

Interview with Roger Kok

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Interviewed by John LeDoux and Mark Stone

LeDoux: The date is July 26, 1978. We are here today at the Christian Reformed Church at Pease. First of all maybe you could start it out Pastor. Tell us a little bit about yourself. First of all, your full name and you birthdate and then a little bit about your family background.

Kok: Okay. My name is Roger Kok, and I was born on July 3, 1937. And my grandparents of both sides were born in the Netherlands, and my father was born in the Netherlands.

LeDoux: In what area approximately in the Netherlands?

Kok: Ah, Amsterdam. That's where my father came from, and he came here when he was, I believe was six years old. He was quite young. But he has retained his native tongue along with English. He's still able to talk with his. And I was born and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan and married Joyce Van Titan whose grandfather and grandmother also came over from the Netherlands, not her parents, however. And I worked for eight years after high school in a bakery with my brother; and then through seven years of college and seminary, graduating from seminary in 1969-Calvin College and Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

LeDoux: Calvin!

Kok: Calvin.

LeDoux: Okay.

Kok: And my first congregation was in Palo Alto, California, which I served for almost five years. And then I moved here in July of 1974 and been at Pease for four years.

Stone: Did your father's-father's family, when they came over, did they move immediately to the Grand Rapids area?

Kok: Yes, they did.

Stone: Okay.

Kok: My grandfather had a bakery which my father then took over.

Stone: Was it a Dutch community in the area at all?

Kok: Yes. Grand Rapids is heavily Dutch even with its very large population today, but the area in which they lived was heavily, heavily Dutch.

LeDoux: Now, the Calvin Seminary, I believe you said it was, is this a Christian Reformed Seminary?

Kok: It's the denominational college and seminary. In fact, it's the only seminary that our denomination has. And ministers in our denomination must ultimately graduate from Calvin. They can go to other seminaries for a couple of years, but they have to take at least one year at Calvin. Almost all of our ministers take all their schooling at Calvin Seminary.

LeDoux: Uh huh. Okay, Mark, did you have any more questions? Okay sir, would you give your full name and birth date and a little bit about your family history, please.

Vedders: I'm John Vedders. I was born in this vicinity in 1899, and my birthday is June 29.

LeDoux: Would you spell your last name please for us.

Vedders: V-E-D-D-E-R-S.

LeDoux: Now, were your parents born in this country?

Vedders: My father was born in Michigan, and my mother came from the Netherlands. I believe at two and a half years old.

LeDoux: Was she from the city or from the rural part of the Netherland.

Vedders: She was from the rural area Obereisel.

LeDoux: Could you spell that please?

Vedders: That's a question!

Kok: It's something like O-B-E-R-E-I-S-E-L.

LeDoux: We'll be asking you to spell several names for the purpose for the people transcribing this. Okay, now you were born in Pease or near here?

Vedders: No, I was born near here in Milo Township, which was Mille Lacs County.

Stone: Was it on a farm?

Vedders: Right.

Stone: It was your parent's farm?

Vedders: Right.

LeDoux: Okay. Have you farmed most your life?

Vedders: Ah, no. I was on construction work for 18-19 years-highway construction.

LeDoux: Okay. And you've been a member of this church now all of your life then?

Vedders: Yes. I have. I was baptized here, and Reverend Westenburg baptized me.

Stone: You mentioned your father was born in Michigan. Is that in the Grand Rapids area?

Vedders: Uh, I don't know. My grandfather was from Graffschap.

LeDoux: How is that spelled?

Stone: Yes, please!

Kok: G-R-A-F-F-S-C-H-A-P. There's a – there is a large number of small Dutch settlements within 25 miles of Grand Rapids, and Graffschap is one of those.

Stone: Oh, I see.

LeDoux: So this was one area where a lot of people from the Netherlands settled then-originally from the Netherlands?

Kok: Oh, tremendous.

Stone: Was it probably the largest center in the United States or are there other large--

Kok: I would judge it's the largest by the number of churches we have in that area. Northwest Iowa, for instance there is large Dutch settlements as well, but I think the Grand Rapids-Holland, Michigan area is certainly is the largest pocket of Dutch reformed any place.

LeDoux: Okay. Sir, could you give your full name and your birth date and a little bit about your family?

Droogsma: I'm Sam Droogsma, born July 22, 1907, half a mile east of Pease, been here all my life. My parents came from the Netherlands, and I think Dad was about 15 years old when they came here. Passeac, New Jersey.

Stone: Passeac?

Droogsma: Passeac, New Jersey. And from there they moved to Iowa-to LeMars, Iowa. They came here in Pease in April 14, 1895 or 6-was it?

Vedders: I think five. My parents came in 1906.

Droogsma: He seeded him first oats this country in the ashes of the Hinckley fire. Now is that 1905 or 1906?

LeDoux: The fire was 1894, I believe. I think it was.

Kok: It was five.

LeDoux: Okay. Would you repeat--

Droogsma: He was the last, he was a charter member of the Christian Reform Church of Pease.

LeDoux: Do you recall what part of the Netherlands he was from?

Droogsma: Probably at Friesland, I think.

Stone: Friesland?

Kok: Friesland. F-R-I-E-S-L-A-N-D.

LeDoux: Okay. And then he came to--eventually went to le Mars and then up to Pease.

Droogsma: --came to Pease, here. Yes.

Stone: What kind of occupation or were you a farmer?

Droogsma: We farmed, yes.

LeDoux: And what occupation do you pursue?

Droogsma: I have a farm, and I've worked in the Alfred Olson company at Milaca for 34 years and been retired for six years. But I still work there.

LeDoux: And what does the Olson Company do?

Droogsma: I was a butcher for 25 years--

LeDoux: Does it do any meat packing at all?

Droogsma: No-just across the counter.

LeDoux: I see, okay.

Droogsma: And now I help in a clothing store.

LeDoux: Okay and I didn't ask if you two gentlemen- I assume you're married?

Droogsma: Yes.

Vedders: Yes.

LeDoux: Okay and both your wives are also Dutch?

Vedders: Mine is.

Droogsma: No.

LeDoux: Okay. I'd like to get into a little bit of general history of the church. Now, you mentioned that there are several settlements in the Mid-West that were frequented by people from the Netherlands. How about Minnesota, are there—outside of Pease - are there several Dutch settlements that are heavily Dutch?

Kok: Do you want a yearbook? Well, I can give you a general sketch.

LeDoux: Okay, that's fine.

Kok: Then we can huh—then we can a—if you want to ask more specific, I'd be happy to.

LeDoux: Okay.

Kok: Um. Really in a sense, Pease is one of the most more isolated Christian Reform settlements or communities in Minnesota. Around the Princeburg—Renville—Bundy area, southwest of here, there are several Christian Reform churches in that area, and a large number of Dutch people who are farming and merchants and so forth in that area. As far as numbers of Christian Reform families, there are many more in that area and so forth. Then down in southern Minnesota there is—there's other pockets, Pipestone, Hollandale--

LeDoux: Edgerton--

Kok: Edgerton. Ah ya, in those areas. Edgerton's quite, quite a good size.

Droogsma: Minneapolis has four Christian Reform Churches.

Kok: Ya, okay. Now that has happened because people generally have moved from the rural Christian Reform Churches to the cities, and ya, Pease has contributed tremendously to the four Christian Reform Churches in the—in the cities, from people—kids going off to college and

finding jobs in the cities and marrying and moving to the cities for trades and businessman and so forth.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Kok: So that has happened from the rural communities as the kids have moved to the cities. There are now four Christian Reform Churches and a campus ministry also in the University of Minnesota.

Vedders: In our classis, that's a group of people that united the congregations—that united together. There's about 15 different congregations-- I'm eliminating--

Kok: Ya.

Vedders: Uh, in this area that grouped together and reformed this—what we call classis--

Stone: Classis?

Vedders: Ya.

Droogsma: Classis Minnesota North.

Vedders: Classis Minnesota North. Then we also have classis Minnesota South. The one of the Reverend was to explain has three-six-nine-twelve-fifteen in the group around. Edgerton is pretty much central.

Kok: Ya. I was going to say--

Stone: Does that also encompass the Minneapolis churches then or is that--

Vedders: No.

Kok: They're in our classis.

Stone: Oh, I see.

Kok: There in Minnesota North.

LeDoux: So would a class be comparable like to a synod or conference in other denominations or--

Kok: Conference.

LeDoux: The conference, uh huh. And there would be how many churches then in this particular conference or classis?

