

NEW HORIZONS

— *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH —

5 Longing for Heaven,
Longing for God
// by Jonathan Gibson

JANUARY 2019

8 A Christian Response to
Disaster *// by Scott E. Pearce*

Homesick

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New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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At Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Kent, Washington, four baby boys were born in less than three months. Emmanuel OPC is thankful for the gift of covenant children and the opportunity to see God's work as he grows and builds the church. (From left to right) Caleb Levi was born on July 20, 2018; Peter Tanner on August 2, 2018; Miles Gardner on September 17, 2018; and Henry Buiten on October 10, 2018.



HOMESICK AND HOLY



JUDITH M. DINSMORE // At one time, “homesickness” was chiefly a medical term, the English translation of a disease called nostalgia, from the Latin *nostos*, “homecoming,” and *algia*, “pain.” Coined in 1688 to describe a strange physical ailment that had been almost instantly cured upon the patient’s return home, nostalgia

was last written as the cause of death on a death certificate in 1918.

Homesickness has plummeted in serious use since then, banished to kindergarten classrooms or maybe freshman dorms. Our travel-loving, globalist culture does not seem to have time for it; we are encouraged to be at home in every corner of the world. Maintaining a vital connection to just one seems to be either narrow-minded or wimpy—or both. Never a bragging right, homesickness today has become downright shameful.

As a Christian, the shame can be compounded: shouldn’t believers, of all people, be the least homesick for an earthly home since they live in hope of a heavenly one? Paul instructs us to set our minds “on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Col. 3:2). Aren’t these emotions of homesickness just one more shackle of a sinful existence?

Not necessarily. We are bound neither by our culture nor by our emotions. Easy-breezy mobility is no virtue, and homesickness need not be a vice. We

can be both homesick and holy.

The Goodness of Home

There should be no shame for the Christian who has a home and loves it. Nowhere are we called to dwell and delight in each inch of earth—that is God’s job, and we couldn’t if we tried. Despite technology, we are stuck in the here and now, limited by time and distance. Yet, here and now is always where God works; he is not just “over there” or “back then.” As we seek to obey God in the day-to-day details, he reveals himself in those very dish rags and dental appointments.

Through common grace, his hand is visible in the leaves about the yard, in the conversation of neighbors, in the cheer of the local library. Through special grace, he is found where we worship, where we celebrate communion, and where we pray. We train ourselves in habits, specific to that place, that serve him. We respond to needs in the name of Christ. Our affections and responsibilities swirl around one place, one neighborhood, or one city. Small

wonder, then, that the people around us and the place we’re in become precious. By seeking God’s presence, we grow a home.

Then, for some reason or other, we move. That affection becomes a source of pain rather than joy: “Everything here is unlovely,” we might think. The responsibilities we assumed can haunt us: “How are they doing without me?” Most frightening, the very thing that makes home so good, the presence of God, can make homesickness so terrible—*where is God, here, anyway?*

Discontentment

Homesickness can drive us to God; it can also drive us away from him.

Homesickness can come as grief, boredom, fear, frustration, depression, or any number of expressions, depending on your personality. But all of these forms of homesickness, no matter what the particular cause, can sidetrack you. They distract you from your calling, suck away joy, and frustrate you. That is because

homesickness, while in itself not a sin, can quickly turn into discontentment. (*Uprooted*, Rebecca VanDooede-ward, 20)

For me, homesickness manifests as an overwhelming conviction that everything is wrong—I am in the wrong neighborhood, living with the wrong people, going to the wrong church. I took a wrong turn. I'm adrift. And I'm stuck.

This homesickness is far more than missing a special someone or being wistful for days gone by. It's a deep-seated displacement, and its tremors can put hairline cracks through the structure of my days.

Author Jen Pollock Michel suggests that displacement is our society's "low-grade fever." We aren't living the life we expected to. In her book *Keeping Place*, Michel demonstrates how many of the defeated expectations of Christians revolve around home: "We pine for marriage and stay single. We want children and birth barrenness. At our tables too many of us find loneliness instead of company" (199). We may have a home, but it's not a refuge. We may have a home, but when we return, it is no longer familiar to us and we are not familiar to it.

Discontentment responds to such difficulty with doubt rather than trust. Like every sin, it longs to usurp God's throne, to overthrow his will and set up an alternate kingdom where our own will rules. And like every sin, discontentment also displays just how weak we are to accomplish our desire.

Morning after morning we wake up to find God still on his throne and us still in our not-home. But yet he shows mercy.

No Wrong Addresses

Christ, in his human nature, also had to submit to being in one place, at one time. Born-and-bred churchgoers know an inordinate amount about one little corner of the world—its emperors, its people groups, and the construction of its stables. The choir of angels showed up in one field, not many. Christ came

to the Near East, not imperial China, precolonial Africa, or primitive America. He grew in one woman's womb; he served supper in one room. His body rested in one tomb.

Although Christ was tied to one place, that place was not home. "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head," Christ warned those who would follow him (Matt. 8:20). Yet Christ was not adrift; although homeless, he did not wander. Steadfastly, he set his face toward Jerusalem. "I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me," he said (John 5:30). And his Father had a plan. It was no accident Christ arrived where he did, when he did. And when he left, he promised, "I go to prepare a place for you" (14:2).

In Rosaria Butterfield's latest book, *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*, she records how she and her family befriended a reclusive and standoffish neighbor across the street. A year later, the neighbor asked her why she bothered. "God never gets the address wrong," she said.

Home-Making

We, too, must submit to where we are born and where we are brought. That means that we may not live where we want to live—but God never gets our address wrong. It is no accident that we are where we are. Regardless of how alien our lives may seem, there was no "wrong turn." In fact, it might be this very alienation that ties us to Christ. Obeying his commands for the here-and-now allows us to both home-make and be properly homesick.

First, in everything give thanks. When homesick, I pine for particulars: a friend's conversation, the sound of the wind around the corner of the house. To counter discontentment, I've found that I must then cherish particulars, "giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:20). It's no vague battle to make a new home; God is in the details. He delights in sparrows, and so must I—not to mention new walking

trails, a new friend's homemade soup, or a rearranged room.

Second, keep the house of God. Sundays make me grumpy; on this day of rest, I cannot busy myself with tasks and a great deep of discontent opens up. The people in the pews next to me only remind me of the family and church family that I am not with. Yet, on Sunday, I also have the privilege in public worship of doing exactly what I need to do most: walk into the presence of God. The stakes are high. This of all days, then, is not the day to submit to my will, but God's. And he wants me in church, with a joyful heart that's trusting in him.

Third, think twice before leaving a home; count the spiritual cost. Uprooting yourself will affect you spiritually, for better or worse, because it will change your habits and your relationships, these earthy means of knowing God. Especially if it is your first time, expect to pour time and energy into seeking God in a new place.

The Presence of God

This human limitation of being stuck in one place at one time is not easy, but it has driven me to worship God for one undermentioned incommunicable attribute: his omnipresence. Although he is physically now at God's right hand, Christ's presence fills this earth. And this is a great comfort to me. He tenderly watches over the people and places I care *about* but cannot care *for*. Because when I yearn for them, I am, in the end, yearning for his goodness found in them. And some day, they will be one: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God" (Rev. 21:3).

In the new heavens and the new earth, when God dwells with us and we with him, place will no longer cause sickness and distance will no longer separate. All I need will be within arm's reach. □

The author is managing editor of New Horizons.

LONGING FOR HEAVEN, LONGING FOR GOD



JONATHAN GIBSON // C. S. Lewis wrote, “If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world.” Augustine wrote, “O God, you made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.”

These two quotations capture the affectional pulsebeat of the Christian life: a *longing for another world*, a *longing for God*.

The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob exemplified this affectional pulsebeat as they lived in tents in the Promised Land:

By faith [Abraham] went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, *living in tents with Isaac and Jacob*, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. (Heb. 11:9–10, emphasis added)

Israel’s annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem also exemplified this desire for another world. The temple in Jerusalem was a physical symbol of heaven, God’s abode, on earth. The pilgrimages were a regular reminder to the people of God that Canaan was not their true home—there was something beyond Canaan, something better than Canaan.

Psalm 84 is set in the context of these pilgrimages, and it goes to the

very heart of what the journey to God’s temple was all about: longing for heaven and longing for God. If Psalm 84 teaches us anything, it’s that this world is not our home; we’re “just a-passing through.”

Now, by “this world,” I don’t mean that the earth below is not our home and heaven above is. That would be Platonism, a dividing of the “physical down here” from the “spiritual up there.” Rather, I mean *the age* of this earth and this heaven is not our home; our home is *the new age* of the new heavens and new earth. So, with that qualification in mind, let me show you three ways in which this psalm pulses for heaven and for God.

A Longing for Heaven, a Longing for God (vv. 1–4)

The psalm opens, “How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!” The word “lovely” does not mean that God’s temple dwelling was “lovely looking,” although I’m sure it was. Rather, the word “lovely” here means something like “lovable.” How *lovable* is

your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!

