

# REFLECTIONS

The Monthly Newsletter of Grace OPC

#### CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENTS

#### By Pastor Brian De Jong

As Biblical illiteracy steals through the church, one area of widespread ignorance and overseeing the sacraments. The father is most disturbing – ignorance concerning the becomes the "family priest" and the institusacraments. Because the Word is not seriously preached and the sacraments are so often neglected, God's people lack important knowledge regarding this aspect of Biblical Christianity. Wherever there is ignorance, there will be false teachers trying to fill the void with their own particular "spin."

In recent years several bad ideas have gained currency within Reformed circles. One error increasingly held is that the sacraments are central to salvation. Some "Reformed" people maintain that water baptism causes, or brings about, salvation.

Therefore, without water baptism one cannot be saved. Such doctrines may be acceptable to Lutherans. Roman Catholics or even Anglicans, but that has never been the position of Reformed Christianity.

Another wrong-headed notion is that the focal point of the worship service is the Lord's Supper. All the other aspects – the praying, the singing and even the preaching – are thought to be secondary to the sacrament. Again, that has been the viewpoint of other branches of Christianity, but Reformed churches have consistently considered the preaching of God's word to be the centerpiece of our worship services.

Some today are even teaching that any child may take communion if his or her parents say it's OK. Fathers assume the role of serving their children the bread and wine sometimes even in the privacy of their own homes. This practice denies the proper role

of the elders of the church in administering tional church is viewed as irrelevant and unnecessary. By contrast, in OPC churches the elders have the right and responsibility to examine applicants for communion – young and old alike. If a person makes a credible profession of faith in Je-

> sus Christ, the Session can admit that person to the Lord 's Table. They must first have been baptized, and then they can be received as "communing members." And if they ever deny Christ and reject the faith, the Session can "excommunicate" them by taking away their privileges at

the Lord's Table.

In an age of such confusion, what are we to do? A few suggestions may help spark some progress. First, we need to rediscover what the Scriptures actually teach about the sacraments. The Bible is our only rule of faith and life, so that is always where we start – what does the Bible say? Second, we must also revisit what Reformed Christianity has long taught about the sacraments. For instance, what do our Westminster Standards say about the sacraments? What does our own OPC Directory of Worship say about baptism and the Lord's Supper? Do we really understand our own position? Then finally, we need to knowledgably engage in celebrating the sacraments. With a clear understanding of what they mean, we should use them as Jesus intended. The sacraments are a great blessing to the church, when rightly used.

#### Volume 1, Issue 7 July 2006

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#### Mnemonics...

- Men's Breakfast & Study, July 8th
- Youth Group, July 9th
- Men & Boy's Cookout, July 15th



## **Ask the Pastor!**

by Pastor Brian De Jong

Since the last issue of Reflections was published, I've received several good responses to the idea of an "Ask the Pastor" column. I was delighted to one question in writing, and several others in personal discussion. For everyone's benefit, here are two "samples." Perhaps this will prime the pump for more questions, and further interaction in months to come.

Question: James 5:19-20 says, "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." In light of this passage, can a believer lose his salvation?

Answer: Throughout his epistle James deals with various challenges that God's people frequently encounter. Sins like pride, lust, evil speech, hypocrisy and worldliness can derail a Christian from a life of faith and obedience to God's word. In a very practical manner James warns his readers about these real dangers, and encourages them to pursue lives of holiness before God. From time to time, a professing Christian will stray away from the truth. Such sins can bring him under God's chastisements and even lead to physical death. To turn aside from the truth for even a short season can be catastrophic to the Christian and leave him or her spiritually devastated.

We also know that the Word of God clearly and repeatedly teaches that from before the foundations of the world, God has chosen out a people for Himself (Eph 1:4-5; Rom 9) They are His, and nothing can snatch them out of His hand (John 10:28-29). As Paul makes clear at the end of Romans 8, nothing in heaven, on earth, or in hell can separate us from the love of Christ.

