

# NEW HORIZONS

in the ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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## THE EIGHTY-SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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## New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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A row of thoughtful commissioners at the General  
 Assembly (from the far left): ruling elders Jim Berry,  
 Dan Powell, and David Gregg, ministers  
 (mostly hidden), Steve McDaniel, and Travis Yonkman,  
 and ruling elders David Noe, John Muether, and Darryl  
 Hart



# THE EIGHTY-SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY



**DANNY E. OLINGER //** For the third time in little over a decade, members and friends of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church from across the United States and Canada gathered at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. There among the charms of rural Iowa, eighty-one ministers and forty-six ruling elders commissioned

from the seventeen presbyteries of the OPC met on June 3–9 as the Eighty-second General Assembly, which is the governing body of the whole church.

## Wednesday, June 3

At 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, the previous moderator, the Rev. Craig Troxel, pastor of Bethel Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Illinois, constituted the assembly with prayer. He then led the opening worship service and preached on John 13, emphasizing Jesus' humble service. For the first time in five years, the opening worship service also included the sacrament of the Lord Supper, which was administered by the Rev. James Hoekstra, pastor of Immanuel OPC in Andover, Minnesota.

Following the worship service, the commissioners reassembled for the roll call. Normally the roll call does not draw attention, but this year extended applause broke out on the floor upon hearing "present" from the Rev. Dan Dillard. Less than two years ago, Mr. Dillard was so severely injured in a motorcycle accident that the doctors

doubted that he would survive (see "They Call Me the Miracle Man," in *New Horizons*, November 2014). He not only survived, but also was able to return to his call as pastor of Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church in Bend, Oregon. The Presbytery of the Northwest, in turn, commissioned him as one of their representatives to the assembly. When asked how he was doing throughout the week, his constant answer was to give praise to the Lord that he had graciously preserved him and to

rejoice in the prayers of the church on his behalf.

The assembly proceeded to elect the Rev. Archibald Allison, pastor of Emmaus OPC in Fort Collins, Colorado, as moderator. In his introductory remarks, Mr. Allison told the commissioners that his parents, the Rev. and Mrs. Samuel (Sonja) Allison, named him after the nineteenth-century Princeton theologian Archibald Alexander. They did so in order to remind and encourage him to stand firm in the orthodox cause of



Dan Dillard standing and being applauded at the Assembly



Moderator Archibald Allison

Presbyterianism. Mr. Allison's calm demeanor and steady hand in moderating served the Assembly well through the week of reports and deliberations.

#### Thursday, June 4

In 1973, the Fortieth General Assembly adopted a system of advisory committees in order to assist the assembly to proceed in an orderly manner. Commissioners are assigned to advisory committees, where they listen, give feedback, and recommend actions regarding the work of their particular standing committee of the general assembly, or recommend how to deal with communications, appeals, and overtures. The advisory committees did their work from 8:30 a.m. until 6:45 p.m. on Thursday.

Every full day the Assembly has a devotional before lunch, and on this day the Rev. Dale Van Dyke, pastor of Harvest OPC in Wyoming, Michigan, preached from Luke 9:10–17 on “Disciple Training.”

Once the work of the advisory committees was completed, Mr. Luke Brown, the statistician of the General Assembly, reported that the OPC had

reached a new total membership high of 31,122 by the end of 2014. Pointing out that membership in the OPC has grown on average 2.3 percent a year throughout its history, Mr. Brown praised God's faithfulness to his people and said that nothing but his grace keeps the OPC stable.

Although the membership increased, Mr. Brown also noted decreases in morning worship attendance (0.25 percent) and Sunday school attendance (2.05 percent) during 2014. He further observed that the number of ruling elders and deacons serving in congregations decreased. At the end of his report, Mr. Brown was given a standing ovation in recognition of his thirty years of service as statistician.

The evening session concluded with the report of the Committee on Foreign Missions (CFM). General secretary Mark Bube stated that the highlights of the year in foreign missions were the beginning of a new distinctively Reformed and Presbyterian church plant in Asia, the safe arrival of the Rev. and Mrs. Raymond (Michele) Call family in Uruguay as associate missionaries, and the generous giving of God's people to Worldwide Outreach that allowed the CFM to give a green light to the Rev. and Mrs. Charles (Connie) Jackson family to proceed to the field in Uganda. Mr. Jackson told the Assembly how the Lord had brought him to this point of leaving a congregation that he loved pastoring (Covenant Presbyterian Church in Vandalia, Ohio) and how he planned to minister at Knox Theological College.

#### Friday, June 5

The morning session on Friday opened with the report of the Committee on Christian Education (CCE). Of major interest from general secretary Danny Olinger's presentation was the putting forth of 428 hymns for a first reading of the proposed Psalter-Hymnal that the CCE is working on with the United Reformed Churches

of North America (URCNA). The Rev. Alan Strange, president of the Psalter-Hymnal Special Committee (PHSC), commented that 318 of the 428 hymns had previously appeared in *Trinity Hymnal*. Mr. Strange also informed the Assembly that the full list of hymns with musical accompaniment is available for review at psalterhymnal.org (username: psalter; password: hymnal). He encouraged all interested parties to study the proposed hymns and send comments pertaining to textual and musical matters to psalterhymnal@opc.org before December 31, 2015. He added that the PHSC and the CCE would take the feedback received and work with the URCNA in amending and perfecting the hymns to be presented for final approval at the Eighty-third (2016) General Assembly.

Speaking for the CCE, Mr. Troxel announced that it had erected a special exploratory committee to help the church address current cultural issues, such as marriage and sexuality. He stated that plans were being made to provide shared resources among churches at OPC.org, articles in *New Horizons* and *Ordained Servant*, and a potential pre-assembly conference.

General secretary John Shaw presented the report of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension (CHMCE). He stated that seven new



Statistician Luke Brown

church plants received both organizing pastors and funding in 2014. In addition, at least six mission works and two regional home missionaries are soon to be added. Also speaking during the report were the Rev. Chris Hartshorn, pastor of Anaheim Hills Presbyterian Church in Anaheim Hills, California; the Rev. Stephen Doe, regional home missionary of the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic; and the Rev. Bradley Peppo, pastor of Living Water OPC in Springfield, Ohio. The CHMCE also expressed its appreciation to the Rev. Mark Brown, pastor of Westminster OPC in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, who retired from the committee after twenty-five years of service.

After Mr. Doe's devotional from Luke 10:21-24 and lunch, the Assembly reassembled and heard the annual survey of the decades in which the commissioners were ordained. The decade with the largest group represented was the 1990s, with twenty-nine commissioners. Six commissioners were ordained in the 1960s, and Mr. A. M. Laurie, a ruling elder at El Camino OPC in Goleta, California, was ordained in the 1950s. There were twenty-seven commissioners attending the Assembly for the first time.

The Assembly then turned to consider Appeal 1, that of the Rev. John Carrick against the Presbytery of the Southeast. The commissioners heard from the Committee on Appeals and Complaints, the Advisory Committee, the appellant and his counsel, and the Presbytery representatives. This was followed by an extended period of questions and answers, and the final remarks by both the presbytery and the appellant, which finished right before the dinner break.

Upon returning from dinner, the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations moved that the Assembly accept the invitation extended by the 2014 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil to enter into a formal relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship. The Presbyterian Church of Brazil has roughly one million mem-

bers, 4,200 congregations, and 270 presbyteries. It also has sent out nearly 130 missionary families who are laboring in thirty countries. The Assembly approved the recommendation without dissent and stood in applause in appreciation of the remarks made after the vote by that church's representative, the Rev. Solano Portelia.

### **Saturday, June 6**

On Saturday, the Assembly continued to consider Appeal 1 throughout the morning, up to the devotional on Hebrews 8 from the Rev. Brian De Jong, pastor of Grace OPC in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. After lunch, the Assembly determined to sustain Appeal 1, which had the effect of reversing the previous judgment of the Presbytery of the Southeast.

The Rev. Lendell Smith, president of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries (CDM), and Mr. David Nakhla, CDM administrator, gave updates regarding the activities of the CDM. Mr. Nakhla gave a slide presentation on short-term missions opportunities in the OPC.

The business of the day concluded with the report of the Committee on Pensions from Mr. Roger Huibregtse, ruling elder at New Hope OPC in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

### **Monday June 8**

After a restful Lord's Day, the Assembly reconvened on Monday morning to consider an overture from the Presbytery of the Northwest regarding the status of OPC congregations located in Canada. Canadian law has strict regulations on the sharing of finances with non-Canadian non-profit organizations, which affects the giving of the six OPC congregations in Canada to Worldwide Outreach. In response to the Overture, the Assembly determined to establish a Committee to Consider Canadian Matters, tasked with studying the ecumenical and financial issues related to expanding the presence of the OPC in Canada.

The Assembly then took up mat-

ters related to the recent action of the Reformed Church of Japan (RCJ) to open up the offices of minister and ruling elder to some who do not meet the biblical qualifications. The Assembly urged the RCJ to rescind their action and affirm the teaching of 1 Timothy 2:12-14, which restricts these offices to qualified men. The Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations declared that if the RCJ does not rescind their action, the OPC would be left in a position where it could no longer affirm without reservation that the RCJ is still Reformed in its confessional standards, church order, and life.

The Rev. Travis Yonkman, pastor of Grace OPC in Hamilton Township, New Jersey, delivered a devotional on the beauty of Christ from Isaiah 53 that concluded the morning session.

The afternoon session opened with the Committee for the Historian informing the Assembly that for the first time it was changing "This Day in OPC History" online at OPC.org in midday. This was done to celebrate Mr. Robert Meeker's fifty years of service as a ruling elder at Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pennsylvania. In gratitude to the Lord for the gift of Mr. Meeker, the Assembly stood and applauded. Later that evening, Mr. Bube read a statement of appreciation for Mr. Meeker's wife, Eleanor, who went to be with the Lord on April 3, 2015.

The Assembly heard the report of the Committee on Coordination (COC) from Mr. John Mazunik, ruling elder at Redeemer OPC in Doraville, Georgia, and passed the recommendation of the COC to set the 2016 budget for the ministries of Worldwide Outreach at \$4,080,000, an increase of over 6 percent over the 2015 budget. It also approved a recommendation that, in the event that giving in the current year received by the CHMCE and the CCE should exceed the budgeted goal, any additional giving to Worldwide Outreach would be allocated to the CFM.

