

# NEW HORIZONS

≡ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ≡

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November 2019

2019 THANK OFFERING

## RESCUE THE PERISHING



HOME MISSIONS

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

FOREIGN MISSIONS

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## New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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On September 25-26, for the first time, Grace Reformed Fellowship in Lander, Wyoming, hosted the Presbytery of the Dakotas in their church building, previously a car dealership that's now in the midst of renovations. Here are some of the church members who "far and away exceeded expectations" with their food and service, including aprons to match their planning name: Orthodox Women's League (OWL). From left to right, Donna Strong, Tiffany Knutson, Mary Lois Wallace, Joyce Harris, Becca Eggli, Avery Anderson, Jessica Wooten, Jonathan Anderson, Jessica Blake, and Ryan Blake.



# RESCUE THE PERISHING



LARRY E. WILSON // “Jesus died for sinners. Can’t we live for them?” Charles Spurgeon asks this incisive question in the December 7 meditation of his well-known *Morning and Evening*. Spurgeon’s devotional writings, especially when rephrased into modern English, often give me the pastoral encouragement and challenge

that I need to hear. This meditation’s striking call to rescue the perishing is no exception. Here is my paraphrase of it:



“I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some.” (1 Corinthians 9:22 NLT)

The Apostle Paul’s great aim wasn’t just to instruct. It wasn’t just to improve. It was to *save*. Anything short of this would have disappointed him. He wanted to see people renewed in heart, forgiven, sanctified—in short, saved. Have we aimed our Christian ministries at anything less than this? Then let’s amend our ways. What good will it be at the great Last Day to have instructed and moralized people if they appear before their Judge unsaved? Our clothes will be red with blood if we’ve sought inferior objects through life (see Jer. 2:34; Ezek. 33:1–6)—if we’ve forgotten that, above all else, *people need to be saved*.

Paul knew the ruin of the human

condition by nature. So he didn’t try to educate them. He tried to save them. He saw people sinking into hell. So he didn’t talk about refining them. He talked of saving them from the wrath to come. To bring about their salvation, he gave himself up with tireless zeal to spreading the gospel. He devoted himself to warning and beseeching people to be reconciled to God (see 2 Cor. 5:18–21). His prayers were persistent. His la-



Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892)

bors were ongoing. To *save* souls was his consuming passion, his ambition, his calling.

He became a servant to all people. He toiled for them. He felt a woe within if he did not preach the gospel (see 1 Cor. 9:16). He laid aside his own tastes to prevent prejudice. He subordinated his own will in indifferent things. If only people would receive the gospel, he raised no questions about worship preferences. The *gospel* was the overriding business with him. If he might save some, he’d be content. That was the crown he strove for. That was reward enough for all his labors and self-denials.

Dear reader, do you and I live to win souls at this outstanding pace? Does the same all-absorbing desire grip us? If not, why not? Jesus died for sinners. Can’t we live for them? Where’s our compassion? Where’s our love to Christ if we don’t seek his honor in the salvation of sinners? Oh, that our Lord would saturate us through and through with an undying zeal for the

souls of our fellow humans!



What if our Lord does grant our prayer and saturate us through and through with an undying zeal for the souls of our fellow humans? What if we do commit ourselves to rescue the perishing? What would that look like?

### Christian Living in Ordinary Life

First, devoting ourselves to rescue the perishing would *not* mean that most of us step out of our ordinary callings and stations in life. The Lord himself providentially puts us in them. He gives us abilities, interests, and opportunities. He orders our circumstances. And the Lord himself providentially works *through* us in those circumstances. He himself serves the needs of his creatures through our service. Too many modern believers think that we must withdraw from ordinary life and do extraordinary things if we're to evangelize. But when the fact that God intentionally calls and places us right where we are grips our hearts, we'll instead work heartily at whatever we do, as for the Lord (see Col. 3:23).

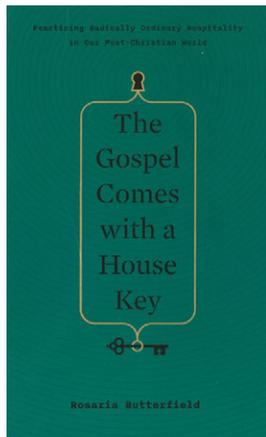
### Christian Living in Practical Action

This is why, second, devoting ourselves to rescue the perishing *would* mean that we let our lights shine in the midst of ordinary life. Actually, walking with and living for the Lord in our ordinary callings and stations is a key aspect of our Christian witness. Without consistent Christian living, even the most eloquent articulation of the gospel comes across like a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal (1 Cor. 13:1). Alas, gongs and cymbals seem to be the norm in our day! In contrast, consistent Christian living in everyday life bolsters and reinforces our gospel message (1 Pet. 2:12). We do need to speak up to make Jesus known. When we do it in the context of consistent Christian living, it will come across with power. Our

neighbors will see our good works and give glory to our heavenly Father (see Matt. 5:16).

### Christian Living Together with Our Fellow Believers

Third, devoting ourselves to rescue the perishing would also mean that we let our lights shine *together* in vital church life so that we're like "a city set on a hill" that "cannot be hidden" (see Matt. 5:14). We shine like this as we truly devote ourselves to assembling together in God's gracious presence each Lord's Day to renew covenant with God and one another (see Heb. 10:19–25). We shine like this as we truly devote ourselves together to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayers (see Acts 2:42). We shine like this as we tangibly love each other, steadfastly obeying the "one another" commands in the New Testament. We shine like this as we work together to tangibly love our



neighbors, serving them and showing hospitable Christian community to them. (For a resource on loving neighbors, see *The Gospel Comes with a House Key* by Rosaria Butterfield, published by Crossway Books in 2018.) We also shine like this as we work together to fulfill the Great Commission—spreading the gospel, making disciples, and planting churches that will then spread the gospel and make disciples.

### An Opportunity to Rescue the Perishing

As members of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), of course, we work together with the denomination as a whole to spread the gospel and make disciples. The OPC's ministry, called Worldwide Outreach, is three-pronged: church planting, sending out

foreign missionaries, and providing biblical resources and training.

Through its Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension, the OPC seeks to assist presbyteries in planting churches that will preach Christ and show love. Through its Committee on Foreign Missions, the OPC seeks to participate in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. Through its Committee on Christian Education, the OPC seeks to provide information, resources, and training to strengthen the body to rescue the perishing.

In the pages of this issue, you can find a "map" of each committee's staff, missionaries, and ministry interns. These are designed to connect you to the labors of these denominational workers. The maps might fit well in your Sunday school room, above your church coffee counter, or on your fridge at home!

Each year, the OPC sets aside the month of November to stir up our prayer and financial support for its mission to rescue the perishing. We call this our "Thank Offering." (For more details on the Thank Offering, see page 6.)

The funds collected during the Thank Offering are dedicated to supporting Worldwide Outreach. Our generous giving to the Thank Offering helps to maintain these ministries and to expand them. Isn't this something we want to do? As Pastor Spurgeon challenges us,

Where's our compassion? Where's our love to Christ if we don't seek his honor in the salvation of sinners? Oh, that our Lord would saturate us through and through with an undying zeal for the souls of our fellow humans!

Let's devote ourselves to serving together to rescue the perishing. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him *should not perish* but have eternal life" (John 3:16, emphasis added). □

*The author is a retired minister of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.*

# WHY ALL THE MAPS?

You may have noticed that *New Horizons* looks a little different this month. Inside its pages are three maps designed to be easily removed for display. The maps feature the work of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church’s three standing committees: Foreign Missions, Home Missions, and Christian Education. They are featured this month because their work is closely tied to the Thank Offering.

Each year, the general assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church elects committees to oversee our church’s missionary, church-planting, and educational ministries, and approves their budgets for the coming year. The assembly commits the whole church to carry out this work, which together is called Worldwide Outreach. Worldwide Outreach is funded during the year by contributions from churches and individuals. But over a quarter of the funding comes from the Thank Offering at the end of the year!

