

# NEW HORIZONS

— *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH —

**10** Ardent Spirits: Presbyterians  
and Prohibition //  
*by Richard M. Gamble*

JANUARY 2020

**23** Review: Ryken's 40  
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# NEW HORIZONS AT 40

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**Editor:** Danny E. Olinger  
**Managing Editor:** Judith M. Dinsmore  
**Editorial Assistant:** Diane L. Olinger  
**Proofreader:** Sarah Pederson  
**Cover Designer:** Christopher Tobias  
**Editorial Board:** The Committee on Christian Education's Subcommittee on Serial Publications

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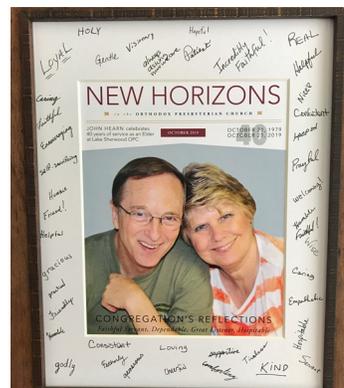
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On Sunday, November 3, 2019, the congregation of Lake Sherwood Orthodox Presbyterian Church presented elder John Hearn with this token of their appreciation for his forty years of service—a mimicked New Horizons cover featuring John and Marcy Hearn. The congregation is very thankful for this faithful servant that God has placed in their midst.



# NEW HORIZONS AT 40



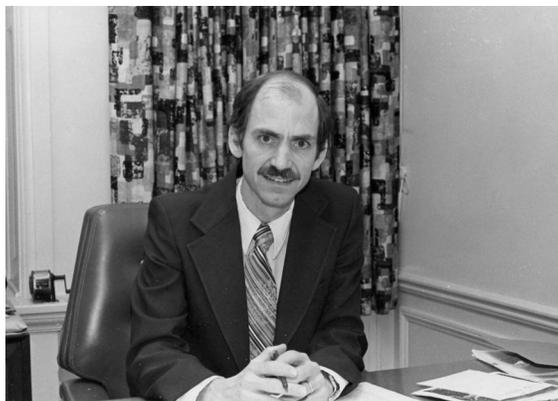
**DANNY E. OLINGER // Forty years ago, in December 1979, Roger Schmurr was scrambling to make sure that the inaugural issue of *New Horizons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* would reach the mailboxes of members and friends on time. Seven months earlier, Schmurr had accepted the call to serve as general**

secretary of the Committee on Christian Education. Soon thereafter, the Forty-Third (1979) General Assembly assigned the Committee on Christian Education the task of publishing a denominational magazine, and Schmurr found himself named as the editor.

Schmurr knew what the framework of the magazine should be in light of the guidelines that the assembly had passed. The assembly wanted it to include news about the departments of home and foreign missions and Christian education; news about presbyteries, general assemblies, youth events, and diaconal service; a prayer calendar to encourage prayer for these individuals and ministries; and suggestions for stewardship.

The assembly had not, however, thought through all the details involved in producing a magazine from start to finish. There were obvious aspects such as choosing a name. At the October meeting of the Committee

on Christian Education, the name *Advance* was put forth in a motion for approval. Member Paul McDonald then substituted the title that carried, *New Horizons*. More significantly, funding for all that was involved—from writing to art to line editing and layout—had been drastically underestimated. The same held true with printing and distribution costs.



*Roger Schmurr, general secretary for the Committee on Christian Education from 1979–1988 and the first editor of New Horizons*

But, Schmurr did have one great resource to teach him about the publishing process from kerning to artwork: Great Commission Publications art director John Tolsma. Tolsma agreed to set up the design of the magazine and lay it out in hard copy. Before Christmas, the magazine was ready, but what had not yet been done was registering the new magazine with the postal service. Schmurr, who had been working endlessly, was at the post office when he collapsed because of low blood sugar. He woke up in a bed at the local hospital.

Schmurr recovered, and Volume 1, Number 1, arrived in the mail by January for its readers. Tolsma punctuated the title on the cover page by making the second “o” in *Horizons* into a bright orange rising sun. On the second page, Schmurr presented the basic principles that would govern the magazine going forward. He emphasized that Orthodox Presbyterians belong to each other on every level of

the church. Hence a local congregation shared in the ministries and oversight of presbyteries and in work on denominational-sized projects through general assemblies. *New Horizons* planned to report on this shared commitment. Letters to the editor were encouraged, but the magazine reserved the right to select and print in whole or in part on the basis of brevity, clarity, and propriety.

Behind the scenes, the Committee on Christian Education continued to flesh out policies that would govern the protocol. Views and opinions of writers did not necessarily represent the position of the magazine and/or of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The names in the prayer calendar would be limited to persons supported by the denominational committees. Other persons and ministries would be reported on as space was available at the end of the prayer calendar or in the “news” section on the back pages. The committee also decreed that there should be a “minimum of self-defense by the editor.”

### New Horizons: Fortieth Anniversary

Almost all the decisions made that first year are still in effect as *New Horizons* celebrates its fortieth anniversary with this issue. Since April 2004, I have had the honor of serving as the fourth full-time editor of *New Horizons*, following in the steps of Roger Schmurr (1980–1988), Thomas Tyson (1990–2000), and Larry Wilson (2000–2004).

After editing a few issues, it was clear to me that the art in the magazine was inconsistent. We tried to use high

resolution photos, but some photos of missionaries were clear and crisp, while others were a blurry mess.

I went to Harmony Press and met with Fred and Steve Grotenhuis to see if they had advice about what could be done to improve the quality of the pictures. They immediately recommended a different paper. In Fred’s words, “The paper that you have is indestructible. You can send it to China, and it will arrive in pristine shape, but it is not the best paper for pictures.” I agreed, but on a limited budget, I knew that the committee could not afford the higher quality glossy paper. Fred and Steve, whose father, Lewis, had started both Great Commission Publications and Harmony Press, told me that serving ministries like *New Horizons* was why they were in business and that they would give us the upgrade at their cost.

With a plan in place for new paper, I started to think about a redesign of the magazine. After a presentation

sheepishly suggested that I might want to contact their son, Christopher, also an OPC member, whose specialty was cover design.

After viewing Chris’s work, and being impressed with his artistry, I asked him if he would work with me in giving the magazine a new look. He agreed, and we began working through this project. One of the design elements

was lifting ink from the page to create more white space. We also decided to change the font and leading, that is, the spacing between the lines. We also added space for a photo of each author.

Chris then handed off the new design to managing editor Jim Scott. In 1992, editor Tom Tyson had hired Jim to oversee the layout of the magazine. Like clockwork, Jim would turn out every issue, assisted by proofreader Ali Knudsen, with near grammatical perfection. Implementing the new design while still producing monthly issues meant that Jim had to work around the clock to hit the January 2005 target date, which he did.

Every time an issue comes off the press, there is excitement in seeing the finished product. But, this was different. The January 2005 issue didn’t look like *New Horizons*, and the paper definitely didn’t feel like *New Horizons*. We were thrilled, and yet at the same time, we realized there was more work to be done. A special article that we had worked on for months with chaplain Christopher Wisdom, “Preaching in the Pentagon,” had a photo that had been inexplicably

## NEW HORIZONS

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

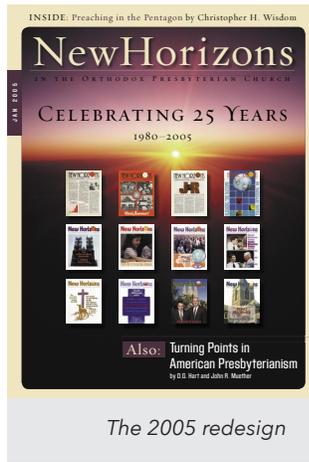
**LET'S KEEP GROWING!**  
With the reception of First Church, Revere, Massachusetts, the Midway Presbyterian has grown from six congregations and churches to twenty-five. Some are in the process of being organized as churches in the Midway Presbyterian. Along with the growth of the church, the membership has increased by a percentage of 25. This is a very encouraging sign.

We recognize that this growth has been given by God alone and we are grateful to Him for it. We will continue to seek His blessing and His grace in our ministry and His work in our lives. The first step is to be sure we are not neglecting any of the areas of the church. We have a prayer calendar for the year, a mission program, a stewardship program, and a youth program. We are also looking for new members and are glad to have you join us. We are also looking for new leaders and are glad to have you join us. We are also looking for new members and are glad to have you join us.

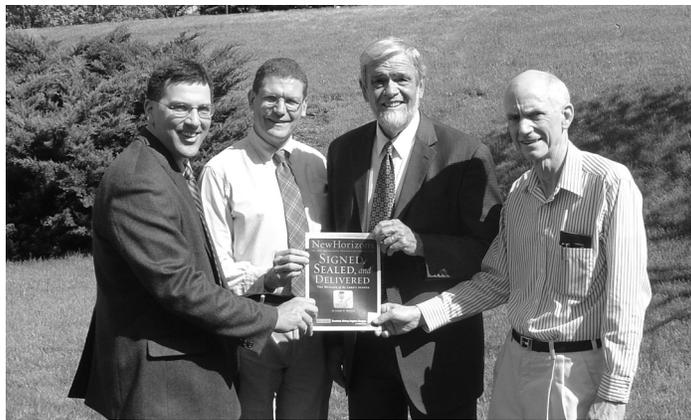
**CHURCH GROWTH IN THE MIDWAY PRESBYTERIAN**  
The Midway Presbyterian Church has grown from six congregations and churches to twenty-five. Some are in the process of being organized as churches in the Midway Presbyterian. Along with the growth of the church, the membership has increased by a percentage of 25. This is a very encouraging sign.

**DEMANDS FOR THE SAVIOR'S SAIL**  
The demands for the Savior's sail are many. We are looking for new members and are glad to have you join us. We are also looking for new leaders and are glad to have you join us. We are also looking for new members and are glad to have you join us.

The first issue, in 1980



The 2005 redesign



Danny Olinger, Larry Wilson, Thomas Tyson, and Roger Schmurr at the Seventy-Second General Assembly in 2005

at Covenant Church in Vandalia, Ohio, where I communicated my interest in a fresh layout of the magazine, Joe and Jan Tobias approached me. They

reduced. We couldn't figure out when and where the software glitch had occurred since the picture had appeared normal in the proofs.

