

# NEW HORIZONS

≡ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ≡

**6** Rebuilding in Appalachia  
*// by Judith M. Dinsmore*

DECEMBER 2022

**8** An Unusual Reflection  
on Christmas  
*// by Roger Wagner*



## The Church in This Place

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## New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

**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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Send inquiries, letters to the editor, and other correspondence to the editor at [danny.olinger@opc.org](mailto:danny.olinger@opc.org).

Send address changes to [ccesecretary@opc.org](mailto:ccesecretary@opc.org). Allow six weeks for address changes.

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On September 30, Alan D. Strange, professor of church history at Mid-America Reformed Seminary, was installed as associate pastor of First OPC in South Holland, Michigan. Cornelis Venema preached; Marcus Mininger gave the charge to the pastor; Daniel Svendsen gave the charge to the congregation; and Lane Keister, the vice-moderator of the presbytery, moderated. Pictured left to right: Marcus Mininger, Cornelis Venema, Alan Strange, Lane Keister, and Daniel Svendsen.



# THE CHURCH IN THIS PLACE



**MARK MCCONNELL // When the New Testament mentions churches, it names them by their location. Christians make up a church in this place or that: the church in Rome, the church in Ephesus. What we know about those places informs what we know about the task that God, who was present in those places, was**

equipping his people to undertake there. The Spirit of God moves the people of God to act according to the Word of God in the place to which he calls them. For example, the Spirit tells Christians not to stop gathering *in person*. We cannot log in for communion. When we obey, our acts display to those outside the church that Christ is present, that he is in this place. In a faithful church, Christ is a neighbor—even when that church’s locale is one of misery and crime.

## **A Changing Neighborhood**

Members of First Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Portland, Oregon, know the story of their earliest presence in the neighborhood. The history page on their website reads, “With early help from Rev. George Marston, Pastor Eyres tirelessly knocked on hundreds of neighborhood doors and did much of the groundwork in getting everything underway.” The denomination’s mission committee chose a place where

young families poured into a working-class neighborhood to support the war effort, quickly filling the gap between the city and the rural community with new homes. Most of the church’s charter members came to worship from a few blocks away. Even before breaking ground for the first building, the surrounding community knew the church by reputation for its connection to their neighbors and its service to other churches in the city. First Church was originally a neighborhood church.

But even at the beginning, the congregation struggled to remain in the neighborhood. When they began looking for a site for the first building, the Portland Ecumenical Council advised the city to refuse permission to establish another Presbyterian church, since two mainline congregations were already meeting nearby. So, the core group at First OPC looked for a location outside the city’s jurisdiction, a couple of blocks away. This is the reason First Church is on the east side of Oregon Route 213,

now with the used car lots, shady bars, sex shops, and cheap motels that line the highway better known now as 82nd Avenue, which was the city limit in the years of the church’s founding.

Long after the city expanded its lines eastward, 82nd Avenue continues to have a seedy character. Some of the worst things city life offers surround the church because of the four-lane thoroughfare nearby.

Cities are always changing, and Portland is typical. The wartime attachment to the neighborhood became a memory. Many of the original members moved farther away. Most new members drove many miles instead of a few blocks to attend services. It became awkward for most of the members to identify with the neighborhood, even while the church sought ways to maintain connection through organized outreach. On some Saturday mornings, members greeted their neighbors from the sidewalk in front of the church, inviting them to a pancake breakfast.



*Church members together with a city office recently organized a resource fair for the neighborhood, with booths from various Christian, secular, and government organizations that address issues like poverty, mental illness, addiction, violence, and prostitution*

There was outreach through Evangelism Explosion, vacation Bible school, and Christianity Explored, as well as visits to a neighborhood nursing home. Some neighbors can remember meeting at the church to make protest signs to seek attention for the harm being done to the neighborhood by a sex shop called The Flick. Yet the sense of alienation from the neighborhood kept increasing.

By the time of Rev. Jack Smith's pastorate from 1994–2018, there were five different sex shops within a block's distance, a methadone clinic across the street, a marijuana dispensary next door (eventually replaced by a food pantry), feces and garbage left on the church porch, prostitution in the church parking lot, constant harassment by vagrants, and a growing drug market at the Madison Suites motel, which is behind the church on Milton Street. The office became a threatening place to work, and the building seemed a risky place to meet during the week. Church officers improved the outside lighting, posted "No Trespassing" signs in the windows, and considered installing a more secure fence and a gated entrance to the parking lot. More than a few members talked about moving the church to the suburbs, where most members lived by then. Others moved farther away or left the area altogether just to get away from the city.

### The Pandemic

The first year of Rev. Andrew Farr's pastorate coincided with the begin-

ning of the COVID-19 pandemic in February 2020. Month after month, the governor urged quarantines and mask-wearing and urged against physical meetings, against public prayers and singing together, against holy communion. At the same time that many members felt forbidden to meet, the city and county declared a moratorium on "sweeps" of homeless camps, so that the drug market camp behind the church overwhelmed the Madison Suites motel and the church's sidewalk next to the parking lot. Deacons hired a security company to patrol the lot to keep out squatters.

Broken down RVs and cars deteriorated in the street and scores of tents blocked the sidewalks, which drug customers and prostitutes used day and night for sleeping. Discarded furniture and thrown-away people spilled into the street, fires broke out, and holes appeared in the church's fence, which vagrants used as a shortcut through the church parking lot to Fremont Street. For nearly two years, the street behind the church became an increasingly dangerous place: a no-go zone of roaming prostitutes, overdosing addicts, tents swollen with rotting garbage, and people with sores swollen by disease. Competing gangs killed four people in the space of several months, injuring two neighbors by gunfire as they were leaving for work.

Amid all this, the church meets for worship.

The church meets for worship in a

city that members sense is cold and hostile toward Christianity and in a neighborhood where unrestrained public vice and dark human misery threaten to overwhelm any sense of belonging. It's a place where most of the members are only present on Sundays, a place which evokes almost no sense of being a home except in nostalgia for earlier times. For some, concerns of COVID continue to prevent their presence on Sunday. How is it possible to be a church now, or to be a neighbor anymore in such times, and in such a place?

### To Know Them by Name

In February 2022, the police swept the camp. It seems to be an opportunity to do something that would explain why the church should remain where it has been called. One member asks what we should do. Be present! another answers. If the church is called to a neighborhood, at the very least it is then called to assert Christ's presence by acting like a neighbor who cares about the other neighbors. With no clear idea of what else to do, members knock on doors of nearby residents to ask how the violence near the church has affected them. They bring information on how to report illegal encampments and crime, and they seek to learn.

The church members also inform the neighbors that a small group of volunteers would be regularly cleaning up around the drug camp as an excuse to introduce themselves to the people there. "We want to know them

by name, to pray for them, to seek their good although we see them as our enemy,” they explain. “That’s all we know how to do, but we’ve been afraid for our safety and reluctant even to do that. Maybe if we act differently, we can assert a different influence, in contrast to the open drug use, the despair, and the violence. We know that our neighbors have been working on these problems for a long time. We want to learn how to help you.”

“We’ve worried about you,” some neighbors answer. “Would you like to attend our safety meeting?”

Encouraged by the neighborhood’s support, a few members meet in the parking lot the next week to sing Psalm 69. “For the zeal for your house has eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached you fell on me.” They pick up needles and say hello to Larry, who spent most of the last three years apparently dealing heroin from a broken-down pickup truck. A prostitute named “Cynda” wants to pray with two of the women. As they pray, Cynda suddenly confesses, “Wait! I lied to you. My name is Cassie.” She had watched her boyfriend accidentally shoot himself to death in a methamphetamine delirium. She wants no obstacles against speaking to God.

The following week, they choose Psalm 22, which no Christian can sing without remembering that Christ spoke these words when he was dying on the cross—when, although innocent, he united himself with human sorrow

and separation from God. “My God, my God, O why have you forsaken me? O why are you so far from saving me, and from my groaning cry?” They introduce themselves to prostitutes and try to wake an overdosed man in a tent, eventually calling for help from a medical emergency team. It’s easy to understand how alien and frightening it all is to the church members, but it staggers the imagination to try to describe how casually the people they are meeting accept this misery.

Deej, a runaway nicknamed “Mary Poppins,” accepts an offer of prayer. She looks like a child. An oozing staph infection swells Lucas’s hand, which hangs heavily at his side. He allows the members to clean and dress the wound, and he is grateful that they ask how he’s doing in the days that follow, but it seems likely he’ll lose his arm or die before he’s willing to go to the hospital. The members know Robbie because he created a raging fire under the eaves of the church’s front porch using his mobile firepit. Justin plays with heroin needles that he found in the gutter, jabs nonsense to himself, and licks the pavement. Neil claims he earned six figures before COVID ruined his business and put him out on the street; moments later, he stumbles from a motel room numbed to the world by opiates. Cat coordinates her pink shoes and shirt that she got from the pantry next door and feigns interest in going to a shelter. Yvonne has a big smile on her face when she’s greeted and extends her hand from

a car filled with garbage. Joe helps to clean the sidewalk. He knows his name is biblical. A nameless transgender prostitute threatens to burn down the church if the members touch his possessions.

Ben, Allan, Mindy, Amanda, Gaura, Kelly, and others who live

nearby long for a clean and safe place to live, where they can watch their children play. They hear gunshots and cars racing down the street late at night. From over her fence, Mindy can hear a local business owner telling drug dealers to be more careful because the police are watching. Allan coordinates meetings with city officials and works to influence the press. Kelly and Ben tend the community garden, donate to the food pantry, and paint murals on the street. All of them think of the neighborhood—except for 82nd Avenue—as wonderful and prosperous. They love their home and don’t want to leave.