## How Does the Thank Offering Work?

Thank Offering promotional packages are sent to OPC churches in mid-October. They include the Thank Offering poster, three sets of bulletin inserts, and remittance envelopes. Additional print material, as well as digital versions (PDFs) of the inserts, can be obtained from Annelisa Studley at the OPC administrative offices (phone: 215-935-1024 or email: [annelisa.studley@opc.org](mailto:annelisa.studley@opc.org)).

The bulletin inserts can be distributed on consecutive Lord’s Days prior to the collection of the Thank Offering. We suggest using them from November 3 to November 17, with a collection being taken up on November 24. Some churches collect the Thank Offering on more than one day or at a special Thanksgiving service.

Checks collected in local churches should be made out to those churches and designated for the Thank Offering in the memo line. Using the enve-

lopes included in this issue of *New Horizons*, you may mail in a check made out to “The Orthodox Presbyterian Church” with “Thank Offering” in the memo line.

As the chart below indicates, giving to Worldwide Outreach has fallen off in recent months. So we need a strong Thank Offering this year, as well as continued regular giving, to meet our commitment to support the ministries of Worldwide Outreach. Let’s each do our part before the Lord.

## Requests for 2020

The 2019 General Assembly of the OPC determined to make the following requests for the financial support of denominational ministries in 2020 (generally to be made through individual congregations):

**Worldwide Outreach:** \$4,500,000. This averages out to \$197 per communicant member. Smaller churches may not be able to give this much, so larger churches should give more than the average. Thank Offering giving at the end of the year goes to Worldwide Outreach. Ideally, it takes these missions and education ministries beyond the budgeted goal.

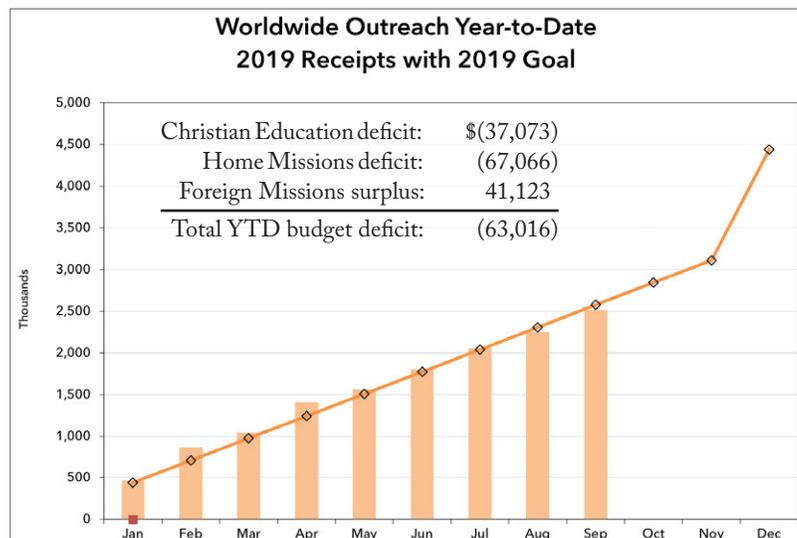
**GA Operation Fund:** Churches are requested to give \$22 per communicant member.

**GA Travel Fund:** Churches are requested to give \$12 per communicant member.

**Diaconal Ministries General Fund:** Churches are requested to give \$25 per communicant member.

**Ministerial Care:** Churches are requested to give \$10 per communicant member.

*Send contributions to:* The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 607 N. Easton Rd., Bldg. E, Willow Grove, PA 19090-2539. Checks should be made payable to The Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Contributions are credited to Worldwide Outreach and support all its ministries, unless specifically designated.



## HOME MISSIONS

# WELCOMING AS CHRIST WELCOMED US

// ALBERT J. TRICARICO JR.



Al and Laurie Tricarico

One of the saddest sights in rural East Africa is a man or woman sitting alone. The Karimojong people of north-east Uganda prize community above many things that you and I regard as valuable. I observed this in my years serving as a missionary among them. The Karimojong spend time together. They work together. They feed each other. They dance. They share stories. Unless forced by circumstances to be alone, they find people to provide them company.

An extension of this cultural value is hospitality. Many were the times when I enjoyed a village welcome from my neighbors—one that included the honor of the best seat and a sincere invitation to share my thoughts. I always felt free to pray, present gospel teaching, or just talk about my life. Being in their company was a great pleasure, and I loved telling them so. I learned from the example that they provided.

Hospitality, however, is not a mere cultural commitment. It is a biblical mandate. It is a practice that emerges from the welcome we have received from God and provides a pattern of that welcome, as members of Christ's body enter each other's lives and homes. Hospitality also contemplates receiving strangers—a duty that turns our thoughts to the last day when the hospitable will be welcomed into Christ's eternal kingdom (Matt. 25:35). It is likely that those reading this will agree. Here are a few thoughts to inspire us all to grow in providing God's welcome to others.

### Jesus Welcomes Us

First, there are many biblical texts that show God's welcome. The prophet Isaiah provides the invitation in vivid culinary terms:

Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend

your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. (Isa. 55:1–2)

Jesus is the fulfillment of this feast-promise. He said so as he offered his very self as the bread of life and the source of living water that will satisfy forever (John 6:35; 4:10, 13; 7:37). The regular welcome of Jesus is extended when Christians participate in the Lord's Supper. Jesus is our host—he welcomes us. Jesus is our food—we feast on him by faith. Jesus is our returning King whose death we proclaim until he comes (1 Cor. 11:26). When he does come, he will welcome all who trust in him to his marriage supper (Rev. 19:7–10).

Consider the many times Jesus visited people at mealtime. The fact that he was despised because he ate with "sinners" (Matt. 9:10) is proof enough that he was a known guest of many. One such host was Zacchaeus. He showed his faith in Christ, not only by giving to the poor and compensating the victims of his greed, but also by receiving Jesus joyfully (Luke 19:6). You might say that the first evidence of his repentance was to show hospitality to his Savior.

Jesus was also a generous host. He fed five thousand people with bread and fish. He took up the cause of undersupplied wedding guests and provided the wine needed for the celebration. Here is something to ponder. Consider how Jesus lived as both guest and host throughout his ministry. Now ask how we as his disciples might follow his example. In other words, let's all consider how we are to welcome others and *be* welcomed by others.

The spiritual dimension of this is clear enough. Jesus will always receive those who come to him. His particular words of welcome are worthy of our regular meditation:

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest

for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matt. 11:28–30)

Jesus welcomes you. Do come. Bring others along.

## Hospitality and the Christian

Hospitality is a great equalizer. After all, everyone eats! We have different homes, different tastes, different capacities. But we do not have different obligations. To be hospitable is to follow the example and command of Christ. The texts are clear: “Show hospitality to one another without grumbling” (1 Pet. 4:9); “Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality” (Rom. 12:13); “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb. 13:2).

While not every person finds himself in a situation conducive to welcoming people at home, we all need to think about how we can follow the welcome-commands of Scripture. It may mean treating a friend to lunch out. Or visiting someone in the hospital or in prison with a welcoming spirit (Matt. 25:39). It may mean being a gracious, affirming guest. Give others the joy of welcoming you while you enjoy the company of hosts and other guests. In the broadest sense, live in a way that makes others feel “at home” with you.

The Bible clearly states our duty to care about other people, particularly—though not exclusively—in the church. Regular practice of hospitality gives the context for practicing the many “one another” commands of Scripture. “Love one another”; “pray for one another”; “bear one another’s burdens”; “encourage one another”; “outdo one another in showing honor”; “greet one another with a holy kiss” (1 John 4:11; James 5:16; Gal. 6:2; 1 Thess. 5:11; Rom. 12:10; 16:16). And finally, Romans 15:7 reads, “Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.” It is nearly impossible to obey these words without being in the presence of those we are called to love. Hospitality is a wonderful means of providing the physical space for that presence.

