

# NEW HORIZONS

in the ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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JULY 2021

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## New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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

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Send inquiries, letters to the editor, and other correspondence to the editor at [danny.olinger@opc.org](mailto:danny.olinger@opc.org).

Send address changes to [ccesecretary@opc.org](mailto:ccesecretary@opc.org). Allow six weeks for address changes.

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Redeemer OPC in Danville, Pennsylvania, installed Joshua L. McKamy as associate pastor on May 14, pictured here with his wife, Kristen, and their children Micah (9), Zoey (7), Kalia (5), and Avia (1). Rev. Zach Siggins preached the sermon, Rev. Stephen Payson gave the charge to the congregation, and Rev. John Van Meerbeke gave the charge to the incoming pastor. "It was a joyful evening to reflect on many years of God's wonderful grace and providence to bring us to Redeemer," said McKamy.



# MINISTRY IN STRANGE TIMES



**MARK E. RICHLINE // Our family had only been back in Montevideo from our brief furlough for about a month. We had just started enjoying worship again with our church family at Iglesia Presbiteriana Salvos por Gracia. Two new visitors came to our service the second Sunday we were back. Our new audio and video**

equipment was in place to transmit our services better than ever. Our congregation had embraced the session's 2021 vision for the church. We were ready to begin meeting for worship twice every Lord's Day. A church barbecue was scheduled, and a marriage conference was being planned as an evangelistic outreach to couples.

And then, in April 2021, we had to do a complete one-eighty turn, closing our doors and moving all our church activities back online.

## **Resurgence of COVID-19 in Uruguay**

As our Uruguayan friends like to put it, "the coronavirus here *se complica todo*." The situation has become much more serious over the past few months. Positive cases have increased dramatically. Hospital ICUs are filled to overflowing, and a number of doctors have died from the virus even as the overall death rate continues to rise. Schools have gone back to virtual classes. Churches have reverted to online activities. The Uruguayan borders remain

closed to all but citizens and residents.

Our congregation of just twenty-two people is being affected by COVID-19 more than before. One of our members nearly died and is now undergoing intense physical therapy to regain the use of his legs and feet. Another of our members was shaken when her aunt died from the virus, and now she and her family have tested positive. A good friend of one of our members just died from the virus. One family came down with symptoms but now appears to be doing well. A husband and wife in our congregation are grieving the death of their former pastor from COVID. I have received a flood of prayer requests for friends or relatives of our members who have tested positive.

Moving back online was a difficult decision as our leadership had to weigh the society's heightened sensitivity to COVID-19—along with our congregation's growing nervousness—against the obvious damage affecting our communion as one body of Christ. (Most of our families must take the bus to church and want to avoid close personal

contact as much as possible.) We know that nothing can ever replace personal corporate worship: raising our hearts as one to pray, lifting our voices as one to praise God, and listening as one to his Word proclaimed. And to spur one another on to love and good deeds, we must be meeting together. Yet meeting online is still meeting. Building one another up with a Bible verse or a link to a Reformed sermon is still building one another up.

## **Pastoring Online and In-Person**

Being back online has required me to become a "digital pastor." I am reminded of Paul's profound love for the gospel that drove his ministry:

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them . . . To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. (1 Cor. 9:19, 22–23)

To a pandemic-weary congregation, I have made myself a digitally diligent shepherd. There are numerous challenges to face. For one, I do not like interacting online. I am more of a people person than a tech person. I only started using a smartphone because my kids bought one for me. Now I find myself being the one not only motivating myself but also motivating others to put aside their personal preferences and, instead of withdrawing from all interaction, engage others online and preserve the unity of our church.

Then there are the technical difficulties: being unable to hear others, wondering whether they hear you, having to repeat yourself, losing connections, hearing your own voice echo, etc. Last Sunday, just as I was warming up and getting excited in my sermon, my son had to interrupt me because the video for our YouTube channel had stopped recording. How exactly was I supposed to pick up where I had left off with the same passion?

Yet, for the time being, I am happy to be a pastor who must communicate online. Thankfully, long before the pandemic, our congregation was connected through a WhatsApp chat group, and this made for an easier transition. Two or three times a week, I post Reformed devotionals on the church's chat group. I often record myself reading from Charles Spurgeon. Brief messages on the subjects of marriage and wisdom also form part of my repertoire. I hope to begin including devotionals focused on God's daily grace.

As much as possible, I minister in person—whether by visiting with members outside their homes or by building relationships with visitors as I meet with them in the park next to our church. I also block out time daily to interact online with our members and learn how to be praying for them. Having a small church allows me to keep in touch weekly with every member and visitor. Lately, we have been engaging online in good discussions on subjects such as infant baptism, Roman Catholic baptism, Christians who commit

suicide, believers blessing one another, and how to view the Apocrypha.

Shepherding people online also requires me to keep a pastoral eye on our various WhatsApp groups. While encouraging members to participate, I also remain aware as to *how* they participate. At times, we all leave messages without realizing how we sound. Other times posted music or messages may contain teaching that's not in line with our church's doctrine. At such times, our ruling elder and I intervene, trying to make the most of these opportunities to instruct and encourage our members.



In 2020, Iglesia Presbiteriana Salvos por Gracia distributed food bags to needy neighbors

## Our Church's Activities

We recently initiated *Apoyándonos en Cristo* (Leaning on Christ), a ministry designed to mutually support one another while we are not meeting in person. Our session grouped each brother with another brother, and each sister with another sister, for one month. We asked them to especially focus on that person, praying for him or her and sharing prayer requests. Scripture verses, sermons, songs, and other videos were also suggested forms of support. Each month, the pairs are rearranged to promote greater interaction within the body.

Our new membership class meets as a WhatsApp group. One of our participants had begun attending services through our YouTube channel. By the time he made his very first in-person

visit to our church, he already wanted to become a member! I keep this group updated with church news and devotionals as well as PowerPoint presentations that they can review if desired before each class.

Our monthly men's book study started at the beginning of 2020 and then was forced to move online because of COVID-19. Despite that, most of our men attend and, at times, bring friends. We now meet twice monthly to review a chapter of A. W. Pink's *The Attributes of God*. Thankfully, those who take turns leading are unhindered by the online challenges.

Now that our Reformed seminary classes are online, the Romans study has been my best-attended class yet, with nine students. Though the difficulties of online instruction are always palpable, we have grown comfortable interacting with one another. Once I master Zoom's breakout rooms, I will be able to make the class more interesting! I am still working out details for teaching a homiletics course online next semester.

While I am adjusting to online teaching and pastoring, I still need to consider effective strategies for online evangelism. At this point, evangelistic activities remain planned for when we meet again in person. Meanwhile, during the week, I sit outside the church at our book table to engage passersby. When doing follow-up with online visitors, I hope to determine if more than one are located in the same area and then meet with them about starting a group Bible study in their neighborhood.

As 2021 continues to unfold, we rest in our Lord's sovereign plans for his church. We pray that he would keep us at Iglesia Presbiteriana Salvos por Gracia growing as one body in Christ, that we would grow to appreciate the tremendous value of personal communion, and that he would soon reunite us in person. □

*The author is an OP missionary evangelist in Montevideo, Uruguay.*

# A MISSION LETTER FROM KARAMOJA



**H. JAMES FOLKERTS // Our family of nine has been serving in Karamoja, Uganda, for a year and a half now. Time passes quickly here for us. Not a day goes by without a new lesson or a challenging experience, many of which we never dreamed of. At times, the intensity of daily life leaves little time for processing these events.**

This past week, for example, we heard that one of our compound guards had suddenly become sick and tragically died and that his body needed to be picked up from the hospital and brought to his village. Since we were several hours away in Kampala for a meeting, I asked another team member to pick up the body with a mission vehicle. I received a call later that he hadn't passed away—yet. He did die a few days later, and mission members collected his body and held a funeral. We arrived in his village the day of his death, just able to be there for the last part of the funeral. So, in the past week, we have had three funerals of people close to the life of the mission. Such suffering and loss are all too common here. We grieve for the brokenness of this world and for the pain and loss that their families are enduring.

For another example, a few days ago, I was mowing and almost stepped on a large, deadly snake. Praise the

Lord for his protection!

## The Real Story of the Missionary

Daily life is intense; it is also non-stop with routine obligations such as Sunday services, discipleship and training, evangelism, conferences, homeschooling, and supply runs on bad roads.

But in writing about the daily



*A venomous green mamba on the grounds of the mission*

challenges and adventures of missionary life, we have to ask: what is the real story of the missionary? It's not about the deadly snakes, although that was an experience I won't quickly forget. The real story is about telling people about Christ through suffering and difficult situations.

It's a story to be read not just by those who are far away from the mission field, but also those who are on it. Think of Dr. Luke and the second installment of his "mission letter" to Theophilus, otherwise known as the book of Acts. Addressed to a single "God-Lover," it is Scripture for us all to read and be fed by. Consider what it was like for members of the churches of Asia Minor when the book was first read to them; what must it have been like for them to hear this account of their churches and themselves?

Our writing is subject to human limitations, but God is the great communicator. In communicating with us,

he, too, wrote about the stories of people, of missionaries and the expansion of his Word, of joys and sorrows, victories and defeats, sin and repentance. He wrote of himself, of his work in us. He communicated himself to us. What a “mission letter” the Holy Scripture is! What a good news story! It is the story of power in Christ to challenge and change us and our story—forever.

Every story, law, parable, song, proverb, miracle, vision, letter, and prophecy given to us was perfectly appropriate, perfectly placed, without fault, given with divine purpose, a divine portioning of grammar and syntax. Isn't it a blessing?

### Instructing and Encouraging Our Hope

Our God thinks so. Paul thought so as well.

Consider the concluding words of the missionary Paul to the Romans. Keep in mind the rich gospel he has already communicated in the previous fourteen chapters. Then, in chapter 15, he writes:

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant

you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 15:4–6)

Paul wants to encourage people with God and with all of his Word. In the next chapter, he mentions by name specific people. Like you and me, they each had a story, a newsletter they could write, a tale of where Christ had met them, how he had changed them, and how he had called them to offer up their lives as living sacrifices.

