

NEW HORIZONS

in the ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

6 Why We Also Sing Hymns
// by Alan D. Strange

JUNE-JULY 2017

16 Summer Reading Club
// by Anne Shaw



Caring for Our Aging Parents

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New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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Downingtown OPC in Downingtown, Pa., held its first worship service on Sunday, April 30. About fifty people from the community and several nearby OP congregations gathered for worship. The group meets at 10 a.m. at the Downingtown Senior Center each week. Regional home missionary David Holmlund (front left) is leading worship and preaching.



CARING FOR OUR AGING PARENTS



LISA ASKEY AND ALTHEA SCOTT // **Every day she drove to her childhood home to check on her mom and aunt. She helped them clean and shop. She took them to numerous doctor visits and for medical tests. Paying the bills and dealing with medical claims fell to her.**

Lately, she had noticed that both her mom and aunt were declining physically and mentally. But they wanted to stay in their home, and they assured her they could help each other cope day to day. Then came the day she arrived to find one of the stove burners on, the coffee pot boiled dry, and a tea towel dangerously close to the flame. Neither woman remembered turning the stove on. As she looked around, she thought, “It’s 5 p.m. They are still in their bathrobes and their morning pills are in the containers. What do I do?”

This particular scenario is real. Haven’t we all heard similar (or worse) stories? What *should* this daughter do? While there is no perfect plan for working through this life challenge, and solutions are as individual as the people involved, helping our aging relatives navigate their golden years is an act of kindness and compassion. The authors learned during their own caregiving journeys that specific and practical advice is a blessing, and so we will share what we learned.

We both found ourselves in the

“sandwich generation” situation: raising families and taking care of aging parents at the same time—while working outside of the home and serving the church. For Lisa, it began by caring for both of her parents, who lived two hours away. Every Saturday for months (and sometimes during the week) she went to pay bills, fill weekly medicine containers, pay the agency that provided full-time aides, do laundry, shop for food, clean the house, and drive one or both of her parents to doctors’ appointments.

When her mother was failing, Lisa found her a place in a nearby medical facility, and her father came to live with her and her family. Then after the death of her mother, Lisa helped her father pack up and sell his house and move into a nearby continuing care facility.

Lisa quickly learned that, at her father’s facility, she needed to go to specific people for answers to her questions about various charges, doctors, transportation, and physical and occupational therapy on site. Getting to know the social worker, chaplain, and head nurse was helpful as well.

Because Lisa’s father wanted to remain in his independent apartment as he became weak, Lisa moved to part time in her job as a school librarian, hired part-time and nighttime aides, transported her father to dialysis (or paid for transportation) and was his daytime aide as well. Lisa’s husband and children held down the fort at home and sacrificially helped as needed.

Althea’s mother came on short notice “just for a while” to recover after surgery, but ended up living with the Scotts until her death six years later. During that time, her father moved in for his final months. Many time, space, and financial adjustments needed to be made. Although Althea is a nurse, it was tough to add a 24/7 job to family life. Involvement with children’s activities became difficult. Meal prep became more complicated. Oversight of her parents’ finances became her job. Their house was already full, but they reasigned bedrooms. Bathroom time was at a premium. Althea left her part-time job. The whole family had to make adjustments. Each family member served

both the care-needer and the caregiver according to his or her ability and skill. The children kept Grandma company, prepared her meals, and gave personal care. Althea's husband was an advocate for his mother-in-law, and he took Althea for many walks to let off steam. God graciously sustained them during these difficult years, often providing creative so-



Althea Scott caring for her mother

lutions to specific challenges through her parents themselves, her brothers, and their church family and friends.

In the story at the beginning of this article, the caregiver was a daughter like us. In fact, 75 percent of caregivers are women, 85 percent care for a relative or loved one, and 70 percent are between the ages of 50 and 64. The average caregiver lives 20 minutes away and gives care 24.4 hours per week, while 25 percent of those caregivers provide 41 or more hours of care per week. Thirty-five percent of caregivers provide help in their own home, and 48 percent in the home of the recipient. The average duration of providing care is four years. (Source: www.caregiver.org/caregiver-statistics-demographics.)

Two Overarching Words of Advice

First, *PRAY*. This can be a highly stressful time, and the whole family needs to be close to the Lord throughout the whole journey.

Second, *TALK*. There should be ongoing conversations among the parents, the caregiving child, her siblings, and her children throughout this journey. While it is true that death is a powerful enemy, that the process of decline is a huge unknown with new difficulties arising often, and that some families find it very hard to talk about end-of-life issues, we Christians have the rock-solid assurance of being present with the Lord after our bodies stop

working. To have someone who loves us walk with us through the process is a gift both to be received and to be given.

Advice for Aging Parents

Be proactive. Put your house in order while you are healthy. Before Moses died, God gave him directives regarding the leadership and the future for the people of Israel. Moses obeyed God and put the house of Israel in order before he died (Deut. 31:14ff.).

We strongly suggest you finalize your *legal* matters. Have a will, a financial power of attorney, and an advanced directive and medical power of attorney made or update your previous ones, and make sure all financial accounts have up-to-date beneficiaries (IRAs, pensions, life insurance, annuities). We also suggest you set up a joint checking account with your caregiver and have a cell phone to use in emergencies.

It's best if *you* start the conversation about how your assets are to be distributed and how and where you envision being cared for in your declining years. While these matters are your decision, telling your children ahead of time may ease their grieving process and may lessen family discord after your death. Assets also include special personal possessions, so make a list or an album of pictures to indicate who is to get what. Also, one child needs to be in charge of your care, handle your important documents, and help you communicate with

other family members.

The child doing the caregiving filters communications from medical people and financial companies, and then makes appropriate decisions. We suggest that you send letters to all relevant people, stating that your caregiver has your permission to discuss you, your benefits, and your assets. This answers all HIPPA laws and other privacy issues.

Explain your medical insurance and prescription plan to your caregiver. A list of all your medicines, doctors, pharmacy, insurance information, and emergency contacts, along with a brief medical history, significant health conditions, and special needs should be in a prominent location in your house and in your purse or wallet. This is extremely helpful to ambulance and emergency room personnel.

When your children or a wise friend tells you that your health is impairing your driving, graciously give up your driver's license. If they suggest that repairing the roof should be left to others now, be gracious about that as well.

Regarding your final arrangements, investigate pre-need funeral and cemetery planning. (You might save some money.) Ask your pastor what planning can be done for your funeral or memorial service beforehand and make a list of *suggested* hymns and Scripture. You might consider writing a very brief autobiography to be submitted to the funeral director for an obituary and to the pastor for the funeral service bulletin.

Advice for the Caregiving Child and Siblings

Our parents nurtured and protected us as we were growing up; now it is our turn to care for and advocate for them. Remind your parents that God wants you to honor them in their declining years. It is important that your

parents know that you are not trying to take away their independence, but want to be their backup. If your parents have not developed a plan for the future as they become debilitated, encourage them to do so. Be sure everyone understands the plan: it is essential that everyone be on the same page! This is especially important if parents are moving into the home of the caregiver. At some point, you may have to be the parent to your parents—taking away the car, selling their house, and disposing of their nonessential belongings.

This is the time to specifically and soulfully review your relationship with your parent and straighten out resentments against them. Put aside grievances and vestiges of teenage conflict. Instead, focus on helping as the Lord would and giving a cup of cold water (and a whole lot more) in the Lord's name to your parent.

Advice for the Caregiving Child

Be an advocate for your parent. Take notes on what was said in each meeting or phone call, and ask questions for your parent. If you are unsure what questions to ask doctors, lawyers, and insurance companies, be sure to ask others who know about these matters.

Spend time learning about your parent's health issues. Learn the terminology and the possible treatments, their side effects, and the prognosis. Will the disease process cause personality or psychological changes? Understand that your parent may become physically dependent on some prescribed pain medications, but this does not make them an addict. Diabetics and those with thyroid disease are physically dependent on their drugs to survive, but no one thinks of that as an addiction.

Being a caregiver causes great stress, so take care of yourself. Formulate a schedule, so that some vestiges of your previous life can continue. Take the time to exercise, to listen to Christian music, radio, and podcasts, as well as sermons from your church, and continue to meet with God's people in worship services and other activities. Ask

selected people to be your prayer warriors, and ask friends of your parent or yourself to come and give you a break.

If your parent comes to live in your house, be willing to get help, such as in-home care, a companion, or time in an elder day care. Arrange needed physical therapy and/or occupational therapy, either through Medicare or secondary insurance. Ask your parent's pastor to visit regularly. Ask your parent's elder to bring the Lord's Supper frequently.

If your siblings live nearby, ask them to help in ways that make use of their strengths. There are many tasks that can be shared—scheduling appointments and tests, paying bills, providing meals for the hands-on family, and packing up your parents' house and belongings. If your siblings do not live nearby, remember to tell them funny quips, old stories, and family secrets shared by the parent.

Advice for the Siblings

Do all you can to resolve differences from the past that may have been swept under rug. The caregiver's primary focus is to take care of your parent. Don't allow past differences to temper your relationship with your parent or caregiving sibling.

Siblings who live at a distance may not understand the extent of the caregiver's time commitment and stress. Caregiving is not like raising a child who progresses toward independence. There will be ups and downs for a while, but caring for an aging parent gets harder with time. Communicate regularly and be encouraging to your caregiving sibling. Visit frequently and give her a break—a day, weekend, or week—but remember to leave essential decisions to the on-site caregiving child.

Advice for the Church Family

The caregiver can become a virtual shut-in. She needs prayer and encouragement through emails and cards. Volunteer to accompany her to meet her parent. Offer to be an elder-sitter so she can go to church or out for an hour alone or to an event that her child is in. When Althea took part in caring for

Lisa's father, a loving bond developed between the ladies.

Arrange meals for the caregiver and her family when her parent is in a particularly difficult time or when dying. When her parent dies, draw the caregiver back into the life of the church.

Advice for the Caregiver When Your Parent Is Failing

Read Scripture to your parent, and sing and/or listen to hymns and Scripture songs. Learn what makes your parent comfortable, such as certain food, slippers, or a blanket. Communicate with your parent's pastor and your siblings and encourage the grandchildren to call or Skype with their grandparent.

