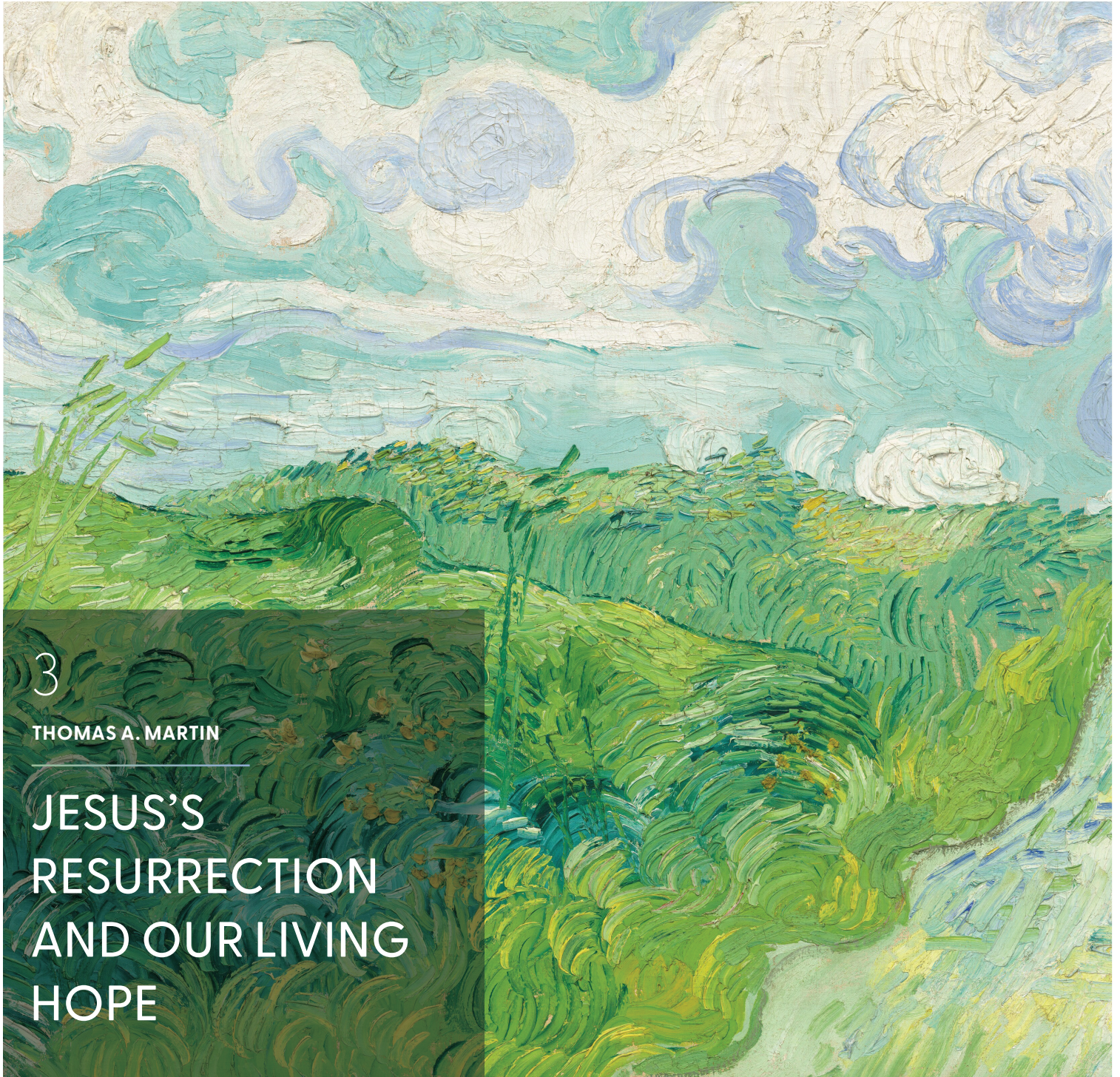


# NEW HORIZONS

APRIL 2026

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



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THOMAS A. MARTIN

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# JESUS'S RESURRECTION AND OUR LIVING HOPE



