

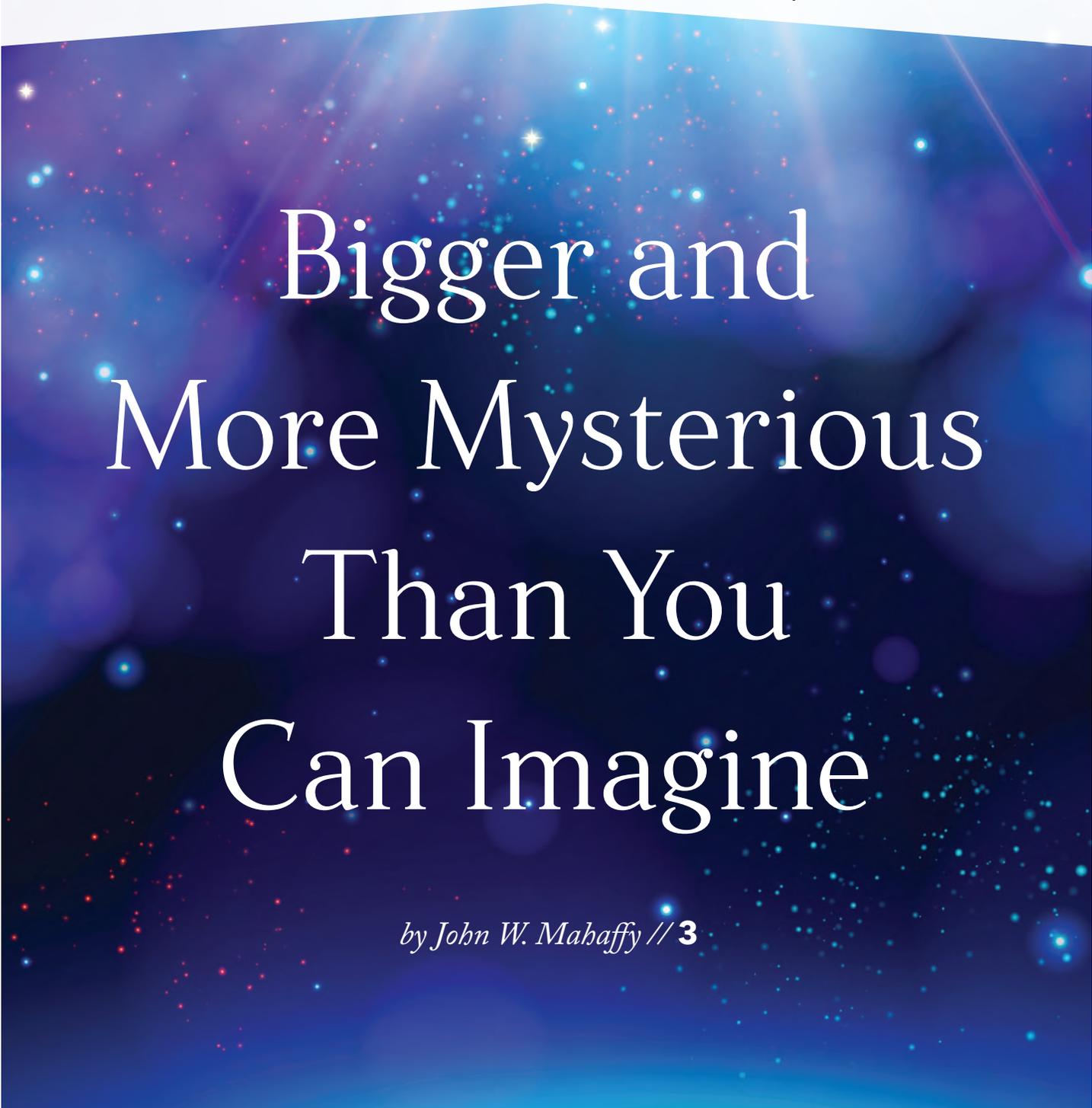
# NEW HORIZONS

≡ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ≡

**5** The Heart of Christmas //  
*by Marianne and William Radius*

DECEMBER 2016

**20** Review: Beeke and La Belle's  
*Living in a Godly Marriage* //  
*by Allen Tomlinson*



## Bigger and More Mysterious Than You Can Imagine

*by John W. Mahaffy* // **3**

# CONTENTS

## FEATURES

- 3** Bigger and More Mysterious Than You Can Imagine  
*By John W. Mahaffy*
- 5** The Heart of Christmas  
*By Marianne and William Radius*
- 8** The Reformation of the Sacraments  
*By David C. Noe*

## DEPARTMENTS

- 10** Foreign Missions  
*The Cordells in Ukraine*
- 12** Christian Education  
*OPC Timothy Conference • ABCs of Presbyterianism • Out of the mouth ...*
- 14** Home Missions  
*Oshkosh, Wisconsin*
- 16** Stewardship  
*Excelling in the grace of giving*
- 17** Prayer Calendar
- 19** News, Views, & Reviews

## New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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These members of Redeemer OPC in Dayton, Ohio, successfully memorized and recited the entire Shorter Catechism last summer (from lower left): Annelise Denny, Stephen Denny, Ken Montgomery (pastor), Barbby Whalen, Jean Bisson, Hannah Bisson, Mike Hogsed, Mark Hogsed, Lori Hogsed, Christina Bisson, Andy Dermana, and Lydia Bisson. They are pictured here at their burger-and-milkshake celebration dinner on September 9.



# BIGGER AND MORE MYSTERIOUS THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE



**JOHN W. MAHAFFY // Young King Tirian, the final king of Narnia in C. S. Lewis's *The Last Battle*, is engaged in the conflict reflected in the title of the book. The enemies of Narnia force him into a stable, but as he enters through the door, he finds himself, not in a dingy shed, but in a wonderful, sunshine-filled country.**

There he meets the kings and queens of Narnia, who are English schoolchildren who have been pulled into Narnia to rule over that land. Tirian, puzzling over the mysterious door connecting the world he has left with the better world he has just entered (friends of Narnia know about those doors between worlds), concludes that the stable he has entered is bigger on the inside than it is on the outside.

“Yes,” says Queen Lucy, speaking for the first time in the book. “In our world too, a Stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world” (pp. 140–41). Without adopting the Platonism that sometimes has too much influence on Lewis, grasp the sense of awe he reflects, pointing you to a reality that is far bigger and far more mysterious than you could ever imagine. The magical world of Narnia comes to an end, but Aslan replaces it with a better country.

Early in the book of Revelation, the apostle John similarly sees a door open in heaven. (Have you ever wondered where Lewis got the idea?) There

he encounters the Lion-Lamb, who takes the scroll from the Father and carries out God’s plan for the perfection of his creation. A series of visions portray God’s work of redemption from various perspectives. You are familiar with the accounts of the birth of Christ found in Matthew and Luke. Revelation 12 provides a third account. It gives a breathtakingly compressed view of what leads up to the incarnation and then of the conflict flowing out of it—but with the assurance that the Lamb triumphs!

In Revelation 12:1, John describes “a great sign” in heaven: a regally clothed woman, about to give birth. Promptly another sign appears: a powerful, cunning, grotesque dragon, seeking to devour the woman’s child at birth. The symbolism of the woman points, not just to Mary, but to the entire people of God (see the prophet’s description in Isaiah 54:1–8), through whom the promised Messiah would come. The conflict between the offspring of the woman and the dragon (identified in Revelation 12:9 as “that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan”)

reaches all the way back to the garden of Eden in Genesis 3:15. Although the serpent would bruise the heel of the promised Savior, the offspring of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent.

John provides a snapshot of the greatest events in history (Rev. 12:5): “She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne,” thus escaping the devouring dragon. The reference to ruling the nations identifies the child as the promised Messiah. Into a single verse John has compressed what the incarnation involves: the birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and final, triumphant kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The incarnation means that the eternal Son of God, coequal with the Father and the Spirit, has, at a particular point in world history, taken upon himself our human nature and has become the God-man. John’s focus is not just on who he is, but especially on what he does. The blood of the Lamb is the

crucial element in the defeat of Satan. Christ conquers, precisely in his time of apparent weakness and defeat. The birth of Christ has his suffering and death on the cross in view—as well as his resurrection, exaltation, and coming again. The completion of his work on earth means that the accuser of God’s people is now thrown down. Satan is a defeated enemy.

The frustrated dragon then turns his fury against the woman and her other children. This is John’s way of describing the persecution and suffering of the church. The dragon uses both deceit (false teaching) spewing out of his mouth and, when that fails, open persecution as his weapons.

Remember that John is writing the book of Revelation to churches that are suffering persecution and even martyrdom. He is telling them that their weakness and suffering do not mean that their King is helpless or frustrated.

That reminder needs to be heard by the church today. Christians in a number of countries are suffering in ways similar to the suffering of first-century believers. Even in cultures such as ours, which in earlier days were profoundly influenced by Christianity, the spirit of the age demands, not just that Christians tolerate positions opposed to God and his Word, but that they embrace them. Refusal, whether by the church or by individual believers, becomes increasingly costly.

In a sense, the church today is caught between two worlds. She is united to her Lord and shares in his triumph. But, because the last battle has not yet come, her union with the Lord involves suffering during this present evil age. Still, there is a note of victory, even in those struggles. G. K. Beale observes:

The one heavenly church being persecuted on earth cannot be destroyed because it is heavenly and ultimately inviolable spiritually, but the many who individually compose the church can suffer physically from earthly dangers. And whenever persecution, deception, and compromise are

resisted, the devil is seen as continuing to be defeated. (*A New Testament Biblical Theology*, p. 220)

The saints, though suffering on earth, do share in the triumph of Christ. His overcoming of the dragon by his blood is their victory over Satan as well (Rev. 12:11). Even in the face of life-threatening and, for some of them, life-taking, persecution, their testimony to the Lamb and their trust in him stands firm.

### How Big Is the Incarnation?

How big, then, is what happened in Bethlehem? Bigger than our whole world, bigger than the universe, more than you can imagine. Paul writes:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (Col. 1:15–20)

Our minds are finite, limited. We can and must believe what the Bible tells us about the incarnation, but, since we are not God, we cannot fully understand it. John Murray reminds us never to lose a sense of mystery and awe at what God has done in becoming man:

The infinite became the finite, the eternal and supratemporal entered time and became subject to its conditions, the immutable became the mutable, the invisible became the visible, the Creator became the created, the sustainer of all became dependent, the Almighty infirm. All is summed up in the proposition, God became

man. (John Murray, “The Person of Christ,” in *Collected Writings*, 2:132)

You live in a world in which the dragon continues to try to deceive and corrupt the church, a world in which he tries to harm God’s people. How do you survive? You, a child of God, belonging to the age to come, live in a world that suffers from the curse and all the limitations and suffering that are present in a fallen creation. When you face illness and the loss of loved ones, where do you find the strength to go on?