I was lamenting what we could have done differently with that one photo when Tom Patate, executive director of Great Commission Publications, called me. He told me that he had gotten the mail that day and threw *New Horizons* in the trash can along with his junk mail before realizing what it was. Glancing again, he picked it out of the trash and smiled approvingly at the changes that had been made.

Not everyone was happy with the changes, however. If the pictures were clearer, some believed that the words were less distinct and harder to read. At one congregation, a beloved member expressed great disapproval in that she now had trouble reading the print. "You hate old people," she told me loudly. I received phone calls that winter expressing the same judgment. We made subtle changes that helped, but so did the advice that I would give our older saints that, with the newer paper, they may need to read the magazine in better light.

## Writers

Still, as editor, I realized that the magazine could have the best design and look, but its purpose would be lost if it did not promote sound doctrine and faithful practice. A defining error of theological liberalism—one that J. Gresham Machen and the founders of the OPC continually fought against—was the belief that Christianity was practice and not doctrine. The historical confession of Presbyterianism was that doctrine and life go together. In fact, according to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, "the Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man." *New Horizons* is always focusing on this biblical dynamic. Some issues are more weighted to doctrine; other issues are more weighted to life. But, in every issue, there is the self-conscious attempt to be faithful to

the covenantal reality that doctrine and practice flow into one another in the Christian life.

Such a goal requires gifted writers who are committed to the OPC as it seeks to be faithful in service to the head of the church, Jesus Christ. Over seven hundred individuals have graciously agreed to my request as editor to write an article, review a book, or report on a church event for *New Horizons*. Ninety-eight-year-old John Galbraith, a founding member of the OPC in 1936, wrote powerfully about the importance of Christian Education in the September 2011 issue, which celebrated seventy-five years of God's goodness to the OPC. Distinguished Reformed theologian Richard B. Gaffin Jr. and Reformed historian George Marsden contributed significant articles, particularly Gaffin's "Justified Now and Forever" (February 2007) and Marsden's "My OPC Upbringing" (June 2006).

The writer I turned to the most during my time as editor is Patricia Clawson, who for thirteen years assisted me with the work of the Committee on Christian Education. Having worked previously as a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*, Pat could handle any assignment with her dogged research and trademark clean prose.

Starting in 2008, I began to ask Pat to help me develop an issue a year devoted to family-related matters. The March 2013 issue was especially memorable. Doug and Susan Felch co-authored the lead article, "Unwilling Infertility." For months afterwards, when I would visit congregations, someone would come up to me and thank me for how helpful that issue and article were.

One issue in 2019 that drew the

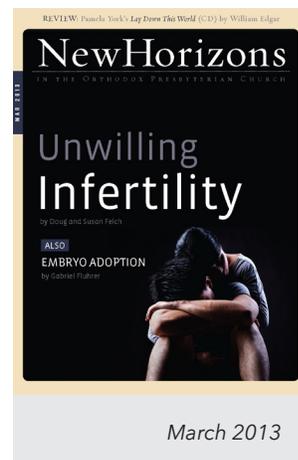
attention of many was July's "Disability and the Body of Christ." The year before, at the Eighty-Fifth (2018) General Assembly, OP pastor Stephen Tracey had wondered if such an issue would be possible. He talked to me about how the experience of serving others with disabilities had changed his life and the lives of many members at Lakeview OPC in Rockport, Maine. I thought we should do it, but I didn't know who to ask to write or on what topics. He said that he could help with that. The next thing I knew, through Stephen's efforts, Joni Eareckson Tada had come onboard.

## Ongoing Work

In November 2017, Judith Dinsmore became the managing editor of *New Horizons*. Three years earlier, having just graduated from Geneva College, Judith approached me about an idea for an article that looked at young millennials in the OPC. As it was both well written and well researched, I recommended to Patricia Clawson and my wife, Diane, that they might want to have Judith write a chapter for their book, *Choosing the Good Portion*. They assigned her the topic of women who had supported the OPC financially through its early years. Her chapter turned out to be superb. Judith has carried on that wonderful balance of research and writing as managing editor.

Please continue to pray for us as we seek with the monthly publication of *New Horizons* to serve Christ and that expression of his church that is the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. After forty years, our goal remains the same: to inform readers about news in the OPC and to serve as an avenue for doctrinal instruction that is faithful to the Bible and the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of the church. □

*The author is editor of New Horizons and general secretary for the Committee on Christian Education.*



# AUTHENTIC BEFORE IT WAS COOL



JUDITH M. DINSMORE // In her thirteen years with *New Horizons*, Pat Clawson wrote dozens of articles, some on recurring events or conferences in the denomination, and some on perennial issues facing OP members like care for the chronically ill, hospitality, tithing, and adoption. “My goal was to encourage,” she said.

*Encourage* isn't a fluff word for Pat. She used it over and over during our phone conversation, and by the time I hit “end call,” some of Pat's courage had come over the line.

Pat's interest in writing began with Agatha Christie. When her husband, Douglas, began seminary, Pat was pregnant with their first child and spent hours at the local library to fill her days. She devoured mystery novels for a few weeks. Then she thought, “I could do this myself,” and enrolled in an evening writing course. With the help of her professor, she submitted her first nonfiction piece to *Good Housekeeping* in 1984. They published it. Later, she worked for two weeklies and then as a freelancer for the *Chicago Tribune*.

When she moved her writing supplies into the OP office in 2005, Clawson was not a diehard *New Horizons* fan. Probably like many of you, she would briefly scan the features each month and then see who she recognized in the news. Once on staff, that quickly changed. “One of my jobs was to proof the magazine,” she explained. “I had to read the whole magazine cover to cover.”

By reading each page, she began to “really appreciate” the different departments and their work. But when she started to write, she broke form.

“Because I was a reporter, I chose to report what other people say and think,” she said. Rather than explaining how to teach Sunday school in a small church or how much an intern is worth, Pat interviewed those who knew.

One of her most encouraging articles—based on the volume of feedback—was “Everyone Needs a Mark” from January 2015. In it, Pat told the story of OP members Darla and Steve Janstch, whose son has Down syndrome. After the article ran, one woman walked into the OP office to tell Pat about her own son with Down syndrome. In another OP church, Pat's article was posted during the funeral of a man with Down. “Everyone Needs a Mark” is honest and hardly sensational. It describes Christ's faithfulness shown in small ways, through the years, to one family. It's *true*.

Being “true” is trendy. Kerri-Ann Cruse, social media and video coordinator for the OPC, pointed out on [out-](#)

[wardopc.com](#) that authenticity is highly prized among twenty- and thirty-somethings. “Millennials tend to search out not just friends, but also brands, companies, politicians, and churches that are ‘authentic,’” Cruse wrote. The OPC is careful to prescribe true doctrine. Providing true descriptions of life as a believer is important, too, especially for millennials.

Pat's writing was authentic before it was cool. Her pieces were simple and direct. “I wanted to write articles not for pastors but for the people in the pews, so that they could be encouraged. I was really hoping to make *New Horizons* more for everyone,” Pat said.

These *New Horizons* pages may not be showy. But, as Pat demonstrated, they are—dare I say it—authentically yours.

Do you receive a hard copy of the magazine? Request one at [OPC.org](#). Do you have news from your church—like an installation, a new building, or a commemorative service? Send it to [danny.olinger@opc.org](mailto:danny.olinger@opc.org). □

*The author is managing editor of New Horizons.*

# TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF OUT OF THE MOUTH



DIANE L. OLINGER // “Out of the Mouth” just celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. The first anecdote ran in *New Horizons* in 1994, when Jim Scott served as managing editor. His title for it reflects the idiom, “Out of the mouth of babes,” from the King James translation of Matthew 21:16: “Out of the mouth of babes and

sucklings thou hast perfected praise.” Although Scott is now retired, his wit guided the editorial decisions behind “Out of the Mouth” for many years.

From the start, “Out of the Mouth” was not about sharing a story of something from a child’s lips that was simply funny or even spiritually profound. Rather, “the idea was to have things that children said that contained an element of truth (especially related to church, God, and the Bible), with of course the typical sincerity or earnestness of children, but which in one way or another did not get it right,” Scott explained.

Children of the church often say things that inhibited adults would not say, allowing us to see the humor in something about the pastor or the people of the congregation. In November 1994, Chip Stonehouse submitted a story that was shared with him by OP pastor John Hills. The Hills family’s rule was that if one of their children misbehaved during the worship service, Mrs. Hills would take them out and spank

them. One Sunday, after Hills’s sermon had passed the fifty-minute mark, his daughter cried out in a loud voice, “Take me out and spank me.” We’ve all been there—right?

Sometimes our children have grappled with the big ideas of the faith in ways that show how difficult it is for all of us to imagine things outside of our normal daily experience. In a December 2014 “Out of the Mouth,” a grandmother explained to her grandson how wonderful the new heaven and earth will be, with all kinds of incredible things to do and see. He was thoughtful for a moment, then asked, “Will everything be within walking distance?”

A truly Presbyterian source of humor over the years has been the mis-speaking of catechism answers, particularly those relating to the Trinity, the sacraments, and Adam and Eve, as children sometimes inadvertently speak a truth about something not at all intended by the Divines. One young man went so far as to dispute with his father (Chad Van Dixhoorn) the necessity of learning the catechism in the first place. After all, he reasoned, it wasn’t required for communicant membership. “I know how membership works,” the boy said. “You just stand in front of the church and say yes five times!” (October 2012).

Perhaps it goes without saying that we are dependent on you and your children for this long-standing part of *New Horizons*. If you have an example of the humorous “wisdom” that can come from children, please send it to *New Horizons*, care of editor Danny Olinger, [danny.olinger@opc.org](mailto:danny.olinger@opc.org). □

*The author is editorial assistant for New Horizons.*

## ● Out of the Mouth . . .

Sunday school teacher: “When Moses stretched out his hand over the Red Sea, God divided the waters, so the people of Israel could walk across on dry land to the other side.”

