

NEW HORIZONS

— *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH —

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by Stephen and Lisa Oharek

JANUARY 2017

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in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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Shown here are the members of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries, who gathered for their biannual meeting on October 27-28 in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. In front of the denominational offices are (from the left) Chris Sudlow, Ron Pearce, Seth Long, T. Nathan Trice, Lendall Smith, Bob Wright, Jr., Ron de Ru, John Voss, Jr., and David Nakhla (missing from photo: Al Zarek).



HONORING THE ELDERLY



BRIAN DE JONG // It is no great secret that people live longer today than in previous generations. We all know neighbors, friends, family members, or fellow church members who are in their eighties and nineties. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the average life expectancy at birth in the year 1900

was 47.3 years. By 1950, that projection had risen to 68.2 years of age. Since that time, it has steadily increased, so that today's average life expectancy is 78.8 years (CDC, *Health, US, 2015*, p. 95).

Greater longevity has many benefits and blessings, but also some downsides. Economists have long held to a principle that they call "the law of unintended consequences." According to this idea, the actions of people and institutions can produce effects that are unanticipated or unintended.

The Challenges of Living Longer

With increased age comes a host of unanticipated challenges for the elderly, their families, and their churches. Some of those unintended consequences are medical, including chronic diseases and conditions commonly associated with aging. Other consequences involve financial issues, as the elderly cannot always pay for expensive care and sometimes outlive their retirement resources. Still other unexpected problems can involve day-to-day caregivers and the demands placed upon the adult children

of aging parents.

The society around us recognizes the changing dynamics, and addresses the challenges as best it can. Search the Internet or look at a bookstore, and you'll find information from a medical and/or psychological perspective. Interesting autobiographical accounts are available, telling about adult children caring for their aging family members.

As thoughtful Christians, we can appreciate such efforts in their proper place, but we want more. What is a biblical response to such circumstances? How does our theology play into caring for an aging parent? If the Word of God is my "only rule for faith and life," what guidance does Scripture give me? Furthermore, what role can and should the church play?

I believe we must begin to answer these important questions by considering the fifth commandment: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you" (Ex. 20:12). This commandment is not only directed to small children who ought to

obey Mommy and Daddy. God also addresses this imperative to adult children whose parents are in their later years.

The verb God chose to use was "honor," which includes obedience, but implies more than mere obedience. Honoring someone means to esteem them, to show them due respect, and to value them highly.

The practical implications of this commandment are spelled out in the Westminster Larger Catechism:

Q. 127. What is the honor that inferiors owe to their superiors?

A. The honor which inferiors owe to their superiors is, all due reverence in heart, word, and behavior; prayer and thanksgiving for them; imitation of their virtues and graces; willing obedience to their lawful commands and counsels; due submission to their corrections; fidelity to, defense, and maintenance of their persons and authority, according to their several ranks, and the nature of their places; bearing with their infirmities, and covering them in love, that so they

may be an honor to them and to their government.

Many of these exhortations have direct application to the lives of godly adult children of aging parents. Adult children are to demonstrate “all due reverence in heart, word, and behavior.” This suggests respect shown toward aging parents, even if a parent does not always conduct himself or herself respectably.

Surely it is the proper place of children to intercede faithfully for their parents. As the adult child prays, he ought to give thanks for the many kindnesses that God has shown to and through his parent.

Because children bear the likeness of their parents, they should imitate their virtues and graces. Even the worst parent has some good quality that could be imitated. Though adults should never follow their parents in sin, they can pattern their conduct after the many good aspects of their parents’ examples.

Another way that adult children honor their parents is to manifest due submission to their corrections. Children are not always right and parents are not always wrong—even late in life. Though the parent of an adult child does not wield the same authority as earlier in life, he or she can still give wise counsel and godly rebuke to erring children.

One of the most important responsibilities of an adult child is to show fidelity to, defense of, and maintenance of their parents’ persons and authority. Respecting them means standing up for them and their honor, especially when they are no longer able to do so for themselves. As aging parents become increasingly feeble, they

need their children to be loyal to them and defend them. Abuse of the elderly is increasingly common, and adult children can be a strong line of defense against unscrupulous people who would prey upon the weak. So, too, the adult child must provide maintenance for his or her parents and not declare such help “Corban” (Mark 7:9–13).

Finally, it is good to bear with the infirmities of our parents and cover them in love. An insolent son will call his parent’s faults to the attention of others and join in ridicule of the parent. But a devoted child will cover over their parents’ faults and failings.

Caring for Aging Parents

While the fifth commandment is the starting point for our thinking, it is not the only passage that informs our duty in this area of life. Another important passage is 1 Timothy 5:1–16. In discussing widows and their care, Paul argues in verse 4 that “if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.” Adult believers have a positive duty to provide for their own, and especially for those who are elderly, in their household. According to verse 8, any believer who willfully neglects this duty “has denied the faith and is

worse than an unbeliever.” It is our responsibility to assist our own aging parents in their frailty.

Continuing to search the Scriptures, we also discover numerous instructive examples, both pro and con. The account of Shem, Ham, and Japheth in Genesis 9 speaks volumes about caring for an aging parent in less than ideal circumstances. Shem and Japheth honor their drunken father Noah, while Ham actively dishonors him. Shem and Japheth are accordingly blessed for their fidelity, while Ham’s descendants live under a curse. Other scriptural examples include Joseph and Jacob, Ruth and Naomi, and our Savior and his mother Mary.

From the wealth of biblical content, we can find ample wisdom for caring for aging parents, but what are some overall scriptural guidelines for the Christian care of the elderly? The first principle is evident in Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 5—namely, that believers have a primary responsibility to care for their own parents. The burden of care for elderly parents does not rest upon the civil government, medical institutions, nursing facilities, or even the church. Primarily responsible is the family: children and grandchildren. How families fulfill that obligation may differ due to circumstances, resources, and opportunities. Yet it is properly their duty. To

abdicate in favor of a government program or a medical institution is not being faithful to God’s Word. Remember how Paul described it: such a person “has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” Even unbelievers recognize their duty to care for their own families. How much more should Christians accept and embrace this role!



Norman De Jong reading the Bible to his mother, Anna, in her nursing home

Teamwork and Helpers

Another biblical (and Presbyterian) principle is that teamwork is important in the care of an aging parent. When there are children and grandchildren available, they must make up the core of the team. Siblings can and should work together in providing care, in offering support, in making decisions, and in overseeing financial and material matters.

This ideal is not always realized, and can sometimes cause considerable friction within the family structure. Geographical distance from parents can hamper participation on the part of one or more family members. Past relational difficulties and estrangements within the family can also make teamwork difficult. Selfishness is another problem that is not uncommon, where one or more of the adult children are simply too wrapped up in their own lives to care much for Mom and Dad. And disagreements that arise over decisions made can dampen cooperation.

Good teamwork is admittedly hard to maintain over time, but placing the entire burden of care on one child's shoulders is unreasonable. Furthermore, it is unwise for any adult child to tell his or her siblings, "I'll take care of them, and I don't need your help!"

In addition to family members, the team of helpers should include medical professionals with expertise in various aspects of care. This can be particularly important if dementia becomes an issue for the elderly parent. When a parent is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia, the need for specialized care becomes nonnegotiable. Having reliable doctors as part of the team is necessary, and adult children often become the liaisons between the medical professionals and the aging parent.

Another key part of the team can be legal and financial advisers. When an elderly parent becomes unable to handle his or her financial obligations and commitments, the adult child typically takes over the checkbook. Manag-

ing assets and property, paying bills, and handling taxes can be overwhelming, and expert advice and help can relieve the burden to some extent. Moreover, professional financial accountability can prevent the abuse of parental assets that sometimes alienates family members and risks legal repercussions.

Another essential member of the team should be a pastor or an elder. The spiritual care of aging parents is not insignificant. Their eternal souls need the means of grace, especially if they cannot venture out for worship services or church activities. Pastoral care for elderly saints is important if they are hospitalized or placed in a nursing home. Pastors and elders can also be sounding boards for adult children who need someone to listen, provide support, and give advice. If an elderly parent is an unbeliever, the pastor can provide evangelistic witness within the context of pastoral visits with the elderly.

The Role of the Church

Another principle arising from Scripture is that the church has a rightful place in promoting the care of elderly parents. James reminds the church, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world" (James 1:27). The care of widows is part and parcel of pure and undefiled religion!

Paul also presses the point in 1 Timothy 5, saying that the church should assist those who are "truly widows" (v. 3)—that is, widows who have no family members to care for them. The church should counsel and instruct younger widows, and support and utilize godly older widows who are able to carry out useful ministry.

The role of the church includes providing regular pastoral care for her members, regardless of their age or situation. Visiting shut-ins is an important aspect of pastoral ministry. Time spent in a hospital room or a nursing home can greatly encourage saints whose bodies are breaking down or whose

minds are no longer as sharp as they once were.

The church's care should also be directed toward adult children within the congregation who are caring for an elderly family member. Because these adult children also have responsibilities to their own spouse and children, and also to their vocation, they can be stretched very thin and grow weary. When they spend a Sunday morning at the ER with their ailing mother instead of in the worship service, they can be worn down and discouraged. Often they feel alone—and that no one else understands the complexity of their lives.

In our congregation in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, we had a significant number of our families dealing with these very challenges. An adult Sunday school class provided an opportunity to consider the teaching of the Scriptures and practical challenges. The discussion among the members of the class was as helpful as anything that I said as the teacher. Truly, believers are "competent to counsel" one another in these challenging areas of Christian duty.

The church can also be of service as the parent approaches death. Deacons can assist the family with necessary practical decisions. Pastoral care is vital to the spiritual equilibrium of adult children who are emotionally frazzled. The funeral can be a wonderful time of honoring the parent, and the words of a pastor can bring great encouragement to the grieving. Even the days following the funeral can be important for the spiritual recovery of exhausted saints.