Notice that after explaining the rich doctrines of grace in the letter to the Romans, missionary Paul says that Scripture instructs and encourages our hope. How often do we as believers hunger for encouragement, for endurance, and for hope and harmony, but then gloss over God's communication to us? How often do we feed others but fail to enjoy the rich nourishing portions of Scripture for ourselves? How often are we content with scriptural sound bites and testimonies of others, but neglect “all Scripture” and what it is useful for? There is no substitute for God's Word to us, whether we are well-weathered missionaries, pastors, or parishioners. Biblical hope gives us renewed endurance and encouragement in that pilgrimage we've been called to.

### In Need of Christ and His Word

So how is Karamoja? It is in need of Christ, in need of his living Word, and so are we missionaries. We remember the words of Paul that one person planted, another watered, but God gave the increase. Over the years, there has been much planting and much watering here, sometimes in tears. We continue to plant and water, and we look to God to give that increase. Only he can change people's stories in his Son, Jesus Christ. Only he can make people here worshipers of him, even as he has made you and I, and men and women through the centuries, worshipers of him.

We give thanks for God's rich communication with us—for his Word. What an encouragement it is to give to people around us. We give thanks for stories of people being changed by the gospel—even when their faith is as small as a mustard seed. We give thanks for men and women who have a renewed interest in studying God's Word and learning to pray. We are learning endurance, learning where to find our encouragement and hope, and above all learning about Christ and his mission.

□

*The author is a missionary evangelist (URCNA) laboring with the Uganda Mission in Nakaale, Karamoja, Uganda.*



Folkerts leading Sunday worship while Louse John Bosco translates



Young men from the Karamoja ministry team, including Boston, a Malawian graduate from Africa Reformation Theological Seminary, who is doing an internship with the mission



Two participants in a memorization program reciting Proverbs 19

# AT LAST, A VISIT TO SOUTH SUDAN



DAVID P. NAKHLA // This spring, after some years of waiting, the OPC was able to visit members of a sister denomination in South Sudan: the Sudanese Reformed Church. Their country has been riddled with violence. In 2011, following years of conflict with the northern part of Sudan, whose people are mainly Sudanese Arab

and predominantly Muslim, the African and predominantly Christian people of the southern part of Sudan voted overwhelmingly in support of independence, officially becoming the Republic of South Sudan.

But less than three years later, South Sudan entered its own civil war, this time mostly along tribal lines—the Dinka versus the Nuer. Because the president and the government were mostly Dinka, the Nuer were under threat of massacre. Millions sought asylum in the neighboring countries of Uganda, Ethiopia, and Sudan, while many others hid under the shelter of United Nations peacekeepers who placed these Internally Displaced People (IDPs) into camps sprinkled throughout South Sudan.

Among those taking shelter in the IDP camps were members of the Sudanese Reformed Church (SRC).

The SRC, which started in Khartoum in 1992, is a Reformed denomination that, in 2013, was welcomed into the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), of which the

OPC is also a member. The SRC holds to the Reformed doctrinal statements known as the Three Forms of Unity.

In 2014, the Sudanese Reformed Church submitted a request to the ICRC's diaconal committee that ICRC member churches be encouraged to contribute to their ministry of mercy in the IDP camps. Many SRC members are displaced: as of 2017, the denomination had six thousand members with only sixteen congregations but eighteen groups within IDP camps.

## The Challenges of Providing Diaconal Assistance

When the request came in 2014, the SRC was not well known to our denomination. It had been a member of ICRC for only a little over a year. Providing diaconal assistance to those of whom we know very little, particularly where the language, culture, and customs are so different from ours, is quite challenging. There are huge knowledge gaps. Large sums of money going to places where money is scarce has the potential to do damage, even in the best

of circumstances—it is well-documented that foreign assistance to Africa has done a great deal of harm. We are always asking the question: How do we help without hurting?

To make it more difficult, the SRC's 2014 request came to a newly minted diaconal committee that was just trying to figure out which way was up. The ICRC had established and elected it only one year earlier, in 2013. This committee of five (of which I am one) represented four different continents and had almost no connection prior to serving together.

We on the OPC's Committee on Diaconal Ministries (CDM) always seek to minister mercy where there is also the opportunity to pair the ministry of mercy with the ministry of the Word. Many of the places in the world where diaconal assistance is sent are places where the OPC has a relationship via its Committee on Foreign Missions or its Committee on Ecumenicity and Church Relations. Neither of these were established with the SRC when their request came in 2014.

When evaluating requests, we also endeavor to gauge the ability of the requesting organization to properly oversee the administration of the diaconal ministry. Will the requestor actually be able to carry out the ministry that it is proposing? Will it succeed in purchasing and distributing the food or supplies that it intends to purchase?

We knew an in-person visit would help to answer these important questions. But in 2014, a visit to South Sudan seemed neither practical nor possible.

While it can be heartbreaking to come to such a conclusion, saying no to a request requires that we trust the Lord to provide for his children by another means he has determined. We also trusted that, if it was his will, the Lord would provide an opportunity to come alongside these brothers and sisters.

After 2014, our relationship with the SRC began to grow. The Reverend Patrick Jok attended the General Conference of the ICRC in Ontario, Canada, in 2017, and then he attended a missions meeting of the ICRC in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, in 2018. Since those meetings, when he got to know the OPC better, and we grew in our appreciation for him, it has been my prayer that I might be able to visit South Sudan on behalf of the CDM.

In God's providence, I was finally able to make that visit in March 2021!

### A Visit to South Sudan

South Sudan is located just north of Uganda. It's a rugged country with very little infrastructure outside its ma-



*SRC pastor Patrick Jok and Charles Jackson at the IDP camp*

jour cities. The only paved highway in South Sudan runs from its capital city of Juba, over Juba's only bridge across the White Nile (which splits the city), and south to the Ugandan border. It then continues through Uganda and Kenya to the seaport city of Mombasa, Kenya, on the Indian Ocean. This is the land route by which most supplies are trucked into Juba.

It just so happens that Mbale, Uganda, is along this road. On the edge of Mbale lies the Knox School of Theology, established by the OP Uganda Mission as a place to train up indigenous ministers. Charles Jackson, OP missionary evangelist to Uganda and headmaster at Knox, wants to see the school used by other Reformed churches in the neighboring countries in East Africa. Jackson recently hired one of his top students, a South Sudanese man named Okuch Ojullo, to serve as a teacher at Knox. Together, they devised a plan to visit South Sudan to explore the possibility of South Sudanese candidates for ministry traveling the Juba-Mombasa highway to come study at Knox.

Knowing of the longtime interest of the CDM to visit South Sudan firsthand and assess the needs of its internally displaced people, Jackson invited me to join their team. In God's

providence, the timing worked out perfectly. OP missionary James Folkerts, who has previous experience ministering to both the Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups, also joined.

Currently, South Sudan is considered a dangerous place by the US State Department, and Americans are discouraged from traveling there due to "crime, kidnapping, and armed conflict." We learned that most of the danger is during nighttime hours. So, like the locals, we were careful not to travel after 5 p.m. We were encouraged to remain behind the safety of the gate and walls of the camp in which we stayed, on the bank of the White Nile River. During our visit, we never felt threatened in any way when out and about in Juba during daytime hours.

### Believers of Bethel Sudanese Reformed Church

To reach Bethel Sudanese Reformed Church, which Patrick Jok serves as pastor, we headed to the outskirts of town and down a dusty dirt road. From the outside, there is not much to see beyond a cheap, simply constructed building of wooden poles and tin sheets. But inside, the worship is vibrant, and love exudes from God's people. Anticipating our arrival, the ladies of the church put together a feast fit for a wedding. They presented us with an incredible spread and treated us as honored guests. They even gave each of us a gift, a handcrafted necklace with a cross attached.

We were encouraged to learn that,



*Worship at Bethel, on the outskirts of South Sudan's capital, Juba*

despite the strong ethnic division in the country, Bethel SRC has twenty-one different tribes represented in its small congregation. What a beautiful picture of the type of reconciliation the gospel can bring!

We were also blessed to visit one of the two IDP camps located on the outskirts of Juba. At its entrance, we were warmly welcomed by believers of the Nuer tribe (easily identified by the tribal scarring on their foreheads) with whom we sang, prayed, and fellowshiped in their tarp-covered, makeshift church building.

We then snaked through the helter-skelter array of temporary structures to the place one church member has called home for the last eight years. The trails between the tents are so tight that one has to step aside to let another pass. It felt like we were rats in a maze. Having seen the dirty latrines located on the uphill side of the camp and observed the overflow “riverbed” that ran through the middle of the camp, we were particularly disturbed to find ourselves stepping *down* into the homes of each member, trying not to picture what this scene must look like when the rainy season comes. It is no wonder that these camps, hastily assem-



*Serving a feast at Bethel SRC*

bled, are ripe for sickness and disease.

And yet, the church members were eager to bring us into their homes and to show us, among their few possessions, their children’s school books that they have used to keep their education going during this period of waiting. (Forty-six percent of South Sudan’s population is under fourteen years old, but schools are scarce.)

When we entered the home of one member of the church, he said to us through a translator: “Welcome, this is your house. Today you are now family. What you do is more than [give] money, because if you see someone, it is better. See the children? They want to see you. ‘Where do these men come

from?’ they ask. We tell them, ‘They come from Jesus Christ.’”

This man then told us that, thanks to the generous contributions of a sponsor, his son is currently studying at Mukhanyo Theological College in South Africa and that they look forward to when he might return and serve the church in South Sudan. This was one means of hope for the future, as they and most of their tribe wait for peace.

Another man, an elder in the congregation, shared this with us: “We



*An elder in the SRC and his wife, who are refugees, outside their home in an IDP camp*

have been displaced from our original homes. Life is very hard here, but the good thing is that Jesus Christ is with us. All the things of this earth will finish, but Christ will never finish. We have been living here for the last eight years. When it rains, we have hard times. These plastic sheets leak. We have water from above and also from the flooding of the area. But we are thankful for God. It is not my problem alone. Everyone in this camp is affected, especially when there is rain. Please, what we want to request from you is prayer that we have peace in South Sudan.”

### **Prayer for Our Brothers and Sisters in South Sudan**

Will you join me in committing to pray for peace in South Sudan, for the sake of our brothers and sisters there?

