

NEW HORIZONS

in the ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

NOVEMBER 2020

THE CHURCH RESILIENT

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION • HOME MISSIONS • FOREIGN MISSIONS

OPC THANK OFFERING 2020



CONTENTS

FEATURES

- 3** The Church Resilient
By Benjamin J. Snodgrass
- 5** *Beyond Stewardship* and Environmental
Syncretism: A Review
By Jan F. Dudd

DEPARTMENTS

- 7** Stewardship
How the Thank Offering Works
- 8** Home Missions
*David Crum Retiring as Regional
Home Missionary (plus map)*
- 12** Christian Education
*Prayer Meetings in the OPC • Favorite
Psalms and Hymns (plus map)*
- 16** Foreign Missions
*From an Interruption to New Providences
(plus map)*
- 20** Prayer Calendar
- 22** News, Views, & Reviews

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in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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On July 31, Providence in Cumming, Georgia,
was organized as a congregation of the Orthodox
Presbyterian Church. Church planter Kevin Medcalf is
front row, second from left with Providence elders Bill
Brown and Michael Harper on either side, along with
ministers and elders from the presbytery and Chris
Strevel (back row, red tie), pastor of Providence's mother
church, Covenant Presbyterian in Buford, Georgia.



THE CHURCH RESILIENT



BENJAMIN J. SNODGRASS // Allow me this opportunity to convince you that 2020 is the year to express overflowing thanks to God by your personal generosity to the Thank Offering. Why? For the hidden spiritual blessings that we received in 2020, attached to the trials we all experienced.

Despite the setbacks of 2020, each of our churches sought to revert rapidly and even cheerfully to the good work of building the kingdom. “Count it all joy,” the apostle James, by the Spirit’s inspiration, starkly and radically urged scattered believers. The key is to “count it.” We can do little to change our surroundings, but we can do much to change the way we consider them. Before his readers could discount him, James gave solid reasons for them to reinterpret their lot:

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2–4)

As the OPC rebounded this year, we rediscovered in our living the same truth explained here in writing. As we encounter trials, we become stronger. A church graced with this sort of spiritual

fortitude can be called the church resilient—a church with perseverance and spiritual toughness.

Twin-Pack Delivery

Our aim is higher than mere fortitude, although fortitude is certainly necessary. The apostle James did not write that we should hang in there, think positive, or even be happy. There is more expected of us than outliving the problems, inventing a good spin, or forcing a smile. Christ is doing a divine work in our perseverance. Only by the grace of a maturing vision can we peer through our trials to the other side.

For example, never before this year were most churches in America prevented from weekly worship for a dozen Sundays. Everyone was reckoning with that fact as we looked *at* the trial. But it was only as we maturely looked *through* the trial to its eventual consequences that we saw a potential for deepened steadfastness and the effect of long-lasting appreciation for

the ordinary means of grace. That further perfecting is what we deem worthy of rejoicing in, according to James.

The OPC knows good theology, but the urging of James is that we must live what we know. During this year, we cried and laughed on our Zoom calls. We grieved and sang with joy on our livestreams. We missed each other in church, and then we showed thoughtfulness and good humor. One pastor propped smiling pictures of the church’s families in empty pews for encouragement while preaching alone in a church-turned-recording-studio. We joked with others on the phone and showed good cheer while delivering groceries to the elderly.

Declaring that all is joy is not becoming mindlessly upbeat; on the contrary, possessing true joy is a work of careful reasoning. Our Savior sanctifies us by his truth and shows us the full view of our trials. This unrequested suffering is delivered like a shrink-wrapped twin-pack from Amazon.

Suffering is only one half of God's intent! Our trusted Lord has conferred upon us two things together—both a new difficulty and a new perseverance. In the design of God, it is our testing that results in, or *produces*, our steady fastness. Every new testing is delivered with a new grace—God's supply of steadfastness. God has sent us trials and character-deepening growth!

Resilient in Home Missions

The problems turned out to have a genius aftereffect for a batch of brand-new churches. Instead of waiting a full growing season to find out if a single pumpkin seed will become a pumpkin in the end, this year mission works fast-forwarded. No bringing along the worshipping newcomers with long patience and easygoing warmth and home-cooked meals. No, these quarantined newcomers found the livestream and tuned in for deeper reasons than meals and talking. The worshipers—every church planter's dream—made it clear that they desired the message, above all else! In record time, it was obvious whether or not our newest pre-church seeds were nestled into the right soil and capable of growing. Just as James pointed out to us, our mission works were forced to lunge forward, letting “steadfastness have its full effect.”

The poet Douglas Malloch (1877–1938) wrote, “Good timber does not grow with ease; / The stronger wind, the tougher trees; / The further sky, the greater length, / The more the storm, the more the strength. / By sun and cold, by rain and snow, / In trees and men, good timbers grow.” In a similar way, the more the storm, the more the strength, in our 2020 mission works.

Resilient in Foreign Missions

We can be so thankful for the determination of our missionaries to

minister in Word and deed. Mission fields, although COVID-impacted, were not entirely hampered. In God's perfect providence, each field had just the right people, positioned there at just the right time, to respond to the lockdowns with wisdom and love.



Falls Church, which Snodgrass pastors, responding to the spring 2020 COVID-19 quarantine with livestreamed services and Zoom calls

Looking forward, we can expect deeper credibility and appreciation from those members and seekers who directly benefited from the work of these OP missionaries in the fields where they serve. One missionary was geographically separated from his wife; other missionaries were restricted from travel, making them dependent on local friends to bring them food and supplies. But the virus does not get the last say. God is perfecting and completing the missionaries, their families, their missions, and the churches around the globe. Where there is a global pandemic, there is global grace as a beautifying gift. Our sovereign God has so designed it.

Resilient in Christian Education

What happens to interns during quarantine? What about seminars and conferences, teaching trips and writing projects? A menagerie of trials have met the church in lost opportunities for Christian Education ventures. In times of distress, where is the joy of the educators of the church? John Blanchard wrote, “For daily needs there is daily grace; for sudden needs, sudden grace; for overwhelming needs, overwhelming grace.” The shape and condition of the cheery outlook of mentors is recoverable, through the ongoing gifts of various grace from the risen Christ!

Resilient in Giving?

One thing is clear from this year. The church did not close. No way. Christ is building the church resilient, as he always has and as the church has often had reason to confess. Nearly four centuries ago, the writers of chapter 25 of the Westminster Confession pronounced, “Nevertheless, there shall be always a church on earth, to worship God according to his will” (WCF 25.5).

What the church does next will reveal our resolve. Now is when we equip our ministry programs to step out in the new year with their full plans. We only get to show this resilience during such a year. If the economy is booming, the watching world yawns at our increased giving. But when the economy has layers of struggles, how many eyebrows would be raised at the beauty of our Savior's steadfastness in us if we gave resiliently? Our giving this year could demonstrate our steadfastness, sacrificial commitment, historical perspective, and the hope of Christ. *That* is the type of mature giving that comes from the church resilient. □

The author is pastor of Falls Church—an OPC Family in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin.

BEYOND STEWARDSHIP AND ENVIRONMENTAL SYNCRETISM: A REVIEW



JAN F. DUDT // Since Lynn White's 1967 essay "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," Christians have often been on the defensive regarding their approach to the environment. Admittedly, Christians, including evangelicals, have often lagged behind other voices in the culture that sounded the alarm over the extent

of environmental degradation that our modern industrial society has spawned even as economic progress and general human health have increased.

There were a number of notable attempts to correct and encourage Christian thinking on environmental matters. Francis Schaeffer's *Pollution and the Death of Man* (1970) was a clarion call in the wake of the first Earth Day. He challenged Christians to take the lead in creation care as a result of the biblical mandate to have dominion and care for the earth. As environmental awareness rose in Christian circles through the 1970s, the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship sponsored research and several books, culminating in the development of the Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies.