At the previous Assembly, a Committee to Study the Care for Ministers of the Church was erected. The Committee



*Ruling elder Bob Meeker, a corresponding member*

surveyed 361 OPC ministers at the beginning of 2015 and came to the conclusion that roughly one-third of OPC pastors appeared to be in good financial condition, including preparations for retirement. Another one-third appeared to be in less than good financial condition. With the information provided by the remaining one third, the Committee was unable to determine whether they were in good financial condition or not. Positively, the Committee noted that most ministers are willing to live sacrificially and cheerfully, even to their own detriment, for the sake of the gospel. Most ministers are not incurring unmanageable debt, and around 80 percent are homeowners. Negatively, more than 70 percent indicated that they cannot save money adequately, and over 50

percent did not believe that they had an adequate retirement plan. Over 40 percent also believed that they did not have an adequate compensation package. The Committee also reported that 25 percent of ministers have opted out of Social Security and will receive no benefits without other qualifying work history. Further, 64 percent of those ministers who have opted out have no disability insurance. Ministers between the ages of 56 and 65 expect to continue working for ten or more years, and those 65 years old or older for five years or more, partly due to inadequate savings and indebtedness. In light of these and other considerations, the Committee alerted the Assembly to a possible diaconal challenge if solutions are not found and implemented.

The Assembly then turned to consideration of Appeal 2, which was a complaint from the Rev. Marcus Renkema, pastor of Trinity OPC in Bothell, Washington, against the actions of the Presbytery of the Northwest in calling

a special meeting of the presbytery. The Assembly denied Appeal 2.

### **Tuesday, June 9**

The last session of the Assembly began with the continuation of the report of the Committee on Chaplains and Military Personnel (CCMP). Mr. Robert Coie, ruling elder at Westminster OPC in Westminster, California, informed the Assembly that the Rev. Bryan Weaver had to resign from the Committee due to declining health. The Assembly resolved to communicate with Mr. Weaver that it was praying for him in his time of need and thanking him for his life and active service as a gospel minister and chaplain for over a quarter of a century.

The Assembly then passed resolutions of thanksgiving for the Rev. Robert Needham and the Rev. Thomas Tyson for their long and dedicated service to the CCMP and the CCE, respectively.

At 11:59 a.m., Mr. Allison declared that the Eighty-second General Assembly of the OPC was dissolved. The next assembly is scheduled for June 8–14, 2016, at Sandy Cove Conference Center in the town of North East, Maryland. □

*The author is the general secretary of the Committee on Christian Education. The photos were taken by Tricia Stevenson, her daughter Rachel, and the author.*



*The commissioners to the Eighty-second General Assembly*

# SILENCE?



**WILLIAM SHISHKO //** Some years ago I was speaking at a conference in a country in which “hate crimes” legislation had been enacted. Already some pastors and others in that country had been charged with discrimination or hate speech because they had spoken out about the truth that homosexual practice was contrary to

the Word of God. Being well aware that such legislation was being considered in our nation, I was curious to find out how Reformed pastors in that country were responding to this challenge by the civil authorities and the dominant culture.

On the Saturday morning of the conference, I was asked to address a group of such pastors from a variety of Reformed and Presbyterian denominations in an informal interchange of questions and answers. Once the pastors had finished their questions of me, I asked them: How did they intend to deal with this challenge as ministers of the Word of God committed to make known the whole counsel of God “whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account” (OPC ordination vow #6 for ministers)? For several long seconds, pregnant with significance, there was no answer. Finally, one of the senior ministers in the group quietly offered: “We simply avoid the issue.”

I was stunned. I was shocked. And in a response that smacks very much of the New Yorker that I am (for whom

tact too often takes a backseat to bluntness), I retorted: “Brothers, do you fear God?” And, to this day, I have no regrets for my New York bluntness. When fear

**“If I profess with loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.” —MARTIN LUTHER**

of man replaces fear of God, particularly in the church communities that are to be known by their faithfulness to the Word of God, we are in big trouble.

## The Situation in America

Now, as the threats of civil consequences for stands on such issues as “same-sex marriage” and “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender” matters come close to our doorsteps in our own nation,

I am deeply concerned about how our own confessionally faithful Reformed and Presbyterian churches will respond. And, yes, I am particularly concerned about the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in all of this. I am concerned for its pastors, teachers, chaplains, congregation members, local churches, presbyteries, and the General Assembly itself. Will we be silent when the Word of God compels us to speak?

Some may be nervous about civil penalties when our proclamations and our practices run against the grain of faddish political correctness that increasingly seeks to impose itself by the force of law. Will you be charged with hate speech? With discrimination? With seeking to “convert” someone from a lifestyle for which God commands repentance and change? Will our churches lose their tax-exempt status if they seek to honor God rather than modern pundits (cf. Acts 5:29)? For some, this may be creating anxiety. In the face of that, will you become silent?

*[Continued on page 20]*

# THEOLOGY FOR EVERY WOMAN



AIMEE BYRD // “What gave you such a passion to encourage and equip women to be better theologians?” “How did you become such an avid reader and lover of theology?” These are questions that I am often asked. It all started in a coffee shop. I was a newlywed fresh out of college, and although my degree was in education and

art, what I really wanted to do was open a coffee shop. My ideas and business plan were appealing enough for my mom to want to go in with me as a business partner. The Mudd Puddle opened its doors in downtown Frederick, Maryland, in 1998. I was a mere twenty-two years old.

Although we were not a “Christian coffee shop” as such, mom and I decided to have some Christian books available in a reading corner. Every now and then we would play Christian music or have Christian bands perform live on the weekends. Apparently, word got around that mom and I had some Christian paraphernalia, and all sorts of people from different churches began to frequent our café.

## From Coffee Barista to Bible Study Leader

Being a coffee barista is similar to working as a bartender because you begin to learn people’s life stories and know what they are going to order as they are walking in the door. Many customers became my friends. I began having

some great conversations about the Christian faith with a handful of women from different backgrounds. It got to the point where a few of them asked me if I would be willing to lead a weekly Bible study after hours. I was a bit apprehensive about leading this group because I needed a teacher myself. But they were persistent, so I organized it on the condition that I would be more of a facilitator of conversation and study than a teacher.

Most of you reading this know just how naive I was. Our small group of women represented an eclectic mix of denominations from Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, nondenominational, and Pentecostal churches. I thought that when we all sat together and opened the Word of God, we would all be able to recognize and submit to the plain text of Scripture.

What I didn’t realize was that we were all pretty bad theologians, and we came to the text with our own ideas that we read into Scripture. I was not equipped to be a good teacher. I recognized the need to provide a confession

from my church for the Bible study on what we believe about man, God, and his Word.

Thankfully, I was able to get help from the elders of my church, and they worked with me and brought our little Bible study in as a small group under their leadership. But I had so many questions. That’s when my pastor introduced me to systematic theology books that he thought would be helpful. He shared his commentaries and answered many of my questions. I remember thinking, “Wow, I get to read these?” It seemed like material only seminary students and pastors read. I considered it both a great privilege and a great responsibility.

Of course, the more I read, the more questions I had. This led me to discover so many great teachers of the faith. Some of the first I remember reading were Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, and St. Augustine. I began reading R.C. Sproul’s books, as I found he was helpful for teaching. Michael Horton’s *Putting Amazing Back into Grace* helped me to better

understand the dispensational background I grew up in.

The next thing you know, I was asking for Calvin's *Institutes* and his *Commentaries* for my birthday. My husband and I were at a Baptist church at this early stage of our marriage, and he had come from a Catholic upbringing. So this group of women wanting to study Scripture together also had Matt asking our pastor more questions. And in our own conversations and learning, the doors of the Reformed faith were opened wide for us.

That small group of women grew as more women from my church joined us. It's natural for me to be conversational, intuitive, and maybe even a bit charismatic in personality, so I knew how important it was to have my passions and gifts grounded in the truth. Some of these women from the coffee shop had been taken in by damaging teaching. I began researching different authors and well-known preachers whom they would quote from radio broadcasts or televised sermons, and I was horrified. There is a lot of false teaching being marketed to Christian women.

### Finding Good Books

When I began to look at the books offered at the Christian bookstore, I was disgusted. Why would I want to go from reading Jeremiah Burrough's *Evil of Evils to The Prayer of Jabez?* And the books targeted specifically for women are even worse. They are insulting. It makes me sad that so many women walk into the Christian bookstore thinking they can buy something to help equip them in the faith, and they may very well walk away worse than they were when they came in.

So as we would go through a book of Scripture, or do a book study in my women's small group, I began constantly comparing the truth of God's Word to what is being falsely taught about it in the so-called evangelical subculture, as well as combating what secular culture proclaims.

We are all theologians—that is, we all have our own ideas about who God

is. The question is, are we good theologians who know God truly, according to his Word, or are we poor ones? Jesus prayed to the Father, "And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3). Jesus prayed for us to be good theologians. It is an eternal matter!

Learning more about Reformed theology eventually led my husband and me to the Presbyterian church. And after spending over a decade as a Presbyterian, I can say that Presbyterian women are just as susceptible to read and teach poor theology.

Lately, some of us women have been speaking up that we want more depth in our studies. We are insulted by the theologically light women's studies that barely scratch the surface, over-stereotype us, or teach harmful doctrine. We want to be well equipped to articulate our faith and be serious students of Scripture. Men don't have to read countless books on more Christian approaches to car repair and taking out the trash, but we seem to be flooded with so-called Christian ways to slim down for God and organize our homes. I have to say, my Pinterest account is much more interesting than these Christian books.

### The Value of Women's Small Groups

And yet women's small groups are valuable in the church. In this information age that we are living in, many of us are finding that the conveniences of technology cut us off from meaningful, mentoring relationships that shepherd us in our unique role. In Titus 2, the apostle Paul points out the importance of women teaching and learning from one another. Intentional small-group studies under the supervision of

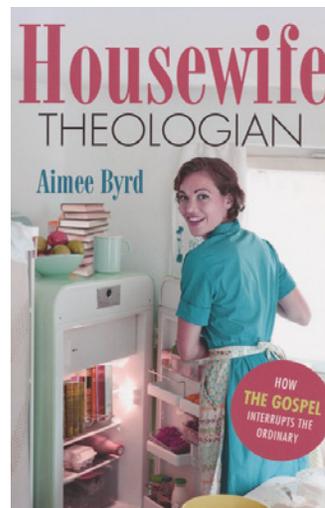
local church elders provide a good opportunity for women to both share and grow in their faith.

