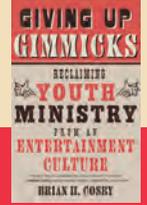


REVIEW: Brian Cosby's *Giving Up Gimmicks* by Ken B. Montgomery



# New Horizons

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

JUN 2012



## BETTER

# *Singing*

## IN SMALLER CHURCHES

BY ALAN R. PONTIER

ALSO: *Hints for Pianists* BY FRANCES W. FOLKERTS

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## NEW HORIZONS

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Pictured here are members of the Presbytery of the Southeast, meeting at Matthews OPC in Matthews, N.C., on Friday and Saturday, April 27–28. The moderator is Scott Willet (front, third from left). Hank Belfield (front, second from right) serves as clerk.



ALAN R. PONTIER

# Better Singing in Smaller Churches

**O**ne of the blessings of the Reformation was the restoration of congregational singing. No longer would worship be the domain of the priest and the professional musician. In accordance with Scripture, worship was restored as the duty and privilege of all the people of God. In Christ, the people are a royal priesthood.

Christ fulfilled the priestly work of substitutionary sacrifice. But another kind of sacrifice belongs in Christian worship. The writer of Hebrews instructs us to “continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God” (Heb. 13:15). This sacrifice of praise reaches its highest expression, not in the polished music of the soloist or in the contemporary beat of a praise band, but in the singing of the congregation. Therefore, in our worship we should pursue excellence in congregational singing, just as we should pursue excellence in all aspects of worship.

However, today it is often something of a struggle to pursue excellence in congregational singing. Music that originates with a commercially successful solo artist or ensemble often becomes awkward when translated for use by a congregation. Instead of a well-delivered shout of praise, we sometimes hear the muted mumbles of people peering at an overhead screen and straining to hear someone who might have a better grasp of the song.

In addition, congregational singing, especially in smaller congregations, can be made more of a challenge by song leaders who are unsure of their own musical ability, as well as by a lack of musical accompaniment to support good congregational singing. In this article, we will avoid the question of what kind of music best suits congregational singing and focus on what the smaller church with limited musical resources can do in the pursuit of better congregational singing.

## LEADING THE SONGS IN WORSHIP

The task of actually leading the singing of the congregation often falls to the minister, who, while spending years

preparing for his teaching ministry, has not spent much time preparing to lead the musical part of the liturgy. Sometimes the task falls to an elder who may be a good singer or have a voice that carries well. Still, especially in smaller churches, the leaders of congregational singing often take their place as much by default as by qualification.

There are some things that can be done to improve the ability of our song leaders. First, there is an important technique for improving the quality of the song leader’s own singing. As he masters this technique, he can pass it on to the congregation. The technique is called diaphragmatic breathing. The diaphragm is a muscle located between the lungs and stomach. Most people rely on upper chest muscles to inflate the lungs. However, breathing from the diaphragm increases the volume of air in the lungs and also, with practice, increases the quality and control of the sounds we make. How can you know when you are breathing with your diaphragm? Yawn. That’s right. When we yawn, we naturally use the diaphragm. Get used to the feeling. Try drawing breath in with a good, full yawn. Hold the air in your lungs for a moment, and then exhale while singing a note. You will have to practice this technique for a while, but with a little work you will see an improvement in the quality of your singing.

If the congregation has difficulty maintaining the tempo of a hymn, the music leader can learn some basic conducting patterns for the various time signatures in the musical score. The time signature is written as, say, 3/4 or 4/4 at the top of the score. In 3/4 time, the “3” means that there are three beats per measure. The “4” means that a quarter note receives one

beat. There are different conducting patterns for each time signature. Take a little time to learn them, and it will help keep the congregation on the beat.

The song leader also has an opportunity to expand the number of hymns that the congregation sings. Many churches have only about fifty to seventy-five hymns that they can sing comfortably. They tend to get repeated frequently. The song leader can introduce and teach new hymns on occasion. Our *Trinity Hymnal* is a wonderful resource with over 700 hymns. There is plenty of material there to expand a congregation's repertoire.

## ACCOMPANYING THE SONGS IN WORSHIP

Over the past generation, fewer children have learned to play the piano, and therefore the number of well-trained accompanists for congregational singing has declined. While larger congregations still have members who can play the piano, smaller congregations and mission works may struggle to find someone who can augment the singing with a steady, competent accompaniment. However, fear not! There is a way to accompany the congregation's singing even if you do not have a pianist in the church.

While help is available, the pastor and/or song leader will have to devote some time and effort to supply musical accompaniment to the congregation in its "sacrifice of praise." The following points in this section will guide you through this process. You don't need a piano or a trained musician, but you do need a computer that can play through your church's sound system.

*First step:* Go to the OPC website ([www.opc.org](http://www.opc.org)). On the right-hand side of the homepage, you will see "Resources." Click on the resource entitled "Trinity Hymnal." On the Trinity Hymnal Resources page, scroll down to "Other Hymnal Resources" and go to the line "MIDI files, complete (.exe, .sit, .tarball, .zip about 3 MB)." If you are using a PC running Windows, click on either ".exe" or ".zip" to download the folder "Th1." Save this folder on your computer. You have downloaded MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) files that contain all the hymns in the 1961 edition of *Trinity Hymnal*.

*Second step:* The MIDI files you have downloaded still need editing in order to make them more suitable for congregational accompaniment. Therefore, the second step is to find a music creator or editing program. We use Cakewalk Music Creator 3 in our congregation, and we will refer to that application in the following editing instructions. Other applications will have equivalent functions or controls.

*Third step:* Select the hymns that you will be singing. If you use the revised *Trinity Hymnal*, you will have to find the same hymn in the original *Trinity Hymnal*. Open the MIDI file for that hymn in your editing program. In Cakewalk Music Creator 3, the files usually open to show three lines (sometimes

two lines).

*Fourth step:* You now can edit the tempo, pitch, and length of the hymn. The unedited MIDI files contain an extra full verse of each hymn as an introduction. Thus, if the hymn has three verses, there will be four verses in the MIDI file. Each file also contains the musical "amen" at the end of the hymn. You may cut out much of the first verse in order to make a more traditional introduction (usually the last line of the hymn).

The tempo can be made faster or slower by clicking on the tempo control pane labeled "BPM" (beats per minute) and using the up and down arrows.

The key can be transposed by clicking on the "Process" button on the toolbar after highlighting one or more lines of the hymn. Then click "MIDI Effects" and choose "Transpose" from the menu. Click on "Key/Scale" on the Transposition Method menu. The "From" menu allows you to click on the key of the original MIDI file, while the "To" menu allows you to choose the key in which you would like to sing the hymn. For instance, "Arise, My Soul, Arise" is number 305 in the revised *Trinity Hymnal*, but it is number 223 in the original hymnal. Open MIDI file Th1\_223 in the editing program. Then, after navigating to the "Key/Scale" transposition method, click on "From." A drop-down menu will display all your choices. The hymn is in 3 sharps (key of A) in the original *Trinity*, but needs to be transposed to 4 flats (key of A-flat) to match the key in the new *Trinity*. Click on "3 sharps" in the "From" menu, and then click on "4 flats" in the "To" menu.

*Fifth step:* Save your edited MIDI file in a folder containing all your music for the worship service. You can also begin building a master folder of all the hymns that you have prepared in this manner.

By following these instructions, you have made the original MIDI file much more like a traditional piano accompaniment. The editing program also allows you to change the sound of the music from piano (the default setting) to any one of several dozen other instruments. Yet, since a piano produces sound by striking strings with hammers, it has a percussive quality that makes it better suited for congregational accompaniment than other instruments. However, you might want to change the sound to another instrument for prelude, postlude, and offertory selections.

Connect your computer to a sound system and play the edited MIDI files through the system.

You have here the basic tools and procedures needed for enhancing congregational singing when your church does not have its own accompanist. It's not a perfect system, but it will help your congregation advance toward the goal of excellence in its joyful sacrifice of praise. □

*The author is pastor of Big Bear Valley OPC in Big Bear Lake, Calif.*



FRANCES W. FOLKERTS

# Hints for Pianists

**S**o, they found out you had a couple of years of piano lessons when you were a kid, and now you've been recruited to fill in at the piano or keyboard in an emergency. If you don't, they say, the hymns will just have to be sung—gasp—*a cappella*. Well anyway, that's what happened to me. Now, a few decades later, I've jotted down some helpful hints that I've learned the hard way.

Remember that you are playing because there is no one out there who can do it as well as you can.

Moderate nervousness is good; it makes you more alert. Extreme nervousness only saps your energy and concentration. Don't allow yourself to indulge in it. Focus on the job at hand.

In music, mistakes happen all the time. Get over it and get on with it. Most people don't even notice. The few that do will admire your ability to keep going, seemingly unperturbed.

When choosing additional music for the offering, etc., pick something you are comfortable with. Having played a piece well once or twice at home doesn't mean you're ready to do it with the stress of playing it publicly.

If you can't see the music well, you don't have much chance of playing it well. Invest in appropriate lenses (measure from eyeball to music on the rack). Bifocals are too awkward and generally inadequate. Simply photocopying the music a little larger may suffice. Yes, it's legal to do that in order to make the music more convenient to play.

Organize all the music you will be playing for a service in a binder. Use page covers and place tabs on the edges. Not only will page turning be easier, but notations on the tabs such as *Prelude*, *Hymn 1*, and *Offering* will keep you on course.

Write notes (musical and otherwise) right on your music—but only so many as can be taken in at a glance. On difficult passages, work out the best fingering and stick with it.

Tempo and melody should predominate. Try using a strong, rhythmic bass. Determine the best tempo for each hymn ahead of time, and don't let a sluggish congregation drag you down. If there is no song leader, you're it by default. You're not accompanying at this point; you are the leader—so act like it. Of course, you will want to make adjustments

if you notice everyone struggling to keep up. Don't worry, though, if the congregation lags a split second behind you. That's very common. (Many people, it seems, just like to hear the next note before they sing it.)

Unless otherwise noted or popularly understood, keep a strict tempo, but gradually slow slightly toward the end.

Play eighth notes distinctly. Don't forget that, in addition to trying to sing those notes, the worshipers also have words to read and, hopefully, think about! You might even consider slowing ever so slightly when playing eighth notes, especially where each is assigned its own syllable, as in "Praise him! praise him! Jesus our blessed Redeemer!"

