

# NEW HORIZONS

═ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ═

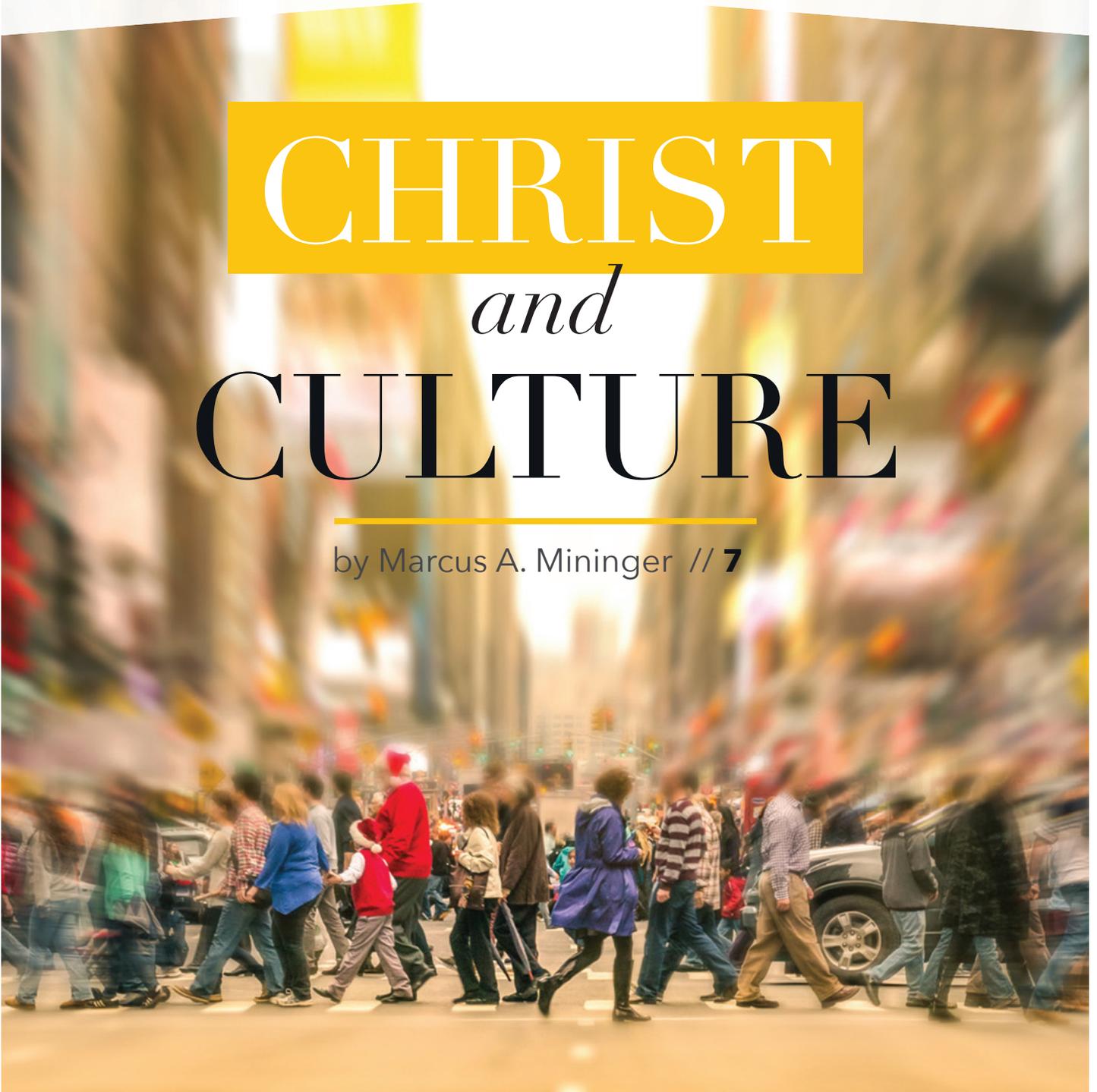
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## New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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Students at Westminster Theological Seminary heard the Rev. Thomas Church speak during the monthly Home Missions and Church Extension Luncheon on April 21. The students present included (from the left): Zach Siggins, Dan Adams, Andrew Fortenberry, Andrew Myers, Ryan Heaton, Will Wood, Tim Brindle, Victor Kim (back to speaker), Joel Carini, Zachary Simmons, Josiah Momose, Carmen Yan Ewing, and Sam Toon. Recently retired Home Missions associate general secretary Dick Gerber (lower left) was at the seminary and dropped by for a visit.



# THE CHURCH IN EXILE



CARL R. TRUEMAN // **The Christian church on earth is always, in a sense, in exile. Whatever the incidental identities of her members may be—whether of nationality, race, class, or gender—their ultimate identity is that they are in Christ and belong to him. Compared to the ephemeral categories that human cultures have**

created for distinguishing one from another, this foundation in Christ is absolute and final. As a result, the church never belongs to this world, but always looks to another.

Yet there are times in history when it is more dramatically obvious, and perhaps more painfully experienced, than at other times, that the church is in exile. In America, given the past cultural dominance of a form of civic Protestantism that is now vanishing rapidly, the sense of being an exile community is likely to be sharpened in the imminent future.

## Same-Sex Marriage

At the heart of this unraveling lies the politics of sexual identity. While many Christians rightly see the advent of legalized abortion as a very significant step in the legal redefinition of what it means to be a person, the coming of so-called same-sex marriage is set to have far more immediate impact upon the everyday lives of Christians.

On one level, we should note that abortion—the killing of innocents—is a more dramatic crime than two men marrying each other. The former involves evil inflicted on a victim. The second, wicked as it is, involves mutual consent and no necessary violation of an innocent third party. Thus, *Roe v. Wade* is without doubt a devastating

blow to notions of legally protected personhood.

Yet the way in which the gay marriage debate is developing may well have a far greater impact upon the way we all live our lives than does the legalization of abortion. Most significantly, gay marriage has become the issue on which the First Amendment is now coming under incredible pressure.

First, we need to understand that the gay marriage issue is not simply about the legitimate bounds of sexual activity. Many Christians respond to accusations of singling homosexuals out for excoriation by pointing to the fact that we also object to sex between unmarried heterosexuals. That is a good argument, but it misses the full significance of the gay issue. To object to heterosexuals having sex outside of marriage is to object to an illegitimate expression of a legitimate identity. To object to gay sex, or gay marriage, is to deny the legitimacy of an identity.

This is why parallels are so easily drawn by gay activists between their demands and those of the earlier Civil Rights movement. They see their struggle as one for a fundamental identity, not one for an incidental lifestyle choice. And this is why the church is about to feel the reality of her exile.

It is one thing to believe something that the world regards as nonsense.

There are plenty of Christian doctrines that fall into that category. The doctrine of the Incarnation is an obvious one. The idea that the transcendent God, who created and sustains all things, should condescend to take human flesh and dwell in space and time as a particular man is foolishness to the world. That he should die on a cross for the crimes of others is morally offensive to the natural man. That he should be resurrected and will return again is nonsense to the unbeliever. Yet Christians can hold each of these beliefs and still be considered decent and polite members of civil society.

Attitudes to gay marriage are different. The way in which society has developed on this matter has made the traditional view not simply something that looks silly to the world, but something that looks positively evil. To many, opposition to homosexuality and gay marriage is not akin to belief in the resurrection; it is akin to belief in white supremacy—a moral stance that speaks of hatred and a basically antisocial, if not criminal, mind-set.

This is why the church is beginning to feel even now the reality of her exile status. As the public square becomes more and more intolerant of any dissent or deviation on this issue, ordinary church members are already beginning to feel the pressure. For

example, a Christian nurse might well be able to object to assisting at abortions and still seem to be taking an ethically principled stand, but one who refuses to participate in a gender reassignment operation might well be stigmatized as promoting hate. That is the world in which we live. And while pastors and intellectual leaders are often those who speak out and thus seem most likely to be persecuted, the most immediate and extensive discomfort will be experienced by ordinary church members who are not protected from the secular world by pulpit or library.

At times such as this, it behooves the church to think very carefully about what discipleship should look like. Exile communities living within a wider alien, and even hostile, culture need means by which to preserve their identity and keep hope alive for an ultimate return to their homeland. If they are not self-conscious about this, then the values and patterns of the host culture will over time penetrate their community and lead to their assimilation. So how are we to maintain our identity?

### Maintaining Our Identity

I would suggest that the answer, at least at a foundational level, is very simple: maintain the Word, the sacraments, and discipline—the three great marks of the Reformed church. If a strong sense of identity is what provides the foundation for the passionate activism of the LGBTQ lobby, then we should learn from that: we too need to instill a strong sense of identity in ourselves and in our churches in order to stand firm in the coming years. And there is no better way to do this than to focus on the three marks.

First, there is the Word. The weekly proclamation of the Word of God is the regular declaration of the identity of God, of the identity of us as his people, and of the home to which we are destined. There is a reason why the early North American Pilgrims would hear regular sermons on providence. It was to remind them of their place in God's scheme. We too need to make

sure that the preaching from our pulpits is faithful, focused on important truths, and supported by good catechetical and pedagogical practice.

We should also remember that preaching is not simply the transmission of information from one mind to another through the medium of speech. Preaching is the mediation of God's presence to his people. In the Word proclaimed, God presses his gospel upon our hearts by his Spirit. Luther put it dramatically when he declared that God, by his Word, kills us, resurrects us, and constitutes us once again as his risen people. We should not underestimate the power of the preached word to strengthen our identity and give us the power to stand firm. Society and the civil magistrate may have power over the body, but God has power over the soul.

Second, there are the sacraments. As human beings, we are more than just brains on sticks. We have bodies that also affect how we think and interact with others. And that is one reason why the Lord has provided us with more than his Word as a means of strengthening our identity. He has also given us the covenant signs of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Particularly the Lord's Supper is important in this regard. To share a meal with someone involves an intimacy that is not found in a mere conversation. To eat together, and to be invited to eat, as it were, with the Lord himself, is to enjoy a special privilege and indeed to find our identity as Christians strengthened and reinforced. Again, society and the civil magistrate may have power over the body, but God can use the simple elements of bread and wine, attached to his Word, to seal the gospel on our hearts and strengthen our hands for the spiritual fight, wherever it may be conducted.

Third, there is discipline. When one looks at the gay lobby, one might be forgiven for wondering how on earth it has come to exert such power over everyone's lives. The answer is complicated, but at its heart is this: despite being only a tiny minority, it has been highly

disciplined and organized. The church has sadly not been so.

I should qualify that statement. I certainly do not mean that the church should have organized itself politically in order to use worldly avenues of power and influence to impose her will. What I do mean is that discipline is necessary to cultivate a strong sense of identity. Indeed, such a sense of identity is vital to the survival and flourishing of exile communities. Part of that comes through the Word, part through the sacraments, and a vital part also through discipline. A community is defined by the beliefs and behaviors it finds tolerable and those it finds intolerable.