Two opposite descriptions in verse 2 then describe the psalmist’s longing for this place. The psalmist *faints* for it, as if the blood rushes from his body. His heart and his flesh also *sing for joy* for it—the blood now rushes back, if you like, because you can’t sing if you’re feeling faint. These opposite experiences, fainting and singing, together capture an intense longing for God’s dwelling place.

God’s temple is this psalmist’s one consuming passion, so much so that he expresses envy in verse 3 at those who live there permanently. He’s envious of the sparrow who finds a home in the arches of the roof. He’s envious of the swallow who makes her nest in the eaves of the temple—she gets to have her young near his altars. The birds have free and easy access to God’s house; they come and go as they please. But this psalmist can’t. He has to make a pilgrimage to God’s temple, and then he has to leave again for months at a time.

The psalmist is also envious of

those who live in the temple courts: the priests, the Levites, and the gatekeepers. He's envious of them because they get to live in God's house and sing his praise continually.

I've been reflecting on this since the death of our daughter, Leila. One Sabbath evening while we slept, at nine months old in her mother's womb, Leila quietly slipped away to her eternal rest. Jesus called her name and she went to him. I remember so well the longing for her to come back, longing to feel her kick again in her mother's womb. Four days later she was stillborn. The next day, we handed her over to hospital personnel and walked out of the hospital without her. I can still remember the sharp, searing pain of leaving her. As my wife, Jackie, held her, I kissed her on the forehead and said, "My sweet, sweet Leila, we'll see you on the other side." Oh, how we have longed for her to return, to come back to us—even just for a day! But think about what we'd be asking of her: we'd be asking her to leave the courts of the Lord of hosts, to leave her home in heaven where she gets to praise God continually. Why would we want her to do that?

Samuel Rutherford once wrote to a mother who lost her child: "Today the Lord has cut off one of your branches so that you might grow higher and closer towards heaven." Life is not about those who have gone before us coming back to us; it's about us going to them.

This psalmist doesn't want the sparrows or swallows confiscated from God's house. He doesn't want them to come and live with him in his house in the countryside. He wants to go and live where they live. This psalmist doesn't want the priests and Levites and gatekeepers to leave the temple. He wants to go and live where they live, because blessed are those who dwell in

them.

Have you ever heard it said of some Christians, "They are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good"? Well, I think that that comment couldn't be more wrong. Those who are heavenly minded are of *great* earthly good, be-

Psalm 84

- 1 *How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!*
- 2 *My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.*
- 3 *Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God.*
- 4 *Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! Selah*
- 5 *Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.*
- 6 *As they go through the Valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools.*
- 7 *They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.*
- 8 *O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah*
- 9 *Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed!*
- 10 *For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*
- 11 *For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.*
- 12 *O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!*

cause they are like a refreshing spring in the valley of sorrow. Such people remind us that this world is not our home, that we're just a-passing through because we are on the highway to Zion,

God's house, ever singing his praises.

Notice how the stanza ends with a focus on God more than the temple: "Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing *your* praise." Heaven is a praiseworthy place, but only because it is inhabited by a praiseworthy person—God. That's why this psalmist finds God's dwelling place so lovable, because the Lord of hosts, the living God, lives there. Heaven is only heaven because of who's there.

A Journeying to Heaven, a Journeying to God (vv. 5-7)

The last stanza ended with a blessing on those who live in God's temple (vv. 3-4). This stanza begins with a blessing on those who journey to God's temple: "Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion." In other words, blessed are those who are already in heaven, and blessed are those who already have the journey to heaven fixed in their hearts. Such people, says the psalmist, are a source of refreshing comfort as the pilgrims travel through the Valley of Baca.

We're not sure exactly where the Valley of Baca was, but "Baca" likely refers to balsam trees, which grew in the Valley of Rephaim, southwest of Jerusalem. The pilgrim route to Jerusalem through this valley would have been very dry during the autumn season of the Feast of Tabernacles and also dangerously close to Philistine territory. Perhaps most significantly, "Baca" sounds exactly like the Hebrew word for "weeping." This is the valley of weeping (perhaps the balsam trees "wept" their "gum").

Yet the psalmist says that those who go into this "vale of tears" with their strength firmly rooted in God, and with pilgrimage in their hearts, can turn a dry place into a place of springs. That is, their lives become a blessing to those who journey with

to God himself. This stanza ends, just like the previous one, with God. The destiny of our earthly pilgrimage, just like the Israelites' of old, is not to a place so much as to a person—to God.

A Prayer to Reach Heaven, a Prayer to Reach God (vv. 8-12)

At first sight, verse 9 feels out of place: “Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed!” If verse 9 is removed, verse 8 runs quite naturally into verse 10. What is verse 9 doing here? Well, in the Old Testament, a shield was a metaphor for Israel's king, and “anointed one” was a title for the king. It's a prayer for God's king.

But that then raises another question: what has God's king got to do with this psalmist's pilgrimage to God's dwelling place? Quite a lot, actually. The prosperity of God's people and the protection of God's temple in Zion were dependent on the prosperity of God's king. If Israel's king was disobedient, then God's curse fell on king and people. Just think of the exile: when Israel and Judah went into exile, it was because their kings fell into sin. The curse on Judah, the southern nation, resulted in the Babylonians coming into the land and destroying the temple. Access to God's house was ended because the king no longer found favor in God's eyes.

That's why this psalmist prays that God might behold the king and look with favor on him. If the king doesn't prosper, access to the place the psalmist loves will be shut, and access to the God he loves will be ended.

The psalmist wants God to look with favor on the king *because* God's dwelling place is incomparable: “For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness” (v. 10).

This verse contains two comparisons. The first is a temporal comparison: a day in God's courts is better than a thousand days elsewhere. The second is a qualitative comparison: being a doorkeeper in God's house—that is, serving

at the periphery of God's temple sanctuary in a menial position—is better than living in the tents of wickedness, with all its fleeting pleasures.

The psalmist then explains *why* God's courts are incomparable: “For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor” (v. 11). The sun is a picture of life and light; the shield, a picture of protection. God is life and light and protection, and he gives favor (grace) and honor (glory) to his people. In other words, a day in heaven is better than a thousand elsewhere *because God is there*—the God of grace and glory and good things.

What are these good things (v. 11) that God does not withhold from those who walk uprightly? A spouse, children, a job promotion, good health? All these are good things, but I don't think they are what is promised here. We can, like Job, suffer the loss of such things while seeking to walk uprightly. So, what exactly is meant by “no good thing”? The answer is found in verses 10 and 11. The good thing that God does not withhold from us is *being with him in his courts*. God does not withhold heaven from us; he does not withhold himself from us. But, of course, this is only true if he has looked with favor on his anointed king (v. 9). For us, this means God must look with favor on Jesus Christ, our King.

Christ, the Pioneer Pilgrim

One of the ways in which the Psalms connect to Jesus Christ is in the sphere of typological experience. The psalmist or the person described in the psalm (like the blessed man in Psalm 1, God's anointed king in Psalm 2, or the righteous sufferer in Psalm 3) is a type of Christ in their experience. That is, the fullest and most perfect expression of their desires, disappointments, and sufferings is found in the life experience of Jesus Christ. In this regard, the psalms are not just about Jesus; they were also experienced by Jesus.

As the true, faithful Israelite, Jesus perfectly experienced the desires expressed in this psalm, especially the

vivid, intense pulsebeat for heaven and for God. Jesus was the Son of Man, born of Mary, but throughout his life he never forgot that he was a son of heaven. During his earthly ministry, he wandered from place to place like his patriarch fathers before him. In fact, he didn't even have a tent to dwell in. “Foxes have holes, birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Matt. 8:20). Why? Because for the joy set before him, he endured the cross and then sat down at his Father's right hand in his presence (Heb. 12:2). This world was not his home, he was just a-passing through.

The life of our Lord is one of those parts of the Bible—like those of the patriarchs in Canaan and those of the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem—where the affectional pulsebeat for heaven, for God, is pumping strong. Jesus was the pioneer pilgrim, the one who in his earthly life embodied the perfect longing for heaven, the perfect longing for God. And because he perfectly lived out this longing, God looked with favor on him as our Anointed King. When Christ died, the temple curtain was torn in two: God removed the angelic barrier that had stood between him and humanity since the day Adam was expelled from the garden-temple of Eden.

Jesus loves me! He who died
Heaven's gate to open wide;
He will wash away my sin,
Let his little child come in.

And when God does let us “come in” to his heaven after our earthly pilgrimage, we will find that C. S. Lewis and Augustine were right: we were made for another world, we were made for God. The deep longings we experience now will be met then, fully and finally, not simply in heaven itself, but in God himself. □

The author is a teaching elder in the International Presbyterian Church (UK) and assistant professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary.