As you read further in the book of Revelation, the Word of God assures you that the Son, snatched so quickly from the devouring dragon, has not abandoned his suffering people. He reappears in chapter 19, riding on a white horse and defeating his and our enemies. His name is “King of kings and Lord of lords.” His victory is not a temporary one. The dragon will be utterly defeated, crushed under your feet because your Lord has crushed the serpent’s head. Revelation 21 and 22 describe the new heaven and new earth, which your King will inaugurate as he comes again.

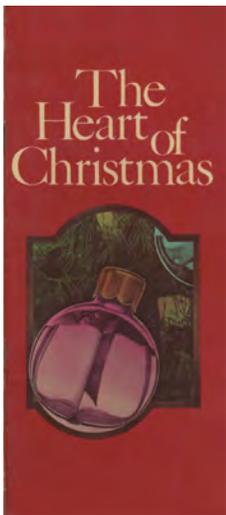
Do you grasp how sweeping the work of the Lion-Lamb is? The Son of God did not become incarnate just to provide a sacrifice for the sins of all who trust him (but thank God he did!). His work will not be complete until he brings in his new creation.

Your world will not just be restored to Eden, where our first parents could, and indeed did, succumb to temptation. Rather, you belong to his new creation. You who trust the Savior born in Bethlehem *will* enter this garden-city, a country filled with glory. You will be changed, never to have any corruption of sin or possibility of falling!

How big is what happened in a stable in our world? Big enough to contain God becoming man. Big enough to bring in a whole new creation! Imagine that—and praise your Savior. □

*The author is the pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Newberg, Ore.*

# THE HEART OF CHRISTMAS



MARIANNE AND WILLIAM RADIUS // Every baby comes into the world crying. Doctors tell you, matter-of-factly, that a baby is “programmed” to cry with the first breath he draws, in order to expand his lungs. Psychologists see in those first tears a cry of protest at being torn loose from the warmth and security of his mother’s body the infant forced

suddenly for the first time to breathe and to eat for himself.

In any case, the cries are soon quieted. The baby is bathed, wrapped in a warm blanket, held in loving arms, patiently coaxed to suck at his mother’s breast. And his mother, as the Bible tells us, quickly forgets her pain for the joy that a man is born into the world.

Our Savior, we must suppose, also came into this world crying. For He was spared none of the pain and heartache that is our common human lot. Is it not strange that not one of the beautiful paintings or sculptures of the Madonna and child shows a crying baby? Indeed, over this child, as over no other child in history, hung a shadow, the shadow of a cross. You and I are born to live. He was born to die.

His smallness laden with our sin;  
Born that His birthcries might begin.  
Full thirty year of tragedy,  
Each step a step toward Calvary.  
(Geerhardus Vos)

For us, Christmas is a time of joy. We are surrounded by music, flowers, parties, gifts, family get-togethers, and church services ringing with glad carols. This joy reflects the general tone of the Christmas stories recorded for us in Matthew and in Luke. There the angels sing, the shepherds kneel in worship, the wise men bring gifts, and Anna and Simeon rejoice that their eyes have seen God’s salvation. No shadow, and no cross intrudes on the scene. But throughout the Gospels the disciples are literally dragged uncomprehending to the disaster, as it seemed to them, of Golgotha. “Our chief rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel” (Luke 24:20). All the lights of Christmas had gone out!

But the earliest of the Christmas stories sees not only the shadow of the cross, but understands that the cross is the very heart of Christmas. This first written account of what Christmas means is found not in the Gospels, but, surprisingly, in Paul’s letter to the Philippians. This letter was written about

twenty years after the death of Jesus, and at least fifteen years before the first of our Gospels was written down.

Paul does not begin his Christmas account with the census and the travel of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, nor with the shepherds listening to heavenly music on the hillside, nor even with the angel Gabriel announcing to young Mary the amazing event she must expect nine months later. Paul starts much farther back, actually before time, in the timeless counsels of eternity, where God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—plans our salvation, encompassing the whole of history: Christmas, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, and the still longed-for *Parousia*, the blessed return of our Savior on the clouds of heaven.

So he wrote to his dear friends at Philippi: Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even

death on a cross (Phil. 2:5–8).

These words are perhaps the most profound interpretation of the meaning of the incarnation in our entire New Testament. They have been studied for centuries, by the best minds in the Christian church. What does Paul mean when he says that Christ Jesus “emptied himself”? What does the Holy Spirit want us to understand by these words?

How can we put it so that it strikes home to us how amazing this was? Sometimes, when we have been trying to help someone in serious trouble, or in great grief, we say afterwards, “I felt just drained.” But this doesn’t really tell us what Paul means. For when we say this, what we are talking about is a *feeling* of exhaustion. After a time of rest we will no longer feel drained.

For Jesus the emptiness was not a feeling; it was a reality. It was not something that passed after a few days of rest. It lasted all the thirty or more years of His human life. Jesus emptied Himself when He took upon Himself our human nature. It is hard for us to understand how the Son of God, through whom the world was created, could possibly embody Himself in human flesh. It stretches our mind beyond comprehension. We can’t help feeling that this mighty Inhabitant would shatter the frail human nature He had assumed, just as a powerful electric current will blow out a 15-watt fuse.

Let us explain in a different way. You would definitely “empty yourself” if you became embodied in an animal—say a dog, or a cat. If you can imagine this, you catch just a tiny glimpse of what this emptying Himself meant to Jesus. But only a faint glimpse, for the gap between God and man is far greater than the gap between man and animal. When Jesus emptied Himself, He

voluntarily accepted all the sorrows, trials, sicknesses, frailties, and temptations to which our human nature has been subject ever since Adam sinned.

But the incarnation is more than this. Jesus came to us not as a man, in the strength of his manhood. He came as a baby. How would you feel about



Marianne and William Radius

becoming a helpless baby again, after you have been an adult? No creature’s young is as helpless as a human baby. He has to be fed, and washed, and clothed, and warmed, or he will die. Jesus came as a baby so helpless that He could not hold up His own head, He could not sit up, He could not creep, or walk, or talk. He who owned the cattle on a thousand hills could not handle a spoon to feed Himself. He who made the cotton plant, and the flax plant, and the wool on a sheep’s back to clothe naked men, He could not put on His own clothes. All that was part of emptying Himself.

He came to a young, inexperienced girl, not yet married. There was necessarily some scandal associated with this. You can be sure there were sneering smiles and evil laughter and ugly whispers when Mary, not yet married, began to show that she was pregnant. That was part of emptying Himself.

He was not born in a hospital, with doctors and nurses in attendance, with

flowers in his mother’s room, and delicious food brought on trays at meal-times. He was not even born in Mary’s mother’s simple one-room home in Nazareth. He was born on a journey, a long, exhausting, bone-racking journey, commanded by the Roman emperor who cared nothing that Mary’s birth-time was at hand.

And when they reached Bethlehem at last, there was not even the shelter of the inn. Not that this would have been much comfort. For the “inn” was only a square porch enclosing an open field where animals could eat and sleep, while their owners built open fires to feed themselves, and then, covering themselves with a blanket, lay down to rest on the bare boards of the roofed-over porch. It was noisy, smelly, crowded, with no privacy at all. Not a very good

place to have a baby. But too good for God’s Son! No, he was born in the cave across the road, where sheep were sheltered in cold weather. His cradle was a pile of hay. That was part of emptying Himself.

He who was King of kings was born into a poor family. His stepfather, Joseph, could not even afford the usual offering for a firstborn son, a lamb, but had to offer instead two doves, the substitute offering God graciously allowed when parents were too poor to bring a lamb.

He was born secretly. Have you ever thought of that? There were no heralds going up and down the streets to announce a king’s son had been born. There were no bells ringing, no feasts of celebration. There weren’t even any birth announcements sent out to family and friends. Nobody in crowded Bethlehem knew what had happened except Joseph and Mary and the rough shepherds on the hillside outside the village. And when the wise men arrived later

at the palace of King Herod in Jerusalem, nobody there had heard anything about the Christmas Good News. Nor were any of them interested enough to go down to Bethlehem to see for themselves what all this was about. That was part of emptying Himself.

And then He had to escape by night to a strange land to save His life from the jealous suspicions of King Herod. It was another weary journey, this time for a mother with a small baby. That was part of emptying Himself.

When He grew up, He was often hungry. He went forty days without any food at the beginning of His ministry. He was often tired. The people so crowded around Him, He had scarcely time to sleep or eat. He had no royal horse to ride, but had to walk all of the many hundreds of miles during His three-year preaching ministry. At the very end of His life He had to borrow someone else's donkey for His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He never owned a house. Foxes, He said, have at least holes in the ground, and birds have nests, but I have no place to rest My head. Like Jacob so long before, He often slept in the open, under the sky, with a stone for His pillow. That was part of emptying Himself.

He had tremendous power, and He used it to help the sick, and the grieving, and the crippled. But He never once used this power to make His own life easier. Even more, for the thirty-odd years of His life, he carried with Him the burden of *our* sins. He, who knew no sin, was made sin for our sakes. When He stepped out of the Jordan River, He had bent His back beneath that invisible burden that weighed Him down as long as He lived. "Surely he had borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," Isaiah tells us. "And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (53:4, 6). That was part of emptying Himself.

When at last He came to die, we see this emptying of Himself in all its terror and horror. For at the last He emptied Himself even of the comforting presence and love of His Father, and, taking our place (for it was we who

deserved to be deserted by God), cried out in dreadful anguish, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That was part of emptying Himself.

And then came the grave. The dead body, disfigured and distorted by suffering, was taken down from the cross and buried in the earth. *Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return*, God had said. That was the final humiliation. That was the draining of the last dregs of the cup God gave Him to drink.

But though it is well for us to ponder what it meant for our Savior to empty Himself, Paul would not have us stop there. Our Christmas should not just be a moment of festivity and joy to be forgotten as soon as the lights go out and the ornaments are packed away. No, Paul mentions the Christmas event in order to call his Philippian friends to a new dedication to the Christ-like life.

When this letter was first read to the church at Philippi, how surprised the people must have been to hear these startling words: "Have this mind among yourselves which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God ... emptied himself, taking the form of a servant." Perhaps the Philippians asked the reader to stop and read the passage again. What was Paul talking about? And why this sudden reference to thoughts they could scarcely grasp? "Go back to the beginning of this part of the letter," they must have said. And so the reader repeats:

"If there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy, by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus ..." (2:1-5).

Years later, Mark was to put into writing Jesus' own words about the Christian life, a little story which, though the Gospel had not yet been

written down, was almost certainly familiar to Paul. You remember the scene. The two sons of Zebedee asked if one of them could sit on Jesus' right hand, and one on His left, when He came in His glory. Jesus called His disciples around Him.