## Hospitality and Church Office

The Lord has given us a list of qualifications that must be met for those who serve as officers in his church. When you read 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, you will not be surprised to learn what is on the list. “Above reproach,” check. “The husband of one wife,” got it. But “hospitable”? Really? Why would that be a requirement for leaders in Christ’s church?

Certainly, it is commanded for all believers to be hospitable, and elders and deacons are believers, so they as well

have the duty to welcome people. But there are other commands to all believers that do not appear in the qualifications list. Why, then, hospitality?

It is because hospitality is perfectly designed to display the gospel. Jesus has welcomed us into the home of his Father. When we welcome friends or strangers into our homes, we are providing a parable-like gospel message. Our welcome reflects Christ’s welcome. Thinking this way transforms an ordinary meal into a profound statement of grace and invitation. Let’s all think that way.

Additionally, as examples to the flock, pastors in particular are to let their conduct be seen so that others would follow them (1 Tim. 4:12).

## Hospitality and You

We can all learn from stories of people like the Karimjong. It is good to do so. But the best teacher and example we have is Jesus—the one who gave his life for sinners and now welcomes them into his family. Consider how he has welcomed you. Then ask him to help you welcome others in his name and for his glory.

*The author is associate general secretary for the Committee on Home Missions.*

# 10 Practical Ways to Welcome

*Shane P. Lems*

Here are a few practical ideas to be more welcoming to visitors on Sunday morning.

1. Say hello to a visitor and kindly tell them that you’re glad they are there.
2. Ask a visitor if they need anything (like a bulletin, hymnal, Bible, or directions to the restroom).
3. Make a goal to say hello to one or two different people each week—including fellow members!
4. Sit in a different spot from time to time so that before and after church you meet different people.
5. Look around to see if anyone is alone or not being talked to. Go talk to them!
6. Work at it! Try to remember names, faces, and information in case the visitor returns. Write them down.
7. If you’re not sure if someone is a visitor, ask if you’ve met before (and kindly apologize if you forgot).
8. Think about open-ended questions to ask when meeting a new person, including where they are from, what their background is, or what some of their hobbies might be.
9. Ask your pastor or an elder how you can help in welcoming visitors.
10. Pray that you and your church family would be more welcoming and loving.

*Originally published on [outwardopc.com](http://outwardopc.com).*

## Home Missions Today

For up-to-date news and prayer requests, receive our newsletter by e-mailing [HomeMissionsToday@opc.org](mailto:HomeMissionsToday@opc.org). New editions: November 13 and 27.

# HOME MISSIONS

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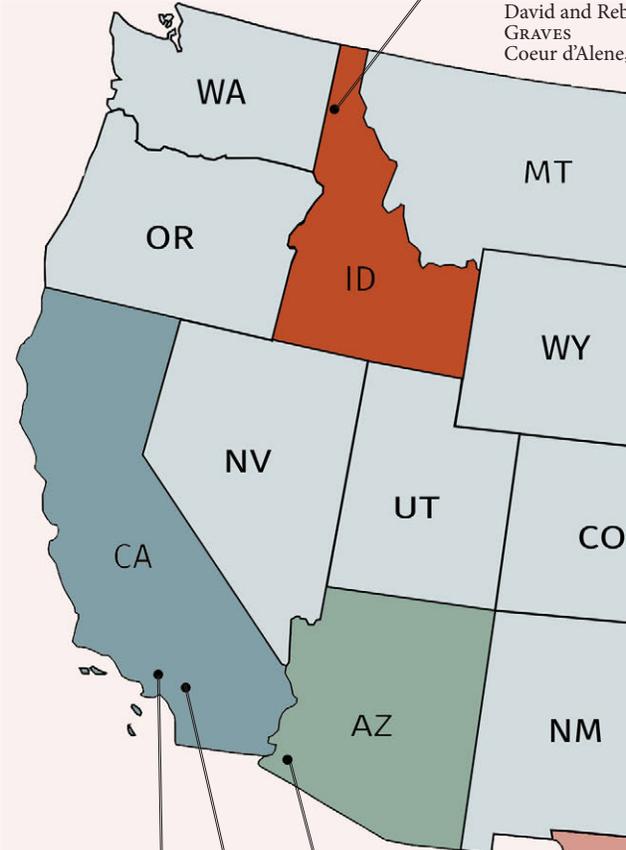
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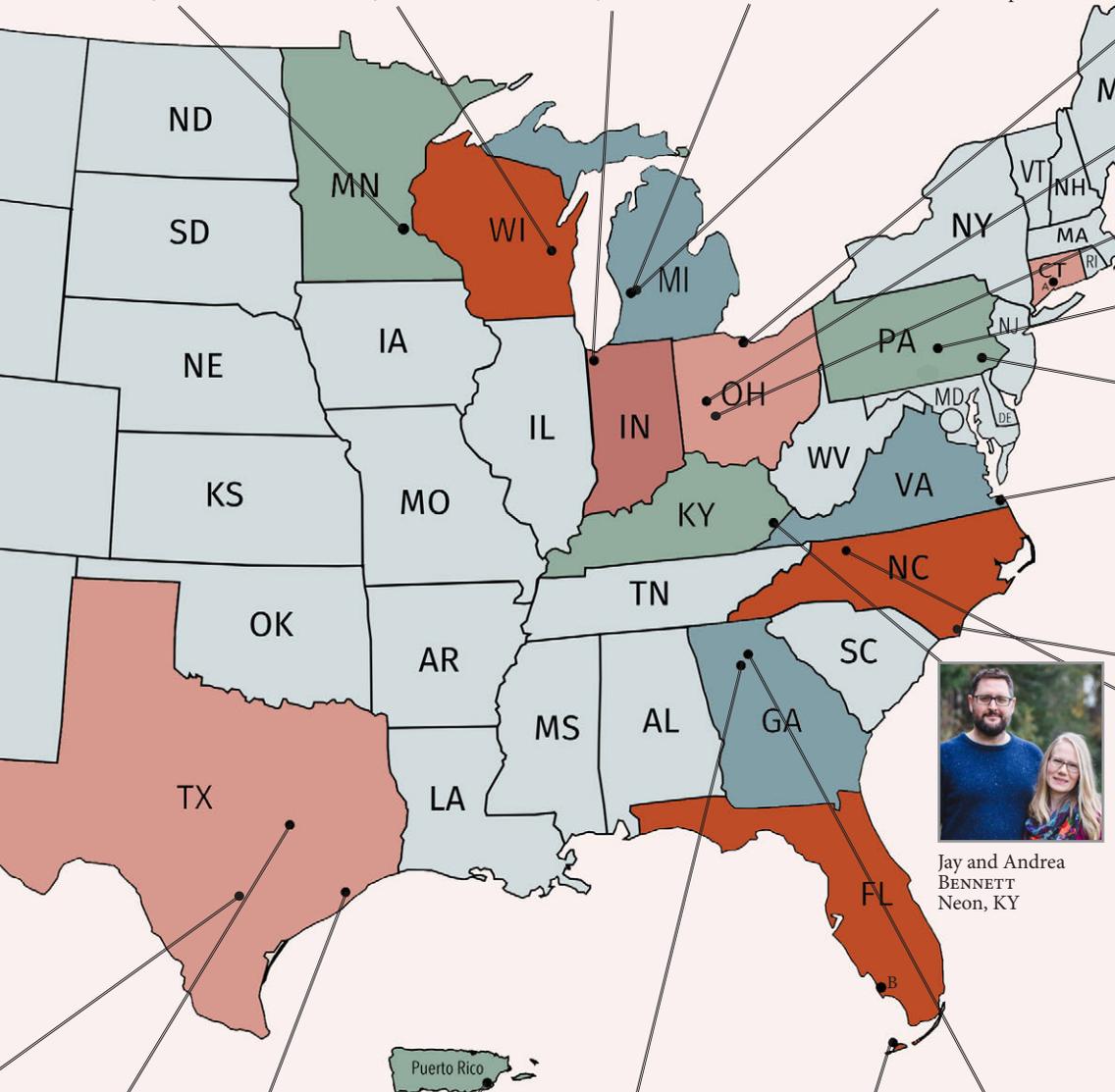
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## Church-Planting

### Interns

# A REFORMED TRANSLATION PROJECT IN QUEBEC

// BERNARD WESTERVELD JR.



