

NEW HORIZONS

≡ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ≡

7 Detained for Christ
// by a persecuted Christian

MAY 2023

10 The Suffering of
the Christian
// by Octavius Delfils



MINISTRY IN UKRAINE DURING WAR

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New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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

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On March 20, Westminster OPC in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, celebrated the fifty-two years of service of its treasurer, Mr. Paul McCann. He is a founding member of the congregation and, Lord willing, will celebrate his 100th birthday in June. The church thanks the Lord for Paul's faithful and joyful service to the congregation.



A LETTER TO THREE MISSIONARIES



EDITOR'S NOTE: Below is an edited portion of the letter that Douglas Clawson, General Secretary of the Committee on Foreign Missions, wrote to the missionaries whose articles appear in this issue: Heero E. C. Hacquebord in Ukraine, M. in Asia, and Octavius Delfils in Haiti.

Dear Brothers,

Let me remind you of my hope for the articles. Currently, we have one applicant for foreign missions, and that family would be serving in more of a diaconal role. There just aren't ministers (other than guys still in seminary) applying for foreign mission service, and we chiefly need men with pastoral experience at this juncture.

For the April *New Horizons*, I asked James Folkerts to write an article about doing ministry in Uganda after the traumatic carjacking he experienced, in which he thought he would be killed, and the memory of which he still lives and works with each day. I also needed the article to describe how the work in Karamoja will transition into the future, following the Folkerts leaving the field at the end of May. He gave me a fantastic article. It was everything I could have hoped for.

For the articles this month, the common theme is the hardship of

doing missionary work in the contexts of the suffering experienced by the church and the unchurched in the nations where you are working. Obviously, in each nation the church and the unchurched look at that hardship and suffering differently.

One of you is doing ministry amid war and people moving east to west and west to east.

Another is working with men who are ministering amid persecution and what, at times, seem to be draconian and senseless COVID restrictions.

Another is doing ministry in the midst of a nearly nonexistent governmental structure and collapsed infrastructure, in which there is no safety to go shopping, let alone attend church.

How do you encourage believers to keep their focus on Christ? How do you hold out the hope of eternal life and forgiveness to people who no longer have jobs; people whose homes and neighborhoods no longer have electricity and water, or worse, have been

destroyed; people who have to worry about the bullets of soldiers, roaming gangs, and the threats of sickness and disease? How does the church display the love, joy, and peace of Jesus Christ when people can no longer trust their neighbors?

I know that this is a big ask.

The church in North America thinks that it has "peace, peace," . . . when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14). Spiritually, it is surrounded by the same opposition and challenge that surrounds you and those with whom you work.

I hope that what you write will help those within whom the Spirit works to see that they need to minister as you are ministering—and that experienced men will say, "Here I am Lord, send me, to go wherever you want me to go and to do whatever you want me to do."

In our Lord,
Douglas Clawson

MINISTRY IN UKRAINE DURING WAR



HEERO E. C. HACQUEBORD // **The sun had not yet risen on February 24, 2022, when Anya’s voice pierced the air in our apartment: “Putin has attacked us!” My head was groggy from a bout with COVID, but the meaning of her words was unmistakable. Several minutes later, the air-raid sirens in our city wailed the**

incredible news for all to hear: Russia had launched an unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and there were missiles flying in the direction of L’viv. Military and civilian buildings around the country were bursting into flames. The big war had begun.

Vika lived through the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. At that time, she fled Russia’s rule, which is especially oppressive to Protestants, to live in Kharkiv in far eastern Ukraine. Having experienced a Russian invasion before, Vika—along with her husband, Vasyl—were prepared this time around. They awoke on the twenty-fourth from the sound of thundering explosions in their neighborhood on the eastern side of Kharkiv, a mere fifteen miles from the Russian border. Their bags were packed. Everyone in their church already had an evacuation plan. Within minutes, they left their apartment, packed their car, and drove off. They collected the three people assigned to travel with them and started the slow journey across the

country to L’viv. Kharkiv would never be the same, nor would Ukraine.

Those first, harrowing weeks brimmed with unanswered questions: Will Kyiv be taken? What about the south of Ukraine—Kherson, Mykolaiv, Odesa? What is happening in the east? Will L’viv become the new capital instead of Kyiv? Just how far will the Russian army go? People began to flee west by any means possible—cars, buses, trains. Some from the Kyiv area never made it, as Russian troops deliberately fired on convoys of evacuating families. Severe uncertainty and brutal attacks unleashed the largest humanitarian crisis in Europe since World War II. At least five million (out of forty million) Ukrainians left the country in the first few months of all-out war. Another eight million became internally displaced.

A Haven in L’viv

Members of Presbyterian churches around the country began to arrive in

L’viv even before the twenty-fourth. Even though some of our L’viv members escaped to safety in the EU, our Sunday attendance still more than doubled. Our church’s newly formed crisis committee scrambled to find housing for everyone. Over the first three months, almost two hundred people found a temporary place to stay in our two recently outfitted shelters and our church members’ homes. We were joining the rest of the city, usually one million strong, in taking care of the two hundred thousand people who had moved to L’viv.

Not everyone who contacted us for help was from other churches in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ukraine. Some were like “Olga”—a soft-spoken, middle-aged, single mother from the southern city of Mykolaiv, which had become the next target city in the Russian army’s southern axis of advance. One of our church members and his parents took Olga into their three-room apartment, along with two other men from Kyiv. When she first

came to one of our new dinner-and-Bible-study nights, it was clear that Olga felt very out of place in a Protestant church. Nonetheless, she soon warmed to the love and care that she received. She also listened with great attention to those explaining and discussing central truths of Scripture. Olga resembled a crumbling, parched patch of earth that thirstily soaked in the summer rain. What a tremendous pleasure to see her grow and blossom with new life! It was with heartfelt tears that she continued her journey after spending many weeks in our church. She could not thank us enough for all she had received for her body *and* her soul.

A few weeks after Olga departed, a young family of four arrived from the southern Kherson region. They had managed to escape their village after Russian soldiers had entered it. Their long journey somehow brought them to one of our shelters, where they were welcomed and loved for several months. During that time, they became an active part of our congregation, attending worship services, Bible studies, and children's events. The mother, "Ira," was overwhelmed with joy when our church presented their family with a Bible. Several months after moving to L'viv, their village was liberated from occupation, but it is still unsafe to move back because of regular Russian artillery strikes in the region. They hope to join our (EPCU) Kherson church whenever they are finally able to move back home.

Crates for Ukraine

Soon after the outbreak of the full-scale war, humanitarian aid began to arrive on our church's doorstep, sent by churches and organizations in Poland, Slovakia, Germany, Spain, the United States, and even Singapore. Our crisis committee began to make connections with drivers and volunteers across the country as we worked hard to send food staples, clothes, and first-aid kits as quickly as possible to Ukrainians along the front lines of the war. As the needs and the incoming aid both continued to grow, it was clear that we had to amplify

our diaconal efforts. And so Crates for Ukraine was born.

With churches in the United States taking responsibility for finding, buying, packing, and sending essential medical and personal hygiene items—many of which are by now unavailable or very difficult to find in Ukraine and even in the EU—our church has been able to focus its efforts on receiving, processing, and distributing the contents of hundreds of crates. This necessitated moving the humanitarian aid from our church building's basement to a warehouse located, providentially, right across the street. It has also given our growing church community—living in the relative safety of



The author with Ruslan, on-the-ground coordinator for Crates for Ukraine

L'viv—a tangible way to help people in those regions that suffer most from the brutality of this war.

After arriving in L'viv from their cross-country journey, Vika and Vasyl did not miss a beat in caring for others. For Vika, helping to provide physical aid to the neediest across the country was a way to deal with her own shock and pain. At first, she worked feverishly. Vika gave herself completely to organizing and assisting our aid distribution efforts in any way possible. She and Vasyl also helped to care for other shell-shocked members of their Kharkiv Presbyterian church.

As our humanitarian aid was forced to become increasingly organized, Vika began to share leadership in this area with one of our L'viv church members, Ruslan. At the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Ruslan was recovering from an operation on his foot. Were it not for that, he would have volunteered for the army right away. In God's planning, though, Ruslan's many gifts became essential to running our church's humanitarian aid hub. It provided him with the opportunity to be instrumental in the saving of many lives and to provide a beautiful witness to the love of Christ.

Opening Hearts Through Offering Help

By the end of last summer, our church had received and processed 1,315 crates. (Aid efforts this year have brought in hundreds more.) Since most Ukrainian men are not allowed to leave the country, a woman in our church quickly learned how to drive large vans, ferrying crates and navigating the tricky Polish and Ukrainian customs and passport controls. On Friday nights, at least twenty volunteers from our church (along with their acquaintances) gather in our warehouse to sort the contents of the crates. This aid is passed on to the eleven other Presbyterian churches in Ukraine. In addition, however, Ruslan and Vika have developed many crucial contacts throughout Ukraine, in particular along the front lines of the war. They have even managed to organize deliveries of essential aid to Ukrainians behind enemy lines. Each box sent out has two stickers—one with a Bible verse, the other with our church's name and website.

