

**WELCOME  
TO THE  
OPC**

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PUBLISHED BY  
THE COMMITTEE ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION  
ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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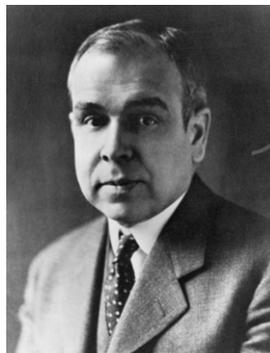
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# HISTORY

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## 1. FOUNDING

Although the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) traces her roots back to the Protestant Reformation, her official formation was on June 11, 1936. The constituting members of the new church were following the lead of Princeton Seminary theologian J. Gresham Machen, who had led the fight within the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (PCUSA) to preserve the cause of historic Christianity. Machen eagerly threw himself into service for the new church. However, during a preaching tour to the Dakotas to encourage new congregations, he became ill with pneumonia and died on January 1, 1937.



## 2. IDENTITY

Some thought that, in addition to standing against theological modernism, the new church should emphasize the American fundamentalist tenets of premillennial dispensationalism and total abstinence from alcoholic beverages. The church determined, however, that dispensationalism, with its fracturing of the covenant of grace, was out of accord with the teaching of Scripture. It also concluded that the Bible teaches that drunkenness is sinful, not the moderate use of alcohol.

Many who favored dispensationalism and total abstinence consequently

left the church. Although saddened that brethren had departed over these matters, the Word of God was going to be the sole arbiter in matters of faith and practice.

Membership was small even before the division, but many believed what Machen had argued: that the power of a body is not in proportion to its numerical strength, but in the atoning blood of Christ and in the uncompromising supernaturalism of the New Testament.

### **3. NAME**

One year after the new church's founding, the PCUSA sued the young church over the name it had chosen, "the Presbyterian Church of America." The PCUSA argued that it was the largest Presbyterian church in America and that this new body would gain members from it through the similarity of the name. In June 1938, the Court of Common Pleas in Philadelphia decided in favor of the PCUSA. The young church gave notice of appeal, but simply did not have the money to continue the legal battle.

An assembly was called in February 1939 for the purpose of choosing a new name for the church. After much deliberation, the name "Orthodox Presbyterian Church" was chosen. In regard to its beliefs and practices, the church would be "orthodox," that is, it would follow the straight teaching of Scripture in all of life.

### **4. DEVELOPMENT**

Despite its humble beginnings, the new church was marked by enthusiasm for the gospel and a steadfast devotion to its Savior. In his sermon that opened the Second General Assembly in November 1936, Machen proclaimed that while the new church was "a real part of the Church of God," it was also a "little company of weak and sinful folk." The message was clear: the strength of the new church would be found in its Savior, Jesus Christ, and not in itself.

Many decades later, the OPC is still a weak and marginal church in the world's eyes. In its best moments, however, the desire of the OPC has not been to impress the world, but faithfully to serve its Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

What follows in the pages of this booklet is a primer about the OPC's doctrine, life, and ministries. The booklet does not claim to be exhaustive or definitive. Rather, its purpose is to introduce the OPC to those who are unfamiliar with it and would like to get to know it better. The OPC is not the "Only Perfect Church." Rather, it is an expression of the church of Jesus Christ that seeks to be faithful to him and to his Word. If you are looking for such a church, one that seeks to glorify God and enjoy him at all times, we invite you to visit a local congregation.

# DOCTRINE

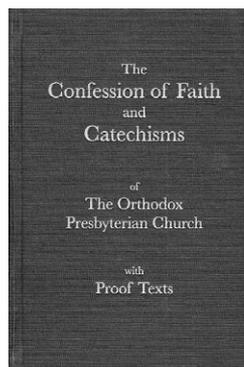
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## 1. SCRIPTURE

A Bible-believing Presbyterian church, the OPC confesses that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, the only rule of faith and life.