When the family and the church work together under the guidance of God's Word for the benefit of aging parents, God is well pleased. These two God-ordained institutions should cooperate in this weighty matter. In these ways, the love of Christ is displayed to a watching world, and our care for the elderly can affirm our Christian witness in these dark times. □

The author is the pastor of Grace OPC in Sheboygan, Wis.

THE CHALLENGE OF PARENTING YOUNG CHILDREN



STEPHEN AND LISA OHAREK // Parenting young children can be one of the more challenging and exhausting parts of life! Sure, when they're young, you don't have the more complex questions and emotions of teenage years. Certainly parents of young children are

yet to deal with the complicated dynamics of relating to their children who have grown up and have families of their own.

Yet if you talk to many parents of young children, a frequent refrain that you hear is one of being tired—and sometimes discouraged. This is understandable. But it is not inevitable. There are ways that Christians can ameliorate some of the difficulties of parenting young children.

Trusting the Lord

Much of our feeling of being overwhelmed is due to our worries and fears. We worry about our children: Are they getting an education that is good enough? Will they survive in this violent world? Will they grow up to love the Lord and his church? We also fear for ourselves: Are we doing the right things as parents? Are we doing enough? What damage might we be doing to these little ones entrusted to our care?

But in all these fears, we must remember that the only one we must fear

is God! “It is the LORD your God you shall fear” (Deut. 6:13). God is God, and we are not. Ultimately, our fears boil down to an issue of trust: are we trusting in ourselves, or are we trusting in God? To appropriate Matthew 6:27 to parenting, which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to your child's life? It is certainly true that the calling for parents is a tremendous one, worthy of us taking it very seriously. But we must not fail to take seriously the God who entrusted our children's care to our hands! Let us trust God for all the things we cannot do in parenting, and trust him for all the things we can do.

Overparenting or Underparenting

Another common source of stress in parenting is that, frankly, we might be overdoing it and wearing ourselves out in the process. Now in writing this, we should hasten to note that some parents don't need to hear what we're about to say. There are neglectful parents who need to be reminded that as stewards of God they need to be more diligent. But

if we could paint with a broad brush, our culture is in a moment that appears to favor overparenting rather than underparenting.

Parents are overwhelmed with how many books there are on parenting (information overload!). There are too many children's activities to choose from. Many parents overextend their time, money, and other resources because they feel the need to be a part of every activity or event for their children. This can lead to burn out—for the parent and the child!

So ask yourself: Whom are you serving? Whom are you trying to impress? Do not let the world around you tell you what you must be involved in. Allow yourself to be unburdened from the pressures put on parents.

It's true that depriving them of this or that extra activity might leave a flag-football sized hole in their heart. But are we slowing down enough to be selective, choosing activities wisely, and not allowing our already overscheduled lives to get even worse?

In the end, doing too much might

negate some of the good we think we are doing. It could be that doing a little less might be good for both the child and the parent.

Don't Forget to Be the Parent

Whether you do less or more, make sure that you don't forget your role as the parent. God has instituted a particular kind of relationship between parent and child (Eph. 6:1–4). That relationship should include parental authority. Paul warned fathers not to exasperate their children (verse 4), and that exhortation must be carefully heeded today.

But let us not run the opposite risk of failing to provide the guidance and discipline that is needed—and by discipline, we do not mean only correction and punishment for bad behavior. We also mean the fuller process of providing a disciplined environment with structure, guidance, and the expectation for the child to become self-controlled and respectful to others. This hard work of discipline, when children are young, will really save a tremendous amount of work and stress when they are older.

Too many parents are asking permission of their children and catering to their demands. The parent-child relationship is a power struggle where the child will (understandably) search for boundaries and test those boundaries. Parents do their children a disservice if the boundaries are too pliable, leaving children to feel less confident and more open to fears. Giving young children too many choices can lead to feelings of insecurity.

On the other hand, parents who provide loving but firm rules give their children the comfort of knowing there is structure, and structure can be very

good for a relationship! The Lord has given us structure in his commands, and we rest secure in him that he knows what is best for his children.

One practical way to implement structure in discipline is to be prepared for problems (disobedience, fights between siblings, etc.) and have a plan of action. Decide consequences ahead of time. Don't be surprised by disobedience; be ready for it. This will help you remain calm and more confident to enforce the boundaries. Think of rules ahead of time and prioritize. A child who can clearly see boundaries established and maintained by the parent is a child who will feel more secure.



The Oharek handful in 2007 (from the left): Joseph, Dolores, Drake, Janelle

Last but Not Least: A Word about the Church

Christian parents are not alone in this great endeavor. They should be rooted and active in a solid church. And their fellow church members should be supportive of them in prayer and with words and deeds of encouragement.

You can help parents by simply offering to babysit one night for free, so that a tired couple can have a night out alone. Nonparents in particular might consider volunteering to serve in the church nursery or to teach a Sunday

school class for young people. In our church one year, we sent out regular emails to parents with tips, encouragement, and humor (and there is much to laugh about with parenting!). Really, there are limitless opportunities to help out one another if we will but take a moment to consider it.

There are many older congregations that pray, sometimes for years, that the Lord would bring more young families into their midst. Well, if God is pleased to lead such young families to your church, make sure you don't miss the opportunity to serve them well, once they arrive.

Whenever a covenant child is baptized in our church, there are two key truths that we are reminded of. First, when the parents take their vows, they are not only vowing to work hard to bring their child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, but also acknowledging their need to trust in the Lord, not just in their own human efforts.

Second, at the baptism of a covenant child, our members are reminded of their obligation to love this child, to receive this child as a member of the body of Christ, and that they should commit themselves to assist the child's parents in providing Christian nurture.

These two things remind parents that they are not alone: we have a great Lord and his bride, the church. Take heart, parents! Great is your opportunity to serve the Lord and these little ones. And great is the Lord who has called you to such service! □

Stephen Oharek is the pastor of Reformation OPC in Oviedo, Fla.; Lisa Oharek is his wife. They write from personal experience.

WHEN KIDS GO ASTRAY



PATRICIA E. CLAWSON // **The birth of a child is one of God's greatest gifts to Christian parents. Moments after children are born, and often beforehand, we establish the habit of reading the Bible to them and praying for them. Images of how they will grow up as godly blessings to others captivate our dreams.**

To encourage their godliness, we have family devotions, pray with them for their needs, help them to memorize the catechism and Scripture, surround them with hugs and prayer after discipline, send them to Christian school or home school, ensure attendance at Sunday school and worship, cart them to youth group and camp, and try to live a godly life before them.

Over the years, we hope and dream and pray and worry for them. We get to know their friends and steer them in the right direction as they head off to college or to make it on their own. Many take up the banner of godliness and go on to faithfully lead their own families—a parent's greatest joy!

But sometimes our beloved children go down a different path. Sometimes our kids go astray.

What happens when our children stop going to church and hang out with fellow students or coworkers who draw them into drugs or excessive drinking? Perhaps they became pregnant out of wedlock, struggle with homosexuality or other sexual sins, marry an unbeliever, have financial or legal problems,

land in jail, or simply withdraw, melting into the sidelines of life. Sometimes we see them only when they need money or don't even know where they live.

Our well-ordered world becomes a swirling storm. We can't see or think clearly. We know the Lord's grace is sufficient, but it is so hard to let go of our dear children. When they got into trouble as kids, we sent them to their room, took away TV privileges, or gave them a time-out. But what can we do now, when they no longer live under our roof?

Are they backsliding believers who may not have counted the cost of discipleship when they made an early profession of faith, or have they never known God's redeeming grace personally? We grieve and pray. We ask others to pray. We keep the communication lines open and reassure our children, time and again, of our love for them. Perhaps on Sunday we ask—in hope—where they went to church. We blame ourselves. We blame our spouse. We look back over the years and recognize the damage our sins may have caused. When we emotionally can't handle it any longer, we let

the busyness of life and denial push our fears to the back burner.

For pastors who have wayward children, grieving includes concern about whether the father-minister should step away from his calling as one who doesn't manage his household well. Seeking the advice of fellow presbyters, the minister is usually urged to retain his post if the prodigal child no longer lives under his roof. But often the pastor and his family become isolated, reluctant to share concerns about their errant child, especially with judgmental folk, who may have unwittingly contributed to offending or alienating their child.

"Bring Them unto Me"

Charles Spurgeon's *Morning and Evening* devotions on Mark 9:19 offer the parent direction:

When (children) are grown up they may wallow in sin and foam with enmity against God; then when our hearts are breaking we should remember the great Physician's words, 'Bring them unto me.' Never must we cease to pray until they cease to

breathe. No case is hopeless while Jesus lives.

Ungodly children, when they show us our own powerlessness against the depravity of their hearts, drive us to flee to the Strong One for strength, and this is a great blessing to us.

Grieving, you read Scripture for comfort and wisdom. You pray, pleading for your child's repentance and salvation. You ask forgiveness for the impact of your sins on your child's life.

When grieving, Psalm 42 reminds us, "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God."

Slowly God assures your heart that your child's struggles are not just your fault. Eventually you reflect on what you did right by God's grace and consider less emotionally what you could have done better. In a sense, you are where God wants you to be. You depend on him.

"Prayer and our trust in the Lord's goodness as found in his Word have been the biggest source of comfort," said one parent. "It is he that is in control and we rest in him." When parents blamed themselves, a counselor's advice helped: "No parent has ever been perfect except God, and look at his children." Indeed, God tells us in Isaiah 1:2, "Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me."

We long for a magic formula to raise godly children. "We sometimes mistake a proverb from our Wisdom literature—such as 'Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it' (Prov. 22:6)—for a law-like promise that depends on our performance," said one minister. "We must remember that believers come from Christian and non-Christian families. Likewise, unbelievers come from Christian and non-Christian families. It is all God's work—not ours—in which we must rest our hope." John 1:12–13 says, "To all who did receive him ... he gave the right to become children of God, who were born,

not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

Coupled with prayer is the need to constantly surrender your child to the Lord. Without that, the parent may try to bury the unpleasant and pretend that all is fine. Rather than being content to plant the seeds of faith in our children and leave the harvest to God, we may try to grab control out of God's hands, making a mess of things. "Ultimately we give them up to the Lord and ask him to draw them back," said a parent. "Ultimately he is the only one who can."