While it is certainly prudent to discuss some of our distinctive roles as women in these groups, that doesn't mean that we want the low-calorie version. Thankfully, there has been more on the menu for us lately. There has been a resurgence of Christian women writers who care about good theology—praise God! I am thankful for authors like Nancy Guthrie, Kathleen Nielson, Melissa Kruger, Gloria Furman, and Hannah Anderson. I encourage you to read them and use their books in your studies. They keep the focus on God, particularly the revelation he gives us in Christ through the gospel, rather than on our own skills as a wife, mother, or hostess with the mostess, even when some are teaching on these topics.

But we don't need to limit ourselves only to women authors and women's issues. While it is good for us to read about feminism, marriage, parenting, and homemaking, there is more to a woman than this. Ask your elders about some good commentaries to use for an expositional Bible study. Ask your pastor what systematic or biblical theologies you might learn well from. Become a well-rounded theologian. Read from some dead guys (and gals). They aren't just for seminary students and pastors.

My coffee shop had the motto, "Fuel for the thinkers of today." It sure was that for me and the group of women who loved to talk about how what we believe about God shapes the way we live our everyday lives. Boy does it ever! ☐

*The author has just become a member of New Hope OPC in Frederick, Md. Her book, Housewife Theologian: How the Gospel Interrupts the Ordinary, was reviewed in the July 2014 issue of New Horizons.*



# NOT THAT I SEEK THE GIFT

// LARRY OLDAKER

“Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account” (Phil. 4:17 NKJV).

Through Worldwide Outreach, we are all partners in the great gospel endeavor. Through our common commitment as Orthodox Presbyterians, we can link our resources together in the propagation of the gospel. Like the Philippians, we are partakers of this gospel together for the glory of God.

The apostle Paul addressed the Philippian believers as those who were partakers with him in the gospel and grace of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1). Unity in Christ bound the apostle with the churches and especially with the Philippian believers who shared with him in the demands of his gospel work. As Christ served all believers by humble obedience to God’s redemptive plan, Christians are called to be servants of one another in Christ (Phil. 2). By this union in Christ, we are enabled to “press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus,” for our common citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:14, 20 ESV).

Through this theme of unity, Paul encouraged the generosity of the Philippian church. Paul was no huckster. He wasn’t asking for money so that he could live the good life. Nor did Paul simply want the Philippian church to support his vision of the gospel. Paul wrote from the context of having learned Christian contentment in every situation. He knew what it was like to be in need and to be full. His learned contentment wasn’t found in having temporal benefits, but in his union with Jesus Christ. It was Christ’s benefits, Christ’s strength, and Christ himself that made the apostle Paul content. He didn’t need the support of the Philippians; he had all that he needed in Christ. Paul’s example and teaching encouraged the Philippians to trust in Christ’s provision for all their needs.

Paul reminded the Philippians that they

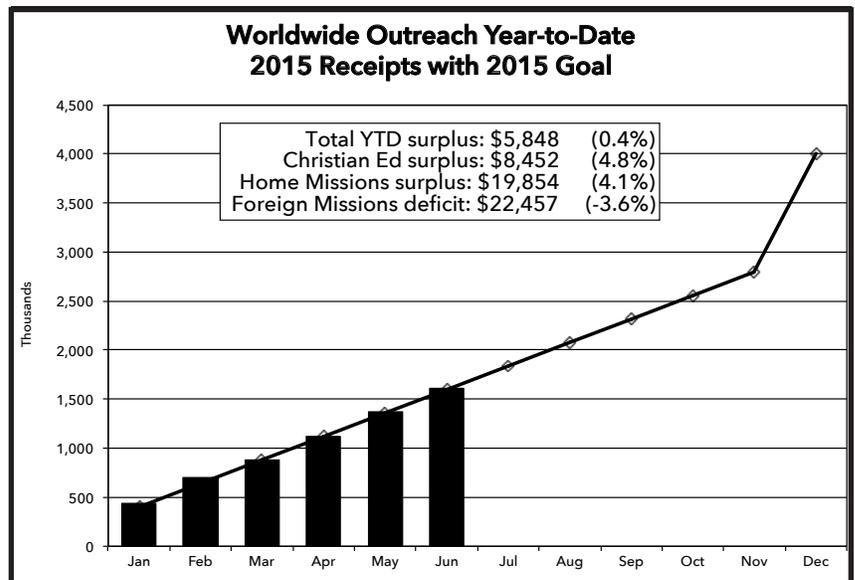
had done well to share in his needs. Again and again they had been the ones to share in his concerns (Phil. 4:15–16). Their sharing in Paul’s necessities was a tangible expression of their awareness of their union in Christ with the apostle and the whole church. Their action on behalf of Paul and others was a good thing, a “sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.”

In Philippians 4:17, Paul comes to the point of his encouragement of the Philippian church. The goal for Paul was not the receipt of the gift of support itself. Rather, he saw that by giving, the Philippian believers were concretely acting out their belief in their union in Christ. He saw their giving as a fruit of faith, a good work produced by the Holy Spirit.

We should be motivated by our union in Christ to give in support of the gospel work of Worldwide Outreach. By faith in Christ, we are united to other Christians. We have a corporate union with our children, who need to grow up in the Lord through Christian education. In Christ, we partake of the struggles of those men that God is calling and equipping to be gospel messengers in churches and in missions. In Christ, we share in the gospel labors of home and foreign missionaries. And yes, in Christ we are fellow citizens with those in church and mission contexts who are coming to faith in Christ and growing in him.

Throughout the Bible, we see the promise of the benefit that comes to the giver as well as the benefit of the gift to the receiver. It is not that the Christian should act out of selfish interest by looking for a personal benefit from giving. Rather, the Christian should be, in Christ, seeking the benefit of serving others in love.

*The author is regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Ohio.*



## AUG–SEPT

1. **Ben and Heather Hopp**, Haiti. Pray for the fellowship and commitment of new believers attending worship services. / **Mike and Katy Myers**, Hartwell, Ga. Pray for God to sustain Natalie Ellen Roper and her family at Heritage Presbyterian Church through the continuing trial of cancer. / **Linda Foh**, OPC.org website technical assistant.
2. Home Missions staff administrator **Sean Gregg**. / Associate missionaries **Octavius and Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray that the Reformed faith will take deep root in Haiti. / Summer interns: **Scott (and Elizabeth) Creel** at Redemption OPC in Gainesville, Fla., and **Jeremy (and Gwen) Baker** at Calvin Presbyterian Church in Phoenix, Ariz.
3. **Woody and Laurie Lauer**, Numazu, Japan. Pray for Woody's teaching ministry at several seminaries. / **Mika and Christina Edmondson**, Grand Rapids, Mich. Pray for New City Fellowship's outreach ministries. / Summer interns: **Andy (and Anna) Smith** at Providence OPC in Temecula, Calif., and **Ryan (and Rochelle) Cavanaugh** at Faith Presbyterian Church in Garland, Texas.
4. **Ben and Sarah Miller**, Syosset, N.Y. Pray for twelve conversions among the unchurched and underchurched around Trinity Church. / **Cal and Edie Cummings**, Sendai, Japan. Pray for contacts who are hearing the gospel for the first time. / **Robert (and Adelinda) Canode**, yearlong intern at Providence Presbyterian Church in Pflugerville, Tex.
5. Affiliated missionaries **Craig and Ree Coulbourne** (on furlough) and **Linda Karner**, Japan. / **Everett and Kimberly Henes**, Hillsdale, Mich. Pray for a new college Bible study that will begin this fall at Hillsdale OPC. / **Ryan (and Rachel) Heaton**, summer intern at Tyler Presbyterian Church in Tyler, Texas.
6. **Jonathan and Lauryn Shishko**, Queens, N.Y. Pray that God's elect will be brought into Reformation Presbyterian Church. / **Kaz and Katie Yaegashi**, Yamagata, Japan. Pray for the teaching and outreach ministries with which they work. / **Mark (and Katie) Stumpff**, summer intern at Providence OPC in Mifflinburg, Pa.
7. Pray for **Charles and Connie Jackson**, Mbale, Uganda, as they begin their labors in Uganda. / **Jim and Bonnie Hoekstra**, Andover, Minn. Pray that Immanuel OPC's recent mailing will bring new residents to worship. / Short-term missions coordinator **David Nakhla**. Pray that the labors of summer short-term teams and individuals would be used by the Lord to draw the hearts of all involved to himself.
8. Pray for **Lacy Andrews**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast, and exploratory church-planting work in the region. / Affiliated missionaries **Jerry and Marilyn Farnik**, Prague, Czech Republic. / **Joel (and Leigh) Fregia**, summer intern at New Covenant Community Church in Joliet, Ill.
9. Pray for the needs of retired missionaries **Betty Andrews, Greet Rietkerk**, and **Young and Mary Lou Son**. / **John and Wenny Ro**, Chicago, Ill. (downtown). Pray that more people will come to Gospel Life Presbyterian Church's outreach Bible studies. / **Dan (and Megan) York**, summer intern at Covenant OPC in Kennewick (Tri-Cities), Wash.
10. **Andrew and Billie Moody**, San Antonio, Tex. Pray for God's blessing on San Antonio Reformed Church's officer training class. / Pray for missionary associate **J. B.**, Asia, as she concludes her term of service and returns to the U.S. / **David Haney**, director of finance and planned giving for the Committee on Coordination.
11. **Ethiopian Reformed Presbyterian Church**. Pray for Tony Curto as he ministers to the believers and church leaders. / **Ron and Carol Beabout**, Gaithersburg, Md. Pray for congregational unity at Trinity Reformed Church. / **Alan Strange**, chairman of the Psalter-Hymnal Committee.
12. **Brandon and Laurie Wilkins**, Crystal Lake, Ill. Pray that God would bless the witness of Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church. / Pray for safe travel for Foreign Missions general secretary **Mark Bube** as he visits our mission stations in Ethiopia and Uganda. / **Daniel (and Amber) Doleys**, summer intern at Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, Ohio.
13. Pray for Foreign Missions administrative assistant **Linda Posthuma** and secretary **Abigail Yates** (leaving the OPC offices on August 14). / **Jeremiah and Elizabeth Montgomery**, State College, Pa. Pray that the people of Resurrection OPC will meet non-Christians seeking God. / Summer interns: **Aijalon Church** at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Ill., and **Bulut Yasar** at New Life OPC in Williamsport, Pa.
14. **Jeremy Logan**, Mt. Vernon, Ohio. Pray that God will give Knox Presbyterian Church wisdom in reaching out to the community. / **Mark and Jeni Richline**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the young people. / **B. A. Snider**, marketing coordinator at Great Commission Publications.
15. **Ray and Michele Call**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for



