

NEW HORIZONS

≡ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ≡

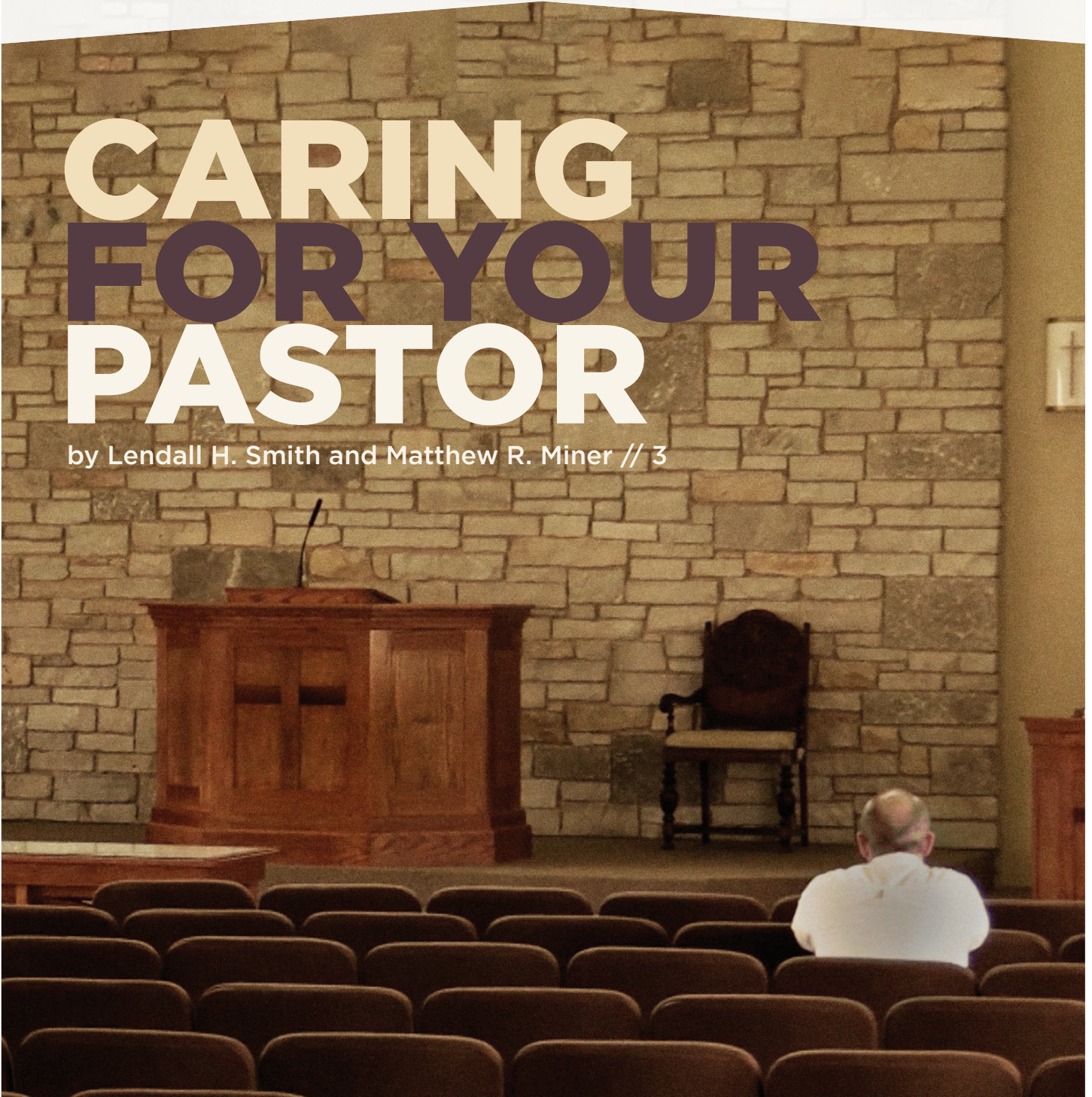
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Sabbatical for Your Pastor
// by Kenneth Vander Molen

MARCH 2021

8 Decoding a Secular Creed
// by Jonathan Landry Cruse

CARING FOR YOUR PASTOR

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New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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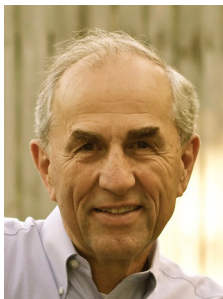
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The congregation of Lake Sherwood, along with members of the Presbytery of the South, celebrated the ordination and installation of David Carnes as its pastor on November 13, 2020. In a moving message, ruling elder Terry Carnes, David's father, gave the charge to the minister. David has been a faithful member of the church since 2013 and, in God's good providence, will now serve as one of its pastors. (Left to right) David Chilton, Stephen Oharek, Rodney King, Terry Carnes, Matthew Butler, David Carnes, Scott Sistare, Geoffrey Downey, Wessel Dirksen, Larry Miner, John Hearn



CARING FOR YOUR PASTOR



LENDALL H. SMITH AND MATTHEW R. MINER // **Most of us have opinions about how an Orthodox Presbyterian pastor should care for the members of his congregation, but we often do not think about the reverse: How should Orthodox Presbyterian church members**

care for their pastor? What does a pastor need to encourage him in his ministry?

Every aspect of a pastor's life involves service to the church. Pastors take phone calls and pay visits at all hours. Evenings are often taken up with meetings and church events. Even as it is offered with a joyful heart in service to their King, these various acts of ministry affect the time that pastors can spend at home with their families. For a pastor's children, their views of Christ and his church are often based in part on how the local church treats its minister—their daddy!

As it says in 1 Corinthians 12, the body of Christ has many members, including eyes, ears, and hands. Each part of the body is essential, and each part should have “the same care for one another” (v. 25), since we all serve “the same Lord” (v. 5). So in this arrangement of mutual service and love in the body of Christ, what can church members and officers do to care for and encourage their pastor?

Responding to the Service of the Pastor

Above all, pray fervently for your pastor! His preaching and pastoral ministry is a challenging calling; humanly speaking, it is impossible. The Apostle Paul knew the importance of prayer. In Ephesians 6:19, he asked for prayer so that he would have both the words and the boldness to proclaim the mystery of the gospel. In Colossians 4:3–4, he writes, “Pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.” Christians must uphold their pastor in prayer in order that the Lord might help him fulfill his calling. Nothing was more reassuring to me (Lendall) in my years of ministry than to be told by various members of the congregation that they were praying for me each day.

Parishioners respond thoughtfully to their pastor's messages when, instead of offering only a generic handshake at

the end of the service, they express appreciation for ideas that helped them in their understanding of the Bible and the gospel. They can share their gratitude as his ministry challenges them in their faith and obedience to the Lord. They can let the pastor know how a message, or a portion of it, was particularly comforting in a time of discouragement or depression. Sometimes a member might interact with the pastor about an idea in the sermon. Hearing such reflections stimulates a pastor. It gives him helpful feedback that his flock is profiting from his messages. I (Lendall) still remember one occasion where I was very discouraged about how the sermon had gone that week (my wife would affirm that this happened more than once!). It was a blue Monday indeed. On Wednesday, I received a lovely note from a member of the congregation who told me how and why the service had been a great blessing to her the previous Sunday. It lifted my spirits to be reminded of how the Lord uses his Word, the singing of

hymns, and prayers to bless his people—even when I felt I had fallen short in my ministry. Her note was a gift from the Lord.

A Man, Not a Religious Professional

The OP minister is a man, made in God's image, broken by sin, and redeemed in Christ. He has a special calling from the Lord, but he is not "more spiritual" than others, nor is he a religious professional that the congregation hired for outsourced work. Members encourage their pastor as they deepen their relationships with him as a person of like nature to themselves. As congregants grasp this truth and get to know their pastor better, they will be able to pray more thoughtfully for him and his family. What experiences shaped his life? What are his interests and hobbies? If you discover similar interests, you may be able to pursue them together—running, reading, golfing, playing sports, or sharing God's good gifts of food and drink. Being a pastor can feel lonely.

I (Lendall) look back with thankfulness on one couple in a congregation that I served who invited my wife and me out to dinner each year on the anniversary of my call to serve that congregation. This annual meal was a big encouragement and thoughtful remembrance that they were glad that I accepted the call to be their pastor.

Dave Holmlund, regional home missionary of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, appreciated one glimpse of affection from an unexpected source in an OP church plant he served: "There was a family with an elementary-aged boy, Cameron, who had a nickname for me behind my back: 'Big Dave.' When I finally learned this after some five years, I thought it was hilarious. Everything at church was so formal—I was addressed as 'Pastor Holmlund,' etc. After I found out, it was my inside joke with them, especially with Cameron. It was very endearing."

Members can encourage their pastor by including his family in their lives.

Invite the whole family into your home for dinner, or go on a picnic together in a park in the summer. If you have children the same age, have the pastor's children over for sleepovers—maybe so that the pastor and his wife can get away for a night or two. If you share a common interest in music, invite the family to go to a concert with you or just have them and others over to participate in an evening of singing or playing instruments together. Including the pastor and his family in activities helps them to feel like a vital part of the congregation, especially if they moved from a different part of the country, away from their family and friends.

Casey Bessette, pastor of Pilgrim OPC in Raleigh, North Carolina, describes the welcome he and his family have received since he began last summer: "Women are intentionally laying the foundation for long-term relationships with my wife. The children of the church are making an effort to befriend our kids. My family is invited for dinner in members' homes. When my family was ill, delicious meals were provided. My wife and I are asked regularly if we have any needs."

Members serving in various roles in the church can also provide a significant encouragement to the pastors, including volunteering as Sunday school teachers, volunteering as nursery workers, providing transportation to worship for students or the elderly, caring for the church property, welcoming visitors, serving the youth, listening to children recite memory verses or catechism questions, or visiting the sick. The list of ways to serve is as long and as varied as the needs of God's people. The public ministry of Word and sacrament, the minister's unique calling, are at the center of the church's work. However, the loving service of all members makes the wheels go 'round (as 1 Corinthians 12 teaches). When the body of Christ is working together in service and ministry, it can be a great encouragement to everyone,

including the minister.

Elders have a special role in caring for and encouraging their pastor. Matthew Holst, pastor of Shiloh Presbyterian in Raleigh, North Carolina, says: "My elders are a great encouragement to me. Even small things are important: ensuring my telephone and computer are up to date enables me to work without the hindrance of out-of-date technology. IT equipment for the pastors is a budget line item for the elders of Shiloh."

Pulpit supply can also be a great help to pastors, Holst observes: "Recently I was asked to preach at another OP church. The elders of that church had brought in two weeks of pulpit supply so that their pastor could take time away from the pulpit to better help his wife who was due to give birth. Those elders had the care of their pastor's family at the forefront of their minds and should be commended."

