difficult days that had followed. He seemed to be caught in a memory that he couldn't get out of.

"Is everything alright Mr. Michealson?" Janet asked as she reached across the table and touched his hand.

He glanced at her then and realizing that his mind had taken him far off once again. He smiled slightly and nodded his head.

"Sure, I'm fine. Little things bring back the memories and I got a bit caught up in one just now." Although his face was calm and the hint of a smile pulled at the corners of his mouth his eyes told Janet everything she needed to know.

"Don't worry about it," he said rather sternly then, cutting off the "I'm sorry" before she could even say it. "I suppose in time those little things hopefully won't bring it all back but right now they do and that is just the way it is," he said with a nod of his head and a smile as if to add emphasis to what he had just said.

Realizing that he had purposely ended that subject she continued to tell him what was on her mind.

"Jack and I kind of talked this through already, knowing that it was possible that it could be serious but I guess I was hoping that we would just get a call letting us know that everything was alright." Her eyes fell to her mug as she carefully raised it to her lips for another sip.

"Did the doctor give you any idea of what it could be when he said it could be serious?" he asked as he sat back in his chair.

Janet leaned forward and set her mug back on the table.

"No, he pretty much just left it there but I suppose

the logical assumption is that it could be some type of cancer or something along those lines."

"What about Ruth? Does she know anything about this?" he asked, concern now showing on his face.

"Yes, actually we talked to her about it for quite a while when we got home from the first appointment and she seemed pretty good with it."

Janet stood up then and walked over to the counter where she placed her mug and turned to look at the old man.

"She doesn't know about the appointment today though. I think Jack and I will tackle that first," she said as she tried to smile but failed miserably.

"Well my dear," the old man said with some vigor as he stood up and put his own mug on the counter, "that is a bridge you will have to cross this afternoon but for now we have bulbs to plant so help me find my coat and we'll get started."

She supposed that she probably shouldn't have been surprised knowing what the old man was like but it caught her just a bit off guard. She couldn't help but smile at his back as he moved past her in search of his coat.

The rest of the morning and early afternoon they talked almost non-stop as they planted the bulbs in various places throughout the yard. There were daffodils, tulips, crocuses, hyacinths, and a variety of other bulbs. The conversation revolved around the doctor appointment but strayed to many other subjects. For a few hours the loneliness of an old man didn't seem quite so lonely and the worry of a young mother wasn't quite so worrisome. They finished shortly before 2:00 p.m. and Janet hurried off to get the kids from school.

As he put his gardening gloves on the shelf in the garage he noticed the pail on the shelf beneath it that contained what had been some of his wife's gardening utensils. He smiled as he watched in his mind's eye as his wife scurried around the yard gently caring for all the plants and flowers. It had been one of her great joys and she had taken care to make sure they were all just so. Sometimes he would rearrange things a bit just to get a rise out of her and she would go about setting things back the way she had them grumbling about men not knowing what they were doing when it came to gardening. The smile on his face continued to grow and remained even as he made his way into the house.

Exhausted from the work of the morning he settled into his chair for a short nap. Shortly before dozing off he thought how beautiful it would be when all those bulbs that they had planted in the ground bloomed in the coming spring. That would certainly be something to see. Well, it was certainly something to look forward to. Amazing how something that seemed to have no life would lie dormant for so long and then spring to life once again. Amazing…. ❖

[1]*Previous chapters in Oct 03, Oct 06, Nov 06 Jan 07, Apr 07 & Oct 07.*

Tom is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

Consider the Creation

When I In Awesome Wonder...

Michigan's Golden Coast

Fire

by Deanne Wassink

Fire! Fire! How quickly those words strike fear into our hearts! Yet, fire is the means of rejuvenating the creation along the shoreline.

It starts oftentimes with a very small flame in the tinder dry dunegrass caused by a lightning strike, fireworks, a match, cigarette butt or a fire poorly attended.

The result is the same—a roaring inferno. It spreads faster than you can run pushed by the constant lakeshore winds. It doesn't stop until it runs out of dry fuel.

I have seen terrible damage. This past summer, three year-round residences filled with material possessions and memories were burned to the ground. Only blackened skeletons remained. The cause was careless use of fireworks. Other times it may be a destroyed landscape or wooden stairway to the beach left a smoldering and charred mess. One of my workers even saved a house by scooping sand on the encroaching flame with his bare hands.

