

NEW HORIZONS

≡ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ≡

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Appealing, Not Appalling
// by William Shishko

MARCH 2019

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Habakkuk, and *Zephaniah*
// by William M. Wood

An aerial night photograph of Houston, Texas. The top half shows the city skyline with numerous skyscrapers illuminated against a dark sky. The bottom half shows a soccer field with artificial green turf, where several people are playing. The field is surrounded by a fence and has stadium lights. A large, ornate, white serif title is overlaid on the center of the image, enclosed in a thin gold border.

An EVANGELIST in HOUSTON

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New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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Articles previously published may be slightly edited.

New Horizons (ISSN: 0199-3518) is published monthly except for a combined issue, usually August-September, by the Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 607 N. Easton Road, Bldg. E, Willow Grove, PA 19090-2539; tel. 215-830-0900; fax 215-830-0350.

Letters to the editor are welcome. They should deal with an issue the magazine has recently addressed. Their language should be temperate, and they may not charge anyone with an offense. They should be brief, and they may be condensed by the editor.

Send inquiries, letters to the editor, and other correspondence to the editor at danny.olinger@opc.org.

Send address changes to ccesecretary@opc.org. Allow six weeks for address changes.

The digital edition (PDF, ePub, mobi) and an archive of previous issues are available at www.opc.org.

Views expressed by our writers are not necessarily those of the editors or official positions of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Copies are distributed free to members and friends of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Nonmembers are asked to donate \$20.00 for an annual subscription (USD \$30.00 if sent to addresses in Canada; \$40.00 elsewhere abroad). A free e-mail PDF subscription is also available. Requests for a subscription should be sent to ccesecretary@opc.org or the address below.

Periodicals postage is paid at Willow Grove, PA, and at additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to *New Horizons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, 607 N. Easton Road, Bldg. E, Willow Grove, PA 19090-2539.

At the nineteenth annual Ladies Retreat in October 2018 at the Machen Retreat and Conference Center, Diane Ippolito from New Life OPC in Montoursville, Pennsylvania, spoke on "The Prayer of Faith" from Mark 9. Check on preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the Ladies Retreat in 2019, as well as other camps and conferences, at www.machen.org or on Facebook at Machen Retreat and Conference Center.



AN EVANGELIST IN HOUSTON



MARK SUMPTER // We were in a northeast Houston neighborhood called Memorial Hills, visiting with folks about their needs and circumstances, when a car pulled up. “I saw your sign, OPC Disaster Response, on the side of the truck. I wanted to stop and talk to you,” said the woman.

Dorothy and her husband, Butch, got out of the car to ask us about our ministry. After talking for some time, we handed them a “blessing bag”—a cloth bag containing Christian literature, a gift card, a pocket calendar, a gospel booklet, and church contact information.

That one conversation with Dorothy and Butch has opened many doors in this neighborhood of 275 households. It’s like a line of dominoes: one domino tips over and smacks the next one. The clatter from one to another winds from street to street. Here in Memorial Hills, a subdivision in Spring, Texas, each household leads you to the next family, and the next, and the next, and each family has a heart-grabbing story.

Hurricane Harvey crawled for two to three days over Houston back in August 2017. The fifty-two inches of rain—more than four feet—pummeled this vast metropolitan area of 6.5 million souls. People still ache from Harvey’s footprint. Houston Responds, a network of Houston churches offering

aid together, writes on its website:

There remains a hidden crisis. Do you see it? An estimated 100,000 people are still displaced or living in gutted homes, lacking the resources to rebuild. Yes, 100,000. The housing disaster is also a human disaster, from which it can seem like someone is telling us, “There’s no way out.”

As surveys reveal, Harvey victims often struggle with financial challenges, medical issues, anxiety, depression and other symptoms of post-traumatic stress. As the *Houston Chronicle* quoted one displaced father of three, remarking about Houston’s seemingly strong recovery, “That may be for some people, but not for a lot of us.”

In this light, we remember the groan describing our Lord’s love: “He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36). In 2018, the Lord began to open the door, not only to OP diaconal aid

in Houston, but also to a dedicated OP evangelist who could minister through Word and prayer to this city.

Expanding into Ministry of the Word

A year ago, OPC Disaster Response Coordinator, David Nakhla, reported that he had been interacting with the Disaster Response Subcommittee of the CDM. The brothers on this committee, all of whom had firsthand experience with ministry in a disaster zone, agreed that disasters create not only incredible physical needs, but also emotional, psychological, and even spiritual ones.

When a disaster like Harvey turns your life inside out and upside down, it’s a major life event—possibly one of the most traumatic in your lifetime. Suppose that all you own and value is piled in a heap at the curbside. You likely did not have flood insurance because, supposedly, Houston only floods once every thousand years. And, all the volunteer organizations you once saw around town have left.



Disaster Response volunteers at work in Houston

The scars that the disaster left are not just the watermarks halfway up your walls, the furniture tossed around and beginning to grow mold, or your vehicle in the driveway that won't start because its engine was sitting in water. The scars likely also go deep into the recesses of your heart and mind—*Who is going to help? How will I ever put my life back together? How will this affect my children, whose safe place is gone?*

One church family said that soon after Hurricane Harvey, a puddle running across the floor from a spilled glass of water created panic in all of their hearts. At that moment, they realized the depth of the trauma they had suffered as a family from the disaster.

Who better to minister to such needs than the church? Who better to speak into the big life questions than a minister of the gospel? One who can apply the balm of Gilead to the heart wounds suffered. One who can explain the brokenness in this world and the hope that is to come for those who are in Christ. One who can point the way into the ark of God's mercy prior to the real storm of God's

judgment that is to come.

OPC Disaster Response is a ministry of mercy. And yet, the response effort is the work of the whole church and ought not be limited to diaconal work.

The committee determined that it would be appropriate to use disaster response funds to respond to the spiritual needs of those

affected. They also believed the church would be thankful to see the funds used that way, particularly if the ministry of the Word was accompanied by a ministry of deed and vice versa.

Recognizing this, the Disaster Response Subcommittee encouraged the brothers in the Presbytery of the Southwest laboring in the Houston area to consider whether they would like to call a full-time evangelist to serve for a limited time before this unique window of opportunity closed.

Evangelist Nick Lammé

Within days, several men from our Home Missions Committee became informed of this suggestion, along with ministers, elders, and deacons in Hous-

ton. Weeks clicked by: a job description was proposed and a profile of a man was drafted. By late June, the men in Houston had contacted the Reverend Nick Lammé (pronounced *lab-MAY*). Lammé, who was serving as a minister of the Presbytery of the Midwest, had been working in Costa Rica in a Bible translation ministry. He expressed enthusiastic interest. This past September, he was approved to accept the call from the presbytery and be on the field as soon as possible.

To have a full-time evangelist on the field ministering the gospel and offering counsel and prayer in connection with disaster response ministry is a first for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The funding for this position comes from the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension, the Committee on Diaconal Ministries, and the Presbytery of the Southwest.

Lammé is a gift to the church and a gifted man. Not only does he have considerable evangelistic experience, he's also fluent in Spanish—a wonderful asset in South Texas. He and his wife, Rosie, have four children: Ester, Abigail, Alex, and Natalia. Together they serve as a gracious family in this ministry.

The area churches are looking forward to this timely help with outreach and teaching. Lammé will spearhead the ministry of the Word and prayer. He will also coordinate hospitality and other practical ways of outreach—particularly in helping the two OP churches of Houston to invite victims of Hurricane Harvey to church, so that they might worship at these congregations or others. Lammé will be on a two-year assignment to initiate



Nick and Rosie Lammé

outreach, evangelism, and follow-up throughout the whole metro area. That's a huge ministry field!

He anticipates great things in Christ's strength: "I am very encouraged to see the Lord opening doors and allowing me to make new contacts and minister the gospel to hurting people. I anticipate that as I continue to work in this [area of Memorial Hills] and other neighborhoods, the Lord will open up even more opportunities."

The challenges in these neighborhoods are great—deep financial burdens, hopelessness about ever returning to normalcy, and lasting marital stress. Lammé is responding with encouragement and hospitality. The Homeowners Association in Memorial Hills offered a free rental of their community center, so Lammé hosted an open house. "We had around thirty people come, most of whom were new friends," he said.

Praying with people, stopping in to visit and read Scripture, and leaving gospel-based literature has also proven effective, Lammé said. "First and foremost, we want people to know the Lord whom we know and love. He alone is our hope," he explained.

Wide-Open Door for Compassion

Back in December, Nick and I were about to leave Memorial Hills after a day of visits when, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a man approaching us. "I see the sticker on your car: OPC Disaster Response," he said. That sticker opened up a two-hour visit with Roger and Cindy. This couple is not only the victim of Harvey but the victim of broken promises from a string of contractors, church volunteers, and other professional laborers. Roger and Cindy—in their early forties with a one-and-a-half-year-old and a ten-week-old newborn—are, like so many others, faced with a mountain of grief and heartache.

After the initial conversation on the sidewalk, we drove to Roger and Cindy's house and spent two hours listening to their story and surveying things. The house is gutted and down to



The open house for friends and neighbors in Memorial Hills

the studs—floor to ceiling. And there's mold. They had seven to eight feet of water in this ranch-style house. Devastation is here. Dire need abounds. Drained emotions fill the room.

We (for sure) made no promises to Roger and Cindy. But we prayed with them. And we did say we'd get back to them after we had gathered some information. Cindy, at one point in the conversation, could barely mouth the words, "we are in trouble." This is a family that has had hardship after hardship with broken promises, scams, and wicked dealings. Roger, as well, is on disability for a medical issue involving brain surgery. They presently live in 300 square feet of space in a loaner-RV.

This is the work of the church. Stirring up gifts in the body of Christ in Houston and throughout our presbytery means helping one another to see the wide-open door for compassionate service in the wake of the hurricane. Having a full-time evangelist here for Harvey households includes his role in equipping all of us to do this work.

Supporting Through Prayer

Please pray with us for fortitude and wisdom; pray for the Spirit's leading, for insight into the needs around us, and for faithfulness. The OPC in Houston has the opportunity to put feet to Psalm 145:14-19:

The LORD upholds all who fall, and

raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. The LORD is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works. The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them. The LORD preserves all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy.