## 2. CONFESSION OF FAITH AND CATECHISMS

At the time of its birth, the OPC adopted the original American edition (1789) of the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger Catechism, and the Shorter Catechism, which present the basic teachings of the Bible. The Confession and Catechisms are the church's secondary standards in that they are subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. All OPC church officers—ministers, ruling elders, and deacons—are required to receive and adopt the Confession and Catechisms as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Bible.



## 3. BOOK OF CHURCH ORDER

*The Book of Church Order* contains the Form of Government, the Book of Discipline, and the Directory for the Public Worship of God. These documents, which are consistent with the teachings of Scripture, regulate the government, discipline, and worship of the OPC, and all church officers must

receive and approve them.

#### **4. SYSTEM OF DOCTRINE**

Here is a brief summary of some of the major points of the OPC's system of doctrine, which is also called the Reformed faith or Calvinism:

##### *a. Doctrine of Scripture*

The Word of God, which consists of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God. Inspired by God, the Bible is entirely trustworthy and without error, and its teachings are to be believed and obeyed.

##### *b. Doctrine of God*

God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. The one true God is personal, yet beyond our comprehension. He is completely self-sufficient and unbounded by space or time. In the unity of the Godhead there are three "persons": the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

##### *c. Doctrine of Creation*

God created the heavens and the earth, and all they contain out of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good. After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, after his own image.

##### *d. Doctrine of Sin*

Sin is any lack of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God. Because of the sin of the first man (Adam), all mankind is corrupt by nature, dead in sin, and subject to the wrath of God.

##### *e. Doctrine of Salvation*

By a covenant of grace, God has established that sinners may receive forgiveness and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ has always been the only way of salvation for fallen sinners.

##### *f. Doctrine of Christ*

Christ, the Son of God, became man by taking to himself a true body and a reasoning soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary and born of her, yet without sin. He lived a sinless life and died on a cross, bearing the sins of his people and received God's wrath for

them. He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, where he sits as Lord and rules over his kingdom. He will return to judge the living and the dead, bringing his people with glorious, resurrected bodies into eternal life, and consigning the wicked to eternal punishment.

*g. Doctrine of Justification*

Justification is an act of God's free grace, whereby he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.

*h. Doctrine of Adoption*

Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges, of the sons of God.

*i. Doctrine of Sanctification*

Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.

*j. Doctrine of the Sacraments*

A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers. There are two sacraments in the New Testament, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

**5. THE CHURCH**

The OPC, as a branch of the true church, acknowledges Jesus Christ as the sole head of the church, which is his body. The OPC also believes that Christ has established his church to gather and perfect his people by the ministry of the Word and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. OPC congregations gather on the Lord's Day to worship the triune God by hearing the Word read and preached, praying, singing psalms and hymns, and receiving the sacraments.

**6. THE LOCAL CHURCH**

*a. The Local Church and Its Members*

Members are received into a local OPC congregation on the basis of their credible profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ before the session. They are required to acknowledge that the Bible is the Word of God and contains the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation. They must also accept instruction

in doctrine and life.

Communicant members are believers who have been baptized and who have professed their faith in Christ before the session. As communicant members, they are admitted to the Lord's Supper and have voting rights within the congregation. Their baptized children are received as noncommunicant members of the congregation. Noncommunicant members do not partake of the Lord's Supper or exercise voting rights within the congregation.



### *b. The Local Church and Its Session*

Each congregation is governed by a session, which is made up of one or more ministers and two or more ruling elders. The session endeavors to see that the Word of God is faithfully preached in the church, that the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are properly administered, and that spiritual care and discipline is lovingly and effectively provided. Session members also regularly visit members to encourage them in the faith, to know how to serve and pray for them, and also, when necessary, to help them turn from sin.

Deacons are officers elected by congregations to oversee ministries of mercy and love. However, deacons do not exercise spiritual oversight with the ministers and elders on the session.

According to the clear teaching of Scripture, all officers must be men. Under the oversight of the session, nonordained individuals may serve on committees that involve important aspects of congregational life.