St. Marc's member Julien Djeki with a publication of the Bannière Réformée Francophone

We are a people of *the Book*. We also like books—good, solid Reformed teaching to nourish our souls. As the Spirit edifies the body of Christ through the spiritual gift of teaching and preaching (Eph. 4:7–16), he also blesses us through these teachings in print. Motivated by this conviction, we have begun publishing books of Reformed teaching and practice in the French language. What follows is the short story of this new adventure.

## Responding to a Need

In 2013, the elders and the congregation of St. Marc's Reformed Church—the church that I serve in Quebec City, Canada, as pastor-evangelist—adopted a new project, *Traduction réformée du Québec* (Reformed translation of Quebec). Recognizing the need for solid Reformed literature as well as the availability of translators and financial resources, we proposed to develop and publish Reformed literature for the French-speaking world in collaboration with an existing publisher.

When I mention our translation project to English-speaking believers, they often comment, “But, didn't Calvin write in French?” He certainly did! We are very thankful that a team in France published an updated French edition of *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* in time for Calvin's five hundredth birthday. Other books by French Reformed authors are also available, including the republication of some classic works by Owen, Edwards, and Monod. However, French-speaking believers have nothing in comparison to the material available in English.

An interest in Reformed literature has been growing among French speakers, particularly in the province of Quebec. Bestsellers include books penned by Reformed authors, such as Kevin DeYoung, Tim Keller, and R. C. Sproul. In 2011, evangelical pastors formed an association called Sola, a Quebec branch of The Gospel Coalition. They have invited

our pastors to sit at the table with them in order to navigate through Reformed theology. A Baptist seminary in Montreal is collaborating with the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation in order to offer a Christian counseling program to Quebec students. Many books written by brothers Paul and Tedd Tripp, David Powlison, and Ed Welch are being translated and sold.

While we readily encourage this interest in Reformed literature, St. Marc's adoption of *Traduction réformée du Québec* grew out of a desire to feed the interest with solid confessional material as well.

## Evolution of the Project

With funding granted by the synod of the Église réformée du Québec (ERQ, Reformed Church of Quebec), we secured Vincent Collet, a native of France and a member of our congregation, as our translator. We selected a few books about evangelism and Christian worldview in order to test the waters.

With our limited resources, we did not want to start our own publishing house, which would require us to advertise, print, and distribute our books. Instead, we prayed that an existing publisher would be willing to collaborate with us. The Lord opened a door “just down the road” in Trois-Rivières, a city one hour away from Quebec City. An evangelical publisher, Publications chrétiennes (PC), established by a member of the Brethren Assembly, expressed an interest in working with us to start a line of books of Reformed conviction. We signed an agreement to launch Éditions La Rochelle, naming the line of books after the first confession of faith adopted by Reformed pastors in France, a text believed to have been penned by John Calvin. Not only would PC publish our books, they also wanted to add their own books with our approval, such as Mark Jones's excellent *Knowing Christ*.

With a publisher in place, a new committee was formed to guide the project, under the oversight of the local session, and another committee of “readers” was formed to recommend

works for translation. The project adopted a new name, *Bannière Réformée Francophone* (French Reformed Banner), with a vision to “discover the richness of Reformed doctrine” and a mission to “offer works of Reformed confession and practice to French-speaking Christians for the glory of God and the edification of the Church.” Topics for publications include covenant theology, baptism, education, ecclesiology, Christian worldview, apologetics, and evangelism. While our initial ef-



Vincent Collet, with his wife Trina and two daughters, sent by St. Marc's as a missionary worker to administer a Christian radio network in Lyon, France, and to continue translating Reformed works

forts are in translation, we have also set a goal to publish original material written by French-speaking pastors and teachers.

Wanting to work with other French-speaking Reformed missions, we contacted the OPC mission in Haiti. Pastor Octavius Delfils had already translated and published locally two books for the Haitian churches: John Sartelle's booklet on infant baptism and Louis Berkhof's shorter work on biblical doctrines. After revision by our translator, both books were published by PC and made available in Quebec, Europe, and French Africa. Several free copies were sent to the Haitian mission with thanks for the initial translation.

Promoting our books is a significant challenge. We have sent free copies of some publications, including Calvin Cummings's *Covenant of Grace*, to all the evangelical seminaries in Quebec, France, and Switzerland. More locally, we plan our publications in connection with a conference on the same topic. To celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of the Synod of Dordt, we published John Benton's booklet on *Evangelical Calvinism*, as well as a thorough study of the canons written by ERQ pastor Paulin Bédard. In May 2019, a conference on the five points of Calvinism was held in Quebec City in collaboration with a Baptist assembly, and our books as well as several others were available for purchase.

We are currently publishing two other works on the covenant: Clarence Stam's *The Covenant of Love* (thanks to generous gifts from the Canadian Reformed Churches) and O. Palmer Robertson's *Christ of the Covenants*. Lord willing, a conference on covenant theology, including infant baptism,

will be organized for 2020. As a follow-up, our next publications will focus on educating covenant children.

Funding these publications remains a challenge. The potential readership in Quebec, France, Belgium, and Switzerland is very limited because of the small percentage of evangelical believers (often pegged at 1–2 percent). Many more potential readers are found in French-speaking Africa, but they often have limited means to purchase books. The team at PC is working on providing them with books at lower costs.

In short, we must find financing for the entire project, budgeted between \$25,000 and \$30,000 Canadian dollars per year. Significant funding will likely come from the ERQ synod and its donors. OP congregations can also contribute to the Quebec Translation Project through the Committee on Foreign Missions. Ask your session for more details.

### Pray for Readers!

But our greatest need is readers. We could flood the market with good literature, but if the books remain on the shelf, we have not attained our goal of edifying the church in the French-speaking world. Join us in prayer for readers who are curious to learn, hungry to be fed by solid biblical teaching, and transformed by the Spirit and the teaching of the Word.

*The author is an ERQ minister laboring on the Quebec Project with the Committee on Foreign Missions.*

## What's New

### // Appointments

Former missionary associates **Miss Leah J. Hopp** (Parkwood Presbyterian Church, PCC, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada) and Mr. and Mrs. Christopher J. (Chloe) Verdick (New Life Presbyterian Church, PCA, La Mesa, CA) currently serving with the OP Uganda Mission in South Karamoja, Uganda, have been appointed to be associate missionaries.

**Rev. and Mrs. H. James (Esther) Folkerts** (Faith Reformed Church, URCNA, Telkwa, British Columbia, Canada) have been appointed to be associate missionaries laboring with the OP Uganda Mission in South Karamoja, Uganda. After pre-field missionary training with their seven children, they expect to head for the field in late November 2019.

**Miss Alethea A. Flores** (Providence Presbyterian Church, OPC, Temecula, CA) has been appointed to serve as a missionary associate in Quebec, Canada, for a two-year term beginning in November 2019.

**Rev. Dr. Richard W. Daniels's** (ordained in the congregational churches) term of service as a missionary associate assisting at Knox School of Theology in Mbale, Uganda, has been postponed until February 2020.