### In Such a Place

A place like the corner of NE 82nd and Fremont in Portland is more than a piece of geography. It is a place defined by the people present. A building is the same way; it is only worth noticing when it affects people. A church that does not affect the people in its place is no better to its neighbors than an empty lot.

For seventy-eight years, First OPC has existed near the corner of 82nd and Fremont. As the neighborhood seemed to become more and more distant over the decades, members prayed and often asked each other “How can we show our neighbors that Jesus is alive here and now?” Would it happen by reviving the VBS or by waving down passersby like they used to, inviting them to Saturday morning pancake breakfast?

Instead, it has happened in a way that nobody would ever want, let alone expect; it happened because murder, hazardous waste, and gruesome misery have afflicted this place. The church members don’t know what to do about these things that seem as far away from their worship services as heaven is from the bottom of a pit. They only know that a faithful church follows Jesus Christ and prays for its neighbors, serving them in his name. Christ is a neighbor in such a place. □

*The author is an elder at First Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Portland, Oregon.*

### “PORTLAND’S DEADLIEST BLOCK”

In summer 2022, *The Oregonian*, Portland’s major newspaper, released a story on the streets around First OPC, where four murders were committed in the last year, with the headline “Portland’s Deadliest Block.” The article begins with two women picking up trash and praying—two women from First OPC. In a podcast interview, author Savannah Eadens said that the work of First OPC members was the “most inspiring and hopeful part of the story” (Beat Check with *The Oregonian*, July 8, 2022).

# REBUILDING IN APPALACHIA



JUDITH M. DINSMORE // In rural eastern Kentucky, the tree-covered Appalachians tumble downward to meet in narrow hollows—*hollers*—that are sometimes only wide enough for a creek, a line of houses on one side, and a road on the other. The town of Neon, where the OPC has had a church plant for twenty-two

years, lies a few miles up one of these hollers next to a creek called Wright Fork.

During the night of July 28, heavy rains poured down the mountains, filled up the creek beds, and flooded hollers across eastern Kentucky, including Neon. Pastor Jay Bennett woke up at 3 a.m. to watch from his second-story apartment as their family's Toyota Corolla floated down Main Street. He called his wife, Andrea, who was out of state visiting family; soon after, cell service broke down. The next morning, Bennett waded through several feet of water downstairs in the renovated storefront that is the church building. The windows were all broken. The water was dark brown. The watermark was six feet high.

Behind the church and across the alley is a doctor's office and, above it, a halfway house. The watermarks on this building are higher, more like eight feet. Gary, a resident of the halfway house, was watching the water rise with his housemates when a car floated slowly by. A couple and their ten-year-old son were stranded on top. Gary tied sheets together and lowered them out the win-

dow. The family held on to the sheets, climbed up the awning over the front door, and then through the window.

Forty people died in the flooding across several counties. The aftermath was catastrophic: homes lifted off their foundations, schools and businesses filled with muck, cars and trucks belly-up in creeks. Major news media coverage pitched July's flood as the last straw for these counties, the crowning disaster of decades of economic devastation, rising addiction, and collapsing infrastructure.

Seth Long, elder at Neon OPC, has a different perspective.

## What a Blessing It Has Become

At worship on a bright and sunny Sunday in October, Long led in intercessory prayer. After becoming Reformed in the 1990s, he was the one who instigated the OP plant in Neon in 2000. Before prayer, pastor Bennett took requests from the congregation. Long then carefully addressed each one, going from members of the congregation to their neighbors, friends, and family. Finally, he brought up the flood. "What a tragedy it was," he reflected to the Lord. "And what a blessing it has become."

Seth Long and his wife, Sheryl, moved to the area thirty years ago from central Pennsylvania where they both grew up Mennonite, so that Seth could take a job with the nonprofit HOMES, Inc.—Housing Oriented Ministries Established for Service. HOMES provides affordable housing solutions to low-income families, and Long now serves as director. Its eleven employees coordinate funding for and the building of new homes, as well as managing fifty rental units. "We're the only developer around that will buy a piece of property, build a house, and sell it," Long explained. No other developer touches this community: the cost of building is too high, the affordability too low.

It wasn't always this way. When coal companies came to Letcher County in the early 1900s, the area boomed. Neon had department stores, a car dealership, and a movie theater. Jenkins, a few miles up KY 805, was a model coal town—literally. Pictures of its tidy rows of identical homes built by the coal company were used to lure immigrants to the area, where they worked in the mines and were paid in scrip, not cash, that could be redeemed only at the company store.

Midcentury, jobs began to decline due to mechanization in the mines, and the decline continued as the coal industry contracted through the decades. Coal jobs in Kentucky fell 69 percent between 1989 and 2019.

When coal left, Long explained, the local infrastructure, which had been propped up by the taxes on the industry, could no longer function. For example, “our electric rates are some of the highest in the country,” he said. The grid was built to accommodate the mines; now, the utility’s fixed costs have to be covered by the remaining residents, whose incomes have shrunk. Median utility costs for Letcher County, according to a study by Virginia Tech, are between 41.5–57.7 percent of monthly income.

It’s tempting to assume that the community needs a big employer back in the area, a silver-bullet solution. But Long has for a long time argued for a combination of many small-scale efforts, instead. His mind never stops churning with ideas. The maples on his mountainous fifty-five acres send their sweet sap downhill into a 400-gallon steel milk tank next to a homebuilt sugar shack, where Long is making a name for Kentucky maple syrup. Last summer, he and Sheryl grew enough produce on three-tenths of an acre for twenty families as a Community Supported Agriculture farm. Now the winter sun is hitting solar panels on his roof and roofs around Letcher County, thanks to HOMES, in an effort to cut energy costs.

The flood has shaken loose some old assumptions about what the area needs. “There are conversations happening in



Seth and Sheryl Long



The Bennetts with site coordinator Art Allen (far left) in front of Neon OPC’s building

the community that I have not been a part of for thirty years, around housing,” Long explained. The local newspaper ran two stories in October on a possible subdivision to provide housing above the floodplain. Long has been put on a steering committee to make a strategic housing plan for the county.

“The crisis is hard to manage after the flood. But there are *so many* opportunities,” he said.

### A Home in Neon

When a 2019 *New York Times* op-ed advocated for investing in cities in Appalachia, not the rural areas, Long pushed back. “The most efficient solution isn’t always the one that does right by people,” he wrote in a published letter to the editor.

To do right by people, you have to know them. And in rural Kentucky, that takes time. After thirty years, Long is still seen as an outsider. In a region with a long history of being exploited by big outside interests, he explained, people are slow to trust.

And they’re tough, said Art Allen, a deacon from Shiloh OPC in Raleigh, North Carolina, who has volunteered in Neon before and came to serve as site coordinator for the church’s rebuild. It’s a mistake to think that the flood has upended the community, like it might in a more prosperous area. “Life here is hard,” Allen reflected. “And the people here are hard. They have gone through hardship before, and they will go through it again.”

Even while Neon OPC moves to-

ward meeting some local needs exacerbated by the flood, helped by a member who works for the postal service and knows well the needs along her route, the church will move slowly. Neon OPC is walking uphill when it comes to building trust, another church member observed, given that the pastor’s family is from Georgia and the elder’s family is from Pennsylvania. And, as Bennett pointed out, it is Presbyterian in a doggedly Congregationalist culture.

Yet in this, too, the flood may have been an opportunity for the church to demonstrate both its long-term investment in Neon and its connection to a broader body of believers, as out-of-state help poured in. “The day after the flood, David Nakhla called me,” remembered Bennett. Soon an OPC disaster response team was onsite to begin mucking out. Since then, 120 volunteers have helped with cleaning out and rebuilding; \$300,000 has been donated for relief.

The church is weeks ahead of the other local businesses, Bennett said. The bank across the street only recently opened its doors; the post office is still closed. The firehouse moved across town, to a building that hadn’t been flooded. The library hopes to open in summer 2023. There’s still no trash pickup, and local schools are packing students into the usable buildings.

But on October 23, Neon OPC worshiped again in its storefront on Neon’s quiet main street. □

*The author is managing editor of New Horizons.*

# AN UNUSUAL REFLECTION ON CHRISTMAS



ROGER WAGNER // Christmas, both the historical event described in Holy Scripture, when the eternal son of God was incarnated as Jesus the Messiah, and the church's annual celebration of that blessed event with "tidings of comfort and joy," has been an inspiration not only to preachers, but to poets, painters,

and composers for centuries. Some second commandment strictures aside, we continue to be blessed by many of their efforts with aesthetic pleasure and spiritual edification. By far one of the most unusual poetic reflections on the Christmas event is "The Burning Babe" by English poet Robert Southwell (c. 1561–1595). Its truth is as penetrating to the heart as its imagery is disturbing to the imagination.

The poem is comprised of four sentences: The first introduces us to the poet's situation and startling vision. The second and third contain the Babe's explanation of what the poet sees. The fourth returns us to the poet's situation as the vision disappears and he comes to realize the importance of it all.

## The Poet's Situation and Startling Vision

The setting is a "hoary winter's night." The poet is not trying to place his experience in December's "bleak mid-winter." (Despite the tradition, we do not know the season of Christ's birth.) Rather, the *external* coldness of the setting

is a reflection of the poet's view of *his own heart*—and those of his readers. Here we are called to take note that, by nature, we are all spiritually "shivering in the snow" of unbelief and indifference.

The poet's vision is *felt* before it is seen—"Surpris'd I was with sudden heat which made my heart to glow." An external heat suddenly (and surprisingly) touches the inward person of the heart. We—for now we readers are one with the poet—look to see the source of this unnatural warmth. Such an unexpected blast of heat understandably provokes a sense of danger. We anticipate a threat—like a dragon swooping in with fiery breath to incinerate us! But, no. Instead,

lifting up a fearful eye to view what fire was near,

A pretty Babe all burning bright did in the air appear;

No threat from such a "pretty Babe," but wait—the baby itself is on fire ("in fiery heats I fry")—and yet not consumed! (In that day, "pretty" meant something small and precious rather than attractive.)

