

NEW HORIZONS

≡ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ≡

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// by Allison Groot

MARCH 2023

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A Seed Must Die to Bear Fruit

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New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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Articles previously published may be slightly edited.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On Jan 27-29, young people from the Presbytery of New York and New England came together for Winter Weekend V, shown here after an afternoon of Nordic skiing. The theme of the weekend was “Let God Write Your Story,” presented by Samuelis Lukošius, pastoral intern at Covenant Presbyterian in Barre, Vermont.



A SEED MUST DIE TO BEAR FRUIT



ALBERT J. TRICARICO JR. with DELACY A. ANDREWS JR. // **Rev. Lacy Andrews has served the Presbytery of the Southeast as its regional home missionary since 2002. A number of years ago, he was talking with a friend about the**

church-planting model that sometimes operates under the name “Church Growth Movement.” Those who use the method set their focus on “seeker sensitive” worship and believe that unbelievers’ interests should take a prominent place in arranging services of worship. Andrews and his friend did not endorse this approach. But in the conversation, his friend asked a penetrating question that has remained with Andrews ever since: “When will they [those who promote the seeker sensitive approach] ever tell their people that they have to die?”

At a recent meeting of regional home missionaries, Andrews presented an insightful and convicting talk about mission work culture, drawn from John 12:20–26 and Matthew 20:1–16. To gain the most from this article, consult the biblical texts and their contexts along the way. Whether or not you participate in a mission work, you will gain

from Andrews’s insights. What follows recaps his talk along with an audio version of a sermon he preached on the same theme.

Dying to Bear Fruit

The teaching of John 12:20–26 leads to the climax of Jesus’s ministry: his death for our sins and his resurrection from the dead. It is placed after the raising of Lazarus and Jesus’s triumphal entry, six days before the Passover. The anointing of Jesus by Mary (vv. 1–8) was preparing him for his burial. Jesus was headed to the cross, and his impending suffering and death was on his mind.

The passage begins, “Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks” (v. 20). The Greeks were probably God-fearers—Gentiles who believed in the Lord and participated in synagogue worship, but had not become part of the circumcised

people of God. They went to Philip with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we wish to see Jesus” (v. 21). Philip told Andrew, and the two of them delivered the request to Jesus.

The Greeks are not mentioned again in this passage. Did they meet Jesus and listen to his teaching? We can infer that they did, though it is not mentioned explicitly in the text. The account follows an interesting statement of concern voiced by the Pharisees; “Look, the world has gone after him” (v. 19). The world’s interest is shown as these Gentiles seek the Lord Jesus. This is more than a hint that the atoning work of Jesus is not for the Jews only. It is for all peoples. The gospel is to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16).

Jesus answered Philip and Andrew, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (v. 23). The hour in view is Jesus’s death. Jesus obeyed the will of his Father and gave his life for the

redemption of the world. It is through death that fruit is produced—“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (v. 24). This is a direct reference to Jesus’s own death and the salvation that results from it.

In a secondary sense, however, it refers to all of those who follow Jesus. Here is how Jesus put it:

Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. (vv. 25–26)

Jesus died for us. We must also die as we live for him. That is the idea. If we arrange congregational life and worship around the personal preferences of those we want to attract, then how will people who come learn that following Jesus means following him to the cross? How will they learn to hate life in this world to gain the life that is to come? Jesus is not teaching that we should despise God’s gift of life and look to destroy it. He is calling us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and live sacrificially for God and others. This is our daily calling (Luke 9:23). It is how Jesus lived. It is his will that we live in the same way. The Christian life is one in which we die every day.

Church planting is a spiritual work. It is a prayer-empowered work. It is a work done with much sacrifice as those who participate follow Jesus by dying to self. This is particularly evident at the beginning of a new work. There are many things to do and few people available to do them. Some of the work is tedious—setting up the worship room; breaking down in time; hauling hymnals, chairs, and instruments. Members are sometimes called to do things they would not otherwise choose to do or are not particularly gifted to do. And yet, those things need to be done. Precious brothers and sisters who participate early on gladly do those things.



The regional home missions meeting at Lake Sherwood OPC in Orlando, Florida, where Andrews spoke about mission work culture

There are other sacrifices that accompany participation in mission works. Members sacrifice time and money. They sacrifice the comfort and predictability of life that they once enjoyed in established congregations. They sacrifice other conveniences as they patiently wait for the work to develop over time. At times, they sacrifice their own preferences as they practice mutual submission in the church out of reverence for Jesus (Eph. 5:21).

We all need to examine ourselves to ensure that we are following Jesus when we make these sacrifices. Jesus gave his life without resentment. He did not insist on his own way or live to satisfy his personal dreams or feelings of comfort. He perfectly had the interest of others in his heart and proceeded to the cross with the joy of gospel fruit set before him (see Phil. 2:4; Heb. 12:2). Think



RHMs Lacy Andrews and Charles Biggs

about your own expressions of Christ-following death. Do your actions and your heart display the sacrificial love of your master?

Core or Seed?

Sometimes, at certain stages of a mission work, it becomes clear that this teaching of Jesus has not been well understood. Works begin with a group of interested and committed families. Ministry carries on and new people start coming to the church plant. At the right point, an organizing pastor is called to lead in the development of the work. Eventually, the work is organized as a particular congregation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

But the membership has changed. Many of the original families are no longer part of the congregation. This is not always the case, but too often original members of what we sometimes call the “core group” have decided to move on. What happened to them?

Sometimes people relocate. This is common and not at all surprising. Others leave this life for glory. But for many, a decision to leave a mission work is driven by disappointment. The work progresses in ways that are not to their liking. They feel, and may even say, “This is not the same church anymore.” Their dreams were not realized, and so they

gradually step back in their participation until finally they give up. Interest fades, attendance lightens, and at some point they make the decision to join another church.

People may sacrifice. But do they die? Are they willing for their opinions and preferences to be buried for the sake of the fruit that God will produce through their self-denial and death? Are they ready to rejoice in all that God is doing when their views do not prevail? This is a great challenge. It is possible to think that because we are sacrificing time, money, and effort, we are dying, when in our hearts, we are not.

Our tradition is to call the beginnings of church plants “core groups”—inaugural members of what will develop into a mission work and then a congregation. This is the group that makes the first inquiries. These are the people who are deeply committed to doing what it takes to get a work going. They belong to the core, the center of mission work and life.

But the term carries a significant liability. If the “core” members of a mission work see themselves as the principal vision-drivers and decision-makers, and if they encounter alternative ideas as the group grows, there may develop a proprietary spirit that disregards those ideas. New people come. They offer some good contributions that relate to the culture of the church plant. Perfectly good thoughts, but different from those of the original families. And the earliest members feel entitled to shape the work because they are among the originals. They become a group within the group.

This spirit is not difficult to understand. But does it harmonize with Jesus’s teaching? Is it consistent with a Christian’s duty to die? Does the term “core group” say too much? Perhaps a better name is “seed group.” It contemplates both beginning efforts and the duty of every member to fall to the ground and die after the example of our master.

Scorching Heat and Equal Gifts

One of Jesus’s kingdom parables is recorded in Matthew 20. It is about a

man who hired laborers to work in his vineyard. He employed a number of them throughout the day and, when the time came to pay them, he provided the same amount to each—one denarius, a day’s wage. They joined the crew at different times during the day, so they worked for different amounts of time. Some of them worked for only an hour. When those who worked the whole day saw that each man was paid the same, they complained:

These last worked only one hour and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. (v. 12)

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Readers may feel sympathy for the full-day workers. The owner seems unjust in his treatment of his employees. But his decision to pay each man a day’s wage was not unjust. It was precisely in keeping with his promise. He owed no explanation for the decision he made, but he did respond.

“Friend,” he said, “I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge

my generosity?” (vv. 13–15)

God’s kingdom is not like the kingdoms of this world. All members of a church plant are equally valued by Jesus and ought to be equally valued by every other member of the group. God is saving his people and is equipping each one with gifts to be used to serve the whole. We don’t all have the same gifts, but we all have valuable contributions to make to the growth and well-being of the whole body. God is generous. His grace does not correspond to ordinary employer/worker relationships and merit-based earnings. God distributes his gifts as he sees fit, and we are all to enjoy what he has given—both to us and to our fellow disciples of Jesus Christ.

Every mission work has a beginning. Every mission work starts with gathered people who share a vision for what the church, by the grace of Christ, will one day be. Over time, others will come and be welcomed to the work. When a mission work is organized it will include full-day members who were there from the beginning and eleventh-hour members who began to serve at a later time. Jesus is building his church with all of them. Let us never undervalue the newly arrived member. Additionally, let us never fail to acknowledge the contributions of members who have been a part of the work from the beginning.

The parable ends with these words: “So the last will be first, and the first last” (v. 16). God’s grace turns everything around. Let’s all pray that God would produce in us a desire to fall and die for the sake of God’s glory manifested in worldwide gospel fruit. This is the path toward receiving honor from the Father (John 12:26). It is a lesson for all of God’s people and must be embraced by anyone interested in participating in a mission work of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. □

Tricarico is associate general secretary for the Committee on Home Missions. Andrews is regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast.

