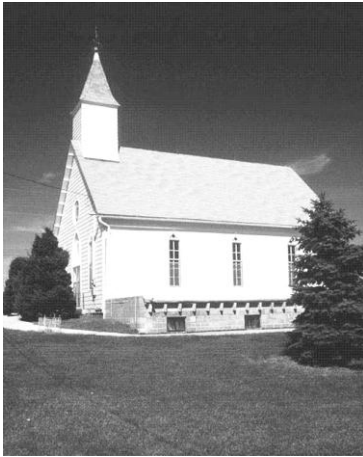


# The Prayer Meeting



by Dick Jones

In the dark places where the evil one rules  
they move toward his throne  
slowly at first, then more quickly,  
as they sense a battle is near.

The quaking ground moves only slightly at first,  
then, as thunder from far away is heard, the  
ground beneath their twisted, gnarled feet  
begins to buckle. What had been only darkness  
and silence, broken up occasionally with the  
pitiful wail of the damned, now begins to  
lighten, revealing their stooped gray silhouettes  
before a monstrous presence.

Their master growls to the shrouded ones  
kneeling before him - "How many this time?  
How many have gathered?"  
"Only a few, my master!" replied  
one of the ghoulish beings in a high-pitched  
voice a human ear could not hear.  
"Good then", the wicked one shot  
back, "We'll hold our ground, perhaps even gain  
some this night."

"Now to your posts and be ready to fight. Few  
they may be, but His power is beyond counting."  
"Tell the dark Lords they have done well - tell  
*Lord Complacence, Lord Procrastination, Lord Stubborn,*  
*Lord Rebellion, Lord Apathy, Lord Distraction, and Lord*  
*Ignorance* that they have each done well. Their  
strongholds will stand!"

The distant thunder becomes louder and the  
hideous sound of singing causes the dark  
creatures to writhe in agony. The shaking of their  
dark abode becomes violent as the prayers offered in  
the name of the Chosen One are heard.  
The dark kingdom begins to retreat and the  
wretched creatures run about in confusion and fear. Panic  
ensues, and the evil one roars at them  
like a wounded lion. "Be still!" he screams  
but now even he seems less confident.  
He roars in defiance as if to an invisible presence,

"No lame will walk nor will the despairing hope this night,  
Excellency! No chains will be broken - I  
swear it!"  
The dark creatures around him nod their approval,  
grinning a stupid, hideous grin.

Another messenger brings ill tidings for the evil  
Kingdom, "Our strongholds fall, Master, but these  
people are so few. How can this be?" The evil one  
sighs and asks, "Are there two  
or more gathered?" "Yes, but still only a handful,"  
the messenger replies. "Then *He* is there as well," and all  
gathered about the wicked one's throne  
seem to understand of whom he speaks.  
"This will pass soon, it always passes,"  
he assures them.

One dark lord speaks as if to himself,  
"What if more gather, what if my *Lord*  
*Complacence, Lord Apathy, Lord Ignorance* and  
the others fail?  
What if they are able to resist us and the  
strongholds fall? The evil one hears him and roars as  
though he has been impaled on the sharp, jagged rocks  
around his throne. "They will not fail. The people  
who are called to gather, they are a silly  
little people and easily turned aside." "But  
what of the others, the few who gather weekly?"  
"Enough!" he growls, "it is enough to last tonight!"

The thunder becomes more distant. The quaking stops.  
Their voices cannot be heard now, as even the  
dim light that had intruded disappears.  
The little gathering has disbanded now. They go to  
rest, to return another time to pray. The evil ones'  
dominion will last only so long as "the silly little people"  
fail to gather. Their thunderous voices are  
silent now and the singing no longer torments the  
shrouded ones.  
Those of the dark kingdom soon forget that one day,  
the gathering will prevail and the evil  
one's power will be broken forever.