Both Lisa and Althea found palliative and hospice experts helpful, supportive, and caring. We strongly suggest you get involved with hospice sooner rather than later, because what hospice provides is important long before the last week of life.

Advice for the Caregiver When Your Parent Dies

The glorious hope we have in Jesus is that though your parent is now absent from the body, he or she is present with the Lord. Pray that the Lord will give you hope and courage. Take time to grieve.

Find all the legal documents, contact the siblings, lawyer, funeral director and cemetery, and pastor, and organize the funeral or memorial service. Your lawyer will help probate the will in the county courthouse. We recommend that you get more than the usual five copies of the death certificate for various legalities that will occur later. If you are the executor, you must distribute the inheritance and special gifts.

We hope and pray that the advice we offer above will be helpful to you as a caregiver. To obtain more extensive information, contact Lisa Askey at lmaskey1@gmail.com, and she will send it to you as PDF email attachments. □

The authors are members of Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pa.

WHY WE ALSO SING HYMNS



ALAN D. STRANGE // In the last century and more, especially in North American evangelicalism, hymns have eclipsed psalms in the liturgy of the church. Actually, hymns themselves have given way in more recent years in many communions to the ubiquitous Scripture songs and choruses. We would hope that the forthcoming *Trinity*

Psalter Hymnal might contribute to the recovery of both robust psalmody and robust hymnody.

This comparatively recent loss of psalm singing is quite remarkable, especially in Reformed and Presbyterian churches, whose liturgies historically consisted either mostly or exclusively of psalms. We intend for this book to assist in the recovery of psalm singing for all of those churches, and we have in recent times seen hopeful signs of such. At the same time, we want to foster a recovery of first-rate hymnody.

We as Presbyterian and Reformed Christians affirm that there must be positive warrant in Scripture for what we do in worship. We are not free simply to do what we want, at least as far as the *elements* of worship—the Word, sacraments, prayer, singing, etc.—are concerned. (There is latitude with respect to the *circumstances* of worship—things like time, place, etc.) Some have averred that the praise we render to our God in song during worship is to be restricted by such a principle to the psalms. Others have affirmed that hymns may be added to the psalms and that the Bible

provides warrant for such. We are decidedly of the latter opinion.¹

Worship in Biblical Times

In Old Testament times, it is sometimes argued, the congregation obviously sang psalms. Indeed, there is in some of the psalms a clear leader/congregation responsive pattern that would point to such involvement. Additionally, it is the case that there was likely some family and personal use of certain psalms, suggested by their content. However, much of the ordinary usage of the Psalter was in the temple by the priests or Levites, especially by those designated as musicians.² Thus, it was not so much the Hebrew laity in temple worship that sang the psalms as it was the choristers/musicians among the Levitical and priestly classes. After the destruction of the first temple (in 586 B.C.), both in exile and after, the Jews developed worship in the synagogue. There is evidence both of selected soloists in synagogue worship (which continues to this day in the tradition of the Jewish cantor and other trained singers) and broader congregational usage of at

least some of the psalms. It was evidently the synagogue that familiarized the Jews with the whole Psalter.

The synagogue more than the temple furnished the pattern for the church as it entered the Christian era. The early Christian church corporately sang more of the psalms than the Jews of old ever did, certainly more than the Jews who lived before the days of the synagogue did. There is evidence from the earliest time of the New Testament church, however, for the singing of Scripture other than the Psalms. The early church sang the Exodus hymn (Ex. 15:1–18), the Song of Mary (Luke 1:46–55), the Song of Zechariah (Luke 1:68–79), the Song of Simeon (Luke 2:29–32), songs recorded by Paul (arguably in Phil. 2:5–11; Col. 1:15–20; 1 Tim. 3:16), and other songs in the Old and New Testament. References in Acts, 1 Corinthians, and Revelation further support this contention.³ Songs based more or less directly on these passages will be found in the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*.

Worship in Church History

Pliny the Elder furnishes a pagan

witness to distinct hymns in noting that the Christians sang a “hymn to Christ as God.” Justin Martyr suggests such in his *First Apology*, as does Hippolytus in the *Apostolic Tradition*. Tertullian especially mentions the early church practice of singing in worship “something from the Holy Scriptures or something of [one’s] own composition.”⁴ Having said that, it appears to be the case that the early church, particularly the Roman church and those associated with it, predominately sang psalms or songs drawn directly from Scripture in the churches, meeting as they then did in members’ homes.

While we have fragments of hymns from the ancient church, the earliest complete hymn is that of Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–220), “Shepherd of Tender Youth.” Other hymns attributed to the Fathers of the ancient church are “O Light That Knew No Dawn” (Gregory of Nazianzus, 325–390), “O Splendor of God’s Glory Bright” (Ambrose of Milan, 340–397), and “Of the Father’s Love Begotten” (Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, 348–413). There are several more hymns from the ancient church and even more from the medieval church that are worth singing today in our worship.

Did the first generation of Reformers sing hymns as well as psalms? Before addressing that, we should note that the Reformation embraced psalmody because psalmody was so central in the early church. The Reformation, in no small measure, involved a recovery of congregational singing, such as had existed in the churches meeting in homes, when the church was still under persecution (until the early fourth century). As Hughes Old notes, “The early Christians sang psalms in the celebration of the Eucharist and in the daily morning and evening prayers during the week ... [also] at meal times ... [and] at work and during the quiet times of meditation at midday and evening. It was precisely this ideal that the Reformers wished to see re-established.”⁵

Psalmody, as it had belonged chiefly to the priesthood in Old Testament

temple worship, had come in the Middle Ages to belong to the secular clergy in the parish and especially to the regular clergy in the monastery, as had hymnody; both the psalmody and the hymnody of the period was generally singable only by trained musicians. The Middle Ages witnessed, in other words, a removal of accessible singing as a regular part of congregational life and a relocating of much music, highly ornamented and difficult, to the preserve of clergy particularly trained to sing it.

The Reformation thus sought to return to a psalmody that the whole congregation could sing. It also had, to return to the hymn question, a commitment to strong hymnody. The centers of Reformed liturgical reforms were Strasbourg, Constance, and Geneva. The Strasbourg Psalter of 1537 contained numerous songs that were not psalms—what some called “hymns of merely human composure.” So also did, even more so, the Constance Hymn Book of 1540. To a lesser extent, the Genevan Psalter of 1542 did so. While Calvin, and thus Geneva, clearly preferred psalms (and a lesser number of hymns), other Reformers (such as those at Constance) had a more positive view of hymns, citing precedents from the early church.⁶

Biblical Teaching on Singing

We could continue looking at church history, but that is ultimately descriptive and not prescriptive. Committed as we are to the Bible as our final authority, the question must be: does the Bible prescribe what must be sung in worship and proscribe everything else? Does the Bible itself teach that only the Psalms, for instance, may be sung?

It quite simply does not. Calvin and those Reformers who were of his mind, especially in their reading of the church fathers, seemed to prefer the Psalms as the proper material for singing, not as a matter of principle, but for pragmatic reasons: the Psalms were written to be sung, and they were God’s Word.⁷ Thus, the Psalms were safe and did not have the sorts of problems that plagued

hymnody in the second and following centuries, when heretics began to write hymns. Clearly it was safer, many Reformers reasoned, to stick to the Psalms and other words of Scripture meant for, or amenable to, singing. They did not, however, rule out biblically faithful hymns.

What of the New Testament? Since we don’t believe that the Old Testament itself prescribed psalms only, and we’ve noted the prevalent situation in worship both at the temple and in the synagogue, it would not be reasonable to think that the New Testament prescribed exclusive psalmody. In the other elements—preaching and prayer, for instance—extemporaneous and extra-scriptural expressions (that are clearly in line with the teaching of the Bible) are common and expected. Prayer, particularly, is to the point here, especially since so much of what is sung is addressed to God. If we may sing only from Scripture, why are we not likewise restricted in our prayers? Yet no serious arguments are made requiring us to pray only the words of Scripture and forbidding us to pray extemporaneously and in our own words.⁸

It is also unthinkable, in all of our corporate singing in the church, that we would never sing anything that has the explicit name of our Lord Jesus Christ in it. Unconvincing attempts have been made to assert that the Psalms explicitly name or invoke Christ; however, Scripture simply does not do so explicitly until the New Testament. The thrust of redemptive history, particularly as set forth in the Pauline epistles and the book of Hebrews, is that the complete has come, and the provisional has given way, and so we are to proclaim to all the world that Jesus Christ is Lord. Hence, we are to worship with maximal explicitness, all shadows that typified the Old having given way to the bright light of the New, in the unveiled gospel of Jesus Christ. The hymns recorded in the last book of the Bible, Revelation, especially furnish us with a clear pattern of hymnic praise to the Lamb slain before the

[Continued on page 20]

THE REFORMATION OF VOCATION



D. G. HART // Lutheran scholar Gene Edward Veith asserted correctly that the Protestant Reformation depended on three doctrines: justification by faith alone, the authority of Scripture, and vocation. The last of these three, Veith added, was in many ways the most practical, since it concerned the everyday life of believers.

Vocation encompassed such related ideas as the priesthood of believers, sanctification, and good works. Rather than a theological rationale for the Protestant work ethic or private property, vocation broke decisively with Roman Catholic teachings about work and the Christian life by recognizing the legitimacy of nonecclesiastical labor.

Yet one will need more than a word search application to find the doctrine of vocation in the catechisms of the Reformation. The Westminster Confession of Faith, for instance, devotes separate chapters to Scripture and justification, but not to vocation. Related words, such as “calling,” “priesthood,” and “work,” are not identical to an understanding of vocation. “Calling,” for instance, takes one to the chapter on effectual calling. The Bible’s teaching on the Holy Spirit’s saving calling is indeed crucial to the Christian life. But that chapter says nothing about work. Likewise, “work” will take one to the chapter on good works, another important element in the service that God calls believers to undertake. But it says little directly about the stations or rank to which God calls Christians. The doctrine

of the priesthood of all believers is even harder to find in the Confession since “priest” is so closely bound up with the three offices that Christ “executes as our redeemer”—prophet, *priest*, and king. The closest the Confession comes to mentioning the secular occupations of believers is in its teaching about the Lord’s Day. It refers to “worldly employments and recreations” and teaches that believers should on Sunday observe a “holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations.”