This in turn demands structure. Presbyterianism is well placed in this matter, given that it has a clearly laid out system of governance. Of course, systems are one thing; practical implementation is quite another. For our exile community to survive as distinctive, those in leadership must lead, make the tough decisions, and implement unpopular policies when the Word of God demands it. Leadership in a time of obvious exile is likely far more taxing than at any other point.

To these three points one can add a fourth: the cultivation of the communal language of exile in song. Whatever ways exile populations find to survive and at times even thrive in an alien host culture, their identity as exiles will be reinforced by the common language they share. For Christians, this is above all the language that we sing. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs really do set the expectations of many believers and shape our theology in profound ways.

Singing is a powerful and universal human phenomenon. When one thinks of the blues as they developed in the American South, or of the Scottish Gaelic songs that speak of lament and sorrow for lost loved ones, we are reminded of how such things set before us a vision of loss and of longing. In a time such as the present, surely it is the moment for us all to be looking to the Psalter for more of our corporate

*[Continued on page 9]*

# THE CHRISTIAN'S PLACE IN SOCIETY



DAVID VanDRUNEN // Conservative American Christians seem to feel culturally adrift and morally isolated today in ways they have never before experienced. While each generation needs to be careful about exaggerating the magnitude of its own challenges, certain moral sentiments have shifted markedly in a

short period of time, in ways that raise difficult questions for Christians seeking to understand their place in civil society and their responsibilities within it.

This article does not analyze these recent cultural shifts, but reflects more broadly on how Christians should understand their identity in the world. Scripture indicates that the discomfort and homelessness that many American Christians now feel is in fact the ordinary and expected state of affairs. This is sobering, but it is heartening to know that Scripture prepares us for these circumstances, providing theological perspective and guidance for faithful life in our changing societies.

## Sojourners and Exiles

How does Scripture describe Christians' place in society? First Peter 2:11 presents two important concepts: "Beloved, I urge you as *sojourners* and *exiles* to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul." Peter's terminology is worthy of special attention since 1 Peter 2 as a whole addresses matters pertinent to American Christians' concern about society's changing moral ethos: the nature of the church, opposition from unbelievers, the legitimacy of authority structures, and suffering for righteousness' sake. In

this context, Peter instructs Christians to think of themselves as *sojourners* and *exiles*. Both concepts draw upon a rich Old Testament background.

A sojourner is one who has temporary residence in a place, but no permanent home. In the Old Testament, Abraham and his family were the paradigmatic sojourners (Gen. 12:10; 15:13; 20:1; 21:34; 23:4). God set apart Abraham's house by establishing the covenant of grace with him (Gen. 15; 17), but he did not command separation from his pagan neighbors in the common affairs of this world. Even while giving up idols and clinging by faith to the true God, Abraham remained an active participant in the broader cultural life of the cities in which he wandered. He joined a military campaign (allied with Sodom and Gomorrah!) (Gen. 14), participated in legal proceedings initiated by Abimelech, king of Gerar (Gen. 20), entered into a civil covenant with Abimelech (Gen. 21:22–34), and engaged in a real estate transaction (Gen. 23). Abraham had no permanent home in these regions, yet was involved in their affairs.

Exile is a similar concept in important respects. Exiles are people banished from their homeland and compelled to live in foreign places. In the Old Tes-

tament, the people of Judah taken into Babylonian captivity were the paradigmatic exiles, and Peter directs his readers to their experience as well. Jeremiah wrote a letter to some of the early exiles, providing perspective and instruction about how to live in Babylon. The prophet encouraged them to continue pursuing the ordinary things of life in exile: building houses, planting gardens, getting married, and having children (Jer. 29:5–6). He also exhorted them to "seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (29:7). This is remarkable: Jeremiah urged them to promote the welfare of the arrogant pagan city that was destroying Jerusalem. Now their own fortunes were tied to the political and economic fortunes of their host city. But at the same time they needed to remember that Babylon was only a place of exile, not a new homeland, for Jeremiah proceeded to prophesy that God would end their exile and bring them back to Jerusalem after seventy years (29:10–14). Like Abraham the sojourner, the exiles were to be active participants in the affairs of their city of residence without embracing the religion of their pagan neighbors or mistaking this city for their permanent

home. Daniel and his three friends exemplified this sort of life (Dan. 1–6).

## Practical Implications

Given this Old Testament background, what does Peter communicate by calling New Testament Christians “sojourners and exiles”? Obviously our situation is not absolutely identical to that of the sojourners and exiles of old. We who live on this side of Christ’s cross and resurrection enjoy the Spirit’s redemptive blessings in much greater measure than did the Old Testament saints. One privilege the church has that Abraham’s household and the Israelite exiles lacked is God’s call to be a missionary community by actively inviting unbelievers to join us.

Despite these and other differences, Peter indicates that our similarities are profound. Perhaps at the most basic level, Christians, as sojourners and exiles, should view their societies as places of temporary residence, not as permanent homes. Believers have a homeland, but it has no earthly address. Our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20), and we are looking for a city that is to come (Heb. 13:14). As with Abraham, our “homeland” is “a better country, that is, a heavenly one” (Heb. 11:14, 16). John Calvin asked, “If heaven is our country, what can earth be but a place of exile?” (*Institutes*, 3.9.4). Yet Peter’s terminology also suggests that Christians should be active participants in their communities of exile, promoting their welfare without mistaking them for “the city that has foundations” (Heb. 11:10).

In the rest of this article, I offer four reflections upon our Christian identity as sojourners and exiles that ought to be encouraging in our own time.

First, we may have great confidence in God’s providential government of our exilic societies. Our communities would not exist at all were it not for the covenant of common grace that God established with Noah after the great flood (Gen. 8:21–9:17). In this covenant, God addressed *all* human beings (9:9, 12)—along with all living creatures (9:10, 12, 15–17), the earth (8:21;

9:13), and the cosmic order (8:22)—and promised to preserve them for as long as “the earth remains” (8:22). God’s common grace preservation entails the basic maintenance of human society. He blesses human procreation (9:1, 7), provides food (9:3–4), and commissions the pursuit of justice (9:5–6). Thanks to this covenant, Christian sojourners may view their earthly societies as legitimate and God-ordained, while at the same time temporary, rather than permanent. Gerar, Babylon, Rome, and the United States have all existed under Noah’s rainbow, serving God’s providential purposes while being “like a drop from a bucket” and “as the dust on the scales” (Isa. 40:15). God superintends the rise and fall of nations (Isa. 40:22–24).

Second, our identity as sojourners and exiles reminds us that historical circumstances change drastically from time to time and place to place, and thus provides a proper perspective on our own situation. In his sojourns, Abraham had to deal with both the king of Sodom and the king of Gerar, rulers of two very different cities. The former was so wicked that God made it a type of the final judgment (Gen. 19:1–29; cf. Luke 17:28–30), while Genesis 20 presents the latter as a place of surprising propriety and justice. Today God calls Christians, having no earthly homeland, to live in a variety of places and circumstances. American Christians have long enjoyed extraordinary privileges and opportunities, but Scripture never guarantees their indefinite continuance. While they continue, we should be very thankful people, especially when we consider what our fellow believers now face in Syria or North Korea, for example. How shameful it is that conservative Christians so often gripe and complain about the state of America, rather than express gratitude for having so many temporal blessings that most Christians throughout history have lacked.

Third, our identity as sojourners and exiles reminds us of important differences between our ecclesiastical and civil associations. In 1 Corinthians 5,

Paul exhorts the church to discipline an unrepentant sexually immoral person, but then immediately distinguishes ecclesiastical from civil relationships: “I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler” (5:9–11). The church must maintain its merciful discipline in the midst of cultural moral change in its cities of exile—as Peter said, “as sojourners and exiles” we must “abstain from the passions of the flesh” (1 Peter 2:11)—but Christians are not therefore to shun association in civil affairs with their non-Christian neighbors who fall into such sins.

Finally, our identity as sojourners and exiles encourages us to pursue excellence in our vocations and strive to bless our neighbors, albeit with modest expectations. Jeremiah urged the Israelite exiles to take up a variety of occupations and to seek the welfare of Babylon, while simultaneously reminding them that Babylon would remain Babylon, and that in seventy years they would leave Babylon for Jerusalem. In similar fashion, God calls New Testament Christians to work hard (1 Thess. 4:11–12; 2 Thess. 3:6–12) and to work well—for Christ’s sake (Col. 3:23), God’s glory (1 Cor. 10:31), and our neighbors’ good (Gal. 6:10), even enjoying our labor as its own reward (Eccl. 5:18–19). But God does not promise how or in what measure we will see fruit from our work. Whether the outward signs are encouraging or discouraging, and whether our ambient social ethos is improving or worsening, we labor on as faithful exiles, confident that the all-wise God will prosper the work of our hands as he sees fit. □

*The author, an OP minister, is a professor at Westminster Seminary California.*

# CHRIST AND CULTURE



MARCUS A. MININGER // How does being a Christian relate to everyday life? In particular, what value do ordinary activities in this creation, like baking or plumbing or architecture, have for God's larger kingdom purposes to redeem a people and usher in the new heavens and earth? On one side, some in church history have

looked at human culture negatively, as something that is worldly and corrupting and therefore to be avoided. On the opposite side, others have viewed this world's cultural activities redemptively, as helping bring in and constitute God's final kingdom rule on earth even now. In between these opposites, a spectrum of other views exists.

For example, in recent years some Reformed writers have advocated separating ordinary cultural activities and Christ's redemptive work into two different kingdoms. One kingdom is not specifically Christian, but is "common" to believers and unbelievers. It includes our social and cultural activities and is guided by natural law. The other kingdom is "religious" and is identified with the church, where Christ presently rules. Life in that kingdom is guided by Scripture.

Other Reformed writers disagree with the "two-kingdom" view, believing that it creates improper separation between our "common" life in creation and our "religious" life in the church. Is our involvement in human culture not more closely related to Christ's redemptive work in our life?

Clearly, then, this topic of Christ and culture continues to be a difficult one, even today. The wide spectrum of views about it testifies to this difficulty, and it also encourages us to discuss the matter graciously with one another.

Just as clearly, though, this topic also continues to be very important, since it impacts our vocations as Christians every day. How are we to live before Christ in ordinary activities each day?

Thankfully, while the topic is complex, the Bible does provide direction. One of the clearest examples can be found in the Bible's teaching about the nature and practice of marriage, as one crucially important part of culture. The Bible does not address some aspects of human culture very much, but it does speak about marriage quite often, from the garden of Eden to the new creation. This makes marriage a good test case for seeing how we should view our involvement in culture here and now.