THOMAS A. MARTIN

“He [God] has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3). Wise counsel for struggling Christians finds a sure starting point with Jesus’s resurrection—who would have expected that? Peter’s apostolic charge was to tend Jesus’s needy flock, and his first epistle is shaped by that mandate. Faced with the diverse needs of many believers across a wide expanse of territory, Peter focused on Jesus rising from the dead! Yes, there’s practical counsel of the “do this” variety later in his letter, but the apostle’s point of departure is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## A FAITH-BUILDING EXERCISE

This writer is not the same Peter who had vehemently opposed even the mention of Jesus’s death. Silenced are the protestations of, “Far be it from you, Lord!” (Matt. 16:22). The Savior’s gracious work in Peter’s life has unshackled

him from the debilitating outlook shaped by what Jesus referred to as “the things of man” (v. 23). Now, with his mind set on things that are above, Peter recognizes how the humiliating death and glorious resurrection of Jesus ignite a bright hope—a blaze of heavenly light that lances through the oppressive clouds threatening to overshadow his readers.

Peter’s priorities are no less instructive for us today than for his first readers. Our urgency to deal with the painful realities of life in our fallen world drives us to push quickly past the Savior’s death and resurrection. But before we rush on to those thorny exile situations that cry out to be addressed, Peter invites us to pause to join with him in blessing our extravagantly gracious God: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” the “God of all grace” (1 Pet. 1:3; 5:10). As we appreciate and celebrate Jesus’s resurrection, we position ourselves to endure the bruising difficulties we experience. This is a faith-building exercise: It inevitably draws our thinking into alignment with the pattern our Savior has consecrated by his example. Otherwise, we forget (or try to forget) that it is only “after you have suffered a little while, [that] the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you” (1 Pet. 5:10).

Sounds simple, doesn’t it? However, like many others I need to hear Peter—a messenger for Jesus himself—tell me to take my gaze off the things of man. To give one practical example, think about how our “eye-gate,” to use John Bunyan’s term, is constantly assailed and often captured by our omnipresent screens, through which the things of man inundate our lives. We are deluged relentlessly with solutions to our problems, told insistently that our citizenship really is in this world after all, and assured that we can fix its inconveniences to make it comfortable. Simultaneously, we are urged to find satisfaction and meaning in the accumulation of ephemeral things we know cannot satisfy the deep needs of our souls. This mindset represents a hard pushback against Peter’s assertion that we are “exiles of the Dispersion” (1 Pet. 1:1), regardless of where or when we might live in this present fleeting age. To conform to the thinking of this world in this way leads us to be surprised and perplexed when fiery trials befall (1 Pet. 4:12), or unduly alarmed when our goods seem threatened.

But Peter advances a positive message to reorient bewildered and anxious souls. Jesus’s resurrection throws open the door to a new hope! Peter’s language is compelling: “[God] has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”

(1 Pet. 1:3)—a breathtaking announcement. Take a moment to ponder it, for Peter is beckoning us to pause and turn our gaze to the riches of God’s grace to us in Jesus. Many of us don’t do that as well (or as often) as we should, but it is an effective antidote to our distress. Otherwise, the raw discomfort of our messy circumstances easily claims the firstfruits of our attention. How wise and compassionate of our heavenly Father to mandate that one day in seven be reserved for us to celebrate resurrection and nurture the health of our fretful souls. Tenderly, he calls us from worry to worship and greets us there with words of peace. By Word and sacrament, he reminds us again of our Savior—crucified and risen—and all the benefits that flow from his work. Then he sends us back out into the brokenness of our world with words of benediction blessing ringing in our ears.

### A LIVELY HOPE FOR ALL

Peter’s language pulsates with vitality: We have been born again; we have a living hope! In the delightful language of the King James Version, it is a “lively” hope—not listless, lethargic, or languishing, even in the face of withering difficulties. It is a hope solidly based on Jesus’s demonstration of his power to triumph over the most impossible of adversaries—death itself! Peter is emphatic about this; these are invigorating resurrection truths Christians dare not forget. We confess with all the saints that “on the third day he arose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and sits at on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.” This is a muscular assertion that puts backbone into wavering saints and revives timid souls. We should declare this faith often and confidently in the hearing of our struggling fellow-saints—they need to hear it, and so do we!