Kok: Okay our—Minnesota North has approximately 25 churches, but about eight or nine of those are Canadian Churches.

LeDoux: I see.

Kok: We're in international classis.

LeDoux: I see.

Kok: So John was correct with about 15 Minnesota churches in Classis of Minnesota North, and then another 15-18 in classis of Minnesota South.

Stone: Is there a yearly meeting or--

Kok: Classis—our classis meet twice a year.

Stone: I see

Kok: Right.

LeDoux: How do the—how did the Dutch happen to settle at this particular place, at Pease?

Kok: You better talk to these two guys.

Vedders: Well, my folks came here because they were completely dried out in Dakota, and they found out there was water in Pease. And they gave up everything they had to get out of there and get to a place to find water. And when they came here, they found Mr. Droogsma and a few others and started up this little nucleus as a Christian Reform Church.

Stone: Wasn't there a large movement of the Dutch from the Dakotas over to this area?

Vedders: Quite a few families.

Droogsma: Later years (indiscernible)

Vedders: I suppose there was about eight-seven-eight in the bunch. Wasn't there?

Droogsma: Uh huh.

Stone: I see. And so your parents came with another group?

Vedders: Ya. Some of them came over land, over here.

Droogsma: And my grand—to Pease.

Vedders: Just because land was cheap. They were poor. They'd given up all they had in Dakota and moved to Pease. And were happy to find a little bit of a start here, and Sam's father was—was one of the originators of this little church.

LeDoux: So the-your ancestors came from the Dakotas and settled back here. Now, why-why did they go to Dakota in the first place? Do you have any idea? And why did they come back here?

Vedders: Uh, It was moister I guess. They came from Michi8gan. They worked in the mills like a lot of these folks did, and they worked in the mills. And there was no chance in getting ahead a little. And they heard about Iowa, so they moved to Iowa, so they moved to Iowa. And they hadn't had the chance to get started there, and they heard Dakota was-free land yet.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Vedders: And they settled in there, but they found out after they were there that Dakota was a dry country. They had no water.

Kok: The water here was free, huh?

Vedders: Well, that's right. But they give up their Iowa possessions where they shoulda stayed.

Kok: Ya, ya.

LeDoux: So it was very dry over there, and they found out there were some people from the Netherlands at the settlement of Pease already.

Vedders: I don't know if they knew that or not, but they evidently did. They evidently did.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Droogsma: This was entirely woods, wild.

Vedders: That was all saw mills.

Droogsma: Ya.

Vedders: In down through there, below.

LeDoux: Before these Dakota families moved here, there were already people here from the Netherlands here?

Vedders: No, there was around five or six families. Wasn't there Sam at the time?

Droogsma: Plummers and Heinzes and my grandparents.

Stone: So about what time did the first settlers come into Pease? Do you have any idea?

Vedders: Well, the first – first of the Dutch bunch came in around on '94, '95, in there, but there were a few living here then.

Kok: Didn't some people come because of the Hinckley fire too? They had settled in Hinckley.

Vedders: Yes. There was a Dutch group in Hinckley. There is still some Dutchmen up there in that area.

Kok: Right, right. But some came to Pease--

Droogsma: Yeah, the Dalmans and the Lahases worked in the quarry in Sandstone, see.

Kok: --after the fire.

Droogsma: Ain't that right?

Vedders: Yeah.

LeDoux: So they came from – after the fire they started coming through this area, and some would settle in Pease and others to the south?

Droogsma: Some went to Ogilvie.

Vedders: Don't get the idea now that many came from--

LeDoux: Several families though, I'd say.

Vedders: Not several, few!

LeDoux: Just a few, okay.

Vedders: Less than several.

LeDoux: Okay. All right. And do you have any idea what – now you said they worked in the metal quarry, I believe you said, up there.

Vedders: Sandstone.

LeDoux: Sandstone. Do you have any idea what occupations they'd take up down in this area?

Did they farm then?

Vedders: Farming.

LeDoux: 'Cause I know the land isn't very good up there, so--

Vedders: Farming.

LeDoux: Farming.

Stone: You said your father had planted his first crops in the ashes of the Hinckley fire.

Droogsma: Ashes of the Hinckley fire, yeah.

Stone: What kind of farming did you take up right away?

Droogsma: You – first you chop off all the timber and try to make a little spot to set the house or cabin.

Stone: Uh huh.

Droogsma: And then you chop out another little piece, and you try to get some – a little open field to get a little oats or something started.

Stone: Uh huh.

Droogsma: When I was five years old, we moved on the 160 acres south of Pease, and when we got the trees cut off, we could walk pert' near across the 40 acres. Stump on stump without being on the ground.

Stone: Is that right? So it was really densely wooded around there.

Droogsma: Oh, yes.

Vedders: I can verify this. The first half acre that Dad had cleared supposed to be potatoes and garden stuff, there was 27 stumps left in this half acre. He told that shortly before he died.

Droogsma: We had three acres of plowed field on a 160.

Stone: So that was one of the biggest occupations right away was just to-just to try to clear the field? Huh?

Droogsma: Clear out the land. Get logs over to the saw mill to build a-something to live in.

Kok: Then you had rocks after the trees?

Droogsma: Well, that was minor.

Kok: Yeah, compared to the trees!

Stone: Now, were the mills located on the Rum?

Vedders: Foley Bean had the biggest mill, I guess, in the state.

Droogsma: Yeah. Uh huh.

Vedders: It was tremendous. This whole area east of-west of Milaca, where the two spoons stand now, that was lumber piles, oh 12-15 feet high just alleys to go through. When the logs come up out of the river, they floated there.

LeDoux: Uh huh. Was there logging, I imagine, down in the Pease area early on?

Vedders: Oh sure, sure. This yard and this whole thing down here was all filled with logs and--

LeDoux: Uh huh, okay, now when the Pease community was getting organized, did they how did they form the church? And did they ask for a minister or seek one out or was one established here by a kind of mother church or do you have any idea?

Vedders: I'll tell ya, why don't you just read that brief-- I took it along too. It will be better than that.

Droogsma: This is the old one, isn't it? This is Rueben. (Indiscernible)

Vedders: That might be Dutch in there. (Laughter) Well that's a fact.

Kok: I suppose. That would -- that--

Vedders: I had that thought.

Droogsma: Ya, right here, the history of our church. Soon after what was known as the Hinckley fire which took place in '93 and '94. There's my-LeMars, Iowa where my father came to Pease. There's the--

Stone: Okay. Why don't we just start there. Get it copied.

Kok: You can get that microfilmed or whatever you do and send it back.

LeDoux: Okay.

Stone: Fantastic.

LeDoux: Okay, it says here then, "They desired to have a place to worship of their own and which was made known to us formally called the Classis Iowa."

Droogsma: Yeah.

LeDoux: So they-they requested down to Iowa for it.

Droogsma: Yeah. There was no Classis here then.

LeDoux: Right, right.

Droogsma: And we were for many years in the Iowa Classis. Then it started a Minnesota Classis. Then we split North and South, kept getting too big.

LeDoux: Do you have a-I don't know if it's in here, do you have any idea when the Minnesota Classis was formed, roughly?

Vedders: Nope, but I've got a yearbook of 1905.

Kok: Is it in there?

Vedders: I think it is.

Droogsma: Yeah, I think I got that too, but I--

Kok: Classis of Minnesota North is organized in 1952.

Droogsma: Yeah.

Vedders: Well this is – this is prior to that.

Stone: So that was when they split in '52.

Kok: This is when they became instead of just classis of Minnesota.

Vedders: I can run home and get a book if you want it.

LeDoux: Well, roughly. Now just basically what we want on the tape is--

Vedders: I would say that we-we organized in ...

Droogsma: When was Reverend Vande Lune here?

Vedders: Well, I can go back to the way other--

Kok: What are you talking about now, John, the church or the Classis?

Vedders: Yeah.

Droogsma: The Classis.

Vedders: It's in there, ain't it?

Kok: Well, the church is 83 years old. Right?

Droogsma: Yep.

Vedders: Yeah, but the classis, when Minnesota left the Iowa classis.

Kok: Oh, that's not in here because both--

Vedders: See and that's in that yearbook, and I thought I had it and I need it.

LeDoux: Well, just roughly which one-decade. Would you say 1910 or earlier?

Vedders: Oh no. Well--

Droogsma: When was Reverend-Reverend Vande Lune here?