Financial Care for Pastors

Of course, one additional way that a church cares for its pastor is in providing financial support that he "may be free from worldly care and employment" (OPC Form of Government

The screenshot shows a website interface with a green header titled "Explore Popular CMC Tools". Below the header are five icons representing different tools: Financial Planning Assistance, Diaconal Assistance Form, 2020 Sabbatical Guidelines, Sabbatical Grant Application, and Pastoral Compensation Tool. Below this is a section titled "Caring for Our Ministers & Their Wives" with a sub-header "Have you ever thought, 'I need help! Should I discuss this with my session? My presbytery? My wife?'". The text below explains that the Committee on Ministerial Care was formed in 2017 to provide general financial advice and ministries of encouragement and support to ministers of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and their spouses. It also states that their prayer and efforts are directed at being able to assist ministers in finding the answers and resources needed to flourish in ministry. At the bottom of the section, it says "The CMC's website, opccmc.org, provides resources including a pastoral compensation tool".

22.9; see also 23.9, 11, 12). That is the teaching of the Apostle Paul: "the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14). In spite of this clear biblical directive, at times pastors find themselves in calls with financial means that are barely adequate, or even inadequate, to meet the needs of their

family. In other cases, calls are not sufficiently adjusted annually to keep up with increased living costs and a growing family. While the factors involved in assessing the adequacy of pastoral compensation can grow quite complex, including widely varying costs based on the region of the country, one of the ways a church can care for the pastor is by reviewing his pastoral compensation annually.

To that end, the Committee on Ministerial Care has posted to its website, opccmc.org, a pastoral compensation tool that can provide guidance to churches, sessions, and search committees regarding how to account for years of experience, changing family size, appropriate contributions for retirement, and more. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to pastoral compensation, but the online tool can be a help, and perhaps a conversation-starter, to ensure a pastor's material needs are being met sufficiently.

The suggestions above are only a sample of the myriad ways to care for, encourage, and support your pastor in his ministry. Such actions should never be aimed at gaining influence with the pastor. Instead, members are called to respond to gospel ministry by serving our Lord with eagerness and love, motivated by gratitude for his grace and mercy. Care for the pastor and loving service in the church will produce a spirit of joy and thankfulness in the congregation and in the heart of the pastor, who will say with Paul, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:3–6). Amen! □

Lendall Smith is president of the Committee on Ministerial Care. Matthew Miner is a ruling elder at Pilgrim OPC in Raleigh, North Carolina, and a member of the Committee on Ministerial Care.

Caring for Your Pastor's Wife

The pastor's wife isn't an officer in the church, but she's married to one, and that presents her with some distinct opportunities for service in the church. Scripture seems to anticipate these opportunities as the households of officers are required to be well managed, and "their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things" (1 Tim. 3:4, 11). Browsing the pages of *Choosing the Good Portion: Women of the OPC* (2016), you will find stories of many pastors' wives (and other women) who, throughout the history of our church, have supported, encouraged, and suffered alongside our ordained ministers. We've been blessed by our pastors' wives!

Yet, how much thought—and time and resources—have we put into supporting pastors' wives as they seek to fulfill this role? This too is a concern for the Committee on Ministerial Care. In a focus group with pastors' wives sponsored by CMC, elder and committee member Greg De Jong asked them to give examples of special care they had received in our churches or suggestions on how we might better care for them. Here are some of their responses:

We have very young children, and always have a baby it seems. And we often host people who are visiting missionaries or conference speakers. We host them in our home and share a meal with them. We enjoy doing it, but the details are sometimes overwhelming to me. There are two elders' wives who somehow always know that people are coming to our house, without me telling them or asking for help. They say, "Can I provide the food?" And so, they bring a spread. They think of everything: paper plates so I won't have to wash dishes, and utensils and napkins and everything. I'll never be able to tell them how much it blesses me because it allows me to host these things, spend time with our guests, take care of my children, and not feel overwhelmed by it.

It's not just my husband shaking hands after church; I try to talk to visitors, too, which means our children are running around after church without supervision. Maybe people (adults or even teens) could be assigned to keep an eye on the pastor's kids so that the pastor's wife has the freedom to go talk with people.

For some pastors, even putting pictures on a wall can be very stressful—that's just not what their gifts and training have prepared them for! If the session and deacons understand that this is a man who lacks these kinds of skills, it might be kind for them to say, "Hey, is there anything that we could do on one day? Give us a list of things that we could do." The minister may not have the finances to hire people, so this would be a blessing to his whole family.

I think being a pastor's wife is a lonely position because everybody thinks that you have your act together and that you should be teaching them. But I'm thinking "I'm just me, I have my own needs, I've never done this before, and I've got kids." At the same time, you're not at liberty to bare your soul in quite the same way. And people don't look at you as a regular person, someone they could have a regular friendship with. So it's complicated, and it can be isolating.

As these comments show, it's important to remember that the pastor's wife, while she may be presented with special opportunities for service, is also an ordinary church member. So, we should be realistic when it comes to her abilities. Like you, she is a servant of Christ. Like you, she is trying to honor her spouse. Like you, she is exhausted and can't seem to find time to serve the church the way she'd like to.

Pray for the CMC as it considers ways in which the church can better support the needs of pastors' wives, and for your own congregation as it endeavors to do this as well.

THE WHY AND HOW OF A SABBATICAL FOR YOUR PASTOR



KENNETH VANDER MOLEN // Have you ever wondered what it would be like to spend time with a pastor in his home, just to see what life was like for him and his family? Years ago, in a previous church, I did exactly that. Just as we all sat down to supper and were about to pray, the phone rang.

It was a member of the church calling to inform the pastor that a family member was in the hospital and might have some serious health issues. The member suggested, even insisted, that the pastor go at once to the hospital.

The pastor hung up, kissed his wife goodbye, and headed off to the hospital, a forty-five-minute drive away. When he returned, I asked him and his wife if interruptions like this one happened often. Their response was that it was just part of the life of a pastor.

The Need for Sabbaticals

I am reminded of Elijah in 1 Kings 19, who was so weary of his prophetic work that he sought to withdraw. Jesus Christ himself, throughout the course of his ministry, often “withdrew to desolate places to pray” (Luke 5:16; see also Luke 6:12; 9:18; 11:1).

It is true that all of us as believers are called to strive now in order to enter later into our promised eternal rest: “Let us therefore strive to enter

that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience” (Heb. 4:11). On the other hand, in the time before Christ’s return, the creational mandate of a day of rest and worship remains in order to refresh us spiritually and physically. A pastor engaged on the Sabbath in public and private ministry, however, does not always get the rest on which other believers have come to rely for their earthly journey.

Having served as an elder for years, I have read many pastors’ reports to the session of that month’s funerals, weddings, hospital visits for the sick, visits with new attendees, counseling meetings, committee meetings, youth theology classes, adult Sunday school classes, family visitations, session meetings, guest preaching, presbytery meetings, and general assembly—not to mention the preparation time for two sermons a week! Add to that what does not appear in the session report: personal devotions, home upkeep, exercise, spending time with wife and children, and—you

get the point.

As an elder, I need to be supportive of and caring for my pastor. Our church wants to keep our pastor for a long time. If timely breaks will help him serve Christ’s church longer for God’s glory and for the building up of the church, then study breaks and sabbaticals need to be a part of our church’s yearly planning, and may God be praised in the process.

Sabbaticals: What They Are and What They Are Not

First, a sabbatical can be described as a break or change from a normal routine. The *Strong’s Concordance* definition of the Greek word *sabbaton* is “day of weekly repose.” Because of the unique nature of a pastor’s ministry on Sunday, a different form of Sabbath rest must be considered. In my research on sabbaticals, I frequently find words like *rest*, *restoration*, and *renewal*. The purpose is to get away for a time from ministry relationships, routines, and responsibilities.

Whether it is a few weeks or a few months, a sabbatical is a restful change in the pastor's schedule to set aside the stress and burned-out feelings of ministry and to focus on areas that need renewal. In some cases, it may restore past joy and zeal for ministry. To be clear, there is no one sabbatical that fits all. It is the job of the session and congregation to help plan with the pastor what a sabbatical might look like.

Second, I would like to highlight what a sabbatical is *not*: it is not a vacation. The vacation time a pastor has will already be built into his call. Any sabbatical would be over and above the scheduled vacation. Goals for sabbaticals and vacations are different.

For many OP congregations, in the Lord's providence, it may not be financially or logistically possible for the pastor to be gone for a long stretch of time. But even a break of just two or three weeks can mean so much to a pastor. If this is your church's situation, consider spreading a number of shorter study breaks out over a year's time to better fit the church's circumstances.

For other OP congregations, longer sabbaticals may be possible. Let me share with you one example of a sab-

batical that an OP pastor took who has been at his current call for many years. He had taken a short sabbatical and a number of study breaks throughout his time as pastor, but this sabbatical was for four months. He attended a marriage conference and stayed in the United Kingdom to study at the Tyndale House, a place used internationally as a sabbatical study location for pastors. While there, he prepared for teaching a seminary class. He read a good number of books completely in one sitting, which would not have been possible during a normal week of ministry. After returning to the United States, but before the sabbatical was complete, he also took a

class at a seminary. He planned the sermons for the year ahead and laid out the church calendar. However, the pastor completely shut off all communication with the congregation except for a few times reporting by email on how things were going and providing prayer requests. He shared pictures on a website if people were interested. Afterward, the pastor debriefed the session on the work he had done and how he was planning to apply what he learned to his future ministry in the church. Much of what this pastor did on sabbatical would not have happened without this dedicated time. Meanwhile, the elders and congregation were stretched, but also grew in their care for the sheep.

A Revived Joy

I currently serve on the Committee on Ministerial Care,

which studies the needs of pastors in the OPC and provides ways of caring for them and their spouses during all phases of ministry. The CMC has placed on their website, opccmc.org, information on how to get a sabbatical started. To further help sessions and congregations, the CMC provides financial grants designated for sabbaticals.

As an OP elder speaking to my fellow elders, I would challenge you to take the lead in offering a sabbatical to your pastor. It will certainly stretch your gifts in serving the congregation while he is gone, but there will also be a revived joy in serving alongside your pastor and congregation when he returns. If given periodic study breaks and sabbaticals, pastors tend to serve the church longer and with fewer cases of burnout. In the long run, caring for your pastor this way *now* saves you all the work of calling another pastor in the future.

I would also encourage OPC members and congregations to consider that you have a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ who is generally available 24/7 to serve you. He has been given gifts to preach and to shepherd you. Please pray for your pastor daily as he takes up the calling to serve the body of Christ as a minister.