Confessional silence about vocation may explain Veith’s lament that it is one of the Reformation’s lost teachings. At the same time, nothing could be more Protestant than the way the Reformers came to understand the ordinary life of the average believer. That Protestant outlook fueled the engines of political democracy and market capitalism. But it was far more important for recovering biblical teaching about the goodness of creation and the manifold ways in which God cares for his creatures. Recognizing the value of human work was one of the Reformation’s greatest achievements.

Why Vocation Mattered

Prior to Luther, the medieval church maintained a curious mix of pagan and Christian notions about secular occupations. The influence of Greek philosophy was particularly responsible for a disdain for the material world. Accordingly, the life of the mind and the pursuit of virtue through contemplation were the highest forms of endeavor. By contrast, the body, too often subject to passions that closely resembled those of the animal world, was the part of human existence connected to ordinary affairs. According to a contemporary Roman Catholic theologian, Gary Chamberlain, “in the medieval world someone who engaged in the work of business was certainly suspect.” Business activities in the ancient and medieval worlds were regarded as “the lowest sort of avarice and as an attitude entirely lacking in self-respect.” Even Aquinas said of commerce that it was “shameful” since it lacked “any honorable or necessary defining goal.” This attitude toward nonreligious work explains why Roman Catholics historically reserved the language of vocation for priests, monks,

and religious orders. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, a “religious vocation is the special gift of those who, in the Church of God, follow with a pure intention the ecclesiastical profession of the evangelical counsels.”

Salvation in the medieval world divided Christians into two camps. Those set apart for religious work—priests, monks, nuns—followed a direct path to salvation through holy activity. The laity, left outside the church’s orders, led a life compromised by shameful activities, and so increased their dependence on the sacraments ministered by the priestly class as their hope of salvation.

And then along came Martin Luther, breathing fresh air for ordinary Christians with his doctrine of vocation. His ideas were a direct consequence of the doctrine of the two kingdoms. According to Luther, a Christian inhabited two spheres, the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of earth. This way of looking at life between the advents of Christ drew on, but did not replicate, Augustine’s two cities. The Christian, Luther held, is a citizen of heaven’s kingdom (salvation) through faith alone. But in the earthly kingdom, the operative principle is love, since God calls a believer to embody his salvation through acts of charity. Vocation, accordingly, belongs to a Christian’s operation in the kingdom of earth. Luther wrote, “Through the human pursuit of vocations across the array of earthly stations, the hungry are fed, the naked are clothed, the sick are healed, the ignorant are enlightened, and the weak are protected.” In other words, a Christian by working participated in “God’s ongoing providence for the human race.”

The Roman Catholic position, which associated vocation only with the sort of vows that priests and monks took, was a perversion of the idea of vocation. It called Christians away from the vital services they provided for family, neighbors, and countries. It is important to recognize that the Protestant teaching of justification by faith, as opposed to justification by grace-infused works, freed believers from performing

good deeds to earn God’s favor. Instead, a Christian carried out his duties as part of his love for God and neighbor. The good works of caring for others was a fruit of faith, not a means of salvation. This also added spiritual significance to the deeds of ordinary Christians by making them part of the sacrifices that believers offered to God as part of their priesthood (by virtue of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling). In fact, Luther compared the ordinary activities of Christians favorably to the most pious acts of monks:

It looks like a great thing when a monk renounces everything and goes into a cloister, carries on a life of asceticism, fasts, watches, prays, etc.... On the other hand, it looks like a small thing when a maid cooks and cleans and does other housework. But because God’s command is there, even such a small work must be praised as a service of God far surpassing the holiness and asceticism of all monks and nuns.

Calvin echoed Luther on vocation and showed how little separates the two branches of the Reformation in this regard. In his commentary on Luke 10:38–42 in particular, the story of Jesus’ visit to Mary and Martha, and the latter’s frustration with her sister for failing to help with the chores of hospitality, Calvin took aim at the contemplative life that justified monasticism:

When some men were driven by ambition to withdraw from the ordinary intercourse of life, or when peevish men gave themselves up to solitude and indolence, the resolution to adopt that course was followed by such pride, that they imagined themselves to be like the angels, because they did nothing; for they entertained as great a contempt for active life, as if it had kept them back from heaven. On the contrary, we know that men were created for the express purpose of being employed in labor of various kinds, and that no sacrifice is more pleasing to God, than when every man applies diligently to his own calling, and endeavors to live in such a manner as to

contribute to the general advantage.

The point of Luke’s story is not to justify monasticism, but to observe the importance of visiting with Christ while he was with his followers. It is “foolish” to use this story to value contemplation above activity.

Providence, not Predestination

Ever since Max Weber argued that the Calvinist doctrine of predestination was the basis for the rise and spread of the Protestant work ethic and the triumph of capitalism, scholars have examined why Protestantism unleashed market forces that produced the West’s unprecedented wealth. Weber’s own explanation was that predestination produced spiritual anxiety (how do I know I am elect?), and this resulted in high levels of productivity and greater riches.

What Weber’s argument misses is the simple but subtle point in both Luther and Calvin: vocation, the work that people perform in their daily lives, is part of God’s providential care for his creation. Just as God created Adam to work in the garden and care for the creatures around him, so people continue to fulfill God’s plan by performing works that contribute to creation’s continuation. According to the Confession of Faith, God upholds all things by his “most wise and holy providence.” In particular, it teaches that God uses “second causes” to order all things. These might involve the use of medicine to heal a sick patient or the sun to cause a plant to grow and produce food. Secondary causes also include the work of rearing children, engaging in business, teaching, exercising civil authority, and even fixing leaking toilets. In other words, providence, not predestination, explains the doctrine of vocation.

The place to find the idea of calling, then, is in the chapter on God’s providential care for his creation. It may require employing a few theological deductions, but it is right there if you look hard enough. □

The author, an OP elder, teaches at Hillsdale College.

THE PRODUCTIVE PASTOR

// CHRISTOPHER CHELPKA



J. Gresham Machen, mountain climber

Everyone wants a pastor who works hard and works smart. Productive pastors make good use of limited resources. And they bless the church with the ministry of Christ. So we ought to encourage our ministers to be good stewards of their gifts. But we must never encourage them to pursue productivity at any cost.

This is a real danger. Being productive is certainly a virtue, but we live in an age that is obsessed with it. Working hard is good, but the modern world has turned working hard into a religion and has made productivity its god. And if we are not wise to this, we may encourage our ministers to work in a way that does more harm than good. For, as Pascal warns, when we “pursue virtues to their extremes on either side, vices present themselves.”

Like any false religion, the modern cult of productivity promises more than it can deliver. *Guardian* reporter Oliver Burkeman gives an example of this in his excellent article, “Why Time Management Is Ruining Our Lives.” In the late nineteenth century, housewives were promised that “labour-saving machines” would give them more free time. But as their efficiency in housework increased, so did society’s expectations for cleanliness. “Now that the living-room carpet could be kept perfectly clean, it had to be; now that clothes never needed to be grubby, grubbiness was all the more taboo.”

Ministers face a similar situation today. Now that they have access to millions of books, they are expected to access them. And if a minister can host his own radio shows, publish his own books, and mentor people around the world, why shouldn’t he? Perhaps he should. But no one can do everything, or even most things. And those who try to do it all, often find that it backfires.

John Pencavel, a Stanford professor analyzing data on munitions workers during World War II, found that after forty-nine hours of work in a week, gains in productivity

decreased. According to the *Harvard Business Review*, one study found that “managers could not tell the difference between employees who actually worked 80 hours a week and those who just pretended to.” Moreover, studies also show that overwork can lead to “all sorts of health problems, including impaired sleep, depression, heavy drinking, diabetes, impaired memory, and heart disease.”

The cult of productivity also dehumanizes us. Whereas God sanctifies our humanity, the idol of productivity destroys it. One way the modern productivity movement dehumanizes us is by mechanizing us. Think of how the priests of productivity use the language of machines and assembly lines to talk about how you should “streamline your laundry” or “optimize your digestion.”

J. Gresham Machen once said that he loved to climb because it refreshed his soul and helped him “escape ... from the heartless machinery of the world.” But these days, even our rest and recreation must bow to the god of productivity. Once a midday nap was a time for quiet, prayer, and refreshment. Now you should probably feel guilty for that nap, or at least “hack it” to get more done when you wake up.

Machen once climbed the Matterhorn in Italy. It became a treasured memory. “We sat on the Italian summit, with our feet over Italy and our backs to a little wall of summit snow, and let our eyes drink in the marvelous beauty of the scene. What a wonderful help it is in all discouragements, what a blessed gift of God, to be able to bring before the mind’s eye such a vision as that.”

Sadly, many ministers today—Machen’s men included—are no longer fleeing from the mechanized world, but have taken its ideas into their ministry and into the church. I include myself among them, for all the times I’ve considered food, sleep, or bodily exercise to be “necessary evils” instead of blessed gifts from God.

Before leaving this point, I must add that sometimes mechanization is only a cover for something even worse: deification. Just as a minister is not a machine, neither is he God. The world, however, suggests otherwise. Daily, we are told that creaturely limits can be overcome, or at least nearly so, by simply working harder and making smarter choices. This cultural impulse is strong. It is so strong, in fact, that in a recent *New York Times* article on the benefits of running, the writer felt compelled to remind her readers that “running does not make people immortal.” Good to know!

The truth is we all have limitations and we need to admit that. Ministers included. Only God knows everything, can fix anything, and can be everywhere at once. As Zach Eswine writes in *The Imperfect Pastor*, we needn’t repent that we’re not God, only for trying to be. But when ministers refuse to repent for trying to be God, they inevitably harm everyone around them. Ministers don’t burn out like a light, they burn out like a fuse on a bomb.