Please pray for the Lammés. Ask the Lord to give Nick, Rosie, and their four children, a good adjustment to Houston.

Pray also that the Lord would direct Lammé's steps in outreach and discipleship to the families affected by Hurricane Harvey. Pray for discipleship in the Word. Pray for conversions. Pray for effective means of inviting and welcoming people in the worship of the Lord in our local OP churches.

May Jesus Christ be working through his church to manifest love, truth, and compassionate care. Thank you, OPC, for this vision of an evangelist to carry on the work of Houston Harvey ministry! □

The author is regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest. He quotes from the New King James Version.

HELPING OUR CHURCHES BE APPEALING, NOT APPALLING



WILLIAM SHISHKO // Did you know that irritation is an important dynamic in helping us to be better servants of the Lord Jesus Christ? In Hebrews 10:24, the writer urges us to think carefully about how to—literally—*irritate* one another to love and good works.

Irritation is our natural response to suggestions for improvement in our personal life or in our church's life. But the Word of God tells us that such irritation can actually stir us up to *love*, that is, to do things for the good of others, and it can stir up *good works*, that is, things that are both pleasing to God and beneficial to those around us.

In my work as regional home missionary, I find it very helpful to be *irritated* by those who have different insights and experiences of church life than my own and who make suggestions for improvement that I may not want to implement. I may not agree with them on everything, but if their irritating suggestions help me do things better, I'm grateful—or, at least, I try to be.

One of these blessed irritants to me is Thom Rainer.

Thom Rainer is a Southern Baptist. Until recently, he served as president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources. Prior to that, he served at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he was the founding dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions and Evangelism. He is a consultant to

churches of many denominations. And he knows far more than I do about church revitalization, outreach, and evangelism. Of course, I'm a Presbyterian (not to mention an *Orthodox* Presbyterian), and he's a Baptist, but, on most points, I find myself agreeing with him and being helped greatly by his insights into local church life and outreach. His work has *irritated* me to be a better pastor and regional home missionary.

In this article, I will pass along some of what I have learned from him about church outreach, an important although not the only labor of the church. I may have already irritated you with my title, "Helping Our Churches Be Appealing, Not Appalling." Now, I'll ask some questions and give some of Rainer's suggestions that I hope will irritate you to love and good works, bringing beneficial change to your local congregation.

First Impressions

How does your church appear to visitors?

What's the quality of the signs both inside and outside your local church

building? Remember that signs are not for church members—*we* know where everything is. Rather, signs show our concern for those who are not familiar with our church. Are they of good quality, at the right height, and done with easily readable fonts? Are they old and tacky, or no longer accurate? Are the signs friendly? (A sign that reads, "Those bringing food or drink into the sanctuary will be asked to leave," is rather harsh!) Should some signs be added?

Ask a few members to do a "sign audit" and examine every internal and external sign. We may think these things are frivolous, but people do look at the outward appearance (1 Sam. 16:7).

What's the quality of the church nursery and Sunday School classrooms? Are they tidy, sanitary, and attractive? Get rid of the junk that can easily accumulate there and spend the money and effort to make the children's areas truly delightful. This is a great Saturday project for church members. Unleash them to make these areas appealing and not appalling, and provide the funds for them to do the work well.

Do you have greeters for your

worship services? Warm greeters give an important first impression. Choose greeters who are gifted with people. Train them. Urge them to invite single church visitors to sit with them. Have them show parents with children where the nursery is. Better yet, take them there. And encourage all church members to reach out to visitors following a worship service, rather than gathering with those whom they already know. Holy huddles (let alone unholy huddles) do not make for welcoming churches! Church members should instinctively invite church guests to join them for the coffee fellowship, Sunday School classes, congregational lunch, and other things. Practice congregational hospitality in every way—reflecting the hospitality of God.

And, pastors, be sure to contact first-time guests. Greeters should have them sign a guest register or fill out a welcome card with their contact information. You should contact the church guest—preferably the same day—by e-mail, text, or phone call, to thank the person for being at worship, to offer your service as a pastor, and to express a willingness to visit the individual or family. In many cases, this prompt, personalized attention by a caring pastor is a key factor in the guest's decision to return to the church.

Church Websites

What's your church website like? Especially for those of us who are older, it's hard to accept that the internet has now replaced the yellow pages. Thom Rainer and others have pointed out that today it's not the worship service but the church website that is the front door of the church. Most people make the decision to visit a church based on the church's website.

Are you using volunteer help to cobble together a church website, or have you spent what is necessary and used an organization or person with expertise to build a quality website? (Rainer points out that we should "regard this expense like paying a church utility bill." And, it may not be as expensive as you think.)

If you are a church leader, you may want to do a church website audit. Pretend that you're looking for a church online. Is your website geared only for church members? Does it give staff names and titles, including pictures and contact information? Does it include easily accessible information about your ministries to children and young adults? Are there sermon archives in both audio and video? (These will also benefit members who, for whatever reason, were not able to attend worship.) Is there a church calendar? If so, is it up-to-date? Is there a statement of the church's beliefs? Are there links to other church social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube? (Church young adults can be immensely helpful to your local church in establishing a social media presence.)

Do you have a church website secretary? The role of the church secretary has changed dramatically with the advent of the internet age. Recognizing this and making appropriate changes is a must if we are to get out of the horse-and-buggy days of church life and move into the twenty-first century! If no one in your local congregation is competent to do this, it may be necessary to hire a "virtual assistant."

Giving Gifts

What gifts do you give first-time guests at your local church? Do you do anything to show your appreciation for visitors and extend your ministry to them? Do you have some kind of "Welcome Center" for church guests? Consider creating a "visitor pack" that you can give to all first-time guests. Along with a church mug or tumbler with the church name and logo on it, include a greeting letter from the pastor, particularly giving his contact information. Make it short and to the point.

Have a good supply of short Christian books and booklets to give out. Consider booklets published by the OPC Committee on Christian Education, evangelistic booklets by Matthias Media, and short issue-oriented booklets published by the Banner of Truth Trust, the Christian Counseling and

Educational Foundation, and other biblically faithful organizations.

Most importantly, get rid of outdated booklets that look like they were (or really were) printed thirty to fifty years ago.

Church Invitation Day

Is your church intentional in its outreach? What are you doing to reach more people? Thom Rainer highly recommends planning and executing a day for everyone to invite someone to a worship service or a special church activity. This is not about numbers, but about helping to create an "invitational culture" in your local church. As a rule, church members are not in the habit of inviting others to worship or to church activities. Having a day set aside for this purpose helps to break that habit.

If you are a member, even better than just inviting others, you could offer to pick them up and drive them to church. Adding a meal to this invitation, either at the church or in your home, gives another opportunity to show the hospitality of God to others. Give every encouragement to them to be part of the life of your local church. And follow up with those contacts! This is a great way to begin developing a Great Commission mind-set in your local church.

These are just a few of the irritating insights I've gained from Thom Rainer. (Read his books or watch his webinars for more. I especially commend to church officers the webinar, in four courses, titled "16 Quick Adjustments to Reach More Guests in Your Church." His books *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*, and *Simple Church* have been the most helpful to me out of the two dozen he has written.)

May these insights also irritate you—stirring you up to greater love for others and to more good works that make your local church *appealing* rather than *appalling*. □

The author is regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Connecticut and Southern New York.

HOME MISSIONS IN TOWN AND CITY



JUDITH M. DINSMORE // Last year, two new OP church plants were received—both in Pennsylvania, but in contrasting locales. One is in Downingtown, a suburb of Philadelphia that’s sprouting housing developments. The other is in Mifflintown, a rural town on the Juniata River with a backdrop of blue mountains.

Grace and Truth in Mifflintown, PA

The OP work in Mifflintown began with a phone call in the summer of 2016. A couple who had been hosting a Bible study at their home called the OPC administrative office to express interest in joining the denomination. The office, in turn, called up Chris Walmer.

Serving as regional home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania, Walmer works in the early stages of church-planting for the presbytery. “Some plant; some water; God gives the increase. But I’m more the guy who plows the ground,” he laughed.

After meeting with those in the Bible study, Walmer headed out to Providence OPC in Mifflinburg (a nearby town not to be confused with Mifflintown, nor their third neighbor, Mifflin) to consult with its pastor. Walmer had recently labored to bring Providence

into the OPC. He knew that two families were making an hour-long trek on a narrow two-lane highway every Sunday from the Mifflintown area to worship at Providence.

The pastor was enthusiastic. The elders were, too. “Providence had actually been praying about the opportunity to do something in Mifflintown,” Walmer explained. So, in February 2017, a Bible study began in Mifflintown, led by Providence’s pastor.

Around the same time, Ronald Beabout relocated to the area with his

wife, Carol. Although he describes himself as only “a man who loves Christ, the Word, the church, and loves to preach the Word,” Beabout is an experienced church planter who has labored both abroad and, most recently, with an OP work in Maryland.

Almost exactly a year after the Bible study began, in February 2018, Beabout began to lead evening worship services in Mifflintown. On July 1, 2018, the mission work Grace and Truth was recognized by the presbytery. “And now we’re going full speed ahead,” Walmer said.

“There’s a good, tight, Christ-like bond among these people, and they are just keen on being a Reformed witness here,” Beabout explained. “I’m obviously very anxious to see the same thing and feel so privileged to have an opportunity to help.”

Mifflintown was an attractive area for a plant because OP members who were traveling to State College to



Grace and Truth meets on Sunday at 6:00 p.m. at Juniata Library

the northwest or Mifflinburg to the northeast could now attend a more local church. But, the church plant's vision is bigger. "We're glad to see Reformed transfers. But we're also looking for new babes in Christ," Beabout said.

One mother of young children in the church, Ashten Swartz, is new to the Reformed faith—and eager to share it. With the help of others in the church plant, she began a women's Bible study in her home that is now thriving.