In what follows, two crucial aspects of the Bible's teaching on marriage will be highlighted. These can help show how ordinary cultural activities do and do not relate to God's redemptive work in Christ.

## Christ-Centered, Not Negative or Neutral

In Ephesians 5:22–33, Paul provides instruction about marriage that is clearly Christ-centered. Wives should submit to their husbands, he says, because the husband is the head of his wife, as also Christ is the head of the church (vv. 22–23). Husbands should love their wives, he says, "just as" Christ

loved the church and gave himself up for her (vv. 25, 28–29). At these and many other points in the passage, Paul here draws a close parallel between the husband-wife relationship and the Christ-church relationship. Clearly, marriage as Paul describes it is very Christ-centered, and this fact constantly guides how we should live in it.

It is also clear in Ephesians 5 that Paul's Christ-centered view of marriage is rooted in *the original creation order*. We see this especially in the appeal he makes to Genesis 2:24 in verse 31. Leading up to that, verse 28 describes how husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. This is because of how Christ loves the church, which is *his* body (vv. 29–30). In other words, by God's design a wife's physical union with her husband resembles the church's spiritual union (that is, through the Holy Spirit; cf. 1 Cor. 6:16) with Christ.

But what is the basis for seeing a resemblance between marriage and union with Christ? Paul finds this in what Genesis 2:24 says about marriage: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." Genesis describes the "one flesh" union of Adam and Eve, and Paul says it *also* speaks about or points forward to the "one Spirit" union between Christ and the church that the Ephesians and all Christians enjoy.

From the very beginning, then, marital union was inherently Christ-centered. It was designed to point ahead to important aspects of our redemption in Christ. Adam and Eve's marital union, like every other marital union since, provides a visible picture, pointing to the (still invisible) union between Christ and his bride.

Clearly, then, the cultural institution of marriage, which is such an important part of the present creation order, is certainly not evil or unspiritual. Nor is it simply neutral or "common." Rather, by its very nature marriage stands in a *positive* relation to Christ by providing a visible pointer to the redemption he has accomplished and the future life of the new creation that will come when Christ returns. Marriage in this creation points to the greater marriage of the new creation.

This also means that, in order to be practiced correctly (that is, according to its inherent design), marriage must be practiced in a Christ-centered way, just as Paul describes in Ephesians 5. To say otherwise would go against the original design of marriage in the garden. In other words, marriage is not nonreligious. It has always been about Christ. One relates to one's spouse either in accordance with or contrary to this fact. So Christ-centered marriage is really nothing more than marriage properly understood.

The example of marriage shows us, then, how one crucial aspect of human culture is intended to be Christ-centered. It is neither a negative aspect of life nor separate from one's Christian identity. Instead, it testifies meaningfully to our future hope in Christ.

What about other aspects of culture, though? Are these also intended to point to Christ and the new creation? Yes, they are. In fact, the Bible constantly speaks about redemption and the new creation *in comparison to* things in the present creation order. (For more on this, see Geerhardus Vos, "Heavenly-Mindedness," in *Grace and Glory*, especially pp. 112–16.)

We've already seen how earthly

marriage points to the work of Christ. But this is also true of many other things. For example, how do I understand what the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2), is like, if not on analogy to cities here on earth? How do I understand what the great supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9) will be like, if not on analogy to the banquets of this life? Or how do I understand what it means when God's kingdom is compared to a building or a cultivated field (1 Cor. 3:9), except by thinking about buildings and fields here on earth? Comparisons like this occur throughout Scripture. Bread, wine, gates, gardens, gems, clean rivers, and many other things help point to aspects of redemption and the new creation.

This means that our cultural pursuits in general, and not just in marriage, help provide context for understanding (albeit dimly and indirectly) the content of our future hope in Christ. Far from being meaningless or unrelated to our Christianity, our cultural endeavors can produce wonderful pictures that point to aspects of the redemption we already experience and the new, greater creation order for which we long.

This fact can also help inform and guide us as we involve ourselves in culture. Because my marriage points to Christ and the church, I do not abandon it or demean it. Rather, my eschatological yearning for Christ helps me to value and enjoy my marriage all the more, seeking to make it a good and accurate picture of Christ's self-sacrificial love. Likewise, because the cities we live in provide a picture of our eschatological dwelling in the new Jerusalem, where human fellowship with God and each other will reach its apex, would a Christian city planner not seek to beautify an earthly city to make it a more fitting (if still quite incomplete and imperfect) pointer toward our hope for the ultimate city to come? Because the bread a Christian bakes in his bakery provides a rich picture of Christ as the true bread from heaven, would he be less concerned to produce a beautiful, nourishing product? Such examples

could be multiplied. The eschatological hope of a Christian gives meaning and direction to his participation in earthly culture.

What we are saying, then, is that being a Christian is not unrelated to our everyday life and work in this world. On the contrary, being a Christian enriches and informs cultural involvement, precisely *because of* our future hope for a new heavens and earth.

### Temporary, Not Constitutive

Having seen that marriage and other aspects of culture are good and point to Christ's redemptive work, some have *falsely* concluded that marriage and culture are central and constitutive to God's purposes or that God is bringing about the new creation order even now *through* our cultural efforts. But this would be to fall into an error on the other side of the spectrum. While marriage is not negative or neutral, it is also not a permanent or ultimate part of life. It is, in fact, temporary, existing only in this creation order, not the new creation.

Just as Scripture makes clear that marriage points to Christ, it also makes clear that this pointer will not last. It exists only in the present time, until Christ returns. In Matthew 22:30, Jesus says that after the resurrection people "neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." Similarly in 1 Corinthians 6:13, Paul says that both sex and sexual desires (spoken of euphemistically as "food" and the "stomach") will be destroyed in the future. They will not be a part of the new creation order. So both passages clearly teach what orthodox Christians have always confessed, namely that sex and marriage are temporary, not eternal.

What this shows about the relationship between Christ and culture more broadly is also quite significant. It means that even good, Christ-centered parts of life in this present age, which are a wonderful blessing, are still not permanent or constitutive aspects of God's ultimate kingdom purposes. Rather, the good institution of mar-

riage, as rich and Christ-centered as it is, still only *points* to the new creation order. It will not be a *part* of that new creation. Nor does marriage bring the new creation about, as such; it is only God's own power, working through his Spirit, that does that (2 Cor. 5:17).

As Christians, then, we must grapple with both sides of Scripture's teaching. On the one hand, marriage is inherently Christ-centered, visibly portraying our relationship to Christ and informing us about our future hope. But on the other hand, this wonderful, Christ-centered institution is not itself a constitutive part of that hope.

Because of this, as beautiful and Christ-centered as marriage is, Scripture still encourages the unmarried to remain so, if they can, specifically in order to be less caught up in things that are merely temporary (1 Cor. 7:31–35). This is not because marriage is bad or unrelated to being a Christian. It is simply because this good and Christ-centered thing is ultimately passing away.

My decision whether to marry and my practice within marriage are *both* informed by my future hope, then. If I marry, I enter into an inherently Christ-centered picture of my future hope and seek to make that picture a clear and faithful expression of that hope. If I do not marry, though, I devote myself more undividedly, not to marriage, but to the permanent thing that marriage only pictures. Either way, marriage as an aspect of culture relates positively, if only temporarily, to the ultimate new creation order to be realized in and through Christ.

Other aspects of culture are also temporary. For example, Scripture is quite clear that both earthly possessions (Matt. 6:19–20; 1 Tim. 6:7) and earthly cities (Heb. 11:10; 13:14) will not last forever. For this reason, while the cultural products we make help point to our future hope, they too do not comprise that hope. So even if such things are taken from us or destroyed, our hope itself is untarnished because we seek a better, imperishable inheritance in the new creation, which is prepared by

God, not man (Heb. 10:34; 11:16).

Christians must be careful not to confuse temporary pointers with the real thing! Earthly cities, bread, vineyards, and so forth can and should provide rich and meaningful pictures of God's ultimate purposes for a new creation order. Nevertheless, because such pictures are temporary, we have careful choices to make based on what is most important. If we are not sure what vocation the Lord is calling us to in life, or if we have a choice between giving our time and money to building an earthly city, which will one day be destroyed, and bringing people into the heavenly city itself through the advancement of the gospel, then we face choices between good, temporary things, on the one hand, and things that are far better because they are permanent in their effects, on the other hand. Clearly, we must place far greater priority on the latter. In fact, Christians should often pull back from voluntary cultural engagement—as good and Christ-centered as it is—in order to devote themselves, their efforts, and their money more directly to that which will not perish.

### Conclusion

In the end, focusing on our future hope shows us both how human culture should be Christ-centered and how it is fleeting. Culture is not negative or neutral, so all activities should be done unto Christ, as testimonies about our future hope in him. Culture also does not bring about our hope, so our central concern lies elsewhere, in that which truly lasts.

May God help us, then, to view all of life always in relation to Christ, to participate in it in ways that speak well of Christ, and to long earnestly for that fuller future hope toward which culture only points and by which it will one day be replaced. □

*The author, an OP minister, teaches at Mid-America Reformed Seminary. The content of this article appears more fully in Mid-America Journal of Theology 25 (2014): 117–40.*

## THE CHURCH IN EXILE

[Continued from page 4]

worship. The Psalms present life as it really is, blessed by God's presence here and now, but looking forward to that time when he will call us all home.

Further, the Psalms often capture an important note: if we are set for a time of open exile even within our own worldly nation, we should remember that the exile of the people of God in Scripture was always in part a judgment upon them. As we look forward to the great future triumph that will be the marriage feast of the Lamb, we should not forget that our current difficulties are the result of human sin and, indeed, of our own sin. We should lament not simply our exile, but also the sin that has caused it. Again, the Psalms are an ideal medium for this.

No doubt there are those reading this article who find my own position to be one of cultural surrender. Should we not be taking to the streets and the ballot boxes in order to take back what is ours? It might well be that thoughtful political engagement by individual Christians will slow the tide of moral collapse in the civic sphere, or perhaps even reverse it. Our faith should indeed shape how we think and behave in the civic sphere. But I would suggest that whatever one's eschatology or understanding of the relationship between church and state may be, the practical reality is that we must prepare at least in the short term for the social marginalization of the church and a form of cultural exile. We may disagree on long-term public strategy, but we should surely all agree on the basic practical foundations of Christian identity: Word, sacrament, discipline, and worship. These and these alone will allow us to face whatever the future may hold with resolute confidence. □

*The author is pastor of Cornerstone OPC in Ambler, Pa., and a professor at Westminster Theological Seminary.*

# ASSISTING A YOUNG CHURCH IN COLOMBIA

// DOUGLAS B. CLAWSON



*Geoff Downey teaching an MTMC class on soteriology in Cartagena, Colombia*

“**T**hat could happen to any of us.” That is all that I could think, when a pastor in Colombia told us about a couple (with a child) who had presented themselves to his church as married, and had been accepted as such. I have never heard of an OP session asking a couple for a copy of their marriage certificate when they said they were married. But it was learned that the Colombian man and woman were not married, and indeed that the man had been in many such relationships in the past. I, together with others visiting from the OPC, had eaten with this family. We had listened to the man describe his struggles with his faith. On each visit, we had greeted the couple when we saw them at church.

