

# NEW HORIZONS

— in the ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH —

**8** Questioning Self-Definition  
*// by George C. Hammond*

AUG - SEPT 2021

**22** Review: Nichols's  
*R. C. Sproul // by  
David M. Sarafolean*



## God's Faithfulness in Affliction

*by* DANNY E. OLINGER // 3



*Report on the 87th General Assembly*

# CONTENTS

## FEATURES

- 3** God's Faithfulness in Affliction  
*By Danny E. Olinger*
- 8** Questioning Self-Definition  
*By George C. Hammond*
- 16** Fraternal Address to the PCA  
General Assembly  
*By Chad B. Van Dixhoorn*

## DEPARTMENTS

- 10** Foreign Missions  
*Health Research in Karamoja*
- 12** Christian Education  
*God's Provision to the GCP •  
Favorite Psalms and Hymns*
- 14** Home Missions  
*Alienation and the Household of Faith*
- 17** Prayer Calendar
- 19** Diaconal Ministries  
*"Most Encouraging Zoom Call of COVID"?*
- 20** News, Views, & Reviews

## New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

**Editor:** Danny E. Olinger  
**Managing Editor:** Judith M. Dinsmore  
**Editorial Assistant:** Diane L. Olinger  
**Proofreader:** Sarah Pederson  
**Cover Designer:** Christopher Tobias  
**Editorial Board:** The Committee on Christian Education's Subcommittee on Serial Publications

© 2021 by The Committee on Christian Education of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. (We use the 2011 revision.)

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](mailto:danny.olinger@opc.org).

Send address changes to [ccesecretary@opc.org](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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.

In June, the Presbytery of Ohio resumed its annual summer camp, this year at Slippery Rock Baptist Camp in Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania. Attendance broke all previous records with 144 campers ranging from ages 9-19. Both junior and senior camps studied the minor prophets and learned about OP foreign missions. Then, they teamed up for sports, memory competitions, and other activities. Pictured here are junior campers working to score some points by fetching "big chewy" back across their team's line.



# GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IN AFFLICTION



**DANNY E. OLINGER //** The theme that permeated the Eighty-Seventh General Assembly—the faithfulness of God in affliction—was put forth at the opening worship service with the sermon of Claude Taylor, pastor at New Hope Presbyterian in Bridgeton, New Jersey. In his first words, Mr. Taylor told those gathered how

he came to have this great privilege. He was standing in the place of his longtime friend and New Hope Church ruling elder David Haney, moderator of the Eighty-Sixth General Assembly, who had died and gone to be with the Lord. Mr. Taylor preached on 2 Corinthians 4:7: “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.”

In the week that followed, testimony abounded from pastors, ruling elders, and committee representatives of God’s goodness during the pandemic. When the commissioners gathered for worship on the Lord’s Day, David VanDrunen preached from Psalm 119:65–80 on God’s goodness and faithfulness in affliction. Then, in the evening worship service that same Lord’s Day, Bruce Hollister told those gathered that, in the providence of God, he had prepared a sermon on 2 Corinthians 4, the same text as Mr. Taylor. Mr. Hollister rejoiced that the message of life out of death once more would be proclaimed.

## Remembering David Haney

Before the election of the new moderator, Danny Olinger and David Nakhla presented a pictorial remembrance to the praise of God for Mr. Haney’s thirty years of service in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Mr. Olinger remarked that sixty-four years earlier, a young Orthodox Presbyterian from Bridgeton, Mr. Haney’s father, George, had traveled to Iowa to serve as pastor of First OPC of Waterloo, Iowa. There George Haney met and married Grace Vanden Bosch, the younger sister of the local Christian Reformed pastor. What a blessing it was for George and Grace to see the covenant faithfulness of God as David grew into a young man who wanted to serve Christ and his

church. When the opportunity arose for Mr. Haney to leave a successful career to work for the Committee on Coordination, he gladly accepted it. Mr. Nakhla spoke about Mr. Haney’s pivotal role in mercy ministries, including OPC disaster relief. When Hurricane Katrina

struck in 2005, Mr. Haney not only organized the OPC’s response but also participated in some way with eleven different teams in Mississippi and Louisiana. He also witnessed to Mr. Haney’s love for his wife, Becky, his children, Lauren, Shelly, and Scott, and his grandchildren.

After the presentation finished, acting moderator John Van Meerbeke addressed Becky and her family via Zoom on behalf of the assembly and assured her of the prayers of the commissioners.



*David Haney moderating the Eighty-Sixth General Assembly*

## A Representative Body and the Moderator

Since 1975, the OPC has operated with a representative assembly that is capped at one hundred and fifty ministers and ruling elders. Each of the sixteen presbyteries can send a certain percentage of its presbyters to the assembly. The range this year varied from the Presbytery of the Midwest sending eleven ministers and seven ruling elders to the Presbytery of Connecticut and Southern New York sending two ministers and one ruling elder.

Around two-thirds of the commissioners this year did not attend the

previous assembly. Sometimes new commissioners can get up to speed on why an assembly is at a particular point in its consideration of a matter. Other times it is a struggle.

That is why it is always important to elect a moderator who can help the assembly move steadily through its business without sacrificing needed deliberation for the sake of efficiency. The assembly elected such a man for moderator in Zachary Keele, pastor of Escondido OPC in Escondido, California.

Mr. Keele's calm demeanor and godly wisdom helped to guide the assembly through forty-three hours of business that included a record number of complaints on appeal (nine) and appeals in judicial cases (four) in the pursuit of the peace, purity, and unity of the church.

## OPC Membership

Statistician Luke Brown reported that membership in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church grew during 2020 by 291 persons to 31,809. This total membership consists of 570 ministers, 23,304 communicant members, and 7,935 baptized children (non-communicant). There are 1,092 ruling elders and 930 deacons.

At year end, there were 290 local churches and 38 mission works. Eight congregations were organized as new and separate churches from mission works: The Haven OPC, Deer Park, NY; Christ Covenant, Crystal Lake, IL; Pleasant Mountain, Bridgton, ME;

Providence, West Lebanon, NH; Emmanuel, Colville, WA; Firelands Grace OPC, Sandusky, OH; Wolf River, Collierville, TN; and, Providence, Cumming, GA.

Largely due to COVID-19 restrictions, both morning worship attendance (-21.6 percent) and Sunday school attendance (-61.6) dropped dramatically. At the same time, however, total offerings increased 3.31 percent as members gave \$67.6 million. Seventy-eight percent of the giving, \$52.6 million, was spent on local church expenses. Thirteen percent of the giving, \$8.9 million, was designated for benevolence offerings to missions, outreach, and diaconal ministry. Nine percent of the giving, \$6.1 million, was used for capital improvements.

## Christian Education

The first program committee to report was that of Christian Education. General Secretary Danny Olinger thanked the assembly for the prayers that have poured out on his behalf during his recovery from COVID-19. Mr. Olinger announced that in 2020—despite the pandemic—the CCE was able to co-sponsor thirty-one ministerial internships in which the committee provided a record-high \$344,436 to local OP congregations.

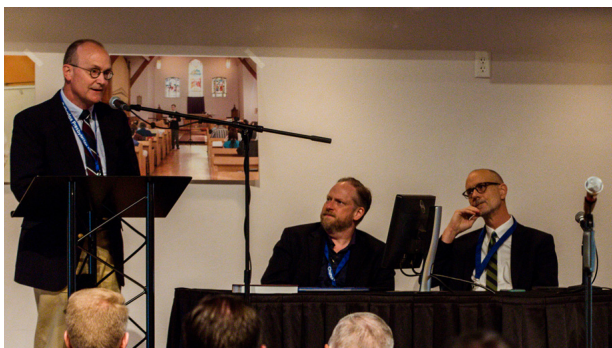
Special note was also made of the service of Mark Lowrey, interim executive director of Great Commission Publications, in helping to keep GCP afloat during a time when most churches did not hold Sunday school classes.

## Home Missions

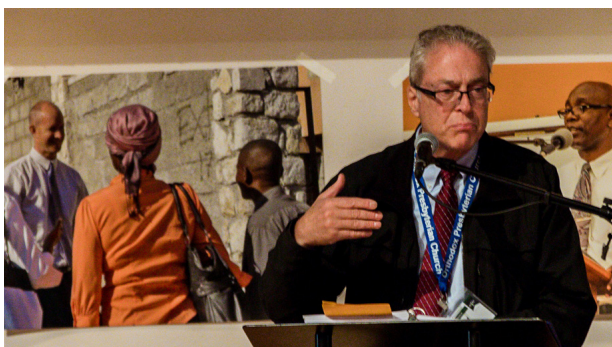
Home Missions General Secretary John Shaw praised God for his faithfulness during the recent pandemic. Mr. Shaw reported that the Lord—faithful, sovereign, and good to his church—provided abundantly during this period. Five new mission works began receiving aid and four new regional home missionaries were added (Bradley Peppo, Presbytery of Ohio; Bruce Hollister, Presbytery of the Midwest;



*Moderator Zachary Keele, pastor of Escondido OPC*



*Bruce Hollister, with Jim Cassidy and Al Tricarico*



*Richard Ellis giving the Report of the Trustees*



David Chilton, Presbytery of the South; and Christopher Hartshorn, Presbytery of Southern California). The committee also announced the publication of its newest evangelistic tract, *What Is Truth?* by Eric Watkins.

### Foreign Missions

Quoting J. Gresham Machen, “The truly penitent man glories in the supernatural, for he knows that nothing natural would meet his need,” General Secretary Mark Bube stated that it is the goal of the Committee of Foreign Missions to advance the cause of Christ’s kingdom by taking the Word of God to the nations. Currently, there are seven active fields: Asia, East Africa, Haiti, Uganda, Quebec, Uruguay, and the Ukraine. Mr. Bube stated the highest priorities for the upcoming year are finding evangelists for Mbale and Karamoja, Uganda; Haiti; and Uruguay. He urged the commissioners to consider whether Christ’s Spirit might be inclining their hearts to consider foreign missionary service.