And please, count out the full measure at the end of each line. The singers are counting on that time to take a breath.

Generally, people are less inhibited in their singing when they don't have the sense that they are singing a solo. Play loudly enough for everyone to be able to hear you well. Trust me, if they can't, they'll just hold back until they can.

Using a hymn arrangement that is different from the one in the congregation's hymnbook will likely confuse and irritate those who can read music and like to sing parts—and right now they're your best friends.

Don't fret about not being able to play fancy flourishes. You are there to serve, not dazzle. Your job is to be helpful, not impressive.

And finally, God gives gifts to his church, and one of yours is being able to accompany the congregation during worship services. Trust him also to give you the ability to use this gift, limited as it may seem to you, for his glory and the good of his church. □

*The author is the organist/pianist at Grace OPC in Fair Lawn, N.J.*



DANNY E. OLINGER

# Singing in the OPC

Since 1961, congregations in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church have sung praise to God out of *Trinity Hymnal* (original and revised editions). Before *Trinity Hymnal* was issued, Orthodox Presbyterian congregations sang primarily out of the 1911 Presbyterian hymnal.

This was in contrast to the vast majority of Presbyterians, who had replaced the 1911 Presbyterian hymnal with the 1933 Presbyterian hymnal. Orthodox Presbyterians refused to switch to the 1933 hymnal because of its liberal tendencies.

J. Gresham Machen had alerted the church in his review, “The New Presbyterian Hymnal,” that the 1933 edition had been deliberately created to match the broadening theology of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. One church leader had been quoted in the *Chicago Tribune* as saying, “If you want to know the trends of religion, listen to the way religion sings. About 400 hymns were dropped. The doctrine note in hymns is almost missing. In place of doctrine, brotherhood, international fellowship, and sound service are stressed.” Machen noted that the leader in view challenged the accuracy of the *Chicago Tribune* account, but what was not in dispute for Machen was the fact that the theology of the church had been altered. Machen said, “The ‘doctrine note in hymns’ is indeed ‘almost missing’ in many of the hymns added in the new book; and that means, of course, that the Christian note is almost missing, since the Christian religion is doctrinal to the very heart and core.”

In making his case in the review that the theology had been altered, Machen observed that among the 400 hymns cut from the 1911 edition were such gospel favorites as “I Lay My Sins on Jesus, the Spotless Lamb of God,” “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less Than Jesus’ Blood and Righteousness,” and “No, Not Despairingly Come I to Thee.”

Perhaps even more revealing than the omission of hymns, said Machen, were the changes to the hymns that had been

retained. Many hymns had stanzas deleted, while others had words replaced that changed the overall meaning. As prominent examples of this corruption of hymn texts, Machen cited “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name,” “Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne,” and “Who Is on the Lord’s Side?”

In “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name,” three stanzas were deleted, including one that mentioned the fall of man and the grace of God:

Ye seed of Israel’s chosen race,  
Ye ransomed of the fall,  
Hail him who saves you by his grace,  
And crown him Lord of all.

“Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne,” which Machen described as a “beautiful hymn,” no longer had the refrain at the end of the fourth stanza that deals with Calvary:

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,  
Thy cross is my only plea.

The hymn “Who Is on the Lord’s Side?” no longer contained the words,

Jesus, thou hast bought us,  
Not with gold or gem,  
But with thine own life-blood,  
For thy diadem.

In examining these changes and many others, Machen saw a clear and undeniable pattern. The shed blood of Jesus Christ for sinners was at the center of the majority of the hymns re-

moved, stanzas omitted, and lines changed. Machen concluded, “Many are the places in this new book where mention of the cross of Christ, in its true Christian meaning, is removed.”

While old hymns were excluded or amended for theological reasons, the new hymns were characterized by a deadly vagueness. Machen commented, “This vagueness is altogether attractive to the non-doctrinal Modernism that now dominates the visible church, but to the Christian heart it is almost as depressing as definitely and clearly unscriptural teaching would be.”

As the supreme example of the modernist theology purposefully carried into the hymnal, Machen pointed to Merrill’s “Not Alone for Mighty Empire.” Its closing stanza read:

God of justice, save the people  
From the clash of race and creed,  
From the strife of class and faction:  
Make our nation free indeed.  
Keep her faith in simple mankind  
Strong as when her life began,  
Till it find its full fruition  
In the brotherhood of man.

Machen understood the implications of singing such a hymn. He argued, “If it is true that ‘faith in simple mankind’ will find ‘its full fruition in the brotherhood of man,’ then the Bible is false from beginning to end; all its solemn warnings, all its rebukes to human pride, all its promises of the sovereign grace of God are but idle words, and we have been utterly mistaken in our reliance for salvation simply and solely upon the atoning blood of Jesus.” He then finished with the challenge, “Which shall it be—‘faith in simple mankind’ or faith in Christ crucified? The time has come in the Presbyterian Church and in other churches when we must choose.”

Three years later on June 11, 1936, a stand for faith in Christ crucified was taken in the formation of what is now the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. About fifty congregations with four thousand members came together to form a Presbyterian church that rejected the broadening theology found in the PCUSA, including its 1933 hymnal. Orthodox Presbyterian congregations simply were not going to endorse that hymnal. They understood that the character of the church’s song, almost equal with the character of its preaching, influences the theology of a church.

## THE COMMITTEE ON SONG

This caused the Church to ask, What does the Bible teach about singing in corporate worship? A Committee on Song was erected in 1944 to study the question.

In the exegetical section of its report, the Committee on Song stated that the first recorded instance of song in the Old Testament in the public worship of God is found in Exodus

15, the song of praise and thanksgiving sung by Moses and the Israelites after the Lord’s mighty work of deliverance from bondage in Egypt.

Knowing that the Lord is one who acts on its behalf, Israel sings throughout its history. Among the more familiar songs in the Old Testament, in addition to the Song of Moses, are the Second Song of Moses (Deut. 32), the Song of the Well (Num. 21), the Song of Deborah (Judg. 5), the Song of Hannah (1 Sam. 2), and the Song of David (2 Sam. 22).

And, of course, there is the singing of the Psalter. The Psalms are Israel’s covenantal response to who God is and what he has done in history. Each psalm stands alone individually, but at the same time the Psalms collectively testify about the coming Messiah and the dawning of the new day he brings. As they speak of Christ and his work (Luke 24:44), the Psalms move forward with the goal of the last psalm in the Psalter ever in view. The glorious hope of all singing that the promised Messiah will bring about for his chosen people is being in the presence of God, where everything that has breath will praise the Lord (Ps. 150:6).

The Psalms speak yet today, and the church should sing them frequently and with joy, but the singing in worship does not end with the Psalter. In examining Scripture, the Committee on Song concluded that there is freedom permissible in singing that is not contrary to the regulative principle. The Old Testament itself did not command the Israelites to employ only the Psalter as the exclusive manual of praise in worship. Further, new songs are found in the New Testament that give expression to the fullness of revelation and redemption found in the coming of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

This last point is of no small significance. What Israel sings in anticipation of the Savior is realized in the New Testament with his appearance. Luke’s gospel opens with Mary’s song of praise (the *Magnificat*) for the great new things that God is doing. Filled with the Spirit, Zechariah sings (the *Benedictus*) after affirming his son’s name will be John, the one who

<sup>1</sup> The Committee’s report deals with a variety of topics on song in public worship, from explaining the regulative principle, to the teaching of the Westminster Standards, to examining key Old and New Testament texts. The Committee argued that although the Psalms ought to be used frequently in worship, the saints in the New Testament era “did not confine themselves in praise to a preliminary stage of revelation but adjusted the content of their songs to the full limit of completed revelation.” The Committee then urged, “We should do likewise.” A minority report from John Murray and William Young argued that there is scriptural authority only for singing inspired songs in public worship, and that the Psalms have such divine sanction and approval. For both reports, see the *Minutes of the Thirteenth General Assembly* (pp. 101–6) and the *Minutes of the Fourteenth General Assembly* (pp. 51–66). The practice of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has been to allow sessions of local congregations the authority to determine whether to sing hymns and psalms or psalms alone in public worship.

will prepare the way for Christ. Knowing that the babe he is holding in his arms is the promised Savior, Simeon sings (*Nunc dimittis*) entering the temple.

But singing in the New Testament is not limited to these songs. From the angels singing in Bethlehem, to Christ singing with his disciples, to Paul's singing in prison, to the singing that takes place in heaven, the New Testament is full of song.

## NEW TESTAMENT INSTRUCTIONS

In addition to these examples of song, there is the apostle Paul's instruction in the parallel texts of Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18–19. Colossians 3:16 reads, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." Ephesians 5:18–19 says, "Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart."

If you want to understand the apostle's teaching, you need to understand the import of the respective governing clauses in the passages. In the Colossians text, the governing clause is "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." In the Ephesians text, it is "Be filled with the Spirit." The word of Christ that dwells in us and the Spirit that fills us are New Testament realities. In view is singing that accompanies the new day of the Spirit that Christ brings.

From this new covenant grounding, the church is to continue singing the Psalms, for they testify of the coming sweet singer of Israel, Jesus Christ. The church is also to sing hymns, that is, crafted, poetic expressions that communicate the teaching of Scripture. The church is also to sing spiritual songs—not spiritual in the sense of being verbally inspired as the Word of God is inspired, but spiritual in the sense that they flow from the wisdom that God gives in the life of faith (Col. 1:9).

With psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, the church sings about Jesus Christ in the fullness of his person and work, promise and fulfillment. But, the blessed reality is that in public worship the church not only sings about Christ, but also sings with Christ. According to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the risen Christ sings the praise of the Father in the midst of the congregation (Heb. 2:12). But he does so, having passed through the heavens in order to bring his blood-bought brethren into the presence of the Father, thus delivering to the Father all those whom he has been given (Heb. 2:13).

It is not just the writer to the Hebrews who understands that Jesus reigns as a singing Savior. The apostle Paul understands this too. He declares in Romans 15:8–9, "For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for

his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name."

Jesus brings to pass the covenant promises. Through his life, death, and resurrection, he is a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, but his work doesn't stop there.

Ascended, he sings and gives praise among the Gentiles as his Word goes out to the nations and many are saved. Jesus is gathering unto himself a choir from every tribe and nation—a choir that he is directing to glorify God for his mercy to sinners such as you and me. The church is that choir, called out from among the nations to sing the praise of God for the gift of Jesus Christ.

