

# REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

## SEASONS

*By Pastor Brian De Jong*

As the final warm days of summer slip by, and as the first hints of autumn are in the air, we are reminded again of the inevitable changing of the seasons. Soon fall colors will dazzle our eyes as the apples come ripe. T-shirts give way to sweaters, and all too soon the snow will be flying again.

This chronological reality is yet another testimony of God's ordering of the world. In the days after the flood, the Lord spoke to Noah saying, "While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease."

Despite the increasing chaos of our society, and a growing lawlessness among our people, there are inviolable laws that God has established that will not be moved, or overturned by the Supreme Court. One of these laws is the orderly march of time. Day and night will continue to alternate, seedtime leads inexorably to harvest, summer heat yields to winter cold, and so it all goes.

From this orderly progression we can see certain truths about the God who made us. We see that He loves order, and establishes predictable schedules. He is not capricious or unreliable. He is one whom we can count on to be the same, yesterday, today and forever. In other words, He is trustworthy in His orderliness.

Another truth discoverable from the change in seasons is that God loves variety. Spring is not the same as summer,

nor is fall merely a carbon copy of winter. Each season has its unique qualities which are lovely and enjoyable. No single season is all bad all the time, nor is any perfectly and purely good. I love the warmth of the summer sun, but am no great fan of 90% humidity. Fall colors are beautiful, but fall can be very wet with regular rain-



storms. Truly, God has made everything beautiful in its time, as Solomon reminds us in Ecclesiastes.

In a different direction, we can observe from the orderly march of seasons the fleeting nature of this life, and our own mortality. Whether you are in the springtime of life, enjoying the sweet days of summer, or getting on it the autumn of your years, time is marching forward and you and I are growing older. Such reflections can lead to bitter regrets, or a spirit of complaining. Rather than giving into bitterness of soul, let us redeem the realization of our mortality to ask the question, "What does God have for me in this season of my life? How can I serve Him faithfully in my present moment?"

None of us live forever, and all too soon we will fly away. But what will we do with the time that remains? How will we spend our waning strength, and dwindling opportunities? Will we cross the finish line with a sense of a job well done, a race well run? May God grant us the presence of mind, and the strength of body and soul, to finish our days to His glory, honor and praise!

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### **Mnemonics...**

- *Church Campout, 8-10th*
- *Presbytery, 16-17th*
- *Men's Breakfast, 24th*

# Quench Not the Spirit, Pt. 1

By Richard Sibbes

We are now to take notice of various sorts of men that offend deeply against this merciful disposition of Christ.

## FALSE DESPAIR OF CHRIST'S MERCY

There are those who go on in all ill courses of life on this pretense, that it would be useless to go to Christ, because their lives have been so bad; whereas, as soon as we look to heaven, all encouragements are ready to meet us and draw us forward. Among others, this is one allurements, that Christ is ready to welcome us and lead us further. None are damned in the church but those that are determined to be, including those who persist in having hard thoughts of Christ, that they may have some show of reason to fetch contentment from other things, as that unprofitable servant (Matt. 25:30) who would needs take up the opinion that his master was a hard man, thereby to flatter himself in his unfruitful ways, in not improving the talent which he had.

## FALSE HOPE OF CHRIST'S MERCY

There are those who take up a hope of their own, that Christ will suffer them to walk in the ways to hell, and yet bring them to heaven; whereas all comfort should draw us nearer to Christ. Otherwise it is a lying comfort, either in itself or in our application of it.

## RESISTING CHRIST'S MERCY

There are those who take it on themselves to cast water on those sparks which Christ labors to kindle in them, because they will not be troubled with the light of them. Such must know that the Lamb can be angry, and that they who will not come under his scepter of mercy shall be crushed in pieces by his scepter of power (Psa. 2:9). Though he will graciously tend and maintain the least spark of true grace, yet where he finds not the spark of grace but opposition to his Spirit striving with them, his wrath, once kindled, shall burn to hell. There is no more just provocation than when kindness is churlishly refused.