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of the  
Orthodox  
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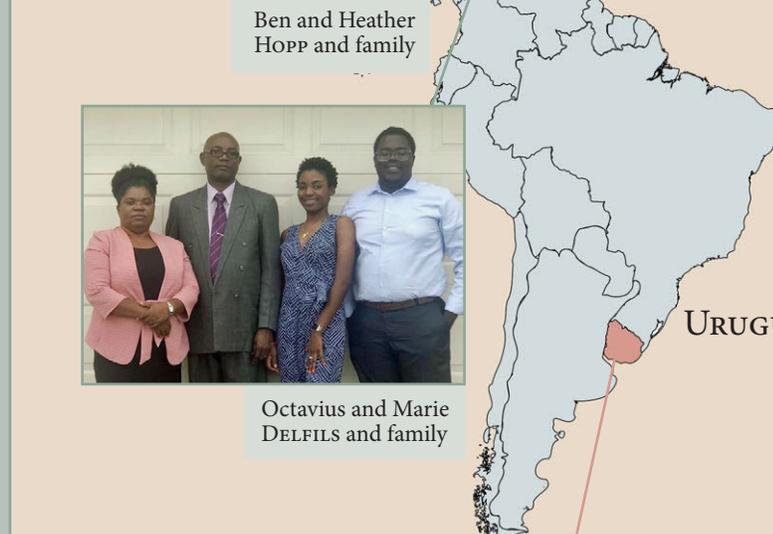
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Committee on

# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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# THE 2020 TIMOTHY CONFERENCE

// DANNY E. OLINGER



Participants in the 2019 Timothy Conference in Orlando, FL

The Committee on Christian Education is pleased to announce that the 2020 Timothy Conference will be held in Philadelphia on March 18–21. Conference participants, young men ages sixteen to twenty-one, will travel to Philadelphia on Wednesday, March 18. Over the next two days, they will hear talks from OPC pastors about gospel ministry, attend classes at Westminster Theological Seminary, and visit historic Presbyterian sites in the greater Philadelphia area. They will return to their homes on Saturday morning, March 21.

Sessions are encouraged to talk to those young men in their congregations who demonstrate giftedness for ministry to see whether they would be interested in attending. Eligible participants should be a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Expenses are paid for by the Committee on Christian Education.

Applications for a session to recommend a participant to the conference will be available on the [Timothy Conference page at OPC.org](#) on November 1, 2019. Nominations must be submitted by January 10, 2020, to CCE General Secretary Danny Olinger ([danny.olinger@opc.org](mailto:danny.olinger@opc.org)). Sessions and applicants will be informed of the approval by January 15, 2020.

## ★ Congratulations

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

- **Emily Batten, Faith Batten, Luke Batten, Colin Goonewardene, Isaac Miner, MollyKate Miner, and Sarahlynn Miner, Living Hope Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Allentown, PA.**

## OUR MEMBERSHIP VOWS Purposes of Church Discipline

*Glen J. Clary*

Church discipline is sometimes necessary to lead an offender to repentance and achieve reconciliation (see Matt. 18:15–20). It's an act of love, designed to prevent members of the church from being cut off from fellowship with God and to restore the church to full communion with him and his people. The fifth membership vow in the OPC requires believers to submit in the Lord to the government of the church and to heed its discipline in case they should be found delinquent in doctrine or life. This requirement is in keeping with the Scripture: "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account" (Heb. 13:17).

If a church member is living in sin and refuses to repent, he is in danger in being cut off from the church and, thus, from the outward and ordinary means through which God communicates salvation. Leaving a person in such danger would be unloving. Discipline is an act of love appointed by the Great Shepherd of the sheep in order to prevent them from going astray. Discipline is designed to reclaim offenders as well as to vindicate the honor of Christ and to promote the purity of his church in doctrine and life.

While it is true that an unrepentant church member may be removed from membership, that removal, which is known as excommunication, is not the final judgment. God alone can pass final judgment. An excommunicated person may be restored to the church if he repents of his sin. Paul teaches that the aim of church discipline is restoration: "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

# REFORMED HARMONY



SHARON L. BRATCHER // *Reformed Harmony* began as something of a joke. Five years ago, about thirty people who were a part of a Reformed Facebook group decided to start their own—specifically for singles. “Welcome to Reformed Harmony,” their description reads, “the group that will love you until somebody else does.”

Currently, the cover photo is a cartoon of two dumpster fires, partially submerged and smiling together in scuba gear.

Unexpectedly, membership in the Facebook group grew to two hundred the first year, then six hundred, and currently clocks in at almost a thousand members from the United States, Canada, and around the world. Impressive, considering that you’re expected to leave if your status changes to “married.”

It not only has members, it has members who interact frequently and consistently. According to Sarah Wolfe, a former administrator of the group, Reformed Harmony receives special access to Facebook’s reports and assistance because the group is so active.

## Alternative to Isolation

“The group may be light-hearted,” said administrator Joe Tenney, “but it accomplishes a serious end. Sometimes God uses foolish things. RH acciden-

tally hit a niche and became something that has filled a need: a safe, healthy community where people can work out their issues and hurts.” Tenney is a Reformed Baptist in Virginia who met his wife, Rachel, a member of the Presbyterian Church in America, through the group.

Some singles in the church wrestle with the expectation that they haven’t really started their lives until they are married. Loneliness “is at the forefront of the struggles of single Christians in their twenties,” believes Taylor DeSoto, a Reformed Baptist who was one of the original brains behind Reformed Harmony. Many members of the group find themselves in small and isolated Reformed communities, leaving them floundering socially

even while surrounded by excellent preaching and families who love them, DeSoto explained. At Reformed Harmony, they can revel in getting to know other Christian singles who are also serious about their faith.

Reformed Harmony has also been an impetus for some to return to at-



*Peter Burback, Amy Burback, Katie Burback, Emily Borntrager, and John Calvin Young at a Reformed Harmony meetup in Colorado*

tending worship regularly, underscoring its respect for the local church.

“Reformed Harmony has never intended in any way to take the place of



Tom and Sarah Wolfe

one’s own church,” Wolfe said. “It’s not a church, and people don’t treat it as if it is. There is constant exhortation from the group to go to your own pastor and elders, and to seek to serve in your local church.”

### Not a Dating Site

Despite its name, “Harmony,” which immediately evokes thoughts of e-Harmony, the group is not a dating site. “This is not a dating site,” the description reads.

“You are not there to ‘sell’ yourself or impress anybody. You don’t just browse through available people,” Wolfe said.

However, in four years, eighty-five couples have met through Reformed Harmony. Some of the marriages have been local, and others have crossed state and even international lines. Most couples are in their twenties or thirties,

### Reformed Harmony

For more information on this group, open a Facebook account and search “Reformed Harmony.”

but some are older.

Taylor DeSoto met his wife, Laura, through Reformed Harmony; they became acquainted through “structured Skype dates” before meeting in person. Laura grew up in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The structured dates were partly the idea of Laura’s father, Bob McKelvey, an OPC minister in Pennsylvania. “I think there’s a great need for Reformed Harmony, since Reformed churches tend to be small,” McKelvey said.

### Virtual to Real

As with any virtual group, Reformed Harmony is vulnerable to irresponsible or malicious users. But McKelvey was comfortable with his daughter’s participation. “There’s a tendency to not be very accepting of such a ministry out of fear for the dangers of the internet, but as long as there are safeguards in place ... I don’t think we need to steer away from it.”

Reformed Harmony’s safeguards are its administrators, who monitor discussions and stop inappropriate comments and behaviors.

The group also encourages “real life” interaction. Every day, there are Google Hangout discussion groups on political and theological as well as lighter topics. And right from the beginning, group members have organized Meetups with others from the group, an easy process through [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com). Meetups have drawn anywhere from five to eighty group members and have been held in Florida, Georgia, Colorado, California, Kentucky, Arizona, Washington, and New York.

### From Personal Experience

I have a personal connection to Reformed Harmony. Kevin Bratcher, my son, met his wife through the group.

He attended his first

Meetup, however, with some trepidation. Held in Phoenix, Arizona, about thirty people were expected, of whom he had interacted with about five online. Afterward, he reflected that, “while we had many different backgrounds, the sense of fellowship was so clear to everyone there.” He chatted for hours with people he’d never talked to before, played games, and joined a local charity event with several friends.