The Song of Moses has become the Song of the Lamb, the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile having been torn down, for those who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:12–13).

That is why the constant removal of the mention of the atoning blood of Jesus from the songs of the 1933 Presbyterian hymnal was so offensive to J. Gresham Machen and the other founders of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. It cut at the heart of the good news found in Jesus Christ, which marks the church's praise in song. Jesus came into this world to give his life as a ransom for many, and he did so at Calvary. He has achieved a perfect salvation, and this is the basis of his song before the Father in heaven. In heaven among the festal assembly of the saints, as the firstborn of many brethren, Jesus is not limited to singing only about his work in anticipation. Risen, he sings about the mighty acts of redemption that have occurred and which have him at their center. He sings with joy over the accomplishment and application of redemption, and the church, joined to him by faith, sings the same song with joy.

By the grace of God, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has always understood this when it comes to singing in public worship. Knowing that it has fallen short of the glory of God in thought, word, and deed, it does not sing about vague generalities or the goodness of mankind. Instead, it sings with joy that Jesus died for sinners and was raised for their justification.

The church sings of the perfect redemptive work of the Savior even as it awaits his return and the consummation of all things, including singing itself. For in the new heaven and the new earth, the deaf will hear, the mute will speak, and all will sing joyously, perfectly about Jesus. The song of the redeemed in glory will be, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (Rev. 5:12). The church's singing now is a foretaste of the worship that will occur in that great day when everything that has breath will praise the Lord. ◻

*The author is general secretary of the Committee on Christian Education and a member of the Psalter-Hymnal Committee.*

# The Dating Download



**To: KellyTodd@linkmac.com**  
**From: JuneMcrea@ustel.com**

Dear Kelly,

Now that you're off to your dream job in the big city, I don't seem to be hearing from you anymore. I'm sure you're busy, but your old aunt would love an update.

*Love, Aunt June*

**To: JuneMcrea@ustel.com**  
**From: KellyTodd@linkmac.com**

Dear Aunt June,

Sorry I've been out of touch. Life is crazy right now! First I had to find an apartment, and then I started my job. Work is so busy! I end up spending extra hours there, trying to learn the trade. On the good side, there are five other college graduates at work too, which is fun and a real stress-buster! We all go out after work. I've been spending lots of time with Ryan, an Indiana State graduate. He's a total goof and keeps everybody cracking up. He and I hang out on weekends, too, so it seems like there's never a spare minute! That's all the news here.

*Love, Kelly*

**To: KellyTodd@linkmac.com**  
**From: JuneMcrea@ustel.com**

My dear niece,

I might as well say it: I hear alarm bells. You don't sound like my levelheaded niece. Honey, I want you to enjoy your new job, coworkers, and independent life. I don't want to be a killjoy. But I am concerned that your message seems to center around "fun." Yes, you're spending extra hours at work, but you don't mention any activities besides going out with coworkers, especially Ryan.

Kelly, are you going to church? Do the people at church mean something to you, or are you forming relationships only with coworkers? Are your coworkers Christians? If not, then you can have a wonderful impact on them, but make sure you are grounded in the church, so that you stay strong in the faith. You want to influence them, not the other way around. Proverbs 13:20 says: "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm."

Is Ryan a Christian? If not, then Kelly, you shouldn't spend time alone with him. We are not to be "unequally yoked" (2 Cor. 6).

You're probably thinking, "Oh, for Pete's sake, Aunt June, I'm not *marrying* him!" But you are setting yourself up to fall in love with him if you are spending time alone with him.

*Love, Aunt June*

**To: JuneMcrea@ustel.com**  
**From: KellyTodd@linkmac.com**

Aunt June,

That sounds nice, but tell me: how am I supposed to find a Christian guy these days—somebody who actually wants a relationship? All the guys I meet want to party until they're 35. I feel like I have to give in some or I'll never meet anybody. It's not like there's some single guy at church; practically everybody is married with four kids! And if I don't join my coworkers, I'll end up sitting in the break room with a book and brown-bag lunch every day. I need some kind of a social life!

I don't mean to insult you, but you've been married with kids for years, so I don't think you know what it's like to be single anymore.

*Kelly*

**To: KellyTodd@linkmac.com**  
**From: JuneMcrea@ustel.com**

Oh, Kelly,

Honey, you are right that it's been a long time since I was single. Maybe I don't know what it's like. But Jesus does. Hear me on that. Your Savior, who died for you, knows what it is like to be single! He didn't have a spouse. He didn't even have a roof over his head!

The Bible tells us that Jesus, while on earth, suffered the same things we suffer: "Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (Heb. 2:17–18).

Jesus suffered your singleness! When you feel lonely, imagine how lonely he was. Even his closest friends didn't understand him until he had left them and gone to heaven. You might say, "Well, he had the fellowship of the Father." But he lost even that—gave it up willingly, for *you*—on the cross. There is no greater love than this. No earthly guy—no party boy from work—can ever love you enough to make it worth giving up Christ.

I am not making light of your circumstances. You *are* legitimately lonely. There is perhaps no more confusing time than young adulthood—trying to find your life partner, establish your career, and determine your place in this world. Please just remember that *this world is not your home*, and the Lord will not abandon you. Seek him.

Thank you for being honest with me, Kelly. Please write again and tell me how things are going. I love you.

*Aunt June*

# A Beautiful Daughter

**W**illiamsport, Pennsylvania, is the home of Little League Baseball. It is also home to a beautiful new daughter, Omega OPC. The adoring mother is New Life OPC. Mom and daughter worship just fifteen minutes apart in this town of 29,000 people.

When New Life completed its building in 1999, Pastor Paul Browne and the elders decided that when God filled the space, they would plant a daughter congregation rather than enlarge the building.

So in 2006 New Life sent off about twenty-five of its people to plant Redeemer OPC in Danville, Pennsylvania (thirty-five miles to the southeast), with Roth Reason as the organizing pastor.

As the Lord filled the building with worshipers once again, plans began to be laid for another church plant. Drew Adcock was brought in as a yearlong intern in the summer of 2010 with the hope that he would become the organizing pastor of the daughter church.

Throughout that year, Pastor Browne nurtured the process. Their plans were regularly brought to the Lord in public prayer. Intern Adcock was given access to the men training to be elders and deacons, to see if there were some who would join him in a church plant. Pastor Browne encouraged various families to think about being involved.

The intention was to go forward in unity, with Omega Church becoming an extension of New Life, not an alternative. The leadership did not want to foster any undercurrents of discontent.

It was emphasized that those starting the new church would be expected to be faithful in all of its ministries and manifest an enthusiastic spirit that would be attractive to visitors. As the time drew near for Omega Church to begin worshipping separately, some families were asked to stay at

Pastor Drew Adcock



New Life. Too many people wanted to be part of the daughter church!

Omega OPC began to worship in July 2011. She worships in the Pajama Factory, which was formerly a manufacturing plant. It now houses artists' studios, retail space, and a church. People pitched in and refinished the floor and did other decorating. They have created an inviting worship space that has impressed even some of the artists.

Pastor Adcock says that the space is very conducive to wor-

ship. Since it is a public venue, the congregation feels like it is worshipping God in the presence of the world. People passing by in the hall can hear and see the congregation. One neighbor has commented that he now knows the Bible very well since he hears it every Sunday.

But the congregation hears its neighbors as well. During evening worship, music from various businesses drifts in, reminding God's people that they are a light of God's grace to the world.

Four of New Life Church's deacons and their families were among the core group of thirty-five that went out to form Omega Church. This was no accident. God was at work shaping the body. The Pajama Factory is located in a poor area of town. As the congregation has taken the gospel to its neighbors, many diaconal needs have presented themselves. The Lord has wonderfully provided deacons to lead in ministering to these needs.

Omega is enthusiastic about worshipping the Lord. She has no professional

Snacks and conversation after a women's Bible study



musicians, but she has focused on the musical part of worship, seeking to be the best she can be to honor the Lord. To this end, the hymns to be used in worship are announced a week in advance. People use them in their family worship and devotions. Pastor Adcock encourages the people to pray through the hymns and use them as devotional material. This has helped the praise that the congregation brings to God in public worship to be truly heartfelt.

Gospel outreach, hospitality, seeking to be mature in Christ, and holding fast to Reformed doctrine are also important to the people of Omega Church. Initially, she tried to do too much, seeking to duplicate the ministries of New Life Church. But she has learned that she needs to walk well before she can run.

Pray that Omega Church's impact on the community will grow. Pray that visitors will return and join the body.

Pray especially that God would protect his people. Signs of spiritual warfare are evident. The church sign was run over and destroyed. Loud music from neighbors sometimes seems deliberate. Almost every family is feeling increased tension.

Pray that Omega OPC will continue to develop well and take her place in the ministry of her presbytery and the OPC as a whole.

## God's Wonderful Providences

"The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps" (Prov. 16:9).

OP pastor Jonathan Peters knows that truth very well. Over the decades, the Lord has taken his steps in directions he never anticipated, let alone planned.

### Home Missions Today

For up-to-date Home Missions news and prayer updates, e-mail [HomeMissionsToday@opc.org](mailto:HomeMissionsToday@opc.org).  
New editions: **June 6, 20.**

Jonathan and Debbie Peters (front, second and third from left) with some of the GRCCC people



The latest episode of his life began with meeting and marrying Debbie Kinkaid.

Debbie is the music coordinator at Covenant OPC in Reading, Pennsylvania. So with their marriage, Jonathan moved to Reading and became part of Covenant Church. So began the latest saga.

Covenant Church hosts the Greater Reading Chinese Christian Church in its building. GRCCC is a mission work of the presbytery. After the first organizing pastor of GRCCC departed, Wendell Stoltzfus, the pastor of Covenant Church, began leading worship and preaching on Sunday afternoons for GRCCC. Before he entered pastoral ministry, Wendell and his wife, Priscilla, had spent time in China teaching ESL classes.

One Sunday in February 2011, Wendell was unable to lead worship at GRCCC and asked Jonathan to fill in for him. Throughout the service, he was interpreted into Mandarin. Knowing that Pastor Stoltzfus was very busy and loving Jonathan's preaching, the people of GRCCC asked him to become their pastor. He asked why, since he didn't speak Chinese. "You speak very good English," was the tongue-in-cheek reply.