Admitting our limits means respecting that we are creatures. It also means respecting that we are diverse. God didn’t make all men the same. Some ministers are healthy; some have health problems. Some men need eight hours to prepare a sermon; others need sixteen. And our life circumstances can also affect the shape of pastoral ministry. B. B. Warfield’s life is an example of this.

Benjamin and Anna were newlyweds in Germany when they got caught in a thunderstorm that caused Anna severe trauma to her nervous system and eventually made her bedridden. But Benjamin loved his wife. So because of her fragile condition, he made the choice to stay close to home throughout his career. This likely increased his literary output—he “has done about as much work as ten ordinary men,” Machen said. But as Warfield’s friend Francis Patton remembered, this choice also made him unable to preach, take part in the debates of the General Assembly, serve on church boards, and take other speaking engagements.

Still, it can be hard to admit one’s limitations. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that “out of every 100 people who believe they only need five to six hours of sleep a night only about five people really do.” Why is it so hard to admit our limits?

One reason is that it requires us to be humble and admit our need for others. I think of the apostles who, in the early part of their ministry, had to face the fact that under their watch a scandal arose: some widows were not receiving church funds because they were Greek. Remarkably, the apostles did not double down and fix the problem themselves. Instead, they told the church to find other men to help, so that they could devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. In doing this, the apostles had to tell the church that they were unable to solve a problem that needed to be solved, that they had to rely on other people and trust that God would supply the need. That takes humility.

Today some ministers find themselves in a similar situation. They have a particular calling and yet find their schedules filled with duties that more properly belong to ruling elders, deacons, and other members. It may be tempting to just try harder, but sometimes humility is what is really needed.

Church Plants

Of course, it will be asked: but what if there is no help? What about church plants, for example, where there are no local elders or deacons and the church is small? It’s a good question, and it gets us to the second reason why it’s hard to admit the limitations of pastoral ministry.

When we admit our limitations, we are forced to make difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions. If help cannot be found, it may require stopping activities that feel important, godly, and even necessary. Jesus did that; he would stop healing people in order to be alone and pray. So it may be that the church directory should wait another year. Or perhaps the number of meetings should be limited. Or maybe starting an evening service should be postponed until the pastor is faster at preparing his sermons. Every church will be different and will have to find its own way to live humbly before the Lord.

Of course, not everyone needs to slow down and do less. Honesty will require some ministers and churches to be more zealous and effective than they currently are. We must be good stewards of all that God has given us—both our individual gifts and our corporate gifts.

But if we are honest, we will learn to recognize that God has given us gifts *and* limitations. This is humbling on both accounts, but it is also a double blessing because it teaches us to lean on God for all that we have and all that we don’t have, to trust him for all the things we can’t do, and, by faith, to do all that we can.



Christopher Chelpka

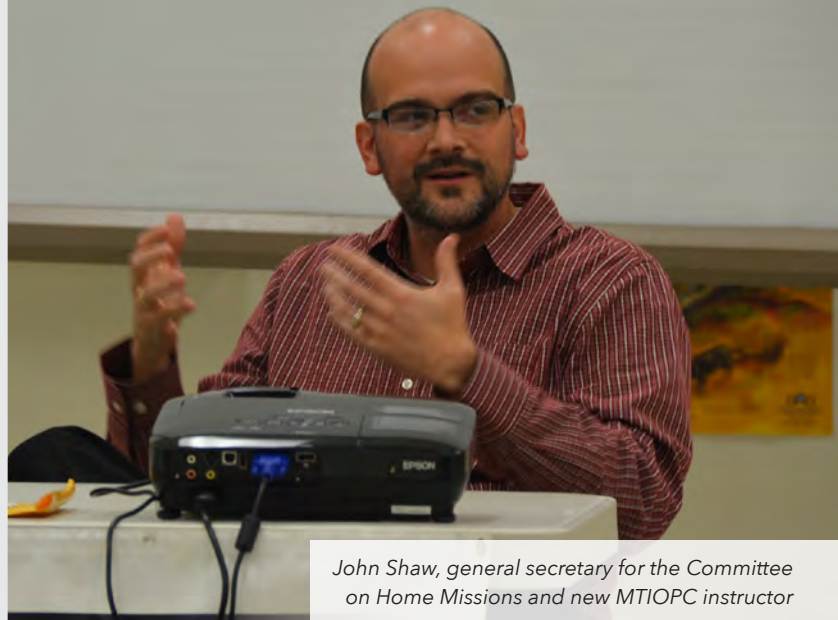
The author is the pastor of Covenant OPC in Tucson, Ariz.

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date Home Missions news and prayer updates, e-mail HomeMissionsToday@opc.org.
New editions: June 14, 28; July 12, 26.

REFORMED EVANGELISM AT MTIOPC

// PATRICIA E. CLAWSON



John Shaw, general secretary for the Committee on Home Missions and new MTIOPC instructor

John Shaw, the general secretary for the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension, recalls how he inadvertently learned to evangelize. His boss kept asking him questions about the Bible and his faith. He simply answered, never realizing that he was sharing the gospel—until he was called into the office of his boss, who excitedly described his conversion. Then John understood what normal evangelism is: just talking about your Savior when the opportunity arises.

Eric Watkins is today the pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church in St. Augustine, Florida. But when he was twenty-one, he was a deadhead hippie skeptic—and then transformed into a Christian who yearned to tell others about Jesus. Newly converted, Eric often showed up at a rural Baptist church with a car full of deadhead hippies! Although he made mistakes, Eric found that his evangelistic efforts were worthwhile when God worked faith in other people's hearts. Thankfulness for those whom God used to share the gospel with him helped prompt his evangelistic zeal, especially for millennials. His earlier questions as a skeptic spurred him to work on five academic degrees as he wrestled with ways to defend the faith. His Ph.D. dissertation focused on preaching Christ from the Old Testament in a postmodern world.

Both Shaw and Watkins have spent much of their ministry as OP pastors on the front lines planting churches. *Reformed Evangelism*, a new course offered this summer by the Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC, emerged from their experiences, their Reformed theology, and their belief that the preaching of the Word in church is the ordinary means that God uses to evangelize. This MTIOPC class wedds their zeal for evangelism with an emphasis on the regular ministry of the Word and prayer, and a call to love our neighbors in word, deed, and prayer.

This course is aimed at filling a gap in the training of pastors and elders. While most are schooled in the theology of

evangelism, they often have not been instructed in the practice of it. "Our goal is to consider how the faithful ministry of the church (word, sacrament, and prayer) is necessarily evangelistic," says Shaw.

Shaw's own evangelistic ministry follows the pattern that the Lord sometimes uses: using normal conversations to save people. Shaw encourages being a friendly, quick, and willing listener, and being a clear and gentle speaker when the opportunity arises. "Conversations often come from the overflow of loving our neighbor," he says.

The course will "consider how an evangelistic focus informs their preaching, teaching, praying, leadership, discipleship, and house-to-house ministry," explains Shaw. They will not only discuss what it means to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4: 5), but also consider the next step: how the session should lead, train, and equip the congregation to do their part in the evangelistic ministry of the local church.

Evangelism programs or event-driven evangelism will also be reviewed, with a goal of enabling the students to separate the wheat from the chaff.

This course is intended to be distinctive in several ways, according to Watkins. The class will be taught from an unapologetically Reformed orientation and present a high view of the church and the ordinary means of grace. Offering the perspective of pastoring and church planting in the OPC, both instructors have the goal of strengthening the work of evangelism within our denomination. "Our real goal is to equip servants in the OPC not only to be better at evangelism, but to strengthen the role of evangelism in our churches," says Watkins.

OP pastors, seminarians or graduates who are licensed to preach or are under care of a presbytery, and elders may take this class.

Many pastors' evangelistic ministry may be similar to their prayer ministry. They know they should do it, Shaw explains, but are ashamed of how little time or attention they give to

it. "This class provides a good opportunity for experienced ministers and elders to recharge in the area of evangelism," says Shaw, who wrote a booklet on *Evangelism in the Local Church*, which is available on the OPC website. Pastors will likely come away with practical ideas that they can implement in their churches, says Watkins.

Although every minister is called to "do the work of an evangelist," many don't carry out this task with energy and effectiveness. "This is a great opportunity to improve in our role as evangelists, and even to build accountability relationships where we can encourage each other to do the work of an evangelist and celebrate the plentiful harvest the Lord might gather through our congregations," Shaw explains.

Seminarians are engaged in the intellectual challenge of ministry preparation, but many lose sight of the practical ministry that flows from their theology. "The typical evangelism class in seminary focuses on the *why* of evangelism (the theology), but there is usually little emphasis on the *how*," Shaw says. This course seeks to keep students from feeling paralyzed in the practice of evangelism by putting their theology into practice.

The class will first consider evangelism from a Reformed perspective by looking at what the Bible says, what church history reveals, and what OPC history shows. They will also evaluate various evangelistic tools. The highlight will be hitting the streets of Columbus, Ohio, sharing the gospel with residents of the community.

"Our hope is that we might all be willing to be stretched beyond our comfort zone for the sake of Christ," says Watkins. "By doing evangelism together and then reflecting on it, we should be able to take some ideas back to our churches and consider, alongside our pastors and elders, how we can do the work of evangelism better together."

"Years from now, we look forward to hearing the stories of how God has been pleased to use our frail gifts to honor his name through the spread of the gospel," says Watkins. "My prayer is that students will come away with a greater love for Christ and his church, and that a renewed zeal for evangelism will flow from that love."

Reformed Evangelism joins a slate of summer MTIOPC classes: *A Hebrew Refresher*, *A Greek Refresher*, and *OPC History*. The registration deadline is **May 30, 2017**. Online classes begin on **June 1, 2017**. The Intensive Training session will be held **August 15–17** at Grace Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Ohio. Applications and more information are available at www.opc.org/cce/MTI.html.

☆ Congratulations

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

- **Rocky Judah La Belle**, *Presbyterian Church of Cape Cod, West Barnstable, MA*

OUR MEMBERSHIP VOWS

The Doctrine of Salvation

Glen J. Clary

The first membership vow of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church states that the Bible teaches "the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation." What is the doctrine of salvation taught in Scripture?