“I left with a profound sense of awe and gratefulness at the common connection we had,” he said.

Bratcher attended a few more Meetups, and each time sensed the same community.

“Whether it’s splitting an Airbnb with five men you’ve never met for a conference in Atlanta, or piling sixty people into a couple homes in Seattle, or retreating with just a handful of folks to the Grand Tetons and Yellowstone ... you’re at home.”

Bratcher’s friend Scott Vander Molen, who has also attended Meetups organized by Reformed Harmony, de-



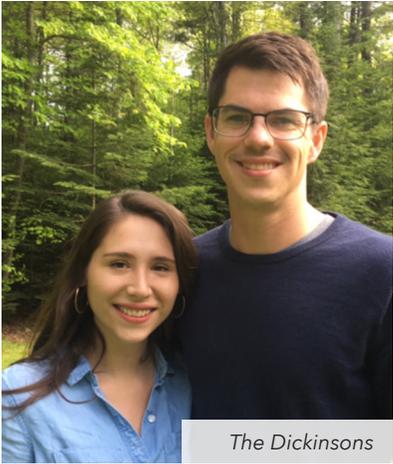
Kevin and Addie Bratcher

scribed them with thankfulness. “Everyone is so welcoming and accepting of each other for who they are ... by the end of the weekend you feel very close to your new friends.”

For more information, open up a Facebook account and type “Reformed Harmony” in the search bar. □

*The author is a member of Providence Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Southfield, Michigan.*

# NOVEMBER



The Dickinsons

**1 JEREMIAH (NATALIA) DICKINSON**, church-planting intern at Harvest Church in East Haddam, CT. / **DAVID & RASHEL ROBBINS**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the pastoral needs of the church body in Nakaale.

**2 GREGORY & GINGER O'BRIEN**, Downingtown, PA. Pray that Christ would save the lost through Christ Church's ministry. / **GREGORY REYNOLDS**, editor of *Ordained Servant*, a journal for church officers.

**3 MARK & CARLA VAN ESSEDELFT**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for effective hospitality to people who speak a different language. / Pray for yearlong intern **JEREMY (KOURTNEY) BRANDENBURG** at Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA.

**4 MATTHEW & LOIS COTTA**, Pasadena, CA. Pray that the Lord would add to their number at Pasadena Presbyterian. / Pray for associate missionaries **JAMES & ESTHER FOLKERTS**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they prepare to leave Canada.

**5 MIKE (ELIZABETH) DIERCKS**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Ohio. / Pray for **ROSS GRAHAM** as he prepares for retirement and transition in the office of stated clerk of the general assembly in January.

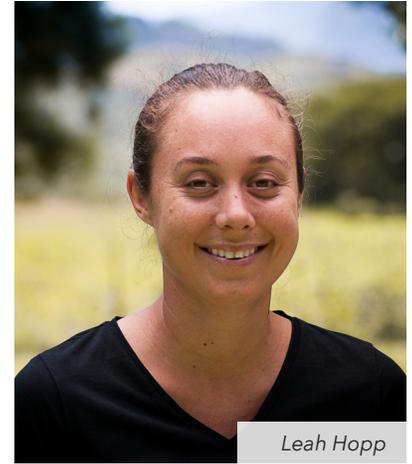
**6** Pray for **DR. FLIP & ANNELOES BAARDMAN** and associate missionaries **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they minister to the clinic staff. / Pray for yearlong intern **DAVID (JOELLE) CARNES** at Lake Sherwood OPC in Orlando, FL.

**7** Missionary associates **ANGELA VOSKUIL** and **JOSHUA MARCOUX**, Nakaale, Uganda. / Pray for wisdom in discussions about future church planting efforts at the **REGIONAL CHURCH EXTENSION CONFERENCE** in Orlando, FL, Nov. 7-8.

**8 STEPHEN & FELICIA LAUER**, Wilmington, OH. Pray that Jesus would grant Wilmington Reformed unity in service to each other and the community. / Pray for **BRENDAN WESTERFIELD**, yearlong intern at Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, OH.

**9** Missionary associates **DR. JIM & JENNY KNOX**, Mbale, and **JOANNA GROVE**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the work of the Reformation book room. / **DAVID (JANE) CRUM**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California.

**10 RON & CAROL BEABOUT**, Mifflintown, PA. Ask the Lord to add three new families to Grace and Truth before the end of 2019. / Pray for the CCE team of general secretary **DANNY OLINGER**, **JOEL FICK**, and **WILLIAM MONTGOMERY** as they visit Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, FL, this month.



Leah Hopp

**11** Pray for **GREAT COMMISSION PUBLICATIONS** as it seeks to provide solidly biblical, Reformed resources. / Associate missionary **LEAH HOPP**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for wisdom as she advises the public health team.

**12 CHARLENE TIPTON**, database administrator. / **BRAD & CINNAMON PEPP**, Dayton, OH. Ask God to bless the development of First Street Reformed's outreach and evangelism ministries.

**13** Pray for **CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda (on furlough), as they reconnect with family. / **DAVID NAKHLA**, disaster response coordinator. Pray that the list of registered disaster response volunteers would grow.

**14** Affiliated missionaries **CRAIG & REE COULBOURNE** and **LINDA KARNER**, Japan, and **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia. / Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**.

**15** Missionary associates **STEVE & CARRIE HILL**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for daily opportunities to witness. / **NICHOLAS & ROSEMARIE LAMMÉ**, Houston, TX. Pray for new contacts and opportunities to share the gospel.

NOVEMBER



The Wells

**16** **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray that the Lord would provide qualified men to serve as officers. / Pray for yearlong intern **ADAM (NOELLE) WELLS** at Lakeview OPC in Rockport, ME.

**17** Pray for OP **MILITARY CHAPLAINS** on active duty: John (Linda) Carter, US Navy, and David (Jenna) DeRienzo, US Army. / **BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for the catechism instruction of the church's youth.

**18** **SHANE & RACHELLE BENNETT**, Grand Rapids, MI. Pray for God's Spirit to direct and empower the gospel witness of Reformation OPC. / **MELISA MCGINNIS**, controller.

**19** **HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for wisdom in shaping the church's mercy ministry. / **CALVIN & CONNIE KELLER**, Winston-Salem, NC. Pray for new visitors to attend worship services at Harvest OPC.

**20** Pray that **OPC.ORG** would edify the church and help it to communicate its message. / Pray for **RETIRED MISSIONARIES** Cal & Edie Cummings, Brian & Dorothy Wingard, Greet Rietkerk, and Young & Mary Lou Son.



The Oldakers

**26** **MR. AND MRS. F.**, Asia. Pray for the witness of OP members participating in a pen pal project. / Missionary associates **P. F.** and **M. S.**, Asia. Praise God for their faithful work.

**27** **LARRY & KALYNN OLDAKER**, Huron/Sandusky, OH. Pray that God would deepen unity, commitment, and witness at Firelands Grace Fellowship OPC. / **MARK STUMPPFF**, manager for the OPC Loan Fund.

**28** Pray for **LACY (DEBBIE) ANDREWS**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast. / Pray for yearlong intern **JOHN PAUL (CORINNE) HOLLOWAY** at San Antonio Reformed OPC in San Antonio, TX.

**29** **MR. AND MRS. M. M.**, Asia (on furlough). Pray for the continued witness of their friends suffering for the gospel. / Pray for managing editor **JUDITH DINSMORE** and the staff of *New Horizons*.

**30** Affiliated missionaries **JERRY & MARILYN FARNIK**, Prague, Czech Republic. Pray for the spiritual growth of new church members. / Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**.

**21** **DAVID & REBEKAH GRAVES**, Coeur d'Alene, ID. Ask the Lord to unite the congregation at Coeur d'Alene Reformed Church. / Pray for **JANET BIRKMANN**, communications coordinator for disaster response.

**22** Pray for **BILL (MARGARET) SHISHKO**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Connecticut and Southern New York. / Year-long intern **AARON (JACQUELINE) MIZE** at Trinity OPC in Easton, PA.