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO DISASTER



SCOTT E. PEARCE // If it's late summer in North America, the images and videos are hard to miss. As yet another hurricane shows up on the radar, it dominates cable and internet news. Slideshows with hundreds upon hundreds of photographs, interviews, and before-and-after satellite images all weave together a composite

story of disaster, ruin, survival, and bravery.

Perhaps we have only experienced these disasters through the news cycle and have grown accustomed to the rhythm of forecast, evacuation, landfall, and disaster. Maybe our hearts have grown numb to the real heartache and pain that are inseparably linked to these personal stories that we receive from the impersonal news.

Or perhaps fleeing your home in advance of a natural disaster is already a part of life in your corner of the world. Perhaps you have boarded up windows while a hurricane swelled and swirled in the Atlantic, or taken shelter when tornado sirens warn of the cyclone threading toward your street. Perhaps you have woken to a red, smoky sunrise and wondered if wildfires will be raging across your county next. Maybe you are in earthquake country and live with regular tremors but fear “the big one.”

Imagine being among the homeowners and emergency response teams who are the first to return to the scene and witness “what God hath wrought”

in their towns and neighborhoods. Imagine walking past houses shattered into toothpicks and trees fallen like Dagon before the ark of the covenant. Imagine wading—wading, not walking—across the cul-de-sac where, on Monday, your children played, but where now, on Friday, you're collecting your belongings before they float away.

The Testimony of Volunteers

What role does the believer have



Volunteering in Houston after the hurricane

in responding to the national news? Is there such a thing as a “Christian” response to natural disasters, and, if so, what does it look like?

If you are familiar with the work of the OPC's Committee on Diaconal Ministries, then you know that over five hundred men and women from churches all over the United States have endeavored to live out a Christian response to six major disasters since 2011. The testimonies of their love, work, skill, and rebuilding efforts and their examples of Christian charity are continuing to inspire new waves of volunteers and response teams to meet current needs.

To listen to any of these volunteers describe their time serving on a disaster response team is to hear a person still brim-full with the impact of the trip, even years later.

Volunteer Ed Pearce still recalls vivid details from tsunami relief in Japan in 2012: seeing the devastation of the tidal wave's impact, collecting children's shoes and toys from rubble strewn across a hillside, hugs and tears with victims who had lost homes and

businesses and family members.

Kevin Offringa and Cheryl Van Beek, two youth leaders who made trips to Houston in 2017–2018, described the enthusiasm of teenagers volunteering. Although many of them lacked skills or labor-oriented work experience, they yet gave themselves wholeheartedly to the work of cleaning up hurricane victims' properties and painting damaged church buildings.

Mark Palmer, a deacon and semi-retired handyman, described his work on multiple teams in multiple states and countries with the humble, grateful acknowledgement that the Lord gave him the ability, the skills, the time, and the resources to be able to help.

A Christian Response to Disaster

But what makes these response teams from the OPC and our sister churches unique? What makes them “Christian” as compared to the efforts of FEMA, the National Guard, the Red Cross, and others? Is there a Reformed method of roof repair? Or a confessional response to catastrophe?

Every past or present volunteer with whom I have spoken states unequivocally that the goal of their efforts was to be first and foremost a tangible expression of the love of Jesus Christ.

How is that accomplished while engaged in roofing and painting? What explicit expressions of Christ's love can be conveyed in carpentry and clean-up? Past volunteers testify to the underestimated power of several elements of the volunteer work—some spoken, some unspoken.

The first is simply and clearly conveyed just by showing up. It is hard to overstate the impact of a van full of strangers from a thousand miles away pulling into your debris-littered driveway just to rip out your flooded sheet-rock. Why would they have come to your home? Of all the houses on the block, why was mine chosen?

OP disaster response provides resplendent examples of what it means for us to be part of a connectional church—

connected across the country and across the world. As we sing in the hymn, we are “one in hope and doctrine” and “one in charity.” When we volunteer and travel any distance to meet the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ, it is an expression of that commitment.

The work to restore the homes of

whirlwind and storm,” to whom clouds are, as it were, “the dust of his feet” (Nahum 1:3). We obey our compassionate Savior who tells his disciples to “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).



A team from “Justice for All” in Iowa volunteered with OPC Disaster Response in Houston.

those of the household of faith reaps benefits greater and longer-lasting than the immediate relief and joy. By restoring believers' homes, we enable them to open their new doors for hospitality and to be a haven for others suffering nearby. We propel them into opportunities

We praise God for the teams he has called and sent out to serve in word and deed in the wake of recent disasters. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact David Nakhla at David.Nakhla@opc.org. Volunteers are especially needed in North Carolina for



Tree removal after Hurricane Irma in Naples, Florida

to witness to their neighbors who want to know why strangers from far away worked without compensation on their roof for two weeks. The cup of cold water offered in the name of Christ is the essence of diaconal mercy ministry and is beloved and blessed by our Father.

Above all, mercy ministry glorifies the God of providence whose way “is in

Hurricane Florence relief.

May God continue to be glorified in the work of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries and may he raise up more laborers for this unique and ripe harvest field. □

The author is a deacon and lifelong member at Church of the Covenant in Hackettstown, New Jersey.

LOVING NEIGHBORS IN OSHKOSH, WI

// KATIE A. STUMPF



Bob Holda's daughter, Elaina, ringing the doorbell of a neighbor in Oshkosh

As a new year, full of possibility, springs into view, many of us find ourselves making goals for the months ahead. The faithful example of the saints at mission work Resurrection Presbyterian Church in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, may encourage us to make goals focused on loving our neighbors.

Door-to-Door in "Christ's Neighborhood"

Sometimes the most basic way to start a relationship with neighbors is to knock on their door and introduce yourself. That is what the folks at Resurrection are doing.

Posted on a wall in one of the Sunday school rooms is a large map of the city of Oshkosh. Resurrection is pinpointed, and five blocks in every direction from the church are highlighted. Every Saturday morning in warm weather, Pastor Bob Holda and a small group of church members gather in front of the map to plan their route for door-to-door visits that day, and to pray. It is a densely populated area, and in the span of these blocks there are thousands of souls who need Christ.

Respect and boldness are two things that they keep in mind as they walk, Holda said. Because the church is new to the neighborhood, they may feel hesitant about reaching out. But Holda encourages the church that, in fact, "this is Christ's neighborhood. We don't need to be ashamed. Yes, we need to be kind and respectful, but we're submitting to Christ first."

Their confidence is not in themselves, but in God who providentially put them in this neighborhood to serve it. "This is the turf we've been given by God to interact with, and we feel that burden. On Sunday mornings, the homes are full but the pews are not. We want to see that reversed! But in order for that to happen, we have to go where people live and not simply wait for them to come to us," Holda said.

When the Oshkosh congregation moved into their new meeting space this past July, they discovered that the building still had ties to the community. "This was originally a Roman

Catholic church building, and ten years ago the neighborhood was filled with Roman Catholics who walked to it each Sunday," Holda said. Sometimes that fact opens the door for conversation on their visits.

Their routine introduction is simple. Holda and the crew will say, "Hi, my name is __. I'm a member of a church in the neighborhood, and we'd like you to know that we're here. As a church, we provide all the things churches should provide: opportunities to worship God, prayer, Bible study, and counseling. And we'd love to serve you in those ways." They often continue by explaining that Resurrection is not Roman Catholic, but that just as the Catholic church had a long history of caring for the needs of this neighborhood, so Resurrection wants to carry on the tradition of loving their neighbors. "If you have or see any needs that a church family could take care of, please let us know. We're here to serve," they conclude.

Elder Eric Johnson met a Vietnam veteran—identified by his hat—on one door-to-door visit. "I thanked him for his service and told him how glad I was that he made it back safely," Johnson said, who was himself almost called up in the 70s. Johnson then asked the veteran if he had a church that was helping him with his continuing needs to know God and his comfort. The man said he went to a local Methodist church where he was satisfied. "We left it at that," said Johnson.

Unknown to them, however, the man's wife was listening inside the house. She had been thinking of finding a more Bible-centered church. She called her sister, who lives about

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date news and prayer requests, receive our newsletter by e-mailing HomeMissionsToday@opc.org. New editions: January 9 and 23, 2019.

ten miles away, to come with her to visit Resurrection. And after visiting, they invited another neighbor to come, too. “God is graciously building his church through his means,” Johnson concluded.

Campus Outreach

Less than half a mile from the church lies the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, a state school with nearly 14,000 students.

Every Thursday afternoon, Holda packs his laptop and hymnal in his bag, throws it over his shoulder, and makes his way to the university’s dining hall, where he works on Sunday’s bulletin from 3 to 5 p.m. It’s an organic approach. Holda just wants people to know he’s there. He hopes it leads to conversations and opportunities to share the gospel.

Holda’s time on campus also allows him to meet regularly with those students who are members of the Oshkosh congregation. One, Alex Basiliere, a sophomore in the education program, is actively sharing his faith on campus.

