

NEW HORIZONS

in the ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

6 Out-of-This-World Poetry //
by Mark A. Green

APRIL 2019

10 "He Appeared to Simon" //
by T. Nathan Trice



REFORMED

AND

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New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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The Reformed Youth Conference (RYC), held annually in Brooksville, Florida, began in 2007 to serve the youth from the churches of the OPC's Presbytery of the South. Since then, however, RYC has grown to include youth from neighboring presbyteries and other theologically Reformed denominations. The leaders desire to see a softening of hearts by the Holy Spirit to the end that each youth may be molded into the image of Christ. The 2018 theme was "Marvelous Identity" (see right); the 2019 theme will be "The Armor of God." For more information on this and other OP camps, see page 14.



REFORMED AND PODCASTING



JUDITH M. DINSMORE // Back in 2004, Camden Bucey had a morning ritual. He'd get up, hook up his iPod, sync his podcasts, jump in the car, and hit "play" on the way to his job at Caterpillar in Peoria, Illinois. "That was my life for years and years," Bucey laughed.

Now pastor of Hope OPC in Grayslake, Illinois, Camden Bucey is not just listening to podcasts, he's hosting one. He launched Reformed Forum, which currently produces three separate podcasts, in 2008.

For Bucey, Reformed Forum is a combination of two interests: tech and theology. When he first began listening to podcasts in the early 2000s, techies were the only ones producing them because techies were the only ones who knew how. Bucey was still listening in 2007, while also preparing for seminary and diving into Reformed literature. He recalls wishing for a few other theology nerds to discuss what he was reading. "People take it for granted that there are Reformed churches and that people can just have conversations about theology. But I didn't have that. In Peoria, I felt like I was alone," he said.

A year later, studying at Westminster Theological Seminary and surrounded by like-minded friends, that memory gave him an idea.

Thanks to a guitar hobby, Bucey had some recording equipment and

knew how to use it. He scheduled a Skype call with two willing friends, Jeff Waddington and Jim Cassidy, hit "record," and discussed the New Testament's use of the Old Testament. Afterward, he posted it online for anyone to download. Ten years later, in 2018, Reformed Forum was averaging about 50,000 downloads per month of its audio content.

What Is a Podcast, Anyway?

Many podcasters begin like Bucey, with minimal radio or media experience, just chatting it up in their living room or garage and uploading the file to the internet. Originally, podcasts, like music, would be downloaded as an mp3 file, burned onto a CD, or, for mobile listening, put onto an iPod with a USB cable. But since those early days, podcasts have become much easier to access and have exploded in popularity. By 2018, an estimated **48 million Americans were listening to podcasts weekly**.

Apple played an outsize role in the rise of podcasts: In 2005, they released

iTunes 4.9 with native support for podcasts—meaning that you could download more than 3,000 free podcasts directly from the iTunes store rather than heading to the podcast's site. Then in 2008—when Bucey began recording—the first iPhone that allowed listeners to download audio files on-the-go hit the market.

Even the name is Apple-coined, an elision of *iPod* and *casting*. Before that term was in use, it was known as "audioblogging"—a clumsy term, but actually more descriptive of the medium. Just as blogging took shape once it became possible to publish content online for the whole world to read, so podcasting began with the ability to publish audio content online for the whole world to hear.

Yet Bucey argues that the podcasting medium is more than just an audio file downloaded from the internet; it connotes a conversation. A podcast listener is invited into a dining room, not a lecture hall. "What gets people most excited, what gives them community ... is when they feel like [podcast hosts]

are sitting around a table or a firepit,” he said. Bucey is careful to capture in the podcast a conversational togetherness around a shared interest.

The shared interest also guides the content of the podcast. “You can’t fake an interest,” Bucey explained. “If we just did programs that we thought would be market-friendly, but we didn’t really care about it, people would know.” Instead, Bucey and his team pick topics that intrigue them, figuring that if they are interested, their audience will be, too.

Christ the Center, produced weekly by the Reformed Forum and hosted by Bucey, tackles theology with technical language and the assumption that the listener has a thorough understanding of the Reformed faith. The second podcast by Reformed Forum, *Theology Simply Profound*, is hosted by Robert Tarullo and Rob McKenzie from Westminster OPC in Indian Head, Illinois, and addresses theological issues at a more introductory level. Finally, *Proclaiming Christ*, with a varying roster of hosts, is “a pastor’s toolbox and an audio commentary for anyone who wants to learn more about the Bible,” said Bucey. All three can be downloaded from reformedforum.org or from most podcast platforms.

Hand-in-Hand with Print

Joining in an informal conversation, however, can be more difficult than it looks. When Aimee Byrd, member of New Hope OPC in Frederick, Maryland, and a writer by trade, first came alongside hosts OP minister Carl Trueman and PCA pastor Todd Pruitt on their podcast *Mortification of Spin*, she brought a stack of prepared notes with her. “They put this microphone in front of you and ... you can’t edit it!” she said. When writing, you can leave your work, come back, ponder, and revise, Byrd explained. Not so with podcasts.

But that’s the draw of the show. “The tagline for *Mortification of Spin* is ‘a casual conversation about things that count.’ We like to talk about important

topics ... but we want to do it in a casual manner. We take the topics seriously but not ourselves,” Byrd says.

Mortification of Spin, a production of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, is published weekly and allows the hosts to confront a pertinent topic. It can be found at alliancenet.org/mos or at most podcast platforms.

Their podcast was designed, Byrd explained, to get underneath and around polished presentations of Reformed theology that “overlook some of the real issues and challenges that the church has.” People who are frustrated by church branding may thrive on the *Spin*’s franker discussions of Christianity, she said.

Like many podcasts, *Mortification of Spin* also frequently includes interviews with recently published authors. It’s a win for Byrd—her favorite task on the podcast is discovering a great book, discussing it with the author on the show, and sharing it with listeners.



Aimee Byrd recording *Mortification of Spin*

Being promoted on podcasts is also a win for the author. Book tours used to be a given in the publishing world; authors would travel from event to event, all centered on their newly released title. But with tighter budgets, publishers now often encourage authors to “tour” podcasts like *Mortification of Spin* instead. “Certain publishers and authors really market well and promote themselves well. But there are so many great authors who don’t have a well-oiled publicity machine behind

them,” Byrd explained. For those, podcasts focused on the content of their books can widen their exposure.

It’s also a win for the podcast: by interviewing authors, they can quickly create fresh content with “experts” on a topic who are often eager for the interview. However, *Mortification of Spin* is careful with which authors they feature. “We like to promote authors that are of use to the church,” Byrd said.

Replacing Radio?

Both Reformed Forum and *Mortification of Spin* grew out of the podcasting era. Established radio shows, however, have also hopped on the podcasting bandwagon by simply publishing their content online in order to grow their audience.

The percentage of Americans who do not even have a radio in their home anymore grew from 4 percent in 2008 to 29 percent in 2018 (the jump among millennials was a shocking 44 percent), according to **Edison Research**. But 82 percent of driving-age Americans still listen to the radio in their car. Does podcasting spell the end of radio?

Andrew Hess doesn’t think so. “My sense is that people are still listening to their radio,” he said. Hess, who worked for years with Focus on the Family, is a PCA elder and producer of the new **Core Christianity**—which is intentionally available both as a podcast and a radio show. Aimed at unbelievers or new believers, *Core Christianity* seeks to “really focus on the core truths that every Christian should know and embrace,” explained Hess. The hosts, PCA pastor Adriel Sanchez and Westminster Seminary California professor Dr. Michael Horton, answer listeners’ questions about faith in a way that always points to historic Christian teaching.

“We always want to be answering questions from the Scriptures,” Hess

said. “My job as a producer is to make sure that we’re being faithful to that.” They solicit questions from listeners and run shows on everything from struggling marriages to the laws in Leviticus.

The vision for *Core Christianity* was to create a show that could be understood by a chance listener who’s stuck in traffic, Hess said. “*Core Christianity* is a podcast. But it’s also on the radio because we really have a heart to get the show out and get people listening to it who may not be familiar with Dr. Horton. It’s an exciting opportunity to reach a wider audience.”

So far, it’s been well received. The thirty-minute show was released in September 2018, airing daily on 420 outlets across the United States. The podcast is now averaging eighty thousand monthly downloads.

Core Christianity’s success is due in part to its parent, *White Horse Inn*, a radio show launched in 1990, long before the advent of podcasts. It features guests who, united around the *solas* of the Reformation, endeavor to call the modern church to reformation. “Within three years of starting, *White Horse Inn* was nationwide,” remembers founding producer Shane Rosenthal, who is also an elder at Christ Presbyterian (OPC) in St. Charles, Missouri. “But the show aired at nine o’clock on a Sunday night in California—which means that on the East Coast, you’d be listening at midnight!” Still, they grew. At their height, *White Horse Inn* was airing on over a hundred stations.