Many times I have been called to hillside burns to give my "professional opinion" as to whether the dunegrass will grow back sufficiently to protect the dunes from blowing away. It looks like all the plants are dead and charred. Invariably I tell them to wait until the end of summer to see what recovers. " Just wait to see what happens." Unless there is a lot of wood to burn at a high temperature and scorch their roots, the dunegrass and other dune plants come back. In fact, they come back stronger and healthier than ever before.

The reason for this phenomenon is that the fire releases the nutrients of the dead plants back into the sand. It is God's way of cleaning up a mess and fertilizing what remains. Soon the points of new sprouts of dunegrass begin to poke through the blackened sand. Within a year, the plants make it all green again and little clues remain of the conflagration.

Fire is a good thing in the dunes. The only bad thing is when men and their possessions are hurt or damaged in the process.

I am using the example of dunegrass and the dunes, however, the same thing is true of wildflowers, meadows, prairies and old growth or diseased forest. Interestingly, by stopping forest fires we only delay the God created process of cleansing the earth. By interfering—necessary though it may be—we create a much more serious and deadly fire danger in the future.

Isn't it striking that the purifying process of fire is true also of us spiritually? Often God uses the fire of pain, sickness and trials to cleanse and focus us spiritually. Usually, when the pain is gone we realize that we have been brought closer to him. When we come to feel the burning of his wrath for our sins, we are driven to the cross of Christ for forgiveness. It is then that we grow in his grace and abound in good works to his glory.

Do we dare to pray for purifying fire? I think not. If we are his children we will experience it in some way. However, we must not be afraid of the fire of trials because through it blessings of salvation pour out upon us. In fact, through fire we will inherit the purified new heavens and earth where we will dwell forever with God.

Lord, preserve us in the fire!

I Peter 4:12; I Corinthians 3:13.

Sacred Flame

Burn in me O Sacred Flame.
Remove my natural dross,
That o'erwhelms my heart with shame,
Sins no more my spirit toss.

Burn in me O Sacred Flame.
Purify my every thought.
Shape my mind and Yours the same,
Make my own will come to naught.

Burn in me O Sacred Flame.
Remove my black heart of sin.
In mercy cleanse each vile stain.
Spark Your Light of life within.

Burn in me O Sacred Flame.
Kindle a hope for glory.
Where love's prize I'll surely gain.
Singing salvation's story. ❖

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

Rev. C. Hanko

Chapter 30

Trip to Europe (continued)

edited by Karen Van Baren

Editor's Notes—In this chapter, the author takes up the story of his European tour once again. He had first traveled the Netherlands with family, and then joined a tour group to visit various places of interest in other European countries.

We joined a tour group now, and headed into Germany. We first exchanged some of our money for German currency. Before long we were traveling along the autobahn, the freeway built by Hitler to speed up the transport of war supplies. We came to Cologne and had a coffee break. We passed through Bonn, the birthplace of Beethoven, and soon saw the Rhine River next to us. In the afternoon we took a cruise down the Rhine, seeing all the beautiful vineyards, castles, the Lorelei, and other points of interest. Soon we transferred to the bus again and by 8:15 we were ready for supper in a hotel in Manheim, where we spent the night.

There was no doubt that our driver, Alberito, was a capable, experienced driver who seriously minded his business. He brought us to Heidelberg where we took a tour of Heidelberg castle. Here we stood on a hill overlooking the city and the university. Here, the Heidelberg Catechism, which we still cherish today, was written by Caspar Olevianus and Zacharias Ursinus.

At noon we were in Ulm. This brought back memories to Rich, who stayed here for some time during World War II. The Catholic Church had the highest steeple of any in Europe (529 feet high).

At 3 o'clock in the afternoon we crossed the border of Austria and entered the Bavarian Alps. The pass was 3,350 feet high, which would have been enjoyed much more if it had not been raining, with the clouds covering the lofty peaks. Arriving at Innsbruck, we attended a Tyrol festival with all sorts of Bavarian music from various unique instruments, such as a ten foot long horn. This was an old building, the room was packed, a real firetrap. But all went well. We retired at 11:15.

In the morning, the sun was shining brightly, so we took the opportunity to see Innsbruck. Soon we reached the border of Italy, where our German money was exchanged for Italian lira. We got a whole fist full. One would think we could really go on a spree with all that money, but soon we discovered that a cup of coffee already took a good bit out of our fortune. We traveled through the Dolomites, the mountain range in Northern Italy. We stopped at Crystal Mt. and to our surprise we saw the landscape depicted on the mural we have in the dinette in our condo. We crossed the Bremer Pass and awhile later arrived at the Villa Fiorita, about 25 miles from Venice, where we intended to spend the night.