Kok: You've got the years of those guys when they were here, haven't yeah? Reverend Vande Lune.

Kok: Go ahead Sam. Reverend Vande Lune was here from '20 to '26.

Stone: And this is--

Kok: And during that time the classis of Minnesota formed. Is that correct?

Droogsma: He was-he went to classis Iowa yet. I know that, but it's in that-in that period.

Vedders: See Iowa is split up--

Kok: Right around 1925 is what we're talking about.

LeDoux: Okay. I see.

Kok: Yeah.

LeDoux: Okay.

Stone: And the-then when the classis was divided into North and south in 1952- now it actually wasn't a split like we commonly known churches to split off, okay this is just the sheer size--

Droogsma: No, mutual-mutual decide because the entire classis system was too big to be effective. So they split it in half and travel from Winnipeg, Canada to Edgerton, Minnesota was kind of high priced.

Stone: But there were no-were no doctrinal differences or anything?

Droogsma: No. No. No.

Stone: Okay.

LeDoux: Okay before we go any further, I want to get a little bit into the-a little bit more about your faith. Now is the Christian Reformed exclusively a kind of a Dutch religion? I really don't know much about it. Is it an offshoot of another main church? Or maybe you can tell us something about the structure.

Kok: Well, Let's see. That must be...when-do you know when Van Rolte came to this country. Man, that's got to be in the late-on mid 1800's, I would say. A man named Van Rolte came to this country, and he settled in what's-what is now Holland, Michigan. And he began the Reformed church in America which then came from Reformed churches in the Netherlands.

LeDoux: Was this like a state church over there, kind of, or an official church, do you think?

Kok: Oh, boy!

Vedders: I don't think so.

Droogsma: No.

Kok: I don't know that history so well. No, I don't think so.

Stone: Was there--

Kok: The state church is different than the-the Reformed church.

LeDoux: Okay.

Kok: In the Netherlands.

Stone: What kind of state church? Did you know anything about the state church back before the church was established in-in America? Was the state church it-self very oppressive? Is this a reason why people left Holland? Do you know?

Vedders: It was-they called it the (Dutch term). Huh?

Droogsma: The Big church.

Vedders: The (Dutch term)

Stone: Can either of you spell that one?

Vedders: Well, that would be the large church.

LeDoux: Okay.

Vedders: The General church. Ain't that right?

Kok: Yeah, right. I can spell it in Dutch if you want it?

LeDoux: So the a--

Vedders: And then these a-these a churches-that's still is the group (Dutch term) in the Netherlands?

Kok: I would imagine. There-it's still the state church.

Vedders: And we have a Reformed church, and we have a Christian Reformed church. And then there's the- what was that other one there?

Droogsma: There's the Dutch Reformed church.

Kok: Yeah. That's in the United States.

Droogsma: Yeah.

Kok: Yeah, right. But then in the a-in the-in the Netherlands there's a chris-let's see. How do you say that?

Vedders: (Dutch term)

Kok: There. Okay, that's-that's just Christian Reformed translated.

Vedders: (Dutch term)

Kok: (Dutch term) which would be the Reformed church translated. Okay?

LeDoux: Now this is – we're talking about the Netherland Churches now? Churches that were over there before?

Vedders: That's right.

Kok: Yeah.

LeDoux: Okay.

Stone: Did they come over to – the churches and their doctrines and everything, did they come over to the states relatively unchanged?

Kok: Yeah. I would say so, at that point.

Stone: Uh – could you explain or either of you explain the basic differences between Christian Reformed and Reformed Churches?

Kok: Okay. That is what I was – I was getting to with Von Rolte coming here in a – in a – right around 1850. And then the Christian Reformed Church broke from the Reformed Church in the late 1850's, so that our denomination is about 120 years old now.

Stone: I see.

Kok: Okay. And some of the big issues were, is that certain people within that church didn't feel that catechism was being taught properly or seriously enough to the young people. That the church at that time was also singing hymns, and many people believed only psalms should be sung right out of the book of psalms, okay. and I think lodge was involved too then already. Wasn't it? That the Reformed Church believed that someone could be a member of the lodge and of the Church, and the people who broke off said, "No. One must not be a member of a lodge and a church because a lodge is in itself a religion." So you have opposing religions.

Stone: Okay, you're speaking of lodges in general? Different orders and--

Kok: Yes. The Masonic, the – you know. That sort of thing. A – not Lion's Clubs and so forth, but the lodges.

Stone: Right.

Kok: So those are the matters that brought about the – the division. The Christina Reformed Church being the more conservative in the sense of – of feeling that catechism teaching and preaching, which means preaching from the Heidelberg Catechism, was very important. Believing that you shouldn't be a member of a lodge and a member of the church. And – what was the other one I mentioned? Now, I forgot. The catechism, the lodge, and--

Stone: Psalms.

Kok: Psalms, yeah, and hymn singing was not right because the reason being that – that a hymns were taking more obliquely from the teaching of the Bible and put to verse where psalms could be taken almost word for word from the Bible and put into songs.

Stone: And they were sure that those psalms were of more true rendition--

Droogsma: Doctrinally sound.

Stone: Doctrinally sound.

Kok: Right, right. See and now of course today we sing hymns as well as psalms in our congregation, so that one is down the tubes.

Stone: Okay. You mentioned catechism and you'll probably just have to excuse my ignorance, but is there a church in America now such as a Lutheran or whatever that is closely related not necessarily a branch of that church but is that a comparable religion that is more well – known in the United States?

Kok: I think as far as Reformed Churches in the United States, the Christian Reformed Church is the largest.

Stone: Uh huh.

Kok: Now they're talking about catechisms; for instance, my kids went to a Lutheran school when we lived in California, and they studied the Lutheran catechism which we found to be very comparable in many ways. This was a Missouri Synod Lutheran which is more conservative Lutheran branch as well. But when we talk catechism, we're talking basically the Heidelberg Catechism which was written by Heirsinus and Olivianus right around 1550 in that area – 1560, and that is one of our basic forms of unit, so called, which binds us together as Reformed people. Now there is a Reform Church of America that we broke from in the late 1850's which doctrinally again is very close to us. There's an Orthodox Presbyterian Church which is really reformed in its doctrinal standards and beliefs – many of the same doctrinal things that we do. There is a – the Dutch Reformed Church in the United States which again is doctrinally close to us. So there are many churches that we – that we feel very comfortable with doctrinally, but I believe the Christian Reformed Church is the largest reformed church in the United States.

Stone: Uh huh.

Kok: I think I'm correct in that.

Stone: Okay. You mentioned your catechisms were written in the 1500s.

Kok: Uh huh.

Stone: Now was there a basic religion that they drew some of these ideas from?

Kok: Well, this came out of, of course, the Protestant Reformation--

Stone: I see.

Kok: --which happened under Martin Luther in 1517-18, right around in there. Now Luther and Philip Melanchthon who was more of a representative of Calvin, sat down at one point and said, “Can we live together?” and I think they had something like 15 points of doctrine to discuss and on 14.5 of the points they agreed. The half point was the Lord’s Supper, basically. The Lutheran did not want to break from the Roman Catholic tradition as cleanly said, the Roman Catholic tradition, that the bread and the wine actually become the body and the blood of Christ upon partaking.

Stone: They’re not merely symbols. They actually become--

Kok: Right. Right. Okay. Now the Lutheran says a bit differently--

Stone: Okay.

Kok: Alright?

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Kok: Okay. The Lutheran says that-that Jesus, although not visibly seen, is never the less present at the Lord’s Supper above and around and under the elements-the bread and wine, and--

Stone: Pastor, you were mentioning that the Lutherans’ idea of communion was that Christ was above and under and all around the elements?

Kok: Right, and a-therefore Jesus is not simply bodily present in heaven through the insentient. Okay. We say Jesus has ascended once and for all. He is bodily present in heaven. He’s with his church by his Holy Spirit, and it’s the Holy Spirit that is active in the disseminating of the Lord’s

Supper-of the bread and the wine. And it's the Holy Spirit that speaks to the hearts of the believers at that time. So that the bread and the wine now do not have any magical qualities about them, but they are signs and seals-are the words we use-of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for believers. Okay? And over that difference, that half a point, Melancthon and Luther could not agree, and the Reformed Church was begun out of that. John Calvin really being the spokesman of the Reformed heritage. And he has written, of course, the Institutes which are just a tremendous doctrinal work and many other whole set of commentaries that I have here on my shelf are Calvin's commentaries. And he is our spiritual father as far as reform-being reformed people are concerned.