All Scripture is about Jesus Christ. The Old Testament anticipates his coming by promises, prophecies, and various types that point forward to him. The New Testament records his life, death, and resurrection, and explains the significance of his person and work. From Genesis to Revelation, the story of salvation in Jesus Christ is progressively revealed as redemptive history unfolds (Luke 24:25–49).

Salvation is a work of the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father sent his only begotten Son to save us from sin. The Son infallibly secured our salvation by his righteous life and atoning death. The Holy Spirit personally applies the salvation accomplished by Christ to each person whom God chose to save before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3–14).

There are many false religions in the world, but Christianity is the only true religion. According to Christianity, there is only one way of salvation because there is only one Savior, Jesus Christ. Some people claim that all religions are basically the same. "There is only one mountain, but there are many different paths that lead to the top of the mountain," they say. "Christianity is only one of those paths, but there are many others." This is false! It contradicts the Bible.

According to Scripture, Christianity is the only true religion, and Christ is the only Savior. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Salvation is only by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone (John 3:16; Acts 4:12; 16:31; Gal. 2:16). Salvation is a work of God, and therefore he alone deserves the glory (Eph. 2:8–9).

● Out of the Mouth . . .

My six-year-old grandson Logan was praying on his bed with his face down. All of a sudden he flipped over and looked up to the ceiling. His mom asked, "Why did you flip over?" He said, "I want to pray up to God. I don't want the devil to think I'm praying to him!"

—Gary Metzger
Bethlehem, Pa.

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

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN MISSIONS

// RAYMOND E. CALL III



Missionary Ray Call speaking with a woman after a worship service in Montevideo, Uruguay

Like many places in the world today, Uruguay has its fair share of skeptics. Recently, I had the privilege of talking to a woman about the things of God. Our dryer broke, and I was determined to find the needed part. After a quick online search and a call, I went downtown to an import warehouse to purchase the item. In God’s providence, I was able to converse with the woman who worked at the counter.

After finding out that I am a pastor, this retail worker respectfully raised some serious questions about the faith. As a law student, she had some pretty strong beliefs! She pointed out that believers get sick and die, just like anyone else, and then she asked me, “Where is this promised paradise?” Furthermore, she espoused the common objection that religion is a “crutch” for the weak, pointing out her own strength and self-reliance.

While she respectfully listened to my responses, it was clear that she was not going to budge in her opposition to the Christian faith. It was a wonderful opportunity to address her questions, while also sharing the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Considering we were on opposite ends of the pole, it was quite nice and surprising that our discussion was so peaceful and courteous. She even thanked me for talking with her, and I thanked her for her time!

This story highlights an important truth that is indispensable for the Christian, especially one living in a post-Christian culture: the sovereignty of God. One of the first things I heard about Uruguay is that it has been labeled “the missionary graveyard.” That is not a pleasant thing to think about as one considers moving his family halfway across the world! On my first visit to Uruguay, a Brazilian missionary pastor told me that if it were not for his confidence in the sovereignty of God, he would not have lasted there as a missionary for very long.

That statement has stuck with me. I cling to the sovereignty of God. He is absolutely in control of all things, even

over the hearts of men and women. He has called us to proclaim the word of God, sharing the good news with those who are lost in darkness. Our job as missionaries here in Uruguay, just as it is for all Christians everywhere, is to testify to the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ—no matter what the response. The psalmist tells us of the sovereignty of God over all things: “Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases” (Ps. 115:3). God is Lord even over the heart: “The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will” (Prov. 21:1).

This truth should encourage us in our evangelism. First, we can rest in the truth that it is God who is responsible for conversions, not the messenger. Sometimes I struggle with getting frustrated or angry at the person who refuses to believe in Jesus—as if I could force him or her to believe! The sovereignty of God corrects this attitude. Or I might be tempted to be sad and despondent, especially if it is a relative or close friend who does not trust Christ. The sovereignty of God gives us rest, as we know that God is King.

Second, we can have confidence and hope that our evangelistic efforts and prayers will not be useless. When a Christian shares the gospel with, or prays for, a non-Christian, the Lord is able to use that as a means of converting them. Contrary to the old criticism that those who hold to a robust view of predestination will lose all motivation to evangelize, the doctrine of the sovereignty of God actually gives us all the confidence in the world that there is hope that the person we care about will come to know Jesus. We can plead for that person before the throne of God, knowing that he is able to change even the most hardened of hearts. Of course, God is the one who changes hearts and brings people into the kingdom. Sadly, some persist in rejecting Christ. The gospel is received by some as a fragrance of life and spurned by others as an aroma of death (2 Cor. 2:14–16). Above all, the message must be broadly proclaimed: “But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through

us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere” (v. 14). And that is what we hope to do with increasing intensity in Uruguay.

Uruguay is a spiritually dry country, with secularism operating as a dominant force. I’ve heard it described as more like France than the United States in terms of its openness to biblical Christianity. In fact, the educational system is based on the secular French system and was implemented in the early twentieth century. Holiday seasons, which were once largely recognized as religious, are now referred to in secular terms. Holy Week is now officially called the Week of Tourism, and Christmas has been replaced with the Day of the Family.

Despite the cultural context of skepticism, the Lord has blessed our church plant here in the capital city of Montevideo with fruit, demonstrating his sovereign work of grace. We recently heard professions of faith from two young men. They were also baptized and became members of our church, *Iglesia Presbiteriana Evangélica de Montevideo*. One of the young men, Santiago, comes from a Roman Catholic background and is studying history at the university. An avid student of English, he began attending English conversation meetings led by Rev. Markus Jeromin and later visited church, where he sat under the preaching of the Word. Speaking about God’s work in his life, Santiago says, “I believe God changed my heart by giving me the wisdom to correctly understand Scripture, and through that I came to a biblical church in which I grew—and continue doing so—in faith and understanding until I’ve completely repented of my sins.” It is amazing when God changes lives, and he deserves all the glory!

Another young man who has come to faith in Christ told me that he never really took religion seriously before. But recently God has taken hold of his life. When Rafael first came to our church, he was reserved and just beginning to explore the faith. Over time, God has brought him to faith in Christ, and he now has a strong profession of faith in the Lord Jesus as well as a desire to serve and grow. He and his fiancée, who is also a believer, are currently going through premarital counseling with Rev. Mark Richline and hope to marry this year.

Our church recently finished its first new members’ class, and we received our first five new members, including Santiago and Rafael. We continue to meet each Lord’s Day in the evening for our weekly worship service. Pastor Richline and I alternate preaching. He is going through a series on the life of Jacob, and I am preaching through the gospel of John. We also recently finished a VBS outreach (*Club de Niños*), where we had the opportunity to share the word of God with about thirty or so children from the neighborhood, most of whom came from non-Christian families.

We need to be praying for the next generation, that God would be pleased to save many and that he would raise up



Ray Call (left) and Markus Jeromin manning a book table at a local market

leaders from among them for the future work of gospel ministry here in Uruguay. Prayer is paramount if we are to see our sovereign God establish his kingdom in Uruguay and to the ends of the earth!

The author is a PCA missionary with the OPC Uruguay Mission.

What’s New

// Appointments

Miss Hannah J. Carroll (Pilgrim Presbyterian Church, OPC, Raleigh, N.C.) has been appointed to serve as a missionary associate in East Asia for July 2017.

Miss Rebecca J. Call (New Life Presbyterian Church, PCA, La Mesa, Calif.) has been reappointed, and **Miss Sabrina M. Richline** (Sovereign Grace Community Church, OPC, Hughson, Calif.) and **Mr. Bennett A. Sunder** (St. Elmo Presbyterian Church, PCA, St. Elmo, Tenn.) have been appointed to serve as missionary associates in Uruguay for the summer of 2017.

// Comings/Goings

Mr. David I. Voytek (Rehoboth Reformed Church, RCUS, Cerritos, Calif.) and **Miss Stephanie L. Zerbe** (Manor Presbyterian Church, PCA, New Castle, Del.) completed their teaching at Yanbian University of Science and Technology in Yanji, China, in June and July, respectively.

Mrs. Elizabeth H. Andrews, who, with her late husband, the Rev. Egbert W. Andrews, served as an OP missionary in Taiwan for twenty-two years, anticipates celebrating her 100th birthday on June 29.

SUMMER READING CLUB



ANNE SHAW // “Those who do not study history are doomed to repeat it.” This quote has been attributed to many people, but whoever said it first, its truth is widely acknowledged, but often ignored. Believing that a knowledge of church history is an important component of Christian education, retired school teacher

Patricia Watkins put together a Summer Reading Club in 2014 for the children (aged eight to thirteen) of her church, Mission OPC in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Each participant received a folder with a list of resources (books and websites), a time line of church history, worksheets to fill out as they read, and directions for a final project. All of the books were biographies or collections of biographies of noteworthy Christians through the ages, and most were available from the church library. The books were to be read as interest led the reader or books became available in the library.

The Reading Club met every month for about twenty minutes following the church’s fellowship meal. The readers talked about what they had read and shared what they had found most interesting, what they enjoyed, or what they disliked about what they had read that month. The emphasis was always on what they had learned from reading, rather than on how many books they completed. Pat Watkins functioned as a facilitator, but allowed the children to take the lead and “own” the discussions.

Discussions naturally led from *what* happened to each Christian to *why* it happened, and this led to discussions of theology. Ms. Watkins answered questions when she could, and then referred the children to further reading and discussions with parents or elders. Children learned that right

doctrine is important. People have died defending doctrines we too easily take for granted.

The Summer Reading Club was welcomed by parents and children with enthusiasm. There were challenges, though: getting kids to read at all in an age of instant entertainment; finding materials to challenge and inspire readers at various levels of ability and interest; allowing for busy family schedules, including family vacations, during the summer months; sustaining interest over the entire ten weeks.

In the end, the participants agreed that the program did indeed further their knowledge of, and appreciation for, the Lord’s work throughout history. One young participant said he liked the Club because “it encouraged you to read biographies and set goals for yourself about how many books you wanted to read.” One mother appreciated the Club because it got her children “to read a number of books that they would not otherwise have read.” Three years later, participants still recall the stories of people—including children—who suffered and died for their faith.