When podcasting first hit, Rosenthal said, many people assumed it was bad news for radio. But *White Horse Inn* had an edge on other podcasts because it was being produced professionally; if you’re radio-ready, you’ll also have a high-quality, clean podcast. In addition, their loyal fan base from the radio show followed them—or rather, *led* them—into podcasting. *White Horse Inn* experimented with a price-per-download of their weekly radio show in podcast form, but when they followed the trend and started posting the show for free,

fans were ready and waiting. “Listeners were like, ‘oh, finally,’” Rosenthal said.

White Horse Inn’s growth in recent years has been “three times out of four” due to word-of-mouth about their podcast, said Rosenthal. The show’s host in 2019, Rosenthal is doing a year-long series on the Book of John. *White Horse Inn* can be found on its website, whitehorseinn.org, or on most podcast platforms.

No Substitute for Church

A radio show might worry about a loss of revenue when they post their content online for free. As the murky waters of podcast advertising revenue start to settle, those problems will increasingly be addressed.

However, a Christian podcast may have a deeper concern about posting compelling content online: the friendly, accessible nature of the medium can draw people into forming virtual relationships rather than real ones.

Camden Bucey has had strangers who listen regularly to his podcasts approach him at conferences with a level of delighted familiarity that he just can’t reciprocate. “It’s weird,” he said. But at the same time, he understands. The voices and personalities of the hosts of podcasts *he* likes are similarly in his head. “It really shows how interpersonal this audio format is,” he reflected.

That one-sided relationship becomes more serious when people on the internet do what fallen people on the internet always do: get angry—not

at you but supposedly *with* you. “Real growth happens in community,” Rosenthal explained, “but [at *White Horse Inn*] we have a kind of virtual community. We can get somebody agitated, but then we just made an angry Calvinist.” Inside the church context, you can personally approach such a person, and suggest toning it down a bit. “But I can’t do that in the disconnected world of media,” Rosenthal said. For this reason, he firmly believes that podcasts about theology and the Christian life should be listened to in the context of a church community, and though they provide assistance to the church, they are in no way intended to replace it.

Podcasting may be a powerful tool for spreading and pondering the Reformed faith. But it’s no substitute for the flesh-and-blood church. □

The author is managing editor of New Horizons.

For Further Listening

Here are a few other notable Christian podcasts that I listen to regularly and enjoy.

Help Me Teach the Bible

Interviews with teachers and preachers to equip all Bible instructors to creatively teach through specific books of the Bible. Hosted by Nancy Guthrie. Published by The Gospel Coalition.

Ask Pastor John

John Piper answers theological and practical questions from listeners, such as “How does an anxious person rest in Christ?” and “Is Calvinism inconsistent with Romans 9?” Published by Desiring God Ministries.

Risen Motherhood

Discussions on everything related to parenting with a ceaseless focus on applying the gospel to each situation. Hosted by Emily Jensen and Laura Wifler.

Journeywomen

Interviews with women on how to biblically glorify God whatever their season or situation: in hospitality and in worship, in marriage and in singleness, in transition and in stability, in joy and in pain. Hosted by Hunter Beless.

—Judith M. Dinsmore

OUT-OF-THIS-WORLD POETRY



MARK A. GREEN // In C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the story begins with Lucy stepping through a great wooden wardrobe, her empyreal entrance into another world. This new world, similar to our own but also gloriously different, surprises and delights Lucy as she wanders and explores.

Like the wardrobe that Lucy steps through, poetry can be a door we stumble through into a whole new world that surprises and delights us. We may discover exquisite collections of well-wrought words that bring ingenious new worlds to life in our imagination. Like Narnia, poetry can be a world of excitement and evil, of wonder and witches, of imagination and idolatry.

Like Narnia, poetry can also be dangerous. How do we discern what is good and beautiful and true in the poetry of those who don't share our convictions? Do they have something to share with us that we can appreciate without fear of being captivated by their unbelieving aptitude and artistry? If you know the Narnian story, you know that a lighted lamp-post helped the four explorers, Lucy and her siblings, orient their journey. As it is in Narnia, so it is with us. The light of truth from our Bibles provides the required illumination we need to guide us forward.

Literature of Christian Belief

In his new book, *The Soul in Paraphrase* (Crossway, 2018), Leland Ryken provides three helpful categories of poetry that each require a different discernment. I will use his categories as a guide. The first is the *literature of Christian belief*. As we enjoy what poets write about the Christian life, we can compare what they create with what the Bible says about the subject or content of the poems. When brothers and sisters weave the truths of Scripture into the fabric of their poetry, we are uplifted in our own walk. When we participate in the

poem, it's as if we are viewing our Father's world from a new perspective, a stage that the poets employ to entertain and inspire us.

Consider the beautiful devotional verse of John Donne and George Herbert from the seventeenth century. Their imaginative word pictures, with the Bible as a type of lamp-post, guide us into strange spaces and poetic places we might not inhabit in our ordinary lives. Here is an example, from Herbert's poem "Sunday," that encourages us to enjoy the great gift of the Lord's Day:

The Sundays of man's life,
Threaded together on time's string,
Make bracelets to adorn the wife
Of the eternal glorious King.

Or consider these verses by Donne and his orienting hope of the resurrection when faced with the death of a loved one:

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,

And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

Literature of Common Experience

The *literature of common experience* might also be called the “common-grace” realm of poetry. Here we can stand side-by-side with our neighbor, appreciating and admiring the same piece of art. As believers, of course, we see and interpret this artist-created world differently from our unbelieving friends. We might be fascinated as our friends struggle to create meaningful art while denying their inherent knowledge of God. If we watch closely, we can see them expressing beautifully their existence and even their responsibility before the God they deny!

While we might acknowledge what they are trying to do in poems that attempt to describe our shared world, there is a sharp division in how we view, appreciate, and interpret what they write. We can ask—and this takes discernment on multiple levels—if the poem is beautiful, while also asking if it's true.

An example of a beautiful poem that demonstrates different ways of viewing the world is Robert Frost's famous “The Road Not Taken.” In it, the author acknowledges that we as humans can make choices that matter, but he does so with an anamorphic it's-all-up-to-me attitude. The last stanza reads:

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

The believer, by contrast, faces these same diverging paths in life with the comforting assurance that the providence of our good God actively works to ensure all things work together for our good—even our choices.

Literature of Unbelief

The final category of poems that Ryken gives us is the *literature of unbelief*. Here is where many of our neighbors—and much of the world of artists—live and breathe and have their being. We must remember, however, that even as artists openly rebel against God, they cannot deny him. Van Til helps us here when he says, “Whatever may happen, whatever sin may bring about, whatever havoc it may occasion, it cannot destroy man's knowledge of God and his sense of responsibility to God” (*The Defense of the Faith*, 273).

Many of the poets in this group unknowingly witness to the beauty of the created world while raising metaphorical fists toward their creator. Walt Whitman is one classic example in our American pantheon of poets. Whitman rejoices at the creation, singing songs about himself as a marvelous creation

while intentionally rejecting the God of the Bible. This type of poem can provide a singular insight into the hopelessness of lives lived without Christ, regardless of the beauty of the lyric.

The English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley furnishes an illustration of this in his poem on the death of his fellow poet John Keats. Note how Shelley, in comparison to John Donne on the same topic earlier, faces the anguish of death without hope. Shelley lived a wild, unbelieving life that ended in tragedy and, when faced with the horror of death, wrote one of his most famous poems that, ultimately, is not true. It closes in the dead-end darkness of unbelief. This is the last stanza of his long, mournful,

[Continued on page 18]

O, Katie

“Wir sein Pettler, Hoc est Verum”
—Last words of Martin Luther

My eyes grow dim amidst this fading light,
Yet here I stand. Still sure that it is good
That Christ alone secures my heavenly right
To live forgiven by our holy God.

Stand here with me, then help me raise my hand
To Him I love. I pray his strength runs through me
In this hour of death, set by his command,
To fight this Foe who threatens to undo me.

Yet I cling to Christ, just as I cling to you.
And we to Him since on that Easter day
We wed. One flesh now knows this gospel true,
God paid that price that we could never pay.

Through weary, teary years your precious face
Has smiled on me, O Katie, full of grace.

Now sit with me and sing those hallowed songs
You wrote with me through all our cloistered years.
And though these words declare my guilty wrongs,
I repent of them with sorrow and these tears.

If I could translate all God's works of grace
Alone, I'd nail them to doorposts in this room.
Like a fortress, they'd surround and then erase
This trembling angst about my pending doom.

Draw the curtains. These earthly powers fade
From me as I lay down my head and lose
The strength I had to live this life I've led,
To secure the crown that I will never lose.

Our goods and kindred now count so slight, so few;
We are God's beggars, O Katie, this is true.

—Mark A. Green

GOOD STORIES, THE BEST STORIES, AND THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD



TAMARA KELLY // Stories are the most natural way in which we come to know God’s created world and our place in it. Whether we are young or old, our desire to tell and hear stories is a fundamental part of our human nature—of being made in the image and likeness of God.

Good stories reveal God’s beauty, affirm the meaning of life and its purposes, and give needed recreation and refreshment to tired souls.