When God would have cured Babylon, and she would not be cured, then she was given up to de-

struction (Jer. 51:9). When Jerusalem would not be gathered under the wing of Christ, then their habitation is left desolate (Matt. 23:37,38). When wisdom stretches out her hand and men refuse, then wisdom will laugh at men's destruction (Prow. 1:26). Salvation itself will not save those that spill the medicine and cast away the plaster. It is a pitiful case, when this merciful Saviour shall delight in destruction; when he that made men shall have no mercy on them (Isa. 27:11).

**“None are damned in the church but those that are determined to be.”**

Oh, say the rebels of the time, God has not made us to damn us. Yes, if you will not meet Christ in the ways of his mercy, it is fitting that you should `eat of the fruit of your own way, and be filled with your own devices' (Prow. 1:31). This will be the hell of hell, when men shall think that they have loved their sins more than their souls; when they shall think what love and mercy has been enforced upon them, and yet they would perish. The more accessory we are in pulling a judgment upon ourselves, the more the conscience will be confounded in itself. Then they shall acknowledge Christ to be without any blame, themselves without any excuse.

If men appeal to their own consciences, they will tell them that the Holy Spirit has often knocked at their hearts, as willing to have kindled some holy desires in them. How else can they be said to resist the Holy Ghost, but that the Spirit was readier to draw them to a further degree of goodness than was consistent with their own wills? Therefore those in the church that are damned are self condemned before. So that here we need not rise to higher causes, when men carry sufficient cause in their own bosoms.

## PRESUMING ON CHRIST'S MERCY

And the best of us all may offend against this merciful disposition if we are not watchful against that liberty which our carnal disposition will be ready to take from it. Thus we reason, if Christ will not quench the smoking flax, what need we fear that any neglect on our part can bring us into a comfortless condition? If Christ will not do it, what can?

You know the apostle's prohibition, notwithstanding, `Quench not the Spirit' (1 Thess. 5:19). Such cau-

tions of not quenching are sanctified by the Spirit as a means of not quenching. Christ performs his office in not quenching by stirring up suitable endeavors in us; and there are none more solicitous in the use of the means than those that are most certain of their good success. The reason is this: the means that God has set apart for the effecting of any thing are included in the purpose that he has to bring that thing to pass. And this is a principle taken for granted, even in civil matters; for who, if he knew before that it would be a fruitful year, would therefore hang up his plough and neglect tillage?

Hence the apostle stirs us up from the certain expectation of a blessing (1 Cor. 15:57,58), and this encouragement from the good issue of victory is intended to stir us up, and not to put us off. If we are negligent in the exercise of grace received and the use of the means prescribed, suffering our spirits to be oppressed with many and various cares of this life, and take not heed of the discouragements of the times, for this kind of neglect God in his wise care suffers us often to fall into a worse condition in our feelings than those that were never so much enlightened. Yet in mercy he will not suffer us to be so far enemies to ourselves as wholly to neglect these sparks once kindled. Were it possible that we should be given up to abandon all endeavor wholly, then we could look for no other issue but quenching; but Christ will tend this spark and cherish this small seed, so that he will always preserve in the soul some degree of care.

If we would make a comfortable use of this, we must consider all those means whereby Christ preserves grace begun; such as, first, holy communion, by which one Christian warms another. 'Two are better than one' (Eccles. 4:9). 'Did not our heart burn within us?', said the disciples (Luke 24:32). Secondly, much more communion with God in holy duties, such as meditation and prayer, which not only kindles but adds a luster to the soul. Thirdly, we feel by experience the breath of the Spirit to go along with the breath of his ministers. For this reason the apostle knits these two together: 'Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings' (1 Thess. 5:19,20). Nathan, by a few words, blew up the decaying sparks in David. Rather than that God will suffer his fire in us to die, he will send some Nathan or other, and something always is left in us to join with the Word, as of the same

nature with it; as a coal that has fire in it will quickly gather more fire to it. Smoking flax will easily take fire. Fourthly, grace is strengthened by the exercise of it: 'Arise therefore, and be doing, and the LORD be with thee' (1 Chron. 22:16), said David to his son Solomon. Stir up the grace that is in you, for in this way holy motions turn to resolutions, resolutions to practice, and practice to a prepared readiness to every good work.

