

Expressions of Faith Preserved for Family and Friends



An Arrangement of Stories and Meditations

By Nick Ellerbroek and Fran Kortman

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**“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways” declares the Lord.
Isaiah 55:8**

KLAAS ELLERBROEK married IDA VAN OOSTERUM on March 5, 1875
KLAAS was a nurseryman in Boskoop
They had 7 children. The 7th child was named MAARTEN ELLERBROEK



Maarten Ellerbroek was born on January 13, 1891.
He was a nurseryman and became my father.



*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.
Psalm 32:8*

The Maarten Ellerbroek Family 1973



Family Picture taken in 1973

MAARTEN ELLERBROEK was born on January 13, 1891 in Boskoop.

GEERTRUIDA JOHANNA SPAARGAREN was born on September 8, 1898 in Boskoop.

MAARTEN ELLERBROEK married GEERTRUIDA SPAARGAREN on June 5, 1924.

They had six children:

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| 1. IDA JOHANNA ELLERBROEK | born 7-28-1926 |
| 2. JOHANNA (JOPIE) GEERTRUIDA ELLERBROEK | born 7-31-1927 |
| 3. NICOLAAS (NIC) ELLERBROEK | born 3-08-1930 |
| 4. JANNA (JANNIE) ELLERBROEK | born 6-23-1932 |
| 5. IMMETJE (EMMIJ) GEERTRUIDA NEELTJE ELLERBROEK | born 11-26-1939 |
| 6. KAREL LODEWIJK ELLERBROEK | born 10-05-1941 |

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. John 6:47

Part of my Mother's Letter

*Mother's letter was written in Dutch on March 7, 1988.
I translated part of her message of when I was born on March 8, 1930.*

Dear Nic and Alice:

Tomorrow will be your birthday Nic and I often think of that day you were born and that it was not so easy. You had stomach problems and all you did was cry. I walked and walked with you in my arms. The doctor came and gave me a suggestion on how to care for you and that was a blessing. He said to me, "Mrs Ellerbroek, let's try something. Cook some rice and feed your son the rice water." I followed the doctor's advice and your father and I don't know if it was a miracle or the rice water that helped get you better.

The pastor (Dominee) came often by me and when he saw you in your crib, he said that you should become a minister, but you studied to be a farmer. It is now all different, you have a business and all is going well. You are both healthy. What a blessing!

This is the Dutch version

Lieve Nic en Alice:

Morgen ben je jarig Nic, en ik denk vaak, dat toen je was geboren, was het niet zo gemakkelijk, je had het aan de ingewanden en maar huilen, en liep ik maar met je op mijn arm. De dokter kwam en kreeg ik een wenk van hem hoe ik moest handelen, en dat is toen gelukt.

De Dominee kwam ook vaak bij mij en als hij dan het kind zag leggen zei hij, die moet U Dominee laten worden, maar je leerde voor boer. Het is nu wel wat anders, je heb een kwekerij en gaat alles naar jullie wens. De kinderen zijn de deur uit, zijn beide goed gezond. Wat een zegening!



Nick's Mother



The house Nick was born in

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12

Netherlands

The Netherlands, on the coast of the North Sea, is twice the size of New Jersey. Part of the great plain of north and west Europe, the Netherlands has maximum dimensions of 190 by 160 miles and is low and flat except in Limburg in the southeast, where some hills rise up to 1056 feet. About half the country's area is below sea level, making the famous Dutch dikes necessary for efficient land use. Reclamation of land from the sea through dikes has continued through recent times.



The Afsluitdijk is a 20 mile long dike, which connects the province of North Holland with the province of Friesland. It was constructed between 1927 and 1933 as a fundamental part in a larger plan called the Zuiderzee Works. With the completion of the Afsluitdijk the Zuiderzee ('Southern Sea') became the fresh water lake of IJsselmeer.

The Zuiderzee Works was consisted of two parts. The first stage of the project was the damming of the Zuiderzee ('Southern Sea'), transforming it into the fresh water lake the IJsselmeer. The second part was the reclaiming of new land. The Noordoostpolder and a complete new Dutch Province, Flevoland, were officially established in 1986.

Today, the Afsluitdijk is more than a dike that protects the Dutch from floods. It's also a motorway which is used by thousands of people every day. You can drive, cycle or walk from one side of the lake to the other and enjoy the amazing views.



Tulip Fields



Afsluitdijk

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.
Eph 2:8*

Nick's roots in Boskoop, Zuid Holland (South Holland)



The house our family lived in for many years



The River Gouwe near where I was born

Boskoop Today



Centre of Boskoop



Rose Garden of Boskoop



Belle de Boskoop is an apple cultivar which, as its name suggests, originated in Boskoop

Boskoop is a town in the province of South Holland. It was a separate municipality until it merged into Alphen aan den Rijn in 2014. The town had a population of 15,050 in 2012 and covers an area of 2.81 square miles of which 0.54 square miles is water. It's the world's biggest joined floriculture area.

Boskoop is famous for its nurseries, particularly woody plant and perennial nurseries, of which some 774 are situated on long stretches of land, divided by narrow canals. Before World War II almost all transport was conducted using narrow boats. A few exceptionally high footbridges crossing some of the broader (main) canals remain from these days. Between the World Wars the transition was made from fruit culture to decorative garden plants and trees. As a source of technical knowledge about the art of growing decorative plants, Boskoop remains world-renowned and unique.

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.-Ecclesiastes 3:1

Alice's Roots in Foudgum, Friesland

Foudgum is a small village in Dongeradeel in the province of Friesland, the Netherlands. It had a population of around 80 as of 2004.

Friesland (or in Frisian: *Fryslân* - because people here speak another language, than the rest of the Netherlands), is a part of the Dutch mainland and includes additionally the West Frisian Islands, Leeuwarden is the Capital. Friesland is a province of people proud of their traditions, their separate way of speaking, difficult to understand even for the Dutch, their style of life which combines century's long tradition with the influences of global economy. Nowhere in the Netherlands do McDonald's restaurants look weirder than in Friesland.

Every few years in winter, when the canals freeze, Elfstedentocht – a skating race through all eleven cities of Friesland, takes place. A Maltese bronze cross is given to each participant, who managed to finish this 124 mile long race. Usually 16 000 participants take part, but for the race to take place, the ice on the canals has to be thicker than 6 inches, so it does not happen every winter.



Cemetery where Alice's Grandparents are buried.



The **Friesian** (also **Frisian**) is a horse breed originating in Friesland, in the Netherlands. Although the conformation of the breed resembles that of a light draught horse, Friesians are graceful and nimble for their size.



Elfstedentocht – a skating race through all eleven cities of Friesland



124 mile Elfstedentocht Route



Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures forever. 2 Chronicles 20:21

Nick and Alice

Met on May 1 1951, Married on October 22, 1953



Children

Martin John Born 11-18-1955

John Mitchell Born 7-11-1957

Nancy Gayle Born 01-12-1961

Diane Lyn Born 01-12-1961



Picture taken on Nick and Alice's 60th wedding anniversary

The Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations. Psalm 100:5

Our Children's Families



Anthony, Megan & Eli – Alicia, Brad & Canaan – Marty & Linda – Kirby, Kyle & Austen



Beth & Nancy



Brett, Ellen, John, Holly, Joel



Ben, Diane, Sami, Frank

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. III John 1:4

Our Grandchildren and Great Grandchildren



*Nick, Brett, Ben, Kirby, Megan, Alicia, Alice
Sami, Joel, Holly*

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Kirby Ellerbroek | July 6, 1985 |
| Ben Barefield | October 18, 1985 |
| Megan Ellerbroek | August 27, 1986 |
| Alicia Ellerbroek | September 22, 1987 |
| Brett Elerbroek | January 10, 1991 |
| Joel Ellerbroek | January 19, 1993 |
| Holly Ellerbroek | January 19, 1993 |
| Samantha Barefield | August 27, 1998 |



*Anthony & Megan
Eli*



*Kirby & Kiel
Austin, Kaysen & Adaleigh*

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Psalm 127:3



*Alicia & Brad
Canaan, Jonah*



Joel



Brett



Holly



Sami



Ben

**Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.
Proverbs 22:6**

Story about a picture of the Spaargaren Family from 1929

The picture on page 14 is important to me because the tall man standing to the right is my Dad while my Mom is sitting and holding my sisters Ida and Jopie. Although I was not born yet when this picture was taken, I am pleased with it because in the middle I see sitting by a small table my Grandpa Jan and Grandma Johanna Spaargaren, my Mother's parents. I remember that one day before I immigrated to the US, I went to visit Grandpa to say goodbye to him. It was difficult for both of us because we knew it was the last time to be together.

When I look at this picture, I realize how much I was influenced by some of my relatives when I was young. For example, the young couple standing in the center of the picture is my Aunt Mary and my Uncle Jan Spaargaren. They didn't have children, but Aunt Mary loved me and often took care of me. But there are two more members of my Mother's family I am reminded of when I look at this picture. One is her youngest sister Neeltje and is standing next to my Dad; she was still young when she died of Tuberculosis. The other is my Mother's youngest brother Jack who is standing in the back. Soon after the war in 1945, Uncle Jack was invited by a nurseryman from Seattle, WA to manage his nursery business. He accepted the position and with his wife moved there in 1947. They raised a family and after a few years Uncle Jack started his own nursery business and named it Hollandia Gardens.

The rest of the story is that after my basic training in the US Army in 1952, I had to report to the Naval Base near Seattle for service in South Korea. So while I was in Seattle, I had the opportunity to visit with my Uncle Jack and his family, who lived not far from the Naval Base. It was during this visit that he offered me a job at Hollandia Gardens when my tour of duty was over. It sounded good to me, but to convince my fiancé to live in Seattle didn't work. She wanted to live in Holland, MI. So after my discharge from the Army on Sept. 22, 1953, I returned to Holland, MI and was rehired by Chris Craft Corp. One month later, on Oct. 22, 1953, Alice and Nick were married in Central Ave. C.R.C. by Rev. Wm. Haverkamp.

With all your heart, you must trust the LORD and not your own judgment. Always let him lead you, and he will clear the road for you to follow. Proverbs 3:5-6

Spaargaren Family Picture of 1929



Uncle Jack



Rev. W. Haverkamp



Wedding Day October 22, 1953

Fear not, for I am with you always. Isaiah 41:10

The De Graaf genealogical tree since 1764

Europe was in economic, political, and religious disarray when HEINE JAN was born in Friesland, The Neth. in 1764. He died in 1807 at the age of 43 and left behind his wife, Nieske, a daughter Dieuwke, and a son JAN. When Napoleon became ruler over all of Western Europe, he required all his subjects to have a surname. Nieske, now the sole provider for her family was employed as a housemaid for a large landowner known as 'de Graaf'. Nieske, with the help of the elders of her church assisted her with choosing the surname of 'de Graaf' due to her employment there. Neiske's son, now bore the name of JAN deGRAAF. He became a shoemaker and at the age of 27 married 25 year old RUURDJE TUINSTRA in May Of 1825. Their first child was born on Feb. 6, 1826 and named HEIN JAN de GRAAF. A second son was born on March 23, 1833 and named Aldert de Graaf. In 1836 a daughter Pietje was born and in 1839 a daughter Nieske. The genealogy continues with ALDERT de GRAAF of Jan and Ruurdje. He married ANTJE MONSMA in December of 1859. Aldert and Antje lived in Akkerwoude, Friesland and had 13 children.

Aldert and Antje's second son was named JAN ALDERT de GRAAF. He was born Jan. 12, 1863. He married FROUKJE ELDERHUIS in May of 1888. Between 1889 and 1911 Jan Aldert and Froukje had eleven children: Aldert, Gerlof, Beitske, Antje, Sietse, Dirkje, Jitse, Martje, JAN, Tietske, and Pietje.

JAN de GRAAF was born on Oct. 24, 1905. He married TRYNTJE NIENKA van der WAL on Oct. 26, 1929, who was the youngest daughter of Hendrik van der Wal, living in Ferwerd, Friesland. Six children were born in the marriage:

Aukje (Alice), Jan (John), Froukje (Fran), twins (born and died in early infancy), and Hendrika (Helene). The family immigrated to Holland, MI in July of 1947 and stayed on a cattle farm in North Holland. Several months later they purchased a house located at 169 E. 16th Street, Holland, MI.

The eldest child of Jan and Tryntje Nienka (Nancy) De Graaf was Alice who was born on May 22, 1930. She met Nick Ellerbroek at age 21 on May 1, 1951.

Nick and Alice were married on Oct. 22, 1953 in Holland, MI. and have 4 children: Martin John, John Mitchell, Nancy Gayle and Diane Lynn.

**Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14:27**

The Family of Jan and Tryntje De Graaf geb. Van der Wal



*Picture from 1947
In North Holland*

*Mom De Graaf
Alice, Fran & Helene*

*The family of
Jan & Tryntje De Graaf
@ Frank & Diane's Wedding 1981*



**For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.
2 Timothy 1:7**

Learning Experiences

Much of what I learned in grade school, in the Netherlands, from 1936 to 1943 was learned by repetition. And because I went to a Christian school, everyone in class was required to learn a Dutch Psalm verse one week and be able to recite it by heart the following week. Indeed, practice makes perfect. This also was the case, when at age 14, I was hired by a farmer and had to learn how to milk cows by hand. Let me tell you, eventually I became really good at it!

My next learning experience started in November of 1949 when I immigrated to the United States and worked on a big farm in Terra Ceia, N.C. But, I was not happy there. So in the early spring of 1951 I moved to Holland, MI and was hired at Chris Craft Corp. What I did not expect, after only living in Holland for six months, was being drafted into the US Army on Oct. 3, 1951.

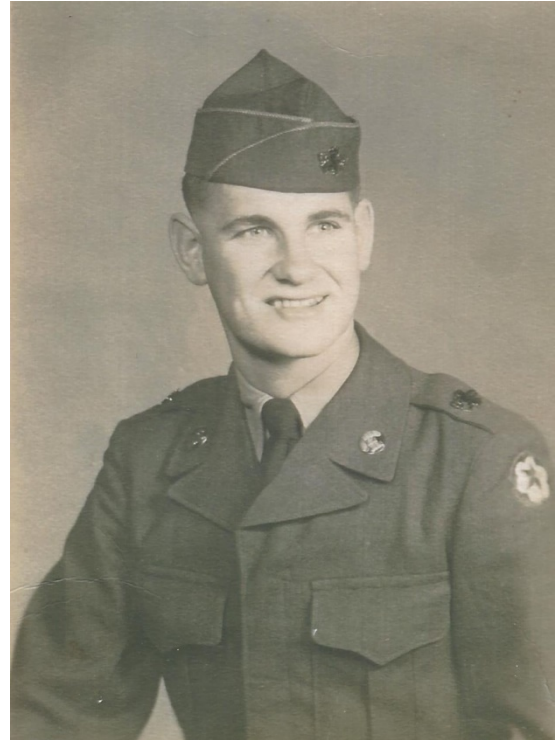
I received 16 weeks of basic training at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. In the spring of 1952, along with many other soldiers, I was sent to South Korea and became a member of the 313th Utility Detachment along the 38th Parallel. During that time, I was one of three men who were operating generators that supplied electric power for the headquarters of an army base on the frontline. I was really happy when in a short time I knew how and when to use every circuit breaker on the switch board by heart.

The Korean War came to an end on July 27, 1953. In early September I was informed that soon I would be on my way back to the United States. In fact, within a week, I was one of many soldiers, who boarded a transport ship, in the harbor of Pusan Korea. All I remember of the two week voyage across the Pacific Ocean is that I was sea sick most of the time. But what made up for it was finally seeing, in the distance, the California Coast and at the end of the journey, experiencing with hundreds of soldiers, passing underneath the Golden Gate Bridge and docking at one of the piers in the harbor of San Francisco.

P.S. 500,000 Americans served in Korea during the three year of war. Of these American soldiers, 54,000 died and 103,000 were wounded. How very sad!

**Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.
Psalm 55:22**

Army Pictures from October 1952-1953



The Korean Service Medal was established by President Truman per Executive Order 10179 to honor those servicemen who served in the Korean War. The design, created by Mr. Thomas J. Jones uses the symbols associated with Korea to reflect services in that Country.