Beyond Stewardship: New Approaches to Creation Care (edited by David P. Warners and Matthew K. Heun, Calvin College Press, 2019), the latest effort from the Calvin Center, attempts to take a matured environmental approach that reflects the development of thinking over the last few decades.

Of the twenty-two contributors to the book, nineteen are associated with Calvin College as graduates, professors, or students.

The book draws from historical Christian perspectives on care of the creation as well as from contemporary, mainstream environmental thinking. This attempted synthesis highlights a tension for Christians. We desire to glean the best from mainstream environmentalism while also bringing true Christian salt and light to bear on the situation. In this attempt, *Beyond Stewardship* at times departs significantly from sound Christian doctrine.

Dominion versus Kinship

In the preface, the authors echo Schaeffer from decades ago with the questions, "Why isn't the broader Christian church leading the way?" and "Why haven't Christians been more engaged in creation care activities?" The introduction's author critiques the traditional environmental term "stewardship" as an unhelpful invention of the earlier twentieth century, as never being found in

Scripture, and as being too anthropocentric and consumption-oriented to be helpful. The authors accurately note that human sinfulness is an extreme encumbrance to realizing the divinely assigned creation mandate to care for the Garden, to be fruitful and multiply, and to subdue the earth. However, after the introduction, the biblical term "dominion" is never mentioned in the book, due to perceptions that abuses of human dominion have rendered the term unhelpful. The stated objective of the book is that the conception of humans as stewards should be replaced with the conception of humans in kinship with the rest of creation. Dominion and the idea of improving creation (subduing the earth) are seen as hopelessly limited by human finitude and sin.

Here they run off the biblical rails. Our finitude was part of human identity at the time the creation mandate was given and is not to be considered an encumbrance, but rather part of the created order. Replacing earlier technologies need not be solely the result of sin. Improvements and iteration would

conceivably have been part of expanding human dominion even if the Fall had not occurred.

The call for us to lament over human impacts that irreparably harm God's good creation is appropriate. However, the call to embrace kinship with the rest of creation apart from a biblical understanding of human dominion, flourishing, and development as a delight to God is not convincing. For example, the claim in chapter 3 that "Scripture does not call us to use and manage creation, rather it calls us to intimate kinship with it," is weak. Scripture clearly puts humanity in a different category than the rest of creation.

When considering the sacraments, the author of chapter 3 indicates that "we can give thanks to the sources" of the elements "for their participation in the holy moment." This idea, unhinged from human exceptionalism as *imago Dei*, strikes frightfully close to animism or pantheism, neither of which have especially good records of environmental stewardship. The author of the chapter is correct in pointing out that radical protection and preservation is part of the human calling, but he fails to acknowledge that human creative development that expands the qualities of the Garden to make God's good creation better is part of that.

Chapter 4's author notes that earth's supportiveness is not automatic, and that life has become more precarious because recent human activities have disrupted trustworthy planetary conditions. However, this overlooks the idea that human dominion has made human life much less precarious than in former times. Even the animals and plants under our charge often find life much less precarious than without it. Sin abounds, to be sure. However, a farm, as an expression of human dominion, demonstrates that cows, cats, dogs, and chickens can live in peace.

The authors of chapters 5 and 6 do a fine job of reminding us of humanity's profound and inescapable connectivity

to and dependence on the rest of creation, down to the microbes that beneficially inhabit our bodies. The authors clearly expound on the incarnation of Christ, who, as they claim, undoubtedly

housed microorganisms as humans always have. They argue that overemphasis of human importance has led many to a view of stewardship that is too anthropocentric. However, the call to retire the term "stewardship" in favor of "earthkeeping" may miss the point. Abuses of a good term may require revisiting true biblical definitions, but merely switching terms without such definitional care would be useless.

The authors of chapters 8 and 9 challenge us to consider our kinship with other animals as exemplified by Adam's naming of the creatures. Chapter 8's author suggests that God is more concerned about the workload of caring for the garden than about Adam being alone. While one can appreciate the desire to see animals as created beings, the emphasis is hard to justify considering the biblical rejoinder, "there was not found a helper fit for him" (Gen. 2:20). Chapter 9 examines the transformation of a city girl who finds herself on a relative's farm. She is struck by the farm family's utilitarian approach to the well-cared-for livestock, but in the end, she desires to see them not as resources for humans but as joint members of the created order. In response, she becomes vegan. The implication that eating less meat is the higher moral ground is less informed by a biblical perspective than by the modern sentimental environmental zeitgeist.

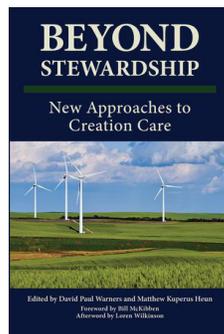
How to Best Address the Environmental Crisis?

The remaining chapters make a better case for a biblical perspective as modern society attempts to address modern environmental concerns. The author of chapter 10 shows how some societies overestimate their ability to manage ecosystems, causing Dust-Bowl-like destruction, while others have been able

to take a more restorative or sustainable approach. The author appreciates John Wesley Powell's desire to understand the interdependent relationship between humans and nonhuman systems that requires patience, humility, and the acceptance of limits. This attitude is much preferable to the hubris of a "we know best" approach to stewardship. Chapter 11 deals with "environmental racism," perhaps better stated as economic elitism, that doesn't take the needs of less advantaged communities into proper consideration. Hence, intercity communities near industrial sites or poor rural communities often suffer degradation and health concerns that would not be tolerated in more privileged communities. Chapter 13 somewhat rehabilitates the concept of stewardship by stressing that humans are not a weed species that the world could do without, but part of the created order who can restore and improve God's creation. However, developing a mindset of commitment to place, à la Wendell Berry, is difficult in our transient, mobile society. Perhaps such a mindset could be developed with a heightened sense of understanding our world as a gift, laden with inherent value as described in chapter 14.

Beyond Stewardship has many challenging ideas that can help address the modern environmental crisis. However, there is a mix of true Christian thinking and a modern environmentalism that smacks of sentimentalism, idealism, and unhealthy preservationism. The biblical ideas of filling the earth with humans (Gen. 2) to the point of swarming (Gen. 9), or filling Judea with returned diaspora until there is no room for them (Zech. 10:10) is lost on those who either do not understand what it means to be *imago Dei* or those who choose to de-emphasize it. Christians always must fight the temptation to be syncretistic with their greater culture. This is as true for us today as in times past. When we read *Beyond Stewardship*, we must ask: who is influencing whom? □

The author is professor of biology at Grove City College and elder at Covenant OPC in Grove City, Pennsylvania.



HOW THE THANK OFFERING WORKS

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

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

How Does the Thank Offering Work?

Thank Offering promotional packages are sent to OPC churches in early October. They include the Thank Offering poster, three sets of bulletin inserts, and remittance envelopes. PDF versions of the inserts will be sent to all churches for posting on websites and distributing by email. Additional print material can be obtained from Annelisa Studley at the OPC administrative offices (215-935-1024 or annelisa.studley@opc.org).

The bulletin inserts can be distributed on consecutive Lord's Days prior to the collection of the Thank Offering. We suggest using them from November 1–15, with a collection being taken up on November 22. Some churches collect the Thank Offering on more than one day or at a special service.

Checks collected in local churches should be made out to those churches and designated for the Thank Offering in the memo line. Using the envelopes included in this issue of *New Horizons*, you may mail in a check made out to "The Orthodox Presbyterian Church" with "Thank Offering" in the memo.

Giving to Worldwide Outreach fell severely in the summer months as families and churches felt the economic impact of COVID-19, but there has been a gracious rebound in giving so far this fall. Still, to make up the nearly \$200,000 deficit (see chart below), a strong Thank Offering is needed, along with continued regular giving, to meet our commitment to support the ministries of Worldwide Outreach.