At the end of the report, it was announced that Richard Gaffin Jr. would not be seeking reelection to the committee. Mr. Bube praised the Lord for Mr. Gaffin’s calm, godly, and Christ-

centered service to his Savior during his unprecedented fifty-two years of continuous service on the committee. Lord willing, the committee is seeking to honor Mr. Gaffin at the Eighty-Eighth (2022) General Assembly scheduled to be held on the campus of Eastern University in St. Davids, Pennsylvania.

### Diaconal Ministries

David Nakhla, administrator of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries, proclaimed that the ministry of mercy at the local, regional, and national level is a tangible expression of the gospel of Jesus Christ. During the worldwide pandemic, deacons helped sessions to implement measures of safety, to visit shut-ins, and to extend funds to needy families. In 2020, donations totaling seventy-five thousand dollars were given to the COVID-19 Pandemic Response Fund. The majority of the fund has been used to help sister churches and ministries around the world, including twenty thousand dollars for Kenya and ten thousand dollars for Haiti.

A video was presented showing the response to the Midland, Michi-

gan, flood in spring 2020, which ruined the homes of two OPC families. The video showed the efforts of over one hundred OPC volunteers in rebuilding the homes, and the joyful appreciation of the families.



Commissioners Shawn Ritenour, Jeremy Jones, and David Nakhla deliberating at the assembly

### Ministerial Care

Director of Ministerial Care John Fikkert shared that through phone, email, and Zoom, he had been able during the pandemic to field inquiries regarding the OPC 403(b) retirement plan, financial planning, counseling resources, and more. All ministers and full-time employees of the OPC or its congregations are eligible for participation in the plan. Approximately 46

percent of participants in the 403(b) plan are under the age of fifty-two.

Gregory DeJong presented the challenges of finding a firm that could provide financial planning assistance for ministers. Thankfully, a firm has been found, but the committee is first running a pilot program with a few ministers. If the pilot program goes well, the committee plans to announce the firm and make its services available at the end of the year.

### Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations

The assembly passed the recommendation of the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations to propose to the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) that the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) should be suspended from the ICRC. The RCN recently acted to permit the ordination of persons to the offices of minister and ruling elder contrary to Scripture. The committee noted that the constitutional process that a proposal to suspend or terminate a member church of the ICRC requires the initiation of another major assembly of a member church. The assembly also sought to encourage the RCN to restore the doctrine and practice of its church to be in agreement with the Holy Scriptures.

### Chaplains and Military Personnel

Chairman Richard Dickinson reported that many chaplains were disappointed that they were prohibited from holding worship services and interact-

ing with others during the pandemic. There are seven OPC chaplains serving on active duty: John Carter, David DeRienzo, Daniel Halley, Joshua Jackson, Cornelius Johnson, Stephen Roberts, and Jeffrey Shames. There are also eight men serving in active reserves or National Guard and nine men serving as civilian chaplains.

### Historian

After twenty-two years of distinguished service as Acting Historian and Historian, John Muether, ruling elder at Reformation OPC, Oviedo, Florida, retired. Under Mr. Muether's leadership, such books as *Confident of Better Things: Essays Commemorating Seventy-Five Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (2011), *Between the Times: The Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Transition, 1945–1990* (2011), *Choosing the Good Portion: Women of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (2016), and *For Me to Live is Christ: The Life of Edward J. Young* (2017) were produced. Mr. Muether also authored *Cornelius Van Til: Reformed Apologist and Churchman* (2008) and helped to oversee the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary celebration of the OPC in 2011.

The assembly then followed the recommendation of the Committee



Bow tie delegation: Jonathan Cruse, Jacob Cruse, Mike Myers, Joel Ellis, Mark Bube, and Tony Curto



John Muether (left) with incoming Historian Camden Bucey

for the Historian and elected Camden Bucey, minister from the Presbytery of the Midwest, as Historian.

The Committee for the Historian also recognized the extraordinary service of commissioners Stephen Phillips, George Cottenden, and John Mahaffy. The assembly marked the fiftieth time that Mr. Phillips served as a commissioner, the forty-ninth time for Mr. Cottenden, and the thirty-sixth time for Mr. Mahaffy.



Chad Mullinix shares a laugh during a break



Ed Tress received an ovation for his years of faithful service on GA arrangements

### Updating the Language of the Doctrinal Standards

The Eighty-Fifth (2018) General Assembly erected a Special Committee on Updating the Language of the Doctrinal Standards. Chairman David Noe reported that the committee had been at work the last three years with the understanding that the Eighty-Fifth General Assembly had authorized the committee to “propose specific linguistic changes”

to the Westminster Standards. He stated that the committee's understanding is that, when it submits its final report at a future assembly with recommendations, its purpose will be fulfilled. That is, if a future assembly believes in light of the committee's final report that there are changes that are worthy of consideration, then that assembly will establish a new committee.

The committee shared a draft work of its suggested morphological (120), archaic (27), and other changes (23) to the Confession of Faith. The assembly approved the committee's request that it be continued with the same mandate for another two years with the goal of bringing its final report to the Eighty-Ninth General Assembly.

### Judicial Appeals

The two-year gap between assemblies because of the pandemic helped to create an unprecedented number of matters, thirteen, to be adjudicated. Two advisory committees on Appeals and Complaints were created and an extra day was added to the docket of this assembly so that all the appeals could be heard.

During the question-and-answer period of one appeal, a collie entered the doors and approached a speaker. As individuals sought to herd the dog out, the moderator commented that their efforts were appropriate because "it didn't have the privilege of the floor."

Of particular presbyterian polity interest, the assembly heard a complaint on appeal from some members of the

Presbytery of the Northwest that concerned whether a complaint may be brought by one session against another session in another presbytery. The assembly sustained the complaint, meaning a session could bring such a complaint. However, the assembly denied the complaint on appeal by the same members of the Presbytery of the Northwest regarding the ability of ministerial advisors to vote in matters pertaining to an appeal of complaints against the session they are advising.

The assembly also sustained a complaint against the Presbytery of the Southeast where a minister was permitted to defend himself in a judicial trial by using language that the presbytery had previously determined to be an offense. The assembly passed amends that the presbytery acknowledge its error in allowing the minister to use reviling language and to communicate this to OPC members Aimee Byrd and Rachel Miller so as to preserve their good names.

### A New Presbytery

The assembly adopted the overture of the Presbytery of the Midwest to divide the presbytery into two separate regional churches. The new Presbytery of Wisconsin and Minnesota will include the geographical region within those two states and the upper peninsula of

the state of Michigan. The Presbytery of the Midwest will include the states of Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska.



*George Cottenden (speaking), Stephen Phillips, and John Mahaffy were recognized for their many years of service as commissioners*

### Day of Prayer and Fasting

As the assembly was nearing its close, it called for a day of prayer and fasting on Saturday, August 21, 2021, "that the whole church may pray as one people, and call upon the Lord with one voice, that we might lament our distress and unworthiness before the Lord, confess our sin, and commit ourselves anew to the faithful service of the Lord our God; that we humbly implore God to send seasons of refreshment, pour His Spirit of wisdom upon us, and draw multitudes to the hope of the gospel by granting faith and repentance unto life." □

*The author is editor of New Horizons.*



# QUESTIONING SELF-DEFINITION



GEORGE C. HAMMOND // Is there any “givenness” to one’s identity? Or is it malleable, not subject to physical, genetic, or biological realities? Must we be defined by others, or an Other? Or can we choose our own identity, defining ourselves according to our feelings and desires?

In 2015, the national news media drew our attention to a controversy surrounding Rachel Dolezal. Dolezal had defined herself as, and was living as, someone who was black. A graduate of Howard University, she was professor of African studies at Eastern Washington University and president of the Spokane, Washington, chapter of the NAACP. But she had in fact been born to white parents. When that became public, much of the condemnation of Dolezal stemmed from her dishonesty—her deception had been the basis for the positions she held. But there was also outrage that someone who was white had self-identified as a black woman. Some secular media outlets truly wrestled with the tension of affirming her freedom to choose while also condemning her for this particular choice.

Dolezal’s case, I believe, raises important questions about self-identification. It seems absurd and insulting for a white woman to identify as a black

woman. But is not choosing one’s own sexual identity problematic in the same way? May one define, without reference to biological realities, with whom one is sexually compatible? And at what age? Must one reach sexual maturity to make that decision, or can a biological male decide to be a girl at eight years of age?

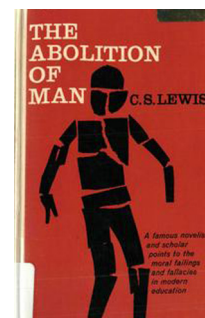
It is unclear, from a non-Christian perspective, who has the authority to answer such questions. When a prepubescent child identifies as other than his or her biological gender, we are told that the individual must answer that question. But in the context of the Dolezal controversy, we were told that it is *not* the individual who makes the choice.

## Lewis and the “Givenness” of Things

In 1944, C. S. Lewis wrote a short book entitled *The Abolition of Man*. In it, he speaks about humanity’s conquest of nature and the benefits that have arisen from it. He notes that in many areas of

our lives, we have not made ourselves beholden to the “givenness” of things. We have made remarkably successful efforts at overcoming, for example, the givenness of disease in the world. Nor have we made ourselves beholden to the givenness that our bodies will not allow us to fly. We have figured out

ways to soar despite our bodies. These conquests of the givenness of nature have been beneficial. But for all the benefits of overcoming natural realities and limitations, Lewis raises concern



about the idea of overcoming *ourselves*, overcoming the givenness of our own humanity.

Lewis points, as one example, to contraception. In Britain in the 1940s, when Lewis was writing, contraception was not legal, but its relative benefits



and merits were being discussed. Lewis was uneasy about contraception because of the power that it placed in the hands of those alive to control those who have yet to be. “By contraception simply, [future generations] are denied existence; by contraception used as a means of selective breeding, they are, without their concurring voice, made to be what one generation, for its own reasons, may choose to prefer” (55).