Basiliere started attending Resurrection in March 2017. He had never been a member of a church. “I would have said I was Christian, but I didn’t actually know what that meant,” he said. Basiliere is far from alone in this. He’s encountered many people on campus who are nominally Christian, just like he was. And even more widespread among students and professors is moral relativism and hostility toward the gospel.

It’s a tough environment to share your faith in, and evangelizing can make Basiliere anxious to the point of feeling light-headed, but he chooses to do it anyway. “It all comes back to loving your neighbor as yourself. I know what it’s like to not be in Christ, and it’s miserable. I want people to see the peace, hope and fulfillment of Christ,” he said.

A Listening Ear

Perhaps you don’t feel comfortable knocking on a stranger’s door or speaking to students on a university campus. Can you love your neighbor and be a witness in other ways? The obvious answer is yes! And, according to Holda, you not only can, but should. “Many of our members are having ongoing interactions with unbelievers or the unchurched as they go about their everyday labors. The Lord gives opportunities in every context,” Holda said. “There are a lot of lonely, hurting people in this world.”

If you’re not sure where to begin, Holda continued, one of the best ways to love and serve neighbors is just by being a person who is willing to listen and commend Christ in a simple way.

Holda recently spent over three hours at a car dealership test-driving cars but, in the end, walked off the lot without a car. “It could have felt like a waste of time,” Holda shared. Instead, this extended time allowed Holda to listen to the sales associate, a man long estranged from the church who had some very real needs. The two have stayed in touch since then.

“Perhaps as you seek to be a listening ear for people, you’ll

hear a lot of things that clearly aren’t true,” Holda explained. “Instead of trying to correct every wrong thing, pray: ‘Lord, what’s the one thing I can say to encourage this person to consider Christ?’”

The one thing you say might be simple: Be in the Word. Pray. Attend worship. The goal is to lead him or her to make contact with the Lord through his means of grace.

As we strive to love our neighbors and be more faithful disciples this year, there are many simple insights we can gain from our brothers and sisters in Oshkosh: Pray for your neighbors. Go where they are. Be a ready disciple. Have a listening ear. Seek to encourage. The folks at Resurrection wouldn’t call themselves experts; they are learning to do these things just like you and me.

“Be friendly with people so that you may find a listening ear to the things of God,” Eric Johnson encouraged. “It is God who develops relationships, and we need to be ready to be used by him.”

The author is administrative assistant for the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension.



What do we say when we are asked the hard questions about our faith? To edify the church in evangelism and apologetics, RPC held a conference in fall 2018 entitled, “In Defense of Christianity: Foundational Principles of Engaging an Unbelieving World,” led by the Reverend Dr. Alan Strange. Oshkosh elder Gregory Linse appreciated the conference’s demonstration that, while believers ought always to be prepared to give an answer for the hope that is within us, proving the truth of the gospel is not up to us. “God’s Word will be true whether people believe it or not,” Linse reflected.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

VAN TIL AND THE SPRING MTIOPC

// PATRICIA E. CLAWSON



Participants in the Fall 2018 MTIOPC in Columbus, OH

What do hospitality, fellowship, and counseling have to do with apologetics? Dr. William Dennison believes that Cornelius Van Til's approach to evaluating men's thoughts and ideas in light of God's supernatural revelation helps us to see that Christ must govern every aspect of Christ's church. It also shows us the way to avoid the secularism that invades the church when we fail to start and end with Christ. Without Christ, we have only our fallible reason to rely on.

Dennison is one of four instructors who will share their expertise at the upcoming Spring 2019 Ministerial Training Institute (MTIOPC). The OPC's Committee on Christian Education offers these courses to OP ministers, licentiates, men under care of a presbytery, and elders so they can be better equipped to minister to their flock.

Presuppositional Apologetics

Dennison, who was one of Van Til's last students, has become more and more convinced of the importance and application of Van Til's biblical apologetic in the life of the church. Too often, Dennison believes, Van Til's teaching is isolated to an academic view of defending the faith. While many agree that the starting point of conversation with non-believers is Scripture and the Christ of Scripture, Dennison doesn't want us to stop there. He wants us to see how Van Til's approach of critical analysis helps us research, read, teach, and preach the biblical text.

In the education that takes

place in the church and home, Dennison encourages us to use Van Til's philosophy of ministry. He wants to show that in our evangelism, fellowship, hospitality, missions, diaconal work, counseling, and even in our Form of Government and Book of Discipline we must and can guard against the secularism that invades the philosophy of ministry.

But you don't need a philosophical background to take this course. Dennison says that knowing the Bible and our Confessions is the best prerequisite. "It is my goal to assist the student through Van Til's philosophical language," said Dennison.

Unlike the view of apologetics that is popularized in some books, Van Til's doesn't look at evidence to support the Christian faith based on a neutral view of facts and reason that demands a human verdict for or against Christianity. Instead, he begins with God and the Bible. "The God of the Bible has already put the verdict in place—he is not making a neutral appeal to humanity," said Dennison.

Van Til's presuppositional apologetic is more consistent with the Reformed faith because he "takes very seriously the

biblical and Confessional understanding of sin and applies it consistently to apologetics," said Dennison. "In light of the effects of sin, the believer needs the only infallible source for truth to take into the marketplace, that is, the Scriptures."

One MTIOPC, Two Locations

In a two-pronged approach this spring, MTIOPC is offering two courses in Glenside, Pennsylvania—*Defending the Faith: Presuppositional*



John Shaw and Alan Dueck at the Fall 2018 MTIOPC

Apologetics, taught by Dennison, and *Westminster Standards*, taught by Dr. Chad Van Dixhoorn—and two courses in Wyoming, Michigan—*Reformed Evangelism*, taught by Rev. John Shaw and Dr. Eric Watkins, and *Homiletics for CHMCE Church Planters*, taught by Rev. Douglas Clawson and Rev. Dale Van Dyke.

Westminster Standards was one of the first courses offered by MTIOPC in 1999 because its content has been considered essential for those who serve the church.

When Van Dixhoorn stepped in as instructor, he brought a wealth of knowledge about the Westminster Assembly, gleaned from his research for his five-volume set, *The Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly, 1643-1652*. Van Dixhoorn was recently named professor of church history and director of the Craig Center for the Study of the Westminster Standards at Westminster Theological Seminary. Not only will the students study the Confession and Catechisms, they will also learn how to defend those documents from Scripture.

Last summer's debut of *Reformed Evangelism* gave its dozen students a lot to think about. The pastors, seminarians, and interns felt like a band of brothers when the class was over, said co-instructor Eric Watkins, especially after going out to evangelize on the Ohio State campus. David Holmlund, one of the participants, has continued to have conversations with a man he spoke with at OSU.

"We were all stretched in one way or another during the class—in good ways," said Watkins. "Many of the students and pastors were encouraged to go back to their local churches with ideas for how they could do more local evangelism. We pray that God will continue to use it for his glory and the building up of our churches."

Registration Details

These classes will begin on February 4 with online reading and writing assignments. Then the students come to one of two locations for three days of in-person intensive training, which is mandatory.

Intensive training for *Defending the Faith: Presuppositional Apologetics* and *Westminster Standards* will be held on May 14–16, 2019, in Glenside, Pennsylvania.

Intensive training for *Reformed Evangelism* and *Homiletics for CHMCE Church Planters* will be held on May 21–23, 2019, at Harvest OPC in Wyoming, Michigan.

Students may apply for these courses at www.opc.org/cce/MTI.html.

Applications, accompanied with a \$50 registration fee, must be sent by the January 28, 2019, deadline to:

Committee on Christian Education
ATTN: MTIOPC
607 N. Easton Road, Building E
Willow Grove, PA 19090

The author is MTIOPC coordinator.

OUR MEMBERSHIP VOWS

Justification

Glen J. Clary

When God unites us to Jesus Christ by his Holy Spirit, he changes our status. That change in status is what we call justification. In the act of justification, God freely forgives us all our sins and accepts us as righteous in his sight.

Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone (Shorter Catechism Q. 33)

What is so surprising about justification is that God actually declares a guilty sinner to be innocent of all sin! He declares an unrighteous person to be perfectly righteous! But how can God do that? If we are guilty, how can God declare us not guilty? The answer is that the righteousness of Jesus is imputed to us. God declares that we are righteous because we stand before him clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

God does not condemn us for our sins, because Christ bore the wrath of God on our behalf. Our sin was imputed to Christ. Paul said that God made Jesus "to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). Because Jesus bore our sin and died in our place, God does not condemn us for our sins.

But that's not all. The perfect righteousness of Jesus in all its fullness is freely given to us, so that we stand before God just as if we had lived the life of perfect obedience to God's law that Jesus lived. In other words, God treated Jesus as if he had lived our sinful life. And he treats us as if we had lived his righteous life.