### *c. The Local Church and Its Property and Trustees*

Congregations are entitled to hold and own their own property. Congregations may withdraw from the OPC by the affirmative vote of two successive meetings of the congregation, if they first notify the presbytery and allow the presbytery an opportunity to dissuade them from withdrawing.

Congregations may also choose to incorporate and elect trustees. However, trustees are not ordained and have no ruling authority in the congregation.

## **7. THE REGIONAL CHURCH AND ITS PRESBYTERY**

The congregations of the OPC are organized into regional churches, each with a governing body called a presbytery. A presbytery is made up of the

ministers within its geographical bounds and the commissioned ruling elders representing the churches within its bounds. It has the power to order whatever pertains to the spiritual welfare of the churches under its care, while respecting the liberties guaranteed to those churches. It also has the power to organize and receive congregations, or at the request of the people to unite or dissolve congregations.

A presbytery examines, licenses, and ordains ministerial candidates, and continues to oversee ministers after their ordination. It uses the combined resources of its churches to spread the gospel in its region through evangelism and church planting. It conducts youth ministries for the churches, handles larger diaconal needs, and provides support for missionaries. It also has the power to resolve questions of doctrine or discipline that arise from the sessions of local churches.

## **8. THE WHOLE CHURCH AND ITS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

The general assembly oversees the ministry of the whole OPC and is made up of ministers and ruling elders who have been commissioned to represent their respective presbyteries. It seeks to advance the worship, edification, and witness of the whole church as it hears reports from its standing committees and approves the budget of the whole church for the upcoming year. It also promotes the unity of the church of Christ through correspondence with other churches. As a court of final appeal in the administration of judicial discipline, it seeks to resolve all doctrinal and disciplinary questions brought before it from the lower assemblies.



# LIFE

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The OPC is a doctrinal church, but it does not believe in doctrine to the exclusion of life or piety. Obedience to the Word of God and a desire to glorify and enjoy God in all of life mark the congregations of the OPC. Public worship of the triune God is the most important way in which church members fellowship with one another. This section highlights worship as an integral part of church life, as well as other ways that members fellowship with one another.

## 1. WORSHIP

Public worship is, above all, a meeting of the triune God with his covenant people. God-produced, God-enabled, and God-centered, it is the reverent and joyful assembly of the Lord's people on the Lord's Day. The elements of the ordinary religious worship of God are the call to worship, the reading of the Scriptures, the preaching and hearing of the Word, the singing of psalms and hymns, the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments, and the benediction. Most OPC



churches have morning and evening worship services.

## **2. BIBLE STUDIES AND PRAYER MEETINGS**

Many churches hold Bible studies and prayer meetings during the week. These are usually held at the church building, a member's home, or a place in the community. They are often led by ministers or ruling elders, or by members approved by the session.

## **3. OUTREACH MINISTRIES**

Congregations also reach out in their communities in various ways to inform individuals of the worship and ministry of the church. This is often done through canvassing of neighborhoods on foot, mailings, and special events. Increasingly, OPC churches use their websites to tell their story to others.



## **4. EVANGELISTIC MINISTRIES**

Direct gospel communication to those outside the church also takes place in OPC congregations. From personal conversations with neighbors to hosting a booth at a county fair to passing out gospel literature, the righteous requirements of God and his plan of salvation are made known in the marketplace. Some pastors also participate in street or public forum preaching.

## **5. YOUTH**

Children and young adults often have Sunday school and catechism classes for their age group. Weeklong vacation Bible schools for the youth are held by some OPC congregations. Some churches have a catechism club or boys and/or girls clubs. Many presbyteries host youth camps, youth rallies, and

backpacking trips, and provide short-term missions opportunities for the youth of the churches. Teens and young adults are often asked to join a class for c o m m u n i c a n t membership, typically taught by a pastor or elder.



## **6. ADULT FELLOWSHIP**

Men’s fellowship activities often include prayer breakfasts, Bible studies, and diaconal projects. Men are also often involved in helping with church building upkeep and repair.