NO CONGREGATION AN ISLAND



ALLISON GROOT // Congregations in our denomination are fortified by both the connectedness of regional churches and the cooperation of individual churches within the regional church. That is the beauty of our local, regional, and denominational structure—it creates a framework of relationships dependent on and supportive

of each other. That interdependent framework is on full display the first week of November each year, when regional home missionaries and presbytery representatives from across the country gather for the Committee on Home Missions Regional Church Extension Conference (ReChEx). The conference is designed to give participants time to review the work of home missions in each presbytery, study biblical principles related to the establishment of new churches, and submit requests for the support of mission works.

When regional home missionaries and others gather, something of the work of God seems to flavor nearly every conversation. There's a feedback loop of praise, rejoicing in the Lord, and mutual edification as burdens are shared by fellow laborers in the gospel.

However, some of the most important conversations continue long after the participants go home. There are discussions, propositions, and exchanged contacts that flow into their ministries as these pastors and elders meet with mission works, assist and advise provi-

sional sessions, and work to bolster local bodies in their respective presbyteries. The interconnectedness benefits the local bodies to which they belong, and the churches are strengthened by it.

Regional Churches Act as One

On the East Coast, where the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic meets the Presbytery of the Southeast, regional home missionaries Charles Biggs (Mid-Atlantic) and Lacy Andrews (Southeast) work together to expand the reach of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and more importantly, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the uniquely named town of Short Pump, Virginia, a particularly intriguing story of cooperation has emerged. In March 2022, Short Pump Bible Study began as a local gathering of a few families and individuals from Knox Reformed Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Mechanicsville, Virginia, itself a church relatively new to the OPC.

Rev. Andrew Miller, chairman of the Home Missions Committee for the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic, origi-

nally worked to connect families of like mind with Knox Reformed, hoping to eventually be able to form a “daughter” mission work in Short Pump. A group grew, plans for a Bible study materialized, and Biggs and Andrews were rallied to help direct the group in discipleship and organization. During the process, it was realized that the Short Pump Bible study was in fact within the bounds of the Presbytery of the Southeast, not the Mid-Atlantic, as previously expected. Despite this, several from the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic continue to be integrally involved in this newly recognized mission work, including Biggs and Miller.

By October 2022, the Short Pump Bible study was recognized as a formal mission work of the OPC under the name of West Creek Presbyterian Church. They've since been enjoying evening worship together each Lord's Day, as well as celebrating the Lord's Supper every other week. Biggs and Andrews share the task of expounding the Word with Jeff Downs, pastor of Knox Reformed.

At first glance, the benefit of this work to the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic may be unclear. Yet, Biggs continues to preach at West Creek every other week while also devoting attention to the people of this young plant. Why would one labor so intensely in a territory that is not part of one's presbytery? "While we seek to be faithful within certain boundaries, as Christians our boundaries have no limits," Biggs explains. "Our Savior and King gives us the privilege of extending his kingdom to the ends of the earth."

For Biggs, the joint endeavor can only be beneficial. "Work done together is work well done—[there is] more accountability and encouragement when you work with one another," he said.

Andrews, like Biggs, exhibits humility and a willingness to spend and be spent for the sake of the gospel. Knox Reformed is giving of itself to a new work, even though the church itself is just getting off the ground. "The Lord loves the mother plant, too," Andrews explained. "We shouldn't be scared to give of our own bodies sacrificially, for the Lord blesses and the Lord brings resurrection."

What unites these regional home missionaries is their commitment to expanding the opportunity to worship God. Biggs again says, "Everything we do is for the glory of God. So we know that missions isn't an end in itself. We were made for worship, and the goal of our evangelism is that people would be saved from sin to the new life of worship in the church—the outpost of heaven."

The Regional Church Is One

Biggs and Andrews believe in the benefit of inter-presbytery relations. Relationships between local churches of the *same* presbytery, however, are equally vital to the success and health of the regional church.

Across the country, in the Presbytery of the Southwest, regional home missionary Mark Sumpter has the privilege of seeing the regional church at work. In this presbytery, as in others, elders from existing churches often serve

on provisional, temporary, or composite sessions for mission works on the journey toward particularization. This gives mission works wisdom, stability, and direction. A few Texas plants that have been blessed by a provisional session are Heritage OPC in New Braunfels, Trinity OPC in Waco, Good Shepherd OPC in Sugar

Land, and Living Stone OPC in Wichita Falls. Sumpter is sure that the help those session members have brought to the young churches has been invaluable.

According to Sumpter, however, the give and take between churches and church plants extends further than merely "sharing" session members. He has seen firsthand that established churches can learn a lot from church plants. "It is encouraging to see how new mission works put outreach and evangelism on the front burner. The majority of the times I visit church plants, the pastor, others, and I go out for evangelism—distributing tracts, preaching on college campuses and parks. It is an encouragement to me and to all the other churches that see their excitement for evangelism. After all, the church's mandate is an evangelistic one," Sumpter explained.

The same goes for hospitality. In Sumpter's estimation, church plants live or die by their practices of evangelism and hospitality. This is often not the case for churches who have consistent membership and attendance. It is good for existing churches to be reminded of these practices and to exercise them alongside their brothers and sisters. And yet, church plants are unable to do what they do without the support of the broader church. The prayers and support of the broader church family are what propel mission works forward.

"Pray big prayers that the public



Interconnectedness within the regional church is seen at Home Missions conferences—and continues long afterward

proclamation of the gospel and personal proclamation would be used by God, so that we might see people brought to Christ and folded into the local church," Sumpter urges. Regardless of whether a church has direct involvement in the formation of a church plant, Sumpter hopes this would be the prayer of every congregation.

One for All; All for One

Our Presbyterianism, among other things, is proof that no congregation or mission work is alone. The smallest, struggling mission work is upheld by the prayers, wisdom, encouragement, and support of the broader church. Meanwhile, the most established church is emboldened by the example of the fiercely evangelistic church plant whose only way forward is direct outreach to its neighbors and encouraging fellowship among its members. Our unity allows, perhaps even enables and necessitates, a give and take among these congregations of varying size, age, and composition. No congregation is an island.

Charles Biggs aptly expresses an attitude that would serve us all well to adopt: "I am thankful to be part of a particular region as a servant, but I am grateful to be a part of the larger church and work alongside servants of the Lord from across the country." □

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

AN ASSISTANT TO CHURCH PLANTERS

// STEVE IGO WITH ELISABETH SCHUMAKER



Elisabeth (Liz) Schumaker with her husband, Jacob, and children

How can presbyteries come together to help support the work of our church-planting pastors? For the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario, the answer was to provide church planters with a presbytery-based administrative assistant. Several years ago, we began offering this vital support to our church planters and mission works.

The role of a church planters' administrative assistant helps to bridge the gap between church-planting pastors and the presbytery. Five years ago, when our presbytery began its search for the right candidate for this position, Jonathan Cruse, pastor of Community Presbyterian in Kalamazoo, Michigan, enthusiastically recommended member Elisabeth (Liz) Schumaker to our search committee, and she was hired by our presbytery's Church Extension (CHEX) committee in July 2018. Through Liz, our presbytery provides administrative aid to each one of our mission works. Liz works approximately twenty-six hours per week from home and reports to our CHEX committee chairman, Rev. Steve Igo (pastor of Cedar Presbyterian in Jenison, Michigan). Her flexible hours and remote working conditions have allowed her to easily mix her work with being a wife and a mother of small children. For these perks of the job, Liz and her family are very grateful.

Digital and Print Materials for Mission Works

Many of our mission works operate on a shoestring budget and do not have full access to resources to effectively promote their work and attract new members. Liz is able to help these mission works by providing a wide range of services, such as graphics for sermon series, Bible studies, church events, and Sunday school classes. She also creates and publishes social media graphics on Facebook and Instagram for our mission works. Liz creates a variety of print materials, including bulletins, bulletin inserts, invite cards, flyers, posters, welcome brochures, road signage, indoor signage, Every Door Direct

Mail postcards, welcome gifts, mugs, pens, and promotional products such as t-shirts or hats for use at outreach events.

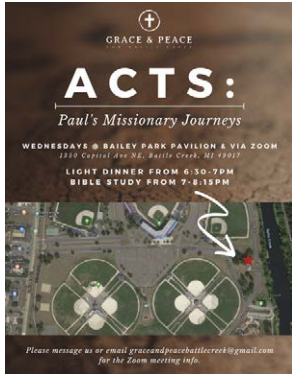
Frequently, mission works will plan what we call a Big Day Sunday. A Big Day Sunday outreach is an all-out push by every member of the mission work such that "everyone brings one" guest to church on the same Sunday. It creates lots of interest in the mission work all at once by exposing new people to the church, exciting your core members, and recapturing the interest of those people on the fringe of the mission work's ministry. For our Big Day outreach events, Liz coordinates digital marketing campaigns, designs and orders materials, and creates volunteer sign-ups for mission work members.

Liz also creates websites for our mission works. Her goal is to consistently provide our church plants with websites that look modern and up to date but are also easy to use.