So began an association that has continued. Jonathan and Debbie have thrown themselves into developing a relationship with the people. Some are English speakers; others are not. The language barrier

is even a hurdle in some homes, where one spouse speaks Mandarin and the other speaks English.

The Peters attend Chinese cultural events, host Bible studies and meals, and visit in people's homes. The congregation numbers in the twenties and includes many professional people. On Easter Sunday, twenty-seven were in attendance, even with several families away.

For Jonathan and Debbie, the Lord's Day begins at 8:15 a.m. Debbie works with Covenant Church's musicians in preparation for the 9:30 worship. Sunday school follows worship. Debbie and Jonathan spend the first twenty minutes with the children aged four through fourth grade. They lead the singing, Bible and catechism memory work, and prayer. Then the Greater Reading Chinese Christian Church meets at 1:30 for worship. This is followed by tea and conversation. Twice a month, there is a fellowship meal. They often don't get home until 5 p.m.

Please pray that outreach to Chinese speakers throughout the Reading area will result in new converts and an ingathering of Christians. Pray for the families that face communication challenges due to differing languages. Pray that the people of GRCCC will grow in their understanding of the Bible, their love for the Lord, and an increased commitment to biblical stewardship.

# For or against Calvinism?

BRENTON C. FERRY

Zondervan has published two books of the same length and price, one against Calvinism and one for Calvinism. *Against Calvinism* was written by the Arminian theologian Roger E. Olson. *For Calvinism* was written by Michael Horton of Westminster Seminary California. The cover of Olson's book is red with three dead tulips; Horton's cover is green with three living tulips. Each author wrote the foreword for the other's book, communicating mutual respect.

Nevertheless, each book is independent, in that they do not reference arguments back and forth as in a debate. If you buy only one of the two books, you can fully enjoy that book without need of the other. But one can't help wanting to read both, because they are set up in opposition, one trying to build up Calvinism and the other trying to destroy it.

The occasion for Olson's book is the rise of five-point Calvinism (TULIP) among young Christians. He is irritated that many of his "best and brightest theological students were gravitating toward Calvinism" (p. 15) under the influence of Pastor John Piper. Olson and other faculty at Truett Seminary refer to them as "Piper Cubs."

Olson's critique of TULIP is restricted to the doctrines of unconditional election, limited atonement, and irresistible grace. He replaces them, respectively, with the doctrines of divine self-limita-

tion (that God limits his sovereignty over creation to make room for man's free will), unlimited atonement (that Jesus' death makes forgiveness possible for all people), and prevenient grace (that God enables all people to believe in Christ equally).

Olson's main concern is that the Calvinist doctrine of God's decree—that God unconditionally foreordained everything that happens—implies that he is the author of sin and thus a moral monster.

In other words, Olson argues against God's decree on the basis of the problem of evil.

The book reads more like an opinion piece than a theological polemic. It is filled with illustrations, analogies, and accounts of personal encounters with abrasive Calvinists, but it is light on biblical exegesis. Olson seems to think that just stating the Calvinistic position is the best argument against it.

He even indicates that he would not believe in God's decree even if the Bible did teach it! His book is marred by too many references to later chapters of the book, like someone saying, "I'll explain this later ... and I'll explain that later too."

Regarding the problem of evil, the Calvinist says that God decreed crimes against children, which Olson thinks is horrible. Olson's doctrine of divine self-limitation says that God limits his sovereignty to allow criminals freedom to hurt children. How is that any better? Is a criminal's freedom more valuable to God than a child's safety? Olson, in arguing against Calvinism, has unwittingly argued against Christianity broadly considered.

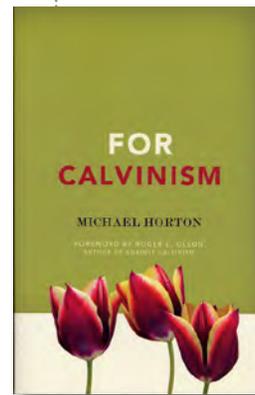
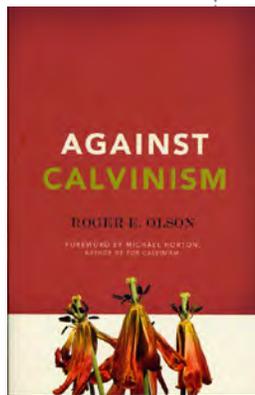
Atheists commonly use that argument against Christianity. For Olson to pick that argument up and apply it to Calvinism alone, when Arminianism is also vulnerable to it, suggests that he has not given enough consideration to the consequences of his own theological system. In other words, if Olson's argument wins, then both Calvinism and Arminianism stand defeated. He uses a Kamikaze argument, seemingly unaware.

As for Olson's theory of God's self-limitation, God cannot limit himself. God is limitless in all his attributes. To suggest that God limits his sovereignty is like saying that God can limit his truthfulness, or his holiness, or his infinity, or his eternity, or his love, or his immutability.

Olson essentially suggests that God changes his own being in order to make room for man's autonomous free will.

Horton's defense of Calvinism was a pleasure to read. You may think you don't need to read it because you already agree with Calvinism, but don't dismiss this book if you want a contemporary defense of confessional Reformed theology against detractors.

There are eight chapters. Chapter 1, "The Essence of Calvinism," looks at Calvinism from a historical-theological perspective. Horton argues for a catholic, evangelical, consistent monergism of five points and *solus*. But he also argues against the assumption that God's sovereignty is



Calvinism's "central dogma," from which all other doctrines are logically deduced. This exemplifies how Horton presents basic theological material and more advanced concepts at the same time. There is a nice complexity to the book in that respect.

In chapter 2, Horton stresses that Reformed anthropology begins before the Fall, with man's nature in the state of innocence. Consistent with this conviction, he addresses concupiscence, total depravity, free will, the distinction between natural and moral ability, the sense of God, God's decree in relation to sin, the gospel, etc. But again, Horton takes basic concepts like total depravity and relates them to an advanced concept, in this case Adam's state of innocence.

In chapter 3, Horton gives an infralapsarian explanation and biblical defense of unconditional election. He discusses reprobation, the Reformed understanding of God's permissive decree, foreknowledge, corporate election, double agency, the implications of the Creator-creature distinction for the free will of God and man (an advanced point, particularly well made), assurance, and the mystery of it all.

In the remaining chapters, Horton defends limited atonement, effectual calling, perseverance, piety, and missions. The book ends introspectively, analyzing current Calvinism's strengths and weaknesses.

## Congratulations

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

• Kimberly Satterfield (Providence Presby. Church in Pataskala, Ohio)

**The First Catechism or the Catechism for Young Children has been recited by:**

- Nicolas Moots (Grace OPC in Lansing, Mich.)
- Henry Horne (Cornerstone OPC in Chattanooga, Tenn.)
- Samuel Russell (Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pa.)

## Four Favorites

### Books on Preaching Christ from All of Scripture

**1. Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*. P&R, 2007.** This book is my first recommendation on the subject. Johnson is clearly carrying the mantle of Edmund Clowney, whose *Preaching and Biblical Theology* is still a standard (See Pete Vosteen's "Four Favorites" in *New Horizons*, December 2010). However, *Him We Proclaim* is a fuller, deeper treatment of the subject with numerous exegetical jewels and a helpful how-to guide at the end. It is well researched, irenic, and determined never to divorce the indicatives from the imperatives of Scripture.

**2. Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*. Eerdmans, 2000.** This is a challenging and invigorating book. It shows that the desire for rich, edifying, Christ-centered preaching is present on other continents and in other denominations. Goldsworthy has a number of excellent books; this one clearly expresses his conviction that there is nothing more *irrelevant* to perishing sinners and struggling saints than Christless preaching. He argues convincingly that the rule of faith (Scripture interpreting Scripture) and good theology require preaching the whole Bible in light of Christ's coming.

**3. Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*. Eerdmans, 1999.** This book develops the hermeneutical and homiletical aspects of preaching Christ from the Old Testament. It includes a helpful historical review of the idea of preaching Christ from all of Scripture and some of its pitfalls. Greidanus offers nicely refined categories and some excellent cautions. His concern for preaching that is Christ-centered *and* relevant is a provocative challenge to the oft-expressed caricature of redemptive-historical preaching. The book also contains a how-to guide and several sample sermons.

**4. C. Trimp, *Preaching and the History of Salvation*. Mid-American Reformed Seminary, 1996.** This little book is a pearl. It shows us once again that there is nothing new under the sun. Many of the discussions we are having today about preaching took place in the Netherlands decades ago. This book's real strength is the way in which communion with God is developed as an overarching concern of the Old Testament, culminating in the person and work of Christ.

Eric B. Watkins

## Out of the Mouth ...

Years ago, my church showed the old film, "The Pilgrim's Progress." Afterwards, my five-year-old son Adam said, "Don't worry, Mom. Now I know what the devil looks like, so I'll stay away from him!" (Adam is now in seminary.)

—Dee McNeal  
Cincinnati, Ohio

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

# Addressing Poverty of Both Kinds

ALBERT J. TRICARICO, JR.

**K**aramoja is a poor place. The people live in fragile mud huts that are easily damaged by rain and fire. They do not have electricity or plumbing. They rely on crops and livestock for their living, but manage neither well. Many travel inconvenient distances to get water—sometimes from the unsafe flows of a local river. Most of them do not have latrines. Dysfunctional civil structures have contributed to their pitiable state. By any standard, the Karimojong are poor.

Karamoja is a poor place. The people are mastered by the sins of drunkenness, stealing, idolatry, lying, violence, idleness, and jealousy. Polygamy is treasured and practiced by most men. Animism is their faith, and superstitions of various kinds hold the hearts and direct the conduct of our Karimojong friends. By the standards of the Bible, the Karimojong—along with all people who do not know Christ—are very poor indeed.

Material or spiritual poverty—which type does the Christian message address? Those who give the Bible a full hearing do not have to choose. Christ calls the church to whole-person love that serves the poor in both ways. This is what the Orthodox Presbyterian Uganda Mission (OPUM) seeks to do.

Ministering to impoverished people is tricky and presents surprising complications. We, the members of the OPUM, feel the complexities keenly. We want to offer open hearts and hands to those whose needs are extensive and visible to all. We want to put away self-interest, and sacrifice comfort and convenience for the sake of the needy. Yet we have come to see that unbridled giving of material help does harm.