Our interest, however, was not in the details of this situation (although we certainly can benefit from the implicit warning not to take every claim of marriage as necessarily truthful). Our interest was in how the matter was handled. The unrepentant man and woman were excommunicated. That meant hardship for the church. Since the man was the owner of the church’s meeting place, they had to find a new place to worship.

The churches that we are serving through our Mobile Theological Mentoring Corps (MTMC) are churches like those in the OPC, facing problems just like those that we face. Their language, the laws of their nation, their food, their climate, and their housing may

all be different, but the sins and the need for Jesus are the same. Therefore, the gospel, which holds out the hope for answering that need, is also the same.

The need was obvious. The Committee on Foreign Missions receives many requests each year from churches asking for money, for a missionary, or to have its ministry made part of the OPC. It would be easy to become jaded by all these requests. Most of those making the requests have a shallow understanding of the Reformed faith and even less of an understanding of Presbyterian government, and they usually accompany their requests with a list of needs that require large amounts of capital. However, in the midst of all the requests, the Committee knows that there must be those who desire to get beyond moralistic sermons, claims of divine revelations, and “big man” church government (in which the pastor cannot be disagreed with). There must be those who need and desire the things that the OPC is best equipped to supply. There must be those who want to know Christ better (Phil. 3:10)

and, more accurately, who want to see Christ’s church live and function according to God’s Word.

In February 2009, the Committee established the MTMC—patterned after a ministry developed by one of our sister churches—to help meet this need. The MTMC seeks to serve congregations and presbyteries of churches of like faith and practice, in order “to offer theological counsel, instruction, encouragement, and mentoring, as appropriate, to assist such church bodies in their more



*Pastor Andrés Espinoza preaching in Bogotá*

consistent implementation of Reformed doctrine and life and in their more effective practice of Presbyterian polity” (Committee on Foreign Missions, *Manual* 4.17.1). Its creation was occasioned by a request from a church in Colombia that was addressed to the Seventy-third (2006) General Assembly of the OPC.

Now, nine years later, we serve the *Iglesia Presbiteriana de la Reforma Colombia* (IPRC) through the MTMC by sending men to Colombia to conduct conferences and meet with its presbytery each year. In recent years, Jonathan Falk has taught Introduction to the Old Testament, Stephen Payson has taught Introduction to the New Testament, Nicholas Lammé (URCNA) has taught Introduction to the Doctrine of God, Geoffrey Downey has taught Introduction to the Doctrine of Man and Introduction to the Doctrine of Salvation, and David Crum has taught Introduction to the Doctrine of the Covenant. At a conference on Christian World Vision in February, Charles Telfer spoke to members of the IPRC and the *Iglesia Presbiteriana Betania de la Reforma*. And, together with them, Stephen Larson and I have preached many sermons.

While the IPRC has seen congregations come and go in various cities of Colombia, its present congregations and mission works are, for the most part, in the areas of Barranquilla, Bogotá, and Cartagena. The giving in only one of its congregations is sufficient to pay the rent and provide a full salary for the pastor. The other pastors provide for themselves and their expenses (e.g., travel to presbytery and to the mission works) through other employment, such as teaching. The church has been aggressive in its evangelism and follow-up of those who have expressed an interest in being Presbyterian and Reformed. It has also been careful and thorough in its exercise of discipline and pastoral care, even if it hasn’t been able to do all that it has wished it could do in some diaconal cases.

It is a privilege to work with men who want resources in Reformed theology so much that they have put books through translation software, even if they get only a corrupted sense of what the book is saying. It is a privilege to work with men who understand that service to Christ means that they will have to sacrifice their time and the resources he has given them to follow him. It is a privilege to work with men who are looking for ways to be in fellowship with churches similar to theirs. It is a privilege to work with churches that do not ask for material things, even while growing weary of so much work and so many opportunities, while pressing on to be as faithful as possible with what Christ has given them. Frankly, while I love the opportunities to serve the churches there with our teaching and preaching, I primarily enjoy worshipping and fellowshiping with brothers and sisters who make me feel as if I am with members of the OPC each time I’m in their country.

Although the IPRC currently has only one presbytery,



The IPRC congregation in Bogotá

made up of five organized churches and five mission works, with a total of about 220 members, seven ministers, and five ruling elders, it also has many young men who want to pursue the gospel ministry in order to take the gospel to the many other cities of their nation. In addition to the men preparing for the ministry, there are many other members who clearly want to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. They have primarily left the Roman Catholic Church or Pentecostalism to find the truths and depths of God’s Word.

The sins of the world in the surrounding culture often appear in the IPRC, just as they do in the OPC. Sometimes the sins are open and may be dealt with patiently and compassionately, making clear the demands of God’s Word. At other times, caution must be exercised—for example, when former U.S. residents, released from prison, are returned to Colombia knowing little Spanish and are now looking for help from the church. At still other times, uncovered sins must be dealt with by sending out the clear warning that sexual immorality and deception must not be tolerated, lest they fester and spread their infection to the rest of the church (1 Cor. 5:6–11).

Colombia has had a reputation for the trafficking of cocaine and danger from paramilitary groups and narcoterrorists. It is also known for its emeralds, ecotourism, and beautiful Cartagena. The IPRC wants Colombia to be known for Christ’s church—Reformed in faith and Presbyterian in government—and we want to work with them as they seek that end. Please pray for this church. It is praying for you.

## What’s New

### // Comings/Goings

**Miss Erika D. Bulthuis** (Providence OPC, Temecula, Calif.) has completed her term of service as a missionary associate with the Karamoja Station of the OP Uganda Mission and returned to the U.S. She plans to wed Mr. K. Bryce Angel on June 27.

# 18th-CENTURY ROOTS; 21st-CENTURY SHOOTS

// DAVID WINSLOW



*Darryl Hart leading his Philadelphia Presbyterian history tour*

The 2015 Timothy Conference was held in the Philadelphia area this past March during a late winter snowstorm. Before five inches of snow arrived, Dr. Darryl Hart conducted a walking tour of Philadelphia Presbyterianism in the heart of the old city with the eighteen young men who attended the conference. The first stop was the site of the first General Assembly of the PCUSA in May 1789, moderated by John Witherspoon. Presently a pizza parlor sits atop the long-gone foundation of Second Presbyterian Church. Nine blocks away, we stood opposite the site of the OPC's first General Assembly, 147 years later, held at the New Century Club. The sign said "Do Not Enter"; it is now a parking garage. We also walked and jaywalked where Machen did on his way from his Chancellor St. apartment to Westminster Theological Seminary's first home on Pine St. (Our guide assured us that Machen was a jaywalker as well as a mountain climber.)

These are our roots as Orthodox Presbyterians living and serving the Lord in America. They remind us, on the one hand, that "here we have no lasting city" (Heb. 13:14). On the other hand, we share a rich theological heritage with men like Alexander, Hodge, and Machen. Knowing who we were and who we are as a church is surely a helpful context in which to nurture future ministerial leaders of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the twenty-first century. As the prophet said, "Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug" (Isa. 51:1).

This year's "Timothys" came from around the world: Paul Lauer from Japan, Achu Mba from Cameroon (by way of the OP church plant in Gaithersburg, Maryland), and Asher Westerveld and Samuel Daigle from Quebec, Canada. Some grew up in the OPC, such as Danny Dieckmann, Ben Hoekstra, Danny Lynam, and Robert Muether. Others have been in the OPC less than two years, such as Emeka Duruji, Will Lyle, Jedidiah Smith, and Joshua Young. It is noteworthy that

eleven of them have fathers who are ordained, and that half were homeschooled.

Are these green shoots in the OP corner of the Lord's vineyard the new growth that will be tomorrow's fruit-bearing branches? Pastor Mark Sallade, the first conference speaker, made the arresting remark that a good number of his closest ministerial friends are ten to fifteen years older than he is, and that, as he looked out at the young men seated before him, it was thrilling to think that there were quite possibly future ministerial friends in the group. Both Pastor Sallade and Pastor Larry Westerveld urged the men to become now what they imagine themselves to be in the future as ministers of the gospel: lovers of God, of his worship, and of his people. Dr. David VanDrunen and the Rev. Danny Olinger presented the daunting but necessary educational and examination process that lies before those who aspire to the ministry.

This year's conference (the ninth) completed our second circuit around North America. "Why does the Timothy Conference move around the country?" we are asked. It is in order to share the burden and the blessing of hosting the conference in a local OP church near a Reformed seminary with OP faculty and students. The Subcommittee on Ministerial Training has been scrupulous about not recommending one seminary over another, so moving the conference serves to highlight a different seminary each year.

Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pennsylvania, is ideally situated to facilitate exposure to lectures at Westminster Theological Seminary. This year's conferees had the privilege of listening to a two-hour lecture by Dr. Richard Gaffin on the Pauline letters. Seven OP students, four of whom were prior Timothy Conference attendees, joined one of the lunches served by the ladies of Calvary Church and shared with the Timothys how their studies and opportunities to serve in the church were helping to develop their gifts and their sense of calling.

Danny Olinger and other conference speakers stressed how important it is to be serving in the local church. In fact,

each conference attendee was required to submit a brief essay covering what he had learned at the conference and how he intended to serve in his local congregation upon returning. This is actually quite challenging, because many young men of 16–22 years are not quite sure what they are allowed to do or what their pastor and elders would like them to do. Surely there is an opportunity for both sides to be more proactive!

Finally, this Timothy Conference featured a visit to the OPC administrative offices in Willow Grove to see where dedicated men and women serve the denominational committees. Upstairs the men toured the Grace Mullen Archives Room and saw what two faculty offices looked like in the early days of Westminster Seminary: a single shared oak table with chairs across from each other. In the adjacent room, they sat down around the large conference table where so much planning and prayer for the future of the OPC takes place. It was clear from the serious and humorous reflections on OP history offered in an engaging lecture by Professor John Muether that the young men are not yet ready to fill these committee chairs that have been filled by the likes of Murray, Galbraith, and Tyson. They are still becoming what they hopefully will be.

One long-serving staff member noted as the young men went out into the lightly falling snow, “Well, there goes the future of the OPC.” Indeed. But the nourishment and shaping of these twenty-first-century servants still belongs to present-day OP families and churches. Pray for our Timothys that they will resist the temptations of the Evil One, and that they will think soberly about the gifts God has given them to use in the church. Show them how to serve in their local congregation and presbytery. Prepare to support them financially when they head off to seminary.