Requests for 2021

Since this year's general assembly was postponed until 2021 due to the pandemic, the financial requests in 2021 remain the same as those for 2020. Contributions are calculated per communicant member but are generally made through congregations:

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

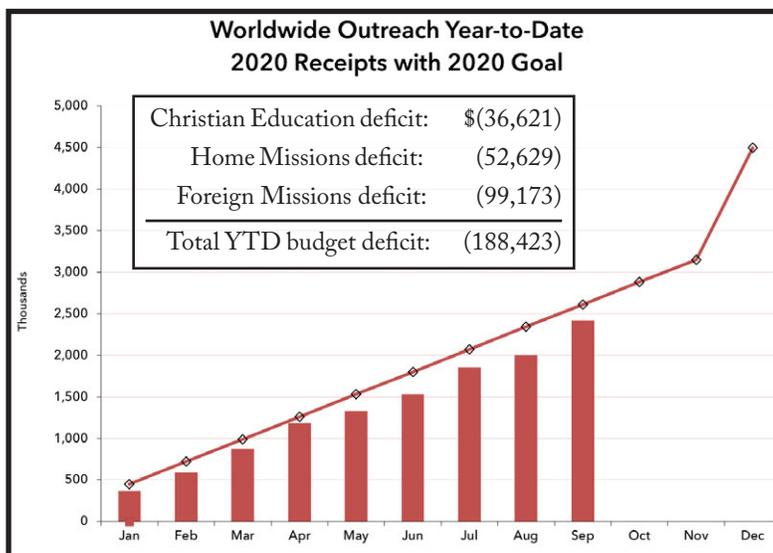
GA Operation Fund: Churches are requested to give \$22 per communicant member.

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

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

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

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



DAVID CRUM RETIRING AS REGIONAL HOME MISSIONARY

// JUDITH M. DINSMORE



Dave Crum, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California, has been a member of the presbytery since his ordination in 1983.

David Crum is retiring in summer 2021 after twelve years as regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California. “The highlights of my time are what we would hope they would be: the ceremonial aspects of the mission work,” Crum reflected.

Major milestones for a new church are marked by a service. For mission works, it’s a particularization service. For churches joining the OPC, it’s called a receiving service. Since Crum was installed in 2009, he has been able to participate in the particularization services of three mission works—in Tucson, Arizona, and in Capistrano Beach, and Anaheim Hills, California—and two receiving services—in Apache Junction, Arizona, and in El Cajon, California. He was also excited to see two more works particularize since 2009, one in Whittier, California, and the other in Concho Valley, Arizona.

Currently, Crum is working with four more mission works: in Pasadena, Corona, and Thousand Oaks, all in California, and Yuma, Arizona. Originally, he planned to retire at the end of this year, but he delayed his plans due to the uncertainty COVID-19 has brought to those four new works.



David and Jane Crum at Crum’s installation as RHM in 2009

Wholehearted Leadership

A regional home missionary serves the presbytery by wearing many hats. He usually sits on several sessions at one time and fills roles from building manager to pulpit supply. He might evangelize new areas, train church leaders, and pastor families through crisis.

Although it’s “unspeakably delightful” to be a part of the private moments that make up a church—a sinner repenting, a family joining, a couple baptizing a longed-for child—Crum

has thrown himself into the bigger-picture work of a regional home missionary. “Kingdom work and church planting is what drives me,” he said.

“Dave leads with his whole self,” is how Christopher Chelpka put it. Pastor of Covenant OPC in Tucson, Chelpka came in as organizing pastor in 2011 when Covenant was still a mission work. He worked closely with Crum until the church’s organization.

“When Dave is with you, he is physically, mentally, and emotionally present. And he’s not pretending to do these things—he really gives you himself. So whether he’s on the baseball field or the mission field, Dave is passionate and sincere. That’s because he believes those he serves are not projects or tasks, but people made in the image of God who need love, respect, and Jesus,” Chelpka wrote in an email.

Andrew Canavan, church planter in Corona, California, agrees, both about the baseball field—“He is a die-hard San Diego Padres fan”—and the mission field. “He gives people his undivided attention,” Canavan observed. “That makes them open up and gives him opportunities to share Christ. I’ve seen him in counseling situations, leading worship and preaching, in session meetings, and on the floor of presbytery. In every context, Dave cares for others and is concerned that they know the comfort of God’s Word and the love of Christ.”

Road to the Cross

Crum learned how in his years of service in Baja California, the Mexican peninsula that stretches down from California. “Missionary work taught me to care for people,” he said. Dave and his wife, Jane, labored in Tijuana from 1983–2008 as missionaries of the presbytery.

“It also taught me that I would make mistakes, and that’s

OK, as long I learn from them” he said. At one particularly memorable worship service in Tijuana, Crum, preaching in Spanish, said that the law and the statutes are more to be desired than gold, that they are sweeter than honey and sweeter than the drippings—of the baby’s diaper. “I learned from that mistake,” Crum said. “The church laughed so spontaneously and sincerely.”

Crum learned Spanish in the first place so that he could make money. As a teen in New Jersey, he knew enough of the language from school classes that his dad, who worked for RCA Victor, came home from Manhattan one evening with a letter in Spanish and asked Crum to translate it. Crum said “sure.” His dad then asked if Crum could translate a response. “Sure,” he said again. And then something clicked. “All of a sudden, my heart went *cha-ching*, and I thought, I can make this work for me,” Crum remembered. His goals in life at that time were “all about me and making money—I was very self-centered.”

He never made it to that dream job. First, his parents got in the way: Christ brought them to himself when they were midlife, and Crum was there to witness it. “I saw my mother change,” Crum said. “She came into my bedroom at the ungodly hour of 9:30 in the morning, whipped open the curtain, and said, ‘This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.’ And I felt like, who are you?”

Then, his sister got in the way. “More than anyone else in my life, my sister brought me to Christ,” Crum said. Very few people in the church will tell you what you most need to hear. But his sister did. He was a junior at Moravian College when he was converted, so he hitchhiked back home to tell his parents. “My dad and I had a beautiful conversation that morning,” Crum remembered. “But my mother ran out of the kitchen, ran to the phone on the wall, and started calling all the people in the OPC who had prayed for me for six years.”

Finally, Christ himself got in the way of Crum’s dream job. After his conversion, Crum can pinpoint the day—he was reading on a train—when he suddenly asked God why he had learned Spanish at all. “I realized that it had nothing to do with a big paycheck. It had everything to do with the Lord.”

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date news and prayer requests, receive our newsletter by emailing HomeMissionsToday@opc.org. New editions: November 11 & 25.

His wife, Jane, had wanted to be a missionary since she was sixteen. While Dave attended seminary in Philadelphia, the Crums found a home at New Life Presbyterian, then in the OPC. One of the pastors was their liaison to the Presbytery of Southern California, who wanted to call a missionary to Mexico.

Speaking from Experience

As someone who has now served for decades in one presbytery, Crum has learned a few things about ministry and, specifically, ministry in the OPC. Having been the recipient of some bad advice himself as a young minister—“keep your mouth shut for five years,” he was told—Crum is cautious about playing the role of expert. One piece of advice he received in his premarital counseling, however, has stuck with him through the years: be hard on yourself, and be easy on others.

“I’ve thought about that a lot, and the alternatives are all recipes for failure and disaster,” Crum said. “If you’re easy on yourself and easy on others, nothing is going to happen in your ministry. If you’re easy on yourself and hard on others, you’re being hypocritical. If you’re hard on yourself and you’re hard on others—and this is where ministers fail—you are bullying your sheep and you might not even know it.” That works well for the military, Crum explained. But “although the church is the church militant, it is not the military.”