Requests of all kinds and degrees come to us in Karamoja. Unrestrained responses to those requests could mean the consumption of virtually all of our assets in a short period of time. While we are happy to give all, we do not want to be instruments of harmful dependency. Surely we want the people of our villages to have what they need. But we also want to help them learn grace-empowered self-reliance and to live happily and faithfully under the promises and commands of Scripture. We do not want our giving to undermine this very important lesson.

I have been asked for large loans, cash and labor to build and staff a primary school, the same for a new medical clinic, and grain enough to feed our local villages in the event of drought. Once a fellow asked to receive regular percentages of my personal salary. We understand these requests and the cultural forces that lie behind them. We really do! The Karimojong have so little, especially when compared with what they know we have.

Although we do not believe in unbounded giving, we do want to offer alternatives to the robust requests that come. We want to say, “We are not able to do what you ask, but there is something we can do in the name of Jesus.” Here is a sample of the things we do in love for our lost and needy friends:

- Akisyon a Yesu (Compassion of Jesus) Presbyterian Clinic gives high-quality care and charges about 20 percent of its cost (exclusive of missionary salaries).
- Our community health ministry brings instruction to the villages that is vital to the well-being of our neighbors.
- Our farm provides day jobs for our Karimojong friends and puts assets (grain and sometimes cash) into the hands of those who help us.
- Our workshop provides discount repairs for local equipment like plows and bicycles.

Preaching while drilling a well



- Our drilling crew has installed a number of wells in Karimojong villages.
- Our literacy and vocational training efforts have improved the lives of many.

There are other things as well. We employ over fifty regular workers. We look for ways to buy supplies locally (e.g., sand, stones, firewood, craft items) and put resources into villages by doing so.

Children in a Karimojong village



On one occasion, we assembled several work crews and sent them to help rebuild a village that had burned to the ground. We provided labor only (no money) and were greatly appreciated by those who received the help.

We need wisdom to know how to give in the best ways. We need grace to love from the heart as we engage in ministry to the poor. We need to make clear that, while we want to assist our neighbors materially, we want them to see their deepest need, which is to be reconciled with the God of heaven through faith in Christ. Please pray for your mission with these thoughts in mind.

The Bible teaches that mercy shown through material gifts is a vital component of living faith (James 2:15-17). The Bible also teaches that the brevity and frailty of life (James 4:13-15) call all the living to orient their beings, plans, and possessions to the reality of God's presence, work, and will. We long to live this way more and more. We long for others to share the joy and safety of serving under the kind lordship of Jesus.

Is there any greater display of mercy than that of Jesus bringing Lazarus back from the

dead? Yet the life which Lazarus reentered remained weak, broken, and subject to death. He immediately received the attacks of those who hated the truth and plotted his demise (John 12:10). His life continued to be a vanishing mist (James 4:14).

Lazarus's greatest need was to be restored completely, body and soul. This restoration was his by grace. Jesus purchased his peace with God, and Lazarus now awaits (with all the living and the dead in Christ) the appearing of our master and the glorification of the saints who will be like him when they see him (Titus 2:13; 1 John 3:2).

"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?" (Matt. 16:26). Pray that we will live in light of the eternal and show our friends through word and deed that they can have the very best offered by God in the gospel of his Son. As you pray for our efforts to show mercy materially, pray for the Spirit-empowered effectiveness of the Scriptures as they are delivered at the meetings where the gospel is declared. In particular, remember these meetings:

- Nine weekly Bible studies at various

locations (including Sunday school in Nakaale)

- Other occasional Bible studies held around the neighborhood
- Sunday morning worship in Nakaale
- Friday noontime Bible stories with workers on our compound
- Saturday morning review of Bible stories with our translators
- Morning devotions at the Clinic and at our living compounds
- Clinic outreach events
- Weekday preaching at the Clinic
- Meetings at local schools

Also pray for the witness of our life.

We want to do everything from love (Rom. 5:5), for the good of our friends (Gal. 6:10), and for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). Pray that our light would so shine before the Karimojong that they would see our good works and give glory to our Father (Matt. 5:16).

## WHAT'S NEW

### APPOINTMENTS

- The missionary associate appointment of **Miss Tina M. D.** (Westminster OPC, Hamill, S.Dak.) to a country in Asia has been extended for another year, beginning in August.
- **Miss Carolyn S. G.** (PCA) has been appointed to teach at a university in a country in Asia for the month of July.

### COMINGS/GOINGS

- **Rev. and Mrs. Wendell S. S.** (Covenant OPC, Reading, Pa.) plan to return to the U.S. this month after serving for four months as missionary associates in a country in Asia.

Maria, James, Laurie, Joshua, and Al Tricarico



## Telenews

Call 215/830-9424, ext. \*833, for the latest Foreign Missions news and prayer requests. New editions: **June 8, 22.**

# Our Lavish God

DANIEL P. CLIFFORD

In Deuteronomy 14:25–27 we read, “You shall turn [your tithe] into money and bind up the money in your hand and go to the place that the LORD your God chooses and spend the money for whatever you desire. . . . And you shall eat there before the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household. And you shall not neglect the Levite who is within your towns, for he has no portion or inheritance with you.”

Sometimes we need reminders to rejoice. Photographers taking a group shot often have to remind everyone to say “cheese.” Perhaps you have needed a reminder, at a family gathering or celebration, to get into the spirit of the occasion!

In a similar way, God reminded Israel to have a joyful spirit when they worshiped him in their giving. He did not want their tithe to become perfunctory. Much less did he want them to develop a sour attitude about having to support Levites, orphans, and widows. So God actually commanded them, in Deuteronomy 14, to use part of their tithe to eat in his presence and *be glad!*

If we compare our situation to that of the Israelites, we can see that we differ from them in a couple of important ways. First, God gives us more freedom in the New Testament about how to dispense our tithes and offerings. Second and most importantly, God has now revealed that all our giving and rejoicing is ultimately grounded in his Gift to us. Jesus Christ, who gave up his life for us, has become the source of all God’s bounty to us and the root of all our thanksgiving to God.

With those differences in mind, we can see how otherwise our situation is much the same. Like Israel, we can clearly

see that in our giving, we merely offer back to God what came from him. The Israelites understood this keenly—they knew that they carried a tithe in their hand to give to the Lord only because he had given them rain and had put his blessing on their crops and animals. This is no less true for us today, although we may be less aware of it. If God stopped the rain, or struck us with some other calamity, we would have very little to give. With that in mind, we should rejoice in our ability to give generously, since we recognize it to be an echo of God’s generosity to us.

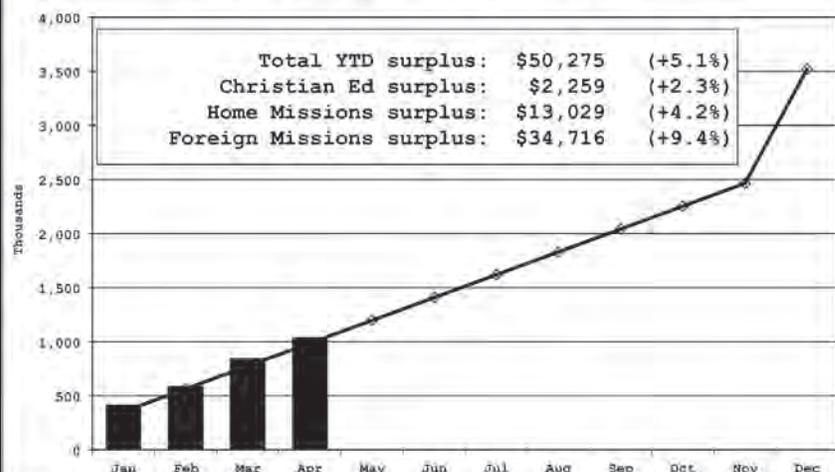
God’s generosity also becomes evident in his instructions to Israel about how to spend their tithe by feasting in his presence. In Deuteronomy 14:26, he encouraged them to spend their tithe money on meat—a relative luxury—or wine, or whatever their hearts craved. God encouraged lavishness and great celebration, because he is not a bread-and-water kind of God. He gives us over-the-top bless-

ings, even to the point of giving us his only begotten Son. He wants his people to revel in his rich goodness by giving rich thanks.

Today God no longer makes lavish feasting a part of our New Testament worship. But he does want you, like Israel, to celebrate as you give, putting your heart into it. How can you do this? Share your home with those who need a home. Give your possessions to those who need them more than you do. Lend your things out without worrying so much about whether they come back with a scratch. Support the ministry of the church with a free hand and an overflowing heart—not just with your checkbook, but with your labor and with your perseverance in doing good. God has been so lavish in his blessings to you. Respond to him with joyful giving!