“I know!” piped up three-year-old Stephen. “I saw the movie!”

*An April 1996 “Out of the Mouth,” submitted by Jim Scott*

# MACHEN'S MAGAZINES



D. G. HART // To claim that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church would not exist if not for a magazine is a bit of a stretch but has enough proximity to historical circumstances to be plausible. One year before J. Gresham Machen said of the OPC, “a true Presbyterian church, at last,” he had established a magazine, *The Presbyterian*

*Guardian*, to inform fellow Presbyterians about the latest developments in the PCUSA.

The *Guardian* was actually the third magazine that conservatives had used to make known their objections to theological liberalism. *The Presbyterian*, founded in 1851, had been the chief avenue outside theological quarterlies for pastors and theologians in the North to reach a popular audience. Thanks to disagreements about strategy in the controversies of the 1920s, Machen and Samuel G. Craig in 1930 founded *Christianity Today* (not the one in print today) to express the views of conservatives associated with Westminster Seminary. The *Guardian* came five years later, once Presbyterians in the seminary's network divided over the wisdom of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions.

Through the long years of doctrinal debate and news stories about denominational politics, magazines informed ordinary readers about the details and significance of the church struggle.

## The Heyday of Magazines

Before the rise of the internet and

online publishing, magazines were the most popular print medium for reaching national audiences. In the 1830s in the United States, thanks to cheap printing costs and relatively easy delivery by the postal service via roads and canals, mass magazines became a regular part of a reader's time. Some of the most popular titles were *Godey's Lady's Book*, a nineteenth-century favorite, and *Saturday Evening Post*, a publication that dominated newsstands the first two-thirds of the twentieth century.

During much of this time, Protestant denominations produced their own magazines. *The Presbyterian* was the first within the PCUSA. In the twentieth century, publishers appealed across denominational lines. *The Christian Century*, which took the name in 1900, became the flagship magazine for mainline and liberal Protestants. Evangelical Protestants had to wait until 1956 to have their own conservative alternative: *Christianity Today*. The *Century* and *Christianity Today* remain in print, as do denominational magazines. But the news coverage and opinion that magazines used to offer in the heyday of magazine readership has declined.

A century ago, however, writing for magazines was such a habit and expectation that at almost every turn in the church controversy that led to the OPC's formation, a weekly or monthly periodical was there to leave a trail of documentary crumbs for historians.

## *The Presbyterian*

In 1920, commissioners to the general assembly heard a plan for an organic union of the largest and most influential Protestant denominations in the United States. The president of Princeton Theological Seminary, J. Ross Stevenson, was the chair of the Presbyterian committee that recommended union to the assembly. But the majority of his faculty opposed the plan because of its lukewarm religious affirmations. The place where Princeton faculty decided to publish their views was a magazine, *The Presbyterian*. Machen himself wrote three articles, all of which employed arguments that he expanded in *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923).

*The Presbyterian* continued to be the outlet for conservative Presbyterians during the ensuing years of theological turmoil in the PCUSA. In fact,

the magazine was at the center of fractured relations at Princeton Seminary when disagreements over trends in the church—like church union—elevated Princeton itself into a political football.

At the 1925 general assembly, arguably the most pivotal in the sixteen years of controversy that led up to the OPC, liberals in New York were prepared to leave the denomination because commissioners were about to reaffirm the virgin birth of Christ as a fundamental article of Christianity. This would have been a difficult vote for New Yorkers to swallow since they had ordained two ministers who could not affirm (though they did not deny) the virgin birth.

But instead of letting the vote take place, the moderator, Charles Erdman, professor of practical theology at Princeton, decided to form a committee to study the sources of the Presbyterian controversy. That investigation found that conservatives were largely responsible for sowing seeds of distrust. It recommended that criticism of ministers and church agencies cease. The committee also advised that the assembly form another committee to investigate why Princeton Seminary faculty were quarreling.

Part of the evidence this commission examined consisted of editorials in *The Presbyterian* that had criticized Erdman's candidacy for moderator of the 1924 assembly. Erdman had assumed that Machen, a member of the magazine's editorial board, was the author of one of the negative editorials. Machen had not written the column in question, but Erdman's perception was another indication of the role that magazines played in the dissemination of news and views in church life.

### **Christianity Today**

The committee to investigate Princeton Seminary eventually recommended administrative changes that undermined conservative control. That was the motivation for Machen and other conservatives in 1929 to found a new seminary in Philadelphia—Westminster Theological Seminary. The start

of a new school for training Presbyterian pastors was also the occasion for launching another conservative Presbyterian magazine. Investors at *The Presbyterian* were not thrilled with Samuel G. Craig's editorials against the changes at Princeton. In an effort to create a platform for unfettered coverage of Princeton and Westminster, Craig and Machen founded *Christianity Today*, a publication of the newly formed Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company. In addition to his work as a writer and editor, Craig served on the board at Westminster. For five years, conservative Presbyterians used *Christianity Today* to oppose the denomination's liberal drift.

Between 1930 and 1935, the controversy over foreign missions enveloped the church. In 1932, a report sponsored by Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, and Dutch Reformed, and conducted by a branch of what became the Rockefeller Foundation, determined that the traditional purpose of missions—saving lost souls—was outdated. Instead, the churches needed to cooperate with indigenous religions for the sake of social improvement. The report, published as *Re-Thinking Missions*, launched the last phase of the Presbyterian controversy. When Machen and other conservatives were unable to persuade the PCUSA's mission board to condemn the report, they founded the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions. Independent Board members faced charges from their respective presbyteries for defying regular channels for foreign missions.

### **The Presbyterian Guardian**

The creation of the Independent Board also split conservatives at *Christianity Today* and at Westminster Seminary. Samuel Craig himself resigned from the seminary's board and refused to defend the tactics of the Independent Board. That editorial decision led Machen to found *The Presbyterian Guardian*—the title that Machen had originally wanted for *Christianity Today*. Its first issue, published on Octo-

ber 7, 1935, placed before readers news about the church, the work of foreign missions, and instructional material for young people and adults. It was also a clarion call for conservative Presbyterians, as Machen explained, that in a world of controversy and flux, the one thing they could put their confidence in was not the visible church or Western civilization but the Word of God.

The *Guardian* remained a platform for orthodox Presbyterians to follow news about church life, receive doctrinal and biblical instruction, and offer opinions about the OPC's place in the world. But throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the OPC general assembly heard and entertained various calls for a denominational magazine that promoted the general interest of the church. What ensued was an almost three-decade conversation about the merits of a magazine that engaged in polemics to defend conservative Presbyterianism as opposed to a publication that reported in a promotional way on church affairs.

### **New Horizons**

Out of those deliberations in 1980 came *New Horizons*, a publication that reported on activities of the church's agencies. A declining readership (as well as pool of writers) meant that over time the *Guardian* could not support itself without a subsidy from the OPC. That financial arrangement made full and frank discussion of church life difficult without offending patrons.

By 1979, the *Guardian's* assets and circulation list had been sold to the conservative southern Presbyterian magazine, *The Presbyterian Journal*, which in turn (1986) became the basis for *World* magazine.

If OP members still desire a magazine that gives room for theologically informed opinion and news coverage of the wider church world, the reason likely has something to do with the role that magazines played in the formation and sustenance of the OPC. □

*The author, an OP elder, teaches at Hillsdale College.*

# ARDENT SPIRITS: PRESBYTERIANS AND PROHIBITION



**RICHARD M. GAMBLE // January 17 marks the one hundredth anniversary of the Eighteenth Amendment to the US Constitution. From that day forward, the manufacture, distribution, and sale of alcohol was prohibited throughout the United States and its territories.**

The accompanying Volstead Act defined “intoxicating beverages” as any that contained .5% or more alcohol by volume and provided the legal apparatus for enforcing the ban. Wine was permitted for sacramental use, and alcohol could still be prescribed by doctors and sold by pharmacies under strict federal regulation, but otherwise “John Barleycorn” had been defeated, and America had gone bone dry—at least officially.

America’s churches boasted that they had been instrumental in securing Prohibition’s victory. Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists stood in the front lines of battle. Liberals and fundamentalists made it their common cause to defeat the saloon and purify American civilization. The PCUSA and its Committee on Temperance did more than its share to put Prohibition “over the top” at the end of World War I. Charles Scanlon, the committee’s secretary for decades, produced annual resolutions, wrote dozens of articles, coordinated with the Anti-Saloon League, lobbied Congress, and took his crusade

to Europe with the help of a generous congressional appropriation. A world made safe for democracy needed to be made sober as well.

## **The Temperance Movement**

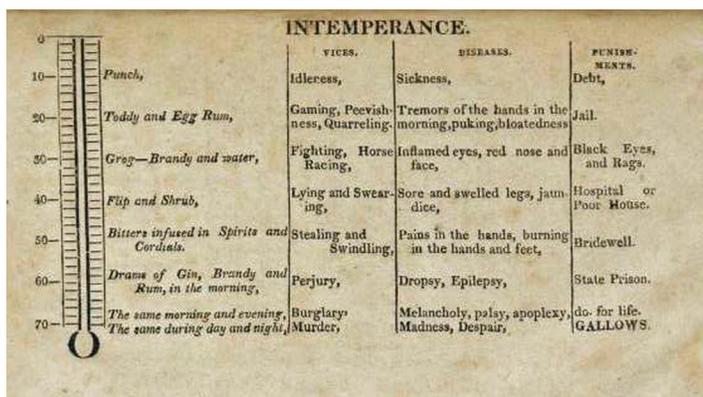
The PCUSA’s involvement in the temperance movement began in earnest in 1811. In that year, the general assembly formed a committee to combat the “mischiefs” caused by “the excessive and intemperate use of spiritous liquors.” The same assembly accepted a gift from Philadelphia physician Benjamin Rush of one thousand copies of his popular treatise on “The Effects of Ardent Spirits on the Human Body and Mind.” Rush was an Edinburgh-trained physician, signer of the Declaration of Independence, and lapsed Presbyterian. The next year, the assembly urged ministers to preach “on the sin and mischiefs of intemperate drinking,” local sessions to be vigilant, and churches to publicize the dangers of “ardent spirits.”