The challenge is to "reconcile" these truths to one another – God's complete sovereignty and man's real responsibility. At various

times in church history, Christians have favored one of these truths and ignored or denied the other. Since Scripture teaches both, we must believe both. It must not be "either/or" but "both/and." These two concepts are entirely consistent within the mind of God, even if they sometimes perplex our finite and fallen brains

Here are some ideas that may help untie the knots:

- 1. God, and God alone, infallibly knows who are His elect people. We do not know with perfect certainty who are the elect, and who are "pretenders." God has chosen to keep certain things "secret" from us Deut 29:29.
- 2. God saves His elect through the completed work of Jesus Christ, applied to them by the Holy Spirit. Those who are regenerated by the Spirit can never become "unregenerated."
- 3. Some people may *appear* for a time to be regenerated, although they never truly were in the first place. Eventually these pretenders will turn their backs on Christ and leave the faith I John 2:19 teaches this.
- 4. Those who are truly regenerated may stray from the truth for a time and bring spiritual and/or physical harm upon themselves. David's sin with Bathsheba is the classic example, or Peter's denial of Christ on the night of the betrayal. Those who are God's children will eventually repent of their sins and come back to Christ with real sorrow demonstrating their faith by fruits in keeping with repentance.
- 5. We have a limited and finite outlook. We cannot see the hearts of men, and often do not know the difference between clever pretenders and truly regenerated believers. We can only know them by their fruits, and even those fruits can sometimes be hard to judge. It is the task of the church on earth to call all men to repentance and faith. We must urge holiness and faithfulness upon everyone especially those who make a profession of faith and are members of the visible church on earth.

- 6. When we see any member of the visible church straying from the truth, we cannot infallibly know if they are elect/regenerated or simply a clever counterfeit. However, we can tell that (a) they are straying, and (b) the error of their way may bring dire consequences upon them. We should then endeavor with all our energies to turn them back from their errors in order to save them from the consequences of their errors and to cover a multitude of sins.
- 7. What are the consequences of such serious errors? For the pretender it will be significant judgment – culminating in eternal damnation in hell. For the temporarily wayward regenerated person, it may be physical or temporal loss in this life, or the loss of spiritual blessings in the life to come. I Corinthians 3:12-15 indicate that at the final judgment, some people will receive reward for the enduring work they have done during their lifetimes. They had built with gold, silver and precious stones. Other believers spent their days on earth building with wood, hay and stubble. Their works will be burned up, and he will suffer loss. He himself will be saved, but will be as one who comes "through fire." His rewards will be minimal because he squandered his time on earth. And so as Jesus said, we can store up for ourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy, and where no thief can break in or steal. On the other hand, we can spend our lives on earth building up our treasures on earth – very shortsighted!
- 8. On the authority of James 5, and other passages like it, we should urge all men to live by faith in Jesus Christ, and in obedience to the word of God. We should especially attempt to dissuade any professing believer from following pathways of error that lead to destruction. We must never take a casual or disinterested approach when we see a professing Christian going down some dangerous path. The attitude that "you win some, you lose some" is not righteous, though you do find it sometimes in Christian circles. Most of all, we must never encourage any professing believer to actively

pursue worldliness, sin, false teaching, etc. To do so would be to spur them on to death and destruction.

# Question: Can you explain the basic differences between Calvinist and Arminian beliefs?

Answer: These two different perspectives share many common commitments – both believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God, that Jesus died to save sinners, and that the good news should be preached. The Calvinist and the Arminian are both Christians, and should expect to spend eternity together – this is really an "in-house" debate.

The first point of difference would be regarding their view of man's natural condition. Both would agree that men are sinful. Calvinists would say that fallen men are spiritually dead. Arminians would believe that fallen men are spiritually sick, and in grave danger. A good analogy is this: the Arminian viewpoint suggests that man is floundering around in the water, is going down for the third time, and is in danger of spiritually drowning. So the Arminian wants to throw him a life-ring and save him before he drowns. The Calvinist perspective says that fallen men are corpses lying at the bottom of the ocean. (See Ephesians 2:1-3; Ps 14:1-3; Rom 3:9-18)

A second point of difference has to do with election and predestination. The Calvinist understanding is that before the foundations of the world were laid, God chose out a people for Himself in Christ. He predestined particular individuals to eternal salvation through the mediation of Christ. The Arminian viewpoint either denies predestination altogether, or says that election and predestination are "conditional." By that they mean that God chose certain individuals because He saw that they would believe the Gospel and obey His word. Calvinists maintain that election is "unconditional" – not based on any merit, or potential goodness in us, but only because God sovereignly wanted to demonstrate His love toward undeserving rebels.