Here are some things to consider if you are planning to implement something similar in your church:

1. Organization. Ms. Watkins’s Summer Reading Club is just one way to do this sort of thing, so figure out what works for you, considering the

age range of participants, reading lists, times for discussions, expectations, etc. Plan ahead as much as possible to avoid confusion and potential difficulties down the road.

2. Materials. See what resources may already be available in your church library, or ask families in the church if they have any appropriate materials in their home libraries. If more books are needed, Ms. Watkins recommends investing in biographies by Simonetta Carr from Reformation Heritage Books, the History Lives! series by Brandon and Mindy Withrow, and the Trailblazers series from Christian Focus. For a complete list of the resources Ms. Watkins used, please e-mail a request to pat.clawson@opc.org.

3. Incentives. Choose a few appropriate incentives—competition or small rewards—to encourage reading. Unfortunately, the joy of learning is rarely enough motivation, but even reluctant readers have been known to work hard for the right incentive.

4. Simplicity. Keep the whole plan as simple as possible. This is summer, after all.

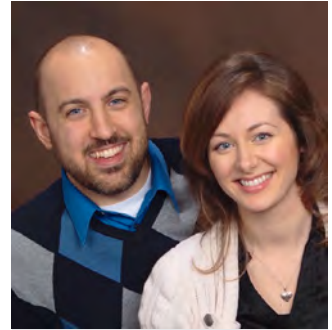
If you think the young people in your church would benefit from this kind of summer reading program, get busy now and make it happen! □

The author is a member of Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pa.

JUNE-JULY

Items pertaining specifically to July are in italics.

1. Pray for missionary associate **Janine Eygenraam**, Quebec, Canada, as she prepares for three weeks of English for Kids camps this summer. / Pray for Home Missions general secretary **John Shaw**, attending General Assembly this week. / Pray for the work of **stated clerk Ross Graham** during the 84th General Assembly, which meets through June 6 at Trinity Christian College, and in the following weeks as he works to complete the minutes and yearbook of the GA.
2. **Andrew and Billie Moody**, San Antonio, Tex. Pray that San Antonio Reformed Church's officers will serve faithfully and effectively. / Foreign Missions administrative assistant **Linda Posthuma** and secretary **Katrina Zartman**. / Pray for the **Psalter-Hymnal Committee members** as they present their work to the 2017 General Assembly.
3. **Heero and Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine. *Pray for students and leaders at this summer's English/Bible camp.* / **Steve and Joanie Doe**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic. Pray for Steve as he does church-planting exploratory work. / Pray for **the students** as classes begin for the summer term of the Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC.
4. **John and Wenny Ro**, Chicago, Ill. (downtown). Pray for the discipleship and ministry of Gospel Life Presbyterian Church. / **Ben and Melanie Westerveld**, Quebec, Canada. *Pray that the English for Kids camps will impact the lives of those who attend.* / Pray for Christian Education general secretary **Danny Olinger** as he presents the work of Christian Education to the General Assembly.
5. Pray for **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia, preparing to return to the U.S. in July to begin a six-month furlough. / **Brett and Maryann Mahlen**, Orland Park, Ill. Pray that Brett's students at Stateville Correctional Institute will be reformed by Christ. / Summer interns: **Brendan Westerveld** at Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, Ohio, and **Ben Petersen** at Bonita OPC in Bonita, Calif.
6. **Christopher and Ann Malamisuro**, Cincinnati, Ohio. Pray that Good Shepherd OPC's hope and joy in the Lord will be sustained. / Pray for tentmaker missionary **T. L. L.**, Asia (on furlough), as she maintains a busy furlough schedule. / **Andrew (and Cyndi) Meyers**, summer intern at Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pa.
7. Missionary associates **E. K.** and **D. V.**, Asia. Pray for a good wrap-up to the semester of teaching. / **Matt and Elin Prather**, Corona, Calif. Pray for God to bless Corona Presbyterian Church's outreach efforts and send new visitors. / **Jeremiah (and Natalia) Dickinson**, summer intern at Lakeview OPC in Rockport, Maine.
8. **Bob and Grace Holda**, Oshkosh, Wis. Pray that members and visitors to Resurrection Presbyterian Church will continue to grow in faith and love. / Missionary associates **H. C.** and **S. Z.**, Asia. Pray for the summer ministry programs. / **Benjamin (and Tiffany) Ward**, summer intern at Redemption OPC in Gainesville, Fla.
9. Tentmaker missionary **T. D.**, Asia. Pray that she will make good progress in her study of the local language. / Pray for **Jim and Judy Bosgraf**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Midwest, as he visits mission works in the presbytery. / **Jeremy (and Kourtney) Brandenburg**, summer intern at Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pa.
10. **Phil Strong**, Lander, Wyo. Pray that God would provide a new place for Grace Reformed Fellowship to meet. / **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia. Pray for Mike's ministry to the future generation of church leaders. / Army chaplains: **Stephen (and Lindsey) Roberts** and **David (and Jenna) DeRienzo**.
11. Missionary associates **Markus and Sharon Jeromin**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray that they will have fruitful contacts in their community. / **Jay and Andrea Bennett**, Neon, Ky. Praise God for his continued blessing on Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church. / **Ryan (and Rachel) Heaton**, yearlong intern at Tyler Presbyterian Church in Tyler, Tex.
12. **Mike and Katy Myers**, Royston, Ga. Pray that Heritage Presbyterian Church will be able to become an organized church soon. / **Mark and Jeni Richline**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for the care and development of the young church in Montevideo. / **Alan Strange**, president of the Board of Trustees of Great Commission Publications.
13. **Ray and Michele Call**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for Ray in his ministry responsibilities. / **David and Rebekah Graves**, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Pray that God would grant growth to Coeur d'Alene Reformed Church through its outreach efforts. / **Jan Gregson**, assistant to the finance director.
14. Home Missions staff administrator **Sean Gregg**. / Pray for missionary associates **Rebecca Call**, **Sabrina Richline**, and **Bennett Sunder**, Montevideo, Uruguay, assisting the Uruguay Mission for the summer. / Diaconal Ministries administrator **David Nakhla**. Pray for the



Bob and Grace Holda

Lord's blessing on the travel and teaching connected with the OPC Diaconal Summit to be held June 15-17 in Wheaton, Ill.

15. Affiliated missionaries **Craig and Ree Coulbourne** and **Linda Karner**, Japan. Pray for their bold witness when they interact with unbelieving contacts. / **Brad and Cinnamon Peppo**, Springfield, Ohio. Praise God for bringing Living Water OPC to the point of particularization. / **Doug Watson**, part-time staff accountant.
16. **Eric and Donna Hausler**, Naples, Fla. Pray that Christ the King Presbyterian Church will have wisdom as they seek to reach local families. / **Ethiopian Reformed Presbyterian Church**. Pray for the church's outreach in both urban and rural areas. / **David Haney**, director of finance and planned giving for the Committee on Coordination.
17. **Bob and Martha Wright**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the completion of ongoing construction projects. / **Jim and Bonnie Hoekstra**, Andover, Minn. Pray that the preaching of the Word will be used to convert sinners and build up the saints of Immanuel OPC. / **James (and Ella) Clark**, summer intern at Grace OPC in Lynchburg, Va.
18. **Larry and Kalynn Oldaker**, Huron, Ohio. Pray that the Lord would add several new families to Grace Fellowship OPC. / Foreign Missions associate general secretary **Douglas Clawson**. *Pray for his participation in a conference in Colombia this week.* / **Ryan (and Rochelle) Cavanaugh**, yearlong intern at Prescott Presbyterian Church in Prescott, Arizona.
19. **David and Sunshine Okken**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for faithful and gifted Karimojong men to teach others the Word of God. / **Jim and Eve Cassidy**, Austin, Tex. Praise God for South Austin Presbyterian Church's newly rented meeting location. / **Bryan (and Heidi) Dage**, yearlong intern at Covenant OPC in Komoka, Ontario.
20. **Lowell and Mae Ivey**, Virginia Beach, Va. Pray for God's blessing on Reformation Presbyterian Church's leadership class. / Missionary associates **Christopher and Chloe Verdick**, Nakaale, Uganda. Thank God for the committed clinic staff. / *New Horizons* cover designer **Chris Tobias** and proofreader **Sarah Pederson**.
21. **David and Rashed Robbins**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that seekers will understand God's Word. / **Bill and Sessie Welzien**, Key West, Fla. Pray for Keys Presbyterian Church, that the preaching of the Word will bring edification and conversion. / *New Horizons* managing editor **Jim Scott** and editorial assistant **Pat Clawson**.
22. Pray for **Lacy and Debbie Andrews**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast, as he visits mission works. / Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **Mark Bube**, as he reports to the Executive Committee meeting tomorrow. / **Daniel (and Marcy) Borvan**, yearlong intern at Merrimack Valley Presbyterian Church in North Andover, Mass.
23. Missionary associate **Kathleen Winslow**, Prague, Czech Republic. Pray for preparations being made for this summer's outreach programs. / **Josh and Kristen McKamy**, Chambersburg, Pa. Pray that Covenant OPC will effectively reach out to their community. / **Kathy Bube**, Loan Fund administrator, and **Mark Stumpff**, OPC office assistant.
24. Pray for Home Missions associate general secretary **Al Tricarico**. / Affiliated missionaries **Jerry and Marilyn Farnik**, Prague, Czech Republic. *Pray for Team Praha, beginning three weeks of ministry to children and young adults this week.* / **Zachary (and Annie) Simmons**, yearlong intern at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Ill.
25. **Ben and Heather Hopp**, Haiti. Pray for Team Haiti, assisting with VBS programs on La Gonâve from June 24 to July 6. / **Joshua and Jessica Lyon**, Carson, Calif. Pray that God's elect will be brought in at Grace OPC. / **Daniel Bobick**, summer intern at Calvary Community Church in Harmony Township, N.J.
26. **Kim and Barbara Kuhfuss**, Eau Claire, Wis. Pray that Providence Reformed Church will be a church of prayer. / Associate missionaries **Octavius and Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray for the translation and publication of Reformed materials into Creole. / **Andrew Moody**, OPC.org website technical assistant.
27. Pray for the labors of missionary associates **Leah Hopp, Sarah Jantzen**, and **Angela Voskuil**, Uganda. / **Paul and Sarah Moureale**, St. Louis, Mo. Pray for a better meeting place and three new families for Gateway OPC. / **Adrian (and Rachel) Crum**, yearlong intern at Bayview OPC in Chula Vista, Calif.
28. **Chris and Megan Hartshorn**, Anaheim Hills, Calif. Pray that God would send more members and more converts to Anaheim Hills Presbyterian Church. / **Eric and Dianna Tuininga**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for the ministry of the men attending Knox Theological College. / **Charlene Tipton**, database administrator.
29. Retired missionaries **Betty Andrews, Cal and Edie Cummings, Greet Rietkerk, Brian and Dorothy Wingard**, and **Young and Mary Lou Son**. Pray for Betty, turning 100 today. / **Tim and Deborah Herndon**, West Lebanon, N.H. Praise the Lord for new visitors at Providence Presbyterian Church. / Navy chaplain **Cornelius (and Deidre) Johnson**.
30. **Mika and Christina Edmondson**, Grand Rapids, Mich. Pray for unity and growth within the congregation of New City Fellowship. / **Church in the Horn of Africa**. Pray for the believers who have been imprisoned for their faith. / **Scott (and Elizabeth) Creel**, summer intern at Calvary OPC in Tallahassee, Fla.
31. **Charles and Connie Jackson**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray that the local radio ministry will bear fruit. / **Mark and Peggy Sumpter**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest. Pray for Mark as he follows up on contacts in the region. / **Janet Birkmann**, Diaconal Ministries administrative assistant.