He practices what he preaches. “Dave knows when to comfort and when to challenge, and he does both graciously. It’s clear to others that Dave has first applied that comfort or that challenge from Scripture to himself,” Canavan reflected.

One mundane way Crum is “hard” on himself is simply in teaching himself to learn people’s names. “I’ve heard many young men going into ministry who say, ‘I’m just not good with names.’ Dude, if you can learn Greek, you can learn people’s names,” Crum laughed. Being able to greet someone by name when you see them can be hugely meaningful. “On our fridge right now are the names of everyone on our street that we have met and then there’s a little clue next to it, like ‘brown dog,’” he said. It’s yet another way to be caring in the name of Christ.

Crum is not sure what lies ahead after retirement. More time with grandkids, most likely. But whatever it is, Dave and Jane will continue resting in another well-learned lesson through their years as missionaries, both in Mexico and California: *Jehovah jireh*, “God will provide.”

The author is managing editor of New Horizons.



Dave and Jane Crum with children Lauren and Michael Crum, Rachel and Adrian Crum, and Aijalon and Jana Church (Adrian and Aijalon are both OP pastors), plus grandchildren

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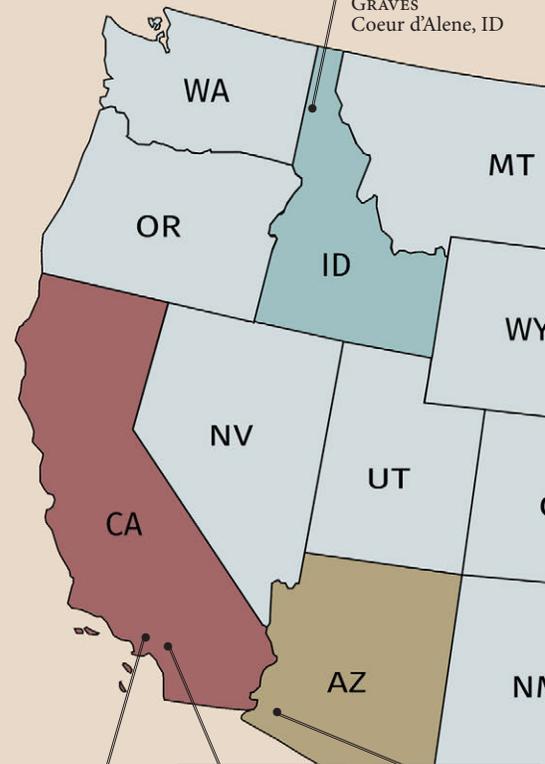
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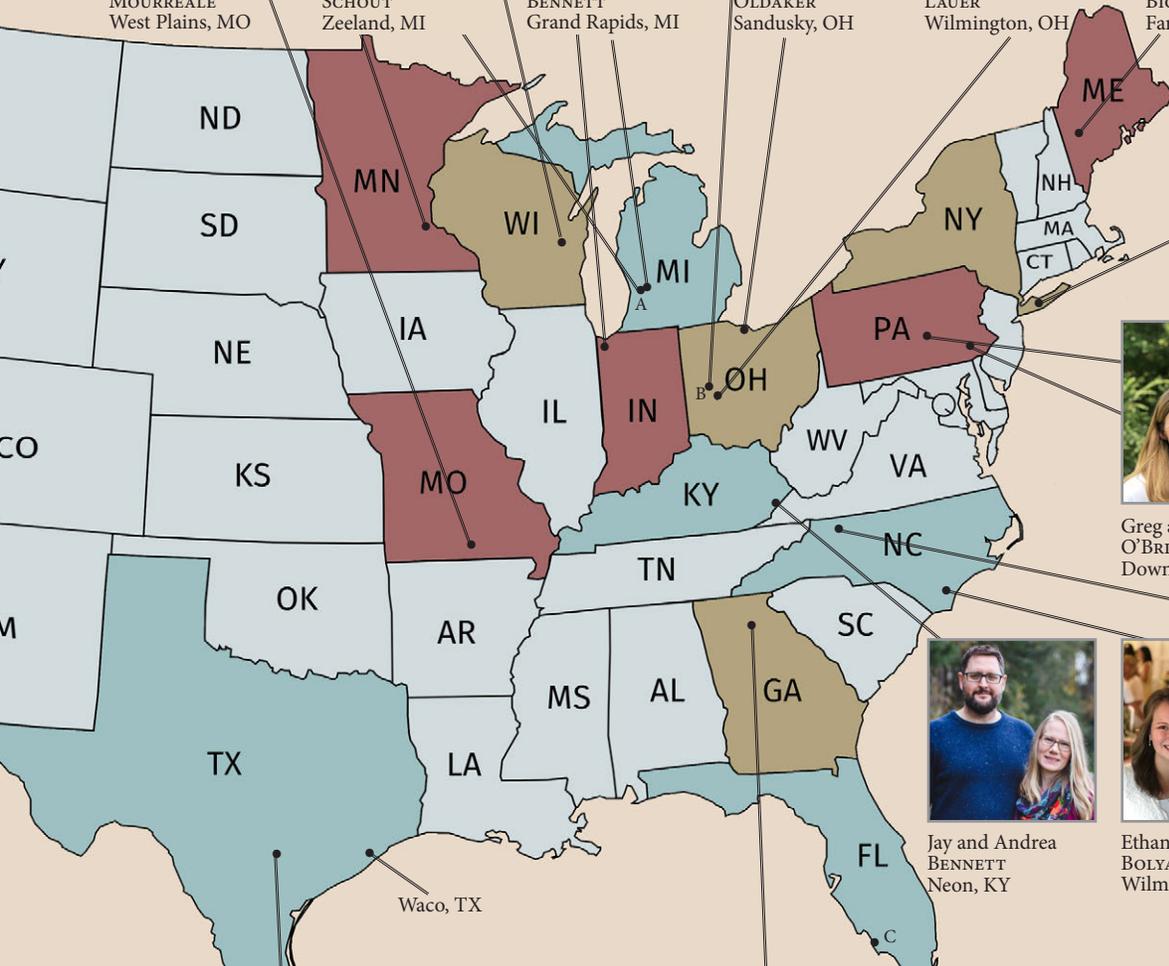
Larry and Kalynn OLDAKER
Sandusky, OH



Stephen and Felicia LAUER
Wilmington, OH



Micah and Eileen BICKFORD
Farmington, ME



William and Margaret SHISHKO
Deer Park, NY



Greg and Ginger O'BRIEN
Downingtown, PA



Ron and Carol BEABOUT
Mifflintown, PA



Jay and Andrea BENNETT
Neon, KY



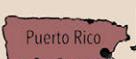
Ethan and Catherine BOLYARD
Wilmington, NC



Calvin and Connie KELLER
Winston-Salem, NC



Carl and Stacey MILLER
New Braunfels, TX



Bradney and Eileen LOPEZ
Arroyo, PR



Kevin and Rachel MEDCALF
Cumming, GA



Bill and Denise WELZIEN
Key West, FL

PRAYER MEETINGS IN THE OPC

// AYRIAN J. YASAR



Members of New Life in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, meeting for prayer

The battle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman has been ongoing since man's Fall. There are those who follow the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2), and those who "call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen. 4:26). What does it look like for the church to call upon the name of the Lord? At one time, Wednesday night prayer meetings were common. How is the church praying today? In particular, what is the practice of the OPC in relation to midweek prayer meetings and incorporating prayer in the life of the church?

The Practice of Prayer

Pastor William Watson of Holy Trinity Presbyterian in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, explained that they do have a traditional midweek prayer meeting in the homes of members. "We meet together for a time of Scripture reading with a brief instruction/comment time, and then we seek the Lord in prayer for forty-five minutes to an hour," he said. Faith OPC in Lincoln, Nebraska, pastored by LeRoy Miller, spends around forty-five minutes in Bible study followed by forty-five minutes or more in prayer. Both Holy Trinity and Faith OPC emphasize prayer as a large and central feature of their Wednesday evening meetings.

