

REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

GAUGING YOUR GROWTH

By Pastor Brian De Jong

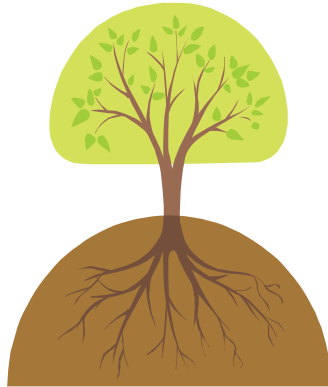
One of my standard questions on most family visits is this: “Do you feel like you’re growing spiritually?” I sense that my question is difficult to answer for some folks. The responses I have often received have led me to think more deeply about this topic of spiritual growth, and how to measure it.

When we want to track the growth of a child, we will look at certain objective data. Are they gaining weight? Is their height increasing? These are very easy to measure, and comparisons are quite simple. Our family has made periodic measurements of the height of children, marking a wooden post in our basement with the name and date. Over the years you can observe the growth of that child.

So what are some of the spiritual characteristics that we can “measure?” How exactly do we gauge spiritual growth? One way is through the amount of knowledge we possess. Do we know more now than we knew last year, or two years ago? Increasing in knowledge is one component of spiritual growth. Ask yourself this: Do I know more today about the tabernacle than I did before we started studying through Exodus in the Sunday morning sermons? Has my knowledge of the tabernacle complex increased? If so, then growth has occurred.

Another aspect of growth has to do with understanding what you’ve learned. Do you “connect the dots” and make connections between pieces of knowledge?

Just recently we’ve seen how Jesus was directly involved in the creation of the world in the beginning. John 1:1-3 makes that very plain. Have you “seen the connection” between the person and work of Jesus Christ and the events recorded in Genesis 1? Connecting these dots casts new light on the creation account, and illuminates new aspects of Jesus’ life and labors. If you’re growing in understanding, that is a good sign. If the Bible is a maze of confusing facts, that’s not a good sign.



Probing in a different direction, we might ask about growth in obedience. Are you doing what God commands? It is possible to know what God requires, and understand the importance of that duty, but not to follow through with obedience. I know God wants me to love my neighbor, and I understand how important it is to display the love of Christ to that person, but I am too busy, or too pre-occupied to actually interact with that neighbor. James tells us we must be “doers of the word”, and not mere hearers who deceive themselves. Are you “doing the word?” Spiritual growth manifests itself by growth in obedience.

Another indicator is some victory over temptation. Perhaps some sin has held you in its grip. You’ve struggled to put it off, and you’ve enjoyed some progress. You haven’t attained perfection yet, nor gained entire freedom, but you have more good days than bad days as you strive against temptation to sin. Again, this is...

Continued on Last Page

Volume 9, Issue 10

October 2014

Inside this issue:

<i>Pastor’s Article</i>	1
<i>Of Prayer, 1-2 by John Calvin</i>	2
<i>Women’s Presbyterian by Phyllis Nyhof</i>	3
<i>Meadowview Manor</i>	3
<i>October Birthdays</i>	4
<i>October Anniversaries</i>	4
<i>October Calendar</i>	5
<i>New Address</i>	6
<i>Session Digest by Pastor De Jong</i>	6
<i>Reformation Conference</i>	7
<i>Comments on Finance by Joel Moody</i>	8-9
	9
	10
<i>Worldview Movie Night</i>	11
<i>Musical Talent Needed!!</i>	11
<i>Book Review by Carla De Master</i>	12
<i>Reflections Addition</i>	12
<i>Recipe Corner</i>	13
<i>Spurgeon Corner</i>	14
<i>Front Page Concluded</i>	16

Of Prayer

by John Calvin

1.