The small city of Melitopol' in southeastern Ukraine has been occupied by Russian forces since the first days of their full-scale invasion. One of the ladies who evacuated to L'viv comes from a small Presbyterian mission church in the southeastern city of Zaporizhzhia. She has a friend in that city who knows a volunteer who is experienced in crossing the Ukrainian and Russian lines in

order to travel to Melitopol' and other towns. In this roundabout way, Ruslan and Vika were able to organize a delivery of essential medicine. By the time the boxes finally reached Melitopol', nobody knew their origin. But the aid was greatly needed and much appreciated. The women who had received and distributed the medicine eventually found it impossible to stay in occupied Melitopol'. They were able to leave the city and make their way across military lines to the area under Ukrainian control—always a perilous journey. They brought only the most essential items with them, including gift boxes of chocolate somehow still being produced in Melitopol'. These were set aside for “Holy Trinity Reformed Church of L'viv,” whose stickers they had found on the boxes of aid. Ruslan was deeply touched to meet these fleeing women in L'viv and receive their heartfelt gifts.

Many others have expressed their sincere thanks as our church has built a reputation for distributing essential aid. Several soldiers have relayed accounts of our excellent first-aid kits saving their lives. (Well over one thousand of these kits have been distributed so far.) One new field hospital in a war-torn region had a large portion of their supplies provided through Crates for Ukraine. Our boxes have become crucial to some of the foremost volunteers and organizations distributing aid along the war's front lines. As a result, says Ruslan, he has witnessed a marked change in some volunteers' attitudes toward our church and the Christian faith. One well-known volunteer from Kharkiv—who worked as a movie director before the war—was cold and skeptical toward Christianity when we first began to cooperate with her. Not anymore. Another volunteer—until last year a sound engineer in the movie business—has evidenced a similar change of heart. On a recent trip to L'viv, he made a point of finding and stopping by our church.

Before the war, the YouTube live broadcasts of our Sunday services averaged around fifty views. Now numbers are in the hundreds. We continue to



(top) Doug, Ruslan, Olena, Vika, and Virginia, all members of the L'viv team helping with Crates for Ukraine; (bottom) the author with his wife, Anya, and others after church on Sunday

pray that God will use this evil war to give many people faith in Christ and to “till the ground” for many more church plants all over Ukraine.

Vika's mom was never excited about her daughter's faith. But the war has given Vika new opportunities to make the love of Christ real to her mother. When Kherson was still occupied, Ruslan and Vika found a way to get much-needed medicine to her family behind enemy lines. Soon after Kherson was liberated, our church organized a small team to travel there—joining forces with the pastor of our EPCU church in Mykolaiv, near Kherson. They distributed carloads full of aid to bone-weary civilians, including remaining members of our Kherson church. They also evacuated Vika's mom and grandmother, who were later joined by Vika's cousin. In L'viv, we used available funds to provide housing for Vika's relatives. Many Christians contributed funds to pay for

Vika's mom's double knee replacement surgery. People from our church helped by providing meals during her recovery. All of this has completely changed her attitude toward Christ and his church, through which she has experienced his love. She never misses a Sunday service and shows heartfelt hospitality, regularly inviting church members over for hearty, southern-Ukrainian meals.

The despairing darkness of war sharply offsets the loving light of Christ. Through his church, Jesus's hands are caring for thousands of destitute people. The message of purpose and hope is going forth and filling empty souls. Through the cooperation of many across the world, God is using this bloody war—the utter tragedy, terror, and tears—to fortify and build his church in Ukraine and beyond. □

The author is an OP missionary in L'viv, Ukraine.

DETAINED FOR CHRIST

EDITOR'S NOTE: A persecuted Christian shares her true story from a country where Christians are suffering for Christ, told through Orthodox Presbyterian missionary M.

It was a cool Sunday evening in December in the large East Asian city where my husband and I lived. We had just returned from evening worship when suddenly the power went out. Several police officers rushed in, overpowering us. They yelled, "Don't move!"

"Who are you? What do you want?" we responded.

They waved a piece of paper at us that said, "Notice of Suspected Illegal Business." Recently the government has been charging church workers with running illegal businesses. Apparently, this is done to avoid the appearance of charging people with their true "crime": worshiping in accordance with their consciences rather than in a church that is approved by the state and that capitulates to its demands. I was quickly separated from my husband, taken to the local public security bureau, and interrogated in handcuffs all night. The interrogation stopped around 6:30 a.m. the next morning. I started singing hymns softly, and the police officer sitting next to me tapped his foot.

Around 8:00 a.m., two policewomen brought the wife of the senior pastor of my church into the station.

"When were you brought in?" she asked. "At eight o'clock last night," I said. I didn't see her again. I found out later that both she and her husband had been charged with subversion of the state; he was subsequently convicted and sentenced to nine years in prison, and she remains to this day under house arrest, completely shut off from the outside world. The same night I was arrested, hundreds of people from the church had been detained by the police. Most were released within twenty-four hours, but a number were held longer.

I was then taken to a detention center. The rules were made clear: no talking about my faith, no talking about my case or family situation. Since I had not slept all night during the interrogation, I was extremely tired, and yet my heart was joyful. When the guards brought me to my cell and I saw the other inmates standing at attention, I said, "I am very glad to meet you!" They all stared at me blankly.

A Conversion

A few days later, a state security officer and two regular police officers began to question me regarding my in-

volvement with the local seminary library bookstore, which was at the heart of the charge against me of running an illegal business. They questioned me many times over the next month and brought in ledgers and other documents from the seminary library bookstore with my signatures on them. Although these documents were sufficient to demonstrate my involvement, they were never able to definitively prove that I was really the one in charge of the bookstore.

Lacking such proof, after thirty-seven days of incarceration, they gave up asking me about my involvement with the bookstore and started to push me in regard to my faith. A police officer showed me video clips of my pastor's testimony and preaching—to my great spiritual encouragement, since I had no Bible or other Christian literature in prison. He asked me to write a letter expressing regret for having joined my church. The letter was supposed to state that my church was an illegal organization and a cult. He also asked me to testify against my pastor for inciting subversion of state power.

I said, "The church I attend is

the church of Jesus Christ, grounded on orthodox foundations. People can only determine if this church is a cult or a pseudo-Christian heretical group based on biblical doctrine; man's own standards and law cannot determine this. My pastor preaches biblical truth in the church, not subversion of state power."

He replied, "Your pastor has said in sermons that the leaders of our nation are unbelievers under God's wrath and destined for hell. Although your pastor preached these words in church, if there are unbelievers who come to hear them, they will find them inflammatory. They will not understand them from a biblical perspective. They will think negatively of our national leaders and will want to disturb society."

"Whether people believe in the Lord or not," I said, "as long as they enter the door of the church, they should know that the truth of the Bible is spoken here and nothing else. What my pastor was preaching is the truth of the Bible. If someone really subverts the state, thinking it to be the message delivered by my pastor, it is the person who broke the law who should be arrested, not my pastor."

Unknown to me, the day after my arrest, my husband, who was not an object of the attack on the church, since he was not even a believer, came to the police station to bring my Bible and other personal items. The police detained and interrogated him: "Are you a Christian? What do you think of the pastor of your wife's church? Do you believe what he preaches?"

"Well, I don't know," my husband replied. "My wife brought me to church sometimes, but I didn't pay much attention to the preaching." Eventually, he was let go, but, provoked by the persecution against my church and its pastor, he started listening to online recordings of the pastor's sermons. Over the next few weeks, the Lord used them to bring him to faith in Christ.

Motivated by his newfound faith, he began helping other Christians in the local church whose spouses were



imprisoned and posted an online positive response to a sermon. The police brought him in again for questioning, and this time when they asked him if he was a Christian, he replied, "Yes, I am a Christian, and I believe the pastor of our church is preaching the truth of the gospel!" He was jailed for a month and then placed under house arrest for six months. First he went to jail without Christ, but this time he went to jail with and for Christ.

Ongoing Interrogation

My interrogations continued for months. The guards reminded me that if I continued not to cooperate with my case manager, I would have to suffer.

I was forced to scrub washbasins and buckets, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. There were more than thirty washbasins and a dozen buckets. Every time I finished scrubbing, the guards would taunt me by throwing a few hairs in the basins and buckets, saying I had done a poor job, and then require me to clean them all again. Six female police officers took me to the hospital because the prison doctor thought that there was something tumorous in my uterus. I felt very worried. They put a black hood over my head, heavy shackles on my feet, and handcuffs connected at the waist so that I could not straighten up. After the examination in the hospital, a state

security officer said to me, "The doctor said there is no problem with your uterus, but there are three cysts on your liver. You have to reject the church and your pastor."

My health continued to decline, and now a different group of police interrogated me. One told me viciously, "You are just an insignificant follower, a person who is nothing and simply runs after others. Your faith is so powerful, is it? I'll make sure you go to jail and give up your faith." I replied, "I won't!" He said, "You will! You will when I lock you up for a few years!" I replied, "I won't!" This went back and forth a dozen times. Then he finally stopped asking questions.

After a particularly severe interrogation, a policeman interceded for me. He apologized to me, saying that he himself had spoken harshly to me during an earlier interrogation because he had quarreled with his wife that morning and because he had been influenced by the state security. They wanted him to say that "this group of Christians" was disturbing the public peace and aiming to subvert the state. He said that at first he believed it, but after actually getting to know some of us Christians, he found out that we are not at all as we had been described. Both high-ranking and low-ranking leaders in the prison had great regard for me and sensed that I was a truly devout Christian, he said.

In early April, yet another set of people interrogated me. During the interrogation, I learned about the situation of other believers who had been arrested. I imagined many of them were in more difficult circumstances than I, and every time I prayed for them, I burst into tears. But I never wanted to compromise. Rather, I was strengthened in my faith and beliefs knowing that they were enduring, too.