He continues:

If any one age really attains, by eugenics . . . the power to make its descendants what it pleases, all . . . who live after it are the patients of that power . . . There is therefore no question of a power vested in the [human] race as a whole steadily growing as long as the race survives. The last [people], far from being the heirs of power, will be of all [people] most subject to the dead hand of the great planners and conditioners, and will themselves exercise least power upon the future. (57)

Today, the realities are more acute than they were in Lewis’s time. Contraception is now a socially accepted reality. But it is not the only reality. Abortion also helps to ensure a eugenic purity. In 2017, news media reported that Iceland had almost completely eradicated Down syndrome. They did this by prenatal screening and aborting any child they suspected of having an extra chromosome. Down syndrome was eliminated by eliminating people with Down syndrome. Is it possible that it hasn’t occurred to some doctors in Iceland that perhaps other handicaps or diseases could be eradicated in the same way?

The cumulative technologies of contraception, abortion, in vitro fertilization, gender reassignment surgery, hormone replacement therapy, and cosmetic surgery mean that we are no longer beholden to givenness in the area of human sexuality. Whatever arguments one may offer for the benefit of any of these technologies individually, the cumulative effect of them has

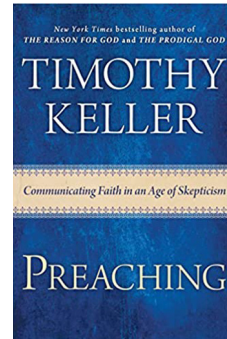
been to remove the necessary connection between human sexual behavior, conception, and the propagation of the human race. We are thus free to express ourselves sexually however we wish—to define ourselves however we wish.

### Beholden Still to a Few

Or are we? Lewis noted that what we might call humanity’s power is in reality a power possessed only by a few. The conquest of nature is also the conquest of others—it’s the rule “of a few hundreds of men over billions upon billions” (58). The conclusion is inescapable: “The power of Man to make himself what he pleases means . . . the power of some men to make other men what *they* please” (59).

Are people able to define themselves, or are they constrained by others? Through a helpful illustration in his book *Preaching*, Timothy Keller shows no one really defines him or herself. We are always defined by someone else:

Imagine an Anglo-Saxon warrior in Britain in AD 800. He has two very strong inner impulses and feelings. One is aggression. He loves to smash and kill people when they show him disrespect. Living in a shame-and-honour culture with its warrior ethic, he will identify with that feeling. He will say to himself, *That’s me! That’s who I am! I will express that.* The other feeling he senses is same-sex attraction. To that he will say, *That’s not me. I will control and suppress that impulse.* Now imagine a young man walking around Manhattan today. He has the same two inward impulses, both equally strong, both difficult to control. What will he say? He will look at the aggression and think, *This is not who I want to be,* and will seek deliverance in therapy and anger-management programs. He will look at his sexual desire, however, and conclude, *That is who I am.* (135)



Keller goes on to explain that we do not get our identities simply from within ourselves. We receive some “interpretive moral grid” from outside ourselves, which we lay over our various and sometimes conflicting feelings and impulses in order to sift through them and determine which is “really me” and so should be expressed, and which is a foreign invader and must be controlled. It is the grid that we use—not a raw, innate, unadulterated expression of our feelings—which determines for us who we should or should not be and which gives us our identity.

We receive those grids, of course, from others—from our cultures and communities. We filter our feelings through what we are told is acceptable, embracing some feelings and rejecting others according to our grid. When left to ourselves to create an identity, we choose to conform to the external moral grid.

This may help us explain why an eight-year-old boy with conflicting feelings today is encouraged to express himself as a girl, but why Rachel Dolezal is condemned for expressing herself as a black woman. It seems to have less to do with how either of them feels, and more to do with what their current culture tells them they can, should, or must do with their feelings.

### Self-Deception

Self-definition, then, is a self-deception. No one defines him or herself. We are always defined by someone else. We will either allow ourselves to be defined by the zeitgeist, the changing spirit of the current age as interpreted by an elite contemporary group of “our betters,” or we will allow ourselves to be defined by the unchanging God who created us and loved us enough to send his Son to redeem us and restore us to our true identity. □

*The author is pastor of Bethel Presbyterian in Leesburg, Virginia.*

## FOREIGN MISSIONS

# HEALTH RESEARCH IN KARAMOJA

// LEAH HOPP



*Leah, Nurse Tinah, who supervises the CHT, and Agnes, a professor of public health who is advising Leah's research*

Last fall, when I traveled down to Mbale to renew my Ugandan work permit, I stayed with OPC teammates Jim and Jenny Knox. Over dinner, I met their friends Tom and Agnes. That meeting was an answer to prayer. In my work at the OP Uganda Mission's clinic and with the Community Health Team (CHT), I have seen the need for more research about those we are endeavoring to serve in the name of Christ. I have wanted to return to research for years but have been very hesitant to do it alone.

Dr. Jim and Dr. Tom have been friends for many years, and Agnes also works in the field of health. She successfully defended her doctoral thesis in May regarding HIV/AIDS in pregnant women, is a professor of public health at Busitema University in Mbale, has conducted many research projects in Lira (north-central Uganda), and mentors students in their research work. At dinner, Agnes and I bonded over both being twins, which I found out when she gave me her email address, which has the name *Napyo* in it. In Karamoja, the name for the eldest of girl twins is *Apio*. We also both completed our masters of public health at the same university (on different campuses). After hearing about her work, I told her that I was also interested in conducting research in Karamoja and asked if I could email her some questions. Agnes not only agreed, she also graciously offered to meet with me regularly through videoconferencing as a research advisor.

That has held me accountable and given me motivation to maintain focus throughout what could be a long research process.

I have been very encouraged by her timely and thoughtful feedback as well as the way that she breaks down the tasks of the research process into manageable portions and assigns me homework. It is a privilege to work with a Ugandan Christian woman who is an expert in her field.

Agnes came to visit Nakaale at the end of May, which gave her a better sense of our local setting and how to advise my research. Because it is the rainy season, I was concerned about taking the bus four times in one week on muddy roads. In an answer to prayer, she was able to ride up with the Knoxes for a long weekend. After a few dry days, we walked out to the villages together with Akol, a member of the CHT—and Agnes didn't even need her gumboots! She said that she really learned a lot from seeing Karamoja in person, on top of all that I had done to previously describe the place to her and what she had already known about the region. We look forward to continuing our research efforts together.

### Research First Steps

Nurse Tinah and I had been discussing research ideas on hygiene and sanitation in the community, which we presented to Agnes. We were able to meet with the district health officer in Nakapiripirit to obtain permission to conduct operational research at the mission's Aki-syon a Yesu Presbyterian Clinic (AYPC).

Since there is not enough demographic information officially available from our district, Agnes suggested that we might need to provide our own background information. Thankfully, the clinic administrator and I had already digitized one full year's worth of data from AYPC's medical



*Agnes's May visit to the AYPC and the surrounding villages enabled her to better advise Leah's research.*

registers from 2019. We will write a paper on that data set, which can then be used to give a snapshot of what health is like in our immediate area. The mission, the clinic, and the CHT will benefit from this summary to help decide which programs to continue offering or which new programs to pursue based on the needs of our neighbors. We will also present this initial study to our local government and other organizations so that they can benefit from the addition of relevant, local health information to their archives, rather than generalizing data from the urban city of Kampala and retrofitting it to our rural village setting.

I have handed over supervisory duties of the CHT to Nurse Tinah, thus freeing up my time to dedicate to our research efforts. I am happy to continue advising Tinah and enabling her to take a more hands-on leadership role in relation to community health. I will still direct the CHT, but will not walk out to the villages as often, instead spending more time at my desk for this stage of the research process. I look forward to stage two when Tinah and I will again spend more time in the villages collecting data on hygiene and sanitation.

### Mapping the Surrounding Villages

No accurate map exists for the villages in our region. In other regions, we would have been able to inquire of our local government official and ask for a map of villages and parishes. But at our rural level, such a map either does not exist or has not been updated in over ten years. A lot can change in a nomadic, pastoral society in ten years!

Over the past few months, I have been conferring with our mission clinic staff on village names and locations to create a map of all the patients who seek care at AYPC. Our clinic



*CHT member Akol (center) served as guide to the local villages during Agnes's visit.*

administrator had started the mapping process, which I built upon, to plot one hundred and eighty-nine villages total. The map has also enabled us to measure distances between all these villages and AYPC as well as distances to other health centers providing treatment. Many patients prefer to seek care at our clinic, which is further away than their nearest health center. We do not yet know why. This map will likely also benefit others on the mission: they could potentially plan to host village Bible studies in some

of the places where a large number of our clinic patients are coming from. I find maps fascinating, so it has been a joy to work on this aspect of the research project.

### Data on Diagnoses

Nurse Tinah and I have also been consulting with other clinical officers at AYPC about the one hundred and sixty-five different diagnoses that were listed in the clinician's registers for 2019. We needed to clear up any inconsistencies in spelling of the diagnoses and remove entries that were just symptoms, like "fever" or "pain," instead of diagnoses. Then, we assigned international classification codes to each diagnosis to ensure that our research findings will be clear to all who read them.

Once we summarize which diagnoses are most common at our mission clinic, we can use the findings to help us focus on offering the programs that best serve our community. The government often asks our private clinic to provide specialist services that cater to only a few people. Providing these services could diminish the time and effort we are able to give to others with more common diagnoses. Perhaps this study will clarify our reasons for offering the programs that we do.

There remains much to learn and study regarding health in our corner of Karamoja. Please pray that the work will support the mission's efforts and for stamina throughout all the stages of research, for God's glory.

*The author is an associate tentmaking missionary in Nakaale, Karamoja, Uganda.*



*The research will inform the CHT's preventive programs in rural villages surrounding the mission*

## What's New

### // Appointments

**Miss Joanna R. Grove** (Grace OPC, Vienna, VA) has been reappointed to serve as a missionary associate in Karamoja, Uganda, for another two-year term which began in May 2021.