The third distinction has to do with the nature and extent of Christ's atonement. Arminians teach that Jesus died for "all people," but that His death is only effective for those who believe the

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gospel. In other words, they say that Jesus wanted to save all, but His salvation depends on man's decision to believe. Arminian theology therefore promotes a hypothetical or potential salvation that is activated or realized only by believers. They will often say that Jesus died "to make salvation possible" and that the hearer must then "ask Jesus

into his/her heart." Calvinist teaching says that Jesus died to save His chosen people from their sin, and that His death sealed and accomplished actual salvation for all of the elect. Jesus did not die for the reprobate. Jesus died to save "His people."

Following on this, the Calvinist says that the Holy Spirit sovereignly applies the redemption purchased by Christ to the

elect. His grace and His call are irresistible – the Holy Spirit always gets His man (or woman). The Arminian teaching suggests that the free will of men can resist the grace and call of the Holy Spirit. If that unbeliever says, "NO!" to the gospel, there is nothing that God can do. God wants to save you, and the Spirit tries to save you, but if you don't want to be saved, they are powerless to make vou become a Christian.

The last point of difference has to do with the "eternal security" of believers – can a person lose their salvation, or are they forever secure? Calvinism teaches "the perseverance of the saints" – the idea that truly regenerated people can never lose that salvation because God always perseveres with His people. And because He perseveres with us, we too will persevere with Him. That includes a commitment to holiness on the part of God's children, and we never abuse God's grace to indulge in sin. The Arminian camp is split on this question. Some believe that you can lose your salvation – repeatedly. Other Arminians believe in "once-saved-always-saved." The O-S-A-S is different from "Perseverance of the Saints" and tends to be more fatalistic. It also tends to allow greater liberty for believers to engage in sinful conduct, because "once saved, always saved..."

Finally, underlying all of these points, is the more fundamental question, "Who initiates and who responds?" Calvinism answers that "God initiates, and man responds" while Arminians tend to say, "Man initiates, and God responds." This is seen in the simple matter of the order of salvation. Calvinists believe that, "God regenerates man, and

> then man repents and believes the gospel." Arminians teach that men repent and believe, and then God the first step – man or God? Who God to man?

regenerates that person. Who takes responds to whom? Man to God, or

One more example of a helpful question and answer comes from our denominational website www.opc.org. This was submitted

by Mark Berenschot.

"Calvinism answers

that 'God initiates,

and man responds'

while Arminians tend

to say, 'Man

initiates, and God

responds."

#### Question: What is the proper Christian condolence to a Muslim [or non-Christian] coworker?

Answer: Your question is a common one, especially because the Muslim is just one type of the unbelieving persons whom Christians know, work with, and befriend. Christians struggle to know what to say to an unbelieving friend who mourns the death of a loved one precisely because their mourning occurs on the other side of the line between our belief and their unbelief.

We can best answer your question by turning to the primary passage in the Bible to comfort Christians in the face of death, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

But we don't want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who have fallen asleep, so that you don't grieve like the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so those who have fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we tell you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left to the coming of the Lord, will in no way precede those who have fallen asleep. For the

Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with God's trumpet. The dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. So we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

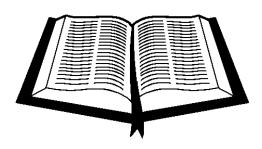
Our comfort when loved ones who belong to Christ die is the resurrection of the dead. That is, our separation from them is only for a time, and death will hold them (and/or us) only for a brief while. All our pain and sorrow will be resolved, ultimately, in the glorious return of Jesus our Savior. All of us will spend all eternity in resurrection bodies, like his, worshiping him with one another. Note carefully that the Apostle Paul does not tell Christians they should not grieve; rather, 1 Thessalonians 4:13 makes clear that we are to grieve with hope, that is, being comforted with the good news of the resurrection and the assurance that our grief is a temporary condition.