Good Stories

Good stories teach us to live well, but it’s not a crash course. Unlike books that lay out ten steps to a better life, a good story will not provide a formula to plug into a given situation or problem. The plethora of self-help books available these days are no substitute for good literature; they may be easier to read and give a temporary motivational boost, but to the degree that they deconstruct and demystify life while claiming false promises, they will be ineffective and potentially detrimental. Good stories don’t tell you directly what to do or how to do it; rather, they use the structured art of storytelling to instill life with continuity and order, thereby showing the best paths by mirroring God’s created order.

A faithful commitment to live well in a sinful world demands laborious work, confusion and even pain, and

good stories do not eliminate these hard aspects of life. As a matter of fact, good stories ought to leave us with a greater appreciation for the time commitment and hard work that are required in order to live thoughtful, meaningful, and purposeful lives. They should provide us with a clearer understanding of the messiness that comes with fostering good relationships and a better awareness of the sacrifices that are imposed by “loving your neighbor as yourself.” If you commit to the partaking of good literature and the telling and hearing of good stories, you will eventually be rewarded with thought-provoking, purposeful direction.

This takes time: it moves far beyond your high school English class. It takes a while—sometimes a very long while—to unearth truths buried deep inside good literature, and often the better the narrative, the deeper you have to go to discover what’s there. This process of discovery calls for patience as you contemplate those truths and allow them to form your imagination, vision, and perspective.

Although stories provide amusement and enjoyment, they are much more than that. They are markers left by earlier travelers to guide us. Like the construction of a great cathedral that takes centuries, good stories build upon the foundation stones of earlier works. Authors, philosophers, poets, and storytellers throughout history have laid the bricks and mortar of language necessary for imparting wisdom to the generations to come. As we choose what to read, both for ourselves and our families, we do well to remember this long history of storytelling. As G. K. Chesterton writes, “It ought to be the oldest things that are taught to the youngest people.”

These trusted authors, philosophers, and theologians help us not only “to know the truth of things” but also “to learn how to go about knowing.” In Russell Baker’s memoir, *Growing Up*, he describes the family stories that were shared around the table night after night:

Usually I listened uncritically, for around that table, under the

unshaded light bulb, I was receiving an education in the world and how to think about it. What I absorbed most deeply was not information but attitudes, ways of looking at the world that were to stay with me for many years.

What Makes a Good Story?

Not all narratives are built on a solid footing, and not all face the right direction. We must use discernment and discretion when choosing stories for ourselves and our children because stories *will* permeate our hearts and minds, influencing our beliefs and shaping us into the people we become.

What are some characteristics of a good story? First of all, it “must be striking enough to be worth telling,” writes Thomas Hardy in *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*. A good story is artistically constructed, imaginative, and honest in its portrayal of the complex human condition.

Second, in a good story, the *story* conveys the meaning. “When anybody asks what a story is about, the only proper thing is to tell him to read the story,” writes Flannery O’Connor. Everything in the story is there because it is necessary for the telling of the story. The meaning is embedded within the story—in the plot and the events and the characters themselves—and unveiled through their choices and consequences, their virtues and vices and ambiguities. From them, you learn what to avoid; they are, in a way, warning signs placed along the trail, alerting you to the dangers lurking up ahead but not yelling your name with specific moral directions to “stop” or “detour” or “keep to the right.”

Third, a good story “enraptures,” argues C. S. Lewis in *On Stories*. It stirs you from a deep slumber and invites you in; once inside, your sense of reality is enlarged and deepened. Its doors are the passageways to other times and places as well as to other ways of thinking about and participating in the larger world. This is not mere curiosity: a desire to take apart, examine, or utilize it. Flannery O’Connor cringed to think of her stories on a dissecting table. No, this is an invitation to gaze, to linger, to ponder—to wonder. There is a “looking, listening, and receiving” as Lewis put it in *An Experiment in Criticism*. This has a transforming effect on the character of the receiver.

The Best Stories

When good books and stories are read and heard and retold, something wonderful happens: you discover that a few good stories have come to be the best. They were thus all the while; you had only to see, and this kind of seeing takes vision. It’s exciting to discover that over time the best stories have remained true and slowly influenced you for the better. The best stories, like the closest friends, are the ones that stay with you—the ones about which you keep thinking and to which you keep returning. They are the stories you read and reread. With well-formed vision, you are better able to discern what narratives offer a depth of perspective on the world’s fullness, and thereby set themselves apart from other works of literature.

You will soon discover that the best stories most potently shape your interior world—forming your imagination, structuring your thinking, ordering your days, and enhancing all areas of your life. As you mature, these stories grow

with you, and there are always more discoveries to be made each time you return. They lead the way to other topics worthy of thoughtful attention. Over a lifetime, the books that you read can tremendously impact your thinking, affect your emotions, and influence your choices—all for the good. Whether it’s a children’s classic such as Oscar Wilde’s *The Selfish Giant*, a masterful fictional narrative like Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, or simply another adventure in John Erickson’s *Hank the Cowdog* series, your life becomes fuller and richer. In stories like these you hear an echo of Truth—the highest and most profound knowledge regarding what is good, beautiful, and true.

The Greatest Story Ever Told

There are relatively few stories worthy of being classified as good, even fewer worthy of being distinguished as the best, and only one “greatest story ever told” in which all other stories find their meaning—God’s story. He has graciously revealed himself, his ways, and his will in the Bible, and often through a narrative form of storytelling. If we are to teach the oldest things to the youngest people, what is older than “In the beginning was the Word” (John 1:1)?

True books and narratives have transported countless people over centuries, in both times of plenty and times of want. I hope you consider good and worthy stories—stories that can provide shelter as you weather storms, quench your thirst as you traverse deserts, soothe your soul as you battle pestilence, and lead where a new land awaits. □

The author is a biblical counselor and member of Providence OPC in Southfield, MI.



"HE APPEARED TO SIMON"



T. NATHAN TRICE // Perhaps we have all put ourselves in the place of Jesus's disciples on Easter morning and imagined their fear, wonder, and joy at seeing the Lord, back from the dead. We have tried to imagine what that reunion must have been like, after witnessing the brutal death and hasty burial of Jesus three days before.

It heightens our own joy to imagine theirs on that day.

There is one disciple whose first encounter with the risen Lord is particularly edifying to consider: Simon Peter. Just as the biblical record underscores the prominent place Peter had among the disciples in general, so it emphasizes the special attention Jesus gave to Peter in his resurrection appearances. Why is this so?

The Unique Despair of Peter

The death of our Lord left all of his disciples, including Peter, in a state of grief and despair. The gospels record this in various ways: women were mourning and lamenting for him on his way to the cross (Luke 23:27), many left the crucifixion beating their breasts (Luke 23:48), and the two Marys were still seated by the sealed tomb, seemingly paralyzed by sorrow, after all others had left (Matt. 27:61). Indeed, the messengers that came from the empty tomb on the first day of the week found the disciples gathered in an upper room "as they mourned and wept" (Mark

16:10). That this sorrow represented not only personal bereavement, but also a shattered hope in Jesus as the Messiah, is indicated by the words of the disciples to their mysterious companion on the road to Emmaus: "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21).

But surely of all the disciples, Peter suffered uniquely, for he would have carried with him the personal agony of what he had done in the hours before his Master's death. Though all the disciples had abandoned Christ at his arrest, it was Peter who had emphatically denied that he would ever do so (Mark 14:29). And it was Peter whose cowardice and disloyalty had been so relentlessly exposed, as Jesus had predicted, by the servants in the courtyard during the trial. Luke's account is unbearably poignant when it captures the convergence of three events: Peter's third and most profane denial of Christ, the crowing of the rooster in fulfillment of Jesus's word, and Jesus's turning to look at Peter from where he stood on trial (Luke 22:60–61). That

moment when their eyes met in the midst of Peter's treachery is the last recorded exchange between Peter and Jesus before his death. At that point, we are told that Peter "went out and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:62).

So, in addition to the loss of the one he loved and the sense of misplaced faith that he shared with all the disciples, Peter would have suffered a deep sense of personal alienation, made unalterable by death, from the one he once swore loyalty to as "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16).

The Special Attention to Peter

It is partly by entering into this pathos unique to Peter that we are enabled to appreciate a certain feature about our Lord's resurrection appearances on Easter Sunday. The precise chronology of all the events of that day is difficult to reconstruct. But it is clear that Jesus made multiple appearances to various disciples that day. And it is also clear that our Lord had certain priorities concerning whom he wanted to see. For example, the women most

devoted to him, who came to the tomb early on that first day of the week, were visited by Christ first.