A new officer genuinely wanted to help me get out of prison and assisted me in crafting a statement that I could sign without compromise and that would at the same time satisfy the prison authorities. I insisted, though, that my statement include a clear declaration that I did not believe that my church or its pastor taught unbiblical doctrine. The officer said the reason the top leaders refused to let me go was that I kept mentioning the Bible. I replied, "I have had my faith for more than ten years. Just like your eyeglasses, which you have to look through to see matters clearly, I have to think and act through my faith and the Bible. From the day I believed in the Lord, it's like it's my DNA. I was made a new creation, and that cannot be changed."

The officer advised me not to be so rigid. He asked if I could refrain from using the single word, "Bible." I agreed to exchange "Bible" for the phrase, "the whole truth and doctrine of Christianity." The officer took the statement I signed, which included affirmations that I did not oppose the rule of the government and that I would not attend a church that "teaches against the whole truth and doctrine of Christianity or the law of the state," and brought it to other officials for their approval. The local police accepted it, but the national security officers rejected it, because it did not include statements explicitly condemning my church. I, therefore, was not released at that time.

The Shadow of Death

By early June, I was physically in bad shape. I had no strength. I could not walk steadily; I was dizzy and fre-

quently fell; I was very thin. My joints and my hands began to swell and hurt, and the head of the prison told me that it was rheumatoid arthritis. My feet were swollen, and my hair had turned gray. My health had not been robust when I entered prison, and my poor treatment and poor nutrition did not improve it. For a week, I thought much about martyrdom. The prison hospital had given me a blood test a week earlier but delayed telling me the whole result of the test, and so I began to think I might die soon. But when I started thinking about martyrdom, I had a

*"I was free
even in
prison . . .
no matter
how much
they yelled."*

special peace in my heart. First, my husband had already become a believer in the Lord, and my adult daughter in America, also a Christian, was proud of my suffering for the Lord. So, I had no worries, and I would always have a chance to see them again in heaven. Second, I thought about the attributes of God, that God is most true, most good, and most beautiful. That which is most true is the eternal nature of God. I had already been converted, and my life was already in the Lord. I had eternal life, and it was a very beautiful thing to go to be with God a bit earlier. When I thought of this, I had a special peace.

In June, the police printed out the statement I had made before and asked me to read it while being recorded on video. They still hoped I could change

the statement to make it more agreeable to the other officials. I said, "I have not changed from the beginning to the end, and I will not change now." Every time I went to be interrogated, my hands were cuffed behind my back, and I had to walk a long, eerie way, which made me appreciate the Lord Jesus's walk to Calvary. I kept praying for the Lord's guidance and wisdom on how to answer each time. Every time I came back from an interrogation, I felt like I had won another battle. I am thankful for the pastoral care I had received from the pulpit of the church and the spiritual equipping and feeding God gave me in the seminary where I sometimes attended classes. All that instruction strengthened me. And by God's grace, I endured six months in prison and was finally released.

The Care of the Shepherd

Every Sunday while I was imprisoned, I thought about the Bible, meditated on it book by book, sang in my heart, and worshiped God. This was my strength. One Monday, someone complained to the prison guard about my crying. He asked me why I cried, and I said that yesterday was Sunday, and Sunday was for worshiping God with his people but that I was separated from them in prison.

Later, when the inmates in my cell bullied me, God caused me to meditate on the creation of mankind in Genesis and to think how people need love. So, I did not hate these inmates whom God had created. I was free even in prison, and no matter how much they yelled at me, by God's strength, my body language and verbal responses showed love, which softened their hearts.

I meditated most often on Psalm 23: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." I know that the Lord is in charge of my daily walk and leads me to experience his shepherd-like care in every big and small thing.

Thank you, Lord! You manifested your power through a humble and weak vessel like me! To you be all the glory and praise! ☐

THE SUFFERING OF THE CHRISTIAN

// OCTAVIUS DELFILS



The United Nations high commissioner in February called the gang violence in Haiti a "living nightmare."

Christians in Haiti live in an environment of great suffering. The country suffered under the Duvalier dictatorship for twenty-nine years. Every pastor had to be careful not to make the slightest reference to the regime's abuses in the illustrations and applications of his sermons. The slightest deviation led to arrest, beating, imprisonment, and even exile or death. The church members were persecuted also.

After the fall of the regime, the country hoped for an improvement in the transition to democracy. However, over the last few decades, the situation has deteriorated to the point that many Haitians would prefer to live under a dictatorship than endure the current situation. The country is now in total chaos. We are witnessing the collapse of all state institutions. It seems as if the government no longer exists. Armed gangs control almost all the roads. Movement from one city to another or from one region to another is becoming very difficult, almost impossible. In the cities, such as Port-au-Prince, for example, almost every major area is controlled by gangs who kidnap for ransom, loot people's homes, rape, and kill. A member of our church in Port-au-Prince was kidnapped at her work and spent almost a week in the hands of her captors. The ransom they required with great threats exceeded the income that a person and his family could accumulate during their entire life. A kidnapping usually leads to the ruin of an entire family.

Health, Wealth, and Prosperity?

A great difficulty facing the true preaching of the gospel in Haiti today, especially in the cities, is no longer voodoo or the survival of ancestral traditions that are still strong in the culture, but the dangerous preaching of the gospel of prosperity. Many churches, influenced by the unbiblical preaching of the prosperity gospel, teach their members that as Christians they are sons and daughters of the great King and therefore

should be free from poverty, sickness, trial, and suffering.

It is understandable that such a message in a poor country like Haiti draws crowds. Such churches are filled with people, not in search of the gospel truth, but in search of physical deliverance. The preaching of the true gospel becomes difficult in an environment where there is such great suffering for reasons of bad governance, personal irresponsibility for several generations, and disobedience to God's Word by refusing to be good stewards of God's creation. People do not want to see the widespread consequences of sin as the cause of suffering. They instead think that if someone suffers, the cause falls on him alone because of his lack of faith, or on Satan who blocks his blessing.

The Apostle Paul on Suffering

Such a view of the Christian runs counter to what Paul teaches in his letter to the Romans. In chapter 8, Paul writes that we are led by the Spirit of God who bears witness to our spirit that we are children of God. We have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" (Rom. 8:14–16). The apostle goes on to say, "And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him" (v. 17). As children of God, we are convinced of the truth and certainty of God's promises to us. Our inheritance is secure, since we are heirs of an unchanging God. We are joint heirs with Christ who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Yet Paul asserts that our status as heirs comes with sufferings.

Our salvation is by grace; our union with Christ is by grace; our inheritance in Christ is by grace. However, once we are children of God, suffering does not disappear from our lives. We are children of God, we have a living hope in glory where there will be no mourning, nor crying, nor pain, but the road to that glorious state is littered with sufferings. This is the general pattern of New Testament teaching. Suffering precedes glory.

Paul is writing to the Christians in Rome who were living under the rule of Nero, the emperor of Rome who imprisoned, tortured, exiled, and slaughtered Christians. However, Paul announces to them the beautiful assurance that they have. They have suffered bitterly! Therefore, it is encouraging that Paul teaches them that the assurance of their salvation is true, but the promise of full possession of their inheritance comes through suffering. Even more, he tells them that the acceptance of suffering with joy for the name of Christ is a sign that they are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

Total Chaos

This teaching of the apostle is also an encouragement to the Christians of Haiti. Violence in Port-au-Prince targets everyone. However, since last year, the criminals seem to have targeted the churches more specifically. It seems that they are counting on the solidarity of Christians to collect the large sums of money that they ask for as ransoms. Several pastors have been kidnapped from inside their churches. This week, one was killed in front of his church because he tried to resist the gangs. Last year, a deacon was killed on the steps of his church on his way to Sunday morning service because he was trying to defend his wife who was about to be kidnapped. Despite his death, they left with the woman, leaving her husband's body on the road. Many church members have been kidnapped in recent months, and thousands of people have fled their homes. We have members of our church who have fled their neighborhoods to stay with friends or other church members without knowing when they will be able to return. Most often, these homes are looted while the owners are away. We are living in chaos. The suffering is real and hard.

What are we to do in the midst of such terrible suffering? Many have left the country. They have left by the tens of thousands to the Dominican Republic, Turks and Caicos Islands, Bahamas, North America, Brazil, Chile, Turkey, and other countries. However, not all can leave. Those who remain and those waiting to leave need to hear the message of hope that only the gospel can give, the only true hope in the face of sufferings. The Apostle Peter exhorted the Christians scattered throughout the Roman Empire because of persecution:

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. (1 Pet. 4:12–13)

Christ's Suffering

This is the model that we see in Jesus; this is the model we are called to follow. We are to look to Jesus, "the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). Suffering is thus a school of preparation as we wait for glory. It is in this



The author with his wife, Marie

school that we are placed during our Christian life. Suffering, persecution, and tribulation prepare us in our Christian life for glory. Since we are united with Christ, the man of sorrows acquainted with grief, since we have the hope of being united with him in glory, we are now united with him in suffering. Paul says: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (Col. 1:24).

Therefore, we can say with Paul, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18). We do not endure trials by resignation but by comparing the present time with the time to come, with the glory to be revealed. Moreover, we know that the time of kidnappings, of stress, of sufferings of all kinds will pass, and the time of glory will be inaugurated at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. "He will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4). The unbeliever does not have this hope. That is why he is troubled by the difficulties of the present time. He does not know where he is going. The Christian knows that he is moving from a world of suffering to a world of glory. We are "waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

That is why the church continues to gather in the midst of this chaos and despite these times of great threats. The church members continue to come to church unless the roads are blocked or unless armed bands occupy the streets. They know that the living hope we have does not deceive. The trumpet will sound, and the Lord will return. Death will have no more power; suffering will have no more power. The wicked who do not like this glorious doctrine of the resurrection and the coming of Christ will be cast into hell. And the children of God will be in glory forever. That is our hope in the midst of sufferings.