However, let us remember that grace is increased, in the exercise of it, not by virtue of the exercise itself, but as Christ by his Spirit flows into the soul and brings us nearer to himself, the fountain, so instilling such comfort that the heart is further enlarged. The heart of a Christian is Christ's garden, and his graces are as so many sweet spices and flowers which, when his Spirit blows upon them, send forth a sweet savor. Therefore keep the soul open to entertain the Holy Ghost, for he will bring in continually fresh forces to subdue corruption, and this most of all on the Lord's day. John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, even in Patmos, the place of his banishment (Rev. 1:10). Then the gales of the Spirit blow more strongly and sweetly.

As we look, therefore, for the comfort of this doctrine, let us not favor our natural sloth but exercise ourselves rather to godliness (1 Tim. 4:7), and labour to keep this fire always burning upon the altar of our hearts. Let us dress our lamps daily, and put in fresh oil, and wind up our souls higher and higher still. Resting in a good condition is contrary to grace, which cannot but promote itself to a further measure. Let none turn this grace 'into lasciviousness' (Jude 4). Infirmities are a ground of humility, not a plea for negligence, nor an encouragement to presumption. We should be so far from being evil because Christ is good that those coals of love should melt us. Therefore those may well suspect themselves in whom the consideration of this mildness of Christ does not work that way. Surely where grace is, corruption is 'as vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes' (Prov. 10:26). And therefore they will labour, with respect to their own comfort, as likewise for the credit of religion and the glory of God, that their light may break forth. If a spark of faith and love is so precious, what an honor will it be to be

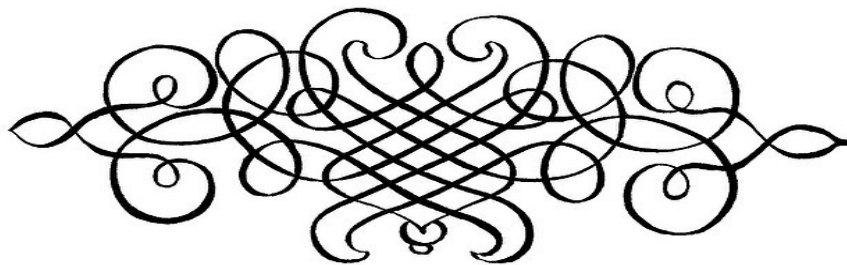
“Surely  
where  
grace is,  
corruption  
is ‘as  
vinegar to  
the teeth,  
and as  
smoke to  
the eyes’”

## Quench Not the Spirit, Concluded...

rich in faith! Who would not rather walk in the light, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, than live in a dark, perplexed state? And not rather be carried with full sail to heaven than be tossed always with fears and doubts? The present trouble in conflict against a sin is not so much as that disquiet which any corruption favored will bring upon us afterward. True peace is in conquering, not in yielding. The comfort intended in this text is for those that would fain do better, but find their corruptions clog them; that are in such a

mist, that often they cannot tell what to think of themselves; that fain would believe, and yet often fear that they do not believe; and that think that it cannot be that God should be so good to such sinful wretches as they are, and yet they do not permit these fears and doubts in themselves.

*Sibbes, Richard, The Bruised Reed, Chapter 10, Quench Not the Spirit*



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## *Pine Haven Autumn Festival*

The Pine Haven Autumn Festival is scheduled for September 10 from 1:00 to 6:00. Our church is responsible for 4 pies, to be delivered to the Haven Drive campus by 10:00 am. Also, we would like donations of craft items, baked goods, canned goods and fresh produce. If you have any of these items to donate, contact Ellen McNeese or Marge Halbach. Thank you for any contributions you can make.