Andrew and Billie Moody

- efforts to find a meeting location for the new church. / **Robert and Christy Arendale**, Houston, Tex. Pray for the Word and Spirit to sustain Cornerstone OPC. / 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.
- 16. Drew and Sonya Adcock**, Williamsport, Pa. Pray for the discipleship and ministry of Omega OPC. / **Brian and Dorothy Wingard**, South Africa. Pray for their preparations to teach classes at Mukhanyo Theological College. / Pray for **the students and instructors** of the Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC during this week's Intensive Training at the OPC offices.
- 17.** Pray for our **missionary associates in Uganda**, assisting the Mission in various ways. / **Jay and Andrea Bennett**, Neon, Ky. Pray for God to bless Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church's outreach and evangelism efforts. / Summer interns: **Zachary (and Anne) Simmons** at Grace Fellowship in Philadelphia, Pa., and **Wayne (and Suzanne) Veenstra** at Harvest OPC in Wyoming, Mich.
- 18. Tom and Martha Albaugh**, Pittsburgh, Pa. Pray that God's elect would be brought into Redeemer OPC Mission. / **James and Jenny Knox**, M.D. and R.N., Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for their health and strength as they labor in a tropical climate. / Yearlong interns: **Matthew (and Elin) Prather** at Harvest OPC in San Marcos, Calif., and **Brian Guinto** at Grace Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Ohio.
- 19. Al and Laurie Tricarico**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the church in Nakaale will continue to grow. / **Greg and Stella Hoadley**, Fargo, N.Dak. Pray that Grace OPC's outreach efforts will bear fruit. / *New Horizons* staff: **Jim Scott**, managing editor; **Pat Clawson**, editorial assistant; **Sarah Pederson**, proofreader; **Chris Tobias**, cover designer.
- 20. Christopher and Ann Malamisuro**, Cincinnati, Ohio. Pray that VBS families will visit Good Shepherd OPC. / **Bob and Martha Wright**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the diaconal and construction work in Karamoja. / Yearlong interns: **Roberto (and Irma) Quiñones** at Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana in San Juan, P.R., and **Benjamin (and Emily) Gordon** at Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pa.
- 21. David and Sunshine Okken**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that they will have wisdom in developing strategies for ministry. / **Jonathan and Kristin Moersch**, Capistrano Beach, Calif. Give thanks for recent growth at Trinity Presbyterian Church. / Yearlong interns: **Lowell (and Mae) Ivey** at Covenant Community Church in Taylors, S.C., and **Darryl (and Anita) Kretschmer** at Lakeview OPC in Rockport, Maine.
- 22.** Home Missions general secretary **John Shaw**. / **Eric and Dianna Tuininga**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for students attending primary schools started by several local OPCU churches. / Pray for **Ross Graham**, stated clerk, as he works to produce the minutes and yearbook of the 82nd General Assembly.
- 23. Heero and Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray that young people who attended July's English/Bible camps will want to come to church. / **Bill and Sessie Welzien**, Key West, Fla. Pray that God would add new people to Keys Presbyterian Church. / Air Force chaplains: **C. Phillip (and Melanie) Hollstein III** and **Cornelius (and Deidre) Johnson**.
- 24. Eric and Donna Hausler**, Naples, Fla. Pray for more young families to join Christ the King Presbyterian Church. / Pray for Foreign Missions associate general secretary **Douglas Clawson**, in Colombia assisting with the training of church leaders. / **Janet Birkmann**, Diaconal Ministries administrative assistant.
- 25.** Pray for new missionary associates **M. D., D. V., and S. Z.**, Asia, as the school year begins. / **Jim and Eve Cassidy**, Austin, Tex. Praise the Lord for newly elected officers at South Austin Presbyterian Church. / Yearlong interns: **Daniel Adams** at Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pa., and **Charles Williams** at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Ada, Mich.
- 26. Brad and Cinnamon Peppo**, Springfield, Ohio. Pray for the ministry of Living Water OPC. / **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia. Pray that God would bring new students to the Bible studies, with hearts open to the Word. / Yearlong interns: **Caleb (and Alexa) Nelson** at First Church of Merrimack in Merrimack, N.H., and **Tim (and Jeni) Son** at First Presbyterian Church, North Shore in Ipswich, Mass.
- 27.** Missionary associates **Mr. and Mrs. C.**, Asia. Pray for a fruitful term of teaching and learning. / **Joseph and Carla Fowler**, Gastonia, N.C. Pray that God would add several new families to Reformation OPC. / **Jonathan (and Kerri Ann) Cruse**, summer intern at Westminster OPC in Hollidaysburg, Pa.
- 28.** Pray for **Larry Oldaker**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Ohio, as he visits presbytery mission works. / **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia. Pray for Mr. M. as he resumes his ministry on the field following a yearlong furlough. / Pray for **Danny Olinger**, Christian Education general secretary, as he edits *New Horizons*.
- 29.** Pray for tentmaker missionary **T. L. L.**, Asia, as she works with the university's English conversation teachers. / **Jim and Tricia Stevenson**, Tulsa, Okla. Pray for growth within the congregation of Providence OPC. / **Michael (and Melissa) Spangler**, summer intern at Providence Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, N.C.
- 30. Phil Strong**, Lander, Wyo. Pray that Grace Reformed Fellowship will continue to grow in spiritual maturity. / **Ben and Melanie Westerveld**, Quebec, Canada. Thank the Lord for ministry opportunities provided to St-Marc Church. / Army chaplain: **Paul (and Mary) Berghaus**.
- 31.** Missionary associate **Jennifer Nelson**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for follow-up with contacts from this summer's English Bible camps. / **Joshua and Jessica Lyon**, Carson, Calif. Pray that visitors to Grace OPC will desire to join. / *Ordained Servant* proofreader **Diane Olinger**.

# THE DANGERS OF NEGLECTING THE ASSEMBLY

// SHANE LEMS



One side of the congregation of Falls Presbyterian Church in Menomonee Falls, Wis.

“Do we have to go to church today?” This is a question my parents remember me asking more than a few times when I was growing up. When I was eleven, there were times when I would have preferred to stay home on Sunday and play with my Lego bricks, rather than go to church. I knew that going to church was a good thing to do, but it seemed to me that going to church once or twice a month was *good enough*. That was my logic as a child in a Christian home.

One problem in the Christian life is that some adults use this same logic: going to church is good, but going once or twice a month is good enough. It’s one thing for a child to reason this way; it’s a very different thing for an adult to do it. I know there are legitimate reasons why some people can’t meet for worship regularly (illness, emergencies, etc.), but there are also illegitimate ones (sports, TV shows, video games, etc.). For now, I want to answer the following question using Scripture and biblical principles: What is wrong with habitually neglecting public worship?

**1. It is against God’s will.** In Hebrews 10:25, Scripture clearly rebukes Christians for “neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some.” Without debating the number of worship services these people were missing, it is safe to say that the early church was *regularly* meeting together to worship Christ (see Acts 2:42). But later, when Hebrews was written, some in the church were very *irregular* in their attendance, and they were clearly called out for skipping church (see WLC 119). It is displeasing to God when his people habitually neglect public worship services; it does not bring him glory and honor, because it is against his will.

**2. It is harmful to the Christian’s faith.** God has promised that through his Word he will powerfully bless his people. Faith in Christ comes through hearing his Word (Rom.

10:17), and that faith is strengthened through the same Word. The Word of God’s grace is “able to build you up” in faith (Acts 20:32; see also Ps. 119). We call preaching an ordinary means of grace because it is one of the primary ways in which God showers his grace upon his people (see WLC 154). If we habitually neglect preaching, we habitually neglect God’s showers of grace (the same can be said of the sacraments). And neglecting showers of grace allows the seed of faith to wither, rather than making it grow in our hearts. So think of habitually neglecting to worship like habitually neglecting to water and fertilize a garden in an arid climate. The plants will not grow. Likewise, our faith will not grow if it is not regularly watered by the Word and sacraments.

**3. It hinders Christian fellowship.** Hebrews 10:24–25 not only talks about attending worship services, but also talks about Christian fellowship in the same sentence. Alongside the exhortation to stop missing worship services, the author of Hebrews tells God’s people to stir one another up to love and good works, and also to encourage one another in the faith as we await Christ’s return. Assembly, encouragement, love, and good works go hand in hand. This kills our self-centered, individualistic attitude and helps us think and live in a more covenantal, corporate way. After all, Christianity is not a solo endeavor, nor does it square with the individualism of our culture. Jesus said, “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35 NASB). A true Christian doesn’t say, “I love Jesus, but not the church.” If a person frequently skips worship, he is questioning the importance of fellowship and love for God’s people (see also WCF 26.2).

**4. It diminishes God’s praise.** The Bible is full of examples of God’s people publicly singing praises to his name and honoring him together. For example, Psalm 34:3 says, “Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!” (cf. Ps. 95:1–2, 6; Rev. 19:7). When we rarely sing

praises to God with his people, it diminishes our praise of him—praise that we should want to give him, together with his people: “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the LORD!’” (Ps. 122:1). Habitually missing worship services means habitually neglecting to praise God with his people. This even sets a bad example for unbelievers, who might begin to think that one can be a Christian without attending public worship services. Indeed, it is inconsistent for a person to call himself a Christian, but not care about praising the Lord with other Christians.

**5. It confuses other Christians.** Christians have been called “churchgoers,” and this is a biblical way to think. When a Christian frequently skips worship services, other Christians may begin to wonder why this person is not going to church. Or, if a child in a Christian family notices that a certain other family never comes to worship, that child might wonder why that family is not worshipping. The Bible teaches that if a person is truly a Christian, he sticks with God’s people (1 John 2:19). In other words, if a Christian frequently skips church, he is setting a poor example for other Christians and causing them confusion (rather than building them up as he should). Perhaps people who frequently skip church need to think more about how this might harm other Christians. Habitual neglect of public worship is a blemish on a Christian’s profession of faith that can cause other Christians to stumble.