Women’s fellowship activities vary from church to church, but many sponsor women’s Bible studies, book studies, and fellowship luncheons. Some presbyteries also have women’s presbyterials, which typically meet once or twice a year within the border of a presbytery in support of foreign missions. The women who participate meet for a day of fellowship, to listen to a speaker, pray, and share lunch. Missionaries often speak at presbyterials, and sometimes an offering is taken to support the work of foreign missions in the OPC.

## **7. COMMUNITY SERVICE**

Many churches engage in service that is particular to their local communities. Among the numerous activities that OPC congregations participate in are providing meals at schools, volunteering at Right to Life centers and food kitchens, and running prison and nursing home ministries.

## **8. THANK OFFERING**

During the month of November, the OPC holds its annual Thank Offering. The offering is an expression of the OPC’s thankfulness to the Lord for his grace and mercy during the past year. Many OPC congregations hold a special banquet or dinner with a speaker to promote giving to the Thank Offering.

# MINISTRIES

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## I. FOREIGN MISSIONS

Committed to proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to the nations, the OPC, through its Committee on Foreign Missions, labors throughout the world to help establish—by the grace and power of God—indigenous national churches that are firmly and fully committed to the Reformed standards, that are self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating, and with whom the OPC may have fraternal relations. Recognizing that the Lord ultimately provides the opportunities, personnel, and support, the Committee is presently committed to sending missionaries to eight fields:



- *Asia* We assist indigenous congregations in evangelism and in preparing qualified men for the gospel ministry.
- *Eritrea* We assist the indigenous Mehrete Yesus Evangelical Presbyterian Church, established through the labors of our missionaries in 1995, and wait upon the Lord for the authorities to grant us permission to resume sending missionaries.
- *Ethiopia* We assist the young indigenous Ethiopian Reformed Presbyterian Church, established through the labors of our missionaries in 1998.
- *Haiti* We assist indigenous congregations in the training of their pastors and elders and in their organization into a presbyterian denomination.
- *Quebec* We assist the indigenous Reformed Church of Quebec in evangelism and church planting among the French-speaking people of Quebec.
- *Uganda* We assist the indigenous Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Uganda in church planting and in preparing men for church office. Our Mbale Station operates Knox Theological College to train men for the gospel ministry. Our Nakaale Station in South Karamoja operates the Akisyon a Yesu (“Compassion of Jesus”) Presbyterian Clinic and carries on other ministries of mercy.



- *Ukraine* In cooperation with Mission to the World of the PCA, we work to plant congregations of, and train leaders for, the indigenous Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ukraine.
- *Uruguay* We assist indigenous congregations in the training of their pastors and elders and in their organization into a presbyterian denomination.

The Committee is also developing opportunities to serve indigenous Reformed churches in Colombia, Peru, Kenya, Eastern Europe, and India through its Mobile Theological Mentoring Corps.

## 2. HOME MISSIONS

The Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension works in partnership with the presbyteries and congregations of the OPC to help them establish new churches throughout North America. Here are some of the ways that the Committee serves the OPC:



### *Financial Help for New Churches*

Up to four years of financial assistance is provided at the request of the presbytery for employing an organizing pastor. Approximately twelve new churches are assisted each year. Over forty mission works are currently receiving denominational financial assistance.

### *Regional Home Missionaries*

These specialized church planters work within presbyteries to develop new churches where organizing pastors will be called to labor. The Committee helps to find, train, and support them in their work.

## *Prayer*

*Home Missions Today*, a prayer newsletter, is issued biweekly. To facilitate prayer, information about the Committee's ministry and individual mission works is provided at [chmce.org](http://chmce.org).

## *Training and Equipping*

Through staff visits and contacts, an annual training conference, and the manual *Planting an Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, church planters are provided with the information and encouragement they need to do their work effectively.

## *Assistance to Presbyteries*

The Committee staff remains in close contact with presbytery home missions committees and works with them to develop new churches. An annual gathering of home missions committee chairmen helps to coordinate the church-planting efforts of the OPC's sixteen presbyteries.