"You know," He said, "that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them. But it shall not be so among you. Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all." And then Jesus added the clearest words in this Gospel to explain why He came to earth that first Christmas: "For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42-45).

To give His life as a ransom for many is something only our Savior could do. But those of us who have been ransomed from sin and death by His emptying of Himself are called upon to empty ourselves, each counting the other better than himself, each of us looking not to our interests, but to the interests of others.

Christmas calls us not to feasting and piled-up gifts and self-gratification, but instead to servanthood, walking the path Jesus walked before us, in lowliness of mind. If we carry with us into the New Year the memory of the King of kings and the Lord of lords sleeping on a pile of hay in a cave rudely hollowed out of the hillside, and keep this picture forever burned upon our minds as a pattern for our own lives, then our Christmas will be blessed indeed. □

*Marianne Radius, the daughter of Gerhardus and Catherine Vos, was a noted children's author. Her books included The Tent of God and God with Us (renamed Ninety Story Sermons for Children's Church). She was married to William Radius, a professor of classics at Calvin College. This article is a reprint of The Heart of Christmas, copyright 1978 by Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group (www.bakerpublishinggroup.com). Used by permission.*

# THE REFORMATION OF THE SACRAMENTS



DAVID C. NOE // As we saw last month, the Reformers sought to restore the proclamation of God's inerrant and infallible Word to its rightful place of prominence in the church. While Paul teaches us that faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17), and our Lord says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed"

(John 20:29), God also knows just how weak we are and that we are but dust. Therefore, in his boundless mercy, he also gives us supports and stays that we might rely upon his grace more completely. These are the sacraments—what the Reformers referred to as the visible Word of God.

Because the church that is reformed must always be reforming according to the standard of that same Word, officers and members of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church have an opportunity at this 500th anniversary celebration of the Reformation to examine both our thinking on and our participation in God's sacraments. Presbyterian doctrine on baptism and the Lord's Supper rests upon a careful reading of the Scriptures and a number of principles that we derive from them, assisted by learned theologians of the past.

## Baptism

The Reformers' critique of Roman Catholic sacramental practice arose from exegesis of Scripture and a reading of the church fathers, especially Augustine

and John Chrysostom. In the case of baptism, a careful analysis of the similarities between the sacraments of the Old and New Testaments showed the continuity of God's gracious dealings with his people. Through their exegesis of Romans 4 and 6, Colossians 2, and 1 Corinthians 12 (among many other passages), the Reformers came to understand that the old covenant sign and seal of circumcision had been replaced by baptism.

With regard to how and when baptism works, the Reformed rejected Roman Catholic dogma by denying that baptism (as well as the Lord's Supper) became effectual by some "virtue [*i.e.* power] in them" (WSC 91). It became effectual, they said, when the Holy Spirit chose to make it effectual. These views were latent in the church's teaching prior to the Reformation. Peter Martyr and Theodore Beza wrote with clarity and at great length to demonstrate that covenantal views of baptism were not innovative, but always taught by the better teachers of the church.

As Orthodox Presbyterians, we

should give thanks to God for our baptism, which is both the sign placed on our bodies of what God has promised to do internally in our hearts by his Holy Spirit, and the seal of that grace. It presents a vivid picture that we have been engrafted into Christ and are partakers of the benefits of the covenant of grace (WSC 94).

If we are parents of baptized infants, we should praise God that though they, like us, are born dead in trespasses and sins, the promise is given to them as well and to all who are far off. Moses risked God's wrath when he neglected the circumcision of his son. How much more would we anger God if we despise and neglect this ordinance (WCF 28)? And we must pray and believe that the children of believers are holy, and pray without ceasing with them and for them for their repentance and faith.

## Lord's Supper

When our covenant youth repent of their sins and desire to confess their Lord before men, just as he has confessed them before his Father in

heaven, they are then admitted to the Lord's Table. There is not enough space here to treat adequately the question of what the Supper is and how it is to be received. But we can say that, prior to the Reformation, a variety of views had arisen in the Roman church.

At least as early as 1059, in the controversy over the French theologian Berengar of Tours, the Roman view known as transubstantiation had been given the church's sanction. This view seemed to receive greater credibility by the rediscovery of Aristotle in the West, when his works were brought from the East in the wake of the Crusades in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These were translated into Latin and used by many scholars, particularly Aquinas, to lend philosophical support to what they believed was the universal and abiding consensus of the church.

In this view, to quote the Council of Trent (1563), "By the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood." But by the working of the Holy Spirit, and equipped with more accurate philological and historical tools that were the inheritance of the Renaissance, men all over Europe began to question the legitimacy of this viewpoint.

Carlos Eire argues (in *War against the Idols*) that the Protestant Reformation was above all a reformation of worship. If that is true, then it is fair to say that it took closest aim at the Mass, the center of Roman worship. The Reformers had two major objections: First, they objected to Rome's metaphysical understanding of the elements and their efficacy. Second, they objected to the way in which the people received these elements.

Central to the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper is the understanding of Christ's session. In Acts 1:9, we are told that "as they were looking on, [Jesus] was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight." As we are told in

Ephesians 1, Colossians 3, four places in the book of Hebrews, and several other passages, Christ then either "sat down" or is "seated" at the right hand of the Father. The session of Christ does not seem to receive much attention these days, and indeed some popular hymns speak of Christ's standing in victory.

But to the Reformers, Christ's session is just as important as his ascension. His resurrection and ascension did not change the fact that he remains truly man, and therefore his physical body remains limited by time and space. Because the Scriptures teach us that he sat down at the right hand of the Father, he cannot simultaneously be present in the bread and wine in a corporal and carnal manner. He did not sit down and then get up again, nor is his physical body of infinite extent. By the time of the writing of the Westminster Standards, these arguments had achieved a high degree of precision.

The Protestant church in America today is often prone to deny the Supper any role in strengthening our faith or serving as the means of its growth. Yet if the meal is merely a memorial, in what sense can Paul say that he who takes it unworthily "eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Cor 11:29)? For these and other reasons, the Reformers believed that we really and truly, yet not corporally or carnally, receive Christ's body and blood when we commune with him. We do this by being raised up into the heavenlies, where he now sits, not by participating in an alleged sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 10:10).

Second, though the Roman church later revised its practice, during the last few centuries before the Reformation the cup was generally denied to the laity. From what likely began as an excess of caution, and from good intentions to protect with consistency their understanding of Christ's physical presence, the practice had developed of permitting God's people to participate in the sacrament in only one species, as it was called. Thus it was possible as a professing Christian to go one's entire life and not receive the cup. This was justified

on the theory that both the body and the blood were contained completely in each species. The Reformers found this line of argumentation to be sophistry, and were eager to restore to God's hungry people the Supper in both kinds.

Another prime area of objection to the Mass was the way in which the elements were idolized by being raised aloft and knelt before, and when men and women would bow or touch their heads reverently before them. While the Reformers understood that Roman Catholics were thereby seeking to be consistent with their carnal understanding of Christ's presence, they did not see how this could escape the charge of idolatry. And, they said, if the prophets and apostles of God argued against anything, it was against idolatry.

We should also mention that the Reformers recognized only two sacraments. Marriage portrays the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32), but that does not make it a sacrament. Only those things specifically instituted by Christ must be practiced. Otherwise, we are guilty of "promoting self-made religion" (Col. 2:23).

We ought to give thanks to God for giving us his sacraments as a visible Word. Both as officers and as members of the OPC, we ought jealously to safeguard our sacramental practice.

One practical way to do this is to make sure that the places where we worship are conducive to the outward and ordinary means of grace. Protestant sanctuaries have thus always had a pulpit, the table, and the baptismal font as their standard furniture. It would be unwise to remove these and replace them with something else, thereby running the risk of concealing from ourselves and our children a proper understanding of the sacraments. And we should remember that Protestant worship is filled with drama and visual aids to our faith, namely the two sacraments given to us by Christ. Let us celebrate them with gratitude. □

*The author, an OP ruling elder, teaches classics at Calvin College.*

# EXPANDING THE WORK IN UKRAINE

// HEERO HACQUEBORD



*Bradley and Sara Cordell with their children Hanna, Becca, and Ben (in order of age)*

He was lying on his back on an oil rig in Venezuela, gazing up at the blue sky above, thinking, “What on earth am I doing here?!” For many months, Bradley Cordell had been working ten-hour shifts on the rig as a mechanical engineer, using the knowledge and skills he had acquired in college. Yet his life seemed painfully empty and missing its main purpose. Many more months of similar work in Indonesia confirmed the need for a change of direction.

I first met Bradley in the southern Ukrainian city of Odessa when, as a college student, he participated in a summer internship called the Odessa Project. It was such a significant experience in his life that he participated in three consecutive such summer internships in Odessa. This early missions experience shaped his desire to serve the church of Christ in an international setting, but working on oil rigs was so time-consuming and isolating that he wasn’t able to connect with the body of Christ in foreign locations at all! So he returned to his native Alabama, where he found an engineering job closer to home.

Yet Bradley’s desire to serve the church of Jesus Christ internationally remained. After our church-planting team established itself in L’viv in 2007, Bradley indicated a strong desire to join our ministry in this Ukrainian-speaking, culturally rich part of western Ukraine. It wasn’t until several years later, however, after God had united him with a Southern beauty named Sara, that Bradley was able once again to serve the church outside the U.S.A. And so, in 2012, a mechanical engineer and his young, growing family joined our church-planting efforts in L’viv.

But what can a mechanical engineer, a pediatric nurse, and small children do in helping to establish a vibrant, Reformed church in western Ukraine? Isn’t this kind of ministry only for ordained men? While the preaching of God’s Word is central to all we do, there are countless ways in which other

gifts can be used to build up and support the young and growing body of Christ!

First of all, Bradley and Sara have an open home. Sara loves to cook flavorful, Southern dishes (and she makes great desserts!). The Cordell family enjoys sharing this food with people they get to know through their children’s activities around town, by speaking English on playgrounds, or through other relationships.

The people of L’viv who spend time in the Cordell home have the privilege of experiencing life in a healthy, loving Christian family. They get to see relationships between wife and husband and between child and father that they may only have heard or dreamed of. Their warm hospitality draws people into lives that are centered around a love for Jesus Christ.

Through open hearts and an open home, the Lord has been able to connect Sara, in particular, with several Ukrainian women in our city. That personal touch brings the day-to-day practicality of the gospel into the lives of people whose culture tends to limit the Christian faith to Sunday morning worship. People desperately need to see how the gospel changes the way that we interact in our homes. They need to see that being accepted by God as his children dramatically changes every aspect of our lives.