# September Birthdays



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*Wedding Anniversaries*



# Comments on Finance

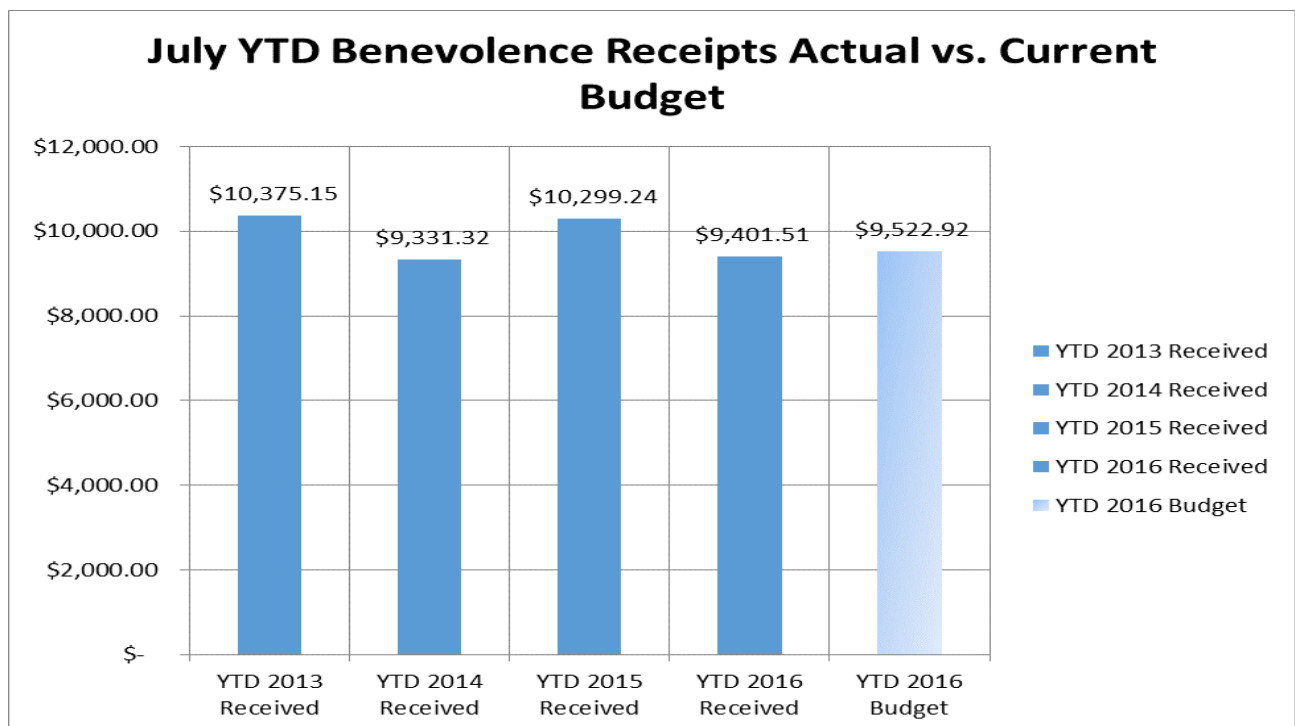
by Joel Moody

**General Fund** receipts for July totaled \$14,963.64 as compared to the budget of \$16,117.10, while General Fund disbursements for July totaled \$10,863.75. July year to date General Fund receipts totaled \$100,491.75 as compared to the budget of \$99,926.10 (an excess of \$565.65), while July year to date disbursements of \$93,440.90 were \$6,485.20 below budget. Through the end of July, the General Fund has increased by \$7,109.13. Year to date General Fund receipts for July were 9.5% above last year's total on an average Sunday while disbursements were 0.8% above the prior year.