And, I am happy to report that, having visited and gained confidence in the ministry carried out on the ground, the CDM, with the concurrence of the Committee on Foreign Missions, has made an initial gift from its Refugee Relief Fund to the Sudanese Reformed Church for the benefit of those suffering in the IDP camps in South Sudan. We pray for increased fellowship and ministry between the OPC and SRC in the years ahead. □



*At the end of 2020, about 1.4 million people in South Sudan (out of a population of 11 million) were living in displacement as a result of conflict and violence, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre.*

*The author is administrator for the Committee on Diaconal Ministries.*

# THE STORY OF RUSLAN

// HEERO E. C. HACQUEBORD



*Ruslan and others being accepted as communicant members in January 2020*

**A**s the pastor goes, often so goes the church. But what if there is no pastor?

Holy Trinity Reformed Church of L'viv was formed in 2012 with twelve founding members. While half of those were mature men with some leadership potential, only two are now currently active in the church. And none of the men who have joined the church since then sense a call to the pastoral ministry. Except for Ruslan.

One of the key goals of church planting is to raise up future church leaders. This challenge is especially important in the context of foreign missions, where the missionary team's role in the church is temporary. It is essential for *local* men, women, and children to develop into Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, women's ministry leaders, Bible study teachers, deacons, elders, and pastors. But where does one get such leaders in a society where people did not have the benefit of growing up in a healthy, biblical church with godly models of leadership? A society where people don't have a sense of what church should be, much less how it should be led?

It is rare in Ukraine to find a man who has the necessary gifts, motivation, and opportunity to develop a call to pastoral ministry. But the Lord seems to have provided Ruslan with all of this.

## Relief from Guilt

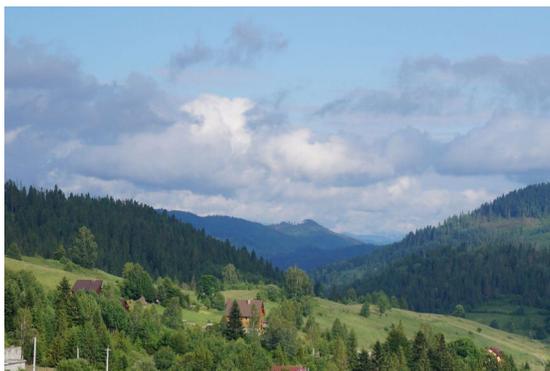
Because of his parents' divorce and his father's abandonment of their family, Ruslan was raised by his grandparents. They were staunch Greek Catholics, the predominant church in Western Ukraine that uses the Orthodox liturgy but is part of the Roman

Catholic Church. Nevertheless, their daily lives displayed a true faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and King. When his grandfather died, twelve-year-old Ruslan started attending church more often. He had a strong desire to know God—who he is and what true faith is. At the same time, he had many questions: If you are forgiven during confession, then what happens when you sin again? Must one also stop sinning to have complete forgiveness? The Greek Catholic Church could not give Ruslan any relief from his sense of guilt before a holy God. Ruslan did not feel the Almighty's presence in his life. There was no relationship.

When Ruslan was eighteen and studying engineering in L'viv, a friend strongly encouraged him to come to an interview night for our annual English camp in the Carpathian Mountains. To his great surprise, Ruslan was invited to attend the camp. In spite of this, he did not want to attend. Between studying and working, he had a lot to do. Even while sitting on the bus filled with excited students on the way to the English camp, Ruslan was filled with doubts. He wasn't in search of more friends and was afraid that he was just wasting his precious time.

Over the course of the camp, though, Ruslan slowly opened up as staff members made an effort to get to know him. The daily English Bible lessons were something totally new. Over the course of the week, he came to understand and appreciate the gospel about complete forgiveness for all our past, present, and future offenses through the immaculate life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But he did not yet trust in Jesus of Nazareth as his Savior and Lord.

After camp, Ruslan returned



*The Carpathian Mountains as seen from the location of the Leopold English Camp*

to his regular routine. He kept very busy with his studies and working two jobs. Indeed, he had become the main breadwinner for his mother, aunt, and brother. He hoped that his more promising job would develop into a career.

Six months after the camp, Ruslan was invited to attend Leopolis, our student organization. He started attending large groups meetings and a weekly Bible study led by one of our missionary team members. Over the course of a month, Ruslan finally came to have true faith in Jesus Christ. When the job in which he had been putting his hope did not pan out, he realized that he had gained a better, lasting hope. Ruslan had come to know God as his heavenly Father, whose love for him knows no measure or end.

### The Many Challenges of Leaving the Greek Catholic Church

Joining a Christian student organization is one thing; joining a Protestant church is quite another. Ruslan had a desire to attend our church and was invited to do so often, but he wasn't sure that he could just leave his Greek Catholic congregation and attend another church—even though he constantly saw contradictions between the Bible and the church of his heritage. Besides, he wanted to work within his church to change it. When he finally did come to one of our services, Ruslan was struck by how understandable everything was and how much Scripture was in the liturgy. He began attending our services more often and became increasingly dissatisfied with his family's church.

In 2019, Ruslan attended his second English camp—this time as a volunteer leader. He loved seeing God working in students' hearts, slowly opening them to his grace. He loved being a part of that process, as he talked to fellow students about faith. He returned home with much joy in his heart. God was using him to bring others to faith!



Ruslan grilling at a youth picnic

That fall he attended a new members' class, but only to learn more about our congregation. After six weeks of meetings, however, Ruslan was ready to join our church. He finally became a member at the beginning of 2020.

Yet the process of becoming part of our church has also come with difficulties. Back in his village, the priest is spreading false rumors about Ruslan and telling people that he has joined a sect. Members of his extended family are treating him as a pariah. His mother is concerned about these rumors, but—in spite of her love for the Greek Catholic church—she knows that they are not true. Her son has not turned his back on his family.

Much to the contrary: Ruslan's strong desire is to proclaim the gospel and see many people like him come to rest in God's unconditional grace. He trusts that, through his current seminary studies and internship with our college ministry, God will shape him further to become a loving, caring, and wise pastor in the Lord's church.

It has been wonderful to behold God's work in Ruslan's sensitive heart over the past three years. The church in Ukraine needs godly men called to be pastors. Please pray with us that God will strengthen Ruslan through many trials and bless the church in L'viv and Ukraine through men like him!

*The author is an Orthodox Presbyterian missionary laboring with Mission to the World (Presbyterian Church in America) in L'viv, Ukraine.*



Ruslan teaching on the Canons of Dort at a new members' class in April

## What's New

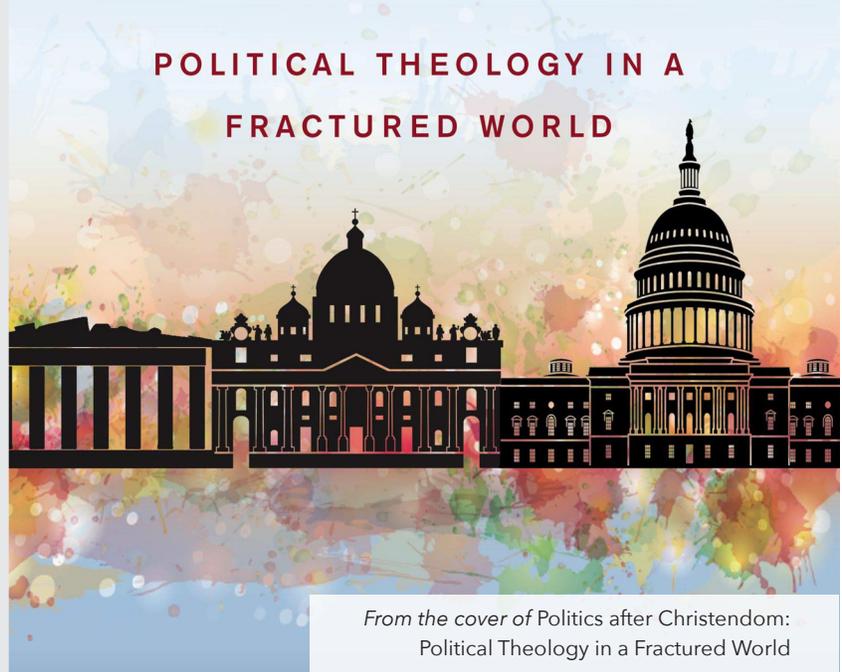
### // Comings/Goings

After much prayer, counsel, and reflection, **Rev. and Mrs. David J. (Rashel) Robbins**, on furlough in the States with their four children, Joshua, Emmalene, Hannah, and Moru William, concluded that the Lord appears to be closing the door to their further missionary service in South Karamoja, Uganda, where David has labored as a missionary evangelist since 2016. They have resigned from missionary service as of July 2021, and David is seeking a call to labor as a pastor in the United States.

**Rev. Dr. and Mrs. L. Charles (Connie) Jackson** returned to the United States from their labors in Mbale, Uganda, in April 2021 for Charles to receive much-needed surgery. They plan to return to the field when their medical leave has concluded.

# REVIEW: VANDRUNEN'S *POLITICS AFTER CHRISTENDOM*

// ALAN D. STRANGE



From the cover of *Politics after Christendom: Political Theology in a Fractured World*

David VanDrunen's book is a capstone to his natural law/two kingdom project: a political theology developed out of his understanding of the Noahic covenant. In typical fashion, VanDrunen's latest, *Politics after Christendom: Political Theology in a Fractured World*, is clear and thorough. He leaves no significant areas having to do with his topic untouched, and he seeks fairly to represent both those with whom he differs and the criticism that they level against his writings.

The book is divided into two basic parts: "Political Theology" and "Political Ethics." The first part, in six chapters, treats VanDrunen's view of the state of things, particularly in our post-Christendom culture, which he rightly refers to as a "fractured world." The second part, in another six chapters, sets forth how the principles of the first part apply in our world.

VanDrunen sets forth in "Political Theology" that all civil society, which includes its government but is not limited to it, bears two pairs of characteristics that define it: legitimate, but provisional; common, but accountable. This means that civil society, in its economic, legal, and other public dimensions, is something that is legitimate. Government, of whatever sort, is necessary, and thus legitimate, something given by God for the proper ordering of society, over against anarchy of varying sorts. However, in contrast to theories of government in absolutized forms on the right or left, civil society is provisional, not ultimate, and will give way in the coming consummation of all things to the eternal kingdom that shall never perish.