# GOD'S PROVISION TO GCP

// MARK L. LOWREY



GCP produced eighty-three Bible story videos for children to view at home as part of its creative response to COVID-19

In the beginning of 2020, churches were faithfully gathering to worship each week. The educational ministries of teaching and training children, youth, and adults were carrying on with their normal rhythms. And then in mid-March, everything came to a screeching halt with the arrival of COVID-19.

After this harsh interruption, slowly, over weeks and months—often depending on where you lived—some churches would regroup for worship while also streaming online, some ministries would resume, and some children would return to school. Few thought that the impact would continue into the 2020 school year—certainly not into mid-2021. And even now with bright signs on the horizon, our churches and ministries still are dealing with the ripples of COVID-19.

### Meeting the Needs of Churches and Families

During those first weeks, as the global pandemic hit home, [Great Commission Publications](#) (GCP) gathered virtually as a staff to pray and decide how we could continue to serve churches and families as we all adapted to a new normal. The vast majority of our churches had never hosted online teaching for children, and even families who regularly do family worship and devotions were looking for further ways to educate their children on the Lord's Day.

It is wonderful to look back now and see how God's hand led us through these difficult times. He brought together the talents and gifts of our staff to brainstorm new ways to use existing curricula and to creatively make video Bible stories, downloadable helps for parents and teachers, and so much more. Through the past year, GCP recorded eighty-three Bible story videos in seven different series, teaching God's marvelous deeds through the Old and New Testaments. We crafted song lyric videos to help children and families learn Bible truths through music. Parent pages gave parents the

relevant Bible background, Scripture passages, and spiritual goals for their children. Coloring sheets provided outlets for creative expression after the children listened to the Bible stories.

Through special offers of *Pilgrim's Progress*, a gospel adventure curriculum based on John Bunyan's classic book, and *Kids' Quest! Catechism Club*, a curriculum to teach *First Catechism*, churches were able to host drive-throughs for families to pick up materials for the lessons that the children's ministry leaders taught online. Parents received a free app, *First Catechism To Go* (FC2Go), that they could download to help them teach the catechism. Through it all, it was encouraging to see the imaginative and resourceful ways God's people responded to discipling their kids through the pandemic.

### COVID-19's Impact on GCP Sales

Of course, even with all the ways GCP was able to support churches in their ministries, sales were nothing like a normal year. At the beginning of 2020, GCP's sales of curriculum, *Trinity Hymnal*, and other resources were strong. They were even ahead of 2019. We were moving forward with work on new curriculum projects. Then COVID-19 hit. Sales basically dried up, with a 2020 drop in sales of 60 to 70 percent compared to 2019.

GCP tightened its belt by cutting expenses and not replacing two retirees. The budget for 2020 was essentially cut by more than half. With decreasing sales, that was still not enough. And yet God met our needs.

As churches cut back on their orders, we knew we did not have the resources to print curriculum that would likely not be ordered. Analyzing the inventory that we had available alongside projections for what churches would need, we felt that we would be able to get through the 2020–21 ministry year without printing curriculum. By spring 2021, as more churches began to gather in person, we printed a short run of material to meet needs. There began to be encouraging signs

that more churches would be meeting in person and education for children at church would resume.

### God's Provisions from the Beginning

At the founding of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, there was a high priority given to developing a doctrinally sound program of Christian education consistent with the church's standards. The OPC funded and began to develop lessons in the mid-1940s and 1950s. From 1961 to 1971, a complete curriculum for grades one to twelve was finalized. This was a huge accomplishment, and yet once it was completed, it was apparent that there would be an ongoing need for revisions, requiring a large amount of funding.

As the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) began to form in the mid-1970s, God provided a solution. Great Commission Publications was incorporated in 1975 with a board of trustees from both the OPC and PCA. The CCE-developed materials formed the starting point and basic building blocks for GCP materials. By the early 1990s, instead of receiving funds from the Christian education committees of the OPC and PCA, the GCP board directed that GCP would support itself through sales of curricula, the *Trinity Hymnal*, and other resources. In the decades since, God has faithfully upheld GCP and enabled us to revise older curricula and create new curricula.

### Looking Forward

While COVID-19 has certainly impacted children's ministry, worship, and outreach, the 2021–22 ministry year looks closer to a normal year for both churches and GCP. It will be a time of transition as churches assess their gains and losses in families, children, teachers, and volunteers. We prayerfully look toward 2022–23 to be even stronger. Join with us now as we praise our sovereign Lord for sustaining GCP and his church through these turbulent times. We have seen God's goodness, sovereignty, and kindness as he provided just what we needed when we needed it. We rejoice in our partnership with the body of Christ as we continue the work of the Great Commission.

*The author is interim executive director of GCP.*

## WELCOME TO THE OPC

### BOOKLET

*Welcome to the OPC* is a twenty-seven-page booklet issued by the OPC's Committee on Christian Education that serves as a great synopsis for what the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is, how it came to be, and what the core beliefs of the church are. It describes how belief in the inerrancy of Scripture led to the OPC breaking from the



## Favorite Psalms and Hymns *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* no. 404 "The Church's One Foundation"

*Diane L. Olinger*

The church's one foundation  
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;  
She is his new creation  
By water and the Word:  
From heav'n he came and sought her  
To be his holy bride;  
With his own blood he bought her,  
And for her life he died. (st. 1)

This remarkable hymn is an extended contemplation on the holy catholic church and the communion of the saints. It was written by Anglican minister Samuel Stone for the benefit of his congregation in an underprivileged suburb of London, along with other hymns based on theological concepts in the Apostles' Creed (Leland Ryken, *40 Favorite Hymns*, 32). The hymn declares that Jesus is the foundation of the church, and that despite threats, the church is united and will survive. It concludes with the expression of a longing to join the church triumphant and the comfort of our union "with those whose rest is won."

Stone wrote "The Church's One Foundation" in the context of denominational conflict. He was responding to unrest in the Anglican church brought about by changing views of the Bible and its message. Perhaps this is why the hymn still resonates within the OPC, which was founded in 1936 as similar conflicts raged in the American church.

The words of the hymn are based on many scriptural passages, one of which is Ephesians 4:4–6: "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

On a personal note, this is the hymn that was sung at my wedding—all six verses, of course, at the insistence of the groom.

PCUSA in 1936, and, for those who want to learn more about OPC doctrine and polity, it points to resources like *The Confession of Faith and Catechisms* and *The Book of Church Order*. The booklet then gives examples of ways the OPC is spreading the message of Jesus Christ in the present day, inviting readers to explore the steps to be taken to join the church as communicant members.

To purchase your copy of *Welcome to the OPC*, go to [store.opc.org](http://store.opc.org) or click on the "Publications" button under the "Resources" tab on the [opc.org](http://opc.org) homepage to be redirected to the online bookstore. It costs \$1.00 per copy and only \$0.75 per copy when you order ten or more.

# ALIENATION AND THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH

// JOHN S. SHAW

During our first years of marriage, like most young couples, Anne and I experienced many transitions, including frequent moves and the births of four children. A long list of friends, mostly from church, offered their time and labor at each milestone. And they brought food—oh, the many tasty meals—to help us move forward. After each move and each new baby, Anne and I had a similar conversation: how do people survive without the love and support of a church family?

To belong to the household of faith is a privilege. We in the church enjoy the benefits of community and connections with deep, even eternal, roots. What difference does it make to be part of such a body?

## The Story of Alienation

A recent book on politics and culture, *Alienated America: Why Some Places Thrive While Others Collapse*, answers that question. The author, Timothy Carney, a columnist at the *Washington Examiner* and a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, writes from a particular ideological perspective that many of us might not share. Yet while his treatment plan often left me disappointed from both a political and theological perspective, his diagnosis simply makes good sense. Reviews from both conservatives and progressives generally agree that Carney accurately diagnoses much of the pain in our nation.

The primary argument of the book is that as communities weaken, social institutions shrink, and personal connections diminish, a growing number of people in our nation have become alienated. The alienated person, according to Carney, “not only does not feel a part of the social order; he has lost interest in being a part of it” (13). That lack of connection contributes to loneliness, inequalities, addictions, depression, hopelessness, and suicide.

# Alienated America

Why Some Places Thrive  
While Others Collapse

Timothy P. Carney



Using an impressive collection of studies and statistics, Carney argues that our communities have lost much of what makes for strong personal connections. What he calls “third places”—those gathering points between home and work, like churches, parks, small neighborhood businesses, and community centers—are closing in startling numbers. The community organizations that depend on volunteer participation while bringing neighbors together (for example, the Rotary, the PTA, Little League) struggle to find willing participants. As communities diminish, people are living more of their lives isolated from their neighbors.

This loss of participation and social capital messes with a sense of meaning or purpose. Carney writes, “Strong communities function not only as safety nets and sources of knowledge and wisdom, but also as the grounds on which people can exercise their social and political muscles. These are where we find our purpose” (12). The loss of social capital also means that people have “fewer and weaker networks and thus less trust” (13).

The consequences of such alienation are dire: “The story [of alienation] is the story of the collapse of community, which is also the story behind our opioid plague, our labor-force dropouts, our retreat from marriage, and our growing inequality” (205).

## How Should We Respond?

I first was introduced to Timothy Carney in an article he wrote during the 2016 presidential primaries after he visited Oostburg, Wisconsin. That lovely village along Lake Michigan is my mother’s hometown, where I have enjoyed many summer visits. It’s also the home to four Reformed churches including Bethel OPC. As Carney chatted with Oostburg residents in a little diner called Judi’s Place, he began to formulate one solution among several to the problem of alienation—a church family that loves and cares for its neighbors.

My purpose here is not to review Carney’s book or even

necessarily recommend it. But I think Carney's cultural analysis gives us an insight about the people our churches serve and the neighbors we are called to love.

How can we evaluate Carney's analysis? And how should we respond—as believers and as the church?