Justification is about our status being changed from guilty to righteous. That change happens instantly. It's not a process. All our sins are entirely forgiven by God in one single act of forgiveness. And God declares once and for all that we are perfectly righteous in his sight. And that new status that we have in Jesus Christ can never change. Never!

● Out of the Mouth . . .

When our church was trying to choose a memorable name to aid in outreach, my four-year-old daughter suggested: "Catholic. Like in the Apostles' Creed!"

—Thomas Tkach
Rio Rancho, NM

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

ENTRUSTING THE TRUTH TO FAITHFUL MEN

// DAVID J. ROBBINS



Missionary David Robbins baptizing a covenant member in Akuyam village

Jesus commands us to go and make disciples of all the nations. Paul's instructions to Timothy give us vital direction for that work: "You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:1–2). We must take the gospel that has been entrusted to us and entrust it to others, who must then go and entrust it to still others. This is how Jesus multiplies his church! And in answer to the faithful prayers of many for the OPC's ministry in Karamoja, we are witnessing the Lord's multiplying power here.

"Faithful Men"

In 2016, the Lord began to send us young men who loved the Scriptures and wanted to walk with him. A cadre of serious Christian men began to form; ten joined Nakaale Presbyterian Church. Some wanted to be doctors, some teachers. Five showed serious interest in becoming pastors or evangelists. In time, these men have become our sons in the faith. But the academics of the local high school were inadequate to prepare them for further stages of theological and pastoral training.

As we reflected on Paul's command to Timothy, we wondered: how could the men who desire to enter ministry be prepared for training in classes like those at Knox School of Theology in Mbale? How would we equip them to teach others as well?

In response to this need, we organized the Timothy Discipleship Training program. The program provides young men with a solid high school education and regular opportunities to be discipled. Meeting on our porch, they begin their day with breakfast, Scripture reading, and prayer, and then study in classes led by local tutors. Three of the men, two with a zeal to evangelize, have completed their final exams toward graduation. We are now considering candidates for the incoming

class, including the "Titus boys"—a group of three younger men the mission has been working with for the past year. Our prayer is that the Lord will send us more academically able young men who are serious about loving Christ and obeying his Word.

"Entrust"

Early in 2018, encouraged by what the Lord was doing in the Timothy men and in those involved in the ministry of the local church, missionary David Okken and I began to ask: is God calling some of these men for the offices of elder or deacon? We believed it was the Lord's will, and after instructing the congregation about the calling of elders and deacons, we asked the church to nominate qualified men for the first time.

Ten names were put forward, and a leadership class began. Sixteen men from the church attend regularly. There is so much that we need to entrust to them! In our weekly meetings, we have discussed God's call, the qualifications for office, and the functions of the different offices. We have laid the Scriptural foundations of biblical church government. We converse about the doctrines of grace and their pastoral value, among other topics.

The men have assignments, including reading a simplified form of the Westminster Confession of Faith (a challenge when English is not your first language!) and getting acquainted with the members of the congregation. We pray for all the members and role-play evangelistic, apologetic, and counseling situations.

This training has been a good addition to other discipleship efforts. For a long time now, we have led morning devotions for our mission compound staff and held lunchtime instruction at the gate. We've also sent some of our ministry-minded men to a few classes at Knox School of Theology, and we're trying to hold regular theology seminars for local pastors and other church leaders, which have been well received.

Progress is evident. Among the men in leadership training, the Spirit has moved some to confess and repent of past sins, and all are clearly growing in biblical and pastoral wisdom. But these men are also experiencing powerful spiritual trials. Several have been severely afflicted with illness—to the point that one dear brother recently said he expected to die soon. Another brother has had to deal with serious family problems involving the police. These men are being tested. Please pray that their faith would not fail and that Jesus would sustain them, be honored in them, and be honored by them, whether in life or in death.

“Teach Others Also”

Elder and deacon training will probably take at least a year and will still be needed after that. We hope to be able to certify some of the nominees and ask the congregation to vote on who should serve as their church officers. What a joy it will be to have our first Karimojong church leaders!

Meanwhile, the men God has raised up have already started teaching others. As they have grown in understanding and proven their character, many of the Timothy men have begun to work closely with those employed to assist the mission’s work. They are visiting church members and others in need and instructing the small flock of malnourished children and their mothers who are daily loved and served at our gate. They are going and making disciples. God is so good!

Several men regularly exhort at the preaching station in the village of Nakasien. Many help to lead evangelism and discipleship efforts in the villages, including the village of Akuyam, our other preaching station and a place known for witchcraft and evil practices. The people there are learning the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, Psalm 23, and the Apostles’ Creed. Our men have also taught through tracts on witchcraft, idolatrous sacrifices, and drunkenness. These have generated good discussion, but also opposition. We recently learned that some nearby village elders want to place a curse on the mission because of our teachings about sacrifices, but we trust God to turn their hatred into blessing.

We pray that many other materials being prepared will have a powerful impact for the gospel here, but I am especially thrilled to announce that an effort of many years has finally come to fruition—the Westminster Shorter Catechism has been translated into Karimojong, and, as I write this, it is being printed for distribution.

“Be Strengthened by the Grace That Is in Christ Jesus”

Jesus is multiplying his church, and yet there are so many opportunities to share Christ to which we have been unable to respond. There is a hunger for salvation. Yet there are still many people here who have never heard the gospel, even in our own village, Nakaale. There are Karimojong villages where the name of Jesus is very little known, if at all. Distant villages

with a few believers have no churches or serious discipleship. And there are three people-groups within fifteen miles of us that, as far as we know, are almost completely unreached.

My heart burns with desire to tell them of our great Savior, but we are so few. We need more men filled with the Spirit and with wisdom. Please pray with me that our Lord will raise up more laborers for this great harvest in Karamoja—men who will faithfully entrust the gospel to others. And please ask yourself whether God is calling you to come and share your gifts for building up the kingdom of God here.



Men in the Timothy Discipleship Training program

Only the grace of Christ can equip us for this great task. Unworthy, incapable, and sinful as we are in ourselves—and faced with many trials here—we can only be effective by his mighty power. Please pray for all of us: that Christ would be at our right hand; that his word would go out with clarity and power; and that he would multiply his church!

The author is an OP missionary to Uganda.

What’s New

// Appointments

Mr. and Mrs. Steven D. (Carrie) Hill (Redeemer Presbyterian, Ada, MI) have been appointed to serve as year-long missionary associates beginning in December 2018 in Montevideo, Uruguay.

Miss Rebekah L. Moore (Lisburn Reformed, Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Northern Ireland, UK) has been appointed to serve as a missionary associate in Karamoja, Uganda, for eight months beginning in January 2019.

Miss Elise M. Rudder (Redeemer OPC, Carlisle, PA) has been appointed to serve as a missionary associate in Montevideo, Uruguay, for six months beginning in January 2019.

COMMENDED FOR FRAUD?

// JAMES T. HOEKSTRA

To understand Jesus’s parables, we have to first understand what a parable is. A parable—a simple story—is told in order to make one main point, and we can get in trouble if we focus too much on the details of the parable instead of that point. The details are included to set the stage, just as a well-told story intersperses local color to keep things interesting.

In the parable Jesus tells in Luke 16:1–13, a manager (or “steward” or “bookkeeper”) starts slashing the amounts owed by creditors to the master. He reduces the bills so that when his employment is terminated, he will have benefactors to help him.

This is a particularly difficult parable to interpret because at the end of the parable, Jesus lauds the unjust and dishonest manager for shrewd dishonesty and fraud. How can this be? Jesus’s commendation seems to contradict the commandment, “Do not steal.”

Savvy Stewardship

Certainly, the parable is not instructing us to be like the manager and steal from our employers. The one main point of the parable is not the stealing—which is just an illustrative detail—but the manager’s shrewdness with wealth. *Something* is praiseworthy, even in his wrong behavior. What our Lord is commending to us is not theft, but cleverness with our worldly wealth.

In verse eight, the master praises the steward for his savvy. He has more “street smarts” than the typical believer. He is shrewd in temporal things like we Christians should be in spiritual things—particularly in how we dispense the wealth with which we have been entrusted.

Often, believers can fall into ruts where we just keep spending routinely without much forethought. Jesus is calling us to have a far-sightedness in our giving and our wealth. We are told by Jesus to make friends for ourselves so that we will receive a warm welcome into heaven (v. 9). This welcome will stem from how we have used our resources.