The author is an associate missionary in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

2023 OPC SUMMER CAMPS AND CONFERENCES



At the 2022 Deerwander Bible Conference

CALIFORNIA—BACKPACKING ADVENTURE
(Presbytery of Southern California)
High Sierra Mountains
Ages 15–25, June 17–21
Contact Thomas Jennings at thomas.jennings91@gmail.com

CALIFORNIA—BLUE RIDGE BIBLE CONFERENCE
(Presbytery of Southern California)
PineCrest Conference Center, Twin Peaks, CA
Family/all ages, June 19–23
www.brbcfamilycamp.org

CALIFORNIA—SIERRA CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE
(OP churches in Northern California)
Sierra Christian Conference Association, Groveland, CA
Memorial Weekend Family Camp, May 26–29
For information, contact Brad DeBoer at 209-604-2940 or bradandjanetdeboer@yahoo.com

CALIFORNIA—SUMMER BIBLE CAMP
(Presbytery of Northern California and Nevada)



At the 2022 French Creek Bible Conference

Redwood Christian Park, Boulder Creek, CA
Family/all ages, June 19–23
www.pncnopc.org/presbytery-summer-bible-camp

FLORIDA—REFORMED YOUTH CONFERENCE
(Presbytery of the South)
RYC High/Middle School Youth Camp, June 19–24
Youth entering 6th grade (or age 11 by August 31) through completing 12th grade
Lakewood Retreat Center, Brooksville, FL
www.reformedyouthconference.com

MAINE-NEW HAMPSHIRE—DEERWANDER BIBLE CONFERENCE
(Presbytery of New York and New England)
Junior High (entering 6th–8th grades), August 8–12
Camp Berea, Lyman, ME
Senior High (entering 9th–12th grades), August 12–19
Chop Point Camp, Woolwich, ME
www.deerwander.org

NORTH CAROLINA—FAMILY CAMP
(Presbytery of the Southeast)
Camp Caraway, Sophia, NC
Family/all ages, July 3–7
www.psefamilycamp.org

OHIO—YOUTH CAMP
(Presbytery of Ohio)
Slippery Rock Baptist Camp, Slippery Rock, PA
Junior Camp (ages 9–12), June 19–24
Senior Camp (grades 7–12), June 19–24
www.pohopc.org/youth

OREGON—FAMILY CAMP
(First OPC, Portland, OR)
Camp Morrow, Wamic, OR
Family/all ages, August 16–19
For information, contact office@firstopcportland.org or call



At the 2022 Presbytery of Ohio Youth Camp

503-253-0695

www.firstopcportland.org/camp

PENNSYLVANIA—FRENCH CREEK BIBLE CONFERENCE
(OPC affiliated)

French Creek State Park, Elverson, PA

Grades 4–6, July 31–August 5

Grades 7–8, July 24–31

Grades 9–10, July 17–24

Grades 11–12, July 10–17

Post-High, July 7–9

Labor Day Family Conference, September 1–4

www.frenchcreek.org

SOUTH DAKOTA—OPC-PCA BIBLE CAMP
(Presbytery of the Dakotas)

Camp Judson, Keystone, SD

Grades 4–12 (completed), June 24–30

www.opc-pca-biblecamp.com

VIRGINIA—MACHEN RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER

(Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic)

Machen Retreat and Conference Center, McDowell, VA

Science Camp (ages 10–17), July 10–15

Stronghold Camp (grades 5–12), July 31–August 5

Family/Labor Day Conference (all ages), September 1–4

www.machen.org

WISCONSIN—CAMP WESTMINSTER
(Presbytery of Wisconsin & Minnesota and Presbytery of the Midwest)

Green Lake Conference Center, Green Lake, WI

All members and friends, all ages, July 17–21

For information, contact nstrom@oostburgopc.org

www.pmwopc.org/camp-westminster/

OTHER RETREATS

Retreats for women, men, singles, and youth are sponsored by presbyteries and local congregations and are held at various times during the year—not just in the summer! Check out the listing at www.opc.org/cce/camps.html.

2023 MTIOPC Summer Course: Disability and the Church

Who is the MTIOPC instructor?

The Rev. Stephen J. Tracey, pastor of Lakeview OPC in Rockport, Maine, serves as the instructor.

When does this MTIOPC course begin?

Online classes begin on May 22, 2023.

Where will the mandatory in-person intensive training sessions be held?

The in-person intensive training sessions for Disability and the Church will be held at Mission OPC in St. Paul, Minnesota, July 24–27.

Who can attend?

Admission is open to OPC ministers, ruling elders, licentiates, and men under care. It is also open to members of the OPC who serve in the Christian education or Sunday school ministries in their local congregation. A non-ordained member who wishes to participate needs to be recommended by his or her session in a written letter sent to MTIOPC Director, Danny Olinger (danny.olinger@opc.org).

How much does it cost?

All students must pay a \$50 registration fee, which is fully refundable upon successful completion of the course. To help defray the cost of travel to intensive training, travel scholarships of up to \$350 are available to OPC ministers, licentiates, and men under care. If necessary, an additional \$100 in travel reimbursement is available if the student's session or presbytery matches that amount.

Where do I apply?

Applications are available at OPC.org. Go to Worldwide Outreach, then Christian Education, then Ministerial Training. Click on MTIOPC. Please contact MTIOPC coordinator Judy Alexander at alexander.1@opc.org with any questions.

When in the deadline?

The deadline is May 19, 2023.



Instructor Stephen Tracey, front, with participants in the summer 2021 MTIOPC

SERVING IN A CITY OF EASE

// ANDREW R. WANN



Covenant Presbyterian Church of the Low Country's location in Bluffton, SC

Though you may have never heard of it, Bluffton, South Carolina, is a beautiful place to live. Not too long ago, as many of the locals often reflect, there was hardly anything or anybody here. In recent years, however, it has seen tremendous growth as people flock to it from all over the United States—since 2010, the population has roughly tripled, according to [realtrends.com](https://www.realtrends.com).

A large portion of the population is comprised of aging couples coming to live out the remainder of their days in ease—golfing on the sunny greens, walking along the sandy beaches of Hilton Head, or relaxing as palm trees and Spanish moss sway in the breeze.

Another large segment of the population is comprised of families who moved here for a more enjoyable climate, whether that be political or meteorological. In short, in Bluff-

ton, there is a desire to live a good life in a comfortable place.

With this influx of people, there is much competition among businesses and shops to make sales, among resorts and hotels to attract guests, and among builders to sell houses. “Come live here, we have these amenities to offer!” “Buy a home in *this* community, where you can live life with others just like you!” “Stay in *this* resort, where we can cater to your every desire!”

Certainly, we understand the desire to live and vacation in a place we enjoy and like—and, by the way, please come visit! However, there is a danger when those in the church begin to think this way. “Come visit our church—we have all of these perks to offer!” “Come join us here, where whatever you like is our priority!” These strategies are not unique to churches in Bluffton, of course, but are perhaps especially ingrained here.

There are many professing Christians who live in Bluffton, but many seem to be floundering in a sea of churches—nondenominational, Methodist, Lutheran. There is an air of questioning, “Whose plan should we follow? Whose sales pitch do we like the most?” Many desire to know how they should live in this world.

An OP Church in Bluffton

Surrounded by a culture that loves ease, that delights to be served rather than to serve, Covenant Presbyterian Church of the Low Country is seeking to worship and serve God faithfully by his grace. The answer to “Whose plan should we follow?” is not to be found in this or that manmade strategy, but in the revelation of God given to his people—that is, in the Scriptures. We offer a straightforward answer: We follow Christ. His plan is our plan. His Word is our light.

Under the ministry of Dr. Ron Gleason for its first few years, the group then welcomed me as the organizing pastor in May 2022. Here in the Low Country of South Carolina, God has called together a group of believers who desire to



In a culture that loves ease, Covenant Presbyterian seeks to offer the means of grace

love and serve the Lord in gratefulness for his love toward them.

God desires a simple obedience to his Word, and we look to him to bring the increase. We have no new or innovative strategies, and our ministries are simple—the preaching of the Word, prayer, and the sacraments. We look to Christ and trust the Spirit to use his Word to convert sinners, build up the saints, and exalt Christ in the Low Country.

God uses the weak things of the world to shame the wise (1 Cor. 1:27). When the world looks into one of our services, it may despise the simplicity. But by faith, we know better. We have joy, knowing that our Father is pleased when we come to him by his Son, in the power of his Spirit.

The world may raise eyebrows at our rented building between an Italian restaurant and an auto store, but, by faith, we come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22). We believe that we meet not only with other like-minded believers but also with an innumerable company of angels and the saints who have gone before us. We meet with the living God. His pleasure is our delight. We die to sin, that we may live to Christ.

Not many visit or move to the Bluffton area thinking about the brevity of life. Temporal comforts, rather than eternal realities, fill the minds and hearts of its residents. Yet God's Word tells us, "it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Walking examples of this parable that Jesus told abound in the Low Country:

"And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'" But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. (Luke 12:19–21)

Covenant Presbyterian Church of the Low Country hopes to awaken sleeping souls and call the dead to life.

Thanksgiving and Prayers

By God's grace, we are learning to dwell in unity with one another, that the world may know that we are Christ's. We are a small body, but we endeavor to grow together in our love and joyful service.

