

REFLECTIONS

The Monthly Newsletter of Grace OPC

TAKE UP AND READ!

By Pastor Brian De Jong

Having recently finished the family visits for 2006, I think that I know the congregation at Grace Church much better now than I did at this time last year. Without exception, these visits were beneficial and encouraging to myself and the elders, and we trust they proved equally edifying to the membership.

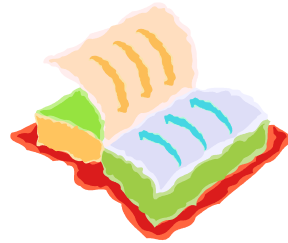
From the feedback we gathered we are now able to make more intelligent plans for the year ahead. We sincerely desire to see spiritual growth in every person that God has brought to Grace OPC. And one need stands above all others for the growth of Grace Church in 2007. What is the one thing most necessary for our spiritual progress? More Bible reading!

One temptation that we all face is to read *about* the Bible instead of reading the Scriptures themselves. Not that devotional materials are wrong or bad. Our family has richly enjoyed devotional books by C.H. Spurgeon and J.C. Ryle. Booklets like “Today” or the “Daily Bread” can be encouraging and instructive. However, we must be careful not to let good devotional materials take the place of regular reading of the Bible itself. That would be like ordering a cheeseburger without the meat.

If I could propose a goal for every person and for each family, it would be to make Bible reading a regular part of your daily routine. Here are a few suggestions toward achieving that goal.

First, you should have a plan. There are many available, some more aggressive

than others. One Year Bibles can be found at most Christian bookstores. These Bibles divide up the Scriptures into daily readings designed to lead you through the Bible in a calendar year. Many Bible Societies and Christian Ministries also provide Bible reading schedules upon request. If you use the internet, you can Google “Daily Bible Reading Schedule”



to find three million, one hundred ninety thousand suggestions. And of course, you can always start at the beginning and read through to the end. (*I knew of a five year old girl who started in Genesis and didn't stop until she finished Revelation – it can be done!*) So your first step is to choose a plan to get you into the Scriptures. If you find reading difficult, you may want to start with a more modest goal – perhaps reading through the gospel of Mark, or through the book of Genesis.

Second, you should choose a time for your daily reading. If at all possible, select a time of the day which is typically free. For me, the best time is before breakfast. Other schedules may favor an afternoon block or the evening before bed. It does not matter when, or even how long – just choose a time that you can keep daily with the Scriptures.

A third suggestion is to open your reading time with a word of prayer. Since the Holy Spirit is the Author of Scripture, and the One who illuminates the Scripture to our minds, we ought to pray

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November 2006

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Mnemonics...

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- *Harvest Home, Nov. 11th*
- *Thanksgiving Service, Nov. 22nd*

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MORE ON “RECONCILIATION”

by Pastor Brian De Jong

After preaching recently on interpersonal reconciliation as God’s solution to conflicts within the church, it became clear to me that more needs to be said. With that sermon in mind, I will try to expand on the subject in practical ways by means of a question/answer format. Remember that you can always “Ask the Pastor” if you have more or different questions.

Could you explain again exactly how the process of reconciliation works? Suppose you realize that you have offended your brother in some significant way. You can plainly see that he holds something against you. Perhaps he is upset enough to take action against you. In this scenario you should begin by humbly confessing your sin to God and asking for His forgiveness. Then you should go quickly to your brother and address the matter to him. Admit that you were wrong to do what you did, and that your behavior was sinful and offensive. Next, ask your brother to forgive you for what you’ve done. Finally, find out if there is anything you can do to change your relationship, so that this doesn’t happen over and over again. Listen carefully to any suggestions he might make, and work together with him to build a better relationship. Such a conversation might go as follows...

Fred: “Joe, I realized that when I called you a stupid idiot the other day, that I sinned against you. I’m sorry for what I said and I’d like to ask you to forgive me.”

Joe: “Fred, that really did hurt my feelings, but I do forgive you for your sin.”

Fred: “Thanks, Joe. I really do want to be reconciled with you, and I’d like to ask you to pray for me. When I get frustrated I sometimes say sinful things. Would you ask God to help me control my temper, and to guard my tongue?”

Joe: “Sure, Fred. I’d be glad to pray for you. Could we pray together right now?”

What should I do if he refuses to forgive me?