First, of course, we should view the problem with a biblical lens. Men and women are made in the image of God, designed for fellowship with God and for community and connection with fellow image-bearers. Indeed, it is not good for man to be alone. Yet sin breaks our relationship with the Creator God, and sin often leads to broken relationships with other men and women. The isolated, alienated existence that so many people live is not good for them, because they were made for something better. An alienated existence brings painful consequences.

Thankfully, to those who feel abandoned, the Bible also provides a remedy through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Abandoned by the Father and by his friends, he was alienated and alone as he went to the cross for the sins of his people. By faith in him, through the forgiveness of sins, we know that we will never be abandoned by God again. The gospel is the ultimate answer to the trials of alienation and abandonment. God in Christ will never leave nor forsake his people.

So the final remedy for the alienated man or woman is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In him, we know for certain that we will never be forgotten again; he knows his sheep by name and leaves none of them behind (John 10:3; Luke 15:3–7). The church has the only message to relieve an alienated America, so we should speak the gospel message boldly and clearly, applying it with wisdom and care.

Second, we should consider how our practice as the church offers comfort to people who struggle with the kind of loneliness so prevalent in our particular moment. Here are a few suggestions, to which you could add many more.

*Commit yourself to a specific group of believers in a local church.* In a culture that is struggling with the loss of community and connection, the Lord provides those very blessings to us in the visible church. Acts 2:42–47 describes the

kinds of activities that were regularly practiced in the early church—they were devoted to the apostolic teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayers, and the ministry of mercy. One of the striking things about this passage is the emphasis on Christians doing these things together, day by day, in the temple and in their homes. From the very beginnings of the New Testament church, the Christian life was corporate, not private. When you absent yourself from the fellowship of the church, you do harm to yourself and you deprive the church of your gifts (Rom. 12:3–8; 1 Cor. 12:12–26). We need each other. The church should be a place of comfort for Christians weighed down by loneliness and alienation, because the church gives them a place to belong.

*Share your abundance and your need with your church family.*

That, again, is the pattern of the emerging church in Acts 2. They were together and had all things in common; those who had been blessed with much provided for those who lacked (vv. 44–45). The benefits of community and connection may

be on the decline in society, but these benefits should be readily available in a healthy church. Christians should run to the church for help in times of need, and they should be ready to help others during times of personal plenty.

*Love your neighbor more than your causes.* You know more about the struggles in every corner of the globe than was possible in previous generations, and that can leave you feeling overwhelmed. But don't lose sight of the immediate struggles in your city, in your neighborhood, or even next door.

The Lord has always put people and churches in a specific community for a particular moment in time. Put down your electronic devices and focus on the people around you.

If the diagnosis Carney presents is accurate—that as communities decline and the number and quality of connections diminish, people suffer—then you likely have many neighbors who are suffering right now. Get to know them by name. Spend time with them; listen to their stories; and pay attention to their cares and concerns. As you have opportunity, meet their physical and emotional needs. And when the conversation allows, tell them how you handle times of loneliness or isolation. Invite them to visit your community of believers to make personal connections with others who can love them well. Tell them of your perfect Savior, who was abandoned and alienated for a time, but now lives forever and never leaves you nor forsakes you.

*The author is general secretary for the Committee on Home Missions.*



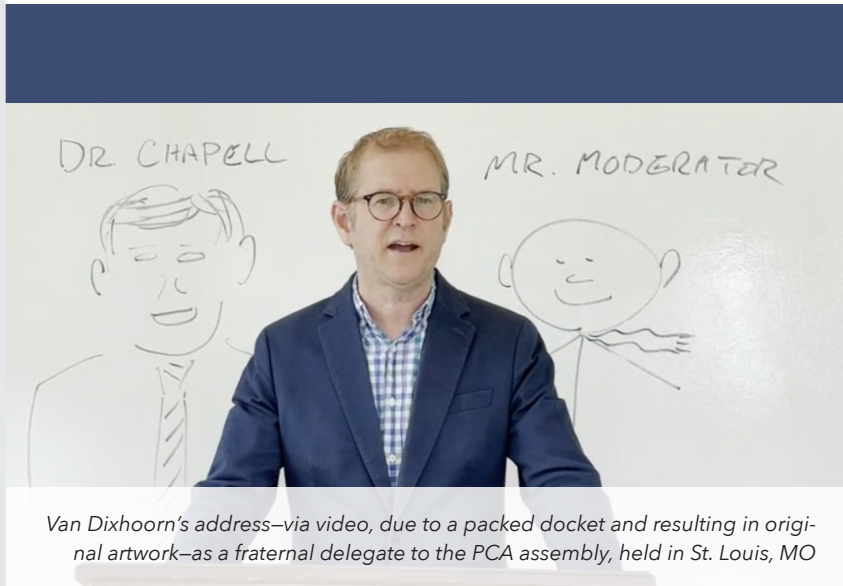
*Vacation Bible School at Bethel OPC in Oostburg, WI, one of the cities Carney argues has retained community bonds due at least in part to local church life*

## Home Missions Today

For up-to-date news and prayer requests, request our newsletter by emailing [HomeMissionsToday@opc.org](mailto:HomeMissionsToday@opc.org). New editions: Aug. 4 & 18 and Sept. 1, 15, & 29.

# FRATERNAL ADDRESS TO THE PCA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

// CHAD B. VAN DIXHOORN



Van Dixhoorn's address—via video, due to a packed docket and resulting in original artwork—as a fraternal delegate to the PCA assembly, held in St. Louis, MO

**M**r. Moderator, fathers, and brothers: My name is Chad Van Dixhoorn, and I bring you greetings from the OPC.

It's important to us that the acronym "OPC" has only one "O," for we don't think we're the "Only Orthodox Presbyterian Church." Evidences of your commitment to orthodoxy are on display in matters as mundane as your review of presbytery records, or as substantive as your committee's report on sexuality.

We praise God for your constant reference to the holy Word of God in debates and key documents. And since even enemies of the truth can quote the Bible, we are especially grateful when we see church leaders supplying sane scriptural interpretations, offering helpful confessional quotations, and embracing faithful ethical implications.

May you remain loyal to your Father's will in all things.

As we in the OPC think about the PCA, items for praise come quickly to mind. We're grateful that the PCA has continued to own our joint mission of educating God's people in the work of Great Commission Publications. We're thankful for your faithful preachers, for not a few of our members have watched PCA services during the pandemic. And we rejoice to forge closer connections to PCA missionaries consciously committed to indigenous church planting.

May the Holy Spirit draw millions to Christ, and then give them a Christ-like community to support them in their journey home!

I'm personally thankful that the PCA keeps grappling with the history and reality of ethnic and racial inequalities and injustice. This is a matter of critical importance, especially for Reformed Christians. There are multiple reasons why Reformed people especially need to grapple with racial injustice. One reason is that whenever Reformed people have defended or allowed such injustice, we have had to set aside our biblical theology in order to find room for racism.

The fact is that the best system for opposing racism from a biblical point of view is the covenantal understanding of the Bible offered by the Reformed faith. No one has taught more clearly that Old Testament Abraham is the father of all new Testament believers than the Reformed. No one has taught more clearly that all nations under the gospel are equal before the Lord, united in one covenant of grace. The Reformed church ought to be the safest place for every race. And so when Reformed people have wandered from these truths in order to promote our prejudices, we have been especially guilty.

Looking at my own denomination's history, I see an encouraging 1974 committee report on race-related problems and solutions, but you can hear from the very date of the report that we were slow to listen, and then slow to speak.

And might it be that we are too slow once more? If Reformed confessions offer the best biblical theology to help with race, they also offer the best theological anthropology to deal with sexuality. I pray that this time, we will all be faithful, and in that way helpful.

The truth is that we must act as Christians even if our diagnosis of the problem cannot be the same as the world's diagnosis. We must act, for the world needs to see the blessing of God's grace culture, building people up, instead of the curse of our enemy's cancel culture, tearing people down.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit draw together first his church, and then this country, as only a triune God can!

May God bless the Presbyterian Church in America.

*The author is an OP minister and professor at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. His remarks were at the opening of the first full day of business of the PCA's general assembly, prior to its consideration later of overtures that addressed sexuality and racism.*



AUG-SEPT



The Garretts



The Bakers

**1** Pray for those at the **CHURCH PLANTER TRAINING CONFERENCE** in ME, August 2-5. / Summer interns **DAVID (HOPE) GARRETT** at Covenant Presbyterian in Abilene, TX, and **ELI HIRTZEL** at Bayview OPC in Chula Vista, CA.

**2** Associate missionaries **JAMES & ESTHER FOLKERTS**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the church's spiritual health as it has endured lockdown this summer. / Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**.

**3** Pray for missionary associate **LEAH HOPP**, Nakaale, Uganda, that her health research may open gospel opportunities. / Pray for **DANNY OLINGER**, general secretary of Christian Education, as he edits *New Horizons*.

**4** Yearlong intern **A. J. (CHELSEA) MILLSAPS** at Sandy Springs Presbyterian in Maryville, TN. / **MARK & CARLA VAN ESSENDELFT**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for sons Josiah, in the US, and Daniel, beginning high school in Kenya.

**5** **PAUL & SARAH MOURREALE**, West Plains, MO. Pray that God would give the people of the Ozarks region ears to hear the gospel. / Summer intern **NATHAN (ELISABETH) BLOECHL** at Covenant Presbyterian in Hammond, WI.

**6** Associate missionaries **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the safe delivery of their child due Aug. 11. / Summer intern **CHRISTIAN (HANNA) REPP** at Harvest OPC in San Marcos, CA.

**7** Tentmaking missionary **TINA DE-JONG**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for her preparations to teach missionary children this fall. / **CARL & STACEY MILLER**, New Braunfels, TX. Praise God for his continued blessing of new members at New Braunfels OPC.