Another important way Liz supports the mission works is through her photography and videography skills. When visiting church plants, she takes photos and videos with the permission of the planter. These photos and videos are then available for the mission work to use on their website and social media pages. This helps to promote the mission work and to attract new members. The presbytery's committee provided



Sign for the Battle Creek Bible study



Some of Liz's handiwork, clockwise from top: social media banner, informative handout, promotional mug, business cards, and Bible study flyer

Liz with a camera and video equipment, but Liz largely taught herself how to use them along with the necessary video-editing software. You can see some of her work by visiting our presbytery's CHEX website at www.opcchurchplanting.org.

From Bookkeeping to Onboarding

Liz is also there to support our mission works in times of crisis. Whether it is through providing practical assistance or offering words of encouragement, she is a valuable resource for church-planting pastors. In one situation, a church treasurer suddenly left one of our mission works. At the request of the provisional session, Liz took over accounting and bookkeeping duties while they looked for a new treasurer. Liz went above and beyond the call of duty by migrating their bookkeeping from a paper accounting system to QuickBooks, and then organized the paper files left behind by the previous treasurer. During that time, she also issued regular reports to the provisional session to ensure financial transparency and accountability.

Another way Liz provides support in times of transition is by training mission work members to take on new roles. This helps to lighten the church planter's load. The training is sometimes accomplished by email and other times via Zoom, video training, or detailed written instructions. Her goal is to help mission work members easily move into new roles.

In her first year in the position, Liz and her husband visited nearly every mission work in the presbytery, usually over a weekend. This provided Liz with the opportunity to explore the area, experience the community, get to know the church planter and his family, and discuss the specific needs of the mission work with the church planter. One challenge

Liz encountered when visiting mission works was the lack of organized systems in place. Many church-planting pastors are focused on the spiritual and pastoral aspects of their work and may not have the time or expertise to set up efficient systems and processes. Liz is able to help our mission works start setting up systems, which greatly improved the efficiency and effectiveness of their work.

In every aspect of her supporting work, Liz endeavors to set up systems that are accessible and usable by the pastor and laity when the church particularizes. After all, the presbytery's goal for the administrative assistant position is to help church plants move toward particularization, not to become overly reliant on the assistant's work.

Supporting the Proclamation of Christ

As we look to the future in our presbytery, we are confident that the church planters' administrative assistant will continue to be a vital part of our mission. We encourage other presbyteries to consider implementing similar programs to support the work of church-planting pastors in their area. The work of a church-planting pastor is not an easy one, and it is important that we, as presbyteries, come alongside church planters in support. The Bible reminds us in Colossians 1:28, "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ." As a church planters' administrative assistant, Liz plays a role in proclaiming Christ by supporting church-planting pastors as they present the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people in their care.

This ministry in our presbytery is an effective and innovative way to support the work of church-planting pastors. Please feel free to contact Liz or our CHEX committee with any questions you might have at opcchurchplanting.org/contact-us.

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date news and prayer requests, receive our newsletter by subscribing at CHMCE.org or scanning this QR code.



Steve Igo is pastor of Cedar Presbyterian in Jenison, Michigan. Elisabeth Schumaker is administrative assistant for the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario.

"CONTENT TO FILL A LITTLE SPACE"

// JUDITH M. DINSMORE



Grove with young friends at her language helper's home

Karamoja, Uganda, is no little space. In the pictures that KOPC missionaries send stateside, red earth sweeps against blue sky in a great pulsing expanse. But tentmaker missionary Joanna Grove reaches for the line, a quote from an old hymn, to describe the size and shape of her daily tasks in Karamoja: "I ask Thee for . . . a mind to blend with outward life while keeping at Thy side; / Content to fill a little space, if Thou be glorified."

Grove's tasks have shifted since her arrival three years ago because the team has changed, but it is not the nature of the tasks but the posture in which they are done that most occupies her attention. She, like many of us, would be content with the little space, the small tasks, that make up a life of faithfulness. As she put it, "missions is basically just faithful Christian living in a different place."

The Daily Tasks

Lately, her "little space" has included payroll tasks: the mission has about thirty regular employees, and anywhere from five to thirty additional employees who might be working in a given week on different projects. Grove pays each one, sometimes through phone numbers, sometimes directly to bank accounts, and sometimes in cash. Twenty men are employed as guards and gardeners; four women work as cooks for the other employees and sometimes missionaries; and four are men who do ministry—they translate for James Folkerts, lead Bible studies in the villages, or work together with Folkerts on preparing sermons.

These four men doing ministry are one aspect of the mission's vision to teach and train up men to be the potential church officers for the Karamoja congregation. Another important aspect of the vision is providing education to men who may be spiritual leaders in the future. So the mission sponsors fourteen men in different levels of high school or

university-level school. That sponsorship isn't as simple as a one-time scholarship. All the schools they attend have different requirements for tuition, food and housing arrangements, and supplies. Grove keeps track of the requirements, makes payments, and troubleshoots. This work comes naturally to her—"I like the coordination and logistics," she explained.

Grove doesn't just make arrangements for the needs of others—she also works with her hands to help care for those at the mission. She shares a kitchen with the women who cook for the guards and makes a supper meal for the Folkerts and one for the Verdicks once a week.

Party Logistics

And at the end of 2022, Grove also organized a holiday party for all the compound staff and clinic staff. Preparations began in November, when a group traveled to Kampala, Uganda's capital. It takes a day just to get there, so, knowing that the trip was planned, Grove used it to buy a few specialty items that they can't get closer to home.



At Acia John's, a friend who gathers his neighbors every week to worship the Lord

Most other groceries and supplies they can buy in Mbale, a trip that can be done in a day but is usually done in at least two. As usual, Grove called the supermarket ahead of time on WhatsApp to put in an order. They treat you very personally, she explained—you're not looking through an online list, you're talking to someone in the store who's sending you pictures and asking, "Do you want this size or that? This brand or that?" (In a city where most people speak two or three languages, English is commonly the shared one.) Then, Grove paid with mobile money, and the supermarket delivered the order to the Jacksons' house—the Jacksons are fellow OP missionaries—where she picked it up.

Finally, to prepare for the party, Grove visited the Friday market in the nearby village of Namalu, where she usually goes once or twice a month to buy flour, beans, rice, and vegetables for the mission. Some of it comes from local growers, some comes in on trucks from other regions. Live chickens are also available—and one market stall slaughters meat, too, but because it hangs outdoors uncovered, the mission usually purchases their meat frozen in Mbale.

On the day of the party, Grove and others cooked all morning. The party was supposed to begin at eleven but in reality started at two or three—"I've learned to be flexible," she laughed. They served: two huge pots of rice; a bunch of cabbage fried with onions and tomatoes; matoke, which is a fruit like a green banana that is cooked and then mashed; beef; chicken; and chapatis, which are unleavened flatbreads about as big as a plate that are rolled out and then fried in oil.

After the food, Christopher Verdick led the group in expressing appreciation for people working at the mission. Then they sang, danced, and played games.

"Guided Where I Go"

As a young adult, although she loved reading missionary biographies and turned to the Foreign Missions article first when she read *New Horizons*, Grove never expected to be a missionary—she assumed missionary service was for more "admirable" people. At the same time, one of her highest values was strength, "both physically and emotionally." She valued being tough.

Now serving overseas in a way she wouldn't have imagined possible then, Grove continually feels the opposite of physically and emotionally strong. This is not her culture, communicating even in English can be challenging, and she regularly copes with being sick. "I've had to learn my weak-



Plucking chickens for the party

ness in so many ways," Grove said. And that opened her eyes to another reality: missionary service is not for the next-tier Christians. Rather, as Grove expressed, what missionary service requires is that one depend on Christ.

That looks different for different people, Grove quickly pointed out. Some depend on the Lord as they cast big picture visions. She, however, is not a big-ideas person—she loves to follow the vision of others on the team. To describe it, she quoted another stanza from the same hymn, "Father,

I Know That All My Life":

I would not have the restless will that hurries to and fro,
Seeking for some great thing to do or secret thing to know;
I would be treated as a child, and guided where I go.

As she depends on the Lord in her missionary service in Karamoja, Grove has become more comfortable talking to acquaintances about spiritual things. She has learned "contentment and thankfulness and not being cynical and being encouraging." And a less materialistic way of life now seems second nature—when she needed a new pair of glasses, instead of being a cosmetic dilemma, it was just another thing on her to-do list.

Those lessons in dependence are precious to her. She encourages anyone interested in missionary associate service to pursue a few months on the field, as she did, to learn to how to depend on the Lord in a foreign setting and "serve the Lord in faithful Christian living wherever we are."

The author is managing editor of New Horizons.

What's New

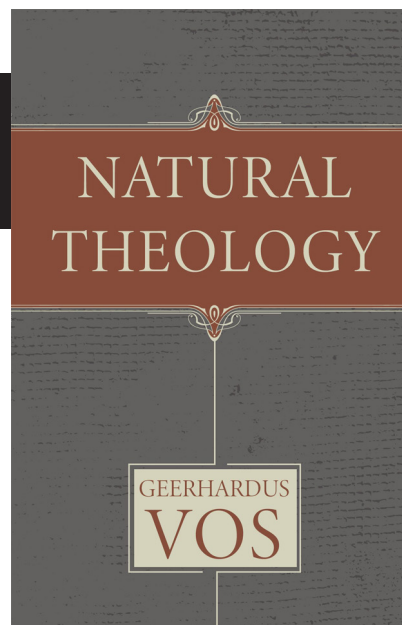
// Comings/Goings

Missionary associate **Mr. Jedidiah T. Homan** (Immanuel OPC, Bellmawr, NJ) completed his six-month term in Nakaale, Karamoja, Uganda, at the end of February 2023.