Time is a great healer. "The older we get and the more difficulties we encounter, the stronger we become because we learn with every problem that comes, to trust in him more," adds another parent. "He has been faithful in so much; we know he will be faithful in this too."

1 Peter 1: 6–7 tells us that the lessons of faith bring joy: "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Support from the Church

How should the body of Christ support parents who are suffering? Advice and preachy sermons are not needed. "We've all preached enough to ourselves. Sometimes a listening ear and an offer to pray, if followed through, are the best medicine we can offer," one parent said. When asked for counsel, however, it may help to share what you have learned through prayer.

Ask the parents how their child is doing, which shows interest in him or her as a person. Allow the parents to share whatever they wish. "A comment, such as, 'I always pray for Sue. Is there anything specific I should include?' could show you are not just being nosy, but really are concerned," said one mother.

While parents wait, hope, and

pray, God works in their lives. "It has strengthened our faith and given us compassion for other parents whose children are not walking with the Lord right now," adds another parent.

Trusting God for Their Salvation

Jeremiah 31:16–17 reflects on how God called his errant child, Israel, back to himself. "Thus says the LORD: 'Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work, declares the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your future, declares the LORD, and your children shall come back to their own country.'"

If we sought to raise our child faithfully, and that child early on demonstrated a love for God, but later strayed from the faith, Hebrews 6:10 reminds us that our work is not in vain: "For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do."

Psalm 46:10 reminds parents, "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations." Despite what our eyes see and our ears hear, the Holy Spirit may be working a dramatic change in our wayward child. Perhaps he has undergone church discipline, but evidenced significant repentance, which led to restoration into full fellowship with his church. The child may continue to struggle in the years ahead, but by God's grace, he endeavors once again to walk with Christ. What an opportunity that provides to thank God daily for his sweet and abundant grace in our child's life—and our own.

While we wait, we must remember that our covenant children have heard the Word. They have heard our prayers for them. They have seen our example. They have seen God's work in others. Look to him to work through his Word in their lives—and be thankful! □

The author is the editorial assistant for New Horizons. This article is based entirely on information given by Orthodox Presbyterian ministers and their wives.

NOT YOUR TRADITIONAL RHM

// BILL SHISHKO



The mission field of New York City

On September 1, 2016, after serving for thirty-five years as pastor of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Franklin Square, Long Island, New York, I began my new ministerial labors as regional home missionary (RHM) of the Presbytery of Connecticut and Southern New York. The preparation for the call to this work and the call itself came after much thought, discussion with others, and prayer. Through the presbytery itself and through the generous support of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension, God made provision for most of the funding (see below) for a five-year trial period of RHM work in the presbytery that covers the largest portion of the population of the United States (with the Presbytery of Southern California coming up as a close second). The combined population of Connecticut, the five boroughs of New York City, and Long Island (Nassau and Suffolk Counties) is over 26 million people—8 percent of the population of the entire United States. And the population of this region (centered on New York City) includes people and entire communities from, literally, every nation of the world. I love to speak of “that great city, New York.” To reach New York is to reach the world.

While ministry in this area is a unique opportunity, it is also a herculean task. The sheer number of people, the varieties of cultures and the challenge of reaching them, the pervasive secularism and materialism, the multiple distractions of “Vanity Fair,” and the high cost of living (close to the highest in the nation) make all church work here seem as daunting as climbing Mount Everest. Most effective ministries in the metropolitan New York area depend, to some extent, on outside funding—and lots of it. And the OPC is simply not a financially wealthy denomination. All of these things factored into what has become an RHM job description that is hardly a traditional one for the OPC.

A Different Approach and a Broadcast Presence

After securing approval by the Presbytery of Connecticut and Southern New York at its April meeting in 2015, steps were taken to establish a nonprofit corporation called Reformation Metro New York, Inc. That 501(c)(3) organization was officially approved by the IRS and the State of New York late last year. It is governed by a board that includes two ministers and a ruling elder of the presbytery. Its purpose is to raise support for the ministry of the RHM and for works of church planting in the presbytery. This enables the presbytery to reach beyond its own congregations (in one of our smaller presbyteries) and beyond Worldwide Outreach to raise funds for this herculean task with a unique opportunity.

But how do we raise the visibility of the work of evangelism, church planting, church revitalization, and ongoing biblical reformation done by the OPC in the metropolitan New York area? How can we capitalize on our rather limited resources to both raise more funds and also serve the kingdom of God?

I began working in secular radio in northeastern Connecticut at the ripe age of fifteen! During my late high school years and during the summers of my college years, I continued to work in radio. I even did call-in talk shows well before there was a Rush Limbaugh or a Sean Hannity. During my years of pastoral ministry, I have periodically had opportunities to do radio ministry, including *A Visit to the Pastor's Study*—a live talk program first done in North Charleston, South Carolina, in the early 1980s, and later through WMCA radio while I was pastoring in Franklin Square. In addition, I have had the privilege of working closely with Dan Elmendorf, the director of Redeemer Broadcasting, Inc., a terrestrial and Internet radio network that is specifically committed to the Reformed confessions and a high view of the church. Radio broadcasting is in my blood. It is part of my skill set. But how can we make regular use of radio in a way that reaches the whole

area of our presbytery—as well as those people who access Christian programming through the Internet?

A Generous Donation and a Radio Program

With the assistance of Chris Arnzen, a good friend of the OPC, who hosts the radio program *Iron Sharpens Iron* and runs the organization Cruciform Media (which assists pastors and churches in reaching local markets via radio), I was offered a ninety-minute time slot (Saturdays from noon to 1:30 p.m.) on WLIE radio, 540 AM. On the weekdays, this is a largely Spanish-speaking radio station, but on the weekends it includes more English-speaking programming. During the day, it is a 10,000-watt station, sending its radio signal from two towers on Long Island. Remarkably, its signal reaches almost the entire area of our presbytery. But a weekly program is costly—like everything else in this area.

Remarkably, again, the Lord provided a donor (another friend of the OPC) who has paid for the first year of the broadcast! The first sixty minutes will present *A Visit to the Pastor's Study*, and the other thirty-minute program will be *God and Your Health*, which will include promotion of the donor's local businesses on Long Island. And because *A Visit to the Pastor's Study* will be commercial-free, we will eventually be able to simulcast the program through Redeemer Broadcasting, Inc. Between the local range of WLIE, the live streaming from that station, and simulcasts through the Redeemer network (both terrestrial stations and Internet streaming), we will have, literally, a worldwide outreach for pastoral ministry, the Reformed faith, and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. This will also provide a broadcast presence for the NAPARC churches with which we are affiliated—a niche market that is not represented by any national church ministry. How the Lord has worked to this point!

The program will be a combination of monologue, interview, and calls from listeners. The goal is to bring biblically faithful pastoral ministry to listeners, but it is also intended to



An aerial view of New York City

introduce people to the exciting life of the kingdom of God in a way in which they can participate. There is certainly a place for broadcast preaching and teaching, but there is not much programming currently that allows listeners to interact with pastors, teachers, and

other Christians. *A Visit to the Pastor's Study* will help fill that void.

Your Help Needed!

Our presbytery wants all of you to be a part of this unique opportunity for us and for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. In fact, we *need* your help! Pray for my ongoing preparation for the radio program. To say the least, there are many voices competing to be heard in our media-saturated day. Pray that the programming will be rich in content, excellent in production, relevant to the present day, and so interesting that people will want to listen. That is so important. Pray for God's generous provision of financial support for the work. I also invite you to listen to the program on Saturdays from noon to 1 p.m. on www.wlie540am.com or from www.redeemberbroadcasting.org (check the link for live streaming). We want *you* to be part of this broadcast ministry. And do encourage others to listen and call as well. This is meant to be a means of outreach. If you are interested in learning more and keeping in touch, send your physical address to wshishko@gmail.com.



P.S.

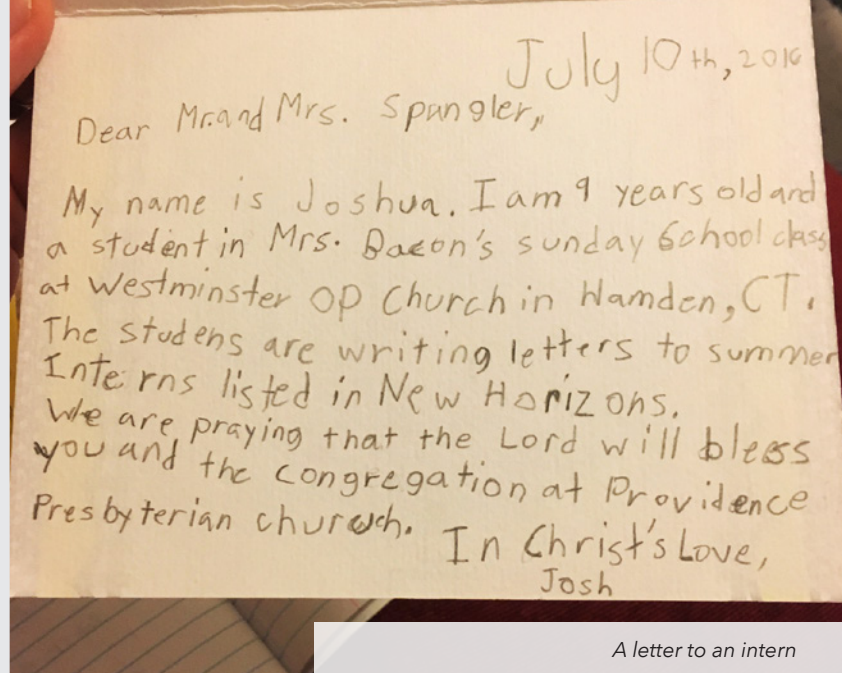
I don't want you to get the wrong impression. My RHM duties also include encouraging evangelism within the bounds of our presbytery and working in various ways with groups that may grow into church plants. (Our hope is that the radio ministry will help us form or reach such groups.) As I said, the task is herculean. But our living Lord is greater than the mythical Hercules. Pray that God would grant the strength needed for all of these labors, all to the exalting of his name and for the furtherance of his kingdom in the metropolitan New York area and beyond. Remember: to reach New York is to reach the world.