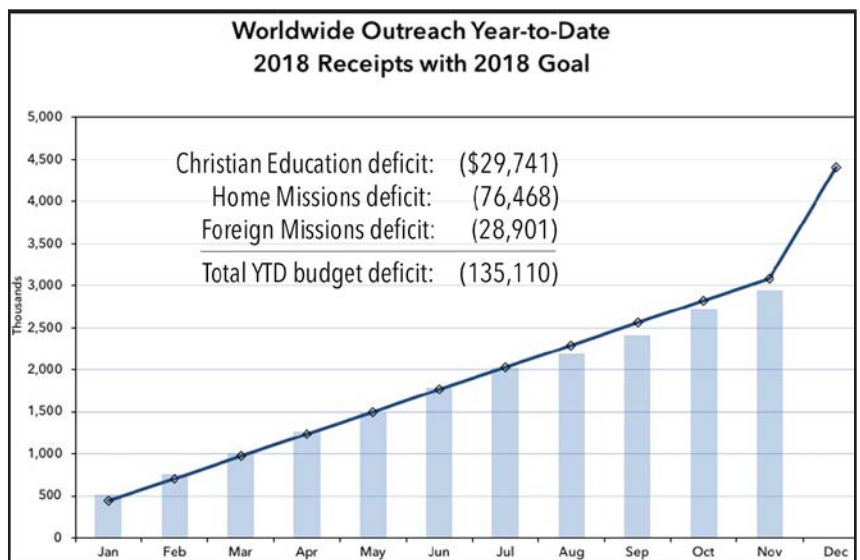
Of course, this is not teaching salvation by giving. As Arthur Just points out, the manager is praised because, when he is faced with a day of reckoning—an eschatological crisis—he cleverly allocates his resources. He recognizes the day and the hour. We do well to do the same, recognizing that the end is near and not wasting our time and funds.

Serving God, Not Money

One of the temptations of life is to move from placing our hope in the Lord and his kind provisions to placing our hope in our possessions. We attempt to find stability, certainty, and a firm foundation in our wealth. We are tempted to serve two masters—God and money—even though Christ tells us that it’s impossible to do so (Matt. 6:24). As John Stott warned, “Worldly ambition has a strong fascination for us. The spell of materialism is hard to break.”

The Lord has graciously provided us with a glorious salvation and rich providential provisions. Our God has been so generous! Let us be amazed by the kindness and benevolence of God. With hearts gripped by the gospel of the kingdom, let us be generous givers. Consider especially what you might give to the Lord’s kingdom through your local church and through the work of Worldwide Outreach.

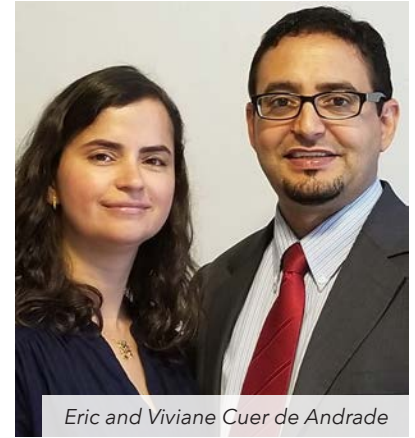
The author is pastor of Immanuel OPC in Andover, Minnesota.



JANUARY



The Jeromin family



Eric and Viviane Cuer de Andrade

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- 1** Pray for **MARK AND JENI RICHLINE** and missionary associates **MARKUS AND SHARON JEROMIN**, Montevideo, Uruguay, as they welcome new missionary associates. / Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**.
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- 2** **LOWELL AND MAE IVEY**, Virginia Beach, VA. Pray that the Lord would prepare men for future service as officers. / Navy chaplain **CORNELIUS (DEIDRE) JOHNSON** and Air Force chaplain **DANIEL (STACY) HALLEY**.
-
- 3** Pray that **RAY AND MICHELE CALL**, Montevideo, Uruguay, may be able to rest and reflect on their furlough. / Pray for CCE general secretary **DANNY OLINGER** as he edits *New Horizons* and oversees other OP publishing efforts.
-
- 4** **MICHAEL AND NAOMI SCHOUT**, Zeeland, MI. Pray for a gospel-saturated church culture at the East Zeeland mission work. / Yearlong intern **DHANANJAY (CORRIE) KHANDA**, Hope Presbyterian, Grayslake, IL. Pray for missionary associates
-
- 5** **STEVE AND CARRIE HILL, ELISE RUDDER**, and **MICHAELA SHARPSHAIR**, Montevideo, Uruguay, as they adjust to a new culture. / **LINDA FOH**, technical assistant for OPC.org.

-
- 6** **BEN AND HEATHER HOPP** and associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS AND MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Pray for peace and security for the church during economic upheavals. / **BEN (TIFFANY) WARD**, church-planting intern, Christ the King, Naples, FL.
-
- 7** Pray for retired missionaries **CAL AND EDIE CUMMINGS, GREET RIETKERK, YOUNG AND MARY LOU SON**, and **BRIAN AND DOROTHY WINGARD**. / **MARK (PEGGY) SUMPTER**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest.
-
- 8** **BILL AND SESSIE WELZIEN**, Key West, FL. Continue to pray for numerical growth at Keys Presbyterian. / Pray for young men who have been nominated to attend the **TIMOTHY CONFERENCE** in order to learn more about the call to gospel ministry.
-
- 9** Missionary associates **E. C., P. F., E. K., and M. S.**, Asia. Pray for rest before the semester begins. / Pray for stated clerk **ROSS GRAHAM** as he begins preparations for the next GA in June 2019.
-
- 10** **JAY AND ANDREA BENNETT**, Neon, KY. Pray that Neon Reformed Presbyterian would be organized by 2020. / **MR. AND MRS. D. K.**, Asia. Pray for good follow-up with new contacts from the community.

-
- 11** Yearlong intern **ERIC (VIVIANE) CUER DE ANDRADE**, Harvest OPC, Wyoming, MI. / Short-Term Missions Coordinator **DAVID NAKHLA**. Pray for those contemplating participation in short-term missions this summer.
-
- 12** **MR. AND MRS. S. F.**, Asia. Pray for the leadership of the local body as it faces various difficulties. / **BROCK (JENNIFER) PAVIER**, church-planting intern, Covenant Presbyterian, St. Augustine, FL.
-
- 13** **MR. AND MRS. M. M.** and **MR. AND MRS. J. M.**, Asia. Pray for health and comfort for their families during intense times. / Home Missions administrative assistant **KATIE STUMPF**.
-
- 14** **LARRY AND KALYNN OLDAKER**, Huron, OH. Pray for the addition of families to Grace Fellowship OPC. / Pray that **GREAT COMMISSION PUBLICATIONS** would produce solidly biblical, Reformed resources for churches.
-
- 15** Pray for tentmaking missionary **T. D.**, Asia, as she provides a stable classroom environment for her students. / *New Horizons* proofreader **SARAH PEDERSON** and cover designer **CHRIS TOBIAS**.

JANUARY



Matthew and Lois Cotta

21 **CHARLES AND CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for their families and grown children in the US. / Pray for **JOEL PEARCE** as he leads efforts to develop a digital edition of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*.

22 **BRADNEY AND EILEEN LOPEZ**, Arroyo, PR. Pray that Iglesia Presbiteriana Sola Escritura would continue to have open doors to share the gospel with unbelievers. / Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**.

23 **MARK AND CARLA VAN ESSENDELFT**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for strength for the new transitions in their family life on the field. / The GA's **SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON UPDATING THE LANGUAGE OF THE DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**.

24 Missionary associates **LEAH HOPP**, **CHRISTOPHER AND CHLOE VERDICK**, and **ANGELA VOSKUIL**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for their witness to Ugandan co-workers. / **GREGORY REYNOLDS**, editor of *Ordained Servant*.

25 Missionary associate **REBEKAH MOORE**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that she may accomplish her short-term work with joy. / **NATHAN (ANNA) STROM**, church-planting intern, Immanuel OPC, Andover, MN.

26 **CHRIS AND GRACE ANN CASHEN**, Clarkston, GA. Pray that God would give children in the after-school program a hunger for Jesus. / **DAVID AND RASHEL ROBBINS** and **DR. FLIP AND ANNELOES BAARDMAN**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the clinic opens doors for the preaching of the Word.



Janet Birkmann

27 **JANET BIRKMANN**, communications coordinator for Short-Term Missions. / **CHURCH PLANTER TRAINING CONFERENCE**, St. Augustine, FL, Jan. 28-Feb. 1. Pray for safe travel, encouraging fellowship, and growth in wisdom.

28 **HEERO AND ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for the family's health and vigor as they provide hospitality. / Pray for CCE's **SUB-COMMITTEE ON MINISTERIAL TRAINING** as they prepare for the April Timothy Conference.

29 Affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK AND LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia. Pray for Mark as he counsels resident doctors through difficult conflicts. / Pray that **OPC.ORG** will edify the church and help it communicate its message to others.

30 **CHRIS AND MEGAN HARTSHORN**, Anaheim Hills, CA. Pray that Anaheim Hills Presbyterian would see conversions, baptisms, and new families. / **JIM BOSGRAF**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Midwest.

31 Affiliated missionaries **CRAIG AND REE COULBOURNE** and **LINDA KARNER**, Japan. Pray for their outreach through education and counseling work. / **JUDITH DINSMORE**, *New Horizons* managing editor.