Stone: What is your doctrine on the-the intercession of the pastor between the congregation and God? Now the Catholic Church sees the priest as the – the intercessor between. Now, what is your doctrine concerning that? Is every person responsible to God directly?

Kok: Yes, very much so. The-the pastor is a trained studier of the Bible who brings God's message on Sunday, but as a Christian, he has no more standing before the Lord than any member of the congregation. He's a prophet in a very particular way in that he takes God's word, and he brings the message to the people which would include a teaching ministry, a counselling ministry, visiting ministry. You know as a full-time employee of the church, but as a Christian, no. His standing is not-not on any higher level than my Christian within the congregation. And there again, I think you've got to understand where we're at. Okay? You've got that progression from Catholic to Lutheran to Reformed.

Stone: Uh huh.

Kok: Because the Lutheran again, the pastor is-is a bit on a higher level than the congregation.
Do you want an instance?

LeDoux: Sure.

Kok: Do you got that much time?

LeDoux: Sure.

Kok: Okay. Well, I was visiting with a Lutheran pastor yesterday, and he mentioned the fact that members of his congregation may be members of a lodge, but the pastors may not. See now a Reformed church would never ever make that kind of duo distinction. You see because the pastor and the people are all priests, okay. Through-by being believers, they are all priests.

Stone: Uh huh.

Kok: And they all intercede for each other. They all can pray on behalf of the other person. They go directly to Jesus asking for forgiveness of sins, not through anyone else. Okay. They stand there.

Stone: Uh huh.

Kok: The Lutheran again between the Catholic and the Reformed. You have the same thing with the finery, the vestures, the symbols within the worship sanctuary itself. Whereas the Roman Catholic Church is heavily symbolic with the crosses and the saints and the holy water and the garments and so forth and so on. The Lutherans again back off that, but not as far as we do because they have the alters and the robes and-and the vestures and so forth. We are much more simple in our worship order in the sense that I wear a suit with a tie. And we don't have crosses with Jesus hanging on it shown in the church. There are no idols. There are no symbols to

worship, and again it comes down to the priesthood believers, each believer has a relationship with God.

Stone: Uh huh.

Kok: And that's, you know, he's saved through the blood of Jesus Christ, and there's nothing in-between. You know that's what we-that's what Calvin always tried to avoid, anything between the believer and his God.

Stone: I see.

Kok: So that's –that's where we stand in that-in that line.

Stone: I have one more question about the-the Northern classis or about classis in general. Now is-are each-is each church independent of the classis in as much as the classics might make a-a sort of declaration or a-a making some sort of doctrinal suggestion to the churches? Is each church quite independent in its own beliefs?

Vedders: We have one general rule, and it would take too long to go through something like that.

Stone: Uh huh.

Vedders: But Milaca, if they have a church, and Pierz, and Princeton, and St. Cloud would be agreed. They are agreed on certain form and rules of church life and-and belief, and our statements of faith are based on the Belgic confession, Heidelberg catechism, and the canons of Dort, right?

Kok: Right.

Stone: So the doctrines remained quite unchanged?

Vedders: That's the same from-from Delaware to Washington.

Stone: I see.

Vedders: If it ain't, there's something wrong.

Kok: Okay. Well, there's three bodies just to-just to extrapolate from what John said. There's three bodies within the Christian Reformed Church. The first is the local consistory. Okay? Our consistory is composed of 20 men, 12 elders, 7 deacons, and myself who are called to conduct the business and the discipline and the care for this congregation. Each of those men, except myself, serve three year terms, and then someone is voted in to take their place. Now the ultimate authority lies with that consistory, within this church and also within the denomination. The next level is the area of the classis. And the classis meet only on the authority of the consistories, okay, so that the various consistories not only send delegates, but they also send the business which the classis are to handle. We, as a consistory, for instance, can overture classis to change some classical rule.

Stone: Uh huh.

Kok: Now classis can accept that or reject that. But classis meets only on the authority of the local consistory. The third level is the synod which is a denominational wide meeting held once a year in June in Grand Rapids, Michigan at Calvin College, and this includes both United States and Canadian churches. Two elders and two ministers are sent from each classis to that synodical meeting, and synod again only derives its authority from the consistory through the classis to the synod.

Stone: I see.

Kok: So if I as an individual want to overture synod about something, I first of all go to my consistory, and I say, “I think this is a good idea for a synodical change-for a denominational change. Do you buy it?” The consistory says, “Yes. Let’s take it to classis.” Okay? Classis looks at it. They say, “Yeah, you know. Why didn’t we think of that? I think it’s a great idea.” Then it’s sent on to the synod. Now when synod speaks, then it filters down through the classis to the consistory. So that, you know, the pronouncements of synod are-are pretty basic and pretty foundational and-and ought to be obeyed, especially doctrinal fiats that are made in synod. Okay. But that they only derive their right to exist from the local consistory through the classis.

Stone: It is kind of a circular thing, actually?

Kok: In a sense, right.

Stone: Would each-okay I assume each consistory actually represents one physical church or one physical--

Kok: Each-each church has its consistory. This is the smallest unit of the church organization history.

Stone: Would you have the freedom, if you really felt the need, would you have the freedom to split, to become something different? I don’t-wouldn’t know the processes, and I certainly wouldn’t know the differences.

Kok: Are you talking about a physical split or a – or a doctrinal split?

Stone: Doctrinal split.

Kok: No! You couldn't just do that.

LeDoux: You chose to differ radically from this synod.

Stone: Just say the synod didn't buy it.

Kok: Again what you'd do is – is go to classis and say, “This is the problem. This is the doctrinal problem. Can you help us?” first of all.

Stone: Okay.

Kok: Okay.

Kok: Okay. And there are church visitors who are called by classis to become involved in those trouble situations.

Stone: So it's almost kind of like a checks and balance system. It seems.

Kok: Yes, very much so.

Vedders: It also becomes in many cases, like Reverend would mention, this becomes a discipline case. Ain't that right?

Kok: Yes. Oh, yes. The classis may say, “Hey, you know that consistory is going astray or the minister or whatever.”

Stone: Uh huh.

Kok: And so we're meant to handle him in a disciplinary fashion.

Stone: I see.

Kok: Now if he doesn't react to that very kindly and 50 percent of his congregation agrees with him, well, he can leave. You know what I mean? That would just be – but then he wouldn't be part of the Christian Reform denomination.

Stone: Uh huh.

Vedders: You can't hold them. You can't hold them, but they got to give them an account of what they're doing. Ain't that right?

Kok: Yeah.

LeDoux: Now the synod, is that – does that include the different branches of the Reformed in America?

Kok: No. That's simply the Christian Reformed Church.

LeDoux: --the Christian Reformed.

Kok: Right.

LeDoux: Okay.

Kok: We are also as a denomination the members – members of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. Now that I think is held every four years. I believe every four years in various parts of the world.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Kok: Because it includes, for instance, Reformed churches in the Netherland, South Africa--

Droogsma: Australia.

Kok: Australia. Right. Various-various places throughout the world.

Stone: Okay, you mentioned the word ecumenical. Now that-is there any other- are there any other churches involved in this-in this second synod that you're talking about or is it strictly the Dutch Reformed of their different varieties?

Kok: It would be a-some of those that I mentioned earlier -- Orthodox, Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed.

Stone: Oh, yeah.

Kok: Now they are not all necessarily Dutch at all.

Stone: Okay.

LeDoux: Yeah, that's what I was getting at. I wanted to ask in general, is the Christian Reformed mainly Dutch? Is it a Dutch church?

Vedders: It probably is, but that isn't our standpoint.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Vedders: Whether you're black or white.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Vedders: Or Indian or-or-we don't-don't (inaudible)

Droogsma: Sixty years ago this was probably true.

Stone: Right.

LeDoux: Right.

Droogsma: But the Christian Reformed Church of today is-you don't associate them-that it's Dutch. It is American.

Stone: Yeah.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Vedders: (Indiscernible)

Droogsma: Now the background is definitely from Holland.

LeDoux: Right. Right.

Vedders: That was a bad--

Droogsma: A bad image.

Vedders: A bad image, and it did float around pretty strong. You had to be a Dutchman to--

Kok: I think though two avenues, basically through missing and through intermarriage, the church is breaking down as to its Dutch-Dutchness, shall we say, even though you know, we would-we would not be telling the truth if a majority-if we didn't say a majority of the people in the Christian Reformed Church are Dutch.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Kok: But we don't gloat upon that fact. We certainly don't make it any kind of a contingency for membership or at all. You know, we seek to be, as John has been saying, a Christian Church which happens to have its origin in the Netherland.