As one might expect, the baby is crying "floods of tears" by reason of the excessive, burning heat. But instead of putting out the fire, the Babe's tears feed the flames.

Who, scorched with excessive heat,  
such floods of tears did shed  
As though his floods should quench  
his flames which with his tears  
were fed.

The suffering of this heavenly Babe seems only to intensify his sorrows. What is going on? This is no ordinary reality. It is a portent, full of meaning.

## The Babe Speaks

"Alas! quoth he, 'but newly born, in fiery heats I fry.'" We are led to the heart of the poem and the poet's message for us. The fires that burn so intensely, and afflict the Babe so, are the flames of a purifying furnace. It has been stoked and fanned to melt and refine the defiled souls of men. This is the "work" of cleansing and transformation—a work, however painful, that will bring us good.

The metal in this furnace wrought are

men's defiled souls,  
For which, as now on fire I am to  
work them to their good,

The furnace also gives off a wondrous heat, by which one might warm oneself. But alas, the Babe laments that no one is willing to come near him and be so warmed.

The allegory of the furnace is then explained, element by element.

My faultless breast the furnace is, the  
fuel wounding thorns,  
Love is the fire, and sighs the smoke,  
the ashes shame and scorns;  
The fuel Justice layeth on, and Mercy  
blows the coals,

What a startling, wonderful picture is evoked by that last line, bringing the justice and mercy of God together to service the furnace that will accomplish the work of our salvation!

Here we have compressed in three lines and their striking imagery the biblical doctrine of atonement. This heavenly Babe has been sent to burn away from fallen hearts all the guilt and corruption of sin.

Then abruptly the imagery changes from a furnace to the molten product: "So will I melt into a bath to wash them in my blood."

The New Testament makes frequent mention of the blood of Jesus Christ as the instrument of God's cleansing our guilt, the costly price paid to pardon our offenses. "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" is a principle well established by the sacrificial system of the law of Moses (Heb. 9:22). Jesus is the final sacrifice of atonement, his blood "precious . . . like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Pet. 1:19). This blood alone can "purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. 9:14). We are thus "justified by his blood" (Rom. 5:9).

For the poet, the faultless breast of the infant Savior is melted down by supernatural flames into a bloody bath that washes away our sin. An almost grotesque picture that nevertheless speaks the comforting truth of the gospel—"the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

### The Vision Departs and the Poet Reflects

With this he vanish'd out of sight and  
swiftly shrunk away,  
And straight I called unto mind that  
it was Christmas day.

The visionary Babe vanishes as quickly as he had appeared. We are left in puzzled amazement at what we (through the poet's imagination) have felt, seen, then heard. The last line brings Jesus's self-sacrificing, atoning, purifying work together, not with Good Friday or Easter, but with *Christmas*.

The "true meaning of Christmas" that so many traditionalists are zealous to guard has everything to do with our need as sinners, and God's provision

through the death of his Son.

The metaphysical wonder that is the incarnation of the eternal Son of God is not an end in itself. It was a necessary step in the accomplishment of salvation by the triune God. As the author of Hebrews explains, "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things. . . . Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. . . . We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (2:14-17; 10:10).

The writing of the sixteenth-century English metaphysical poets, including Southwell, is not everyone's cup of tea. The imagery is often so unusual, even shocking, as to be off-putting. But sometimes it is good for us to be shaken out of our sleepy contemplations about everything to do with Christmas.

The gracious Babe of the poem laments, "Yet none approach to warm their hearts or feel my fire but I!" No wonder. We've heard it all before. We can be left hardened by the very celebrations that are intended to express our gratitude and devotion. Perhaps a poetic shock is in order.

Robert Southwell reminds us that by nature we all live "in hoary winter's night . . . shivering in the snow" of our spiritual deadness and indifference. The "burning Babe" has appeared and invites you to come and warm yourself at his fire. That is, believe in him. Trust in his blood to take away your sins. Give thanks. And remember this is why he came that first Christmas Day. □

*The author is pastor of Bayview OPC in Chula Vista, California.*

## THE BURNING BABE

As I in hoary winter's night stood shivering in the snow,  
Surpris'd I was with sudden heat which made my heart to  
glow;  
And lifting up a fearful eye to view what fire was near,  
A pretty Babe all burning bright did in the air appear;  
Who, scorched with excessive heat, such floods of tears did  
shed  
As though his floods should quench his flames which with  
his tears were fed.  
"Alas!" quoth he, "but newly born, in fiery heats I fry,  
Yet none approach to warm their hearts or feel my fire but I!  
My faultless breast the furnace is, the fuel wounding thorns,  
Love is the fire, and sighs the smoke, the ashes shame and  
scorns;  
The fuel Justice layeth on, and Mercy blows the coals,  
The metal in this furnace wrought are men's defiled souls,  
For which, as now on fire I am to work them to their good,  
So will I melt into a bath to wash them in my blood."

With this he vanish'd out of sight and swiftly shrunk away,  
And straight I called unto mind that it was Christmas day.

—Robert Southwell

# LESSONS LEARNED FROM NURSING HOME MINISTRY



DANIEL BAUSCH AND GERALD SISTO //

For more than twelve years, Calvary OPC in Ringoes, New Jersey, has had a monthly ministry at a local long-term care facility, otherwise known as a nursing home. This ministry is small, it is ordinary,

and it has produced limited visible fruit. Yet, the Lord has used it to encourage and bless individuals outside the church doors in meaningful ways. Our hope in this article is to share how the Lord may use a nursing home ministry in proclaiming the gospel of Christ and to offer some practical suggestions for congregations who are either considering or engaging in a ministry like this.

## Need and Opportunity

According to the CDC, there are more than fifteen thousand nursing homes and twenty-eight thousand residential care communities in the United States. These facilities vary widely in size, cost, quality, and safety. When you read “nursing home,” a few connotations likely come to your mind. You might think of people with chronic medical needs requiring continuous care to function, you might imagine seniors watching television all day, or you might recall painful memories of seeing your own loved one suffer. Few of us primarily think of nursing homes

as places in our community where our neighbors live, where Christ’s children continue to serve in his kingdom, and where gospel opportunity is abounding.

Why focus on a ministry like this when there are so many other worthy ministries a church can pursue? Here are three reasons to consider.

First, because God cares for the elderly and those who experience affliction. “Even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you” (Isaiah 46:4). God does not neglect, discard, or disuse the elderly or persons with disabilities. He promises that his children “still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green” (Psalm 92:14). Second, as part of the Great Commission, Christ calls us to share the good news with all in our society—the rich, the poor, the young, the old, the free, and the institutionalized. Finally, many nursing home facilities are regularly seeking volunteers to provide “activities” for residents, opening the door for faithful Christian ministry where none may exist.

## Ministry Approach

At Calvary, our nursing home ministry began with simple outreach to a local facility to see if there was a need for a church ministry. That contact led to a monthly visit, which occurs between our fellowship meal and our evening service.

Our typical visit is usually attended by five church members and lasts for one hour. We begin by singing a few popular hymns from the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*, with the hymns available in large, easy-to-read print. Our team includes those who play the piano or flute to accompany the singing.

After singing, we present a simple, ten-minute message from Scripture. The message always includes our state of misery due to sin, our deliverance through Christ’s death and resurrection, the invitation to belief by faith, and encouragement to live in Christ. After the message, we close with prayer, final hymns, and time spent engaging one-on-one with each participant.

These conversations are an opportunity to build relationships and learn about needs. The Lord has used this time to bring about wonderful gospel conversations, tearful prayers, and precious moments of comforting those undergoing loss and affliction.

### Lessons Learned

Our nursing home ministry has had both highs and lows over the years. Here are some lessons we have learned.

- 1. Focus on the gospel essentials.** The time you have with residents and nursing home staff is limited and precious. Present Christ and his gospel (not you and your nice church) through Scripture, teaching, song, and conversation.
- 2. Keep your teaching short and clear.** To best serve your audience, limit your messages to a few minutes in length. This is not the time to practice full sermons or to have a detailed Bible study. Remember to speak loudly, use familiar passages, and avoid jargon.
- 3. Engage and respect all residents and staff.** Each resident should be treated with dignity. Make sure to speak individually to each person in attendance (even if they can't speak to you), listen when they express a desire to leave or need assistance, and adhere to the facility's rules and regulations.
- 4. Be open to adjustments.** Changes in plans, new facility requirements, and frequent disruptions are very common. Remember to be patient and to accept



Laura Bush, Theresa and Gerald Sisto, and Elizabeth and Daniel Bausch after a service at the nursing home

changes based on resident or facility needs.

**5. Stay accountable.** As with any ministry of the church, it is critical to have the oversight and wisdom of the session. One or more ordained leaders should be actively involved in the ministry.

**6. Trust in the Lord.** It is easy to grow discouraged with nursing home ministry. Remember that the Lord uses weak means to bring about his purpose, and his word does not return void (Isa. 55:11).

**7. Share updates with your congregations.** It can often feel like there is little news to share with your brothers and sisters. However, failing to share updates deprives your congregation of the privilege of participating through prayer and encouragement. This is the entire congregation's ministry; share

regularly and invite others to come and participate.

**8. Be in prayer.** Remember to pray for any Christians who attend your ministry, asking the Lord to encourage them and to use them. Pray for those who are not followers of Christ, that the Lord would change hearts so that many might turn and be saved. Pray also for the staff of the facility, that they would know Christ and care for the residents well.