## *Church Planter Recruitment and Training*

Seminars are held annually at selected Reformed seminaries to identify and encourage men with an interest in church planting.

## *The OPC Loan Fund*

This fund provides loans to churches and mission works for building worship/education facilities through the investments of individuals who desire a reasonable return while having their money used to serve the Lord.

## **3. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

Christ commissioned his church to “make disciples ... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19–20). Accordingly, the Committee on Christian Education serves the church through such ministries as these (see [opc.org/committee\\_ce.html](http://opc.org/committee_ce.html) for details):

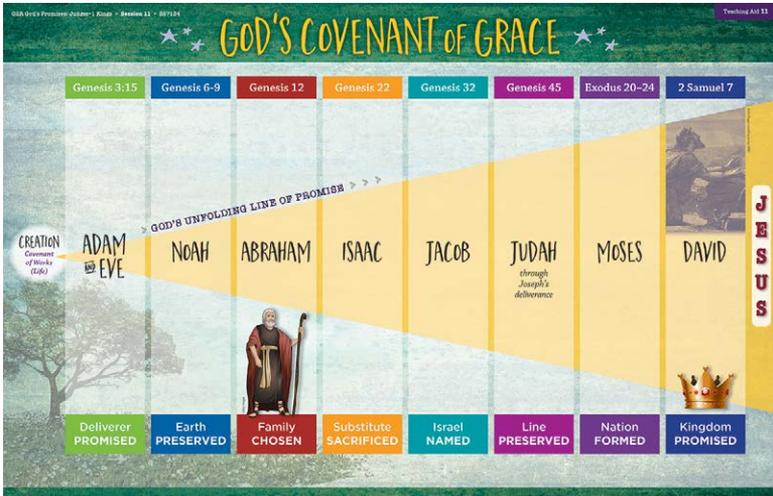
### *Serial Publications*

*New Horizons* is a monthly magazine that propagates the Reformed faith and provides news of the OPC. It is distributed free of charge to OPC members and friends. *Ordained Servant* is an online journal that equips ministers, elders, and deacons in their work.

### *Great Commission Publications*

GCP is a joint publications ministry of the Christian education commit-

tees of the OPC and the Presbyterian Church in America. It sells Sunday school materials, VBS materials, *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*, *Trinity Hymnal*, and other worship aids and instructional materials (see [www.gcp.org](http://www.gcp.org)).



### *The OPC Website (OPC.ORG)*

OPC.ORG puts forth news and information regarding the OPC. New feature articles regarding the OPC are regularly posted. Church resources, articles, and information pertaining to the Scriptures, the Reformed faith, and the OPC are also available at [www.opc.org](http://www.opc.org).

### *Literature*

The Committee produces books (such as *The Confession of Faith and Catechisms* and *The Book of Church Order*), booklets (such as *Why Join a Church?*), and pamphlets (such as *Christ Proclaims a Better Way*).

### *Ministerial Training*

The Committee coordinates yearlong and summer ministerial internships and provides financial assistance to participating churches. It maintains contact with several seminaries with a view to strengthening the training of ministers for the OPC.

### *The Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC*

The MTIOPC provides supplementary education for men under care, licentiates, and ministers.

#### 4. DIACONAL MINISTRIES

The OPC carries on a word-and-deed ministry of mercy through its Committee on Diaconal Ministries, focusing on the covenant community, the church, its adherents, and earnest inquirers. The Committee supports the work of local congregations and presbyteries by bringing the resources of the whole denomination in to assist where the diaconal need is too great for those bodies to handle. It also provides assistance for medical costs to aged and infirm ministers and their widows and orphans.



#### 5. DISASTER RESPONSE

The OPC engages in emergency help, both in this country and abroad. For example, it sent multiple volunteer teams and supplies to Haiti following that country's 2010 earthquake and to Japan following its 2011 tsunami. When Hurricane Sandy struck the East Coast in 2012, disaster response teams from the OPC were immediately on the scene assisting those in need. Teams also served those in need in multiple states and Puerto Rico after Hurricane Harvey in 2017 and Hurricane Irma in 2018.