Further, civil society as established among mankind is common, which is to say that it encompasses all here below, not simply the godly or those members of the visible church. All in any given region,

the righteous and the wicked, are subject to the same systems, including the same government. At the same time, this common life is one for which all are accountable and for which everyone will be judged.

The lives of all together, then, saved and lost, are part of a system that is legitimate and common. A day is coming, however, when the sheep and goats will be separated, so this legitimate and common life that they now experience is not eternal but provisional and will come to an end. That such a life is now common does not mean, though, that it is neutral and unaccountable. On that great day just referenced, everyone will give an account of their lives in terms that make clear personal moral responsibility and accountability.

VanDrunen sees these pairs (legitimate but provisional, common but accountable) as emerging from the Noahic covenant, which is a covenant verifying a common realm in which common grace is at play. He sees this as true not only in the Old Testament but in the New: the redemption promised in the covenant of grace (since Gen. 3:15) does not change the nature of this relationship between a common kingdom that emerges from the Noahic covenant and the spiritual kingdom of grace, manifesting in the visible church, that is part of the gracious, saving covenant that God has with the elect. VanDrunen, then, reads Romans 13 and its allied New Testament passages through the lens formed by the common kingdom concerns and approach of the Noahic covenant. One of the strengths of this work is that the breathless, highly politicized atmosphere in which we all live in the West, including the United States, while recognized by VanDrunen, does not infect this work, which enjoys a thoughtful and becalmed approach.

In the second half of the book,



David VanDrunen, professor at Westminster Seminary California

“Political Ethics,” VanDrunen spells out the implications and consequences of his common kingdom approach. First, he addresses pluralism and religious liberty: as a consequence of the common kingdom being just that—common—he argues that this implies that civil society, certainly the state as part of that, does not properly enjoin religious conformity of any sort, but its citizens should enjoy religious liberty and the freedom to embrace various philosophies and viewpoints as long as that is done within the bounds of law. In the next chapter, he argues that all families and commerce are part of this common kingdom and that they carry on their lives at least in light of the Noahic covenant and natural law. I could go into detail under each of the sections that follow (“Justice and Rights,” “Customs and Laws,” “Authority and Resistance”), but space prohibits. I do find this second part of the book to be especially useful.

One of the most frequent criticisms of VanDrunen’s approach is that it accounts for proper distinctions that need to be made between the provisional and the eternal (or other ways of putting the necessary distinctions between this world and the coming one) but tends to separate the two. This leads, some say, to diversity but not unity, many-ness but not oneness (37–44). VanDrunen acknowledges this criticism and seeks to address it in a measure (77–78). Whether he successfully does so is debatable. For example, chapter 8 on the “Family and Commerce” treats Christians and non-Christians similarly. While non-Christians, together with Christians, certainly participate in the creation ordinances of family and labor (Sabbath rest as the third creation ordinance produces its own conundrum that I do not think this approach ever surmounts), non-Christians do not experience these realities as substantively as do Christians.

VanDrunen’s approach in its theory seems to suffer from a lack of points of integration in which the kingdoms overlap. I say “in its theory” because in its outworking, as the second part of his book manifests, I do find points of integration, though perhaps not in all areas—for example, as mentioned above, in marriage and family. I am encouraged, however, because I find VanDrunen open to bettering his theory and practice, having done so over the course of addressing his subject matter, which remains, after all, one of the most controverted areas among Christians of similar confessional commitments.

*The author is an OP minister and professor at Mid-America Reformed Seminary.*

[Politics after Christendom: Political Theology in a Fractured World](#), by David VanDrunen. Zondervan Academic, 2020. Paperback, 400 pages, \$20.00.

## ☆ Congratulations

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

- **Lucy Kunda**, *Faith OPC, Grants Pass, OR*

## Favorite Psalms and Hymns *Trinity Psalter Hymnal no. 347* “There Is a Green Hill Far Away”

*D. G. Hart*

Hymns were never far from J. Gresham Machen’s thoughts. In 1933, when the Presbyterian Church USA produced a new hymnal, he wrote a lengthy review of it (*Selected Shorter Writings*, 274). This was a time when the controversy over foreign missions was at its most intense. That year was also the fourth for Westminster Seminary, a fledgling institution that drew upon Machen’s fame as much as it depended on his leadership. No one would have faulted Machen had he been silent about the new hymnal. But he was not. “The ‘doctrine note in hymns’ is indeed ‘almost missing’ in many of the hymns added,” Machen observed. That meant that “the Christian note is almost missing” from the new hymnal (276).

The link between doctrine and hymnody was evident in Machen’s regard for “There Is A Green Hill Far Away.” In *What Is Faith?* Machen used “There Is A Green Hill Far Away,” a children’s hymn from 1848 by Cecil Frances Alexander (wife of the Primate of the Church of Ireland), to explain a simple point of doctrine. Machen pointed to the relation between faith and works in the hymn’s fifth stanza: “and trust in his redeeming blood, and try his works to do.” For Machen, that was “the true order of Christian pedagogy”—trust before works. Christ’s redeeming work is the basis for sanctification.

This was Machen’s favorite hymn, along with “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” Both hymns reflected the nature of Machen’s piety, which in turn displayed the importance of hymns for his devotion.



Cecil Frances Alexander

## ● Out of the Mouth . . .

My four-year-old granddaughter, Stacy, was dominating a tricycle during a family picnic. Attempting to teach a lesson in courtesy, I told her that “we share.” Somewhat reluctantly, she complied. Just a few minutes later, my Pepsi was pulled out of my hand. It was Stacy, who simply told me, “we share!”

—Rollin Keller  
Lakewood, CA

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

# YEAR ONE IN THOUSAND OAKS, CALIFORNIA

// CALEB M. SMITH



*Thousand Oaks Presbyterian Church began with an outdoor Bible study on the book of Romans*

Los Angeles airport was empty and eerie when my family arrived on June 1, 2020. Having just said goodbye to the congregation we love, Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pennsylvania, we were looking forward to a new opportunity. We were excited that the Presbytery of Southern California was determined, despite COVID-19, to begin an exploratory work in the city of Thousand Oaks, California, and that they had asked me to serve as an evangelist to the area.

This new opportunity was a very natural fit. For my wife, it was a return to her hometown. And we had been praying for over ten years that the Lord would establish an OPC in this area. But there were also lots of questions. Perhaps most significantly: how could we possibly expect to successfully begin work in the midst of a global pandemic?

As we look back over the past year, we remember the words of Proverbs 16:9: “The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.” What a wonderful promise this is! We made many plans. We sought the counsel of many advisers. We read books on church planting. In this way, we tried to reduce as many risks as possible. But even so, we have the deeper assurance that it is the Lord who establishes our steps.



*Caleb and Erika Smith with sons Oliver and Joel*

## Meeting at the Park

In June we unpacked our belongings, and on July 5 we began a Bible study at the Conejo Community Park. With

a variety of connections from church, family, and friends, we began a Sunday evening study going through the book of Romans. Our format was simple: we set up our lawn chairs as we greeted each other, we sang a hymn or two, we shared a few things that we were thankful to the Lord for, and then we launched into the book of Romans.

Gathering each week around God’s Word characterized our group. We slowly began getting to know each other; the children developed friendships and the adults enjoyed fellowship with like-minded Christians. The desire for a Sunday worship service grew.

## Meeting at the Community Center

On Sunday morning, November 22, we gathered for our first public worship service in the parking lot of the North Ranch Community Center with the saints from Covenant of Grace in Oxnard, California, joining us. Mark Mueller led portions of the service. I preached on “How to Get Thanksgiving Wrong” from Jesus’s parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18, and then David Crum administered the Lord’s Supper.

God’s people were gathering around God’s Word, and his Word in the hands of the Spirit was doing all the work to establish the church. By the end of February 2021, the presbytery had supplied us with a talented overseeing session and approved our group as a new mission work of the OPC. We are delighted to have the privilege to gather each Lord’s Day for worship.

## Looking Back

Many great things happened this first year at Thousand Oaks Presbyterian Church, but we also faced difficulties. We endured the mask/no mask debates, cried together over personal tragedies, braved meeting outdoors in both extreme heat and penetrating cold, and weathered political debates and uncertain times.

But even amid those and other trials, there are many reasons to give thanks. We were refined, a new work was officially begun in the Conejo Valley, the Lord has provided a wonderful facility to meet in, and we are bonding as a group. Because of COVID, we have even met families that we otherwise wouldn't have. Through it all, the Lord ministered his grace through his Word. And in those respects and more, we can all say that this has been a wonderful year.

As we study the pages of sacred Scripture, we are reminded week by week that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). At Thousand Oaks Presbyterian Church we will continue to gather around that precious Word. Please pray that the Lord would establish this new mission work!

*The author is church-planting pastor at Thousand Oaks Presbyterian Church in Thousand Oaks, California.*

## CHURCH-PLANTING IN "CEREAL CITY"

Markus G. Jeromin

What do Seventh Day Adventism, a sprawling health spa, the invention of breakfast cereal, and a new OP church-planting ministry have in common? Answer: Battle Creek, Michigan. With a metro population of now over 135,000, the city of Battle Creek had just under 2,000 when Adventism arrived in the 1850s. Four decades later, brothers Will and John Kellogg were operating the famous Battle Creek Sanitarium on Adventist principles. Their quest to provide patients with a light, healthy, and grain-based breakfast food led to the invention of modern breakfast cereal. The huge success of the Sanitarium and the explosion of the cereal industry caused the city to prosper and grow.

Recent decades have seen the region—largely blue-collar—struggle economically. At the same time, its spiritual neediness has become more evident. Only a handful of Calvinistic churches may be found here, and there has never been a NAPARC congregation.

America's Cereal City presents an exciting church-planting opportunity. The Presbytery of Michigan and On-



"Skate church": Bible study at a Christian skate park

tario, through its Church Extension Committee, wants to be a part of the harvest in Calhoun County. Having previously served at a mission work in northern Michigan and then on the mission field in Uruguay, I was tasked with assembling a core group in Battle Creek.