In the evening, we took a boat ride to Venice to see the city by night. We walked around St. Mark's Square, were served champagne, and then got a ride back to our hotel. I think the ride would have been a bit more enjoyable if the "water bus" had not been so packed that you had someone breathing down your neck.

Thursday, August 20, we toured Venice. At 8:30 the water bus left to take us to the city. Here we saw water, water, every where. Even the main streets were canals. We passed a funeral procession in boats. We saw how high the water reached at times, seeping into the first floor of the buildings. We arrived at St. Mark's Square and had a tour of the church. Then our group split up to wander around. Some took a gondola ride. Some shopped. In the afternoon the rest shopped while I rested by sitting in St. Mark's Square, unable to avoid the droppings of the many doves that flew about. We took a ride up the Bell Tower to see the other islands, and also the island where President Reagan met with other foreign bigwigs. After dinner we were ready to call it a day.

The next day we set out for Rome. We passed fields of sunflowers with their brown faces to the sun, also sugar beets and peach groves. We passed over the Apennine

Mountains. As I looked around me at the rest of our tour group, I saw an elderly couple toward the front. They both were married for the second time. He was German and she was Dutch. Since I also could speak Dutch, she liked to talk to me. They were from Australia and had with them a daughter Lorraine. Then there was Tina, who joined up with Lorraine. She had been doing mission work in Germany and was about to return to Ontario. And in front of me were Mr. and Mrs. Larson who came from Minnesota and were traveling with their daughters Suzie and Mary. On the other side was a lone traveler Lynn who kept herself quite aloof. She was from California and was a Communist.

This made up quite a motley group, but you have not met all of them yet. Behind me were two couples, still quite young, who had recently moved from Australia to New Zealand. Two fellows sat across the aisle, who bought T-shirts at every stop. Besides, on that side of the aisle were four Orientals, brothers and sisters, from an island off Africa. The girls were accompanying their brothers, who were on their way to school in France. Nor could I forget the two schoolteachers, ladies from India, who wore a different sarong every day. Poor Alberito, who had to carry out their baggage very day! But they did know how to push their way through a crowd. There were a few more, but they rode along almost unnoticed.

We stopped for lunch at Assisi. I did not accompany the group, since they had to climb a steep hill to visit the Basilica of Assisi. I do know that there were pay toilets there that were not very clean.

Arriving at Rome, we went to our hotel, cleaned up a bit, and then went on a tour to see Rome by night. This was quite an impressive sight! We had a special dinner with pop and wine. Each could have as much as desired.

Saturday morning. 8 o'clock the group started for St. Peter's Square. As the others went on a tour, Rich, Elaine, Ed, Bob, Allie and I went on our own to the Sistine Chapel. We saw all the works of art of the Roman Catholic Church that are collected there. That church is inestimably rich with all its possessions. While the countries of the world go bankrupt, the RCC wallows in its riches. Besides a lot of the other artwork, we saw Michelangelo's painting "The Final Judgment." We spent some time admiring this great work.

The others walked, but Elaine, Allie and I took the bus to St. Peter's Square. Even the Square with all its steps was very impressive, but the cathedral was even more so. Here was the center of Roman Catholic idolatry. We went in and admired the walls with their Latin inscriptions, the high ceiling, and all the decorations. We paused a moment at what is presumed to be Peter's grave. Then we saw a mass being celebrated in the far end of the building. We watched for a little while, and then went our way.

At noon we met our tour group and took a tour with a special guide, who showed us the ruins of the old city and the entire city from another vantage point. We passed the Vatican with its huge walls. No wonder the Pope at one time called himself "the prisoner of the Vatican." But he is not anymore.

Upon our return the group made a trip to the Fountains of Tivoli. For this they had to pay extra. Rich and Elaine decided that they could go on their own at a very small cost. So while I rested at the hotel, they went by bus to Tivoli.

Another day dawned and we rode along the beautiful countryside to Naples. There we took a boat to the famous island of Capri. We were given time to look around on our own, so our little group took a ride on the tram to the top of the hill to overlook the sea and the cliffs of Sorento. Later we went back to a boat to go to Sorento where we spent the night.