One helpful tool in developing these relationships is the English language. In Ukraine, as in most parts of the world, knowing and mastering English is a key factor in opening up educational and vocational opportunities at home and abroad. Spending time with Americans is an important way for people to hone their English skills. Bradley has made use of people’s desire to practice their English with native speakers by starting an English-language Bible study.

While learning to speak Ukrainian well takes a long time and a lot of effort, Bradley is already an expert at speaking English! Over time, his study of the parables of Jesus has attracted a faithful group of believers and unbelievers who are not only practicing English but also learning about the Word

that became flesh—to redeem native speakers of all languages!

The Lord has also used Bradley's experience in the engineering world to support and facilitate our church-planting efforts in L'viv. Besides building and maintaining our church's website ([www.lvivchurch.com](http://www.lvivchurch.com)), Bradley's main responsibility has been starting and heading up a publishing house for our church. The experience in project management that Bradley gained in his last engineering position has been very useful as he has taken on the significant responsibility of designing and managing this much-needed aspect of our church-planting work.

While much Christian material is available in Russian, there is much less Ukrainian material that is useful in church planting. Most adults in L'viv know Russian from their Soviet education and from contact with Russian-speaking parts of Ukraine, but children often do not know Russian well. Besides, it's awkward for children in the context of the church to use material that is not in their native language. Our translation work, therefore, has started with a focus on translating good Sunday school curricula into Ukrainian. We are now in the finishing stages of translating and editing Sunday school materials by Desiring God Ministries and Great Commission Publications.

In addition to translating Sunday school curricula, Bradley is also heading up our efforts to translate Bible studies, other materials for discipleship, the Children's Catechism set to music ([www.ukrkids.com](http://www.ukrkids.com)), seasonal devotionals, and an online video presentation of the gospel. We trust that this publishing house will be useful in helping to establish not only a Reformed church in L'viv, but also a healthy presbytery throughout western Ukraine. (For more information, please visit <http://www.kraynebo.com>.)

One of the key requirements in establishing a congregation and a denomination is to have physical space. We understand that the church of Jesus Christ is made up of "living bricks"—those for whom our Savior gave his life on the cross. At the same time, physical brick and mortar can go a long way in assisting the daily functioning and longtime presence of Christ's living church in a community. This is especially true in L'viv, where people have great difficulty accepting a church as legitimate when it doesn't have a recognizable church building. For most people, any church without a building is automatically relegated to the category of a sect. So we have made it a priority to raise the necessary funds and purchase property in L'viv. In this significant project, the Lord has again used Bradley's particular gifts and skills. He spearheaded our support-raising efforts in the U.S., communicating our vision to friends and churches back home. As a result, we have been able to raise most of the money necessary to purchase property that could serve as a strategic location for L'viv's first post-Soviet Reformed/Presbyterian church (for more information,

see [www.lvivbuilding.weebly.com](http://www.lvivbuilding.weebly.com)).

Having the money for the initial purchase is not the same as having the property itself, though. Finding property that fits our needs for a strategic location and that is in our price range has been a grueling, difficult process. Some of the properties we screened had strings (or owners) attached to them that made purchase and ownership a very uncertain prospect. But recently the Lord brought to our attention a plot of land on the corner of two major streets in L'viv that seemed to fit the bill. After carefully reviewing all the necessary documents, speaking with experts, and voting on the matter in our twenty-nine-member church, we were able to purchase this plot of land! We will be proceeding carefully with the planning of the actual building we hope to construct on this site. In the meantime, the Lord has provided temporary housing for three ladies in our church at the house that already stands on the property. In the future, this home could function as a manse for a Ukrainian pastor and his family!



*The newly purchased church property in L'viv*

I thank the Lord for making the Cordell family (and other families) part of our church-planting team here in L'viv. Their crucial participation in our work here gives me a clearer picture of how the whole body of Christ works together—as each member serves in his or her own particular way, using the gifts and experience that our heavenly Father has given to us. As the apostle Paul says, "As in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness" (Rom. 12:4–8).

*OP missionary Heero E. C. Hacquebord labors with the MTW (PCA) team in L'viv, Ukraine, as a church-planting evangelist.*

# SURF'S UP AT THE OPC TIMOTHY CONFERENCE!

// DAVID WINSLOW, JR.



John Fesko demonstrating the first steps in surfing: catch a small wave and then stand up

The tenth annual OPC Timothy Conference will be held next April 5–8 in Southern California. Thus begins what is planned as the third cycle around the country over the next four years.

Pastor Mark Schroeder and his congregation, Harvest OPC in San Marcos, will serve as the host church. They are close to Westminster Seminary California in Escondido, where parts of the conference will be held, and are also just a short drive to the Pacific Ocean. That's where ultimate frisbee on the beach or a quick surfing lesson could come in, since we always try to plan an activity at the conference suited to its particular location. Two of our planned conference speakers are surfers, and all of them can speak to the value of enjoyable exercise.

This, of course, is just the wrapper to a conference package that at its heart is a challenge to godly young men in our churches to consider whether the Lord is calling them into gospel ministry, and how to prepare for that calling even now.

While this is a free conference for those who attend, it represents an investment of the offerings that support Worldwide Outreach and the ministry of the Committee on Christian Education. We are sowing seeds that can take a long time to bear fruit in the Lord's church and in his harvest field (please see Caleb Smith's story at the right). However, we are convinced that it is a good investment, a faithful one that will bless the church—and even your congregation.

Who may attend the conference? We accept session-nominated young men who are juniors in high school to sophomores in college, ages 16–22. We expect them to come from all over the country, provided they are willing to adjust their academic schedules to attend. Whether you are a seasoned member of your church, the pastor, a mother or father, or young adult, look around your congregation and consider if there is a young man in your church who should be

encouraged to attend the conference. If they are interested, have them speak to your pastor or a member of your session.

## Conference Speakers

What they will receive at the conference is instruction from ministers with experience in missionary, pastoral, and seminary ministry. These men will explain what is involved in becoming an OP minister of the gospel.

- *The Office of the Minister.* Dr. John Fesko will lead off

## First "Timothy" Ordained

October 7, 2016, marked the first ordination of one of the Timothy Conference "Timothies." Caleb Smith was encouraged by Pastor Nathan Hornfeld of Grace OPC in San Antonio, Texas, to attend the 2008 conference. He came as a college sophomore sensing the Lord's call to ministry.

Encouraged by his wife, Erika, Caleb went to Mid-America Reformed Seminary for his M.Div., followed by two more years at Fuller Seminary working on a degree in historical theology.

Interspersed with this higher education was practical training and mentoring with internships under Pastors

Bruce Hollister, Daniel Clifford and Chad Van Dixhoorn, and Craig Troxel.

Eight years later, Caleb is now the associate pastor of Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pennsylvania, serving with Pastor Mark Sallade. A patient eye toward a future harvest is necessary when sowing Timothy Conference seeds.



Pastor Caleb Smith

the conference with a lecture on who the minister is, especially the pastor, and the work that he is called to do. This lecture is an eye opener, which our attendees often point to as giving them a much greater appreciation for their own pastor.

- *The Call to the Ministry.* Pastor Jonathan Moersch will explore with the students the different aspects of the call to ministry, including the internal work of the Spirit and the external involvement of the church. All the speakers will share informally how the Lord called them into their gospel labors.

- *The Seminary Education.* Dr. David VanDrunen will explain why a seminary degree is so important and what to expect in a seminary education. His lecture will be enhanced by interaction with seminary students and classes on the Westminster campus.

- *The Process toward Ordination.* The Rev. Danny Olinger will lay out for the students each step of the way that lies before candidates for the ministry. But with his well-known encouraging smile, he will assure the students that with the church involved, they may expect the Lord's blessing for the challenges they meet on the journey.

- *Preparing for the Ministry Now.* Pastor Christopher Chelpka will wrap up the conference lectures with practical wisdom on what young men can be doing in their personal development and service in the church to prepare them to follow God's calling.

These five essential lectures, attendance at a seminary class, meals with the speakers, and meeting seminarians who are just a few steps ahead along the path to ordination are all part of what makes this conference a great experience.

The ribbon on the conference package is the wonderful peer fellowship of like-minded young men committed to exploring God's calling upon their lives. As Ben Hoekstra said after the 2015 Conference, "My time at the Timothy Conference was incredibly enriching. Beyond sessions with all the speakers, I was blessed with deep, meaningful, Spirit-filled conversations with other attendees and the speakers."

### Application Deadline

The application deadline is January 15, 2017! Download the application and the conference prospectus at [OPC.org](http://OPC.org) on the Christian Education page.

## ☆ Congratulations

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

- **Jonathan Black**, *Caney OPC, Caney, KS*
- **Naomi Black**, *Caney OPC, Caney, KS*

The **Catechism for Young Children** has been recited by:

- **Matthew Carrell**, *Tyler Presbyterian Church, Tyler, TX*

## ABCs of PRESBYTERIANISM

### The Presbyterian Vision

Larry Wilson

The biblical ideal is that there should be one Christian church in any community. It should be made up of more than one local congregation, and should be ruled jointly by its assembled elders. In our day, we can barely even imagine this. There is too much ecclesiastical pandemonium. Nevertheless, it *is* the Presbyterian vision.

Of course, we can implement this vision only as far as believers come to agree with it. And in our day, like-minded Christians are few and far between. We're divided and scattered. How desperately the church needs revival and reformation!

This is part of our vision in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church—to keep proclaiming Christ, to keep planting Christ-exalting churches, and to keep cultivating ecumenical relations with other Christ-exalting churches in order to accomplish together what no one church can do alone.

Thankfully, the shortcomings and failures of believers and churches can never change the basic reality: King Jesus really is gathering, ruling, and perfecting his one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church by the agency of his Holy Spirit working through his Word as it is administered by weak and sinful men. And he will continue to do so until the day when he returns in power and glory and his one beautiful bride appears (Col. 3:4). What a day that will be!

Meanwhile, our Good Shepherd calls us to keep listening to his voice and following him as closely and faithfully as we can and to keep trusting him to keep his promise to build his church. We can do so with this assurance:

Did we in our own strength confide,  
our striving would be losing;  
were not the right Man on our side,  
the Man of God's own choosing.  
Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is he,  
LORD Sabaoth his name,  
from age to age the same,  
and he must win the battle. (Martin Luther)

## ● Out of the Mouth . . .

My son William, 2, has learned the Lord's Prayer, partly by hearing it in church. Recently he ended his bedtime prayers with it: "... the power and the glory forever. Amen. You may be seated."

—Megan Robinson  
Oviedo, Fla.