God requires that we forgive those who sin against us. If you have humbly and honestly confessed your sin, and sought forgiveness, that person is now obligated to forgive you. If they do not forgive, then they are sinning against God and against you by refusing to be reconciled. Practically speaking, it is often wise to give people time to “cool down” in order to extend to you forgiveness. After you’ve repented and requested their forgiveness, give them some time to think it over. Come back to them later and ask, “Have you forgiven me? Are we reconciled?” If that brother steadfastly refuses to forgive you, they will need to be dealt with about their unforgiving attitude. You are probably not the best person to address that, since you’ve provoked the situation somewhat by your initial offense. Getting another person to act as a mediator can be beneficial – especially if the mediator is a person that the unforgiving brother truly respects. You also can employ the steps of Matthew 18:15-17 to address their sin of unforgiveness. Beware of appearing vindictive. Such an approach may seem like a “gotcha” – I’ve admitted my sin to you, now you won’t forgive me, so I’ll institute Matthew 18 against you – “gotcha!” Asking a neutral party to play the role of peacemaker may be wiser than pursuing a disciplinary course in such a case.

What should I do if someone sins against me?

Now the shoe is on the other foot. You are not the offender, but you are the victim. Someone has sinned against you – how should you proceed? If possible, overlook the sin in Christian love. It is possible to turn the other cheek and to absorb the abuse, out of love for Christ and for the offender. If you find that you cannot overlook the matter, or if it is of such a serious nature that you must not ignore it, then you should go to the offender privately and confront him for his sin. This is where Matthew 18:15-17 is so very instructive. If you can handle the matter privately, with no one else knowing about the offense, reconciliation can be brought about and nothing more ever should be said about it. However, if the offender won’t listen to you, then you should take one or two

Ask the Pastor Continued...

witnesses with you. This second approach must involve people who witnessed the actual offense. They are not accompanying you in order to witness the confrontation, but they come as second and third witnesses to the original incident. They join with you in confronting the offender because they have seen what he originally did. They also call him to repentance and reconciliation. If he still will not heed you, then it is time to tell it to the church. This does not mean that you should stand up in worship and announce what the offender has done. Neither should you start circulating your story to the general membership of the congregation. Rather, you should take the matter to the pastor and elders of the church. Together, the Session is commanded by God to govern the congregation. The elders are appointed to hear and settle disputes, and they sit as an ecclesiastical “court” when they meet in session. Before you can bring a matter to the attention of the elders, you must make sure you have two or three witnesses who can establish the accusation of offense. If not, the matter usually becomes “he-said-she-said.” If it is one person’s word against another’s word, the truth cannot be established. Biblically, it is only on the testimony of two or three witnesses that a matter can be established. So if you have no witnesses to the original offense, you cannot formally press the matter. Assuming there are two or three witnesses, then the church officers take up the problem and work the disciplinary process through to its conclusion.

What should I do if there were multiple sins committed? It is not uncommon that we sin in response to the sins of others, provoking further retribution from our opponents. When there is a sin fest going on, it is important to first stop the cycle and then begin to sort out the situation. When cool heads are again prevailing, everyone involved should start sorting out what went on, and accept-

“When there is a sin fest going on, it is important to first stop the cycle and then begin to sort out the situation.”

ing personal responsibility for their own actions. Who sinned first? What happened next? What percentage of blame do I have? What percentage do others hold? When both sides in a dispute have sinned against one another, it is the responsibility of each side to own up to what they did, and how they contributed to the melee. Each side should accept responsibility for their own actions, confess their own sins, and ask forgiveness from the other side. Even if you only had 10% of the blame for what went on, you can still repent and confess your 10%. If all parties involved will accept the blame for their own actions, and will voluntarily repent, confess, and seek forgiveness, then full reconciliation is possible. Even if it was an extended and complicated situation, full reconciliation is possible. It is hard work and requires much humility, but peace can be re-established by God’s grace.

Why go through all the trouble of seeking reconciliation? Can’t I just sweep these things under the rug? It is true that love covers over a multitude of sins. There are situations where we can and should overlook an offense. However, when relationships are disrupted within the church, reconciliation is necessary and important for the life of the body of Christ. If we do not pursue reconciliation, the problems will fester until they break out in open hostilities. Bitterness can quickly take root in our hearts, and it will grow and spread. Soon our whole lives are filled with bitterness. Not only does it infect our lives, but it easily spreads to others. People realize that we are bitter, and they begin to share in our complaints. They become bitter with us, and soon it spreads to more and more. Party spirits and factions within the church thrive on bitterness – on the victim mentality – the idea that good people have been wronged. So in a situation where serious sins have been committed, and Christian love has been disrupted,

Ask the Pastor Continued...

reconciliation is necessary for the well-being of the body. Neglect reconciliation and watch Christian unity evaporate before your very eyes.