Of course, our possession of comfort is contrasted with "the rest," who must grieve without hope. This is because they have no Christian hope of the resurrection for themselves and thus cannot take comfort in any glorious reunion with loved ones at the Second Coming of Christ. This is the point at which many Christians stumble. What condolences can we offer to those whom the Bible specifically says are without hope?

We certainly must not offer any false

hope; we cannot tell unbelievers, for example, that they will see their loved ones again in glory, for that would be a lie. However, we can — in fact, I believe we must if ours is to be a truly Biblical faith — sympathize and empathize with their grief. For as Christians we affirm the reality of death and its horrific grip on all mankind. We not only acknowledge this fact, we embrace it, for it, along with the genuine reality of sin, makes sense of the Cross of Christ. God's sympathy for human pain and suffering in the omnipresent face of death is the very reason for the Gospel: "Since then the children have shared in flesh and blood, he [Christ] also himself in like manner partook of the same, that through death he might bring to nothing him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might deliver all of them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Hebrews 2:14-15)

The proper Christian condolence to a Muslim, or to any other non-Christian, is to tell him or her that you know his/her pain is real and that your own conviction is that by his Incarnation the Son of God testifies to all mankind that he dispels the fear and pain of death through his person and work. This, after all, was the message of the angel outside Bethlehem two thousand years ago: "Don't be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be to all the people. For there is born to you, this day, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the





# JULY BIRTHDAYS

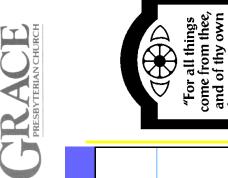


# **New E-mail Address**





# Jesus Christ excellencies Showing



have we given thee."

1 Chronicles 29:14

| Sat |   | 8<br>Men's Study<br>7:30 a.m.          | 15<br>Men & Boy's<br>Cookout<br>11:00 a.m. |   |  |                     |
|-----|---|--|--|---|--|---------------------|
|     | 1 | 8<br>Men's Str<br>7:30 a.m.            | 15<br>Men & B<br>Cookout<br>11:00 a.n      | 22                                      | 29   |                     |
| Fri |   | 7                                      | 41   | 21                                      | 28<br>VBS<br>9 a.m<br>12 p.m.                                  |                     |
| Thu |   | 9                                      | 13   | 20                                      | 27<br>VBS<br>9 a.m<br>12 p.m.                                  |                     |
| Wed |   | 5<br>Prayer Meeting<br>7 p.m.          | 12<br>Prayer Meeting<br>7 p.m.             | 19<br>Prayer Meeting<br>7 p.m.          | 26 27 Prayer Meeting VBS 7 p.m. 9 a.m 9 a.m12 p.m.             |                     |
| Tue |   | 4                                      | 11<br>Pine Haven<br>1:30 p.m.              | 18                                      | 25<br>Pine Haven,<br>1:30 p.m.<br>VBS<br>9 a.m12 p.m.          |                     |
| Mon |   | 3<br>Women's Bible<br>Study, 6:30 a.m. | 10<br>Women's Bible<br>Study, 6:30 a.m.    | 17<br>Women's Bible<br>Study, 6:30 a.m. | 24<br>Women's Bible<br>Study, 6:30 a.m.<br>VBS<br>9 a.m12 p.m. | 31<br>Women's Bible |
| Sun |   | 2                                      | 9<br>Missions Sunday<br><i>Youth Group</i> | 16                                      | 23   | 30<br>Lord's Supper |

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# **Comments on Finance**

By Joel Moody

#### **General Fund**

May General Fund receipts totaled \$9,441.24 as compared to budgeted receipts of \$10,313.40. Actual disbursements for the same period were \$8,143.78. Year to Date Actual General Fund receipts totaled \$72,995.03 while Actual General Fund Disbursements for the same time period totaled \$48,983.52.

#### **Benevolences**

Actual May Benevolence receipts totaled \$1,129.00 while Budgeted Benevolence receipts were \$1,250.00. For the first five months of the year, Actual Benevolence receipts totaled \$6,934.30 while Budgeted receipts for the same period were \$6,250.00.