**8** Pray for **DAVE (ELIZABETH) HOLMLUND**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Philadelphia. / Pray for stated clerk **HANK BELFIELD** as he works on the minutes and yearbook of the Eighty-Seventh (2021) General Assembly.

**9** Associate missionary **ANGELA VOSKUIL**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for possibilities to reach village children who have returned from boarding school due to lockdown. / Church-planting intern **ISAAC (ESTHER) ZHOU** at Pasadena OPC in Pasadena, CA.

**10** Pray for **MIKE (ELIZABETH) DIERCKS**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Ohio. / Pray for teachers and students at **MTIOPC** intensive training sessions in Rockport, ME, August 10-12. / Pray for the **PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED COMMISSION ON CHAPLAINS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL**.

**11** **JEREMY & GWEN BAKER**, Yuma, AZ. Pray for the everyday outreach efforts of Yuma OPC. / Pray for the **BOARDWALK CHAPEL** as they close their 76<sup>th</sup> season with the Evangelism Conference.

**12** **CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for the accreditation of Knox School of Theology. / **MARK STUMPF**, OPC Loan Fund manager, and **CHARLENE TIPTON**, database administrator.

**13** Missionary associates **DR. JIM & JENNY KNOX**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray that Joy Hospice patients would seek necessary care despite COVID. / **JOEL PEARCE**, director of digital development for the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*.

**14** **ETHAN & CATHERINE BOLYARD**, Wilmington, NC. Pray that the Lord would bless Heritage OPC's officer training class. / Pray for missionary associate **JOANNA GROVE**, Nakaale, Uganda.

**15** Associate missionaries **Octavius & Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray for safety and wisdom for the church in Haiti during a time of political chaos. / Summer intern **ZACHARY JOHNSON** at Reformation OPC in Oviedo, FL.

# AUG-SEPT

*Items pertaining to September are in italics.*



*The Staffords*

**21** Give thanks for **RETIRED MISSIONARIES** Cal & Edie Cummings, Brian & Dorothy Wingard, Greet Rietkerk, and Young & Mary Lou Son. / **MARK (PEGGY) SUMPTER**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest.

**22** **SHANE & RACHELLE BENNETT**, Grand Rapids, MI. Praise God for the increase in membership at Reformation. / **MR. AND MRS. M.**, Asia. Pray for next steps as lockdowns and visa uncertainties prevented their move.

**23** **BRUCE (SUE) HOLLISTER**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Midwest. / Affiliated missionaries **JERRY AND MARILYN FARNIK**, Czech Republic. Pray for rest and a good return to the field in early September.

**24** **MR. AND MRS. F.**, Asia (on furlough). Pray for the Lord to raise elder candidates in the Reformed churches in Asia. / Yearlong intern **DUSTIN (AMYE) THOMPSON** at Trinity Presbyterian in Medford, OR.

**25** *Pray for Foreign Missions staff* **TIN LING LEE** and **STEPHANIE ZERBE** as they prepare for committee meetings next week. / Pray for OPC office manager **ANNELISA STUDLEY** and Christian Education office secretary **ABBY HARTING**.

**26** **GREGORY & GINGER O'BRIEN**, Downingtown, PA. Pray for a new worship location for Christ Church. / Summer interns **FILIFE (MARIANNA) SCHULZ DOS SANTOS** at Trinity OPC in Hatboro, PA, and **CHRISTOPHER (LAURA) BARNARD** at Lake Sherwood OPC in Orlando, FL.



*The Westerveld family*

**27** *Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary* **MARK BUBE** and *associate general secretary* **DOUGLAS CLAWSON** as they report to the committee this week. / Pray for **BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada.

**28** **MELAKU & MERON TAMIRAT**, Clarkston, GA. Pray for God's blessing on weekly Bible studies for local refugees. / Pray for **ALAN STRANGE**, president of the board of trustees of Great Commission Publications.

**29** **RYAN & ROCHELLE CAVANAUGH**, Merrillville, IN. Pray for Mission Church's outreach efforts. / **HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for the development of new leaders in the L'viv church.

**30** Pray for the CDM's **REFUGEE MINISTRY SUBCOMMITTEE** as it seeks to expand ministry to refugees in 2021. / **MIKE & NAOMI SCHOUT**, Zeeland, MI. Pray that Grace Fellowship would exhibit a culture of evangelism and hospitality.

**31** Summer interns **JOSIAH (HANNAH) STOCKWELL** at Pilgrim OPC, Bangor, ME, and **DUSTIN (EMILY) KARZEN** at Providence OPC in Temecula, CA. / Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**.

**16** Church-planting interns **NATE (KATIE) PASCHALL** at Christ the King in Naples, FL, and **JAMES (DANA) STAFFORD** at Grace in Columbus, OH. / Pray that **OPC.ORG** will edify the church and help it to reach others.

**17** **JAY & ANDREA BENNETT**, Neon, KY. Pray for evangelistic faithfulness and continued growth at Neon Reformed. / **JOHN FIKKERT**, director for the Committee on Ministerial Care, and **MELISA MCGINNIS**, financial controller.

**18** Pray for affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia, as they prepare for home assignment in the Midwest from September to December. / **DAVID NAKHLA**, Disaster Response coordinator.

**19** **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for God's blessing on a homiletics course that Mark begins at the Reformed seminary. / Yearlong intern **KELLE CRAFT** at Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, OH.

**20** **BILL & MARGARET SHISHKO**, Deer Park, NY. Pray God would provide Haven with inroads into ministry to its neighborhood. / **BEN & HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti (on furlough). Pray for the children as they begin the school year.

# "MOST ENCOURAGING ZOOM CALL OF COVID"?

// J. ZACHARY SIGGINS

When I saw the Committee on Diaconal Ministries' virtual deacon event "Continuing the Conversation" advertised as possibly "the most encouraging Zoom call you have during COVID," I must admit I was skeptical. Is it even possible to have an encouraging Zoom call now that we're a year into a pandemic and Zoom fatigue is part of our lives and lexicon? I opened my email, clicked on the link, and entered the call. Over the next hour and a half, I found that the event lived up to its advertisement.

## Encouraged to See an OP Diaconate

When we think of the diaconate, most of us probably think about the deacons of our local church. As chairman of our presbytery's Diaconal Ministries Committee, I try to remember that the presbytery really has a regional diaconate. But when I sat there scrolling through multiple pages of "gallery view" on the call and saw the little boxes representing well over a hundred deacons from across the OPC, I was reminded that we also have a denominational diaconate! This connection to one another, as CDM administrator David Nakhla reminded us, is what it means to be a presbyterian deacon. We have a network of deacons with all kinds of gifts and experience to call upon in the mercy ministry of the church.

## Encouraged to Hear How the Lord Has Blessed

I was also encouraged to hear about the blessings the Lord has brought to churches both despite and because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Richard Dickinson, a member of the CDM, reminded us all in his opening devotional that we often have our best opportunities to serve and glorify and enjoy God in experiences and circumstances that we wouldn't choose. Scott Pearce, a deacon at Church of the Covenant in Hackettstown, New Jersey, shared that the church's rarely used

food pantry was suddenly an important help to families whose businesses were closed and whose income was lost. John West, a deacon at Mid Cities Presbyterian Church in Bedford, Texas, told us about brothers stepping up to help after the recent winter storms that caused power outages across Texas.

## Encouraged to Hear about Challenges

In his address for the event, Nathan Trice, president of the CDM, focused our attention on the challenges faced by our churches, and deacons in particular. This primed the pump for conversation in breakout groups about those challenges.

First, Trice spoke about how our churches had to balance ministering to the needs of both body and soul in 2020—to balance legitimate concerns about public health with the important needs of the soul. Recognizing the difficulty of finding that balance, the second ministry issue he identified was the need to preserve peace and unity in the church despite our disagreements over these questions. Rather than leaving me lamenting (or worse, complaining about) the conflict and disunity we've experienced this past year, Trice prompted me to reflect on how navigating these challenges should leave us better equipped to deal with conflict in the church in a healthy, loving, and biblical way going forward.

Finally, Trice spoke about the challenge of ministering to the needy apart from physical presence. Recognizing that we've always had the category of a "shut-in," our ministry was considerably complicated by the fact that, briefly, we all became shut-ins and then, for longer periods of time, were unable to minister in person to the needs of our shut-ins. Even creative solutions felt inadequate to meet the needs of those unable to participate in the regular ministry of the church.

Reflecting on the challenges of this past year might seem like an odd way to be encouraged, but Trice's focus on what we've learned led to rich conversations in our breakout groups.

## Encouraged about Diaconal Ministries in the Future

When our facilitator asked about how deacons can uniquely contribute to caring for the needs of both body and soul, many said that meeting physical needs opened doors for ministering to spiritual needs as well. Many of the needs of this past year required elders and deacons to work together. We care for Christ's dearly loved people with greater effectiveness and fruitfulness when the shepherding ministry of the session and the mercy ministry of the diaconate are viewed as distinct but inseparable parts of the ministry that the church is called to carry out in Christ's name.

*The author is associate pastor of Living Hope OPC in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.*

# NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

## COVENANT OPC ORGANIZED IN COEUR D'ALENE, ID

*David G. Graves*

Coeur d'Alene Reformed, a mission work of the Presbytery of the Northwest, was organized as Covenant OPC, a new separate congregation, at a service of recognition, ordination, and installation on Friday, June 11. Mark Collingridge, pastor of Covenant OPC in Kennewick, Washington, moderated, and Bill Kessler, pastor of Grace Presbyterian in Columbus, Ohio, preached the sermon and gave the charge to the pastor. David Graves gave the charge to the elders, and elder Curt Sommerfeld of Faith OPC in Grants Pass, Oregon, gave the charge to the congregation. Elder Mark McConnell of First OPC in Portland, Oregon, prayed for the elders.

Covenant began as a Bible study in 2013 with worship services beginning in 2015. The presbytery called Rev. David Graves as the organizing pastor in 2016, and he was installed as Covenant's first pastor on June 11. Mike Cooper, Ed de Bruin, and Kris Kord were ordained and installed as elders.