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date Home Missions news and prayer updates, e-mail HomeMissionsToday@opc.org.
New editions: January 11, 25.

GROWING PASTORS FOR THE OPC

// PATRICIA E. CLAWSON



A letter to an intern

A church that supports a pastoral intern not only helps the young seminarian to grow into his future calling as a pastor, but also benefits his subsequent Orthodox Presbyterian congregations.

Imagine sitting in your pew, listening to the preaching of your new pastor, a recent seminary graduate who never had the advantage of a ministerial internship. He may have deep doctrinal knowledge, but unless he is particularly gifted, communicating that knowledge with clarity, compassion, and conviction may be a challenge. The first time he officiates at a wedding or a funeral could be difficult, as would be visiting the dying or overseeing a session meeting. That's because seminary education emphasizes the principles of ministry, rather than how to put those principles into practice.

Now picture a young seminarian/intern preaching to a church that is striving to help mold him into a minister. Under the oversight of an experienced OP pastor, his ability to prepare and deliver a sermon that points people to Christ would have matured over his summer or yearlong internship. He would have joined the pastor in visiting the sick and witnessed a session meeting. When he has his own congregation and deals with a difficult passage or session disagreement, he could ask his former mentoring pastor for advice.

Churches that provide pastoral internships serve OP congregations as well as the broader denomination through the pastor's subsequent service to his presbytery and the General Assembly. But many churches don't have the funds to pay for an intern.

That's when churches with a heart to help seminarians get creative. Funding an intern wasn't easy for the ninety-member Reformation OPC in Olympia, Washington. A single man with an extra room housed Brian Guinto and developed a deep friendship with him. "This meant that we just had to provide salary and, though we were stretched, with the help

of the Committee on Christian Education we were able to make it work," said Pastor Brett McNeill. "Brian developed his gifts while he was with us, which the congregation loved being a part of. Beyond this, they came to love him as part of the congregation. There were tears when he left."

Although New Hope OPC has 170 members, hosting a summer intern in expensive Frederick, Maryland, was a challenge. The congregation responded to the session's request for housing. "Getting a single man made it easier, and having free housing was essential for us to make it work that first time," said Pastor Francis VanDelden. Having an intern "helped us connect with the broader church, look outwardly, and develop our role of discipling by investing in a future minister."

At another OP church, the housing of their summer intern and his family was split between their two elders' families. This helped prepare the intern's wife for her future as a pastor's wife by giving her the opportunity to observe how the elders' wives prepared for Sunday guests, trained their children, and structured their domestic tasks.

Providence OPC in Madison, Wisconsin, has sixty communicant members, so to finance an internship they partnered with a Chinese church that shares their building. This worked well because their summer intern was interested in mission work in China. Pastor Mark Jenkins wonders if other small OP churches that are near each other might share an intern. One congregation could serve as the overseeing church with the mentoring pastor, while the other would cover a portion of the cost. The intern, in turn, would preach regularly in both congregations.

"Our intern was a blessing by his word ministry and by giving our small congregation a tangible means of contributing to the larger church," said Jenkins. "We are able to give to denominational missions, but often don't *feel* we contribute much. Having an intern enabled us to *see* a contribution at work, quite literally."

With more than one hundred members, Amoskeag

Presbyterian Church in Manchester, New Hampshire, had the funds for an intern after they added intern costs to their budget and asked the congregation to make up for the small increase. "It was tight, but it worked," said Pastor Gregory Reynolds. "He needed lots of work on his preaching, but his enthusiasm for the gospel was contagious. Also his love for people and evangelism was a great example to all."

First Church of Merrimack in Merrimack, New Hampshire, with 180 members, annually budgets for an intern. Pastor Allen Tomlinson appreciates his interns' help with the ministerial load. Having an intern "gave the congregation an opportunity to hear the same truth from different lips, which reinforced my preaching in the long run," said Tomlinson. "Instructing and setting an example for younger men helps keep me sharp."

Before the 230-member Oakland Hills Community Church in Farmington Hills, Michigan, placed a line item in their budget for interns, they tapped individuals who were supportive of ministry for help. The church owns a home, which provided living space for an intern, said Pastor Ralph Rebandt II. He appreciated having another caring staff member who helped him meet the congregation's needs.

Support for interns comes in various ways, including from the youth. Nine-year-old Joshua Bryan, a student in Mrs. Bacon's Sunday school class at Westminster OPC in Hamden, Connecticut, encouraged Michael Spangler, a summer intern in Greensboro, North Carolina. Spangler received a cheerful card from Josh, which mentioned that his class was praying for him, his family, and his congregation. "What a joy to hear the next generation calling on Christ to bless his church!" said Spangler. "I am grateful for the personal note and for the prayers. The Lord answered and gave us an excellent summer."

OP churches that desire to help train an intern for either the summer or an entire year may apply for an intern if their pastor has served in an OP church for five years. Seminary students under care of an OPC or PCA presbytery may apply for a summer internship. Those who are under care or licensed in the OPC may apply for a yearlong internship.

The Subcommittee on Ministerial Training of the Committee on Christian Education helps to fund interns up to \$1,000 per month for summer interns and \$1,250 per month for yearlong interns. The church must at least match the CCE's support.

Church and seminarian applications are available online at www.opc.org/cce/intern.html. The application deadline is February 28, 2017.

☆ Congratulations

The **Shorter Catechism** has been recited by:

- **Kristy Holdeman**, *Redeemer OPC, Dayton, OH*
- **Elizabeth Wallace**, *Christ Presbyterian Church, Salt Lake City, UT*

OUR MEMBERSHIP VOWS

Confessing the Faith

Glen J. Clary

One becomes a communicant member of the church by making a public profession of faith. In the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, one makes a public profession by taking the following vows:

- (1) Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?
- (2) Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory, and that Jesus Christ is God the Son, come in the flesh?
- (3) Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, that you repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?
- (4) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, and do you promise that, in reliance on the grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?
- (5) Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?

Before making this profession, candidates meet with the elders of the church for an examination. The elders examine their faith and life to see if they understand and live according to the gospel. They also examine their knowledge of the doctrines contained in the vows.

This series is a commentary on the vows. Our primary aim is to explain the biblical doctrines contained in the vows in order to help covenant youth and others prepare to make a public profession of faith in Christ.

● Out of the Mouth . . .

When our daughter, 6, told our pastor that she took notes on the sermons, he asked her what she took notes on. She replied, "On paper."

—Steve and Nancy Nadeau
Holly Springs, N.C.

Note: If you have an example of the humorous "wisdom" that can come from children, please send it to the editor.

HALF A LIFE AS A MISSIONARY

// S. F.



Sunday morning worship for the congregation led by Hunter

DEAR CM., PLEASE DON'T CRY

*Just a child when I saw you last, your dad in seminary
You're now almost all grown up, a pre-teen
Just arrived for dinner, we visitors wanted to see you
But you're in the other room crying because of your teachers at
school...*

*Your parents explain: "They" had scolded you—the class star—
For not going to a school event on the Lord's Day*

*Lord, CM. is crying
Lord, she with such young shoulders is bearing her own cross
Her father reads Psalm 124 to comfort
And to help her bear well that cross: If not ... then ...,
But ... "our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and
earth"*

*O Great God Our Helper who bears the sobs of your little covenant
children*

*You have given this cross for little CM. to bear
You who call to her "All ye who are heavy laden; come to me"
Please make her shoulders strong
To bear that heavy load*

*Dear CM., please don't cry
With expectancy looking forward to the rewards of heaven
Which the good Lord will give you
Bravely walk on*

If I am fifty-one years old (I am), and if this is my twenty-third year here (it is), then does that mean nearly half of my life has been spent on the mission field? It does! Wow, doing the math just now scares me a bit. One, I'm getting older now. Two, I have to ask, "Lord, has the second half of my life so far been well used for your glory?" In this short article, I want to make a small start at answering that question and take a peek

at the future.

If the Lord had called me to do so, I would have been satisfied to continue serving all my days the same way I spent the first phase of ministry as a missionary of the OPC—with our wonderful team, teaching English in the university here. During those eighteen years, I quietly hinted at the gospel to students and just as much to those in the surrounding community (evangelism). I did the best I could to be a faithful, Reformed influence on those who came to faith (discipleship training). I worked to pass on the riches of God's Word especially to the next generation of young church leaders whom the Lord was raising up in the broadly evangelical churches here (church leadership training). If God had allowed it, I would have been (and still would be!) thrilled to continue representing Christ at risk of life and limb in a different country that is dangerous and lost, as we did in the second, short phase of two and one-half years. (O Lord, soon again open to us the door to that darkest, most unreached place!)

But in his reforming preparation of my young pastor friend, nicknamed Hunter, and a small group of believers no longer satisfied with compromise and hungry for true biblical worship, despite much opposition, God has clearly called me for now to be involved in the planting of a new, consistently Reformed church, and I am so glad he did! Trying to nudge juggernauts in the right direction is not impossible, but it may not be the best long-term strategy. What a joy it has been to work directly at the highest-priority missionary task among these people. That task, as Mark Bube, the general secretary of the Committee on Foreign Missions, puts it, is "establishing the faithful Reformed worship of God, and then casting the net, and bringing them into that worship." Hunter is the church planter; I am his on-the-scenes, borrowed elder. Hunter, his family (see the poem about his daughter, above), and his flock take on themselves the brunt of the danger of following their triune God in this atheistic, worldly society. (See the poem below.)