**23** **BEN & HEATHER HOPP** and associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti, give thanks for the 9th anniversary celebration of the Port-au-Prince congregation. / Home Missions administrative assistant **KATIE STUMPPFF**.

**24** Tentmaking missionary **T. D.**, Asia (on furlough). Pray for opportunities to share the gospel at home. / **KERRI ANN CRUSE**, video and social media coordinator, and **ANNELISA STUDLEY**, office manager.

**25** **MICHAEL & NAOMI SCHOUT**, Zeeland, MI. Pray that Grace Fellowship OPC would experience the joy of a gospel-centered community. / Pray for yearlong intern **DERRICK (NICOLE) LEITAO** at Presbyterian Church of Cape Cod in West Barnstable, MA.

# NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

## BENNETT INSTALLED AT ADA, MI

On September 15, Shane Bennett was installed as organizing pastor of Reformation OPC in Ada, Michigan. Everett Henes preached, David Noe gave the charge to the congregation, and David Vander Meer gave the charge to Shane Bennett.

Bennett, originally from near Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, graduated from Westminster Seminary California in 2013. Prior to moving to Michigan, he spent four years as pastor of Faith Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Fawn Grove, Pennsylvania. He and his wife, Rachelle, have four children.

## IN MEMORIAM: DAVID J. O'LEARY

*John R. Sallade*

David J. O'Leary, 66, passed away on September 13 after a long battle with Parkinson's. He was the founding pastor of Covenant OPC in Sinking Spring, Pennsylvania.

My wife and I visited Covenant for its very first service in October 1982, held in a rundown building and led by our soon-to-be dear friend, David O'Leary. There was no pianist that first Sunday, so one woman played the right hand and another played the left until a volunteer came forward and played majestically. Only twenty-five people were there, but the preaching was rich and Christ-centered, and we knew this would be our home. Through the years, David's preaching continued to touch the heart each week. He accepted a call in 2002 to First Presbyterian (OPC) North Shore in Ipswich, Massachusetts, where he retired in 2012. David is survived by his wife, Debra Jean, three daughters, a son, and



*David O'Leary*



*At the installation of Shane Bennett (front and center, cross-legged) at Reformation OPC*

fifteen grandchildren. We miss you, dear brother. Enjoy your sweet fellowship with our Savior.

## IN MEMORIAM: CECILIA "SESSIE" I. WELZIEN

*Abigail White*

Cecilia "Sessie" Welzien passed away on September 6. Born in Costa Rica in 1957, Sessie moved to New Jersey at age two. After graduating high school, she hitchhiked to Key West, Florida. She was saved after reading a gospel tract she found on a bus. Sessie met Bill Welzien at a Bible study in Key West; they married in 1977 and lived in Ohio, Italy, and England for ministerial and missionary work. Eventually, however, they moved to Chicago where Bill attended Moody Bible Institute. After Bill's graduation in 1986, the growing family settled in Key West where Bill began open-air preaching and pastoral work.

Sessie educated their children—who eventually totaled nine—and taught them faith in God. She loved reading, quilting, exercising, and homemaking.



*Sessie Welzien*

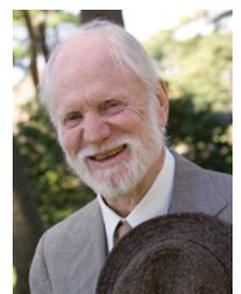
She fed hundreds of visitors with amazing home-cooked meals and accompanied the congregation of Keys Presbyterian Church on her guitar. She is survived by her husband, Rev. Bill Welzien, her parents, two brothers, nine children, and twelve grandchildren.

## IN MEMORIAM: T. GRADY SPIRES

*Josiah Stockwell*

On August 27 at the age of 91, Dr. Thomas Grady Spires (simply known as "Grady") passed peacefully into glory to be with the Savior he loved and served.

Born and raised in Miami, Florida, Grady graduated from Davidson College and then earned a BD at Westminster Theological Seminary in 1953. Though he originally had pursued pastoral ministry, the Lord led him to New England where he earned his masters degree at Harvard University and then taught philosophy at Gordon College for over forty years. A student and close friend of Cornelius Van Til, Grady introduced many students to the Reformed



*Grady Spires*

faith in his teaching over the years.

Grady was a founding elder of the First Presbyterian (OPC) in Hamilton, Massachusetts (now a PCA congregation in Ipswich), for over fifty years. He also taught frequently at Deerwander Bible Conference, the high school summer camp of the Presbytery of New York and New England.

Grady was known and loved by many for his warm and spirited personality and his well-grounded character and faith. He was a faithful example of Christian character and of an elder who loved God's sheep with the compassion of Christ.

## WORSHIP IN THE PARK

*Bill Slack*

On September 8, River of Life OPC in Phillipsburg, New Jersey, continued our ten-year summer custom of going into the very heart of our community to hold a "Worship in the Park" service at Shappell Park.

In the weeks prior, we rent a truck and folding chairs, hand out invitations to the community, and, of course, prepare with prayer. That Sunday, our church members meet at 7:30 a.m. to set up chairs, tents, and the sound system. Worship begins at 10:30 a.m., with a condense, relatable presentation of the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The worship team



*On September 20, Five Solas Reformed Church in Reedsburg, WI, which began as a mission work of the OPC, dedicated its new building with a special service*

brings a blend of traditional hymns and contemporary worship music.

Then comes the church picnic. One of our local supermarkets provides dozens of hamburgers and hot dogs. While everyone eats, our members interact with our visitors, encouraging them to come worship with us.

Many from the community come out to this rather unusual service. This year's attendance was over one hundred. Cars will slow down as they pass, straining to hear what is being said or sung. Some who live in the apartments around the park even open their windows to hear what is going on. It is truly a *community* service. Worship in the Park is simply a grand outreach event!



*Worship in the Park in Phillipsburg, NJ*

## UPDATE

### CHURCHES

- On July 26, **Grace Presbyterian Church** in Laconia, NH, formerly a congregation of the PCA, was received by the Presbytery of New York and New England.

### MINISTERS

- On July 26, **Andrew S. Wilson** was installed as pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church in Laconia, NH, upon transfer of his credentials from the PCA.
- On September 15, **Shane M. Bennett**, previously the pastor of Faith OPC in Fawn Grove, PA, was installed as an evangelist of the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario to serve as organizing pastor of Reformation OPC in Grand Rapids.
- On September 27, **Brian E. Belh**, previously the pastor of Beal Heights Presbyterian in Lawton, OK, was installed as pastor of Providence OPC in Rockford, IL.
- On September 27, **John R. Hilbelink**, was installed as Teacher of the Word at Providence OPC in Rockford, IL.

### MILESTONES

- **T. Grady Spires**, 91, died on August 27. He was a founding elder at First Presbyterian (OPC) North Shore, in Hamilton/Ipswich, MA.
- **Cecilia I. Welzien**, 62, died on September 6. She was the wife of William

V. Welzien, pastor of Keys Presbyterian Church in Key West, FL.

• Retired pastor **David J. O'Leary**, 66, died on September 13. O'Leary was the founding pastor of Covenant OPC in Sinking Spring, PA.

## REVIEWS

***Our Ancient Foe: Satan's History, Activity, and Ultimate Demise*, edited by Ronald L. Kohl. P&R, 2019. Paperback, 168 pages, \$12.00. Reviewed by OP pastor Arthur J. Fox.**



For me, having begun my walk with Christ over forty-five years ago in dispensational and charismatic circles, a book about Satan from a Reformed perspective seems a peculiarly delightful prospect. I was more than pleased, there-

fore, to find both depth of theological insight and simple, effective communication in this book.