Finally, I would encourage OP pastors to please speak to your session if you need a break because of burnout. Too often pastors leave their calls earlier than necessary because of the high and sometimes unspoken expectations placed on them.

May Jesus Christ receive glory and honor in our efforts together as a church both to labor for his kingdom and to take rest when appropriate. □

The author is a ruling elder at Harvest Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Wyoming, Michigan, and a member of the Committee on Ministerial Care.



The Tyndale House

Steps for Planning a Sabbatical

Sessions could consider the following steps as they plan for sabbaticals:

1. Create a Sabbatical Committee early in a pastor's call to the church to prepare for a future sabbatical.
2. Communicate the need for sabbaticals to the congregation.
3. Consider starting small by giving the pastor a one-to-two-week study break.
4. Have a line item in your budget to fund sabbaticals.
5. Ask for personal donations or thank offerings for sabbaticals.
6. Apply for grants or inquire of foundations that help finance sabbaticals.

From "Introducing Sabbaticals," opccmc.org.

DECODING A SECULAR CREED



JONATHAN LANDRY CRUSE // **They began appearing in front yards across the country this past summer. Suddenly. Overwhelmingly. I thought it would be a passing fad, but it looks like I was wrong. They persisted through the change of seasons, standing stalwartly next to campaign signs in the fall, and, as I write this, next**

to Santa and Rudolph. I imagine that by the time you are reading this, the signs will be greeting the spring blossoms in the gardens of your neighborhood.

I am speaking of the ubiquitous “In this house, we believe. . .” yard signs. First seen in 2016 but surging in 2020, they are the latest of our culture’s virtue signals and apparently encapsulate the main tenets of a new and powerfully popular secular creed. Among the various versions of this sign, you will find some or all of the following declarations:

Black lives matter.

Women’s rights are human rights.

No human is illegal.

News isn’t fake.

Water is life.

Science is real.

Love is love.

Kindness is everything.

Some of these statements Christians would affirm, others we must patently deny (or at least deny the underlying meaning), and others still are simply baffling. Nevertheless, this formulation has by and large gripped the heart of our society, and it’s important to understand why. My aim in this article is not

to address each individual statement but rather to explore why the creed exists in the first place. In doing so, my hope is that we would better understand our neighbors and be better equipped to love and serve them.

The Impulse of Religion

A main purpose of these signs seems to be a protest and rejection of traditional religion. The language is intentionally reminiscent of the creedal formulae of Christianity, and the concept of belief is employed, yet there is no mention of God, Christ, or Scripture. Apparently, these things are unnecessary for living a morally upright and meaningful life in the world. Secularism has triumphed over religion.

But has it? I would posit that this secular creed has served to underscore the main thing it was trying to disprove: that we are an extremely religious people. True enough, God may have been pushed out of this recent confession, but the *need* for a god remains. In Romans 1, Paul describes the nature of fallen humanity by saying that they “suppress the truth . . . they exchanged the truth

about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!” (vv. 18, 25). Notice what Paul is saying: the truth of God is suppressed, but worship is not. We will worship whether we like it or not because this is how we were made. The least “religious” people in the world are still worshipers.

The problem is that, after the Fall, we innately worship the wrong thing. This is made abundantly clear today in the yards of many American homes. Belief is no longer in the Creator, but in what he has made. There is a problem when we think “water is life” and not that Jesus is the Water of Life (John 4:14). All of this serves to underscore a point made by Terry Eagleton, professor of literary and cultural theory at Lancaster University, in his book *Culture and the Death of God*: “The history of the modern age is among other things the search for a viceroy for God.”

Even so, the arrival of these signs has opened up an apologetic window for us that perhaps we didn’t realize was there. Religion and worship are alive and well in the heart of the

average twenty-first-century American, so perhaps an invitation to church might not be so bizarre to your neighbors as you might have assumed. Why not give them a chance to experience the proper religion? They want to worship; why not welcome them to a right worship?

The Exhaustion of Virtue Signaling

Why are people putting these signs out in the first place? Why do so many feel the need to tell their neighborhood their stance on these particular issues? What is happening here is commonly called virtue signaling—the act of expressing one’s opinions openly to demonstrate good character or moral correctness. Society has deemed this set of views to be morally right, and by displaying them in your yard, you are showing the world that you “get” it. You are on the right side. It’s a way of accruing moral capital in society. We have a term for it theologically, too: works righteousness.

This is seen in the final line of the creed: “Kindness is everything.” In today’s world, the transcendent imperative upon all moral creatures is to be kind to one another. I am not disputing that kindness is important. Just the other day, I forgot to set the trash can out at night to be emptied in the morning, but my neighbor (who has one of these signs in his yard) noticed and, very early in the morning, put my trash out for me so I didn’t miss the pickup. That was kind.

But is kindness *everything*? I certainly don’t want everything—my life, my soul, my eternity—riding on my acts of kindness or lack thereof. That’s a terrifying way to live. And yet, it’s the controlling worldview of many of our neighbors. They need to hear the very same thing you and I need to hear: kindness isn’t everything; Christ is everything. *His* kindness is everything. “When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us” (Titus 3:4–5). Furthermore, when we recognize that our salvation is secured by what Christ has done, and not by what we do, then the allure of virtue signaling fades, and we may practice

our righteousness in secret (see Matt. 6:1).

The Absurdity of the Moral Revolution

If you take the time to look, you’ll notice that the stanzas of this creed differ from house to house. Unlike our Nicene Creed or Westminster Confession, there was no council or assembly that convened to produce this formulation. The yard signs are very much a grassroots movement, and one that is continually evolving. But think about what that says about the tenuous nature of the current moral revolution.



A quickly spreading creed (photo by Nate Meulenber)

One of the factors in play here is something called “intersectionality”—a theoretical framework for understanding how aspects of a person’s identity shape their privilege. The more minority categories one falls into, the theory claims, the more one is societally disadvantaged and underprivileged. The creed is one attempt of many to overturn for these groups the societal oppression that they have experienced in the past. The problem with this worldview is that it is never satisfied. You can never keep up with the demands of this moral revolution, because who is undervalued, who is oppressed, who is underrepresented, is always changing. The first iteration of this creed stated that “women’s rights are human rights” but subsequently it has been changed by some to “trans rights are human rights.” What will be next? If you don’t keep changing, you’ll eventually brandish a sign that excludes a group, and you’ll seem to be part of the problem, not the solution. You’ll seem

like the out-of-touch bigot, not the woke activist that society applauds. It’s an exhausting—and, in reality, *impossible*—exercise to try to keep up being morally conscious in a world that keeps morphing the definition of morality.

Your secular neighbor is drowning in a sea of uncertainty. What our neighbors need is a firm foothold, something they can trust. They need the truth, found ultimately in the authoritative Word of God. As Christians, we can offer a moral order that transcends human opinion and outlasts cultural crazes. We can also present an unwavering stance on nature that is rooted in the unconflicted and wise character of God. We may share a Savior who presents himself as the answer to that critical question, “What is truth?” (John 18:37–38). Though daunting, we must recognize that it’s an ultimate mercy for us to share this reality with those who for now reject it.

Knowing What We Believe

As you witnessed the proliferation of the “In this house. . .” signs over the past months, perhaps you were tempted to roll your eyes or get angry at the world. As I hope you have seen, however, there is a wonderful evangelical invitation here. But to take full advantage of it, we need to know our position on these matters and to prepare our winsome responses. We must recommit ourselves to an understanding of the whole counsel of God, especially Scripture’s teaching on sexuality, gender, and the gospel of free grace. And to witness well, we must worship well. We must place ourselves and our families under the preaching of the Word, partake regularly of the sacraments, and earnestly seek the face of our Father in public and private prayer.

Before we can address the errors of the house across the street, we must first be able to say with conviction and clarity, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” □

The author is pastor of Community Presbyterian in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

THE WORD AND SPIRIT OF GOD IS NOT BOUND

// BERNARD WESTERVELD



During COVID, Ben Westerveld preached a series of sermons on the breath of Christ

It has been a year of “No, we can’t do that.” No English for Kids summer Bible camps. No teen camping for outreach to unbelievers. No block party for the church neighborhood. No more fellowship over a coffee and light snack, nor communal meals. At times, no public worship services. No prayer groups in homes. The COVID-19 pandemic and government health restrictions have often forced us to say, “No, we can’t do that.”

But St. Marc’s Reformed Church in Quebec City, where I serve as a pastor-evangelist, has said yes to other things, some of them new. Here is a potpourri list of what the Lord permitted us to do during the pandemic.

Preaching

The essential work of the gospel ministry is the preaching of the Word of life. While government authorities restricted and even forbade worship gatherings, the Word was still preached. On occasion we invited members of our church to link into other Reformed worship services. (Our kids enjoyed services in France, Australia, United States, Scotland, India, and Canada, as well as all our sister churches in Quebec province.) We produced our own online sermons and worship services, which led to developing a [YouTube channel](#) and revamping our [website](#) and [social networking](#).

Since the world was taken up with a respiratory virus, I produced a series of [sermons on the breath of Christ](#)—his last breath at the crucifixion; his new breath of the resurrection; his continual breath of intercessory prayers; and his breath of life through the gift of the Spirit.

Worshipping

While all our sermons are available on the web, we also insisted upon gathering for worship and hearing the Word preached as the body of Christ. Our worship gatherings have taken many different forms, however. Initially the government

closed all churches for three months. With other religious leaders, I petitioned that we might reopen.

During the summer, we were permitted to hold worship services. In spite of all the sanitary measures that we had to take, what a joy it was to gather! However, with the second wave, the government restricted us to services of no more than twenty-five individuals. So, we offered three worship services each Sunday, enabling our members to gather and hear the Word. By the third time around, I knew my sermon text quite well. I also noticed how repeatedly hearing the same message was used by the Spirit to transform my own heart.

New government restrictions have closed churches once again. So now we meet via Zoom. The body of Christ must gather to worship our Lord and Savior.

Moving

When government permission was granted last summer to gather for worship, the Anglican bishop decided to keep his church buildings closed. We were renting one of his churches. We had no place to gather. Having developed a good contact with the local Roman Catholic parish, we inquired about renting one of their facilities. They readily accommodated.

Worshipping in a Catholic church facility raises some issues. Fortunately, we can arrange the sanctuary in such a way that the Word is central. The Catholic artifacts and statues, while present, are left in the background. Our interaction with Catholic parishioners and clergy has significantly increased. Dialogue is slowly turning to more significant issues of biblical teachings about grace. Excitingly, some Catholic visitors have noted and appreciated the clarity of Reformed preaching.