The two-year-old Provisional Reformed Presbytery of Y___ (PRPY) has two congregations: GWC, speaking one language and CRCY, speaking another language. Both meet in the same apartment, where worship takes place in the basement. The office and bathroom are on the ground floor, and a fellowship hall is upstairs. They are both small churches, but they are beautiful in worship and are consistently growing, with Sunday morning attendance averaging just over thirty for GWC and around eleven for CRCY. The congregations meet twice on Sundays and once midweek. Commitment and giving are strong, we regularly have visitors, and both congregations are preparing a handful of new members. We eat a meal together each Lord's Day between the morning and afternoon services, with everyone sharing a dish. Each week the congregation practices the hymns they will sing the next week. We even had a musician come twice from abroad to help us worship better!

The future is bright, as the Lord has provided three pastoral interns—one already studying at a Reformed seminary abroad, and two others making formal application to attend the same school before the end of the year. These three men are under care of presbytery and preparing diligently (including two weddings!). Each of them is committed to returning to plant two churches (one in each language) in neighboring cities. In addition, for the last several months two other men have been studying and praying in preparation for church office. Organization is still a few years away, but we are making progress.

The Mission team still does evangelism, discipleship, and leadership training (supported by an active Reformed literature ministry), but now it is doing so in the context of having a church that we can fully recommend to people. Praise the Lord! In many ways, we just need to stay out of the way and watch the Lord as he gloriously does his work, but in other ways we must also be obediently busy doing the work to which the Lord has called us. I have regular presbytery meetings with Hunter, teach the new members class and new church officers' class, and occasionally preach. Our missionary associates attend on a rotation basis. (We all want to be there every time, but too many foreigners gathering together at one time may be regarded with suspicion by the authorities.) We take our turn cleaning the building, we prepare and then bring in new people, we serve as friends, and we pray. Every week we have six Bible studies and more regular one-on-one relationships. This winter, during January and February, we are having our annual English Corner, which is always a good source of evangelistic contacts. Please pray for the Lord to glorify himself through the development of our infant presbytery, the PRPY. Pray also for our faithfulness.

In his marvelous providence, the Lord has called me to work alongside church planter Hunter as a new Reformed presbytery is being formed here in Northeast Asia. I am so thankful! As to whether I have been doing a good job or not, I will leave that for others to decide, and only look to my Lord

to see what he has for me and try my best to do it. It is hard to keep my mouth shut when I need to, to speak when I need to say something difficult, and to let other people play the up-front roles, but there has also been great joy and satisfaction in seeing this emerging manifestation of the precious body of Christ.

They say the test of a missionary is what's left when he leaves. Oh Lord, show your power by having GWC and CRCY thrive when we leave on furlough! Upon our return, will our work continue? And eventually, will the Lord have us forge a new path into the country that is now closed? If I have completed half a life, I can't wait to see where my King will have me live the second half of it, but I will wait upon the Lord for him to lead. Wherever he leads is where I want to be!

GRAIN OF WHEAT

*Avoiding the paved and big roads
We come roundabout by narrow and rough garden paths
As if hiding
Then enter and go straight down into the basement
But there is Jesus' welcoming greeting: "Please come in!"*

*Interesting that all having come so surreptitiously
Into this church under the ground
Are all still smiling so bright and warm! And peaceful.*

*Early Christians did the same, worshipping quietly and reverently
In Roman catacombs, Antioch caves, Cappadocian underground
But those opposing ones whom they then avoided
Eventually bent the knee to Him
Who has all authority in heaven and on earth*

*The gospel that Paul and Barnabas carried from Antioch
Two thousand years later has come to the East
It has arrived in the far northeast corner of this big country
Not unlike Rome*

*And now, in just a little while
We will praise the Lord Jesus
Bursting out from underneath
Out into the open, into the bright sunshine*

*Not swallowed up (Psalm 124)
Not swept away
Not given as prey to their teeth
The Lord will be our Helper*

*O Lord who hears the spiritual songs of this church
Like a Grain of Wheat buried underground
Sinking down roots, springing forth living sprouts
With all our heart and soul and mind
We praise you, we praise you!*

The two poems in this article are the author's free paraphrases of poems written by YC. Y., a visitor from a sister denomination in another country.

THE REFORMATION OF PRAYER



DANIEL BORVAN // Johannes Schlaginhaufen, a ministerial student living in the home of Martin Luther in 1532, expressed to his mentor his struggle with prayer: “Whenever I think about God and Christ, this immediately comes into my mind: ‘You are a sinner; therefore, God is angry with you. For this reason, your prayer

will amount to nothing.’” Luther replied to his student, “If I waited to pray until I was righteous, when would I pray? Now, then, whenever Satan suggests to you: ‘You are a sinner; God does not listen to sinners,’ you should boldly turn that argument inside and say, ‘Therefore, because I am a sinner, I pray, and I know that the prayers of the afflicted are effective in God’s sight’” (Wenger, *The Pastoral Luther*).

In these brief instructions to his student, Martin Luther revealed key aspects of his reformation of prayer. He rejected late medieval teaching that the efficacy of prayer came through the act of praying itself and the worthiness of the one offering up the prayer. Rather, Luther believed that prayers were efficacious based on the righteousness of God, the object of prayer, and the content of Scripture.

A Medieval Work

By the late medieval period, prayer had become a primary component of the sacrament of penance. This sacrament derived in part from a mistranslation of the Greek word for repentance in passages such as Luke 13:5, where the Latin Vulgate read “unless

you do penance.” The Council of Trent (1545–1563) codified the doctrine and identified the elements of penance as contrition, confession, and satisfaction. Works of satisfaction performed by sinners allowed God to forgive the guilt of sin and remove the habits acquired by evil living.

The Council of Trent went on to prescribe three kinds of satisfaction—prayer, fasting, and giving alms—explaining, “God we appease by prayer, our neighbor we satisfy by alms, and ourselves we chastise by fasting.” Although no one can offer contrition or confession on behalf of another, one can “pay for others what is due to God” through prayer, alms, and fasting. Thus, medieval clergy devoted themselves to this task.

Medieval society was composed of three estates or orders: the Clergy, the Nobility, and the Third Estate (everyone else). A seventeenth-century lawyer summarized the duties of the three estates like this: “Some pray, others fight, still others work” (Duby, *The Three Orders*). Those in the praying class—parish priests, but especially monks and friars—were responsible to pray on behalf of those in the other estates. They

had the time to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). Also, through the sacrament of holy orders, they supposedly possessed a level of holiness that others did not, thus making their prayers more effective.

Luther’s Reformation of Prayer

Martin Luther rejected the idea of a professional praying class and taught that everyone’s prayers could be effective. He discarded the errors of the medieval prayer books and compiled new volumes based on Scripture.

Luther insisted that Scripture teaches the priesthood of all believers, that all Christians have an equal soteriological standing in the sight of God, and that the clergy do not become more holy through the sacrament of holy orders. The prayers of monks are not necessarily more efficacious than those of peasant farmers. Prayers are efficacious only because of the righteousness of God (the object of prayer), not the righteousness of the one praying. All Christians are to pray because God commands us to pray, not because we are holy enough to pray. Luther confessed, “When [as a monk] I had prayed and said my mass I was very presumptuous.

I didn't see the scoundrel behind it all because I didn't put my trust in God but in my own righteousness."

Luther rejected the belief of the medieval monastics, who, he believed, were seeking to be righteous in their own eyes. Their repetitious prayers, Luther held, were attempts to offer up good works to God. He stated in the Large Catechism, "We have rightly rejected the prayers of monks and priests who howl and growl day and night like fiends.... For none of them has ever purposed to pray from obedience to God and faith in his promise, ... but they thought no further than this, to do a good work, whereby they might repay God, as being unwilling to take anything from him, but wishing only to give him something." Medieval monastics believed that their prayers, like the Lord's Supper, were effective *ex opere operato* (i.e., innately), whether or not God even heard them. This turned prayer into a work, rather than an obedient response to what God had done.

Our own righteousness does not make our prayers efficacious, but neither should our lack of righteousness prevent us from obeying God's command to pray. Luther explained in his Large Catechism, "For we allow such thoughts as these to lead us astray and deter us: 'I am not holy or worthy enough; if I were as godly and holy as St. Peter or St. Paul, then I would pray.' But put such thoughts far away, for just the same commandment which applied to St. Paul applies also to me.... Therefore, you should say: 'My prayer is just as precious, holy, and pleasing to God as that of St. Paul, or of the most holy saints. This is the reason: For I will gladly grant that he is holier in his person, but not on account of the commandment; since God does not regard prayer on account of the person, but on account of his word and obedience thereto.'" We pray because God commands us to pray, and we have faith in God's promise that he will hear our prayers.

Our lack of righteousness should not lead us to attempt to profit from the righteousness of dead saints by pray-

ing to them. Unlike the monastics, Luther and the Reformers offered prayers only through the mediation of Christ, never to and through departed saints. As Calvin explains, "Now Scripture recalls us from all to Christ alone, and our Heavenly Father wills that all things are gathered together in him. Therefore, it was the height of stupidity, not to say madness, to be so intent on gaining access through the saints as to be led away from him, apart from whom no entry lies open to them" (*Institutes*, 3.20).

Luther instructed Christians to pray in response to, and using the words of, God's promises revealed in the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, which contain "the total content of Scripture and preaching and everything a Christian needs to know" (*Works*, 43.13). In his 1535 advice to his barber on how to pray, Luther said that when he felt cool or joyless in prayer, he retreated to his room or to the church, where he recited quietly to himself the words of the "Ten Commandments, the Creed, and, if I have time, some words of Christ or of Paul, or some psalms, just as a child might do" (*A Simple Way to Pray*, 1). With each passage, Christians should ponder the instructions given to them, offer thanksgiving, confess sins exposed by the text, and issue a general prayer in response. Instead of mindlessly repeating words, the Christian meditates on divine truths and responds in a prayer of repentance and faith.

Luther displayed his confidence in God's promises in his prayer for his close friend Philip Melancthon, who was deathly ill: "Our Lord God had to bear the brunt of this, for I threw my sack before his doors and wearied his ears with all his promises of hearing prayers that I knew from the Holy Scriptures, so that he had to hear me if I were to trust any of his other promises" (*Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, 418).