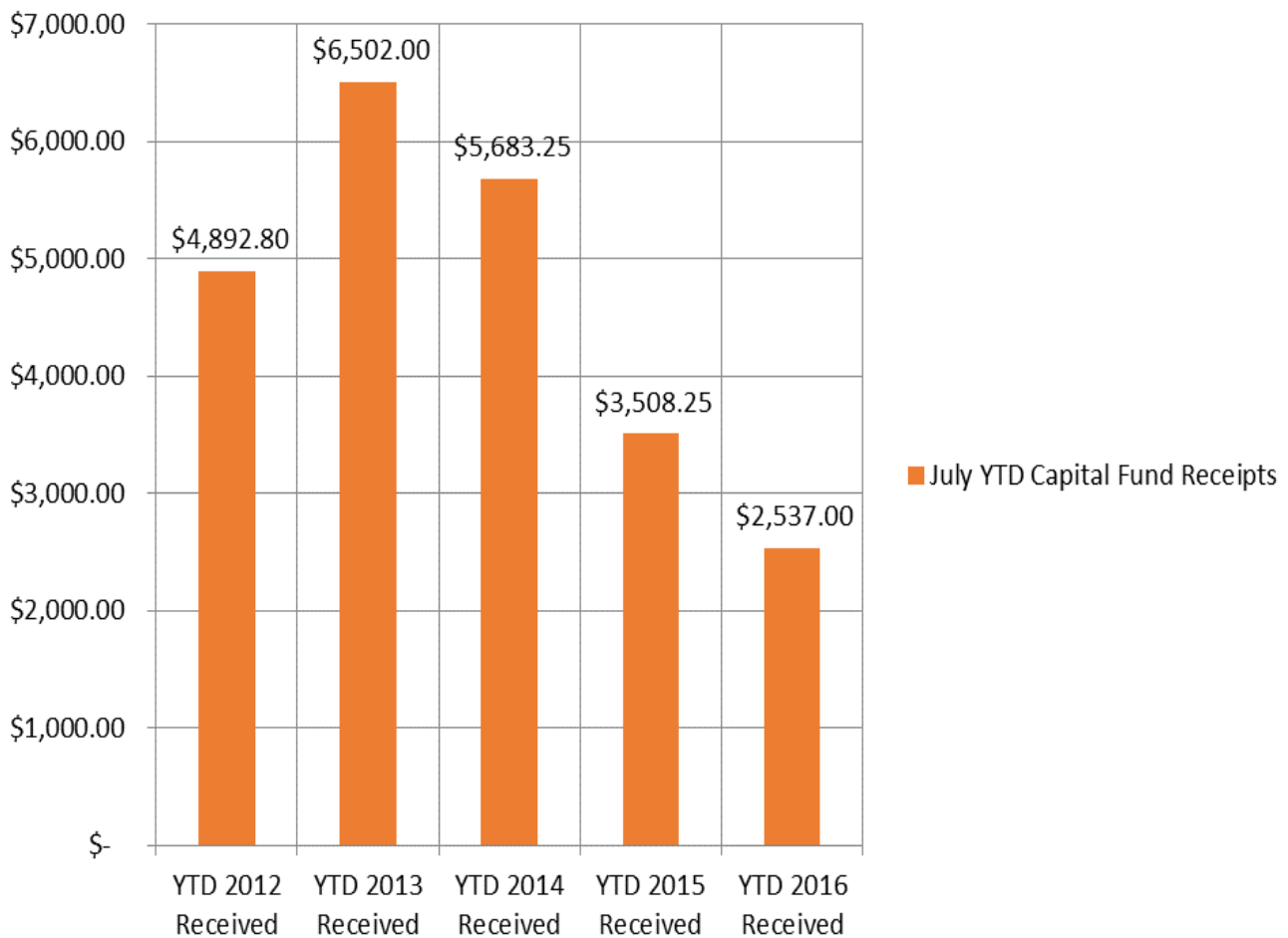
**Benevolence Fund** Receipts for July totaled \$1,102.00 as compared to the budget of \$1,360.42 (a shortfall of \$258.42). Year to date Benevolence Fund Receipts through July totaled \$9,401.51 and fell short of budget by \$121.41. Please refer to the graph for a historical trend of benevolence receipts as well as the current benevolence budget. During July, \$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). In addition, \$600.00 was

disbursed to three seminaries, \$600.00 to Reformed University Fellowship - UWM, and \$300.00 to Geneva College/New Song (\$37.00 from Miscellaneous Benevolence as well as \$263.00 from gifts for that purpose).