Peter’s apostolic colleague, Paul, exemplifies the potency of this life-giving confession. He testifies that even though “we felt that we had received the sentence of death . . . that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead” (2 Cor. 1:9). This is a radical transformation for, at a stroke, our trials are morphed into tutors teaching us to rely on God who raises the dead! When we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus we confess once more God’s power over all that opposes us. We hail the destruction of the elaborate and pervasive works of the devil (1 John 3:8). Christ’s triumph is such that even our last enemy—death itself—has been destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26)! So, from a place of acute difficulty (think incarceration, defamation, discomfort, and the possibility of an actual death sentence), Paul could make his triumphant declaration, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). A lively hope indeed!

The vibrant, hope-filled language of these apostolic witnesses is not the dialect spoken in the places we are dispersed to as the elect exiles of heaven. The vernacular of our society reeks of nihilism, confusion, and hopelessness. Our unbelieving friends inhabit the same broken world as us, often experiencing similar bewildering trials, but they do so bereft of resurrection hope. What a tragedy—and what an opportunity! Trial in all its varied forms continually exercises the hearts of our fellow image-bearers and constantly wells up in conversation. Inevitably, followers of Jesus will be asked about their response to it. Peter primes us to be ready for the questions: “Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet. 3:15).

Significantly, Peter clarifies that he is not advocating angry polemic, harsh name-calling, or clever put-downs (nor, for that matter, is he invoking deft argumentation of the sort that eludes many of us). Instead, he tells us to testify to our hope “with gentleness and respect” (1 Pet. 3:15). This is crucial instruction on tone as well as content. Peter is looking for the fruit-of-the-Spirit-flavored response that is one of the most credible ways we reflect Jesus and shine as lights in the world.

This outward-looking posture pivots us to a ripe harvest field and sends us there equipped for resurrection-shaped conversation. Christians can dialogue about the hardships of the present age with the fluency that comes from personal knowledge of its myriad bitternesses. But by God’s grace (and he is the God of all grace), we confess that we have a Savior who “was made manifest in the last times for the sake of [those] who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that [our] faith and hope are in God” (1 Pet. 1:20–21). With the eye of faith, we can look on adversity knowing that all things work together for our good (Rom. 8:28) and affirm with Spurgeon that, for the Christian, “Ill to him is no ill, but only good in a mysterious form” (*The Treasury of David*).

For that reason, Peter is quick to remind us that the full benefit of Jesus’s resurrection is not found in this life. With pastoral intuition, he cautions against courting disappointment by seeking an over-realized eschatology. On the contrary, faith looks beyond the grave “to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:4). Absent those eschatological benefits, we would remain in a pitiable condition, but Christ has indeed risen from the dead and is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Cor. 15:19–20). Jesus’s resurrection simultaneously secures and heralds the coming joys of a glorious harvest time so that “those who sow

in tears shall reap with shouts of joy!” (Ps. 126:5). This is an invigorating reminder for missions-minded believers laboring in rocky soil!

### FOCUS ON A GLORIFIED JESUS

It is only at the consummation that the benefits of our union with Christ ripen and come to full flower, for (to use the language of John Calvin), what “was begun in the Head . . . must be completed in all the members” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 2, 990). The writer to the beleaguered Hebrew congregation makes practical pastoral use of this when he exhorts his readers to run with endurance the oft-difficult race that is set before them. Far from using this racetrack imagery merely as a call for his congregation to put forth greater effort, he directs them instead to look beyond the finish line to the resurrected Christ, the founder and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:1–2). We are being taught to endure as seeing him who is invisible, just as Moses did (Heb. 11:27). This intentional focus on the glorified Jesus is a vital discipline of the Christian life.