More common, however, is a time of prayer that follows or accompanies some kind of study. Hank Belfield, pastor of Providence Presbyterian in Chilhowie, Virginia, hosts a Wednesday night small-group Bible study that is followed by a prayer meeting in his home. An elder in the same congregation hosts another Tuesday night study followed by prayer and fellowship. Immanuel OPC in Andover, Minnesota, pastored by James Hoekstra, has been practicing a weekly men's prayer meeting for the last four years.

Other churches take prayer requests during the morning congregational prayer time or have an extended prayer time during the evening service. Trinity Presbyterian in Newberg, Oregon, takes requests from adults and children before the

congregational prayer time in the morning. Pastor John Mahaffy believes this teaches the covenant children about prayer. Providence in Mifflinburg, Pennsylvania, pastored by Christopher Post, also takes requests for prayer, but during their evening service. New Life in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, has a similar practice during evening worship, "and then the worshipers, in the priesthood of all believers, pray for those matters while an elder or pastor oversees and concludes the prayer," said pastor Paul Browne.

Aids for Prayer

In order to encourage the saints in prayer, churches make use of means like bulletins, websites, the prayer calendar in *New Horizons*, and church email lists.

Providence OPC creates a specific bulletin page of prayer requests that includes both their own church family and the larger church body. "We include a foreign missionary of the month and two entries from the 'Home Missions Today' sheet. Each week we also include a family from our congregation, a sister congregation from our presbytery, and another denomination with whom we have fraternal relations," explained Post.

New Life periodically passes out prayer cards that members fill out with the names of unsaved family or friends. A few of these cards are then distributed regularly during the Sunday evening service for prayer. Sometimes the fellowship meal is followed by a brief time of evangelistic prayer.

Challenges

Yet, at the churches surveyed for this article, attendance at midweek meetings and evening services with extended prayer time is just a fraction of the church community. What is it that makes gathering for prayer such a challenge?

Distance from the church building, family busyness, and work demands all seem to be factors. Because of this, a sensitivity to time management is important. "We are very careful to not go over an hour in our men's prayer meeting since

Saturday is a ‘catch-all day’ for the men,” Hoekstra said. “Also, we try to stress family and private worship and using those times for prayer as well.” In the church’s membership class, Hoekstra goes over the Shorter Catechism questions on the Lord’s Prayer to encourage using it as an outline for family and personal worship.

This year, COVID-19 restrictions affected church prayer meetings like they affected just about every other part of church life. Many churches switched to Zoom instead of in-person, which had some unexpected benefits. More people were able to attend Trinity’s Bible study and prayer time via Zoom than in person before COVID. And it increased sympathy: “The virus has underlined for us the importance of meeting the needs of those whose health, age, and distance had made attendance challenging before the virus impacted our lives,” Mahaffy said.

“I imagine we will continue Zoom as an option even after we are able to do small groups for Bible study,” Hoekstra said. More men attended the men’s virtual prayer meeting via Zoom, and more women participated and stayed with the women’s study via Slack: “We had trouble previously getting ladies to commit to regular meetings for a study. This format is new and seems to be going well.”

Importance

Despite the challenges, praying together is important. Mahaffy reminds us that prayer is part of experiencing fellowship with God as his people, and it “not only meets our needs, more importantly, it glorifies God.” We are “changed through prayer,” Browne said, “as we enjoy fellowship with the Lord and align our wills with his.”

While the trajectory of prayer is vertical, from the saints to God, the impact is also horizontal. “Prayer . . . cultivates a concern for others and facilitates getting to know one another’s burdens better. It draws us closer to God as we cry out to him together,” Belfield said. For those who get into the habit of meeting together midweek, Watson says, “it quickly becomes a joy and not a burden . . . Prayer tends to enhance the bonds of love and fellowship.” Locating the midweek meeting in someone’s home, which many OP churches do, helps with “fellowship on a personal level,” Belfield said.

“Corporate prayer has been a characteristic of the New Testament church from the earliest days,” Watson pointed out. “As Reformed believers, we understand that the Lord hears our prayers, he desires us to pray, and he answers prayer in accordance with his good and perfect will.” While essential, prayer is clothed in humble garb. As Post said, “It’s not flashy, it can often be overlooked, but it is so needed.” Indeed, the spiritual strength of a congregation is connected to prayer, Browne says. “I would fear for our congregation’s life and spiritual vigor if we ceased these various opportunities for corporate prayer.”

God uses prayer to sustain and strengthen his church, and one of the many examples of this is Immanuel. Hoekstra says, “The Lord has graciously helped us through some dif-

Favorite Psalms and Hymns *Trinity Psalter Hymnal no. 242* “Father, Long before Creation”

Jeremiah W. Montgomery

One of my favorite hymns in the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* is one that I had never known prior to this publication, “Father, Long before Creation.” What first caught my eye was its origin, printed at the bottom left corner of the page: “Chinese, ca. 1952.” A Chinese hymn in the OPC hymnal—and written *after* the Communist takeover of the Mainland? Quite apart from my personal interests, this was an intriguing discovery.

According to the *CRC Psalter Hymnal Handbook*, the authorship of the hymn is anonymous—but it served Chinese Christians as a “theme song” during the horrific Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Bearing this in mind lends a haunting beauty to nearly every phrase. Amidst all the upheaval of the Communist Revolution and expulsion of Western missionary mentors, the Chinese church reminded itself that the Father’s electing love “keeps us firmly fixed in Christ alone” (stanza 1). As bands of raving Red Guards plundered and purged China of everything traditional, the Christians would sing, “Though the world may change its fashion, you will still remain the same; your compassion and your covenant through all ages will remain” (stanza 2). As public humiliations, brutal torture, and hideous massacres ensued, our brothers and sisters in China sang forth their one shining hope: “Loving Father, now before you we shall ever sing your grace, and our song will sound forever when we see you face to face” (stanza 4).

Even apart from this context, “Father, Long before Creation” is a beautiful hymn—a sustained, theologically rich meditation and praise of the love of God. But knowing its history enriches its value. What a beautiful mark of the global-historical unity of Christ’s church, that we are able to include and sing this hymn in our *Psalter Hymnal*!

difficult struggles in our early years, I think, partially through the prayer of God’s people. Now we are enjoying a beautiful season of unity and harmony, love, and a willingness to serve . . . I do believe prayer has played a part in helping us through the bad seasons and preparing us for this season of blessing.”

While the format for many OP prayer meetings may have shifted in the last few decades from a time mostly devoted to prayer to a prayer time following studies, OP members are still gathering to pray. Through prayer they are being blessed—growing spiritually, having prayer answered, and fellowshiping with God and each other. As Post states so well, “Prayer is the breath of the church—we can’t stop praying, just as we can’t stop breathing!”

The author is a member of New Life OPC in Williamsport, PA.

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FROM AN INTERRUPTION TO NEW PROVIDENCES

// L. CHARLES JACKSON



Jackson preaching at Joy Hospice during quarantine

Many people have asked us how we are doing as missionaries serving during the COVID-19 pandemic. The answer is that these past few months have been the strangest months we have ever spent in Africa.

When we first heard about COVID-19, we didn't think much of it. Then, one thing after another began to be shut down by the government. First, worship services and all gatherings of more than five people were forbidden. Then, public transportation was forbidden, and then private vehicles were outlawed without a special permit. Honestly, I thought that this interruption would last for only a few weeks. Wow, was I wrong!

Chauffeuring and Preaching

Thankfully, we were able to get a driving permit for both of us, and Connie and I started transporting nurses back and forth from our local hospital here in Mbale, Uganda. This provided a unique opportunity to serve the community and speak into the lives of these ladies. Connie drove in the morning, and I drove in the evenings when we were more likely to be stopped by the authorities due to a 7:00 p.m. curfew.