*The author is pastor of Grace OPC in Vienna, Va.*

Worldwide Outreach Year-to-Date  
2012 Receipts with 2012 Goal



WORLDWIDE OUTREACH

# June

1. **Ben and Melanie Westerveld**, Quebec, are thankful for ministry opportunities from the Lord. / **Carlos and Diana Cruz**, San Juan, P.R. Pray that God would bring local families to worship at Iglesia Presbiteriana Reformada. / **Jonathan (and Lauryn) Shishko**, yearlong intern at Reformation Presbyterian Church in Queens, N.Y.
2. **Everett and Kimberly Henes**, Hillsdale, Mich. Pray for new contacts for Hillsdale OPC in the community. / Missionary associate **Debra Blair**, Quebec. Thank the Lord for Debra's desire to serve his people in Quebec. / **Andrew (and Rebekah) Miller**, yearlong intern at Bethel Reformed Presbyterian Church in Fredericksburg, Va.
3. **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia. Pray for the translation and publication of Reformed literature. / **William and Deddeh Joe**, Philadelphia, Pa. (Liberian). Pray for a smooth transition as Rev. George Morton retires at Grace OPC. / Pray for Christian Education's **Psalter-Hymnal Committee** meeting on June 5–6 in Wheaton, Ill. / Army chaplain **Kyle (and Laurel) Brown**.
4. **Bill and Sessie Welzien**, Key West, Fla. Pray that God's elect will be brought in at Keys Presbyterian Church. / Pray for missionary associates **M. and M. C.** and **T. L. L.**, Asia, as they prepare for the university's end of term. / **David Haney**, director of finance for the Committee on Coordination.
5. Missionary associates **C. H.** and **E. H.**, Asia. Pray for students as they study for end-of-term exams. / **Gabe and Callie Fluhrer**, Cary, N.C. Pray for Shiloh OPC as they begin denominational field support. / Pray for **George Cottenden**, stated clerk of the General Assembly, as he handles details for the 79th GA convening June 6.
6. **Chuck and Kristie Muether**, Pella, Iowa. Pray for a new facility that would allow Hope Reformed Presbyterian Church to have an evening service. / Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **Mark Bube**, attending General Assembly this week. / Short-term missions coordinator **David Nakhla**. Pray for the deacons attending Diaconal Summit II on June 7–9.
7. Missionary associates **T. D.** and **H. L.**, Asia. Pray for a good wrap-up to the teaching semester. / **Matthew and Jessica Figura**, Cookeville, Tenn. Pray for the nomination and training of church officers at Faith Presbyterian Church. / **Andrew (and Elizabeth) Barshinger**, summer intern at Immanuel OPC in Bellmawr, N.J. / Navy chaplain **Bryan (and Shelly) Weaver**.
8. **Roberto and Marieta Laranjo**, Lowell, Mass. Pray that visitors to Igreja Presbiteriana Brasileira will join in communicant fellowship. / **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia. Ask God to use them to reach young people for the Lord. / Pray for **Danny Olinger**, Christian Education general secretary, as he reports on the CCE's work to the 79th General Assembly.
9. Missionary associates **E. C.** and **W. and P. S.**, Asia. Pray for their students heading home for the summer. / **Tom and Martha Albaugh**, Pittsburgh, Pa. Pray that visitors will attend worship at Redeemer OP Mission. / **Alan (and Carrie) Dueck**, yearlong intern at Church of the Covenant in Hackettstown, N.J. / Air Force chaplain **Comelius (and Deidre) Johnson**.
10. Home Missions general secretary **Ross Graham**. / **Woody and Laurie Lauer**, Numazu, Japan. Pray that the Lord would raise up men to serve as elders and deacons at Numazu Chapel. / **Steve (and Siobhan) Brown**, yearlong intern at Grace Presbyterian Church in Vienna, Va. / **Rodney King**, chairman of Christian Education's Subcommittee on Internet Ministries.
11. **Cal and Edie Cummings**, Sendai, Japan. Pray for their opportunities to present the gospel to seekers. / **Jay**



On Saturday evenings from 8:00 until 11:00 p.m., missionary Steven Larson (lower left) leads 30 to 35 young people (and a couple of adults) in Santa Isabella, Rivera, Uruguay, in singing, Bible study, and games. Some of these young people are members of the church and have professed faith, but most are not members of the church. Pray that all would come to a saving knowledge of Christ and live faithfully for him.

- and **Andrea Bennett**, Neon, Ky. Pray for unity and fellowship among the people of Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church. / **Joshua (and Jessica) Lyon**, yearlong intern at Branch of Hope OPC in Torrance, Calif.
12. **Christopher and Della Chelпка**, Tucson, Ariz. Ask God to bless Covenant OPC with additional families. / **Kaz and Katie Yeagashi**, Yamagata, Japan. Pray that many will hear the preaching of the Word. / **Michael (and Rachel) Borg**, summer intern at the Presbyterian Church of Cape Cod in Cape Cod, Mass. / **Julie Carter**, advertising coordinator at Great Commission Publications.
  13. Pray that **Heero and Anya Hacquebord**, Lviv, Ukraine, will be an encouragement to members of their ministry team. / **Todd and Cheryl Bordow**, Rio Rancho, N.Mex. Pray for the continued spiritual development of the OPC of Rio Rancho. / **Ryan (and Jennifer) Stoddard**, yearlong intern at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Ill.
  14. **Larry and Holly Wilson**, Airdrie, Alberta. Pray for a more adequate meeting facility for Redeemer OPC. / Foreign Missions associate general secretary **Douglas Clawson**. Pray for the Executive Committee, which meets tomorrow. / **Cris (and Margaret) Simpson**, yearlong intern at Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pa. / **Sarah Pederson**, *New Horizons* proofreader.
  15. Foreign Missions administrative assistant **Linda Posthuma** and secretary **Janet Birkmann**. / **Philip and Jenny Dharmawirya**, Philadelphia, Pa. (Indonesian). Pray that the leaders of Emmanuel Chapel will continue to mature and work well together. / **Austin (and Rebecca) Britton**, yearlong intern at Grace OPC in Mount Vernon, Wash.
  16. Home Missions associate general secretary **Dick Gerber**. / Pray for the day-to-day needs of retired missionaries **Betty Andrews, Greet Rietkerk, Young and Mary Lou Son**, and **Fumi Uomoto**. / **Jeremy Logan**, summer intern at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Mansfield, Ohio.
  17. **Steve and Linda Larson**, Uruguay. Pray for their labors in the Rivera churches. / **Mark and Michele Winder**, Collierville, Tenn. Pray that Wolf River Presbyterian Church will gain a reputation for distinctive ministry. / **Mike (and Katy) Myers**, summer intern at Faith OPC in Elmer, N.J.
  18. **Stephen and Catalina Payson**, Mifflinburg, Pa. Pray that the congregation of Providence OPC will minister to young men in the community. / Pray for **Mark and Jeni Richline**, Uruguay, as they concentrate on studying Spanish. / **Caleb (and Erika) Smith**, summer intern at Grace OPC in Vienna, Va.
  19. Pray for **the Church in the Horn of Africa** and the believers living and suffering in their country. / **Brian and Sara Chang**, Cottonwood, Ariz. Pray for new growth at Verde Valley Reformed Chapel. / OPC office staff: **Jim Scott, Doug Watson, Kathy Bube, Pat Clawson**, and **Jan Giandomenico**.
  20. **Drew and Sonya Adcock**, Williamsport, Pa. Pray for the outreach efforts planned for this year at Omega OPC. / **Brian and Dorothy Wingard**, South Africa. Pray for the theological college students ministering in their villages during the school break. / **Jeffrey (and Maryfrances) Carter**, summer intern at Trinity OPC in Wilmington, N.C.
  21. Affiliated missionaries **Jerry and Marilyn Farnik**, Czech Republic (on furlough), and **Craig and Ree Coulbourne**, Japan. / **Chad and Katie Mullinix**, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. Pray that God's Word will go forth uninhibited at Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church. / **John (and HaeSung) Keegan**, summer intern at Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pa.
  22. **Ben and Sarah Miller**, Huntington, N.Y. Pray for new families at Trinity OPC. / **Ben and Heather Hopp**, Haiti. Pray that the false religion of Vodou will be silenced by the gospel truth. / **Paul (and Jana) Sandbulte**, summer intern at Spencer Mills OPC in Gowen, Mich. / **David Landow**, summer intern in Nakaale, Uganda.
  23. Missionary associate **Marcie Winslow**, Haiti. Pray for her health and strength in a tropical climate. / **Brad Hertzog**, Queens, N.Y. Pray that leaders will be raised up at Reformation Presbyterian Church. / **Jason (and Amanda) Kirklin**, yearlong intern at Grace Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Ohio.
  24. **John and Wenny Ro**, Chicago, Ill. Pray for new visitors at Gospel Life Presbyterian Church. / Pray for **Eric and Dianna Tuininga**, Uganda, as they prepare to start their ministry in Mbale later this summer. / **Bradley (and Cinnamon) Peppo**, summer intern at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Vandalia, Ohio.
  25. **David and Sunshine Okken**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for David as he proclaims the gospel in Karamoja. / Home Missions administrative assistant **Sean Gregg**. Pray for his adjustments to a new job. / **Geoffrey (and Hannah) Grissom**, summer intern at First Congregational Church in Merrimack, N.H. / **Rhett Lemmel**, summer intern at Providence OPC in Mantua, N.J.
  26. **David and Rashel Robbins**, Huntington, W.Va. Ask God to encourage the people of Trinity Presbyterian Church to share the gospel. / **Bob and Martha Wright**, Nakaale, Uganda (on furlough). Pray for safe travel and good visits in churches. / **Silverio (and Lisa) Gonzalez**, summer intern at Faith Presbyterian Church in Garland, Tex.
  27. Pray that **Al and Laurie Tricarico**, Nakaale, Uganda (on furlough), will give a vision for missions to the churches they visit. / **Larry and Kalynn Oldaker**, Mayfield Village, Ohio. Pray that God would open hearts to the gospel at Lake OPC. / **Andrew (and Jacqueline) Minatelli**, summer intern at Church of the Lakes in Brainerd, Minn.
  28. **Vern and Olena Picknally**, Fremont, Mich. Praise God that a new family joined Fremont OPC. / Pray for **Jim and Jenny Knox**, M.D. and R.N., Nakaale, Uganda (on furlough), as they speak in Colorado churches. / **Steve (and Sarah) Moulson**, summer intern at Providence OPC in Temecula, Calif.
  29. Missionary associates **Erika Bulthuis, Heather Foss, Leah Hopp**, and **Emily Phil**, Nakaale, Uganda. / **Ken and Cressid Golden**, Moline, Ill. Pray that God would bless the plans for outreach at Sovereign Grace OPC. / **Joshua (and Kristen) McKamy**, summer intern at Redeemer OPC in Danville, Pa. / **Brad Jones**, summer intern at Harvest OPC in Wyoming, Mich.
  30. **Doug and Kristi Bylsma**, Beamsville, Ontario. Pray that there will be a passion for evangelism at Living Hope Presbyterian Church. / **Ethiopian Reformed Presbyterian Church**. Pray for the believers in Shashemene. / **Jeffrey (and Dawn) Scott**, summer intern at New Covenant Community Church in New Lenox, Ill.

# The D-17 Summit in San Diego

MATTHEW HOLST

## THE PAST

In 1947, some eleven years after the birth of the OPC, the General Assembly established the Committee on Diaconal Ministries (CDM). It has provided a formal means for addressing the physical and material needs of the wider church, both at home and abroad. Today the CDM actively seeks to help meet the diaconal needs of the OPC.

In January of this year, at the initiative of the CDM, the first presbytery diaconal summit, called the D-17 Summit, took place in San Diego. You may be wondering what presbyteries have to do with diaconal work. Let me explain.