## MTIOPC SUMMER COURSES

This summer the Ministerial Training Institute of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church offers a new course, **A Greek Refresher**, to help pastors to preach with sound exegesis. **OPC History** is again being offered.

OP elder and Calvin College professor David C. Noe seeks to refresh and expand his students’ grasp of Koine Greek.

OP elder and Reformed Theological Seminary professor John Muether, the official OPC historian, will teach the OPC’s background, history, character, and commitments.

**The registration deadline is Monday, June 1.** Classes begin Monday, June 8 with online assignments. A mandatory Intensive Training session will be held at the OPC administrative offices in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, August 18–20.

Tuition is free for OP pastors, licentiates, and men under care. OP elders pay \$50 and non-OP men pay \$100 for tuition. All students pay a \$50 registration fee. For information, contact Pat Clawson, MTIOPC coordinator, at 215-935-1023 or [pat.clawson@opc.org](mailto:pat.clawson@opc.org). More information and application forms are available at <http://www.opc.org/cce/MTI.html>.

## ABCs of PRESBYTERIANISM Ordination

Larry Wilson

After a man is called, the church is to formally, publicly attest its conviction that the Lord Jesus has called, gifted, and qualified him for this office. They set him apart by prayer and the laying on of hands. We call this “ordination.” We have an example of this in Numbers 27:15–23:

Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, “Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.” So the LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight. You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the people of Israel with him, the whole congregation.” And Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and made him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation, and he laid his hands on him and commissioned him as the LORD directed through Moses.

Ordination carries over into the New Testament. First Timothy 4:14 refers to the ordination of Timothy: “Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.” “Council of elders” actually translates a single Greek word, *presbyterion* (i.e., “presbytery”).

Here we see that King Jesus uses a presbytery (that is, an assembly [or council, or court] of elders acting collectively) to solemnly commission and authorize a person to do a specific task. When a man is duly called to serve as a church officer, the church formally inaugurates him into that office by ordination (cf. Form of Government XX:1, 2).

## ● Out of the Mouth . . .

While we were eating breakfast before church, my son Carl, 6, said: “Dad, when you talk too long at church, it makes me fall asleep.”

—(Pastor) Eric Watkins  
Saint Augustine, Fla.

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

# HOME MISSIONS THEN AND NOW: A PERSONAL VIEW

// STEPHEN D. DOE



Overseeing session of Trinity Reformed Church in Gaithersburg, Md.: Peter Lee, Pastor Ron Beabout, Cliff Mack, Steve Doe, Jerry Taylor, Jim Van Dam

There is an old adage that wisdom is knowing how much you don't know. It may not be biblical (cf. Prov. 1:7!), but after nearly forty years of involvement with home missions in the OPC, I must say that there is so much that I don't know about home missions. However, since the Lord of the church, Jesus Christ, does know all and has all power (Matt. 16:18; 28:18–20; Eph. 1:22–23), everything is good.

When my wife, Joanie, and I moved to Oxnard, California, in June 1976 to serve a fledgling Orthodox Presbyterian mission work in that city, there was no *Planting an Orthodox Presbyterian Church* manual to help us. There were no annual conferences for new church planters to provide a network of connections with other men doing similar work. There was no regional home missionary whom I could consult.

There were, however, men who had done the work of planting churches for decades, men of the caliber of Henry Coray and Dwight Poundstone, men who had labored in several places to establish solid OP congregations and who modeled faithfulness. There was willingness by a presbytery, the denomination, and the tiny congregation to let an untested man, fresh from seminary, serve in the vital work of church planting. There was the essential emphasis on ministering the Word of God to the congregation that the Lord was gathering. There was for me a session of mature and god-

ly elders at El Camino OPC in Goleta to provide oversight of the work in Oxnard, and they showed me during session meetings, month by month, how Presbyterianism worked.

The core group that formed the Oxnard Chapel had left the mainline Presbyterian church. They desired to set the mission work clearly over against a denomination in theological decline, and they were constantly encouraging me by their hunger to know the Word of God.

As someone has waggishly remarked, the seven last words of the church are “We’ve never done it that way before.” In our mission work, we had no templates and no fears about trying things like theology conferences on a shoestring or meeting in a vine-draped music studio. Without the Internet or social media, personal contacts were vital (as they always are), and I quickly learned the importance of connecting with every visitor who came through the doors.

Joanie and I experienced the sweet fellowship of people learning to be the church together—the church planter included. The joy of the women in Oxnard when our daughter arrived from South Korea is something Joanie has always treasured. For me, it was the faithfulness of those core members who refused to be discouraged at the slow growth, the sometimes less-than-attractive facilities, or my many weaknesses.

We left Oxnard after five years, as it became a particular congregation with its own elders. We then returned to the East Coast for some further study. Immediately we became involved in



John and Penny Bayles of Oxnard Chapel in the 1970s, which became Covenant of Grace OPC (with John as elder)

an OP church plant near where we were living, and I served with a classmate from seminary on the overseeing session of that mission work. Here we saw the difficult side of home missions in a small town where the Reformed faith was being introduced for the first time and the core group was getting smaller as it struggled with being Presbyterian.

When the Lord called us to Nebraska, I found myself involved again with home missions. I found out that home missions pioneers would travel vast distances to minister in the Dakotas, establishing preaching points. At that time, the Presbytery of the Dakotas stretched from the Canadian border to the Mexican border, yet the Presbytery was undaunted by its vast size and pursued church planting especially in Texas.

When the Presbytery divided, the northern portion (still being called the Presbytery of the Dakotas) had to learn what to do when there were fewer large metropolitan areas, when much of the Presbytery was sparsely populated, and when there was little money to do church planting. The new home missions committee of the Presbytery had to learn how to do home missions differently. Again I was learning that in order to do church planting in a Presbyterian way, a presbytery has to unite behind a shared vision.

When we came to Barre, Vermont, to serve Covenant OPC, I was told that home missions in New England would be challenging. One person compared church planting in the Northeast to going to a foreign mission field. Indeed, in the entire state of Vermont there were less than half a dozen confessionally Reformed congregations. Yet the history of church planting in the Presbytery of New York and New England included the efforts of the Society for the Propagation of the Reformed Faith in New England. The Society had been energized by Professor John Murray and others who would come to New England during the summers to help with church planting.

I found myself getting to know Wendell Rockey, who led the church-planting efforts in the Presbytery. He and the rest of the missions committee loved both home missions and New England. When it seemed that church planting would be hard, the Presbytery kept at the work, and in a variety of places the Lord has turned the rocky soil of New England over once again as new churches have been planted there.

## 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 3, 17.



Steve Doe preaching in Gaithersburg

At the annual home missions conference in 2001, as I represented the missions committee of the Presbytery of New York and New England, I moved from the committee overseeing home missions to my second stint as a home missionary. I was called to become the church planter at Fredericksburg, Virginia, in what became Bethel Reformed Presbyterian Church.

Serving on the home missions committee of the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic, I began to work with Dick Ellis, the Presbytery's regional home missionary, and I got to see his labors up close and personal as we labored together for a number of years.

The Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic, which I now serve as regional home missionary, is compact and more densely populated. The opportunities, from the northern border of Maryland to near Richmond, Virginia, are numerous. In this present calling, I've been privileged to work with Lacy Andrews, the experienced regional home missionary of the

Presbytery of the Southeast. I cannot exaggerate the value of working with him in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and seeing church planting from the side of a regional home missionary.

The Lord has allowed me, as I have worked in home missions, to be in four different presbyteries and see the leadership of five different general secretaries of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension. As I have worked with many men in home missions, some things have become very clear. We are in a different day than when the OPC began. The mainline Presbyterian church yields fewer and fewer contacts for conservative Presbyterians. The OPC must see America as a mission field and think about how to reach the lost. We must treasure and nurture the blessing of being Presbyterian and doing the work of the church as the church.

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church is passionate about church planting. Presbyteries and individual congregations make great sacrifices for home missions as they give to Worldwide Outreach and presbytery home missions. Yet the greatest gift involves lending pastors and ruling elders to serve on overseeing sessions (see "The Ruling Elder in Church Planting," by John Shaw, in *Confident of Better Things*, edited by John R. Muether and Danny E. Olinger, pp. 425–43).

The OPC has been able to articulate how she seeks to be both Reformed and soundly Presbyterian in her approach to church planting. When I explain how the OPC does home missions, people universally get it—and embrace it. And even when our efforts at church planting seem small, and may even result in a mission work closing, we keep laboring for the Lord. In his incredible grace and mercy, Christ has been pleased to use the OPC in his grand plan to "present the church to himself in splendor" (Eph. 5:27). What a privilege it is for the OPC to serve such a Lord!

# WHAT A BLESSING WE HAVE!

// LeROY E. MILLER

In October 1978, I started my pastoral career at a small, somewhat conservative, country congregation in a mainline (largely apostate) denomination.

That group funded all of its denominational work with what they called the “Unified Budget.” This funded the denominational offices, their educational ministries, their colleges and seminaries, and their two hundred or so missionaries on foreign fields, only a handful of whom preached anything resembling the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I hated that Unified Budget, because it meant that, so long as I tithed to the church I pastored, some portion of my tithe was sent to the Unified Budget and was used to support some version of the social gospel. Neither I nor the congregation I served had the option to designate our giving.

When my family and I joined and became active in an OP congregation, it became a joy to give to the local church, knowing that a portion of our giving was going to the OPC’s version of a unified budget: Worldwide Outreach.

Why the change in attitude? First, it had to do with a greater appreciation for the unity of the church. Second, it had to do with the difference between the OPC and that mainline church. Let’s take the second first.

While the OPC is certainly not monolithic, we are a confessional church with a shared commitment to Reformed theology. We share a commitment, not just to historic Christianity, but to an extensive confession, whose teaching on each head of doctrine we take seriously. We know that our Committee on Christian Education is dedicated to producing literature that presents our shared gospel, disciples converts and covenant

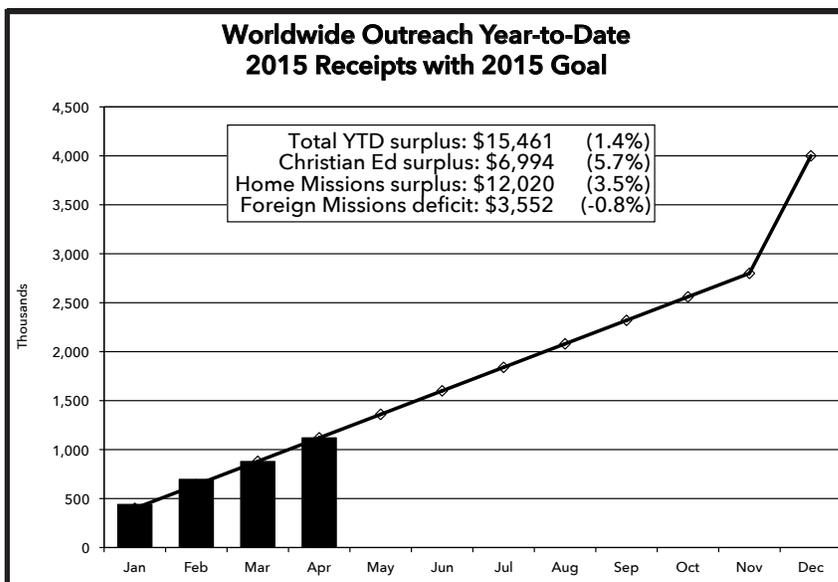
children in a common faith, and helps develop ministers who will proclaim and defend that faith. We know that our Committee on Home Missions and our home missionaries are working to establish congregations that have a commitment to the heritage and distinctives of the OPC. Finally, we know that our Committee on Foreign Missions and our foreign missionaries have similar commitments. All of our missionaries are committed to the same gospel and the same confession.