During June, \$500.00 was sent in support of three seminaries. Gifts of \$200.00 each were sent to Westminster Seminary in

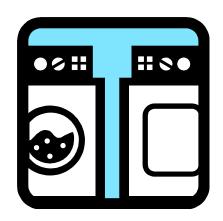
Philadelphia and Westminster Seminary in Escondido, while \$100.00 was sent to Mid-America Reformed Seminary in Dyer, Indiana.

#### Gideons

Gifts of \$195.00 in support of the Gideons were received and disbursed during May. In addition, there were two checks written directly to the Gideons which were sent along with the gift from Grace Church. Please note that the Treasurer would prefer that gifts such as this be written directly to Grace Church so that they can be included in the giving total from the church. If these gifts are written directly to the intended recipient, the Treasurer can not include them in the total amount provided from Grace Church.

# Need a Washer & Dryer??

A washer and dryer, both in good condition, are available. Lynn Baatz is willing to give them away to someone who needs one. Please contact her if you are interested in them.



### EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

When in sorrow call John 14

When men fail you, call Psalm 27

If you want to be fruitful, call John 15

When you have sinned, call Psalm 51

When you worry, call Matthew 6:19-34

When you are in danger, call Psalm 91

When God seems far away, call Psalm 139

When your faith need stirring, call Hebrews 11

When you are lonely and fearful, call Psalm 23

When you grow bitter and critical, call 1st Cor.13

For Paul's secret to happiness, call Col. 3:12-17

For idea if Christianity, call 1 Cor. 5:15-19

When you feel down and out, call Romans 8:31-39

When you want peace and rest, call Matt. 11:25-30

When the world seems bigger than God, call Psalm 90

When you want Christian assurance, call Romans 8:1-30

When you leave home for labor or travel, call Psalm 121

When your prayer grow narrow or selfish, call Psalm 67

For a great invention/opportunity, call Isaiah 55

When you want courage for a task, call Joshua 1

How to get along with fellowmen, call Romans 12

When you think of investments/returns, call Mark 10

If you are depressed, call Psalm 27

If your pocketbook is empty, call Psalm 37

If you are loosing confidence in people, call 1st Cor. 13

If people seem unkind, call John 15

If discouraged about your work, call Psalm 126

If you find the world growing small, and yourself great, call Psalm 19



Emergency numbers may be dialed direct. No operator assistance is necessary. All lines are open to Heaven 24 hours a day! Feed your faith, and doubt will starve to death.



# A CALL TO WORSHIP

By Don Schlernitzauer

In the early days of Grace Church, Sunday School preceded the morning worship service. Desiring to have a greater attendance at Sunday School, wisdom suggested the order be reversed hopefully making it more likely that those inspired in the worship of God would then be hungry for more of God's Word.

The next question to be faced was, "At what hour should the worship service begin?" The early risers advocated 9 o'clock, while the Mosaic contingent thought the pace should be more leisurely and so favored half past 9. The unity of the body was maintained, when, according to Brother Harlan, a Solomonic compromise was reached and each group received half a loaf. It was thus, now years ago, that the peculiar starting time for morning worship at 9:15 was established.

With our almost seamless changing of pastors, much has remained the same, and we give God praise for the unity we have experienced in the smooth transition. There are, however, a few differences, one of which has been a more lengthy am worship service. This inturn gives a later starting time for social fellowship which inturn delays the start of Sunday School.

During our congregational visits, the feedback concerning Sunday morning wor-

ship has been excellent and therefore the Session considers it best not to alter or shorten our current format. The next obvious alternative is to change the starting or ending time for Sunday morning activities. The easiest solution, if it meets with the approval of the congregation, is to revisit that old compromise of many years ago. A number of you have already given input, and to this point there has been no apparent opposition to a 9 o'clock beginning of worship. But the purpose of this article is to bring the issue before the entire congregation of members and friends with the purpose of seeking your counsel.

During the next couple of weeks your Session would be most grateful if you would render your opinions, orally or written, to one of the elders. In that manner, the Session will be truly able to make a wise decision that has the support of most if not all of our wonderful congregation.

The testimony of David, regarding his desire for God, may be worthy of our meditation. "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is." (Psalm 63:1, KJV) May God place His blessing on all this congregation does to worship and please Him, as He calls us to worship.