GREAT COMMISSION THEOLOGY

// DAVID HARR

There are few books of Scripture that are more dear to the hearts of Orthodox Presbyterians than Paul’s letter to the Romans. Its theological richness guides our doctrine and shapes our ministry. The Holy Spirit has used this book of Scripture to bring many of us to the Lord or to ground us in the faith.

But why did Paul write this letter in the first place? Why did such theological riches first get communicated to the Christians in Rome and not to some other church? Paul even admits that Rome fell outside of the main area of his ministry. The gospel had already taken root in Rome, and the apostle’s ambition was to preach where Christ had not yet been named (Rom. 15:20). So why write such a magisterial letter to Rome, of all cities?

While several motivations seem to emerge from the text, an interesting one comes to the surface in Paul’s concluding remarks. In Romans 15:24, he reveals his future plans: “I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.” When his pioneer mission work in the eastern Mediterranean world was drawing to a close, Paul set his sights on Spain, a land where Christ had yet to be proclaimed.

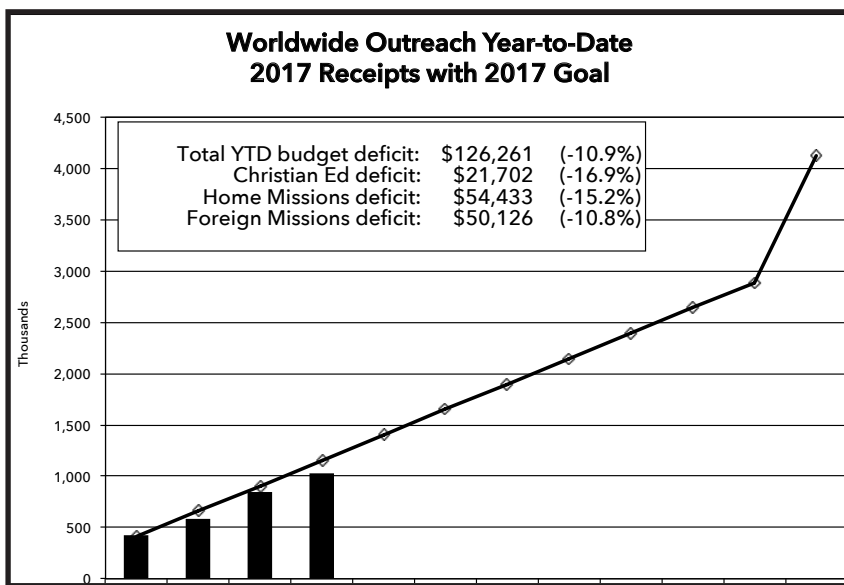
The Christians in Rome were strategically placed to help make this plan a reality. Their hospitality would provide a place for him to rest on the long journey to Spain. Their financial support would provide the critical resources to kick-start the Spanish mission. In order to lay the groundwork for such a partnership in ministry, Paul wrote the letter to the Romans with all its theological depth.

Going back to the main body of the letter

with this in mind, one begins to see the wisdom of the Holy Spirit’s work in inspiring the book. The theology of Paul’s letter would instill commitment to the Great Commission in the Roman believers. Reading of the horrors of human sinfulness (chapters 1–3) would stir up in the Romans a love for those still lost in that depravity. A deeper understanding of the righteousness that comes by faith in Christ (chapters 3–5) would motivate the Romans to give, so that others would hear of this righteousness. Paul’s instruction about the victory over sin that is ours in union with Christ (chapters 6–7) would have them praying for the holiness of the elect in cities yet to be reached. A confidence in God’s sovereign plan (chapters 8–11) would encourage the Roman believers to sacrifice for the work of the gospel, knowing that their labors would not be in vain. Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, intended the theology of Romans to be Great Commission theology. The deep things of God and his gospel were to inspire and motivate the church to pursue the Lord’s call to make disciples of all nations.

The richness of the Bible’s theology should still motivate us today. Endeavor to bring this to mind the next time you dig deep into the truths of Scripture. Perhaps your church is in the middle of a sermon series on Ephesians or a Sunday school class on the Westminster Confession of Faith. Maybe you are working through the latest release from your favorite theological writer. Don’t forget to meditate on the Great Commission. Because God is so great and his gospel is so glorious, we will want to give and serve, so that the nations will hear of this great God and be saved by this glorious gospel.

The author is the pastor of Immanuel OPC in Medford, N.J.



SINGING HYMNS

[Continued from page 7]

foundation of the world, to whom all glory is due.

There is nothing in the New Testament that hints that this glorious message will not be on our lips in preaching, praying, and singing, both in the implicit form that this takes in the Psalms and in the explicit form that it takes in the hymns, which we see exemplified on the pages of the New Testament and in the ancient church.⁹ And then we see it in every succeeding period of the church, which continues to apply the Word of God in every age in all her worship: preaching, praying, and singing in ways that are in keeping with the Word, seeking to communicate the

gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom be honor and glory, forever. Amen. □

The author, an OP minister, teaches at Mid-America Reformed Seminary.

1 *The Reports of the Committee on Song in Worship* (together with a minority report) to the 13th and 14th General Assemblies (1946, 1947) of the OPC (available at www.opc.org/GA/song.html) defined and affirmed the “regulative principle of worship,” arguing that it is in keeping with such a principle to sing hymns as well as psalms (the minority disagreed).

2 Tim Dowley, *Christian Music: A Global History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 11n25.

3 Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship: Reformed according to Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 36–40.

4 Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship*, American Edition (Black Mountain, SC: Worship Press, 2004), 235–36, 260.

5 *Ibid.*, 258.

6 *Ibid.*, 251–53.

7 Calvin never makes an argument for principled exclusive psalmody, nor, as we’ve seen above, was it his practice.

8 The OPC *Reports of the Committee on Song in Worship* uphold both the regulative principle of worship and the freedom that we enjoy in divine worship in our singing and praying: “Although the Bible gives us much instruction and direction in the matter of prayer, indeed even though the whole Word of God is of use to direct us in prayer and even though our Lord gave us a special rule of direction in prayer, we are not required to use any set form of words exclusively and invariably in our prayers.” Neither are we required to use such in our songs in worship.

9 Dowley, *Christian Music*, 26–35.

Trinity Psalter Hymnal Update

Alan Strange and Derrick Vander Meulen
(coeditors of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal)

After receiving the final song approval from both the 2016 General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the 2016 Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America, the primary focus of our work has shifted from music selection to editing, pursuing copyright permissions, and layout.

Our music editor, Lou Ann Shafer, has completed all the editorial matters related to the music and lyrics. This was of first priority, since a copyright holder must see the song in the exact form that it will appear in the published book before giving permission. Even though she has completed that work, we still have proofreaders who will continue to search for typos or other mistakes until the files are submitted to a printer.

Since the editing has been completed, our copyright subcommittee has contacted nearly all of the copyright owners of those songs that require permission. Many have already granted such, but there are still some that we continue to pursue. This process can

be troublesome and time-consuming because some copyright owners simply don’t respond, while others may respond with difficult or unreasonable requests (or even denial of permission).

The URCNA Liturgical Forms committee has submitted their final copies of the Three Forms of Unity, which, with the Westminster Standards, will be included in the back of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*.

All of this means that Jim Scott, our layout editor, has begun the complex job of laying all of this out in preparation for printing. This will involve reconfiguring all the music scores to fit on hymnal-size pages by the music editor (and perhaps some assistants).

We have received quotes from multiple printers, based on the size and specifications of the *Trinity Hymnal* (Revised). We will not make a final decision on choosing a printer until the layout of the entire *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* is complete. The reason for this is that printers must know the exact number of pages and when the printing will occur before they can give a firm quote. The timing is important because, like lumber, the cost of paper fluctuates.

Our goal is to have all the layout

completed by the end of September, although we realize that this may not prove possible. At that point, we hope to get firm quotes and choose a printer by the end of October. We will then submit the files for printing and, Lord willing, have the published *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* ready by the end of 2017 for distribution.

This book, containing no documents that are specific to any one denomination or federation, will represent Reformed ecumenism at its best, and we hope that it will be used to draw confessional Presbyterian and Reformed communions worldwide closer together. In these days of societal decay and the pervasive embrace of worldviews antithetical to the Christian faith, what could be more needed? We would affirm that nothing is more needed than all faithful churches calling the world to its only and true hope: the worship and praise of our triune God, focused particularly on the person and work of Christ, the only Redeemer of humanity and the only one who has done for us what we could never do for ourselves. All praise to our great and gracious God! That is just what the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* seeks to promote.

