

REVEREND PASTRYCOOK:

The little church at Gaastmeer, in the Dutch province of Friesland, is falling to pieces - but the pastor, the Rev. Bruinsma, is determined to save it. The cracks in the wall are already so bad that he needs 40,000 guilders for the job - and meanwhile the church must be closed. The last service he holds before the doors are locked is the wedding of two young parishioners.

The pastor isn't defeated. As a boy, he was a baker's apprentice - so he goes back to work, to start raising that 40,000 guilders - nearly £4,000 sterling. A Frisian delicacy is spiced gingerbread, very popular in the markets of Amsterdam; and with the help of his parishioners-workmates, the Rev. Bruinsma sets about baking a consignment of 13,000 gingerbread leaves.

Done to a turn - and in Amsterdam, they sell literally like hot cakes. Women from Gaastmeer, in traditional Frisian costumes, act as salesgirls. The customers know what it's all in aid of, so the gingerbread sells even faster. In less than no time, the pastor has 13,000 guilders, enough to start work on the restoration. So if your village church walls are cracking, the answer's simple - go and bake some gingerbread.