It is glorious to see the Lord work through a simple nursing home ministry. We hope you might consider the value and opportunity such a ministry can be for you and your congregation. □

*Daniel Bausch is a deacon, and Gerald Sisto an elder, at Calvary OPC in Ringoes, New Jersey.*

### A DEACON STILL AT WORK

"This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!" you might overhear Bob McConahy say at Heritage Village, his assisted care living facility in Gainesville, Virginia. Bob has served as an OPC deacon, pianist, organist, and choir director, and he continues to look for ways to serve the Lord in retirement. The staff enters his room to see him poring over his study Bible, or praying and talking about the things of God. Recently, Bob invited our church, Acacia Reformed in Manassas, Virginia, to lead a devotional service on Sunday afternoon both to worship with and witness to the residents at Heritage Village. "Honor such men," Paul says of Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:29) because of his faithful service to God and the church.

—John Paul Holloway, pastor of Acacia Reformed in Manassas, VA



Bob McConahy

# WHY MISSIONS? PART 1

// DOUGLAS B. CLAWSON



Paul preaching at Athens (Fleetwood and Warner, 1830)

We all have our favorite stories about missions. There are the stories that have shaped your life and the stories that have shaped mine. Our thinking has also been influenced by sermons, Sunday school classes, missionary presentations, and perhaps service on a field. The timing of these and the gifts God has given us has shaped our attitudes, our understanding, and our zeal about missions.

The words “mission” and “missionary” can be used in different ways. In their narrowest sense, it is what a pastor is and does when he is planting a church or what someone does when they go overseas to help with the spread of the gospel. In their broadest sense, I want us to see that these words may be used to refer to every believer and to God’s ultimate goal for every Christian life. It is my hope that if you, as a disciple of Jesus, do not yet understand your missionary calling, you will begin to understand it through this essay; or if you were once inspired by that understanding, that you will be inspired again.

## Missions: What Is It?

From the very beginning of our thinking about the questions “who is a missionary?” and “what is missions?” we discover that we have a problem. The words “mission” and “missionary” are not in the Bible. If we look at the Greek of Acts 12:25 where the NIV uses the word “mission,” we find that it is translating the word that means *service*. And, if we look at the Greek of 2 Corinthians 11:12 where the ESV uses the word “mission,” we realize that the word was added to try to explain what the false apostles are boasting about.

Therefore, because “mission” and “missionary” are not biblical words, it is a little difficult to explain the biblical basis for missions. In the English language, the word “mission” may be used to describe any group or person who is sent for some duty or purpose. It may also be used to describe the goal of that group or person. For instance, in English, we can speak of a

military mission or a scientific mission. We also may refer to a person’s “mission in life” or describe a person as “being on a mission” when referring to their focus on a goal.

## Jesus’s Mission: Glorifying God

If we understand the word *mission* in that general sense of describing a purpose in life, then we may also say that we know what all of mankind’s mission in this world is supposed to be. We express that understanding each time we recite the first answer to the Westminster Shorter Catechism: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.” If mankind’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever, then your chief end—your *mission* or *purpose*—is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

When we focus on the first part of our mission, that is, to glorify God, we must begin by asking ourselves how it is that we glorify God. We discover what it means to glorify God by listening to Jesus’s words. In John 15:8–14, we read, “*By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love*” (emphasis added). Then in John 17:4, Jesus says to the Father: “I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.” For Jesus, glorifying the Father is far more than attending a worship service. It is that—but it is much more.<sup>1</sup>

In John 15 and 17, glorifying the Father is measured by bearing much fruit, keeping Jesus’s commandments, and doing the Father’s will. Jesus glorified the Father by doing the work that the Father gave him to do, which included speaking the words that the Father gave him to speak.

The fact that Jesus was sent into this world by the Father to do the Father’s will is made clear by Jesus’s many declarations that the Father sent him to do the Father’s will and speak the Father’s words. In John 5:30 and 6:38, Jesus declares, “I can

do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because *I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me,*” and “*I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me*” (emphases added; see also John 12:49).

### Your Mission: Glorifying God

If Jesus was sent into the world to glorify the Father by doing the things that the Father sent him to do and speaking the words that the Father gave him to speak, how ought we to glorify God? We glorify God by doing what Jesus has commanded us to do and by speaking the word that Jesus has given us to speak. This is how we achieve man’s chief end. And, if it is man’s chief end, then it is particularly our chief end, both as disciples of Jesus and corporately as his church. It is our mission.

When understood in this way, then, we also see that making disciples who glorify God is part of the mission of the church. Listen to Matthew 28:18–20: “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” In making disciples, the church teaches them to observe (obey) all that Jesus has commanded. And, considering what we saw in John 15, when disciples do what Jesus commanded, those disciples are glorifying God.

The mission of the church and our mission is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. We glorify God by doing all that Jesus commanded us to do, including teaching others all that Jesus commanded so that they, too, will glorify God by doing all that Jesus commanded us to do.

I have emphasized this perspective because anything less leads us to a shortsighted understanding of missions. Missions isn’t just a matter of making sure that others hear the gospel as we go into the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Certainly, it starts there. But those who believe and are baptized must also be taught. They must be taught to do all that Jesus has commanded them to do, so that they will glorify God.

### Your Missionary Life: You Were Sent [on a Mission]

If we understand that we have been sent into the world to glorify God by doing Jesus’s will, then we will understand that what we call missions (home and foreign) is the vehicle by which God calls and gathers disciples who will glorify him.

The Father’s sending of Jesus gives us perspective on his sending of us. In John 17, Jesus prayed, in part,

And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction,

that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. *As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.* And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. (17:11–19, emphasis added)

We have been sent by Jesus. That is, we are not from here, just as Jesus was not from here. Jesus says: “They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.” He was from heaven, and now we are from heaven. He has sent us from heaven into this world.

Having a Christian worldview of missions begins with the notion that we are missionaries who have been sent by Jesus to glorify God. We have been sent to live in the place where we find ourselves, with the people in that place, bearing much fruit by obeying Jesus’s commands. We are his missionaries from the moment that we are made new creations in Christ Jesus. Certainly, we begin as missionaries in training. We are missionaries who make mistakes (like Peter), missionaries who may need to get away for a little while (like Paul who went to Arabia; see Gal. 1:17), missionaries who sometimes want to go back home (like John Mark; see Acts 13:13), and missionaries who even in zeal and knowledge may need further training (like Apollos; see Acts 18:26). Even with these qualifications, we are Jesus’s missionaries on his mission.

*The author is general secretary of Foreign Missions.*

#### Endnote:

1. While the glory that Jesus gave to the Father by doing those things that the Father sent him to do and speaking those things that the Father gave him to speak was part of his work as Mediator to keep the covenant of works as the second Adam, we must see that we also give glory to the Father through our obedience, although it is produced by the work of the Holy Spirit and accepted only in Christ (Westminster Confession of Faith 16.2, 3, 6). Therefore, although the nature of Jesus’s obedience and our obedience is quite distinct, our obedience is made a means whereby the Father is glorified because it is an obedience that is the work of God in us and viewed by the Father through Christ apart from our corruption.

## What’s New

### // Comings/Goings

Missionary associates **Dr. and Mrs. James D. (Jenny) Knox, MD** (Grace Presbyterian Church, OPC, Columbus, OH) completed their term of service of three years and two months in Mbale and Karamoja, Uganda, at the beginning of November 2022.

# BOOK REVIEW: *REDEEMING EXPERTISE*

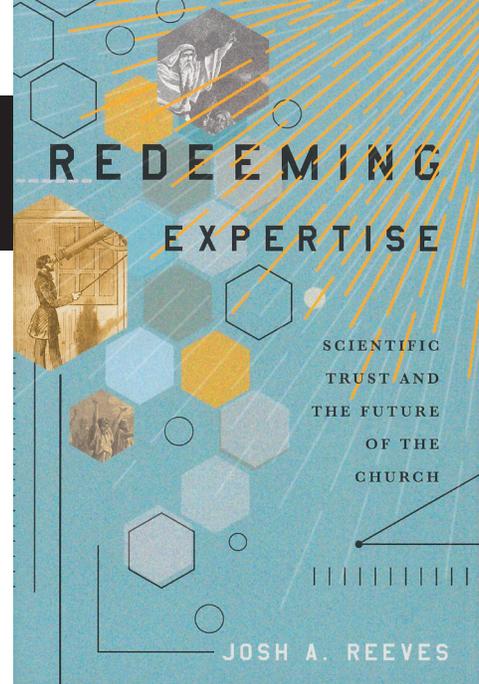
// JAMES S. GIDLEY

The title of this work by Samford University professor and philosopher Josh Reeves invites comparison to a number of works by Vern Poythress with similar titles, such as *Redeeming Science*. While Poythress is concerned with science as a body of knowledge, Reeves is concerned with the *expertise* of scientists, which includes not only their knowledge, but also the scientific practices and cultural institutions that validate it and foster the public's trust. In viewing expertise as a social phenomenon, Reeves is on solid ground. Virtually all that we know is based on the testimony of others, and the authentication of experts builds trust in our sources of knowledge.

For Poythress, the presupposition is that every sphere of human endeavor has been corrupted by sin. Redeeming one of them means that the corrupting influence of sin must be exposed, analyzed, and corrected by the gospel. For Reeves, on the other hand, the problem lies not with science but with Christians who reject it. Therefore, he gives little attention to correcting scientific expertise by the application of gospel truth. Rather, he aims to persuade evangelical Christians, whom he characterizes as anti-expert (7) and therefore populist (8), to accept the current scientific consensus. Two key scientific theories that he believes evangelical Christians should accept are evolution and global warming.

Reeves devotes a chapter to the history of Christian skepticism toward experts. He traces the development of science not in its content but in its methods and institutions. Specifically, the scientific enterprise has developed from an activity that could be pursued by solo amateurs in the seventeenth century to a huge, university-based enterprise conducting experiments that require billions of dollars of funding and dozens to thousands of scientists and support personnel in the twenty-first century. In part because of this institutionalization of science, Reeves argues, we have no choice but to trust its findings.