The Juniata County seat, Mifflintown was designated a "high growth" area by the county in 2014. But, as one member told Beabout, almost every door represents a family that does not go to church. In a tight-knit community like Mifflintown, building relationships is the best way to bring neighbors into church, Beabout explained. That, and stability. He and Walmer visited local leaders to let them know that a new church was moving into the area and that, Lord willing, they will be around for awhile.

Downingtown OP

The idea for Downingtown OP began in a conversation over lunch.

"I was driving through the area with a ruling elder from the Wilmington congregation," regional home missionary Dave Holmlund explained. "We stopped at Downingtown for lunch, and my friend said, 'You know, this area could really use an OP congregation.'"

They went on with their day, but the idea stuck with Holmlund. Within a year, there was indication that some people in the Downingtown area agreed. Two families expressed an interest in an OP work—one was traveling long-distance to a different OP church, and another had family in the OPC—and in January 2017, Holmlund began a Bible study.

"By April 2017, we started services, and we've been going steadily ever since," he said. In August 2017, they became an official mission work of the presbytery.

Nancy Hayes and her husband, Jay, have been attending since it was a Bible study—they heard about it from

a friend who was also searching for a church. Hayes has been a Presbyterian her whole life, but was a member in the mainline denomination or other offshoots. She and Jay are thankful to now attend an OP work. "The OPC is more to our liking, more to what we believe," she said.

For two years, Holmlund has been traveling a half-hour to Downingtown to preach and essentially function as the pastor for Nancy and Jay Hayes and other members of the group. He created a presence for the church in Downingtown, networking with new friends, and even planning a soccer outreach that, although canceled due to terrible weather, introduced him to people in the community. But in October 2018, he handed it all over to church planter Greg O'Brien. "Greg now fills my shoes," he said. "I rejoice that there's an organizing pastor to continue this work."

Greg O'Brien, who was born and raised in Austin, Texas, came to faith on a mission trip to Mexico when he was a freshman in college. The trip leader's desire to evangelize and share the gospel deeply affected O'Brien. "God used that trip for the gospel and to the glory of Christ. I asked, 'why am I living for anything else?'" he remembered.

Back at school, O'Brien didn't know enough to know that evangelizing was hard. A mentor told him that if he was walking with God, God would give him the words to say—if he was abiding in Christ, he would bear Christ's fruit. "I thought, OK, this is the Bible, so it has to be true," O'Brien said. He prayed silently before conversations with friends, and was given, he said, wisdom far beyond his understanding.

He never lost this eagerness for

evangelism. He went to seminary at Gordon-Conwell, then to China for overseas missions work, and finally to Alabama for a few years, laboring in the PCA. Desiring to minister in a less-churched area than the Bible Belt, the O'Briens came north to suburban Philadelphia last fall. The week before they moved into their new home was Halloween, so the family—Greg and his wife, Ginger, have four children—took



Dave Holmlund in Downingtown, PA

the opportunity to walk around the neighborhood and introduce themselves.

"This is my heart for Downingtown and the congregation," O'Brien explained. "If we really see Christ and the radiance of the glory of God, if we are really gripped by that truth, then

talking about Christ won't just be what we have to do, it will be woven into our life, woven into our hearts, and worked out into our conversations."

One tactic that O'Brien recommends is having literature on hand to give at the end of such a conversation. One booklet might be designed for non-Christians, another for Christians from a different tradition. Before Christmas, O'Brien gave out a full-length book—*A Very Different Christmas* by Rico Tice—to church members, with extras for friends and neighbors.

Obtaining more such resources is on O'Brien's to-do list. He also hopes to begin a Sunday evening service and to start a study in his neighborhood. But most importantly, O'Brien's desire is to establish "simple, ordinary patterns of ministry that focus on the keys of worshiping God together and being in awe together at what he has provided for us." □

The author is managing editor of New Horizons.

MEETING OF REFORMED WORLD MISSIONS AGENCIES

// MARK T. BUBE



Paul Bukenya of the Presbyterian Church in Uganda (far left) addressing the representatives of ICRC-NAPARC World Missions Agencies Consultation

The grand task of bringing in the Lord's harvest, which His Spirit is even now preparing in every corner of the world, seems to far outstrip the physical resources of any single church to complete alone. Certainly there are no limits on what our Lord, hearing the prayers of his people in any church, can accomplish. Yet, when it comes to putting actual boots on the ground to go into every one of those far corners to proclaim the precious doctrines of grace and to gather his lost sheep into churches where they will be fed, the OPC has only so many qualified preachers and only so much funding.

Thankfully, in God's gracious providence, the OPC is not the only faithful, Bible-believing, Reformed church in the world ("OPC" is not an acronym for "Only Perfect Church!"). Rather, he has given to us like-minded brothers and sisters in faithful Reformed churches all around the world, with whom we can and do join hands to carry out our Lord's command.

World Missions with Like-Minded Churches

The OPC is a member church in two Reformed ecumenical bodies: the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC—with thirty-four member churches) and the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC—thirteen member churches).

On September 18–20, 2018, representatives of world missions agencies of eighteen ICRC and NAPARC member churches from Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America met together in the OPC's administrative offices in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, for three delightful days of fellowship, sharing, and prayer.

The agency reports from the respective churches were stimulating, uplifting, and humbling, as we heard multiple accounts of what our Lord is doing to bring glory to himself among those who would otherwise be perishing in their sins.

For your OPC representatives, it was a particular delight to sit with and hear the reports of brothers representing churches that previously received OPC missionary assistance and are now sending their own missionaries.

Included among the special items for fuller discussion were: ministry to refugees in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa; dependency issues in meeting diaconal needs; pastoral care of missionaries; different views of the church's mission; security concerns in the use of the internet; and ways to encourage each other in one particular restricted access country.

History of Collaboration

For more than forty years, representatives of the world missions agencies of the NAPARC member churches have met annually "to consult with each other regarding the ministries that have been entrusted to them and to explore ways in which they might cooperate with one another to advance the cause of Christ."

Wonderful working friendships have developed over the decades, as we gather with our missions colleagues to hear where and what each of our respective churches is doing and what new works are being planned for the year to come; to intentionally explore ways in which we might be able to work together more fully in our labors; to pray for one another in our labors; to discuss issues of mutual concern (the same kinds of issues seem, to one degree or another, to crop up almost simultaneously in the missions work of several of the member churches); and to share resources that each of us has found helpful in addressing issues of concern and in serving our missionaries.

We leave those meetings with hearts full of thanksgiving to our Lord for his marvelous mercies to us, and deeply humbled by the privilege of being able to witness what he is doing to bring glory to himself through the labors of weak and fallible men and women.

In part because its members are not confined to just one continent (as is NAPARC), and therefore are not able to meet annually (like NAPARC does), the ICRC world missions agencies representatives meet only once every three or four years. The ICRC established a Missions Committee, not to do the work which Christ has entrusted to the member churches themselves, but rather to facilitate and promote cooperation among the member churches in missions, which includes making the arrangements for those triennial consultations.

Our September meeting was the third such missions consultation for the ICRC member churches (the previous ones were in 2011 and 2015). Since another one of the tasks mandated to the ICRC Missions Committee is to “gather and study the relevant documents from the Member Churches regarding their mission vision, policies, programs or projects, including the training of missionaries and mission methodologies, and to report on its study of these documents, as appropriate,” the consultation also heard a progress report from the subcommittee that was working on this. We all appreciate that there is much we can learn from one another in how we are faithfully to go about

our calling to send missionaries to the ends of the earth to preach Christ and establish Reformed churches to feed and care for his sheep.

The basis of both the ICRC and NAPARC is the Holy Scriptures as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort) and the Westminster Standards. The decisions of each body are advisory only, as neither body exercises any kind of ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the member churches. One of the functions of each body is to facilitate and promote cooperation among the member churches in areas such as missions.

Participants in the Meeting

Seven of the churches represented at the September meeting are members in both the ICRC and NAPARC:

- Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church
- Canadian Reformed Churches
- Free Reformed Churches of North America
- Heritage Reformed Congregations
- Orthodox Presbyterian Church
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America
- United Reformed Churches in North America

Eight are members in ICRC only:

- Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church
- Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia
- Free Church of Scotland
- Free Reformed Churches of South Africa
- Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
- Presbyterian Church in Uganda
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India
- Sudanese Reformed Churches

And, finally, three of the churches represented are members in NAPARC only:

- Korean American Presbyterian Church
- Presbyterian Church in America
- Presbyterian Reformed Church

One participant in the meeting followed up with this response: “It truly was a time of blessing—the unity of purpose,

and such a purpose ... it was a privilege to share in it with you.” Another wrote, “I am very thankful for the great spirit in which everyone contributed to the consultation. I enjoyed it very much as an upbuilding and encouraging meeting.”

The next NAPARC world missions consultation is scheduled for the third week of September 2019 in Wil-

low Grove, and the next ICRC world missions consultation is scheduled for the same time frame in 2021. Please pray that it would continue to please our Lord to bless these gatherings for his own glory and the advancement of his kingdom.

The author is the general secretary of the OPC's Committee on Foreign Missions, the chairman of the ICRC Missions Committee, and the vice-chairman of the OPC's Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations.



The participants in the ICRC-NAPARC World Missions Agencies meeting

What's New

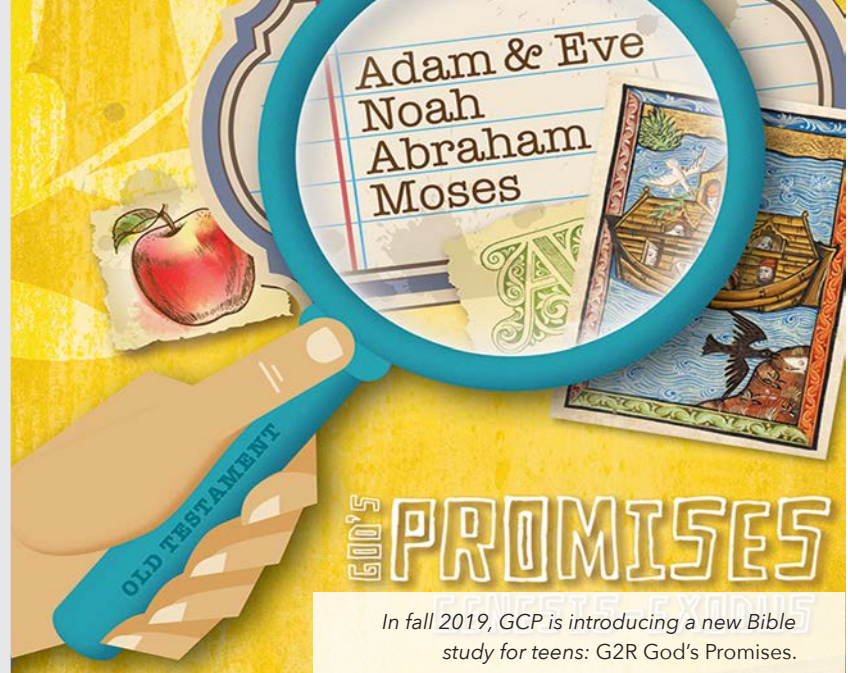
// Comings/Goings

Miss E. K. (Grace Reformed, Reedsburg, WI) concluded her two-and-a-half-year term as a missionary associate in Asia in mid-January 2019.