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

REFORMADA, SAN JUAN

Dick Ellis

During a conference in San Juan commemorating the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, elder Jaime Zapata said to me, “We have turned the corner.” Iglesia Presbiteriana Reformada has seen evidence of God’s work in several ways.

People from several nearby churches joined the Reformada congregation in commemorating the Reformation. Several pastors spoke on the theme of *sola Scriptura*. God is growing the church in knowledge of the truth and joy appropriate to gospel-saturated people.

The high point of the weekend was the Sunday morning service. On March 19, ten people were received as members, including two by covenant baptism.

Also on that day, Angel Carrasquillo was ordained and installed as an elder of the church. Participants in the service included Pastor Carlos Cruz, elders Miguel Flower, Jaime Zapata, and Efrain Girau, Rev. Richard Ellis, and Rev. Bill Green (URCNA missionary to Costa Rica).

The Spirit is adding people to the church as members share their joy in the gospel of God’s sovereign grace. People are eager to hear the truth of the Reformed faith, and the Spirit is growing solid disciples. The Lord has recently brought a number of young adults, both single and married, into the Reformada congregation.

Years ago, construction of their building ground to a halt; even today the sanctuary is without a roof. But money coming from the OPC Loan Fund, and work promised by a contractor, a fellow Christian, underscores that the corner has indeed been turned.

The two OP churches in San Juan and one mission work in Arroyo, on the southern end of the island, are congregations of the Presbytery of New Jersey. The economy of Puerto Rico creates financial pressures for the families and the churches. But the churches are confident in the ongoing work of the Lord, and members



New members received at Iglesia Presbiteriana Reformada in San Juan, Puerto Rico

seem to have an irrepressible joy.

One of the phrases repeated by Pastor Carlos Cruz is “El pecado embrutécete” (“Sin makes us brutes”). But more powerful than our sin is the glorious gospel of

Christ, crucified for our sins and raised for our justification. In the renewing power of the Spirit, there is new and joyful life in the Orthodox Presbyterian churches in Puerto Rico.



At the installation of Lane Keister on April 7 as pastor of Momence OPC in Momence, Ill., were: (front row) Arne Keister (PCA elder), Dr. J. C. Keister, Lane Keister (with son Edmund), and Momence elders Michael Cornwell and Larry Herman; (back row) OP ministers Bruce Hollister, Michael Kearny, Camden Bucey, and Alan Strange

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S RETREAT

Jane Crum

The thirty-fifth annual Southern California OPC Women's Retreat was a joyful weekend conference! Eighty-seven women set aside their normal responsibilities to get away and consider the blessings of Christian friendship.

Biblical Counselor Tricia Mathys taught on "Iron That Sharpens: The Glory of Christ in Everyday Friendship." The very first OPC Retreat in our area was the 1982 conference, and it was on the same topic: counseling each other as friends! Many church friends, as well as mothers and daughters, attended this retreat together, making the topic immediately applicable.

The mountain town of Idyllwild, California, afforded many opportunities for enjoying God's beautiful creation in the free time on Saturday afternoon. The most energetic of us hiked the Ernie Maxwell Trail, some checked out the shops in the village, and others participated in the crafts being taught or practiced with the choir for Sunday worship. Our resourceful sisters revealed their various gifts at the talent show on Saturday night; some of them were hilarious!

On Sunday morning, we gathered early for devotions on the topic of prayer, led by Della Chelpka from Covenant OPC in Tucson. After breakfast, we thanked the Lord and interceded for the churches and many personal needs in our presbytery. Regional home missionary Dave Crum led us in worship and preached on "Jesus, What a Friend!" We were reminded that "a friend loves at all times, and a brother is

born for adversity."

Before we descended from the mountain, some said good-bye until next year. Many returned to their churches, encouraged to serve together as friends in the Lord's harvest field.

UPDATE

CHURCHES

- **Grace Presbyterian Church** in Madera, Calif. (Terry Thole, stated supply), a mission work of the Presbytery of Northern California and Nevada, was closed by the presbytery as of May 1.

MINISTERS

- On April 21, the Presbytery of the South dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Robert A. Berry** and Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ft. Pierce, Fla., and placed him on retired status.

- **Richard M. Edwards** retired as a teacher at Bethel OPC in Oostburg, Wis., as of March 31.

- **Carl E. "Erick" Erickson**, retiring after serving fifty years as pastor of New Covenant OPC in South San Francisco, Calif., preached his last sermon as their pastor on April 2.

- On April 28, **John M. Fikkert** was installed as a teacher at Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church in Des Moines, Ia., to serve primarily at Hope Reformed Presbyterian Church in Pella, Ia.

- The Presbytery of the Southeast has voted to dissolve the pastoral relationship between **Irfon P. Hughes** and Shiloh OPC in Raleigh, N.C., at his request and with the concurrence of the congregation, effective May 1, due to his retirement.

- **Lane B. Keister**, formerly a PCA minister, was installed as pastor of Momence OPC in Momence, Ill., on April 7.

- **Marcus A. Mininger**, a professor at Mid-America

Reformed Seminary, was installed as an associate pastor of New Covenant Community Church in Joliet, Ill., on April 2.

- On March 25, the pastoral relationship between Resurrection OPC in State College, Pa., and **Jeremiah W. Montgomery** was dissolved effective June 30; he has been called by the Committee on Foreign Missions to serve in East Asia.

- The Presbytery of the South has dissolved the relationship between **Mark D. Soud** and Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Ala., effective December 31, 2016, due to the dissolution of the congregation.

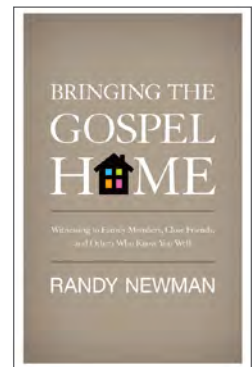
REVIEWS

Bringing the Gospel Home: Witnessing to Family Members, Close Friends, and Others Who Know You Well, by **Randy Newman**. Crossway, 2011. Paperback, 224 pages, list price \$16.99. Reviewed by OPC member **Emily Van Dixhoorn**.

As Christians, we share a longing for people to know Christ as we do, especially the people closest to us, like family and friends. But people who are close to us are

often the most difficult to witness to. They have heard it before, or they just aren't interested. Perhaps we have even given up. Randy Newman's book offers practical encouragement in this difficult but worthy task.

Newman humbly shares lessons in witnessing—including those he learned from watching his seventy-five-year-old Jewish mother come to faith—and "somehow, mysteriously, having God involve me in the process." His book is not a set of rules or a "how-to" program. Rather, he tells stories that demonstrate how God has worked in many families before yours and mine.



Some of the ladies at the Southern California retreat

Perhaps God is calling you to be involved in the process of another coming to faith. This book holds out a full-orbed approach to witnessing, including silent displays of love, prayerful waiting, compassion, empathy, seeking common ground, asking questions, what he calls “stepping on the clutch before shifting gears,” and even conversations by the hospital bed.

His stories, which come from others as well as from his own life, give us the benefit of an outside perspective. We can see what has worked and what hasn’t—and have many good laughs along the way. We can be encouraged by the faith of others, and perhaps usefully reflect on our past witnessing attempts, or lack thereof.

In addition to stories, the book presents practical strategies that are consistent with solid, presuppositional apologetics. This is not another book about the evidence for Christianity, although he acknowledges that such books have their place. This book is more about discerning where your friends are spiritually and engaging with them there. It is about raising thoughtful questions in conversation more than unloading the answers. The book also encourages us to be prepared with an answer for when it is needed.

Newman sympathetically acknowledges that this kind of witnessing isn’t easy. The author gives us a flavor of it by offering sample scenarios, such as the holiday family dinner table. He presents conversations between a non-Christian and a Christian, including a predictable evangelical response and more gracious alternatives. His approach can pave the way for healing in broken relationships. He demonstrates how we can not only point to God’s grace and truth, but also be gracious while doing so.

Thankfully this book doesn’t include everything. It is an easy, enjoyable read. For those who need more time to meditate on this approach, Newman’s books *Questioning Evangelism* and *Corner Conversations* provide substantive follow-up. Significantly, Randy Newman assumes that witnessing is not comfortable or natural for most Christians, but he makes the case that it is worthwhile, even urgent, and he gives us a helping hand.



Free Literature in Spanish

Free materials in Spanish are available by writing to Steve Larson at conchovalleyopc@aol.com. These include *The Westminster Shorter Catechism and Confession of Faith*, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, *Bible Lessons* (the illustrated Catechism for Young Children), *The Ten Commandments* (for youth, by OP pastor Roberto Quiñones), *The Living Savior* (by J. Gresham Machen), and *Book II of Institutes of the Christian Religion* (by John Calvin).



Short-Term Missions Prayer Calendar Summer 2017

Pray for health and safety, boldness in witness, effective ministry, increased missionary vision, and spiritual growth for those participating in short-term missions this summer. The 2017 schedule includes:

May–July	OP Uganda Mission/KEO summer helpers (Karamoja)
May–September	Boardwalk Chapel (Wildwood, New Jersey)
June 24–July 6	Team Haiti (La Gonâve, Haiti)
June 26–30	English for Kids Bible Camp (Quebec City)
July 1–8	English for Kids Bible Camp (St-Georges de Beauce, Quebec)
July 1–31	English House outreach to university students in Asia
July 3–7	English for Kids Bible Camp (Quebec City)
July 3–7	English Club (Montevideo, Uruguay)
July 10–14	English for Kids Bible Camp (Quebec City)
July 12–24	English Camp (Czech Republic)
July 22–31	Team Utah (Magna, Utah)
July 24–August 14	Team Praha (Czech Republic)
August 21–25	English for Teens Bible Camping Trip (Quebec)

Visit OPCSTM.org and click on General Information for the complete STM Prayer Calendar and an STM Prayer Guide.



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