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

# ANNOUNCING THE BIRTH OF RESURRECTION OPC

// SEAN GREGG



*The members of Apple Valley Presbyterian Church in Neenah, Wis., who form the core group for the Oshkosh congregation*

**O***shkosh*: for many, the word stirs up images of little children playing in denim overalls. But the session and members of nearby Apple Valley Presbyterian Church in Neenah, Wisconsin, see a mid-sized city of that name with no NAPARC presence. Or, at least, they did. Their daughter, Resurrection Presbyterian Church, is due to be born there in December.

Oshkosh, the eighth-largest city in the state, is southwest of Neenah, twenty-five minutes down newly designated Interstate 41. Unlike some mid-sized Midwestern cities, the economy and population of Oshkosh are stable. The population of about 65,000 has good demographic diversity.

The city grew up around the lumber and paper industries. The famous overalls are no longer made in town, though the company that makes them still has offices there. Fishing and boating are big business, and a local defense contractor was recently awarded a large contract to build vehicles for the military. More than 13,000 students attend the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh, and another 10,000 attend Fox Valley Technical College.

New Hope Presbyterian Church in Green Bay planted Apple Valley Presbyterian Church, about forty-five minutes to the southwest, in the early 1990s. Apple Valley is in the middle of Wisconsin's Fox Cities, a group of six cities that run into each other at the northern end of Lake Winnebago. The cities have a combined population of nearly 300,000.

## A Solid Core Group

A family from Oshkosh began attending worship at Apple Valley, and they soon brought another family, which brought another family. About two and a half years ago, Pastor John Hartley and the session began praying regularly from the pulpit that the Lord would grant a daughter church to be planted in Oshkosh.

About one year later, one of the Oshkosh families

approached the session, saying that they were ready to be part of the core group. Others quickly followed suit, and soon an evening Bible study was begun in Oshkosh. In February, the search began for an associate pastor, and the congregation voted to call Robert Holda in July.

The core group includes three ruling elders from Apple Valley. One is a former nondenominational minister in Oshkosh who grew in his Reformed convictions, the second is a retired Oshkosh police officer, and the third was employed in the area's paper industry.

About twenty people are committed to the work, and several more have expressed interest. Many who will soon be worshipping in Oshkosh have spent a number of years at Reformed churches. In the core group are retirees, middle-aged couples, young families, and newlyweds.

Apple Valley's session decided to wait for families to approach them about joining the plant, rather than trying to prompt families to leave. While the new plant will be relatively close, it results from a desire to see friends and neighbors in Oshkosh reached for the gospel, rather than to see a split within the Apple Valley congregation. "I love them so much," Hartley said. "I'll miss them, but the whole church recognizes that the Lord led in all of this."

Pastor Holda is leading the group through Ken Golden's book *Presbytopia*, as they consider how to speak to unbelievers about Christ without relying on Reformed vocabulary that won't be easily understood. The group is excited to take on the hard work of planting a church. Holda points out that his family is the newest in the group, and the others already have a history of worshipping and working together at Apple Valley.

## Holda's Path to Oshkosh

Robert Holda was ordained on October 21, 2016, completing a long and winding path to the ministry. He was raised by nondenominational parents who left the Roman Catholic church in their twenties. He was a believer, but lacked a robust

theological foundation in his younger years. In his early twenties, he attended a Reformed Baptist church, where he heard the doctrines of grace and the sovereignty of God clearly proclaimed for the first time.

That proclamation brought peace to Holda, who was working on his B.A. in elementary education. After graduating, he taught middle school in Chicagoland for five years. During that time, he attended Grace Community Bible Church in Elgin, Illinois, where David Sunday was the pastor. It was during those years that Holda met Grace McHugh, who was attending the Church of Christian Liberty, which her grandfather, Paul Lindstrom, had founded. Grace's father was an elder in the church, and he took Holda through the Westminster Confession of Faith. While he grew in his understanding of Reformed doctrine, he did not yet feel a call to the ministry.

One and a half years after Bob and Grace married, he began teaching at a private boarding school. A year later, the Holdas began house-parenting positions at a sister campus in Chicago's south suburbs. That was where the Holdas first encountered the OPC. They became members of New Covenant Community Church in Joliet, Illinois, in 2012. By this point, Bob had earned a masters degree in education, and he began to consider whether he was called to use his gifts in an administrative position at a Christian school.

Pastors Bruce Hollister and Alan Strange approached Holda separately and told him that he was gifted for the ministry, and they recommended seminary study. Bob enrolled at Mid-America Reformed Seminary in 2013. Summer internships, one at New Covenant Community Church and a second at Bethel OPC in Oostburg, Wisconsin, helped to confirm a call to pastoral ministry. He was licensed in March and graduated from



Bob and Grace Holda with daughter Ellie

### Home Missions Today

For up-to-date Home Missions news and prayer updates, e-mail [HomeMissionsToday@opc.org](mailto:HomeMissionsToday@opc.org). New editions: December 14, 28.



Pastor Holda leading a Sunday evening Bible study

seminary in May.

Holda was in contact with several churches, including Apple Valley. Still, while he was convinced of his call to pastoral ministry, church planting was not on his radar. "We knew we probably weren't going to be foreign missionaries, but not much beyond that," Holda said. "We spent the summer praying and candidating, and the Lord faithfully led us through the options on the table."

Committed to staying in the OPC, but initially a bit unsure about the nature of church planting, Holda says he was encouraged by one elder who half-jokingly referred to the Oshkosh option as church in a box. While he knows there is much hard work ahead of him, Holda is glad that this is not a parachute drop, and that Pastor Hartley and the overseeing session will be readily accessible.

### Looking Ahead

While he knows being the only Reformed church in Oshkosh will come with challenges, Holda and the core group are excited by the opportunity to introduce their neighbors to Reformed theology and see them benefit from it.

Worship is scheduled to begin the first Sunday of December at Christian Community Childcare Center. The building was a church building in the past, and the group will be able to have a sign up on both Saturdays and Sundays. The rental fee includes the ability to set up on Saturday and use the building all day on Sunday. Current plans are to hold worship at 10 a.m., but having the facility all day long enables the congregation to add to their Sunday schedule as time goes by.

Apple Valley and her new daughter are happy to see a Reformed witness in Oshkosh, but they aren't ready to stop there. "We'd love to see OP churches up and down Interstate 41 from Green Bay to Milwaukee," Pastor Hartley said. Holda agrees, and both see Fond du Lac, at the southern tip of Lake Winnebago, as a great place for New Hope Presbyterian Church's great-granddaughter to grow up in the years to come, Lord willing.

# EXCELLING IN THE GRACE OF GIVING

// DAVID WINSLOW, JR.

What can the gathering of manna in the wilderness teach us about Christian stewardship? In 2 Corinthians 8:15, the sufficiency of the manna supplied by the Lord illustrates that we should give according to what we have, not according to what we do not have. Does this seem too obvious to you? Well, think again about your own gathering and giving.

Do you ever daydream about what you might give to the church if you won the lottery? How willing you would be to give away such riches! (Believe me, Orthodox Presbyterians dream like this on occasion.) But this is not the diligent gathering of manna that took place in the wilderness. Don't waste your resources on lottery tickets. Get off your daydreaming couch and start gathering, so you can give in accordance with what you have, not what you *might* have.

Do you ever think that you have gathered too little to share in the kingdom needs around you? Are you fearful that if you share some of the little you have now, you may have an unmet need down the road? The sufficiency of the manna to meet God's people's *daily* needs speaks to these fears.

Do you ever think about the abundance you have gathered as that which you have earned by the sweat of your brow, thus entitling you to it? Matthew Henry notes regarding the manna that "what God graciously gives we must industriously gather." But our industry, which is commendable, never erases the fact of God's gracious provision. What do you have that is not a gift from God?

Yes, the gathering of manna in Exodus 16:17-18 is interesting to think about. The Israelites "gathered, some more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over,

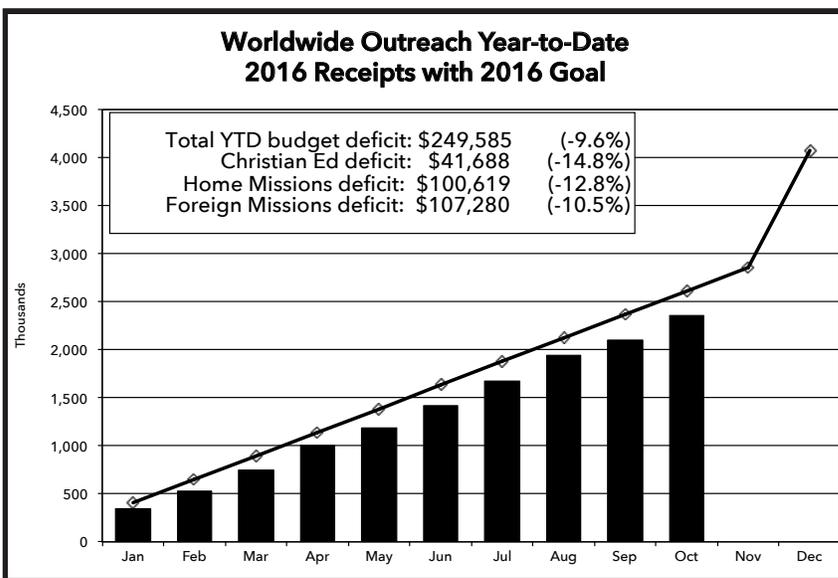
and whoever gathered little had no lack." The wealthy and the poor, the healthy and the sick, the large families and the small families, all had a sufficiency: their daily bread from heaven.

Calvin is convinced that an enforced generosity is taking place, appropriate to the time and circumstances. He notes that since manna was supplied daily without labor, it is not surprising that God would require each one to partake equally without allowing any to store up extra. "Thus as each was more especially diligent, the more he benefited his slower and less industrious neighbor without any loss to himself."

In addition to his guideline to give according to one's means, Paul supplies two examples that go above and beyond that. First, the Macedonians, despite affliction and poverty, display a wealth of generosity and willingly give beyond their means. Second and preeminently, the Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich beyond comparison, became poor for our sake, so that we by his poverty might become rich. The Macedonians had great faith; Jesus displayed perfect love.

Gather God's gifts with diligence, gather abundantly if the Lord allows, and then give cheerfully, even joyfully, just as our Savior did for us. "For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have" (2 Cor. 8:12). Your diligence in gathering, spurred on by faith and love, can supply what others are not able to gather: the young, the infirm, the aged, the refugee, and yes, pastors and missionaries who depend on us to gather and give material blessings so that they can concentrate on gathering souls in obedience to the Great Commission.