Praying

We would all admit that we do not pray enough. Confinement is a good time to pray. The Lord is possibly using this pandemic to call us to more prayer. Gathering for prayer has been for the most part restricted. Some members have

attempted online prayer groups. The elders and I have been in regular contact with all the members, touching base, finding out how they are doing, inquiring about items for prayer, and frequently praying together online or on the phone. Some members have taken up writing cards to others. I have never seen or heard of so many cards being sent and received. It is a wonderful gesture of the communion of the saints.

The Spirit is not confined, as I love to remind believers. We need to be much in prayer for the outpouring of God's love in the hearts of many.

Converting

We are not converting lost souls. But the Holy Spirit is, as always, even during the pandemic.

Three months before the church closure, Gabriel began attending our church worship services. Interested in pursuing a relationship with a woman from our sister congregation, he realized that he needed to figure out this Reformed church. Gabriel had grown up nominal Roman Catholic.

Church closure did not stop his growing interest in the gospel. In fact, Gabriel continued worshiping very faithfully. He asked to make profession of faith. The two of us met in person when permitted, or otherwise online. His hunger for the Word was as amazing as his growing ability to articulate biblical truths.

The Sunday after the elders approved Gabriel to make public profession of his faith, another young man, William, walked into our church. William had been attending his local Roman Catholic mass. Some evangelical friends in Montreal recommended that he check out our church. He loves it! William comes to worship carrying his own, personal Bible. In twenty years of ministry, I have never seen a Catholic carrying a Bible to church.

Reviving

We witness the Spirit reviving souls that have gone through a long desert period. François was raised in a Reformed family. He had even been a pastor. However, for nearly twenty years, his faith was like a flickering flame. Recently, the flame has come alive! François is at church every Sunday unless he is caring for his severely handicapped adult son. He is accompanying our congregational singing. He is evaluating material for translation. He has a thirst for the Word!

Sandra first contacted me two years ago via email. She never responded afterward. Then suddenly, there she was in church, during the complexities of our changing worship services. Originally from Brazil and raised in the Presbyterian Church, Sandra left the faith at seventeen. Now some twenty years later, she testifies to having been born again. She hungers for the Word!

If the Lord provides me with health and strength, I hope to serve the Reformed mission in Quebec for another twenty years. The testimonies of François and Sandra inspire me to continue. What other lost sheep might the Good Shepherd

bring home?

Teaching and Catechizing

I was invited to teach a course on the Reformed confessions and catechisms at the Farel Reformed Theological Seminary. We studied their historical and ecclesiastical context and their content, and compared the various texts, as well as some more recent confessions. While one student was preparing for the pastoral ministry in the Reformed Church of Quebec, the three others were from Baptist or Pentecostal congregations. They thoroughly enjoyed reading and interacting with the confessions. The Pentecostal pastor inquired how he could incorporate catechetical teaching in his congregation.

I was reminded of the children's catechism when puzzling out how to teach Sunday school during confinement? A former professor at the Jean Calvin Seminary in Aix-en-Provence has prepared a special edition in French that can be easily taught at home. That format is easily adapted to our confinement. Not only will children learn the systematic truths of the gospel, but their parents will also be engaged. We are also encouraging the families to use the French language materials produced by [Songs for Saplings](#), which have many of the catechism questions and answers, with Bible texts, set to music. The same songs were used in previous years in the English for Kids summer Bible camp ministry, so I invited those families to join us. Three families have responded positively to our invitation, and a fourth wants their teenager to join our online youth group. I have rarely had such an enthusiastic response from summer camp families to our church ministries.

Still Ministering

While it is disappointing, and even discouraging, to have to say, "No, we can't do that," it has been an exciting time to see what we can do to minister to God's people. "The word of God is not bound!" declares the Apostle Paul (2 Tim. 2:9). Neither is the Spirit! So, we continue to minister the Word, trusting the Spirit to bring forth his fruit.

The author is a minister in the Église réformée du Québec, laboring on the Quebec Project with the Committee on Foreign Missions.

What's New

// Comings/Goings

Associate missionary **Angela J. Voskuil** (Rehobeth Presbyterian Church, ARPC, Waxhaw, North Carolina) arrived in Nakaale, Karamoja, Uganda, in January 2021 to resume her labors with the Uganda Mission.

The session of St. Marc Reformed Church and **Miss Alethea A. Flores** (Providence Presbyterian Church, OPC, Temecula, CA) determined to conclude her service as a missionary associate to Quebec, Canada, in November 2020, due to travel restrictions.

IT'S NOT (JUST) FUN AND GAMES

// CHARLIE FENTON



Plaid party for Amoskeag Presbyterian's high school youth group in 2018

Amoskeag Presbyterian Church in Manchester, New Hampshire, has a Christ-centered high school youth group ministry that goes by the name “Friday Night Live”—you guessed it, they meet for Bible study and fellowship on Friday nights. The group started as a small, in-home group but has grown and thrived.

After ten years leading it, the Lord has laid on my heart some guiding principles that I pray will benefit youth group leaders throughout the OPC.

Why Youth Group Matters

The teen years are an important time for spiritual formation and for developing a commitment to the church. If we don't accomplish this then, we may not get a second chance.

As the children of our churches grow into adolescence, their impressionable minds and passionate hearts will search for role models and like-minded peers who will shape their worldviews and guide them into adulthood. Of course, some of this will happen as the outworking of a godly Christian home. And some of this will happen as our teens interact with adult church members and each other after worship service, in school settings, at a church picnic, while helping to teach younger children at VBS, or even while mopping the floor on a church workday. But, things don't always happen naturally as we'd expect or desire. And, for that reason, churches should consider providing a formalized weekly youth group where these key relationships can be intentionally fostered.

Energized Leaders and Engaged Youth

In Philippians 4:9, Paul urged the Christians to practice what they learned, received, heard, and saw in him as their leader. The youth leaders' attitude will set the disposition and tone of the meeting. When approaching a group of impressionable and sometimes insecure teenagers, youth leaders

must show a visible enthusiasm in their roles. This cannot be overstated, because a teen will desire to attend only as much as leaders show that they desire to be there, too! If the group is showing signs of disinterest in the meeting's events (and apathy among a group of teens can spread like wildfire), look at how the leaders are communicating and responding to the group as a whole.

Youth leaders (at Amoskeag, leaders are often a married couple) must be effective not only at leading the group energetically but also at engaging and encouraging teens individually. During a short free time or before and after the youth group meeting, observation of group dynamics can quickly determine which teens may require additional attention. Depending on the size of the group, teens naturally form into smaller groups by age, gender, etc., and some may be left out and need to connect. The leaders should capitalize on opportunities to welcome each teen and display a genuine interest in each teen's life. Our activities often do not get formally started until fifteen to twenty minutes after our official start time due to chatting with every teen, especially visitors. In 1 Thessalonians 2:12, Paul says that he exhorted each member of the church, encouraging and charging each one in their walk with Christ. Knowing the members of your group individually will increase their comfort level and help you apply the Bible study.

Setting Boundaries

Applying boundaries can facilitate a healthy chemistry among all participants in the youth group. Whether you are playing a game, studying the Bible, or singing, teens appreciate knowing what is expected of them. Proverbs 11:14 states, “Where there is no guidance, a people falls.” Treating youth groups as a free time where teens simply mingle on their own can lead to cliquish behavior along with tension and discomfort for those not fitting in. This tension reinforces social barriers and can cause teens to disengage from group discussion

and not return in the future. Boundaries provide expectations for the teens. Our boundaries included showing attention and respect, following a consistent schedule each week, and participation in all activities. These aided in keeping minds and bodies engaged and focused during the meeting.

Promoting Unity

Confident and dynamic leaders who are able to guide the group and relate to each teen is the first, but not the only, step in promoting group unity. One of our hallmark events crucial to further uniting our youth group is an annual weekend retreat into the mountains of New Hampshire. This extended period outside of the weekly meeting gives the teens and leaders a chance to become more acquainted, learn from God's Word, and participate in activities unique to the retreat. In addition, regional mission trips performed every few years, such as serving at the Boardwalk Chapel, have been used by the Lord to unify our group and spread the gospel. These special events galvanize our group and help to form a base from which we can grow in Christ and in number.

Be Aware of Group Dynamics

During each weekly meeting, our first organized activity is a game purposefully designed to expel physical energy. Games also double as a fun way to become more familiar with others. The best games are characterized by constant movement of the highest amount of people possible. Steer away from games like relays where most of the teens are standing by and waiting their turn. Playing upbeat music during a game also creates a more relaxed and fun setting.

Before our Bible study time together, we create fun ways for teens to introduce themselves to the group, play funny games during snack time (like "would you rather. . ."), and then implement our tactical sociological stimulus: an in-unison hand clap. Before beginning our Bible study, the teens are restless, coming down from their "high" of games and sugary snacks. The unison group clap, if it is performed consistently every week, sets the habit for shifting all focus to the leader.

The Main Event: Bible Study and Prayer

Our Bible studies are topical and chosen to help prepare teens for spiritual conflict in early adulthood. We deal in apologetics, current events, book studies, and some video series, with a goal of biblical worldview formation. Our method is discussion. On a Friday night, teens do not want a lecture on church doctrine. There is a place for that, but, at youth group, leaders should act as discussion facilitators and guide conclusions in light of God's Word. Oftentimes, the leaders' talking points may need to be modified based on the direction of the discussion, or they may need to redirect the discussion if it begins to go in a less-than-edifying direction.

Finally, after prayer time, our meeting ends by standing in a circle, arms around shoulders, singing the words of

Favorite Psalms and Hymns *Trinity Psalter Hymnal no. 23C* "The Lord Is My Shepherd"

Larry E. Wilson

Of all the psalms, Psalm 23 may well be the best-known and most beloved. David's inspired words vividly lead God's people to trust the Lord to always protect and provide for them in an intimate relationship of steadfast love and goodness. Accordingly, it's been read, preached, sung, and prayed in many places and on all sorts of occasions.

A godly old saint once told me of his experience in World War II. He was a US Marine, stationed on a Pacific island. He served as a point man, going ahead of his patrol. They went through dense jungle valleys, filled with many hiding places for snipers or ambushers. He said that he kept praying Psalm 23 over and over, especially verse 4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (KJV). It was then that he first began to consciously experience what it means to walk with the Lord in personal trust. No doubt many, many more could easily tell stories of how Psalm 23 strengthened their personal faith walk with our loving Savior, and helped them voice it—"The LORD is my Shepherd!"