Mr. and Mrs. Mark (Carla) Van Essendelft welcomed Jordan Taylor Van Essendelft on January 15 in Kampala, Uganda.

NEW TEEN BIBLE STUDIES FROM GREAT COMMISSION PUBLICATIONS

// HEATHER COSSAR



In fall 2019, GCP is introducing a new Bible study for teens: G2R God's Promises.

I will be your God, and you will be my people.” This sentence is “the heartbeat of every divine covenant in the Bible” (O. Palmer Robertson, *Covenants*). When you realize that Scripture is held together by the scarlet thread of the covenant of grace, you marvel at the love of our heavenly Father.

Great Commission Publications is introducing new Bible studies for teens in fall 2019 called *G2R (Genesis to Revelation) God's Promises*. This series will take students on a discovery of amazing “aha” moments in God’s covenant of grace. Beginning with the seed of the first promise in Genesis 3:15, your teens will wonder at the marvelous unfolding of God’s redemptive plan through Christ. They will see God’s promises made and kept through the lives and events of fearful, failing, and sinning men and women. And they will come to understand that our triune God is a covenant God—the God who in the person of Jesus bore the curse of the covenant so his people would receive the blessings of his promises.

Discipling Preteens and Teens

Churches are discipling preteens and teens in various ways—in children’s ministry, Sunday school, youth group, and even small groups or discipleship groups. Think of *G2R Bible Survey* and *G2R God's Promises* as tools to adapt to your setting. These studies are easily adjusted to your ministry calendar and age breakdown. For example, you could use three thirteen-session studies during the school year (thirty-nine weeks) and use one as a stand-alone discipleship group on weeknights or in the summer. Visit www.gcp.org for free samples, lesson overviews, and training resources. Add in *So What? Youth Bible Studies* (see www.sowhatstudies.org), and you’re giving your teens a solid foundation in the Word, all the way through youth group.

G2R God's Promises

G2R God's Promises builds on *Show Me Jesus* for children and *G2R Bible Survey* for preteens/younger teens. By their teenage years, your students have a solid foundation of people and events in the Bible and can go to a deeper level—studying God’s covenantal promises, their fulfillment in Jesus, and the implications for covenant living.

How does *G2R God's Promises* help teens discover that Scripture is held together by the scarlet thread of the covenant of grace?

- By exploring God’s unfolding covenant promises to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David and their fulfillment in Jesus Christ
- By tracing the gospel from the promised seed in Genesis to Jesus, the promised Messiah in the New Testament
- By emphasizing interactive discovery using the Bible as the primary source
- By encouraging time alone in the Word using the *aha!* devotional booklet
- By applying these truths to covenant living today, equipping students to grow in trusting and obeying God out of gratitude for his great salvation

G2R God's Promises includes eight studies of thirteen sessions each (104 in all) with four studies devoted to the Old Testament and four to the New. Students will discover covenant connections and be astounded to see that not only do the Bible stories fit together in one big story, but that God entered into a covenantal relationship with his people, making and keeping promises over thousands of years, ultimately fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The Goal of G2R—Genesis to Revelation

There are two pillars in the *G2R* series: *Bible Survey* and *God's Promises*. Both teach the historical-redemptive plan of God from Genesis to Revelation, but they have different

emphases. *G2R Bible Survey* focuses on the *who, what, where*, and *when* of God's plan—an exciting journey through every book of the Bible. *G2R God's Promises* zeroes in on the *why* and *how* of God's covenant of grace.

G2R Bible Survey, flexible for fifth grade through middle school, is designed for preteens and young teens. By now, they understand chronology and history, and they can see God's plan through the Bible. They are able to connect the dots of Scripture in ways they didn't before. They can take the stories they've heard as children and put together the big story of God's redemption through Christ. And while they do this, they are taking ownership of their faith by spending time with the Author of Scripture during personal devotions using *Devo*. This overview of every book of the Bible lays an essential foundation for studying God's covenant in *G2R God's Promises*.

G2R God's Promises, flexible for middle and high schoolers, centers on God's redemptive dealings with his covenant people. It uses powerful visuals like the "God's Covenant of Grace" poster (see photo) and interactive Bible studies to get students into the Word. It also includes social media posts for leaders to connect with students or their parents during the



week with inspiring illustrations and truths from God's Word.

These two pillars are crucial in the Christian education of our kids, helping them "grow up into salvation" (1 Peter 2:2). In this age of broken promises, think how reassuring it will be for your teens to grasp that the one true God is trustworthy, full of grace and love, and Immanuel, *with them*. They will be encouraged as they see God choose and use his sinful people, and how he keeps pursuing them—all the way to the cross.

The author is production manager at Great Commission Publications.

☆ Congratulations

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

- **Josh Heger**, *Covenant Family Church, Wentzville, MO*

OUR MEMBERSHIP VOWS

Obeying Christ

Glen J. Clary

The fourth membership vow in the OPC requires us to acknowledge Jesus Christ as our Lord and promise obedience to him:

Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, and do you promise that, in reliance on the grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?

Christ is not only our Savior, he is our sovereign Lord, and he instructs his disciples to obey all that he has commanded (Matt. 28:19–20).

That is why the fourth membership vow in the OPC requires us to promise obedience to him. Of course, none of us obeys Christ perfectly. "No mere man since the fall is able in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word and deed" (WSC 82). However, as Christians, we must desire to obey Christ perfectly, and in reliance on the grace of God, we must endeavor to love and serve him with all that is in us.

It is important to know that our desire and ability to serve Christ do not come from ourselves. They come from the grace of God. That's why we promise that we will serve him "in reliance on the grace of God." We recognize that apart from God's grace, we cannot obey Christ. The only reason that we are able to do so is that God is sanctifying us by the Holy Spirit who conforms us to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29).

"Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness" (WSC 35). This ongoing work of sanctification is progressive; it's a gradual process that continues throughout our entire Christian life. It doesn't happen all at once. God enables us "more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness." But the process of sanctification begins the moment we are united to Jesus Christ through Spirit-gifted faith.

● Out of the Mouth . . .

My nine-year-old son is learning about the depth of the depravity of his own heart. The other day I heard him singing, "In my heart there rings a FELONY!"

—Karl Thompson
Grants Pass, Oregon

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

ANATOMY OF A CHURCH OFFICER

// MICHAEL MYERS



Michael and Katy Myers

What should you look for in an elder or deacon? When you are considering men who have been nominated for church office, what should you evaluate? I want to direct your attention to several features that should catch your eye in a potential elder or deacon. Though not exhaustive, the following list will hopefully guide your decision. If you are currently a church officer, you may find these lists an encouraging reminder of your role inside the church.

The Anatomy of an Elder

One of my seminary professors often said that a congregation will never rise above the spirituality and maturity of their elders. As rulers in the church of Jesus Christ, elders have the unceasing pressure and privilege of overseeing the flock of God. It is remarkable that the chief Shepherd has given *the sheep* the responsibility of identifying and electing their own shepherds! When sizing up a potential elder, I encourage you to consider the following.

First, look for a prospective elder who has *a spiritual mind*. Paul's heavenly aim produced his unmatched zeal for the church. Paul refused to overlook the realities of the kingdom of God, the day of judgment, and the well-being of the Church. His fixation upon the realities of the unseen drove him to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), enabled him to see the warfare in which he engaged (Eph. 6:12–20), and motivated his tireless labor (Col. 1:28–29).

Taking Paul as our model in this case, look for a man who orients his mind toward spiritual truth. The church desperately needs men whose minds are on things that are above, not on the things that are on earth (Col. 3:2). Only those men whose minds are captivated with the glory of heaven will rule in a manner worthy of the heavenly king.

Next, a potential ruler in a congregation must possess *a wise tongue*. The elder's work, without exception, requires

them to speak the Word of God. Whether teaching truth or correcting error, encouraging the weak or rebuking the proud—these require words of wisdom. As surely as a soft answer turns away wrath, a harsh word stirs up anger (Prov. 15:1). Like a sword they wound and as a salve they heal (Prov. 12:18). They can build up; but far more easily they can tear down (Eph. 4:29; James 3:5).

As you consider your nominees, reflect on these questions: Does this man have a tongue eager to speak of the Lord (Ps. 45:1–5)? Has he gone out of his way to encourage me or my brethren? Am I willing to receive his rebukes as oil for my head (Ps. 141:5)? Will his wounds be faithful (Prov. 27:5–6)? Does he know when to speak and when to be silent (Prov. 26:4–5)? No man in this life attains perfection, and no elder in the church will before heaven. Nevertheless, a man fit for the eldership must be able and willing to speak with the tongue of the wise.

Finally and most fundamentally, look for a man who possesses *a shepherd's heart*. Oh, how desperately the people of God need this! The heart of a shepherd pulses with care for the flock, puts their needs above his own, and—with urgent sobriety—seeks their spiritual good. The Lord Jesus saw the masses as scattered sheep without a shepherd and was moved with compassion for them (Mark 6:34). He left the glories of heaven to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10), to lay down his life for the sheep (John 10:11). The shepherd must be firm in his stand against attackers of the flock (John 10:12–13) while being gentle with the weak and struggling who are within it (Isa. 40:11).