Sorento was not only a very hilly city, but the streets were very narrow. Here we could only admire the skill of Alberito as he steered his bus through what looked like impossible gaps. I tended to hold my breath and draw away from the window as he crept along these narrow streets. Then it was discovered that we had left two of our traveling companions behind. Back to the hotel. They had not been called, so they had a good excuse. Once more we wended our way carefully to the highway.

We rode along the pleasant countryside to the ruins of Pompeii. As I was reading all about the sudden eruption that poured burning lava over the people of Pompeii, the others were having a closer look at the ruins. Our guide Shabon thought it was better that, because of my bad leg, I did not attempt to stumble over these ruins. We were given opportunity to roam around on our own, and soon we found ourselves in the center of the town, where an excavation was being carried out since, in digging for a sewer, ruins of an earlier city were discovered. After more sightseeing, we returned to our bus.

Our next stop was Pisa with it leaning tower. Ed took a picture here that we have hanging in our breakfast nook as a reminder of our walking about and taking in all the sights of Pisa.

Now we started on a long trek, not over, but through the mountains. It is interesting to note that we passed through 168 tunnels before we reached the other side of

the mountain. This brought us to the Italian Riviera.

We left Italy with all its attractions and arrived at Monaco, where we saw the palace of Prince Rainier, who was married to Grace Kelly. This is an attractive city, built on the hillside overlooking the sea. From here our churches sent a broadcast through Transworld Radio, which was focused on England, but spread to Germany, and was even heard on short wave in Tasmania. This broadcast brought us a splendid response, and it is through the station that we came into contact with the churches of Jamaica.

We rode along the French Riviera to the city of Nice. It was raining as we crossed the French Alps, so we failed to see the towering peaks. But the sun soon broke through, giving a beautiful double rainbow and a splendid view of the mountains and plains.

We stopped at Calvin's city, Geneva, Switzerland. We paid a short visit to a garden of flowers there, but our chief interest was in the university. There we spent considerably more time viewing the wall with its carvings of the four Reformers, Farel, Calvin, Knox and Beza. We would have liked to see Calvin's church also, but that was not included in this tour. What we did see brought back a strong appreciation for what God has wrought through these Reformers, having preserved the truth for us even to this day. The guide made the remark that the followers of Calvin are called "Calvinists", who never have any fun. We disagreed.

We traveled through the Swiss Alps with their attractive chalets nestled on the hillsides. We admired the trim roofs and the numerous flower boxes at the windows. We made a stop at the city of Berne, where we saw the bears, after which this capital of the Swiss Confederation was named, and we also had time to walk about the town. We saw, among other attractions, the glockenspeil, from which appeared a crowing rooster and also men marching about blowing their horns as the clock struck the hour. There was also a huge chess game board painted on the sidewalk.

Our next stop was Paris. We were privileged to take a ride through Paris, in order to see the city in the lights at night. After we spent a night at our hotel, our group went to meet the rest of the party at a restaurant in downtown Paris. Rich and Elaine, Ed and Bob, Allie and I walked to the subway, the Metro, to take us downtown. There we met the rest of the party and visited the Champs Elysee, the Eiffel Tower and the Notre Dame Cathedral.

The Eiffel Tower was extremely interesting not only for its structure, but much more for its visitors. Parisians seem to be entirely indifferent toward tourists. Here people do as they please without asking what others may think. One man was lying flat on his back, taking a picture straight up into the tower. Another young man was entertaining his fiance with a long, drawn out speech, to which she attentively listened.

We stopped briefly at the Arch of Triumph. We had come to the parting of the ways. Some would leave us at this point, while we went on to London. We had a farewell party that night.

We left Paris with all its points of interest. So often we heard of these things and saw pictures of them, but it is far more interesting to see them as they are. The trip through Belgium was very scenic and pleasant. We rode through "Flanders Fields, where the poppies bloom"[1] made famous in World War I. This does not look like a war torn battlefield any more, but then France and Germany do not either.

We took a boat across the North Sea. This could have been a pleasant trip, if it were not for the fact that the boat was packed. Most of the party was eager to get across. But we did see the White Cliffs of Dover. Upon landing, we had to go through customs.

The trip through the countryside in England is nothing less than spectacular. This was one of the most scenic routes of our entire trip. I could not keep my eyes from the passing scenery.

London! Yes, I was glad to see Rome and Paris, but I think I was more eager to see London.