### Finding a Core Group in Battle Creek

How to find people for the core group? Key elements include building a strong internet presence, advertising—especially through Facebook—networking, evangelizing, and relationship-building. I have also been getting to know area pastors. I volunteer at a Christian skate park ministry and the local pregnancy care center. The mall provides unhindered opportunities for survey evangelism. And just before COVID, we held a conference on depression which attracted seventy people. A second mini-conference on race relations is being planned for this fall.

One of our outreach's strategic elements is referrals, or personal contacts. If you know anyone in Battle Creek who may be interested in our core group, please don't hesitate to contact me at the email address below.

### Prayer for the Future

Referrals are important. But prayer is *the* most important element in the work. The Apostle Paul was keenly aware of how much the success of his labors depended on the prayers of God's people (see 2 Cor. 1:11, Rom. 15:30, and 2 Thess. 3:1). Would you please help us by your prayers?

Please pray for God to bless our weekly Bible studies. Pray especially that more Battle Creek locals would attend. Pray that new contacts who have expressed interest would attend.

Please pray that the survey evangelism, the Facebook outreaches, a mailing to *World* magazine subscribers, summer outreaches, and the coming mini-conference, would bear much fruit.

Ask the Lord to bless my meetings as a fatherhood advisor at the crisis pregnancy center. Pray also that riders at the skate park would attend the Ask a Pastor sessions I am offering, and that efforts to connect with their parents would succeed. Lastly, please pray that I would be able to make connections with business owners, civic leaders, and area pastors who would partner with us in getting the word out.

Thank you so much for your partnership in this gospel outreach. It is most appreciated! I can be reached at 269-808-4287. If desired, sign up for prayer updates at [jeromin.1@opc.org](mailto:jeromin.1@opc.org) or learn more about our efforts at [www.graceandpeacebattlecreek.org](http://www.graceandpeacebattlecreek.org). You can also connect via [www.facebook.com/GraceandPeaceBattleCreek](https://www.facebook.com/GraceandPeaceBattleCreek).

*The author is a church-planting evangelist in Battle Creek, Michigan.*

### Home Missions Today

For up-to-date news and prayer requests, receive our newsletter by emailing [HomeMissionsToday@opc.org](mailto:HomeMissionsToday@opc.org). New editions: July 7 & 21.

# 2022 PROPOSED FOREIGN MISSIONS BUDGET

When you give to Worldwide Outreach, about 46 percent of each undesignated gift will be used by the Committee on Foreign Missions. How will it be used to advance the missionary efforts of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?

## Program Services

*Proposed 2022 budget: \$1,606,438*

*Asia (\$246,112):* Supports the work of two missionaries, who continue to labor under difficult circumstances.

*East Africa (\$20,000):* Supports the work of the persecuted Reformed congregation planted by OPC missionaries over twenty years ago.

*Ethiopia (\$51,300):* Supports the work of part-time missionary evangelist Anthony Curto and provides assistance to the Ethiopian Reformed Presbyterian Church.

*Haiti (\$117,972):* Supports the labors of missionary evangelist Benjamin Hopp on the island of La Gonâve and Port-au-Prince (where he joins Octavius Delfils [PCA] in planting a Reformed congregation in that capital city).

*Kenya (\$2,400):* Contributes to the running costs of the Muruu Trinity Bible Institute, which was started by OPC missionaries over twenty years ago.

*Quebec (\$13,756):* Contributes to the support of Bernard

Westerveld Jr., as he labors to build up congregations of the Reformed Church of Quebec.

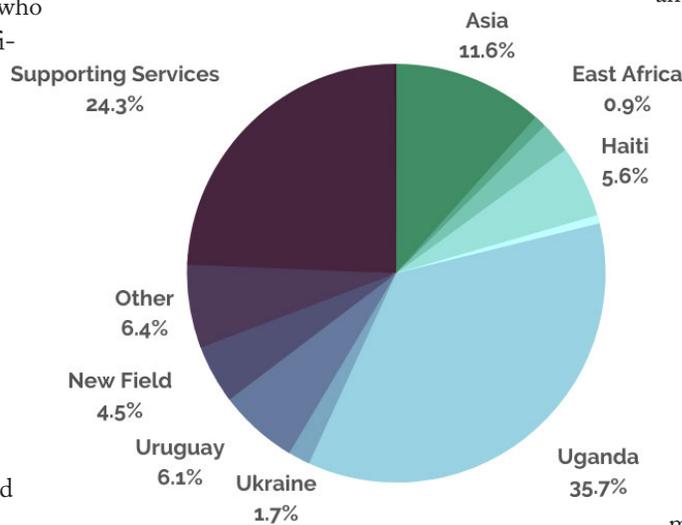
*Uganda (\$756,466):* Supports two missionary evangelists, funding for two more that are urgently needed, and a diaconal facilities engineer, as the Orthodox Presbyterian Uganda Mission operates the Knox School of Theology, the Reformation Book Room, Akisyon a Yesu Presbyterian Clinic, the Timothy Discipleship Program, Karamoja Education Outreach, and assists the Presbyterian Church of Uganda in church planting and leadership training. This is Foreign Mission's largest mission.

*Ukraine (\$36,000):* Contributes to the support of missionary evangelist Heero Hacquebord, who is laboring with the PCA Mission to the World team in Ukraine, planting Reformed churches.

*Uruguay (\$130,032):* Supports the labors of missionary evangelist Mark Richline and assists with the operating expenses of the church plant in Montevideo.

*New Field/Missionary (\$96,000):* A placeholder in the budget to allow for the addition of another missionary on one of our fields (perhaps Haiti or Uruguay).

*Other Program Services (\$136,400):* Supports the work of short-term missions and interns, the Mobile Theological Mentoring Corps, training for missionary candidates, furlough vehicle maintenance, and benefits to retired missionaries.



## Supporting Services

*Proposed 2022 budget: \$514,299*

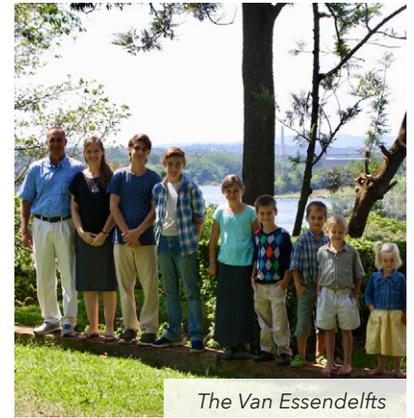
Provides for our general secretaries, an administrative assistant, and an office secretary, as well as for the administrative support of our missionaries, including promotional materials. (Just as the OPC does not require its foreign missionaries to raise their own support, it also doesn't require them to cover their associated administrative or promotional expenses.) It also provides for other operating expenses including committee meetings, rent, audit, and printing and publication of promotional materials.

Thank you for your generous giving to Worldwide Outreach, which supports the Committee on Foreign Missions and its missionaries as they spread the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

JULY



The Knoxes



The Van Essendelfts

**1** Missionary associates **DR. JIM & JENNY KNOX**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for strength in caring for Joy Hospice patients. / Pray for those **OPC CAMPS AND CONFERENCES** meeting amid changing COVID regulations.

**2** **BRADNEY & EILEEN LOPEZ**, Arroyo, PR. Pray that the Lord would provide a new worship space. / Pray for the work of stated clerk **HANK BELFIELD** during General Assembly next week in Sioux Center, IA.

**3** **CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for the African professors at Knox during Charles's absence. / **LARRY & KALYNN OLDAKER**, Sandusky, OH. Pray for discipleship and assimilation efforts at Firelands Grace.

**4** Pray for **LACY (DEBBIE) ANDREWS**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast. / **HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for the student English camp on July 4-10 and for good follow-up from it.

**5** **MIKE & NAOMI SCHOUT**, Zeeland, MI. Pray for gratitude, humility, and faithfulness as Grace Fellowship settles into its new facility. / Pray for **DANNY OLINGER**, general secretary of Christian Education, as he directs the intern program.

**6** Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **MARK BUBE** and associate general secretary **DOUGLAS CLAWSON** as they report to GA this week. / **BEN & HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti (on furlough). Pray for safe travels to the Midwest and to GA.

**7** **MATTHEW & LOIS COTTA**, Pasadena, CA. Pray that God would bless Pasadena Presbyterian's Chinese language outreach and ministry. / **MARK LOWREY**, interim executive director of Great Commission Publications.

**8** OPC office manager **ANNELISA STUDLEY** and Christian Education office secretary **ABBY HARTING**. / Summer interns **VINCE (ERI) LAM** at Providence Presbyterian in Pflugerville, TX, and **DUSTIN (EMILY) KARZEN** at Providence Presbyterian in Temecula, CA.

**9** Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Pray for the saints in Haiti enduring political insecurity and economic hardship. / Summer intern **ANDREW DAVIS** at Covenant Presbyterian in Vandalia, OH.

**10** **RON & CAROL BEABOUT**, Mifflintown, PA. Pray that new advertising efforts will help Grace and Truth's outreach. / Affiliated missionaries **JERRY & MARILYN FARNIK**, Czech Republic (on furlough). Pray for traveling mercies as they visit churches in the western US. / Summer intern **CHRISTIAN (JOLENE) McARTHUR** at Covenant OPC in Tucson, AZ.

**11** **MARK & CARLA VAN ESSENDELFT**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for church members to grow in desire to serve one another. / Pray for **PAT CLAWSON**, MTIOPC coordinator, as summer classes prepare for intensive sessions in August.

**12** **BRAD (CINNAMON) PEPPO**, regional home missionary of the Miami Valley for the Presbytery of Ohio. / Active duty military chaplains **JOSHUA (STEPHANIE) JACKSON**, US Army, and **CORNELIUS (DEIDRE) JOHNSON**, US Navy.

**13** Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**. / Associate missionaries **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for progress in issues affecting the clinic staff housing renovation.

**14** **CALEB & ERIKA SMITH**, Thousand Oaks, CA. Pray God would provide Thousand Oaks Presbyterian many opportunities to share the gospel in its community. / **KERRI ANN CRUSE**, video and social media coordinator.

**15** Assoc. missionary **ANGELA VOSKUIL**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for KEO teacher discipleship and Bible classes in the local schools. / **DAVID (JANE) CRUM**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California.