Droogsma: There are very few younger than I am that understand any Holland anymore. Let's put it that way.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Stone: Uh huh.

LeDoux: The church today would be predominately though people from the Dutch, not totally, but they would still be largely Dutch.

Vedders: In this area sure, but there's a lot of others coming in through like Reverend said intermarriage. I don't know if that word is right to use.

Kok: Well, intermarriage in the sense of Dutch and not Dutch, Christian and non-Christian.

Stone: Speaking as all three of you are-have Dutch background, do you personally welcome anyone to become a Christian in your church?

Vedders: Oh absolutely!

Kok: Oh absolutely!

Vedders: Absolutely!

Kok: No problem there.

Vedders: And there-there was a little feeling there in our great-grandfathers probably, but--

Stone: That they wanted to keep it-keep it Dutch?

Vedders: Yeah, my dad even, and he was dead a long time.

Kok: You see, many of the Christian Reformed Churches went through a real turmoil in just changing over from the Dutch to the English in this county for the worship services.

Stone: Sure.

Vedders: And they were deathly afraid of what had been happening.

Kok: Right.

LeDoux: What-what do you mean by that now?

Vedders: That's why a split come into the church because of different views like Reverend explained. Right?

LeDoux: Oh, I see.

Kok: Yes, Right.

Droogsma: We weren't the only ones. The German Lutherans-they didn't want to lose their German, and the Swedish didn't want to lose their Swedish. And we had old Dutchmen that-Dutchmen that was the only thing that was, but this (indiscernible)

Kok: But they also saw-they saw the English language as-as-as a step into worldliness, too.

Droogsma: Yeah.

Kok: You know, it was a very real concern for them. If our kids start talking English, then they're going to go to the dance halls and to the bars and to the roller skating parlors and--

Stone: They were kind of worried about the melting pot?

Kok: Yes. Right. And that happens to every nationality that comes here.

LeDoux: And the language kind of attaches them more closely to the church than they felt.

Kok: Right.

Vedders: You can go to a Lutheran church in Milaca and you'll find pretty much the same background there that you did amongst the Holland church only the--

Kok: Swedish and Norwegian.

Vedders: Sure.

Kok: The two different churches.

Stone: Maybe that's the--unless you have any more questions, maybe that's a good jumping off point to get back into the --the early history of the church and what you two gentlemen would remember.

LeDoux: I'd like to hold off. I do have a couple more questions, so we don't have to come back to it. When was the changeover made to English services, roughly would you say? What decade?

Vedders: It was gradually. It took--

LeDoux: Twenties, thirties, what would you say?

Kok: Are you talking about Pease or the denomination?

LeDoux: Well, both I guess. I'd like to know.

Kok: Okay.

Droogsma: Reverend DeHaan.

Vedders: Reverend DeHaan-he finally come down the basement after service, and he says, “as far as Dutch is concerned, I’m done.” That’s just--

Kok: And that’s ’43 to ’49.

Vedders: That’s when the change come. Shortly after he was here.

Droogsma: Yeah, he preached one sermon a month toward last.

Kok: In Dutch?

Droogsma: Yeah.

Kok: Okay, but when he came, was it all Dutch or was it half and half or something?

Droogsma: No, no, no. About two or three ser -- I don’t know. Just a few of them anymore. I know my dad told him the last time when he preached, he says, “Reverend,” he says, “it wasn’t a sermon and it wasn’t Holland either.”

Kok: I think denominationally in the early 30’s the synod made a pronouncement that English may be preached.

LeDoux: Okay. That’s--

Kok: That sounds pretty accurate here that it began to happen at that time, and it wasn’t until the mid 40s--

Vedders: It would’ve been impossible for us in a few years to get a preacher who could preach Dutch because naturally the younger students coming into Calvin, they ain’t gonna know.

Kok: No, you’d have a terrible time finding one. I’ll tell you that.

LeDoux: So, the synod then was in the early 30s that they switched over, and it was almost 15 years later before Pease did that? Entirely, entirely--

Kok: Well, I think they began to-but entirely in the mid-40s.

LeDoux: And there was quite a bit of dissatisfaction, you think, among some of the older people that was being switch here?

Vedders: Not too bad.

Stone: It wasn't bad.

Vedders: It wasn't too bad. It went very--

Droogsma: It went very smooth.

Vedders: There were a few that simply didn't understand the English, but there was never any quarrels or anything that I ever -- do you Sam?

Kok: I think most churches went gradually. You know, in the whole denomination. I don't think any said, "Next Sunday, we're all English."

LeDoux: Oh no, no. I didn't mean to imply that.

Kok: No, it was-it was a breakdown.

Vedders: It depends on the pastor you have too. If he has an act of leadership and DeHaan did, but he finally says, "I can (inaudible). I'm done fellas."

Kok: No more Dutch.

Stone: It sounds like the church as well as the entire synod. Kind of went the way the Swedish churches want that we've talked to. That it was very gradual. It was a very once a month thing for several years, and then finally it was dropped off. Now would you say one of the bigger influences to change from Dutch to English was the English education the children were getting in schools or-no wait now this-this town had a special situation, didn't it with the-a school that was supported by the church?

Droogsma: We had our one Christian school.

Stone: That's right. Okay, now was Dutch ever taught there?

Droogsma: Ah, on the--

Vedders: On the sideline.

Stone: I see. It wasn't official?

Droogsma: No.

Vedders: It was a half a day that you could take Dutch, but it wasn't this type of a thing that we excluded kids that didn't know English.

Stone: I see.

Kok: When did the school begin?

Vedders: In '14 --'14.

Droogsma: 1914.

Stone: '14. So both of you gentlemen went to that school?

Vedders: I went one year.

Stone: One year.

Droogsma: I started when the school started and graduated from it.

Stone: Oh, I see.

Vedders: I didn't graduate from it. They didn't have the means to give us a diploma. The public school teacher--

Stone: You would have been 15 at the time then that it got started?

Vedders: Right, right.

Stone: I see. Okay.

Vedders: No, I was 14.

Stone: Oh, okay.

Vedders: And I—but my state exams come in '50.

Stone: Oh, okay.

LeDoux: I noticed one item we looked up and found on the Pease school. You had a—you burned the old building at a ceremonial burning or something like that? Do you recall that?

Stone: It was televised and everything.

Droogsma: Yeah. It was on WCCO, I think.

Stone: What—what year was that? I didn't catch the year.

Droogsma: Um.

Stone: You (indiscernible)

Vedders: You look up a lot of things that are with the wrong thing.

Kok: Yeah, right. That's always true.

Vedders: Now if we'd been cued in a little bit on this, why--

Kok: It's like taking a test only you studied the wrong things.

Stone: Well, it must have been in the 50s or 60s right, because it—to be televised—it would have to be during that time.

Kok: Oh, wasn't-wasn't Pastor Slater here at that time?

Vedders: I doubt it.

Kok: Or was it before that?

Droogsma: Before that.

Kok: Before that, okay.

Stone: Now where did that stand in relation to the church? Was it close by?

Droogsma: Separate society entirely. It's right down a few blocks.

Kok: Right down the street.

Stone: Oh, I see.

Kok: You should take a look. It's really something now.

Droogsma: It's a separate society.

LeDoux: Now, we went by there-the school there. Yeah.

Vedders: And there's a Sam's folks.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Kok: We've got about ten classrooms and a nice new gymnasium, and it's very nice, nice stuff-educationally and physically.

Stone: Oh, great.

LeDoux: Has the church remained fairly constant in size, would you think or has it grown at any particular time or what would you say about that?

Droogsma: We are larger right now than we have ever been, but for many years we've hung right around 200 families. But right now, I imagine we're 210 or 211 probably, somewhere.

Stone: Did either of you notice the-we'd been talking before, maybe the Pastor had mentioned—that the churches—their Dutch Reformed or, excuse me, Reformed Churches in Minneapolis because of the kids moving away and going—going to school and finding jobs. Now was there any point or several points in the history of the church where it seemed like the congregation was dwindling because of the kids removing away?

Vedders: We never had a decline, but there was a gradual flow because of the labor situations and work and so on.

Stone: I see.

Droogsma: All four churches in Minneapolis are practically, the first group are from Pease, and also we've started one in St. Cloud.

