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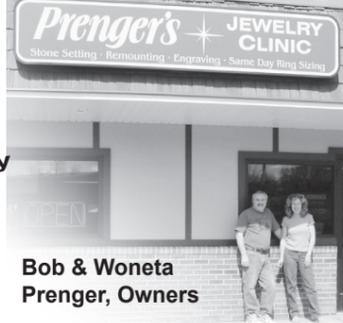
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The Constitution: Our charter of freedom

by Reverend R.A. Shackles

The United States Constitution and its 27 Amendments are this nation's most precious charter, guaranteeing to every citizen a life of freedom unprecedented in history, of a special truth that has made the United States the greatest nation in history. We should, therefore, be familiar with its contents. Yet, in reality, few among us today can pass even an elementary test on its contents, let alone what they really mean. Consequently, we are ill-equipped to say what is and what is not of the Constitution.

There are today some serious Constitutional issues in our political life, with some insisting our Constitution is a "living document," which too often is taken to mean a license for "change it all!" How many among us can challenge such an assertion? Many claim they are "strict constructionists" in applying that document. How many of us can really verify whether or not that is true, if we are not familiar with what that Constitution says? Indeed, how many of us could give the correct date of its adoption, if asked? (That's a trick question because its date of adoption and its final ratification are separated by four years!)

In the conviction that ignorance is our worst enemy, we begin a series of articles on the Constitution as a beginning step in correcting that disappointing lack of Constitutional knowledge so prevalent today. We take three documents as our "textbook," primarily: The Declaration of Independence, The Constitution (with its present Amendments) and the best commentary on it, *The Federalist*. The latter is a collection of 85 essays written by three great Constitutionals: Alexander Hamilton; John Jay; and James Madison, Jr., serially published beginning on October 27, 1787, when, as yet, none of the states had ratified the Constitution. (The final ratification was on January 10, 1791.)

To begin, though many are familiar with the phrase, WE THE PEOPLE, how many know these are the first three words of the Constitution? How many can repeat any part of the opening Preamble of the Constitution? We should be able to, for it is the theme statement that establishes the spirit in which our nation has been established. For your reflection, we print it here:

"WE THE PEOPLE of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect union, establish Justice, ensure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Consider the key words as themes to bear in mind in understanding the rest of this document: Union, Justice, Tranquillity, common defense, general Welfare, and that glorious, glorious phrase — the Blessings of Liberty. Consider, too, those Blessings were adopted by and for those who actually won that Liberty for the sake of "our Prosperity," you and me and every other citizen of this great nation.

It is good to briefly reflect on what these key words mean. "A more perfect Union" is an interesting phrase that implies there certainly could be, as happened, amendments to "fine tune" this plan. To that end, the framers provided a method for amending the Constitution. Justice is a word that needs careful understanding, for it implies the whole practical philosophy put forth in the Constitution, a word that might be summed up as "fair and equitable treatment for all." Domestic Tranquillity is very significant in that the word "peace" is not used. Rather, the Constitution says, "Tranquillity," which is what the ancient Jewish *Shalom* means, and the Greek *eirene*, often not quite accurately translated "peace." The point of the Constitution is in fact that tranquillity, and honoring that, sustains our national unity. This is exactly the intention of our Founders.

"The common defense" is not capitalized, as are the other key words. It is a sign that the whole purpose of the Constitution is to not only establish a highly workable government, but that it be one including a citizen's responsibility to uphold it valiantly. But as well, by not capitalizing this key word, it has an implicit intention to work towards that Tranquillity and never to be — as indeed has ever been clear of us — a war-mongering, territory-consuming empire. As to Welfare, it must not be ignored that it is modified by "general." In other words, the fundamental intention here is that of establishing a governmental system that encourages all that is good and best for our continuing national health and strength in Freedom's unity. In its exalting in this action "the Blessings of Liberty," the Constitution — by adding "and our Posterity" — clearly is written to be our fundamental statement for all foreseeable future. In short, it is meant to form and define what still today "Charter of Freedom" means.

Our next article will note the significance of the Declaration of Independence in understanding the context of a key issue: The spiritual commitments of both those who specifically composed and those who enthusiastically voted to adopt this Constitution. After that, we will address how the Constitution provides for the laws and operating structure of our country: The Legislature. Come with us on this journey into understanding our great Document of Freedom. •



Local church welcomes new pastor

by Vicki Smith

Calvary Temple Assembly of God, 2956 E. Pontaluna Road, is pleased to announce the upcoming installation service for Pastor Casey Arnouts and his family. The service will be held at 10:30 a.m. on July 19.

Arnouts, a native of Muskegon, returned to this area as senior pastor of Calvary Temple after being away for 18 years, both studying and pastoring in the Midwest.

"We are excited to be back in the area," said Arnouts. "We're excited to work and worship with our new congregation. Plus, it's an added blessing to be close to family and friends with the opportunity to be involved with the area I love so much."

After graduation from Calvary Baptist Academy in 1990, Arnouts relocated to Springfield, Missouri, to study at Central Bible College, where he graduated with a B.A. in pastoral ministries in 1994.

From 1996 to 1998 he studied at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, working on a Master's degree in Old Testament and Semetic Studies.

Casey and his wife, Tammy, met in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and were married in 1998, soon after accepting an associate pastor's position at the Whitewater Assembly of God in Whitewater, Wisconsin. There, they ministered for three years and welcomed the birth of their first daughter, Katy, in 2001.

In 2003, Arnouts received a call to pastor at Baldwin Assembly of God, and the family returned to Michigan to serve that congregation. They ministered there for more than six years, welcoming their second daughter, Becca, in 2004.

Arnouts was invited to candidate for the position of senior pastor at Calvary Temple Assembly of God here in Fruitport and was elected in April. At the conclusion of a transitional period in Baldwin, the family relocated to the area and Arnouts began his responsibilities in June.

We invite you to celebrate with us at the installation service.

Contact the church at (231) 865-6495 for further information. •

We walk because they walk

by Cheryl Snow

Join us for the 8th annual Fruitport Area CROP Hunger Walk on Sunday, October 4, 2009. We walk to help feed people around the world and here in the Fruitport area. Every day more than 16,000 children die from hunger related causes — about one child every five seconds. Over one billion people in developing countries live on an income of \$1 a day or less.

Locally, our unemployment rate is the highest around. People are seeking food and financial aid in increasing numbers. Come and join a growing movement: Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty — CROP.

A number of area churches have been involved in the local walk for years. If your church is not involved, find out why! The Fruitport area businesses support the walk by offering both financial support and incentives for the walkers.

You can support our CROP Hunger Walk this year by being a walker, pledging your support, and/or volunteering to help on the day of the walk; there's something for everyone! Recruit your family and friends and come out for a good cause. You can pick up a pledge envelope or volunteer your time by calling the Fruitport Congregational United Church of Christ at (231) 865-3551.

Remember, 25 percent of the funds raised here is returned to our local food pantry. Help us help others in our community and around the world. For walk information, call the church. •



For the second year, Calvary Church provided a free breakfast every morning for the carnival workers. (Photo by Ron Cooper.)