Following the War of 1812, with consumption of distilled liquor rising, the denomination redoubled its efforts.

Alcohol abuse was becoming a serious social problem, straining the resources of local communities to handle the consequences. Historians’ explanations for the increase include: farmers’ need to turn their corn into whiskey for the sake of cheap and convenient transportation; the growth of Irish and German immigration; the dislocation of families and communities in an increasingly mobile and urbanizing nation; and a rise in alienated young people thrown upon their own resources in a world where traditional family, community, church, and livelihoods were breaking down. More mechanized workplaces made the consumption of alcohol more dangerous, as well. Whatever the causes, and there were many, alcohol abuse threatened marriages and families, increased the risk of worker injuries and death, exacerbated poverty, crime, and mental illness, and brought scandal to the church.

The first temperance society appeared in Massachusetts in the 1820s, and its success was rivaled in the short term only by the one in New York City.

Maine passed the first prohibition law in 1851, and even though it survived only until 1858, it became a model for other states seeking similar restrictions. Voluntary associations dedicated to controlling and then eradicating alcohol joined a host of benevolent societies mobilized for world peace, public education, poor relief, and colonization of freed slaves. Though controversial and often divisive, nondenominational tract societies, Bible societies, Sunday school unions, and home and foreign mission boards flourished alongside temperance reform, often led by the same trustees.



"A Moral and Physical Thermometer" from Benjamin Rush's treatise

### Extra-Biblical

Calls for Christian temperance were nothing new in the nineteenth century. Faithful preachers had always warned against the sin of drunkenness. Since colonial times, church members and officers had been disciplined for habitual intemperance. Pastoral advice manuals consistently warned against the dangers of drink. No one disputed that the Old and New Testaments condemned the drunkard and demanded a life marked by sobriety. At the same time, the Bible described wine as a gift from God, further blessed by Jesus and central to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. John Calvin insisted on temperance but also taught that God provided wine "to make us merry."

Historians often attribute Prohibition to a caricature of the dour and busybody Calvinist. But the record of

America's Calvinism shows that being a Calvinist did not automatically predispose anyone to be a prohibitionist. Something deeper was going on. In the PCUSA, reform-minded pastors and elders kept upping the ante for personal holiness. The trend is obvious. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the general assembly moved from lamenting the sin of intemperance, to calling for total abstinence from liquor and then wine, to denying membership and the sacrament to believers who consumed, manufactured, or sold alcohol, to sponsoring "temperance Sundays"

and seeking new local and state legislation to close saloons. The 1866 assembly resolved that "total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks as a beverage is demanded from every Christian by the condition of society, the purity of the Church and the Word of God." That sweeping statement was reaffirmed year after year by the assembly. By 1892, the general assembly was praising the "majority of our churches" for using grape juice for the sacrament.

To be sure, Old School Presbyterians worried about temperance societies and other voluntary associations that imposed standards of sanctification and fellowship beyond the bounds of Scripture. The Old School, while condemning intemperance, warned in 1848 that the "General Assembly, as a court of Jesus Christ, cannot league itself with any voluntary society, cannot exact of those who are subject to its discipline to do so, but must leave the whole matter where the Scriptures leave it—to the prudence, philanthropy and good sense of God's children, each man having a right to do as to him shall seem good." But in 1865, at the end of the

Civil War, the Old School denounced the sin and curse of alcohol in the name of "piety and patriotism."

### A Divisive Issue

Prohibition continued to divide churches after the Great War. In 1926, the year the indefatigable Charles Scanlon testified before the Senate to preserve an unmodified Volstead Act, the PCUSA denied J. Gresham Machen appointment as professor of systematic theology and ethics at Princeton Seminary. His recent vote against his presbytery's resolution in support of Prohibition doomed his chances, giving liberals one more reason to block him.

By the time of the OPC's founding in 1936 as a refuge for confessional Presbyterians, the Eighteenth Amendment had been repealed and prohibiting liquor sales returned to the discretion of local and state authorities. But controversy over total abstinence and Christian liberty erupted in the OPC almost immediately. In 1937, an overture from the Chicago presbytery to reaffirm the PCUSA's long-standing commitment to total abstinence was voted down. The OPC's failure to endorse the ban helped to split the young denomination and, among other controversies, led to the founding of the Bible Presbyterians.

The centennial of Prohibition has given many Americans the opportunity to consider once more important questions about constitutionalism, federalism, political liberty, and the growth of the modern state. But at the same time, confessional Presbyterians ought to remember that no matter how noble the intentions behind the "noble experiment," the crusade against alcohol divided Christians, brought politics into the pulpit and the pulpit into politics, and radically narrowed the sphere of Christian liberty. It mobilized the Bible and the church to wage a war for social transformation at odds with the testimony of Scripture, the Reformers, and the boundaries of our confessions. □

*The author, an OP elder, is a professor at Hillsdale College.*

# MTIOPC APPLIES BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES TO MINISTRY

// PATRICIA E. CLAWSON



Mark Bube is teaching a course on the OPC Book of Church Discipline for the 2020 MTIOPC

Pastors are called to faithfully preach God's Word, pray, administer the sacraments, and, along with ruling elders, govern and discipline the church. A clear understanding of the biblical principles of apologetics also is vital. One way for ministers, licentiates, men under care of a presbytery, and ruling elders to hone those skills is to take one of three courses offered this spring by the Ministerial Training Institute of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (MTIOPC): Book of Discipline, Form of Government, and Defending the Faith.

## The OPC's Book of Discipline

MTIOPC director Danny Olinger believes that it is "all-important" for men seeking to serve or already serving in church to know the OPC's Book of Discipline and its Form of Government. "We believe that a proper mark of a true church is the faithful administration of church discipline," he said.

Book of Discipline's new instructor, Mark Bube, is well known as the general secretary of the Committee on Foreign Missions. "Mark's years of active service as a ruling elder in the courts of the church bring unmatched experience," said Olinger. "Regularly over the past thirty-five years, he has been a commissioner at the general assembly, the body that hears appeals. He also served multiple times as the parliamentarian of general assembly."

Bube, who grew up in the OPC, was ordained a ruling elder in 1983 while working as an estate tax lawyer for the IRS. Soon he was elected to the general assembly's Committee on Coordination and as moderator of the Presbytery of the Northwest. The Fifty-Eighth (1988) General Assembly elected him as moderator, and then in 1991 he was called to serve as Foreign Mission's general secretary.

More than half a dozen general assembly moderators have asked Bube to serve as their parliamentarian. He urges moderators to focus on the big picture and not get caught up

in all the details. "When assemblies go down rabbit holes, a wise moderator wants to back off and find something we can all agree on, seek general consent, and move on from there."

Bube will remind his students: "We're talking about ministry and not law, shepherding sheep and not winning court cases. The idea in biblical church discipline is not about 'throwing the book' in frustration at a wandering sheep, but whenever possible using the facts that are already agreed upon, to begin the process of bringing that sheep back home."

As Presbyterians, Bube urges ruling and teaching elders to be familiar with the rules that they agreed upon in their ordination vows as they handle church business. In wisdom questions, one should joyfully submit to his brothers' decisions even if it wasn't what one thought best, said Bube.

"Biblical church discipline is done in love, not to punish or, even worse, get revenge," said Bube. "It's about the honor of Christ and the care of his sheep."

Bube will discreetly share "real life" experiences, which include discipline locally, regionally, at general assembly, and on the mission field. "Any time a court of the church feels compelled to rely on self-help as opposed to following the process to which we have all agreed upon in the *Book of Discipline*, we're in big trouble," said Bube.

The course will review the development of discipline after Calvin; consider Matthew 18, especially verse 14's statement that none should perish; look at the reasons for discipline, church jurisdiction, and the foundation for discipline; and show what biblical discipline looks like. Bube will analyze historic OPC cases and draw principles that underlie them, then assess the powers of church courts, and appeals and complaints.

Bube hopes that students will "walk away with shepherds' hearts and recognize that discipline is done in love and is part of God's grace." A better understanding of church discipline allows teaching and ruling elders to be "better under-shepherds, better able to care, and better able to lead the

precious ones Christ has entrusted to them.”

### The OPC's Form of Government

As the Rev. Dr. Alan Strange teaches Form of Government, he, too, hopes his students will become better churchmen. A professor of church history at Mid-America Reformed Seminary, Strange will present the church as a spiritual institution that proceeds in a spiritual manner by the means of grace, without concerning itself with purely political matters that aren't addressed in Scripture and that bring division. The OPC's Form of Government expresses the principles of Presbyterian government found in Scripture upon which ministers and ruling elders covenant together to base their actions, said Strange.

“We need to know our polity—our processes on how to do everything decently and in order—and we need to abide by our polity. Can you imagine a doctor not knowing the conventions that govern his profession? It's bizarre that we think it's OK when someone says, I care about Jesus and the gospel, but the Form of Government is getting in the way.”

This course seeks to make students better suited to function and serve in their session, presbytery, and general assembly, said Strange. “Our Form of Government inculcates a heart of service, considering one as better than ourselves. It's not just about our local church. This will make us better churchmen.”

### Defending the Faith

Rev. Dr. William Dennison will show in his course, *Defending the Faith*, how Cornelius Van Til's critical analysis helps one research, read, teach, and preach the biblical text. While teaching at Covenant College, Dennison has used presuppositional apologetics in his classes for twenty-eight years. At a time when criticism of Van Til has arisen, Dennison challenges current and future church officers to study what Van Til actually believed. “I am hopeful that students would understand how Van Til is so helpful in working with a structure of a biblically framed apologetic in every aspect of their Christian walk.”

Dennison will consider how Van Til may be used consistently in a congregation's philosophy of ministry regarding education in the church and in the home, evangelism, outreach, fellowship, hospitality, missions, diaconate, counseling, Form of Government, and Book of Discipline.

These MTIOPC classes begin February 3 and culminate with a mandatory Intensive Training on May 12–14 at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Illinois. Students may apply for a course at [www.opc.org/cce/MTI.html](http://www.opc.org/cce/MTI.html).