FROM the previous part of the work we clearly see how completely destitute man is of all good, how devoid of every means of procuring his own salvation. Hence, if he would obtain succour in his necessity, he must go beyond himself, and procure it in some other quarter. It has farther been shown that the Lord kindly and spontaneously manifests himself in Christ, in whom he offers all happiness for our misery, all abundance for our want, opening up the treasures of heaven to us, so that we may turn with full faith to his beloved Son, depend upon him with full expectation, rest in him, and cleave to him with full hope. This, indeed, is that secret and hidden philosophy which cannot be learned by syllogisms: a philosophy thoroughly understood by those whose eyes God has so opened as to see light in his light ([Ps. 36:9](#)). But after we have learned by faith to know that whatever is necessary for us or defective in us is supplied in God and in our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, that we may thence draw as from an inexhaustible fountain, it remains for us to seek and in prayer implore of him what we have learned to be in him. To know God as the sovereign disposer of all good, inviting us to present our requests, and yet not to approach or ask of him, were so far from availing us, that it were just as if one told of a treasure were to allow it to remain buried in the ground. Hence the Apostle, to show that a faith unaccompanied with prayer to God cannot be genuine, states this to be the order: As faith springs from the Gospel, so by faith our hearts are framed to call upon the name of God ([Rom. 10:14](#)). And this is the very thing which he had expressed some time before, viz., that the *Spirit of adoption*, which seals the testimony of the Gospel on our hearts, gives us courage to make our requests known unto God, calls forth groanings which cannot be uttered, and enables us to cry, Abba, Father ([Rom. 8:26](#)). This last point,

as we have hitherto only touched upon it slightly in passing, must now be treated more fully.

2.

To *prayer*, then, are we indebted for penetrating to those riches which are treasured up for us with our heavenly Father? For there is a kind of intercourse between God and men, by which, having entered the upper sanctuary, they appear before Him and appeal to his promises, that when necessity requires they may learn by experiences that what they believed merely on the authority of his word was not in vain. Accordingly, we see that nothing is set before us as an object of expectation from the Lord which we are not enjoined to ask of Him in prayer, so true it is that prayer digs up those treasures which the Gospel of our Lord discovers to the eye of faith. The necessity and utility of this exercise of prayer no words can sufficiently express. Assuredly it is not without cause our heavenly Father declares that our only safety is in calling upon his name, since by it we invoke the presence of his providence to watch over our interests, of his power to sustain us when weak and almost fainting, of his goodness to receive us into favour, though miserably loaded with sin; in fine, call upon him to manifest himself to us in all his perfections. Hence, admirable peace and tranquillity are given to our consciences; for the straits by which we were pressed being laid before the Lord, we rest fully satisfied with the assurance that none of our evils are unknown to him, and that he is both able and willing to make the best provision for us.



Women's Presbyterial of the Midwest

by Phyllis Nyhof

On Saturday, September 27th at 5:30 a.m. four ladies from church headed down to Momence, Ill. for the Women's Presbyterial.

We were welcomed with a delicious continental breakfast before going into the auditorium for the meeting. We opened with singing a hymn, and recognition of churches. There were many churches from Illinois represented, but only Janesville and Sheboygan from Wisconsin. Our speaker for the morning was Sue Hollister, who spoke on "A time for every purpose." based on Ecclesiastes 3.

There was a special offering and special music followed by a delicious salad and dessert luncheon. The offering will be used for ...

For our afternoon session we broke up into small groups— each choosing from "A time to Heal", "A time to Laugh", or "A time to Mourn". The four of us went to "A time to Laugh" led by Karen Baldwin.

We discussed many scriptures on what it means to share Biblical laughter and what is not "Biblical laughter". The time went too fast— it was very interesting. We closed with prayer and a closing hymn. It was truly an enjoyable day. Thank you— Lynn for driving!

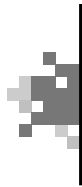
Next year on October 3rd the Women's Presbyterial will be held at our church! So mark your calendars.

Lynn Jensema, Ellen McNeese, Phyllis Nyhof, & Audrey Voskuil

Meadowview Manor

Come to Meadowview Manor on Sunday, October 19th at 3:00 p.m. There will be a message, a time for hymns and a chance to visit with the residents afterwards.



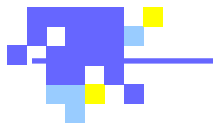


October Birthdays



Wedding Anniversaries

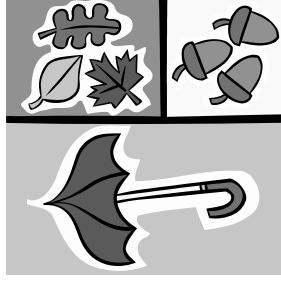




Grace OPC

October 2014

Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
12 Missions Sunday	13 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m.</i>	14 Session Meeting, 6:30 p.m.	15 Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.	16	17	18 Men's Leadership Training Breakfast, 7:00-8:30 a.m.
19 Meadowview Manor, 3 p.m.	20 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	21	22 Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.	23	24	25
26 Lord's Supper, (p.m.)	27 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m.</i>	28	29 Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.	30	31	Nov. 1st <i>Reformation Conference</i>
5	6 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	7	8 Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.	9	10 Worldview Movie Night, 7 p.m.	11
			1 Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.	2	3	4