JULY



The Paschalls

**16 TYLER & NATALIE DETRICK**, Dayton, OH. Pray that God would bless First Street Reformed's ESL outreach and plans for a new worship location. / Yearlong intern **NATE (KATIE) PASCHALL** at Christ the King in Naples, FL.

**17 MILLER & STEPHANIE ANSELL**, Waco, TX. Praise the Lord that Trinity Presbyterian particularized earlier this year! / Pray for assoc. missionary **LEAH HOPP**, Nakaale, Uganda, and outreach through the community health team.

**18 MICAH & EILEEN BICKFORD**, Farmington, ME. Pray for five new families to join the congregation. / Assoc. missionaries **JAMES & ESTHER FOLKERTS**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the Karamoja ministry team and its village outreach.

**19** Tentmaking missionary **TINA DEJONG**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for her further acquisition of the Karimojong language. / **CHRIS BYRD**, Westfield, NJ. Pray for God's Spirit to direct and empower Grace's gospel witness.

**20 ANDREW & REBEKAH CANAVAN**, Corona, CA. Pray that Corona Presbyterian would joyfully share the gospel and worship the living God. / Pray for the **Committee on Diaconal Ministries** as they plan for a new podcast.

**21** Missionary associate **JOANNA GROVE**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the Karimojong women as they learn to share their faith with their neighbors. / Pray for the staff of **NEW HORIZONS** and **ORDAINED SERVANT**.

**22 BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for an ingathering of the saints as the church returns to more normal services. / **MELISA MCGINNIS**, financial controller, and **CHARLENE TIPTON**, database administrator

**23** Home Missions administrative assistant **KATHARINE OLINGER**. / Please pray for the **DEACONS** of the OPC as they connect with one another and develop deeper relationships following last month's virtual CDM event.

**24 MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Ask the Lord to raise up officers. / Summer interns **NATHANIEL (EMMA) VROOM** at Resurrection in Matthews, NC, and **CALEB MALTBY** at South Austin Presbyterian in Austin, TX.

**25** Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**. / Yearlong interns **ISAAC (MASHA) BAUGH** at Covenant OPC in Kennewick, WA, and **BEN (CHERIE) FRANKS** at Ketocoin Covenant in Purcellville, VA.

**26** Pray for **RETIRED MISSIONARIES** Cal & Edie Cummings, Brian & Dorothy Wingard, Greet Rietkerk, and Young & Mary Lou Son. / Summer interns **NATE (AMY) JEFFRIES** at Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA, and **SAMUELIS (MILDA) LUKOSIUS** at Presbyterian Church of Cape Cod in West Barnstable, MA.



The Jeromins

**27 MARKUS & SHARON JEROMIN**, Battle Creek, MI. Pray for God's blessing on efforts in evangelism and networking. / **MR. AND MRS. M.**, Asia. Pray for the Lord's will and their encouragement through the visa process.

**28 MR. AND MRS. F.**, Asia (on furlough). Pray that the Lord would save and bring more men into the Reformed churches in Asia. / Pray for Disaster Response staff **DAVID NAKHLA**, **TRISH DUGGAN**, and **SARAH KLAZINGA**.

**29** Pray for affil. missionaries **CRAIG & REE COULBOURNE**, Japan, and their church-planting with Shin Urayasu Grace Church. / **KEVIN & RACHEL MEDCALF**, Cumming, GA. Pray that God would use Providence to make disciples.

**30 STEPHEN PRIBBLE**, senior technical associate for OPC.org. / Summer interns **NATHANIEL (SARAH) CROFUTT** at Redemption OPC in Gainesville, FL, and **WILLIAM (SAMANTHA) STEVENS** at Trinity Church in Syosset, NY.

**31** Affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia. / **CALVIN & CONNIE KELLER**, Winston-Salem, NC. Pray for Harvest's leadership training and its building committee.

# NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

## LEITÃO INSTALLED AT LISBON

On May 28, 2021, Mr. Derrick Leitão was ordained by the Presbytery of New York and New England and installed as pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church in Lisbon, New York.

Reverend James La Belle of the Presbyterian Church of Cape Cod in West Barnstable, Massachusetts, preached from Colossians 1:25 on “The Dignity of Gospel Ministers” and gave the charge to the minister. Reverend Thomas Trouwborst of Calvary OPC in Schenectady, New York, gave the charge to the congregation, and Reverend Daniel Patterson of Second Parish OPC in Portland, Maine, presented the warrant and nature of the office and led in prayer.

Grace Presbyterian Church, located in the St. Lawrence Valley in northern New York, was established in 1958, and Mr. Leitão is the congregation’s eighth pastor.

Mr. Leitão, originally from Providence, Rhode Island, is a graduate of Westminster Theological Seminary, Glenside, Pennsylvania, with a Master of Divinity.

## IN MEMORIAM: SALVADOR SOLIS

*Donald Jamieson*

The beloved pastor Salvador Solis passed into glory on May 21, 2021, at ninety years old. The Scriptures declare, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Our brother has departed life here on earth and is now enjoying great gain—his heavenly reward in the presence of our God and heavenly Father.

We are all the richer because of the life and ministry of Pastor Sal to a number of Orthodox Presbyterian churches, including in Waterloo, Iowa; Eagle Rock (Los Angeles), California; San Francisco, California; and Sunnysvale, California. He also served for



Salvador Solis (1930-2021)



At the ordination and installation of Leitão: Leslie “Skip” Putney, James La Belle, Michael Shingler, Daniel Patterson, Wayne Moore, Derrick Leitão, Dean Moore, Harley Lowry, Andrew Selle, Kevin Kisler, Thomas Trouwborst

a time in his retirement as stated supply in Hughson, California, at an OP mission work.

Sal grew up in Monterey, California, where he was student body president at Monterey Peninsula College. He transferred to San José State College in 1950 with a major in education, and the next year he was elected president of the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship group on campus. During that year, a small group of young men including Sal became acquainted with the Reformed faith, and that led Sal to Westminster Seminary and the ministry. He served for many years on the Home Missions Committee of the Presbytery of Northern California and Nevada and was involved in the start of several churches.

Sal is survived by his wife of sixty-eight years, Amy MacArthur, two sisters, two sons, three daughters, fifteen grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren.

## UPDATE

### CHURCHES

- On May 1, the Presbytery of Philadelphia dissolved **Pocono OPC** in Reeders, PA.

### MINISTERS

- On May 1, the Presbytery of Philadelphia dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Thomas A. Foh** and Pocono OPC in Reeders, PA, upon Foh’s retirement.

- On May 14, **Joshua L. McKamy** was installed as associate pastor of Redeemer OPC in Danville, PA. McKamy previously served as associate pastor of Living Hope OPC in Gettysburg, PA.

- On May 21, the Presbytery of Ohio concurred with the request to accept the resignation of **Alan J. Dueck** and dissolve the pastoral relationship between him and the congregation of Grace Presbyterian in Columbus, OH.

- On May 28, **Derrick Leitão** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor

of Grace Presbyterian in Lisbon, NY.

## MILESTONES

- Retired OPC pastor **Salvador M. Solis**, 90, died on May 21. He served churches in CA and IA.

- **Bertha Hunt Kinnaird**, 86, died on June 2, after sustaining injuries in a car accident. Bertha was married to John Kinnaird, previously an OP elder and moderator of the Fifty-Fourth (1981) general assembly. Her parents were OPC foreign missionaries Bruce and Katharine Hunt.

## REVIEWS

*Surviving Religion 101: Letters to a Christian Student on Keeping the Faith in College*, by **Michael J. Kruger**. Crossway, 2021. Paperback, 272 pages, \$15.29 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP member **Katharine Olinger**.

*Surviving Religion 101* addresses fifteen questions young believers are likely to ask or be asked when studying at a secular university. Author Michael J. Kruger, president and professor at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, writes to his daughter, who attends University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill—walking the same halls her father did. Kruger explains how a challenging college experience of his own—taking UNC’s “Introduction to the New Testament” course—first fostered his interest in biblically faithful New Testament studies. Although the book’s title refers to mere survival, Kruger’s aim is to show that Christianity “is not just intellectually defensible but also intellectually *satisfying* at the deepest of levels” (24).

Some essays in the book, like “My Professors Are Really Smart—Isn’t It More Likely That They’re Right and I’m Wrong?” and “I Have Gay Friends Who Are Kind, Wonderful, and Happy—Are We Sure That Homosexuality Is Really Wrong?” are immediately and personally relevant to today’s college student. (Even though I attended a Christian college, I asked some of these same questions, as did my classmates.) In other essays, Kruger

tackles common challenges to Christianity by using references and concepts accessible to young adults. Why do we believe in miracles? How can Calvinist particularism be just? How can a good God allow for evil and suffering? While Kruger writes for college-aged students, the winsome and approachable apologetics of *Surviving Religion 101* could also serve parents and youth leaders as a guide for complicated conversations.

Kruger devotes the latter half of his book to combatting scientific and historical-critical accusations against the Bible. For example, he addresses questions about the significance of New Testament textual variants and seeming contradictions in the Gospels. Kruger is consistent throughout that the secularist’s intellectual issue with Christianity is really a heart issue.

Kruger’s book doesn’t answer every question, but it reminds students who are in over their heads that there are answers out there, that the other side needs to support its own claims, and that the Lord and his Word are trustworthy and true. Today, the training and professional advancement opportunities offered by schools like UNC are unparalleled—especially for young people working in STEM (like Kruger’s daughter). But is it worth the risk for young believers? Another book might ask whether it’s right for Christians to study at institutions that deny Christ’s lordship. Kruger’s concern is simply that young people be prepared, proactive, and encouraged as they enter hostile territory. Christ *is* Lord over every square inch of creation—whether your Religion 101 professor agrees or not.

*What about Evil? A Defense of God’s Sovereign Glory*, by **Scott Christensen**. P&R, 2020. Hardcover, 576 pages, \$30.00. Reviewed by OP pastor **Ken B. Montgomery**.