We give thanks for the growth we have seen since this work began, in numbers and maturity. We also give thanks to the Lord for bringing my family and me here, so that I might serve as pastor. It was just over a year ago that the



After worship at Covenant Presbyterian

Lord provided a new location for the congregation to meet for worship, which has been a great blessing to us. We have also been blessed to begin using the new *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* this past year.

We meet together for worship both morning and evening on the Lord's Day, as well as gathering for Sunday school in the morning. In the past year we have also begun a midweek prayer meeting.

Please pray:

- that the Lord will continue to add to our number,
- that the body would continue to grow in grace and godliness,
- for God's provision of local faithful elders and deacons,
- for our financial needs, and
- that we may reach the lost with the gospel.

Come visit! While we are not to be earthly minded and concerned only with temporal things, those in Christ are able to rightly receive every good and perfect gift as coming down from the Father of lights (James 1:17). If you are ever in need of a vacation and the beach is your desire, Hilton Head Island is just across the bridge. Come refresh your bodies during the week and join us on the Lord's Day to refresh your souls as well. And if you have friends or family that may have recently moved here and are looking for a Reformed church, please send them our way!

The author is church planter of Covenant Presbyterian Church of the Low Country in Bluffton, South Carolina.

Home Missions Today

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



THE WORK OF PREPARING FOR REST

// DARREN S. THOLE



Imagine being diagnosed with an illness that is stress-related. You may find yourself stressed out over the need to eliminate stress!

With a similar irony, sabbaticals require work. A sabbatical is a period of rest that ministers typically need to continue in their callings. At one point Jesus told his apostles, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.’ For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat” (Mark 6:31). Such rest doesn’t just happen and, if anything, seems to be the first thing to be pushed aside when schedules get busy. A well-developed sabbatical that is a blessing to a minister, as well as to the congregation and session he serves, requires deliberate and careful planning.

The three parties involved in sabbatical planning are the minister, session, and congregation. The three main parts of a successful sabbatical that require planning are the nature of the sabbatical desired, the needs of the congregation, and finances.

The Nature of the Sabbatical Desired

The minister will be largely responsible for assessing what kind of rest he desires. One minister may yearn for a break from regular pastoral duties in order to give his attention to continuing education or a writing project. Another minister may long for a spiritually enriching time reading the Bible and other edifying books and praying. Some ministers will feel so beaten down by their pastoral responsibilities that they need a substantial amount of time to catch their breath and get the ground back under their feet. Some ministers need permission to unwind with no particular schedule in view. Your pastor may be struggling to find the time to think about and plan a sabbatical. The session may need to come alongside him, giving practical help and encouragement.

The Needs of the Congregation

In planning a sabbatical, the needs of the congregation must not be overlooked. It is important that the ministry of the Word and sacraments continue unabated, so pulpit supply will need to be scheduled. (Your Committee on Ministerial Care has a growing list of OPC pastors available to fill in for sabbaticals.) Naturally, extra work will need to be shouldered by the ruling elders and deacons. Who will do the bulletin, teach Sunday school, lead Bible studies, return church calls and emails, visit sick church members, counsel the wandering, moderate session meetings, etc? The fill-in minister may be able and willing to do some of these things, but such matters will need to be arranged ahead of time. The goal should be for the vital ministries of the church to continue.

Finances

A significant part of organizing a sabbatical is financial. How much compensation will the fill-in minister need for ministerial work and housing? Meanwhile, the minister on a sabbatical continues to get his full salary and benefits. Perhaps his sabbatical would best be accomplished at a location that requires travel and housing costs. The CMC has begun to compile a list of places a minister might stay for little or no cost. There are also sabbatical grants available from a number of sources, including the CMC. See www.opccmc.org for a sabbatical grant application. Some churches have wisely set aside money in their church budget, with the goal to give their minister a three-month sabbatical every five years.

Sabbaticals take planning, and planning is work. But the rest that comes from such work is worthwhile. The result, if done well, is a well-rested minister who has renewed energy to continue the work of ministry. This benefits the entire church.

The author is an OP pastor and member of the Committee on Ministerial Care.

MAY



Leah Hopp (day 4)

1 Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **DOUGLAS CLAWSON** returning from Uganda. / **CHRISTOPHER & SARA DREW**, Grand Forks, ND. Pray the Lord raises up officers for Faith OPC.

2 **PAUL & SARAH MOURREALE**, West Plains, MO. Pray for the conversion of souls through ministry of Covenant Reformed. / Yearlong intern **JOHN (ERIN) NYMANN** at Reformation Presbyterian in Virginia Beach, VA.

3 Pray for associate missionaries **JAMES & ESTHER FOLKERTS**, Nakaale, Uganda, and family returning to Canada in May. / Pray for stated clerk **HANK BELFIELD** and others preparing for the 89th General Assembly, June 7-13.

4 Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**. / Pray for associate missionary **LEAH HOPP**, Nakaale, Uganda, doing health research in Karamoja. / Director **JOHN FIKKERT**, Committee on Ministerial Care.

5 Pray for **LACY (DEBBIE) ANDREWS**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast. / Yearlong intern **SAMUELIS (MILDA) LUKOŠIUS** at Covenant Presbyterian in Barre, VT.

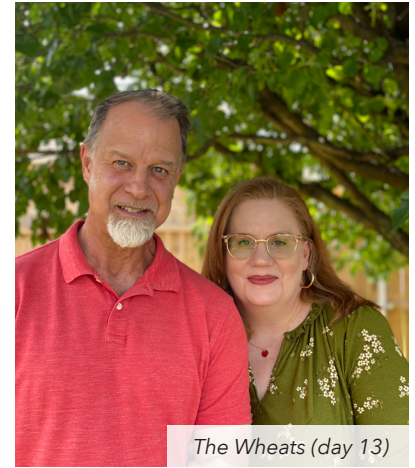
6 Associate missionaries **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for mission members saying goodbye to the Folkerts. / **PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED COMMISSION ON CHAPLAINS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL**.

7 **CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray the Lord provides another missionary evangelist for Uganda. / **JEREMY & GWEN BAKER**, Yuma, AZ. Pray for more families who stay in Yuma year-round to join the fellowship of Yuma OPC.

8 **MILLER & STEPHANIE ANSELL**, Waco, TX. Pray for Trinity's outreach and evangelism efforts. / Committee on Ministerial Care. Pray for **ANNEKE FESKO**, care coordinator for ministers' wives. / Office manager **ANNELISA STUDLEY**.

9 Tentmaking missionary **JOANNA GROVE**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for spiritual growth for Karimjong church and ministry team. / Yearlong intern **COREY (ANDREA) PAIGE** at South Austin Presbyterian in Austin, TX.

10 Pray for **CHARLES (MARGARET) BIGGS**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic. / OPC Short-Term Missions asks prayer for those participating in the URCNA's **CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONS TRAINING** program in Mexico this month.



The Wheats (day 13)

11 **MICAH & EILEEN BICKFORD**, Farmington, ME. Pray Grace Reformed grows in number. / Tentmaking missionary **TINA DEJONG**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for rain for crops.

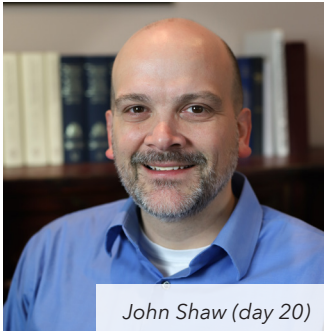
12 **BEN & HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti. Pray the Lord gives Ben wisdom while encouraging saints in Haiti in preaching and teaching. / Pray for **GREAT COMMISSION PUBLICATIONS**, a joint ministry of the OPC and PCA.

13 Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Pray for safety for saints attending church services. / **MARK & LORIE WHEAT**, Sugar Land, TX. Pray the Lord sends visitors to Good Shepherd OPC.

14 **JOHN & KATIE TERRELL**, Moline, MI. Pray the Lord brings in his harvest. / Yearlong interns **DOMINIC (MARTHA) SILLA** at Living Hope OPC in Allentown, PA, and **ZACHARY JOHNSON** at Immanuel OPC in Bellmawr, NJ.

15 **BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for plans for a Reformed online learning program geared for believers in Quebec. / **ANDREW MOODY**, OPC.org technical assistant.

MAY



John Shaw (day 20)

16 Pray for **CHARLENE TIPTON**, accounts manager. / Pray for Christian Education general secretary **DANNY OLINGER** as he directs **MTIOPC**, with Intensive Training beginning today at First OPC, South Holland, IL.

17 **JOHN PAUL & CORINNE HOLLOWAY**, Manassas, VA. Pray Acacia Reformed grows in evangelism. / Pray for **RETIRED MISSIONARIES** Cal & Edie Cummings, Brian & Dorothy Wingard, Greet Rietkerk, and Young & Mary Lou Son.

18 **MR. & MRS. M.**, Asia. Pray for Mr. M.'s Bible studies in the US. / Yearlong interns **CHRISTIAN (HANNA) REPP** at Harvest OPC in San Marcos, CA, and **RICHY (NEVA) BRASHER** at Escondido OPC in Escondido, CA.

19 **MR. AND MRS. F.**, Asia. Pray for the covenant children of the Reformed churches to grow up professing the faith as their own. / **CHRIS BYRD**, Westfield, NJ. Pray God would awaken those living near Grace OPC to seek God.