Then, among the rest of the disciples, our Lord's highest priority was apparently to see Peter—and to see him alone. This is pointed out in several biblical notations, easily overlooked, about that day. Mark tells us that the angel at the empty tomb bids the women to “go, tell his disciples *and Peter* that he is going before you to Galilee” (Mark 16:7, emphasis added). Luke tells us that the two disciples who return from the encounter with Jesus on the road to Emmaus say to the rest, “The Lord has risen indeed, *and has appeared to Simon!*” (Luke 24:34, emphasis added). And the Apostle Paul relates what was apparently, by the time of his writing to the Corinthians, common knowledge among the saints (Peter was also known as “Cephas”):

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. (1 Cor. 15: 3–5)

Why was this personal appearance to Peter such a priority for our Lord on Easter Sunday? We could surmise that it had something to do with the leadership that Peter had, and would continue to provide, among the disciples. But I think Jesus was also doing something more personally redemptive for Peter. Surely our Lord was ministering comfort to a disciple suffering a unique burden of guilt. There would come a later exchange between Jesus and Peter where Peter would be invited to answer the question put to him publicly, “Do you love me?” and be formally restored to Christ's service (John 21:15–19). But well before that famous exchange came this private moment, where Jesus was personally reconciled with the disciple who had so recently professed not even to know him.

What a moment that must have been for Peter! We might wish that we had some record of what was said and done there, as we do for Jesus's touching encounter with Mary in the garden in John 20 (an account I can scarcely read to this day without emotion). But we can be sure of at least these two things: Peter would have, in the midst of joyful awe at the sight of Christ, expressed deep remorse; and Jesus would have extended mercy and grace once again to his disloyal disciple. Indeed, I am suggesting that this was a primary reason Jesus showed such special attention to Peter in those first moments of his resurrection life.

The Particular Joy of Peter

The encounters on Easter Sunday with the risen Christ would eventually transform all his disciples from those beset by bitter despair to those who walked with joyful hope. In time each of them would, with Thomas, have all their doubts dispelled, and would embrace Christ with his testimony: “My Lord, and my God!” (John 20:28). Indeed, this transformation of the disciples' disillusionment with a dead Messiah to devotion to a resurrected and vindicated Messiah is one of the great evidences for the resurrection. Only by being confronted with the undeniable evidence of his flesh-and-blood presence were they able to grasp that “he has risen, as he said” (Matt. 28:6).

The truth of who he was, in light of his resurrection, and the truth of what his death meant, also in light of his resurrection, transformed the confused and heartless disciples into the fearless and eloquent apostles of the book of Acts—this, in connection with the outpouring of the Spirit of Christ at Pentecost, in fulfillment of Christ's promise.

And here again, it is edifying to reflect upon that element of Peter's own joyful transformation that was due to his encounter with the resurrected Christ. Christ's appearance to Peter did more than just establish for him the truth about the person and work of Christ. For Peter in particular, Christ's

resurrection brought a personal restoration to Christ. This is what makes Peter's experience so poignant for each of us. All of us, like him, have made our own contribution to the shame and pain of Christ's death, for God “has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). Despite our most fervent and frequent resolutions to the contrary, we have all betrayed our Master grievously, as Peter did.

Yet, with good reason has Simon Peter come to be a kind of “patron saint” for Christians with a sense of colossal failure in their service to Christ. Peter came to realize that his sinful failure did not thwart Christ's purposes, and neither do ours. Peter found out that his infidelity did not end Christ's love for him, and neither does it for us. And Peter was even assured that his unfaithfulness would not change his Savior's intention to use him in the building of his church, and neither will it for us. Perhaps Jesus even told him all this in that first encounter on Easter morning.

Surely Peter's experience of the resurrection of Christ is a wonderful encouragement for all of us delinquent disciples with our own sources of guilt this Easter season. Christ has been raised—for our justification! (Rom. 4:25). The special attention of our Lord toward his guiltiest disciple is a true index of his heart toward us as well. Reconciliation is his Easter agenda with us, and it has been his heart toward us ever since that heart began to beat again on the third day. Easter should be a celebration of the “living hope,” as Peter would later describe it, of those who have been reconciled to Christ by his resurrection (1 Peter 1:3).

If you have been estranged from Christ, be encouraged by that mysterious encounter between Christ and Peter to go to him with your guilt and grief, and seek and find in him full acceptance and love. For such a reunion is precisely his purpose in rising from the dead. □

The author is pastor of Matthews OPC in Matthews, North Carolina.

THE COMMUNITY HEALTH TEAM IN KARAMOJA

// LEAH HOPP



Akol Josephine, a Community Health Team member, teaching in the village of Nakaale

When I began working with the OPC Uganda Mission in Karamoja in 2009, my role was to create a community health program in order to expand the services offered by the mission's clinic into the villages. I hired a woman named Anyakun Josephine to teach me the Karimojong language, to accompany me to homes in the neighborhood, and to translate as I taught about health. Soon, I was teaching these lessons to villagers in Karimojong myself.

Even before I arrived in Nakaale almost ten years ago, God had been preparing me in many ways to work with the OPC mission. I attended InterVarsity Christian Fellowship's Urbana mission conference while at university and completed some biblical studies at a Bible college in Michigan. I traveled to rural Tanzania for a one-year internship in primary health. Then I studied for a masters of public health in maternal health here in Uganda, and God gave me a desire to live among his people here in Karamoja for his glory.

After a few years in Nakaale, I saw the need to expand the program and began to train two more women: Acia Rose and Naduk Olivia. They were better equipped to communicate in the local language and address cultural issues than I was.

Rose and Naduk have since trained partners for themselves. Now, six women on the Community Health Team (CHT) go out into the villages in pairs to teach about health. Rather than teaching, I visit the villages to obtain feedback on the curriculum, to continue

expanding my understanding of the Karimojong culture, and to maintain relationships with the villagers. What a blessing it is that the members of the CHT can do their work on their own! While the maturing process has taken many years, we have hope that God will deliver his people and cause them to grow in grace.

What Does the CHT Do?

The local CHT members are all staff at the OPC Uganda Mission's clinic. They support the clinic's work by teaching families how to care for themselves, when to come to the clinic, the importance of early testing and proper treatment, the need for washing their hands regularly, how diseases are transmitted, how to prevent illness, and many other health-related topics. We walk to all the homes in the area that are within one hour of the clinic. This gives us opportunities to greet our neighbors along the way.

The CHT is well-known and welcomed everywhere in the community. When the team enters a village, they call the neighbors together to hear the lesson. Karimojong women are frequently working in their homes, whether building their actual home, building a fence around their compound, sewing a skirt, grinding maize, or sifting sorghum. They either take a break from their work or continue working while listening to the health lesson. Each weekday morning, the team also visits individual homes, and many of our neighbors are learning how to improve their health.

Team members seek to teach people wherever they are. In



The Community Health Team: Kocho Betty, Nakut Claudia, Leah, Akol Josephine, Acia Rose, Naduk Olivia, and Lomuria Rose

the villages, women are the primary audience. Mothers and young girls but also older women whose families have grown up all listen to our team members. Most men will not spend time during the day inside the village with the women. Instead, the men gather together under a tree outside the village, so we engage them there. At the clinic, we teach whoever is sitting in the waiting room: for example, pregnant women come on Tuesdays for check-ups and mothers with infants come on Thursdays for immunizations. We also teach weekly in four primary schools and at the Karamoja Education Outreach preschool. In as many ways as we can, we are trying to get the word out about important health issues.

The women on my team have not only been increasing their knowledge on many topics, but they have also become known in the community as advisors to whom others can turn for health guidance. Outside of working hours, they teach mothers how to make oral rehydration solution at home, comfort and support mothers throughout the birthing process, and give advice during health emergencies. When their neighbors come to visit them at home, they exemplify hygienic behaviors within a sanitary compound.

Leadership of the Community Health Team

We have come to an exciting point in the life of the leadership for the CHT. Nurse Tinah is interested in community health and is known to the CHT team because she used to work for the clinic. We have been strategizing together weekly, and she has been accompanying the team to the villages to re-familiarize herself with the program and the environment. Because she understands Karimojong, she is able to evaluate some of the lessons and suggest additional talking points to improve people's knowledge, which I have greatly appreciated.

For example, Nurse Tinah has drawn on her research on Brucellosis to give feedback and suggestions to the CHT on updating that lesson. (Brucellosis is an infection spread from animals to people, often through consuming raw meat or raw milk.) Soon, we will conduct some training sessions together with the CHT to review the basics of all our health lessons. This training will give her a better idea about how to improve the program. My hope is that Nurse Tinah will oversee the program at some point in the future. It has been a blessing to be able to share specific ideas together and learn from her.

While it is hard to quantify the impact of our program, Elizabeth, a lab technician who has worked at the mission's clinic at least since my arrival in 2009, identified an

encouraging outcome of our training: When she began working for the clinic, the shelves in our lab were lined with specimen bottles filled with intestinal worms. Now, the shelves are frequently bare. Part of the reason for this change is that people are washing their hands more and maintaining better hygiene. Almost all of our community health lessons include the importance of washing hands. Another reason is that during our immunization outreach into the community, we give out medication to help proactively prevent worms for some children and to treat others who have worms.



Kocho Betty and Naduk Olivia giving lessons in health and hygiene at Akison A Yesu Presbyterian Clinic

Spiritual Care

I have enjoyed getting to know the ladies on my team and being able to disciple them as we walk to the villages together. Sometimes we listen to the Karimojong audio Bible or to local praise songs on my phone. Or we sing together and recite our memory verses in Karimojong. We have learned ten verses together so far. Sometimes when we sit with people in their compounds, after we have finished teaching, we pray together. A few on the CHT are now comfortable praying on their own while others

prefer to translate as I pray.