The apostle specifically commissioned by Jesus to feed his sheep (John 21:17) fulfills his mandate well when he affirms the soul-sustaining effects of a faith fixed on the resurrected Jesus:

*Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Pet. 1:8–9)*

With this, Peter assures us that Jesus’s resurrection has set in motion a train of events that will reach an inevitable climax—nothing less than the vindication of our faith in our Redeemer and the salvation of our souls! We can have no doubt about this, for we, “by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet. 1:5).

Cross-bearing disciples keep in mind that the glories to come are no less real than their present, ever-so-tangible trials. However, those coming glories are of such splendid character as to utterly eclipse what we may have to endure now. Paul voices his own perspective when he writes that “this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen” (2 Cor. 4:17–18). And, lest we suppose that these trials are random misfortunes, Peter assures us that the unfathomable wisdom of God deems them to be necessary tests of the genuineness of our faith (1 Pet. 1:6–7).

Peter paints a bright picture of the inheritance secured by the resurrected Christ. It is “imperishable, undefiled,

and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:4). This is an inheritance that is profoundly different from earthly treasure with its irremediable susceptibility to the depredations of moths, rust, and thieves (Matt. 6:19).

As quickly as he draws attention to the inviolable permanency of the believer’s inheritance, Peter pivots briskly to highlight the believer’s security. We, “by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet. 1:5). Both the heirs and the inheritance are secured by Jesus’s resurrection. How can it be otherwise when we are indissolubly united to Jesus and he himself is our inheritance? Peter’s great confidence rests on the fact that all these elements are profoundly and inextricably interrelated at the deepest level. Paul binds them together in his assertion that we are “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom. 8:17).

Once again Peter is directing us towards the ordinary means of grace which fortify us against deception and discouragement. Our baptism testifies that we have died with Jesus. Now we are raised with him to walk in newness of life in confident anticipation of a resurrection like his (Rom. 6:4–5). What an encouragement for those grappling with such trials as physical pain, declining faculties, or the loss of believing loved ones! We do well to improve our baptism “by drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized” (Westminster Larger Catechism Q. 167). Likewise, we gather around the Lord’s Table to taste the comforting goodness of our God and the sweetness of his grace when our teeth have been set on edge by the bitterness of life. As we do so, we savor the food that endures to everlasting life—a substantial alternative to the unhealthy diet this world offers! At the same time, the tunnel vision that fixates on trials has its gaze widened and uplifted to take in the Savior’s atoning death and his triumphant return in glory. Blessed indeed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! **NH**

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# THE BRIDE OF CHRIST IN JOHN AND REVELATION



DANIEL R. SVENDSEN

In addition to his three epistolary letters, the Apostle John gave us two great major works, the Gospel of John and the Apocalypse, which is known more commonly as the Book of Revelation. Both books contain depths that cannot be exhausted in a single lifetime. Yet the Lord has placed treasures within them for the good of his people, and with his help we may discover riches that strengthen faith, deepen hope, and stir love.

In recent years I have been blessed as I have explored the possibility that John's Gospel and his Apocalypse share striking and intimate connections. Dr. Warren Gage has explored this hypothesis in his book *John's Gospel: A Neglected Key to Revelation?* where he traces remarkable links between the two. Other authors and scholars have

recently explored avenues that interact with Gage's work and further the conversation. While we need not embrace every proposal, their work can help us see fresh dimensions of the unity and beauty of Scripture.

## CHIASTIC STRUCTURE

Before we consider these connections, a brief word on structure will be helpful. A chiasm is a literary pattern far more familiar to ancient readers than to modern ones. It is a way of shaping a story, speech, or letter so that it ascends toward a central point of emphasis and then descends by visiting the same themes in reverse order.

There are many advantages to communicating this way, one of which is that we gain new insights on the same themes in light of the larger unfolding of the story being told.

Gage proposes that both books unfold in a chiasmic pattern, and that they do so in a corresponding way. In other words, the end of Revelation mirrors the beginning of the Gospel, and the end of the Gospel mirrors the beginning of Revelation, a phenomenon he calls "parallel correspondence."