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.
Isaiah 40: 29-31

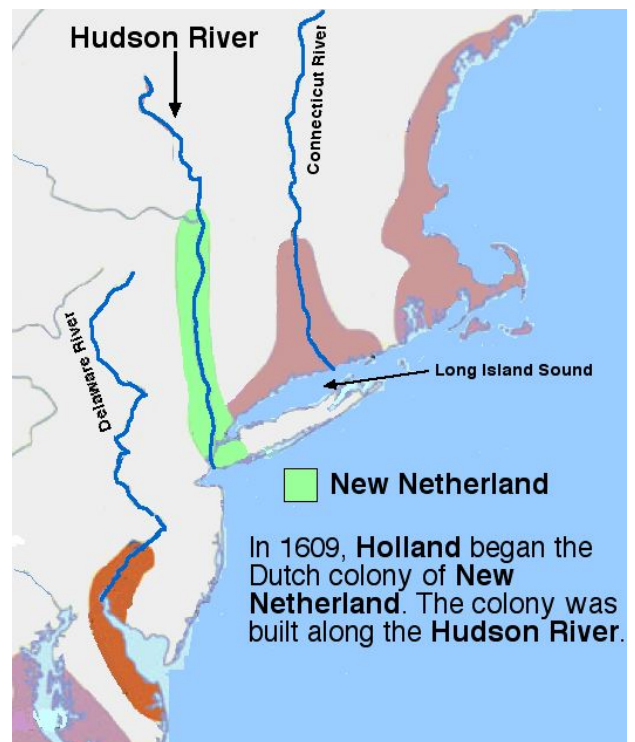
The First Dutch Settlers arrived in America in 1609

In 2013 I read a book about the first Dutch settlers, who in 1609 established Trading Posts and villages along what today is called The Hudson River. The book was written by Nicoline Van Der Sijs and she explains the reasons why so many people from Europe decided to immigrate to America during the 17th century. It was mainly because of social and political unrest. But other people decided to leave their homeland because they wanted religious freedom for their family and their descendants.

The only reason for becoming an immigrant in 1949 is that I was given the opportunity by the Westerbeek family from Tera Ceia, N.C. At that time, I thought living in America would be a good way to prove myself. Today, I believe it was the guiding hand of God.

The question is: What is so interesting reading about Dutch people who immigrated to America in 1609? It's because they experienced different living conditions than we do today. For example" Historian Jaap Jacobs writes about a group of Dutch settlers in the 17th century who were living near a tribe of Native American Indians. He explains that although the physique of the Indians was not much different than the Dutch settlers, the settlers had to get used to their red skin, brown eyes and painted faces. They wore animal skins and in the winter lived in huts that housed several families. They did not worship any God, but ascribed to powers in the sun, moon, and planets.

P.S. All I know is that there is no lack of information available of past civilizations. The question is: Should I accept the cultural and political changes we see and hear about on radio and television? My response is that I will continue to do my best to be a Christian example wherever I go.



The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace. Psalm 29:11

Dutch Influence in West Michigan

After I immigrated to the US in November 1949 and lived in Terra Ceia, N.C. for a week, the Westerbeek family took me along to the Terra Ceia C.R.C. Although I did not understand the minister that day, I made up my mind to learn American English and learn to read and write it.

It is now 2015 and because I enjoy reading and writing short stories; I bought a book that was written by Nicoline Van Der Sijs from which I learned that in 1609, the first Dutch colonists came to live in North America, and that some of the Dutch words they used to communicate with the Indians found their way into the Webster's New World Dictionary. I also learned that in 1950 some firms in Grand Rapids, MI used Yankee Dutch to draw people's attention. For example: a sign at a gas station reads:

If je have trouble mit your car or truck phone de number below and you'll never be stuck.
At Calvin College students called a drink 'a slokje' and when their car broke down; they said their car was 'kapot'. Other Dutch expressions were spread by way of 'coffee klets' a custom among people from the Netherlands.

But if there is any Dutch influence left in America, it is in names of towns and religion in West Mi. One example is that in 1866 thirty five members of Graafschaap CRC left in order to organize and build a new church on property along what is Country Club Road today. The 35 organizers, who came to America as immigrants, decided to pattern the new church after the church they had left, which was a small rural white framed church near the town of Ulrum, in the province of Groningen, The Netherlands. They even gave it the same name: "Niekerk" meaning New Church.

In 2016 it will be 150 years ago Niekerk Christian Reformed Church was organized. An addition to the church was added in 2011 and the corner stone says:
'Built on Christ Jesus, Himself, as the Chief Cornerstone.' Ephesians 2: 20



Built on Christ Jesus, Himself, as the Chief Cornerstone. Ephesians 2:20

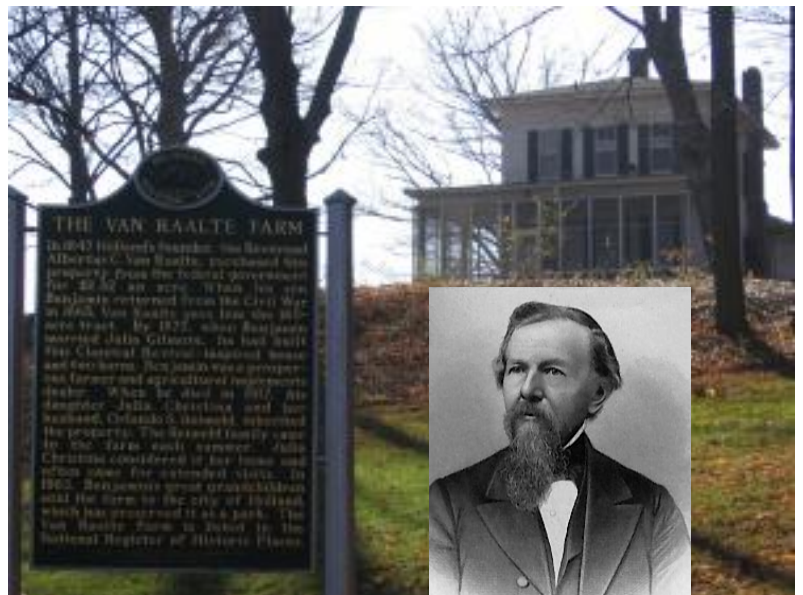
The Early Years of Holland, Michigan

The idea of a Dutch settlement in Southwest Michigan began in the early 19th century with four ministerial students at the University of Leiden; and with many people in the Netherlands who experienced economic problems and religious persecution. The situation was so serious that two of the students, van Raalte and Scholten, made plans to immigrate to America. As a result: *The Principles for a Society of Dutch Immigrants to the United States* was drawn up and Wisconsin considered the best place for the settlement.

But van Raalte was persuaded to consider a Dutch settlement in West MI by John Kellogg, a judge in Allegan County, who was familiar with the area and a possible colony site. What happened is when John Kellogg and his Indian guide showed Rev. van Raalte the Black Lake area. van Raalte believed he had found a home for the colony and a place that would become the vocal point for Dutch Protestant immigration to America. So in early 1847, after further study and negotiations, the center of the settlement was chosen and called Holland, MI.

Development of Holland, Michigan began slowly because of a shortage of capital. Another problem, in 1847, was not enough shelter and swamps made the area a breeding ground for malaria. In addition, the new immigrants had brought smallpox into the area and many found their dreams shattered by death. But even when a fire destroyed half of Holland, MI in 1871 did some leading institutions come into being. Some people, who live in Holland, MI today, are descendants of the people who came with Rev. Albertus van Raalte from the Netherlands in 1846. In his farewell address in 1876, he said to his congregation: “Beloved who follow us in this inheritance; we give it over to you with joy, but do not forget we received it from God as a training school for eternity, a workplace for God’s kingdom. This shall prosper in your hands only if God and His kingdom remains your precious portion.”

The information needed for this story came from a book called: *A Brief History of Holland, Michigan* written by Donald Van Reken.



Albertus Christiaan van Raalte
(1811-1876)

I Trust in You, O Lord. You are my God. My times are in your hand. Psalm 31:14-15

Nick's First 2 years in America



18 Months in North Carolina



The ss Veendam (II) late in her career, carrying post war emigrants across the North Atlantic. The passenger accommodation becomes 195 First Class and 357 Tourist Class and 362 Crew members commence her first post war sailing on 21 February 1947 from Rotterdam to New York. The ship is extensively used by Dutch emigrants moving to North America in the period 1948 to 1952. On 30th, October 1953 the last voyage is made with 600 passengers and upon arrival in New York the ship is sold for scrap to the Bethlehem Steel Company of Baltimore. The demolition starts in November 1953.



*State Bird and Flower
Cardinal & Dogwood*



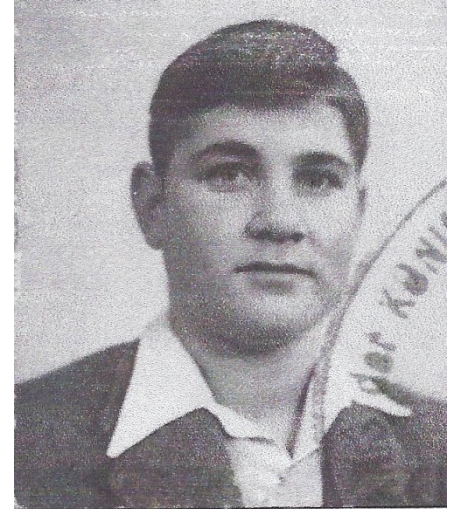
Terra Ceia Christian Reformed Church

Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. 1 Corinthians 2:9

From November 1949 to November 1953

It was November 4, 1949 at the age of 19 when I immigrated from Boskoop, the Netherlands to the United States and lived in a small Dutch community called Terra Ceia, located near the coast of North Carolina. I boarded by a Southern family, Mr. and Mrs. Keech, and worked on two different farms, first on the Westerbeek farm, then on the Van Dorp farm. I remember the summer of 1950 was hot and humid.

After doing regular farm work for a year in Terra Ceia I became restless mainly because there were very few Dutch young people I could share my free time with. So one day I asked for two weeks' vacations to travel to Grand Rapids, Michigan to visit a family I had met onboard the immigrant ship Veendam. Their last name was Spanjer and consisted of a husband, wife and two daughters. One special friend of mine on the voyage across the Atlantic Ocean was the 17 year old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Spanjer and to be honest she was the main reason for my vacation, to find out what happened to her and her family after we arrived in New York on November 16, 1949.



Nicolaas Ellerbroek
Dutch Passport Picture 1949

Well, my trip by Greyhound bus from Terra Ceia to Grand Rapids took longer than I had expected. Traveling through the Blue Ridge Mountains was most beautiful. Something I had never seen before. When I was hungry on the more than two day trip I bought a ham sandwich at a bus stop. It was something I knew how to order in English.

Finally, I arrived in Grand Rapids and found my way to Bemis street where the Spanjer family lived. Only Mr. Spanjer was home, Mrs. Spanjer was in the hospital for something I don't remember, but I was welcome. My question was where is the now 18 year old daughter? After all, I was searching for a young lady to share my life with in America.

Well, I soon found out she had a boyfriend, was happy and in love. When I left for Holland, Michigan the next day I remember her saying to me "Nick, I am sure you will find the right Dutch girl". In Holland I visited with the Spek family. They also had immigrated in 1949 and like me came from Boskoop. I knew their son Arie who was working for the Weller Nursery. But it was John and Mien Koning, my first cousin who had immigrated in 1947 and lived in Holland, Michigan who invited me to stay with them till it was time for me to return to work in Terra Ceia. Several months after I was back in Terra Ceia something happened at work on the farm that convinced me I was not needed nor appreciated, so I decided to move to Holland, Michigan and find a job there.

After I moved to Holland, Michigan in the spring of 1951 I was employed at Chris Craft Corporation and boarded with Mr. and Mrs. Van Zonneveld, a Dutch family who had immigrated in 1949 and lived at 321 Central Avenue. They were very nice people. Central Avenue Christian Reformed Church was near-by and on Sunday afternoon a church service was held in Dutch.

"No eye has ever seen, no ear has heard, no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." 1 Corinthians 2:9



Central Avenue Christian Reformed Church

Several weeks later my friend Arie Spek and his girlfriend Harriet Gruppen were making plans to have a birthday party. They were going to invite some couples but who could I ask to be my girlfriend? I said to Arie, "You know this girl Alice DeGraaf, she is not going out with Evert anymore and you know her from English class". So Alice DeGraaf got a phone call from Arie Spek inviting her to his birthday party. That was "Okay" Alice said, but she didn't have a way to get to his house. Arie told her May 1st is my birthday and someone will pick you up about 7 O'clock. That is how our friendship began. It was May 1, 1951.

In September of 1951 I received a notice to report for military duty and on October 3, 1951 I was inducted into the US Army. I received 12 weeks of basic training at Fort Belvoir, Virginia near Washington DC. After basic training my furlough was spent with Alice and her family with orders to report on a certain date at a place in Seattle, Washington. From there with many other soldiers I would leave to serve either in Japan or Korea. I finally served the Army in Korea at 8th Army Headquarters near the 38th Parallel as a member of the 313 Engineer Utility Detachments. In September of 1953 with many other soldiers I was on my way back to the US and received my discharge in Chicago on September 22, 1953.

During my absence Alice wrote a letter to me every day. One month after I came home from the Army on October 22, 1953 Alice and I were married in Central Avenue Christian Reformed Church. We bought 5 acres of land on 16th Street near Country Club road in Holland Michigan, built a house there and raised our 4 children. We lived there for 52 years. Finally we sold this property to Tendercare of Holland. Both Alice and I turned 81 years old in 2011 and when we look back on our lives together we can relate to the providence of God. We are Thankful and Praise the Lord!



Alice & Nick - Christmas 1951

Shortly after I began boarding at Van Zonneveld's another Dutch boy came to live there. His name was Evert and his girlfriend's name was Alice DeGraaf. I had seen her picture and thought to myself: "Not bad Evert, not bad".

One Sunday evening while I was writing a letter to my parents in the Netherlands Evert's girlfriend stopped by. She wanted to know if Evert was home. Well, he was sick in bed, so upstairs she went but a short time later, and down she came and asked if she could use the telephone to call her brother to pick her up. I looked at her and said "I can take you home".

"Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; For as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God." 1 Corinthians 11:11-12

Pictures from a Trip to the Netherlands in 1959



Vertical Lift Bridge over the river Gouwe in Boskoop



Arrival in Rotterdam



Family picture taken in Holwerd



Holwerd is a village in the Netherlands, in the province of Friesland.



Dokkum is a city in the province of Friesland. It has 12,635 inhabitants (January 1, 2013). The fortifications (defense wall) of Dokkum are well preserved and are known as the bolwerken (bulwarks). It is the fifth-most popular shopping city in Friesland. It also has the smallest hospital of the Netherlands.

Give Thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His love endures forever. 1 Chronicles 16:34

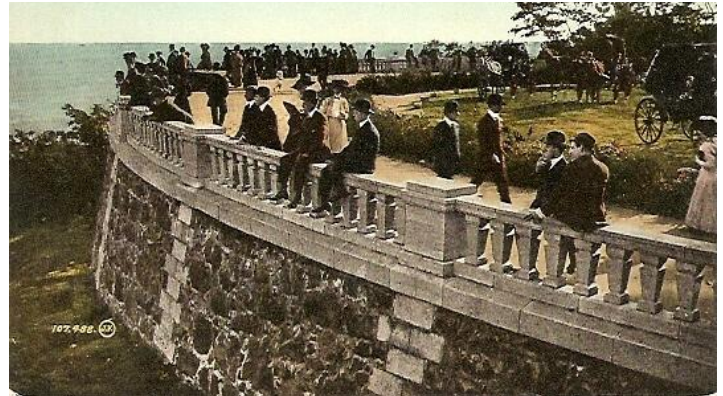
The Netherlands 1959: More Than a Vacation

By Nick Ellerbroek

In the summer of 1959 my wife Alice and I went to the Netherlands for three months with our 3 ½ year old son Martin and 2 year old son John. We made plans for this vacation for at least a year, and the day our journey started, Alice her parents and our friends Wim and Grace Ploeg brought us to Battle Creek. From there we left by train to Montreal.

When we arrived in Montreal the following day we had plenty of time before we were expected on board the ship *Rijndam*, so we took a bus tour through the city of Montreal, which is the second largest French speaking city in the world. First we went to the foot of Mount Royal, motor vehicles are prohibited to the top, but a horse coach was waiting for us to take us there. Once on top, a stop was made at the LOOK OUT; from there we could see both the Saint Lawrence River and the city of Montreal. Next we visited Notre Dame Catholic Church which accommodates at least 10 thousand worshippers. It was the last stop on our tour through the city of Montreal.

Lookout out over Saint Lawrence River and the city of Montreal.



We were now more than ready to go on board the ship *Rijndam*, find our cabin and put Martin and John to bed. Besides Alice and I were ready for a good night sleep. Soon after breakfast the following morning, Alice and I with the boys were on deck, enjoying the wonderful weather and changing landscape with fellow passengers, as the *Rijndam* sailed through the Bay of Saint Lawrence. It sure was different the next

day when the ship moved through the Belle Isle Straits and icebergs were the attraction. I remember some of the passengers were exchange students from Sweden and good models for the camera. A young man from Nigeria told me that Christian missionaries have a positive effect on the people of his country.

A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps. Proverbs 16:9

After a 12 day voyage across the Atlantic Ocean the *Rijndam* arrived in the harbor of Rotterdam and its dock at the Holland America Line. Many people on shore were waiting for family and friends to disembark, but before this started a long blast of the ship's horn was heard with the people on shore responding with a shout.