Robert Dick Wilson, one of the founding members of the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary, advised his students, “Do not shirk the difficult problems, but seek to bring the facts to light, for God’s Word and God’s world will

never contradict one another” (*Christianity Today*, Dec. 1930). Arguably the most difficult problem in terms of defending the faith is answering the “problem of evil.” Simply put, it can be stated as follows: If God is wholly good (omni-benevolent) and wholly sovereign (omnipotent), how can he allow evil in his world?

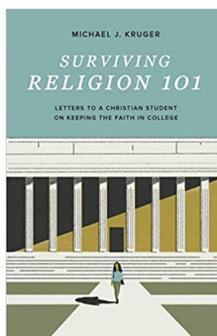
Scott Christensen advances a version of the “greater good” theodicy, which he calls a “greater glory” defense: “God’s glory is magnified not merely when greater glories are compared to lesser ones, but especially when it is seen against the polarizing backdrop of its opposite—moral and natural evil. Therefore, evil is in a unique position to magnify the glory of God” (296).

Here is a tome that must be read with a thinking cap firmly fixed to one’s noggin. Christensen summarizes and analyzes various philosophical approaches with aplomb, but he rightly insists that philosophy be treated as part of the supporting cast in theological inquiry. The main source to be acknowledged and studied is the inspired text and storyline of Scripture, culminating in and centered upon the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God.

There are several strengths of this book. Firstly, there is a robust interaction with the narrative of the Bible, which throughout records God dealing with and defeating evil, without being complicit in any way in evil. The Lord overcomes evil with good. Christensen also cuts off at the pass any who want to climb through the escape hatch of “libertarian free will”: “the plain reading of Scripture indicates that God meticulously decrees and presides over every event that unfolds within his creation, including the choices that his creatures make” (91).

Secondly, *What about Evil?* is full of insightful quotes and distillations of lines of argumentation from other solid Christian writers (including many Reformed thinkers) past and present. Clearly the author sees himself as building upon the work of others, and not starting from scratch. The reader will find the “for further reading” and study questions at the end of each chapter very useful in pursuing a deeper dive into the material that is covered.

Thirdly, Christensen understands that he is writing in the context of what



Charles Taylor has termed “a secular age.” Christensen is keen to show that a generation that is regularly confronted with horrendous instances of evil at the same time lacks the basic categories to process pain and suffering because of the “triumph of the therapeutic” (as described by Philip Rieff). In a nice turn of phrase, he writes, “we have gerrymandered the world as if designed for our own insipid gratification and no longer for God’s glory” (45).

I want to close with what I see as a few weaknesses of this work. For one, *What about Evil?* is very answer-heavy, and the impression is given that even the asking of certain questions regarding evil shows a lack of faith. Here spending more time in and with the Psalms would in my estimation be wise, for the suffering psalmist asks, for example, in a trustful and yet troubled way, “Why, O Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?” (Psalm 10:1). And the other issue is that while some treatment is given to the book of Job (the biblical book that seems to address the “problem of evil” more than any other), there is not a substantial explication of it, particularly in the interchanges between Job and his “friends.” God’s appearance in the whirlwind at the end of Job among many things shows the limits of human quests to defend God’s ways.



***Cheer Up! The Life and Ministry of Jack Miller*, by Michael A. Graham. P&R, 2020. Paperback, 256 pages, \$18.50. Reviewed by OP minister Albert J. Tricarico.**

Anyone familiar with C. John Miller will immediately understand the title of his biography, *Cheer Up! The Life and Ministry of Jack Miller*. “Jack,” as he was known, knew how to communicate hard realities in ways that magnify the grace of Christ and bring healing and joy to needy souls. The best-known example is the title of chapter two: “Cheer Up! You Are Far Worse Than You Think.” The other five

chapters begin with the same two words.

In *Cheer Up!*, PCA minister Michael A. Graham ably reviews Jack’s life from his beginnings in southwest Oregon to his death in Málaga, Spain, in the spring of 1996. He recounts Jack’s upbringing, conversion, education, calling to teach and preach, and engagement in domestic church planting and overseas missions. As expected, he also explains the Sonship course that emerged from Jack’s study of Galatians and became so influential in the church. Graham’s is a sympathetic treatment of Jack Miller. He is a fan. So am I.

If you want to learn about Jack’s unique ministry profile, including his life trials and the mild disputes surrounding his work, you will discover them in *Cheer Up!* Those who know more about the controversies than I do can decide if they are fairly treated by Graham. I do feel qualified to share how Jack’s ministry helped me and how reading *Cheer Up!* reinforced the lessons I received from hearing him preach and reading his books.

Jack practiced repentance. I read his book *Repentance and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Man* in 1981. I had been a Christian for about five years and never thought much about repentance as a lifelong duty for the believer. It is just that lesson I came to learn from reading the book. *Cheer Up!* explains the lesson well and tells Jack’s story of how he learned it himself. It also recounts the discomfort felt by some when Jack asked penetrating questions like, “What have you repented of today?”

Jack loved to pray. He treasured his friendship with Christ, his assurance that God always welcomed him, and the invitation to boldly ask for the desires of his heart. Reading about his habits of prayer,

and his faith while praying, exposed my own prayerlessness. I am grateful for that.

Jack loved the world. Graham tells the story of World Harvest Mission (now Serge) and its service to the people of Ireland, the Netherlands, and Uganda. As a former OPC missionary to Uganda, I feel the debt I owe to one whom the Lord used to reap a harvest of souls in a needy place that I called home for a decade. I loved reading about familiar names and places.

Other signature aspects of Jack’s life—the practice of hospitality, the role of the Spirit in the Christian life, praying for a wayward daughter—are worthy of interest and found inside these pages.

Forty years have passed since I first met Jack Miller. I didn’t know him well, but I gained much from him during the brief time I worshiped where he served as pastor in Abington, Pennsylvania, and from his books. I am grateful to him and to Michael Graham for telling us about him.

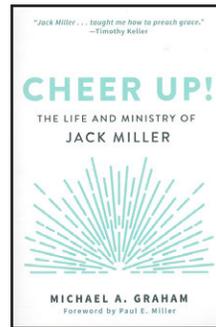
***Being the Bad Guys: How to Live for Jesus in a World That Says You Shouldn’t*, by Stephen McAlpine. The Good Book Company, 2021. Paperback, 144 pages, \$11.39 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP minister Larry E. Wilson.**

We’re used to seeing serious Christians as “the good guys.” It shocks us to realize that our society now largely sees us as “the bad guys”—particularly when it comes to issues of sexuality (think LGBTQ+). Recent academic tomes helpfully trace what has brought us to this point in Western society (for example, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self* by Carl Trueman). Now Stephen McAlpine—an Australian pastor and former journalist—has written *Being the Bad Guys* to face this matter on the



## USPS Delivery Delays

The United States Postal System’s delivery of *New Horizons* has been delayed in some areas. If your issue does not arrive by the tenth of the month and you would like a copy, please contact Abby Harting at [ccesecretary@opc.org](mailto:ccesecretary@opc.org) or 215-830-0900.



popular level. He's a good writer. At less than 150 pages, it's an easy read.

McAlpine points out how today's vision of human flourishing not only rejects the Christian gospel, it seeks to replace it with itself. This new "gospel" proclaims that meaning, purpose, and identity are found within—and that sex and gender are at the heart of identity. This new "gospel" promises love, happiness, and utopia. Many find its vision compelling. So, Christians are increasingly deemed to be not just wrong, but downright evil—standing opposed to love, happiness, and utopia. God's people feel increasing social pressure as we're alternately wooed, scolded, and penalized.

How should we respond? By trying to politically overpower those who oppose us? By trying to give in as much as we can? By trying to sneak away and hole up to protect ourselves? McAlpine points out Scriptural and practical problems with each of these options. He suggests an alternate, positive way forward. Pointing to various Scriptures, he contends that we should embrace our "bad guy" status. We should make the most of our new situation as a huge—albeit painful—opportunity to demonstrate the hope of the true gospel.

McAlpine suggests some general contours of what that might look like. These are more than mere cosmetic adjustments. "As Western cultures fracture into toxic tribalism," he writes, "it's crucial for churches to form deep, thick communities, based around more than convenience" (99). This calls us to follow Christ in ways we find hard to imagine. It calls us to deeper, longer-range commitment to fellow Christians and local churches, through thick and thin. It calls us to show deeper, more Christlike love to those who despise and abuse us—especially, to put ourselves into positions to bring gospel mercy to those broken by and cast out of the new "utopia." It exposes a key obstacle—how can we display a genuine alternative to deep-seated individualism if we're in its thrall ourselves? We, the people of God, need radical grace and deep repentance to unlearn many things we're comfortable

with and to learn many things we're uncomfortable with.

*Being the Bad Guys* is not long enough to develop these suggestions in detail. But it is long enough to serve as a needed wake-up call and to give hope that, even if we are utterly routed in this culture war, King Jesus has already won the victory that really counts. He gives his followers a more lasting, life-giving identity than anything the world can ever offer. Those who are willing to take up their crosses and follow Jesus outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore, will shine all the brighter as the world gets darker.

This book applies sound doctrine to a pressing need. It can prime the pump for consequential discussion among church leaders, adult Sunday school classes, or small groups.

***Redemptive Reversals and the Ironic Overturning of Human Wisdom*, G. K. Beale. Crossway, 2019. Paperback, 208 pages, \$14.14 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor Robert T. Holda.**

*Redemptive Reversals* is an excellently written exposition of the biblical theme that God orders the affairs of his human creatures with a noteworthy dose of irony. This book is part of the Short Studies in Biblical Theology series, the goal of which is "to connect the resurgence of biblical theology at the academic level with everyday believers . . . in a way that requires no prerequisite theological training of the reader" (19). G. K. Beale's *Redemptive Reversals* certainly fits the bill.

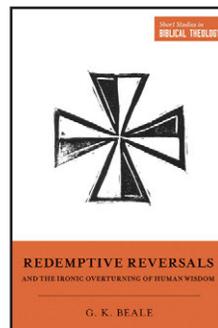
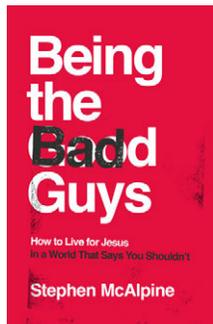
Beale's basic definition of irony is "the saying of something or the doing of something that implies its opposite." He helpfully categorizes the Lord's ironic interventions with two types of theological irony: retributive irony, "whereby God punishes people by the very means of their own sin," and redemptive irony, "whereby the faithful appear to be cursed, but as they persevere in faith, they are really in the midst of being blessed" (21).