Associate missionary **Ms. Angela J. Voskuil** (Rehobeth Presbyterian Church, ARPC, Waxhaw, North Carolina) completed her labors with the Uganda Mission in Nakaale, Karamoja, and returned to the United States to be married in February 2023.

REVIEW: GEERHARDUS VOS'S *NATURAL THEOLOGY*

// DAVID VANDRUNEN



The author of this work, Geerhardus Vos (1862–1949), was never a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, but he had an important influence on it. As a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, he taught many of the original OPC ministers. Many subsequent OPC ministers have also learned from Vos through his writings, especially *Biblical Theology* and *The Pauline Eschatology*. Vos has guided generations of OPC and other Reformed ministers in seeing the unity and development of God’s revelation through the biblical canon and in understanding how Scripture is centered in Christ and his everlasting kingdom.

The contents of this book were never previously published. It considers a topic—*natural theology*—quite different from the biblical studies for which Vos is known. In general, “natural theology” refers to the study of what we know about God through creation itself. That is, it considers knowledge of God attained through natural revelation. Vos himself defines natural theology as “a knowledge of God that takes its content and method from the world as it presents itself to us as governed by fixed laws” (4).

A Selective Treatment

The book’s material dates from Vos’s first and relatively brief teaching post (1888–1893), at the Theological School of the Christian Reformed Church, the precursor of Calvin Theological Seminary. He lectured on natural theology there (in Dutch) as part of his teaching responsibilities. Several student manuscripts that transcribed these lectures have survived. The translator has produced what he calls a “best text” (xiv) based on these manuscripts.

The work itself is short—under a hundred pages. It consists of 224 questions and brief answers. If we think of natural

theology as the “systematization” of God’s natural revelation, as J. V. Fesko describes it in this book’s introductory essay (xviii), Vos’s manuscript falls far short of this, for it is rather selective in what it treats.

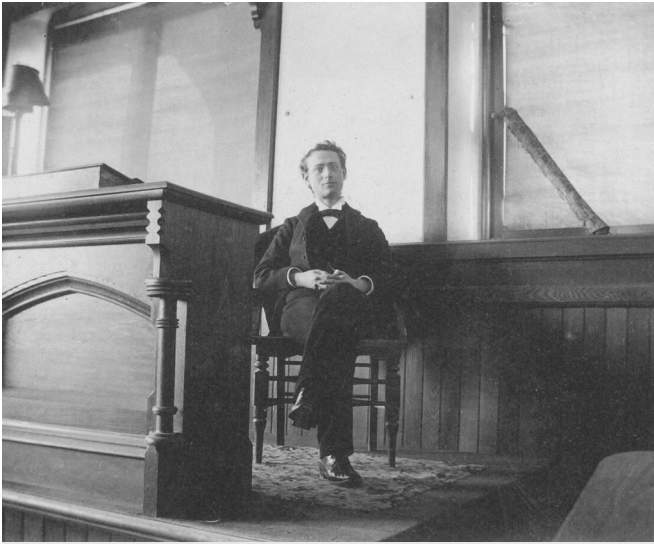
The first section is entitled “Prolegomenon.” It explains what natural theology is, what Scripture says about it, and what its value is. It also provides a historical overview, beginning in the early church, of the importance theologians and philosophers placed on natural theology.

The second and longest section is entitled “The Systems of Religion.” This begins with another historical overview, this time of “the different systems of religion and religious faith,” which include pantheism, deism, monotheism, polytheism, and atheism. It then interacts with theories about how religion arose and developed in the world. The remainder of the section analyzes five types of arguments for God’s existence (ontological, cosmological, teleological, ethical, and religious). Vos expresses a mix of appreciation and criticism of the various arguments.

The brief final section (“The Immortality of the Soul”) first describes theories about the soul’s nature. Vos then gives special attention to the Christian view that the soul is immortal, discussing several natural-theological arguments in support of it.

Narrow Value

The most remarkable thing about this book is that it was published at all. Vos was a young man fresh out of school when he gave these lectures. Natural theology had not been the focus of his doctoral studies. Yet the Christian Reformed theological school at this time was a small place with few instructors, and Vos was assigned a heavy teaching load on a range of different subjects. This raises inevitable questions about how much time Vos could possibly have spent on these lectures and how deeply he had really engaged all the issues and people he discusses. He clearly relied on the work of his



Geerhardus Vos at Princeton

own teachers. This isn't to criticize Vos, who surely did the best he could under the circumstances. But we don't usually publish the lectures of rookie teachers on subjects that weren't their specialty. Vos himself never tried to do so.

The value of these lectures (and the reason they've been published) is fairly narrow. They show the continuity of Vos's thought with earlier Reformed theology. They also provide a window on how late-nineteenth-century Reformed ministerial students were trained to engage non-Christian thinkers and philosophies. Finally, they provide evidence for the debate as to whether Vos was a forerunner of twentieth-century presuppositional apologetics (and suggest that the answer is no). Readers interested in these questions may well find Vos's *Natural Theology* fascinating. Other readers probably won't.

The author is an Orthodox Presbyterian minister and professor of systematic theology and Christian ethics at Westminster Seminary California.

Natural Theology, by Geerhardus Vos, translated by Albert Gootjes. Reformation Heritage, 2022. Hardcover, 184 pages, \$18.75.

🗨️ Out of the Mouth . . .

I was moving a coffee table and temporarily turned it upside down. Incredulous, my five-year-old confronted me. "Mommy! My Sunday school teacher said that only Jesus should flip tables!"

—Allie Stahl
Springfield, VA

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

ON READING OLD BOOKS

"It is a good rule, after reading a new book, never to allow yourself another new one till you have read an old one in between." C. S. Lewis

PREACHING AND BIBLICAL THEOLOGY (1961)

BY EDMUND P. CLOWNEY

One of the great privileges I had as a seminary student in the late nineties was that of hearing Dr. Edmund Clowney give several addresses in our chapel, and even more to have him sit in on some of our preaching classes. Dr. Clowney was advanced in age at this point. He would sometimes teach while sitting in a chair. He was very grandfatherly, with a kind and gentle demeanor; but when it came to preaching, his insights were firm and unwavering. He insisted that sermons should be Christ-centered, edifying, and clear.

Many of these same homiletic insights can be found in his wonderfully helpful book published in 1961, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*. What Geerhardus Vos did in his exegesis—showing Christ as the sum and center of biblical revelation—Clowney translated into a model for preaching. Clowney did not believe we need "red-letter Bibles" as though only the New Testament spoke of Jesus or was spoken by the Spirit of Jesus (52). Both testaments were authoritative and enjoyed continuity with one another.

This sensitivity to the continuity between the Old and New Testaments, especially as it relates to preaching is Clowney's lasting legacy. Preaching Christ from all of Scripture was at the heart of his preaching paradigm. The coming of Jesus and the fruit of his death and resurrection were at the heart of the Bible, and in Clowney's view, the heart of preaching. The resurrection gives power and purpose to the church. "The gospel message as it is defined in the New Testament is a missionary message which concerns the whole world. He who does not see the need of proclaiming it does not understand it" (69). Those firm, yet gentle words remind me of the older man I remember sitting in that chair when I was learning how to preach. I was grateful for him then; I am even more grateful for him now as I continue to learn. *Preaching and Biblical Theology* is a classic work on preaching the gospel from all of Scripture. It may be an "oldie," but it is also still a "goodie."

—Eric B. Watkins

☆ Congratulations

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

- Phoebe Schrader, Westminster OPC,
Bartlesville, OK

RETIRING FROM MINISTRY: IS IT BIBLICAL?

// BRETT A. MCNEILL



Over the years, I've heard this said (more than once) by people in the church: "There's no retirement in the Bible; ministers should never retire." Considering that one of the things the Committee on Ministerial Care (CMC) does is help ministers prepare for retirement, we thought it wise to address whether or not retirement is a biblical goal.

Retirement in Scripture

While we wouldn't want to draw a direct line between priests in the temple and pastors today, it is important to acknowledge that those who served in God's house did retire. This was especially true for those who had more physically demanding jobs, like moving the tabernacle and its furnishings, as the sons of Kohath, Gershon, and Merari did (Numbers 4). But it was also true of other priests:

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "This applies to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall come to do duty in the service of the tent of meeting. And from the age of fifty years they shall withdraw from the duty of the service and serve no more. They minister to their brothers in the tent of meeting by keeping guard, but they shall do no service." (Num. 8:23–26)

It wasn't just priests who retired. King David handed rule of the kingdom over to his son Solomon when he became too old to rule: "When David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel" (1 Chron. 23:1).

This simply means that the Bible recognizes that not all leaders can continue their labors for God's kingdom until they die—at least not in the same way. Age and health make it so that there may come a time to pass the baton to new leadership.

One of the ways we show honor to our leaders is by helping them to prepare for that day. When it comes, we want

them to be ready to step aside and still have their needs met. We don't want to force them to labor beyond their years of ability and fruitfulness just because they need to pay the bills. After your minister has served God's people for decades and his stamina fades, we want him to be able to take a breath, enjoy his family, and figure out what serving God's people looks like in this new chapter.