As soon as Alice and I walked down the gangplank of the ship with Martin and John by the hand and our passports were checked, my family was more than ready to meet us. It was the first time for them to meet Alice and the boys, all of us were wiping away some tears.

I grew up in the town of Boskoop and when we arrived there, I thought everything looks the same even the man who sold ice-cream cones in 1949 is still doing business. In the center of town, nothing has changed there either. It consists of four churches, all kinds of stores, city hall and the bridge across the river Gouwe. The main industry in Boskop is horticulture, but is known above all for its horticultural trade school today. In fact Jaap Deblecourt, the former manager of Windmill island in Holland, Michigan graduated from this trade school in Boskoop.

After a week of visiting with my family in Boskoop our plans were to visit Alice's family who live near Dokkum in the province of Friesland. We rented a car and drove first to the city of Alkmaar known for its cheese market. From there we drove north and via the Afsluitdijk to Friesland. The Afsluitdijk is a road through the former Zuider Zee in the Netherlands and connects the province of North Holland to the province of Friesland. From shore to shore it is 20 miles long and about 300 feet wide. It was constructed between 1927 and 1933 and converted most of the former Zuider Zee into a freshwater lake known today as IJsselmeer.

Alice's relatives were happy to meet us and I still remember that one young girl asked her dad after she had seen some of our pictures, "Dad when are we going to America?" He answered, "Your mother could never leave Grandma and Grandpa." Our trip to Friesland with our two sons Martin and John was a wonderful experience and something Alice and I will never forget.



City of Alkmaar, known for its Cheese Markets

"...Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9



A visit at the grave of Willard Van Eyck in Margraten, Limburg

Friends, as memorable as our visits with family were on our trip, I had an important task to complete while in the Netherlands. Before we went on our vacation I promised our neighbor Richart Van Eyck that we would visit the American Military Cemetery for him near the village of Margraten in the province of Limburg. In order to keep this promise we traveled to the village of Margraten. We found our way to the American Military Cemetery where we soon learned that 8000 American soldiers and 1000 Allied soldiers were buried on the 65 acres cemetery site. An American was on duty, very friendly and ready to answer any questions a visitor might have. My question was, "We are looking for the grave of a Holland Michigan soldier. His name is Willard Van Eyck."

Soon we were told that flight officer Willard was killed on March 24, 1945 and was buried on plat E, Row 5, Grave 20 and would be very easy to find. There we found a cross made of Italian marble, engraved with his name, the state he came from and date he was killed. Indeed, many men and women have paid the ultimate price for the freedom we enjoy in America today.



Willard Van Eyck

This story was in the June 2013 edition of the D.I.S. Magazine

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23:6

History of Niekerk Christian Reform Church

Niekerk is part of the Christian Reformed Faith in North America, which has a rich tradition of thoughtful theology, relevant Biblical wisdom, and worldwide service. The congregation of Niekerk was organized on September 25, 1866. The congregation decided to name the church Niekerk which means "New Church" in Dutch since this was the native language of the founders of the church. Niekerk has a rich history which as a church we are thankful for because it has brought us to where we are today.



BRIEF TIMELINE OF NIEKERK EVENTS

- 1866 – Niekerk Christian Reformed Church Established
- 1885 – Original Church Enlarged
- 1941 – Chapel and Classrooms Added to East of Building
- 1949 – Present Parsonage Built
- 1957 – March 17 Church Destroyed by Fire
June 11 Ground Breaking for New Church Building
- 1958 – May 27 Dedication of New Church
- 1988 – Addition of our South Main Entrance
Youth Building – “En Gedi” Built
- 2011 – Addition of our East Entrance and Family Center
Sunday, September 11 – Dedication of Addition
Saturday, October 8, 2-4 pm – Community Open House



**Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...
But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. Joshua 24:15**

Radio Program: The Bread of Life 1983

As a member of the Niekerk Chr. Ref. Church and your speaker today, I welcome you to listen to this: The Bread of Life Program and comes to you from the sanctuary of our church which is located on Country Club Road, east of Holland. Our soloist is Mrs. Ruth Boven and Mrs. Marge Boeve is the Organist. Our Bible passage will be from Psalm 100. My name is Nick Ellerbroek and will be speaking to you on this program about the question: What does it really mean to you and me to be a Christian?

Mrs. Ruth Boven sings. Prayer by N.E.

Father in Heaven, what a joy it is to listen to familiar songs of the church, songs with words of hope and love. A love we can experience every day from Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Father, what a privilege it is to live in a community where we can listen to Christian programs by way of the radio. All of us have taken these Christian activities for granted, and find ourselves busy with things that are common in life, things that only give us pleasure for a while. Father, and so we pray help us to become stronger in our conviction of faith so we are able to resist temptations. We also pray for courage to be a witness for Jesus' sake. Dear Lord, help us to be faithful, an example to those who want to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord and taught us to pray The Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in Heaven, Hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen

For the mediation on The Bread of Life program today, I will begin by reading from the Word of God a Psalm of praise. Psalm 100.

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before His presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord, He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise; be thankful unto Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations.

Dear people: As members of a Christian church, we partake of Holy Communion and often are engaged in activities of a congregation. The question is: What does it really mean to us to be a Christian? I believe there must be some evidence in the way we behave in our lives. Behave in a way people see us as Christians, who are, in the words of Psalm 100 willing to serve the Lord with gladness and see us as people who are thankful to God.

Be still and know that I am GOD. Psalm 46:10

In our society today, we celebrate Thanksgiving Day. How sad that so many people think of this day only in terms of just another paid holiday. For Christians, this must be different; everyday must be a Thanksgiving Day. Every day we must be able to say with the Psalmist: We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. But can we say things like that as Christians in 1983 and be taken seriously? Oh, it seems OK to discuss the way a minister preaches. It is also accepted we discuss openly denominational differences. Instead, as sincere Christians, let's discuss our faith in a living God, a faith that comes from the heart; a faith that is a testimony and expresses Christian love; and is able to say from Psalm 100: *The Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endureth to all generations.*

As an example, our pastor at Niekerk Church told the story about an elderly lady he had met in a former congregation. He said he knew Frieda as a good friend and a God-fearing lady. After some years, he met Frieda again when he came to the same church to preach. Yes, here she was, the person he had learned from so much as a younger preacher. Frieda was now really old and had become much smaller physically. But what was most important Frieda had remained a real child of God, a witness in the Church of Jesus Christ.

What about you, my friend? What does it really mean to you to be a Christian? I hope that this story reflects your life and that the older you become, the more you want to live for the Lord. That the weaker your body becomes, the stronger you feel your faith is. What a comfort then to know psalms like Psalm 100 that tell us that the Lord is good, His mercy everlasting.



Another example is from my personal experience. I, too, remember a real Christian lady, who before she passed away sang her favorite Dutch Psalm. Psalm 89:1 *Ik zal eeuwig zingen van God's goedertierenheid.* This means I will forever sing of God's mercy. Oh, what a comfort it must have been for her to experience God's grace at the end of her life. When I think of it, it reminds me of my calling as a Christian.

For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock. Psalm 27:5



Christians are to be the salt of the earth. When we want to stress a person's worth, we often say that he or she is the salt of the earth. In the ancient world, salt was highly valued. Jesus Christ intends His followers to be preservers and healers in the society. As salt, they help people in suffering with a healing covenant with the healer, Jesus. Salt is an integral part of divine covenant (Numbers 18:19, Leviticus 2:13, 2 Chronicles 13:5, Ezra 43:24, Mark 9:50, Job 6:6).

In fact, Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, tells us that as Christians, we are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? Jesus said: but to be cast out "it is, therefore, good for nothing and to be trodden under foot of men." Jesus said: "We are to be the light of the world; like a city that is set on a hill and cannot be hid. Neither must we light our candle of faith and put it under a bushel. We must put it on a candlestick so that it gives light unto all that are in the house." Therefore, may our light so shine before men that they may see our good works; not that glorify men, but that glorify our Father which is in heaven. Amen.

Let's pray: Dear Heavenly Father, we thank Thee that as Christians we are free to speak of the assurance of faith because we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. Father, may the Bread of Life Program truly be a blessing to many of our listeners. Father, and if there is a burden anywhere, may each one of us know that Jesus invites us and says: "Come unto me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Read Matthew 11:28. After the message, Mrs. Marge Boeve used her talents playing some hymns on the organ.

The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. Job 33:4

The Departure of the Israelites from Egypt

By way of special programs on television, we learn about tornados, hurricanes, snowstorms, even social unrest. But when we are not personally involved, there is really not anything we can do about it. Many of us feel sorry for people who endure hardship or even persecution in today's world, and millions of people do. However, when as Christians we have physical problems or face death; we know that God is in control, in fact, He is our refuge and strength.



For people who do not believe in God, it is different. Just think of not having anyone to turn to during times of sickness or death. This must be unbearable. This reminds me of a Bible story I have known since I was a child. It is a story about the Israelites leaving Egypt with Moses as their leader. The first problem they had to overcome on their journey to the 'Promised Land'

was it seemed they were trapped. In front of them was the Red Sea and behind them was the King of Egypt with men who were ready to destroy them, they said "Did you have to bring us out here in the desert to die?" Moses replied "Do not be afraid, you will see what the Lord will do to save you." The Bible tells us the Lord told Moses to move his people forward; to lift his rod and hold it out over the water; the sea will open up a path before you so all the people will be able to go through the sea on dry ground. The Bible also tells us that the angel of the Lord, who had been leading the Israelites, moved to the rear so that a pillar-like cloud was between the Egyptians and the Israelites. Let's picture it in our mind; the Israelites walking through the Red Sea with a wall of water on both sides. The question is: What happened to the Egyptians? The Bible tells us they followed the Israelites with their horses and chariots. But the Lord threw them into a panic so they were unable to move. By now, the Egyptians realized that the God of the Israelites was ready to destroy them and that is what happened when the Lord said to Moses: "Hold out your rod over the sea," as Moses did the water of the sea returned to the normal level. When the Israelites saw how the Lord defeated the Egyptians, they sang praises to Him. Read more about this story in Exodus 14:5-31

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7

The Story of David and Goliath

We live in a world today where wars, violence, murder, abortion, and persecution of Jews and Christians are common. This was also going on during Bible times and the following story is about David and Goliath during a time in history the Bible tells us the Israelites and the Philistines just did not get along. So, one time when they were at war with each other, David brought food to his brothers who were in a war zone facing the Philistines. When David arrived there, he suddenly heard a loud voice coming from the direction of the enemy camp demanding the Israelites send someone brave enough to fight with him. David looked across the valley and saw the biggest man he had ever seen. Who is that man? David wants to know. "Oh, that is Goliath," a soldier tells him, "every day he comes out and challenges one of us to fight him, but so far, no one even wants to consider it. King Saul has offered a big reward to anyone who can kill him." A short time later, David makes it known that he will fight Goliath and is



introduced to King Saul. "You are so young," he says, "and Goliath has been a fighting man all of his life." David replies, "King Saul, I have killed lions and bears, I can kill this Philistine too because he has defiled the army of God." Finally King Saul said to David: "Go and may the Lord be with you."

Just imagine...David going out to meet Goliath with nothing more than a stick, his slingshot and five smooth stones he picked up along the way. No doubt, Goliath was angry when he saw this young man coming

at him because he cursed and yelled: "I will give your flesh to the birds and the beasts of the field." But David is not afraid of him and called out to Goliath: "You come against me with sword and spear. I have come here in the name of the God of Israel." At that point, Goliath started to come at David with spear in hand. It was then that David reached into his bag, took out a stone and slung it away. You know what happened? The stone struck Goliath right between his eyes. It killed him and the battle between David and Goliath was over.

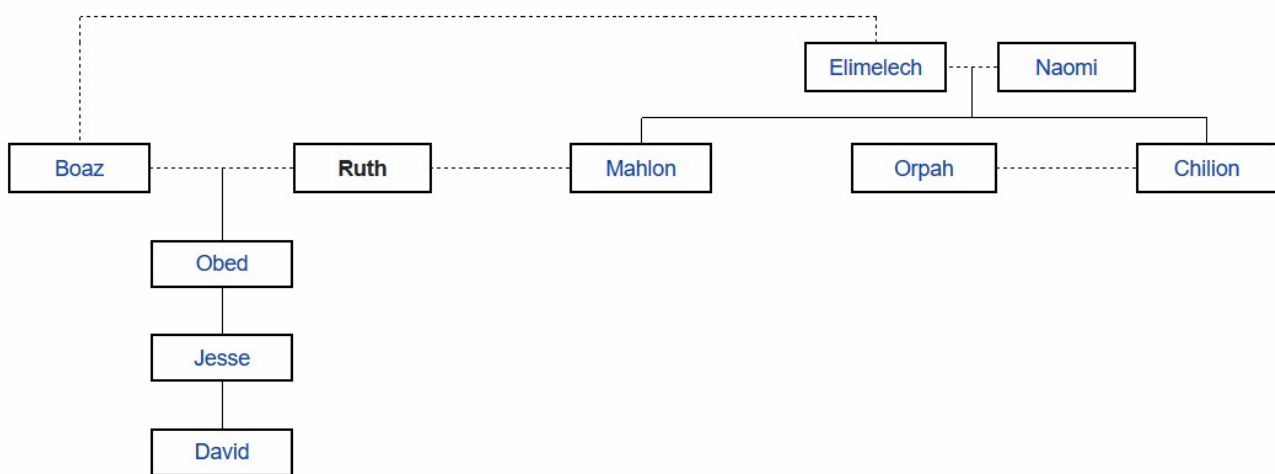
When I think of this Bible story in 1 Samuel 17, I believe the stone from David's slingshot that killed Goliath was directed by the Lord. In the same way may the opportunities we have to express our Christian faith be directed by Jesus our Lord and Savior? I pray that the examples of faith written in this book be used by God to draw someone to Himself.

Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the LORD. Psalm 31:24

The Story of Naomi and Ruth

When during the 1930's I went to school in the Netherlands, I enjoyed the teacher tell Bible stories and one of the story I still remember is about a man by the name of Elimelech, and his wife Naomi who decided to move with their two sons Mahlon and Chilion, to the land of Moab because of a severe famine in the land of Israel. But after they lived there for a while Elimelech, Naomi's husband, became very sick and died. Naomi became very lonely in this strange land; and to make matters worse Mahlon came home one day with the news that he and his girlfriend, Ruth, were in love and wanted to get married.

Genealogy: the descent of David from Ruth



Naomi felt terrible because Moabites and Israelites never liked each other. So how could this be? The Bible tells us that Mahlon and Ruth got married. But not much later Chilion, Naomi's second son, came home with the news that he was in love with his girlfriend Orpha and they too wanted to get married. Now remember, Naomi loved her two sons and decided she would also love both of her daughters-in-law as best as she could. She would do her best to teach both Ruth and Orpha about God. Naomi, with her two sons and their wives lived together for ten years. Then something terrible happened again. Both Mahlon and Chilion died. Now all three women were left without husbands. The good news was the Lord had again provided food for His people in Israel. So one day Naomi said to Ruth and Orpha: "I must return to my people!" Soon the three women began to prepare themselves for the long journey to Bethlehem in Israel. But along the way Naomi began to worry again and said to both Ruth and Orpha: "You girls must go back home. It will be much easier for you to get married again in your own country."

**Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.
Psalm 96:12**

At last Orpha decided Naomi was right and kissed her goodbye. But Ruth said to Naomi: *“Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.”* Ruth 1:16 When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her to go back to Moab, and together they walked until they came to Bethlehem. Without husbands, Naomi and Ruth knew it would not be easy for them to earn enough money to buy food. So one day Ruth said to Naomi: “Let me go to the field and pick up the grain that is missed by the harvesters. As it turned out, she found herself gleaning in a field that belonged to a man by the name of Boaz. One day he asked his servant: “Who is that girl?” The servant replied: “Oh that is Ruth, Naomi’s daughter-in-law.” “Ruth?” Boaz asked. “I have heard many wonderful things about her. She takes care of my relative Naomi and she is even more beautiful than what I heard.” Soon a friendship was started and to make a love story short, before long Boaz and Ruth were married.