## THE PRESENT

Deacons are selected and ordained by each individual congregation. They engage in various mercy ministries. But what happens when a local church is faced with extraordinary needs—needs it cannot meet on its own? We can think of needs arising out of “natural” disasters or when one of its members is confronted by overwhelming medical costs. God, in his wisdom and goodness, has provided a connection between local churches in regions governed by presbyteries. The function of these presbyteries involves, among other things, diaconal work. Thus, all seventeen presbyteries of the OPC have a committee on diaconal ministries, also known as a presbytery diaconal committee (PDC). These committees exist to help meet the physical needs of the regional church.

The CDM called the D-17 Summit to facilitate a discussion in which diaconal representatives of the seventeen pres-

byteries could more clearly understand their relationship to the local church, to other presbyteries, and to the CDM itself. Much of the discussion centered on principles and methods of operation and communication. The discussion opened with a presentation by members of the CDM (those present were minister Lendall Smith, elders David Haney and David Nakhla, and deacon Kenley Leslie) on the current circumstances of the committee. The CDM is now experiencing a significant increase in its work. That is due to its increased commitment to meet needs within the United States, but also those needs that arise on foreign mission fields. The last two years have witnessed the earthquake and tsunami in Japan and the earthquake in Haiti—two countries in which there is an OP presence.

With this increased workload in mind, the CDM has sought to reorganize its operations and include both regional churches and local churches in its planning and vision—hence, the D-17 Summit. Acknowledging that the CDM cannot physically function without the regional and local churches, the members of the CDM reported that they are seeking to improve the use of the multitude of human resources that God has granted the OPC. This will involve closer communication and cooperation among the CDM, presbytery diaconal com-

mittees, and individual churches. The representatives of the CDM also reported that they are attempting to take a more proactive approach to identifying needs.

To facilitate this closer communication and operation, David Nakhla, on behalf of the CDM, presented each attendee with a list of questions concerning their presbytery’s approach to diaconal ministry. As each member of the respective PDCs reported, it became increasingly clear that there was no clear vision on how to carry out regional diaconal ministries. There was also disparity in the financial capacities of presbyteries to assist member churches. What was most clear, however, was the lack of clear vision and communication within presbyteries over the role of PDCs.

As the CDM and then each presbytery presented its own practices, it became apparent that there was a common experience between the CDM and the local presbytery committees. Both needed to review their own organization and communication. As the presbyteries

Participants taking a break



explained their practices, it became increasingly obvious that there was a significant disparity in the way PDCs are run.

For example, the General Assembly's CDM consists of men from all three offices (pastor, elder, and deacon). Some presbyteries similarly elect men to their diaconal committees from all offices of the church, but others do not. Some presbytery committees consist of a single man, often a minister, with no diaconal input. Other presbyteries rotate the committee among the diaconates of its member churches. These regional differences necessitate different methods of operation. As each presbytery presented its approach at the Summit, participants discussed the pros and cons of each structure, probing the men to determine helpful aspects of their structure and work. One question that arose from this discussion was whether presbyterial uniformity of organization and practice would be helpful or merely create more bureaucracy.

Another disparity was in the financial capacity of the various PDCs to assist local churches. Some presbyteries had only a couple thousand dollars on hand; others had a more robust balance. Naturally, the number of churches within a presbytery affects this figure.

Most PDCs also indicated that a lack of communication, both internally and with the presbytery, was a problem. Hearing how others worked enabled the participants to identify the best practices and apply them to their own regional situations. If the goal of the Summit was to enable presbyters and members of PDCs to see how they can better function, then the goal was certainly achieved.

## THE FUTURE

So, what of the diaconal ministries of the OPC in the future? At the Summit, brothers shared sad stories of serious health issues of OP members and damage caused by storms, the costs of which could not be met by the family or the local church. It is in these situations that the local church, the regional PDC, and the denominational CDM come into action.

Back row: Rich MacLaren, Lendall Smith, Kenley Leslie, Dave Brown, Shawn Mathis, Bob Folkerts;  
middle: Leo Frailey, Roy Postma, David Haney, Len Richards, Dave Mitchell, Bill Slack, Don Jamieson;  
front row: Carl Foley, Matt Holst, Cliff Leigh, Jim Ferguson (cameraman: David Nakhla)



Several ideas came out of the D-17 Summit that may profit the church at large. For example, while there is financial assistance available at the PDC or the CDM, are we, as regional churches or the denomination, aware of the *human resources* that God has given to the church? The idea of creating a “talent bank” was aired—that is, assembling a list of OP members in each regional church who possess skills or knowledge that could serve the broader church. For example: construction, medical, legal, counseling, architectural, or engineering skills. These people need not be deacons, for the resources God has given to the church are manifold.

Another matter discussed was the need and practicability of a regional assembly of deacons, perhaps meeting on a yearly basis. Should there be a “presbytery” of deacons to oversee the diaconal ministry of each regional church, under the oversight of the present presbyteries? Or would this be an unnecessary new tier of bureaucracy? Currently serving on PDCs are many ministers and elders (sometimes without any diaconal input on their committee) whose primary calling is not to diaconal work or the administra-

tion of diaconal work. Would it not be more profitable to assign diaconal work to deacons?

Before I conclude this brief report of the D-17 Summit, I would be remiss not to acknowledge several men who worked hard to make it all happen. Obviously, the men of the CDM who set up the Summit in the first place deserve our thanks. Yet three men “on the ground” in San Diego assisted selflessly in its organization. Pastors Roger Wagner and Stephen Parker and especially elder Roy Postma were instrumental in the smooth running of the conference. Every last detail was attended to by these brothers, and we praise the Lord for their dedication.

Brothers and sisters of the OPC, if you encounter the kind of trouble of which I have written above, you have the church of Christ to assist you. The Lord has provided financial and human resources to the OPC, so that we may “do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).

*The author is pastor of Geneva OPC in Woodstock, Ga., and chairman of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries of the Presbytery of the Southeast.*

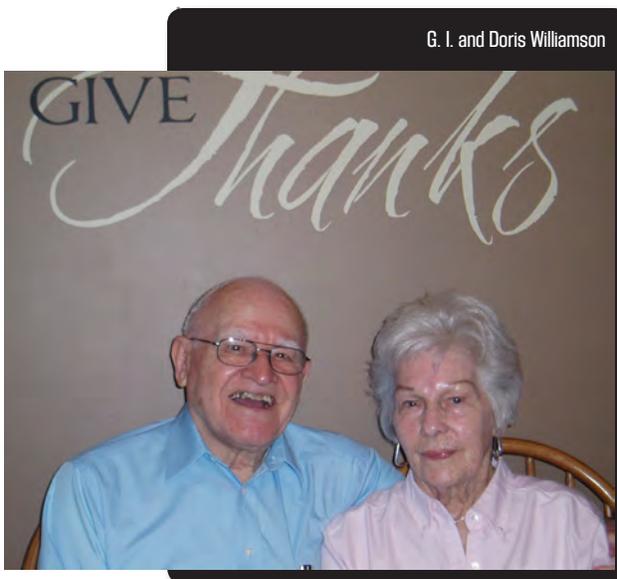
**G. I. WILLIAMSON:  
AN APPRECIATION**

*Iain Wright*

I was not raised under Reformed preaching, but in God's providence I was brought into contact with a minister who was committed to the historic standards of Presbyterian churches. He placed in my hand a copy of the Westminster Standards, and along with it Mr. Williamson's commentary and explanation of the Shorter Catechism. That was close to forty years ago, and the standards that I learned to love under Mr. Williamson's tutelage still remain, after Scripture itself, most dear to me.

Many of us could tell a similar story. However, it is the ordinariness of the story that is the greatest strength of Mr. Williamson's work. Many around the globe, unbeknownst to him, have had their thinking changed and channeled toward biblical orthodoxy by his explanation of the work of the Westminster divines.

I also have much cause to bless the



G. I. and Doris Williamson

Lord that I have had the privilege of getting to know Mr. Williamson personally during the past ten years. My affection for this older brother in the Lord only continues to grow, as he embodies not just a steadfast love for our standards, but an even greater love for the church of Jesus Christ, and a desire to see those standards applied through practical application in her life. For Mr. Williamson, a love for our standards does not imply a slavish adherence to them, but a warm engagement with the truth of God's word.

We bless the Lord for Mr. Williamson and for his ministry. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

*(Editor's note: On June 1, 2012, Mr. Williamson will have completed sixty years in the ministry. Cornerstone URC in Sanborn, where he attends church*

in the absence of an OP church in the northwest corner of Iowa, plans to host a reception in his honor later in June.)

**AMBLER ANNUAL RETREAT**

*Carl Trueman*

Cornerstone OPC in Ambler, Pennsylvania, held their annual retreat at the Traber Center in Chester County on March 23–24. Friday night devotions were led by deacon Tim Roof, followed by a campfire gathering.

The speaker on Saturday was Dan Kunkle, a teacher at Phil-Mont Christian Academy, who gave two excellent addresses on adoption. In the first, he talked of our adoption in Christ as individual Christians; in the second, of our adoption as a church. Illustrating his talk with moving references to his own experience as an adoptive parent, he magnified the love of God in Christ for us.

The retreat ended on Saturday afternoon with a talent show organized by Sharon Bratcher. With everything from comedy skits to an unaccompanied solo performance of the haunting Scottish Gaelic song "Fear a' Bhata," the big surprise of the weekend was how much talent exists in the congregation. After great teaching, food, and fellowship, we all returned to Ambler refreshed and reinvigorated.

Members of the Ambler church at their retreat



**UPDATE**

**Ministers**

- The pastoral relationship between **Timothy L. McClymonds** and Garst Mill OPC in Roanoke, Va., was dissolved on April 27, in order for him to care for his seriously ill wife, Nancy.

- **Scott L. Seder** was erased from the roll of ministers on April 3 by the Presbytery of the Dakotas; he was received by the PCA about a year ago.

**Milestones**

- **Jerry W. Crick**, 61, teacher at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Ala., died on April 22.

## LETTERS

## SHORT-TERM MISSIONS

Editor:

I wanted to comment on the article about short-term missions by Jamie Dean and David Nakhla in the April issue. I agree with all that was written and would like to add a further encouragement. In the 1990s, when I was the chairman of the Australian National Council of OMF International, we reached the following conclusion: "While not all STMers become missionaries, almost all new missionaries have been on a STM." I have confirmed today that the figure is approximately 95 percent. Furthermore, STMers who do not become missionaries usually become enthusiastic supporters of world missions.