Church Office:
4930 Green Valley Ln
Sheboygan, WI 53083

Phone: 920-565-2160
Website:

graceopcsheboygan.com

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

New Address



Session Digest

by Pastor Brian De Jong

Your Session has been meeting in recent months and has taken a number of significant actions. At a special meeting on Sunday night, August 24th, we met to consider a request from Dave and Brenda Kuiper to transfer their membership to Emmanuel OPC in Corapolis, PA. While we miss the Kuipers, we are glad they have found a new church home. From the testimony of their new pastor, Dave and Brenda have been quite an encouragement to this small congregation.

Our regular monthly meeting for September was held on Tuesday, September 9th at the church. We met with Troy and Sanna Vander Waal to discuss their desire to have their children baptized. We also heard an update on Troy's job plans, and how that will impact their children moving forward. The Session

also received and granted a request from Ian De Jong to transfer his membership from Grace Church to Mount Rose OPC in Sparks, Nevada. This will be Ian's home church for the five years he plans to spend doing his studies at UN-R.

The Session discussed the then upcoming Presbytery meeting, and Tim Voskuil was designated as our commissioner, with Bob Boss serving as the alternate. Due to sickness, Tim was unable to attend the meeting that Friday, and Bob served as our ruling elder commissioner throughout the meeting. Other matters discussed included the parking lot expansion plan, and the 2014 Reformation Conference. The meeting adjourned at the conclusion of business at 9:00 pm.

Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church's 2014

Reformation Conference

Saturday, November 1st

9:00 a.m. Session 1 – Treasures from Early American Presbyterians

10:30 a.m. Session 2 – The Tricentennial of George Whitefield

Sunday, November 2nd

9:00 a.m. The Invitations of Grace

5:00 p.m. The Powers of Grace

sessions are free & open to all

-
- Rev. B.J. Gorrell is pastor of Westminster Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Westminster, California
 - He and his wife Nancy have three children, Lydia, Austin and Joshua



Grace OPC is located at 4930 Green Valley Lane in Sheboygan, Wisconsin.
For more info, see our church website: www.graceopcsheboygan.com or call 920-565-