Applications, a \$50 registration fee, and tuition (for ruling elders and non-OPs), must be sent by January 27, 2020, to: Committee on Christian Education ATTN: MTIOPC 607 N. Easton Road, Building E Willow Grove, PA 19090

*The author is the MTIOPC coordinator.*

## Trinity Psalter Hymnal Selections “Weary of Earth,” no. 506

*Alan D. Strange*

*“Weary of Earth, and Laden with My Sin,”  
by Samuel J. Stone, 1868*

Weary of earth, and laden with my sin,  
I look at heav'n and long to enter in;  
but there no evil thing may find a home;  
and yet I hear a voice that bids me “Come.”

So vile I am, how dare I hope to stand  
in the pure glory of that holy land?  
Before the whiteness of that throne appear?  
Yet there are hands stretched out to draw me near.

This is by the same Anglican minister, Samuel J. Stone, who wrote “The Church's One Foundation” and other hymns. Many of them are outstanding, but none is quite like this one. This was in the original *Trinity Hymnal* (1961), though not its revision (1990). It has been restored in the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* with six stanzas, though written originally in eight. The hymn is most frequently sung to LANGRAN (10.10.10.10), as it is here.

The hymn was drawn from article 10 of the Apostles' Creed on “the forgiveness of sin.” Stone vividly depicts the Christian in his sin-burdened condition, longing to enter heaven, recognizing no fitness for admittance, yet hearing the Savior say, “Come.” Each stanza advances this quandary: I am vile—how can I approach such ineffable brightness and purity? Ah, here are his hands to draw me near.

The third stanza laments evil, while hearing a voice say “Repent.” The fourth stanza identifies the voice as Jesus's: he is the one calling us. The fifth stanza prays that we as penitent may enjoy the garment of Christ's righteousness. And the sixth exults that the merits are all his and the reward ours due to Christ's sacrifice for us. The hymn sets forth how Christ's blood and righteousness answer for all our sin and misery, in a most plaintive and appealing way.

## Out of the Mouth . . .

Our three-year-old, Samuel, was having a conversation with imaginary friends in the back seat. “Hi.” “Hi. Do you want to play?” etc. Then came, “Do you have souls?” “No, we don't have souls.” At this point, I'm driving with a raised eyebrow. “We don't have souls, because we're DINOSAURS.”

—Hyojung Walker  
Glenside, PA

*Note: If you have an example of the humorous “wisdom” that can come from children, please send it to [danny.olinger@opc.org](mailto:danny.olinger@opc.org).*

# CONFIDENT OF THE HARVEST

// JOHN S. SHAW



*Amelia Berglund and Anya Rop share a laugh during a Pizza and Theology Night sponsored by Reformation OPC*

Two of the newest mission works of the OPC are reaching cities in the middle of apparently church-saturated communities. New Braunfels, Texas, is situated in the middle of the Bible Belt, and Grand Rapids, Michigan, rests in the heart of what you might describe as the Dutch Reformed belt. Yet both mission works see opportunities to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to many needy people in their communities.

## Grand Rapids, Michigan

Shane Bennett was only twelve years old when his father perceived gifts for the ministry in his young son. Through his father's encouragement, and the prodding of the Holy Spirit, Shane eventually considered a call to the ministry and studied at Westminster Seminary in California. At Knox OPC in Silver Spring, Maryland, he grew in his gifts during an internship. He then served for four years as the pastor of Faith OPC in Fawn Grove, Pennsylvania. "I learned so much in those first four years of ministry, and I am thankful to the saints of that wonderful congregation for the opportunity to serve them," Bennett said.

Although the Bennetts expected to serve for many years in Fawn Grove, the Holy Spirit led them in a new direction.

At the end of the summer of 2019, Shane moved with his wife, Rachele, and their four children to Grand Rapids. He now serves as the church planter at Reformation OPC, which meets on the campus of Calvin University.

As you might imagine, meeting on the campus gives the mission work special access to ministry to college students. Each week Pastor Bennett and Elder David Noe (associate professor of philosophy and classics at Calvin) meet with students over lunch.

"College-age students are at a unique point in their lives where, maybe more than any other time, they are asking hard questions: about God, about the church, about the Bible, about the meaning of life," Bennett said.

Reformation also hosts a weekly "Pizza and Theology Night," where they discuss questions with students over the familiar college staple of pizza. "It's exciting to engage young people and help guide them to the truth of the gospel. They are needy people in need of the love of the church, and I think the congregation is burdened to engage and help the young people here," Bennett explained.

Reformation OPC not only enjoys the opportunity to reach college students at various stages of spiritual interest, but they are also committed to reaching Southeast Grand Rapids with the message of the gospel. While Grand Rapids has historically enjoyed a heavy Christian influence, research published on [bestplaces.net](https://www.bestplaces.net) claims that only 50 percent of its residents have an affiliation with any church. The mission work is pursuing a variety of opportunities to meet and love their neighbors. "We're hopeful just to introduce people to the church, to pray with them, and show needy sinners the love of Christ. [And we plan] to continue seeking the lost for Christ by planting other OPC churches," as the Lord gives opportunity in the future, said Bennett.

Pray for the Bennett family as they build



*David Noe (far left) leading a Pizza and Theology Night*

relationships in a new community. Pray that Pastor Bennett and the whole mission work would effectively love college students. And pray for the whole group to build deep relationships with their neighbors—relationships that lead to deep gospel conversations.

### New Braunfels, Texas

Six years ago, South Austin Presbyterian Church began as a mission work of Providence Presbyterian Church in Pflugerville, a northeastern suburb of Austin, Texas. The Lord quickly grew that new work, and that growth included two families driving from New Braunfels, about forty minutes south down Interstate 35. Almost immediately, the session began to pray for another mission work. By April 2018, worship services began in New Braunfels.

The city of New Braunfels sits almost exactly in between San Antonio and Austin, right along the very busy highway that connects these growing cities. In fact, New Braunfels's county is one of the fastest growing counties in the United States.

The Lord has quickly brought to this growing city a mission work filled with families who love to talk about Jesus and love to invite their neighbors to Sunday worship. At their second worship service, one row was filled with young people, several of them not regular churchgoers, who were invited by a young member of the core group. That pattern of invitation is found throughout the whole group.



*Sunday worship at New Braunfels OPC*



*Fellowship after worship at New Braunfels OPC*

### 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: January 8 & 22.

“The members frequently tell family, friends, and people in the community about the work, and invite them to come to church. The great thing is that many of them come!” said Carl Miller.

Miller was called to serve this new mission work and began his labors in October 2019. Pastor Miller served as a pastor both in California and Texas before then moving with his family to Cornerstone OPC in northwest Houston. He served as an elder in that congregation for four years but was excited about the opportunity to return to pastoral ministry in 2019. The Lord brought together this new mission work and the Miller family—Carl, Stacey, and their six children.

“It’s exciting to see the mutual love, care, and unity that is already present in the body,” Miller said. “Another exciting thing for me is that NBOPC has many return visitors. They are settling in and desire to be part of the congregation. We plan on starting a membership class soon.”

Please pray that this mission would persevere in their willingness to invite others, and that those invitations would be received warmly. Pray for new visitors to be kindly welcomed, and that many would stay and become part of this growing work. And pray for fruitful gospel conversations with neighbors and friends.

### Confident Faith

We sometimes doubt the power of God to save sinners in the neighborhoods in which we work and live. We are reluctant to invite people to worship because we are convinced that they will refuse the invitation. Yet God has promised a plentiful harvest where the primary problem is not the lack of willing hearers, but the lack of laborers for the harvest fields (Matt. 9:37).

The Lord can build new churches in the Bible Belt of the South, and he can build new churches in the shadow of American Dutch strongholds like Calvin University. He can also build your church or even new churches where you live. What does he ask of us? He calls us to a confident faith in his promises—even the promise of a plentiful harvest—that would produce a confident witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So as you pray for new mission works in places like New Braunfels and Grand Rapids, do so with great confidence that the one to whom you pray is the Lord of the harvest. Expect him to answer those prayers with conversions and baptisms, because the Lord is powerful to save. And be challenged to follow the example of the saints in Grand Rapids and New Braunfels, joyfully inviting people to worship because in that service they will hear the voice of Christ. He is the Good Shepherd, and when the sheep hear his voice, they will follow.

*The author is general secretary of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension.*

# MEET NEW MISSIONARIES JAMES AND ESTHER FOLKERTS



*James and Esther Folkerts with their children Joel (11), Elyse (6), Jenna (4), Benjamin (7), Henry (2), Corianna (9), and Natalie (12)*

## A TUG TOWARD MISSIONS

*H. James Folkerts*

**M**issionaries from Nigeria visited my Christian Reformed Church when I was just a child on the Canadian prairies. I remember thinking that I wanted to be a missionary, too.

At the time, my father was wrestling with a call to serve in the ministry and, after much deliberation, he decided to study at Mid-America Reformed Seminary. Our first big, memorable move as a family was to Orange City, Iowa. It was a whole new, wonderful world. I heard lots of theological conversations in my parents' living room. I was introduced to people called "professors" and catechized by zealous seminary students. Soon I was making new American friends and exploring the small town we lived in. I even had a paper route!

Throughout my childhood, God graciously gave me an awareness of his grace to me, a sinner, and of his presence. My high school years were spent in Winnipeg, Canada, where my dad pastored a church that would become part of the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA). After graduating from Dordt College with a degree in history, I moved back to Winnipeg, picking up carpentry work to pay off college debt. Now it was my turn to wrestle with what God wanted me to do with the new life in Christ that he had given me. The call to the ministry didn't go away. In fact, it grew, and I knew I had to do something about it.

I decided to enter a two-year graduate program in Jerusalem to study archaeology and Hebrew, hoping to work on a higher degree and to teach. Though I enjoyed my studies, the hostilities there opened my eyes to an even greater need for pastoral ministry. Many nights I went to bed to the sounds of gunfire. After one semester there, I transferred to Mid-Amer-

ica Reformed Seminary for three rich, full years that sped by quickly.

### Training on the Field

After seminary, I taught in northern Kenya in the border town of Lokichogio at a training center for Sudanese and local Kenyan pastors and church leaders. This town is home to the local Turkana tribe, which is from the same branch of tribes as the people of Karamoja whom we will be serving in Uganda.