How does this work within a family context?

As I've watched parents with their children, I've seen the benefits of reconciliation in the child-training process. Suppose a parent gives a command to the child, and the child refuses to obey the command. Both the parent and the child know there has been an offense. Children are required to obey their parents in the Lord. This is right and good, and pleases the Lord. Yet the child has disobeyed the parent. A sin has been committed. If the parent will address the sin, and call the child to repentance, they can work together toward reconciliation. There may be discipline involved, and there should be instruction accompanying the discipline. The child must confess his sin to God and to his parent, and then they can pray together. As a result, parent and child are reconciled and feel their fellowship restored. That incident is settled and over, and won't be brought up again. But it often happens that a parent won't confront his child's sin. Instead, the parent starts to do the slow burn. Frustrations simmer for a while, and slowly the pressure builds. Meanwhile, the child has a guilty conscience because he knows that he has disobeyed his parent's command. He is uncomfortable with his disobedience, but he also grows bolder in disobedience. His heart becomes hardened toward his parent, yet he fears that his parent will lash out in anger against him. Sooner or later another offense is committed. Perhaps another command is given by the parent, and again disregarded by the child. Now pressure is getting intense. The simmering frustration is nearing a full rolling boil. The parent is angry, and the child is both guilty and rebellious. Suddenly, the storm breaks and angry words are spoken. Accusations fly back and forth, and much damage is done by sins of the tongue. Both parent and child go away

hurt and angry toward the other, but still there is no reconciliation. They keep repeating this cycle until they so deeply despise one another that the alienation is complete and thorough. Hatred, and not love, has come to dominate this family. The same dynamics can work out between a husband and a wife, or between siblings. Reconciliation is crucial to a loving atmosphere in a family. Without a commitment to reconciliation, suspicion and anger become the controlling attitudes in the home.

“Reconciliation is crucial to a loving atmosphere in a family.”

What if the offender keeps sinning and keeps coming back for forgiveness? Jesus addresses this situation in Luke 17:3-4, where he warns, “Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.” Not only does Jesus authorize us to

issue rebukes to our sinful brethren, but he commands us to forgive the repentant. If he keeps sinning and keeps returning in repentance, we should keep forgiving him – even seven times a day! If this seems too difficult to you, just stop and think about how often you sin against God. Think about the sins of thought, word and deed that you daily commit. Remember how God deals with you. Does God say, “Well, that’s the third time today that you’ve come and asked my forgiveness. Sorry, three strikes and you’re out?” God has shown his rich grace by repeatedly forgiving us of the same old sins – over and over and over. If we have been forgiven by Him, we can forgive our fellows too.

What if I witness unkind words between other members of the church? As a third party, what is my role? As Jesus says in the beatitudes, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” If you are a third party witness to a dispute between brothers, you may play a very important role mediating the dispute and brokering peace. However, you must first give time for the

Ask the Pastor Concluded...

two people involved to work it out on their own. Each has a duty to approach the other – the offender to repent and the victim to confront. If neither will do their part, or one party will not receive the other, then you may step in as an advocate for a peaceful resolution. In some disputes a third party mediator is absolutely crucial for a resolution. The peacemaker should remember Biblical principles, such as are found in Proverbs 18:17 “The first to plead his case *seems* right, *Until* another comes and examines him.” Listen to both sides before arriving at firm decisions. Don’t listen to just one part and assume they are entirely truthful. Keeping an open mind is very important so that you can evaluate the whole situation and be of most help. Also, remember that as a witness to the initial events, you may be required to join the

victim in confronting the offender, as described in Matthew 18:15-17.

Do you have any final advice about reconciliation? Be careful not to sin yourself, when you’re involved in the reconciliation process. Sometimes in these situations our patience wears thin and we do or say something hurtful. We feel justified because we think that the offender is a worse sinner than we are. We do need to be plain, clear and honest in our communication to an offender. Sometimes we are required to severely reprove an unrepentant offender and to deliver a stern rebuke. But we must be careful that we do not fall into sin ourselves. Guard your heart and pray for patience and self control, lest your efforts to help end up compounding the difficulties.

TAKE UP AND READ! Concluded from page 1...

that He would use His word to refresh and transform us. Ask the Spirit to teach you truth as you read His word. Pray that He would keep your mind focused, and that He would protect you from the countless distractions that flood into our minds whenever we open our Bibles.