Comments on Finance

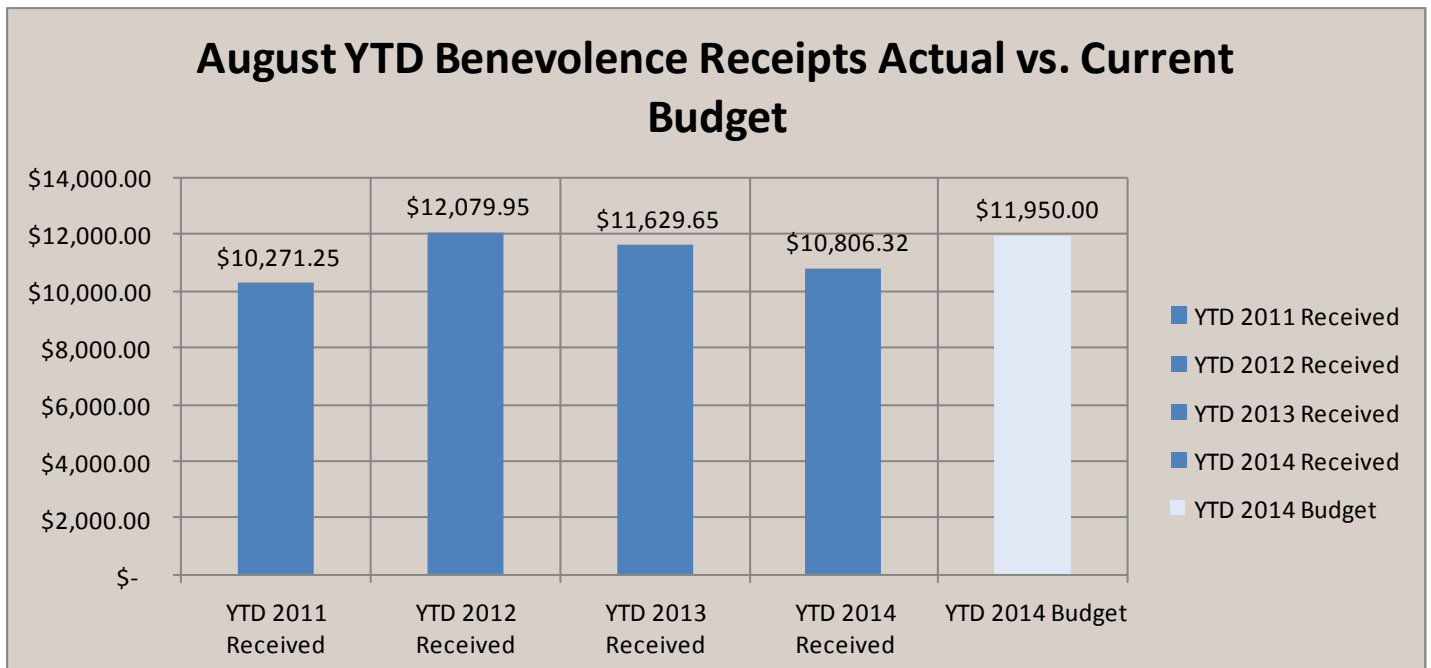
by Joel Moody

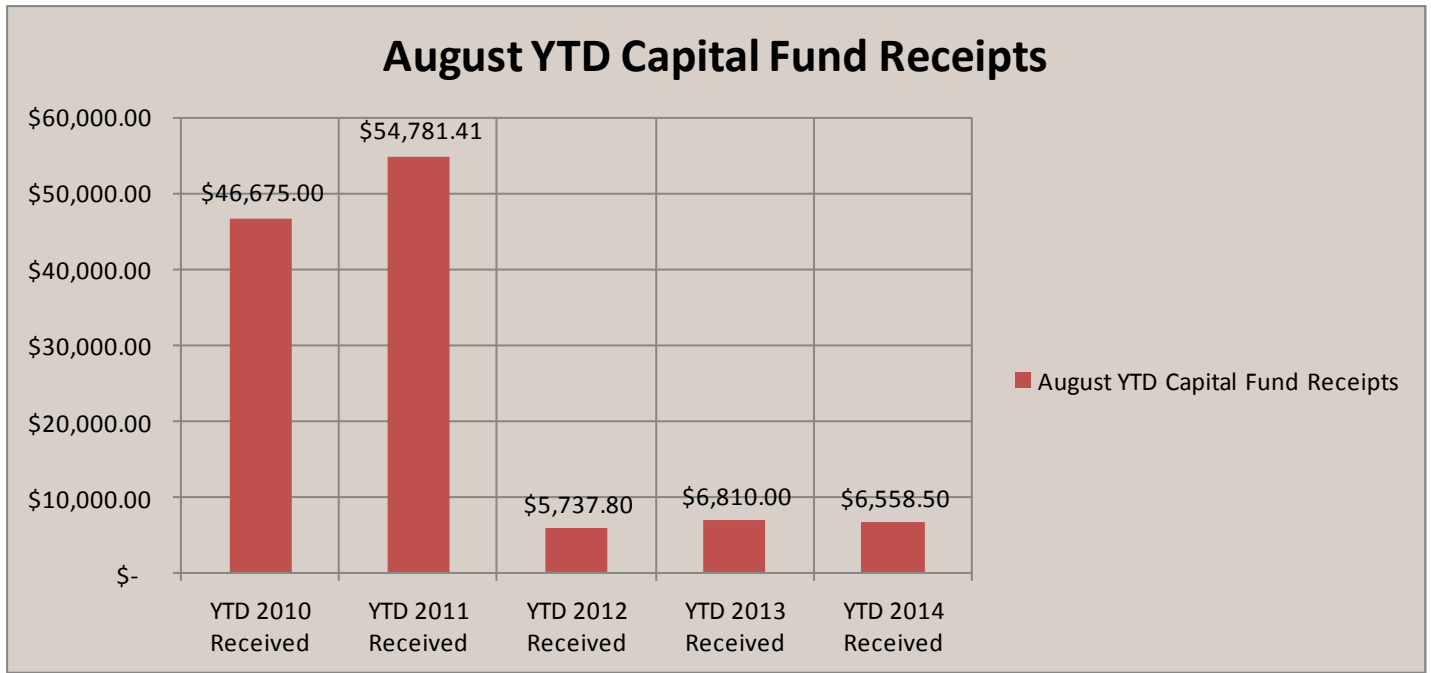
General Fund receipts for August totaled \$15,590.24 as compared to the budget of \$16,256.76, while General Fund disbursements for August totaled \$12,470.20. August year to date General Fund receipts totaled \$105,206.03 as compared to the budget of \$113,797.13 (a shortfall of \$8,591.10), while August year to date disbursements of \$102,136.93 were \$11,660.20 below budget. Through the end of August, the General Fund has increased by \$3,137.10. Year to date General Fund receipts for August were 7.1% below last year's total on an average Sunday while disbursements were 1.7% above the prior year.