LeDoux: Uh huh. Are there any special Dutch services or customs that are still practiced or observed here? Or have been observed through the years that are--

Droogsma: Well, there's a few of our members have wooden shoes for stuff on the shelves.

Kok: Decorative or--

Droogsma: I think there should be a pair up there too!

Stone: Well, something comparable to -- like the Swedish Christmas Julotta?

Droogsma: No.

Stone: Nothing like that?

Kok: No.

LeDoux: Nothing carried over from Holland that was--

Droogsma: It's too cold here for the tulip festival.

Kok: No, really except-except the windmill, I guess, sitting across from the school there. It's just a—kind of a landmark or whatever, but as far as special services or customs, no. I guess our big deal is the Fourth of July, but that's not tied into our Dutchness. That's a big-big celebration--

Stone: So there really -- so there really aren't any socials or anything that would involve old, Dutch food, or you know, bringing in old recipes or--

Kok: Some is still made but not in any kind of a formal way, no.

Stone: Uh huh.

Kok: We have ham dinners and soup suppers and... every church does.

Stone: Just as an aside. We'll get back to the church right away, but when you mentioned the windmill, were there any farmers around or any people—anybody at all that set up any functional windmills that were used to--

Droogsma: Oh, yes. There was lots of windmills here on the farms to pump water, lots of them, to form electricity.

Vedders: There's one northeast of here that generates his power.

Stone: He still uses it?

Vedders: He was last night.

LeDoux: What would you say would be the predominant occupation around here? Would it be all farm related, farming?

Droogsma: Thirty-five percent of our families are farmers.

Kok: Okay, but then how many retired farmers?

Droogsma: Thirteen percent are senior citizens.

Stone: Is there a large percentage that—that's employed by the machinery company in town?

Kok: No.

Stone: That is not a really large--

Droogsma: Oh, no. We have a produce here as some help, and the hardware store, Ace Machinery, and there's quite a few commute to Minneapolis, Coon Rapids--

Kok: Anoka.

Droogsma: Anoka.

Kok: A number to Anoka.

LeDoux: Do you get a lot of work in Milaca then too?

Droogsma: From Milaca

Vedders: Princeton.

Kok: Princeton and Milaca. The town itself, I would suppose employs 25 people or so, families. But then you got and you know, two garages, Bob Hastings Used Cars, and the store you can see in town. I suppose there's 20 to 25 families employed right in Pease here.

Stone: Uh huh.

Kok: But between farmers and retired farmers, it's—it's close to 50 percent.

LeDoux: Now with several communities we've gone to, it's been the case where the common complexion of the town has changed over the years in that during the '50s and the '60s, new families moved in who would be like a bedroom community; they would live there, but they would work in the city. And their affiliation with the town was kind of marginal. Now, what would the situation be here, compared to that? Do people that-that do live here, do they just live here or do they also go to church here and participate with the local people, and that?

Vedders: We have, what, a couple of families--

Kok: There's three or four families in town that do not attend our church.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Kok: The others do attend our church, and the ones who-who do work in the cities or Anoka are very much a part of the community, both of the church and the community as a whole. They just don't want to live in the Cities.

LeDoux: Yeah.

Vedders: Then-then there's a few, you know. I have-my nearest neighbor and when they moved in I asked him if they had a church affiliation. He says, "We're devout Catholic." Well, we don't believe in going and bothering them people and try to get them to come to church. To our church to battle it over. It would be a long time.

Stone: Uh huh. Sure.

LeDoux: Did you have-you had a question earlier on the early history of the church? Did you want to go back to that now?

Stone: I had-I just wanted to ask you, sir, if you remember-now this is more related to the school, but that is tied into the church-do you remember the-the first instructor there that, I think taught the first one or two years, a Mr. Lunkey?

Droogsma: Lankey.

Stone: Lankey?

Droogsma: Herman Lankey.

Stone: Could you tell us just a little bit about him? Do you recall much about him?

Vedders: He was a real--

Droogsma: Stern.

Vedders: --stern

Droogsma: Strict.

Vedders: --well posted man.

Droogsma: Yeah.

Stone: Well posted?

Vedders: Educated.

Stone: Oh, I see.

Vedders: Yeah.

Stone: Okay

Vedders: But he was real-real stern, and he believed in using a paddle.

Stone: I see. It seemed that you-you both immediately remembered him as stern at the same time as strong?

Droogsma: Oh, yes.

Vedders: Sure, but he had eight grades.

Stone: Yeah.

Kok: But like elsewhere, I'm sure here too, that a school teacher demanded that kind of respect too at the same time. You don't talk back, you know.

Stone: Or things would just be out of control.

Kok: Oh, yeah. But just the aura of a school teacher in those days.

Stone: Uh huh.

Kok: You know-discipline.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Vedders: It was that way in our public schools.

Kok: Sure, sure. Everywhere.

LeDoux: Do you gentlemen recall some of the early pastors of this church? I was wondering if you'd tell a little bit about what you remember of some of the earliest ones you recall up here.

Now, Pastor Meyers, would you remember him now?

Droogsma: You bet your money.

LeDoux: He was from Dakota. Wasn't he?

Droogsma: Yeah, and he was my folks' pastor in New Holland, South Dakota.

Stone: Huh? Did they move at all with him?

Droogsma: Huh?

Stone: Was--

Vedders: No, no. Reverend Meyer went to a congregation in Cincinnati, Ohio and went to Baldwin, Wisconsin. Where was he when we called him? Do you know?

Droogsma: I don't know.

Vedders: I wouldn't know.

Droogsma: In the yearbook.

Vedders: Yup -- no.

Droogsma: Well, Reverend Meyer baptized me. And when our oldest daughter was baptized-he got done baptizing her, and he says, "I baptized you, too, Sam."

Stone: During the service?

Droogsma: Yeah. We were vacant at the time. He was retired here. He retired in Pease.

Stone: Uh huh.

Droogsma: And when we were vacant and couldn't get a minister that Sunday, then he would fill in; and this just happened to be when Lorraine was baptized.

Kok: Oh, I see.

Droogsma: And--

Kok: Now, was he the one that-that made all of his calls on foot?

Vedders: Right.

Kok: Okay, why don't you-he'd get out for a whole day, right?

Vedders: He'd go out for a whole day, and he'd have it figured out. He'd visit his clients. Can I call them that?

Kok: Whatever you want.

Vedders: Down the road. And he figured in being some place for dinner, and he'd let them know about it.

Stone: Um.

Vedders: And he'd come back another road and take them all back into Pease.

Kok: But he would circle like five miles--

Vedders: Real, real brief. Fifteen minutes?

Droogsma: Yep.

Vedders: Real brief.

Droogsma: He never used two words where one could handle it.

Vedders: But he touched the spiritual.

LeDoux: Oh, okay. From what I've read-I've just read a notation of it-of him somewhere, he seemed to be quite an organizer-quite a popular minister here.

Droogsma: He was loved here.

LeDoux: Did the church grow quite a bit?

Droogsma: Oh, sure.

Vedders: Oh, sure. He was a-maybe a peculiar man, but he was really a man of God.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Vedders: And he used it in every walk of life.

Droogsma: (Indiscernible)

Vedders: Yeah and he could stand it too.

Droogsma: You bet. Real nice. Later on the ministers got-had a cow. We had a little barn over here and a horse and a buggy.

Kok: Reverend Moes during the Depression he took a voluntary cut in pay and lived off this cow in the backyard. So there were tough times too.

LeDoux: Did the church stay fairly stable during the Depression?

Vedders: Oh, yeah.

Droogsma: You bet you.

Vedders: It was probably closer to God than it is--

Kok: --possibly. Hardship does that.

Stone: Uh huh. I wonder if we might go back to you're a- your childhood and if you can recall any-any of the socials. Were there many socials where the congregation would get together on a weeknight at the church--

Vedders: Not like today. Our means of transportation-I walked to catechism always. That was three miles, and I was five years old.

Droogsma: I walked to school two and a half miles down a railroad track for all the years. Sometimes-why later on when I got a saddle-- each farmer that came to church with his team and buggy. Why he'd put the horses in the barn?

Stone: Uh huh. Was that-were buggies probably the main way that families got to church or did they mostly walk?

Vedders: No.

Droogsma: Buggies.

Vedders: Mostly buggies, wagons. I had my own wagon. Sleds in the winter, bobsleds.

LeDoux: When did the automobile first come in this area, do you recall?

Droogsma: Straitening and Sicataboua(?), wasn't it?