What a blessing! The *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* has three alternate metrical settings of Psalm 23. And I love each of them! In the December issue of *New Horizons*, the most well-known setting, 23A, was commended. All I say to that is, "Amen!" But I also want to commend 23C. The Free Church of Scotland freshly versified it for *Sing Psalms* (2003). They set it to a beautiful Scottish folk tune ("Farewell to Tarwathie") that they adapted and harmonized for this psalm. Listen to it on [Soundcloud](#) or [Youtube](#). I'm delighted that the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* includes it.

Psalm 133 at the top of our lungs: "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!"

The author is a member of Amoskeag Presbyterian in Manchester, New Hampshire.

☆ Congratulations

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

- **Malena Mininger**, *New Covenant Community Church, Joliet, IL*

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

- **Graham Evans**, *Providence OPC, Tulsa, OK*

REVIVAL IN DAYTON, OHIO

// JOHN S. SHAW



Market-rate housing in downtown Dayton has grown by 77 percent since 2010 (Downtown Dayton Partnership), which caught the notice of OP evangelist Brad Peppo

The history of Dayton, Ohio, is a story of innovation and invention. During most of the twentieth century, the region produced more patents per capita than any other region in the United States. The Wright brothers perfected the design of their planes in their bicycle shop just west of downtown and in the open fields on the other side of the city. Charles Kettering, holder of 140 patents, designed the self-starter engine for the automobile in Dayton. It was a thriving city.

Not unlike Detroit, though, the struggles of the automobile industry hit Dayton hard. The downtown deteriorated, almost too deserted to be dangerous, as one local recently explained. This city of inventors appeared to be headed into uninterrupted decline. But recently, the region has enjoyed a surprising renewal, with new businesses and new construction in the downtown area. Many are moving back.

With new growth came new opportunities for church planting. The local OP congregations were ready to answer that opportunity with energetic gospel witness. This is the story of two congregations with an ongoing commitment to church planting, two evangelists who love Christ and love the people and place in which they were raised, and a renewed city in desperate need of the gospel.

Two Congregations

Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, Ohio, which started as a mission work in 1970, eventually settled in the suburbs east of downtown Dayton. Redeemer has been instrumental in planting churches throughout Ohio, as is especially evident in the planting of Covenant OPC in Vandalia, north of Dayton, in 1996. There, Redeemer committed to a plan for church planting—identifying an evangelist (Charles Jackson, now a missionary to Uganda), supporting his seminary training, and calling him as the church planter in Vandalia.

Covenant OPC learned from the example of its mother

church. After the new church was well established, Covenant made similar plans for church planting. They identified an evangelist, supported him through seminary, and called him to plant a church in Springfield, Ohio, in 2015.

Those two churches, Redeemer and Covenant, are now working together to plant churches throughout the region. Sharing dollars and people, they willingly give up resources that could be used within their own walls to support new ministry in neighboring communities.

Before we go further, take note of this pattern, rejoice in the pattern, and consider whether it is a pattern to follow in other locations. The Lord has blessed not only the emerging church plants, but also the mother churches, with healthy growth, conversions, baptisms, and the kind of deep fellowship that grows from the fertile soil of united gospel commitment. Don't we all want to enjoy that kind of gospel fellowship? Let's pray for it and pursue it.

Two Evangelists

The evangelist that Covenant OPC identified was one of its own, Brad Peppo. The church perceived in him the God-given gifts, energy, and passion to start new churches. Brad and his wife, Cinnamon, have lived most of their lives in the Dayton region. They have deep roots and deep friendships that have served well in the gathering of groups. And Brad is never bashful about building on those relationships for the purpose of church planting. "I continue to try and form relationships and stir up conversations wherever I'm able, in the hope that some of these contacts could be collected into new core groups, and even that some whole churches might grow more interested," he explained. The Lord has blessed those relationships in the establishment of new Orthodox Presbyterian congregations and mission works.

Even as Covenant OPC developed works in Springfield, Wilmington, and Dayton, the Lord was preparing another evangelist in the region. Tyler Detrick grew up in Springfield

before attending nearby Cedarville University. During his college years, Tyler and his future wife, Natalie, began attending Redeemer in Beavercreek. Like the Peppos, Tyler and Natalie have deep roots and deep friendships in the region. Though they left the area to attend seminary, they hoped that an opportunity for gospel ministry would bring them back.

That hope became a reality as the Lord provided Tyler a church-planting internship with Brad in downtown Dayton at the mission work First Street Reformed Fellowship. His internship, however, took place during 2020, amidst all the challenges of ministry during a pandemic. Plans for outreach events were interrupted, and services and studies moved online for a time. Yet, as many churches and pastors throughout the OPC can attest, ministry during challenging times often deepens relationships. Tyler and Natalie loved the people of First Street Reformed well, and the people of First Street grew in their love for the Detricks.

In November 2020, Tyler was ordained and installed as the new evangelist at First Street Reformed, while Brad began his new labors as a regional home missionary in southwest Ohio. He joins regional home missionary Mike Diercks in laboring to see new churches planted. Brad works from Dayton as his base, pursuing opportunities for evangelism and church planting throughout the region.

A City in Revival

But before the Lord brought Tyler to this congregation, how did First Street Reformed Fellowship come to be located in downtown Dayton? After several decades of decline, this city might seem like a strange target for growing new churches. Having finished his labors in Springfield in summer 2017, Brad had begun a new work in a smaller community west of downtown. At the same time, Brad was hearing of exponential residential growth in the downtown area that many had forgotten. He was intrigued.

Brad prayed, and the Lord opened doors. The large Lutheran church building in the heart of downtown provided an open door into the city. Not by coincidence—this was the

church building where Brad's parents were married, and the church where Brad's grandfather and father were confirmed in the Lutheran church. With the willing commitment of four families in the emerging core group, the mission work moved into the downtown.

What does ministry look like in the inner city? The Lord is sending visitors from bus stops and homeless shelters. Sometimes people simply show up because the doors are open, and people are already inside. The fields are white for harvest, even among the pavement and buildings of the downtown core.

Maybe most exciting are opportunities to share the gospel with a growing Turkish Muslim community in the city that is more than three thousand persons strong. One particular segment of that community has built new bonds with the folks at First Reformed. What began as hours-long personal conversations with Brad about the Christian faith led to larger meetings. A group of Turkish families invited families from the mission work to a large Turkish breakfast, hosted outdoors at the Peppo home. Every third week, there is a regular Zoom discussion with members of both groups, asking and answering questions about their faith. Twice already, Brad has proclaimed and explained the gospel for more than an hour to an engaged and interested audience. Those larger conversations have led to individual families meeting for dinner. Relationships are developing. Gospel conversations are happening. This is exactly what we hope and pray for in our churches and mission works.

So, again, why Dayton? Because the Lord has opened the door for gospel ministry in many forms. The opportunities keep appearing, even during a pandemic. Dayton is serving as a hub for expanding gospel witness and church planting throughout the region.

Dayton is a city in the midst of economic revival, but, more importantly, it is a city in need of gospel revival. The Lord has raised up two churches with a commitment to church planting. He has raised up two evangelists with deep love for a people and a place, guided by a deep desire for these people to know Christ. This sounds like the recipe for a flourishing gospel witness, and we have the tremendous privilege of joining with these churches in support and prayer.

The author is general secretary for the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension.



Congregational vow (top), laying on of hands (middle) and the benediction at Tyler Detrick's ordination

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date news and prayer requests, receive our newsletter by emailing HomeMissionsToday@opc.org. New editions will be published on March 3, 17, & 31.

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF THE “NEW” CMC

// DOUGLAS L. WATSON

We on the Committee on Ministerial Care still hear the Committee referred to as “the new committee for pastors’ retirement”—but neither “new” nor “retirement” is quite accurate. This article will hopefully revise those notions so that OP ministers will seek and receive blessings that we want the Lord to give his ministers through this committee.

CMC’s Past

The CMC was the brainchild of the late David Haney. A ruling elder who grew up as a pastor’s kid, he saw the burdens and responsibilities pastors bear and the sacrifices they make. With a heart of compassion, he long wanted to see more done for their care.

In God’s providence, his idea took firmer shape. About ten years ago, the Committee on Diaconal Ministries and the now-decommissioned Committee on Pensions began discussions together to develop a better system of needs-based care for OP ministers. About that time, the Obadiah Foundation began giving to the OPC for retired ministers—a providential motivation! But they knew more was needed. They recommended to the general assembly that a special committee be erected to study the care of OP ministers. The committee spent three years developing the framework for a standing Committee on Ministerial Care that could take over the functions of the COP, care of ministers from the CDM, oversight of the Obadiah Fund, and add to them ten more points of a wide-ranging mandate. The intent was to provide resources and assistance to ministers, sessions, and presbyteries for the complete care of OPC ministers—not just financial matters—throughout their ministry—not just in retirement.

The Eighty-Fourth (2017) General Assembly erected the Committee on Ministerial Care. So, it isn’t just “the pastors’ retirement” committee. And, with the time it took to bring the initial idea to fruition, it really isn’t “new.”

CMC’s Present

In the three and a half years the committee has existed, it has engaged in far more than retirement work, and done so ear-

nestly, meeting four times a year and dividing the work among subcommittees (executive, pastoral care, and resource and development). David Haney was the first director and focused the committee’s efforts. Unexpectedly, in 2019, the Lord took David home. Rev. John Fikkert was called to the director’s spot and continued the work with admirable skill and zeal.

The list of work to date is long:

- Budget and fund-raising for the committee
- Formulating bylaws and an operating and policy manual
- Oversight of the 403(b) retirement plan (not “Pension Fund”)
- Oversight of the Obadiah Foundation assets
- Diaconal care and funding requests for OP ministers, retired ministers, and widows
- Having a website designed and built
- Formation of a financial planning team for ministers in crisis situations
- New salary guidelines for ministerial calls
- A salary calculation tool for the CMC’s website
- Quarterly webinars and videos
- Educational white papers on health insurance
- Information and resources for ministerial sabbaticals
- Resources to provide counseling for ministers
- A confidential ministerial database
- Speaking at presbyteries, church-planter conferences, diaconal summits, and other gatherings

We did not dream that there would be so much work to setting up a new committee and fulfilling its mandate! But the pressure has brought out the best of the creativity, leadership, diligence, and godly fellow-labor from those on the committee.

CMC’s Future

Although the CMC has made a good beginning and significant progress, we on the committee realize that there is a long way to go—in one sense, till the Lord returns, or at least as long as the OPC exists (which we hope coincide!). Our ministers will need care during the entire course of their ministries so they can focus undistractedly on their high calling. They will need care in retirement until the Lord calls them home.

In the more immediate sense, there are areas of our mandate on which we have not yet started our work. We will soon begin working on ministerial retreats, disability insurance, and long-term care insurance. At the same time, we need to keep building upon and improving our work already started.