This means that there is no reason to lack confidence in the work of our church, and therefore no reason not to give liberally.

The foremost reason for the change in my attitude, however, had to do with changing theological views. The denomination within which I had served had as part of its title “Churches.” We, on the other hand, are the Orthodox Presbyterian *Church*. The singular word *Church* in our name is rooted in God’s Word. Acts 15 tells us how church leaders assembled to make decisions, not just for the church in Jerusalem or Judea, but for the church *as a whole*. The apostle Paul teaches in Romans 12 that the members of Christ’s body are “members one of another” (v. 5). There is one body of Christ, and we are all to minister to one another. Paul tells us to “contribute to the needs of the saints” (v. 13)—not just locally, but throughout the church. So in the Corinthian epistles we read of the fundraising Paul did for the saints suffering in Palestine.

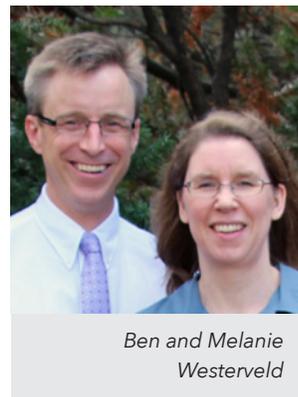
I rejoice that when I give my tithes and offerings to my local congregation, or to the annual Thank Offering, I’m giving to the whole work of the whole church. I can give in confidence. What a blessing Worldwide Outreach is.

*The author is the pastor of Faith OPC in Lincoln, Neb.*



## JUNE

1. **Heero and Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine, ask prayer for identifying and training ruling elders for the church. / **Ron and Carol Beabout**, Gaithersburg, Md. Pray for the discipleship and ministry of Trinity Reformed Church. / Pray for the work of stated clerk **Ross Graham** at the 82nd General Assembly, which meets June 3-9.
2. **Brandon and Laurie Wilkins**, Crystal Lake, Ill. Pray that Christ's elect will be brought into Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church. / **Eric and Dianna Tuininga**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for Eric as he mentors pastors in the village churches. / Pray for a fruitful start for **the students** taking Greek or OP History at the Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC.
3. Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **Mark Bube**, attending the General Assembly this week. / **Jeremiah and Elizabeth Montgomery**, State College, Pa. Pray that Resurrection OPC will minister to non-Christians seeking God. / **Robert (and Adelinda) Canode**, yearlong intern at Providence Presbyterian Church in Pflugerville, Tex.
4. **Jeremy Logan**, Mt. Vernon, Ohio. Pray for unity and fellowship among the people of Knox Presbyterian Church. / **David and Sunshine Okken**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that God would guide and equip them for their ministry. / **Lou Ann Shafer**, music editor for the Psalter-Hymnal Committee. Pray for her complete recovery from a stroke.
5. Pray for missionary associates **Taryn Dieckmann, Leah Hopp**, and **Hannah Keller**, Nakaale, Uganda. / **Mike and Katy Myers**, Hartwell, Ga. Pray that the people of Heritage Presbyterian Church will grow in love for Christ, for each other, and for the lost. / Pray for **Danny Olinger**, Christian Education general secretary, as he presents the CCE report at the General Assembly tomorrow.
6. **Robert and Christy Arendale**, Houston, Tex. Pray for the Word and Spirit to build up and sustain Cornerstone OPC. / **Bob and Martha Wright**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the health and safety of short-termers laboring in Karamoja this summer. / **Alan Strange**, president of the Board of Trustees of Great Commission Publications.
7. **James and Jenny Knox**, M.D. and R.N., Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for Jim's leadership of the medical work. / Home Missions staff administrator **Sean Gregg**. / Committee on Coordination staff: **Doug Watson**, part-time staff accountant; **Jan Gregson**, assistant to the finance director; **Charlene Tipton**, database administrator; **Kathy Bube**, Loan Fund administrator.
8. **Chris and Megan Hartshorn**, Anaheim Hills, Calif. Pray that more families, both church and unchurched, will come to Anaheim Hills Presbyterian Church. / Pray for the labors of missionary associates **Christopher and Chloe Verdick**, Nakaale, Uganda. / Army chaplains: **Earl (and Susan) Vanderhoff** and **Stephen (and Lindsey) Roberts**.
9. **Al and Laurie Tricarico**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the weekly Bible studies held in twelve village churches. / **Tom and Martha Albaugh**, Pittsburgh, Pa. Pray that God would save local families and bring them to worship at Redeemer OPC Mission. / **Zachary (and Anne) Simmons**, summer intern at Grace Fellowship in Philadelphia, Pa.
10. **Brian and Sara Chang**, Cottonwood, Ariz. Pray for new growth at Verde Valley Reformed Chapel. / **Ben and Melanie Westerveld**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for effective ministry to unbelievers in upcoming activities. / **Jonathan (and Kerri Ann) Cruse**, summer intern at Westminster OPC in Hollidaysburg, Pa.
11. Missionary associate **Jennifer Nelson**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for preparations being made for the English for Kids Bible camp this summer. / **Bill and Sessie Welzien**, Key West, Fla. Pray that the Lord would add more members to Keys Presbyterian Church. / **Ryan (and Rachel) Heaton**, summer intern at Tyler Presbyterian Church in Tyler, Texas.
12. **Eric and Donna Hausler**, Naples, Fla. Pray that the Lord would draw more families with children to Christ the King Presbyterian Church. / Pray for the health of associate missionaries **Octavius and Marie Delfils**, Haiti, living in a tropical climate. / **David Haney**, director of finance and planned giving for the Committee on Coordination.
13. **Ben and Heather Hopp**, Haiti. Pray for the VBS teams ministering in Haiti this summer. / Pray for **Chris Walmer**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania, as he visits presbytery mission works. / Short-term missions coordinator **David Nakhla**. Pray for the teams serving this summer in domestic locations and in Quebec, Haiti, Japan, Uganda, and Ukraine.
14. **Christopher and Ann Malamisuro**, Cincinnati, Ohio. Pray that visitors to Good Shepherd OPC's VBS will come to worship. / **Mark and Jeni Richline**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for those providing leadership in the church. / Summer interns: **Aijalon Church** at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Ill., and **Bulut Yasar** at New Life OPC in Williamsport, Pa.



*Ben and Melanie  
Westerveld*

- 15. Ray and Michele Call**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for the Mission as they look for a good location for a new church plant in Montevideo. / **Greg and Stella Hoadley**, Fargo, N.Dak. Pray for God's Spirit to direct and empower the gospel witness of Grace OPC. / **Matthew (and Trina) Patton**, yearlong intern at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Ill.
- 16. Jonathan and Kristin Moersch**, Capistrano Beach, Calif. Give thanks for recent growth at Trinity Presbyterian Church. / **Brian and Dorothy Wingard**, South Africa. Pray for their interaction with neighbors. / **Roberto (and Irma) Quiñones**, yearlong intern at Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana in San Juan, P.R.
- 17.** Affiliated missionaries **Jerry and Marilyn Farnik**, Prague, Czech Republic. Pray for effective outreach programs in the church. / **Jim and Eve Cassidy**, Austin, Tex. Pray for fruit from outreach efforts at South Austin Presbyterian Church. / **Matthew (and Melinda) Cole**, yearlong intern at Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Bellmawr, N.J.
- 18. Brad and Cinnamon Peppo**, Springfield, Ohio. Pray for unity and fellowship among the people of Living Water OPC. / Pray for the teaching labors of tentmaker missionary **T. L. L.**, Asia, and missionary associate **Mary York**, Czech Republic. / **James Jordan**, yearlong intern at Church of the Covenant OPC in Hackettstown, N.J.
- 19. Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia. Pray for local pastors as they deal with the needs of their congregations. / **Jim and Tricia Stevenson**, Tulsa, Okla. Praise God for his continued blessing on Providence OPC. / Summer interns: **Joel (and Leigh) Fregia** at New Covenant Community Church in Joliet, Ill., and **Dan (and Megan) York** at Covenant OPC in Kennewick, Wash.
- 20. Kim and Barbara Kuhfuss**, Eau Claire, Wis. Pray that God would bless the covenant children who are taking a membership class at Providence Reformed Church. / Pray for missionary associates **J. B.**, **C. B.**, and **T. DeJ.**, Asia. / **Mark (and Katie) Stumpff**, summer intern at Providence OPC in Mifflinburg, Pa.
- 21.** Pray for **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia (on furlough), on a busy travel schedule. / **Tony and Mica Garbarino**, Morgan Hill, Calif. Pray for God's blessing on Providence Presbyterian Church's outreach efforts. / Yearlong interns: **Caleb T. Nelson** at First Church of Merrimack in Merrimack, N.H., and **Tim (and Jeni) Son** at First Presbyterian Church, North Shore, in Ipswich, Mass.
- 22. Drew and Sonya Adcock**, Williamsport, Pa. Pray that the people of Omega OPC will continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. / Missionary associates **Mr. and Mrs. C.** and **T. D.**, Asia. / **Matthew (and Elin) Prather**, yearlong intern at Harvest OPC in San Marcos, Calif.
- 23.** Pray for the family of retired missionary **Fumi Uomoto**, who died peacefully during the night on May 4. / Home Missions general secretary **John Shaw**. / *New Horizons* staff: **Jim Scott**, managing editor; **Pat Clawson**, editorial assistant; **Sarah Pederson**, proofreader; **Chris Tobias**, cover designer.
- 24. Jay and Andrea Bennett**, Neon, Ky. Pray that God would bless Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church's outreach and evangelism efforts. / Affiliated missionaries **Craig and Ree Coulbourne**, Japan (on furlough). Give thanks with them for those who pray for and support their ministry. / Summer interns: **Ryan (and Rochelle) Cavanaugh** at Faith OPC in Garland, Tex.; **Scott (and Elizabeth) Creel** at Redemption OPC in Gainesville, Fla.
- 25.** Pray for Foreign Missions associate general secretary **Douglas Clawson** as he reports to the Executive Committee meeting tomorrow. / **Joseph and Carla Fowler**, Gastonia, N.C. Pray that visitors to Reformation OPC will desire to become members. / Summer interns: **Daniel (and Amber) Doleys** at Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, Ohio; **Michael (and Melissa) Spangler** at Providence Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, N.C.
- 26. Mika and Christina Edmondson**, Grand Rapids, Mich. Pray that the seed of the gospel will be faithfully sown and bear abundant fruit at New City Fellowship. / Foreign Missions administrative assistant **Linda Posthuma** and secretary **Abigail Yates**. / **Andy (and Anna) Smith**, summer intern at Providence OPC in Temecula, Calif.
- 27. Woody and Laurie Lauer**, Numazu, Japan. Pray that the Lord would provide for the diaconal needs of the church. / **Ben and Sarah Miller**, Syosset, N.Y. Pray for at least a dozen conversions among the unchurched and underchurched this year for Trinity Church. / **Stephen Pribble**, OPC.org senior technical associate.
- 28. Joshua and Jessica Lyon**, Carson, Calif. Pray that God would add several new families to Grace OPC. / **Cal and Edie Cummings**, Sendai, Japan (on furlough). Pray for efforts to establish contacts that will open the door to witness. / **Janet Birkmann**, Diaconal Ministries administrative assistant.
- 29.** Pray for new missionaries **Charles and Connie Jackson**, Mbale, Uganda, beginning pre-field orientation today. / **Everett and Kimberly Henes**, Hillsdale, Mich. Pray that graduating college students will find jobs in areas with OP churches to join. / *Ordained Servant* proofreader **Diane Olinger**.
- 30. David Crum**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California. Pray for church planting exploratory work in the region. / **Kaz and Katie Yae-gashi**, Yamagata, Japan. Pray for opportunities to share the gospel with seekers. / Navy chaplain **Bryan (and Shelly) Weaver**.