Continuing the Reformation

Protestants subsequent to Luther followed in his reformation of prayer.

Calvin believed that prayer was the means whereby we "reach those riches which are laid up for us with the Heavenly Father." Those riches are not material goods, but the presence of God himself, in his providence (guarding us), power (sustaining us), and goodness (receiving us). Calvin concluded, "It is by prayer that we call him to reveal himself as wholly present to us" (*Institutes*, 3.20).

Similarly, in the seventeenth century, the Westminster Divines designated prayer a means of grace: faith is increased and strengthened through the sacraments and prayer (WCF 14.1).

The Reformers taught that prayer, instead of a work of the professional praying class to appease God in the sacrament of penance, was an "offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of his Spirit, with confessions of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of his mercies" (WLC 178). The orientation of prayer was corrected: whereas the monastics offered it as a good work ascending to heaven, the Reformers saw it as an invocation for God to send down his favor based on the work of Christ.

Prayer was transformed from a meritorious work to a means of great comfort to God's people. As Luther said, "For whenever a godly Christian prays: Dear Father, let Thy will be done, God speaks from on high and says: Yes, dear child, it shall be so, in spite of the devil and all the world."

Some Christians today are still tempted to see prayer as a means of earning God's temporal favor. While we realize that our works do not merit eternal life, we might think that our obedience to God's command to pray causes him to smile on us or even to love us a bit more. We must recognize with the Reformers that our prayers do not deserve God's favor, but that God chooses to communicate his favor, which is ours in Christ, through our prayers. □

The author is the pastoral intern at Merrimack Valley Presbyterian Church in North Andover, Mass.

HE GIVES, HE TAKES, WE WORSHIP!

// ANDREW MOODY

“**W**hen a man knows he is to be hanged ... it concentrates his mind wonderfully.” So said Samuel Johnson.

As Christians, we should be mindful that our life is fleeting (Ps. 39:4). It is a breath (Job 7:7), a mist (James 4:14), and a flower that blooms and quickly fades (Ps. 103:15–16).

We are reminded of this when loved ones die. Everything is left behind and portioned out according to their will. When God calls us home, we leave empty-handed to take possession of our inheritance of eternal riches in Christ!

Everything we possess belongs to the Lord. David sings of this in Psalm 24:1–2: “The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.”

This is true, both in times of material blessing and in times of poverty and suffering. Consider Job in the land of Uz, a servant of God who was blessed with great wealth and a large family. He had it all. He was living the Uzian dream! But one day the Lord permitted Satan to take it all away, piece by piece. Even his children were taken away. In Job’s response to this terrible news, we see his faith being sustained by God’s grace. We read in Job 1:20–21, “Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.’”

In his grief, Job worships. In his worship, he glorifies the name of his God, who gives and who takes away. By faith, Job understands that he owns nothing. Everything is God’s!

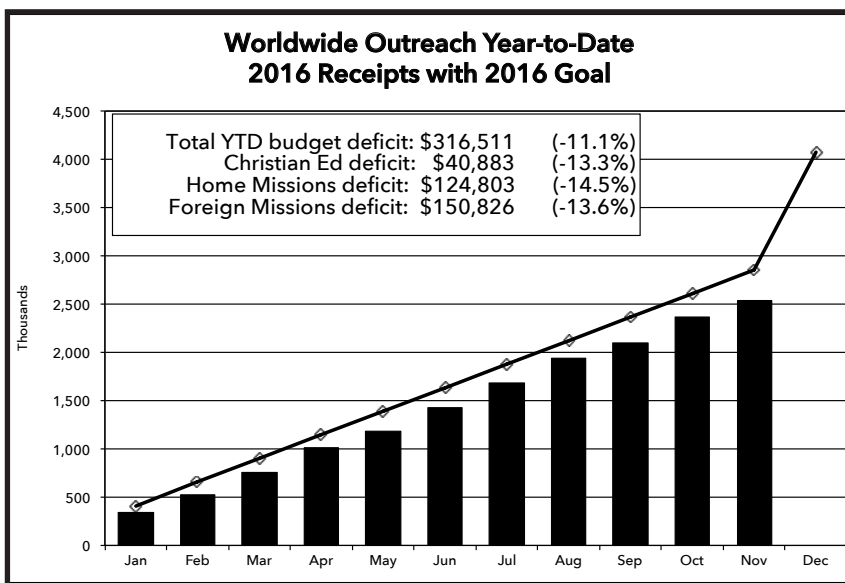
His flocks, his cattle, his servants, his property, and even his children belong to God.

The Lord gives! Everything we have is from God. He is generous with his children, and we are to be thankful and content with what he provides. We are called to be good stewards of all we possess. This means we purpose to use all that we have for his glory. This includes being generous with our finances, our time, and our talents for the building up of the church. He delights in blessing us, and we are called to take joy in giving, as it is written, “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7).

The Lord takes away! Our stewardship of material possessions is temporary. We need to make the best use of them while we can. Jesus told the story of a rich man who kept storing up more and more wealth, even needing to build larger barns to store all of his crops. He placed his trust in his wealth, thinking he would enjoy it for many years to come. “But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:20). We need to hold our possessions loosely, always ready to use all that we possess for his glory.

Blessed be the name of the Lord! We delight to see the Lord build his kingdom. No matter what we are blessed with, we are responsible to glorify God with our stewardship. We bless his name in times of plenty and in times of want. We give with generosity and joy that flow out of his generosity toward us in Jesus. He has “blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Eph. 1:3).

The author is pastor of San Antonio Reformed Church in San Antonio, Tex.



JANUARY

1. Pray for retired foreign missionaries **Brian and Dorothy Wingard**, as they settle into retirement in the U.S. / Pray for **Dave and Elizabeth Holmlund**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Philadelphia, as he does church-planting exploratory work. / **Ryan (and Rochelle) Cavanaugh**, yearlong intern at Prescott Presbyterian Church in Prescott, Arizona.
2. **Jay and Andrea Bennett**, Neon, Ky. Pray that Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church will be organized into a local congregation by 2020. / **Ray and Michele Call**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for the Bible study and English conversation classes held each week. / **Ryan (and Rachel) Heaton**, yearlong intern at Tyler Presbyterian Church in Tyler, Tex.
3. **Mark and Jeni Richline**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for Mark as he resumes his ministry on the field following furlough in the U.S. / **Christopher and Ann Malamisuro**, Cincinnati, Ohio. Pray that God would bless Good Shepherd OPC with additional families. / **Daniel (and Marcy) Borvan**, yearlong intern at Merrimack Valley Presbyterian Church in North Andover, Mass.
4. **Bob and Grace Holda**, Oshkosh, Wis. Pray for Resurrection Presbyterian Church, that God's elect will be brought in. / Retired missionaries **Betty Andrews, Cal and Edie Cummings, Greet Rietkerk**, and **Young and Mary Lou Son**. Pray for their health and well-being. / **Richard (and Erin) Chung**, yearlong intern at Theophilus OPC in Anaheim, Calif.
5. Pray for missionary associates **Mr. and Mrs. C. and D. M.**, Asia, concluding their time of service and returning to the U.S. / **Matt and Elin Prather**, Corona, Calif. Praise the Lord for providing a meeting place for Corona Presbyterian Church. / **Adrian (and Rachel) Crum**, yearlong intern at Bayview OPC in Chula Vista, Calif.
6. **David and Rebekah Graves**, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Pray for the discipleship and ministry of Coeur d'Alene Reformed Church. / **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia. Pray for good health during this bitterly cold time of year. / **Andy (and Anna) Smith**, yearlong intern at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Ill.
7. Tentmaker missionary **T. L. L.**, Asia (on furlough). Pray that the Lord would provide the missionary associates needed to teach in Asia. / **Bill and Sessie Welzien**, Key West, Fla. Pray that the Lord would add to the con-



Mark and Jeni Richline

gregation of Keys Presbyterian Church. / **Miller (and Stephanie) Ansell**, yearlong intern at Faith Presbyterian Church in Garland, Tex.

8. **Brian and Sara Chang**, Cottonwood, Ariz. Pray for new opportunities for Christ Reformed Presbyterian Church to reach out to the community. / Pray that tentmaker missionary **T. D.**, Asia, will have many opportunities to share the gospel. / **Alan Strange** and **Derrick Vander Meulen**, coeditors of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal.
9. **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia. Pray for special English Corner outreach programs conducted in January and February. / **Jim and Eve Cassidy**, Austin, Tex. Pray for God's blessing on South Austin Presbyterian Church's new Bible study in New Braunfels, Tex. / **Bryan (and Heidi) Dage**, yearlong intern at Covenant OPC in Komoka, Ontario.
10. **Larry and Kalynn Oldaker**, Huron, Ohio. Pray for new visitors to come to Grace Fellowship OPC. / Missionary associates **E. K., D. V., and S. Z.**, Asia. Pray for their witness through the English Corner outreach. / **David Haney**, director of finance and planned giving for the Committee on Coordination.
11. Affiliated missionaries **Jerry and Marilyn Farnik**, Czech Republic. Pray that Jerry's course on Nehemiah will encourage the men attending and further equip them for ministry in their churches. / Home Missions associate general secretary **Al Tricarico**. / **Doug Watson**, part-time staff accountant.
12. **Lowell and Mae Ivey**, Virginia Beach, Va. Pray for a single meeting location for Reformation Presbyterian Church's morning and evening services. / Pray for missionary associate **Kathleen Winslow**, Czech Republic, as she leads a monthly club for junior high girls. / *New Horizons* proofreader **Sarah Pederson**.
13. **Ben and Heather Hopp**, Haiti (on furlough). Pray for Ben's safe travel as he continues his furlough speaking engagements. / **Eric and Donna Hausler**, Naples, Fla. Pray for the Lord to use Christ the King Presbyterian Church to draw families to himself. / **Charlene Tipton**, database administrator.
14. **Tim and Deborah Herndon**, West Lebanon, N.H. Praise God for his continued blessing on Providence OPC. / Associate missionaries **Octavius and Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray for Tav as he translates Reformed materials into Creole for use in the church. / *New Horizons* managing editor **Jim Scott**.
15. Pray that Foreign Missions general secretary **Mark Bube** will give a vision for foreign missions to the churches where he speaks. / **Joshua and Jessica Lyon**, Carson, Calif. Pray for God's blessing on Grace OPC's officer training class. / Pray that churches will be willing

to mentor a summer or yearlong **pastoral intern** for 2017.