But in what other ways were we supposed to be missionaries? We were concerned about what would happen if we contracted COVID-19 at a time when there were only a handful of ventilators in the whole nation and none in Mbale. There were also many rumors that if the borders remained closed, there would be serious civil unrest. Friends warned us that we should prepare for the worst, so



Connie Jackson chauffeuring nurses

we bought about three month's supply of food and lots of water. Many of our missionary friends started leaving. We felt alone—unsure whether, if we waited much longer, we would even be allowed to leave.

We realized it was time to think about what we could do to minister to others. In addition to finding more time for private meetings with people, I caught up on grading exams, taking care of administrative issues, reading, and trying to write. We found new opportunities to serve God during these strange times. The Committee on Diaconal Ministries sent us some money for COVID-19 food relief, and even though we were restricted from personally distributing it, a local deacon was able to bring the food to the village churches—who were so very thankful for the help.

Then, Joy Hospice in Mbale, where OP missionary associate Dr. Jim Knox works, experienced the first COVID-19 death in Uganda. The clinic was closed and all the staff, except the two doctors, were quarantined inside the gates. The staff was afraid, and Jim asked me to come preach to them. This was a strange opportunity to offer gospel hope. Since my audience was trapped behind a walled compound, I could not resist! I preached on Sunday to this fearful group about Jesus and his disciples on the stormy waters. We left encouraged to look to Christ whose power can still the winds and the waves!

I then continued to go back to the clinic to teach a series through Ruth. On the last day of their quarantine, we had a worship service inside the clinic. We danced and sang together as they got the announcement that they were all negative for the virus and were allowed to go home.

Pursuing Seminary Accreditation

As COVID-19 lockdowns continued, God began to clarify for me that perhaps this was the time to consider independent accreditation for Knox School of Theology (KST) as the only Reformed bachelor's program in eastern Uganda. Perhaps we could become a regional seminary.

After much prayer and attending a meeting to discuss the possibilities, I reviewed the many catalogues from other schools in east Africa that offer bachelor's degrees and started filling out applications.

Thankfully, I did not have to do it alone. We already had one instructor, Pastor Paul Magala, and from my work as professor at Africa Reformation Theological Seminary in Kampala, I also knew of a recent graduate, Okuch Andrew Ojullo, who might be able to teach at KST. By God's grace, we hired Okuch, who is originally from South Sudan. Okuch moved here to a newly renovated little flat that we had time to fix, thanks to the virus, and he started helping immediately. KST now has a complete curriculum to submit with its application to offer a diploma and a bachelor's degree program in theology. We are still waiting for a few things, but our plans seem to be falling into place. Please pray for us to finish over the next year—our goal is to get a provisional license beginning in August 2021.

The application process also requires updates to our facility, and another lovely bit of providence made this possible. Prior to the pandemic, a generous woman visited and asked about things at KST. I mentioned that I would love to build



Bricks for KST's new pavilion



Pavilion construction underway

a pavilion to act as a church building for Sundays, a cafeteria and kitchen during the week, and a conference center on some weekends. She and an OP congregation she is affiliated with sent us most of the money we needed. So, we launched a building project.

The accreditation requirements, however, demanded more than a new pavilion to meet facility standards. Praise God that a church in Canberra, Australia, also sent money for this project, and now we believe we have enough funds to meet the standards. We can finish the new building, paint and renovate the old ones, plant trees and flowers, and install a new gate and a new sign.

I would not have had the time or the courage to launch this new program without COVID-19. It is as if God wanted us to take this time to start on a new venture. Now I understand that what I thought was an interruption was God's way of providing us with a fresh new opportunity for ministry.

We still have so much more to do. The amount of red tape and bureaucracy is amazing. Even with the facility renovations, please pray that the Lord will supply the necessary funding to complete the accreditation process over the next few years. Pray for us and praise God with us for all that he has done.

So How Are We?

How have we been doing as missionaries during the coronavirus pandemic? Probably a lot like everyone else. We started out frustrated and discouraged, but now we are busier than ever before, and God is doing great things for us in ways that we could not have imagined!

Praise God that what, for us, felt like an interruption was actually his loving providence directing us to serve him in great things and allowing him to bring glory to himself in ways that we could never have predicted.

The author is an OP missionary in Mbale, Uganda.



Breaking ground to improve the facilities

FOREIGN MISSIONS

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Church

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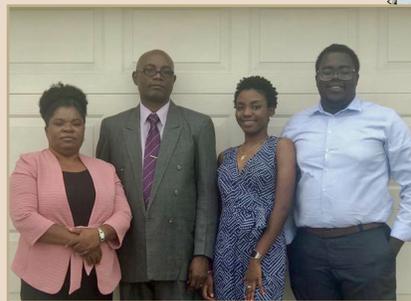
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WESTERVELD and family



Ben and Heather
HOPP and family



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Kathleen CURTO



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HAITI

URUGUAY



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and family
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and family



Tina DEJONG



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JACKSON



ANGELA VOSKUIL



Leah HOPP



David and Rashel
ROBBINS and family



James and Esther
FOLKERTS and family



Christopher and Chloe
VERDICK and family



Mark and Carla VAN
ESSEDELFT and family

NOVEMBER



The Tricaricos

1 BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD, Quebec, Canada. Praise God that St-Marc church has been able to resume in-person worship. / Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**.

2 RON & CAROL BEABOUT, Mifflintown, PA. Pray that Grace and Truth's mailing campaign would bring new visitors. / Pray for the OPC trustees of **GREAT COMMISSION PUBLICATIONS**, a joint publishing effort with the PCA.

3 DAVID & RASHEL ROBBINS, Nakaale, Uganda (on furlough). Pray for health and safety on the road for the family as they visit churches in WI. / **ABBY HARTING**, office secretary for Christian Education.

4 BRAD & CINNAMON PEPP, Dayton, OH. Pray that campus outreach efforts would bear fruit this winter. / Pray for tentmaking missionary **TINA DEJONG** and associate missionary **ANGELA VOSKUIL**, Nakaale, Uganda.

5 JAY & ANDREA BENNETT, Neon, KY. Pray for evangelistic faithfulness and continued growth at Neon Reformed. / **STEPHEN PRIBBLE**, senior technical associate for OPC.org.

6 Associate missionaries **JAMES & ESTHER FOLKERTS**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the resumption of in-person corporate worship services. / Pray for **DANNY OLINGER**, general secretary of Christian Education, as he edits *New Horizons*.

7 Pray for missionary associate **JOANNA GROVE**, Nakaale, Uganda, as she mentors young women in sharing their faith. / **CALVIN & CONNIE KELLER**, Winston-Salem, NC. Pray that God would grant Harvest OPC wisdom in conducting outreach.

8 BEN & HEATHER HOPP, Haiti. Pray that the planning of the first meeting of the indigenous Haitian presbytery may move forward despite security concerns. / Yearlong intern **SEOB (RACHEL) KIM** at Rockford Springs Community Church in Rockford, MI.

9 MARK & CARLA VAN ESSENDELFT, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the process with the local church in evaluating diaconal needs. / **MICHAEL & SAMANTHA SEUFERT**, St. Paul, MN. Give thanks as the church finishes Home Missions support this month.

10 Affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia. Pray that the local church would embrace new visitors rescued from trafficking. / **CHARLENE TIPTON**, database administrator, and **STEPHANIE ZERBE**, office secretary for Foreign Missions.



Leah Hopp

11 Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**. / Associate missionaries **LEAH HOPP** and **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the encouragement of the AYPC staff.

12 Pray for **MARK (PEGGY) SUMPTER**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest. / Local **DEACONS** and **PRESBYTERY DIACONAL COMMITTEES** as they help those affected by wildfires and hurricanes.