Over the years, we have made efforts to coordinate with the outreach of the mission's pastoral team. On most afternoons, the pastoral team goes out to the villages to teach Bible stories under a tree outside the village where they encounter mainly men. At times, I have brought some men on the pastoral team with me to the villages so that the women there can hear both a health lesson and a Bible story.

Recently, it has been beneficial to work with some secondary school students while they were on their year-end break, which in Uganda is during the months of December and January. Perhaps, during other shorter breaks between school terms, the pastoral team can again join the CHT and teach the young people from the Bible. Coordinating our efforts in these ways has worked well and I hope we are able to make this a more consistent joint ministry in the future.

The author is a missionary associate in Nakaale, Uganda.

What's New

// Comings/Goings

Mr. E. C. (Lake Sherwood, Orlando, FL) concluded his one-year term as an associate in Asia, at the end of January 2019.

2019 OPC SUMMER CAMPS AND CONFERENCES



Camp Westminster in Green Lake, WI

CALIFORNIA—BLUE RIDGE BIBLE CONFERENCE
(Presbytery of Southern California)
PineCrest Christian Conference Center, Twin Peaks, CA
Family/all ages, June 17–21
www.blueridgebibleconference.org

CALIFORNIA—SIERRA CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE
(OP churches in Northern California)
Sierra Christian Conference Association, Groveland, CA
Memorial Weekend Family Camp, May 24–27
For information, contact Brad DeBoer at 209-577-4341
or bradandjanetdeboer@yahoo.com

CALIFORNIA—SUMMER BIBLE CAMP
(Presbytery of Northern California and Nevada)
Redwood Christian Park, Boulder Creek, CA
Family/all ages, June 17–21
www.pncnopc.org/calendar



Science Camp at the Machen Retreat and Conference Center

FLORIDA—REFORMED YOUTH CONFERENCE
(Presbytery of the South)
RYC High/Middle School Youth Camp, June 17–22
Youth entering 6th grade (or age 11 by August 31) through
completing 12th grade
Lakewood Retreat Center, Brooksville, FL
www.reformedyouthconference.com

**MAINE-NEW HAMPSHIRE—DEERWANDER BIBLE CON-
FERENCE**
(Presbytery of New York and New England)
Junior High (entering 6th–8th grades), August 6–10
Camp Berea, Lyman, ME
Senior High (entering 9th–12th grades), August 17–24
Chop Point Camp, Woolwich, ME
www.deerwander.org

OHIO—YOUTH CAMP
(Presbytery of Ohio)
4-H Camp Piedmont, Piedmont, OH
Junior Summer Camp (ages 9–12), July 8–13
Senior Summer Camp (grades 7–12), July 8–13
www.opcohioyouth.wordpress.com

OREGON—FAMILY CAMP
(First OPC, Portland, OR)
Camp Morrow, Wamic, OR
Family/all ages, August 21–24
For information, contact office@firststopcportland.org
or call 503-253-0695
www.firststopcportland.org/camp.php

**PENNSYLVANIA—FRENCH CREEK BIBLE
CONFERENCE**
(OPC affiliated)
French Creek State Park, Elverson, PA

Grades 4–6, August 5–10
Grades 7–8, July 29–August 5
Grades 9–10, July 22–29
Grades 11–12, July 15–22
Post-High, July 12–15
Labor Day Family, August 30–September 2
www.frenchcreek.org

 **SOUTH DAKOTA—OPC-PCA BIBLE CAMP**
(Presbytery of the Dakotas)
Camp Judson, Keystone, SD
Grades 4–12 (completed), June 22–28
www.opc-pca-biblecamp.com

 **TEXAS—SUMMER CAMP**
(Presbytery of the Southwest)
Alto Frio Baptist Encampment, Leakey, TX
Youth entering grades 4–12, July 1–6
www.opcsouthwest.org/summer-youth-camp

 **VIRGINIA—MACHEN RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER**
(Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic)
Machen Retreat and Conference Center, McDowell, VA
Science Camp (ages 10–17), July 8–13
Stronghold Camp (grades 5–12), July 29–August 3
Family/Labor Day Conf. (all ages), August 30–September 2
www.machen.org

 **WISCONSIN—CAMP WESTMINSTER**
(Presbytery of the Midwest)
Green Lake Conference Center, Green Lake, WI
All members and friends, all ages, July 29–August 1
For information, contact events@pmwopc.org
www.pmwopc.org/camp-westminster-2019

 **OTHER RETREATS**
Retreats for women, men, singles, and youth are sponsored by presbyteries and local congregations and are held at various times during the year—not just in the summer! Check out the listing at www.opc.org/cce/camps.html.



Oregon Family Camp 2018

OUR MEMBERSHIP VOWS

The Christian Life

Glen J. Clary

We have already covered the first half of the OPC's fourth membership vow, in which we acknowledge Jesus Christ as our sovereign Lord and promise, in reliance on the grace of God, to serve him with all that is in us. Here, we will cover the second half of the vow in which we promise (also in reliance on God's grace) to "forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death" our "sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life." These phrases need some explanation.

"To forsake the world" means to turn away from the sinful ways and pleasures of the world. It does not mean to isolate ourselves from unbelievers (which is impossible) or to withdraw from involvement in society. Christians are not of the world, but they can and should remain in the world. Simultaneously, although we live in this present evil world, we are not to participate in its sinful ways because Christ has delivered us from sin's enslaving power.

"To resist the devil" means not to give in to him when you are tempted to sin, like Adam and Eve did when they were tempted to eat the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:1–6). Believers are called to resist all temptations. "To put to death your sinful deeds and desires" means to completely turn away from all sinful practices and put any sinful thoughts or feelings that you have out of your mind and heart. Of course, it is only by God's grace that we can do that. That's why we constantly turn to him in prayer and seek his grace to overcome sin.

Finally, in the fourth membership vow, we promise to live or "lead a godly life," which is a life that reflects the holiness of Jesus Christ into whose image the Holy Spirit is conforming us. Again, we do not promise to do any of these things by our own power or strength but "in reliance on the grace of God." And we can only make such promises because God has promised in the Holy Scriptures that he will sanctify us in Christ (compare to 1 Thess. 5:23).

☆ Congratulations

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

- **Eliana Gritter**, *Grace Presbyterian, Columbus, OH*

COMMUNITIES IN NEED OF COMMUNITY

// DAVE HOLMLUND



Steve Corsello (left, from Trinity OPC in Easton, PA) met John when his fourth-grade daughter began riding on John's school bus and discovered John loved bluegrass just like her dad. Sixteen years later, Steve and John are still going to concerts together, and John is a welcome guest to their home and church events.

Several years ago, my family moved from small-town New Hampshire to a suburban community near Philadelphia because of our love for church planting in the OPC. One of the first discoveries we made is that just because an area is full of people does not mean those people know one another.

In northern New England—with its robust winters and reserved residents living with proud independence in their more remote homes—we figured that weather, geography, and local culture had much to do with why at least some neighbors barely knew each other. But we were shocked to discover that crowded suburbs four hundred miles to the south were not much different. Our family could play outside in full view of all the neighbors on a gorgeous, warm, and sunny afternoon and yet have remarkably little social contact with others on our street. Sometimes we might venture a tentative wave as a car drove home, but the neighbor invariably then navigated his or her SUV safely into the attached garage where the automatic door closed tightly just as the brake lights turned off.

Lacking Community

Participating in the work of Home Missions in Pennsylvania and Delaware revealed to me that our experience was not unique. From cities to suburbs to small towns and rural areas, I noticed that church planting in local communities was facing an increasingly evident problem: our *communities* often lack *community*. I was encountering individuals who had a great enthusiasm for church planting, but sometimes these delightful, friendly

people had almost no meaningful attachments in their neighborhoods and communities. It was hard to gather groups of people in new communities when those communities seemed to be full of people living in essential isolation from one another.

Other people in all kinds of settings have also been observing how American life has changed, leaving an absence of local relationships. It was helpful to me to read several books that touched on this problem, giving me concepts to explain what I was experiencing in daily life. The secular sociologist Robert Putnam describes it as a “loss of social capital” in his massive study of American community dynamics, *Bowling Alone*. Christian books like *The Art of Neighboring* by Dave Runyon and Jay Pathak or even Rosaria Butterfield’s *The Gospel Comes with a Housekey* present bold models of ministry to fill this void of community life with the contagious love of Jesus.

John Leonard wrote a helpful book on evangelism called *Get Real* which is less about how to persuade someone to believe our Christian doctrines and more about living as human beings with open hearts toward others whom we might seek to impact in our daily lives. Leonard’s chapter on “party evangelism,” for example, reminds us that our love for the lost can find an expression in forms that our unbelieving neighbors will understand and appreciate.