After a blessed summer in Kenya, I headed back to Canada to finish my church examinations and was then called and ordained by Providence Reformed Church of Winnipeg (URCNA) as a missionary. During this season, I met Esther. As I went back to the mission field, we began a yearlong, long-distance relationship in the early Skype years when the World Wide Web wasn't that worldwide and didn't connect that well. Thankfully, although Skype didn't work well, we did!

On the mission field in Kenya, I experienced the joy and messiness of missions—and the misery of malaria. Later, after much prayer and counsel, I decided that it would be best for our future marriage to seek a call in a church back in North America. Still, I felt that I was leaving part of my heart in Africa, and I wondered if I would ever return.

Esther and I were married in 2006 and set off for the remote mountains in northern British Columbia, Canada, where I began serving as the pastor of Faith Reformed Church of Telkwa (URCNA). How can we summarize the thirteen years we have spent here? I think of Jacob going empty-handed to uncle Laban and fourteen or so years later leaving with his hands full, this being the Lord's doing. My seven beautiful children have grown up here in Telkwa, and Esther and I have been privileged to serve a church family from whom we have learned so much. They have borne with me in my weakness and upheld me in their prayers. And from this remote end of the earth, the congregation is sending us to Karamoja to work with the OPC Uganda Mission.

We know that for everything under heaven there is a time and a season. As I write this, our memories are being packed away in boxes, and our seasons are changing again—but we know that our faithful God does not. We are looking to the Lord to be our help and shield. Thank you for your prayers for the Lord's blessing on us as a family and our labors with the team in Uganda. To God be the glory!

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## STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

*Esther A. Folkerts*

When I was five, my parents agreed to become missionaries, teaching at a theological school on the island of Sumba, Indonesia. My dad, a Canadian, was at that time pastoring a church in The Hague, Netherlands, and my Dutch mother was a registered nurse. After their language training, they moved with my seven siblings and me to a little village called Wai Marangu on the eastern part of Sumba.

The next six years changed the rest of my life. I learned to speak a different language and acclimate to a new culture. We lived in a little concrete house with three bedrooms, no indoor plumbing, and no power (except for a generator running a couple of hours at night to recharge my parents' computers). We learned new rhythms—the dry season with its still, sweltering heat, and then the rainy season, with the rain drumming down in sheets on the corrugated tin roof. We were homeschooled in the morning and then played outside in the warm afternoon sun. We walked to church on Sundays and worshiped in a little building that doubled as a classroom, its doors open to keep the breeze moving through. The occasional stray dog would wander in to lie respectfully in the aisle.

There were joys on the field: reciting memory verses with dozens of village children at Christmastime, experiencing our unity in Christ as we worshiped together in Indonesian, enjoying fellowship with other missionaries, and taking much-needed holidays at the seashore or on the island of Bali. There were also struggles: strife as the gospel collided with the pagan beliefs around us, threats against our family, hurt relationships, and sickness. God held us together through all of it.

### Difficult Transitions

In 1994, we moved back to the Netherlands. It was my parents' desire to emigrate to Canada, and within a couple of months, the Lord provided a call to a Canadian Reformed Church in Guelph, a city in southwestern Ontario. The transition to Canada and to city life was very hard. As missionary kids, we did not fit in at all. But we made many happy memories camping and exploring the beauty of Ontario.

Six years later, we moved from the city to the small prairie town of Carman, Manitoba, and settled into a slower-paced prairie life. We learned how cold winter could really be, with temperatures plunging down to -40 degrees and icy prairie

winds whipping the dry, powdery snow into huge drifts. We learned to appreciate the sunny beauty of Manitoba with its wide-open skies and its steady, friendly people. I finished high school there and went on to complete a BA at the University of Manitoba.

Meanwhile, the Lord was planting a growing interest in missions in my heart. I spent a summer working in Quebec, and then returned to Manitoba to complete a degree in education, thinking that this would lend itself well to working somewhere in missions. During this time, I met my husband, James, who had returned temporarily from mission work and preached occasionally at our church in Carman.

After our wedding in the spring of 2006, James and I moved to Telkwa, British Columbia, and began a whole new chapter. For the first time, I was permanently leaving behind my family, with whom I had traveled so far and experienced so much. For my husband, too, it was a time of goodbyes. We took comfort in God's promise that "there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold" (Mark 10:29–30). We knew that God would care for us. And he did, giving us a wonderful church family in Telkwa, blessing us with seven children, and allowing us to serve there for thirteen rich years.

It's strange how the Lord works sometimes. About two years ago, James received a call to a church in New Zealand. This call really pulled at us, and yet after much prayer and deliberation we felt that it was not time to leave Telkwa yet. It did loosen our roots, however, and—unbeknownst to us—God was preparing us for an even bigger step.

When we were first made aware of the need for another missionary in Karamoja, Uganda, it caught my husband's interest. Could this be where the Lord was leading us next? There had been a time when I was young and excited about missions, when I felt that I had abilities to contribute that could be useful on the field, but now parenting our seven children felt like a pretty challenging mission field already. How could I be of much use?

And yet, the Lord wouldn't let me say no. Again and again, I felt challenged by the quiet reminder: What does it really mean to pick up my cross and follow Christ? Do I truly love Christ more than my comfortable, safe life? Bit by bit, as we prayed and talked, the Lord was prying my hands open to let go and receive what he had planned for us.

Recently, I was reading the story of Moses, and this stood out: God didn't use Moses when Moses felt he was ready and full of strength. He waited until Moses was humble and weak. It was in Moses's weakness that God's might could be displayed. So my prayer is that the Lord will use us, despite our weakness. Whatever his purposes, may he strengthen us for his service, and use us as he sees fit; may he be glorified.

*The authors serve as missionaries with the OPC Uganda Mission in Karamoja, Uganda.*

## STEWARDSHIP

# INTERIM ADMINISTRATOR FOR THE COMMITTEE ON COORDINATION

// DONALD J. DUFF



*Robert Jones, new interim administrator for the Committee on Coordination, with his wife, Linda*

Leading up to the Eighty-Sixth (2019) General Assembly, the Committee on Coordination was working hard with David Haney, Director of Finance and Planned Giving, so that he could take up the position as director for the newly created Committee on Ministerial Care. Then, in mid-August 2019, the Lord took home to himself our dear brother David.

In God's providence David had established a good staff which was able to carry on the routine work of the committee. Mark Stumpff, Charlene Tipton, and Melissa McGinnis have done excellent work, for which the committee is very thankful. The committee met several times to determine what matters needed to be covered and appointed several men to temporarily pick up special responsibilities. Now the committee is happy to announce that Mr. Robert M. Jones has been appointed as an Interim Administrator for the Committee on Coordination for a nine-month term that began on December 2, 2019.

Mr. Jones has extensive experience in financial management, personnel management, client relationship management, and negotiating for companies such as Siemens and General Electric. Mr. Jones and his wife, Linda, were members of Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Sewickley, Pennsylvania, before moving to Atlanta where they were members of an Orthodox Presbyterian church plant in Cumming, Georgia. In the mid-1990s, they moved to Philadelphia and

joined Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Glenside.

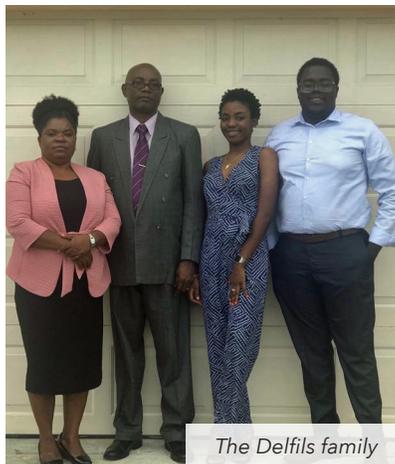
Since 1998, Mr. Jones has served as a ruling elder at Calvary Church. In recent years, commissioners to general assembly have come to know his wife, Linda, who has served as a registrar.

The Committee on Coordination is delighted to have found a servant so well-qualified and ready to serve the Orthodox Presbyterian Church for this transitional period.

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



# JANUARY



The Delfils family



The Brandenbergs

**1** Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Pray that the unity among church members may strengthen as they go through recent trials. / Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**.

**2** **BEN & HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti. Pray that the unrest in Haiti would end soon and that the family might be able to return. / **JEREMIAH (NATALIA) DICKINSON**, church-planting intern at Harvest Church in East Haddam, CT.

**3** **NICHOLAS & ROSEMARIE LAMMÉ**, Houston, TX. Ask the Lord to give Nick opportunities to share the gospel as he goes door to door. / Pray for **HANK BELFIELD** as he begins his new duties as stated clerk this month.

**4** Pray for young men considering whether to attend the **TIMOTHY CONFERENCE** to learn more about gospel ministry. / **DAVID STEWART** (PCA), board of trustees president for Great Commission Publications.

**5** Pray for the labors of **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay. / **MICHAEL & NAOMI SCHOUT**, Zeeland, MI. Pray for Grace Fellowship to have a deeper love for Jesus, lost neighbors, and one another.

**6** **HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for God's blessing on Heero's preaching ministry and the church's spiritual growth. / Pray for good enrollment for the February **MTIOPC** classes.

**7** Affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia. Pray for patience as Laura struggles with mysterious health symptoms. / **DAVID & REBEKAH GRAVES**, Coeur d'Alene, ID. Ask the Lord raise up officers at Coeur d'Alene Reformed.

**8** **SHANE & RACHELLE BENNETT**, Grand Rapids, MI. Pray for clear direction as Reformation OPC seeks new outreach opportunities. / **JUDITH DINSMORE**, managing editor of *New Horizons*, and **GREGORY REYNOLDS**, editor of *Ordained Servant*.

**9** **BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD** and missionary associate **ALETHEA FLORES**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for youth ministry and catechism instruction of the children. / **STEPHEN PRIBBLE**, senior technical associate for OPC.org.

**10** **CALVIN & CONNIE KELLER**, Winston-Salem, NC. Pray for conversions and a greater commitment to fellowship at Harvest OPC. / **MR. AND MRS. F.**, Asia, give thanks as they reunite with family for the birth of their first grandchild this month.