Benevolence Fund Receipts for August totaled \$1,475.00 as compared to the budget of \$1,493.75 (a shortfall of \$18.75). Year to date Benevolence Fund Receipts through August totaled \$10,806.32 and were below budget by \$1,143.68. Please refer to the graph for a historical trend of benevolence receipts as well as the current benevolence budget. During August, \$500.00 was sent to Worldwide Outreach (WVO) for the General

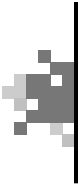
Missions outreach of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and \$200.00 was sent to the Midwest Presbytery's Church Extension Committee (CHEX).

August Year to Date giving for the **Capital Fund** was \$6,558.50. Please refer to the Capital Fund Graph that shows the historical giving for the years indicated in the graph. You may contribute to the Capital Fund by marking your gift as "Capital Fund" and placing it in the offering plate. Please note that the Capital Fund is used to pay for current and future needs that may exist to purchase additional equipment (such as the sound system, tables and chairs, etc.) or building-type items (such as a parking lot, driveway, furnace boiler, etc.). Since some capital needs are quite substantial in nature, resources to finance and pay for these projects can take years to pay for them. Even though capital needs may not be large in the current year, we should wisely allocate our giving not only to current needs, but also to these future needs as well.





submitted by Carla De Master



Worldview Movie Night

On Friday, October 10th at 7:00 p.m. we'll be watching and discussing the film, "God's Not Dead." Invite your friends to join us for an enjoyable and stimulating evening. Popcorn and drinks will be provided. Feel free to bring other snacks.



Musical Talent Needed!!

Residents at all of the Pine Haven Nursing Home locations will be provided with a church service for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Four services are scheduled on both Wednesday, November 26th and Wednesday, December 24th.

They are looking for piano players and also for other musical talent such as singing or playing any other instrument.

Your help is appreciated to make these services really special. You may help with one or you may help with all!

Please contact Denise Walter, Volunteer Coordinator, for more information.



...

Book Review

by Carla De Master

Book Review on Adopted for Life by Russell D. Moore

Adoption has taken on a new meaning for us as Ruth and Tom are in the process of adopting a son. Many interviews and much paperwork, home visits, and testimonies about each other are all a part of the 5 month procedure with Bethany Christian Services. One of the helpful books was Adopted for Life. Ruth loaned it to us as grandparents of their son and it has been a life changing book. Assumptions about adoption were changed and a new perspective replaced them.

One of the changes has to do with the biblical application of adoption. I am more conscious of being adopted into God's family. None of us become part of God's family by natural birth. God seeks us out and adopts us as His own. He does so at the cost of His Son. He has made us part of His family with all the blessings and benefits of His children.

Pastor Moore challenges us to see adoption as part of the Great Commission. By adopting children with many needs and parents unable to care for them, Christians are able to welcome them into our families

and show them the family of God. Perhaps couples with children or without children might consider whether God is calling them to consider adoption.

I found the chapter on what not to say to be VERY helpful. Some questions can be hurtful, such as: "Which of these are your real children?" "Are your two adopted boys brothers? I mean REAL brothers?" "Aren't you afraid of the possible problems?" (Problems come with birth kids too.)

The cost of adoption sometimes is overwhelming. Some couples have found financial help from family, relatives, or church members. A couple we know in Maine arranged for an adoption of twins from the Ukraine. They adopted 3 siblings from an orphanage and were helped by the contributions of friends and church members.

In thinking over this book, I realized that Ivan is joining his four brothers in having an adopted child or two in each extended family. There are 8 adopted children in the De Master families. What a blessing!!!

The book Adopted for Life, has been ordered and is placed in the church library.

Reflections Addition

There's one more item from the "Getting to

Know...