July Year to Date giving for the **Capital Fund** was \$2,537.00. 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 computers, 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.



## July YTD Capital Fund Receipts



## *New Secretary*

Liz TenPas will be filling in for Susan from September 1st to December 22nd. If you have bulletin announcements or other items for the secretary during this time, please give them to Liz.





Grace OPC

# September 2016

*Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ*



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4 Meadowview Manor 3:00 p.m.	5	6	7	8 Church Campout	9 Church Campout Dinner 6:00 p.m.	10 Church Campout
11	12	13 Session Meeting 6:30 p.m.	14	15	16 Presbytery Janesville, WI	17 Presbytery Janesville, WI
18	19	20	21	22	23	24 Men's Leadership Breakfast 7:00 a.m.
25	26	27	28	29	30	



## Carrot Soup

- ★ 1 medium onion, chopped
- ★ 2 tablespoons butter
- ★ 2-1/2 cups chicken broth
- ★ 1 pound carrots, sliced
- ★ 2 large potatoes, peeled and cubed
- ★ 1-1/2 cups milk
- ★ 1/4 teaspoon salt
- ★ 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- ★ Shredded Swiss cheese & minced fresh parsley, optional

### *Directions:*

In a large saucepan, saute onion in butter until tender. Add the broth, carrots and potatoes; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 15-20 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Remove from the heat; cool slightly.

Transfer to a blender; cover and process until blended. Return to pan. Stir in the milk, salt and pepper; heat through (do not boil). Garnish with cheese and parsley if desired. **Yield:** 6 servings.



“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.”



Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

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## Spurgeon Corner

*“His fruit was sweet to my taste.”  
(Song of Solomon 2:3)*

Faith, in the Scripture, is spoken of under the emblem of all the senses. It is *sight*: “Look unto me and be ye saved.” It is *hearing*: “Hear, and your soul shall live.” Faith is *smelling*: “All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia”; “thy name is as ointment poured forth.” Faith is spiritual *touch*. By this faith the woman came behind and touched the hem of Christ’s garment, and by this we handle the things of the good word of life. Faith is equally the spirit’s taste. “How sweet are thy words to my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my lips.” “Except a man eat my flesh,” saith Christ, “*and drink my blood, there is no life in him.*”

This “*taste*” is faith in one of its highest operations. One of the first performances of faith is *hearing*. We hear the voice of God, not with the outward ear alone, but with the inward ear; we hear it as God’s Word, and we believe it to be so; that is the “*hearing*” of faith. Then our mind *looketh* upon the truth as it is presented to us; that is to say, we understand it, we perceive its meaning; that is the “*seeing*” of faith. Next we discover its preciousness; we begin to admire it, and find how fragrant it is; that is faith in its “*smell*.” Then we appropriate the mercies which are prepared for us in Christ; that is faith in its “*touch*.” Hence follow the enjoyments, peace, delight, communion; which are faith in its “*taste*.” Any one of these acts of faith is saving. To hear Christ’s voice as the sure voice of God in the soul will save us; but that which gives true enjoyment is the aspect of faith wherein Christ, by holy taste, is received into us, and made, by inward and spiritual apprehension of his sweetness and preciousness, to be the food of our souls. It is then we sit “under his shadow with great delight,” and find his fruit sweet to our taste.

*Morning, August 25th by C. H. Spurgeon*

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# CHURCH CAMPOUT

The annual church camp-out will be Sept 8-10 at Kohler Andrae State Park. The pitch-in supper on that Friday evening will be at 6:00 p.m. All are invited to come. See Pastor Brian for more details.