Reeves identifies three common reasons why Christians



mistrust experts. First, scientists are committed to naturalistic presuppositions. Second, unbelieving scientists lack the assistance of the Holy Spirit in observing and interpreting the natural world. Third, giving up intellectual autonomy will leave the church at the mercy of an intellectual elite. He devotes a chapter to each of these reasons, explaining why they are not persuasive.

Then Reeves begins to build his case for trust in experts, arguing for a middle ground between “blind trust and populist skepticism” (99). He includes a chapter on the limitations of science. At the risk of oversimplifying, Reeves’s argument can be boiled down to three principles: (a) It is impossible to know more than a handful of disconnected bits of science without trusting in the testimony of others; (b) The testimony of experts is far more valuable than the testimony of uneducated amateurs; (c) Therefore, we must have a way of identifying who the experts are.

The means of identifying experts is the public university. Reeves defends the secular university system as a truth-seeking institution, where differing viewpoints are subjected to searching critique. For this system to work, divergent viewpoints must be represented. While conceding that university faculties are politically skewed far to the left, which means that certain ideas may be dismissed without a fair hearing (162), he concludes that “nonetheless, the overall system is the best one for uncovering truth between rival groups” (165). In my opinion, Reeves underestimates the degree to which public universities have been co-opted by leftist ideology, which trades on the reputation of the university as a truth-seeking institution in the interests of authoritarian propaganda.

Reeves crystallizes his point in his tenth and final chapter:

These leaders—over half of evangelical pastors think the world is less than ten thousand years old—damage the credibility of Christianity through scientific ignorance. As Augustine says, “It is offensive and disgraceful for an unbe-

liever to hear a Christian talk nonsense about such things, claiming that what he is saying is based in Scripture.” (180)

The intellectual task for Christians is not to reject all scientific information that does not fit into traditional doctrines, but always to be reforming theology in the light of new knowledge. (184)

But Reeves is still willing to draw lines in the sand against some pretensions of modern scientists, such as the mechanistic view of psychology, the denial of the real existence of the self or consciousness, and the denial of the possibility of miracles (184). He argues briefly that these beliefs fall outside the legitimate limits of science. In my opinion, he does not give a satisfactory argument why this is not also true for at least some aspects of evolutionary theory.

I would cautiously recommend this book for pastors, elders, and college study groups who are interested in the interactions between theology and science. Disagreement with Reeves’s position on evolution should not diminish appreciation for his primary concern with the centrality of testimony as a basis for knowledge and the resulting importance of social institutions that authenticate both knowledge and expertise. Further reflection and discussion on these ideas could prove to be fruitful. The following reflections may be suggestive: (1) The theory of expertise could naturally be tied to Kuyper’s theory of sphere sovereignty. (2) The role of the church in proclaiming the truth of the gospel should be more fully explored in relation to the role of academic institutions. (3) The legal system is the institution that has given the most attention to testimony and how to evaluate its credibility. Insights from the law, applied to science and expertise, could prove to be illuminating. (4) Some cultural critics have noted that the liberal world order rests upon a technocratic elite, whose expertise often trumps individual freedom, including religious liberty. What happens when expertise is co-opted for political purposes? How do we speak truth to power when power claims to possess omniscient expertise?

*The author is a ruling elder at Grace OPC in Sewickley, PA.*

*Redeeming Expertise: Scientific Trust and the Future of the Church*, by Josh A. Reeves. Baylor University Press, 2021. Paperback, 254 pages, \$44.99 (Amazon).

## 🗨️ Out of the Mouth . . .

During family worship, I made the comment that Jesus never married. Our four-year-old was indignant. “Yes, he did!” she replied. “He married the church!”

—Adam Wells  
Middletown, PA

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

## Favorite Psalms and Hymns *Trinity Psalter Hymnal no. 296* “How Lovely Shines the Morning Star!”

*Wendy Chilton*

We are blessed to have many wonderful hymns in the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*, but none are more interesting and beautiful than those that are harmonized by Johann Sebastian Bach, especially for those who enjoy part-singing! Bach was a master at weaving together four distinctive counter melodies for soprano, alto, tenor and bass voices (“counterpoint”).

All twelve of the Bach harmonizations in the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* are examples of this counterpoint, but “How Lovely Shines the Morning Star!” is one of the best for part singers. Each of the four voices move melodically up and down in pitch, and in varied rhythm (quarter notes, eighth notes, dotted notes, etc.). If you turn back (or ahead) a few pages in the hymnal and compare them to no. 296, you will see that most tunes are harmonized in a much simpler way. The complexity of Bach’s hymns makes them wonderful choir pieces and beautiful when sung in parts by the congregation.

But Bach’s harmonizations can be a challenge for accompanists to play! If the accompanists’ goal is to help the congregation sing (yes, even in parts), then we should attempt to play all the parts. This requires careful practice! As I look through my accompanist edition, I see that I have planned and written specific fingerings only for the Bach hymns (especially no. 296 and no. 66A, with the same tune). Additionally, the accompanist should prepare the tempo carefully, so that singers have adequate time to breathe and sing the faster notes.

J. S. Bach himself said, “The aim and final end of all music should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul.” How blessed we are to have his music to sing praise to our great God!

## ☆ Congratulations

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

- **Luke Hogsed**, *Redeemer, Beavercreek, OH*
- **Samuel Hogsed**, *Redeemer, Beavercreek, OH*
- **Ruth Watkinson**, *Redeemer, Beavercreek, OH*

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

- **Michaela Brown**, *Bethlehem Reformed, Freeman, SD*

# A NEW WORK IN EAST TENNESSEE

// A. J. MILLSAPS



The Athens Reformed Bible Chapel

**M**y work as an evangelist in East Tennessee started with a question: “Are there *any* open doors for church planting in the region?”

I had been born and raised in East Tennessee, and I had come to faith in the Baptist church, which dominates the local religious landscape. Yet, in high school and college, I found my theological convictions increasingly challenged by my study of the Scriptures, and eventually, those studies landed me in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. My personal experience left me with an eagerness to share the riches of the Reformed faith with others from my little part of the world.

Then came an opportunity. Upon graduating seminary, the Lord opened the door for a year-long internship at Sandy Springs Presbyterian Church in Maryville, Tennessee, under the oversight of pastor James Ganzevoort. In God’s providence, this church was only about ten miles from my childhood home. It was the sort of opportunity that I was eager to engage. However, an internship is, by definition, limited in scope and length.

So, the question remained: “Are there *any* open doors for church planting in this part of the presbytery?” This was the question which Ganzevoort and I put to the Presbytery of the Southeast’s regional home missionary, Lacy Andrews, in the fall of 2021. However, as he explained, there were no mission works seeking organizing pastors, no core groups hoping to become a plant of the OPC, and no active leads.

## An Idea

Under these circumstances, the path of least resistance

would have been to consider the matter settled and to move on, but a lack of leads is not the same thing as a lack of needs. Regardless of whether or not there were folks out there looking for another OP church in East Tennessee, it remained true that confessionally Reformed churches made up a very small drop in a very big bucket.

As I considered the problem, it struck me that one way to overcome the challenges of church planting in East Tennessee would be to call an evangelist to one of the existing congregations, who would work alongside the congregation’s pastor, in order to gather core groups from scratch. Such an individual could simultaneously serve the established church *and* work to initiate another. In other words, what was needed was a “local home missionary,” as some have described the role since.

This was the idea which I pitched to James Ganzevoort, who had been serving as pastor at Sandy Springs since 2005. The more that we talked about the idea, the more it sounded like something worth exploring. Starting an outreach Bible study was already one of the requirements of my internship; maybe that could be the first step towards the establishment of another Orthodox Presbyterian church?

## A Call

Even if Ganzevoort and I were on the same page, there were many bridges which had to be crossed if this idea were ever to become reality. The Sandy Springs session would need to approve of it, the congregation would need to desire it and issue a call, and other denominational entities would need to help with the funding.

The people of God heartily embraced the idea. There was



an evident hunger to see the gospel go forth in our community, and this was a tangible way to make progress toward that goal. So, in due time, the congregation issued a call for me to serve as their evangelist. However, there was still an unanswered question: how would such a call be funded if Sandy Springs could not do it on its own?

Lacy Andrews had an idea. Of course, we would approach the presbytery and the OPC's Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension to see if they would be willing to support the work, as is typical in the case of mission works. But, at an early meeting, Andrews put forward a suggestion which we had not previously considered. When trying to solve a regional problem, why not try to fund it regionally?

There are three OPC congregations in the eastern portion of Tennessee: Sandy Springs in Maryville, Cornerstone in Chattanooga, and Faith in Cookeville. Located in a geographic triangle, the three congregations are each between 100–120 miles apart. So, at Lacy Andrews's prompting, we approached the other two congregations to see if they would be willing to help fund the call, and after prayerful consideration, both congregations graciously agreed to partner with Sandy Springs. Consequently, with the support of Cornerstone and Faith, I was called to serve as an evangelist at Sandy Springs.

### A Reality and a Blessing

While I would not be ordained and installed until June 2022, we began some of the work earlier, during the internship. We began considering locations for an outreach Bible study in the fall as we were having conversations about a potential call. In the hopes that this outreach Bible study could pave the way for a church plant, we decided on Athens, Tennessee.

Athens is the county seat of McMinn County, and it is located halfway between Sandy Springs in Maryville and Cornerstone in Chattanooga. We determined that this would be a strategic location for a church plant, made more strategic by the fact that we had two couples worshipping at Sandy Springs who lived closer to Athens than to Maryville. They agreed to help us get the Bible study started, and so by January 2022, we were inviting folks to a weekly Bible study at the local library. On the first Thursday in February, the Athens Reformed Bible Study commenced.