**6. It obstructs true piety.** In the church’s liturgy, God’s people learn the rhythm of the Christian life: praise, confession of sin, forgiveness of sin, prayer, hearing God’s word, and learning how to live for him. These elements of worship help keep our Christian life oriented in the right direction; liturgy is like a Christian “recalibration.” Habitually avoiding worship services makes us forget the right way to walk as disciples, casts confusion on morality, messes up our consciences, makes us prone to shame and guilt, and throws a fog on the realities of God and his grace. As a friend recently reminded me, the psalmist’s confusion about reality was cleared up when he went into the sanctuary of God (Ps. 73). Neglecting worship services gets in the way of true Christian piety.

**7. It makes pastors’ and elders’ tasks difficult.** God has called the pastor(s) and elders of a local church to care for the flock, to pay attention to it, to love it, to set good examples for it, to pray for it, and so forth (see Acts 20:28–31; 1 Tim. 3:4; 1 Pet. 5:1–3). Church leaders are accountable to God for how they lead and care for the flock (Heb. 13:17). When a person habitually neglects public worship, the pastor cannot preach to that person, and the elders begin to worry about that person’s faith and life. Certainly pastors and elders should do their duty even outside the public worship service, but it is very difficult for them to do their task of shepherding when someone constantly misses worship services. In fact, Hebrews says that Christians should “obey” their leaders, “submit to them,” and “imitate their faith” (Heb. 13:7, 17). When a Christian constantly dodges the worship services that the elders have

called for, he is not obeying and submitting to his leaders or showing honor to them (think also in terms of the fifth commandment). Despite the fact that most Americans don’t like authority figures, the Bible is quite clear: we must honor the elders and pastors that God has put in authority over us. Neglecting worship services makes pastors’ and elders’ jobs difficult.

**8. It is making light of membership vows.** Although some churches today care little about membership, historic Reformed churches have membership vows that are taken from various places in Scripture (cf. Deut. 6:13; Ezra 10:5; Pss. 50:14; 116:14). When a Christian joins one of Christ’s churches, he makes certain covenantal, public promises. In the OPC, a person vows, among other things, “to participate faithfully in this church’s worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its government, and to heed its discipline.” If a person makes a vow in church, and then bails on the church by habitually forsaking worship, that person is not keeping the vows he made. Here is where the ninth commandment comes into play (see also WCF 22.5).

**9. It is a sign of apathy in the faith.** If a person loves the Lord with fervency, loves his Word with passion, and loves other Christians, he will want to worship Christ with other Christians (cf. Ps. 122:1; Isa. 2:3). I don’t know of any Christian who fervently loves Jesus, but never sings to him with his people and doesn’t care to sit at his feet with his people to hear his Word. I do, however, know of Christians who grow lazy in the faith and would rather watch a football game or relax on the deck than sing to Jesus with other Christians. John Newton once wrote a letter to his congregation on this very topic. Among other things, he said, “Most of you agree with me that Scripture is God’s revelation. But do not some of you act inconsistently with your acknowledged principles? Your business and entertainment indispose you for due observation of our church services. You have other things to do, so you miss many sermons.... Many people can give their attention to trivial entertainment for several hours without weariness, but their patience is quickly exhausted under a sermon where the principles of Scripture are applied to the conscience.”

**10. It invites Satan’s temptations.** I once saw a clip on a nature show on hyenas and how they hunt for food. They often look for and hunt the antelope that is a bit removed from the herd, since there is protection in numbers. Similarly, Satan and his demons often attack Christians at a vulnerable point: when they are alone, not accountable to anyone, not hearing God’s word regularly, and not benefiting from Christian strength in Christian numbers. Satan is no idiot—he knows the best times to attack. It is no coincidence that Peter says Satan is like a hungry lion on the prowl (1 Pet. 5:8). The church is Christ’s flock, and straying from the flock is spiritually dangerous. To remove oneself from the assembly is to expose oneself to Satan’s attacks and invite his arrows of temptation.

**11. It is a step down the road of apostasy.** The track record of apostates is to go to church for a while, then less frequently, then not at all. Hebrews 10 doesn't just command us to worship regularly with the assembly; it also warns of the hellish punishment awaiting those who forsake Christ. If someone is truly a Christian, he will not leave the flock. However, those who left for good "were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us" (1 John 2:19 NASB). William L. Lane wrote this on Hebrews 10:24–25:

The writer regarded the desertion of the communal meetings as utterly serious. It threatened the corporate life of the congregation and almost certainly was a prelude to apostasy on the part of those who were separating themselves from the assembly. The neglect of worship and fellowship was symptomatic of a catastrophic failure to appreciate the significance of Christ's priestly ministry and the access to God it provided. (*Hebrews 9–13*, p. 290)

I realize that more could be said on this subject. I also know that many people have very busy lives and find it hard to manage their time. It takes commitment, resolve, a sense of duty, and self-discipline to worship regularly with God's people. This is something we should all pray about and ask God for grace to carry out. Thankfully, when we do go to church, we hear the gospel of Christ and are refreshed and renewed in the Christian faith.

Since my list above is a negative one, I'd like to end on a positive note. Using the same points as above, we can positively say that regularly attending public worship services (1) is God's will for you, (2) strengthens your fellowship with other saints, (3) helps you praise God better, (4) is beneficial for your faith, (5) builds other Christians up, (6) helps keep Satan's attacks at bay, (7) keeps you from straying off the path, (8) inflames true piety, (9) makes the pastors' and elders' jobs easier and more enjoyable, (10) helps you keep your church vows, and (11) is a sign of strong faith.

See you on Sunday!

*The author is the pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Hammond, Wis. Unless otherwise indicated, he quotes the ESV.*

## ☆ Congratulations

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

- **Joyce Wang**, Providence OPC, Temecula, CA
- **Jill Ivory**, Christ Presbyterian Church, St. Charles, MO

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

- **Claire Montgomery**, Redeemer OPC, Beaver-creek, OH

## ABCs of PRESBYTERIANISM All the King's Men (2)

Larry Wilson

The OPC's Form of Government V.3 says:

The ordinary and perpetual offices in the church are those given for the ministry of the Word of God, of rule, and of mercy. Those who share in the rule of the church may be called elders (presbyters), bishops, or church governors. Those who minister in mercy and service are called deacons. Those elders who have been endowed and called of Christ to labor also in the Word and teaching are called ministers.

In our day, however, much of the church has doubts about this division of labor. And it's not hard to figure out why. The New Testament doesn't elaborate much on these offices. Look, for example, at Philippians 1:1: "Paul ... to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons." This mentions two categories—*overseers* (or *elders*) and *deacons*. What does that mean?

Does it mean that there are no ministers in the church? Well, that is what Brethren churches think. They historically have had elders and deacons, and have regarded ordained ministers as an unbiblical innovation.

Or does it mean that preachers are the *only* elders in the church? Well, that is what Baptist churches think. They historically have had ministers and deacons, but have regarded ruling elders to be an unbiblical innovation.

But Presbyterians have insisted that God did not inspire the New Testament in a vacuum. He never intended for us to read the New Testament in isolation from the Old. When we read the New Testament in light of its Old Testament background, then this conundrum is solved. It shows that the Bible sometimes uses the term *elders* in an *inclusive* sense to mean "those who share the ministry of rule in the church." In other words, the Bible uses the term *elders* (or *overseers*) to refer to an order of church officers which includes both ministers and ruling elders.

## ● Out of the Mouth . . .

Our daughter-in-law was teaching her son Joshua, 3, the answer to the catechism question, "Why did God make you and all things?" The correct answer was "For his own glory." But Joshua gave this answer: "God made me and brother and all things for his jewelry."

—Richard and Virginia Moore  
Round Rock, Tex.

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

# ANSWERED PRAYERS AT HILLSDALE OPC

// EVERETT A. HENES



Hillsdale leadership: Richard Gamble (elder), Everett Henes (pastor), John Davis (deacon), and Darryl Hart (elder)

At the organizational service of Hillsdale OPC in Hillsdale, Michigan, on Friday, April 17, the Lord answered the prayers of many people going back many years. The story of Hillsdale OPC is just that, a story of answered prayers. I've had the opportunity over the last few months to reflect on this as we've given thanks many times for God's faithfulness. I'd like to share some of those stories with you now.

Ninety minutes. Before October 2007, that is how long you would have to drive from Hillsdale in order to reach the nearest Orthodox Presbyterian church. The nearest NAPARC congregation wasn't much closer at seventy-five minutes. This state of affairs might not seem so significant, since Hillsdale is not exactly a hotbed of Reformed theology. But there was a need that became more apparent as the years passed. In fact, OP minister Peter Wallace noticed the empty space on his NAPARC church map years ago, and he began to pray.

This story begins in 1985. That was when Chuck and Barbara Williams moved to the nearby town of Pittsford from the Philadelphia area, having attended Calvary OPC in Glenside (Barb is a daughter of the Schnitzel family). When the Williamses first arrived, they reached out to the OPC's Committee on Home Missions, but there was not sufficient interest to start a work in the area. They continued to attend the French Creek Bible Conference and maintained many relationships within the OPC, even as they attended the nearest faithful churches they could find.

Jump forward about ten years. One of the unique aspects of the area is the presence of Hillsdale College, a small liberal arts college established in 1844. Hillsdale College is best known for being one of a handful of schools in the United States that rejects any kind of government funding. Through the years, several students have come from OP congregations. Four students helped to continue our story.

Archibald Allison, pastor of Emmaus OPC in Fort Col-

lins, Colorado, attended the college over twenty-five years ago. During his stay at Hillsdale College, he would drive over an hour to attend the nearest NAPARC congregation, an RCUS work in Ohio. There was a PCUSA church in Hillsdale, but Archie, the son of an OP minister, knew that he would be better cared for by making the long drive every week. Other students felt the same way.

One of those former students came out for our organizational service and shared his story with me. His name is John Dickey, and I had not met him prior to the service. He attended Hillsdale College in the early nineties with a good friend, John Shackelford, both from OP congregations. When they arrived at Hillsdale and learned that there was no church, they began to pray that the Lord would establish a work there.