20 Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**. / **COMMITTEE ON DIACONAL MINISTRIES** requests prayer for deacons as they encourage service in local churches. / Pray for **JAMIE DEAN**, communications coordinator.

21 **STEPHEN & CATALINA PAYSON**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for efforts for connections with neighbors and nearby business owners. / Yearlong intern **JACOB (LINDSAY) CASH** at Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, OH.

22 Pray for **CHRIS (MEGAN) HARTSHORN**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California. / **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray new visitors to Salvos por Gracia seek church membership.

23 **A. J. (CHELSEA) MILLSAPS**, Maryville, TN, area evangelist. Pray the Lord adds new members to Zion OPC in Athens. / Pray for staff of **NEW HORIZONS** and **ORDAINED SERVANT**.

24 Pray for affiliated missionaries **CRAIG & REE COULBOURNE** and **LINDA KARNER**, Japan. / **DAVID NAKHLA**, disaster response coordinator. Pray for Neon, KY, as community outreach and clean-up efforts conclude.

25 Pray that **OPC RULING ELDER PODCAST** would be edifying for ruling elders in the OPC and other churches. / **DAN & STACY HALLEY**, Tampa, FL. Pray God raises up men to serve Bay Haven OPC as officers.

26 **MARK & CELESTE JENKINS**, Placentia, CA. Pray that one-to-one Bible reading at Resurrection would lead to conversions. / Affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia. Pray for encouragement of Cambodian pastors' wives as they meet for Bible studies.



David Nakhla (day 24)

27 Affiliated missionaries **JERRY & MARILYN FARNIK**, Czech Republic. Pray for church members and US teams as they serve in summer missions programs. / **KERRI ANN CRUSE**, video and social media coordinator.

28 **DAVID & ASHLEIGH SCHEXNAYDER**, Scottsdale, AZ. Pray for youth ministry at Providence/ **HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for safety of church members fighting and as they show Christ to fellow soldiers.

29 Home Missions administrative assistant **ALLISON GROOT**. / Pray that **THE REFORMED DEACON** podcast would be a useful resource for deacons in the OPC and beyond. / Financial controller **MELISA MCGINNIS**.

30 Pray for the churches in **EAST AFRICA** and **ETHIOPIA**. / Christian Education office secretary **ABBY HARTING**. / **BRAD (CINNAMON) PEPPO**, regional home missionary of the Miami Valley for Presbytery of Ohio.

31 Pray for Foreign Missions administrative assistant **TIN LING LEE**. / **NATE & ANNA STROM**, Sheboygan, WI. Pray for Breakwater Church as they introduce themselves to their neighbors.

NEWS, VIEWS & REVIEWS

PASADENA OPC PARTICULARIZED

On March 12, Pasadena OPC, formerly a mission work, became a particular congregation of the OPC. Church planter Rev. Matthew Cotta was installed as pastor, and two elders and a deacon were ordained and installed. Rev. Peter Sim preached from Acts 2:41–47; Dr. David VanDrunen gave the charge to the pastor; retired regional home missionary Rev. David Crum gave the charge to the congregation; and regional home missionary Rev. Christopher Hartshorn led in prayer for the new congregation.

CROFUTT ORDAINED AND INSTALLED AT GAINESVILLE, FL

Joel D. Fick

Nathaniel Crofutt was ordained and installed on Friday, January 27, as a pastor at Redemption OPC in Gainesville, Florida. The Rev. Joel Fick presided over the service, which was moderated by Mr. John Muether. The sermon was preached by Mr. Crofutt's father, Rev. Richard Crofutt (PCA). Rev. David Briones delivered the charge to the minister, and Rev. Warren Bennett delivered the charge to the congregation.

Nathaniel is married to Sarah and is a graduate of Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando. He served as a pastoral intern at Redemption before accepting the call to serve as its associate pastor.



Members of the presbytery at the particularization of Pasadena OPC and installation of elders, deacon, and pastor Matthew Cotta (center, grey blazer)

UPDATE

CHURCHES

- On March 12, **Pasadena OPC** in Pasadena, CA, was organized as a particular congregation of the OPC.

MINISTERS

- On January 27, **Nathaniel J. Crofutt** was ordained as a minister and installed as a pastor of Redemption OPC in Gainesville, FL.
- On March 10, the Presbytery of the Mid-

west granted the request of **John H. Ro** to demit the office of minister.

- On March 10, the Presbytery of the Midwest granted the request of **Kenneth R. Golden** to demit the office of minister.
- On March 11, **James G. Brinkerhoff** was ordained as a minister and installed as an evangelist by the Presbytery of Ohio to serve internationally.
- On March 12, **Matthew E. Cotta**, formerly the organizing pastor, was installed as a pastor of Pasadena OPC in Pasadena CA.
- On March 24, **Charles K. Telfer** was installed by the Presbytery of the Midwest to the work of an evangelist, laboring as a translation consultant with Wycliffe Bible Translators.
- On March 31, **Tyler E. Jackson** was installed as an evangelist of the Presbytery of Ohio, serving at Redemption Life Bible Church in New Castle, IN.

MILESTONES

- Retired OP pastor **Rollin P. Keller**, 88, died March 30. He was an active OPC minister for over fifty years, serving congregations in NJ, DE, and CA.



At the ordination and installation of Nathaniel Crofutt (center)

REVIEWS

***Bully Pulpit: Confronting the Problem of Spiritual Abuse in the Church*, by Michael J. Kruger. Zondervan, 2022. Hardcover, 177 pages, \$19.90 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor Shane P. Lems.**

It's heartbreaking and horrific when a pastor or other ministry worker leads God's people in a tyrannical, heavy-handed, abusive way. We've all heard or perhaps experienced a situation where a leader manipulates, gaslights, and bullies people in a church. It's not at all something to joke about. Abusive pastors and church leaders leave behind such a dreadful wake of destruction that it's hard to over-exaggerate the tragedy of it all. Thankfully, helpful resources have been coming out on this topic. One of the better ones I've read so far is *Bully Pulpit* by Michael J. Kruger.

Bully Pulpit is a helpful book that touches on all the main aspects of spiritual abuse in the church. In the first chapter, Kruger gives some general observations about abusive leaders. For example, he discusses the celebrity pastor syndrome, lack of character, a misunderstanding of authority, narcissism, and other characteristics of a bully pastor. The second chapter is a somewhat detailed explanation of spiritual abuse. In the third chapter, Kruger gives some biblical examples of tyrannical leaders and contrasts them with the proper Christian virtues of a leader (e.g., servant, kind, not quarrelsome, gentle). The next two chapters talk about the deceitful tactics of abusive leaders and why they typically aren't removed from the ministry early on. Chapter 6 explains the sad and devastating effects of abusive leadership. In the final chapter Kruger gives some great advice on how to create a church culture that resists abusive leaders.

Kruger's book is fair and balanced. He does note that a pastor calling out sin is not necessarily spiritual abuse. I appreciated Kruger's explanation about how bully pastors sometimes misuse Scripture to boss people around. Another excellent

part of this book is the discussion about how it is not always wise for victims to meet with a bully pastor to try and resolve the situation. Kruger's discussion of a bully pastor's tactics is also spot on. He notes that when challenged, bully pastors use these tactics: they insist proper procedure was not followed, claim to be the victim, attack the character of the real victims, play the sympathy card, and brag about their own accomplishments. Indeed, the schemes of abusive leaders are deceitful!

The problem of spiritual abuse in a local church is not just "out there." Sadly, it happens even in solid Reformed churches, even in OPCs. Sin is real; so are pride, narcissism, and straight-up oppression. Kruger's book is a good one for all Christians to read to keep them aware of dangerous spiritual bullies. The session on which I serve has copies of this book, and we've discussed parts of it. In fact, I believe that this book should be required reading for OP elders—and I don't say that lightly or without thought. We need to do everything we can to protect Christ's precious sheep from bully pastors. This book will help us to do so, with God's help.

***Fight for Your Pastor*, by Peter Orr. Crossway, 2022. Paperback, 112 pages, \$9.99. Reviewed by OP ruling elder Mark McConnell.**

Fight for Your Pastor is advice to guide church members toward helping and encouraging their pastor. The one-word chapter headings provide a good summary of author Peter Orr's message. "Fight!": Pray for your pastor. "Encourage!": Let him know that his work is fruitful. "Listen!": Be attentive to his teaching. "Give!": Support his ministry financially. "Forgive!": Be patient with his mistakes and



At the February 12 installation service for deacons (from far right) Casey Sikes, Mike Kelly, and Kyle Stenersen at Heritage OPC in Wilmington, NC

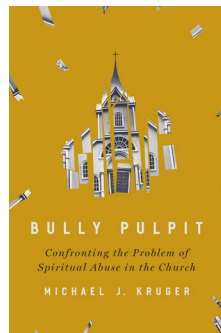
shortcomings. "Submit!": Respect God's authority symbolized by the ordained office he holds. And finally, "Check!": Your congregation has a role in helping your pastor to live the holy life to which Christ called him.

Has your pastor told you what your neglect is doing to him? Will he tell you about the daily strains on his family and his walk with God? Will he share his uncertainties about the effectiveness of his ministry? Probably not. Would he appear too needy for you to follow if you knew that the futility and sorrow of the work bring him low, or that he needs support when opposition grows harsh, or else he cannot do the job at all? In other words, what if your pastor admits he is no better than the Apostle Paul, who confessed to having

such weaknesses to the point that he "despaired of life itself"?