We were prepared to enjoy many weeks of Bible studies attended by only my family and the two families from Sandy Springs who had committed to participate. However, when we arrived at the library for our very first meeting, there were



*A. J. Millsaps with wife, Chelsea, and daughter*

five people already waiting for us at the door. One woman, Dianne, had seen our advertisement on Facebook and invited some friends. As was quickly confirmed, there was, indeed, a need for a greater Reformed witness in McMinn County.

Attendance waxed and waned, but due to outreach efforts and personal invitations, the group grew to the point that we could expect between twenty-five and thirty-five people to be there weekly. Ultimately, as we endeavored to sow and water seeds, God gave the growth through the study of his Word. As a result, after several months, we determined that it was time to take the next step.

On October 16, the Athens Reformed Chapel met for worship for the first time. A group of about thirty, made up of Bible study attendees and members of Sandy Springs, gathered in the local senior center to make use of the ordinary means of grace. The Athens Reformed Chapel now meets weekly on the Lord's Day.

Now, we wait expectantly for Christ to build his church in East Tennessee. As such, we pray that the Lord will soon establish a full-fledged mission work of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Athens, even as we plan to initiate other outreach Bible studies in places like Knoxville. This is not an area where the Reformed faith has historically flourished, and due to the prevalence of nominal, cultural Christianity, many are not convinced that they need to hear the gospel message at all. Yet, by God's grace, we press forward in this unusual work in the hopes that God will use our meager contributions to set up new lampstands for his glory.

*The author is an Orthodox Presbyterian evangelist serving in East Tennessee.*

### Home Missions Today

For up-to-date news and prayer requests, receive our newsletter by subscribing at [CHMCE.org](http://CHMCE.org) or scanning this QR code.



# ARISE AND SHINE

// PAUL TAVARES

*Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. (Isaiah 60:1–3)*

Darkness had covered the earth, a thick darkness the peoples. Such was the world of Israel, having endured seventy years of banishment from the Lord’s presence. Such is the estate of the world in general after being banished from the garden. Jew and Gentile alike have been lost in a night of sin and hopeless despair, even bound by death itself.

Isaiah was blessed to be called of God to announce the good news of God’s mercy.

“Arise!” the Lord declares. This declaration comes with power that brings sight to sin-blinded eyes, causes sin-deafened ears to hear and believe, and enables the spiritually broken to leap for joy; indeed, it even brings life to dry bones.

“Shine!” he commands. This is not an order to spit-polish the veneer of our lives. No, our light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon us. The source of this light is God himself: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

He has imposed himself upon this darkness and that darkness gives way to his light, like darkness giving way to the sunrise. The darkness that pervaded us is replaced by his light, for he now has taken up residence in us. We are to display his radiant glory in our lives: “In the same way, let your light shine

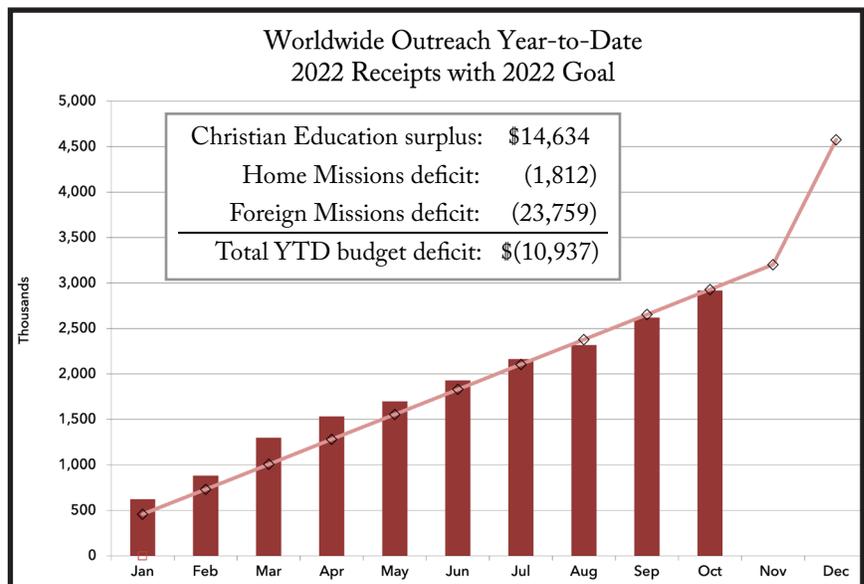
before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

The good news that Isaiah brings is also that the “nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.” Like moths are drawn to a porchlight, so too will people from every nation be drawn, not only to the Lord, but to his church, who reflects his radiant glory: “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands” (Rev. 7:9).

How will this great multitude be gathered? We have been united to Christ and commissioned by him to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19–20). We are to proclaim this good news of Christ’s enlightening, redemptive, and empowering work to all.

Worldwide Outreach brings OPC resources together to enable our collective light to shine brightly by preparing men for the gospel ministry and development of study materials (Christian Education), by supporting startup groups seeking to establish churches in communities that still sit in darkness throughout North America (Home Missions), and by making Christ known in various locations around the world (Foreign Missions). Israel of old gave joyfully to build the tabernacle. May thanksgiving compel us to give generously to him that we might joyfully participate in the building of his eternal holy temple (Eph. 2:21).

*The author was president of the Committee on Coordination.*



# DECEMBER



Tina DeJong (day 5)



The Halleys (day 6)

**1 CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda. Give thanks that Knox School of Theology has its provisional accreditation and has full classes. / Pray for an abundant **THANK OFFERING** to fund Worldwide Outreach.

**2 MARK & CELESTE JENKINS**, Placentia, CA. Pray for Resurrection's endeavor to have one-on-one Bible reading opportunities with unbelievers. / Yearlong intern **NATE (SARAH) CROFUTT** at Redemption OPC in Gainesville, FL.

**3 A. J. & CHELSEA MILLSAPS**, Maryville, TN. Pray that the Lord would bless worship services in Athens, TN. / Yearlong intern **BEN (JOELLE) CAMPBELL** at Presbyterian Church of Cape Cod in West Barnstable, MA.

**4** Associate missionaries **JAMES & ESTHER FOLKERTS**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for an elder and a deacon to be ordained in the Nakaale church. / Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**.

**5** Tentmaking missionary **TINA DE-JONG**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for missionary evangelists to serve in Nakaale and Mbale. / Yearlong intern **CHRISTOPHER (LAURA) BARNARD** at Lake Sherwood OPC in Orlando, FL.

**6 DAN & STACY HALLEY**, Tampa, FL. Pray that Bay Haven Presbyterian would foster an environment of evangelism. / Pray for sessions who are selecting young men to nominate for the **TIMOTHY CONFERENCE**, April 19-22, 2023.

**7** Associate missionaries **CHRISTOPHER AND CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda. Give thanks that the new clinic housing nears completion in January. / Pray for **MIKE (ELIZABETH) DIERCKS**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Ohio.

**8 DAVID & ASHLEIGH SCHEXNAYDER**, Scottsdale, CA. Pray for Providence's new midweek fellowship meal and education ministry. / Yearlong intern **DOMINIC (MARTHA) SILLA** at Living Hope OPC in Allentown, PA. / **MELISA MCGINNIS**, financial controller.

**9** Associate missionary **LEAH HOPP**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for wisdom in diaconal ministry as the cost of living rises with inflation. / **DAVE (ELIZABETH) HOLMLUND**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

**10 NATE & ANNA STROM**, Sheboygan, WI. Pray for the leaders of Breakwater Church to have continued vision and wisdom to reach new contacts. / Associate missionary **ANGELA VOSKUIL**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for needs of the Karamoja Outreach Education teachers. / Yearlong intern **JACOB (LINDSAY) CASH** at Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, OH.

**11 CARL & STACEY MILLER**, New Braunfels, TX. Pray for the session of Heritage as they faithfully shepherd the flock. / Pray for MTIOPC instructor **WILLIAM DENNISON** and students currently taking the apologetics class.

**12** Pray for missionary associate **JED HOMAN**, Nakaale, Uganda, laboring on several maintenance projects to support the missionaries. / Database administrator **CHARLENE TIPTON** and office manager **ANNELISA STUDLEY**.

**13 MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Praise God for efforts to bring greater cooperation among Reformed seminaries in Latin America. / Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**.

**14 CALVIN & CONNIE KELLER**, Winston-Salem, NC. Pray for wisdom as Harvest OPC seeks elder and deacon nominations. / Yearlong intern **RICHY (NEVA) BRASHER** at Escondido OPC in Escondido, CA. / Stated clerk **HANK BELFIELD**.

**15** Tentmaking missionary **JOANNA GROVE**, Nakaale, Uganda. / **MIKE & NAOMI SCHOUT**, Zeeland, MI. Pray for wisdom as Grace Fellowship considers building expansion, church planting, and staffing needs.

# DECEMBER



The Delfils (day 16)

**21 RETIRED MISSIONARIES** Cal & Edie Cummings, Brian & Dorothy Wingard, Greet Rietkerk, and Young & Mary Lou Son. / **GREGORY REYNOLDS**, editor, and **AYRIAN YASAR**, editorial assistant for *Ordained Servant*.

**22 BILL & MARGARET SHISHKO**, Deer Park, NY. Pray for wisdom and effectiveness in The Haven's outreach. / **BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for Ben as he teaches seminary students.

**23 GREGORY & GINGER O'BRIEN**, Downingtown, PA. Pray for Christ Church's faithfulness and fruit in making disciples and witnessing to the lost. / **MARK LOWREY**, Executive Director of Great Commission Publications.