During their time at the college, they drove up to Grace OPC in Lansing, where they got to know Pastor Stephen Pribble. Pastor Pribble fondly recalled, "The two of them would come faithfully the seventy miles almost every week during the school year, borrowing ten-year-old cars from other students, sometimes bringing as many as eight or ten fellow students with them to worship with us and come to our house for dinner afterwards." John Dickey's face lit up when we met, and he expressed gratitude to the Lord for our new work.

Jump forward about ten more years. In 2004, David Landow began his studies at the college. David came from an RPCNA congregation in Indiana, and he immediately began to pray that the Lord would raise up a Reformed church in Hillsdale. During his time at the college, he organized a number of students who would pray with him and they met, each week, asking that the Lord would bless in this way.

I know what you've got to be thinking by now: *how do you plant a church with a whole lot of college students?* The answer comes in the form of three professors who came to the college within a year of each other.

Richard M. Gamble was a ruling elder at Fellowship OPC in Lake Worth, Florida, and a professor at Palm Beach

Atlantic University. In 2006 he accepted a position at Hillsdale College and moved into the area. He quickly learned that there were no faithful Presbyterian and Reformed churches in the area, so he began doing what others had done before him: traveling a long distance every Sunday for worship. A year



*The congregation at Hillsdale's organizational service*

later, Christopher Hamilton (from Providence Presbyterian Church in Pflugerville, Texas) and Eric Hutchinson (from Proclamation PCA in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania) moved to Hillsdale with their young families and began teaching at the college.

Through a series of contacts, a core group was formed: a community family, three professors and their families, and several college students. They continued to pray, and through several more contacts they met with Peter Wallace, Glenn Jerrell (who was then the pastor of Grace Reformed Church in Walkerton, Indiana), and John S. Deliyannides (a ruling elder who had served with Richard Gamble in Florida and moved to Indiana).

At the September 2007 meeting of the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario, the group presented their petition and it was granted. John, Richard, and Glenn would serve as the provisional session, and Peter as the ministerial adviser. Michiana Covenant PCA granted Pastor Wallace two months off from preaching on Sunday evenings—and then one Sunday each month for eight months after that—so he could get things started. Grace Reformed Church in Indiana was the planting church. Worship services began on Sunday evening, October 21, 2007. The group continued to meet each Sunday morning for ongoing prayer and fellowship, and for worship in the evenings. For seven months, the Presbytery provided pulpit supply, and many men made the long trip to preach each week.

My own story and my own prayers come at the end. I was just finishing up at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia when I met with Richard Gerber, then associate general

secretary of Home Missions. I wanted to hear about the opportunities for church planting in the OPC. He told me about Hillsdale OPC and the large student base there. Having a background in youth ministry, I was interested in the opportunity and made arrangements to visit the church. Once

I graduated in May 2008, my family relocated to Hillsdale, where I served a summer internship under Pastor Wallace while I completed my trials for ordination. I was ordained and installed as a church planter on September 26, 2008.

Since that time, we have continued to offer up prayers, and God has continued to answer them. We no longer have three professors with their families, but closer to fifteen. We no longer have only one community family, but closer to eight. We still have a lot of students—upwards of one hundred of them—who call HOPC their “home church away from home.” This work continues to be an exciting opportunity to see the Lord answer the prayers of his people. The Lord has brought us another ruling elder (Darryl G. Hart) and a deacon (John Davis), both new to the community.

I know that there are more stories. There has been so much faithfulness from the Lord through the years, shown through generous giving from those who attend as well as from those whose students attend. We have been grateful for the ongoing support we've received from our presbytery and the denominational office as well.

Many of the students who have graduated continue to keep in touch with the church. In fact, to date we have graduated over one hundred students, and about half of them are attending Orthodox Presbyterian churches around the country. Most of them did not come from NAPARC churches before attending college. Some of their families have learned about the OPC through their children and have joined works in their home areas.

What is our task now that we've been particularized? What is our plan? We continue to pray, and ask that you would pray with us. There is still so much that needs to be done, so many in the community who need to hear the gospel. Above all, pray that we would remain faithful to our task and that the Lord would add to our number those who are being saved. HOPC was begun as a beacon for the gospel, and we desire to remain faithful to that call. Pray also for our ongoing ministry to college students and their families.

### **Home Missions Today**

For up-to-date Home Missions news and prayer updates, e-mail [HomeMissionsToday@opc.org](mailto:HomeMissionsToday@opc.org).  
New editions: August 12, 26; September 9, 23.

FROM  
BLOOMFIELD  
TO MBALE

// CHARLES JACKSON



Charles and Connie Jackson with sons Zach (left) and Noah

*Editor's note: On June 12, the Presbytery of Ohio installed the Rev. Dr. L. Charles Jackson as a missionary evangelist in Uganda. He will be teaching at Knox Theological Seminary in Mbale.*

I was born in Indiana and grew up in Bloomfield, a quaint little town about twenty miles west of Bloomington, the home of Indiana University. My father was a dentist, and I had three older sisters and a younger brother. I had a safe, happy childhood, and my mother made sure I was at church on Sunday morning, Sunday evening, Wednesday evening, and pretty much any other time the doors were open. It was a small, fundamentalist church. I wasn't particularly rebellious, but my attitude toward Christ and the church was not warm. I made a decision for Christ at nine years of age at a church camp because I was certain that, if I waited one more night, I was going to be left behind after the rapture, and I would surely be eaten by giant things during the great tribulation. According to my church's theology, this decision sealed my eternal destiny for heaven. After baptism, however, I lived about the same as everyone else in my local public school.

It wasn't until I graduated from high school in 1983 that things began to change. I assumed I would go to Indiana University, but my parents, who knew my life was heading in the wrong direction, told me they would be happy to pay for college, but only if I chose a Christian school. I was angry, but did the math, and since the options they presented were basically Bob Jones University and Cedarville College, I chose Cedarville. The Lord took hold of my heart within a few weeks of enrolling, and during the opening days of chapel services, I was convinced that I needed Jesus Christ for real. The changes that God started making in my heart have never stopped, and I'm so thankful for his loving pursuit.

At Cedarville, my life was genuinely transformed, and it seemed like God had given me a fresh chance to reclaim a

future of serving him. After a year of learning how to learn, I chose to major in history, and professors like Jim McGoldrick, who is now teaching at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, helped to point me to great historical and theological resources that shaped my thinking. God also put me in contact with godly friends who were discovering the Reformation and making significant changes in their theology. I can recall the day that one friend, Tom Ewing, burst into my dorm room with his Bible open, asking me if I was a Calvinist. I wasn't really sure what a Calvinist actually looked like, but he read Romans 9 and assured me that if I believed that, then I was a Calvinist. I read it and said, "I guess so." Another friend, Danny Olinger, who was going through the same changes, became my roommate for our senior year. He is still my friend today—and serving the OPC as general secretary of the Committee on Christian Education. The Lord has taken us a long way from those days, and he has been so good along the way.

After Cedarville, I went to the University of Dayton for a Master's degree in history, and while attending Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, I met my wife, Connie. We got married and were soon on our way to Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. When we moved to Jackson, I worked full-time as a school teacher, which allowed me to squeeze a three-year degree into six years, after which we returned to Ohio to plant an OP church in Dayton. I enjoyed my time at RTS and Jackson. I received a good education, and we made lifelong friends. Our seminary adventure started when, prior to our leaving, Rev. Mike Frangipane took me to lunch and asked if I had ever considered being a minister. The session at Redeemer was willing to help finance my seminary studies if I was willing to return to plant a church in the Dayton area. We did this, and the Lord blessed our work.

When we came back to Dayton, we had four children, and the Lord has since given us two more. First came two girls, and then four boys. The Dayton church started in a hotel banquet room with five families. Over the past eighteen years,

the Lord has built this little group into a wonderful church. We have our own building now in Vandalia, and we are planting a church in Springfield, Ohio. Words fail me when I try to express how much I love Covenant Presbyterian Church. They are much more than a church to me—they are like family. Throughout the years, they encouraged and supported me to get a Ph.D. and write some books along the way: *Faith of Our Fathers: A Study of the Nicene Creed*, *Bible Studies on Ruth*, and most recently *Riots, Revolutions, and the Scottish Covenanters: The Work of Alexander Henderson*. I will miss them with an aching heart; I will always love them dearly.

I have had a lifelong interest in foreign missions. While at Cedarville, I went on a summer mission's trip to the Philippines, and I loved everything about it. However, full-time missionary service never seemed to fit with how my life was working out.

But after talking to Al Tricarico, who is now in Karamoja, Uganda, the Lord changed things for me. Al said that what changed things for him was when he stopped asking, "Why should I go?" and started asking, "Why not me?" When I did this, doors opened up dramatically. We went to Uganda in 2014, so I could teach a class at Knox Theological College in Mbale. I sensed that I was willing to go, but I didn't want to push things. When my wife, Connie, said that she really wanted to go, all bets were off—and by God's grace, here we go.

Pray for our beloved church to find a new pastor. Please pray for Connie and me—for our health and strength in Africa because we're not, as they say, spring chickens anymore. All but two of our children are out of the house, so pray for their blessings. Pray for our youngest son, Noah, as he will come with us; he plans to attend Rift Valley Academy in Kenya. Pray that he will prosper as a young man of God. Pray for our second youngest son, Zach, who will stay in Dayton for college, but who hopes to work with Bob Wright in Karamoja when he finishes in a year or two. Pray that my work in Mbale will bless the church there and supplement what Eric Tuininga and others have been doing.

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## SAYING YES TO UGANDA

*Connie Jackson*

I grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio, in a large Irish-Catholic family. My parents instilled a strong sense of family in their children, but unfortunately our spiritual growth and nurturing was left up to the church and the parochial school. Consequently, my view of God was that he was an angry God, vengeful without grace and mercy. This led to rebellion in my teen years and beyond.

After college, I moved to Los Angeles. The lifestyle there encouraged my rebellion, with no family and no church accountability. Those were turbulent years, and, as I now look back, I see God's hand guiding, protecting, and drawing me to himself. I moved back to Ohio to get away from that lifestyle.

The following quote pretty much sums up my life until age twenty-five, when God drew me to himself and guided me out of that maze of sin: "The whole life of man until he is converted to Christ is a ruinous labyrinth of wanderings" (John Calvin).