If this is so, then the center of each book becomes especially significant. And indeed, in both John 12 and Revelation 12 (almost precisely the middle of both books), we find striking points of contact. In Revelation 12, the enemy of God and his people, the Dragon, is cast out of heaven, and in fury turns his attention against the saints on earth. At the same time, a young child is born, who is caught up to God and his throne. How unexpected: The creature that symbolizes strength and terror loses his place of power, while the newborn child, a symbol of weakness and dependence, is exalted to heaven.

John's Gospel is key to understanding this paradox. At the very center of that book, Jesus announces that his hour has come. It is his time of suffering, crucifixion, and subsequent glory. He declares:

*Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. (John 12:31–32)*

Here the same themes emerge: the dark ruler of this world cast down, and the One who has walked in humility being made ready for his ascension into glory and blessedness. Yet Jesus's being "raised up" refers not just to the ascension but to being crucified on a Roman cross, which is an image of weakness, shame, and apparent defeat. In both books, victory is won through suffering, exaltation through humiliation, and the triumph of God's kingdom through the seeming weakness of the Lamb.

## THE GREAT REVERSAL

This “great reversal” is the story being told in both John and Revelation. It is the story of the Scripture itself, the story of Christ and his people. It is the story of sinners drowning in sin and despair, then somehow being rescued by the One who descended into unfathomable humility and was unexpectedly exalted to the highest place.

In other words, the story of the Savior directly connects to the story of the saved. His suffering before glory reminds us that we must follow his Lordly example. The way of the cross is the way to life.

When we connect this pattern to the central emphases of John and Revelation, the picture becomes even clearer:

*Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” . . . these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:29, 31)*

*To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. (Rev. 2:7)*

*Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” (Rev. 14:12–13)*

John writes so that we might believe, Revelation is given so that we might endure in that belief. We are encouraged to both believe and endure as we take our place in the story God has written and is writing in the world.

I would like to explore a few themes that are deeply enriched by searching both John and Revelation together.

## THE BRIDEGROOM COMES FOR HIS BRIDE

As we have seen, in the chiasmic structure, the “ends” of John and Revelation correspond to their “beginnings,” and nowhere is this clearer than in the rich matrimonial imagery of Jesus and his bride.

In John 3, John the Baptizer identifies Jesus as the Bridegroom, implying that he has come for his bride. Yet this theme remains largely undeveloped in the Gospel itself. Only at the end of Revelation do we meet the bride who comes out of heaven, adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2).

Behind John’s declaration in chapter 3 stands the glorious opening chapter of the Gospel, where the Bridegroom’s journey is first revealed: He has come all the way from heaven in order to find this bride. There we read that the eternal Word tabernacled among men (John 1:14), another picture that finds its fulfillment in Revelation 21:3: “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with man. He will

tabernacle among them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them” (Gage’s translation).

Gage observes, “The opening chapters of the Gospel and the closing chapters of the Revelation tell the story of the Son of Man as a Heavenly Bridegroom who leaves His Father’s house to dwell among mankind in search of a bride” (100).

The attentive reader will notice how both books echo the opening chapters of Genesis: “*In the beginning* was the Word” (John 1), then in Revelation 22:2: “on either side of the river, the *tree of life* with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month” (emphases added). This theme of bridegroom and bride is also rich in Genesis symbolism. Jesus is showing us that it is not good that man should be alone. Here is the true Man, the perfect Man, who has come to be united to the bride whom he loves, and she will find her everlasting joy in the One who came for her.

We were not made to be alone, and these two books tell us that not only will you not be alone, but for all eternity you will be with the only One who can satisfy, and, amazingly, he came for you because he loves you. This is a Savior whom the saved can do nothing but love. But indeed, we love him because he first loved us.

## A WOMAN FINDS HER SAVIOR

Another interesting thread has to do with women who are brought out of earthly (often sexual) sinfulness into divine redemption, who then live unto the joy of salvation.