From the rise of television’s popularity to the breakdown in stable family units, many aspects to modern life are working against the experience of a rich and satisfying local community. My own habits are a part of the problem: trips to the local stores and face-to-face visits with friends are being replaced by



Stephanie Avellino (left, from Calvary OPC, Glenside, PA) describes her local running group as “a way God has opened up for me to connect with non-Christians in my area.”

shopping at online retailers and instantaneous digital interactions. (I must confess here that my family just signed up for a service which delivers all our groceries from our favorite stores right to our doorstep—it's wonderfully convenient, but *yikes!*)

Made for Relationships

Recently the news highlighted a rather sobering aspect of this trend: last year, the CDC reported a drop in the average life expectancy for the third straight year, the first time that's happened since World War I. This drop is not due primarily to poor diets or insufficient exercise routines—problems of which we are all well aware. Rather, it's due to what are called “deaths of despair”: drug overdoses and suicides. Our neighbors are literally *dying* in their isolation and despair as they find no one around them to help bear their burdens.

Christians have an opportunity to speak right to the heart of this problem in our society because God's Word explains the need. We human beings—however we identify ourselves or explain our personal realities—are created in the image of God and are made for relationships and community. There is no amount of modern convenience or social dysfunction that can fundamentally alter the fact that we are wired to thrive when we have others in our lives. Indeed, modern life intensifies the experience of this fallen world for all people as it eats away at community life.

But, while these biblical and theological categories help define the need, I envision Christians doing more than articulating the solution from a Christian world-and-life view. We can also help to rebuild the crumbling foundations of local community life when we are a part of authentic, functioning communities in local church bodies. Our congregations ought to be radically counter-cultural not only by our *faith* in Jesus Christ but by a *commitment* to express the corporate body of Christ in weekly and daily expressions of connection to one another: “By this

all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” These words in John 13:35 tell us that our Lord would have us to follow his own example rather than the pattern of this world when it comes to forming significant relationships and establishing God-honoring practices in the church. Jesus calls us to love one another, and that starts by knowing one another, committing to spend time with one another, and learning to serve one another in order to build one another up and give witness to the watching world.

Don't let busy schedules crowd out prayer meetings, Bible studies, playdates, visits to the elderly, regular fellowship with church friends, or special occasions for gathering. Through these practices and many others, we are following the pattern Jesus gave us. Through these simple appointments and habits, we are saying something to the world about our Christian faith and how it helps us to experience an objectively more blessed life.

I am most excited by this when I think about church planting. In the work of home missions, we identify individual people who have spiritual needs, and we map out geographical areas that are lacking in biblical witness so that we can plant a church for those people. Yet in the process we unite people together in a completely new expression of local community life. We give people two reasons to develop a love for the church—the real-life people and relationships we know that we need, and the Savior in whom we together place our trust. Church planting brings unique challenges in forming this kind of new community bond, but it is also uniquely rewarding and uniquely important for the spread of God's kingdom.

There may come a day when unreached people in America need two levels of “evangelism.” In the first, they need to recognize that we are socially impoverished if we lack all forms of community at-

tachment that earlier generations took for granted. At the second level, though, we need to see how our spiritual impoverishment and brokenness is relieved by the riches of God's grace and his redeeming power in Jesus Christ. May God move our churches to recognize the neediness in this world and supply both.

The author is regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Philadelphia.



Bill Viss (from Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA) is a prison ministry volunteer (top) and along with his wife witnesses to many, including this couple from Asia (bottom).

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date news and prayer requests, receive our newsletter by e-mailing HomeMissionsToday@opc.org.
New editions: April 3 and 17, 2019.

[Continued from page 7]

beautiful poem, “Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats”:

The breath whose might I have invok'd in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven,
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

Dana Gioia, the recent poet-laureate of California, describes poetry as enchantment, a form of vocal music. Such lyrical, pleasant poetry is a gift to us and a reminder that the creator God formed us in his image and still makes himself known in his creation. Leland Ryken makes the claim that God expects us to understand poetry because “approximately a third of the Bible is poetic in form” (“10 Things You Should Know About Poetry”). When we read good poetry by proficient poets, something resonates within us and calls us away from our ordinary lives to participate in songs of life that speak to us of another world. Words skillfully crafted into stylistic sculptures of sound beckon us to revel in the refrains of common-graced beauty along the path of our particularized pilgrimage. These word songs, like fur coats in the wardrobe, are all around us and lead us to participate in our own poetic adventure. □

The author is an OP minister and president of White Horse Inn.

The Beginning

Genesis 1:25

In the beginning, long before it mattered
All potential knelt in reverent reverie,
This empty void, by brooding Spirit mastered,
All life uncolored; unmade, unnamed, unseen.

This silent space, without a form, suspended
In time, marked out, a Genesis presumed,
Because One knew, and so with love attended
This pregnant darkness, infinity enwombed.

See three persons, working as the Artist,
By word alone paint emptiness away.
Creation, composed in royal garments
Comes forth, unloosed, as on her wedding day.

Earth-bride bursts forth, revealed in all her glory
Birthed by the word, and so begins our story.

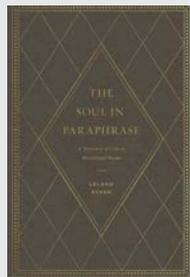
—Mark A. Green

Suggested Books for Beginning Poets and Readers of Poetry

Mark A. Green

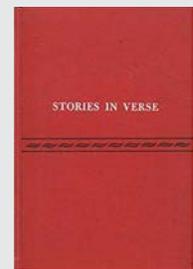
***The Soul in Paraphrase*, Leland Ryken, editor. Crossway, 2018.**

This clothbound volume, a delight to hold and read, is a collection of the best devotional poetry in the English language. Highly recommended not only for the selection, which spans from Caedmon to John Donne to Emily Dickinson, but also because the poems are followed by commentary by Ryken, professor of English emeritus at Wheaton College and an expert on devotional poetry.



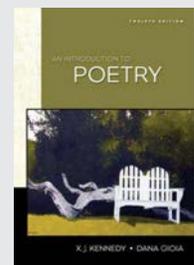
***Stories in Verse*, Max T. Hohn, editor. Bobbs-Merrill, 1978.**

The Calvert curriculum provided this excellent book for the eighth grade curriculum which we used to homeschool our four children. It is still on my bookshelf and a joy to peruse, with helpful hints on how to read poetry and over five hundred pages of stories.



***An Introduction to Poetry*, X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia, editors. Longman, 2009.**

Dana Gioia recommended this textbook to me when I asked him where to start. This collection brings some of the most well-known English poetry together in a wonderful volume.

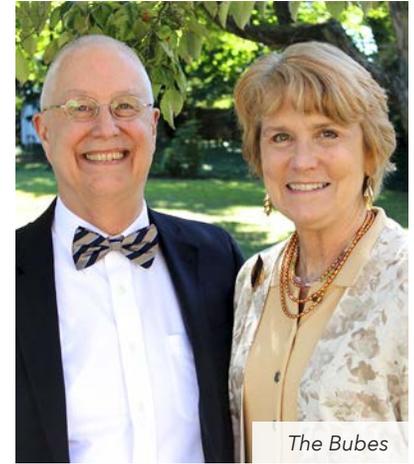


APRIL



The Sumpters

- 1 Pray for missionary associates **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they adjust to life on the field. / **MARK (PEGGY) SUMPTER**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest.
- 2 **RYAN AND ROCHELLE CAVANAUGH**, Merrillville, IN. Pray that Mission Church would have creativity and courage in evangelism and hospitality. / **LINDA FOH AND ANDREW MOODY**, technical assistants for OPC.org.
- 3 Missionary associates **MARKUS & SHARON JEROMIN**. Pray for joy in the fruit of their labors as they return home. / Pray for **DANNY OLINGER**, general secretary of Christian Education, as he visits presbyteries.
- 4 **MICHAEL & NAOMI SCHOUT**, Zeeland, MI. Pray that God would bless the outreach of Grace Fellowship OPC. / Yearlong intern **ETHAN (CATHERINE) BOLYARD**, Covenant Community OPC, Taylors, SC.
- 5 Pray for missionary associates **LEAH HOPP**, **REBEKAH MOORE**, and **ANGELA VOSKUIL**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they make contacts. / Pray for **JUDY ALEXANDER** and others planning the Timothy Conference next week.