It is both the duty and the privilege of those on this “new” committee to do the work that it takes to provide care for the OPC’s ministers, including, but certainly not limited to, retirement concerns. It continues to be our commitment and our joy.

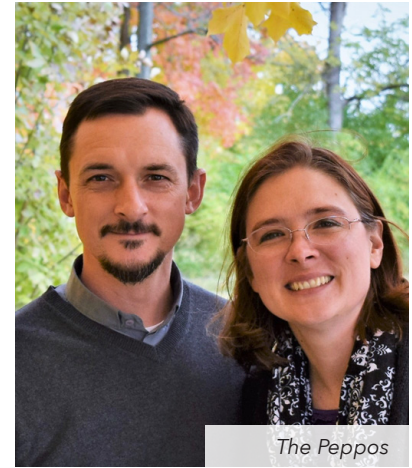
The author is an OP pastor and member of the CMC.

MARCH



The Mourreales

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- 1** **PAUL & SARAH MOURREALE**, West Plains, MO. Pray that God would strengthen the faith of Covenant Reformed through both good and hard times. / Active duty military chaplain **JEFFREY (JENNIFER) SHAMESS**, US Army.
-
- 2** **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for the growth and encouragement of the church. / **KEVIN & RACHEL MEDCALF**, Cumming, GA. Praise the Lord for new visitors at Providence Presbyterian.
-
- 3** Pray for **MR. AND MRS. M.**, Asia, as the family continues to wait on the Lord's timing for their return to the field. / Thank the Lord for the efforts of all those who worked on the recent re-design of **OPC.ORG**.
-
- 4** **JEREMY & GWEN BAKER**, Yuma, AZ. Pray that members of Yuma OPC would share Christ with their friends and neighbors. / Pray for **MR. AND MRS. F.**, Asia (on furlough), as they make plans to visit US churches.
-
- 5** **MARK LOWREY**, interim executive director of Great Commission Publications. / **BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada. Pray that friendly exchanges with Catholic leaders might be opportunities for gospel truth.



The Peppos

-
- 6** Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFELS**, Haiti. Pray for the spiritual growth of church leaders in Haiti. / Yearlong interns **SETH (EVA) DORMAN** at Limington OPC in Limington, ME, and **DAVID (LEBO) BONNER** at Tyler Presbyterian in Tyler, TX.
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- 7** **BEN & HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti. Pray for blessing as Ben and Pastor Delfels teach theology courses online for presbytery partners. / **ETHAN & CATHERINE BOLYARD**, Wilmington, NC. Pray for Heritage OPC as the congregation steps toward particularization.
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- 8** **JAY & ANDREA BENNETT**, Neon, KY. Pray for evangelistic faithfulness and continued growth at Neon Reformed. / Pray for the Lord's blessing and wisdom for all those planning to participate in **SHORT-TERM MISSIONS** this summer.
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- 9** Foreign Missions general secretary **MARK BUBE** and associate general secretary **DOUGLAS CLAWSON**. Pray for wisdom as they make plans to travel and encourage those in the field. / **CHRIS TOBIAS**, cover designer for *New Horizons*.
-
- 10** Pray for **RETIRED MISSIONARIES** Cal & Edie Cummings, Brian & Dorothy Wingard, Greet Rietkerk, and Young & Mary Lou Son. / Yearlong interns **ANDREW (ANESSA) BEKKERING** at Harvest OPC in Wyoming, MI, **ELIJAH (GRETA) DE JONG** at Faith OPC in Grants Pass, OR, and **DAMON (ELISABETH) YOUNG** at First Church in Merrimack, NH.
-
- 11** Pray for **BRAD (CINNAMON) PEPPO**, regional home missionary of the Miami Valley for the Presbytery of Ohio. / **CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for stability of the nation following the Ugandan election.
-
- 12** Missionary associates **DR. JIM & JENNY KNOX**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for continued good health for JOY clinic workers as they see more COVID-19 cases. / **KERRI ANN CRUSE**, video and social media coordinator.
-
- 13** Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**. / **SHANE & RACHELLE BENNETT**, Grand Rapids, MI. Pray that visitors to Reformation OPC would become regulars, and that regulars would become members.
-
- 14** **GREGORY & GINGER O'BRIEN**, Downingtown, PA. Pray for awe and joy in worship at Christ Church Downingtown. / **ABBY HARTING**, office secretary for Christian Education, as she prepares for committee meetings.
-
- 15** **JOHN FIKKERT**, director for the Committee on Ministerial Care. / Pray for **DANNY OLINGER**, general secretary, as he meets with the Committee on Christian Education, March 15-17.

MARCH



Angela Voskuil

21 **MARK & CARLA VAN ESSEDELFT**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that farming workshops may aid in sowing both physical and spiritual seed. / **RON & CAROL BEABOUT**, Mifflintown, PA. Pray for a larger facility for Grace and Peace OPC.

22 **MIKE & NAOMI SCHOUT**, Zeeland, MI. Pray for God's blessing on Grace Fellowship OPC as it seeks to purchase a new worship facility. / **GREGORY REYNOLDS**, editor, and **AYRIAN YASAR**, editorial assistant, of *Ordained Servant*.

23 Associate missionary **LEAH HOPP**, and missionary associate **JOANNA GROVE**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the community's health and safety as the number of COVID-19 cases rise. / **ANNELISA STUDLEY**, office manager.

24 Pray for **DAVID & RASHEL ROBBINS**, Nakaale, Uganda (on furlough), and their further language acquisition. / **BILL & MARGARET SHISHKO**, Deer Park, NY. Pray for a suitable and stable worship space for The Haven.

25 Committee on Diaconal Ministries administrator **DAVID NAKHLA** as the committee meets on the 25th and 26th. / Affil. missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia. Pray for a permanent building for the church.

26 **MATTHEW & LOIS COTTA**, Pasadena, CA. Pray that Pasadena Presbyterian would endure trials with humility and honor. / Yearlong interns **JOHN (SHARON) CANAVAN** at Grace Presbyterian in Vienna, VA, and **ISAAC (MASHA) BAUGH** at Covenant OPC in Kennewick, WA.



The Folkerts family

27 Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**. / Assoc. missionaries **JAMES & ESTHER FOLKERTS**, Nakaale, Uganda. Praise the Lord as the Timothy Program spreads the gospel to more villages.

28 Yearlong interns **BEN (CHERIE) FRANKS** at Kectoctin Covenant, Purcellville, VA, and **DUSTIN (AMYE) THOMPSON** at Trinity Presbyterian, Medford, OR. / Active duty military chaplain **DANIEL (STACEY) HALLEY**, US Air Force.

29 **RYAN & ROCHELLE CAVANAUGH**, Merrillville, IN. Pray for effective outreach and a loving witness in church members. / Pray for **LACY (DEBBIE) ANDREWS**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast.

30 Pray for the **ETHIOPIAN REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** that its flock may be encouraged in Christ. / Stated clerk **HANK BELFIELD** and others preparing for the 87th General Assembly in Sioux Center, IA, July 7-14.

31 Affiliated missionaries **LINDA KARNER** and **CRAIG AND REE COULBOURNE**, Japan. / **CARL & STACEY MILLER**, New Braunfels, TX. Pray that the Lord would provide New Braunfels OPC with visitors at their new location.

16 Associate missionary **ANGELA VOSKUIL**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the Karamoja Education Outreach as schools for younger children are scheduled to reopen. / **MARK STUMPF**, manager of the OPC Loan Fund.

17 Pray for **DAVID (JANE) CRUM**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern CA. / Pray for tentmaking missionary **TINA DEJONG**, Nakaale, Uganda, as she encourages the missionary children to enjoy God's work.

18 **CHARLENE TIPTON**, database administrator, and **MELISA MCGINNIS**, controller. / **HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for wisdom as the church seeks to meet in person while complying with restrictions.

19 Assoc. missionaries **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for Christopher as he works with local authorities to protect the work of AYP Clinic. / Home Missions administrative assistant **KATHARINE OLINGER**.

20 **LARRY & KALYNN OLDAKER**, Sandusky, OH. Pray that families of Firelands Grace would be committed to the means of grace. / **BRADNEY & EILEEN LOPEZ**, Arroyo, PR. Pray for God's blessing on the ministry of the church.

THE GIVER AND THE GIFT

// BENJAMIN M. WARD

Most of us have fond childhood memories: the sights of a Christmas morning, or the excitement of a grand birthday party complete with presents, balloons, and an ice-cream cake! As human beings, we love to receive gifts, whether for a birthday, anniversary, or something spontaneous. But sometimes in Christian circles we've made receiving gifts into some kind of guilt trip. After all, we say to ourselves, according to Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Indeed, this is true, but his Word also says, "For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving" (1 Tim. 4:4). Both to give and to receive gifts are good actions blessed by the Lord. So what does it mean to be both a cheerful giver of good gifts as well as a cheerful receiver of the same?

Give Generously

In 2 Corinthians 8, the Apostle Paul is trying to stir up the Corinthian church to a "holy jealousy." The Macedonian churches that Paul had been serving were giving a great deal to the cause of Christ despite their "extreme poverty" (8:2). Comparatively, the Corinthians were quite wealthy, but were less willing to give. So Paul flatters the Corinthians, telling them of the many graces in which they've excelled, "in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you" (8:7), but he begs them to excel in this act of giving also! Christian giving (that is, giving to the church locally, broadly, and to ministries of various kinds) should go above and beyond the bare minimum expectations. If the Macedonians in their poverty could give, what could we OPC members in 2021—Corinthians all—be able to give? This is not, as Paul says, so that "others may be eased and you burdened" (8:13). Many of us have received ample goods and hold our treasure closely as we chase the dream of upward mobility—but others give their widow's mite and receive the Lord's favor. Our

giving is not meant to make us impoverished while others enjoy luxury, rather it is meant for "fairness" (8:13). We all know that "God loves a cheerful giver" (9:7). Giving is for the benefit of others, but we are also reminded of the spiritual fruit we see from generosity, "whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (9:6).

Receive Thankfully

If our giving is to be done cheerfully, even bountifully, then how should we receive gifts? And, if I am in a position where I can freely give to another, what right do I have to receive a gift from someone else? Scripture answers both these questions. We can receive gifts cheerfully, knowing that all gifts are lavished upon us ultimately by Christ who "gave gifts to men" (Eph. 4:8) by a truly sacrificial act: "You know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). We are all poor, we are all beggars in need of this great gift: salvation in Jesus.

Your giving of gifts to others is to be patterned after your Savior in generosity. Your receiving of gifts from others should be with thanksgiving, just as you have freely received the good news. There are many of us who, because of a sense of our own unworthiness, think ourselves incapable of receiving from anyone. Yet if we know that God loved us enough to die for us, and that the fruits of that were a free gift, why should we refuse the gifts of our fellow creatures? Receive God's good gift, and give to others in the same spirit as your Savior.