The Bible tells us they had a son and called him Obed. When Obed became a grown man, he married and had a son named Jesse, who became the father of King David. Many years later, in the town of Bethlehem, another boy was born and His name was Jesus. Friends, this story tells us of a Moabite girl who was willing to leave her native land to care for her mother-in-law and was predestined by God to bring forth after 28 generations Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Matthew 1:5



Ruth in Boaz's Field,

Lord, help us to be fully committed to being your disciples. Help us to throw off anything that entangles us and hinders our commitment to you. In Jesus name, Amen

The Story of David and Nathan, the Prophet

When I read the Bible or a Christian magazine, I often have a dictionary nearby in case I want to know the meaning of a certain word. For example: One day I wanted to know the definition of the word 'Confrontation' and learned it means to come face to face with someone. That is what happened when Nathan, the prophet, visited King David at his palace and told him about two men; one was rich and the other poor. The rich man had many sheep and cattle, but the poor man had only one lamb. This lamb was like one of the family and shared food and drink with them. What happened is that when a guest arrived at the home of the rich man, instead of taking one of his own lambs to prepare a meal for him, he took the lamb that belonged to the poor man. Upon hearing this; King David became angry and said to Nathan, the prophet, *"This man deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over. Then Nathan said to David: You are the rich man! The Lord God of Israel says: I made you King of Israel and saved you from the power of Saul. I gave you his palace and his wives and the kingdom of Israel and Judah; and if that was not enough, I would have given you much more. Why then, have you despised the law of God and done this horrible deed? For you have murdered Uriah and stolen his wife."*
2 Samuel 12:7-9



"I have sinned against the Lord," David confessed to Nathan and he replied: *"Yes, but the Lord has forgiven you and you will not die for this sin."*

So, what do we learn from such a story? If we use the Bible for a guide, we learn from Romans 3:23 *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* But listen! Romans 4:7-8 promises: *"Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the person whose sin the Lord will never count against him or her."* Oh, may we have the assurance today our sins are forgiven and are prepared to meet our Lord and Savior face to face. If so, let's keep in mind the chorus of an old hymn.

*Face to face I shall behold Him, far beyond the starry sky;
Face to face, in all His glory, I shall see Him by and by!*

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

The Story about the Birth of Jesus

Regardless of what time of year it is, the story about the birth of Jesus in a Bethlehem stable should be important to every Christian. And if we grew up in a Christian home, we learned all about Jesus in school or when His story was read to us by our parents from the Bible. Although I am familiar with the story of the birth of Jesus, I wonder what it must have been like for the shepherds who were taking care of their sheep one night near Bethlehem and suddenly were approached by an angel who said: *“Do not be afraid, I bring*



you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today, in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you; you will find the baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger. Suddenly a great company of angels appeared with the angel, praising God and saying; Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests. When the angels left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one

another: Let us go to Bethlehem and see what has happened which the angel has told us. So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph with the baby Jesus lying in a manger.”
Luke 2: 10-16

I wonder who took care of the sheep when the shepherds went to Bethlehem. The Bible does not tell us. What I do know is that it is more than 2000 years ago the birth of Jesus was reported, first by an angel, and then by some shepherds who saw it come to pass. But many people around the world are still confused and their question is: Who is this Jesus I am supposed to believe in?



Well, the answer is found throughout the Bible telling us Jesus Christ was with God, the Father, even before the creation of the universe. And that by accepting Him as Lord and Savior, we will be forgiven of our sins and at the end of life’s journey, we will stand faultless before God’s throne.

The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. Psalm 34:15

Immanuel – God with Us

When we read Luke 2: 8-20, we learn that while some shepherds were guarding their sheep in a field near Bethlehem one night, suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and they were terrified. But the angel said to them: *“Do not be afraid! I bring you good news. Today, in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you, He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find the baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.”* Luke 2: 11-12 NIV. But this was only the beginning of what a sinful world would come to know about Jesus – Immanuel – God with us. For example: An early American hymn writer Wilber Chapman was inspired to write during his life (1859-1928):

One day when Heaven was filled with His praises
One day when sin was as black as could be,
Jesus came forth to be born of a virgin,
Dwelt amongst men, my Example is He!
Living, He loved me, dying He saved me;
Buried, He carried my sins far away;
Rising, He justified freely forever,
One day He’s coming again – Oh, glorious day!

Now, if we want to know more about Jesus while He lived on this earth, the Bible tells us Satan could not seduce Him. Pilate said of Him: “I find no fault in this man.” A Roman soldier said: “Certainly this was a righteous man.” And God announced from Heaven: “This is My Beloved Son; listen to Him.”

Yes, let’s listen to Jesus and hear Him say: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”* Matthew 22: 37 NIV. *“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”* John 14: 6 *“I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness; but will have the Light of Life.”* John 8: 12 NIV

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." John 8:12



Your Faith has made You Well

As Christians most likely we are familiar with most Bible Stories. One such story is found in Mark 5:25-34. Here we are told of a woman who had suffered from severe bleeding for twelve years, even though she had been treated by many doctors. But when she heard about Jesus, she believed: *“if only I could touch His robe, I will be healed.”*

So when Jesus came to Capernaum, where she lived, she was one of many people who wanted to be near Him. And sure enough, the moment came that by an act of faith, she touched Jesus’ robe.

Suddenly Jesus stopped and asked: *“Who touched my robe?”* The disciples looked at Jesus; how could He expect an answer? Dozens of people had been touching Him. But while Jesus stood still and looked at the many faces in the crowd, He said: *“I know that power has gone out of Me. Someone has touched Me and has been healed.”*

When Jesus said this, the woman meekly stepped forward, knelt at His feet and said to Jesus: *“I knew that if I could only touch Thy robe, I would be healed.”* Jesus said to her: *“Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”*

Mark 5:34. With these words from Jesus, a hymn writer (Elvis Presley) said that he was:



Shackled by a heavy burden
'Neath a load of guilt and shame
Then the hand of Jesus touched me
Now I am no longer the same.

He touched me, oh He touched me
And oh the joy that floods my soul
Something happened and now I know
He touched me and made me whole.

Since I met the blessed Savior
Since He cleansed and made me whole
I will never cease to praise Him
I'll shout it while eternity rolls.

He touched me, oh He touched me
And oh the joy that floods my soul
Something happened and now I know
He touched me and made me whole.

On return, they beached the boat at Gennesaret. When the people got wind that he was back, they sent out word through the neighborhood and rounded up all the sick, who asked for permission to touch the edge of his coat. And whoever touched him was healed. Matthew 14:34-36

Assurance of Faith

Regardless of what denomination we belong to let's all worship the Lord!

With this in mind, a story is told of a pastor who visited a dying man in the hospital and wanting to know more about the man's religious background, he asked him of what persuasion he was. The patient replied; "I am of Paul's persuasion." "I don't think you understand my question" said the minister. "You know some folks are Baptist, others are Lutherans or Methodist and still others are Presbyterians and that is what I had in mind when I asked you about your persuasion." The man on the sick bed answered, "Pastor, I know what you mean and let me say it again; *I am of Paul's persuasion because I can say; "for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that Jesus is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day."* 2 Timothy 1:12b. The dying man could face the future, even death with confidence. He had the assurance of salvation because his trust was in Christ alone, not in any righteousness of his own.

Do you and I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? If our answer is yes, then John 3:16-17 tells us:



"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see. Hebrews 11:1

Treasures in Heaven

Wilber Nelson, who was a radio pastor during the 1980's said in one of his sermons that many people are only half-heartedly interested in the things which must be supreme in our lives.

But our question might well be: How are we to live the Christian life our God wants us to? One answer to that question is found in Matthew 6: 19-21 where Jesus says: *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*



To apply the words of Jesus: *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* to our daily lives: A story is told of a lady who was visiting at the home of a pastor and his wife. They had two sons who were well informed of what the Christian faith teaches. When she arrived, the two boys were amusing themselves with some beautiful instructive toys. So, the visiting lady remarked: *“Well boys, are these your treasures?”* *“Oh no, Mum,”* said the preacher's oldest son. *“These are not treasures; these are only our play things. Our treasure is in Heaven!”*

I know many things we own have a purpose, are interesting, desirable at times, helpful and needed in everyday life, but, as Christians, we are not to set our hearts on them, instead let us focus on what Jesus said: *“Store up for your selves treasures in Heaven!”*

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself. Mark 12:30-31

To Do the Lord's Will



Marian Billups Booth

(4 May 1864 – 5 January 1937), better known as Marie Booth, was the third daughter of Catherine and William Booth, the Founder of The Salvation Army.

Marian Booth, daughter of the founder of the Salvation Army was a beautiful lady both physically and spiritually. She began her Christian work with great promise but suddenly disease brought her to the point of death. A friend who was visiting her one day said it is a pity that a person with your capabilities should thus be hindered from doing the Lord's work. Marian replied with gentle graciousness: "It is great to do the Lord's work, but it is even greater to do the Lord's will."

Like Marian Booth, who lived many years ago, may it also be our desire to do the Lord's will. I believe when our desire for God dominates our hearts, our minds will stay focused on ways to serve Him and our actions will further His kingdom on earth and in Heaven.

Our land was blessed in times of old by men and women who loved the Lord. Oh, let us trust Him as they did and stand upon His Word.



William Booth

*(10 April 1829 – 20 August 1912)
Was a British Methodist preacher who founded The Salvation Army and became its first General (1878–1912). The Christian movement with a quasi-military structure and government founded in 1865 has spread from London, England, to many parts of the world and is known for being one of the largest distributors of humanitarian aid.*



Catherine Booth

*(17 January 1829 – 4 October 1890)
Was co-founder of The Salvation Army, along with her husband William Booth. Because of her influence in the formation of The Salvation Army she was known as the 'Mother of The Salvation Army'.*

"The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever."

1 John 2:17

Conrad Had a Dream

Some time ago, I read a short story of a sincere Christian man by the name of Conrad, who had a dream that the next day Jesus was going to visit him. Being sure this was going to happen, he rose early the following morning and went to the woods to collect some green boughs to decorate his work shop so that it would be the best place to receive such a great guest. Then Conrad waited. He waited all morning and the only thing that happened was an old man came by asking if he could rest for a while. By trade, Conrad was a shoemaker. When he saw that the old man's shoes were old and worn, he said to him: "I will give you a pair of new ones." So Conrad put on the old man's feet the sturdiest pair of shoes he had in his shop before sending him on his way. Then the afternoon came and Conrad waited and the only visitor was an elderly woman who also stopped by to rest because she was carrying a heavy load. Conrad gave her some of the food he had prepared for Jesus. She ate and after resting, she continued on her way. Soon evening came and there in Conrad's shop came a little lost child. He was annoyed because now he had to leave his shop and take the child home. When he returned, Conrad was certain he had missed the Lord. So he prayed: "What is it Lord? Have you forgotten this was the day you would visit me?" Then Conrad heard a voice that said: "Lift up your heart; for I kept My word. Three times I came to your door. I was the old man who needed shoes; I was the woman who needed food; and I was the lost child you took home." When we think of this story, we understand that the presence of Jesus Christ comes in many forms. At times, we ourselves are called upon by Jesus to be His hands and His feet. Other times, we realize our needs are met in a special way. Matthew 25: 34-40 explains it this way:

Then the King will say to those on His right, come you who are blessed by My Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you invited me in; I needed clothes and you clothed me; I was sick and you looked after me; I was in prison and you came to visit me Then the righteous will answer Him:

Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? When did we see you as a stranger and invite you in or needing clothes and clothed you?

When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? The King will reply: I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me."

Always Remember the Golden Rule

Do to others as you would have them do to you. Luke 6:31

Safe at Last!

In November 2012 it will be 63 years ago that I immigrated to the United States and promised my parents that I would write to them about my life in America. As a result, writing letters became something I was good at; even today, writing is a good past-time for me, besides I enjoy reading short stories and memoirs of folks I don't know personally.

For example, some years ago, I read the memoirs of a bachelor who enjoyed operating a train for the Railroad, but his mother was afraid that someday he would be involved in a terrible railroad accident. So every morning after she prepared his lunch for the day, she would place her arm about his shoulder and as they said good-bye, she would pray: "O God please watch over our boy and bring him home safe tonight."

He writes: 'when late in the afternoon, I would come in from my run and the old steam engine would make the last curve on the outskirts of our little town, I would look up on the hillside to the little vine covered house and I would reach up and give one long blast on the steam engine whistle. Then I would see my white haired mother come to the window and wave her handkerchief. Later the neighbors told me, she would say: "Thank God my boy is home safe at last."



But in time, my mother went home to be with the Lord and while a hired woman would keep the house clean and fix my lunch; my Dad continued where mother had left off. He would place his trembling hand on my shoulder and pray: "O God, please watch over the boy and bring him home safe tonight."

Then, when late in the afternoon the old railroad steam engine would come around the last curve on the outskirts of our little town, I would look up on the hillside to the little vine covered house; I would reach up and give one long blast on the steam engine whistle, and the neighbors told me that my Dad would say: "Thank God, my boy is home safe at last."

For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. Psalm 91:11

But in time my Dad went home to be with the Lord. Since then life has been lonely and according to the law of nature, it won't be long until I, too, will go home to be with the Lord. When that time comes, I am going to ask the greatest engineer of all times, to let me ride in the cab on that final run, and as the engine rounds the last curve and my eyes behold the gleaming lights of the city of God, I will reach up and give one long blast on the whistle. Then as I climb down from the cab on that last run that brought me home safe at last, I know that on either side of that beautiful Gate there will be a white haired mother and a white haired dad. They will throw their arms around me and the first thing they will say: "Thank God, our boy is home, safe at last."

I don't know what heaven is like. I am like the young girl who one night was walking with her father along a country road, the sky was free from clouds, and the child was fascinated by the splendor of the sky all lit up with twinkling stars from one end to the other. After a time of thought, the young girl suddenly looked up at her father and said: "Daddy, I was just thinking, if the wrong side of heaven is so beautiful, how wonderful the inside must be!" Certainly, how wonderful it must be to be safe at last!



The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the almighty gives me life. Job 33:4

The Testing of Our Faith

James 1:2-3 says: *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.*

“So as Christians, let’s believe in God’s wise design, the storms of life will bring forth showers of blessings.

Charles Swindoll, in his book *Growing Stronger in the Seasons of Life* says: life is difficult; it’s often an endless series of problems. He suggests not to moan and groan about them because through problems we grow mentally and spiritually. For this reason let’s keep in mind that God is in charge of our lives; that He is involved with the growth and development of our inner being and supplies an abundance of grace to bear every trial.



Charles “Chuck” Swindoll

Now, it’s often a story I read or heard that explains to me what real problems are. Such a story was written about David Livingstone, who after sixteen difficult years as an explorer, doctor and missionary in Africa, returned to his native Scotland to teach students at Glasgow University. His body was weak because of the many times he endured high fevers during his years of service. Besides, one arm hung useless at his side, the result of being mangled by a lion. But the core of his message to the students at Glasgow University was that God, by His grace, sustained him amidst hardships and loneliness. In closing, Livingstone said: *“that no matter what happened in his life, he depended upon the promises made by Jesus in Matthew 28:20” “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”* Like David Livingstone, we may claim the same promise from our Savior and Lord that He will be with us always.

An unknown poet expressed himself about his faith and wrote:

Praise the Lord and leave tomorrow in your Father’s hands.

Burden not yourself with sorrow for secure His promise stands.

He is faithful! Leave your trouble in His hands.

Therefore, whatsoever your burden, cast on Him your every care.

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:2-4

He Came to Say Thank You to God

During some of the darkest hours of World War 2, in May of 1940, while thousands of British soldiers were being evacuated from the beaches of Dunkirk, France an English minister noticed a young boy who came to church to pray.

After he had seen him there several times, the minister went to the boy and said: "I see you make a habit of coming here, my friend. What is the reason?" The young boy answered: "Sir, I have been here five times in the last five days to pray for my father. He was a soldier in the British army across the channel in France. But, my father came home yesterday, so I came to church today to say thank you to God."

You know this young boy practiced one of the most important parts of the Christian life. He expressed gratitude to God. I believe all of us fall short in expressing thankfulness to God. So let's begin today and say in our heart with David, the Psalmist:

*Praise the Lord, Oh my soul, all my inmost being praise His holy name.
Praise the Lord, oh my soul and forget not all His benefits. Psalm 103:1-2*



The Dunkirk evacuation, code-named Operation Dynamo, also known as the Miracle of Dunkirk, was the evacuation of Allied soldiers from the beaches and harbor of Dunkirk, France, between 27 May and 4 June 1940, during World War II. In a speech to the House of Commons, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill called the events in France "a colossal military disaster", saying "the whole root and core and brain of the British Army" had been stranded at Dunkirk

With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible. Mark 10:27

The Blessing of Social and Spiritual Freedom



On July 4, 1776 the Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence which proclaimed to the world the birth of the United States of America. Ever since many people in this country celebrate this event with family and friends having picnics and watching evening fireworks. President Ford on July 4, 1976 welcomed a group of immigrants as Americans and invited each one to join him in the American adventure.

Some of us know what it is like to become an American by naturalization and are proud to be an American today, but they will never forget the fatherland. What most immigrants from Europe also will not forget is the experience when they arrived in this country, seeing from the deck of a ship The Statue of Liberty, towering above the New York Harbor.