Next, begin reading with a desire to understand and obey. After all, we do not want to be like the man described in James who looked at himself in the mirror and then went away and immediately forgot what he looked like. We want to be those who gaze intently into the perfect law of liberty, striving to become effectual doers of the word (and not mere hearers). It is important that we take time to ponder what we read, making sure we understand the basic meaning of the text. Don’t let it come in one ear, and out the other.

Retain what you read. Reflect upon it. Consider what it actually says, and what it requires of you. In other words, believe it and obey it!

Finally, spend a few minutes praying over what you’ve read, and what you’ve learned. Ask God to make those truths penetrate deep into your soul. Often the blessings of Scripture reading are cemented into place by prayer.

But above all, take up your Bible and read. What enormous blessings the Lord has in store for His people when they regularly read His word. You won’t regret making a commitment in this spiritual discipline!



November Birthdays



*Happy
Birthday!!!*

THE HOLY WAR BY JOHN BUNYAN

Book Review by Samantha De Jong

Many people are familiar with John Bunyan's book, Pilgrim's Progress, but did you know that Bunyan wrote another book about the Christian life? The Holy War is an allegory on two levels, dealing both with God's eternal plan of salvation for His elect, and with His work of grace in each believer's life. Bunyan opens his story with a description of "Mansoul," a magnificent and powerful city, fashioned by the great "King Shaddai" for his own pleasure and glory. The king's delight in his creation does not last for long, however; Diabolus, a designing and deceitful devil, approaches the walls and by falsehood and flattery persuades the inhabitants to surrender the city to him. Once inside, the enemy ruins the town, corrupts its citizens, and establishes his own fiendish followers in positions of power. Enraged by his adversary's treachery, King Shaddai sends Prince Emmanuel, to save his captive people and dwell among them. The liberated citizens of Mansoul are at first deeply grateful to their beloved prince, but their ardent devotion soon cools, and they begin to return to their old, sinful ways. When

Prince Emmanuel, grieved and offended by his people's increasing indifference, leaves the town, the citizens do not even notice his departure. Diabolus, in contrast, is quick to see the Prince's alienation, and takes advantage of Mansoul's new vulnerability to launch a second assault on the city. By the time Mansoul realizes her error, the Diabolonians are nearly at her gates. Will the great king relent and rescue his repentant subjects before it is too late?

In The Holy War, John Bunyan paints a portrait of the Christian life which will be encouraging and helpful to every believer. King Shaddai's love for Mansoul clearly pictures God's faithfulness to us, His covenant people, even when we sin as Mansoul did. In addition, this story emphasizes that Christ's ongoing war with Satan impacts even our daily lives. Bunyan's book conveys a solemn warning to his readers: "Learn from Mansoul's mistake; don't alienate your truest friend and best protector by indifference to Him and His word!" May you walk more closely with your King as a result of reading The Holy War.



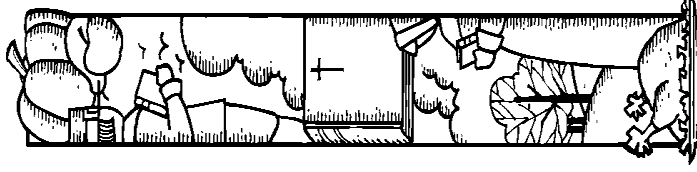
Grace OPC

November 2006

Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
5 Youth Group Choir Rehearsal 4:15 p.m.	6 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Theology Class</i> 4 p.m.	7	1 Prayer Meetings, 7:00 p.m.	2	3 Worldview Movie Night 7 p.m.	4 Men's Study 7:30 a.m.
12 Missions Sunday	13 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	14 Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m. Trustee Meeting 7 p.m.	8 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	9	10	11 Harvest Home 5:30 p.m.
19	20 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Theology Class</i>	21	15 Prayer Meetings, 7:00 p.m.	16	17 Catechism Class 8:45 a.m.	18
26 Lord's Supper	27 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	28 Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m. Session Meeting 6:30 p.m.	22 Thanksgiving Service 7:30 p.m.	23	24	25
	29 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	30	29 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	31	31	



Church Office:
4930 Green Valley Ln
Sheboygan, WI 53083

Phone: 920-565-2160

Email:
graceopc@tds.net
briandejong@earthlink.net

Harvest Home

The annual Harvest Home Dinner is scheduled for Saturday, November 11, at 5:30 pm. Pastor Ivan De Master and Ashley De Troye will report on their recent missions trips to Africa with slides.