On the other hand, the failures of shepherds most often come not by way of commission, but omission. Ezekiel directed most of his stinging rebukes at what Israel's shepherds *failed* to do (Ezek. 34:1–6). Be mindful of this, dear saints: negligent, lazy shepherds are a scourge upon the church. Look for men who take initiative, who do not wait until sounds of desperate bleating reach their ears. Above all, however, be

sure that love for the Lord Jesus fills the would-be shepherd's heart. If so, he will feed you (John 21:15). Rich blessings come from such men: "I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer. 3:15, see also vs. 16–18).

The Anatomy of a Deacon

Because elders have a predominantly spiritual role within the church, it's appropriate to focus on the mind, the tongue, and the heart. Deacons have a related but distinct role. While elders primarily shepherd through the ministry of word, deacons lead the church in the crucial ministry of deed. For that reason, they frequently find themselves on the front lines of costly and sacrificial ministry. So, what should these servants of the church possess?

As the preeminent servants in the church, deacons first of all must have **eyes that seek**. As the front line for the church's ministry of mercy, these men must be watchful for occasions of need both inside and outside of the church (Ps. 41:1). They need awareness to look and wise insight to act. In other words, they must identify the need itself and then determine how to meet it most *helpfully*. No wonder the first congregation had to identify men full of the Spirit and of wisdom (Acts 6:3)! Our natural reaction to difficulty is to look elsewhere; deacons intentionally direct our gaze of compassion *toward* those in need, even if it is ugly.

In addition to eyes that look for those in need, a qualified deacon has **ears that hear** their cries. Wisdom tells us, "Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered" (Prov. 21:13). In the Gospels, we read scene after scene in which Jesus listens to the voices of the desperate (Mark 1:40), the hopeless (Luke 8:47–48), and the blind (Mark 10:47–49).

Deacons, therefore, need to be men of mercy, compassion, and wisdom, with a willingness to associate with the lowly: "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own

sight." (Rom. 12:16—a command given to all Christians!). Why? Because when a cry comes to their ears, they must be willing to devote the necessary amount of energy, time, and resources to respond to it. Though there is such a thing as active listening, a deacon's task of hearing will often require him to do more. He must *react* appropriately and wisely to calls for aid.

Have you observed men in the congregation who model compassion to these cries? Are you listening?

We have examined how a deacon's eyes serve proactively and his ears mostly reactively. We come now

to the servant's most crucial feature—**hands that serve**.

Seeing and hearing must lead to doing. "If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?"

So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:15–17).

In the Bible the hands often stand for the whole of a person's actions. A carpenter's hands show the tough calluses of his trade, the surgeon's the steadiness of medical precision, but what of the deacon's? His hands should bear the unique blend of strength for willing service, gentleness for tender care, and endurance for patient labor. Think about a church led in her service by men of such grace and ability. Their in-

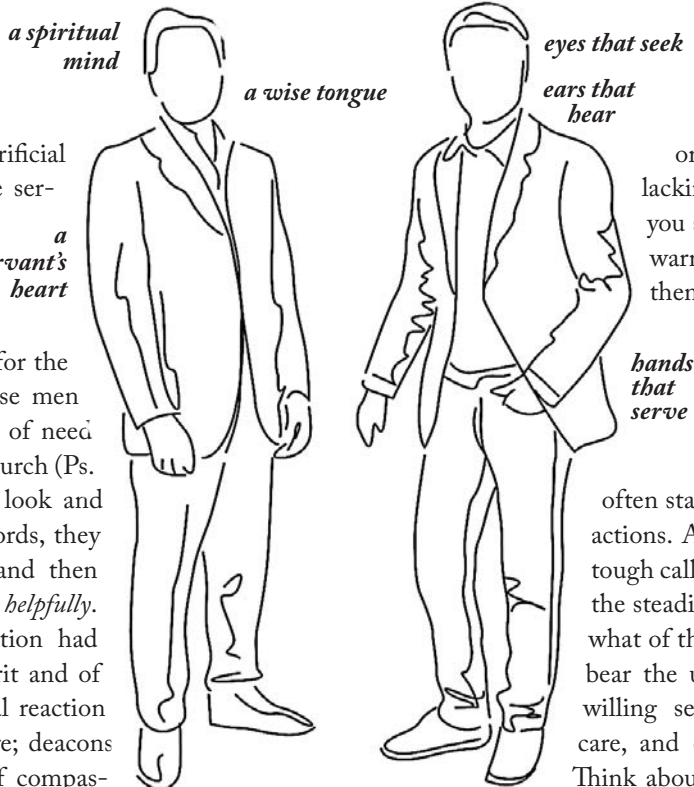
valuable work in the trenches of mercy ministry perhaps lies behind Paul's encouragement, "For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also a great confidence in the faith that is in Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 3:13).

In his commentary on Revelation 1–11, James Ramsey wrote this about the church:

Her whole government is designed to train and discipline her to be a witness bearer. And just in proportion as her ministers, office-bearers, and people keep constantly in view this work of witness-bearing for God as the very design of the church's existence does she answer to this symbol of the golden candlestick, and is truly God's light-bearer in a dark world.

The officers of the church will take the lead in witness-bearing, for better or for worse. May the Lord grant us men to guide us well, and may he give us grace to identify them.

The author is pastor of Heritage OPC in Royston, Georgia.



Home Missions Today

For up-to-date news and prayer requests, receive our newsletter by e-mailing HomeMissionsToday@opc.org. New editions: March 6 and 20, 2019.

WHERE DOES YOUR DONATION TO HOME MISSIONS GO?

When you give to the OPC, there's a 40.5 percent chance that your dollar will end up with the Committee on Home Missions. If it does, what will it be used for?

Church Planting

2019 budget: \$675,000

It's most likely that your donation will directly aid church planting. The Committee on Home Missions provides up to 50 percent of the total budget of new OP mission works if the presbytery and/or the mission work cannot fully support the labors of a full-time evangelist for that work. (This support is typically given for no more than four years.) In 2018, there were eleven new evangelists and interns. In 2019, there may be as many as fifteen new evangelists and church-planting interns, for a total of thirty-three evangelists and three interns.

Church Planter Training

2019 budget: \$125,000

Or, your donation could go toward training church planters. This line item grew from 2018 to 2019 as Home Missions included at their annual training conference all third-year church planters along with church planters who were in their first year of receiving support. Not stopping there, Home Missions invited all spouses to attend the training conference as well.

In addition to the conference, Home Missions visits three seminaries annually to meet future OP pastors and church planters and teach them about ministry in the OPC. It also provides a variety of online training tools for church planters and others, such as outwardopc.com.

Regional Home Missionaries (RHMs)

2019 budget: \$300,000

Your dollar may also go toward supporting RHMs, who are church-planting representatives of their presby-

teries and serve as liaisons to Home Missions. RHMs perform a wide variety of church planting tasks, including leading Bible studies, following up with contacts, leading or coordinating a mission work's first months of worship, and more. This year, Home Missions budgeted support for eleven regional home missionaries (two part-time, nine full-time).

Home Missions Staff

2019 budget: \$399,186

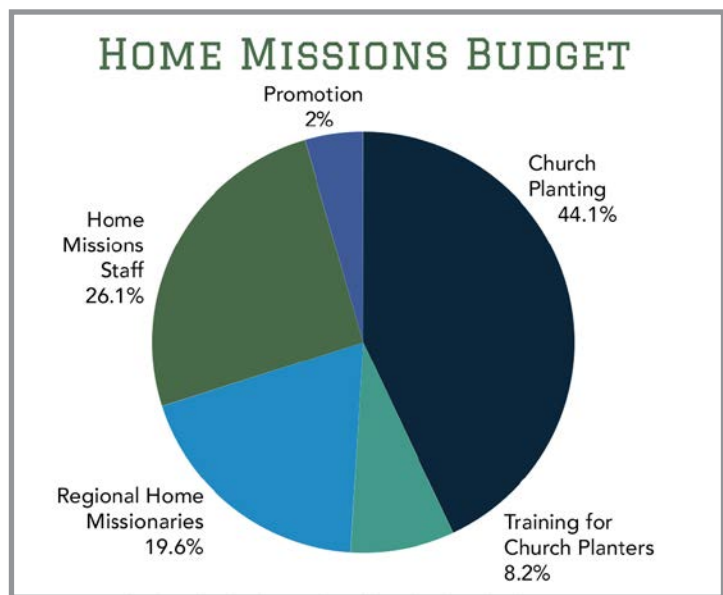
Home Missions may also use your funds to support its staff: general secretary John Shaw, associate general secretary Al Tricarico, administrative assistant Katie Stumpff, and one-third of the salary of Committee on Diaconal Ministries coordinator David Nakhla—as well as the travel and other expenses that make their work possible.

Promotion

2019 budget: \$70,000

You may have seen the WorldWide Outreach videos last fall; that was the work of Home Missions in partnership with the Committee on Coordination. Home Missions also assists mission works with creating videos and other promotional materials. (If you would like to see an example of their promotional work, visit graceop.org.)

Thank you for your generous support of Home Missions. In a denomination of roughly 325 churches and church plants, your presbyteries typically work with fifty to sixty emerging new works. And each year, the CHMCE has the privilege of providing support and training for thirty to forty church plants—roughly 10 percent of the total number of OP congregations meeting each Lord's Day. With your support, more people are hearing the gospel and worshipping God.



MARCH



The Woods



The Bennetts

1 Affiliated missionaries **JERRY & MARILYN FARNIK**, Prague, Czech Republic. Pray for the recruitment of summer short-term mission teams. / Yearlong intern **RYAN (ALISABETH) WOODS**, Covenant OPC, Rochester, NY.

2 **CHRIS & GRACE ANN CASHEN**, Clarkston, GA. Please pray for Jesus's light to shine through the after-school and English volunteers. / **BEN (TIFFANY) WARD**, church-planting intern, Christ the King, Naples, FL.

3 **MARK STUMPF**, administrator for the OPC Loan Fund and the Committee on Ministerial Care. / **BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for fruitful interactions with Muslims in the community.