What Will Retirement Look Like?

Numbers 8 describes a partial retirement for priests. They continued to serve in some ways but had the burdens of the daily service taken off their shoulders. Some ministers might do something similar, preferring partial retirement to full. That might mean serving as a part-time associate, occasionally teaching Sunday school and filling the pulpit, serving as an interim pastor for a church in transition, or filling a pulpit so that the pastor can take a sabbatical. That can be a great blessing to the church, while at the same time acknowledging that the minister ought not to carry the lion's share of ministry any longer. Ministers don't stop being ministers simply because they retire. They continue to have gifts and opportunities to serve with those gifts (1 Pet. 4:10).

But if they live long enough, the time will come to step away completely. Some OP ministers live well past 100. Some suffer from dementia and other infirmities that prevent them from teaching or preaching. Consider also the minister's wife. Is she provided for if her husband should precede her in death? Whether the retirement comes all at once or in stages, the CMC wants ministers to be prepared.

This is why our committee urges churches to include contributions to their minister's retirement account in the call and the annual budget. This is why we encourage ministers to add to what their churches give and to speak to a financial adviser that can help them prepare for when God calls them to transition out of full-time ministry. Whatever that transition looks like, with foresight and preparation, ministers can welcome it with confidence and gratitude.

The author is pastor of Reformation Presbyterian in Olympia, Washington, and member of the Committee on Ministerial Care.

MARCH



The Kruchkows (day 3)

1 RETIRED MISSIONARIES Cal & Edie Cummings, Brian & Dorothy Wingard, Greet Rietkerk, and Young & Mary Lou Son. / Year-long intern **JOHN (ERIN) NYMANN** at Reformation Presbyterian in Virginia Beach, VA.

2 MATTHEW & LOIS COTTA, Pasadena, CA. Pray that Pasadena Presbyterian would continue to have a heart for evangelism. / Coordinator **JUDY ALEXANDER** and others preparing for the **TIMOTHY CONFERENCE**, Apr. 19-22.

3 Tentmaking missionary **TINA DEJONG**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the women's Bible study on Sundays in Nakaale. / Active-duty US Army military chaplains **KENNETH (MANDY) KRUCHKOW** and **STEPHEN (LINDSEY) ROBERTS**.

4 Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**. / Tentmaking missionary **JOANNA GROVE**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for rest for the mission team after hosting several visitors.

5 CALEB & ERIKA SMITH, Thousand Oaks, CA. Pray for those training to be officers of Thousand Oaks Presbyterian. / Pray for stated clerk **HANK BELFIELD** and others preparing for the 89th General Assembly, June 7-13.

6 Associate missionary **LEAH HOPP**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that her research will assist the clinic in serving the community well. / **BRADNEY & EILEEN LOPEZ**, Guayama, PR. Pray that more would worship and encounter the gospel at the church.

7 CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for the growth of the church plant in Mbale and that the Lord would provide a missionary evangelist. / **LACY (DEBBIE) ANDREWS**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast.

8 CHRISTOPHER & SARA DREW, Grand Forks, ND. Pray that Faith OPC would minister effectively to the nearby university. / Year-long intern **SAMUELIS (MILDA) LUKOŠIUS** at Covenant Presbyterian in Barre, VT.

9 Associate missionaries **JAMES & ESTHER FOLKERTS**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the Ugandan clinic chaplain, Pastor Julius, as he prepares to assist the team in Karamoja. / Yearlong intern **RICHY (NEVA) BRASHER** at Escondido OPC in Escondido, CA.

10 PAUL & SARAH MOURREALE, West Plains, MO. Pray that the Lord would provide a permanent meeting place for Covenant Reformed Church. / Associate missionaries **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for wisdom for the clinic staff as they treat patients. / Director **JOHN FIKKERT**, Committee on Ministerial Care.



The Mourreales (day 10)

11 JEREMY & GWEN BAKER, Yuma, AZ. Pray for more permanent residents to visit Yuma OPC. / Year-long interns **ZACHARY JOHNSON** at Immanuel OPC in Bellmawr, NJ, and **COREY (ANDREA) PAIGE** at South Austin OPC in Austin, TX.

12 Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Give thanks that the Nan Mangot congregation on La Gonâve has a permanent place to worship in their community. / Financial controller **MELISA MCGINNIS**.

13 BEN & HEATHER HOPP, Haiti. Pray for success for the Hopp kids in their studies in homeschooling and at college. / **MILLER & STEPHANIE ANSELL**, Waco, TX. Pray that Trinity would have boldness and zeal for God's kingdom.

14 CHARLES (MARGARET) BIGGS, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic. / Pray for Loan Fund manager **MARK STUMPF** as he oversees this effort to assist churches with capital expansion projects.

15 BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD, Quebec, Canada. Pray for the development of online Reformed courses offered to francophone believers. / Yearlong intern **CHRISTIAN (HANNA) REPP** at Harvest OPC in San Marcos, CA.

MARCH



The Ambroses (day 16)

16 Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**. / Pray for affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia, that the Lord would strengthen them as they work with victims of trafficking.

17 **MICAH & EILEEN BICKFORD**, Farmington, ME. Pray that the Lord would bring new families to visit Grace Reformed. / Office manager **ANNELISA STUDLEY**. / Christian Education office secretary **ABBY HARTING**.

18 Pray that the Lord would provide for the families of long-imprisoned believers in **EAST AFRICA**. / Committee on Diaconal Ministries asks prayer for those delivering **CRATES FOR UKRAINE** with personal and medical supplies.

19 Pray for **TONY CURTO** as he prepares to resume ministry with Reformed churches in Austria and Switzerland. / Pray for **BRAD (CINNAMON) PEPP**, regional home missionary of the Miami Valley for the Presbytery of Ohio.

20 **MARK & LORIE WHEAT**, Sugar Land, TX. Pray for Good Shepherd's ongoing officer training. / Yearlong intern **JACOB (LINDSAY) CASH** at Redeemer OPC in Beaver Creek, OH. / Database administrator **CHARLENE TIPTON**.

21 Pray for a permanent worship facility for the **ETHIOPIAN REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** in Addis Ababa. / General secretary **DANNY OLINGER** asks prayer for the Committee on Christian Education meeting this week.

22 **JOHN & KATIE TERRELL**, Moline, MI. Praise the Lord for the success of Living Hope OPC's recent evangelism events. / Pray for affiliated missionaries **CRAIG & REE COULBOURNE** and **LINDA KARNER**, Japan.

23 **JOHN PAUL & CORINNE HOLLOWAY**, Manassas, VA. Give thanks for the Lord's work at Acacia Reformed. / **JUDITH DINSMORE**, managing editor of *New Horizons* and **GREGORY REYNOLDS**, editor of *Ordained Servant*.

24 **HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for the health and safety of their family and for Juliette studying in New York. / Yearlong intern **CHRISTOPHER (LAURA) BARNARD** at Lake Sherwood OPC in Orlando, FL.

25 **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Give thanks for their trip to the US to meet their first grandchild. / **CHRIS BYRD**, Westfield, NJ. Pray that the Lord would bless Chris's personal discipleship efforts.

26 **CHRIS (MEGAN) HARTSHORN**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California. / Pray that **THE REFORMED DEACON** podcast would be a useful resource for deacons in the OPC and beyond. / Yearlong intern **DOMINIC (MARTHA) SILLA** at Living Hope OPC in Allentown, PA.



The Paysons (day 27)

27 **STEPHEN & CATALINA PAYSON**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for opportunities to build relationships and invite those in their neighborhood to church. / **STEPHEN PRIBBLE**, senior technical associate for OPC.org.

28 **A. J. & CHELSEA MILLSAPS**, Maryville, TN. Pray that God would convert sinners in East Tennessee through gospel proclamation. / Pray for affiliated missionaries **JERRY & MARILYN FARNIK**, Czech Republic.

29 Home Missions administrative assistant **ALLISON GROOT**. / **DAVID NAKHLA**, Short-Term Missions coordinator. Pray that churches and individuals would be moved to engage in upcoming short-term missions opportunities.

30 **MR. AND MRS. F.**, Asia. Pray for God's blessing on the ministries of the three recently licensed men. / **MARK LOWREY**, executive director of Great Commission Publications.

31 **MR. AND MRS. M.**, Asia. Pray for the completion and publication of a dictionary of theological terms. / **MARK & CELESTE JENKINS**, Placentia, CA. Pray that Resurrection Presbyterian would faithfully preach the Word.

ECUMENICITY AND INTERCHURCH RELATIONS

ICRC MEETS IN WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

// MARK T. BUBE

As part of her duty to seek a closer fellowship with other churches that are also striving to be faithful to the Holy Scriptures, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church enters into formal bilateral (church-to-church) relationships with almost three dozen churches of like faith and practice spread all over the world. The OPC is also a member church in two ecclesiastical ecumenical bodies, the member churches of which must adopt or confess one or more of the historic Reformed standards as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures. One is the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) and the other is the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).

In the second week of October 2022, delegates from ICRC member churches traveled to Windhoek, the capital city of Namibia, on the west coast of Africa, to gather for the 10th (2022) Meeting of the ICRC. The host church for this meeting was the Reformed Churches in South Africa with the theme of theological education; three papers were presented, followed by a panel discussion and a period of questions and answers from the floor for each.