The Bubes

- 6 **CALVIN & CONNIE KELLER**, Winston-Salem, NC. Pray for new contacts to be made in Harvest OPC's neighborhood. / **ERIC & DIANNA TUININGA**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for the breakfast club outreach in their home to the youth in the community.
- 7 **CHARLES AND CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for the children who hear the Word at the Reformation Book Room. / **DAVID AND REBEKAH GRAVES**, Coeur d'Alene, ID. Pray that the Lord would add to Coeur d'Alene Reformed Church.
- 8 **CHRIS (NANCY) WALMER**, area home missions coordinator, Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania. / **NICK (ROSEMARIE) LAMMÉ**, evangelist, Houston, TX. Pray that God would open doors to start Bible studies and other groups throughout Houston.
- 9 **MARK AND JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray that the preaching of the gospel may encourage the church members in difficult times. / Navy chaplain **CORNELIUS (DEIDRE) JOHNSON** and Air Force chaplain **DANIEL (STACY) HALLEY**.
- 10 Pray for the young men participating in the **TIMOTHY CONFERENCE**, April 10-13 in Orlando, FL. / Pray for **DAVID & RASHEL ROBBINS**, **MARK & CARLA VAN ESSENDELFT**, and **DR. FLIP & ANNELOES BAARDMAN**, Nakaale, Uganda, that the Lord would grant times of rest and renewal.
- 11 **CHARLENE TIPTON**, database coordinator, and **DAVE VANDER PLOEG**, interim controller. / Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **MARK BUBE** and associate general secretary **DOUGLAS CLAWSON**.
- 12 Pray for health and safety for missionary associates **STEVE AND CARRIE HILL**, **ELISE RUDDER**, and **MICHAELA SHARPSHAIR**, Montevideo, Uruguay. / **NATHAN (ANNA) STROM**, church-planting intern, Immanuel OPC, Andover, MN.
- 13 Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW** and associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**. / Pray for affiliated missionaries **CRAIG AND REE COULBOURNE** and **LINDA KARNER**, Japan.
- 14 **JEREMY AND GWEN BAKER**, Yuma, AZ. Pray that the Lord would add year-round families to Yuma OPC. / **HEERO AND ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for health and stamina for the family.
- 15 **BEN AND MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for wisdom as the church explores the purchase of a new building. / Yearlong intern **ZACH (SANDRA) SIGGINS**, Calvary OPC, Glenside, PA.

APRIL



The Hopps

21 **BEN & HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti. Pray that many will come to Christ as Ben travels to preach and to encourage the churches. / Pray for **DAVE (ELIZABETH) HOLMLUND**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

22 **BROCK (JENNIFER) PAVIER**, church-planting intern, Covenant Presbyterian, St. Augustine, FL. / Pray for retired missionaries **CAL & EDIE CUMMINGS** and **BRIAN & DOROTHY WINGARD** in their current service to the church.

23 Pray for new staff member **ABBY HARTING**, secretary to the Committee on Christian Education and office receptionist. / **MR. AND MRS. D. K.**, Asia. Pray for wisdom as they face unexpected transitions.

24 Retired missionaries **GREET RIETKERK** and **YOUNG & MARY LOU SON**. Pray for continued joy as they face health concerns. / Home Missions administrative assistant **KATIE STUMPF**.

25 **DAVID NAKHLA**, administrator, Committee on Diaconal Ministries. Pray for guidance in an effective ministry of mercy to the persecuted church. / **MR. AND MRS. J. M.**, and tentmaker **T. D.**, Asia. Pray for health and encouragement.



Brad & Cinnamon Peppo

26 **BRAD & CINNAMON PEPP**O, Dayton, OH. Pray that the families of First Street Reformed Fellowship will grow into a cohesive core group. / **BEN (TIFFANY) WARD**, church-planting intern, Christ the King, Naples, FL.

27 Pray for **JOEL PEARCE** as he leads efforts to develop a digital edition of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. / Pray for **STEVE (JOANIE) DOE**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic.

28 **RON & CAROL BEABOUT**, Mifflintown, PA. Pray that God would save local families and bring them to worship at Grace and Truth Presbyterian Church. / **GREGORY REYNOLDS**, editor of *Ordained Servant*.

29 Pray for the Board of Trustees of **GREAT COMMISSION PUBLICATIONS** as it meets today. / **MR. AND MRS. M. M.**, Asia (on furlough). Pray for the family as they adapt to daily life and labors in the United States.

30 Pray for stated clerk **ROSS GRAHAM** as he prepares the agenda for the meeting of the 86th General Assembly, which convenes June 5, 2019, in Dallas, TX. / Yearlong intern Chris Byrd, Knox OPC, Silver Spring, MD.

16 **MR. AND MRS. S. F.**, and associates **P. F.** and **M. S.**, Asia. Pray for open hearts to the Word in challenging times. / **DAVID HANEY**, director for the Committee on Ministerial Care.

17 Pray for **JIM BOSGRAF**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Midwest. / **MARK STUMPF**, administrator for the OPC Loan Fund and the Committee on Ministerial Care.

18 Pray for affiliated missionaries **JERRY & MARILYN FARNIK**, Prague, Czech Republic, and missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia. / CCE's **SUBCOMMITTEE ON RESOURCES FOR THE CHURCHES**.

19 Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Pray that the churches' diaconal work may be a loving witness amid the recent unrest. / **JANET BIRKMANN**, communications coordinator, Short-Term Missions.

20 **GREGORY & GINGER O'BRIEN**, Downingtown, PA. Pray for a new members' course and follow-up with visitors at Downingtown OPC. / **DIANE OLINGER**, editorial assistant for *New Horizons* and *Ordained Servant*.

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

WETHERED INSTALLED AS EVANGELIST

On February 2, Bennett Wethered was installed as an evangelist of the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic. He was formerly a pastor in the presbytery, but accepted the role of director of The Machen Retreat and Conference Center in 2015, having been on the Retreat Operating Committee since 2009. As director, Wethered is the contact person for all conferences, camps, and retreats. He also oversees all maintenance needs for the property and serves as representative of the Machen Retreat and Conference Center to presbyteries and at individual churches. Since the gift of the property over twenty years ago, it has been a desire of the presbytery to reach out to others in the surrounding Highland County (which, historically, has a rich Presbyterian history) by holding Bible studies and worship services at the conference center. Wethered is involved in strengthening these efforts.

UPDATE

MINISTERS

- **Bennett B. Wethered**, director of the Machen Retreat and Conference Center in McDowell, VA, was installed as an evangelist of the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic on February 2.
- On February 2, the Presbytery of Philadelphia approved the transfer of the ministerial credentials of **Richard B. Gaffin Jr.** to the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic.
- On February 2, the Presbytery of Philadelphia received **Chad B. Van Dixhoorn** upon transfer from the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic.
- On February 8, **David A. Okken**, formerly a missionary to Uganda, was installed as associate pastor of Shiloh OPC in Raleigh, NC.
- **Samuel S. Chung**, a ministerial member previously serving the Korean Church



At the installation of Bennett Wethered on February 2: (back row) Tom Martin, Ethan Allison, Ken Barnes, Tony Monaghan; (front row) Paul Martin, Tappey Jones, Ryan Bever, Bennett Wethered, Scott Willet, and Gerald Taylor

of Queens, NY, was installed as associate pastor of Reformation Presbyterian Church, Queens, NY, on February 9.

- On February 10, the Presbytery of Philadelphia dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Michael J. Matossian** and Emmanuel OPC in Wilmington, DE.

MILESTONES

- **Belinda (Bartley) Morris**, 42, wife of OP pastor Jody O. Morris of Redeemer OPC in Carlisle, PA, died unexpectedly on February 12.
- **Alice (Simon) Strimple**, 84, died on February 19. She was the wife of OP minister Dr. Robert B. Strimple, president and professor emeritus of Westminster Seminary California.

REVIEWS

Echoes of Exodus: Tracing a Biblical Motif, by Bryan D. Estelle. IVP Academic, 2018. Paperback, 392 pages, \$32.32 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor **Thomas A. Martin**.

Read this book and you'll be drawn back to the Bible with a renewed appreciation of the riches of God's Word and

the fullness of redemption!

"Should you speed-read this book?" the author asks in his introduction (16). His answer is, "Probably not." That's a good answer because this is a content-rich book that engages vigorously with current scholarship. It's an academic book intended to equip preachers and teachers, but serious Bible students will profit from it too as an edifying study to stimulate the intellect and refresh the soul.

Most of the heavy lifting comes early on, so don't quit at the opening chapter. Here Estelle lays out his hermeneutical methodology, introducing us to the concept of "echo" and locating its roots in the method of classical and Reformed exegetes. This is the most technical part of the book (augmented by a twenty-four-page concluding appendix), but its content is engagingly illustrated by the chapters which follow.

The second chapter establishes from Genesis the covenantal framework within which the exodus event is situated. This is an excellent explication of covenant theology as understood in our confessional standards.

Chapter 3 brings us to the exodus itself. Biblically, this is an event of "epic proportions" (93), which the reader is

cautioned against reducing to a mere political liberation. Instead, Estelle notes approvingly the assessment of Geerhardus Vos, “The exodus from Egypt is the Old Testament Redemption” (4). On this basis, he proceeds to demonstrate how the exodus paves the way for a full-orbed understanding of redemption. As a type of redemption, the exodus unites both forensic and participatory aspects of salvation and reverberates throughout the rest of the canon.

Having laid this careful groundwork, Estelle goes on in subsequent chapters to trace the echoes of the exodus event by examining selected passages from both testaments. This is a richly-textured and well-developed study. It makes judicious use of the original languages (generally transliterated) in a way that will be appreciated even by those unfamiliar with them. In unfolding his theme, Estelle provides preachers of the Old Testament with a fine case study in hermeneutics, demonstrating how all the Scriptures bear a unified and coherent witness to Christ.