Vedders: Yep. About 1950.

Droogsma: I suppose.

Vedders: There were only two of them for a while.

Stone: But were they both Fords?

Droogsma: Overland and--

Vedders: Flanders-remember that first one we had? It was a Flanders.

Droogsma: Yeah. It was a Flanders.

Vedders: And the spreading of the (Inaudible).

LeDoux: Did many of the-did the ministers then start-did they have a car and start using that to run their errands or their house calls?

Vedders: What?

Droogsma: Yeah, It went back to Vande Lune, and he had an Overland.

Vedders: And who before him?

Kok: Haan, G.J. Hann.

Droogsma: Haan had one. Meyer never did. He walked everywhere.

Kok: G. J. Haan was the first one then? 1918.

Vedders: I don't recall G. J. Haan.

Droogsma: Yeah. I'm sure he had a car.

LeDoux: Just going back to the history of the town, I understand that Pease was not exactly the original name of the town called Soule's Siding, is that correct?

Stone: Soule's Siding. Do you recall?

LeDoux: We were going back through some old histories. Originally they said the settlement was named Soule's Siding.

Vedders: I think that's right.

Droogsma: Yeah. They intended to change it to Peace, “C-E” instead of “S-E”.

Stone: But somebody couldn’t spell.

Droogsma: But somebody misspelled it.

Stone: Okay. Now, I’m not familiar with the meaning of the word “siding” in the town. Now, I understand Longsiding is down south of here.

Vedders: Because it was alongside the tracks. Lumber and wood and later there were five or six good warehouses, in this town.

Stone: Uh huh.

Vedders: And the train ran through twice every day.

Stone: So it was called--

Vedders: Well it was alongside.

Stone: “Siding” because it was beside the tracks? I see.

Droogsma: Same thing. You got your side tracks today in the towns. They were “long” because-- and then they were “siding”, so they called it Longsiding.

Stone: Okay, I see.

LeDoux: So except for spelling errors, it would have been Peace then?

Droogsma: Yep.

Vedders: Yep.

Droogsma: Soule's Siding was named after Benjamin Soule.

Stone: Now, the changing of then name to Peace, to Pease, now were the city fathers who named the town Pease, were-were they at all pacifists in their belief to-I mean to call a town Pease?

Vedders: It would be pretty hard for us to get into that. For instance, the lady that took care of the mail lived back here about half a mile out in the woods. And she carried this mail pack, that was the start of it I think from the store in Pease and met the train every morning and every evening when the train came in. Ain't that right, Sam?

Droogsma: Yeah.

Vedders: And she had a half mile hike winter and summer, back and forth, doing that. I believe she (inaudible).

Kok: Do you have the date on the name change from you guys? It was before your time, huh, John?

Droogsma: I don't think there was ever anything official about it.

LeDoux: We have it. We have a book that was written of the county, and it had a kind of a brief sketch of the town and a little bit about the church. I don't recall the date. We have it out in the car there.

Kok: Well, I'm just trying, you know, I'm just thinking that if there was a community of Christian people here that Peace would come out of the fact that in Jesus there's peace.

Stone: Uh huh.

Kok: More than a pacifist understanding of what you're talking about.

Stone: Uh huh.

Kok: This church is certainly contributed, and I would take that to be from generation to generation to the armed services in this country and that sort of thing.

Stone: Uh huh.

Kok: I just doubt if it would be a pacifist type of thing. I don't think it would be more than peace in their heart.

Stone: Okay.

Kok: That'll do.

LeDoux: So this original church structure was built in 1895?

Vedders: Well, I'll just read this over.

LeDoux: About 1895, would you say or '96?

Vedders: No. Is that just the frame?

Droogsma: That was just the frame of the building.

Vedders: The frame-the frame of the building.

LeDoux: Now, the original, what was the original building?

Vedders: Wood.

LeDoux: And that would have been built in 18-what?

Vedders: We've got a picture of it somewhere.

Droogsma: Yeah, this picture of it somewhere.

Kok: Well, the church was organized in '95.

Droogsma: Yeah.

Kok: Correct? So it'd have to be somewhere in that area.

LeDoux: So that-that was the frame of the church?

Kok: Then half-then approximately half of this church was built and then the other half was put across the front, right?

Droogsma: Uh huh.

Stone: Is there-is there a dated cornerstone on the original part of the church here?

Vedders: On this one. 1907.

Stone: 1907. Okay.

LeDoux: So the frame church started in about the middle 1890's or so and then went to about 1907? Approximately.

Kok: Yeah.

LeDoux: Okay.

Droogsma: Talked about the school house that was burned down that would be burned up. That was -- this is the first piece.

Stone: Uh huh.

Droogsma: Then we built all around Bill Cleveland's-around it, then we destroyed the whole thing and built this new.

Stone: Um. I see.

Vedders: Here's the first part of the brick building.

Stone: Oh, yeah.

Vedders: 1907. And the parsonage is that small building right there.

Stone: Oh. Okay. Um, did they-did the members of the church meet in homes before the frame building was put up?

Vedders: Well, I think that there was actually some services in the logging camps, here.

LeDoux: Oh.

Stone: Um.

Droogsma: This house is still standing-the second one from the corner.

Stone: Really?

Kok: Just behind that town house.

Droogsma: Yeah. The second.

LeDoux: Do you think in the logging camps, they had kind of a travelling minister that went through there or--

Vedders: No, I--

LeDoux: Did the people just celebrate their own?

Vedders: I think that these camps were pretty well done, but they were shacks in the meantime.

LeDoux: Oh, Okay, I see.

Kok: Who conducted the services then? The old man.

Vedders: You heard of the old -- I'm sorry I could have taken other books along.

Kok: A circuit rider or something (inaudible)

Droogsma: Oh -- Bodes--

Vedders: The Bodes.

Droogsma: --came here. He married my folks here. Came from Iowa.

Kok: But he wasn't the pastor as such?

Droogsma: No, no.

Vedders: No. But he was a great missionary.

LeDoux: I see.

Droogsma: Yeah, yeah, missionary.

Vedders: And he was also interested in--

Droogsma: Mortgage--

Vedders: --land-a lot of land around here. He picked up land. Then finally, his sons even had land out here.

Droogsma: Uh huh.

Stone: Huh.

Vedders: There's land up north pretty near all belong to Reverend Bode.

Kok: Is that right? I don't remember that.

Vedders: Yeah. I think he had some mortgages in his pocket.

Kok: Where he was preaching, huh?

Vedders: No. Don't spread that around.

LeDoux: So this was a German missionary of what-from what faith was it?

Vedders: Christian Reformed.

Droogsma: Christian Reformed, yeah.

LeDoux: Christian Reformed. And he went through the area, and he also owned a lot of land here?

Droogsma: Well--

LeDoux: In this area.

Droogsma: --a lot--

Stone: He owned some of it.

Vedders: He owned some.

Stone: --some.

LeDoux: Okay.

Vedders: We don't want nothing to get-get into -- he was a real Christian.

LeDoux: Yeah. No, I understand that. Did he own the land that this church was eventually built on or how did the church get this land here? Do you know?

Vedders: Quite a bit--first they were going to build here on the Milaca Road. In fact, it did start, didn't it? Didn't he tear down--your dad got after him--

Droogsma: I believe it, but--

Vedders: --and then the club got together and put up the basic structure, right about the same place.

LeDoux: It was originally a little bit out of town, and they moved it more into this area?

Vedders: They didn't move it.

LeDoux: Well, they decided on a location.

Stone: Okay, you said the Milaca Road. Is that currently 169?

Droogsma: Well, the West Princeton Road.

Stone: Oh, I see.

Droogsma: Three-fourths of a miles.

Kok: County 5.

Stone: Would that--now I understand that the foundation had already been laid for that church?

Vedders: I doubt that they put foundations in those buildings.

Stone: Oh really, because in that-that history that we mentioned they said that the foundation had been laid, and the frame had already been put up.

Vedders: Foundation as far as principle is concerned, probably.

Stone: I see. Okay.

LeDoux: Now do you-framed church-that torn down or did that burn down?

Vedders: I think it was used in rebuilding the one that was put up here.

LeDoux: Okay.

Stone: Was this all local stone that built this church, the foundation?

Droogsma: Sandstone.

Vedders: Sandstone.

Stone: Sandstone, I see.

Vedders: The brick came from the little place in Brickton which is off of that.

Stone: The little place what?

Vedders: Brickton.