The OPC's delegates to the meeting were Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations members Mark Bube, Tony Curto, David Nakhla, and Robert Tarullo. During the four days of business sessions, we were able to meet with our counterparts from fourteen of the overseas member churches and one observer church. The fellowship was sweet, and we came away much blessed by these brothers in Christ!

Each quadrennial meeting of the ICRC also appoints committees of five to seven men—which usually meet by video



Singing at the 10th Meeting of the ICRC

conference several times a year and once in person—to facilitate and promote cooperation among the member churches in such areas as missions, theological education, and ministries of mercy. The OPC is heavily involved in this ongoing work, with Mr. Bube chairing the Missions Committee, Mr. Nakhla chairing the Diaconal Committee, and Dr. Curto serving on the Theological Education Committee.

The 10th Meeting opened with thirty-four member churches in the ICRC, and during the meeting five more churches were received into membership; for two of which—the Reformed Churches Netherlands and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe—the OPC happily served as one of their two required sponsoring churches. Sadly, the membership of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)—one of the founding churches of the ICRC, whose membership in the ICRC had been suspended by the 9th (2017) Meeting because it had “recently acted to permit the ordination of persons to the offices of minister and ruling elder contrary to the rule prescribed in Scripture”—was terminated as its “practice . . . is no longer in accord with the Basis” of the ICRC.

In his high-priestly prayer, our Lord prayed to his heavenly Father: “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who

will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:20–21). Our living demonstration of the unity that is already ours in Christ with brothers and sisters from all around the world is part of our testimony to the world that the Father did indeed send the Son into the world to, by his blood, “ranso[m] people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9). To God be the glory!

The author is administrator of the OPC's Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations and coordinator of the ICRC.



OPC delegates with Ugandan brothers

NEWS, VIEWS & REVIEWS

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF MACHEN RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER

Judith M. Dinsmore

Off a dirt road in the mountainous northwestern corner of Virginia lies the Machen Retreat and Conference Center, which has been welcoming campers for twenty-five years.

“It’s a spectacular place in many ways,” said Gerald Taylor, OP minister and chairman of MRCC’s retreat operating committee, which includes local OP members as well as presbytery representatives.

MRCC’s location is truly a rest from the world, he explained. Its county, Highland County, is one of the least populated east of the Mississippi and is nicknamed Virginia’s “Little Switzerland”; MRCC itself sits in a green valley, flanked by mountains, with freshwater streams nearby. Taylor has seen lady slippers and scarlet tanagers on the property, and he’s keeping an eye out for bald eagles.

But what Taylor is most excited about is the opportunity that MRCC provides to experience the connection that we have as presbyterians—what he calls “presbyterianism in action.” Campers young and old can build relationships across churches as they attend MRCC’s events. In 2023, there will be five: Science Camp, Stronghold Camp, Labor Day Family Camp, Singles Retreat, and Ladies Retreat. Taylor loves to see young people from out of state showing up at his home congregation, Staunton OPC in Staunton, Virginia, because they’re visiting their camp friends in the area.

The facilities—warm weather and winterized cabins, tent and RV sites, kitchen/dining area, and conference room—are also available to rent for family reunions or group retreats, at reduced rates to OP members. Maximum capacity is 75.

Machen Retreat and Conference Center is sustained by the generosity of individuals, churches, and presbyteries. For more information, visit machen.org.



Machen Retreat and Conference Center has blessed campers for twenty-five years, including Dr. Anne Jones (right), OP member and entomologist, who came to the camp as a young adult and is now a Science Camp instructor.

NEW COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

The Committee on Coordination is pleased to announce the addition of Jamie Dean as communications coordinator. Miss Dean, a member of Resurrection Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Matthews, North Carolina, previously was national editor for *World* magazine. During her eighteen-year tenure at *World*, she completed more than one hundred cover stories, wrote a monthly column, contributed to the news podcast, and taught at the World Journalism Institute.



Jamie Dean

In accepting the new position, Dean said, “The Lord has used the ministry of the OPC, both locally and globally, to shape my own Christian discipleship and growth in grace for many years. I’m so thankful for his ongoing work in our denomination, and for this opportunity to serve the church that I love.”

In the creation of the new position of communications coordinator, Benjamin

Snodgrass, chairman of the Committee on Coordination, observed, “Over these last few years, the committee has been taking stock of the vast changes in the way that God has provided for our society to communicate, and the direct impact on the methods that the standing committees of the OPC are using to communicate with churches, pastors, and members.” It became apparent, Snodgrass said, that a strategic adjustment would be wise. He added, “We are delighted that our efforts led to the welcome addition of Jamie Dean, a wonderful fit for our needs.”

Committee member John Shaw agreed. “The Lord provided to the OPC in Jamie Dean a wonderful mixture of missions experience that fuels her love for the church and the OPC with years of proven experience in journalism. She wants to contribute well-told stories about what the Lord is doing for his kingdom through the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and to paint a picture of how others might participate in that work.”

**ARMOR BIBLE CHURCH RECEIVED
IN ORCHARD PARK, NY**

D. Leonard Gulstrom

On January 13, the Presbytery of New York and New England received Armor Bible Church (formerly of the PCA) at a reception service at Orchard Park, New York. Rev. Jonathan Hunt was installed as pastor; Jonathan Bergmann and LeRoy

Osborn were installed as ruling elders; and Rick Hunt, Rick Weber, Nick Wells, Jonathan Rogers, and Caleb Henning were installed as deacons. The commission of presbytery consisted of Rev. D. Leonard Gulstrom (retired), Rev. Kevin Kisler of Cornerstone Presbyterian in Rochester, New York, and ruling elder Jonathan Looney of Hope Presbyterian in Syracuse, New York.



At Armor Bible's reception: Jonathan Bergmann, Jonathan Hunt, Leonard Gulstrom, Rick Hunt, Jonathan Rogers, Nick Wells, Caleb Henning, Doug Giebel, Rick Weber, Jonathan Looney, Kevin Kisler, Michael Shingler, and LeRoy Osborn

**CORONA ORGANIZED, CANAVAN
INSTALLED IN CORONA, CA**

Corona Presbyterian Church held a service of recognition and installation on November 20 and was recognized as a new and separate congregation of the OPC by the Presbytery of Southern California.

Andrew Canavan, previously serving as evangelist, was installed as pastor. Brent Murphy was installed as ruling elder and Ray Sahagun was installed as deacon. The

service was well attended by many from the regional church and from as far away as the Presbytery of the Southeast. Rev. Dr. A. Craig Troxel preached on Romans 1:1-7. Rev. Joel Ellis of Reformation OPC in Apache Junction, Arizona, delivered the charge to the congregation, and Rev. James Lim of Faith OPC in Long Beach, California, delivered the charge to the pastor.

This service was held six years to the day since the first worship service of the mission work in Corona. Thanks be to God for a new congregation in a city with no other NAPARC churches!

RENOVATIONS IN SANDUSKY, OH

Firelands Grace OPC was able to meet in its newly renovated building for its first public worship service on Sunday, December 25, 2022. After a year of work that saw the removal of all debris, the replacement of the flat roof on the educational wing, a new HVAC system, and interior refurbishing, the congregation braved the extreme winter weather and met to praise God for his kindness in providing our Lord Jesus as the Savior of mankind. The congregation offers its sincere thanksgiv-



Oldaker giving the benediction in Firelands Grace's renovated building

ings to God and to many in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church who prayed for them and gave toward this project. We rejoice that Firelands Grace OPC has a new permanent home from which to preach and to share the gospel.

**IN MEMORIAM: L. WILLIAM
STEPHENS**

Robert Letham

L. William (Bill) Stephens, ruling elder for nearly thirty years at Emmanuel OPC in Whippany, New Jersey, died on January 9 at age 101. An engineer by profes-



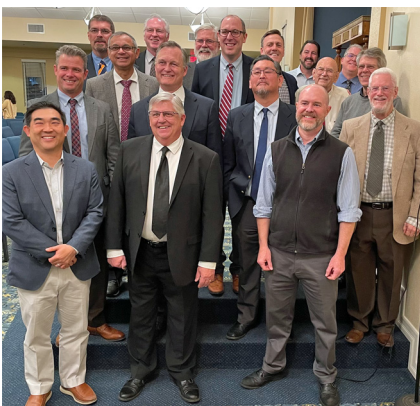
Bill Stephens

sion and an accomplished violinist, Bill taught himself New Testament Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Chinese, and Russian. In his final years, he memorized Psalm 119 backwards and was able to quote any verse if requested at random. His last words were a comment on Psalm 23. Bill was greatly loved for his gentle and quiet wisdom. His wife Lorraine predeceased him; he is survived by his six children (including a former OPC deacon, a current PCA elder, and a daughter married to a former OPC minister), twelve grandchildren, and sixteen great-grandchildren.

UPDATE

CHURCHES

- On November 20, **Corona Presbyterian**, in Corona, CA, was organized as a particular congregation of the OPC.



At Corona's particularization service; Canavan in center, striped tie

• On January 13, the Presbytery of New York and New England received into the presbytery **Armor Bible Church, OPC**, of Orchard Park, NY. Armor Bible Church was previously a PCA congregation.