Biscotti

- ★ 1 1/3 cup white sugar
- ★ 1 cup butter, softened
- ★ 3 eggs
- ★ Flavor ingredients (see note below)
- ★ 4 1/4 cup all purpose flour
- ★ 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ★ 1/2 teaspoon salt
- ★ Almond bark, or white chocolate



“The eyes
of all look
to You,
And You give
them their food
in due time.
You open
Your hand
And satisfy
the desire of
every living
thing.”

1. This is a can't-miss recipe for biscotti that can be flavored in different ways. Cream the white sugar and butter until light and fluffy. Beat in one egg at a time, mixing well. When all eggs are beaten in, add the flavor ingredients. Here are some that we like:

- ★ 1/2 cup slivered almonds + 1/2 cup chopped maraschino cherries + 1/2 teaspoon almond extract.
- ★ Or the zest of one lemon + 1 cup of fresh raspberries + 2 Tablespoons of sugar, mixed together.
- ★ Or the zest of 1 orange + 1/2 cup of chopped walnuts + 1/2 cup dried currants.
- ★ Or 1 mashed ripe banana + 1/2 cup chopped walnuts + 1 teaspoon banana extract.
- ★ Or 1/2 cup mini chocolate chips + 2 Tablespoons cocoa powder + 1/2 cup chopped cashews.
- ★ Or 1/2 cup chopped macadamia nuts + 1/2 cup dried cranberries + 1/2 teaspoon almond extract. (You can use any flavor combination you wish.)

2. Next mix the flour with the baking powder and the salt. Add to mixture and beat until thoroughly blended. Chill in frig for 10 minutes. Preheat oven to 350°.

3. Form dough into 12 inch logs 3 inches wide and 1 1/2 - 2 inches tall on a lightly greased cookie sheet or jelly roll pan. Leave at least 2 inches space between each log. Bake 35 minutes in preheated oven until firm, but not crisp.

4. Remove from oven and cool for at least 10 minutes. Carefully lift log onto cutting board, and cut on a diagonal. Each slice is an inch wide. Place slices back onto cookie sheet. Bake for 8 minutes in oven. Remove from oven, flip onto other side, bake another 8 minutes.

5. Remove from oven and cool thoroughly. Drizzle almond bark, or white chocolate over the slices. Put in an airtight container or a ziplock bag. Guard carefully, for they have a alarming tendency to “disappear.”

Pastor De Jong



Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

Grace OPC

Church Office:
4930 Green Valley Ln

Phone: 920-565-2160
Website: graceopcsheboygan.com
Email:
graceopc@tds.net
briandejong@earthlink.net

CHECK OUT THE AUDIO:

**SERMONAUDIO.COM/
GRACESHEBOYGAN**

CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE:

GRACEOPCSHEBOYGAN.COM



Spurgeon Corner

*"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you in all truth."
(John 16:13)*

Truth is like a vast cavern into which we desire to enter, but we are not able to traverse it alone. At the entrance it is clear and bright; but if we would go further and explore its innermost recesses, we must have a guide, or we shall lose ourselves. The Holy Spirit, who knows all truth perfectly, is the appointed guide of all true believers, and He conducts them as they are able to bear it, from one inner chamber to another, so that they behold the deep things of God, and His secret is made plain to them.

What a promise is this for the humbly inquiring mind! We desire to know the truth, and to enter into it. We are conscious of our own aptness to err, and we feel the urgent need of a guide. We rejoice that the Holy Spirit is come and abides among us. He condescends to act as a guide to us, and we gladly accept His leadership. "All truth" we wish to learn, that we may not be one-sided and out of balance. We would not be willingly ignorant of any part of revelation lest thereby we should miss blessing, or incur sin. The Spirit of God has come that He may guide us into all truth: let us with obedient hearts hearken to His words and follow His lead.

October 6th, Faith's Checkbook, by C. H. Spurgeon



Front Page Concluded...

...spiritual growth.

Still other questions could be asked: Do you enjoy attending church? Do you benefit from the sermons? Are you finding places to serve within the body? Are the sacraments helpful to you? Are you developing friendships within your church family? Is the Sabbath a blessing, or is it a struggle? How is your prayer life? Do you spend time each day in prayer? Does prayer come easy, or is it "like pulling teeth?"

One last way to gauge your spiritual growth is to ask your fellow Christians, who know you and whom you trust, "Am I growing? Do you see progress in me?" Sometimes the observations of a Christian friend can help us to see things that are too close for us to actually observe.