- 16. Jonathan and Kristin Moersch**, Capistrano Beach, Calif. Pray that the saints of Trinity Presbyterian Church will continue to grow in love for Christ and neighbor. / Foreign Missions administrative assistant **Linda Posthuma** and secretary **Katrina Zartman**. / *New Horizons* editorial assistant **Pat Clawson**.
- 17.** Pray for Foreign Missions associate general secretary **Douglas Clawson** as he assists with the training of church leaders in Colombia. / **Josh and Kristen McKamy**, Chambersburg, Pa. Pray that God would bless Covenant OPC's move to a new worship facility. / Pray for **the Subcommittee on Internet Ministries** as it oversees the OPC website.
- 18.** Home Missions general secretary **John Shaw**. / **Heero and Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for wisdom and vision to know which areas of the church to develop and how to do it. / *New Horizons* cover designer **Chris Tobias**.
- 19.** Affiliated missionary **Linda Karner**, Japan. Pray for a good balance between work and rest. / **John and Wenny Ro**, Chicago, Ill. (downtown). Pray that God would use Gospel Life Presbyterian Church's outreach activities to bring in new people. / Pray for Christian Education general secretary **Danny Olinger** as he visits seminaries to interview prospective interns.
- 20. Kim and Barbara Kuhfuss**, Eau Claire, Wis. Pray that Providence Reformed Church will make good use of their new location. / Affiliated missionaries **Craig and Ree Coulbourne**, Urayasu, Japan. Pray for the salvation of the boys attending the junior high group. / **Kathy Bube**, Loan Fund administrator, and **Mark Stumpff**, office assistant.
- 21. Ben and Melanie Westerveld**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for wisdom to prioritize and manage many ministry demands. / **Brad and Cinnamon Peppo**, Springfield, Ohio. Pray that God would give Living Water OPC a firm foundation as they prepare to become an organized congregation. / *Ordained Servant* editor **Greg Reynolds**.
- 22. Paul and Sarah Murreale**, St. Louis, Mo. Pray for wisdom regarding a change in location for Gateway OPC. / Pray for new missionary associate **Janine Eygenraam**, Quebec, Canada, as she assists in a number of St-Marc Church's outreach programs. / **Janet Birkmann**, Diaconal Ministries administrative assistant.
- 23.** Pray for **Eric and Dianna Tuininga**, Mbale, Uganda (on furlough), as they maintain a busy furlough schedule. / **Mika and Christina Edmondson**, Grand Rapids, Mich. Pray for the continued development of the ministry of New City Fellowship. / Pray for **Ross Graham**, stated clerk of the General Assembly, as he begins preparations for the 84th General Assembly, which convenes on May 31, 2017.
- 24.** Pray for **David and Jane Crum**, regional home mis-

ionary for the Presbytery of Southern California, as he regularly visits mission works and organized congregations. / Pray for the labors of missionary associate **Sarah Jantzen**. / **Dan Boulton**, director of sales at Great Commission Publications.

- 25. Charles and Connie Jackson**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray that the preaching of God's Word would bear much fruit in the churches around Mbale. / **Jim and Bonnie Hoekstra**, Andover, Minn. Pray that Immanuel OPC's welcome bag ministry will bring new visitors. / **Bulut Yasar**, year-long intern at New Life OPC in Montoursville, Pa.
- 26. Andrew and Billie Moody**, San Antonio, Tex. Pray for wisdom as San Antonio Reformed Church prepares to organize. / **David and Sunshine Okken**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the church in Nakaale will continue to grow as God's Word is faithfully preached. / Air Force chaplain **C. Phillip (and Melanie) Hollstein III**.
- 27. David and Rashed Robbins**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for wisdom for the Mission in developing strategies for ministry. / **Chris and Megan Hartshorn**, Anaheim Hills, Calif. Pray for conversions and adult baptisms at Anaheim Hills Presbyterian Church. / **Joe Johnson**, yearlong intern at Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pa.
- 28.** Home missions staff administrator **Sean Gregg**. / Missionary associate **Leah Hopp**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that community health programs in local villages will touch many lives with the gospel. / Short-term Missions Coordinator **David Nakhla**. Pray for those contemplating participation in short-term missions opportunities this summer.
- 29. Bob and Martha Wright**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the missionary families who are separated from their children while they are away at school. / **Ron and Carol Beabout**, Gaithersburg, Md. Pray that Trinity Reformed Church will be patient for God to bring the increase. / Navy chaplain **Cornelius (and Deidre) Johnson**.
- 30.** Missionary associate **Angela Voskuil**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for her preparation to teach classes at the primary school. / **Phil Strong**, Lander, Wyo. Pray that Grace Reformed Fellowship's session will continue to faithfully lead the congregation. / *Ordained Servant* proofreader **Diane Olinger**.
- 31.** Missionary associates **Christopher and Chloe Verdick**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for Chloe in her responsibilities as Mission bookkeeper. / **Mike and Katy Myers**, Royston, Ga. Heritage Presbyterian Church. Pray for the Lord's blessing on officer training. / **Jan Gregson**, assistant to the finance director.



Ron and Carol Beabout

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

REFORMATION IN THE OPC

David Winslow, Jr.

On October 29, Reformation Bible Church in Apache Junction, Arizona, officially became part of the Presbytery of Southern California and took on the new name Reformation OPC. This congregation of 114 persevered through trials in its sojourn from being an independent church to becoming a Presbyterian congregation determined to hold fast to the Reformed faith.

At a service conducted by the Presbytery and attended by over 250 people, the moderator, Douglas Watson, administered the vows to the four ruling elders (Jonathan Gilbert, Lee Rouse, David Henry, and Darrall Dennee) and the pastor, Joel Ellis. RHM David Crum charged the congregation, and Pastor Michael Babcock of the Phoenix church laid upon the officers their respective responsibilities. Pastor Jim Cassidy delivered a stirring sermon entitled "The Possession," telling how Abraham's purchase of a burial plot for Sarah in the Promised Land points God's people to their eternal inheritance kept in heaven for them.

The service was followed by a picnic barbecue in a moderate "dry heat" of 96 degrees, set against the beautiful backdrop

of the red-rock Superstition Mountains. It was a day of much rejoicing and thanksgiving for the Lord's kind providence in bringing Reformation to the southeast corner of the Greater Phoenix area. The church has purchased a building in Mesa and hopes to be worshipping there in the new year.

There are now seven OP churches and mission works in a state where half a generation ago there were none. This is the Lord's doing, and we praise him for it.

IN MEMORIAM BARRY A. TRAVER

Danny E. Olinger

On November 19, the Rev. Barry A. Traver died at the age of 75 and went to be with the Lord in glory. He was married to Sharon Fawthrop Traver for fifty-one years, and the father of John Calvin Traver. Barry earned an M.Div. at Westminster Theological Seminary in 1969 and a Th.M. in 1980. He taught English and mathematics at Pinebrook Junior College before being ordained in the Reformed Church in America and installed as pastor of Talmage Memorial Fourth Reformed Church in Philadelphia. In 1984, he helped bring Fourth Church (renamed Pilgrim Church) into the Orthodox



Barry Traver

Presbyterian Church, and transferred his ministerial credentials to the Presbytery of Philadelphia in 1985. He served as a teacher of Pilgrim Church from 1988 to 2005.

A member of Mensa, Barry was a self-taught computer expert, which led to his induction into the TI99ers Hall of Fame. In 1998, he was central to the start-up of OPC.org. For sixteen years, he served the Committee on Christian Education as the website's technical associate, but bad health forced his retirement in 2014.



The congregation of Reformation OPC on the day they joined the OPC. Pastor Joel Ellis is the young bearded man in the upper center left.

Women's Spring Conference

March 24-25 • Green Bay, Wis.

- Theme: "Fear Not: Finding God's Comfort for My Fearful Soul"
- Speaker: Tara Klana Barthel
- Venue: New Hope Presbyterian Church, 2401 Deckner Ave., Green Bay, WI 54302
- Online registration: nhopc.org
- Questions? Email library@nhopc.org.

• **David G. Graves**, formerly pastor of Trinity OPC in Franklin, Pa., was installed on November 4 as an evangelist to serve as organizing pastor of Coeur D'Alene Reformed Church in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

• On October 28, **John R. Hilbelink** was installed as pastor of newly organized Providence OPC in Rockford, Ill., where he had previously been the church planter.

of the Presbytery of the South.

• **Charles B. Williams** was ordained as a minister and installed as associate pastor of Bethel OPC in Wheaton, Ill., on November 11.

MILESTONES

• Retired minister **Theodore J. Georgian**, 94, died on November 21.

• Retired minister **Barry A. Traver**, 75, died on November 19, suffering from Parkinson's disease.

• Retired minister **J. Peter Vosteen**, 85, died on November 2.

UPDATE

CHURCHES

• **Providence OPC** in Rockford, Ill., was officially organized as a church of the Presbytery of the Midwest on October 28.

• On October 29, Reformation Bible Church, an independent congregation in Apache Junction, Ariz., was received into the OPC by the Presbytery of Southern California as **Reformation OPC**.

• **Trinity Presbyterian Church** in Capistrano Beach, Calif., was organized as a separate congregation of the Presbytery of Southern California on November 6.

MINISTERS

• On November 4, **Casey M. Bessette** was ordained as a minister and installed as a teacher at Christ Presbyterian Church in Janesville, Wis.

• On October 29, **Joel M. Ellis, Jr.**, was installed as pastor of Reformation OPC in Apache Junction, Ariz., of which he had been the pastor while it was an independent church.