The advice on how to help is urgent. Still, a pastor's congregation and fellow officers probably follow it leisurely, if at all, and

so it bears repeating. This little book adds urgency to the familiar guidance. In *Fight for Your Pastor*, the author enriches his personal experience with observations from "a pastor I know" and "a pastor writes," sometimes anonymously. This wealth of experience can give readers insight into what Dane C. Ortlund, in the foreword, calls "a



crisis among pastors.” Your pastor serves you amid an emergency enflamed by the hostile world and fueled by worldly minds masquerading as spiritual in the churches, among both members and pastors.

Will your pastor’s ministry survive the discovery that his views on politics or science differ from many in the congregation? How will church families deal with a disagreement with the pastor over a disciplinary issue? Are you spiritually prepared if an accusation of serious sin arises against your pastor or one of his household members? Your leader, too, should benefit from the gracious commands: “Do not bite and consume one another,” “be at peace with one another,” “be kind to one another,” “be patient with one another,” “forgive one another,” “pray for one another,” and “love one another.” Congregation members might help to avoid another tragedy if they only include their pastor as one of these “one another.” You must fight for one another. You must fight for your pastor.

***Who Needs the Church? Why We Need the Church (and Why the Church Needs Us)*, by Terry L. Johnson. Christian Focus, 2022. Hardcover, 128 pages, \$13.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Robert S. Arndale.**

I was born a covenant child, raised in a Christian home, and taught the truths of the gospel from my earliest days. My parents faithfully took us to worship. I am ever thankful for the Christian heritage my parents gave to me. When I arrived on campus for college, I desired to live as a faithful witness to Christ. Yet my desire to be an example was not matched by a commitment to a local church. God in his kindness, however, used those early years on the college campus to impress upon me the centrality of the local church in the purpose of God and in the life of the believer. I needed the church. I needed to be reminded of the truths set forth in Terry Johnson’s excellent work *Who Needs the Church?*

In this brief work, Johnson clearly and crisply sets forth the doctrine of the church. In a refreshingly readable fashion, Johnson touches on all the ma-

ajor aspects of our ecclesiology (e.g., the church as the body and bride of Christ, role of elders, keys of the kingdom, necessity of membership, Jesus as the shepherd of his sheep). Two features of the book uniquely struck me. First, I appreciated Johnson laying the foundation in the first two chapters from Christ’s words in Matthew 16:18 and Matthew 18:15–17. The implications he draws from our Savior’s words include “standards of belief and conduct, membership, a process of discipline, a form of government, meetings at which matters are discussed, and officers who administer the whole.” Second, I appreciated Johnson highlighting various theological matters and areas of confusion related to the doctrine of the church. Due to the brevity of the book, Johnson can only briefly address such topics, but I am thankful he at least touches on them. Such matters include how the church is to be in the world, but not of the world; distinguishing things true of the “church as the church” from things true of Christians individually (the church as organism distinguished from the church as organization); the role of parachurch organizations; and the significance of denominational identity.

In our hyper-individualistic and increasingly spiritual (and pagan) age, the centrality of the church to the life of the Christian is absolutely vital. May many take up and read this helpful book. It would serve as an excellent guide for a youth or adult Sunday school class and would be excellent to work through in a small-group setting.

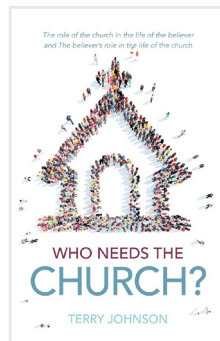
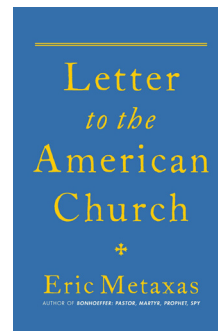
Let me close with words from the final page of the book: “It’s Sunday morning. My wake-up routine has been completed. What am I now to do? . . . Do what the Scriptures require and what Christians have done for 2,000 years. Go to the public assembly, gathered under the discipline of Christ’s appointed officers to be ministered to by the word read, preached, sung, prayed, and displayed in the sacraments.” Put simply, each Lord’s Day may we gather in the church to worship our glorious Savior and King! Who needs the church? We need the church!

***Letter to the American Church*, by Eric Metaxas. Salem, 2022. Hardcover, 139 pages, \$19.99 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP minister and professor Alan D. Strange.**

While there is much in Metaxas with which many confessional Christians would agree—he calls for pulpit opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage, for instance—there is much else that he calls for that is, at best, uncertain, particularly with respect to the “need” of the institutional church to be explicitly political. For instance, take Metaxas’s curious call that we must not only fight “for justice,” which could mean many things, but that the church must also attempt to see “that our government enacts the will of the people” (77). The best reading of that is problematic for the institutional church—how does the church know “the will of the people” and, in any case, if such could be ascertained, why would it be the church’s business to seek to have the government “enact” it?

One suspects, given Metaxas’s known public commitments and actions regarding former President Trump, that enacting the will of the people may have something to do with the church speaking up in the case of a purported defective election so that the “real decision” of the people may be followed. How the church is supposed to ascertain such and why it is the church’s calling even to attempt to do so and to proclaim the “real winner” of an election is never disclosed. It’s hard to think that Trumpism doesn’t lurk in the back of his insistence that the church needs to step up and stop dodging its political obligations.

Metaxas’s point of departure throughout his call for the American church not to be politically silent is his analogy of the present church in this country with the German state church of the 1930s. Metaxas believes that the failure of the German church to confront National Socialism and Hitler parallels the modern



church in its failure to confront abortion, same-sex marriage, and fluid genderism, as well as more directly political matters like COVID-governmental overreach and the thwarted will of the people (in elections and the like, presumably). Metaxas has elsewhere, in his biography on Bonhoeffer, wrongly constructed him as some sort of evangelical, which he decidedly was not, and wants to read our current history as replaying the history of Germany in the time leading up to and during the “thousand-year reign” of Hitler, which was mercifully cut short after twelve years; indeed, Bonhoeffer opposed Hitler, not only in print and pulpit but violently. It is hard to see that our present time is a replay of 1930s Germany, and Metaxas asserts it but does little to demonstrate the recurring pattern.

Metaxas is not wrong that the church should speak prophetically to the nation. It should proclaim not only the gospel but also the law, in all three of its uses. The second use of the law furnishes civil society with a legal pattern. Thus, the church can call upon the magistrate to rule righteously, even in accordance with natural law, if he refuses to hear biblical law, since the latter is fundamental to the former. The church, however, is never to give itself over to the merely political. Rather, the church as church is to distinguish itself from the world, while, at the same time, giving itself to the world. The church does this in carrying out its primary mission, its spiritual calling, of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is what the world truly needs.

***The Global Church—The First Eight Centuries: From Pentecost Through the Rise of Islam*, by Donald Fairbairn. Zondervan, 2021. Hardcover, 416 pages, \$9.79 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor Calvin R. Goligher.**

Donald Fairbairn’s new history of the early church stands out because it tells the story as if the Church’s most important beliefs were actually true. Fairbairn straightforwardly tells how Jesus commissioned the apostles, who took a single gospel throughout the known world. From there, he tells how this gospel was received and preserved in a wonderful

unity across an enormous variety of cultures, languages, and geographies.

Fairbairn is a clear writer with a gift for narrating complicated events and ideas in a simple and memorable way. This clarity is not just a matter of writing style, though. Where Fairbairn truly stands out as a teacher is in his theological and historical accuracy and reliability. The study of the early church has been plagued for more than a century with various kinds of spin—for instance, that there were a variety of other gospels, or that “orthodoxy” was just the product of the bishops’ political victory. Fairbairn reliably guides readers through a tangle of these misleading historical interpretations, thus managing to tell the church’s history from the church’s own perspective.

Fairbairn offers brief reflections at the close of each chapter, giving a balanced evaluation of an aspect of early Christianity. For example, he reflects on monasticism’s crucial contributions to world mission, doctrine, piety, and social action, while also noting its limitations and failures.

This “global history” addresses not only the parts of early Christianity most familiar to us (the city of Rome, for instance) but also the parts most of us have never heard about: Persia, Ethiopia, Georgia (the country, not the state!). Readers may spot their homes in the story: I was thrilled to notice Northern Ireland (where my parents were born), and various members of the church that I pastor will spot their ancestral homes in Iran, Kerala, and Armenia. This global narrative is an excellent reply to the idea that Christianity is “western,” “colonialist,” or even “white supremacist.” For eight centuries, Christian beliefs and practices were formed mostly in Africa and Asia and shared across the known world. This profound commonality was finally interrupted by the sudden arrival of Islam, which Fairbairn narrates very thoughtfully—another rare feature of a textbook on Christian history.

Beginners (the primary audience of this text) should know that some of Fair-

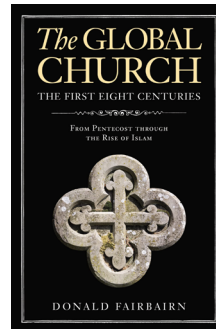
bairn’s interpretations are controversial. He lays the major share of the blame for the Arian controversy at the feet of Origen. He dramatically emphasizes the consensus and unity of the church’s doctrine, even in those episodes where its tendency to fragmentation was most clearly on display. Most notably, he maintains that underneath the church’s sharp divisions over the Chalcedonian Definition lay a true consensus on the doctrine of the person of Christ. On many of these points, Fairbairn takes a minority position, but his arguments are clear and well grounded in the historical evidence.

Modern Christians who are looking for roots will be glad to learn that the early church enjoyed a long, broad, stable, Christian faith. This history shows us a faith in which we can happily abide, despite our precarious position in modern society. It shows us a faith that can draw us together, despite differences of language, culture, geography, and denomination. Mostly, it shows a Savior who really is “the desire of the nations,” in whom we can confidently trust.