*The author, a ruling elder at Westminster OPC in Westminster, Calif., is a member of the Committee on Christian Education.*



## DECEMBER

1. **Ben and Heather Hopp**, Haiti (on furlough). Pray for Ben as he speaks to the tenth annual Foreign Missions Conference, meeting in Willow Grove, Pa., tomorrow. / **Bill and Sessie Welzien**, Key West, Fla. Pray that the Lord would add people to Keys Presbyterian Church. / **David Haney**, director of finance and planned giving for the Committee on Coordination.
2. Home Missions general secretary **John Shaw**. / Pray for tentmaker missionary **T. L. L.**, China (on furlough), speaking to presbytery representatives at the missions conference today. / The **OPC trustees** of Great Commission Publications.
3. Associate missionaries **Octavius and Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray for growth in numbers and in zeal to worship God at the Port-au-Prince church. / **Larry and Kalynn Oldaker**, Huron, Ohio. Pray for the discipleship and ministry of Grace Fellowship OPC. / **Doug Watson**, part-time staff accountant.
 

*Larry and Kalynn Oldaker*
4. **Bob and Grace Holda**, Oshkosh, Wis. Pray that the Lord would bless Resurrection Presbyterian Church as worship services begin this month. / Pray for Foreign Missions associate general secretary **Douglas Clawson** as he presents the work of foreign missions to OP congregations. / **Janet Birkmann**, Diaconal Ministries administrative assistant.
5. Pray for missionary associates **Markus and Sharon Jeromin**, Uruguay, as they complete their term of service and return to the U.S. / **Matt and Elin Prather**, Corona, Calif. Pray for unity and fellowship among the people of Corona Presbyterian Church. / **Kathy Bube**, Loan Fund administrator, and **Mark Stumpff**, office assistant.
6. **Eric and Donna Hausler**, Naples, Fla. Pray for the Lord to continue using Christ the King Presbyterian Church to honor Christ. / **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia. Pray for the diaconal ministry to refugees coming from North Korea, carried out through a local church. / **Bryan (and Heidi) Dage**, yearlong intern at Covenant OPC in Komoka, Ontario.
7. Pray for **Bill and Margaret Shishko**, regional home missionary of the Presbytery of Connecticut and Southern New York, as he does church-planting exploratory work in the region. / Missionary associates **D. M.** and **D. V.**, Asia. / **Bulut Yasar**, yearlong intern at New Life OPC in Montoursville, Pa.
8. **Jay and Andrea Bennett**, Neon, Ky. Pray that the elect will be brought in to Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church. / Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **Mark Bube** as he reports to the Executive Committee meeting tomorrow. / Pray for **Greg Reynolds**, editor of *Ordained Servant*, the magazine for church officers.
9. **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia. Pray for Mr. M. as he assists with the examination of indigenous men for ordination. / **Brian and Sara Chang**, Cottonwood, Ariz. Pray for new opportunities to make known the name of Christ and Christ Reformed Presbyterian Church. / *Ordained Servant* proofreader **Diane Olinger**.
10. **Jim and Eve Cassidy**, Austin, Tex. Pray for wisdom at South Austin Presbyterian Church as plans are made for outreach in New Braunfels. / Missionary associates **E. K.** and **S. Z.**, Asia. Pray for a good wrap-up to the semester of teaching. / **Jan Gregson**, assistant to the finance director.
11. Pray for **Mark and Jeni Richline**, Montevideo, Uruguay, concluding their furlough and returning to Uruguay tomorrow. / **Lowell and Mae Ivey**, Virginia Beach, Va. Pray for God's blessing on Reformation Presbyterian Church's evangelism and outreach activities. / Publications coordinator and *New Horizons* managing editor **Jim Scott**.
12. **Brad and Cinnamon Peppo**, Springfield, Ohio. Pray that God would bless Living Water OPC through the process of particularization. / **Ray and Michele Call**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for our missionaries as they witness to their neighbors. / **Daniel (and Marcy) Borvan**, yearlong intern at Merrimack Valley Presbyterian Church in North Andover, Mass.
13. Missionary associates **Mr. and Mrs. C.**, Asia. Pray that seekers attending Bible studies will respond in faith to the gospel. / **Mark and Karissa Soud**, Birmingham, Ala. Pray for unity and growth in Redeemer Presbyterian Church. / **Joseph Johnson**, yearlong intern at Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pa.
14. **Tim and Deborah Herndon**, West Lebanon, N.H. Give thanks for the many young families that regularly attend Providence OPC. / Tentmaker missionary **T. D.**, Asia. Pray for a bold witness as she interacts with unbelieving contacts. / **Ryan (and Rochelle) Cavanaugh**, yearlong intern at Prescott Presbyterian Church in Prescott, Ariz.
15. Affiliated missionaries **Jerry and Marilyn Farnik**, Prague, Czech Republic. Pray for the outreach activities held during the holiday season. / **Josh and Kristen McKamy**, Chambersburg, Pa. Praise the Lord for providing a new worship facility for Covenant OPC. / *New Horizons* cover designer **Chris Tobias**.

- 16. Joshua and Jessica Lyon**, Carson, Calif. Pray for the discipleship and ministry of Grace OPC. / Missionary associates **Kathleen Winslow**, Czech Republic, and **Angela Voskuil**, Uganda. Pray for their witness to students. / Pray for ample enrollment for the spring 2017 **Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC** semester.
- 17. Eric and Dianna Tuininga**, Mbale, Uganda (on furlough). Pray that the Lord would use Eric's ministry to bless the congregations to whom he speaks. / Home Missions staff administrator **Sean Gregg**. / Pray for **Brian Cochran**, **Christopher Folkerts**, **Joel Pearce**, and **David Winslow** as they seek to gain permission to use copyrighted material for the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*.
- 18. Jonathan and Kristin Moersch**, Capistrano Beach, Calif. Pray that Trinity Presbyterian Church will continue to grow in love and service toward God and neighbor. / **David and Sunshine Okken**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for God's provision of men to serve the church as elders. / Navy chaplain **Tim (and Janine) Power**.
- 19. David and Rashed Robbins**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the Nakaale congregation's spiritual growth and understanding. / **David and Rebekah Graves**, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Pray for God's Spirit to direct and empower the gospel witness of Coeur d'Alene Reformed Church. / Navy chaplain **John (and Linda) Carter**.
- 20. Kim and Barbara Kuhfuss**, Eau Claire, Wis. Pray that God would bless Providence Reformed Church's use of their new facility. / Foreign Missions administrative assistant **Linda Posthuma** and secretary **Katrina Zartman**. / **Miller (and Stephanie) Ansell**, yearlong intern at Faith Presbyterian Church in Garland, Tex.
- 21. Brian and Dorothy Wingard**, South Africa. Pray that the Lord would use the students at the theological college to be a positive influence in their communities. / **Paul and Sarah Mourreale**, St. Louis, Mo. Pray for wisdom regarding a change of location for Gateway OPC. / **Ryan (and Rachel) Heaton**, yearlong intern at Tyler Presbyterian Church in Tyler, Tex.
- 22. Chris and Megan Hartshorn**, Anaheim Hills, Calif. Pray for visitors and conversions at Anaheim Hills Presbyterian Church. / **Bob and Martha Wright**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for those finishing the clinic construction. / Pray for Christian Education general secretary **Danny Olinger** as he interviews potential interns.
- 23.** Pray for the labors of missionary associates **Christopher and Chloe Verdick**, Nakaale, Uganda. / **Mika and Christina Edmondson**, Grand Rapids, Mich. Pray for continued development in the ministry of New City Fellowship. / Committee for Diaconal Ministries administrator **David Nakhla**. Pray that Christ would be glorified through the ministry of mercy carried out by OPC deacons.
- 24. Andrew and Billie Moody**, San Antonio, Tex. Pray for wisdom as San Antonio Reformed Church prepares for particularization. / Pray for the day-to-day needs of our retired missionaries **Betty Andrews**, **Cal and Edie Cummings**, **Greet Rietkerk**, and **Young and Mary Lou Son**. / Army chaplain **David (and Jenna) DeRienzo**.
- 25. Ethiopian Reformed Presbyterian Church.** Pray for believers who face the challenges and consequences of leading Christian lives. / **Jim and Bonnie Hoekstra**, Andover, Minn. Pray that visitors to Immanuel OPC will desire to join in communicant fellowship. / *New Horizons* editorial assistant **Pat Clawson** and proofreader **Sarah Pederson**.
- 26.** Pray for **Chris and Nancy Walmer**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania, as he regularly visits mission works in the region. / **Charles and Connie Jackson**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for local pastors as they deal with the needs of their congregations. / **Adrian (and Rachel) Crum**, yearlong intern at Bayview OPC in Chula Vista, Calif.
- 27.** Missionary associates **Leah Hopp** and **Sarah Jantzen**, Uganda. Give thanks for their contributions to the work of the Uganda Mission. / Home Missions associate general secretary **Al Tricarico**. / Pray for stated clerk **Ross Graham** as he begins preparations for the next General Assembly, which convenes on May 31, 2017.
- 28. John and Wenny Ro**, Chicago, Ill. (downtown). Pray that God would bring new people to Gospel Life Presbyterian Church as a result of its outreach activities. / **Heero and Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for the ministry to the children in the church. / **Andy (and Anna) Smith**, yearlong intern at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Ill.



Heero and Anya Hacquebord

- 29.** Affiliated missionaries **Linda Karner** and **Craig and Ree Coulbourne**, Japan. / **Ron and Carol Beabout**, Gaithersburg, Md. Pray that Trinity Reformed Church will keep her focus on Christ in her ministry and outreach. / **Richard (and Erin) Chung**, yearlong intern at Theophilus OPC in Anaheim, Calif.
- 30. Phil Strong**, Lander, Wyo. Pray that Grace Reformed Fellowship's session will be faithful in their ministry. / **Church in the Horn of Africa**. Pray for those providing leadership in the church. / **Charlene Tipton**, database administrator.
- 31. Ben and Melanie Westerveld**, Quebec, Canada. Pray that visitors to St-Marc Church will become regular attenders. / **Mike and Katy Myers**, Royston, Ga. Pray that the Lord would open doors and hearts for evangelism at Heritage Presbyterian Church. / **Wayne (and Suzanne) Veenstra**, yearlong intern at Harvest OPC in Wyoming, Mich.

# NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

## IN MEMORIAM

### ROSEMARY COMMERET PENN

On Sunday, October 2, Rosemary Finlaw Commeret Penn, 91, went to be with her Lord and Savior. She had been the wife of the late Rev. Raymond Commeret. They served OP churches in Kirkwood, Pennsylvania; Fair Lawn, New Jersey; Barre, Vermont; and Burlington, Vermont. They retired to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where they were active in Harvest OPC. After Raymond's death in 2003, Rosemary married Maury Penn, who had long been active at the Fair Lawn church. He died in 2011. Rosemary is survived by four children, seven grandchildren, and eleven great-grandchildren.