Since it was late afternoon, we found ourselves now completely on our own. We decided to head for the hotel where we have our reservations. So the thing to do was to look for the subway. This was not too difficult to find. Only a slight delay and we were on our way at fast speed. But then the train came to a halt and we were told that this was as far as we could go for the present because there was an obstruction on the tracks ahead. We got out of the car, and soon there came another train, which took us a short distance further. Then we stopped again, since a suicide had been committed on the tracks ahead. We stepped out of the car to the platform to wait. After awhile, we were able to continue on our way.

It was late when we stepped off the train at our destination. In fact, it was close to midnight. Most of us were so tired that we went off to bed without supper.

The next morning we were ready to go sightseeing. Back we went by subway to the heart of London. At the subway we purchased tickets that could be used on the Underground and the buses in the city at least for the day. London has its own attractions. We stopped at the Tower of London and saw a Beefeater guarding the tower. We

saw Big Ben and the Thames River. We also saw Clarence House, where the Queen mother lived.

We took a bus to Westminster Abbey where we saw a bobby on guard. From there we went to No. 10 Downing Street, where Margaret Thatcher, the then current Prime minister of England had her home. There we saw the changing of the guard. All the men and horses were neat and trim.

The next morning, we started out with pack and baggage. There was plenty of room in the train so we nicely stacked all our luggage at the entrance. As we traveled along the car filled up to a point where there was standing room only. At our station we had to get out, but we also needed our luggage. Rich was struggling between people's legs trying to retrieve all our possessions. In the meantime I held the door. We did retrieve everything and headed for the airport.

Our trip home was without incident, except that we were informed that this plane must make a landing in Philadelphia because it was needed in New York. This meant a delay for us. We had to pass through customs and board an old decrepit plane that took us to Detroit. We arrived in the wee hours of the morning, tired but thankful that we made the trip under God's watchful care. ❖

Endnote

[1] The author refers to a poem written by Major Mc Crae who fought in WWI. Flanders Fields refers generally to the site of many WWI battlefields.

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

Made in the Image of God

'Th' eternal God created time,
And then within those bounds
He formed the earth and all therein
Which to His praise abounds.

He looked upon this wondrous work
And He proclaimed it good:
Ev'ry element so functioned
As a perfect world should.

Creation's crowning work was man,
Whom God formed from the dust;
He breathed His spirit into him
That man in God might trust.

The image-bearer of his God—
What unsurpassed delight!
Mere creature honored by his God
To such exalted height.

Although man lost through Adam's sin
The wondrous gift He gave,
In Christ His people are restored,
Christ died His own to save.

In thankfulness may we so live
To manifest that we
Are image-bearers of our God;
Redeemed, from sin set free.

Thelma Westra

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:

Marcus James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ray Doherty—Bethel, MI

Clara Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Terry Kaptein—Byron Center, MI

Jaelyn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brian VanMaanen—Calvary, IA

Malachi, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ben Bloomendaal—Calvary, IA

Joah Edward, son of Mr. & Mrs. Justin Bultema—Cornerstone, IN

Lanae Joyce, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Philip Kuiper—Doon, IA

Benjamin Elliot, son of Rev. & Mrs. David Overway—Doon, IA

Jack Alan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Pete Byker—Faith, MI

Jacoba Cathleen, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Carl Kalsbeek—Faith, MI

Adult baptism was administered to Chad Furrow—First, MI

Madison Kaye, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Lubbers—Georgetown, MI

Jake Thomas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Mingerink—Grandville, MI

Everett John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kenton Kalsbeek—Peace, IL

Jake Robert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bob Alsum—Randolph, WI

Grace Elaine, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Matthew Velthouse—Southeast, MI

Landon Michael and Nathan Michael, sons of Mr. & Mrs. Michael Kerkstra—Southeast, MI

Evan Wyatt, son of Mr. & Mrs. Gise VanBaren—South Holland, 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:

Dawn Young—First, MI

Calvin Brown—Georgetown, MI

Mike Zwak—Georgetown, MI

Rebecca Bomers, Tim DeVries, Ryan Kregel, Dustin Hall, Ashlee Looyenga and Rebecca Looyenga.—Grandville, MI

Kevin Warner—Holland, MI

Vanessa Holthouser—Loveland, CO

Ross Kooienga—Southeast, MI

Scott Mingerink—Southeast, MI

Heather Vanden Berg—Southeast, MI

Tyler DeJong, Jennifer Van Baren, Michelle Zandstra and Bartosz Grochowski—South Holland, IL