**24 MR. AND MRS. M.**, Asia. Pray for God's comfort for men in prison or under house arrest for the gospel; pray also for their families. / **COMMITTEE ON DIACONAL MINISTRIES** requests prayer for all local OP deacons.

**25 HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for their family's physical, emotional, and spiritual health during very uncertain times. / Yearlong intern **SAMUELIS (MILDA) LUKOSIUS** at Covenant in Barre, VT.

**26 MELAKU & MERON TAMIRAT**, Clarkston, GA. Pray that Redeemer Mercy Ministry would be a light to the refugees they encounter. / Home Missions admin. assistant **ALLISON HILL** and Christian Education office secretary **ABBY HARTING**. / **LINDA FOH**, technical assistant for OPC. org.



The Hollisters (day 28)

**27** Affiliated missionaries **JERRY AND MARILYN FARNIK**, Czech Republic. Pray for God's provision for refugee Ukrainian believers who have returned home. / Yearlong intern **CHRISTIAN (HANNA) REPP** at Harvest OPC in San Marcos, CA.

**28 BRUCE (SUE) HOLLISTER**, regional home missionary for the Presbyteries of the Midwest & Wisconsin and Minnesota. / Yearlong intern **CHRIS (AMANDA) MAN-FREDA** at Covenant Presbyterian in Fort Worth, TX.

**29** Affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia. Pray for wisdom, patience, and healing after Mark's knee surgery. / Yearlong intern **ZACHARY JOHNSON** at Immanuel OPC in Bellmawr, NJ.

**30** Pray for **STEPHEN & CATALINA PAYSON**, Montevideo, Uruguay, as they seek opportunities for witness and hospitality where they live. / Yearlong intern **COREY (ANDREA) PAIGE** at South Austin OPC in Austin, TX.

**31** Foreign Missions general secretary **DOUGLAS CLAWSON** and administrative assistant **TIN LING LEE**. / **BRADNEY & EILEEN LOPEZ**, Guayama, PR. Pray for God to open hearts when those of Sola Escritura preach in the open air.

**16** Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Pray for the needs of the church members as they face economic hardships. / Pray for Christian Education general secretary **DANNY OLINGER** as he visits presbyteries.

**17 ETHAN & CATHERINE BOLYARD**, Wilmington, NC. Pray that the Lord would bless Heritage's fellowship groups. / US Army active duty military chaplains **JOSHUA (STEPHANIE) JACKSON** and **JEFFREY (JENNIFER) SHAMESS**.

**18 BEN & HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti. Ask that the Lord would sustain the saints in Haiti to continue to put their hope in Christ and not their secular leaders. / **JOHN FIKKERT**, director for the Committee on Ministerial Care.

**19** Pray for affiliated missionaries **CRAIG AND REE COULBOURNE** and **LINDA KARNER**, Japan. / **JAY & ANDREA BENNETT**, Neon, KY. Pray for the assimilation of prospective members and continued growth at Neon Reformed.

**20 MARK (PEGGY) SUMPTER**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest. / Short-Term Missions coordinator **DAVID NAKHLA**. Pray that short-term service opportunities would be solidified and sustained in 2023.

# NEWS, VIEWS & REVIEWS

## REFORMATION OPC ORGANIZED IN GRAND RAPIDS

On October 7, the four-year-old mission work Reformation OPC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, was recognized as a new and separate congregation of the OPC. David Noe was installed as its pastor, and Dana Dawe and Tyler Gaastra were ordained and installed as elders.

Everett Henes (pastor of Hillsdale OPC in Hillsdale, Michigan) preached, retired OP minister Dave Vander Meer gave the charge to the congregation, and Bob Van Manen (pastor of Little Farms Chapel in Coopersville, Michigan) to the officers. Rev. Noe administered the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, an offering was taken for the Committee on Home Missions, and Noe blessed the gathered congregation, members of presbytery, and friends.

## IN MEMORIAM: GEORGE W. HALL JR.

OP minister George W. Hall Jr. died October 10 at the age of 89. Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Hall attended Geneva College in Beaver Falls and then Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, graduating from the latter in 1962. That same year he was ordained by the Presbytery of the Philadelphia and served as the pastor of Calvary OPC in Middletown until 1971. After serving as a corrections facility counselor for two



George W. Hall Jr.

years in Pittsburgh, Hall went on to pastor OP congregations in Cedar Falls, Iowa; Vienna, Virginia; and Manassas, Virginia. He retired in 2005 and relocated with his wife, Kay, to Wanaque, New Jersey.



Officers and their spouses at Reformation OPC: David and Tara Noe, Tyler and Marylynn Gaastra, and Dana and Melanie Dawe

## UPDATE

### CHURCHES

- On October 7, **Reformation OPC** in Grand Rapids, MI, was organized as a particular congregation of the OPC.

### MINISTERS

- On September 16, the Presbytery of the Midwest dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Deryck C. Barson** and Bethel Presbyterian in Wheaton, IL, at the request of both.

- On September 16, **Edward E. Jensen** demitted the ministry. He was removed from the roll of the Presbytery of the Midwest and enrolled as a member of the regional church.

- On September 17, the Presbytery of the Southwest dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Glen J. Clary** and Providence Presbyterian in Austin (Pflugerville), TX.

- On September 17, **Robert A. Lotzer** demitted the ministry and was removed from the roll of the Presbytery of the Southwest.

- On September 19, **Jason P. Vartanian** was ordained as a minister and installed as associate pastor of Bayview OPC in

Chula Vista, CA.

- On September 23, the Presbytery of the Midwest dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Kent W. Harding** and Sovereign Grace Reformed Church in Doniphan, MO, at their request in view of his retirement.

- On September 23, **William D. Barnett** was installed as pastor of Sovereign Grace Reformed Church in Doniphan, MO. Barnett previously served as pastor of a Southern Baptist church in AZ.

- On September 30, **Alan D. Strange** was installed as associate pastor of First OPC of South Holland in South Holland, IL. Strange is a professor at Mid-America Reformed Seminary and previously served as associate pastor at New Covenant Community Church in Joliet, IL.

- On October 7, **David C. Noe** was installed as pastor of Reformation OPC in Grand Rapids, MI.

- On October 14, **Harrison Perkins** was installed as pastor of Oakland Hills Community Church in Farmington Hills, MI. Perkins previously served as associate pastor of London City Presbyterian Church in the United Kingdom.

- On October 18, the Presbytery of New

York and New England dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Silas P. Schreyack** and Merrimack Valley Presbyterian in North Andover, MA.

#### MILESTONES

- **Mary Frame (nee Cummings)**, 76, died October 9. She was married to Reformed theologian John Frame and was the daughter of OP pastor Calvin Cummings and his wife, Mary, constituting members of the OPC.

- **George W. Hall Jr.**, 89, died October 10. A retired OPC minister, Hall served congregations in PA, IA, and VA.

#### WOMEN'S RETREAT IN CA

*Kim Hankins*

On October 15, fifty-four women representing thirteen churches in the Presbytery of Northern California and Nevada gathered in Pleasanton, California, for their annual women's retreat, which this year featured the topic "Growing in Grace" with speaker Dr. Jonathan Master, president of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

Dr. Master began with 2 Peter 3:18 and connected growing in grace with growing in the knowledge of Christ in his ministry as prophet, priest, and king; suffering, he then explained, is a means of grace for growth. After lunch, Dr. Master examined how the means of grace in the Word, sacraments, and prayer can grow Christians in their faith and ultimately closer to Christ. We thank God for this opportunity to once again learn, grow in our faith, and fellowship with each other after a two-year hiatus.



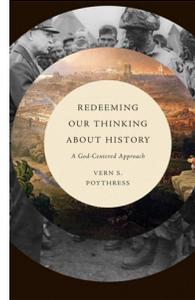
*The Presbytery of Northern California and Nevada women's retreat*

## REVIEWS

*Redeeming Our Thinking about History: A God-Centered Approach*, by **Vern Poythress**. Crossway, 2022. Paperback, 256 pages, \$20.99 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor David Graves.

Vern Poythress's book *Redeeming Our Thinking About History: A God-Centered Approach* seeks to challenge readers to be more conscientious in their study of history. Poythress has divided the book into five parts. The first four will be profitable to anyone who reads or studies history, with the fifth part aimed at those with more scholarly historical pursuits, though it will prove profitable to the generalist as well.

The first section analyzes the various aspects of the study of history. He notes that there are three aspects that make up the studying and writing of history: events, people, and meanings. Section one details the difficulties and deficiencies of many attempts to write and study history that do not adequately engage these three aspects. Section two uses the three aspects of history developed in the first section and applies them to biblical history as revealed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Section three moves past biblical history and begins to examine the historian's limitations when he seeks to understand the events, people, and meanings outside of divine revelation. Section four takes the principles developed in the first three sections and applies them to concrete examples.



The fifth and final section addresses seven historiographical approaches that a Christian might take. The first five are developed from Jay D. Green's writings. They are historical study: that takes religion seriously; through the lens of Christian faith commitments; as applied Christian ethics; as Christian apologetics; and as the search for God. The sixth is some form of providentialism, seeking to find God's hand in history. The seventh, and the only one Poythress rejects outright, is going along with the flow of non-Christian historiography. He notes that the approach one takes ought to be considered a matter of Christian liberty, so

long as it does not trespass God's Word. Along this line, he notes that the biblical standard rules out hagiography, writing about Christian heroes of the faith as if they were without fault, as an approach to studying history.

Poythress returns several times to the question of providentialism. While one may quibble with some points, his cumulative argument on this is worth mentioning. He warns against reading those events in history that one deems propitious as God's benevolent hand, while pronouncing others as God's wrathful judgments. Such conclusions need to be reached circumspectly and with humility.

This book will serve the student of history well, helping them to think through their methodological considerations from an informed perspective. It will also serve the general Christian reader who desires to be more intentional in their approach to history.