4 Pray for **MIKE (ELIZABETH) DIERCKS**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Ohio. / **MR. AND MRS. J. M.**, Asia, give thanks for the opportunity to continue their language studies this year.

5 Pray for tentmaker **T.D.**, Asia, as she encourages like-minded friends in the community. / Pray that **OPC.ORG** will edify the church and help it communicate its message to others.

6 Pray for teams planning **SHORT-TERM MISSIONS** trips for this summer. / **BOB & GRACE HOLDA**, Oshkosh, WI. May many visitors become members of Resurrection Presbyterian Church and participate in its fellowship and service.

7 **MR. AND MRS. M. M.**, Asia. Pray for a profitable time of rest and reflection. / Pray for stated clerk **ROSS GRAHAM** as he works with the Committee on Arrangements to plan the 86th General Assembly, which convenes June 5, 2019, in Dallas, TX.

8 **BRAD & CINNAMON PEPP**, Dayton, OH. Pray for a strong unity to develop in the early days of First Street Reformed Fellowship. / Pray for affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia, as they return to the US for furlough.

9 **BRADNEY & EILEEN LOPEZ**, Arroyo, Puerto Rico. Pray for the Lord's provision for Iglesia Presbiteriana Sola Escritura and the Lopezes. / Pray for **CCE'S SUBCOMMITTEE ON MINISTERIAL TRAINING** as it approves internship applications for 2019-20.

10 **CHRIS & MEGAN HARTSHORN**, Anaheim Hills, CA. Pray that Anaheim Hills Presbyterian Church would see new families added, as well as families converted and baptized. / **DAVID & RASHEL ROBBINS**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for health and energy as David coordinates efforts to bring the gospel to unreached mountain villages.

11 **JAY & ANDREA BENNETT**, Neon, KY. Continue to pray that Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church would be organized by 2020. / Army chaplains **JEFFREY (JENNIFER) SHAMESS** and **DAVID (JENNA) DERIENZO**.

12 **MARK & CARLA VAN ESSENFELDT** and **DR. FLIP & ANNELOES BAARDMAN**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the missionary families raising young children on the field. / **CHARLENE TIPTON**, database coordinator.

13 Pray for missionary associates **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they prepare to return to the field. / Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**.

14 Pray for **DAVID (JANE) CRUM**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California. / Pray for the GA's Special Committee on **UPDATING THE LANGUAGE OF THE DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**.

15 Missionary associates **LEAH HOPP**, **REBEKAH MOORE**, and **ANGELA VOSKUIL**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for their mutual support and growth in unity as team members. / **GREGORY REYNOLDS**, editor of *Ordained Servant*.

MARCH



The Tuininga family

21 Affiliated missionaries **CRAIG & REE COULBOURNE** and **LINDA KARNER**, Japan. Pray that seekers will commit their lives to the Lord and overcome cultural fears. / Home Missions administrative assistant **KATIE STUMPPFF**.

22 Pray for **ALAN STRANGE**, president of the board of trustees of Great Commission Publications. / **BROCK (JENNIFER) PAVIER**, church-planting intern, Covenant Presbyterian, St. Augustine, FL.

23 Pray for the labors of missionary associates **MARKUS & SHARON JEROMIN**, **STEVE & CARRIE HILL**, **ELISE RUDDER**, and **MICHAELA SHARPSHAIR**, Montevideo, Uruguay. / **STEPHEN PRIBBLE**, senior technical associate for OPC.org.

24 **LOWELL & MAE IVEY**, Virginia Beach, VA. Pray for the officer training taking place at Reformation Presbyterian Church. / **MR. AND MRS. S. F.**, Asia. Pray for the students in the new members' class.

25 **MR. AND MRS. D. K.** and associates **P. F.** and **M. S.**, Asia. Pray for fruitful follow-up with English Corner contacts. / Foreign Missions general secretary **MARK BUBE**.
JASON & AMANDA KIRKLIN, Waco,

26 TX. Pray for fruitful officer training and Sunday school classes at Trinity OPC. / Pray for **JUDY ALEXANDER** as she coordinates plans for the April 2019 Timothy Conference and for Christian Education general secretary **DANNY OLINGER**.



The Khandas

27 Pray for retired missionaries **CAL & EDIE CUMMINGS**, **GREET RIETKERK**, **YOUNG & MARY LOU SON**, and **BRIAN & DOROTHY WINGARD**. / Yearlong intern **DHANANJAY (CORRIE) KHANDA**, Hope Presbyterian, Grayslake, IL.

28 Pray for administrator **DAVID NAKHLA** and others meeting with the Committee on Diaconal Ministries today and tomorrow. / **BILL & SESSIE WELZIEN**, Key West, FL. Ask the Lord to add to Keys Presbyterian Church.

29 **HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for the church's outreach efforts to young adults and teenagers. / **LARRY & KALYNN OLDAKER**, Huron, OH. Pray that God would grow Grace Fellowship OPC in 2019.

30 Pray for **BEN & HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti, as they plan for visiting teams who will aid in leader training, VBS, and a roofing project. / **LACY (DEBBIE) ANDREWS**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast.

31 Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti, give thanks that the children's club attracted many to the church. / **JOSH & KRISTEN MCKAMY**, Chambersburg, PA. Pray for renewed outreach for Covenant OPC.

16 Please pray for the staff of **NEW HORIZONS**. / Pray for the labors of **CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON** and **ERIC & DIANNA TUININGA**, Mbale, Uganda, as they prepare Reformed doctrine courses at Knox School of Theology.

17 **NATHAN (ANNA) STROM**, church-planting intern, Immanuel OPC, Andover, MN. / **MATTHEW & LOIS COTTA**, Pasadena, CA. Ask the Lord to continue his good work in Pasadena Presbyterian Church.

18 Pray for the **COMMITTEE ON MINISTERIAL CARE** and its director **DAVID HANEY**. / **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for the formation of a provisional presbytery among the Reformed churches in Uruguay.

19 **RAY & MICHELE CALL**, Montevideo, Uruguay (on furlough). Pray for good health as they travel to meet supporters. / Pray for the **COMMITTEE ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION** as it meets today.

20 Pray for associate general secretaries **AL TRICARICO** in Home Missions and **DOUGLAS CLAWSON** in Foreign Missions. / Yearlong intern **ERIC (VIVIANE) CUER DE ANDRADE**, Harvest OPC, Wyoming, MI.

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

MISSION WORK ORGANIZED AT CONCHO, AZ

In 2010, Brian Chang, while church-planting in Cottonwood, Arizona, asked an important question one Sunday to a visiting couple, Steve and Barbara Neuzil: "Would you like to see an OP congregation in your hometown of Concho, Arizona?"

Thanks to that question, a group of around twenty-five people became a new mission work in 2012. In July 2016, the Lord brought Stephen Larson to Concho to labor as church planter. The Lord continued to bless this mission work with growth and, on December 8, 2018, Concho Valley OPC was recognized as a new and separate congregation. Larson was installed as pastor, Joshua Grimsley and Peter Schelin were ordained and installed as ruling elders, and Darrall Dennee and Bruce Ferg were installed as ruling elders.

The presbytery's regional home missionary, David Crum, led the service. Christopher Chelpka gave the charge to the congregation, Charles Perkins preached, and Joel Ellis gave the charge to the elders and pastor. What a joyful occasion that began with a simple question eight years ago!

IN MEMORIAM: ROBERT W. ECKARDT

Robert Y. Eckardt

On December 30, 2018, my father, the Reverend Robert W. Eckardt, went to be with the Lord in glory at the age of ninety-five. As a young man, he had to be encouraged by his uncle, the Reverend Robert S. Marsden, to attend Westminster Seminary. He had a shy per-



Front row: Carl Bogue, Darrall Dennee, Bruce Ferg, Stephen Larson, Peter Schelin, Joshua Grimsley, Charles Perkins; back row: Joel Ellis, Christopher Chelpka, David Crum, Arie Hilbrands

sonality and a fear of preaching, but the Lord empowered him to serve for fifty-five years as a gospel minister, including long pastorates at Emmanuel OPC in Wilmington, Delaware, and Covenant OPC in Vineland, New Jersey. He moderated the Thirty-Second (1965) General Assembly and served as stated clerk of four general assemblies.

I heard my dad preach many times about the rich young ruler (Matthew 19 and Mark 10), and I was privileged to preach from the same text on the Lord's Day after he died. My dad had very few possessions and it did not seem to bother

him. He delighted in Christ and his salvation, and that was enough for him.

This past November, my father and mother, Mary, celebrated their sixty-ninth wedding anniversary. In 1997, they endured the loss of a son, Doug, but they trusted in the goodness of the Lord and the hope of being together in Christ on the last day.

My father is survived by my mother, my brother Richard and myself, six grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.



Robert Eckardt (left) with Hal Megonigal

UPDATE

CHURCHES

- On December 8, Concho Valley OPC in Concho, AZ, was organized as a particular congregation.

MINISTERS

- On December 8, Stephen A. Larson, formerly the organizing pastor, was installed as pastor of Concho Valley OPC in Concho, AZ.

MILESTONES

- Bonnie (Hanks) Conard, 80, died on January 24. She was the widow of OP pastor Larry D. Conard.

HARVEST OPC FALL RETREAT

Shayna Medendorp

Harvest OPC in Wyoming, Michigan, held its fourth annual fall retreat on November 9–10, 2018, with the theme “Heart for the Harvest,” located on the conference grounds of The Shack near White Cloud, Michigan (no connection to the book by William P. Young). The speaker was Jesse Pirschel, pastor of Providence OPC in Temecula, California, who came with his wife and four children. Pirschel summed up the sessions as “looking at the wonder of creation and redemption and what it says about the God of both.” Some also enjoyed a snowball fight—while others stayed indoors.

LETTERS

EATING OUT ON THE LORD’S DAY

Editor:

If, in my article “Confessions of a Sabbath Breaker” (December 2018), I gave the impression that my point was to encourage believers to eat out on Sundays, then I take that back. What I really hoped to get across is that, in itself, negatively abstaining from doing things on the Lord’s Day—including eating out—is not really keeping the day holy at all! Keeping the day holy means actively devoting it to the Lord, his people, and his purposes in the power of the Spirit. I long to see us not only *getting* but also *giving to others* a refreshing foretaste of heaven by the spiritual activity of our Lord’s Day interactions with God and his people.

