

Make a joyful noise!

By Pastor John Koedyker, Word of Hope Church

Spring is here! And one of the signs of spring is that all the birds have come back from their winters down south. The last few mornings I have been awakened by the sound of a bird singing beautifully just outside our bedroom window. What a pleasant way to be aroused from a long night of slumber!

That experience reminded me of the familiar verse from Psalm 100: "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord!"

I have heard that verse quoted many times when I have had conversations with people about singing. You know how it goes. Someone says, "Oh, I can't sing, but I can make a joyful noise!" And we all have a good chuckle.

But the truth of the matter is, there are many noises in our world — some pleasant like birds singing sweetly outside our bedroom windows, and some not so pleasant — like screaming, yelling, or sobbing.

We human beings can make all kinds of noises. Some of our noises may even sound funny and make us laugh.

I read recently that a survey was taken to see what people thought was their favorite sound. Some of the top sounds were music, waves crashing on a beach, and — you guessed it — birds singing in the trees. But the winning sound was that of a baby laughing. Not surprising, is it?

But we are not the only ones who hear the noises and sounds of this world. Whether it is a song of joy on our lips or the lament of sadness or cry for help, our voices are heard by a God who listens to us, hears our prayers, and cares deeply about us. The psalm referred to earlier ends with these words: "For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations." •

Conscience and its problems

By Reverend R.A. Shackles

There's a problem with conscience? Now there's a surprise for us! But it is a pleasant surprise in that all of a sudden, because of an unfortunate mandate by the President — whose decision seemed to have no sensitivity to people — conscience has become the issue of the day all across the country. This has to be one of the least expected developments in a long time — given the moral situation of recent years.

It has been kicked off by what — to traditional moralists — is an implicitly immoral complaint by a law student at Georgetown Law School. Her testimony before a congressional committee grew out of the presidential mandate that *all* health delivery institutions, without exception, *must* provide free birth control, or contraceptive, coverage. The religious community suddenly realized this is a violation of legitimate spiritual conscience.

The young lady's angry protest was that Georgetown — a Roman Catholic University, conscience-bound to rejection of artificial birth control — should be made to provide her contraceptive supply. What rather shocked people of conscience is that she listed that need as \$3000 worth of materials (we are trying to be circumspect here, being old-fashioned!) over three years of law school. Apparently not married, the obvious inference is her "need" is a lot more sexual activity than seems at all "average" or even "normal."

The challenge to conscience here is two-fold. First, the President's mandate is inherently a threat to our American freedom of religion, unmolested by interference of the government — in short, unconstitutional. The other challenge is also of moral concern, for the young woman's position seems to be a "right" to unlimited sexual indulgence, which "right" includes her "right" to expect the rest of us to underwrite her libido.

In both cases, she — or anyone else — is completely free to indulge their conscience in any way she or others want to. Our position of conscience is, we are under no obligation to underwrite that decision. Furthermore, we have the right guaranteed by the Constitution: No interference to our free and conscientious practice of a religion. The point is not that some Christians do not object to contraceptive practices. The point is that government has no right to mandate Christians' — or any other sincere religious commitment — practice and belief.

The good news is, we Christians have finally been challenged precisely where we ought to be — at the level of how sincere we are in our claim to be Christians. Perhaps at last, in a rather perverse culture (in which the churches also sin), we have awakened to a conscious realization that conscience means we really must live up to what we say we believe. The government — and that young law student — are wrong; but we are not right until we meet the demands of Christian conscience ourselves. And that is our "problem" with conscience. May we have courage and, as my grandma used to say, "gumption" to dare to be true to our Lord as He informs our conscience. •

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Social media summer school scheduled

(Submitted by the Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce)

This series will teach you everything you and your business need to know about social media. (All sessions take place at the Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce, 380 W. Western Avenue in downtown Muskegon.)

Twitter & LinkedIn – Tuesday, June 12 from 8 to 9:30 a.m. Learn how to effectively use these big name networks in your business's marketing.

The Next Wave – Tuesday, July 10 from 8 to 9:30 a.m. Stay current with this look into social media's newest trends and platforms.

Chamber members pay \$20 for each session. Future members pay \$35 for each session.

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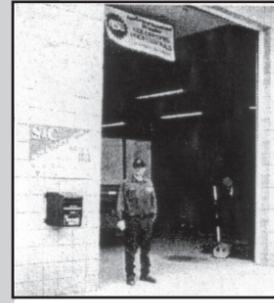
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SUNSET RIDERS 4-H Club 2012 Open Horse Shows

Proof of negative 2012 Coggins required

NEW LOCATION: Montague (TBSC) Show grounds
5682 Eilers Road Montague, MI 49437

SHOW TIMES: 8:30 am - rain or shine -

FEES: Entry fee \$5.00 per class
(no refunds once entry is made)
High point fee \$3.00 per show
(high point nomination fee must be paid before entering first class)
4-H rules apply to all classes

DATES & JUDGES: Saturday, May 12 (Shaggy Show) - Kimberly Rutledge
Clipped horses and show clothes not required for May show
Saturday, June 8th - Donna Spears
Sunday, July 8th - Richard Fitch

Sponsors: West Michigan Veterinary Service & B-Shop Sharpening Service

Sunset Riders will not be held responsible for the loss of property, accidents or injury to horses or riders. Walk-trot participants may enter Walk-trot classes only. Daily high point awards given by division: 35 & over, 20-34, 16-19, 13-15, 12 & younger, WT 15 & over and 14 & under. Only one halter class will count toward high point. Sunset Riders reserve the right to cancel or combine any classes at any time.

For more information on horse shows, sponsors, or 4-H memberships call: Shirley Thompson (231) 773.8193 or Kelly Payne (231) 740.0680. Check us out on Facebook.