So David Nakhla's ministry is strategic and, God willing, will result in even greater OP involvement in the advance of the gospel around the world.

Keith Noldt  
Kirrawee, NSW, Australia

## CHRISTIANS AND POLITICS

Editor:

Responding to my review of Wayne Grudem's *Politics according to the Bible*, Cale Horne's letter in the April issue asserted that I embrace the notion of a politically engaged church. Not so. I don't think the church, as an entity or an institution, should become a politically charged labor union. But I do embrace the notion of politically engaged people, even Christian people—informed by their Christian convictions.

Horne reminds us that Machen "never once brought his libertarian politics into the pulpit of any Presbyterian church." I say, "Amen." Pastors should painstakingly prepare their sermons, not rifle down the voter's guide on the Lord's Day.

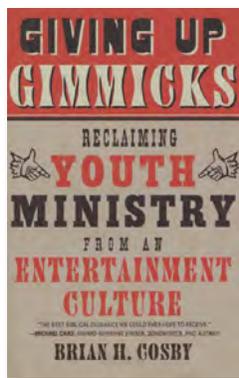
I agree with Horne that there is a wonderful thing called Christian liberty, and that God alone can bind the conscience. However, that does not mean that

Christians should not share political convictions that they believe to be informed by Scripture. Horne's own testimony of the actions of J. Gresham Machen indicate otherwise. Machen, he says, called for an end to Prohibition and to the federal Department of Education, and even testified before the city council when they sought to outlaw jaywalking.

Paul Viggiano  
Torrance, Calif.

## REVIEWS

*Giving Up Gimmicks: Reclaiming Youth Ministry from an Entertainment Culture*, by Brian Cosby. Published by P&R, 2012. Paperback, 160 pages, list price \$12.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Ken B. Montgomery.



The thrust of *Giving Up Gimmicks* is that the youth of the church are to be built up in the knowledge and love of Christ, using the same means of grace that God has

given to the whole body: the preaching of the Word, the faithful administration of the sacraments, and prayer. While this should not be a radical claim from a Reformed standpoint, it does cut against the grain of the prevailing methodologies of youth ministry in the wider mainline and evangelical church in the Western world. Thus, this book would serve as a helpful basic introduction to the identity and practices of the Reformed church in general, with secondary implications for youth ministry.

Sadly, one of the reasons that youth today may be leaving their churches at such an alarming rate is that the church has carved out "separate enclaves" for young people, with the result that they are not "functioning alongside

and becoming an integral element of the body life of the congregation" (p. 28). The author's burden is to show the folly of trying to amuse rather than edify: to "get them in" with a smattering of fun-filled gimmicks, and then to "keep them in" with brief snippets of biblical teaching and prayer. This generation seems to appreciate being "up front" and "transparent" about one's intentions, so Cosby's question is essentially, "Why would the church then pretend to be something that it is not?" Our ministries must present the same face to all members, even as it is sensitive to the stations and capacities of each individual.

Cosby points out that in fact many young people are asking the church to give them solid instruction in biblical narrative and doctrine and what it means to be godly: "They want to understand why Presbyterians baptize infants and why prayer works. They want to explore the development of the canon of Scripture and how to defend it at school" (p. 18). In my experience at youth camps, I have also found such desire for greater theological understanding, together with questions regarding service in the church. So it is possible to give them both what they want and what they need!

Cosby's argument works if one accepts his premise that there should be a "youth pastor, youth ministry, and youth group." He does admit toward the end, "In many respects, the youth pastor is a result of the failure in the home to bring children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (p. 93). But he does not then follow through with any concrete directions for restoring the family's role in catechizing and training children. Such

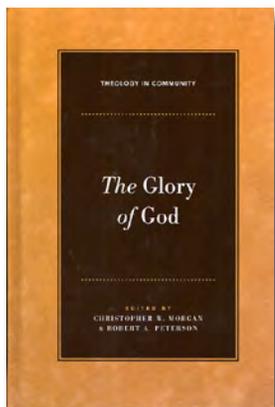
Can I get an "Amen"  
(to my hymn)?  
Should I sing it?

[www.opc.org/qa.html?question\\_id=242](http://www.opc.org/qa.html?question_id=242)

a discussion would have rounded out the book quite nicely. However, Cosby has still offered to the church a welcome reminder and resource for thinking about ministry to covenant youth.

\* \* \*

***The Glory of God*, edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson. Published by Crossway, 2010. Hardback, 255 pages, list price \$23.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Mark A. Garcia.**



Crossway's *Theology in Community* series has been a welcome boon to theological reflection in the evangelical world. Each

book in the series is edited by Morgan and Peterson. In this volume, each essay surveys an aspect of the glory of God.

After a brief introduction by the editors, Steven Nichols summarizes the contributions of three contemporary theologians: the dispensationalist Charles C. Ryrie, the Roman Catholic Hans Urs von Balthasar, and the Baptist pastor John Piper. This combination of thinkers is surprising, but Nichols explains persuasively how the glory of God is at or near the center of each theologian's thinking. And since he is often overlooked by Reformed theologians, the attention given to Balthasar's theological aesthetic is especially helpful.

Tremper Longman helpfully sketches the glory of God as an Old Testament motif, covering the vocabulary for "glory" and the ways this motif functions in the Pentateuch, the historical books, the Psalms, the Prophets, and the apocalyptic literature (Daniel). Longman concludes that God's glory is a matter, at least, of his "weighty presence" manifested in judgment and eliciting praise, though

the term cannot be reduced to a single, simple definition.

Richard R. Melick, Jr., surveys the glory of God in the Synoptic Gospels, Acts, and the General Epistles, noting how none of these texts actually *defines* God's glory; instead, each works within the realm of its various manifestations.

Andreas J. Köstenberger provides an insightful analysis of God's glory in John's Gospel and Revelation.

Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., explores the theme of glory in Paul's epistles, including the glory of the gospel, Christ as the "glory-image" of God, the glory of the last Adam who became life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), and, not to be missed, the glorification of believers.

Morgan leads us "Toward a Theology of the Glory of God" by charting the different ways we must account theologically for the Bible's teaching on God's glory. He captures something of the grandeur of God's intrinsic glory and the wonder that he shares his glory.

Bryan Chapell, in "A Pastoral Theology of the Glory of God," gently but clearly affirms the priority of God's glory to all human notions of happiness. Chapell reminds us that the glory of Christ is reflected in his faithful ministers.

In the final essay, "A Missional Theology of the Glory of God," J. Nelson Jennings offers a gripping vision of God's purpose to glorify himself in the restoration of the cosmos, and he warns against misconceptions of the relationship between God's glory and missions.

Refreshingly, the volumes in this series are written not only for pastors and teachers but also for laypersons, and in my view they succeed admirably. This particular entry is an edifying and stimulating read on the chief passion of our faith and life: the glory of God.

***Living by God's Promises*, by Joel R. Beeke and James A. La Belle. Published by Reformation Heritage Books, 2010. Paperback, 192 pages, list price \$15.00. Reviewed by OP member Scott Weirick.**

*Living by God's Promises* not only is a cover-to-cover read, but also will surely become a staple in the library of anyone who studies the Word of God. Even the very first page will assist you in your walk and help you to grow in your faith. There is no presumption of truth or flashy catchphrase to lure in the reader. Instead, the truth of God's Word is the foundation upon which this book is based. What's more, the authors resisted the temptation to prematurely focus on application. Joel R. Beeke and James A. La Belle, like the Puritans they so love, "do not speak about the applications or uses of God's promises until after they have instructed the mind and educated the understanding with regard to those promises."

The authors rest heavily on the works of three Puritan writers: William Spurstowe and Andrew Gray, as well as Edward Leigh, who says that the promises are "the grounds of our hope, the objects of our faith, and the rule of prayer." The authors' goal was to contemporize the language of these writers and to condense the material on this glorious subject, which they profess to be "extensively, powerfully, and beautifully" written.

Beeke and La Belle begin by defining the various types of promises. This helps

## Positions Available

**Pastor:** Hope Presbyterian Church, a small, established congregation located in Grayslake, Ill., is seeking an experienced ministerial candidate. He should preach dynamic, Christ-centered sermons that are biblical, doctrinally sound, lovingly applied, and relevant to our times. He should have experience leading a congregation by word and deed to be active in evangelism and service, both at home and abroad. He should have a discerning and understanding heart, so that he will relate to the people of the congregation with Christlike compassion and encourage others to do the same. If you would like to be considered for this position, e-mail your information to Dr. Henk Blom, chair of the Pastoral Search Committee, at [hpb1517@yahoo.com](mailto:hpb1517@yahoo.com).

A bird's-eye view of the ladies on their Southern California retreat



the reader to see that not all promises are the same. However, all promises are built upon the foundational promise of the covenant of grace, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer. 31:33).

From there, we are taught to whom God’s promises belong, the characteristics of his promises, and the right use of them. This final point acts as a transition into the anticipated application portion of the book. God’s Word is unfolded to reveal the use of God’s promises in affliction, during times of temptation and sin, in fighting sin, and for pursuing holiness.

I have found many occasions to use specific things in this book for my own edification and encouragement, as well as to assist others in times of adversity and temptation. I have used portions of it to encourage others, and God has worked mightily in their lives through it.

### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WOMEN’S RETREAT IN APRIL SNOW

*Jane Crum*

Ninety-two Orthodox Presbyterian ladies from Southern California and Arizona braved a rogue snowstorm to gather on the weekend of April 13–15 at Camp Maranatha in Idyllwild, California, for our thirtieth annual Women’s Retreat. Snow boots and tire chains came out of storage for this conference in the mountains. The camp staff was called upon to rescue one car that got stuck in the snow en route.

We rejoiced in our God’s covenant faithfulness, as so many of our number were grandmothers, mothers, and daughters attending the retreat together. Several ladies who now live outside our region made a point of coming back for the conference, where many long-term

friendships are nurtured.

The Lord encouraged us to continue ministering to one another in our local churches through the lectures of biblical counselor Eileen Scipione. The singing was robust and the prayer was earnest, as we poured our hearts out to the Savior, interceding for our families, churches, and nation. The small-group discussion times gave ample opportunity to the older women to fulfill the biblical injunction to teach the younger women.

We wrapped up our weekend together as regional home missionary Dave Crum led us in Lord’s Day worship. He preached from 2 Corinthians 4:16, “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.” We took that precious promise back with us to our homes and churches!