## PRESBYTERY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S RETREAT

*Jane Crum*

Over one hundred and fifty women participated in our first ever virtual women's retreat this summer with the theme, "Till We Meet Again." Tricia Mathys, a local biblical counselor, led us in monthly Zoom devotion meetings and followed up with periodic emails to turn our hearts to Jesus. We prayed for each other. We all hiked on the same day—and greeted each other across the miles with posts and photos. We also shared a virtual book club, reading together *Forever* by Paul Tripp and *Becoming Elisabeth Elliot* by Ellen Vaughn. The latter book was chosen because Elisabeth Elliot's daughter, Valerie Elliot Shepard, will be our speaker at our in-person retreat in April 2022! Find out more at [www.opcwomensretreat.org](http://www.opcwomensretreat.org).



At Covenant OPC's June 11 service (left to right): Bill Kessler, Len Pine, Ed de Bruin, Mark Collingridge, Ryan Woods, Kris Kord, David Graves, Mike Cooper, Jude Reardon, Curtis Sommerfeld, and Mark McConnell

## IN MEMORIAM: BERTHA LLOYD HUNT KINNAIRD

*Patricia E. Clawson*

Bertha Lloyd Hunt Kinnaird faithfully served her Savior for eighty-six years when the Lord called her home on June 2. The daughter of OPC missionaries Bruce and Kathy Hunt, Bertha was born on March 8, 1935, in Chungju, Korea. As a six-month-old, she witnessed the First Assembly.

Bertha attended West Suburban Hospital School of Nursing in Oak Park,

Illinois, and was a registered nurse. She married John Kinnaird, who would serve for decades as an elder in the OPC. She taught Bible studies and welcomed all to "The Farm" in Nottingham, Pennsylvania. But her finest work was raising five children, including their eldest son, the late John Hunt Kinnaird, who was severely physically handicapped.

Bertha is survived by her husband, John; four children and spouses; two sisters and a brother; and twelve grandchildren.



Bertha and John Kinnaird with their son John at his college graduation

## UPDATE

### CHURCHES

- On June 11, Covenant OPC in Coeur d'Alene, ID, was organized as a particular congregation of the OPC.

### MINISTERS

- On June 4, Jeremiah A. Dickinson was ordained as a minister and installed as a pastor of Lakeview OPC in Rockport, ME.
- On June 5, Damon A. Young was ordained as a minister and installed as a pastor of Grace and Peace Presbyterian in California, MD.



At Dorman's ordination and installation: (front) James La Belle, Joshua Littlefield, Seth Dorman, Micah Bickford, Russell Hamilton; (back) Leonard Gulstrom, Stephen Tracey, Logan Murray, Jeremiah Dickinson, Steve MacDonald, Luke Powell, Don Theriault, Josiah Stockwell, Nathan Lambert, Daniel Patterson, Albert Tricarico

- On June 11, **Seth M. Dorman** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of Limington OPC in Limington, ME.
- On June 11, **David G. Graves**, previously the organizing pastor, was installed as pastor of Covenant OPC in Coeur d'Alene, ID.
- On June 11, **Daniel Schrock**, previously a PCA minister, was installed as associate pastor of Bethel Presbyterian in Wheaton, IL.
- On June 12, **C. Steven McDaniel Jr.**, formerly pastor of Providence OPC in Mantua, NJ, was installed as associate pastor of Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA.
- On June 18, **Aaron P. Mize** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of Providence OPC in Kingwood, TX.
- On June 19, **John Paul Holloway** was ordained as a minister and installed as a pastor of Sterling Presbyterian Church in Sterling, VA.
- On June 28, the Presbytery of Ohio dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Mark A. Garcia** and Immanuel OPC in Coraopolis, PA, as Garcia takes up a call as teacher of the Word at Westminster Theological Seminary.
- On June 30, **Douglas W. Snyder** retired as pastor of Faith OPC in Indiana, PA,

having served that congregation for twenty-six years. The Presbytery of Ohio dissolved the pastoral relationship, and Faith OPC granted Snyder the status of "pastor emeritus."

- On June 30, **D. Leonard Gulstrom** retired as pastor of Limington OPC in Limington, ME.
- On July 1, **David A. Crum** retired as regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California.

#### MILESTONES

- **Dennis J. Fullalove** died on June 1. A ruling elder at New Covenant OPC in South San Francisco, CA, Fullalove was a former presbytery moderator and was due to be a commissioner at this year's general assembly.

## LETTERS

### ON SABBATICALS

Editor:

Thank you for your March features. I had to laugh at the title of "The Why and How of a Sabbatical for Your Pastor." My husband, pastor of the Greek Evangelical Church in Volos, Greece, has been serving since 1994 and has never had a paid sabbatical, nor has any other pastor we know in (economically strapped) Greece. I think the only thing that came close was

our two-month trip to the United States in 2007, when our children were old enough to carry their things, and young enough to want to come with us. It was a great experience for which I thank God.

Angela Meletiadis  
Volos, Greece

### FAULT LINES AT FAULT

Editor:

I am happy to see pastors in the OPC engaging with books that wrestle with racism in America, as Michael Myers does with Voddie Baucham's *Fault Lines* (June). But unlike Pastor Myers, I would argue against the usefulness of *Fault Lines*. Mr. Baucham's critique of Critical Race Theory (CRT) is derived from a fundamental misunderstanding of the movement. Second, he is inconsistent in suggesting when Christians may use certain ideologies and when they may not. For instance, it seems right to Mr. Baucham to borrow almost entirely from an atheist, James Lindsay, for his analysis of CRT, yet we are asked to eschew Bell and Crenshaw because of their unbelief. And finally, the central weakness to *Fault Lines* is Baucham's answer to racism, that it must be resolved in the "gospel of free grace in Jesus Christ." Although this appears self-evident, it is actually a historically rooted trope that has been used to truncate the gospel by eliminating the gospel's full implications: loving and seeking the welfare of our neighbors. As sure as it is to be choir music for the already convinced, *Fault Lines* is not helpful for those seeking racial clarity.

John Livingston  
Glenside, PA

Editor:

I was happy to see this publication addressing injustice and racial matters since both justice and the image of God are fundamental components of the gospel we proclaim. However, I disagree with the reviewer that Baucham's book is full of "solid principle" and "righteous polemics."

Baucham's definition of Critical Race Theory as a worldview, as opposed to an analytical tool set, is not solid. Situating CRT within the broader notion of "Theory," as Baucham does, is building on the work of Dr. James Lindsay, a mathematician famed for publishing hoax papers and a non-expert in legal studies or

religion. Yet Baucham treats Lindsay's work as authoritative, rather than engaging with how CRT scholars themselves characterize their work. The righteousness of Baucham's polemics is also suspect. It is quite a bold statement to place Christians like Thabiti Anyabwile, Tim Keller, Russell Moore, the Southern Baptist Convention, the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, 9Marks, The Gospel Coalition, T4G, Jemar Tisby, Anthony Bradley, and Latasha Morrison, all on one side of a "fault line" (2, 135). Certainly it is possible large groups of Christians could deviate from the true gospel, what Baucham presents as implied in joining the "New Religion" of "Critical Social Justice" (3, 66–90), but such grave accusations must give us pause before we join our voices to them (Rom. 16:17–18; Titus 3:9–11; James 4:11).

Adam Wells  
Middletown, PA

## CHRISTIAN STUDENTS IN STEM

Editor:

I very much appreciated Katharine Olinger's review of Kruger's *Surviving Religion 101* (July). One statement in the review captured my attention: "The training opportunities . . . are unparalleled—especially for young people working in STEM. But is it worth the risk for young believers?" Christians have long realized the importance of education from a Christian worldview, but almost all of the colleges they have established for that purpose are liberal arts schools. Christians should start colleges that teach STEM from a Christian worldview, colleges that bring forth the best STEM practitioners in the world.

Daniel Burns  
Harvest, AL

## REVIEWS

***R. C. Sproul: A Life*, by Stephen J. Nichols. Crossway, 2021. Hardcover, 400 pages, \$26.99 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor David M. Sarafolean.**

*R. C. Sproul: A Life* is a delightful story of how God raised up a kid from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and made him an ambassador of the gospel whose life touched millions around the globe. Stephen Nichols

does a masterful job explaining Sproul's rise to professor, theologian, prolific author, pastor, and chairman of Ligonier Ministries. Much of the book is based on personal interviews that Nichols conducted with both R. C. and his wife, Vesta. Sproul died in December 2017 at the age of seventy-eight.

Sproul's path to becoming a theologian is fascinating. His parents were both believers, but the family found itself attending a Presbyterian Church that was rather liberal. Sproul attended Westminster College just north of Pittsburgh on an athletic scholarship. Sproul came to faith early in his freshman year. There he was mentored by Dr. Thomas Gregory, who "was an island in a sea" of liberalism (59). Gregory was a graduate of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and the only theological conservative on the college faculty. Through the influence of Gregory, Sproul changed his major from history to religion, and later changed it again to philosophy.

Upon graduation, Sproul found himself at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary where he studied under John Gerstner, who became his close friend and mentor. Gerstner was the only theological conservative at Pittsburgh, and it was under his influence that Sproul blossomed. With guidance from Gerstner, Sproul pursued a PhD at the Free University of Amsterdam where he studied under G. C. Berkouwer.

The book also chronicles Sproul's work facing major issues affecting the church. For instance, in 1973, Sproul convened the first major council on the topic of biblical inerrancy, The Conference on the Inspiration and Authority of Scripture, held at Ligonier. Participants included J. I. Packer, John Warwick Montgomery, John Gerstner, Sproul, and others. In 1977, he was invited to participate in the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, where he served as president and James Montgomery Boice served as chairman. The council convened in the fall of 1978 in Chicago. In 1994, Sproul led opposition to "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" (*First Things*, May 1994), a document signed by a number of evangelical leaders like J. I. Packer, Chuck Colson, and others, pur-

portedly agreeing with Roman Catholics on a number of sticky theological issues. At stake were core doctrines like justification by faith alone and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer.