13 Pray for **RETIRED MISSIONARIES** Cal & Edie Cummings, Brian & Dorothy Wingard, Greet Rietkerk, and Young & Mary Lou Son. / Stated clerk **HANK BELFIELD** and Foreign Missions administrative assistant **LING LEE**.

14 GREGORY & GINGER O'BRIEN, Downingtown, PA. Pray for new members to be added to Christ Church Downingtown. / **JOHN FIKKERT**, director for the Committee on Ministerial Care.

15 Pray for **DAVID (JANE) CRUM**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California. / Office manager **ANNELISA STUDLEY** and Diaconal Ministries administrative assistant **SARAH KLAZINGA**.

NOVEMBER



The Delfils family

21 Missionary associates **DR. JIM & JENNY KNOX**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for those with serious medical and diaconal needs in Mbale. / **MARK STUMPF**, loan fund administrator, and **MELISA MCGINNIS**, controller.

22 **BILL (DENISE) WELZIEN**, Key West, FL. Pray for the session at Keys Presbyterian in its pastoral search. / **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay, give thanks for new visitors attending church membership class.

23 Pray for **CHRIS (NANCY) WALMER**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania. / Yearlong intern **SAMUEL (BETH) ALVIRA** at Providence OPC in Mantua, NJ, and Grace OPC in Pennsville, NJ.

24 Affiliated missionaries **JERRY & MARILYN FARNIK**, Czech Republic. / Yearlong interns **JOSEPH (ANNIE) POLLARD** at Calvin Presbyterian in Phoenix, AZ, and **ISAAC (MASHA) BAUGH** at Covenant OPC in Kennewick, WA.

25 **MR. AND MRS. M.**, Asia. Pray that the visa process for their new home base would go smoothly. / Yearlong intern **SILAS (ANASTASIA) SCHREYACK** at Merrimack Valley Presbyterian in North Andover, MA.

26 **ANDREW & REBEKAH CANAVAN**, Corona, CA. Pray that Corona Presbyterian would have a zeal for the Lord's harvest. / **DAVID NAKHLA**, Diaconal Ministries administrator, asks for wisdom as he continues to receive requests for COVID-19 assistance from around the globe.



The Cottas

27 **MR. AND MRS. F.**, Asia. Pray for the two pastors on the field and the seminarians in their last year of training. / Pray for affiliated missionaries **CRAIG & REE COULBOURNE** (on furlough) and **LINDA KARNER**, Japan.

28 **MATTHEW & LOIS COTTA**, Pasadena, CA. Praise the Lord for good attendance at Pasadena Presbyterian's outdoor worship. / Associate **P. F.**, Asia. Pray for local churches' growth and spiritual maturity.

29 Active duty military chaplain **STEPHEN (LINDSEY) ROBERTS**, US Army. / Yearlong interns **SETH (EVA) DORMAN** at Limington OPC in Limington, ME, and **BEN PETERSEN** at Covenant Presbyterian in Abilene, TX.

30 **MICAH & EILEEN BICKFORD**, Farmington, ME. Join Grace Reformed in praying for five new families. / Foreign Missions general secretary **MARK BUBE** and associate general secretary **DOUGLAS CLAWSON**. / **SHANE & RACHELLE BENNETT**, Grand Rapids, MI. Pray that Reformation OPC would make fruitful connections with the community.

16 Home Missions communications assistant **KATIE STUMPF**. / Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Pray for safety at the schools and for their daughter, Farah, as she prepares for important exams.

17 **PAUL & SARAH MOURREALE**, West Plains, MO. Pray that Covenant Reformed would discover new ways to be involved in its community. / **BOB JONES**, interim administrator for the Committee on Coordination.

18 **HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for church-planting efforts in Poland. / **STEPHEN & FELICIA LAUER**, Wilmington, OH. Pray for evangelistic opportunities in a new meeting location.

19 **CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda, give thanks as Knox School of Theology begins the accreditation process. / Home Missions administrative assistant **KATHARINE OLINGER**.

20 **KEVIN & RACHEL MEDCALF**, Cumming, GA. Pray that the Lord would raise up more officers for Providence Presbyterian. / **KERRI ANN CRUSE**, video and social media coordinator.

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

A GREAT DAY IN THE PRESBYTERY OF THE DAKOTAS

David Winslow

On September 23 the Presbytery of the Dakotas rejoiced to approve the exams of four men called to fill empty pulpits in Colorado and South Dakota. Timothy M. Marinelli transferred from Covenant East Classis in the RCUS, bringing his family of seven children south to Castle Rock, Colorado; PCA licentiate Nicholas K. Barnes headed north from Louisiana in time for fall and winter in Winner, South Dakota; OPC licentiate Eric Cuer de Andrade from the Presbyterian Church of Brazil moved from Grand Rapids, Michigan, to Park Hill Presbyterian Church in Colorado; finally, the presbytery welcomed Thomas B. Brown from Northern California Presbytery in the PCA to serve in Freeman, South Dakota, where he has been laboring as regular supply for two years. We give thanks to the Lord for these servants he has brought to feed his sheep and use their many gifts for the glory of Christ in his church.



New arrivals to the Presbytery of the Dakotas: Timothy Marinelli, Nicholas Barnes, Eric Cuer de Andrade, and Thomas Brown

Sunday school by their maiden aunts. His parents came to faith later in life. After service in the Navy on a destroyer escort in the North Atlantic, Wendell, who was attracted to Reformed thinking early on, attended Westminster Theological Seminary in 1951, served his first OP congregation in Grove City, Pennsylvania, and then spent most of the rest of his pastoral career in the Presbytery of New England. His tenure and influence there earned him the nickname “Bishop of New England,” at which he simultaneously winced and smiled. His first wife, Joy, having died young of a brain tumor, Wendell married Trudi Zuelow when pastoring in South Hamilton. A year or so later son Mark joined older siblings Linda, Jonathan, and Louise. Wendell

then served another organizing congregation in Cape Cod for a decade. After retirement, the Rockeys lived in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and helped another organizing congregation before moving to Quarryville Presbyterian Retirement Community for better care for Trudi. After her passing, and at age 92, Wendell married fellow Quarryville resident Ruth Shaffer. Wendell’s last months, although marred by chronic cardiac and pulmonary woes, were still marked by deepening love of his family, of Christ’s Word and church, and by a firm hope of life beyond the grave. He is truly resting in Christ.

IN MEMORIAM: WENDELL L. ROCKEY JR.

Jonathan Rockey

Wendell Lewis Rockey Jr. slipped away to Jesus peacefully in his sleep on September 15, 2020. Born and raised in the Sunnyside neighborhood of Queens, New York City, Wendell and his siblings were taken to



Wendell L. Rockey

UPDATE

CHURCHES

• On July 31, **Providence Presbyterian** in Cumming, GA, was organized as a particular congregation.

MINISTERS

• On July 31, **Kevin L. Medcalf**, previously the organizing pastor, was installed as pastor of Providence Presbyterian in Cumming, GA.

• On September 4, **Anthony C. Domanik** was installed as a pastor of Falls Church—An OPC Family in Menomonee Falls, WI. He was previously a teacher of the Word serving at Chicago Christian High School.

• On September 4, **Carl R. Trueman** was installed by the Presbytery of Ohio as a teacher of the Word serving at Grove City College in Grove City, PA. He was previously the pastor of Cornerstone Presbyterian in Ambler, PA.

MILESTONES

• Retired OP pastor **Wendell L. Rockey Jr.**, 96, died on September 15. He served congregations in PA, RI, and MA.