For His Honor

Appearing in Concert...

Saturday, Nov. 4, 7:00 p.m.

Calvary O.P. Church

136 W. Union Ave., Cedar Grove

“For His Honor”

is a classical family group presenting

a unique combination of

Classical, Hymns and

Contemporary Christian music.

“This family touches
the hearts of young & old.”

A free will offering received
for the music ministry of
FOR HIS HONOR



HISTORY OF GRACE CHURCH - DEVELOPMENT

written by Rev. Ivan De Master

Grace Church, continued...

COMMENTS ON FINANCES

written by Joel Moody

General Fund

September General Fund receipts totaled \$8,940.43 as compared to budgeted receipts of \$10,313.40. Actual disbursements for the same period were \$9,200.28. September Year to Date Actual General Fund receipts totaled \$115,982.89 while Actual General Fund Disbursements for the same time period totaled \$91,478.17. Budgeted General Fund Receipts/Disbursements were \$85,557.44.

Benevolences

Actual September Benevolence receipts totaled \$1,141.00 while Budgeted Benevolence receipts were \$1,250.00. For the first nine months of the year, Actual Benevolence receipts totaled \$11,466.66 while Budgeted receipts for the same period were \$11,250.00.

In addition to the normal disbursements to Worldwide Outreach (WVO) and to the Church Extension Committee (CHEX) of the Midwest Presbytery scheduled for October, a disbursement of

\$800.00 went to Sheboygan Co. Christian High School; \$500.00 went to Pine Haven; and \$200.00 went to Reformed Youth Services. For November, only the normal monthly disbursements to WVO and CHEX are planned for.

Thank Offering

During the Harvest Home Supper, you will have your first opportunity to present your gifts for the Thank Offering. The Thank Offering will continue to be received during the rest of November and until approximately the first week in December. Please mark on your gift "Thank Offering" and it will be recorded accordingly. This offering is very important to our denomination since it provides a large thrust for the Missions effort of the denomination. Gifts received through the Thank Offering go towards the support of Foreign Missions, Home Missions, and Christian Education. These gifts are used in various places throughout the US as well as many other places in the world. Please consider the opportunities that exist for the spread of the Church through this Missions Offering.



Letters from Michael & Gift

Highlights from three letters received by the De Masters from Michael & Gift

Notes on Malawi

written by Rev. Ivan De Master

The trip to Malawi has tied us more closely to the country and to the church there. We are developing a friendship with Pastor Ephraim Tembo and his wife, Ennie. We look forward to sharing more of these things at the Harvest Home evening.

One of the needs in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Malawi is training for the elders who do much of the preaching. There is presently only one pastor. Two students have started Seminary training and two others have applied to the church as well. The church uses the Westminster standards and the OPC Book of Church Order. They are committed to singing the Psalms but not exclusively.

Consideration is being given to returning next summer to provide some of

this training. John Tinsley has expressed interest in going as well. A request has been made to presbytery to approve this mission effort. If all moves ahead on this, my goal is to do so this summer.

Someone asked about specific needs that the church has right now.

Worldview Movie Night

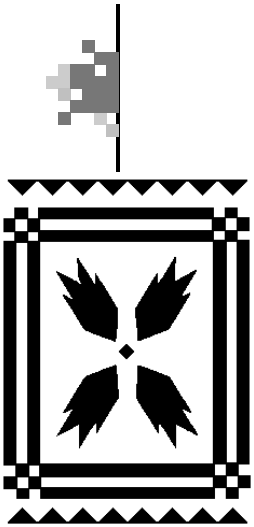
Date: Friday,
November 3rd

Time: 7:00 p.m.

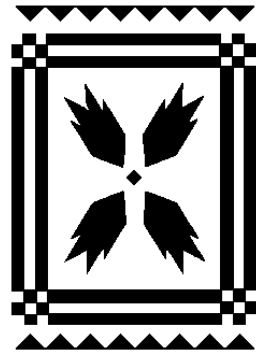
Place: Grace Church

Movie: "Sergeant
York"

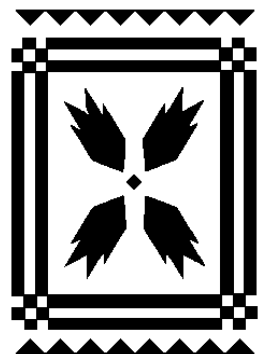
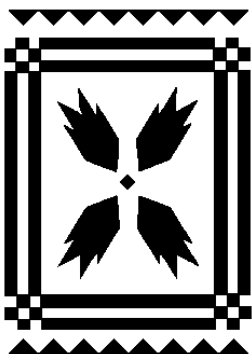
Come join us for another Worldview Movie Night here at the Church. This time we will watch "Sergeant York" starring Gary Cooper. There will be a time after the movie for discussion. Popcorn will be provided, but feel free to bring snacks and drinks to share while we watch.