If we wish to trace the rise of Reformed theology in the evangelical church over the last thirty years, we need look no further than R. C. Sproul. Through his influence, untold millions of people have been exposed to the truths of the Protestant Reformation and the doctrines found in the Westminster Confession of Faith and its catechisms. As someone

touched by Sproul's ministry, my heart was warmed by reading this biography. He was my introduction to Reformed theology, and, through his influence, God moved me out of parachurch ministry to ministry as a pastor, now serving in the OPC.

***Enjoying God—Experience the Power and Love of God in Everyday Life*, by Tim Chester. The Good Book Company, 2018. Paperback, 192 pages, \$14.44. Reviewed by retired OP minister Larry E. Wilson.**

We affirm that our "chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever" (WSC Q. 1). But do we really *enjoy* him in the day-by-day grind? Alas, all too little. Tim Chester sets out to help remedy that in *Enjoying God*. He does so by applying sound, gospel-centered doctrine to ordinary living. This easy-to-read book is written so as to not unnecessarily scare away those who aren't familiar with Reformed vernacular, but it's thoroughly Reformed. Chester quotes Calvin and various Puritans throughout. In large part, he digests and applies the teaching of John Owen from *Communion with God*.

This book is scriptural. Not only does it exhibit a sound doctrinal framework, but also Chester takes pains to make clear the biblical basis for his



## Women's Fall Conference

Sept. 10-11 • Green Bay, WI

- Designed for His Glory: Cultivating Our Time and Talents for the Kingdom
- Speaker: Hannah Anderson
- Location: New Hope Presbyterian  
2401 Deckner Ave
- For details, email [library@nhopc.org](mailto:library@nhopc.org) or visit [www.nhopc.org](http://www.nhopc.org).

observations and suggestions. Two underlying principles saturate *Enjoying God*. First, we can know the living and true God; we know him through the three persons of the Trinity, so we relate to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Second, we can grow in knowing the triune God; our union with him in Christ is the basis for ongoing communion with him in experience. Chester fleshes out these principles in fourteen practical chapters. “The first step in relating to God,” writes Chester, “is to relate to each distinct Person of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit” (17). Then he proceeds to show how to do so in the ups and downs of life—with three chapters on engaging with the Father, three chapters on engaging with the Son, and three chapters on engaging with the Holy Spirit.

This book is also pastoral. It’s by no means abstract or merely theoretical. Chester writes to ordinary Christ-followers in today’s context. He makes concrete applications in a number of ways. First, he starts the book with a story about Mike and Emma. Their Lord’s Day fills them with comfort and gospel encouragement. They’re excited about living for the Lord. But by Monday morning, it all seems to go wrong. He comes back to their story with each chapter, showing how the theme of each makes a huge difference—not to their circumstances, but to their walk with God in the midst of those circumstances. Second, he strews helpful illustrations and examples throughout the book. Third, each chapter ends with a “putting it into practice” section—suggestions to

help apply the principle discussed in the chapter. Fourth, each chapter is followed by questions for discussion.

Let me highlight a few points I really appreciated. First, his clear discussion of real communion in the Lord’s Supper was outstanding. Second, so was his discussion of the “means of grace.” While we do well not to reduce them to “spiritual disciplines,” he suggests that we might do even better

to think of them as “means of communion” with the triune God (132–134). This can help us steer clear of an impersonal misuse of them. Third, throughout this book, he stresses the importance of Christian fellowship. Our union with God in Christ is at the same time union with everyone else who is united to God in Christ.

This book is quite good for personal reading, but it also provides great fodder for discussion in a small group or an adult Sunday school class.

***Hope in Times of Fear: The Resurrection and the Meaning of Easter*, by Timothy Keller. Viking, 2021. Hardcover, 272 pages, \$21.02 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor Jeremiah W. Montgomery.**

Reading *The Reason for God* in 2008, I was struck by Tim Keller’s emphasis on the centrality of the resurrection. If Jesus rose from the dead, then everything he said matters—including the things that modern people find most offensive. But if Jesus was not raised, nothing he said matters. The point was simple: settle the big question first.

More than a decade later, Keller has returned to the centrality of the resurrection with *Hope in Times of Fear*. In this volume, his focus is not as philosophical. As he writes in the preface, “I am concentrating on the resurrection as a key to understanding the whole Bible and to facing all the challenges of life” (xiv).

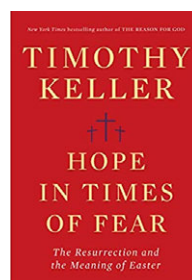
Over the course of twelve chapters,

Keller cites numerous theologians beloved within the Reformed tradition, including G. K. Beale, John Murray, Michael Horton, John Owen, Herman Ridderbos, and Geerhardus Vos. Given Keller’s broad readership, it is quite possible that his interaction with these authors may draw many new readers to their works!

In the first chapter, Keller reviews the evidence for the historicity of the resurrection. Yet as he unfolds the facts, he also emphasizes that no soul approaches them without biases: “When we confront the claim of the resurrection, we address it not only with logic but with a lifetime of hopes and fears and preexisting faith commitments. And we will never be able to accept it until we see our need for God’s grace” (15).

Keller next explores how the resurrection of Christ changes everyday life. “When Jesus rose, he brought the future kingdom of God into the present. It is not yet here fully but it is here substantially” (24). This “already-but-not-yet” reality cautions us against unrealistic optimism or unwarranted pessimism (28–29), while at the same time affirming the prospect for real change: “When we unite with the risen Christ by faith, that future power that is potent enough to remake the universe comes into us . . . To be brought out of one kingdom into another . . . means to be freed from things that once controlled us” (31–32).

Several chapters (ch. 6–8) deal with how the resurrection of Jesus brought hope into the lives of individuals in the New Testament—and how that same hope can now enter our lives. Subsequent chapters (ch. 9–11) suggest how the resurrection and its implications address contemporary issues of race, injustice, sexuality, and suffering. Though the issues are thorny, Keller’s analysis provides biblical wisdom that avoids the double trap of either conservative reactionism or liberal reductionism. Particularly commendable is the discussion of poverty and injustice, in which Keller demonstrates that the Bible “gives full weight both to personal responsibility and social structures,” while



## NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS *Continued*

acknowledging the deep sin that permeates all hearts (160–168).

The final chapter and epilogue demonstrate that the resurrection alone can lead us to “the world and life that we have always longed for but never had” (208). Writing during the COVID-19 pandemic and amidst a personal struggle with pancreatic cancer, Keller confesses that “writing in such dark times helped me see in the resurrection new depths of comfort and power” (217). May *Hope in Times of Fear* do the same for all who read it.

***The Hope of Israel: The Resurrection of Christ in the Acts of the Apostles*, by Brandon D. Crowe. Baker Academic, 2020. Paperback, 256 pages, \$16.99 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP minister and professor Mark A. Garcia.**

On the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the ages turn as on a hinge, and all of cosmic and human history is swept up and through the empty tomb. By way of the transition in history from cross to resurrection, all are either judged or delivered, caught in the train of Christ’s ascension in glory or condemned to perdition and utterly undone. Dr. Brandon Crowe’s book demonstrates this importance of the resurrection with verve, but extends it to matters of biblical interpretation as well. Focusing on Luke and Acts in particular, Dr. Crowe argues that the resurrection provides a guide to interpreting many other biblical texts and concerns, and reaches and spreads like tentacles through the vast body of Holy Scripture. This additional move is key to his argument, which he executes with care.

The first half of the book focuses on

the apostolic teaching concerning the resurrection, including judicious studies of Peter and Paul as heralds of the resurrected One. Luke, the writer, grants us authoritative access to all three of the lions of the apostolic church—Peter, James, and Paul—so it is fitting to listen to Luke’s summaries of especially Peter’s and Paul’s apostolic teaching and note the special role the resurrection has for them both. In the second half of the book, Crowe outlines the place of the resurrection in relation to the accomplishment of redemption and then the application and experience of salvation. This includes a discussion of how the resurrection figures as an argument for Holy Scripture itself: Luke’s many references to the resurrection as “according to the Scriptures” reflect the definite pressure exerted upon Luke by the Old Testament itself in the direction of the resurrection. Even the genre of Acts, Crowe suggests, indicates that Luke sees himself as participating in Old Testament historiography.

In his final chapter, Crowe then explores plausible and important canonical implications of the centrality of Luke’s resurrection teaching. As he carefully explains, the placement of Acts in the New Testament manuscript tradition is not stable or fixed. Crowe argues, with good reason, that this variety suggests that Acts performs a flexible role in the New Testament canon, uniting it theologically to all other New Testament literary groups and effecting a unity among them: the Gospels, the Catholic Epistles, the Pauline Letter Collection, and Revelation. He

further argues that the resurrection is the key thematic ligament holding these corpora together. Seeing the resurrection as central to apostolic teaching in Acts, and Acts as the intended and proper context for reading the epistles, Crowe concludes that the resurrection thus provides “part of the necessary framework for interpreting all the New Testament epistles” (189).

Dr. Crowe is professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary, at which institution Dr. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. famously taught and wrote on the resurrection of Christ in Paul’s theology to great effect. Dr. Crowe thus continues that tradition, but extends and

develops it in ways that are both appropriate and promising of yet further advancement. There is a tendency to read the New Testament writings as vehicles of theological truth that is somehow detached from the form and shape of the vehicle itself. The canonical shaping of the New Testament is a key part of any serious exploration of its teaching, however,

and requires our attention, if for no other reason than that we take the doctrines of providence and of the church (as an interpretive community) seriously. I commend Dr. Crowe’s study, then, not only as edifying reading—which it certainly is—but as a proposal worthy of careful consideration in thinking through the providential ordering of the New Testament.

*Editor’s Note: This review was written when Dr. Garcia was serving as pastor of Immanuel in Coraopolis, PA. He has now been appointed Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary.*