## 6. SHORT-TERM MISSIONS

The OPC provides short-term missions opportunities for those who desire to assist foreign mission fields and local churches in need. Teams are regularly sent to the Czech Republic, Quebec, Uganda, and Uruguay.

## 7. ECUMENICITY

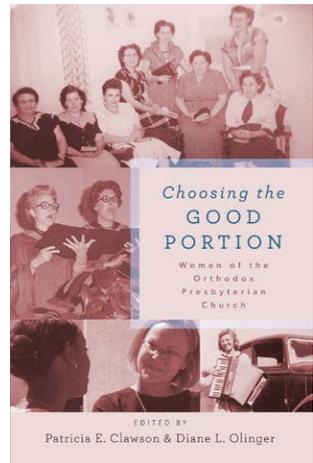
The OPC, through its Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations, maintains ecclesiastical fellowship with churches that share its Reformed commitments. As a member of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council, the OPC has an intimate connection with other North American churches in the work of bringing the gospel to a starving world. The OPC is also a member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches, a fellowship that includes thirty Reformed denominations worldwide.

## 8. HISTORIAN

The historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, elected to office by the General Assembly, oversees the denomination's efforts to preserve her history through the collection and organization of historical documents and records. He is responsible for the organization of the denomination's archives, the production of materials that promote a greater understanding of OPC history, and the organization of conferences to observe the denomination's anniversaries.

## 9. CHAPLAINS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL

The Committee on Chaplains and Military Personnel represents the OPC on the Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Persons in the Military, which serves as the endorsing agency for OPC chaplains. The Committee publishes *Please Pray for Those Who Serve and Their Families* (a list of Orthodox Presbyterians in the military) and *A Plea for Prayer* (a digest of current prayer requests).



# APPENDIX 1

## PEOPLE TO CONTACT

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The administrative offices of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church are located at 607 N. Easton Road, Bldg. E, Willow Grove, PA 19090-2539; tel. 215/830-0900; fax 215/830-0350. At this location you may contact the following people (and their supporting staff) about the ministries of the OPC:

The stated clerk of the General Assembly  
statedclerk@opc.org

The general secretary for Home Missions  
ophomemissions@opc.org

The general secretary for Christian Education  
CCEsec@opc.org

The general secretary for Foreign Missions  
opforeignmissions@opc.org or CFMsec@opc.org

If you are considering becoming a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, you are urged to contact an OP minister in your area. OP churches and ministers are listed geographically in our annual Directory, which may be ordered (free of charge) from the stated clerk. A directory of churches is posted (and continually updated) on our website, [www.opc.org](http://www.opc.org).

Ministers or licentiates of other denominations who are considering ministry in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church are encouraged to speak with the general secretary for Home Missions, the stated clerk of the General Assembly, and/or the stated clerk of the appropriate presbytery (listed in the printed Directory and the booklet *What Is the OPC?*).

# APPENDIX 2

## FURTHER INFORMATION

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A great deal of information about the OPC can be found at the OPC website ([www.opc.org](http://www.opc.org)), including, in downloadable digital form at no charge, a growing number of the publications listed below.

The following publications may be ordered by calling the administrative offices of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Willow Grove, Pa., at 215/830-0900. Most of the items (and others) that are for sale may also be ordered at [www.opc.org](http://www.opc.org) using a credit card. (Prices may change.)

*Directory* — free listing of all churches and ministers in the OPC (annual editions; directory of churches kept current on website)

*New Horizons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* — free monthly denominational magazine; \$20/year requested from non-OPC subscribers in the U.S.; \$40/year required from overseas subscribers (\$30 in Canada); also available as a free e-mail attachment; downloadable in PDF, ePub, and Mobi formats

*The Confession of Faith and Catechisms of the OPC with Proof Texts* — \$12.00

*The Book of Church Order* — \$10.00

*Home Missions Update* — free biweekly newsletter at [chmce.org](http://chmce.org)

*Planting an Orthodox Presbyterian Church* — free at [chmce.org](http://chmce.org)

Great Commission Publications (3640 Windsor Park Drive, Suwanee, GA 30024-3897) sells Sunday school and VBS materials, *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*,

*Trinity Hymnal*, and adult studies. Call toll-free 800/695-3387 to ask for a catalogue or order material. To find more information and/or to order online, go to [www.gcp.org](http://www.gcp.org).