It stands there as a symbol of hope for many oppressed and persecuted people in the world. The majestic figure was unveiled in 1886. It stands 151 feet high, the top of the torch stands 300 feet above the sea; weighs 450,000 pounds and 40 people can stand in the head that can be reached by a winding stairway. In its pedestal are words inscribed by Emmy Lazurus: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses to breathe free, the wretched refuge of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest tossed to me: I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

But as important The Statue of Liberty is, let us consider an even greater symbol of freedom. It is a symbol that offers spiritual freedom to burdened souls everywhere. Its shape is that of a Roman Cross and more than 2000 years ago Jesus Christ died on such a cross so He could set us free from the bondage of sin. Those who saw the awful scene must have been repelled by it. Yet from that cruel cross has come an invitation for people everywhere to trust in Jesus Christ who gave His life so that we can live for all eternity.



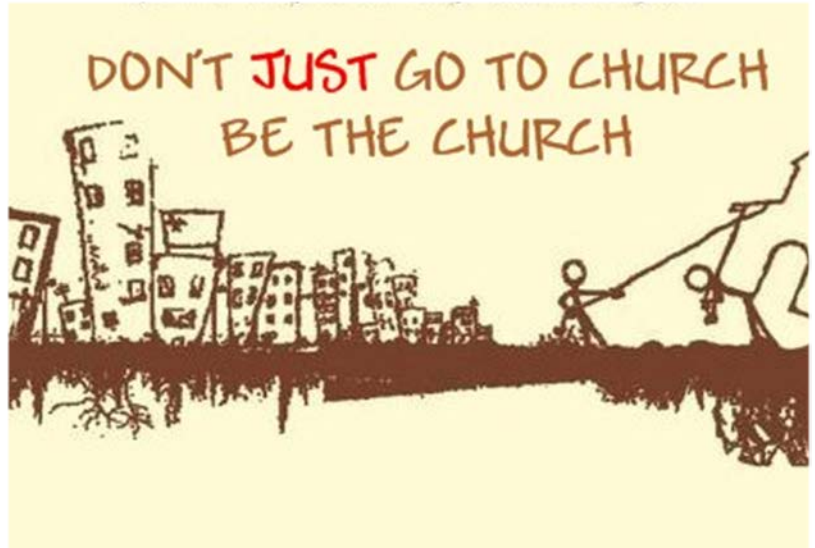
This is described in John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life*

"If the Son sets us free from sin, we will be free indeed." John 8:36

Being Retired

Many men and women who are retired have chosen to stay active with volunteering from something that is meaningful to them. But what Alice and I find rewarding is meeting friends at a local restaurant for breakfast or lunch and share some memories or a special experience.

But sometimes Alice and I just enjoy having breakfast or lunch together at Russ Restaurant on east 8th Street. One time in 2011 when Alice and I had breakfast at Russ I wrote down in large letters what is written in Dutch on the wall in the main dining room. It is 1 Chronicles 16:34 "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, His love endures forever." The same verse is also recorded in Psalm 106:1 and Psalm 107:1.



Besides going out for breakfast or lunch with Alice or together with friends, one of my hobbies is searching for stories I can identify with. For this I have used a booklet called *Our Daily Bread*, distributed by Our Daily Bread Ministries in Grand Rapids, MI. Another booklet we use for our devotions besides the Bible is called *The Upper Room*. It's a daily devotional guide with inspirational short stories written by people from many different countries.

For example: Lidia Mauri, a lady from Lombardi, Italy writes: During World War 2, I often worried about feeding my family. One day I went to the bakery to buy three loaves of bread with my ration card. However, the baker said he couldn't give me anything because I had used the ration coupons for that week. I couldn't use the next month's coupons as I had hoped. While I was returning home with my husband and daughter, I was worried. What would I give my family to eat? My husband assured me, "God will provide." When we got home, I saw a huge loaf of bread on the table. It seemed to shine, as if it were gold. Later, I found out it had been brought by a child to whom I had given lessons. For me though, that bread was sent from heaven. It strengthened my faith that God will supply all we need.

"Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!" Luke 12:24

To Be Content

While the apostle Paul was in prison in Rome, he wrote a letter to the Christians he knew in Philippi. In part of this letter he tells them; *"I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want."* Philippians 4:12

After reading this verse from Philippians 4 to the folks at the Zeeland nursing home in September 1988 I told them the story of old Hans who was a Christian and worked in the field of a rich farmer. So when it was lunch time, with folded hands, old Hans would thank God for His goodness. One time, during Hans' lunch break, the farmer stopped by wondering how he was doing. "I am sorry, Sir, but I did not hear you coming. I have grown a kind of deaf lately and my eyesight too is failing." But you look so happy Hans, said the farmer. "I am, Sir, you know my heavenly Father has provided me with food and raiment, a good bed and a roof over my head. That is more than what my Savior had when He was here on earth." Old Hans then began to tell his employer of a dream he had the previous night. "Sir, I dreamed last night that I stood at the portals of Heaven so I could see into that blessed city. Oh, Sir, the glory and beauty I cannot describe, but I heard a voice saying that the richest man in the valley would die tonight. After that, I heard the most wonderful music. Then I awoke. Sir, those words were so plainly spoken that I thought to tell you, perhaps it is a warning."



The farmer's face turned pale and while he tried to hide his fears, he hastily left the presence of old Hans. During the rest of the day what old Hans had said seemed to haunt the wealthy landowner. The richest man in the valley would die tonight. But then he thought it's only an old man's dream and certainly a dream he did not believe. But late that afternoon the rich farmer did not feel so good and believing the dream or not; he called for his doctor.

"I have learned in whatsoever state I am in therewith to be content."

Philippians 4:11

An examination and hearing about the dream of old Hans, the doctor assured the farmer that the richest man in the valley would not die that night, there was nothing to worry about. During the dinner hour and into the evening, the farmer and his doctor laughed and joked until about ten o'clock when they were interrupted by the ringing of the doorbell. Who on earth could that be so late in the evening? Nervously, the farmer answered the call.

"Sorry to disturb you, Sir" said the man in the doorway. "I came to tell you that old Hans passed away suddenly this evening and to ask you to make funeral arrangements." So the old man's dream was true. Although he was one of the poorest, by the world standards, he was rich toward God. The possessor of everlasting life money cannot buy. Indeed true contentment is a state of faith and many of the happiest people are Christians who know for sure that both in life and in death, they belong to Jesus Christ, their Lord and Savior.

Luke 12:15-21

¹⁵ Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

¹⁶ And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'

¹⁸ "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹ And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'"

²⁰ "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

²¹ "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."



"But Godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content."

1 Timothy 6:6-8

Amazing Grace

Many Christian parents are disappointed now days because one or more of their children are no longer interested in the principles of the Christian faith. These parents still remember their children singing 'Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so.' They also remember before their children went to bed they prayed 'Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep.'

So the question is: What happened? What did we do wrong?

Not able to answer this question a Christian parent must take this burden to the Lord and pray: "Father in heaven, keep our children and grandchildren safe from a society that has gone astray from the Christian way of life. Keep them safe from the many temptations they are confronted with each day. Return them to a life that is pleasing unto Thee; a life that experiences Thine amazing grace.

Many years ago I read a story about such a prayer. It was written by a well-known preacher Norman Vincent Peale and begins when he preached an evangelistic sermon, as a guest minister, in a downtown church in Atlanta, Georgia.

In this sermon, he spoke of the fact that by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, any person, however badly defeated, could begin a happy new life and he read from 2 Corinthians 5:17: "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*" Soon after the service an usher came to the church office saying that a man, by the name of John, wanted to see Mr. Peale. After agreeing to talk to John, the usher soon returned with a pretty bad looking fellow, who appeared to be about 50 years old, but later volunteered that he was only 39 years of age and that at an early age he had experienced just about everything a down and out person might be able to experience.

During their conversation, John said to Mr. Peale: "Sir, I listened to your sermon this morning and I heard you say that by faith in Jesus Christ any person, even a no-good character like me, can change and have a new life, a successful life, a happy life.

Is that really so?" Mr. Peale replied: "That is so John, if you can truly say I want to begin a new life. I am tired of being a failure. I want to have peace with God. You can have a new and happy life."

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12

Three men prayed for and with John in all sincerity of faith, even John himself prayed for forgiveness of all his sins. Mr. Peale writes: John was transformed before our eyes. It was all so wonderful that each of us was moved to tears. And so after a handshake, our new found friend walked out into the night.’ But the story does not end here.

Some years later, when Mr. Peale was scheduled to preach in Saint Petersburg, Florida, he received a message in his hotel room, that a young man, who had accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior in Atlanta, Georgia was in the hotel lobby and wanted to speak with him. And who did Mr. Peale see but a clean splendid looking gentleman by the name of John. He was holding the hands of two little girls. The trio made a beautiful picture of God’s amazing grace and coming behind was a lovely young woman. When they met, John began to sing an old hymn: *Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.* John said to Mr. Peale: “remember the night we met in Atlanta, Georgia and how I met Jesus? May I present my wife and two daughters?”



Norman Vincent Peale
(May 31, 1898 – December 24, 1993)

But there is still more to this story that speaks of God’s amazing grace because the office of Mr. Peale received a letter from a young woman that said:

Dear Mr. Peale:

I am one of the two little girls you met some years ago in a Florida hotel lobby with my father. I want to thank you for leading him to Jesus. He became an outstanding man, a wonderful husband and father. He went home to heaven a few days ago. One of the last things he said was give my love to Mr. Peale.

Her letter ended with:

And I thank God and you for the loving and honorable Christian father we had for these wonderful years. Praise the Lord!

But, what about you and me? Are we living by the commitment we once made? If we do then 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 describes us this way.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old is gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”

**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!
2 Corinthians 5:17”**

We Are Growing Old

Anna Eshelman wrote, at the age of 101: 'We should be thankful for the privilege of growing old. It's a time we no longer have to worry about trivial things in life, but instead can commune with God and thank Him for blessings, kindness and mercy bestowed upon us during our lifetime.' Anna continues: 'While growing old we can learn to enjoy meditating on the Word of God; learn that with Jesus there is fullness of joy; pleasures that do not fade away but are eternal.'

She continues: 'When we are growing old we also have time to wonder in awe at the greatness of God's creation. No hap-hazard work there, it is all carefully planned and perfect. For example: For God to put life into the smallest insect and with strength enough to make its bite really sting is a marvel. Then there is the creation of man in His own image and making him a living soul by breathing life into him.'

Yes, there is joy in growing old and to call on our Father in Heaven with child-like faith is a privilege beyond compare. And in closing she quotes from Psalm 91:2 *"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in Him will I trust."*

Like Anna, let us live for Jesus a life that is true. Let us strive to please Him in whatever we do.



Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained in the way of righteousness. Proverbs 16:31

The Providence of God

A good example of the providence of God is the story of a widow lady in Scotland who, during the middle of winter, noticed her food supply was down to nothing. With this on her mind, she went to bed, not in despair, but with the hope she might earn some money the next day that would pay for the food she needed. But, the next day a big snowstorm blocked the road leading in and out of her little house. The weather was so bad it was impossible for her to walk to the neighbor's house where she at least would be made welcome to eat with the family.

So what did she do? By sincere faith in God, she filled her pan with water, put it upon the stove and added some salt. Then she said to herself: 'and now I am going to ask the Lord for a meal.' She had not been on her knees very long when there was a knock at the door. She wondered who that could be. She said: 'No Lord, you could not of sent me the answer so soon!' But when she opened the door the farmer's son, who lived some distance away, walked in with a sack of flour, and said: 'Father sent me here and I hope you are grateful to me for bringing it to you through this terrible weather. Whatever possessed my father I don't know, but all morning he has been telling me to bring this sack of flour to you, snow or no snow. But let me tell you, it was a hard job of getting here through this storm.'



With uplifted hands and eyes filled with tears, the widow lady said: 'You know, my Lord is always the same. Many years have I trusted Him and never found Him to fail. I put my pan with water on the stove, put the salt in it, but did not have any flour in the house. So I was just asking the Lord to provide, when I heard the knock at the door.'

Indeed, this is a story in which the providence of God is portrayed. The question is: What does the Catechism teach us about the providence of God? It tells us the providence of God is the ever present power of God by which He upholds; as with His hand, heaven and earth and all creatures. And so rules: That leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty, all things, in fact, come to us not by chance, but from His Fatherly Hand.

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. John 6:35

He Gave Himself

From John 1: 10-12 we learn that: *“Jesus was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”*

Many years ago the land of Persia was ruled by a wise king who cared greatly for this people and wanted only the very best for them in life. So one day he decided to disguise himself as a poor man and go to a public bathhouse to visit a man who worked in the cellar of a bathhouse to keep the water heated. The two shared food, befriended each other and for days afterward, the disguised king visited the workman. The workman really enjoyed the daily visits by the stranger who came to him where he was. But one day the king revealed his true identity and expected his friend to ask him for a gift. Instead he looked long into the king’s face and with love and wonder in his voice said: “You left your palace to sit with me in this dark cellar to eat my course food and care what happens to me. To other people you may have given gifts of great value, but to me you have given yourself! And that is what Jesus did for our salvation. He gave Himself. He took upon Himself the very nature of a servant and became obedient unto death.

Philippians 2: 9-11 explains it this way: *“Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth, and under the earth; and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.*

In 539BC, Persian King Cyrus the Great issued the first ever decree on human rights. He freed slaves, declared that all people had the right to choose their own religion, and established racial equality.



**Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.
Hebrews 13:16**

Thoughts about Going Home

By way of a devotional booklet from 1999, Mr. Robinson tell us he used to travel a lot and that some hotels he stayed in made him feel at home, while other hotels made him wish he was home. This hotel experience made Mr. Robertson think of the Apostle Paul who, at the end of his life, wrote to his friend Timothy that he was longing for his heavenly home. In fact, part of Paul's letter is recorded in 2 Timothy 4:6-7 and says; *"The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, and I have kept the faith."*

With this in mind, a story is told of a grandpa and his grandson who were fishing one afternoon. They talked about why seasons change and what life is all about. But suddenly the boy looked up at his grandpa and asked: "Grandpa, does anybody ever see God?" Grandpa replied: "Son, it's getting so now I hardly think of anything else." Indeed, for aging Christians, communion with their Father in Heaven should be as natural as breathing and thoughts of being ready to go home should be more and more on their minds.

And for those who are taking our place in this life, how wonderful it must be their parents loved the Lord and had a testimony similar to that of the Apostle Paul that they fought a good fight, finished the course, and kept the faith. On the other hand, it gives elderly parents much joy to know their children and grandchildren are striving to be part of the family of God.



**In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.
I go to prepare a place for you. John 14:2**

Add to Your Faith Kindness

“Make every effort to add to your faith goodness, and to goodness: knowledge; and to knowledge self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness’ and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.” 2 Peter 1: 6-7

An example of being kind was found in a story of a young man whose job involved delivering goods and collecting money. But over a period of time, he stole several hundred dollars from the company. One day his boss suddenly said to him: “Go home for the day. Do not tell your wife why you are not working but instead come to my house with her this evening.” The young couple waited all day until it was time to go to the boss’s house. The boss and his wife greeted them in a friendly way but after they visited for a while, the older man turned to the younger one and simply requested him to tell his wife why it was that he had not been working during the day. It was quite an ordeal, but the young man began unloading the facts of what he had done. His poor wife just stared at him; then she broke down and cried. The boss stressed how the young man’s conduct had been a betrayal of trust, but added: “I am going to give you another chance and want you to report for work as usual tomorrow morning. We will not let you handle money yet, but we will give you plenty of opportunities to redeem yourself. What happened is that through the experience of remorse and of an older man’s Christian kindness, God added His love and favor called Grace. Now the question is what do we learn from such a story? First, we learn our need to be forgiven. Second, we learn what Christian kindness is all about. Third, we are reminded of God’s Grace; His undeserved love and favor. And speaking of God’s Grace, one hymn writer explains it to us this way:

**Marvelous, infinite, matchless Grace freely bestowed on all who believe.
You that are longing to see His face will you this moment His grace receive?**



Holly Ellerbroek showing a wonderful act of kindness by stretching out the leg of an opposing team player who pulled a leg muscle.

**Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other,
just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Ephesians 4:32**

Do Everything with Love

As part of a program at a Zeeland Nursing home in 1991, I told the story of Wendell Phillips who was so devoted to his invalid wife that he accepted with love full responsibility for the care she needed. However, his speaking engagements sometimes required him to be away from her for a while.

At the close of a lecture one night, in a town many miles from his home, Phillips friends urged him not to return home until morning. "The last train has left and because it is sleeting, you will face miles of rough weather before you get home." Mr. Phillips replied: "But at the end of those miles I shall find my beloved Anna."

As Christians, let us press on through life's trials and disappointments because we know the Lord will not leave us nor forsake us. 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 states: "Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, Do everything in love." With this in mind, let us say or sing the words of an old hymn:

It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus,
Life's trials will seem so small, when we see Christ.
One glimpse of His dear face, all sorrow will erase,
So let's bravely run the race, till we see Christ!