LeDoux: Brickton, uh huh.

Droogsma: Right alongside--

LeDoux: Now, was the church-what was the exact original name of the church? Was it the same as now?

Vedders: Do you want that in Dutch?

LeDoux: Well, in English, I mean what was the full name? Was it changed over the years a couple of times? Some of the churches we've gone to, you know, there's been a certain name change through the years and it's kind of interesting to note those.

Stone: Uh huh. Like the Swedish Baptists' eventually dropped-some of them would drop the Swedish aspect of it.

LeDoux: Part of it.

Kok: Uh huh. Uh huh.

Stone: And so it would retain the Swedish--

LeDoux: I was wondering if that happened-it was called the Dutch Christian Reformed or?

Droogsma: The Holland Christian Reformed Church of Pease.

Stone: Oh, yeah.

LeDoux: Oh.

Droogsma: The newly formed congregation was incorporated under the name of the Holland Christian Reformed Church of Pease, Minnesota.

LeDoux: I see. Okay. The Holland Christian Reformed-now is there any record of that-that change over the years then or did that stay until recent times?

Vedders: No. That's quite a few years ago. That had to go legally, of course, we never had a paper pasted on the board.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Droogsma: What do you call it? Incorporating, would you?

Vedders: Well, it-it was sort of in cold water if you wanted to borrow money and so on.

LeDoux: So the church was-was changed-the name of the church was changed when then about would you say? Now today, it's called the Christian Reformed Church of Pease. Okay, and that was, to your knowledge, the only two names that it ever had?

Vedders: That I remember.

LeDoux: Okay, I wanted to ask you, have there been women's groups, Ladies Aides or that sort of thing active in church through the years? What sort of activities did they pursue through the years?

Vedders: First is that they study the word of God, and then they make garments and clothing and stuff and send it-have sales-send it to-by themselves. Lots of it is sent to-blankets and nightgowns and stuff to their missions. What else?

Kok: Well, the Mission Society, which is a ladies group, has supported the "Back to God" hour radio ministry in St. Cloud for-how many years, Sam?

Droogsma: The oldest one in the denomination.

Kok: Oh, okay.

Droogsma: We have supported that program longer than any other program in the denomination.

Kok: But that's got to be what-30 years, something like that.

Droogsma: Oh, it's over that.

Kok: More than that.

Stone: What station is that on?

Kok: Is that still on KCLD?

Droogsma: No. What was the old call?

Stone: KFAM?

Droogsma: Yeah.

Stone: Yeah. That's the original call numbers.

Vedders: It's also broadcast from the cities.

Kok: Yeah.

LeDoux: Is the-are the women's groups about as old as the church then, do you figure.

Vedders: (Indiscernible).

Droogsma: Sure. It started when the church did.

Vedders: Societies as your church grew, why they'd blossom.

LeDoux: Right.

Kok: You have numbers of the Ladies Aides who have been members of it for more than fifty years. Some ladies who are in their 70s and 80s.

Stone: Charter members.

Kok: Yes.

Stone: We mentioned the missions. Does your church sponsor any one specific missionary family?

Kok: We have a-a small church in St. Cloud which is a daughter church of this church.

Stone: I see.

Kok: And the Reverend Paul Kortenhoven is a pastor there at present.

Stone: When was that formed?

Kok: '69, somewhere in there.

Stone: Did they come to you? Did the people in that area ask you for your help?

Kok: I think it happened through responses from the fact about our radio ministry. And then follow-up was done, and they said, "Hey, there's some interest here. Let's do some canvassing." And they felt the interest was sufficient to begin a church there. Plus the fact that there were like five Christian Reformed families in St. Cloud who were going to be part of it in that way.

Stone: Now getting back to the class that you're in the Northern class, are any of the other churches in your class daughter churches of this church?

Kok: Not in the formal sense in which St. Cloud is, right? But again like the Cities churches are largely responsible for Pease people.

Stone: I see.

Kok: But they were not-Pease did not do the organizational work.

LeDoux: Do you have any other questions Mark?

Stone: Um. No.

LeDoux: I just had one last question. We talked to several-several churches throughout 14 countries, and most of them, of course, were in totally rural settings. Some were in small towns. And I'm wondering-now have-if you Pastor -- I forget, have you pastored for churches in larger cities, now?

Kok: Palo Alto, California.

LeDoux: Right. That's right. You said that.

Kok: Good size city.

LeDoux: From pastoring churches in both urban and rural settings, do you feel rural churches have-oh perhaps, I don't know how to say this-a better sense of their own history, a better sense of having stable roots than for example, a larger town?

Kok: Oh, I think that's easily answered, yes.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Kok: And also, although the more mobilization that occurs and opportunity to go and do things, the rural people see the church as the center of their existence more than a city church. By that, I don't mean that city Christians are less faithful in attending church--

LeDoux: Right.

Kok: --but for social functions and for weekday activities and so forth, the church is-is really a large focus in part of the lives of most of the members of our congregation.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Stone: I see. It's the kind of glue that keeps the town stuck together?

Kok: Yeah, in a real sense. It-well, the church is, you know, it's not an addendum to the town. The church and the town are-are one in a sense.

LeDoux: Uh huh. I would think that the families of these two gentlemen, I'm not going way back, but provided that stable influence would-that would hold such a community and a church together, then.

Vedders: You have to.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Vedders: If we didn't stick together, you'd get a rumpus. Why it'd go to the four winds, ain't that right? That's it-it's only the work of Jesus Christ that can implement this thing and keep together and keep it going.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Vedders: And we've been real fortunate as a group here with pastors that were careful and would operate (indiscernible).

Droogsma: We have really never had any bad trouble in Pease.

Vedders: No. That don't mean that there weren't a little family quarrel, but in general our church is run real smooth.

LeDoux: Uh huh. Okay, is there anything that we have not brought up that you'd like to add on the tape that we haven't asked you, that you think should be on the tape?

Kok: I don't know. I think it's probably more of a community thing than than a church thing; although again, they're so closely tied together. But I just-I just marvel at what these people went through in the times of the depression. You know, peat fire just raged burning and smoldering in this town for how long. Cattle being driven up to Lake Mille Lacs to-to get them water and-and grass. And you know it's-it's kind of a-an economic thing and yet it spoke to their existence, you know, to the--

Droogsma: Nobody had anything and we're all-all alike.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Vedders: Some we don't even know, and probably take our dinners along a few slices of bread and a sack full of hay for the horses and stay over for dinner. Right?

Droogsma: Sure--

Vedders: And we'd visit around, and when church time come, why-everybody got in a pew--

Stone: Have-have all of you, now this is kind of a personal question, but have all of you felt a real sense of pride in your ministry? Have you always felt--

Vedders: Well, I hesitate to answer that because, man is by nature kind of proud.

Kok: I think pride in the right sense, though.

Stone: Oh, yeah.

Kok: Not boastful.

LeDoux: No, no.

Stone: No.

Kok: But in the sense that you're thankful of your heritage, for your heritage.

Vedders: No, I don't--

Stone: Yeah, being able to go-get through the hard times.

Vedders: I'm thankful for what my dad did, and Sam's thankful for what his dad did. And they had a lot more troubles than we ever had.

LeDoux: I think the reason that we were asking is largely because some-sometimes people nowadays that had just suddenly discovered their roots after so many years of not caring about them, I guess that's why we asked the question regarding the past history here, father and grandfather and that sort of thing. Do you know-go ahead.

Vedders: In this congregation, I don't remember that there were-really were right down and out-anybody in trouble. No. I don't think so. It's a-settled or being settled.

Stone: Uh huh. Now, the reason I had asked that was because-well, one of the churches we've gone to had at one time, I believe during World War I, tried to deny their-their heritage, the European heritage because of it's-it's closeness to the German traditions and everything. And they-in fact, some of them even changed their names from German sounding to a more Anglicized name, and this is the basic reason we asked.

Kok: I think we're, you know, I think we're-we're proud of our heritage, thankful for it and so forth, and yet in a sense we're almost going the reverse direction because we're saying while we are Dutch and we're thankful for that, and we have no problems with coming from the Netherlands ultimately, yet we are the church of Jesus Christ, and we're not a Dutch Church.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Kok: You know, that we are trying to minister to-to anybody in spiritual need.

Stone: Isn't that-that truly American thing?

Kok: Yes. Right, and I think you know, Sam said that earlier that we are American who happen to have Dutch heritage.

LeDoux: Okay. That concludes this interview.