Rosemary Commeret Penn

## IN MEMORIAM

### JOCILYN WARREN

*Susan Winslow*

During her final illness, when Jocilyn's daughter read her 1 John 2:17, she responded, "Don't tell anyone that I'm passing away: the world with its passions is passing away—but I am going to live forever. The Bible tells me so." Born in 1937 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Jocilyn Mae Engbers was grounded by that faith through the nearly seventy-nine years of her fruitful life.



Jocilyn Warren

After graduating from Calvin College with a teaching credential, Joc taught in various settings all her adult life, even into her last months. She taught in four different Christian day schools, impacting the lives of hundreds of students and their parents. But she also taught by example and with an open Bible in eleven different congregations served by her husband, Pastor William Warren, during their fifty-three years of marriage.

Jocilyn fell asleep in Christ on September 21, 2016. A service of thankful praise for her life filled Westminster OPC in Westminster, California, fuller than ever before. She will be missed, but she has not passed away!

She is survived by her husband, three married children, eight grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

## UPDATE

### CHURCHES

• The congregation of **Trinity OPC** in Franklin, Pa., voted a second time on September 25 to leave the OPC.

### MINISTERS

• On July 30, Army chaplain **Paul T. Berghaus** left active duty and transferred to the Army Reserve, where he will serve as a chaplain while pursuing a Ph.D.

program at Georgetown University.

• On September 17, the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Arthur J. Fox** and Calvary OPC in Middletown, Pa., effective September 30.

• **Calvin R. Goligher** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of First OPC in Sunnyvale, Calif., on October 28.

• **Robert T. Holda** was ordained as a minister and installed as associate pastor of Apple Valley Presbyterian Church in Neenah, Wis., to serve as organizing pastor of Resurrection Presbyterian Church in Oshkosh, Wis., on October 21.

• On October 7, **Caleb M. Smith** was ordained as a minister and installed as associate pastor of Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pa.

• On October 27, the Presbytery of the Midwest dissolved the pastoral relationship between **John R. Tinsley** and Bethel OPC in Oostburg, Wis., and approved his taking the position of chaplain at the Aurora Zilber Family Hospice in Wauwatosa, Wis., as of November 1.

• On September 30, Army chaplain **Earl W. Vanderhoff** retired with full disability.

### MILESTONES

• **Rosemary (Finlaw) Commeret Penn**, 91, widow of the late Rev. Raymond Commeret, died on October 2.

## LETTERS

### CHRISTIAN ISOLATION

Editor:

This letter responds to George C. Hammond's letter in the October issue. We agree that the church has become an island in our culture, but we should not blame homeschooling. God has instructed parents to "diligently teach their children" (Deut. 6:4-6). Home-educated children can and should be productive

citizens, while being raised according to God's order and mandates. Without being "conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2), our children (with parental supervision) participate in many activities with unbelieving neighbors. They help the needy in their community by visiting nursing homes and assisting disaster victims. When out running errands, they interact with the employees and others. They impact our culture without being sacrificed to the world.

Paul and Ann-Marie Hines  
San Clemente, Calif.

## WOMEN IN THE OPC

Editor:

I have appreciated how the October issues of *New Horizons* in recent years have commemorated the October 31 anniversary of the Protestant Reformation by focusing on important figures in church history. How fitting it is that in 2016 the focus is turned toward the oft-neglected women who, throughout the OPC's history, have helped to build up our own particular branch of Protestantism.

Matthew Kingsbury  
Aurora, Colo.

## THE LGBT COMMUNITY

Editor:

In his letter to the editor in the October issue, Curt Day asks, "If Christians push society to marginalize and disrespect the LGBT community, how can we claim to be reaching out to those in that community in love?" Of course Christians should reach out in love to all of our neighbors, but upholding the biblical view of sexuality and marriage is not a bigoted act of marginalization and disrespect.

Brian Wortman  
Sheridan, Ind.

### Corrections

In the November issue, p. 22, the age at death of Jocilyn Warren should have been given as 78.

Also on that page, the date of birth of Norman Byer should have been given as April 2, 1926.

## REVIEWS

*Living in a Godly Marriage*, by Joel R. Beeke and James A. La Belle. Reformation Heritage Books, 2016. Paperback, 268 pages, list price \$15.00. Reviewed by OP pastor Allen Tomlinson.

This is one of the best books on biblical marriage that I have ever read. Some books approach the subject from a biblical perspective, and some have seemed less committed to that. Joel Beeke and James La Belle's approach definitely belongs in the former category. One of the most beneficial qualities of this book is its balance—its biblical balance, so much needed in our postmodern culture.

As with their other jointly written books, Beeke and La Belle look to our Puritan forefathers. In this case, twenty-nine Puritan writers from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are quoted extensively, including Ames, Baxter, and Perkins.

There are ten chapters in the book. The first two deal with "The Institution and Honor of Marriage" and "The Purposes and Benefits of Marriage." These chapters provide a foundation that is absolutely vital for the remaining topics.

The next two chapters are very practical, built upon the foundation laid in the first two chapters. "Securing a Good Entrance into Marriage" is one of the reasons I am going to recommend this book to all my grandchildren. "Preserving the Honor of Marriage" is very useful to all of us who are married. There is always more to learn about treating our spouses in a way that reflects God's original purpose.

Chapters 5–9 deal with our duties toward one another, and most of all toward God, in marriage. Grounding our duties toward one another upon our duty toward God is critical for a due appreciation of them. Chapters 5 and 6, "The Mutual Duties of Love and Chastity" and "The Mutual Duties of Help and Peace," are very helpful, even for those of us who have

been "happily" married.

Chapter 10, "Concluding Counsel," points us to Christ as the only way for us to live faithfully (in a progressive sense) in a genuinely biblical marriage. The appendix gives us "George Swinnock's Prayers for Husbands and Wives," and there is also a full bibliography on "Puritans on Marriage and Family."

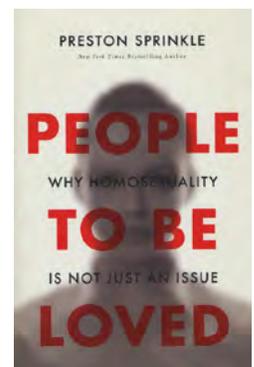
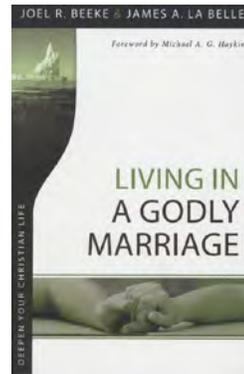
I have only two possible improvements to suggest. First, in regard to the creation of woman to fill up what was lacking on man (Gen. 2), the authors could have brought Titus 2:1–5 and 1 Timothy 2:11–15 into the discussion, as well as other passages that refer back to, or may be based upon, the creation account.

Second, some of the Puritans seem to personalize the Church's marriage to Christ in a way that could lead to a dangerous kind of mysticism if one sees oneself (as an individual) as "Christ's bride." The bride of Christ in the New Testament is the church as the church, not the individual Christian.

However, both of these suggestions are not meant to suggest that there is a serious defect in this book. It comes highly recommended for both personal use and pastoral counseling.

*People to Be Loved: Why Homosexuality Is Not Just an Issue*, by Preston Sprinkle. Zondervan, 2015. Paperback, 224 pages, list price \$16.99. Reviewed by Prof. David VanDrunen.

In this volume, Preston Sprinkle chiefly advances two ideas: that Christians need to do a much better job at befriending, understanding, and loving people with same-sex attraction, and that Scripture considers homosexual conduct a sin.



This book contains a great deal of valuable material. Before discussing it, however, I need to point out a couple of things that detract from the seriousness of Sprinkle's efforts. First, he engages in repeated self-congratulation early in the volume. He emphasizes how much he loves people, how fair, honest, and open-minded with Scripture he has tried to be, and how he has refused to keep the Bible at arm's length from real people. It may all be true, but Sprinkle would commend himself better if he let those things shine through in the book implicitly rather than talk about himself explicitly.

Second, Sprinkle lapses into colloquialisms and even crude informalities at frequent intervals. He subjects readers to "yup," "yeah," and "Heck." He refers to "hump[ing] anyone and anything," making "a big stink," and being "up the creek." He mentions the "funky laws" of Leviticus and "girls with big boobs." I apologize for stating some of these things, but this is what readers will find. Presumably he uses such language because, as he writes, he is not only a pastor and New Testament scholar, but also an "ordinary dude."

These two drawbacks are unfortunate, since much of the book's substance is excellent. His exegesis of several key biblical texts is sharp and insightful. The best of these discussions, in my judgment, are his treatments of sexual difference in Genesis 1–2 (chapter 2), Jesus' teaching on sex and marriage in the Gospels (chapter 5), Romans 1:18–32 (chapter 6), and the two unusual words that Paul uses to refer to homosexual conduct in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 (chapter 7). Sprinkle also offers many helpful comments on celibacy, calling, suffering, and singleness in his final chapter. He calls on the church to "develop a better theology of singleness" in order to deal better with celibate, same-sex attracted people in its midst. I believe he is right. Throughout the book, as indicated above, Sprinkle urges a loving approach toward the same-sex attracted and lambastes much of the Christian world for grievous failings in this area. Of course, readers will have different individual and ecclesiastical experiences with these matters, but his concerns are correct and his exhortations well worth

pondering.

Some of Sprinkle's analysis is unsatisfying. For example, he misses some important aspects of the Sodom story in Genesis 19, and his treatment of "same-sex orientation" is open to several objections. The latter issue, granted, is a very difficult one.

Despite some weaknesses, this is a valuable contribution to contemporary debates about sex and marriage. Reformed Christians would probably do well to bear with the drawbacks and reflect seriously on Sprinkle's biblical exegesis and exhortations to love.

***The Flow of the Psalms: Discovering Their Structure and Theology*, by O. Palmer Robertson. P&R, 2015. Paperback, 325 pages, list price \$21.99. Reviewed by Prof. Bryan D. Estelle.**

Most studies of the Psalter for centuries focused on understanding the meaning of individual psalms apart from the psalms that appear immediately before or after the one under consideration, let alone the book in which a particular psalm appears (there are five "books" in the Psalter). Then along came Herman Gunkel (1862–1932) and Sigmund Mowinkel (1884–1965), and the focus switched to genre identification as the key to understanding individual psalms. Recently, however, another approach has become important: finding an organizational structure within the Psalms and trying to understand the editor(s)' theological intentions for organizing the Psalter as a whole. Robertson has written a book attempting to engage this approach.