God is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect. 2 Samuel 22:33

He Loved His Mother

During a program at a Zeeland Nursing Home in 1991, I told the story of a young newsboy whose mother had died. Mother and son did everything together, but now that she was gone, he was determined to buy a gravestone in memory of her.

However, getting such a stone was not easy for him because his earnings were small, but at last he found, in the stonecutter's yard, a piece of marble he was able to carry and place on his mother's grave.

Curious to know what the young boy had done with the broken piece of marble, the stonecutter contacted the man in charge of the cemetery who showed him the piece of marble the boy had put on his mother's grave. Sometime later, when the stonecutter visited the cemetery again he noticed something was written on the piece of marble. It said: "My mother died last week. She was all I had. She said she will be waiting." Then the boy's lettering stopped.

After reading this, the stonecutter went back to the man in charge of the cemetery to ask him if he knew what happened to the boy. His answer was: "Didn't you notice a fresh grave near the stone? That is where he is." He came here working on that stone and then one day I missed him and then for several days. Then a man from the church that buried his mother ordered a grave dug by her side. I asked if it was for the boy and he said it was. The boy had sold all his papers and was hurrying along the street out this way. There was a run-a-way team of horses just by the crossing and well....he was run over. The boy lived a day or two. He had an old file he did the lettering with. Before he died, he kept on saying: "I didn't get it done. But she knows I meant to finish it, won't she? I'll tell her so, for she is waiting for me." The boy died with those words on his lips.

When the man from the stonecutter's yard heard what had happened, he took a good stone, inscribed upon it the name of the newsboy and underneath, in touching words, he wrote: He loved his Mother.



*When someone you love becomes a memory,
the memory becomes a treasure.*

**"Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old."
Proverbs 23:22**

Dying Grace



Dwight Lyman Moody
(Feb. 5, 1837 – Dec. 22, 1899),
also known as D.L. Moody, was an
American evangelist and
publisher, who founded the
Moody Church, Northfield School
and Mount Hermon School.

D. L. Moody was a well-known American Evangelist in 1875. One time, when he preached on Psalm 23:4 *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.”* Someone said to him following the service: “Preacher, it is easy for you to talk about being called home to be with the Lord, but, are you ready to die right now?”

Moody thought for a moment and replied: “Yes, I am prepared to die because I have accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and He has given me eternal life. But I must admit I am not ready to die at this present moment because God has given me living grace to do His work. I am sure that when the time comes, I must say goodbye to my family and friends, God will give me dying grace.”

As Mr. Moody predicted, his last hours on earth were filled with peace and victory. In fact, a story written about his death tells us that his oldest son sitting beside his bed heard his father say in a low tone of voice: “Earth is receding. Heaven is opening. God is

calling.” The family at his bedside heard him say: “Is this death? There is no valley. This is bliss! This is glorious!” His daughter Emma began to pray for his recovery but he said: “No, Emmy, God is calling. This is my coronation day. I have been looking forward to it.” Mr. Moody was given dying grace and so he entered the presence of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

As Christians, many of us still enjoy living grace, in other words, each day we live we experience undeserved love and favor of God. When we come to the end of this temporal life, let us pray for dying grace that Mr. Moody spoke of; then like him, we will begin our eternal life with Jesus Christ. Although I cannot imagine what that is like, Jesus, Himself, tell us: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in Me, in My Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.” John 14: 1-2

**Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.
Ecclesiastes 12:7**

It Is True

In John 11:25-26 Jesus said to Martha: *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

Friends, the most important part of the Christian faith is to believe with all our heart that Jesus Christ is our personal Savior and Lord. This is true because Jesus said to Martha and to you and me today: *"He who believes in me will live even though he dies."*
Meaning eternal life!



Walter B. Hinson

In 1917, East Side Baptist calls W.B. Hinson as pastor, and under his faithful evangelical ministry the congregation begins to grow. When he arrives, there are about 200 members, but 9 years later the congregation has grown to nearly 1,400. It's during Hinson's pastorate that the church acquires our present-day property on 20th and Salmon in 1918, and you can see East Side Baptist Church written there on the stone near the entrance. It's also under Hinson that this church begins to develop its passion for outreach & world missions, and also its leadership among conservative churches in the Northern Baptist Convention. However, in 1926, Hinson suffers a sudden stroke and passes away, and in memory of him, two months later, the church is renamed Hinson Memorial Baptist Church.

W.B. Hinson, a preacher of a past generation, describes eternal life this way: It is the supernatural quality of God in us that begins at the time of salvation and continues on throughout all eternity. When Rev. Hinson wrote this, he was, in fact, thinking about the duration of his own wonderful life as a preacher and knew that soon he would go home to be with his Lord. He wrote: "It's a year ago that the doctor told me, Rev. Hinson you have an illness from which you will not recover." So, what did I do? I walked to where I live, near Portland, Oregon and looked at the mountains that I love, I looked at the river in which I rejoice and I looked at the stately trees which grow in the forest. Then I said to myself: 'Mountains, I may not see you many more times but I shall be alive when you are gone, and river, I shall be alive when you cease running toward the sea.' Later that day, I looked at the stars and said: 'I shall be alive when you shine no more.' Like Rev. Hinson, may we have the assurance of eternal life with Jesus Christ.

**"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."
Ecclesiastes 12:7**

I Will Trust in God

In Psalm 56:3 it states: *“When I am afraid, I will trust in God.”*

When David wrote those words he was in trouble and like David, we all have experienced problems during our lifetime, creating fear and anxiety. For example: I once read a story about a pilot on a mission during Operation Desert Storm. He wrote: “I was afraid many times during my 28 missions over Iraq and Kuwait. Sometimes, on such a mission, I would get nervous and sing. Yes, I would sing: “Jesus loves me, this I know for the Bible tells me so. He said: “It was all I could think of.”

Being afraid can be for different reasons but may our Christian faith be so strong that we can say with the Psalmist: *“When I am afraid, I will trust in God.”* Or are we more like the pilot in Operation Desert Storm? All he could think of was what he learned to sing as a child: Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so.”

Whatever the case may be, may it be true that when we are afraid, we find comfort in knowing that Jesus loves us and with David, the Psalmist, can say: *“When I am afraid, I will trust in God, the creator of Heaven and earth.”*



The Vought F-8 Crusader (originally F8U) was a single-engine, supersonic, carrier-based air superiority jet aircraft built by Vought for the United States Navy and Marine Corps. The first F-8 prototype was ready for flight in February 1955. The F-8 served principally in the Vietnam War. The Crusader was the last American fighter with guns as the primary weapon, earning it the title "The Last of the Gunfighters".

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7

A Story about the Natural World

Many people, Christians and non-Christians alike, enjoy the natural world at home and at places they visit while on vacation. The only difference is most Christians believe that everything they see in the natural world was created by God. As proof, Psalm 135: 6-7 states: *“The Lord does whatever pleases Him, in the heavens and on the earth; in the seas and all their depths; He makes clouds to rise from the end of the earth; He sends lightening with the rain and brings out the wind from His storehouses.”*

This makes me think of springtime when different kinds of seeds are planted in fertile soil and will grow and mature. It also makes me think of perennial plants and trees that will beautify the landscape. But what I really enjoy is watching birds building nests so they can lay their eggs and shelter their young.



Bald eagles mate for life, but when one dies, the survivor will not hesitate to accept a new mate. During breeding season, both birds protect the nest territory from other eagles and predators. Bald eagles can live up to 30 years in the wild.

One time, as part of a short mediation at a nursing home, I used the example of a mother eagle who builds a comfortable nest for her young. But her God-given instinct before long will force the eaglets, one at a time, out of the nest. And why? Because eagles are born to fly. Only when they know how to fly will they become what they are meant to be. So when it is time for eaglets to learn to fly, it is very uncomfortable for the eaglets to stay in. But that is not all. Mother eagles will soon pick up one of the perplexed eaglets, soar into the sky and drop it. The eaglet will begin to fall! But mother eagle is not far

away and quickly swoops underneath the fledgling, catching it on her strong wings. Mother eagle will repeat this exercise until each one of her offspring is capable of flying on its own. Like the eaglets, we are all afraid of something unfamiliar. But as Christians, let us not forget that God is nearby and will spread His everlasting arms of love beneath and around us.

The eternal God is our refuge and underneath are His everlasting arms.” Deuteronomy 33:27

The Beauty of the Natural World

Both Alice and I have enjoyed seeing the beauty of the natural world, especially while we were on vacation during the fall season in Northern Michigan. But because of our age the next best thing is to read about it; seeing the beauty of nature close to home, on television, or by way of a DVD. For example, what interested me, sometime ago, was reading about a husband and wife who were visiting Michigan's Upper Peninsula. What caught the attention of the husband was that the leaves of some trees were not moving while the leaves on other trees were fluttering with the slightest hint of a breeze. When he pointed this out to his wife, she told him: "Honey, the fluttering leaves are the leaves of Quaking Aspen trees."



Sleeping Bear Dunes is a United States National Lakeshore located along the northwest coast of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan in Leelanau and Benzie counties near Empire, Michigan.

With over public 100,000 votes, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore was named the "Most Beautiful Place in America" on ABC's Good Morning America.

As long as we live, Alice and I will stand in awe of what God created in the beginning of time and we will keep on reminding ourselves of a song written by George Beverly Shea:

*There is wonder of sunset at evening,
the wonder of sunrise I see,
But the wonder of wonders that thrills my soul,
is the wonder that God loves me.*

Another story I read that reminded me of the beauty of nature in Northern Michigan was that every summer thousands of Good Morning America viewers cast their vote to select 'The most beautiful place in America.' The winner for 2011 was Sleeping Bear National Lake Shore. Rugged bluffs rise as high as 480 feet above Lake Michigan. The seven mile scenic drive provides access to the high dunes of Sleeping Bear Dunes and is open from late April to early November. Indeed, the State of Michigan has many places we can observe 'the beauty of the natural world.'



**But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you.**

Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? Job 12:7-9

Storms of Nature – Storms of Life

Whenever I read or hear a story that is an example of the Christian faith, I have a good reason to keep it, study it, and write about it. Such a story was written many years ago by David Egner, who wrote short meditations for a booklet called *Our Daily Bread*. By way of this meditation, David tells us he grew up near Lake Michigan and remembers it was lots of fun to climb steep sand dunes. Each step up a 300 foot dune was followed by half a steep slide back down. But the view of the sparkling waves from the top of the dune made the climb worthwhile. Other people loved the view, as well, and built beautiful homes on the crest of the dunes. David often thought how wonderful it would be to live in one of those homes.



*Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore:
Steep Beach to Lake Michigan*



November 11, 2015 A powerful storm system walloped the region with strong winds and high surf.

But, one year Lake Michigan's water level began to rise and soon the beach was gone. Wild November gales sent huge waves crashing against the dunes. The sand began to erode and gradually it was pulled out into the lake. As the dunes were eaten away, some of those beautiful homes came crashing down.

Isn't that the way life is for many people today? They feel secure as long as their life is peaceful and without problems. Although as Christians we experience our share of storms in life, in the form of disappointments, illness, and heartache. Psalm 91:1 tells us: "He who dwells in the shelter of the most High, will rest in the shadow of the Almighty."

"He who dwells in the shelter of the most High, will rest in the shadow of the Almighty."

Psalm 91:1

Lake Michigan Shoreline



I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. Ezekiel 36:25

My Grandparents Life During World War II

By Samantha Barefield

My 11th grade English teacher, Mr. Barry, asked our class to write a story about a survivor we knew. Many students chose to write about a neighbor who broke her arm while biking or a friend who injured his tendon while playing football. I wanted to write something that captured the life or death feeling that most true survivors probably have. The first people who came to mind were my grandparents. This is just a glimpse into their difficult life during World War II.

In May of 1940, the German army invaded the Netherlands. Nick and Alice, two ten-year-olds living in different parts of the country, survived the next five years of German occupation. Nick Ellerbroek lived in Boskoop, a town full of nurseries. Nick's father worked in one of them and was able to keep up business during the war because of the demand for plants from foreign countries. Nick lived at home with his mother, father, one brother, and four sisters. His sister Ida, Johanna, Janna, and Immetje worked as maids for wealthy families and were able to travel a bit during the war with those families. "Their employers provided a room for them and they stayed there most nights. They were also given meals which helped our family," Nick said. Nick only got an education through the 6th grade and after the schools were closed by the Germans he worked for a farmer. This job provided him with wages and milk that helped his family greatly during the war because the farm gave them easy access to food. Nick remembers, "By 1945 the grocery stores were all empty, and when the people thought condition of life could not get worse, lack of food in cities and towns caused malnutrition and death." Nick's family never had to go to the store because they could buy food from the farmer. In early 1945, American planes were allowed to drop food in the Netherlands. Nick's family did not have to stand in line because they had enough food throughout the war.



One hundred and twenty five miles away, Alice DeGraaf lived in the village of Raard with her mother, father, two sisters, and one brother. Alice's last year of education was sixth grade as well and during the war she was not able to maintain any friendships from school. Alice did form a friendship with Mien Van Gronden, an evacuee from Arnhem. She was about 6 years older than Alice and stayed with the family for 9 months. Alice's father, Jan, cooperated with the underground in the Netherlands. He helped Jews find safe places to stay, although Alice does not recall any Jews living with them in their house.

"No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me," declares the Lord.
Isaiah 54:17

But one day Alice remembers clearly the day her father was picked up by the Gestapo and taken to a prison about an hour away. “My mother fainted and we all thought he wasn’t going to come back,” said Alice. He stayed there 18 days in a small cell with no windows and he and his cell mates were sprayed with ice water every few days. She said, “One of the few things he told us after he came home



was that he remembers hearing the other men scream from the water because it was so cold.” Somehow, Jan’s boss made an arrangement to bribe the Germans and was able to get Jan out of jail. He rode home on a bicycle that someone left for him outside of the jail.

Both Nick and Alice say they will never forget what it was like to hear planes flying overhead and bombs being dropped. Nick recalls the Gestapo coming into his house one night looking for Jews; the soldier ripped the covers off of Nick’s bed. Alice’s family had hidden a radio in the church and they were always afraid the Germans would find it and trace the radio back to her family and kill them. Nick said, “We were often afraid, but you get used to it.” However, both Nick and Alice recognize that not all the German soldiers were bad and many were just doing what they were told and trying to survive themselves. “I biked to work every morning and the Germans got used to seeing me. They never gave me any trouble when I passed them,” Nick remembers. Alice said, “Just like all people, there were good Germans and there were bad Germans.”

After the war, Nick took the boat to the USA by himself when he was nineteen years old and Alice’s family came to the USA around the same time. Now, seventy years later, Nick and Alice have been married for many years and have four children. They say their lives have been dramatically changed by the war and everything they do reflects their experiences in their childhoods.

Note from Mr. Barry:

Sam, An outstanding narrative. Your revisions, including more of the voices or your interviewees as well as added detail has really made for an exemplary story of survival here. A fascinating glimpse into another world in time. Congrats. Let me know if I may post your narrative for the class. Thanks!

“The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” Psalm 34:17-18

A Story from the Past

By Fran De Graaf Kortman

My first memory was when I was about four years old. My name was Froukje, and part of a family of four children (2 sisters and 1 brother), we lived in a small red brick house in a village called Raard in the Province of Friesland. My sister Aukje, who was 12 years older than I went to our neighbor lady, Mrs. Halbersma, to the north of us, two days a week to help her with doing the wash and some light housework. I learned later this was common for teenage girls to do in the 1940's; it prepared them for when they would have a family of their own. What they earned, most often went into the family coffers.



Mrs. Halbersma was a nice lady and treated Aukje well; she treated me well, too. I still remember she gave me a piece of candy or a cookie whenever I went along with Aukje to her house. One day, I walked by myself across the meadow full of purple flowers and yellow buttercups to inform Mrs. Halbersma that Aukje could not come to work for her that day. She appreciated that I came to tell her and she gave me a cookie when I went home again. However, what I told Mrs. Halbersma was not true. I was not told to go to her house. So, I was punished for telling a lie and I did not get to eat the cookie. I wonder who did eat the cookie.

What I also remember before I was five years old is that I was taken to the hospital in Leeuwarden to have my tonsils removed. My mom and my Pakka (grandpa in English) took me there by way of Uncle Pieter Zylstra's taxi service. My mom and Pakka were told to leave me there at the hospital and return for me the next day. Pakka was not so inclined. He remained at the hospital with me. My fondest memory of my Pakka is that he came to love me as his favorite grandchild because I smiled at him when I was only 6 weeks old. One thing Pakka van der Wal was very unhappy about was that I was named after my paternal grandmother Froukje De Graaf and he made no bones about it. I should have been named after him. When the decision was made to immigrate to America, my mother left behind her aging father and we never saw him again and to this day I feel deprived of a grandfather who loved me and regret I did not learn to know him more personally.

Nothing is more special than growing up knowing you have grandparents who love you and are praying for you. If you have grandparents, treasure them; get to know them as individuals with their own personalities, so that when they are gone you will have wonderful memories of times shared together.

Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children. Titus 2:2-4

The Story of Mien Van Gronden from 1944 to 1945

By Fran De Graaf Kortman



*In the **Province of Gelderland** we find the beautiful and historically rich city of Nijmegen. Though at peace today, Nijmegen has experienced centuries of war related violence. Even as recently as WWII the city was the focal point of aggression. In 1940 it was the first Dutch city to be captured by the Germans. Throughout the difficulties of war and aggression, the city of Nijmegen has remained firm, and is today a jewel of history and architecture.*

bedrooms were Mom and Dad, Aukje and John, baby Henny and me, plus Pakka Hendrick. Our little house was bursting at the seams with the addition of Mien. Mien quickly became a helper to Mom, who was not very strong due to her last pregnancy. Aukje, as a young teenager, had taken over the care of a great deal of responsibilities and so to have the help of Mien was of great benefit to her. Mien was so grateful to be in a loving home environment and to be near to her parents and brother; she soon regained her strength. Never has Mien forgotten the love and kindness bestowed on her; for she considered Dad and Mom as her 2nd parents and when she married, she raised her children Yvonne and Ronnie to respect and love Dad and Mom as Opa and Oma De Graaf. Over the years, we have kept a fond relationship with Mien and her daughter, (Ronnie died young) and definitely include them in our family. All things work together for good to those who are called according to God's purpose. Dad choose to be the hands and feet of Jesus and so mom and dad became foster parents which is what my husband and I were led to do also.

Mien van Gronden lived with her parents and Brother Bart in Oostebeek, in the Province of Gelderland during the beginning of the war years. But in 1944 they were forced to leave their home and possessions and find another place to live because of the war and their area being declared a war zone. Many of these displaced persons headed for the Province of Friesland because of the dairy farms and the potential for some food resources. Mien, at age 20, found a blacksmith in the village of Raard, who would 'house' her in exchange for room and board. Mien did everything the blacksmith and his wife asked of her, working her as a slave with very few creature comforts to call her own. When Dad met Mien, she was unhappy, cold and hungry, having grown very thin. She was also lonesome for her family and just plain miserable. So, Dad's heart, full of compassion, took Mien home to his wife and family.

Now our little house was just that....very little. It had a bedroom on the main floor and two bedrooms upstairs. Already occupying all the

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace. Ecclesiastes 3:8

The Story of the Eikema Family during World War 2 From 1940-1945

By Fran De Graaf Kortman

The Eikema family lived near Raard on a large farm. The father was a strong man who worked from sun-up to sun-down. His hands were callused with hard physical labor he did to provide a living for his family. He saw to it that the family was well provided for spiritually, as well. Each Sunday would find the Eikema family in church. Mrs. Eikema was a loud boisterous woman who had 2 sons after her 30th birthday had come and gone. She dearly loved those boys and even though they worked hard with their father, they were often times spoiled by their mother. The two boys attended school with Aukje and John. They were boys who loved to pick on other kids, doing mean pranks and finding great humor in their deviltry. This abuse was reported to their parents and they were punished by their father, never by their mother. Seldom did it deter their actions.



During the war, the dominee (pastor) of the church in Raard and Foudgum was Rev. Israels, a Jewish man of God. He and his family were well loved in this rural community and as the war escalated and persecution of the Jewish community began to enter the Netherlands, the Israel family just disappeared one day. No one knew of their where about, no one could find them. It was just as if the family had disappeared during the dead of night. The Raard and Foudgum communities grieved the loss of this dear family and many prayers were offered for them. Much later, toward the close of WW2, Rev. Israels came back to his church to tell the amazing story of his families' safekeeping on the Eikema farm. Here, they had been hidden from public view and safeguarded during the worst 5 years of the war. The Eikema boys never gave a hint of what their parents were doing. Maybe they didn't even know themselves. The heroism of these and other people who lived and worked in the small communities of Friesland is the best part of this story.

The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore. Psalm 121:7-9

The Story about the Twins who died During World War 2

By Fran De Graaf Kortman

From my mother I learned that during the last two years of World War 2 every family in the Netherlands experienced their share of heartache and even death. Times were tough in 1944 especially during the following winter of 1945; food and medicine were scarce, often not available, except on the black market.

Our family experienced their share of heartache and death during that time, too. Although I was only 2 years old in 1944, mom was pregnant and expecting twins. Sad to say when it was time for them to be born(breech) my baby brother was still-born and my baby sister Henny died 9 months later of pneumonia, most likely because proper medical care and medicine was not available. My older brother John remembers Henny died with her tiny hands waving. After a small coffin was prepared for Henny's earthly remains, the family, on their bicycles, began the funeral procession to Foudgum, a small village near Raard. In route some U.S. reconnaissance planes flew overhead. When each member of the procession began waving white handkerchiefs, the airplanes flew on leaving the family to bury their dead. Henny's coffin was laid to rest on top of my grandmother (Beppe) Aukje van der Wal in the cemetery alongside the Foudgum church.

I look forward to the day when I meet Henny and our infant brother, who died before he was ready to be born. Had he lived he would have been named Hendrik, after Pakka Hendrik. What a treasure that would have been to have yet another Hendrik in my life. God richly blessed me with a Pakka Hendrik van der Wal; a husband and father of my children Heinrich (Henry) Kortman and a precious grandson, Henry Michael Schipper.



Henry Kortman
1939 - 2014

Raard, 8-4-1945
Op den dag des Heeren
nam God weder tot Zich
ons aller lieveling
Henderika,
in den ouderdom van 9
maanden. De verbonds-
belofte zij ons tot troost
J. de Graaf
T. de Graaf—vd. Wal
en kinderen

*On this day the Lord God took unto Himself
everyone's favorite.*

Henderika

*At the age of nine months. The covenant
promises us comfort.*

J. de Graaf

*T. de Graaf- van der Wall
and Children*

**If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die,
we belong to the Lord. Romans 14:8**

The Story of My Dare Devil Father

By Fran De Graaf Kortman

My dad worked for the Fortuin Candy Factory located on the outskirts of Dokkum, Friesland. He had been working there since he was a lad of 13-14 years of age and was “handy with a hammer, saw, and other tools needed to make shipping boxes for the candy products produced by Fortuin. Dad made a living for his family working at Fortuin with joy because he loved his job. The most familiar products produced for export to the US and Canada by the Fortuin Candy Factory in the 1950’s was the Wilhelmina and King peppermints, which came in a variety of containers: delft tins, small bags, rolls, in boxes of a dozen. Other products made by Fortuin for export at that time were a variety of fruit slices dipped in a sugar glaze and hard candy which were individually wrapped and sold by the pound.



Mr. Fortuin was a kind man who had lost his first wife to a heart condition and had found love, happiness and companionship again with a lady he soon would marry. On the occasion of the wedding day, the employees of Fortuin thought it would be nice if the Frisian flag flew from the smoke stack of the factory. But, who was willing to take the risk?



My dad, who in his youth, never let danger stand in his way, accepted the challenge. He placed a handkerchief over his nose and mouth and armed with the Frisian flag draped over his shoulder, began the dark ascent inside the smoke stack. The smoke stake in the picture on this page shows just how high the smoke stack was. But dad laughed in the face of danger and as a monkey climbed the rungs to the very top and hung the Frisian flag in honor of the boss’s wedding day. Then he still had to climb back down. Amazingly, he arrived back on solid ground, although, he was unrecognizable! Dad was black from head to foot. Arriving home from work that day, Mom was in total shock at the sight of him. How in the world could this be her husband? It did not even look like him; but it sounded like him. Dad began to strip off his clothing and behold even his long underwear was black! Mom thought dad had done a very foolish and most dangerous thing, not to mention the mound of filthy clothing she had to wash and attempt to get clean again. It took a good soaking in the kitchen tub to get dad’s skin back into a normal skin tone. And longer still to get his only set of work clothes clean again.

**Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”
Matthew 19:26**

Well, Mr. Fortuin was not too pleased, either. In fact, he gave dad quite a lecture regarding not only risking his life in such a dangerous manner, but he forgot that he had a responsibility to his wife and children to remain healthy and safe so that he could continue to provide for them. A few days later Mr. Fortuin presented dad with a box of fine Havana cigars. This was a lovely reward for dad since he had a fondness for cigars. Mom, however, would have preferred a reward of guiders with which she could have purchased new underwear and work clothes for her husband.

This writer thinks mom should have SOLD the cigars and made a nice profit instead of letting dad smoke them all into a pile of ashes and nothing to show for the experience but the story to tell.



Tryntje & Jan De Graaf with children
John & Alice De Graaf



Tryntje & Jan De Graaf

"Be strong, and let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God; and may the LORD do what is good in His sight." 2 Samuel 10:12

A Story about World War 2

By Fran De Graaf Kortman

During the occupation of the Netherlands by the Nazi Regime, from May 1940 to May 1945, no one was allowed to own a radio of any kind. To own one or found guilty of being in possession of one was enough for the Gestapo to send one to a concentration camp. Yet, for some folks in our village of Raard and throughout the Netherlands, this was no deterrent. One of these men was our father, Jan de Graaf, who alone knew where he had hidden his radio. It was not until after the war that he made it known that he had hidden it in the tower of the Reformed church in Raard. Besides, he had made a small hiding place in our house where he could go in case someone wanted to question him about some illegal activities. This happened in 1944 when the Gestapo, the German secret police, came knocking on our front door because the oldest two brothers of dad (Aldert and Galve) had turned traitor and reported him for suspected wrongdoing. So they came to arrest our father. Dad was in his hiding place when he heard the commotion and overheard the threat to his wife and children. The officer in charge and soldiers searched the house and found dad upstairs but searched no further. Dad was permitted to kiss mom good-bye and as he did, she fainted. The officer allowed dad to put mom in bed and then the soldiers took him away.

Soon our neighbors came to assist my 14 year old sister Aukje and Mien van Gronden, the evacuee from Oosterbeek, with caring for mom, my 8 month old sister Henny, myself and my brother John, who was 11 years old. Dad was initially confined in the city hall of Dokkum, called "Weg en Wacht". Then, with other prisoners, who were cold, hungry and frightened, they were transferred to a prison camp in Leeuwarden, the capital city of Friesland. News of dad's arrest quickly spread throughout nearby villages and Mr. Schulinga, the owner of the Fortuin Candy Factory was personally informed that Jan de Graaf, one of his best employees, had been arrested by the Gestapo. Mr. Schulinga, initially, made many requests for dad's release without results. But after two weeks of dad's confinement in the Leeuwarden prison, Mr. Schulinga arranged with our Uncle Pieter Soorsma for a bribed release of our father. Uncle Pieter, armed with two cartons of cigarettes and two large expensive bottles of whiskey pedaled on his bicycle to the Leeuwarden prison camp so he could bribe the guards to release our father. The bribe was successful and with dad free, together they pedaled back to Raard to family, friends and neighbors, who were eagerly awaiting his homecoming. Everyone had prayed for our dad during his captivity and prayers were answered in a mighty way.

**You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble;
You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah.
Psalm 32:7**

Our father's 16 days of incarceration were filled with cold, hunger and fear. He never lost hope for his release, however, and learned to lean on his Lord. Our father told me of the small amounts of rutabagas that were thrown into the cell and how the men would scramble for them before rats could take off with them.

Dad suffered for several years from the prison experience; his nerves were frayed and he became restless. He knew it was time for him to accept Jesus as his personal Savior and Lord and make public Profession of his faith which he did. Looking back over the years, our father never overcame the Post Traumatic Stress. He was eager to leave Friesland for America where no war had ravaged the land. He willingly gave up his home, his job (one in which his employer highly valued his service), his siblings, and his wife's family, with whom they were very close, in search of a better life for himself and his family.

Post Script: Just before our family immigrated to the US, dad went to visit his brothers Aldert and Galve, who were arrested and imprisoned after the war for collaborating with the enemy. Dad asked his brother Aldert if he was sorry for the betrayal and deaths he had caused. His response was: "No, I should have killed many more!"



Uncle Peter Soorsma



Dad De Graaf

**Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.
Psalm 41:9**

The Story of our Family's Journey to America in 1947

By Fran De Graaf Kortman

With mostly Dutch immigrants on board, it took the MS Veendam about 2 weeks in the summer of 1947 to cross the Atlantic Ocean from Rotterdam to New York. The de Graaf family of 6 were some of the passengers who had left Raard, Friesland and were on their way to Holland, Michigan. My mother and 8 month old sister Hendrika (Helene) were seasick most of the time on our journey across the ocean. But my dad, 17 year old sister Aukje (Alice), 15 year old brother Jan and 5 year old me were able to enjoy the voyage because it was a new experience. Besides, as young as I was, I wanted to do some exploring on my own and one day made it as far as the ladies restroom. This was a large room with many stalls. Each stall had a door on which was a dial that locked and opened the door by turning the dial. What a fun game that was! I played with it for a while, turning dials and turning some more. Finally, I entered a stall only to discover that no matter which way I dialed, the door would not open. I really had enough fun and wanted to leave, but the door would not open. So now what must I do? Well, under the door was enough space to see feet, so why don't I get out of this stall by crawling under the door. I got as far as my head and shoulders, but then I got stuck! The more I struggled, the more wedged I became. So, I called for help. But no one came to my rescue until a porter showed up to clean the bathroom. He was black and spoke a funny language I could not understand. He tried to pull me out from under the door, but it did not work. I must have been really stuck and because he did not want to hurt me, he went to ask for some help. Soon, there were all kinds of people wondering what was going on, including my dad and brother John.



*The ss Veendam (II) late in her career.
Carrying post war emigrants across the
North Atlantic*

My dad was not very happy when he found out it was his little daughter who had caused the commotion. And when he was told that in order to free me the door would have to come off the hinges, he really was upset with me because dad never wanted to bother anyone with such family problems and cause others to be inconvenienced. But my mother was happy to have me back safe and sound. It is because of this incident on the MS Veendam that I have memories of the journey to America in 1947.

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11

The Story about Arriving in America

By Fran De Graaf Kortman

After our family arrived in New York in June of 1947 and our immigration documents were checked, we were ready to start living in America. Uncle Martin Buursma was at the dock in New York to meet us and had made arrangements for our family to first travel by train to Kalamazoo and from there travel by car to North Holland where Uncle Martin and his family lived on a cattle farm about a third of a mile from New Holland Street on 120th Avenue, on the east side of the road.

Uncle Martin was a stockman, buying and selling cattle at the Chicago stockyards for many years. He kept a dozen or so cattle, a few pigs, and some chickens on the farm. He also had two Billy goats for which Uncle Martin said I was responsible. My cousin Andy, who is just a few years older than I had fun with the goats. We would take them out of their pen, let them wander over the lawn, chase them, and even ride them. But, when we tired of them, the goats were to be put back into their pen and the gate securely locked. We lived with the Buursma family for about six months before they moved to 13th Street in Holland and let us rent their farm house. That made a difference for the family. It gave us more living space and Mom was happy to be in charge of her family again, although, she was very lonesome for her loved ones back in Friesland.



Chicago International, Stockyard

One day, I forgot to lock the gate after playing with the goats. In North Holland, Mom knew no one other than one neighbor lady – Mrs. Ebels (who spoke some Dutch) and the bread man who spoke broken Dutch. So, when the bread man came with his bread truck, Mom was always eager to see him. One day the bread man came, with his panel truck filled with assorted breads, rolls, cakes, pies, and cookies. Mom always bought a few items from him, especially the bread for the lunches of Alice, who worked at Heinz, and John who worked on the Veen Hoven farm, and Dad, who worked for Halkeboer Builders. When the bread man left, my two goats went along as stow-a-ways because I had not securely latched the gate, this time. The driver heard noises coming from the back of his truck on the way to his next stop and when he stopped to check, he found my goats enjoying a feast of baked bounty. I was not adored that day. However, later this story became a favorite to tell at school every time there was a story writing assignment.

**So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice,
and no one will take your joy from you. John 16:22**

The Providential Plan of God in Our Lives

By Fran De Graaf Kortman

My dad had a check list for me regarding whom I should date. He must be Christian Reformed, Dutch background and able to speak Dutch, have a good job, be of good character, and last but not least, enjoy shelling peanuts with my dad. Such a young man showed up at our front door one Sunday evening asking me for a date. He had just returned home from a tour of duty in the US Army and served in Alaska, where he received frost bite on his face and ear. I turned him down. The next day he was back again, and mom encouraged me to accept. She knew about his family and he had her approval. Always listen to your mom.