After my conversion, I started attending a Plymouth Brethren church, but even as a young believer, I knew that there was something wrong with their teaching. After a few years, I found myself at Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, Ohio. The teaching there was so different from anything I had experienced before, and I wanted to learn more, so I stayed and joined the church. I finally had a church home and a God who was loving and kind. Of course, it did not hurt that there was this handsome University of Dayton grad student, Charles Jackson, who was also where I was working. We were married within a year, and by year two, we were in Jackson, Mississippi, where Charles attended Reformed Theological Seminary. Moving so far into the South, I thought we were already on the mission field. Our time there was such a blessing. Our family grew to four children: Angie, Jessica, Lloyd, and Robert. We were also blessed with many lifelong friends. I have to say I grew to love the South, and we were even made honorary Southerners.

When Charles finished seminary, we returned to Dayton, Ohio, to plant a church in North Dayton. God blessed us with two more children, Zachariah and Noah. We have labored at that church for the past eighteen years. Although Charles loves the church and preaching the gospel there, he has always had a desire to go on the mission field. I thought living in Mississippi was enough of a mission-field experience; God would need to do a great work in my heart to get me to go to a foreign country.

Charles was asked to go to Uganda in 2014 and teach at Knox Theological Seminary, and I went as well, knowing that both Charles and the Committee on Foreign Missions wanted us to serve there. God totally changed my heart! When I saw the pastors and their desire to know God more fully and to make him known to the people of their villages, I knew that Charles would be able to help them do just that. I have watched him over the years of our life together taking the somewhat lofty and cerebral theology that is such a part our tradition and making it accessible to those with less education—from the high school and homeschool students he taught over the years to the children in the pews at our church. How could I deny my brothers and sisters in Uganda this opportunity? The answer was simple: I could not. So we are off on this new adventure, and I am so excited to see how God will use us for his glory to make disciples in Uganda!

Please pray for all six of our children (and our two grandchildren). Only Noah will be with us; Lord willing, he will be attending Rift Valley Academy in Kenya. Pray that Charles will be effective in his calling to teach at Knox Theological Seminary in Mbale. Also, please remember this mother/grandmother, who will miss her family.

# SILENCE

[Continued from page 7]

## A False View of Church and State

Others will retreat into what, according to my estimation, is a false view of church and state. According to this view, the state is a common sphere, and the church should never (or hardly ever) address it with what the Word of God says—even when it speaks to civil leaders (that is, magistrates)—who are meant to be “ministers of God to us for good” (Rom. 13:4). (In the face of this view, I am regularly struck by the sobering truth that arrogant civil leader Herod was struck down by an angel of the Lord “because he did not give God the glory” [Acts 12:23]).

Certainly the church should not try to impose on the civil realm those things that are distinctive to the church and its life, but when the creation ordinances, which are given to man as man—including marriage and procreation—and the moral law of God, which applies to “all men” (see Larger Catechism 95), are undermined and openly acted against by those in authority, are we being “steady on the battlefield” (to quote Martin Luther) or are we in “mere flight and disgrace” by flinching at that point? Will we be silent?

And for others (especially those of us who are in urban and suburban areas in which the winds of the trends of modern culture blow with particular force), there is the seeming tension between being faithful to all that God says in his Word and not wanting to appear inhospitable to those with “alternative lifestyles.” In short, we don’t want to offend the very people we are trying to reach with the gospel. I fear that this way of thinking is far more common than we want to admit.

## Speaking the Truth in Love

I certainly agree that we must always be gracious and filled with the Spirit of the forgiving Christ, who bids all who are weary and heavy-laden to come to him, that they might find rest

for their souls (Matt. 11:28–30). But are we to do this in such a way that we tone down or eliminate altogether the very truths about human sinfulness that make people hunger and thirst for the saving Christ and his righteousness? That would be like a doctor who knows that his patient’s case is terminal unless the patient pursues a specific medical regimen, but does not want to offend his patient and so is less than fully honest in disclosing his patient’s condition and the horrible consequences of failure to immediately pursue the only effective path to a cure. Is this truly loving?

Consider the physical, social, psychological, emotional, and spiritual consequences of patterns of life that are contrary to the Word of God. Many of us, I fear, have preferred to ignore these things, rather than allow ourselves to be impacted by the painful truth that “the way of transgressors is hard” (Prov. 13:15 kjv). When we are struck by these things, we know that it is not loving to be silent.

Is it loving to be silent when we know that certain sexual practices inevitably lead to some of the most painful and miserable forms of disease?

Is it loving to be silent when, by the vote of a slim majority of United States Supreme Court justices, the very nature of marriage, as an institution that is meant for human perpetuation and flourishing (as expressed so well in our own Confession of Faith, chap. 24), has been radically redefined for our nation?

Is it loving to be silent when the Scriptures declare unequivocally that certain patterns of conduct prohibit the unrepentant from entering the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9–10)?

Is this really love—or cowardice?

Randy Alcorn, in his article, “The Trend in the Church towards Silence” ([www.epm.org/blog/2015/Mar/30/trend-church-silence](http://www.epm.org/blog/2015/Mar/30/trend-church-silence)), comments wisely on the call to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15):

As Christ-followers, we are not to choose between being loving and being truthful. We are to be both. And notice ... that we are *to speak*.

Yes, there is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Ecclesiastes 3:7). But we dare not embrace the ease of silence and turn our backs on the hard work of truth-telling done in love.

When we believe and teach the Bible with courage and compassion, it’s guaranteed you and I will be seen as bigots—unless we either outright deny the Scriptures or are so quiet about our beliefs that no one finds us out. (Imagine an ambassador who lives in fear of divulging his King’s policies).

*Of course* we will be mocked and despised by some. But our call is clear: in the balance of grace and truth, (we are) to follow the example of Peter and the Apostles, who told the Sanhedrin: “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

Yes, we are living in a time in which difficult ethical questions and issues are challenging churches. However, for that very reason alone we must not be silent. To be silent is to leave God’s people in bewilderment when they are most in need of bold yet gracious and carefully thought-out answers. This has always been *the* strength of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in its unashamed commitment to the final authority of the Word of God. Now is not the time to be silent. It is the time to think carefully and biblically, seek wise counsel from others, and then speak—regardless of the consequences. Our doomed culture needs that—and, above all, God requires that.

Why are we silent? Because we have too much fear of man, but too little fear of God; too much desire for the approval of the world, but too little desire for the approval of Christ; too much of the spirit of the age, but too little of the Spirit of God.

Silent soldiers on today’s battlefield? No! ☐

*The author is the pastor of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Franklin Square, N.Y. He quotes the ESV unless otherwise indicated.*

# NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS



The church officers at the installation of Charles Jackson included him (center, dark shirt) and moderator Stephen Dufresne at his left

## CHARLES JACKSON INSTALLED AS MISSIONARY EVANGELIST

At a special meeting of the Presbytery of Ohio on June 12, the Rev. L. Charles Jackson was installed as a missionary evangelist to serve in Uganda on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Missions. He previously served as the pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Vandalia (Dayton-North), Ohio.

The service of installation was led by the Rev. Stephen Dufresne. The sermon, "Don't Lose Heart" (on Ephesians 3:1-13), was delivered by the Rev. Brad Peppo. The charge to the missionary was given by the Rev. Bill Kessler. Closing remarks were made by Mr. Mark T. Bube, general secretary of the Committee on Foreign Missions. Numerous other ministers and ruling elders were among those present.

For further information on Charles Jackson and his wife, Connie, see the Foreign Missions pages earlier in this issue of *New Horizons*.

## UPDATE

### CHURCHES

- Hillsdale OPC in Hillsdale, Mich., was

organized as a new congregation of the OPC by the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario on April 17.

- On May 15, the Presbytery of Northern California and Nevada organized **Redding Reformed Fellowship** in Redding, Calif., as a new and separate congregation of the OPC.

### MINISTERS

- On May 15, **Gene L. Crow**, formerly the organizing pastor, was installed as the pastor of Redding Reformed Fellowship in Redding, Calif.
- On May 15, chaplain **Patrick D. Durkee**, deemed to have come before the Presbytery of the Central United States as his own accuser, was deposed from the ministry and enrolled as a nonministerial member of the rolls of the regional church.
- **Everett A. Henes**, formerly the organizing pastor, was installed as pastor of Hillsdale OPC in Hillsdale, Mich., on April 17.

- **L. Charles Jackson**, formerly the pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Vandalia, Ohio, was installed on June 12 by the Presbytery of Ohio as a missionary evangelist to serve in Uganda.

- **Ryan M. McGraw**, formerly pastor of First OPC in Sunnyvale, Calif., was installed on June 6 by the Presbytery of Northern California and Nevada as a teacher of the presbytery to serve as a professor at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

- The Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania has dissolved the ministerial relationship between **Stephen S. Payson** and Providence OPC in Mifflinburg, Pa., effective August 31, and approved his request to work out of bounds as an evangelist in the resident

chaplaincy program of the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center in Hershey, Pa.

- On May 1, the Presbytery of the Southwest dissolved the pastoral relationship between **F. Allan Story, Jr.**, at his request, and Providence Presbyterian Church in Pflugerville, Tex., with their concurrence, and approved his contemplated labor of teaching and writing.

- On June 5, **Lane G. Tipton** was installed as pastor of Trinity OPC in Easton, Pa., to serve on an interim basis; he remains a professor at Westminster Theological Seminary.

- **Timothy G. Walker**, formerly a teacher at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Marina, Calif., was installed as (associate) pastor on May 10.

- On May 24, **Zecharias Abraham Weldeyesus**, an Eritrean minister, was installed as an evangelist of Covenant Community OPC in Taylors, S.C.; he is now officially transferred into the OPC as a minister in the Presbytery of the Southeast.

### MILESTONES

- **Paul H. Anderson**, 55, pastor of Grace OPC in Fall River, Mass., was declared deceased on June 27, shortly after he suffered a stroke.

## LETTERS

### CHRIST AND CULTURE

Editor:

I appreciated Marcus A. Mininger's featured article on "Christ and Culture" in the June 2015 issue of *New Horizons*. Yet I did find it a bit incongruous that the two other articles addressed "the church in exile" as "sojourners." Certainly it is true that Christians are sojourners and exiles in one sense, but we must also address the sense in which we are citizens in our respective cultures.

Our primary citizenship is in heaven, most assuredly, but why are we so hesitant to address God's plan for history? Is there a plan? Does God care about what happens in the history he has decreed? Does he have marching orders for the church militant or the individuals within that church? Are there objective standards to govern how a Christian engages the rebellion by which he or she is surrounded? How does evangelism figure in? What to do? What to avoid?

