

## **From the Pastor's Desk 1980-1989**

### **Lift up your hearts unto God!**

In our order of worship we have the salutation and the benediction. Consider for a moment the wondrous actions that take place through these simple rituals.

The salutation comes after the votum, when the congregation has confessed its dependency on Jehovah, the Covenant God and Creator. In response to the votum, the Lord declares that He wants His grace and mercy to be in the midst of His people. "Grace, mercy and peace", the words used in the salutation, are sent from the Father and the Son, through the Holy Spirit, to be the possession of all who have come into the Kingdom. So something wonderful happens each Sunday. Peace through the grace of Christ is bestowed upon us. Can we ever fully appreciate the greatness of it all? Here is a gathering of believers, of people, some are hurting and burdened by trials and worries, and all have sinned each day. And yet they form the people of God to whom the Lord says; "I want to be in your midst".

The minister of the Word performs an awesome service when He raises his hands in salutation at the beginning of the service and at the end for the benediction. He is not a priest, though he is used in the act of God meeting with His people.

Each service ends with a benediction. What is a benediction? It is a declaration of, or supplication for, God's blessing. In ancient Israel, the benediction was a regular part of the temple service. It was assigned to the Aaronites, who used the benediction of Nu. 6:24-26. Before the priest could engage in the service, he was required to wash his hands as a ritual; afterwards with uplifted hand, and while the people stood, he uttered the words of blessing. From the very beginning of the history of the Christian Church, the use of the benediction was common.

God blesses His people at the end of the service of praise. And so the Lord's people can return to their every day duties with the blessing of the Lord. The salutation and benediction are solemn but also joyous happenings in the church full of the mercy, grace and peace of the Lord.