**11** **MR. AND MRS. M. M.**, Asia (on furlough). Pray that the Lord would open doors for their return. / Yearlong intern **JEREMY (KOURTNEY) BRANDENBERG** at Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA.

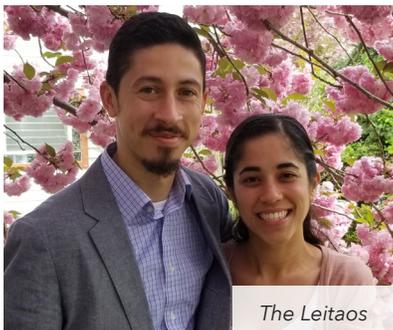
**12** Associates **P. F.** and **M. S.**, Asia. Pray that the Lord would bless and protect their English classes this winter. / **BOB JONES**, interim administrator for the Committee on Coordination.

**13** **CHURCH PLANTER TRAINING CONFERENCE**, St. Augustine, FL, Jan. 13-17. Pray for safe travel, encouraging fellowship, and growth in wisdom and zeal. / Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**.

**14** **MICHAEL & SAMANTHA SEUFERT**, St. Paul, MN. Ask the Lord to bless this new season in the life of Mission OPC. / Yearlong intern **BRENDAN WESTERFIELD** at Redeemer OPC in Beaver Creek, OH.

**15** Yearlong intern **DAVID (JOELLE) CARNES** at Lake Sherwood OPC in Orlando, FL. / Pray for the labors of Foreign Missions general secretary **MARK BUBE** and associate general secretary **DOUGLAS CLAWSON**.

# JANUARY



The Leitaos

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**21** Pray for tentmaking missionary **TINA DEJONG**, Nakaale, Uganda, (on furlough) as she visits friends in Asia. / Pray for the **COMMITTEE ON MINISTERIAL CARE** during the search for a new director.

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**22** **GREGORY & GINGER O'BRIEN**, Downingtown, PA. Pray for neighbors and friends of Christ Church to attend a new Bible study and be drawn to Christ. / Home Missions administrative assistant **KATIE STUMPF**.

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**23** Missionary associates **DR. JIM & JENNY KNOX**, Mbale, Uganda. / Yearlong interns **AARON (JACQUELINE) MIZE** at Trinity OPC in Easton, PA, and **ADAM (NOELLE) WELLS** at Lakeview OPC in Rockport, ME.

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**24** Pray for missionary associate **JOANNA GROVE**, Mbale, Uganda, as she resumes work at the Reformation Book Room. / Pray for **DAVID (JANE) CRUM**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California.

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**25** Pray for **CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda, as they return to the field. / **RON & CAROL BEABOUT**, Mifflintown, PA. Pray for the continued development in the ministry of Grace and Truth Presbyterian Church.

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**26** Pray for **DANNY OLINGER**, Christian Education general secretary, as he visits seminaries and interviews applicants for the internship program. / **LARRY & KALYNN OLDAKER**, Huron/Sandusky, OH. Pray that God would deepen the unity, commitment, and witness of Firelands Grace Fellowship.

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The Robbins family

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**27** Pray for **DAVID & RASHEL ROBBINS** and associate missionaries **JAMES & ESTHER FOLKERTS**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they begin ministry together. / Pray for those contemplating **SHORT-TERM MISSIONS** this summer.

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**28** **MELISA MCGINNIS**, controller, and **CHARLENE TIPTON**, database coordinator. / Pray for **DR. FLIP & ANNELOES BAARDMAN**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they complete their time of service in Uganda.

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**29** Pray for **MIKE (ELIZABETH) DIERCKS**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Ohio. / Pray for chaplain **JEFFREY (JENNIFER) SHAMESS**, US Army, as he goes through Ranger training.

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**30** Associate missionaries **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK** and **LEAH HOPP**, and **MARK & CARLA VAN ESSEDELFT**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for unity as the team transitions. / **DIANE OLINGER**, editorial assistant for *New Horizons*.

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**31** Missionary associates **JOSHUA MARCOUX** and **ANGELA VOSKUIL**, Nakaale, Uganda. / **KEVIN & RACHEL MEDCALF**, Cumming, GA. Pray for Providence Presbyterian Church as they take the first step towards organization.

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**16** Yearlong intern **DERRICK (NICOLE) LEITAO** at Presbyterian Church of Cape Cod in West Barnstable, MA. / Foreign Missions administrative assistant **TIN LING LEE** and secretary **SHENISE MEDINA**.

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**17** **BRAD & CINNAMON PEPP**, Dayton, OH. Pray that God would grant fruitfulness to First Street Reformed Fellowship's outreach and evangelism efforts. / **MARK STUMPF**, OPC Loan Fund manager.

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**18** Affiliated missionaries **CRAIG & REE COULBOURNE** and **LINDA KARNER**, Japan. Pray for relationship-building through recent outreach events. / **JUEON KIM**, church-planting intern at Christ the King in Naples, FL.

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**19** Pray for **RETIRED MISSIONARIES** Cal & Edie Cummings, Brian & Dorothy Wingard, Greet Rietkerk, and Young & Mary Lou Son. / **ANNELISA STUDLEY**, office manager.

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**20** **MATTHEW & LOIS COTTA**, Pasadena, CA. Pray that Pasadena Presbyterian would seek first God's kingdom and righteousness. / Pray for **LACY (DEBBIE) ANDREWS**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast.

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# NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

## PASSING THE BATON IN SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO

*Kathy Erickson and Dennis Fullalove*

On Friday, March 31, 1967, Carl E. Erickson was ordained to the gospel ministry. Fifty years later, to the day, Erickson celebrated not only the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination but also his retirement from fifty years of pastoring New Covenant OPC in South San Francisco, California. Current and former members and friends gathered to pay tribute to Erickson's faithful ministry to the saints.

Erickson also served in the Presbytery of Northern California and Nevada in several capacities: as chairman of the Credentials Committee for fifteen years, as dean of Family Conference for twenty-five years, and as moderator for one year. He also served on the Christian Education Committee of the presbytery.

On Friday, November 1, 2019, Erickson was the first to extend the right hand of fellowship and to "pass the baton" to Michael Grasso, who was ordained and installed that evening. New Covenant had a full house as many from the churches of the presbytery joined to witness and to thank God for bringing Grasso to shepherd the saints at New Covenant.

After a sermon by Dr. Ryan M. McGraw from the Presbytery of the Southeast, twenty-three ministers and ruling elders laid hands on Grasso. Ruling Elder Dennis J. Fullalove gave the ordination prayer and the moderator, J. Glenn Ferrell, declared Grasso ordained to the gospel ministry. Calvin R. Goligher, the pastor of First OPC, Sunnyvale, gave the charge to Grasso. Ferrell gave the charge to the congregation.

The newly ordained Rev. Michael F. Grasso closed the service with the benediction. It was a joyful night blessed by our awesome God.



At the November 1 ordination and installation at New Covenant OPC in South San Francisco, Kathy and Carl Erickson (left) and Michael and Erika Grasso (right)

## NORTHERN CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA WOMEN'S RETREAT

*Joanne Goligher*

On October 27, 2019, approximately eighty women from the churches of Northern California and Nevada gathered in Pleasanton, California, for the forty-first annual presbytery women's retreat. The featured speakers were Dr. David Murray, professor of Old Testament and practical theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, and his wife, Dr. Shona Murray. The theme of the confer-

ence was based on the Murrays' recent book, *Refresh: Embracing a Grace-Paced Life in a World of Endless Demands*. Over three sessions, the ladies learned about how to identify depression and burnout, how to rest their lives to live a grace-paced life, and how to recognize that their identity is in Christ. The women enjoyed a day of fellowship together, making new friends and catching up with old ones. We pray that this year's topic and speakers are used to bless the women of the presbytery and help us to live our lives in a way that glorifies God.



The Northern California and Nevada Women's Retreat, which featured speakers Shona and David Murray

## UPDATE

### CHURCHES

- The Presbytery of the Southeast removed **Trinity Reformed OPC** in Wilmington, NC, from its roles on October 18, following a congregational vote to leave the denomination.
- **Arco OPC** in Arco, ID, was dissolved and its last service was held on October 27.
- On November 17, **Anaheim Hills Presbyterian** in Anaheim Hills, CA, was organized as a particular congregation.

### MINISTERS

- On October 18, the Presbytery of Ohio received **Carl R. Trueman** upon transfer from the Presbytery of Philadelphia.
- On October 18, the Presbytery of the Southeast removed **Frederick F. Hofland** from its role of ministers after Mr. Hofland renounced the jurisdiction of the OPC.
- **Kerry W. “Pete” Hurst**, a retired minister previously serving in the PCA, was received into the Presbytery of the Southeast on October 18.
- **Richard A. Miller**, previously the pastor of Arco OPC, retired on October 28.
- On October 30, the Presbytery of the Southwest erased from its role and dissolved the pastoral relationship of **Jason C. Kirklin**, who formerly served as evangelist to the Trinity Reformed mission work in Waco, TX.
- On October 31, at the request of **Tim W. Young**, the Presbytery of Philadelphia dissolved his pastoral relationship with Living Hope OPC in Allentown, PA, upon his retirement, after serving that church for twenty-nine years.
- **Bradney Lopez** was and installed as an evangelist of the Presbytery of New Jersey on November 2 to serve as organizing pastor of Iglesia Presbiteriana Sola Escritura, Arroyo, PR.
- **Martin Emmrich**, previously the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian in Corvallis,



At the November 8 installation of Benjamin Ward as associate pastor of Covenant OPC, Grove City, PA: (back row) Stephen Lauer, Geoff Willour, Karl Hubenthal, Jonathan Hutchison, Paul Tavares, Mark Graham, (front row) Shawn Ritenour, Jeremy Jones, Joel Fick, Ben Ward, Eric Watkins, Jim Berry, Don Duff, Carl Trueman

OR, was installed as the pastor of Calvary OPC in La Mirada, CA, on November 3.