Jim and Tricia Stevenson

# NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

## PRESBYTERY OF THE SOUTH DIACONAL CONFERENCE

*Janet Birkmann*

“It was encouraging to be in the company of so many other deacons, knowing that they too are going through the same joys and trials in their work.” This is how one deacon described his experience at the Presbytery of the South’s first Presbytery Diaconal Conference, held in Orlando in February 2015. The conference brought together over thirty men from throughout the presbytery for instruction and fellowship. One participant reflected that “being connected to the regional church is a very encouraging and motivating experience!”

Attendees indicated that they benefitted from discussions on walk-up requests for aid, diaconal visitation, caring for ministers, and organizing for disaster response. One deacon commented, “The collective knowledge of deacons throughout a presbytery will always be stronger and deeper than that of any one congregation. Getting together for mutual encouragement and sharing of ideas sharpens everyone.”

The men enjoyed being “among a multitude of counselors” and being “face-to-face with the other men, hearing the issues they were wrestling with in their calling as deacon, and being able to walk alongside them in prayer.”

Discovering the experience and abilities of other deacons was also helpful. “The relationships forged will be useful for gaining wisdom on future situations because we now have contacts to reach out to when we might not know how to handle something new.”

And one conference organizer reported, “In good Presbyterian fashion, the men said that the best part of the conference was the food!”

To obtain help organizing a similar conference in your presbytery, contact David Nakhla, the administrator of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries, at [nakhla.1@opc.org](mailto:nakhla.1@opc.org).



*The diaconal conference held for the Presbytery of the South*

## JEREMY LOGAN ORDAINED

*Larry Oldaker*

The Presbytery of Ohio met on Friday, March 27, 2015, to conduct a service of ordination and installation for licentiate Jeremy J. Logan. Mr. Logan was elected pastor of Knox Presbyterian Church in Mt. Vernon, Ohio, at a congregational meeting on February 8, 2015. He sus-

tained his ordination exams at the spring meeting of the Presbytery of Ohio on March 13.

Pastor Stephen Dufresne of Providence Presbyterian Church in Pataskala, Ohio, moderated the meeting and led the worship service. Pastor Matthew Judd of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Mansfield, Ohio, preached the sermon. Pastor Larry Oldaker, regional home missionary



*The ministers and elders attending the ordination service for Jeremy Logan (front, center)*

of the presbytery, gave the charge to the new minister, and Pastor Bill Kessler of Grace Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Ohio, gave the charge to the congregation. Pastor Jeremy Logan closed the service with the benediction.

A large crowd was in attendance from churches across the presbytery for the joyous occasion. Knox Presbyterian Church was originally planted by Pastor Sacha Walicord under the oversight of Providence Presbyterian Church in Pataskala.

Pastor Jeremy Logan grew in his commitment to Jesus Christ and became a member of the OPC at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Mansfield. He later served internships at Covenant and assisted the congregation during its transition in receiving its new pastor, the Rev. Matthew Judd. Pastor Logan is a graduate of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

## CELEBRATING TWENTY YEARS FOR DALE VAN DYKE

*Susan Felch and collaborators*

Twenty-one years ago, Dale Van Dyke, with his wife Joanne and their four small children (Joshua, Emily, Andrew, and David), answered the call to become a minister of the gospel at Harvest OPC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, then a congregation of 48 communicant and 42 baptized members. A graduate of Dordt College and Westminster Seminary California, Dale had been raised in the Reformed tradition, but was new to the OPC. He settled with zeal into the ministry at Harvest—preaching, teaching, counseling, and, with Joanne, opening their home with generous hospitality. He was ordained on May 5, 1995.

Since 1995, Dale and Joanne have faithfully served Harvest Church as senior pastor and pianist, and Dale has also served the denomination as a member of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension. Their four small children now have children of their own (six grandchildren at the last count, and two more on the way). Joanne continues to bless the congregation with her music, and Dale ministers word and sacrament week by week, with a love for Christ that



Pastor Dale Van Dyke

has grown over the years.

Harvest itself has grown to 391 communicant and 281 baptized members, with 173 professions of faith in the last twenty years. In 2014, Harvest planted New City Fellowship in Grand Rapids, which averages 200 worshippers each Sunday morning. But numbers are useful only insofar as they represent people—real people, God’s people.

We celebrate the Van Dyke’s two decades at Harvest because we celebrate God’s faithfulness in providing a pastor who proclaims his word with humility and power. To see Jesus, to love and follow him, to be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, and to rejoice in our Father’s care, have been the hallmarks of Dale Van Dyke’s ministry. For that we give thanks. To God be the glory.

## UPDATE

### MINISTERS

- The Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario dissolved the pastoral relationship between **K. Dale Collison** and Covenant OPC in London, Ontario, as of February 28; he is now officially retired.

### Correction

In the May issue, p. 11, Rehoboth Reformed Church in Cerritos, Calif., should have been identified as belonging to the RCUS (Reformed Church in the United States).

- The Presbytery of the Southeast on April 24 acted to transfer **Bryan P. Crotts** to the First Presbytery of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church; he has been called to serve as pastor of First ARPC in Burlington, N.C.

- The pastoral relationship between **Jason M. Roddy** and Pilgrim OPC in Metamora, Mich., was dissolved by the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario, at his request and with the concurrence of the congregation, on October 18, 2014, effective October 31; he has since moved to Tennessee.

- On April 24, the Presbytery of the Southeast dissolved the ministerial relationship between **S. Scott Willet** and Redeemer OPC in Doraville (Atlanta), Ga.; he had resigned on February 23, with the congregation’s concurrence on March 8.

### MILESTONES

- On April 3, **Eleanor Meeker**, 84, wife of Bob Meeker and longtime member of Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pa., died after a long bout with cancer. Her quick smile and quiet demeanor will be missed by all who knew her.

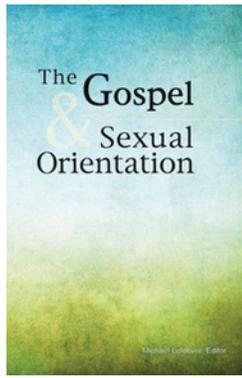
## REVIEWS

*The Gospel & Sexual Orientation: A Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*, edited by **Michael Lefebvre**. Crown & Covenant, 2012. Paperback, 67 pages, list price \$6.00. Reviewed by OP pastor **George C. Scipione**.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America is to be commended for their brief but important testimony. They have tackled a pivotal issue in the culture in which we live. They are to be commended, *first*, for facing this issue head-on. *Second*, the testimony attempts to be comprehensive in facing the issues involved. *Third*, the testimony maintains an irenic tone throughout. *Fourth*, the testimony ends with the pastoral implications of this testimony. *Fifth*, the testimony is well written in plain English.

Chapter 1, “Introduction and Terminology,” covers the historical development

of the new ideas concerning sexuality. This is essential to properly grasping the issues at stake. Chapter 2, “Biology, Gender, and the Biblical Doctrine of Man,” emphasizes



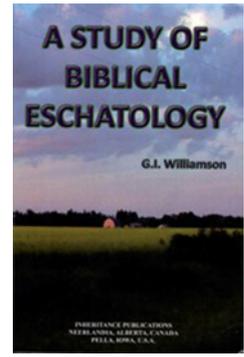
that a biological link to homosexual orientation does not negate an individual's moral responsibility to avoid what God forbids. Chapter 3, “Personality Traits and the Multiplication of Gender Categories,” states: “The church needs to be aware of these trends in our society, multiplying gender categories through the separation of sexuality and brain gender from one's physical gender.” Chapter 4, “Hermeneutical Issues of the Homosexuality Debate,” deals with the arguments that some use to avoid the clear teaching of the biblical texts and the hermeneutical fallacies behind them. Chapter 5, “Exegesis and Confessional Statements,” interacts further with “progressive” scholars' exegesis of the key texts. Larger Catechism Q/A 139 is covered as well. Chapter 6, “Pastoral Implications,” deals with many pastoral issues.

This excellent work has a few weaknesses. One, the implications of texts like Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 6 are not fully mined. In their light, how can genetic make-up be the cause of homosexual desires or any other particular sin? Two, a fuller biblical anthropology, dealing with the implications of genetic research in general, needs to be developed. Three, the presuppositional framework of the social sciences is not challenged sufficiently, though there is a warning of possible bias. Four, the pastoral advice should be better organized. Five, the resource section needs to be edited more carefully and updated. For example, Exodus International no longer exists. Harvest USA should have been listed, as it is both biblically based and Reformed. When biblical and Reformed resources are available, why even go to questionable evangelical resources?

*A Study of Biblical Eschatology*, by G. I. Williamson. Inheritance Publications, 2015. Paperback, 153 pages, list price \$10.95. Reviewed by OP pastor Archibald A. Allison.