• **Lake Brandt Reformed** in Greensboro, NC, is closing. Its last service was January 29.

MINISTERS

• On October 22, **Marc R. Scaturro** was ordained as a minister and installed as a pastor of Little Farms Chapel in Coopersville, MI.

• On November 20, **Andrew W. Canavan**, previously an evangelist, was installed as pastor of Corona Presbyterian in Corona, CA.

• On December 9, **Taylor L. Sexton** was ordained as a minister and installed as teacher at Heritage Presbyterian in Royston, GA.

• On January 13, **Jonathan W. Hunt**, previously a PCA minister, was installed as pastor of Armor Bible Church, OPC, in Orchard Park, NY.

• On January 21, the Presbytery of the Southwest dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Todd S. Bordow** and Cornerstone OPC in Jersey Village, TX (Houston Northwest).

• On January 21, **Glen J. Clary** demitted the ministry, and the Presbytery of the Southwest erased his name from the roll of the regional church.

• On January 21, the Presbytery of the Southwest permitted retired minister **William H. Doerfel** to demit in order to join the local PCA church where he now worships.

REVIEWS

William Carey: Expecting Great Things, by Linda Finlayson. CF4Kids, 2022. Paperback, 128 pages, \$9.99. Reviewed by OP pastor David B. Carnes.

Growing up, my family had a collection of children's biographies on Chris-

tian missionaries. Many hours were spent reading the stories of the various men and women God had used to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. My wife and I desire to instill this same culture in our own family. This was in the back of my mind while reading this book, and I was not disappointed. Linda Finlayson's *Expecting Great Things: William Carey* is a great addition to Christian Focus's Trail Blazers series of biographies for children.

William Carey is most well-known for his pioneering of modern missions. He founded the Baptist Missionary Society and became one of their first missionaries. He moved his family to India, and he served in that country for forty-one years. Finlayson provides an engaging account of William Carey's life, from his days growing up learning to be a shoemaker to his final years on earth fighting for reform in India. I found myself looking forward to the next time I would pick up the book and continue the journey.

In the writing of biographies, there can be a temptation to only focus on the positives of the person one is writing about. One of the things I really appreciate about this work is that it provides a holistic perspective. The afterword does a good job of summarizing many of the unique and valuable contributions that Carey made, but it is honest about the fact that Carey was not a perfect man. The reader is encouraged to engage in honest reflection about some of the decisions Carey made, especially in regard to his family.

The book is very readable and accessible. However, there are occasional words that some children may not be as familiar with. The glossary is a helpful aid for those moments. The other helpful part of this book is a feature of the Trail Blazers series. In the back of the book, they have a section called "Think Further." This section includes a paragraph for each chapter of the book that provides further engagement with the issues or events arising in each chapter. This can be

a helpful resource for parents to engage in further discussion with their children as they read the book.

Overall, this was an enjoyable read. I haven't read anything about William Carey for a while now, and it was refreshing to relearn about his passion and labors for the Lord. I even learned some new things about him along the way. I look forward to this work being part of our family's growing collection of

books for our future children to enjoy for years to come.

Byang Kato, by Simonetta Carr. Reformation Heritage, 2022. Hardcover, 64 pages, \$14.00. Reviewed by OP member Tiffany Ward.

Simonetta Carr's *Byang Kato* is the latest volume in her series of Christian Biographies for Young Readers. Carr thoroughly acquaints readers with Byang Kato (1936–1975), an inspirational Nigerian man from the district of Kwoi who converted to Christianity out of the juju religion of the Ham people. Kato became a passionate follower of Christ during a time when the gospel took root in his region, with the Lord bringing half of the population to faith in Christ. Kato would eventually become an evangelical forefather in Africa, and a leader in various missions organizations.

As he grew from a young Christian boy into a man, he was burdened with the sense that Christian leaders in Africa needed theological education. With very little opportunity for Christian study, Kato, along with his wife and children, sacrificed greatly to send him to several theological training grounds. First he studied at Igbaja Bible College, then London Bible College, and eventually Dallas Theological Seminary. In a day when many Christians deride the need for theological education, Kato stands in sharp contrast, going to great lengths to ensure that he was an educated minister for Africa.

Carr exposes children to difficult questions Kato faced in his daily ministries, such as whether Christianity should look



New Hope Women's Spring Conference

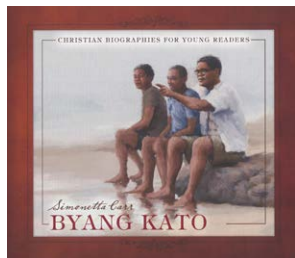
April 28-29 • Green Bay, WI

- Jen Oshman, speaker
- Come to Me: The Sufficiency of Christ in a Self-Help World
- New Hope Presbyterian
2401 Deckner Avenue
- Details and registration information at www.nhopc.org/ministries/women. For more or to request a scholarship, email library@nhopc.org.



different in Africa than in other parts of the world. Kato's answers are deep, helpful, and align with Reformed teaching.

This book drives readers, young and old, to an appreciation for the preciousness of the gospel and Christian education. Throughout the book, Kato's example of persistent labor for Christ—even amid



hostility—causes readers to reflect on their own selfishness and consider whether they are really making “the best use of the time” (Eph. 5:16). The book highlights the many ways Kato served the church in Africa and beyond, showing how glorious Christian labor is often outwardly ordinary. Kato's life and example, particularly in how he raised and catechized his children, encourages child readers to ask questions about God at home, and to be able to defend their beliefs from the Bible. The biographical content of the book is surprisingly extensive and is compellingly written. With eye-catching illustrations, photographs, and maps, Carr does a fantastic job immersing the reader in the life of Byang Kato and displays his wide-reaching in-

fluence and impact for the Lord. Her research for the book brought her into contact with many primary sources such as his speeches and writings, photographs, and contributions from his son, Paul Kato, all of which deeply enrich the narrative.

This book is an inspiring and convicting biography for young Christian readers, and worthy of its recommendations. In the words of Byang Kato, this book reminds Christians that “The world is the field” for us all.

***Who Is Jesus? Forty Pictures to Share with Your Family*, by Kate Hox, illustrations by Joe Hox. New Growth Press, 2022. Hardcover, 96 pages, \$14.99. Reviewed by OP member Annie Nelson.**

This book did not disappoint. A feast for the eyes, the illustrations in this book are evocative and mesh perfectly with the rich text to create a dynamic understanding of Jesus Christ that is drawn faithfully from Scripture. Featuring forty devotionals, each one highlighting a different aspect of Christ's character or his work, this book is a treasure mine especially for parents who want to parade the beauty of the Savior before their children, ages four to thirteen. I was pleasantly surprised by the theologically sound, well-written, and easily understandable prose of

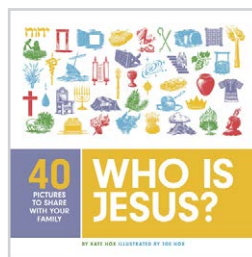
these devotionals that completely avoided the over-simplified and silly approach so often found in Bible story books.

With a strong use of color and design, the Hoxes' craftsmanship is superior in every way. I loved the splendid organization—it was very easy to find my way around as each devotional is clearly labeled (Day 1, Day 2, etc.), followed by clear titles such as “Jesus Is the Ark and the Door,” “Jesus Is the Serpent Crusher,” “Jesus Is the Mercy Seat,” and “Jesus Is the Rock Moses Struck.” Each one of these can be easily read at one sitting, and the page following each devotional contains several intriguing questions (with answers provided at the back of the book) and more Bible references that pertain to the subject.

Each devotional is illustrated by a full-page picture of subjects such as rocks, shepherds, and burning lamps. These pictures have strength and the sort of living vitality that will draw children into the story. Hox uses color throughout to tie everything together. One cautionary note here: on Day 22, “Jesus Is the Prince of Peace,” the illustration depicts Jesus as a babe in the manger.

I highly recommend this book to those who love the beauty and glory of the gospel in all its many shining facets. I personally have never seen a book meant for children that was all about the excellencies of Christ, but I hope there are more to follow. The author mentions that she spent six years writing this, and her love for Christ shines through, as well as her carefulness to display Christ's attributes with reverence.

Who Is Jesus? would make an excellent gift as it is a quality product in every way, and it would be useful in a Sunday school classroom or a church library as well. Your children will be exhorted to grow in their love and trust for the Good Shepherd, as you can see from this short quote: “What do you think? Are your eyes open? If Jesus is your Good Shepherd, you are safe with him. Listen to his voice, worship him, and let him care for you. He will lead you to good pasture and abundant life” (119).



Everything Sad Is Untrue (a true story), by Daniel Nayeri. Levine Querido, 2020. Hardcover, 368 pages, \$15.29 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP member Emma Nakhla, 18.

The title of this book is not a thesis statement. Daniel Nayeri's true story about his childhood told in *Everything Sad Is Untrue* is compelling and beautiful, but it is filled with sadness and suffering that is far from untrue. However, the constant presence of faith in the story allows for the good news of the gospel to shine through, even in the saddest of moments.