As the subtitle suggests, this study traces a *biblical* motif—its value is not limited to those with an interest in the Old Testament alone. The later chapters examine how exodus themes emerge in the New Testament, shaping its narrative and overflowing into the soteriology, ecclesiology, and ethics of New Testament believers. Finally, the book rises to a stirring climax in its treatment of the book of Revelation—a feast for the soul and a salutary lesson on how to read and preach the closing book of the canon!

For those still tempted to speed-read, there are helpful summaries at the end of each chapter. The usual indices include a comprehensive Scripture index. A concluding section prompts the reader to reflect on the implications of the study for systematic theology and adds some provocative comments on its implications for prayer and piety that are well worth pon-

dering. Truly, as Estelle says, “much grist for the biblical, theological and ecclesiological mill” (326).

***The Ark of Safety: Is There Salvation Outside of the Church?* by Ryan M. McGraw. Reformation Heritage, 2018. Paperback, 112 pages, \$7.50. Reviewed by OP pastor A. Craig Troxel.**

In *The Ark of Safety*, Ryan McGraw’s primary quarry is the confessional phrase, “out of which [visible church] there is no ordinary possibility of salvation” (WCF 25.2). At first glance such a phrase may appear overly narrow or strict. Isn’t it enough simply to love Christ? On that point, Geddes MacGregor wrote that the quickest way of getting a correct answer to the “very theological question, ‘What think ye of Christ?’ is by not asking it at all, but by ascertaining, rather, what your audience thinks of the Church” (*Corpus Christi*, preface). In his book, McGraw argues similarly. Not only does he get to his answer quickly—it’s a short book—but he also concludes that how we regard the church says more about how we regard Christ than how we regard the church herself. He makes this case in three successive ways.

First, he tracks down the historical origin and development of the phrase “no salvation outside the church,” starting with Cyprian, Augustine, and then looking to Reformers like Heinrich Bullinger, William Ames, John Calvin, and Zacharias Ursinus. The author shows that the latter argued their points around the important distinction between the church in her twin capacities as invisible and visible. He then surveys the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the thinking of John Owen, Francis Turretin, Wilhelmus à Brakel, and Herman Witsius—who taught that membership in the church invisible is absolutely necessary for salvation, while membership in the church visible is ordinarily necessary for salvation. McGraw rightly argues that both have their place and priority, and that the “church visible comes first in order his-

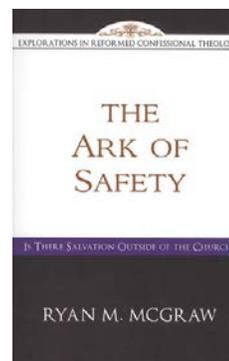
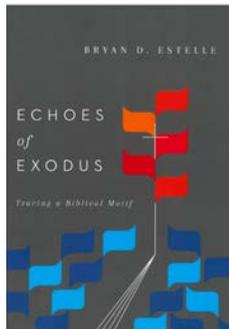
torically, while the church invisible comes first in order theologically” (86). Nicely said.

Secondly, McGraw hunts down the scriptural evidence to see whether these confessional giants and standards hold up. As he discusses the covenantal structure of Scripture, he lands upon the importance of circumcision as the God-given sign and seal of membership among God’s people. Circumcision inevitably draws out the distinction between the visible and invisible nature of God’s corporate people, since the outward circumcision of the body was meant to signify the inward circumcision of the heart. Moses and the prophets capitalized upon this, as did Paul (Rom. 2:28–29). The author then shows how the New Testament ties circumcision to baptism as the covenantal sign that ushers new members into the expanding visible people of God since both sacraments fulfill the same function, have the same meaning, are applied to the same recipients, and underline the same significance of the church visible for the salvation of God’s people.

It is true that a person can be saved without joining the church or being baptized—like the thief on the cross. And yet, speaking to this very example, the author cites J. C. Ryle who wisely remarked that God gave us this one example of a deathbed conversion so that we would not give up on anyone, but he gave us only one, so that we might not be presumptuous and dismiss the importance of affiliating with the church. The church, and all the means God has given to her (like baptism) only emphasize how crucial these are for the believer.

Thirdly, McGraw brings together his historical and scriptural evidence. For example, he demonstrates how important the preaching of the Word of God is for salvation. He looks to Romans 10:14, which states,

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And



how are they to hear without someone preaching?

Without faith, there is no salvation. Without the preaching of the Word, there is no faith. Without the church visible, there is no preaching of the Word. Moreover, without the church visible, there is no communion of the saints, no perfection of the saints, and no duties of the saints. How can anyone seriously entertain salvation without considering how necessary the church is for it?

I think McGraw should be complimented for obtaining his goal—and for doing so with brevity. This little book could have been even more concise, but not by much. And yet, for its size, it is packed with solid work—especially helpful in its exposition of the distinction between the church visible and invisible. I'm pleased that the author has not lost sight of a more general readership and the types of questions that Bible readers like you and I, might ordinarily ask.

Romans, by J. V. Fesko. Reformation Heritage, 2018. Hardcover, 464 pages, \$24.00. Reviewed by Reformed Theological Seminary professor Ben C. Dunson.

J. V. Fesko's new Romans commentary is in *The Lectio Continua Expository Commentary on the New Testament* series, a series comprised of non-technical, expository sermons written from an unabashedly Reformed perspective. (The series uses either the King James or New King James translations of the Bible.)

As Fesko notes, Paul does not explicitly state why he wrote Romans, although Fesko sees Romans 1:16–17 as a kind of theme statement for the whole letter, arguing that Paul's chief purpose is to unpack the "power, scope, and nature of the gospel" (23). And the gospel is this: "the righteous shall live by faith," a faith that

is both the exclusive means by which we receive the imputed satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, and the lens through which we must live our entire lives. (30)

For those whose own theological perspective is Reformed there are few

surprises in Fesko's reading of Romans. What perhaps distinguishes this commentary most is its welcome concern to apply the text to the heart as well as the mind, seen, for example, in Fesko's treatment of hypocrisy and pride in Romans 2:17–29 and his discussion of hardship and suffering in the life of the believer in Romans 8:18–25.

It may be most helpful to interested readers to note a few areas where Fesko takes a view that is contested by modern interpreters.

Fesko straightforwardly expounds Paul's prohibition against homosexual desire and activity in Romans 1:26–27. With regard to Paul's teaching that God "will render to each one according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:6) and that "the doers of the law will be justified" (Rom. 2:13), Fesko takes the position that such statements hypothetically lay out the law of God to send lawbreakers to Christ (47–52).

In chapters 9 and 10 (on Rom. 3:21–31 and 4:1–8), and throughout the commentary, Fesko clearly articulates Paul's teaching that Christ's death accomplishes a penal (judicial) substitutionary atonement for his people that turns God's righteous wrath away from them. Justification is thus a forensic (legal) declaration that one is in the right with God, a verdict grounded solely in the imputed righteousness of Christ.

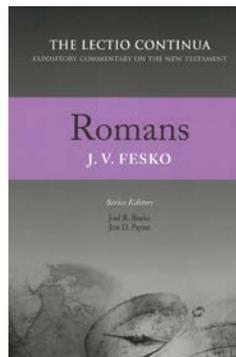
In chapter 10 (on Rom. 5:12–14), Fesko provides a classic Reformed defense of "federal theology." On the long-simmering debate among modern Reformed theologians about the relationship among union with Christ, justification, and sanctification, Fesko maintains that because justification is a judicial verdict that "breaks the legal claim and power of sin" (162), it is "a life-

giving verdict" (160). While explaining union with Christ in Romans 6, Fesko emphasizes that Paul lays out the legal, rather than transformative, dimension of this union (see, for example, 169; Fesko has elsewhere argued against the notion of "definitive sanctification" in Paul's theology). How, then, does sanctification take place? The believer

die[s] more and more to sin and live[s] more and more unto Christ by seeking the power of His life-giving resurrection and laying hold of the life-giving verdict of our justification. (166)

Fesko elsewhere emphasizes that the strength to pursue progressive sanctification lies in the fact that the believer is a participant in the new creation, and that the Holy Spirit is actively at work subduing the sinful flesh of the believer. On the identity of the "I" in Romans 7:13–25, Fesko, in agreement with an increasing number of Reformed scholars, contends that Paul is not writing about himself (before or after conversion), but about "Israel's collective experience under the law" (182).

In sum, Fesko has written a straightforwardly Reformed commentary that is focused on the meaning of the text as well as its application to the hearts and lives of believers. Pastors and laypeople will benefit from his exposition.



Position Available

Pastor: Christ Presbyterian Church (OPC) in St. Charles, Missouri, (within the St. Louis metropolitan area), is seeking a senior pastor who will faithfully proclaim Christ from all the Scriptures. Our theology is firmly rooted in the "solae" of the Reformation, and our weekly service consists of a classical liturgy that highlights God's extraordinary work through the ordinary means of grace. For more information about us, visit www.cpcopc.org. To apply, email us at: apply@cpcopc.org.



Short-Term Missions & Disaster Response

The Committee on Diaconal Ministries | The Committee on Foreign Missions | The Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension
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1 Peter 4:10 (ESV)

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