The author is associate pastor of Covenant OPC in Grove City, Pennsylvania.

Worldwide Outreach and Thank Offering Results

It is a joy to report that giving to the 2020 Thank Offering was \$1,123,546. This generous Thank Offering contributed to a total of \$4,463,028 for Worldwide Outreach in 2020. Foreign Missions and Home Missions exceeded their budgeted goals, and Christian Education was within 1 percent of theirs.

Thank you for your prayers and support for the ministries of the OPC, and thank you for promoting the Thank Offering in the church!

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

ALVIRA ORDAINED AND INSTALLED IN PENNSVILLE

On January 16, 2021, Rev. Samuel A. Alvira was ordained and installed as pastor of Grace Church in Pennsville, New Jersey. Rev. David Harr, pastor of Immanuel OPC in Medford delivered the message. The charge was given to Samuel by his father, Rev. Benjamin Alvira (now retired). The charge to the congregation was given by Rev. Steven McDaniel, pastor of Providence OPC in Mantua.

IN MEMORIAM: MEINDERT PLOEGMAN

William Shishko

On November 17, 2020, the Lord ushered the soul of his servant, Pastor Meindert (“Meint”) Ploegman, into his immediate presence. Two days before, Meint had suffered a heart attack and fell ten feet while on a ladder cleaning the gutters at the church building.

Meint was born and received most of his schooling in the Netherlands. He came to the United States in the early 1970s and did his



*Meindert Ploegman
(1954-2020)*

formal theological training in Florida. In 1981, Meint visited the OPC in Franklin Square to hear Dr. Cornelius Van Til. He purchased an armload of books that reintroduced him to the Reformed faith that he had learned from his youth in the Hervormde Kerk in Holland. In 1988, he and his family began attending the OPC in Franklin Square, where they subsequently became members. Meint was called to serve first as a ruling elder and then as associate pastor while organizing a church in nearby Bohemia, a hamlet of about ten thousand in Suffolk County,



At Alvira's ordination: (front row) Tom Church, Neil Bech, Matthew Cole, David Harr, Samuel Alvira, Benjamin Alvira; (back row) Travis Yonkman, Robert Kafka, Steve McDaniel, John Wittholm, Kevin Parks, David Glading, Bruce Fenton, Warren Schrier, Todd Smith

Long Island. He served as pastor of the OPC in Bohemia from 2001 until his homegoing. Meint became a pastor to the entire Bohemia community, visiting each home annually to promote the work of the church's food pantry. He leaves his wife of forty-two years, Roseanne, five children, five grandchildren, and a legacy of ministry in Bohemia.

IN MEMORIAM: JAY ADAMS

John R. Muether

Born in Baltimore in 1929, the year of the founding of Westminster Theological Seminary, Jay Adams followed J. Gresham Machen in studying classics at Johns Hopkins University. He also earned degrees from Reformed Episcopal Seminary, Temple University School of Theology, and a PhD from the University of Missouri. Ordained in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Adams served churches in the Bible Presbyterian and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, General Synod, before he was called to pastor Grace OPC in Westfield, New Jersey, in 1963. During his three-year tenure there, he began to teach homiletics at Westminster Seminary, where he would serve in several capacities for sixteen years.

The 1970 publication of *Competent to Counsel* earned Adams the title of “father of the Biblical Counseling movement.” Nouthetic counseling (the expression he coined) took issue with integrationist

directions in the broader Christian counseling field that borrowed from secular psychology. “A good seminary education,” he wrote, “rather than medical school or a degree in clinical psychology is the most fitting background for a counselor” (61). Adams also founded the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF) near Westminster.

Controversy surrounding his counseling views tended to obscure his contributions to homiletics. From 1982 to 1989, he directed the DMin program in preaching at Westminster Seminary California. In retirement he transferred his credentials to the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and moved to South Carolina, where he passed away on November 14, 2020, at the age of ninety-one.



Jay Adams at the 55th (1988) General Assembly at Covenant College

IN MEMORIAM: MARY LOIS (YOUNGMAN) ECKARDT*Robert Y. Eckardt*

On December 23, 2020, Mary Lois (Youngman) Eckardt went to be with the Lord in glory at the age of ninety-two. She was raised in West Collingwood, New Jersey, and was an early member of the OPC with her parents, Frank and Elsie Youngman.

She served faithfully as wife to OP pastor Robert W. Eckardt and mother of three sons, Robert Youngman Eckardt (an OP pastor), Douglas Marsden Eckardt, and Richard George Eckardt. She lost her son Doug in an accident in 1997.

Mary will be deeply missed by many family and friends. With hope in the Lord and his resurrection, we grieve, but not as those who have no hope.

She is survived by her two sons, six grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.



Mary Lois Eckardt
(1928-2020)

and his family, and for the presbytery, finally arrived after being delayed in various ways by COVID restrictions.

The service was led by moderator Rev. Zachary Simmons. Rev. Dr. John Currie of Westminster Theological Seminary preached from Romans 10. Rev. John Van Meerbeke offered prayer during the laying on of hands. Rev. Albert Tricarico gave the charge to the pastor, and Rev. Stephen Payson (ministerial advisor to the session during the recent vacancy) gave the charge to the congregation. Prayer was offered by Rev. Zachary Siggins before the closing hymn. Rev. Adam R. Wells pronounced the benediction.

Two days later, Wells administered the sacrament of baptism to his infant son during his first morning worship service as pastor of Calvary.



Praying over newly ordained Bickford

BICKFORD ORDAINED AND INSTALLED IN FARMINGTON, ME

On January 15, Micah Bickford was ordained and installed as church-planting pastor of Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church in Farmington, Maine. Grace is a mission work of Limington Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Pastor Danny Patterson (Second Parish, Portland, Maine) gave the ordination and installation questions to Bickford, and Pastor Stephen Tracey (Lakeview OPC, Rockport, Maine) preached the sermon, "More Joy to Jesus," from Hebrews 1:8-9. Chaplain Richard Dickinson gave the charge to the pastor, and Pastor Russell Hamilton (Pilgrim OPC, Bangor, Maine) gave the charge to the congregation. Pastor Micah Bickford pronounced the benediction.

UPDATE**CHURCHES**

- On September 11, **Wolf River Presbyterian** in Collierville, TN, was organized as a particular congregation of the OPC.

MINISTERS

- On September 11, **Mark A. Winder**, previously the organizing pastor, was installed as pastor of Wolf River Presbyterian in Collierville, TN.

- On January 15, **Micah M. Bickford** was ordained and installed as an associate pastor at Limington OPC in Limington, ME, to work as a church planter at Grace Reformed Presbyterian in Farmington, ME.

- On January 16, **Samuel A. Alvira** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of Grace Church in Pennsville, NJ.

- On January 17, **Eric B. Watkins** was installed as the pastor of Harvest OPC in San Marcos, CA. He was previously the pastor of Covenant Presbyterian in St. Augustine, FL.

- On February 7, the Presbytery of New York and New England dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Timothy H. Gregson** and Covenant Presbyterian in Amsterdam, NY, with the concurrence of the congregation, upon Mr. Gregson's retirement.

MILESTONES

- **Diane B. Auksela**, 70, died on December 1 after a long battle with cancer. She was the wife of retired OP minister Joseph A. Auksela.

- **Mary (Youngman) Eckardt**, 92, died on December 23. She was the wife of OP minister Robert W. Eckardt, now deceased, and the mother of retired OP pastor Robert Y. Eckardt.

- Retired OP minister **Bruce M. Brawdy**, 86, died on December 23. He served OP churches in the Presbytery of the Dakotas and the Presbytery of Southern California.

- **Gladys E. Kramm**, 94, died on January 2. She served as the Foreign Missions



Praying over newly ordained Wells

WELLS ORDAINED AND INSTALLED IN MIDDLETOWN, PA*David Gregg*

On November 6, Adam R. Wells was ordained to the gospel ministry by the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania and installed as pastor of Calvary OPC in Middletown, Pennsylvania. This day of rejoicing for the congregation, for Adam

office secretary during the 1970s and 80s. She was married to OPC elder Robert A. Kramm, who predeceased her.

LETTERS

RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC ABUSE

Editor:

I truly appreciate the courage of *New Horizons* in taking on the issue of domestic abuse in the church (January-February 2021). As an abuse survivor, I completely concur with the warnings in this issue. I would, however, like to add one: delay benefits the abuser, affording him more opportunities to intimidate, retaliate, and hide evidence. The top priority of a church should be to find a way to protect abuse victims and separate them from their abuser. Whatever investigation, analysis, or counseling is required should be done after a situation is stabilized, not while abuse is still active and ongoing. Well-intentioned pastors and elders often think that a man will scale down his abuse once he knows he is being investigated. In fact, the opposite is true. Abuse typically escalates when it is reported. Even if a man gives the appearance of reducing abuse, he may act out in other ways, including financial retaliation, to take revenge on his wife.

An OP member

Editor:

When my eyes saw the cover of the January-February *New Horizons*, my heart jumped for joy. As a biblical (nouthetic) counselor for decades, I have dreamt that the OPC would begin to see what is happening to wives and children who have lost their ability to recognize and resist oppression and domineering leadership.

Robert Needham hits the church's most prominent failure on the head by pointing out that some pastors and counselors simply tell the oppressed to be more submissive. Another critical point from Darby Strickland is that the oppressed are not clear at first—it can take twenty sessions to make sense of what has happened to them. I would add that elders and pastors often jump to what the victim should have done as a response to the violence or harassment. They are uncomfortable seeing the emotional devastation, so they say

a few words of comfort and then quickly turn a spotlight onto her failures. They are easily deceived by the oppressors, who offer lengthy and elaborate explanations that twist the Scriptures, the secondary standards, or even the Book of Church Order. What vulnerable person can refute that?

Eileen Scipione
Pittsburgh, PA

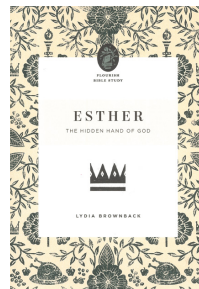
REVIEWS

***Esther: The Hidden Hand of God*, by Lydia Brownback. Crossway, 2020. Paperback, 128 pages, \$14.99. Reviewed by OP member Laurie Tricarico.**

“Once upon a time in a land far away, there was a girl. . .” Most fairy tales begin this way, don’t they? And the girl grows up to marry the prince and become the queen. That’s the way it is with fairy tales. Sadly, though, such stories are only fiction. Yet don’t we wish they were true? If only every young girl became royalty and lived happily ever after.