In *Everything Sad Is Untrue*, the author narrates his own experience as a child, exchanging wealth in his home country of Iran for poverty in Oklahoma because of his mother's unashamed Christian faith. Nayeri takes on the voice of his twelve-year-old self, explaining his experience to his classmates in America, and the authenticity is striking. Nayeri takes inspiration from *A Thousand and One Nights*, adopting the role of Scheherazade to tell "the king," his reader, his story. At the start, the reader may find it difficult to look over the chasm between himself and Nayeri. The narrator details a life in Iran with vocabulary and cultural cues that are most likely unfamiliar to the average reader—and Nayeri does not hesitate to point this out often. Although in Oklahoma Nayeri is, at worst, severely traumatized and, at best, simply misunderstood, he takes pride in his heritage, and through the story allows the reader to truly see him—not a patchwork of myths and truth. The reader slowly feels the chasm between himself and the narrator narrow, as his understanding of Nayeri's world and culture grows. This story is humbling, and at times uncomfortable, but important and deeply educational.

Nayeri's life is ridden with tragedy, but he uses his misfortune as a gateway to explain his hope. Nayeri describes his mother as the hero of the story because of the godly influence she had on his life. Although tempted to feel hopeless and cynical throughout his trials, Nayeri gradually realizes that his mother chose to keep and share her faith because of her focus on

eternity, and this in turn changes how Nayeri views his past.

Although Nayeri does not speak about the role faith plays in the story as often as he could, he does make its importance clear to the reader—it would be a completely different story otherwise. The language and tone of the book are befitting its middle-school narrator, as well as the intended audience—it is considered "Young Adult" fiction. Nayeri chooses to include each small tale, no matter how gross or upsetting, in order to weave his inspiring overall story.

Of course, contrary to the book's title, the narrator understands that the sad things in his life are still true. Yet, although the reader will undoubtedly feel Nayeri's pain throughout the story, he will leave the story not with the tragedy of Nayeri's life weighing on his heart, but with joy in how Nayeri's God works all, including the sad, for good.

***Understanding Family Worship: Its History, Theology and Practice*, by Terry L. Johnson. Christian Focus, 2022. Paperback, 96 pages, \$10.99. Reviewed by OPC ruling elder Dan Cooke.**

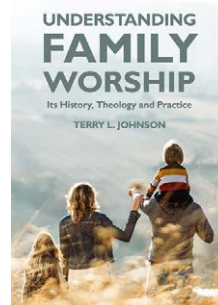
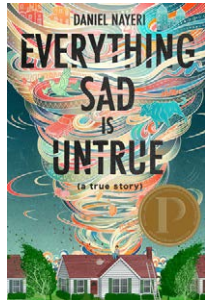
Have you struggled with the why, how, and what-should-I-do of family worship? Terry Johnson's wonderfully written, pastoral gem *Understanding Family Worship* uses Puritans, Presbyterians of a bygone era, and Reformers to showcase the necessity and beauty of family worship. The author starts with the godly home, then moves to biblical and theological support for daily family worship, drawing from the Old and New Testaments and weaving together the thoughts of many authors. Once the case for family worship is solidly before the reader, he develops the elements needed in family worship drawing from his own *Family Worship Book* and several writers of yesteryear.

Johnson states that the Reformation brought back the biblical design for spiritual nurturing in the home. He notes, "Wherever the Reformation took root,

the responsibility for daily prayer shifted to the Christian home. Family worship in the home became a hallmark of Protestantism for generations and right up until the recent past. . . . Virtually the whole weight of Protestant history testifies to the importance of family worship." After this, he moves to describing the godly home and viewing our families as Calvin put it "as little churches." He emphasizes how children learn from parents and how parents need to conduct themselves. From here, Johnson leads the reader through the biblical and theological case for family worship. This is the core of the book; it very neatly, pastorally, and soundly sets forth why we must be engaged in family worship. There is very generous quotation from Puritan and Reformed scholarship of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries as Johnson makes his case from both Old and New Testaments.

After constructing a solid foundation, Johnson turns to the elements and practice of family worship, discussing how to engage children and the importance of keeping it short by not belaboring points. With all this, Johnson leaves the reader without excuse, tackling many of the barriers we tend to create as reasons to not do family worship. His quote of Doddridge is a dagger: "Where the heart is rightly disposed, it does not require any uncommon abilities to discharge family worship in a decent and edifying manner." And further, ask yourself "whether you have not time for many other things, which you know to be of much less importance?" Johnson closes the book with chapters on "Catechizing" and "Parental Hopes," which are full of encouragement to parents and children.

When we baptize our covenant children, two of the promises we make are to raise them and teach them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (baptismal vows, questions 2 and 4). Johnson lays out a thoughtful background for why family worship is part of this vow we take as parents. If you answered the opening question of this review with a yes or would like a deeper understanding, this book provides



a concise and clear articulation of family worship. “Train up your child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6, KJV).

***Terms of Service: The Real Cost of Social Media*, by Chris Martin. B&H, 2022. Paperback, 224 pages, \$17.49 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP minister and editor of *Ordained Servant* Gregory E. Reynolds.**

The author of this important new book was born in 1990 and is a “digital native,” brought up in the internet world. This makes his serious critique of social media especially poignant, since most in his generation are uncritical users of the internet and social media. Martin is also deeply involved with the internet and social media professionally.

Beginning with a fish-in-the-water metaphor, Martin illustrates our lack of awareness of our immediate and pervasive electronic environment. He asserts that the “social internet is brilliant and obscene” (2). The point of the book is to demonstrate that the water is toxic (3–4)—what purports to serve man ends up enslaving us (6).

The book divides into three sections: 1) “How We Got Here,” 2) “Five Ways the Social Internet Shapes Us,” 3) “Where Do We Go from Here?”

Part 1 traces the presence of the internet in our lives from its limited academic and military origins to its invasion of our homes and souls (13–18). The internet has always been social, but the social media, and the mobile media have vastly expanded electronic connections (16). “[T]he fear of missing out” and consequent “addiction” (35) make users so obsessed with what is going on online that off-line life fades into the background (36). What is insidious about this is that the media themselves are designed to promote addiction (38). What people assume are neutral tools are making tools of us. Martin also shows how social media create “virtual tribes” of like-minded people, not expanding our horizons as the early promoters claimed. This in turn undermines empathy (47), as one tribe develops intolerance for others.

Part 2 explores the ways that the social internet shapes us. In sum, we falsely believe that attention assigns value, and so

what is popular, or trending, must be important, thus we must pay attention (63). This phenomenon has great cash value for advertising and sales. But our identities as well as our privacy are at stake.

Social media also shape us by alluring us to pursue affirmation instead of truth (97). They amplify our sinful tendency to demonize people with whom we disagree. Martin warns of the lie that “people who disagree with me cause me harm” (113), and should thus be canceled, leaving little room for considering contrary ideas (114).

Part 3 provides tools “to more wisely engage the social internet” (147). The study of history, and our past heritage, gives perspective to the present and expands our view of other cultures’ ideas and people, helping us to understand alternative perspectives, thus encouraging empathy.

Martin counsels refraining from using the social internet as a digital soapbox. By not responding, we are quenching our natural sinful tendency to spout off—taking a kind of verbal sabbath. This requires humility. “Pride is integral to so much of the disfunction we find online” (175). Looking at the nature of the medium of the social network, Martin observes that “no algorithm is engineered to promote reconciliation and forgiveness. All algorithms are engineered to favor the spread of conflict and argumentation” (180).

Martin’s plea to establish accountability fails to drill down on the way that the internet alters social space and does an end run around traditional gatekeepers, invading households and hearts. He observes that “mental health statistics are growing more dis-

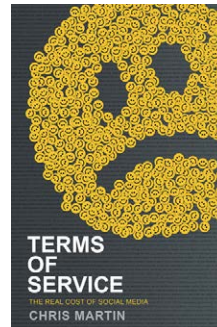
couraging as social media use is increasing” (185).

He concludes by recommending embodied friendship. “The social internet has cheapened friendship. . . . I think many of us have become so fused with our phones that we have forgotten the magic of real, embodied friendship” (192–193).

While Martin warns about several sins and recommends Christian virtues, his desire to reach a non-Christian audience blunts the vital connection between Christian virtues and Christ. His concluding section, “We Cannot Do It

Alone,” recommends wise human helpers, but never mentions our greatest helper, the Holy Spirit. Despite these weaknesses, his many excellent insights make the book worthwhile.

The internet is not just a technology, it is a philosophy and way of life. Romans 12:1–2 should lead us in the direction of leaving, or at least wisely navigating, this lake whose water is toxic and enslaving.



Positions Available

Senior Pastor: Cornerstone OPC in Houston, Texas, seeks a senior pastor with prior ministry experience and gifts in preaching, teaching, and leading God’s people in worship. He will also have a passion for both edification of believers and outreach to those who do not yet know the Lord. Inquiries can be made at 573-238-5607 or at ngordon@csopc.org.

Senior Pastor: Westminster OPC in Westminster, California, seeks a senior pastor with a zeal for evangelism and cross-cultural ministry in an area known as “Little Saigon”; who loves the Reformed faith; who preaches the whole counsel of God expositoryly; and who delights to lead reverent worship. We own a spacious facility that we share with a Christian school and a Vietnamese mission work with whom we want to grow in the Lord. Please contact Mike Rensink by email at mdrensink@gmail.com.

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