16 **MATTHEW AND LOIS COTTA**, Pasadena, CA. Praise God for his faithfulness to Pasadena OPC. / **BEN AND MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for new missionary associates to assist with outreach programs in 2019.

17 **JASON AND AMANDA KIRKLIN**, Waco, TX. Pray for those involved in officer training at Trinity Reformed Presbyterian. / **DAVID HANEY**, director, and **MARK STUMPF**, administrator, of the Committee on Ministerial Care.

18 Pray for affiliated missionaries **JERRY AND MARILYN FARNIK**, Prague, Czech Republic, as they mentor Christian marriage counselors. / Pray for **PAT CLAWSON**, MTIOPC coordinator, as plans are finalized for the spring.

19 **ERIC AND DIANNA TUINGA**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray that the youth group would grow in the Word and seek to serve. / Pray for **CHRIS (NANCY) WALMER**, area home missions coordinator, Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania.

20 **BOB AND GRACE HOLDA**, Oshkosh, WI. Pray that visitors to Resurrection Presbyterian would become members. / Yearlong intern **RYAN (ALISABETH) WOODS**, Covenant OPC, Rochester, NY.

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

CHURCH ORDAINED AND INSTALLED AT SINKING SPRING

Debbie Peters

Aijalon Church and his wife, Jana, had planned on serving in foreign missions but accepted a yearlong internship at Covenant OPC in Sinking Spring, Pennsylvania, as they awaited the arrival of their first child, Elionai. At the conclusion of the internship, the congregation asked them to stay.

On October 19, Covenant OPC celebrated the ordination and installation of Aijalon Church as pastor. Craig Troxel, pastor of Bethel Presbyterian in Wheaton, Illinois, delivered the message. The charge was given to Aijalon by his father, Thomas Church, pastor of Immanuel OPC in Bellmawr, New Jersey. Jonathan Peters, pastor at Covenant, gave the charge to the congregation.



At the ordination and installation of Aijalon Church (center)

WOMEN'S RETREAT IN PLEASANTON, CA

Kim Hankins

On October 20, the women of the Presbytery of Northern California and Nevada gathered for the fortieth annual Women's Retreat in Pleasanton, California. Thirty-eight ladies were present, representing eight churches. Timothy Walker of Covenant Presbyterian in Marina, California,

spoke to the women about the importance and richness of praying through the psalms, using Psalms 16 and 121 as examples and encouraging the saints to use them as our own.

Group discussions followed each session and a time of table fellowship, a book sale, and the fine hospitality of the Doubletree Hotel capped off a wonderful day. The presbytery is thankful to Mrs. Joanne Goligher from First OPC in Sunnyvale, California, and all the volunteers who helped to organize the annual event.



Speaker Emily Van Dixhoorn

PRESBYTERY OF OHIO WOMEN'S RETREAT

Harleen Dizer

The Presbytery of Ohio Women's Retreat was held October 11–13 at Camp Akita, Logan, Ohio, and was organized by the women of Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, Ohio. Emily Van Dixhoorn, author of *Confessing the Faith Study Guide*, spoke on the theme “Watch Your Life and Doctrine Closely,” using the Westminster Confession of Faith's chapters on providence, adoption, justification, sanctification, and assurance of salvation. The sixty-seven women in attendance enjoyed



Participants in the Women's Retreat in Pleasanton, CA

times of fellowship, discussion, and prayer as well as crafts, hiking, and Zumba. Next year's retreat is being organized by the women of Grace Presbyterian in Columbus, Ohio, and will be held at Camp Akita on September 26–28, 2019.

CORNERSTONE OPC CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

Linda Finlayson

Cornerstone Presbyterian in Ambler, Pennsylvania, celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in October 2018 with a weekend of events.

On Friday, October 19, pianist John Silva gave a concert. A church family cookout was held on Saturday, October 20, at the home of Tom and Lois Sorkness.

On Sunday, October 21, Dr. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. preached in the morning, and Dr. John Currie in the evening. Both men served on Cornerstone's session in the past, and Currie was first stated supply (2001-2004) and then pastor of Cornerstone from 2005-2009. Between the services, the congregation enjoyed a catered lunch.

One display featured a large map with photos of former members or regular attendees who have moved all around the world to serve in full-time ministry. A second display presented Cornerstone's history in a photo timeline, making evident God's gracious providence through the ups and downs of twenty-five years.



Some of the friends and former members of Cornerstone now in ministry worldwide

UPDATE

CHURCHES

- On December 4, the Presbytery of New Jersey dissolved **Covenant OPC** in Vineland, NJ, which had discontinued meeting.

MINISTERS

- On September 22, **Keith E. Graham** was received as a ministerial member of the Presbytery of New Jersey by letter of transfer from the PCA's New Jersey Presbytery as a retired minister without call.

- On November 2, **Chad D. Mullinix**, formerly the pastor of Holy Trinity Presbyterian in Fort Lauderdale, FL, was installed as pastor of Westminster OPC in Hollidaysburg, PA.

- On November 9, **Dylan J. Rowland** was installed as pastor of Covenant Presbyterian in Mansfield, OH.

- On November 25, **J. Scott Creel** was ordained as a minister and installed as associate pastor of Redemption OPC in Gainesville, FL.

- On December 1, **James W. Clark** was

ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of Garst Mill OPC in Roanoke, VA.

MILESTONES

- Retired OP missionary **Elizabeth “Betty” (Heerema) Andrews**, 101, the widow of OP minister Egbert W. Andrews, died on November 21.

- Former OP missionary **Faye (Brown) Hake**, 64, wife of OP minister Steven R. Hake, died on November 21.

- Retired OP pastor **Jack J. Peterson**, 89, died on November 24.

LETTERS

SABBATH REST FOR ALL MANKIND

Editor:

Larry Wilson rightly stated that we observe the Sabbath to imitate God (“Confessions of a Sabbath-Breaker,” December). However, he under-emphasized how much of a blessing it was intended to be, not just for Christians, but for all people. “Observe the Sabbath day ... that your male and your female servant may rest as well as you,” (Deut. 5:12, 14). Even sojourners were given rest from their labors—in modern terms, we might say, even unbelieving pizza makers! Whether eating out on Sunday is sinful or not is a genuine question, not because it isn't a “holy” activity, but because it forces others to work when they ought to have rest.

Tiffany Ward
Naples, FL



At Ronald Beabout's installation on October 12: (left to right) Thomas Martin, Christian Walmer, Stephen Doe, Ronald Beabout, Joshua McKamy, Alan Montgomery, and Jody Morris

***For the Love of Discipline*, by Sara Wallace. P&R, 2018. Paperback, 160 pages, \$10.00. Reviewed by RPCNA member Cheryl DeGraaf.**

In her book *For the Love of Discipline*, author Sara Wallace reminds us that disciplining our children is a beautiful privilege we should embrace and cherish as parents. To those frustrated and exhausted from the daily mayhem of parenthood, she shines the hope of the gospel, gives solid encouragements to persevere, and provides practical helps for letting the gospel transform our parenting.

Wallace defines gospel-centered discipline as shepherding hearts, training minds, and cultivating a loving relationship with our children that points them to Christ. This means we should welcome it.

You have a chance now, in this tiny window of time, to strengthen their armor—to find the holes in their breastplates and sharpen their swords, to tweak their helmets and tighten their belts. You can't do that if they never show you where they are weak. Painted like this, we see that discipline is a beautiful privilege, a precious gift we give to our children, and ourselves. (12)

The goal of discipline is to conform us to the image of Christ, and we know from

our own lives that this is a slow process. If we look for quick fixes to our kids' sin issues, we will become frustrated. We are tempted to dish out a quick punishment and return to folding laundry. Yet, we are called to shepherd our children and look to why they acted as they did, not just what they did.



Wallace counsels parents to have patience, wisdom, and hope as we look forward to the good work God will accomplish in our children. We discipline today because consequences of our children's disobedience could cost them more than a time-out in the future. Finally, Wallace reminds us that obedience to God yields blessings because of his good character, not ours.

The second part of her book focuses on specific discipline strategies and practical tools. Wallace has five young boys, and her strategies focus on the younger years. I found her discussion about structuring her day and developing the fruit of the spirit particularly helpful. For instance,

she writes that because they eat similar breakfasts most days of the week, she uses that time to look for thankfulness and contentment. Since lunches have more variety, she uses that time to develop politeness and self-control. This intentionality can help us focus our role in our children's lives, and develop those mindsets in ourselves as well.

Wallace quotes a wealth of authors, which adds depth to her arguments. She continually encourages us to be faithful and leave the results to God. *For the Love of Discipline* should cause us to look afresh at our children and our God-given role as parents and to embrace the challenges and joys before us.

***Journeys with Jesus: Every Path in the Bible Leads Us to Christ*, by Dennis E. Johnson. P&R, 2018. Paperback, 192 pages, \$11.50. Reviewed by PCA minister Robert R. Drake.**

The title of the book comes from the literal walk Jesus took with two men on the road to Emmaus on Easter Sunday and from the figurative walk the men took as Jesus led them through the Scriptures to see the Old Testament anticipations of the Christ's sufferings and glory. Dr. Johnson doesn't try to tell us everything

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"They help you appreciate things about another culture as well as your own."