Beale does a fantastic job of highlighting the themes of theological irony present in a variety of biblical passages. In fact, I found that discovering the pervasive presence of irony in Scripture was one of the book's main benefits. Even the most seasoned students of Scripture should be able to discover new insights into the mind and plan of God as Beale helps them to appreciate the various ways God's orderly rule features the element of irony.

Beale offers two chapters on retributive irony, three on restorative irony, and one on the irony of eschatology. In nearly every chapter, Beale does more than expertly exposit irony in the text of Scripture for the renewal of our minds; he also applies his exposition to the heart, which is the entire focus of his concluding chapter.

Beale's exposition often deals with portions of Scripture that are illustrative by their nature as narratives (e.g., the accounts of Joseph, Haman and Mordecai, David and Absalom). However, Beale adds his own illustrations throughout, ranging from the presidency of Richard Nixon to *The Road Runner Show* to the life of Paul Anderson, the world's strongest man. Beale's illustrations are all quite effective, but my favorite illustration of irony comes from Andrew A. White, one of Beale's former students. In the forward, which White wrote for Beale, he shares his own testimony of irony, "that God uses weakness to produce strength and thus accomplish his gracious rule" (18), by sharing the way in which the Lord unexpectedly used him in his weakness to help effect a revival in a Khmer Rouge refugee camp on the Thailand/Cambodia border in 1980.

G. K. Beale is well known for his masterful treatment of biblical theology generally, and here that mastery is put to good use for the benefit of the church. Although the book was not written for use in a group study, as it lacks discussion or reflection questions, the application portions could be useful for group discussion. I highly recommend this book as a source of biblical edification for believers of all stripes.



***The Promise: The Amazing Story of Our Long-Awaited Savior*, written by Jason Helopoulos and illustrated by Rommel Ruiz. Crossway, 2021. Hardback, 64 pages, \$15.99. Reviewed by managing editor Judith Dinsmore.**

This picture-book, easy to read aloud in one sitting, begins with creation and sketches redemptive history, fixing on key Old Testament figures—Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Sampson, Saul, David, and Eli—and their inability to save us, they being but types of the One who can and who did.

Like his fellow PCA pastor Kevin DeYoung, who wrote the children's book *The Biggest Story*, author Jason Helopoulos partnered with an illustrator able to transform a well-phrased but simple presentation of Christian truth into a gorgeous and layered tale that draws the reader, but especially the child being read to, into its pages. Illustrator Rommel Ruiz's art repeats themes from page to page that adults will quickly pick up on, though they are not brought out in the text: mountains, walls, light and dark, the color red, and even walking staffs. Most striking is an undulating, often-golden line that flows from the top of the page down, signifying the motion of God toward his people, from creation to the mighty works of his chosen men, to Christ's arrival in the manger, to Christ's crucifixion. The line appears in the clouds, in smoke, and in abstract design, until finally it cleverly culminates as a timeline to link each type in a chain that leads, of course, to Christ himself. This line's motion is mirrored in the red snake in the garden of Eden whose body runs defiantly from the bottom of the page upward. Only on the cross does the snake at last lie limp.

Books about the heroes of the Bible abound. This picture-book differs in its apt description of each hero's strength but also each hero's sin. No child will walk away thinking these Old Testament figures are in the Bible merely as models for right conduct. The repetition of failure becomes almost heavy to read. The illustration of Moses leaning in despair against

the rock he has just struck is especially gripping, as is the prophet Nathan towering over a guilty David. Turning page after page teaches the reader the weariness of waiting for one without sin—and the joy of arriving at last in Bethlehem.



Although other faces are depicted, in a cartoony style, Jesus's face is not depicted. In fact, the snake-crushing figure you can see on the cover is repeated inside the book's pages and is the only depiction of Christ. That, however, did not stop my three-year-old from immediately pointing at this shadowy figure, which emanates power, and asking, "Is that Jesus?"

***Recovering the Lost Art of Reading: A Quest for the True, the Good, and the Beautiful*, by Leland Ryken and Glenda Faye Mathes. Crossway, 2021. Paperback, 304 pages, \$21.99. Reviewed by OP member Diane L. Olinger.**

A frequent public service announcement during my 1970s childhood told us that "reading is fundamental." That would also be a good summary of this book. In the context of our digital age, Ryken and Mathes argue for the importance of reading literature as a key part of becoming a good person and a good Christian, or maybe it's better to say a well-educated person and a mature Christian. The authors base their argument about the importance of literature on the Bible itself: "We know God wants us to have literature in our lives because he has revealed himself to the human race in a book that is primarily literary in nature . . . The very example of the Bible establishes the necessity of literature in a Christian's life" (64).

Ryken and Mathes lament the societal decline in reading litera-

ture. But, with twenty-four-hour access to a constant stream of information, aren't we reading more than ever? Yes and no, they tell us: People are reading a great deal of information, especially online, but they are not reading quality material and they are not reading well (16). Ryken and Mathes recommend reading physical books, believing that "online reading does not allow time for analytical thought" (22) and screens do not provide the kind of "transport" (73) that book readers experience as they take leave of their ordinary world and arrive in an imaginary one.

The authors encourage us to take steps to recover the lost art of reading and they give us advice, based on years of experience in teaching and writing, on how to do this generally and with specific attention to the genres of poetry, novels, fantasies, children's books, creative non-fiction, and the Bible as literature. The PSAs of my childhood emphasized that "reading is FUNdamental." And Ryken and Mathes agree. They want us to read because it is a delight, not just a duty. "What does reading literature offer us? It offers us meaningful leisure at contemplative, intellectual, imaginative, and spiritual levels. As a total package, reading literature is impossible to surpass as a recreational activity" (78).

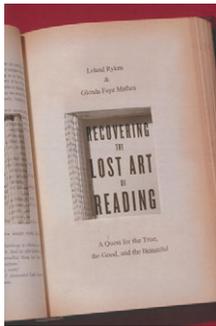
I find that I agree with most of what

## Position Available

**Pastor:** Providence OPC is an established congregation in Madison, Wisconsin—a vibrant university town with many recreational and cultural opportunities. We seek a praying, Scripture-loving pastor who is enthusiastic about the Reformed faith. Healthy organizational and counseling skills would further bless Providence. If you are interested in the challenge of a multi-generational congregation from a variety of faith backgrounds and in ministering to our Chinese-speaking members alongside our new Chinese Ministries Coordinator, please send your resume to: [providencepost1@gmail.com](mailto:providencepost1@gmail.com).

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS *Continued*

Ryken and Mathes assert in this book about reading. And, I've heard myself make similar arguments to reluctant, younger readers, though I'm not sure I've done so convincingly. It is hard to convince a digital native with quick, easy access to a vast amount of knowledge that he "inhabits a tiny world" because he rarely reads literature (36, quoting Dickens). It's hard to convince him that reading is an unparalleled recreational activity when he has YouTube, or that literature provides a transport from mundane preoccupations that video games do not. I don't think these arguments are aided by eternalizing older technologies, like the printing press and the book, though God has certainly used them mightily. But I do think there is an opening to discuss what is in danger of being lost when we shun reading, and why this might matter particularly to Christians. In *Recovering the Lost Art of Reading*, Ryken and Mathes have provided us a useful guide as we do so.



***Chief Scottish Man: The Life and Ministry of Thomas Chalmers*, by Sandy Finlayson. Evangelical Press, 2021. Paperback, 176 pages, \$11.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Michael L. Babcock.**

The housing scheme in which my wife grew up has a church named Chalmers Parish Church. It was built in the nineteenth century as part of Thomas Chalmers's (1780–1847) vision to reach the poor and uneducated working classes of Scot-

land with the gospel. Who was Thomas Chalmers? Though virtually unknown today, Chalmers was renowned as one of the greatest preachers and orators of Scotland whose sympathies turned to improving the social conditions that resulted from Scottish industrialization. He knew from personal experience, however, that moral change could only come about through lives transformed by Christ. Chalmers's great vision, evangelical passion, and tireless energy renovated Scotland so that Karl Marx even named him as the "arch parson."

Sandy Finlayson's wee biography gives a brief but excellent sketch of this man whom Thomas Carlyle called "the chief Scotsman of his age" (from whence came the title of the book). Finlayson's biography is both engaging and instructive. He tells the story of this great man with wonderful fluidity. The 152 pages of the book read very quickly. With each page turned, the reader's understanding of the importance of this man will grow. This biography will cause the reader to deeply respect the man and to the love the gospel he lived for.

Finlayson clearly admires the great Scot, yet he rehearses his life without being hagiographic. Indeed, he tells how Chalmers was a man of great pride and ambition. His faults are examined in the book as a way of reminding us that even giants need a Savior.

Chalmers entered the ministry for a comfortable employment but found preaching to be a distraction from his real passion, which was mathematics. His sermons in the early days were moralistic

and often put together only on Saturdays and without much thought. But then he was converted, and his ambitions turned to make Christ great in the eyes of his people. From the moment he saw that salvation was not a matter of mere morality but of regeneration, his forceful preaching of the gospel became a means of bringing many to faith in Jesus. A sermon worth noting is his "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection."

Finlayson provides a good and clear summary of Chalmers's influence as he traced the span of his ministry from rural Scotland to his ministry in urban Glasgow and then as Professor of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews University. His influence was so profound that when he walked out of the 1843 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to form the Free Church, it is of little surprise that one third of the ministers went with him. His influence crossed the Atlantic and the theologians of Princeton Seminary deeply appreciated him.

It is sad that Chalmers is hardly appreciated, let alone even heard of, today. I believe Finlayson's book will help rectify that. It is hard to capture the full scope of Chalmers's genius, but here is a book that at least begins to show how powerful the gospel can be in a person's life. In the context of this biography, the reader will be encouraged by topics on mercy ministries, church planting, shepherding strategies, separation of church and state, and pastoral leadership. Indeed, I believe this will inspire even American pastors to be more effective in their roles as shepherds of Christ's flock.