LETTERS

AN OUTDATED RESPONSE

Editor:

“What Should the Church Say” (August) would have read more aptly as the church’s response to chattel slavery, not to current issues of racial injustice facing our nation today. Many well researched thinkers and theologians—including orthodox Christians—would argue that the racialized structures in our country did not disappear after 1965, they simply evolved. Additionally, Dr. Strange used Charles Hodge as his historical basis for what the church should say. However, although Hodge may have believed that



At Carl Trueman's September 4 installation in Grove City: Geoffrey Willour, Danny Olinger, Don Duff, James Berry, Shawn Ritenour, Gary Welton, Jeremy Jones, Carl Trueman, Mark Garcia, Mark Graham, Ben Ward, Sandy Finlayson, Brad Peppo, Jonathan Hutchison

black people were human, he certainly did not consider them to be remotely equal to the white man. He argued in the *Princeton Theological Review* that within the bounds of unity there is inevitable inferiority and superiority. If not being racist means we need only not think black people are sub-human then we have set the bar so phenomenally low that the average neo-Nazi could jump over it and proclaim, "But I am not racist!"

Noelle Wells
Middletown, PA

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Editor:

"The Bible and Black Lives Matter" (September) failed to address three things. First, many of us do not understand the rage that has been building up in many Blacks for over four hundred years because we do not share either their life experiences or history. So when we see violent

protests, we focus too much on feeling threatened or outraged while ignoring the conditions that led to the protests. Second, the systemic racism that exists in America is experienced in far more areas of life than just in law enforcement and the justice system. Third, Christian support for BLM should not depend on whether we could join BLM as a religious institution. Rather, it should depend on whether its members have a right to do what they are doing in our democratic society.

Curt Day
Allentown, PA

Editor:

Mr. Watkins is woefully behind the times on politics and current history, referring to a 1966 work by Edmund Clowney, which Watkins thinks looks forward to today. Have events not progressed beyond 1966, to the point of attempting to get a "new world order" in power? Black Lives Matter is thoroughly atheistic, is openly Marxist, and desires control of all institutions. We who endeavor to remain faithful to the truth of the Bible and the hope we have in the cross of Jesus Christ must build up our treasure in heaven. But, when we do comment on current events, we ought not to soft pedal or be outright anachronistic about what is happening. Further, the work of a pastor is more time-consuming and important than keeping up

with the matters of this world. Thus, for a pastor to comment on deep and complex events as they are happening might only be appropriate as a personal anecdote.

Jeffrey Genter
Yardley, NJ

CHOOSING GOOD BOOKS

Editor:

I was so happy to see an article on children's stories given a prominent place in the magazine ("Stories to Capture a Child's Heart," September). I might have little time for reading adult books in my stage of motherhood, but I've found reading good stories to my children to be abundant nourishment for my soul. But I wanted to express some concern over the commendation given to Sally Lloyd-Jones. *The Jesus Storybook Bible* has depictions of Jesus on almost every page, immersing an impressionable spirit with something that God calls evil. Further, Lloyd-Jones's 2018 book, *Goldfish on Vacation*, has a picture of a same-sex family in it.

Natalie Wical
Lakeside, CA

REVIEWS

***God, You, and Sex: A Profound Mystery*, by David White. New Growth Press, 2019. Paperback, 240 pages, \$15.30. Reviewed by OP pastor John W. Mahaffy.**

"Sex is about God," writes David White on the first page of this book. "He invites us into a deeper understanding of who he is by creating us in his image as sexual beings." This is why we need a "positive theology of sex. . . . The otherness of husband and wife, rooted in the proclamation that marriage is about Jesus and the church, is foundational to God's design" (46).

White addresses this topic with an uncompromising commitment to the authority of Scripture, refreshing in a time when the stance of the church is too often shaped by the culture. Yet the voice of God is never presented harshly, but rather reflects his compassion. The Fall has affected all of us—and we, including God's redeemed people, have to deal with our fallen sexuality. We all need redemption.

White points to the purpose for which God created us: fellowship and commu-

Position Available

Pastor: New Covenant Community Church in Joliet, Illinois, is seeking a new senior pastor. This established, sizeable OPC congregation outside of Chicago desires a gifted preacher and teacher to unfold the riches of Reformed faith and practice, to shepherd us toward ever greater maturity in Christ, and to lead us in worshiping our great God and reaching out to our community. If interested, please send resume and letter of interest to our search committee at nccopc@gmail.com.

nion with him. That provides hope and strength for those who struggle. He addresses specific challenges faced by those whose marriages involve pain and loss (all marriages this side of Eden), those who struggle with singleness, those who wrestle with same-sex attraction, and survivors of abuse.

While the focus is on God and his Word, White appropriately describes his own struggles as he came to Christ, and as he dealt with the untimely death of his first wife and the challenges of being a single parent of young daughters. He understands the shallowness of pat answers, but knows the deep comfort of the Lord drawing us closer in suffering.

White reminds us: “We are called to be salt and light to people with radically contrary lives and worldviews so that the glory of Jesus is evident to a watching world” (200). I fully agree that cultural change requires something much deeper than political or judicial action. Yet, it would have been helpful if White had detailed some steps that Christians might take in the area of civil government.

Do not let this minor critique prevent you from reading the book. Members of the church and those who lead and teach will benefit from its very practical theology. A copy belongs in the church library. Parents, read the chapter, “Parenting Challenges and Opportunities,” and then discuss it with your older children.

White reminds us that we are God’s eschatological people: “What I mean is people who lose their life in this world be-

cause of the promise of eternal life, people who live as strangers and aliens because all their hope is placed in the world to come. This identity should inform all aspects of how we live our lives, especially our sexuality” (214–15).

***Basics of Hebrew Discourse: A Guide to Working with Hebrew Prose and Poetry*, by Matthew H. Patton and Frederic Clarke Putnam. Zondervan, 2019. Paperback, 288 pages, \$21.70 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor Jeremiah W. Montgomery.**

Thorough reading is no easy task—especially in a foreign language. The cues we expect from our mother tongue are often missing, and those provided by the new language are often missed. In conversation, the results can be amusing. But in exegesis, the consequences can be disastrous.

Patton and Putnam’s book aims to equip intermediate-level students with the tools necessary to engage the Hebrew Bible on its own terms. Its focus is on “discourse analysis,” defined as “the study of the meaningful relationships that exist between individual clauses” to express logical connections and produce units of text (11–12). This volume is actually two books under one cover, each with a separate table of contents: a treatment of Hebrew prose written by Patton (25–144), and a treatment of Hebrew poetry written by Putnam (145–269). I used Patton’s portion of the book during a recent MTIOPC Hebrew refresher course, and so the remainder of this review focuses on it.

There are many strengths to Patton’s work. He carefully defines important terms and concepts, and does so using *English* examples (ch. 2)—a brilliant

stroke that allows readers to get oriented with the grammar before the language becomes Oriental. As he subsequently unpacks the elements of Hebrew prose (chs. 3–6), he continues to provide an English translation for each Hebrew example, allowing readers to focus on the point he makes without getting stuck on parsings. Concluding chapters draw the preceding elements together into a single, unified process (ch. 7) with extensive examples (ch. 8). I especially appreciated the final summary chart (ch. 9) that can be laid open on the desk side by side with one’s Hebrew text.

Though meticulous with his content, Patton remains refreshingly humble with his conclusions: “Good reading is not mechanical but relies on balanced, sympathetic attention to all kinds of contextual clues” (97). He even includes an example

where contextual factors override other grammatical and discourse considerations (107)! Nevertheless, throughout the text he convincingly demonstrates a key insight: more often than not, Hebrew “conveys discourse relationships through verbal sequences and alterations in

word order, features not as salient in English” (111–12).

Students of Hebrew who wish to get a better handle on how discourse analysis factors into translation and interpretation will find much that is useful in this book. Patton’s final sentence is a fitting conclusion to this review: “Even if it cannot resolve all these difficulties, discourse analysis fruitfully disciplines us to move beyond the sentence to the text as a whole in our search for meaning” (138).