*A Gospel-Shaped Marriage: Grace for Sinners to Love Like Saints*, by **Chad and Emily Van Dixhoorn**. Crossway, 2022. Paperback, 160 pages, \$17.00. Reviewed by OP pastor J. Zachary Siggins and his wife, Sandra.

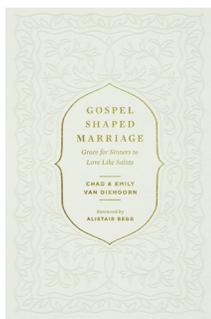
Perhaps the most straight-forward recommendation we can give for *A Gospel-Shaped Marriage: Grace for Sinners to Love Like Saints* by Chad and Emily Van Dixhoorn is that reading and talking about it together has been an encouragement to us and our marriage. Among the book's many strengths is its brevity while still cover-

ing a comprehensive range of topics, including ones that are not always found in other marriage books—relationships with in-laws, parenting together, and growing old. Though its brevity makes it very accessible, it occasionally left us wanting more (for example, we'd recommend reading chapters one and two together since chapter two clarified questions we had after chapter one).

The book's greatest strength is that it is true to its title. *Gospel-Shaped Marriage* is infused with the gospel, and the Van Dixhoorns regularly remind the reader to love their spouse as they have been loved by Christ. Real gospel grace and power are offered and practically applied to each area of marriage as they take readers through a survey of Scripture passages on marriage. Reflective readers will find themselves growing both in love for Jesus and their spouse as they read.

The Van Dixhoorns also ably and appropriately show how the pattern of the gospel provides for and empowers the respective roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives. Unique to many marriage books, they introduce this section with a chapter about mutual submission from Ephesians 5:21 and then focus on the specific callings for wives and husbands. Though the section on decision-making may seem a little rigid at times to some, their overall focus in these chapters was on the heart attitudes of submission, respect, and sacrificial love, inspired by the gospel and resulting in good works, rather than on prescribing an overly defined role for either spouse.

They are also careful to guard against potential weaknesses, even if only perceived, and, while they follow the general pattern of a work by the Puritan William Gouge, they clarify that, "not everything in it is helpful" (14). We encourage all readers, regardless of their thoughts about Gouge, to engage this book on its own terms, since he is brought in only at his most helpful, like his encouragement for each spouse to make the other's call to sac-



rificial love or respect as easy as possible, which is described as "a guiding principle of this book" (44).

Finally, the Van Dixhoorns offer the important caveat that *Gospel-Shaped Marriage* is not a resource to help those in an abusive marriage. Their purpose is to provide a "normal baseline of marriage and what it looks like to give oneself to another" (52). But for gospel-shaped people, *Gospel-Shaped Marriage* will be an excellent resource to help prepare for, heal, strengthen, or grow your marriage.

***Following God Fully: An Introduction to the Puritans*, by Joel R. Beeke and Michael Reeves. Reformation Heritage, 2022. Hardcover, 168 pages, \$15.00. Reviewed by OP pastor Carl A. P. Durham.**

In touring Yellowstone National Park, where the typical auto-tour only touches 5 percent of the park's landmass, it is invaluable to have an experienced guide, an authority on the history and meaning of that special place. In their book, *Following God Fully: An Introduction to the Puritans*, Joel Beeke and Michael Reeves successfully guide our tour through the massive work of the Puritans. Beginning with a concise history of the period of the Puritans' rise, Beeke and Reeves then convey many of their signal contributions as they summarize the lives of nine of the movement's founders.

Especially valuable is the section on "The Triune God and His Saving Work." Here we grasp the depth of devotional theology that is the hallmark of the Puritans, and there is no better example to choose from than John Owen's second volume, *Communion with God*. Most helpful is the way the authors trace the source of our worship of our triune God to the Father's love, the Son's grace, and the Spirit's

comforting fellowship. Of course, each member of the godhead fully possesses love, grace, and the power to comfort us in our sufferings. But there is an element to worship of each member of the Trinity that is tied to *each person's unique contribution* to the work of our salvation. Just as Paul highlights the Father, Son, and Spirit in 2 Corinthians 13:14, so does Owen in a powerful description of our fellowship with the triune God:

The emanation of divine love to us begins with the Father, is carried on by the Son, and then communicated by the Spirit; the Father designing, the Son purchasing, the Spirit effectually working; which is their order. Our participation is first by the work of the Spirit, to an actual interest in the blood of the Son; whence we have acceptance with the Father. (45)

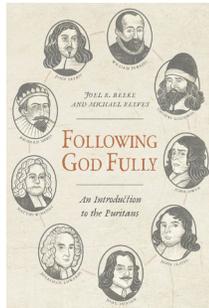
This little book now lays forth something of the glorious role of each member of the Trinity in Puritan theology. By sovereign, predestinating love, the Father

## Positions Available

**Senior Pastor:** Bethel OPC in Oostburg, Wisconsin, seeks a senior pastor with prior ministry experience and gifts in preaching, teaching, and leading God's people in worship. He will also have a passion for both edification of believers and outreach to those who do not yet know the Lord. Inquiries can be made at 920-564-2300 or at [bethel@oostburgopc.org](mailto:bethel@oostburgopc.org).

**Associate Pastor:** Grace OPC in Vienna, Virginia, seeks an associate pastor. Grace is a thriving fellowship consisting of a core of long-term members and many who are brought to the Washington DC area on temporary work assignment. The associate pastor will assist our senior pastor of fifteen years, Dan Clifford, in fulfilling a range of pastoral duties, including preaching, teaching, counseling, and directing church ministry activities for a congregation with weekly attendance of two hundred. Please contact Dan Griswold ([dtgriz58@gmail.com](mailto:dtgriz58@gmail.com)) and Rich Gaffin ([rbg3grace@yahoo.com](mailto:rbg3grace@yahoo.com)) for more information.

rules all in creation and providence. By effective, purchasing grace, the Son reveals the Father in love to us and effectively intercedes for us. He is the object of our faith and the priest whose compassion pities us in all our sins and trials. By effectively pouring out the graces of communion with the Father and the Son, the Spirit comforts and strengthens us as part of Christ's church, which is his body.



With discrimination, the work offers a bird's-eye view of Puritan teaching on the covenant commitment of the Trinity to regenerate, convert, marry, adopt, sanctify, assure, and preserve each elect member of Christ's church for their heavenly inheritance. The result is the upbuilding of the church in the means of grace and by godly church government. The final sections apply Puritan theology to daily life, offering an honest, humble, and hopeful way forward to imitate the Puritans in their wholehearted devotion to God.

***Typology—Understanding the Bible's Promise-Shaped Patterns*, by James M. Hamilton Jr. Zondervan, 2022. Hardcover, 432 pages, \$29.49 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor Andrew J. Miller.**

Every Christmas Eve, our church holds a Lessons and Carols celebration where we alternate between singing hymns of Christ's incarnation and hearing Scripture readings. The major emphasis of the biblical passages is promise and fulfillment—

God promised a Savior, a snake-Crusher, and fulfilled his promise in Jesus's coming. Our faith is strengthened by seeing such patterns—our confessional standards say as much: “the consent of all the parts” of Holy Scripture is one of the “arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God” (WCF 1.5).

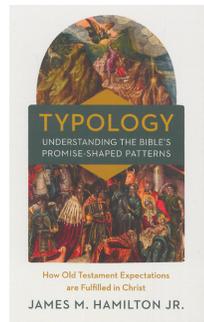
Therefore, we should be thankful for James Hamilton's *Typology*, which helpfully outlines major patterns of promise and fulfillment in God's Word. Hamilton, a Baptist seminary professor, digs into biblical texts and connects the dots between, for example, Joseph and Jesus (217). Like Joseph, Jesus's Hebrew brothers plotted to kill him, but God providentially used a suffering servant to bring salvation from death.

While advanced readers with knowledge of Hebrew will harvest most from this work, Hamilton's writing style is inviting, and any Christian can profit from his presentation of how God progressively revealed more and more of himself and his plans over time. Because this work is saturated with God's Word, it makes fine devotional material—I found reading it very enjoyable.

Hamilton rightly explains that “typology deals in repetitions” (28). In other words, biblical authors like Moses noticed that God dealt with his people in patterns and so presented future hope in terms of those same types (256). For instance, “Adam, Abraham, and Jacob all experienced exile from God's presence in anticipation of salvation and return” (258). Their stories pointed to the exodus, which in turn pointed ahead to a new, heavenly

exodus enacted by the Savior, proclaimed by Isaiah and Hebrews, among others.

Part 1 covers correspondences between biblical persons, showing how Christ is the second Adam, and our prophet, priest, and king, as well as the righteous sufferer. Part 2 covers paralleling salvation events, charting how God's Word progressively unfolds the themes of new creation, new exodus, holiness in God, and the church as the bride of Christ. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Revelation feature heavily in *Typology*, and I plan to return to it when working through those books.



As with all books, readers will have to filter out less helpful content. Hamilton's heavy use of the Old Testament literary device of chiasm to structure his own content is confusing and unnecessary (e.g., 332). Likewise, only scholars will be able to evaluate if Hamilton successfully refutes a new type of exegesis called “prosopological exegesis” (e.g., 195). Most importantly, I have my doubts that Hamilton gives sufficient attention to God as the divine author of Scripture. Again and again, he emphasizes only the human authors of the Bible and what they intended (e.g., 18, cf. 73).

Nevertheless, for most readers, the deeper hermeneutical debates Hamilton engages will fade into the background, as *Typology* pleasantly swims through the Scriptures, rejoicing in God's promises, which are all “yes” in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20). Of Jesus, Hamilton writes: “Behold how great this man is: archetype and fulfiller of the patterns, Israel's long history builds to him” (146).