We begin with the well-known story of the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. Her past is marked by a web of sin, presented to an almost ridiculous degree: “You have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband” (v. 18). Divorce, adultery, fornication—all are piled together in a way that often provokes a visceral reaction of disgust from the religious. But surely John has not introduced her so that we might despise her.

Jacob is mentioned twice in the passage: Jesus meets this woman at “Jacob’s well,” and the woman questions whether Jesus might be “greater than . . . Jacob.” Though not at the same well, we remember that Jacob first found his lovely wife Rachel at a well in Paddan-aram (Gen. 29) and that Isaac’s wife Rebekah was also found at a well (Gen. 24). Wells are places where matches are made. What if here John is giving us a picture of the heavenly Bridegroom and the bride?

But could it be? The holy and spotless Son of God, keeping company with such a woman? A text like this summons us to the well of God’s mercy and grace, the one who gives the water of life freely to the thirsty. What mercy runs to meet the sinner!

Revelation reinforces this theme. If the two books unfold chiastically, then on the “descent” of Revelation we should expect a counterpart to John 4. And indeed, we find a woman—though not the one we might expect. Revelation 17 introduces the prostitute of Babylon, defiled through her immorality with the kings of the earth. She is not redeemed like the Samaritan woman. And yet, in the very next chapter, we hear a surprising call: “Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues.’” (Rev. 18:4). Here is the gospel invitation: leave behind the woman of the great city, come out of her corruption, and be washed clean in the blood of the Lamb. Come and be made ready for the Savior, as a bride adorns herself for her husband.

This theme reminds us of that grand and glorious gospel truth: We who make up the Bride of Christ have our origin in Babylon. But, just as the woman at the well, we have “come out of the city” to meet the Savior and receive the waters of life.

The two women of Revelation correspond to the “two” women we meet in John 4: there is the woman who came to the well with five divorces and a mess of immorality, and the woman who leaves as a picture of this: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17).

Gage captures this beautifully:

*Christ redeems the Samaritan woman, in spite of her impure past, and transforms her into a picture of the bride of Jesus. Her thirst having been satisfied (John 4:28), she leaves the One she loves at the well, going back into the village to share with everyone the love she has found without cost. And so she calls for the people, any who thirst for living water (John 4:10), to come out of the city to meet Jesus, who gives so freely by the well of waters (John 4:29–30). In this she conforms to the picture of the bride in Revelation, who invites all who thirst to come out of the city (cf. Rev 18:4) and partake of the water of life without cost (Rev 22:17). (59–60)*

Our origin is within the world, within the filth, but as we come to the well of living water, we are forever changed, and forever we live and exist to put his excellency and the power of his grace on display.

“Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did,” the Samaritan woman says (John 4:29). For those who know themselves, such a statement is not immediately comforting. And yet, in Christ, that is precisely where comfort is found. He tells all that we have ever done, and then he cleanses us of all we have ever done, and all we ever will do.

## THE BRIDE WHO HEARS HER NAME

Finally, the Gospel ends with another redeemed woman, Mary Magdalene, discovering the risen Savior. Luke tells us she had been delivered from seven demons, redeemed from deep darkness to become an instrument of light. And in John’s Gospel, it is Mary Magdalene—whose testimony would not stand alone in the public square—who first encounters the risen Christ.

Why all the attention on this woman lingering in the garden and then encountering the risen Lord? With our John-Revelation lens more fully developed, we might expect this to be a capstone picture of the heavenly marriage to come.

Thinking that the tomb has been raided and the body of her Lord has been stolen, Mary stands outside the tomb weeping.

*Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary.” (John 20:15–16)*

With a single word, the risen Lord turns her sorrow into joy, and her weeping into laughter. He calls her by name. The One who conquered death reveals himself not first to a king, a priest, or a council of elders, but to a redeemed woman in a garden, a glorious echo of Eden and a foretaste of the new creation.

If John and Revelation correspond, we should expect a parallel, and we find it in the promise of Revelation 21: “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (v. 4).