I would encourage *New Horizons* to engage in a more thorough treatment of Christ and culture.

"The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof" (Ps. 24:1).

Paul Viggiano  
Torrance, Calif.

### POLITICAL LIBERALS IN THE OPC

Editor:

David VanDrunen began his article in the June issue of *New Horizons* by saying: "Conservative American Christians seem to feel culturally adrift and morally isolated today in ways they have never before experienced." He goes on to outline a wonderful reminder on how Christians are sojourners in this world. But I'm left with the uneasy feeling that he seemed to lump all American Christians under "conservative" with that opening statement, reminiscent of the common assumption in our circles. I think it's worth pointing out that not everyone in the OPC is politically conservative, underscoring the already frustrating and isolating experience

of OPC liberals (why, yes, there are a few of us who vote blue). I have appreciated the generally neutral political stance the OPC takes, relatively speaking. The OPC should encourage a healthy diversity of political opinions that keeps us searching the Scriptures as we seek to live out our faith in love of Christ and our neighbors.

Jeannette DiBernardo Jones  
Stow, Mass.

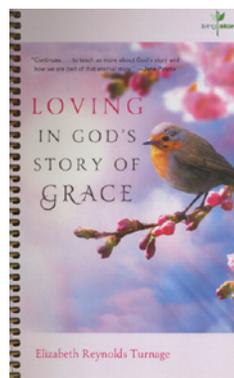
## REVIEWS

***Loving in God's Story of Grace*, by Elizabeth Reynolds Turnage. P&R, 2014. Spiral bound, 144 pages, list price \$12.99. Reviewed by Donna Hausler, OP pastor's wife.**

*Loving in God's Story of Grace* is the third and final book in the Living Story Bible Study series by Elizabeth Reynolds Turnage, and provides a welcome addition to women's Bible study options. Within the context of God's great story of redemption, she explores the magnitude and mystery of God's love for his people.

In doing so, she also calls the reader to ponder, appreciate, and imitate this covenantal, unending love.

The book consists of an introduction, seven chapters, and an epilogue. The introduction gives a new reader (like myself) a brief overview of the previous two books in the series (*Learning God's Story of Grace* and *Living God's Story of Grace*) and helpful advice for using the book to study God's word and prepare for group discussion. Each chapter contains five days of material to guide readers through the study of Scripture (days 1–3) and personal reflection and application (days 4–5). Using various stories from Scripture, Turnage asks us to think about our own story, and how the truths from the passage



should encourage us to self-examination and then action. Bible memory and prayer reminders are also included in every chapter. The final chapter wraps up the book as well as the series, with instructions for a "Story Feast," in which the participants in a study group will share their stories with one another.

There are a couple of additional features in this Bible study that impressed me. Each chapter includes a "Theological Theme" box that clearly and succinctly summarizes such biblical themes as atonement, covenant, and reconciliation. Turnage also includes meaningful quotations from respected authors and theologians to shed light on the main topic of each chapter.

*Loving in God's Story of Grace* was designed to serve as a resource for small groups, but it would also be an excellent book for individual growth or one-on-one mentoring or discipleship. The author opens up to her readers with intensely personal stories from her own life, and she encourages us to do the same with one another. She wants women to allow Christ

into the darkest recesses of their own history. Some of these matters may be too difficult for many women to share in a group setting. Before using this book, a Bible study leader should know whether the women in her group are prepared to get this "real" with one another. Because of the personal nature of the discussion questions, it would be helpful to establish an environment of confidentiality where women can safely share their wounds and stories with others.

I am pleased to have found a Bible study series for women that is Reformed and theologically sound.

***Catechizing Our Children: The Whys and Hows of Teaching the Shorter Catechism Today*, by Terry L. Johnson. Banner of Truth, 2013. Paperback, 87 pages, list price \$10.00. Reviewed by OP Greenville professor Ryan M. McGraw.**

Catechizing is often a missing ingredient

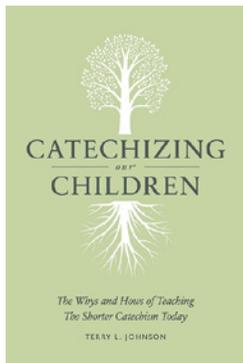
### Correction

In the July issue, the third man from the left in the photo on page 2 should have been identified as Joshua Lyon.

## Women's Retreat

November 6-8 • Whiting, N.J.

- What: 15th Annual Women's Retreat of the Tri-State Area
- Host: Immanuel OPC, Bellmawr, N.J.
- Where: America's Keswick Retreat and Conference Center in Whirting, N.J.
- Speaker: Aimee Byrd (author of the new book *Theological Fitness*)
- Details and registration information: <http://immanuelopc.org/bellmawr> or [mandymilne@comcast.net](mailto:mandymilne@comcast.net)



in the discipleship of covenant children today. Many parents reject catechizing by pitting it against Bible memorization. Yet those making this objection fail to realize that the catechism is often the best tool to help us understand the Bible.

Terry Johnson's *Catechizing Our Children* shows us the blessing of catechizing in promoting a vibrant biblical faith.

Johnson's book is persuasive and clear. The greatest strength of his approach is that he sets catechizing in the "environment" of personal holiness. He notes, "Without the daily domestic example of Christian lives being lived with integrity, we have little hope of catechetical usefulness" (p. 4). He then addresses the history of catechizing in Protestant churches and the peculiar strengths and advantages of the Westminster Shorter Catechism as a culmination of the best of Reformed theology and catechesis (chapters 2 and 3). His fourth chapter addresses the structure of the Shorter Catechism. Chapter 5 presents a suggested course of catechizing, followed by an appendix detailing how his congregation implements these suggestions.

Johnson recognizes that catechizing neither replaces Bible reading nor auto-

matically secures the salvation of covenant children. But he rightly concludes, "Given our commitment to the well-ordered family, the well-ordered church, and prayer, we think that with catechizing we have the best method of indoctrinating our children, and the best hope of transmitting our faith to our children" (p. 72).

Johnson's book has minor deficiencies, many of which are historical. He states that the Shorter Catechism "was not suitable for younger children" (p. 11) and that Puritans, such as Thomas Vincent, recognized this by writing commentaries on the catechism. However, this contradicts both the original preface to the catechism and the preface to Vincent's commentary, which notes that while the younger children in his congregation memorized the Shorter Catechism, the older children memorized his commentary on it. Johnson also makes the common mistake of elevating Calvin to demigod-like status by acting as though he almost single-handedly developed doctrines such as Christ's threefold office, the Reformed doctrine of the Spirit (p. 34), and the Lord's Supper (p. 59). This neglects both the medieval and the Reformed precedents for such teachings. Yet these and a few other deficiencies do not detract from the overarching purpose of his work.

A good catechism, such as the Shorter Catechism, gives one the categories needed to understand the Bible properly. *Catechizing Our Children* speaks to the need of the hour. Take the couple of hours needed to read this book and you may reap rewards for a lifetime.

## Positions Available

**Director of Youth Ministries:** Columbia Presbyterian Church (OPC) is seeking a full-time director of youth ministries. Candidates should have a passion for building relationships with middle and high school students and for ministering to youth and their families. Other pastoral duties, including occasional preaching, may be requested. Columbia Presbyterian is a vibrant church of approximately 500 attendees (70+ youth) located midway between Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, Md. Please apply by August 15, 2015. The targeted start date is autumn 2015. For more information, contact Dick Stum at [DYMsearch@columbiapres.org](mailto:DYMsearch@columbiapres.org).

**Associate Pastor:** Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Ada, Mich., is seeking to call an associate pastor. He should be characterized by vision and passion to see young people reached and disciplined, with his ministry priorities focused on youth, college students, and young couples. His ministry of the Word will be exercised primarily in individual discipleship and small group contexts. He will have the opportunity to preach (on average) twice a month, primarily in the evening service. Interested applicants may request a role description by contacting Pastor John Currie at [jcurrie@redeemer-opc.org](mailto:jcurrie@redeemer-opc.org).

**Pastor:** Providence OPC in Mifflinburg, Pa., started in 2003, is seeking a full-time pastor. Located in a small, rural town in central Pennsylvania, the church has a congregation of about forty. The position will be vacant September 1, 2015. The starting date is to be determined. Applicants should be ordained or eligible for ordination in the OPC. New graduates and pastors of all experience levels are welcome to apply. Additional requirements, job description, instructions, and contact information can be found at <http://providenceopchurch.com>.

**EVANGELISM TRAINING**

*Mark Sumpter*

On Saturday, June 6, the Rev. Bill Welzien of Keys Presbyterian Church completed the annual Swim Around Key West, a 12.5 mile course, for the sixty-fifth time—at the age of sixty-five!

“I always look for these little goals,” Pastor Welzien commented to the *Key West Citizen*, the local paper. “So when I got to 60 in last year’s race, I figured I only had to do two more in the fall and two in the spring to set it up for [the 65th]!” He swam for about 6 hours, 45 minutes to complete the trek. His son accompanied him (kayaking) as support.

Love for God and his word and love for Key West exude from Bill, who has served for thirteen years as the organizer of the Swim Around Key West event. Embracing the gospel in heart and life and giving expression to it by a faithful preaching ministry characterize this



*Bill Welzien (under the zinc oxide) and his son David at the 2015 Swim Around Key West*

brother. He and others from Keys OP Chapel minister on Mallory Square in

the evenings, proclaiming Jesus Christ to thousands of pedestrians week after week.

Bill’s ministry of evangelism training reaches across the USA. He will be in Oregon this August, leading various ministries. To highlight one: Westminster OPC in Corvallis will host the third annual Great Commission Northwest conference, primarily for high school students, collegians, and young adults, August 7–9. Training in evangelism and apologetics will be featured, with Mr. Welzien leading the conference. Email Mark Sumpter at [gmarksumpter@gmail.com](mailto:gmarksumpter@gmail.com) or call him at 541-450-1982 for more information.

**Short-Term Missions**

Stay tuned to the Short-Term Missions website at [www.OPCSTM.org](http://www.OPCSTM.org) for news, testimonials, and photos from this summer’s short-term missions trips and programs! Nearly fifty OP churches are represented in ten locations at home and abroad!



*Short-term missions opportunity: English for Kids Bible Camps in Quebec*