• The pastoral relationship between **Brenton C. Ferry** and Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church in Mount Airy, N.C., was dissolved by the Presbytery of the Southeast as of October 31, following his resignation and the congregation's concurrence.

• **Brett E. Mahlen**, formerly the associate pastor of Grace OPC in Sewickley, Pa., was installed as the associate pastor of Covenant OPC in Orland Park, Ill., on November 5, to focus on prison ministry, including teaching at Divine Hope Reformed Bible Seminary.

• **Jonathan L. Master** was installed by the Presbytery of Philadelphia as a teacher at Cairn University in Langhorne, Pa., on November 6.

• On November 6, church planter **Jonathan B. Moersch** was installed as the first pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Capistrano Beach, Calif.

• On November 13, **Matthew S. Prather**, formerly a Calvary Chapel minister, was installed as an evangelist by the Presbytery of Southern California to serve as the organizing pastor of Corona Presbyterian Church in Corona, Calif.

• **Charles K. Telfer** was transferred to the South Coast Presbytery of the PCA on April 30, 2016.

• **Kenneth L. Wendland**, formerly the pastor of Heritage Presbyterian Church in Mobile, Ala., was transferred to the Philadelphia Metro West Presbytery of the PCA at the October 28-29 meeting

LETTERS

WOMEN IN THE OPC

Editor:

I am very thankful for the recent OP book *Choosing the Good Portion*. After reading the chapter about Betty Wallace, I had to write you. Barb Cerha, her granddaughter, goes to great lengths to explain what a prayer warrior Betty was. I am the grateful recipient of many of her prayers.

When I started attending the Franklin Square church as an unbeliever, I was in a serious relationship with a young man whom I expected to be my future husband. After a time, he realized that my "new religion" was not going to go away, so he started attending with me. We "just happened" to sit in front of Betty and Bob Wallace.

Pastor Bill Shishko urged me to be careful in this relationship. Betty, then unable to move from the back row after her stroke, would tell me that she was praying for me. At the time, I did not appreciate her prayers as I ought. After a year, I broke up with that young man. Three months later, I met my future husband at the French Creek Bible Conference!

Barb Denton Cerha became one of my first Christian friends. Add Margaret Shishko and the other women at Franklin Square at the time, and you get the recipe for the dynamic, life-changing ministry described in the New Testament.

Diane Corsello
Durham, Pa.

Correction

In the October issue, p. 9, the ordination of Francis Makemie should have been given as 1681 or 1682.

REVIEWS

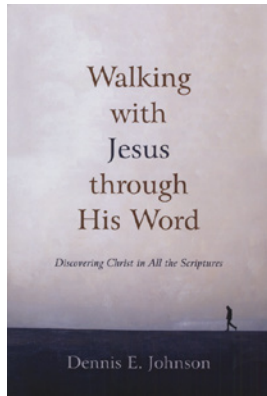
Walking with Jesus through His Word: Discovering Christ in All the Scriptures, by Dennis E. Johnson. P&R Publishing, 2015. Paperback, 320 pages, list price \$16.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Jeremy C. Jones.

In *Walking with Jesus through His Word*, Dennis E. Johnson, a professor at Westminster Seminary California, has provided students of the Bible an excellent resource for understanding how the central plotline of God's redemptive work unfolds in Scripture.

Johnson structures his book around the extended metaphor of a journey. He draws on the analogy made popular by Charles Spurgeon that compares Holy Scripture to the network of roads and trails in England. From any hamlet or village in England, there is a path that leads to London. So too, wherever you are in Scripture, there is a path that leads to the metropolis, which is Christ. Johnson helps us discover the pathways and pointers to Christ that are embedded in Scripture itself, and he warns us against trying to blaze our own fanciful trails to Christ.

In the opening chapter, we see that this approach to reading Scripture is the approach that Jesus himself employed and taught his disciples. In chapter 2, Johnson orients the reader in the original context of Scripture. In order to find your destination, it is important to know your point of origin.

Some roads to Christ are obvious. Whenever the New Testament applies Old Testament passages to Christ, we are given clear road signs directing us to him (chapter 3). At other times, the route is less obvious. Johnson shows (in chapters 4–6) how God's covenantal dealings with his people provide the reader-traveler with a path through Scripture that inevitably leads to Jesus (chapter 6). In a third category are landmarks that orient the reader. Johnson identifies the offices



of prophet (chapter 7), priest (chapter 8), and king (chapter 9) as the distinctive landmarks in Scripture that help us get our bearings and point us to Christ.

Johnson makes clear that these connections to Christ are neither the clever inventions of preachers nor the imaginative rereading of the Old Testament by New Testament writers in light of the resurrection of Christ. The patterns that point to Christ are the result of the sovereign Lord, who is the one author of both Scripture and history.

Walking with Jesus is accessible without being simplistic. In addition to providing sound principles of interpretation, chapters 2–9 conclude with examples of how to put

these principles to work in specific passages. Also, every chapter concludes with engaging discussion questions, profitable for both individual and small group use.

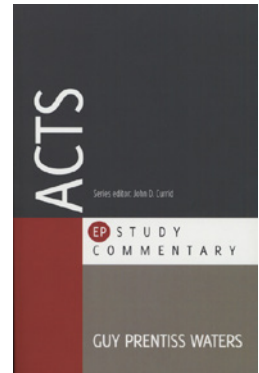
The book aims at doing more than just providing techniques and tips for reading the Bible. It aims to bring the reader to the Christ revealed in Scripture, to walk with Jesus through his Word as the disciples walked with him on the road to Emmaus on the first resurrection Sunday, opening their eyes and setting their hearts aflame. The goal of this exercise, as chapter 10 makes clear, is that we might be transformed into Christ's likeness as we behold his glory.

Wherever you are in your journey through God's Word, you will be well served by reading Johnson's *Walking with Jesus through His Word*.

Acts (EP Study Commentary), by Guy Prentiss Waters. Evangelical Press, 2015. Paperback, 614 pages, list price \$44.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Michael J. Matossian.

Guy Waters has written an accessible, intermediate-level commentary that should appeal not only to pastors and theological students, but

also to anyone seeking a deeper, clearer understanding of Acts. As Waters himself puts it, he has sought to provide "exegesis in the service of exposition." He illuminates



Positions Available

Pastor: Calvary OPC in Middletown, Pa., seeks a full-time pastor to preach and teach the inspired and inerrant Word of God.

The pastor and a mature session will work together ministering to the saints at Calvary, training them to lead godly and faithful lives, to love one another well and effectively, and to serve faithfully in the kingdom of God for the purpose of bringing God glory and reaching out to the lost in our community. For further information, please contact Dennis Ritenour via the church email at: copcsecretary10@gmail.com.

Principal: Rochester Christian School is seeking a proven educational leader with a passion for Christian education for the position of Principal, beginning July 2017. The Principal will be responsible for leading the school, articulating its vision, and maintaining a high-quality, distinctly Christian education. Some classroom teaching is required. Rochester Christian School, based in the Reformed tradition, is located in Rochester, N.Y., and is currently celebrating its 100th anniversary. For more information and to apply, visit www.rochesterchristianschool.org/employment-opportunities.

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS *Continued*

and accentuates details of the text that lend themselves to grasping the key points of the passage and avoids getting bogged down in the minutiae of scholarly debate. His target audience is, as he explains, anyone who wants to understand the text better and be able to explain it to others. Nevertheless, he makes generous use of footnotes for those who want to look more closely into differing interpretations.

In addition to his commitment to exegesis in the service of exposition, Waters seeks to implement Calvin's principles of clarity and brevity. Although it's hard to call a book of over six hundred pages brief, Waters repeatedly gives concise, clear explanations of the text that provide a definite aid to understanding it. For example, in comments on Acts 17, he draws together portions of the chapter by succinctly explaining the beliefs of the Epicureans and Stoics, the function of the Areopagus (a council of sorts), and the ongoing marketplace of ideas of an Athens no longer in its philosophical glory days. Then he shows how Paul accounts for the viewpoints of the philosophers and addresses them in his speech with truth about God and mankind. Amazingly, Waters pulls this all together in the space of only a page or two, leaving the reader thinking, "Wow. How did he make so much clear in so little space?"

Waters writes his commentary with a Reformed orientation. He seeks to follow in the biblical-theological, redemptive-historical line of Geerhardus Vos, Herman Ridderbos, and Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. By doing so, he seeks to avoid the trap of seeing the church in Acts as "church in the good old days," as he puts it. At the

same time, Waters wants to avoid the danger of thinking that Acts has no contemporary relevance. Rather, he argues, "it is when we appreciate the redemptive-historical lines of Luke's teaching in Acts that we are best poised to make rich and full application of Acts to our Christian lives." Waters succeeds not only in maintaining his Reformed commitment, but in elucidating ways in which Acts provides

insight into Christian life today.

All who read this commentary will benefit from the application section Waters includes at the end of each distinct segment of Acts. In these sections, Waters crystallizes the central thoughts of the passage and provides a catalyst for further application in the reader's own context.

I wholeheartedly commend this commentary as a blessing to the church.

MIDWEST WOMEN'S PRESBYTERIAL

Lynn Jensema

About eighty-five ladies came out to Women's Presbyterial of the Midwest on October 1 at New Covenant Community Church in Joliet, Illinois. We enjoyed a day of "Connecting and Encouraging Women at Home and Abroad." Tin Ling Lee, a tentmaker missionary in China, was our speaker.

In the afternoon, a panel shared how different churches connect and encourage each other through ladies' groups,

Bible studies, hospitality, and other activities. We had a booklet printed with the churches' answers to a questionnaire we sent out about their ministries. The booklet also contained letters from missionary ladies. We seek to connect with and encourage them in their daily work on the mission fields.

Next year's Women's Presbyterial will be on October 7 at Falls Presbyterian Church in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin. You can find more information at pmwopc.org. Address questions or comments to Elaine Laczny, our president for 2017, at relaczny@aol.com.



Women's Presbyterial of the Midwest participants