Ministry Team at the Boardwalk Chapel, Wildwood, NJ (summer 2018)

—2018 short-termers

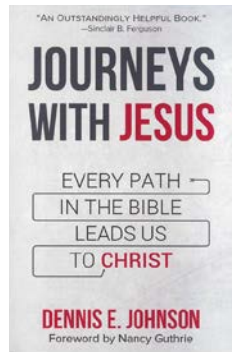
Jesus might have said either to those in Emmaus or to the disciples that same night. Instead, he equips us to take the walk ourselves. He provides an overview of redemptive history and the interpretative tools to see Christ.

At first, because the book is brief, clear, and written with summaries and discussion topics at the end of each chapter, pastors may think it is appropriate only for an adult Sunday school class or Bible study group. However, from an opening illustration attributed to Spurgeon, we know that Johnson also has pastors in mind.

The story goes that a young expository preacher was told by an older pastor that the young man's sermon had been poor because Christ wasn't mentioned. The young preacher objected that Christ wasn't in the text. The older man said that every road in a small English town can lead a traveler to the great city of London. The point, of course, was that every passage of Scripture is like a road that can lead us to

Christ. After all, preaching is to "preach Christ." If any pastor has noticed upon reflection that Christ has not really been in his sermons, he will want to investigate this book.

I said the book was clear, but I had some trouble with the basic metaphors used to explain redemptive history. The



general road imagery shifts to a river representing the covenant of grace, which flows toward a lake that is Christ. Along the way are tributaries, which are the various covenants of redemptive history. The road imagery is picked up again when Old Testament "types" are called "road signs." However, one diagram has the road signs

alongside the tributaries. To this a third metaphor is used, that of "landmarks," such as mountains, which refer to the offices of prophet, priest, and king. They appear in the same diagram, but I can't get the pictorial unity, even though I'm usually a very visual person. Nevertheless, since Johnson has in mind a global audience for this book, the imagery is sure to be transcultural.

While it is fascinating to follow the story of covenants within covenants and types within covenants as redemptive history advances toward its fulfillment in Christ, God's use of covenants and types raises a question. Why did the history have to take so long that it was necessary to keep the attention on Christ alive through types down through the ages? A comment about a reason for the length of time

would have been welcomed, even if it's only to say that the kingdom wasn't big enough then or even now.

Authorized: *The Use and Misuse of the King James Bible*, by Mark Ward. Lexham, 2018. Paperback, 168 pages, \$10.39 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor Calvin R. Goligher.

Mark Ward's book on the use and misuse of the King James Bible is the most fun you will ever have reading about Bible translations. More importantly, though, Ward's book persuasively and charitably presses an important argument: that, in our present context, the King James Bible is no longer a vernacular translation, and therefore churches ought not to use it as their primary Bible translation. It is not that Ward despises the King James Bible. He grew up with it, and he recognizes the benefits of its prominence in the English-speaking world. Ward insists that, those advantages notwithstanding, the Bible ought to be translated into the common language of the common people. The Bible, especially Paul in 1 Corinthians 14, the Protestant Reformers, and the translators of the King James Bible themselves shared this conviction. His point is that, owing to the enormous changes in the English language over four centuries, the King James Bible no longer fulfills this ambition.

Ward provides many detailed examples of how the King James Bible falls short of a vernacular translation. The most important issue is what he calls "false friends." These are "words that are still in common use but have changed meaning in ways that modern readers are highly unlikely to recognize" (31). We need to look these words up, too, but—and this is the crucial point—we will not usually know that we need to look them up. To mention just one example: how should we obey Paul's instruction in Romans 12:7 to "wait on our ministering"? A modern English speaker might assume that Paul wants us to "pause before starting to serve." In fact, Paul wants us to "carefully attend to our serving," which is exactly the meaning of the phrase "wait on" that was current when the King James Bible was first published (40).

2019 Faith Church Women's Retreat
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 Speaker: Tracey Taylor
 To register, contact Dawn Hitchner at FaithOPSecretary@gmail.com or Gayle Ellis 856 521-0199 for more information.
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Ward does an especially good job of interacting charitably and frankly with proponents of the King James Version. He

thoughtfully responds to their concerns about reverence, the deterioration of language, the usefulness of singular (“thee”) and plural (“you”) pronouns, the transparency of italicizing words supplied in English, and other matters. The practical takeaway that Ward

wants to leave with his readers is simple: feel free to continue using the King James Bible, but also use multiple vernacular translations. We have God’s words in our own language, and this privilege brings the responsibility to read “those words in translations [we] can understand” (118). Even if we continue to prefer the King James Bible for our personal use, we must ensure that our ministry of God’s Word to others is intelligible, and therefore edifying. We must help others approach God’s Word, and not put unnecessary obstacles in their way (120).

***Christianity at the Crossroads: How the Second Century Shaped the Future of the Church*, by Michael J. Kruger. IVP Academic, 2018. Paperback, 256 pages, \$20.98 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP minister Robert S. Arendale.**

The author of Hebrews calls believers to run the race looking unto Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:1–2). Thus, we live with our eyes fixed forward and upward to our risen Savior. At the same time, however, we are to look back to our past and learn from the church throughout the ages. The church did not begin yesterday! And it did not begin in America! Rather, for two thousand years the Lord has been guiding, protecting, and building his church. While some periods in the history of the church, namely the fourth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, have received quite a bit of attention (and rightly so!), other periods have received precious little. In this book, Dr. Kruger seeks to remedy this neglect as he turns his scholarly focus to

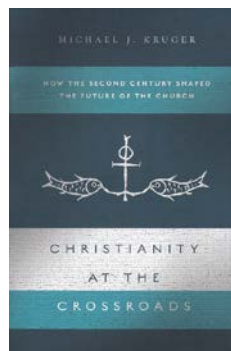
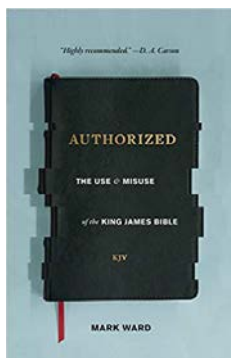
the second century.

Kruger writes, “It was the challenges, obstacles, and transitions faced by Christians in the second century that, in many ways, would determine the future of the church for the next two millennia. It was a century (though not the only one) when Christianity stood at a crossroads” (vii). Kruger, president and professor of New Testament at RTS Charlotte, examines seven aspects of second-century Christianity, devoting one chapter to each. These seven areas are: the sociological make-up of second-century Christianity (their identity); the political and intellectual acceptability of second-century Christianity (their relationship to the wider, pagan, culture); the ecclesiological structure of second-century Christianity (their worship); diversity in second-century Christianity (their interaction with false teaching); unity in second-century Christianity (their unifying truths and distinction from heretical groups); the literature of second-century Christianity (their writings); and the New Testament canon in second-century Christianity (their canon).

One of the strengths of this work is its readability. Although a scholarly work, it is clearly written and well organized. The reader does not need any prior expertise to benefit greatly from this work. Another strength is its scholarship. Kruger is an expert in early Christianity—particularly as it relates to matters of Scripture and canon (see his prior works, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy* and *Canon Revisited*, for example)—and such expertise is evidenced throughout this work. He regularly interacts with relevant secondary sources; but more interesting is his

interaction with the primary source material. From the early church fathers to early heretics, from Gnostic sources to the “rule of faith,” Kruger demonstrates a masterful grasp of the primary sources, to the benefit of the reader.

In the final pages of *Christianity at the Crossroads*, Kruger makes three observations as to how the second century might inform modern-day Christianity. First, as those who now live in a “post-Christian” era, we can learn from the example of second-century believers what it looks like to be the church in a hostile culture. Second, as modern-day Christians, we should be challenged by the “bookish” nature of second-century Christianity. As Kruger writes, “Christianity is centered on, and always has been centered on, its Scriptural writings” (230). Finally, as we study second-century Christianity, we are reminded that *a person* has always been the focus of worship. Second-century believers were committed to worship—and to worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ—and we should be too.



Positions Available

Pastor: First Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Portland, Oregon, is seeking a pastor. Details can be found at www.firstopcportland.org/pastorsearch. For information or to submit qualifications, please contact moderator John Southgate, at pastorsearch@firstopcportland.org.

Associate Pastor: Grace Presbyterian in Columbus, Ohio, is searching for an associate pastor. He will provide teaching, preaching, counseling, and discipleship to the congregation with a particular emphasis on youth, college, and career ministries and short-term missions. He will take on administrative duties as assigned. Please send a cover letter, a copy of your Ministry Information Form (MIF), and any questions to Doug Hedges at ddouglashedges@gmail.com.

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