Catherine Haveman—Trinity, MI

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. Mark VanDyke and Miss Maria Bodbyl—Faith, MI

Mr. Calvin Brown and Miss Rachel Busscher—Georgetown, MI

Mr. Martin Van de Pol and Miss Gaylene Wierenga—Immanuel, Lacombe, Alberta CAN

Mr. Tim VanderMeulen and Miss Caitlin Snyder—South Holland, IL

Music in the Woods (5)

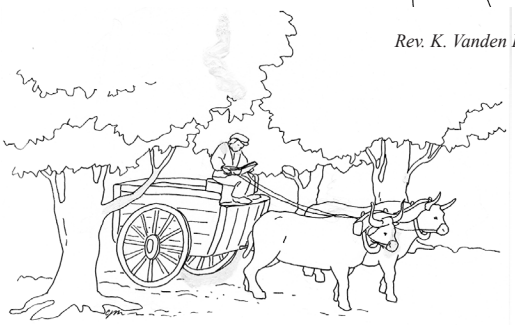
The people of the Afscheiding who began to settle in the woods of West Michigan in 1847 treasured the doctrines of election and reprobation, preached the Heidelberg Catechism, and loved to sing the word of God in the Psalms. But they discovered that the Reformed Church in America, to which they had united in 1850, did not. The RCA spoke little of election and reprobation, did not preach the Catechism, and sang hymns. They also allowed Masonic lodge membership—a serious sin. Whether one admitted it or not, to be members with the Reformed Church in America was to approve of all these things. The immigrants of Noordeloos, Polkton, Graafschap, and part of Grand Rapids, along with the Revs. Koene Vanden Bosch and Hendrik Kleyn could not approve. In 1857 they left the RCA and their many fellow Dutch immigrants who chose to remain with the RCA.

They could not in good conscience stay, but they also left in humble repentance. They had been one with this denomination for seven years, including, therefore, one in its guilt. And church splits are never a mere "fraternal adieu" as was suggested to them it ought to be. They fasted and prayed, and then marched on as all warriors of faith must move forward.

The kingdom of God always wins on this earth, but as it "cometh not with observation" (Luke 17:20), so is its victories. It appeared as if all was lost. The saints left standing for holiness of doctrine and life were few and despised. Most of the Dutch immigrants stayed with Van Raalte and the RCA—and they were not happy with those who left. Within one year Rev. Kleyn went back to the RCA as well. One minister with four small churches stood by themselves.

Rev. Vanden Bosch traveled by ox wagon on primitive roads and trails, trying to care for the four congregations as best he could. Though he was a faithful preacher, Rev. Vanden Bosch was not a gifted and educated leader such as Rev. Van Raalte was. And they were so few! They needed help and encouragement. They sent word to their church brothers in the Netherlands about the separation they believed so necessary, but only received a cold reply. They were truly alone in the world.

Rev. K. Vanden Bosch



"LITTLE LIGHTS" . . . let it shine !

by Connie Meyer

What could possibly become of one inexperienced minister and four small churches? God was watching out for his little flock. As new immigrants arrived in West Michigan, a number of them joined these churches. After six years a minister from the Netherlands finally answered a call to help them, and now more would come. Slowly and steadily they began to grow. For many years they were known as the True Dutch Reformed Church, but in 1890 they adopted the name of the Christian Reformed Church.

Yes, this is the history of those who have gone before us in the battle for the truth, for the holiness of God and of his people—and for singing the Psalms. By 1924 the battleground would again change into another chapter of the history of the spiritual warfare of God's people, but an important foundation was laid in the forests of Michigan in 1857. The truth, with its sound so complete and pure in the Psalms, would continue to ring in the music in the woods.

Find the following underlined words in the puzzle below:

"O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever. Praise ye the Lord" (Psalm 117).

G	P	R	A	I	S	E	L	T	R
R	U	K	N	E	S	I	A	R	P
E	N	D	U	R	E	T	H	E	Y
A	S	N	S	L	N	O	A	L	L
T	O	W	A	R	D	D	P	P	T
H	T	U	R	T	N	W	R	O	U
P	E	L	U	F	I	C	R	E	M
N	V	G	L	F	K	O	G	P	L
Y	E	O	N	A	S	D	N	H	Y
P	R	O	F	P	R	A	I	S	E

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

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but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."
Proverbs 29:25

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