A year later, Hank and I were married. Soon our being a couple turned into our being a family of four. We were blessed to have two precious healthy baby girls. We named them Kerrie and Kathy. Pregnancy and child-birth did not agree with my body and following the birth of Kathy, I nearly lost my life from a severe hemorrhage. Following an emergency D & C, I often woke up during the recovery to discover my doctor and the anesthesiologist sitting by my bedside. How strange that they should be staying with me, I thought. A few days later, I knew that God had spared my life and that He had a purpose for me to fulfill. That is the day I rededicated my life to serve the Lord with gladness. My two daughters grew so fast and soon they were off to school. I love babies and frequently did day care of other infants and small children to supplement Hank's income. One Sunday morning in January of 1973 the church bulletin had an announcement requesting foster parents for troubled teenagers and also for disabled infants and small children. Hank and I both recognized the call and contacted the fostering agency. For the next 30 years I was in God's school of nurses training. Each child (63 in 30 years) that came through our doors was a new medical challenge for me to learn. Each child Hank and I dedicated to God. We stood strong on the verse in *Joshua* which states: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Our daughters were not always that happy with the incoming children, but our Kathy, at age 3, learned so much while assisting me with the care that when she began nurses training, she already was ahead of the learning curve. She became an excellent nurse, brilliant beyond her years. Butterworth Hospital was her site where she ministered love, compassion and her nursing skills in the Pediatric ICU and in the Pediatric emergency department bringing a ray of sunshine into each room with her beautiful smile. Everyone loved her.

O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. Psalms 30:2

Kathy now lives in heaven with her Lord and Savior. She died May 19, 2011. Hank has joined Kathy, there as well, on Nov. 11, 2014. During our 53 years of marriage, he initially thought he had a quiver that would hold only two daughters. He was soon to learn that God had given him a quiver made of elastic. It was meant to stretch and stretch again as each new child came into our home for him to love, snuggle and be a father to. The stories of Scottie and Shannon best portrays the impact Hank had on the lives of our foster children.

The service God had in His plans for me has been the best. I would not change a moment of it. His faithfulness endures forever and He demonstrated that to me each and every day. **To God be the glory!!!**



Hank & Fran Kortman



Kathy & Kerrie

For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.' Deuteronomy 15:11

A Little Boy Named Scottie 1978-1983

By Fran De Graaf Kortman, special needs foster parent for 30 years.

The baby I met that May morning sat in metal crib, tucked in with a pillow behind his back and one pillow on each side. He had a unique appearance. Not like a normal child of 16 months would look. This child had an egg shaped head with small tufts of blond hair sticking up here and there; his eyes were bulging and he struggled to breathe. Around his small neck was a thin white ribbon which held in place a trachea tube which was to make his breathing easier. He was very small in stature, his arms and legs were shorter than normal and his fingers and toes were very tiny. He suffered from a rare genetic disease that caused his body to have shortening of his bone structure creating brittle bones and a miniaturization of his internal



Scottie

organs, as well. Scottie was a dwarf. The nursing staff had loved this special child since his birth and had provided his daily care since his birth. He required four nurses to do his trach care which was done every 6 hours around the clock. One nurse to distract him, two to hold him still, and the fourth to do the actual removal of the trach tube, clean it, sterilize it, and return it to his trach stoma before his stoma would collapse.

As a foster parent, it became my duty to learn his care quickly so that he could become part of our family within the next 3-4 weeks. It also meant that this little prince, who ruled his little kingdom from the metal crib, would have to learn to trust me to do his daily care alone and with his cooperation. One of the greatest lessons I learned during the training with Scottie was the trusting—simply trusting. Such childlike trust is to be the mandate of every child of God. Watching Scottie learn to trust me showed me volumes of how I am to trust my Lord and Savior every day, too.

Home life agreed with Scottie. He was like a budding rose. Every day we watched him blossom more. Scottie was still a very delicate baby and required a large amount of rest inside his little misting tent, but when he was awake he wanted to be busy playing with toys and activities more and more. He loved to smile, cuddle, play with our daughters, and sit on his foster daddy's lap to pull ink pens, and other goodies from his shirt pocket. Although little sound came from Scottie's trach, his squeals of laughter made sounds that tickled our hearts.

Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, Matthew 18:4-5

The doctors said Scottie would never speak because of his trach. He did! He would never walk. He did! During the day Scottie became my daily companion. He assisted me with my household duties. Scottie's little shopping cart was filled with laundry from each bedroom and brought to the laundry room where he would hand me each item, identify it and its owner. When the clothes were dry and taken from the dryer, Scottie was 'jonny-on-the-spot' to help me fold them and he would place the clothing into the proper baskets for each bedroom. Meal times were Scottie's time to help, too. He didn't need to be asked, he was just there to take each plate and set it on the table carefully, returning for the silverware and napkins. He loved all the praise he got for his efforts. When prayer time came Scottie was in control. He would inform daddy "pray now", fold his tiny hands over his eyes and made sure to leave enough gaps to observe that all was happening correctly. He said his prayer in phrases repeating me and then his loud 'AMEN'. Scottie had a small blue New Testament. It was his prize possession. When his daddy read the Bible, Scottie needed his Bible and would imitate daddy as to where he was reading. It was a solemn occasion. The four years we were privileged to care for Scottie were such a blessing. We grew to so love that child, that if he had been available for adoption it would have been a no brainer. Scottie went to live with his birth mother for two weeks before we received a call that he was very sick and needed our home again to help him recover. All four of us stood at the door when our little boy arrived. Each one of us thought Scottie would reach for one of us, but he reached for his daddy. Why? Because this child knew that each child needed a daddy who would love him and provide for him. This child had such a daddy for four years and oh how much he had missed his daddy in those two weeks. When Scottie had improved greatly within 5 days, he had to return to his birth mother. One morning in early January we received a call. Scottie's time on earth had ended. He had been called home. God NEVER makes mistakes and who here on earth can know or understand why Scottie was taken home at that particular time. Had Scottie remained with us would he have died? Yes, because God had that time appointed in His Book of Life for Scottie to end his earthly journey. God gave us the rare privilege of caring for one of His special little lambs, a special angel sent from heaven on a special mission. We were privileged to have cared for an angel!



Fran De Graaf Kortman

**Bless the LORD, you His angels, Mighty in strength, who perform His word, Obeying the voice of His word!
Psalm 103:20**

The Story of My Son Shannon

By Fran De Graaf Kortman

One summer day in 1991 I received a call from my case worker to inform me that a small African/American 5 week old infant was in need of my care. He had many medical problems that would have to be dealt with. Shannon was born with Spina Bifida (the most severe), Hydrocephalus, an addiction to 5 street drugs, two broken legs (in womb) and two club feet. Shannon would never walk. Our family met Shannon that same evening at Butterworth Hospital and I fell in love with him the moment he smiled at me. He was so tiny and fragile, having had surgery on his spine to correct the defect and surgery on his head to place a drainage tube in one of his ventricles, and being addicted to the street drugs that would only slowly leave his system.

We took Shannon home with us the following morning and he became our son via adoption shortly thereafter. Shannon thrived in our home; he was loved by everyone who came in contact with him. My mom, most of all. My mom came to stay with us for 6 weeks while she recuperated from rotor cuff surgery. She took charge of tiny Shannon, holding him in her good arm, snuggled close. She keep track that he would get fed every three hours because Shannon had no sensation below his waist line and never felt hungry. The nurse and I would squabble over who got to hold him and feed him his bottle, unless Hank or Chelsea was home, and then it was their turn.

Our Shannon was the only child (of our foster children) who attended regular school. The doctors had labeled him Mentally Retarded when he was born, but Shannon proved them so wrong. Shannon graduated from high school in 2009. Shannon and his dad enjoyed each other so much. They spent as much time together as possible and shared a deep love for each other. At age three Shannon announced, at the table one night: "Did you know that I have 3 fathers? Yes I do! I have a Father in heaven, I have a birth father, and I have my best's father, my daddy." Today, Shannon and I share our time together. His father and my husband are gone. Hank has left this world for the glories of heaven. But God, in His great providence, has seen to it that I am not left alone. When the Lord and Savior of our lives is allowed to lead and guide, He chooses the very best for His children.

All praise to Him!

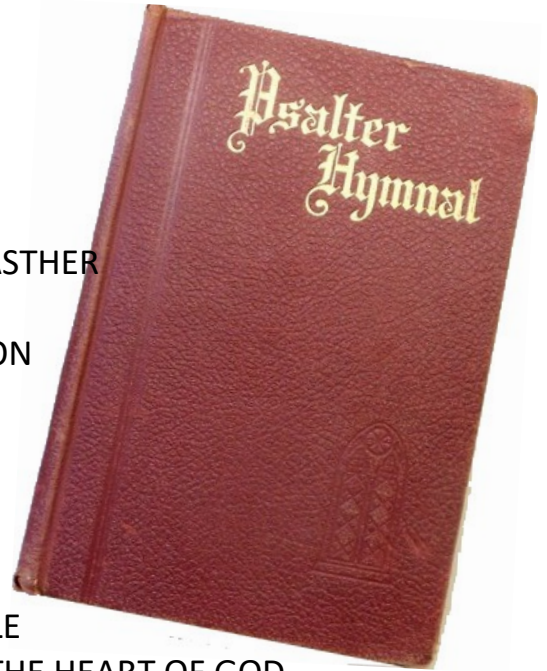


Shannon Kortman

**Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Proverbs 3:5-6**

Do You Still Know The Tune Of Some Old Hymns?

1 ABIDE WITH ME, FAST FALLS THE EVENTIDE
2 AMAZING GRACE! HOW SWEET THE SOUND
3 WHAT A FELLOWSHIP, WHAT A JOY DIVINE
4 BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR! KING OF CREATION!
5 BLESSED ASSURANCE JESUS IS MINE!
6 GREAT IS THY FAITHFULLNESS, O GOD MY FATHER
7 WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS
8 PRECIOUS LORD, TAKE MY HAND, LEAD ME ON
9 SAVIOR, LIKE A SHEPHERD LEAD US
10 STAND UP, STAND UP FOR JESUS
11 I WILL SING OF MY REDEEMER
12 HAVE THINE OWN WAY LORD!
13 I SERVE A RISEN SAVIOR
14 LORD JESUS, I LONG TO BE PERFECTLY WHOLE
15 THERE IS A PLACE OF QUIET REST, NEAR TO THE HEART OF GOD
16 LIVING FOR JESUS A LIFE THAT IS TRUE
17 TAKE MY LIFE AND LET IT BE CONSECRATED LORD TO THEE
18 MY JESUS I LOVE THEE I KNOW THOU ART MINE
19 I LOVE TO TELL THE STORY
20 I WILL SING OF MY REDEEMER AND HIS WONDEROUS LOVE TO ME
21 I NEED THEE EVERY HOUR, MOST GRACIOUS LORD
22 O MASTER, LET ME WALK WITH THEE
23 O JESUS, I HAVE PROMISED TO SERVE THEE TO THE END
24 MY HOPE IS BUILT ON NOTHING LESS
25 GO, TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAINS
26 ON A HILL FAR AWAY STOOD AN OLD RUGGED CROSS
27 DAY BY DAY, AND WITH EACH PASSING MOMENT
28 I AM WEAK BUT THOU ART STRONG
29 LIKE THE WOMAN AT THE WELL I WAS SEEKING
30 LIVING FOR JESUS A LIFE THAT IS TRUE
31 FAIREST LORD JESUS
32 SOFTLY AND TENDERLY JESUS IS CALLING
33 NEARER STILL NEARER, LORD TO BE THINE



I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search. Psalm 77:6

Relationships

By Nancy Ellerbroek

It is December 26, 2015, the day after another wonderful Christmas party with my family at our cabin. Our family is very fortunate and has been blessed beyond words. We are all relatively healthy as of this date and able to get up and enjoy the day ahead with enthusiasm. Our family seems to grow every year and it's most interesting to see the paths that we take and the relationships that develop as we all age.

My Mom and Dad through my eyes have a traditional relationship, getting married, having children, Mom stayed at home for the kids, and Dad worked for financial support. They have loved and supported each other every step of their 63-year-old marriage, and seemed to have loved every minute of it. After helping format this book, I know this is true from reading all the stories, I would say, 'their relationship is one to admire and applaud.'



Kirby holding Kaysen, Bret, Joel, Holly, Sami, Ben Grandpa & Grandma Ellerbroek with baby Adaleigh

Another relationship is the one of my Aunt Fran, who co-authored this book, and her late husband Hank Kortman. Their relationship was similar to my Mom and Dad as very traditional and loving. After reading her stories in this book they were both very selfless, taking in handicapped foster children into their home for years on end and also adopting their son Shannon. They also cared for my Grandmother for several years in their home. This labor of love had to have 100% support from both partners to have worked. Their relationship like my Mom and Dad's surely had ups and downs, but was strengthened by their Christian faith. They had a spiritual place to go, whether it be to church, a bible study, dinner out with close friends or just at home on their knees praying; their faith made the 'Ups' in life higher and the 'Downs' in life manageable.

I have had a few close relationships in my life; I have not been as fortunate as my Mom and Dad to get it right the first time, up until now. After living and learning, 2015 is different than 1953, times change along with societies expectations, rules change, but there are some things I believe will never change.

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Ephesians 4:2

As I ponder all my nieces and nephews, some are married and have children of their own; there are a few pieces of advice on relationships I would give them if ever asked:

1. LOVE. Love like Christ loved, with all your heart, soul and mind. Be able to be spiritual together, work through good and bad times together.
2. KINDNESS. Always think in terms of WE, not ME. Pick a partner that will also think that way. Try to always put your partner first; do not be selfish or self-centered.
3. SHARE. Share your time, share your passions and disappointments, talk and listen intently without distraction.

It's been a joy to work on this storybook with my Dad and Aunt Fran. My hope for whoever reads this book will take away something that 'sticks', something that inspires them, something that gives them courage or something that gives them a feeling of contentment. I'm happy to say I did.



John Ellerbroek, Nancy Ellerbroek, Marty Ellerboek, Diane Barefield
Alice and Nick Ellerbroek and baby Adaleigh

**Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.
It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.
Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.
It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7**

You Tell Me I Am Getting Old

Author Unknown

You tell me I am getting old, but that is not really so.
The house I live in may be worn, and that of course I know.
It's been in use a good long while and weathered many a gale.
I'm, therefore, not surprised to find it's getting somewhat frail.

You tell me I am getting old; you mix my house with me.
You are looking at the outside, and that's all most folks see.

The dwelling in this little house is young and bright
Just starting life that will last through all eternity.

I Patch the house up a bit to make it last the night
But soon I will be moving on to my house of endless light.
I'm going to live forever there, my life goes on – it's grand.
How can you say: I am getting old, you do not understand.
I know I have been made fit for Heaven that blest land above.
Cleansed in the precious blood of Christ and growing still in love.

The beauty of that glorious home no words can ever say
It's hidden from these mortal eyes but kept for me someday.
And when I walk with you no more, the world will move on just as before.
But let each his house in order set, that he may leave without regret
Whenever called to go, whenever called to go.



But soon I will be moving on to my house of endless light.

Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life. Proverbs 16:31

Is it a Story or an Essay?

By Nick Ellerbroek

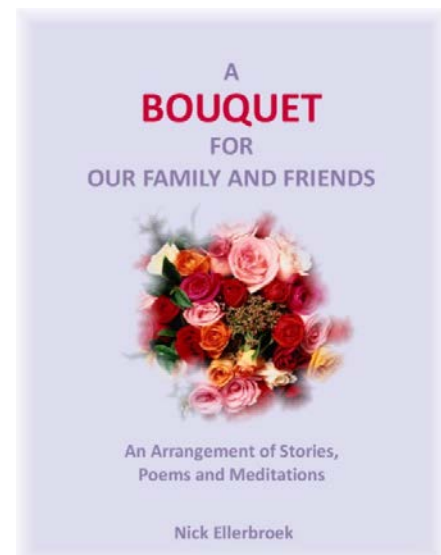
Writing a story or an essay is something I enjoy; besides it is a good learning experience for me. The question to myself is this: What is the difference between a story and an essay? *Webster's New World Dictionary* explains. A story is telling or writing about an event, while an essay is a personal literary composition, a form of art.

This sounds important, but writing a story or an essay is not very popular anymore because in today's society computers and other electronic devices are being used by almost everyone to communicate what is on their minds. Still, it is interesting to know that talented writers of the past, like novelists, poets, and historians were known by name the way they composed their literary works.

My writing experience started when I was in 5th grade elementary school in the Netherlands and 30 of us kids in the class had to write a story that was written in such a way as if the author was speaking to an audience. When many years later, my father-in-law Jan De Graaf and I were comparing similar experiences from the past, he told me that when he was a teenager in Friesland, The Netherlands, he and his friends spent time around a cast iron stove telling stories, sometimes a writing contest was held and a story he wrote, at that time, he still knew by heart. His story was about religious persecution in Europe. I spent many hours translating it into English, not so much each word but the message into a poem and called it: "Faith in Times of Persecution."

This poem can be found on page 81 in my first book:

An Arrangement of Stories, Poems and Meditations.



**Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father in Heaven.
Matthew 5:16**



The Journey Home



There's a path that leads
to a turn in the road,
and we each must travel there.
Where the Father waits
to take us home
to shelter of His care...