- On November 8, **Andrew M. Farr** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of First Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Portland, Oregon.
- On November 8, **Benjamin M. Ward** was ordained and installed as associate pastor of Covenant OPC in Grove City, PA.
- On November 8, **Adam A. York**, formerly the pastor of Providence OPC in Kingwood (Houston North), TX, was installed as pastor of Hope Presbyterian in Grayslake, IL.
- On November 17, **Christopher D. Hartshorn**, formerly the organizing pastor, was installed as pastor of Anaheim Hills Presbyterian in Anaheim Hills, CA.
- On November 22, **Anthony C. Phelps**, formerly a URCNA minister, was installed as pastor of Living Hope OPC in Allentown, PA.
- On December 6, **A. Craig Troxel** was installed as Teacher of the Word by the Presbytery of Southern California. Troxel serves as professor of practical theology at Westminster Seminary California.

### MILESTONES

- **Daniel L. Korzep** died on November 13. He was previously the pastor of Merri-mack Valley OPC in North Andover,

MA, and several PCA congregations, including Harvest Church in Lincolnton, NC, at the time of his death.

## REVIEWS

*The Whole Counsel of God, vol. 2: The Full Revelation of God*, by **Richard C. Gamble**. P&R, 2018. Hardcover, 1,144 pages, \$40.50 (Amazon). Reviewed by **OP pastor Everett A. Henes**.

This is the massive second volume of a planned three-volume work by Dr. Richard C. Gamble. The first volume worked through prolegomena and the Old Testament. Volume 2 picks right up with a look at God’s revelation in the New Testament age, weaving together biblical, historical, systematic, and practical theologies. Here there is a New Testament introduction, which puts the authors and books in their historical settings. This section also includes a chapter on the intertestamental period, as well as an explanation of methodology. Gamble provides an orthodox and accessible statement of the Reformed view of Scripture. Throughout the main body of the work there is not a lot of argument or interaction with opposing views. Footnotes, which are legion, are where the reader would look for such interactions.

Parts 2 through 5 are united under “God’s Mighty Acts” as the work moves through the doctrines of God, Jesus Christ, the atonement for sinners, union



Faith Orthodox Presbyterian Women  
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## women's retreat

March 20-21  
Mystery of Godliness  
Speaker Tracey Taylor

Cape May at La Mer Beachfront Inn

Contact Dawn Hitchner  
(faithopsecretary@gmail.com) to  
register or Gayle Ellis (856 521-0199)  
for more information

with Christ, and the church. Part 5 is a biblical “Philosophy of Life” that includes an explanation and defense of the Van Tilian presuppositional apologetic.

Given the scope of the work, there is the necessary bird’s-eye view of theology. But, what many will find useful is that the author often swoops down to exegete important Scripture passages. This is probably the strongest and most endearing aspect of the work. For instance, under the discussion of the extent of Christ’s atonement there is an analysis of John 3:16. Consideration of union with Christ leads to a lengthy discussion of Romans 6–7, complete with a wrestling through the question of whether Romans 7 is unregenerate or regenerate Paul. Familiar passages are examined (Eph. 2:1–10) as well as not so familiar ones (Revelation).

The work is written accessibly, and includes a list of key terms and study questions at the end of each chapter, making it useful for a theological discussion group or Sunday school class.

No theology is written without certain presuppositions, and Gamble’s work is no exception. He teaches at Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh, which is the denominational seminary of the RPCNA. This comes through, clearly,

in his discussions of Christ’s mediatorial kingship and of song in worship. After discussion of Christ’s role as king, and Paul’s words in Romans 13, Gamble asserts, “Any state that has not sworn allegiance to Christ is immoral” (520). Elsewhere he acknowledges the tension that exists in the Christian life as we live in the “already but not-yet” as regards Christ’s fully consummated kingdom.

When it comes to song in worship, Gamble argues that singing “as an Old Testament type” is fulfilled in Christ, along with the rest of the ceremonial laws and trappings associated with tabernacle and temple worship, such as musical instruments (829). Singing is then reinstated, in the New Testament, by apostolic command but without instrumentation. The songs commanded, as Gamble explains it, are the psalms and only the psalms. With these two particular views known in advance, OPC readers will be less surprised by the author’s conclusions.

**40 Favorite Hymns on the Christian Life: A Closer Look at their Spiritual and Poetic Meaning, by Leland Ryken. P&R, 2019. Hardcover, 160 pages, \$12.00. Reviewed by OP pastor Stephen A. Pribble.**

Christians treasure hymns for their devotional and doctrinal insights, but Leland Ryken’s book *40 Favorite Hymns on the Christian Life* helps the reader to appreciate hymns as *poetry*. Ryken, professor of English emeritus at Wheaton College and author of dozens of books, including *How to Read the Bible as Literature*, *The Soul in Paraphrase*, and a favorite of mine, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were*, observes that “every hymn is a poem first, and only later becomes a hymn” (11). Ryken is a knowledgeable guide to help fellow Christians view hymns as poetry, and thus better understand their structure, tone, verbal images, rhetorical and literary techniques, figures of speech, and meaning.

The Apostle Paul declared, “I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the *understanding* also” (1 Cor. 14:15 KJV, emphasis added). Understanding the meaning of a hymn enables the worshiper to communicate that understanding to others, as the congregation fulfills its divinely-ordained role of “teaching and admonishing one another” (Col. 3:16).

Ryken has selected forty favorite hymns from the twelfth to the twenty-first centuries. All but one (“In Christ Alone”) appear in the revised *Trinity Hymnal* (1990), so many of these will be familiar to Orthodox Presbyterians (the new *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* has 35). Each entry includes the hymn text, commentary, and a Bible passage to encourage devotional reflection. Some entries tell the story of the hymn’s origin, but the emphasis is on the poetry itself. Here are some nuggets; there are many more.

“Holy, Holy, Holy” “belongs to a very elite circle of hymns that are included in nearly every English-language hymnbook.” I personally have sung this hymn for nearly seventy years and never noticed that “there is a single rhyming sound (the long *e*) for the entire poem”—fascinating!

Ryken tells us that “Amazing Grace” is “the signature hymn of the English-speaking world,” although the version he shares does not have the words “dissolve like snow” and “refuse to shine” that appear in Newton’s original (23). This hymn “roots us in the fallen earthly order but promises us the best that can be

## Position Available

**Pastor:** Calvary OPC in Volga, SD, is seeking a pastor for a small congregation. Our church is located near South Dakota State University, giving us growth opportunities. Candidate should have a zeal for church growth and be willing to share the Reformed faith both in daily life and from the pulpit. Due to the church’s size, this would probably be a bivocational calling unless the candidate has other means of support. Inquiries should be addressed to the pastoral search committee at [jereshomeinspection@hotmail.com](mailto:jereshomeinspection@hotmail.com) or by phone, 605-690-7315.

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS *Continued*

imagined.” It “takes us from the moment of conversion to eternity in heaven.”

Ryken helpfully ties the imagery of “Like a River Glorious” with scriptural imagery: “the river whose streams make glad the city of God” (Ps. 46), “the still waters of Psalm 23:2,” and “the river that flows from the throne of God” (Rev. 22).

With regard to the popular “In Christ Alone,” Ryken writes that “the modern spirit of the poem is seen in its fluid arrangement.”

The book is beautifully designed, typeset, and edited. A glossary of literary terms is included. I found it especially helpful in trying to understand “vows of renunciation,” which are mentioned twice. The book could be improved by the addition of a Scripture index. Recommended.

***Karl Rahner*, by Camden M. Bucey. P&R, 2019. Paperback, 184 pages, \$11.50. Reviewed by OP minister Danny E. Olinger.**

It is not hyperbole to equate the theological influence of Jesuit scholar Karl Rahner (1904–84) upon post-Vatican II (1962–65) Roman Catholicism with the influence of John Calvin upon the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition that followed the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Friend and foe of Rome alike acknowledge that Rahner’s theological methodology and conclusions, which came to be known as a theology of Trinitarian personality, stood central to Rome’s *aggiornamento* (updating).

Knowing Rahner’s importance, many

Protestants have picked up one of Rahner’s publications (which number 1,651, according to the Karl Rahner Society) only to find themselves bewildered about what he is saying. In the words of Robert Strimple, the great Reformed critic of Roman Catholicism: “Rahner is not easy to read.” Help has arrived in Camden Bucey’s excellent addition to P&R’s Great Thinkers series.

Bucey explains that Rahner’s overarching concern is to explain how God communicates himself to humanity in the modern world. For Rahner, the Infinite Majesty lovingly offers himself to us; we become human precisely in the sense that we give ourselves away to him. Consequently, the incarnation of Christ is the necessary and permanent start of reconciliation between God and man, the divinization of the world as a whole. Rahner said, “In Christ, God’s self-communication takes place basically for all men, and there is ‘hypostatic union’ precisely in so far as this unsurpassable self-communication of God ‘is there’ irrevocably in a historically tangible and self-conscious manner” (47).

But, even the short paragraph above has so much baggage. Rahner believed this reconciliation is not because man has sinned before a holy God. It is needed—and here Rahner fully adhered to Roman Catholic dogma—because God created man ontologically lacking. Christ’s hypostatic union is the conduit of ontological self-communication that heals this deficiency of essence in man. This hypostatic

union is the means for eternal communion with God even prior to the fall into sin. Forgiveness and justification do not require a judicial reckoning.

Bucey counters that Rahner misunderstands the problem and the solution. God creates man upright in his image. The problem is not that man in his essence is deficient, but that the first man, Adam, sinned as he failed to obey the command of God. The solution is not simply that God became man, but that the God-man, Jesus Christ, died on the cross to pay the price for sin and rose again from the dead for the justification of his own. God gives himself to his own in a mystical and covenantal bond that has been brought about through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in history.

The different conclusions are because of different starting points. Rahner taught that any attempt to start with God as he is revealed in Scripture is a denial of the shared experience of what it means to be human. The worldly genius of Rahner in this methodological move is that it instantly put Roman Catholic theologizing on par with other academic disciplines that had

turned to the knowing subject. But, salvation is not through the wisdom of the world. It is through that which Rahner abandons, the foolishness of the cross. And yet, Rahner is unarguably a premier theologian of the modern Roman Catholic Church. Those who believe that Rome is a safe haven should read Bucey’s book and see how radically differently the faith is understood there.