Larry E. Wilson
Jenison, MI

NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH

Editor:

Jonathan Gibson’s otherwise excellent article, “Longing for Heaven, Longing for God” (January), portrays the penultimate blessing of believers, heaven, as the ultimate blessing. Gibson properly presented Psalm 84 as ultimately fulfilled in King Jesus’s ministry but overlooks his victory over death. Instead, we are left in heaven, the intermediate state before our resurrection. This was emphasized twice by refer-



Snowball fighting at Harvest OPC’s fall retreat

ence to the song “This World Is Not My Home,” which wrongly suggests that God does not intend to redeem this physical world as Romans 8:18–25 teaches. That song goes on to proclaim that believers “will live eternally” in heaven. Being with God in heaven temporarily will be great; living with God eternally in the new heavens and earth will be glorious.

Roger Schmurr
Cleveland, TN

Jonathan Gibson responds:

I appreciate that the reference to Jim Reeves’s song “This World Is Not My Home” might imply that I had only the intermediate (blessed) state of heaven in mind, instead of the eschatological (glorious) state of the new heavens and the new earth. Certainly, there are points in the article where I refer to leaving our earthly pilgrimage in this life and going to heaven, and thus entering the intermediate (blessed) state of experiencing God’s courts above. However, at the beginning of the article I did write a qualifying paragraph, immediately after referencing the song:

Now, by ‘this world’ I don’t mean that the earth below is not our home and heaven above is ... 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.

In other words, while I was alluding to Reeves’s song, I was putting a new angle on it. The world of this age is not our home, we’re just a-passing through to another age—the new age of the new creation. This paragraph was meant to keep

any reference to the intermediate state in heaven within the wider framework of the glorified state in a new heavens and new earth. Also, when I speak of Christ near the end of the article, I refer to him sitting down at the Father’s right hand, which entails his victory over death. The next sentence reads: “This

world was not his home, he was just a-passing through.” In other words, he had entered a new state and inaugurated a new age, of which his own resurrection and ascension were the firstfruits.

So, I agree with Schmurr: the intermediate state in heaven is a penultimate blessing, the glorified state in the new creation will be the ultimate blessing. When my daughter Leila died, well-intentioned friends would say to us, “She’s with Christ, which is far better. She’s in a better place.” My wife and I would respond: “Yes, she is with Christ, which is better. But it’s not yet best. She’s still awaiting her resurrection in a new creation.”

I thank Schmurr for his observation, but hopefully the qualifying paragraph in the article and this explanation might help alleviate any concern on where our hope must ultimately be placed, while at the same time affirming the blessing of the intermediate state for our loved ones in Christ who have gone before us to the celestial courts above.

KJV RHETORIC

Editor:

I look forward to reading *Authorized: The Use and Misuse of the King James Bible* (see Calvin Goligher’s review, January), but I hope it contains better examples of “false friends”—that is, words still in use that have changed meaning—than “wait” in Romans 12:7. The KJV’s use of italics in that verse identifies the phrase as an editorial gloss. It is not, therefore, even an example of translating inspired text. Also, the use of the preposition “on” rather than “for” intimates the intended meaning

(e.g., waitresses wait “on” tables while they wait “for” their shift to end). In addition, the disputed definition “carefully attend to” continues to be listed in modern dictionaries as a second or third use of the verb. This may seem like a minor point of concern to some, but overstatements have always been common in both pro-KJV and anti-KJV rhetoric. They are anything but helpful.

Christian McShaffrey
Reedsburg, WI

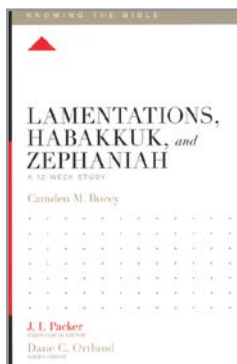
Calvin Goligher responds:

Thank you to Mr. McShaffrey for his thoughtful response to my review. *Authorized* does indeed provide many more examples of “false friends” in the King James Version. Some of them will, perhaps, be more convincing than the one I mentioned. Of course, with careful research such as that conducted by Mr. McShaffrey, almost any “false friend” could be exposed. The really pressing question is whether such research should be necessary when using a vernacular translation that aims to address the ploughboy in his native tongue, as the translators of the King James Version (following the principles of 1 Corinthians 14) hoped to do.

REVIEWS

***Lamentations, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: A 12-Week Study*, by Camden Bucey. Knowing the Bible Series. Crossway, 2018. Paperback, 98 pages, \$8.99. Reviewed by professor William M. Wood.**

Publishing a short twelve-week study covering three of the more complicated and under-read Old Testament books is a daunting task that Bucey undertakes admirably. Each lesson is full of biblical truth, theological insight, and a Christ-centeredness that will benefit any reader who takes the time to attentively read each passage, answer the attendant questions, and reflect on the material in the study. Each lesson includes introductory comments



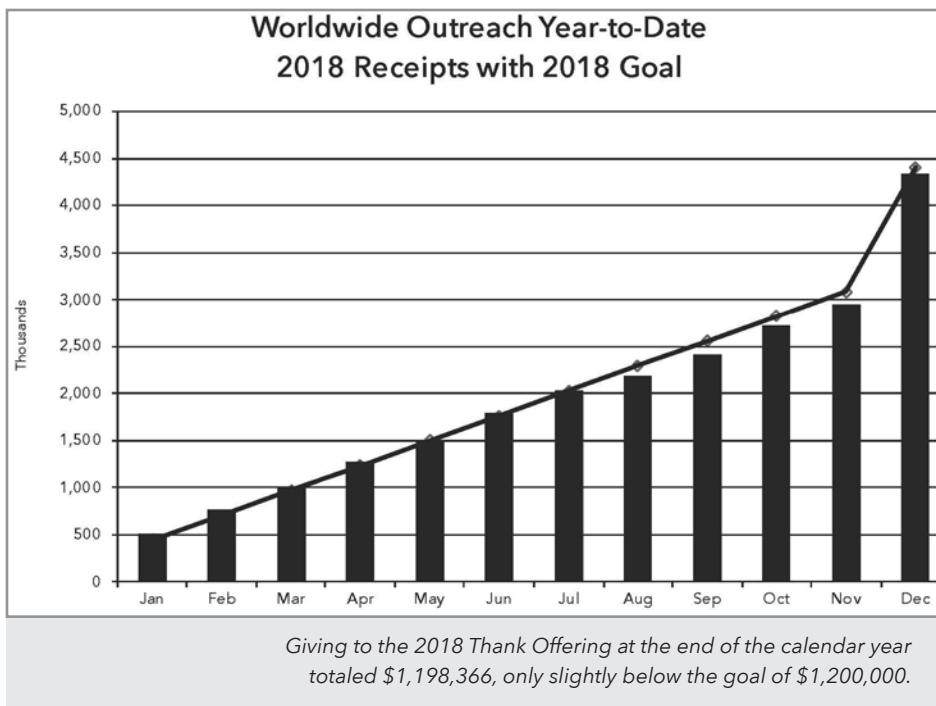
presenting the place of the passage in the context of redemptive history and in the book, a “big picture” of the message, and a series of questions designed to guide the reader through the important features of the text. The lessons then proceed with prose sections entitled “gospel glimpses,” which focus on important theological features that drive one to consider the gospel of Christ crucified and raised, “whole-bible connections,” which tie the passage in with the rest of the Bible and God’s plan of redemption, and “theological soundings” that dig into the most salient theological issues presented in the passage. Each lesson then concludes with a section of guided questions for personal reflection and a call to prayer. The book contains four lessons on Lamentations, three on Habakkuk, and three on Zephaniah with introductory and concluding lessons. Although the format of a Bible study resists the presentation of a proper thesis, Bucey does offer a “big picture” analysis of these three books where the main focus is that they “wrestle with the reality of sin and its consequences” in a context where the people of God “broke his covenant” and “God’s justice must be satisfied” (87). It is this “big picture” that drives one to Christ as the Son of God who has borne

the wrath of his Father that he might give his church “strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow” (87–88; citing “Great Is Thy Faithfulness”).

In my estimation, the study fulfills its goal to faithfully present the gospel in these Old Testament books. It will be a great benefit to any church or individual who seeks to study these difficult books and wrestle through their tough themes, such as the righteous suffering at the hands of the wicked (Habakkuk), the reality of God’s just judgment against sin (Zephaniah), or having hope in the midst of great distress (Lamentations). While a reader who desires to dig deeper into these books would have been aided by the author providing a helpful bibliography for further reading beyond the ESV Study Bible, this study successfully guides readers in wrestling with these books as Christians who find their hope in Christ and his promises of an eternal kingdom where the church will rejoice in the Lord always (Zeph. 3:14).

***An Immovable Feast: How I Gave Up Spirituality for a Life of Religious Abundance*, by Tyler Blanski. Ignatius, 2018. Hardcover, 290 pages, \$16.11. Reviewed by OP pastor Everett A. Henes.**

This book will help you to understand why some convert to Roman Catholicism.



It is written to convince the reader to convert as well. The author seeks to create a desire that he has come to believe only Rome can fulfill.

Over the past ten years, I have had the opportunity to work with college students, many of whom face what I've come to call "the Catholic Question." The question is usually put this way: Why aren't you a Roman Catholic? It often comes from their peers, though professors play a role as well. Behind it, is the assumption that the Roman Catholic Church is "original Christianity," and if you do not align with them, you must justify your decision.

Tyler Blanski is a graduate from Hillsdale College. The topics he covers sound very familiar; almost like someone had taken all the conversations I've had with students over the past ten years living in Hillsdale and threaded them together. *An Immovable Feast* recounts Blanski's college days, beginning as a Jesus-only evangelical. He walked the too familiar road, attending local Baptist churches, skipping church altogether, then visiting the local Anglican parish.