The book is basically a transcript, prepared by the original speakers, of the 2017 Quakertown (Pennsylvania) Conference on Reformed Theology. It contains contributions by R. Kent Hughes (two chapters), Thomas J. Nettles (two chapters), Ronald L. Kohl (editor), Derek W. H. Thomas, Roger Nicole, Joel Beeke, and Sinclair Ferguson. The range of the devil's history and activity is covered from the garden through the end of the age. We are masterfully told by Hughes how the devil operated in Eden, and the nature and cleverness of his lies; given by Nettles an accurate description of his character; clued in on his methodology by Kohl; warned to take Satan seriously in light of our fallenness as creatures by Thomas; taught to know our enemy by Nicole; shown how to fight and resist him by Hughes and Beeke; told of his inevitable demise by Nettles; and then promised by Ferguson that our story as God's people will end happily in the Satan-free new heavens and new earth.

All of the chapters are easy to read and even fun to explore because they are written in plain English. Even a mature believer will find refreshing meditation in this book. By far my favorite chapter was the unexpected help in reading the book of Revelation by Sinclair Ferguson, who tells us that, as a whole, Revelation is best understood as a picture book of redemptive history and that the final overthrow of Satan is simply the closing chapter as the saints are brought into eternal glory in the new heavens and new earth. In fact, he mentions Satan only twice, using the following five words, "our enemy has been defeated" (139), and then in a passing reference to "Satan and his demons" (140). He then proceeds to show how our lives and the heavens and the earth will be transformed at the end.

This is a gloriously refreshing and encouraging book that should make us thankful for Christ's work in overcoming the world, the flesh, and the devil, and for our being united to Christ in his victory. This book is literary fruit plucked from a tree of biblical knowledge that will do you good and help you to live faithfully.

***Flourish: How the Love of Christ Frees Us from Self-Focus*, by Lydia Brownback. Crossway, 2019. Paperback, 144 pages, \$10.88 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP member Tiffany Ward.**

In an era where *Girl, Wash Your Face* (Rachel Hollis, 2018) is considered the gold standard for female flourishing, Lydia Brownback's *Flourish: How the Love of Christ Frees Us from Self-Focus* serves as a timely, necessary tonic. Brownback's goal for the book is to train women "to discern teaching that's pure and true from that which is toxic and false," using Scripture as the standard (13). In just ninety-eight pages, Brownback addresses topics that pervasively impact women: self-consciousness, self-improvement, self-analysis,

self-indulgence, self-condemnation, and self-victimization.

She explains: "We cannot assume that material labeled 'Christian' is actually biblical" (23). Instead, Brownback trains the mind for biblical discernment by interacting with popular "Christian" writings to uncover their sub-biblical ideas. She drives the reader away from self-focus both by illustrating the damaging effects of an inwardly oriented life and by pointing the reader to Christ's sufficiency. She reacts strongly against the idea "that Christian discipleship is synonymous with self-improvement" (36) and drives the reader to understand "that in Christ, there is none of that old self left to improve" (39).

Brownback addresses modern topics with a refreshingly analytical eye, such as the self-care movement, remarking that it "often runs counter to the stewardship advocated by Jesus" who taught us to lay down our lives in sacrifice (57). She shows how modern evangelical trends—such as Bible coloring—can "morph into habits of laziness, where we are unwilling to exert ourselves without some pleasurable comfort as an accompaniment" (59). Ultimately, Brownback wants us to see that Jesus did not die in order to maximize *our* potential; God should be the focal point of our lives, and our greatest source of joy.

However, Brownback appears to mishandle "self-victimization" in chapter 6, repeatedly identifying it with the ongoing

## Position Available

**Pastor:** Cornerstone OPC in Chattanooga, Tennessee, is searching for a pastor prepared by God to lead our congregation. Founded in 1996, Cornerstone seeks a man who is biblically grounded, enthusiastic, kind, a visionary, and accessible to congregants who span a wide age spectrum. If you are interested in this opportunity, contact us at [costonepsc@gmail.com](mailto:costonepsc@gmail.com). Include your completed Ministerial Information Form and a link to at least two of your sermons. For more information, visit [www.cornerstone-OPC.org](http://www.cornerstone-OPC.org) and [www.chattanooga.com](http://www.chattanooga.com).

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struggles of survivors of severe trauma. This is particularly unfortunate because a woman who has been the victim of abuse needs to be told more than that she has an “unwillingness to let go of the past,” leading her “to demand coddling” (91). There is an overall sense that many of the topics discussed in this chapter, including addiction and psychotherapy, should not have been treated with such brevity. Perhaps with greater space these ideas could have been sufficiently explored and defended.

Though *Flourish* does not wade into deep theological waters, it contains meaningful biblical insights throughout. With a built-in, thirty-day study program, this book is remarkably accessible and would be well suited for discipleship of new believers or believers new to the Reformed faith. This book functions as a primer in discernment and presents a countercultural message relevant to all people: that we can never be fulfilled in ourselves, but that true flourishing comes with finding our identity in Christ, resting in his finished work, and delighting in who he is.

***The Devil's Redemption: A New History and Interpretation of Christian Universalism*, 2 volumes, by Michael J. McClymond. Baker Academic, 2018. Hardcover, 1376 pages, \$87.72 (Amazon). Reviewed by professor Alan Strange.**

Universalism, the teaching that everyone will ultimately be saved, especially looms in our day. Many cannot stomach the notion of anyone going to hell for eternity. Maybe Hitler, but certainly not “the good people that I know.” Thus Rob Bell and many others proclaim that “love wins,”

meaning that it must turn out all right for everyone in the end. Neither the Bible nor the Christian church in its creeds or confessions has taught this, however.

Michael J. McClymond (professor of modern Christianity, Saint Louis University), in this thorough examination of Christian universalism, looks at a host of thinkers—from Origen and before to Barth and after—who've asserted that Christianity teaches the salvation of the whole human race.

While there were Jewish and gnostic universalists before Origen, it is Origen's form of universalism that is best known: apocatastasis, which posited the salvation of all ultimately, including the devil himself. Origen had enormous influence, though his universalistic teaching was condemned around the time of the Second Council of Constantinople (AD 553; whether the condemnation was a conciliar decree is disputed). Gregory of Nyssa, the younger brother of Basil of Caesarea, imbibed the doctrine, though arguments abide over whether their friend Gregory of Nazianzus embraced universalism. Many of the church's theologians (Augustine, Gregory the Great, Maximus the Confessor, Aquinas, etc.) have expressly refuted Origen.

McClymond fairly treats the proponents of universalism at length before arguing in his concluding chapter in the second volume that Christian universalism not only undermines the character of God and exacerbates the problem of evil (and justice), but sidelines grace and faith and undermines hope, which only particu-

larism secures. Grace, as God's unmerited, free favor, does not exist in any form of universalism, which either ignores or radically reinterprets the Bible in favor of its own metaphysical constructs. Universalism, in all its forms, privileges an abstract notion of love and the ultimate unity of all things, putting its Hegel-like insistence on harmony always at the forefront. The Bible's doctrine of love and salvation in Christ actually offers hope, where universalism is simply wishful.

It is the case that some of the church's greatest speculative thinkers (Origen and Nyssa would be among them), who did not stick close to revelation (as, say, Calvin did), tended in the direction of universalism. John Scotus Eriugena, G. F. W. Hegel, Karl Barth, Jurgen Moltmann, and many other moderns have tended in this direction. There is an undeniable attractiveness to this way of thinking; it must be thoroughly rejected, however, as it has no biblical support.

The Westminster Confession of Faith is especially alert to this error, perhaps surprisingly so, to any who consider universalism a particularly contemporary error: WCF 10.4 calls the notion that any can be saved outside the Christian religion, which would condemn more than universalism but not less, “very pernicious and to be detested.”

“Some today,” McClymond laments, assume that “God's ‘job’ is to get everyone to the heavenly ‘finish line’—otherwise it is not humanity but God who has failed” (1.19). Every ministerial student, preacher, and interested layperson should welcome this volume that shows instead how thoroughly all forms of Christian universalism have failed.