After more than sixty-two years in the Christian ministry, G. I. Williamson has written a book to explain biblical eschatology to ordinary Christians. Two of the “things which are necessary to be known,

believed, and observed for salvation” are the doctrines of creation and consummation, which “are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of



## OPC WOMEN'S RETREAT

Jane Crum

“Running the Race,” from Hebrews 12, was the theme of the thirty-third annual OPC Women's Retreat in Southern California. Margaret Falk shared from her years of experience ministering together with her husband, Jonathan, at home and abroad. We were encouraged to run with our eyes fixed on Jesus, letting nothing distract us from him, letting nothing entangle us, and letting nothing prevent us from persevering to the end as we follow where our Savior leads.

Margaret punctuated her talks with many illustrations from missionary service and practical suggestions on ways to “unclutter” our lives in the hopes of having less to distract, entangle, and weary us in the race.

The conference, which was held April 10–12 at Camp Maranatha in the mountain resort of Idyllwild, California, was attended by seventy-six ladies of all ages. Some traveled from as far away as Idaho and Eastern Arizona to retreat from the fast pace of life in the world and be encouraged by the Scriptures and warm fellowship. In the Saturday afternoon free time, some hiked the mountainous Ernie Maxwell Scenic Trail, while others worked on crafts or toured the picturesque village of Idyllwild. Participants from many churches shared their gifts in the Saturday evening talent show.

David Crum, the regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California, led us in worship on Sunday, preaching from Hebrews 12:1–2.

Our next retreat will be April 8–10, 2016. For information, contact Jane Crum (janecrum91@gmail.com).



Hikers at the OPC Women's Retreat in Southern California

Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them” (WCF 1.7). This small book will encourage you to study the text of the Bible and see for yourself that, although no one has all the answers to questions about the future, the main things we need to know about the future are clearly revealed in Scripture.

After clearly stating five time-tested principles of sound Bible interpretation, Williamson defines eschatology as “whatever God has revealed concerning things still in the future at the time when God revealed them” (p. 9). He summarizes the eschatology of the Old Testament, focusing on God’s promises to the nation of Israel and the various visions that God gave the prophet Daniel concerning the four great world kingdoms leading up to the time of Christ. He concludes, “There is no other event in the history of the world that rises to the level of importance of that momentous time when the Jewish nation, as a whole, was disenfranchised by the Lord Jesus” (p. 19). From this we learn that biblical, doctrinal, and spiritual qualities define the true church, not organizational continuity.

One of the reasons for so much confusion in eschatology is the loss or weakening of “reformational principles of biblical exegesis” (p. 26). Williamson explains the importance of “grammatico-historical exegesis,” rather than looking at the text of the Bible from the perspective of the twenty-first century and changing its meaning. The rest of the book sets forth the eschatology of the New Testament. He gives a careful exegesis of Matthew 23–26, focusing on things that are commonly misunderstood and the most difficult points. He looks at the Thessalonian letters and compares three basic types of interpretation of 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12. He compares the most common interpretation of the texts in the Epistles of John concerning the Antichrist with what the texts actually say.

About half the book is an exposition of the book of Revelation, carefully comparing Scripture with Scripture and showing that John restates the same things Jesus taught in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Williamson gives six concluding statements, the last of which is WCF 33.3. The final chapter gives confirmation from other evidence in Scripture and the confessions. Throughout the book are questions for further study and discussion. Buy a copy of this refreshing, accessible study of Scripture that sets forth the certainties of biblical eschatology, study it, and share it with others.

***Everyone’s a Theologian: An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, by R.C. Sproul. Reformation Trust, 2014. Hardback, 357 pages, list price \$19.00. Reviewed by Prof. David VanDrunen.**

Is everyone really a theologian? In a professional sense, of course not, but R.C. Sproul argues that all Christians inevitably engage in theology as they seek to understand the truth that God has revealed to us. The only question is whether we are good theologians or bad ones. Sproul writes this overview of systematic theology in order to steer readers in the former direction, and accomplishes this task quite admirably.

The book is organized into sixty short chapters that deal with nearly all of the main issues of Christian doctrine, following the usual order of Reformed systematic theologies. Consistent with his goal of reaching ordinary Christians, Sproul’s explanation of topics is usually clear, concise, and winsome. The text is free of technical scholarly debates and is only lightly footnoted (though most of the footnotes, unfortunately, function as advertisements for Sproul’s other books).

This volume should serve many Christians well as a general introduction to biblical, Reformed doctrine. Among many sections that helpfully treat important, but often puzzling, features of Christian doctrine are Sproul’s discussion of the relationship between God’s justice and his mercy and grace (pp. 68–69) and his practical illustration of how God’s justice is displayed in the atonement (pp. 157–58). Sproul frequently seeks to answer

the objections of unbelief against biblical truth. Another commendable feature of this book is that it includes a chapter on worship—an important topic that is often absent from Reformed systematic theologies.

Less helpful is the fact that on several occasions Sproul, after describing different views on a given topic, does not explain why his own view is correct—and sometimes does not even identify which view is correct. For example, he takes no position on how sin is transmitted from Adam to subsequent generations or on the millennium (though he does specifically reject the pre-tribulation dispensationalist version of premillennialism and makes comments suggesting a bias toward postmillennialism). Historically, confessional Reformed theologians have differed on these issues, so Sproul’s reticence to choose sides is understandable and perhaps properly irenic. Yet his book would have been stronger if had he provided at least some

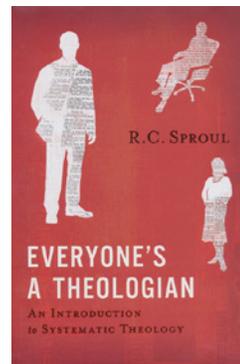
defense of infant baptism and

of the “spiritual” presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper. Also, his treatment of the gifts of the Spirit (ch. 35) is weak; some of his claims here are less than clear, and he does not provide a lucid defense of cessationism.

Despite a few weaknesses like these, Sproul has effectively presented the main teachings of Reformed theology as an organized and coherent whole. OP pastors and elders should find this book useful as an educational tool for believers moving beyond the basics of biblical truth into a richer understanding of our system of doctrine.

***An Able and Faithful Ministry: Samuel Miller and the Pastoral Office*, by James M. Garretson. Reformation Heritage Books, 2014. Hardback, 425 pages, list price \$35.00. Reviewed by OP Pastor Christian McShaffrey.**

This book was an absolute joy to read, and I heartily recommend it to all. More specifically, I recommend that it be read by both



ministers and nonministers of the OPC.

As for the first group, most OP ministers already have some interest in our ecclesiastical heritage, so they will probably not need much persuading. This volume is a well-researched, copiously referenced, and engagingly written narrative of the life and legacy of “one of our own.”

At times, the minister will feel as if he were back in seminary, receiving a lecture. At other times, he will feel as if he were simply receiving friendly and fatherly advice from a seasoned minister.

Fellow ministers, do buy this book and spend some time sitting under Samuel Miller’s ministry. It will do your head and heart immeasurable good!

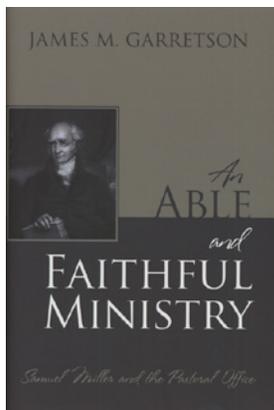
As for the second group, I acknowledge that nonministerial members of the OPC may not immediately see the profit in reading a book on pastoral ministry. Though Part One does address matters of more universal interest (such as the founding of Princeton Seminary), Part Two is admittedly more narrow in its interest, exploring the duties of ministers.

Nevertheless, I remain convinced that the average layman can profit from these sections also. Have you ever wondered what makes your minister tick? Have you ever wondered why he sometimes seems so intense? Have you ever thought that he might just take himself too seriously?

This book can help you understand your minister better. It might even help you appreciate and enjoy him more. For it offers the reader a candid look into the typical minister’s heart—there to see some of his secret joys and sorrows, his strengths and weaknesses, his hopes and fears, and, most importantly, the sole source of all his abilities and faithfulness: Jesus Christ.

Because ministers are real people with a really heavy calling, they need to be ministered to as they spend themselves for others. This book will equip you to do that more faithfully by helping you understand the heart of your minister.

To close, let me identify one potential



complaint. Because Miller’s convictions concerning the ministry may sound unrealistic, or at least exaggerated, to modern readers, some might accuse him of a certain kind of pietism or perfectionism. That, however, would be an inaccurate and anachronistic accusation.

Admittedly, I did feel something of a “historical disconnect” at times while reading this book, and I even wondered whether Miller’s standards were attainable. However, having now spent a few months, as it were, as his student, the only thing I now wonder is this: how can we, as modern Presbyterians, rekindle the old fire that once burned so brightly in our church’s bosom?

***The Heart Is the Target*, by Murray Capill. P&R, 2014. Paperback, 272 pages, list price \$16.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Larry G. Mininger.**

If you are not a preacher, please don’t read this book—you already know our weaknesses! But if you are a preacher, here are reasons why you might want to read this book:

1. It just might improve your preaching! This book thoroughly addresses how to apply sermons.
2. It is challenging. Capill will mess with your routine of sermon preparation and might cut down your prep time.
3. It is easy reading—not lightweight, but it communicates well.
4. It is inspiring and positive.
5. It is written for us—the OP type—by one of us (OK, he’s Australian, but...). He interacts with almost everyone worth reading on the subject of preaching—people you know and trust.

Capill observes that many sermons seem ineffective because they are aimed only at being faithful to the text, not at

what God is aiming at. The goal should be “that as the biblical text is proclaimed, people will encounter God himself in a life-shaping way today” (p. 17).

Reformed pastors, says Capill, spend all their energies on exegesis, leaving little time for applying the message. And their applications tend to be add-ons. “Application must not be a subsequent addition to exposition but the end goal of the exposition. Biblical exposition itself must be applicatory in thrust” (p. 19).

So first, application should be the driving force of each step of sermon preparation. As you study your text, ask yourself, “What is the application that God was making to those who first heard this text?” Discover the life-changing purpose of your text.

Second, apply that truth to your own life before considering how you might apply it to your congregation. You probably do this as you pray over your work, but Capill wants this to be a deliberate bridge to application to our hearers. “The preacher’s life is the laboratory in which biblical truth is tested. Preachers must live

the application before they can make it live in the lives of others. If the preacher has a narrow or superficial experience of biblical truth, his messages are likely to be narrow and superficial in their application” (p. 54).

Third, apply the truth that you have applied to your own soul to your people’s lives. Capill lifted my soul as he spelled out how application is made to the mind, conscience, will, and passions (pp. 115–16). “True Christianity is *felt*” (p. 126).

Then you can approach your pulpit and think, “I have a message from God for the people he has given to me to speak today.... I have something of importance to say that I believe will make a difference to how people think, act, and feel. I have been commissioned to say this.”

This is good stuff! Give Capill a chance to unfold his methodology. Your soul and your ministry may discover God’s intended applications.





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