

Orthodox Presbyterian Summer Institute

June 18–20, 2013

Report of the Director
September 30, 2013

Purpose

OPSI is designed to introduce prospective ministers to the work of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as a means of recruiting able young men for OPC ministry and future participation in MTIOPC. This is similar to the Timothy Conference, but with an older age group in view (last year college; first two years seminary).

To fulfill this purpose the following themes were taught and discussed at length:

- The OPC: continuity with Reformed tradition and distinguishing characteristics.
- The centrality, nature, and benefits of being a confessional church.
- The importance of the means of grace in the church's mission.
- The meaning of a culturally-aware pilgrim church.
- The work of a minister of the Word in an organized church and a mission work.

Participants and Location

Eight students applied, were accepted, and all but two were able to attend. Of the applicants we had five seminarians: one from Calvin Theological Seminary; one from Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, one from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and one from Westminster Seminary in California; and two college students, one from Wheaton, and one from University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

On Monday, June 17 the instructors arrived to make preparations for the arrival of the students the following day. Our location in the White Mountains made travel arrangements a lot simpler, due to the proximity of Manchester Boston Regional and Logan airports. Elder Jim Graves of Amoskeag Presbyterian Church helped with transportation.

This was our third year at Shiloh Retreat in Jefferson, New Hampshire, overlooking the White Mountains. The main lodge is very suitable for lectures and discussions, and at a very reasonable cost. This venue would easily accommodate a dozen or more students. Retreat director Greg Gordon is a delightful and accommodating host who shares our mission as a committed Presbyterian (PCA).

Instruction

Each of the four instructors gave a two hour talk interspersed with discussion and then two separate two hour periods to discuss pre-assigned readings. Stephen Tracey from the Lakeview OPC church has become a permanent instructor.

- Darryl Hart taught “The OPC and Global Calvinism”
- John Muether taught “A True Presbyterian Church at Last”
- Stephen Tracey taught “The View of an OPC Immigrant”
- Greg Reynolds taught “The Shape of OPC Ministry”

A fair amount of free time, as well as leisurely meals, allowed plenty of opportunity for informal discussion among participants and instructors.

2013 Assessment

Having completed its fourth year, the positive feedback from students continues to indicate that the Institute is achieving its stated purpose. It has been heartening to learn that half of this year’s yearlong internship applicants are alumni of the summer institute (8 of 16). Survey respondents all strongly agreed that the institute is beneficial in preparation for ordained ministry and all indicated that they would recommend the Institute to other ministerial candidates.

In response to our survey, all of the instructors were rated highly, and all respondents thought the reading was very appropriate (we have modified the length of readings and delivered in a more timely fashion, based on last years student feedback). Although the facilities were modest, food, accommodations, and meeting spaced continued to score well in student evaluations. Students appreciated the balance of free time and fellowship time. “I think this is a valuable and important part of considering ministry in the OPC. The accessibility, humility, and helpfulness of the faculty was something hard to match in a seminary environment.” wrote one student. “I don't think I exaggerated in rating everything as highly as I did. Each of the speakers was so willing to talk with students and presented such an informative lecture that there's not much left to say,” wrote another. Yet another wrote, “OPSI is important because it covers things you likely won't hear in seminary.”

The variety of seminaries and colleges represented continued to enhance the atmosphere of the Institute and the interaction among students. For the second year in a row we had two college students.

Newsletter

New this year is a quarterly newsletter sent to all students who attended the institute.



Shiloh Retreat, Jefferson, NH



2013 Summer Institute



The Presidential Range in the White Mountains from the Shiloh porch, Jefferson, NH