Blanski talks a lot about his relationships—friendships and romantic ties—that caused him to ask questions about the unity of the church and how he relates to students from other churches. The Hillsdale curriculum, focusing on the transcendentals of the good, the true, and the beautiful, gives him a sense of unity with his classmates that his faith seemed to lack.

Some students convert to Roman Catholicism while they are at college. Others do not. Blanski did not. But the seeds for conversion were sown there. The chapters that follow his college years are helpful, because he sets out to wrestle with key issues: *sola scriptura*, the place of Mary and the saints, the priesthood, the papacy, and "awesome" family planning. By the end, Blanski has converted, and he has drawn the reader along with him.

Absent from the book is any serious dealing with the theology behind these doctrines. Purgatory is taken for granted,

and the treasury of merit is absent when discussing the saints. Mary comes to have a bigger and bigger place in his theology, joining the Father and the Son at the head table for this immovable feast he envisions.

As I finished the book I felt sad for Blanski. It sounds presumptuous, perhaps, but I was sad that I wasn't there to talk with him during his college days. He asks good questions that have great answers in the history of the Reformed church. I could see him getting onto the sacramental treadmill that is the Roman Catholic Church. Get grace, lose grace, get grace, lose grace. One of his closing lines serves to show just how far he'd gone, "Perhaps we are saved not so much by 'faith alone' but by fidelity to Jesus and his Kingdom?" Blanski trades in assurance for a priest and justification by faith alone for a chance at purgatory, so long as he dies in friendship with God.

Blanski helps me to better understand the culture that leads to conversions. We must have good answers to questions about *sola scriptura*, the communion of the saints, the papacy, the place of Mary in redemptive history, and how to understand unity amidst the diversity in the visible church. Most of all, we must help people to understand that their only hope for salvation is through faith in Christ alone.

***The Life of Moses: God's First Deliverer of Israel*, by James Montgomery Boice. P&R, 2018. Hardcover, 472 pages, \$22.50. Reviewed by OP pastor Andrew Miller.**

Hebrews 3 draws our attention to Moses who was "faithful in all God's house" (3:2) and who pointed to Jesus whose ministry would be even more glorious. The posthumously published book *The Life of Moses: God's First Deliverer of Israel*, explores the faithfulness of Moses in order to show us God's faithfulness and grace to his people. Drawn from sermons by the late Dr. Boice, the book tracks the life of Moses through each book, starting with Exodus and ending with the final words

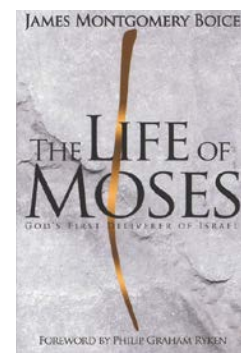
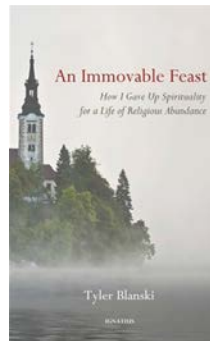
of Moses at the conclusion of Deuteronomy. Each chapter explains a passage of the Bible, sometimes even a series of biblical chapters, and makes application to the Christian life. While some chapters reference connections to the gospel more explicitly than others, Boice's insistence on proclaiming Christ and the Bible as one grand story of redemption comes out clearly.

For example, Boice explains that Leviticus is at the center of "the five books of Moses" to emphasize "that the sacrifices stand at the very heart of the Old Testament ... They also point to the very heart of Christianity, because all the sacrifices are fulfilled and brought to completion by Jesus Christ. And his death on the cross stands at the very heart of Christianity. So as we come to Leviticus, we come to the very heart of the meaning of the Christian faith" (224).

The weaknesses of the book are minor, and some of them may be due to its genre and to the nature of a posthumously published work. For example, there are places where additional Scripture references would have been helpful to support an assertion. As in mathematics, there are times when you need to "show your work" to convince readers or give them the ability for further study. At the same time, *The Life of Moses* is more of a devotional work than an academic commentary.

Similarly, a survey of four large books of the Bible is bound to skip over some details. Much more could have been said about Moses being prohibited from entering the Promised Land because of his sin. Likewise, the covenant that bears the name of Moses, the "Mosaic Covenant," is left largely unexplored.

These points aside, *The Life of Moses* is informative and edifying, and I plan to integrate some of what I learned into my own teaching. I happily recommend *The Life of Moses* for readers who wish to learn



about Moses or the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. It has enough depth to inform pastors and stimulate their thinking, while being clear and accessible enough that new Christians will find it a very profitable introduction.

***Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition*, by Craig A. Carter. Baker, 2018. Paperback, 304 pages, \$17.98 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor Matthew H. Patton.**

From the very first page of this exceptional book, Carter throws down the gauntlet to conservative Christian interpreters of the Bible: are you interpreting the Bible in an authentically Christian way, or have you unwittingly imbibed the assumptions of unbelieving biblical scholarship? Anyone weaned on the classic interpretive approach of evangelicalism (often called “grammatical-historical” exegesis because it emphasizes the grammar and historical setting of the human author of the text) and anyone who gets skittish when they hear the words “allegory” or “typology”

needs to consider the argument of this book.

Carter, a professor of theology at Tyndale University College (Toronto), served for several years as a Baptist pastor. He holds to the 1689 London Baptist Confession (a lightly modified version of our Westminster Confession). Carter’s book emerged from the crisis he faced of trying to preach Christ from all the Scriptures when the grammatical-historical approach forbade him from doing so. Simply put, can we read Old Testament (OT) texts as being *about* Christ when we often cannot demonstrate that the human author intended to point forward to him?

Carter contends that we not only *can* but *must* read the entire OT as pointing forward to Christ. Two presuppositions govern his book. First, a high doctrine of Scripture: at the very outset the interpreter must decide whether to treat Scripture as a divinely inspired book, or as just another ancient text. Carter demonstrates that Scripture views itself as entirely divine, and is both flawless and unified. The second presupposition is what Carter calls “Christian Platonism.” The name may raise eyebrows, but Carter means by it the biblical insistence on spiritual realities like heaven and angels, as well as “the Creator-creature distinction”: the idea that God transcends his

creation in every respect, and that even time is a created reality that is contained in God.

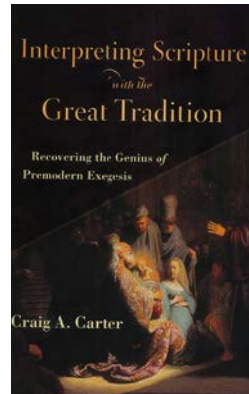
Carter then surveys some of the great early church interpreters and concludes that they built an interpretive approach squarely on these two presuppositions, and that this approach must be recovered by the present-day church. To Carter’s thinking, the closest contemporary expression of the early church’s exegesis is found in “Vosian biblical theology”—that is, the approach of Geerhardus Vos, where “the Bible is interpreted as a unity centered on Jesus Christ by means of a hermeneutic that sees the most important context of every biblical text to be the canon of Scripture as a whole” (155–156).

The final chapters point to how we can do this Christ-centered exegesis more faithfully, and these are the most exciting in the book. First, an OT text’s meaning includes foreshadowings of Christ that the human author may not have intended, but the Holy Spirit did. Typological connections to Christ are *in the text* when it is read in light of the whole canon. Christ is the great interpreter of his own Word, not only through his teaching, but also his work. These typological connections might go beyond the literal sense of the text, but they must be “consistent with, and grow out of, the literal sense of the text” (170). This rule safeguards against free associations that have no rooting in the text’s thrust.

Carter then introduces “prosopological exegesis,” which focuses on Christ as the living speaker of the OT, a fruitful ancient approach that will be new to many readers.

Ultimately, an interpreter needs Christian virtue: humility, faith, repentance, and a zeal for God.

While Carter’s writing is sometimes unclear (his definitions of “Christian Platonism” and the “literal sense” vary), his book urges a rich, deeply Christian approach to interpretation, which must be recovered.



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NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS *Continued*

***A Colorful Past: A Coloring Book of Church History*, by William Boekestein, illustrated by Naomi Kamphuis. Reformation Heritage, 2018. Paperback, 88 pages, \$6.00. Reviewed by OP pastor Jonathan L. Cruse.**

Children love to draw, just as they love to be told a great story. These two passions are combined in *A Colorful Past* to hopefully produce a third: love for the church. In this coloring book of church history by William Boekestein and Naomi Kamphuis, children (and their adult family and friends) are not only introduced to some of the most important figures in church history, but are immersed into their stories as well.

The book is organized to have at least one important church history figure represented from each of the last twenty centuries of the church. Young artists begin in the first century with the apostle Paul (depicted in chains under Roman guard) and by the end will have journeyed

the whole way to Glenside, Pennsylvania, coloring in J. Gresham Machen lecturing at Westminster Seminary in the twentieth century. Each picture is accompanied by a few sentences that explain the important work accomplished by these various figures.

Readers will learn that John Wycliffe helped translate the Bible into English, that Tertullian articulated the doctrine of the Trinity, and that Lady Jane Grey stood for her faith even in amidst the threat of persecution. While the heroic figures of the Reformation are well attested, the book also includes lesser-known characters: Gottschalk, Vladimir of Kiev, and Saint Columba, for example. Budding artists who use this coloring book will be getting a head start on seminary!

A particular strength of *A Colorful Past* is that it represents the unity through di-

versity of the visible church. Men who would be on different sides of denominational lines still belong to the “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” of God’s church. To that end, medieval scholar Thomas Aquinas, fiery Baptist minister Charles Spurgeon, and brilliant Reformed theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper are all in the book, just as they were all used powerfully by God in and for his church.

I highly commend this informative and interactive book. It would be great for use in the home or even in Sunday school programs of the church. Hopefully it will spark further conversations about the church and how God has been faithful to her from generation to generation. And since “there are no unimportant people in God’s church,” may this book help our children see their precious place in the body.



It was a balmy 10 degrees at the Second Youth Winter Weekend in Craftsbury, Vermont, in January, which is put on by Covenant Presbyterian in Barre, Vermont. Youth from five OP churches attended and heard from speaker Carl Durham on the theme “Daniel in Babylon.”