In the Bible, the book of Esther reads much like a fairy tale. There is a queen, a king, a villain, and a hero. Yet Esther is not a fairy tale, as Lydia Brownback’s workbook, *Esther: The Hidden Hand of God*, makes clear. Intended for women’s individual or group use, the workbook guides the reader through a refreshing ten-week study of this familiar Old Testament book. It helps us to understand the true story of a real young girl who grew up to be queen, a story not made up, but set in history and part of the written revelation of God.

Because of Brownback’s conversational teaching style, as well as the helpful timelines, charts, lists, and sidebars, we are led by insightful questions into a deeper understanding of the Scriptures. The true character and identity of each of the central figures in the story is revealed: a young Jewish queen, a self-focused king, a politically ambitious villain, and a humble, God-fearing hero. We learn more



about the lives of the Jews who resided in the exotic Persian city of Susa two generations after the first Jewish exiles had returned to Israel. Yet, the life of the contemporary Christian is brought into focus by the story, as well. As God’s people live comfortable lives in a pagan culture, it can become easy to forget God, especially when his hand may appear hidden.

While God is never mentioned in the book of Esther, he is most certainly the central figure. It is he who placed Esther in her position as queen “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14), and who, through his providential acts, shows himself to be the God of reversals, the God who is faithful to his promises and saves his people. Above all, the story of Esther points the reader to Jesus Christ and his gospel, exposing “the need for a better deliverer, a better king, and a better kingdom than any we find in this world” (18).

***David Hume*, by James N. Anderson. Great Thinkers series, P&R, 2019. Paperback, 160 pages, \$11.50. Reviewed by OP pastor and professor Alan D. Strange.**

James Anderson argues that David Hume matters immensely. Hume, as chief exemplar of the Scottish Enlightenment, was a critic nonpareil of orthodox Christianity. At the same time, as the most consistent empiricist, he shows us where radical reliance on sense experience lands: in solipsism that produces utter skepticism. In this way, his works serve as an unintentional warning against unbelief.

Anderson begins with an overview of Hume’s life and works. Hume was born in 1711 in Edinburgh, going to France when he was twenty-three. There he began writing his ambitious three-volume *Treatise of Human Nature*, seeking “to develop a rigorously *naturalistic* account of human thought and action, particularly our moral and aesthetic judgments, which would rely exclusively upon *empirical* investigation” (2). Hume’s work was seen by many as an infidel tract promoting doubt.

By the end of the 1740s, Hume had reworked this early material into *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* and *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. The former includes his infamous argument against miracles as empirically

PNYNE Virtual Women's Retreat

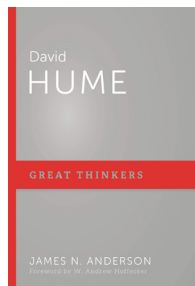
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- Details and registration at pnynne@wordpress.com

unverifiable and unwarranted in a naturalistic approach to knowledge. Hume retired to Edinburgh in 1769 and died in 1776 of intestinal cancer. In these later years, he wrote various skeptical treatises on religions, including his well-known *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, an attack on natural theology, revealed theology having earlier been dispatched. It was judged too incendiary for publication and did not see light until 1779, three years after his death, sealing his “reputation as one of the most formidable critics of religion in Christendom” (6).

Anderson notes that there are three distinctives of Hume’s philosophical project—empiricism, naturalism, and skepticism—carried out in two phases—critical and constructive. In the former phase, Hume seeks to show the limits of reason alone, and in the latter he proposes his new science of man from the standpoint of his three distinctives. Anderson discusses Hume’s theory of the mind, his radical account of causation, and his psychologized philosophy, all in which, “in the name of science, Hume banishes metaphysics and psychologizes epistemology” (21).

Anderson examines Hume’s naturalistic ethics, an attempt to establish justice and morals “by following the experimental method . . . without any reference to questionable metaphysical or theological theses” (35). However, Hume cannot account for the move from “is” to “ought,” reducing ethics to announced arbitrary views. Anderson then treats Hume’s religious skepticism that forms the basis of much subsequent anti-supernaturalism. Hume’s



doubt roused Kant from his dogmatic slumbers and inspired utilitarianism, logical positivism, and scientism. David Hume’s commitment to believing nothing but what sense experience yields has promoted agnosticism and atheism.

Many Christian apologists are empiricists or evidentialists, affirm “brute facts,” and believe that the Christian faith ought to be defended by things like proving Jesus’s resurrection, as if that can be done from a neutral standpoint, assuming epistemological common ground between Christians and non-Christians. Hume serves as a proper corrective, showing, if you follow him through as Anderson does, that empiricism leads to skepticism, the destruction of all knowledge. One cannot start with contingent sensory observations and arrive at truth. Hume’s radical empiricism highlights the utter need for revelation as the necessary starting point for all knowledge.

***Jazz, Blues, and Spirituals: The Origins and Spirituality of Black Music in the United States*, by Hans Rookmaaker, new edition with preface by William Edgar. P&R, 2020. Paperback, 248 pages, \$11.99. Reviewed by OP member Pamela York.**

Written by the late Dutch art professor Hans Rookmaaker, *Jazz, Blues, and Spirituals* gives readers a history of black music in America from a Christian perspective, from its earliest days through the 1950s. Black musicians have made an enormous contribution to the musical culture of America and to the world. Rookmaaker’s love and respect for this music is evident throughout the book. As a professional jazz pianist, I often encounter people who are curious about jazz but

New Work in Florida

A few families are interested in starting an Orthodox Presbyterian congregation in western Hernando and Pasco counties of Florida. If you know of someone who would be interested in joining us and exploring this possibility, please contact David Anderson at 352-585-9955 or davidanderson.cf@gmail.com.

don’t know where to start listening, even though they are familiar with names such as Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington. This book would be an excellent guide for anyone eager to learn about the history of black music.

The book begins with an explanation of the origins of American black music in African music. Slaves brought their music, along with their religion and worldview, with them from Africa to the New World. They sang work songs to help endure their brutal labor. Over time, they heard sea shanties, folk songs, psalms, and hymns.

Music expresses deep joy, often despite circumstances. Rookmaaker reminds us that this is the fruit of the Christian faith. Nowhere is this more evident than in the genre of the spiritual. Rookmaaker shows us how these songs are not just escapism, but have a joy that is focused on the scriptural hope of salvation in Christ. The spirituals *Go Down, Moses* and *Down on Me* declare hope for heaven, even if they also include hope for the future on earth.

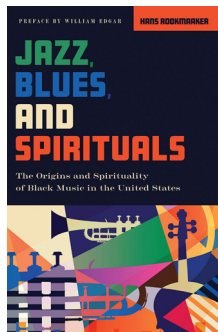
What history of black music would be complete without a discussion of the blues? Rookmaaker explains the twelve-bar blues structure—the AAB pattern. Primarily secular in nature, these songs tell of the worries and troubles of this life. The writers and singers of the blues faced their difficulties head on, with minimal bitterness in spite of hardship.

Rookmaaker also gives us a brief history of ragtime music. A precursor to jazz, ragtime was music that was entirely notated. Unlike the blues, the sixteen-bar form was central. Scott Joplin’s “Maple Leaf Rag” is one of the best-known ragtime compositions. The middle chapters of the book continue with information about the music of New Orleans and how musicians combined French music, folk music, blues, and the music of brass bands to form early

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS *Continued*

jazz. Big band music and bebop are covered in later chapters. The final chapter critiques modern jazz.

One highlight of the book is that recorded musical examples of each genre are given throughout. Rookmaaker compares and contrasts many of the bands that he is describing. One simply must hear the music to appreciate the book fully. When the book was first published in 1960, these recordings were only available on LP. This edition has a list of CD collections in the back. I found almost all of the musical examples mentioned in the book on YouTube and Google Play Music. I hope you're able to pick up a copy and discover some of this marvelous music!



***The Story Retold: A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament*, by G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd. IVP Academic, 2020. Hardcover, 560 pages, \$41.99 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor Andrew Canavan.**

Of making many New Testament introductions, authors G. K. Beale and Benjamin Gladd readily acknowledge, there is (seemingly) no end. True as that may be, Beale and Gladd's entry into this well-populated field is a refreshing and needed resource for redemptive-historically-minded pastors, teachers, and students of the Scriptures. Traditional introductions deal with key questions about each New Testament book (authorship, occasion,

textual history, theological themes). Others explain the Jewish and Greco-Roman cultural backgrounds of the New Testament. Beale and Gladd, however, aim for their introduction to "make sense of the New Testament in light of the Old Testament" (xi). In other words, their goal is to show how the Old and New Testaments fit together to tell (or retell) one story of redemption. Many will recognize that this approach aligns with the Westminster Confession's firm belief that "the infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself" (1.9). As valuable as other introductions are, Beale and Gladd's biblical-theological introduction fills a notable void—especially for New Testament introductions aimed specifically at students.

This hefty book (which is intended as a textbook), opens with a concise overview of Old Testament redemptive history. The authors contend that the pattern set in Genesis 1–3—creation as a cosmic sanctuary for God, human beings as kings and priests faithfully representing God, and the tragic Fall and God's subsequent promise of redemption—is the pattern for the whole Old Testament. In fact, it is the pattern for all of redemptive history until its perfect fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This chapter is a gem of redemptive-historical interpretation. Another unique addition is a chapter on the New Testament's use of the Old Testament: quotes, allusions, and concepts. Anyone familiar with Beale and Gladd will know their deep expertise in this topic. The distillation in this

book makes it a useful introduction to an important area of biblical studies. Beale and Gladd thus rest their approach on the conviction that the Old Testament and New Testament are organically connected as the progressive revelation of God and the single history of redemption. From there, the authors survey each New Testament book, with traditional elements of a New Testament introduction (authorship, date, purpose, outline) followed by a short explanation of im-

portant biblical-theological themes in each book. They then comment more extensively on those themes as they appear in the New Testament book under consideration. This makes *The Story Retold* an ideal resource for preparing sermons, Bible studies, and simply for understanding God's Word better. If readers have ever wondered what such

terms as "inaugurated eschatology" and "two-stage fulfillment" mean and what makes them significant, this book is a wonderful place to start.

One slight quibble is in order, however: while the lavish illustrations are often useful, readers who are especially sensitive to artistic depictions of Jesus may find one or two (out of hundreds) less than helpful. In no way should that detract from Beale and Gladd's achievement in this very useful volume. *The Story Retold* should receive a warm welcome by Christians everywhere, perhaps especially by those who appreciate the rich tradition of Reformed biblical theology—including Geerhardus Vos, Meredith Kline, and others—in which it stands.