***How to Find Yourself: Why Looking Inward Is Not the Answer*, by Brian S. Rosner. Crossway, 2022. Paperback, 237 pages, \$18.79 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor Nicholas J. Thompson.**

It doesn’t require a degree in sociology to recognize we live in a culture that is obsessed with personal identity and convinced that to know ourselves truly we mustn’t look beyond ourselves. It is called *expressive individualism*, the ideology that external roles, relationships, and revelation play no part in defining who we are as persons. As a pastor seeking to help people think through this late modern view of selfhood, I find Brian Rosner’s latest book *How to Find Yourself* a welcome guide. The book is unabashedly Christian, but Rosner has written it with a particular apologetic thrust that makes it readable and relatable, whether you are a Christian or not.

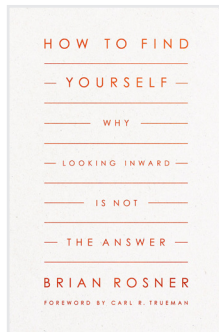
In part one, he quotes from both academic and popular sources to carefully



delineate the key tenets of expressive individualism (e.g., look inward, reject authority). Rosner then deconstructs the self-made self, showing that it is actually leading to identity angst, not identity assurance, and that instead of leading to human flourishing, it is leading to human floundering. That, of course, is because humans were never designed to be the definers of their identity, morality, and destiny. Rosner takes us back to Genesis 3 to show us that expressive individualism didn't begin with Rousseau; it began with the serpent in the garden of Eden, tempting our first parents to cast off the external authority of an oppressive God and to be their own lords. The result? Death and destruction.

In part two, Rosner demonstrates that because we are created as social creatures, we cannot understand ourselves outside of our relationships. No one can consistently define himself or herself without reference to other people and God, for it is actually in the context of social interactions that we come to find ourselves. While expressive individualism leads to death, knowing yourself in relation to God as his beloved child in Christ is the path to flourishing.

In part three, Rosner shows how not only our relationships but also our story shapes who we are and perceive ourselves to be. Our past shapes us considerably, as do our future hopes and dreams. Rosner's critique of the identity narrative of secular materialism is excellent, but unfortunately, his chapter on social justice is concerning. He is critical of the movement, but far too sympathetic. For example, he states, "Standpoint theory and intersectionality have their legitimate place" (154). He claims woke-ism has "good intentions," that it is merely "incomplete," and that its "transformative vision of the future is inspiring and worthy" (159). Anyone who has read literature from the Frankfurt School and beyond recognizes this is far from the case. In the end, Rosner rightly shows that only the story of the crucified and risen Christ can deliver us from identity angst and make us to know ourselves in truth.



Rosner concludes with two chapters giving some practical pointers for how to find ourselves in Christ. Readers will find helpful encouragement to give themselves to the means of grace, both public and private, in their identity formation.

Overall, *How to Find Yourself* is a helpful and engaging critique of expressive individualism that demonstrates how the God and gospel of Christianity alone can lead us to a proper self-perception and thereby to a life of freedom and flourishing. Rosner's greatest contribution is helping us to see the place of social interaction and story in our sense of self, and how that is by the good design of God and according to the good news of God's gospel. For that reason, I warmly commend the book to discerning readers.

***Calls to Worship, Invocations, and Benedictions*, by Ryan Kelly, P&R, 2022. Hardcover, 288 pages, \$15.00. Reviewed by OP minister George R. Cottenden.**

The Reformed world has produced an increasing number of books aimed at encouraging a scriptural understanding of worship. *Calls to Worship, Invocations, and Benedictions*, by Ryan Kelly, is a narrowly focused but useful addition to that trend.

In a brief preface he states his two-fold purpose. First, he wants to encourage Scripture-filled worship. Second, he wants to give some historical perspective on the variety and flexibility of the practices of the Reformed churches relating to the three parts of worship that he considers.

This is a nice-sized handbook for the pastor's desk, containing suggested calls to worship, invocations, and benedictions. To reach a broader audience than just churches holding to a strict view of the regulative principle of worship, Kelly organizes these chapters according to a liturgical calendar. However, an index of Scripture and an index of

themes enable one to bypass the calendar aspect. There are also robust bibliographies of "practical resources" and of "study resources."

In an introductory section, Kelly traces how these three parts of worship came to have a place in Reformed worship. He shows clearly that there has not been the rigid uniformity of practice that is sometimes assumed. This is a fascinating, if brief, treatment, although we may disagree with a few of his conclusions.

The call to worship, Kelly affirms, is not just a random Scripture verse. It is God's own call to gather his people together. Ordinarily it should contain an exhortation to worship, such as "come let us worship and bow down" or "sing to the Lord." It may, however, be a statement of an attribute or action of God showing that he is worthy of worship. In that case the minister can add words like, "Therefore, let us worship him."

Kelly describes the invocation as "a prayer that calls upon God's presence, assistance, and blessing in worship." It is not an extended prayer of adoration, which would be better placed elsewhere in the service.

The benediction is "the minister's pronouncement of God's blessing on his people at the conclusion of worship." This accords with the understanding of the benediction in our own *Directory for Public Worship*. Yet elsewhere he quotes at length several writers who see it as simply a prayer for God's blessing.

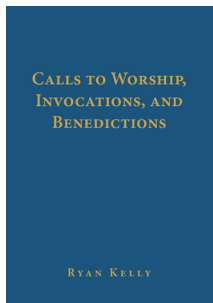
Kelly argues that historical precedent and the analogy of the sermon allow the

Position Available

Evangelist: Westminster OPC, a congregation worshipping in Countryside, Illinois, is seeking a full-time evangelist. He will be responsible for evangelizing as well as equipping and encouraging the local congregation to evangelize through discipleship training and personal example. To apply, send an OPC Ministerial Information Form and cover letter describing your interest in this position to search@westminsteropc.org.

NEWS, VIEWS & REVIEWS *Continued*

minister to use his own words for the call and benediction as long as they are restatements of scriptural teaching. One wonders, though, if Kelly and the ancient and contemporary authors whom he quotes give adequate attention to the different character and function of the sermon from these other parts of worship. In any case, a congregation with various levels of biblical understanding will better grasp that it is God declaring his blessing upon them if, as our *Directory* instructs, the very words of God are used.



Despite these issues, pastors should find this a valuable tool for enriching their use of Scripture in leading their people in worship.

***A Supreme Love: The Music of Jazz and the Hope of the Gospel*, by William Edgar. IVP, 2022. Paperback, 224 pages, \$22.80 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor George C. Hammond.**

Although jazz will probably never regain the popularity it enjoyed in the early twentieth century, the fame of Wynton Marsalis, Diana Krall, Postmodern Jukebox, and the collaborative projects of Lady Gaga and Tony Bennett are witness to a resurgence in the interest of jazz. Recent books such as *Duke Ellington: A Spiritual Biography* by Janna Tulla Steed and *Getting the Blues* by Ligonier's Stephen J. Nichols indicate that there is a connection between this music and Christian spirituality.

Riffing on the title of an iconic John

Coltrane album released in 1965, Edgar's book is the most recent in the genre of books on jazz and spirituality, although he himself is no newcomer to the topic. With an undergraduate degree in music from Harvard University, after graduating from Westminster Theological Seminary, Edgar spent time in France pursuing more theological education while working as a gigging jazz musician. While Edgar has always had an interest in the history of jazz and Christian spirituality, born as it was out of the Black experience in America, that history has never been of more interest to the dominant culture than it is today.

Believing that it is impossible to really understand the music apart from the context in which it developed, Edgar spends the first of the three parts of the book tracing the history of the cruelty of chattel slavery, the short-lived promise of emancipation, and the disappointment of Jim Crow. He speaks about the conversion of slaves (sometimes in defiance of the Black Code laws) who were able to see the beauty and hope of the gospel even through the ugly distortions of the slavers who often justified their sin in Jesus's name.

Part two traces the musical developments that led to jazz through spirituals, gospel, and the blues, along with the feeders of work songs, marches, minstrelsy, and European music to arrive finally at the jazz that was birthed in New Orleans in the early twentieth century, and which quickly "went viral," not only around the United States but also around the world.

Part three deals with jazz proper in its

birth and evolution. Edgar does not try to draw a straight line from the Christian faith to jazz (and says one can't be drawn) but argues that the ever-present themes of deep sorrow and suffering leading to a deep and abiding joy that characterize jazz cannot be understood apart from the message of the gospel, which gave hope to a people who saw themselves as living in bondage in Egypt. Although some of the early jazz musicians were confessing Christians, not all were; yet "there is a far deeper connection of jazz and the Spirit than can be traced to individuals. There is something about the music itself that is profoundly connected to the truths about life and the truth found in the Christian message" (168).

Thirty-six years ago, Edgar wrestled with "How Does Music Mean?" (*Taking Note of Music*, Third Way Books, 1986). He reasoned there that music is not linguistic and that it draws its meaning from its context. Within its context, however, music has profound meaning. In the book being reviewed, he argues that the meaning of jazz cannot be known apart from its context, and its context is incompletely understood apart from the influence of the Christian faith, which recognizes the evil of oppression but does so with a defiant joy.

This book will have limited interest. The book is more history than theology, and the spiritual connections will not be well grasped by those who do not have a knowledge of and love for the music. But for those who do, and especially for those who have read Steed and Nichols, this book is a must read.