# **VOTE OF THANKS FOR THE TIMELY ASSISTANCE**

.





# VB5

Location: Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church 4930 Green Valley Lane Sheboygan, WI

**Dates: July 24-28** 

Time: 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

Ages: 4 years old — completed 6th grade Call for Information: Pastor Brian De Jong

(920) 565-2160

# Men& Boy's Cookout

The men & boys are invited to a cookout & baseball game at Grace Church on July 15, at 11:00 a.m. There will be food as well as a devotional. Come for this fun time of food, fellowship, & fun!!



# BREAD OF THE WORLD IN MERCY BROKEN

Bread of the world in mercy broken,
Wine of the soul in mercy shed,
By whom the words of life were spoken,
And in whose death our sins are dead,

Look on the heart by sorrow broken, Look on the tears by sinners shed; And be thy feast to us the token That by thy grace our souls are fed.





# The Screwtape Letters by C. S. Lewis

Book Review by Samantha De Jong

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against...the spiritual forces of wickedness in the Heavenly places," says Eph. 6:12. Perhaps C.S. Lewis had this <u>Letters</u>, a series of helpful messages purportedly sent by Screwtape, an experienced devil to Wormwood, a naïve young tempter. This distinctive work skillfully uncovers the devil's schemes, while showing his true weakness, and the ultimate triumph of irresistible grace.

"Readers are advised to remember," warns Lewis in the preface, "that the devil is a liar. Not everything Screwtape says should be assumed to be true, even from his own angle." Sifting through Screwtape's

diabolical bias, the reader finds clear discussions of the nature of sins common to man, their relative "value" in luring a soul away from God, and the "best" methods of encouraging sinful tenverse in mind when he wrote The Screwtape dencies and habits. This book is more than a thoughtful discussion of temptation and sin, however. Through the letters, the reader can trace the desperate battle for the soul of Wormwood's, "patient." Lewis keeps his audience in painful suspense as to whether the tempter's victim will finally succumb to the temptations and deceptions of the devil, and wander away from God, or stand fast in his faith, and run with endurance the race marked out for him. Reading The Screwtape Letters will be an encouraging and enlightening experience for any mature Christian.

# Apple Bread

1 tsp. soda 2 cup sugar 1 cup vegetable oil 1 tsp. cinnamon

3 eggs 2 tsp. vanilla

3 cups flour 3 cups finely chopped apples

1 tsp. salt 1 cup nuts

Mix sugar, oil and eggs together. Then add flour, salt, soda, and cinnamon. Stir well. Then add remaining ingredients. Put into 2 greased loaf pans. Sprinkle with sugar. Bake at 350° at least 1 hour.

Megan Boss



"There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen, that it is from the hand of God. For who can have enjoyment without Him?"

# Pam Schlernitzauer, continued...



# Camp Westminster

The Sixth Annual Presbytery "Camp Westminster", will be held Monday, July 31 through Friday, August 4 at the Green Lake Conference Center in Green Lake, WI. This year the Rev. Bruce Hollister, pastor of New Covenant Community OPC in New Lenox, IL will be speaking on the topic of the

Holy Spirit. Reservations are taken on a first come first served basis as to what remains available. Please see the poster and brochures on display.

You may make your reservation by phone or email



The Monthly Newsletter of Grace OPC

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CHECK OUT THE WEBPAGE:

WWW.OPC.ORG





- ★Psalm singing has always played a prominent role in the church?
- ★The Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century brought congregational singing in the vernacular (common language) back into play?
- ★ Clement Marot (French) was one of the first translators of psalms for singing?
- ★ the Genevan Psalter (1543-1562) was encouraged along by John Calvin, who wrote the introduction?
  ★ Louis Bourgeois was responsible for the majority of the hymn tunes in this book? (See Hymn 1)
- ★The first psalter published in the colonies of America was The Bay Psalm Book (1640)?

Some of this information was found at www.smithcreekmusic.com/Hymnology/ Metrical.Psalmody/French.psalmody.intro.html

# Getting to know... Pam Schlernitzauer

compiled by Harlan Harmelink