COMING SOON



The banner committee is planning to make a large quilt to hang on the back wall of the sanctuary. For this project we'll need everyone's help. We're asking that each family choose a favorite Bible verse to be written or stitched on a quilt square. We hope to have squares with instructions, ready to hand out at the Harvest Home Supper on November 11, at which time Bev Koehler will also take a few moments to better explain our plans. We realize there are some who might not be able to make their own square and are prepared to assist with this. We suggest that families begin now to consider the verse they would like to have put on the quilt.



Deep Dark Chocolate Cake

- ★ 2 cups sugar
- ★ 1 3/4 cups flour
- ★ 3/4 cup cocoa
- ★ 1 1/2 tsp baking soda
- ★ 1 1/2 tsp baking powder
- ★ 1 tsp salt
- ★ 2 eggs
- ★ 1 cup milk
- ★ **1/2 cup vegetable oil**
- ★ 2 tsp vanilla
- ★ 1 cup water (boiling)

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour 2 round 9-in. pan or a 9x13 rectangular pan. Combine dry ingredients. Add eggs, milk, oil, and vanilla. Beat on medium speed for 2 minutes. Stir in boiling water—batter will be thin! Pour into pan (s). Bake 30-35 minutes for round pans; 35-40 minutes for 9x13 pan. Check with toothpick. Frost with Buttercream Frosting (See following).

Buttercream Frosting

- ★ 6 Tbs butter (softened)
- ★ Cocoa
 - 1/3 cup for light flavor
 - 1/2 cup for medium flavor
 - 3/4 cup for dark flavor
- ★ 2 2/3 cups powdered sugar
- ★ 1/3 cup milk
- ★ 1 tsp vanilla

Cream butter. Add cocoa and powdered sugar alternately with milk. Beat to spreading consistency. Blend in vanilla.

Deborah Arndt

(Ingredient in bold missing in Grace Church Cookbook)



“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?”



Proclaiming the
Excellencies of our
Lord Jesus Christ.

The Monthly Newsletter
of Grace OPC

Worship: Grace OPC
4930 Green Valley Lane,

Phone: 920-565-2160

Email:
graceopc@tds.net

CHECK OUT THE WEBPAGE:
WWW.OPC.ORG



★ Frances Jane Crosby better known as “Fanny” Crosby lived from 1820-1915?

★ When she was 6 weeks old, an illness left her blind?

★ She became a teacher of English & History?

★ Two dollars was all that Fanny asked most of the time for her hymns & poems?

★ She wrote more than 9,000 hymns in her time?

★ Words from of one of her well-loved hymns graces her tombstone, “Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine./ Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine.”?

Information found at www.nyise.org/fanny/

THE BRITISH JOSIAH BY N. A. WOYCHUK

Book Review by Grace De Jong

Have you ever heard of King Edward VI? Before I read N. A. Woychuk’s “The British Josiah” I had never heard of this monarch, and yet he played a vital part in the protestant reformation.

Throughout Edward’s six-year reign, he boldly fought papacy and protected Christ’s church. Because of her wayward misunderstanding of Protestantism, Edward’s once close relationship with his sister, “bloody Mary,” degenerated into a serious feud. The battle against Catholicism also resulted in Edward’s writing his masterpiece, Treatise Against the Primacy of the Pope, which in one place bluntly compared the Pope to the anti-Christ. The king also was deeply interested in the welfare of certain “religious refugees.” When Martin Bucer needed a stove to heat his room, Edward sent him money, and, after his death, Edward showed

compassion on his widow. As one pastor has said, “One of the main reasons England became a staunchly Protestant nation was Edward VI.”

God deeply blessed many Christians through king Edward VI life and reign. Sir John Cheke, one of his teachers said,

“He has removed images from the church; he has overthrown idolatry; he has abolished the mass and destroyed almost every kind of superstition. He has put forth by his authority an excellent form of common prayer, and he has published homilies to lessen ignorance of uneducated ministers.”

The treatise Edward wrote when eleven years old helped open middle-class England’s blinded eyes to the flaws of Catholicism. “The British Josiah,” by N. A. Woychuk, will bless Christians of all ages.