Robertson sets out the two "poetic pillars" of the Psalter: Psalms 1 and 2, whose themes permeate the rest of the Psalter. Next he sets the redemptive-historical framework of the Psalter. Those familiar with Robertson's views on covenant theology will recognize many themes here. The subsequent chapters cover each book of the Psalter, respectively, with its major theme: Book I of the Psalter (Pss. 1–41) is

about confrontation. Book II (Pss. 42–72) is about communication, especially with peoples outside Israel. Book III (Pss. 73–89) is about devastation and exile. Book IV (Pss. 90–106) is about maturation after exile. Book V (Pss. 107–150) is about consummation.

In the final chapter, Robertson makes some concluding observations and includes helpful explanations of the colorful charts he has supplied at the end of the volume.

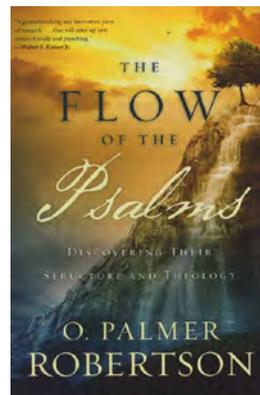
The book has several strengths. To the publisher's credit, no spelling, typographical, or syntactic errors were found in the entire book. Robertson's canonical and theological analysis raises many fresh questions that might not be otherwise asked. Theological and literary insights abound throughout the book.

There are some weaknesses in the book

as well. For example, some bibliography I expected to see referenced in such an ambitious undertaking is missing. Most of the major secondary literature touching on his topic is there, but important monographs and articles published in the last decade are missing. Secondly, some of Robertson's applications to the personal piety of individual believers

are unpersuasive to this reviewer. For example, he contends that "the believer must learn to pray his own first-person prayers in the same way as David" (pp. 65–66), which basically means that our petitions must always aim at the corporate well-being of the people. Although individual believers living in the age of the new covenant should always be concerned about the corporate well-being of the people of God, Robertson's approach seems to minimize the unique role of David as a type of the messianic King. In other words, these prayers of David often say something first and foremost about the prayer life of the coming greater son of David, Jesus Christ.

Despite these slight shortcomings, the book is to be commended for its careful attention to many details in the Psalter. It is an edifying read, and this new volume deserves a significant readership.



## The Obadiah Fund Turns Ten

Janet Birkmann

“This practical expression of Christian love is a source of great encouragement to us in these years of our lives.” So wrote a retired minister after receiving a gift from the OPC’s Obadiah Fund last summer.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Obadiah Fund, established in 2006 with a large contribution from a member of the OPC who has contributed an additional \$150,000 to the Fund each year since then.

The original donor requested that the Fund be used specifically for the care of retired ministers and their widows. The Fund is administered by members of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries (CDM), who consider it a blessing and privilege to serve as the conduit through which special concern is expressed for those in the church who have sacrificed so much for the ministry of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In recent years, other individuals and churches have made contributions to the Fund as well.

The CDM receives requests from presbytery diaconal committees on behalf of retired ministers or their widows who are in particular need. In addition, annually since 2007, the CDM has made general disbursements of up to \$1,250 to each eligible beneficiary on the assumption that all retired ministers and their widows would be blessed to receive a monetary gift to be used as they see fit. This has been confirmed by many expressions of thanksgiving:

“Please pass on to our gracious donor-in-Christ our love and ongoing appreciation with the same extravagance with which he has blessed us through his diaconal heart.”

“Praise be to our God who provides for his ministers in this way.”

“It is such a joy to be part of this church, where the doctrine is straight and the heart is tender also.”

“... helped us make much-needed repairs to our home.”

“... will go to badly needed glasses.”

“... a much-appreciated gift for us since we just moved.”

“... came at a good time as my wife had some medical events that Medicare did not cover.”

“... helps take the bite out of school taxes.”

“... exactly covered the member contributions I needed to spend for physical therapy.”

“... comes as a great encouragement to look for a newer car, rather than pour money into the old one.”

“... settling into retirement and getting adjusted to a very fixed income.”

“... it came providentially at a time my wife is facing unplanned dental expenses uncovered by insurance.”

“In God’s all-wise, loving, and powerful providence, those gifts always seem to arrive just at the time when some unforeseen need arises.”

“I am reminded of the Scripture in which we read, ‘Before they call I will answer!’ Truly the Lord ‘daily loads us with benefits.’”

Further information about the Obadiah Fund can be obtained from David Nakhla, administrator of the CDM, at david.nakhla@opc.org.

*Is Church Membership Biblical?* by Ryan M. McGraw and Ryan Speck. Reformation Heritage Books, 2015. Paperback, 32 pages, list price \$3.00. Reviewed by OP pastor Brett Mahlen.

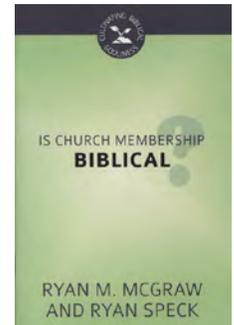
Church membership can be a thorny issue. There are people who believe the gospel, read their Bible, pray regularly, and even attend church, but they deny that church membership is biblical. Such well-meaning people may seem to have a good argument; they may even ask us to show them one Bible verse where church membership is mentioned. Also, we live in a time when many believers hop from one church to another without becoming rooted. How shall we help such people?

We should remember that church membership is not proved from one verse, but from reading all of God’s word (not unlike the Trinity and infant baptism). To guide us, Ryan McGraw and Ryan Speck have written *Is Church Membership Biblical?* and they have done a great job.

This short book reads in the simple style of a Puritan sermon. That structure has a brief introduction, a strong one-sentence thesis (often written in italics), unpacking of the thesis, argument for the thesis, answers to possible objections, and then a conclusion. This book has a similar structure.

The authors define church membership as “*a covenant made by a public vow in which a person commits himself or herself to a local body of believers under the authority of a well-defined group of church leaders*” (p. 2).

McGraw and Speck then go on to show that the thesis is true, and that without church membership many passages of the Bible don’t make sense. They argue from the analogy of national citizenship, family membership, and different members of the body; they argue for each of these analogies biblically. The authors then show how the Bible assumes the interdependence and mutual responsibilities that members have with one another.



They then show that the many biblical passages dealing with church members and officers assume membership. Church membership is assumed in baptism. It is assumed in formal church discipline. Lastly, the authors ably handle three common objections to church membership.

I highly recommend this book for church officers to give to membership classes. Pastors could give this book to frequent attendees who sit on the fence about membership. This book also challenges our individualistic view of the church. We should all be challenged to be more mindful of our interdependence and mutual responsibilities toward each other and less individualistic.

***Praying Together: The Priority and Privilege of Prayer in Our Homes, Communities, and Churches*, by Megan Hill. Crossway, 2016. Paperback, 160 pages, list price \$12.99. Reviewed by Jean Gaffin, wife of a retired professor.**

Corporate prayer is vital to the life of the church and yet, so few really participate in it outside of the minister's congregational prayers. Why don't more people participate in prayer meetings?



Corporate prayer is hard work. Learning how to do it joyfully and fruitfully is the business of us all. That is why I highly recommend a wonderful little book, *Praying Together*, by Megan Hill. This book would serve a Bible study group well. It has nine chapters and study questions for each chapter.

Her approach is so biblical and her style so engaging that when you close the book, you can't wait to pray. Her use of biblical and historical illustrations, her obvious breadth of reading on this subject, and much personal experience give weight to her arguments.

The wife of a PCA pastor, and a regular contributor to *Christianity Today* and

## ✓ **Contacts Sought for Calvert Co., Md.**

A new OP Bible study is starting in northern Calvert County, Maryland (Prince Frederick and north), and is looking for interested contacts in the area to invite. The study meets on the first and third Sundays of the month at 5:30 p.m. in a home. If you are interested or know someone who might be, contact regional home missionary Steve Doe at [pastorsteved47@gmail.com](mailto:pastorsteved47@gmail.com) for more information.

Gospel Coalition websites, Mrs. Hill commends to us the blessing of a corporate prayer life.

Her first section develops the biblical foundations for corporate prayer. Her first chapter beautifully outlines the relationship we have with the Trinity in prayer. She says, "Prayer is an activity of relationship: God and us, God and God, all of us and our God." She moves on to the duty of prayer, which she says we will take seriously when we understand its importance as an expression of "the very essence and life of the church" (Lloyd Jones). The promise of prayer is her third foundation.

In the second part she speaks of the

fruits of praying together: love, discipleship, and revival. These are powerful chapters. The chapter on revival is so appropriate in these darkening days for the gospel. Praying Christians have the best tool to defeat the forces of evil that seem to be gaining strength here and globally.

Finally, she gives practical ideas for implementing prayer in the church, prayer with partners and groups, and prayer with family and guests. At a time when Wednesday evening is no longer reserved for prayer meetings in many places, we can still implement corporate prayer in ways that suit our present situation, rather than letting it be a thing of the past.

## ✓ **Digital Minutes Now Available**

Starting this year, a digital edition of the Minutes of the General Assembly and Yearbook of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church will be available for download by OP ministers and sessions. Sessions are now offered a free download of the electronic version of this volume, rather than a printed copy.

This digital edition is the same in pagination and format as the printed volume, except that the report of the Committee on Foreign Missions has been omitted for security reasons.

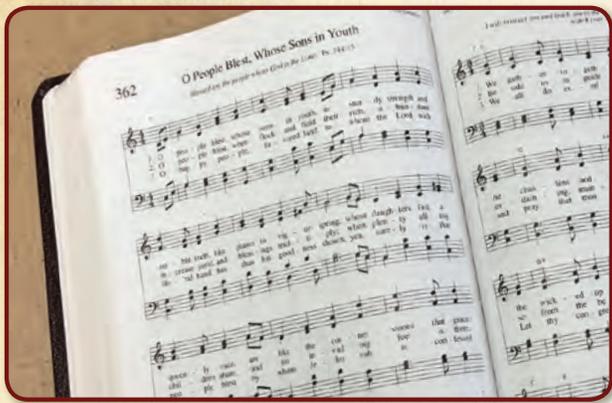
A secure system of making this PDF available electronically for sessions and ministers to download has been developed and tested, and is now in use.

If you are an OP minister or session clerk and have not received notification of your download opportunity, email your request to Ross Graham at [statedclerk@opc.org](mailto:statedclerk@opc.org).

If your session would like to receive a printed copy of the 2016 Minutes and Yearbook, the stated clerk of the General Assembly will be happy to send you one at your request. Plenty of printed copies are available this year as we transition to a more digital distribution and try to determine how many of you still desire to receive the printed version.

# ENRICH

*your spiritual life*



An essential worship resource, *Trinity Hymnal* provides you with over 150 Psalter selections. It also includes hymns and spiritual songs that reflect a rich, varied heritage. The deeply biblical content will disciple your adults and children alike. Use in your church, personal quiet times, family devotions, or a day alone with God.



*Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;  
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!* PSALM 95:1

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