The following publications are sold by the Committee for the Historian. For information and/or to order online, go to [www.opc.org/historian.html](http://www.opc.org/historian.html). Orders may also be placed at 215/830-0900 or [bookorders@opc.org](mailto:bookorders@opc.org). There is an additional charge for shipping. (Prices may change.)

*The Presbyterian Conflict*, by Edwin H. Rian — paperback, \$5.00

*Lest We Forget: A Personal Reflection on the Formation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, by Robert K. Churchill — paperback, \$2.00

*Fighting the Good Fight: A Brief History of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, by D. G. Hart and John Muether — paperback, \$5.00

*Between the Times: The Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Transition, 1945–1990*, by D. G. Hart — hardback, \$10.00

*J. Gresham Machen*, by Ned B. Stonehouse — hardback, \$10.00

*Choosing the Good Portion: Women of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* — hardback, \$12.00

*Confident of Better Things: Essays Commemorating Seventy-five Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* — hardback, \$12.00

*For a Testimony*, by Bruce Hunt — paperback, \$5.00

# APPENDIX 3

## HOW TO JOIN THE OPC

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If you are an individual or a family ...

We invite you to get to know us better by visiting one of our churches. Members are received into our local churches by the session (consisting of the ministers and ruling elders). After hearing of your desire to join the church, the session will meet with you to learn of your faith in Christ.

You may become a communicant member of an Orthodox Presbyterian church in one of three ways:

1. By transferring your membership from another approved denomination (a church of like faith and practice),
2. By reaffirming your faith in Christ to the session, or
3. By professing your faith in Christ for the first time as the session meets with you.

You will be asked to give your assent to the following five questions before the congregation:

1. *Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?*
2. *Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory, and that Jesus Christ is God the Son, come in the flesh?*

3. *Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, that you repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?*

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

5. *Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?*

## If you are a group of families or a congregation ...

You should contact the stated clerk of the presbytery for the region in which your group or church is located. (He may be found in the printed Directory or by contacting anyone listed on page 22). He will be able to make arrangements for you to meet with presbytery representatives with whom you may explore the process of becoming a congregation or a mission work of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The membership requirements are the same as those for individual membership, listed above.

The presbytery will want to know that your official documents will relate your group or congregation to the doctrinal standards of the OPC (the Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and the documents in *The Book of Church Order*). In addition, they will want to know that your pastor and your elders are committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, to the Reformed faith, and to the presbyterian form of church government.

Pastors and ruling elders will be examined as to their qualifications and will be required to give their assent to the following questions, among others:

1. *Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?*

2. *Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?*

3. *Do you approve of the government, discipline, and worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?*

4. *Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord? (Ruling elders: Do you promise to seek the purity, the peace, and the unity of the church?)*

At a service of recognition and installation, the congregation will be required to respond affirmatively to this question:

*In reliance upon God for strength do you solemnly promise to walk together as a church of Jesus Christ according to the Word of God and the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?*

Then the officers of the congregation will be ordained (if necessary) and installed in the usual manner.

## If you are a minister of the gospel ...

You should contact the stated clerk of the presbytery for the region in which you currently live or minister. (He may be found in the printed Directory or by contacting anyone listed on page 22). He will be able to help you to make arrangements to meet with presbytery representatives with whom you may explore the process of becoming a ministerial member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. They will need to inquire concerning your educational and ministerial credentials. In addition to other requirements, you will be asked to stand before the presbytery for an oral examination of your theological beliefs and of your commitment to the Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and the documents in *The Book of Church Order*. You will be asked to give your assent to the questions put to all ministers of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, as given above.