What Mary tasted in that moment is what the Bride will know fully on the last day. When we are united to our Bridegroom and behold the immeasurable riches of his grace, he will sweep us up, as the one he came to find, the one he came to save, and he will wipe away every tear from our eyes. As Mary did, we will joyfully cry out, “Rabboni!”

Let Geerhardus Vos give the final word, as he writes:

*He shall also come again to show Himself to us as He did to Mary, to make us speak the last great “Rabboni,” which will spring to the lips of all the redeemed, when they meet their Savior in the early dawn of that eternal Sabbath. (Grace and Glory, 107) NH*

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# SPECIAL NEEDS FAMILIES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST'S CHURCH



ADRIAN R. CRUM

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus calls us to include a wide variety of guests at our tables: “When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you” (Luke 14:13–14). For many of us, hospitality is a matter of calculation—we tend to invite those who move in our circles, those who can reciprocate, or those we believe fit the social rhythms of our lives. But as Christians, Jesus invites us to different table fellowship. He calls us to a community that honors the weak and recognizes every member as a necessary part of his body.

Recently, I had the privilege of hosting a conversation for *The Reformed Deacon* podcast with several brothers and sisters from across the Orthodox Presbyterian Church who live at the crossroads of faith and disability (releasing this month at [thereformeddeacon.org](http://thereformeddeacon.org)). What began as a discussion for deacons quickly broadened into a vital lesson for every member of the covenant community. How do we move toward families with special needs—not as pity projects, but as essential brothers and sisters in Christ?

## THE IMAGE OF GOD: THE FOUNDATION OF SERVICE

Our service to families with special needs must begin with a robust theology of the image of God. It is easy to fall into the trap of valuing people based on their function—what they can contribute, how beautifully they sing, or how productive they appear. But Rev. Mike Schout, pastor of Grace Fellowship in Zeeland, Michigan, whose brother Stephen lived with a lifelong seizure disorder, reminded us that dignity is intrinsic, not functional.

“These individuals are made in the image of God and have needs, but also have wonderful gifts to share. They’re real, they’re people to know, they’re people to ask questions of. Often, in my case, Stephen was the one ministering to me, not the other way around,” Schout said.

When we view Christ’s treasured people through the lens of their disability, we miss them as people. When we view them as a fellow image-bearer, we see a friend, a fellow pilgrim, and a gift to Christ’s church.

## MOVING PAST THE “FIX-IT” MENTALITY

For many well-meaning Christians, the first instinct when encountering a family with special needs is to help “fix” the situation. We want to offer medical advice or try to solve behavioral outbursts. However, Rev. Eddie Mercado, an associate pastor at Harvest OPC in Wyoming, Michigan, whose son, Calvin, was born with non-verbal autism, cautions us against this posture.

“As a deacon (or congregant), you have to recognize that you are not Jesus. And you ultimately cannot fix the problem of disability. Jesus promises to do that. If a deacon comes to a particular family or an individual with a disability trying to fix the problem, it’s going to lead them to frustration, perhaps even despair. And it will also keep that deacon from seeing the person across from them as a human, an image bearer,” Mercado cautions.

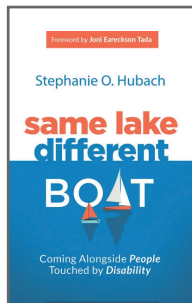
Our role is not to be their Savior, but to extend the love of *our* Savior. This requires humility that acknowledges we are all broken, though in different ways.

Eddie and Hilary Mercado and family; Calvin is far left



## SAME LAKE, DIFFERENT BOAT

Author Stephanie Hubach's concept, spelled out in her book *Same Lake, Different Boat* (P&R Publishing), is a helpful tool. We are all in the "same lake" (the fallen world), marred by sin and its effects, all in need of the same Savior. However, we are in "different boats"—and some families navigate waters that are significantly choppy due to specialized challenges.



Nikki Gotch, a member of Harvest OPC in Wyoming, Michigan, teaches a Wonderfully Made Sunday school class at Harvest OPC. In this class, students are taught the same Scriptures as any other Sunday school, but the delivery is adapted. Whether using an iPad talker or picture selection, the goal remains the same: the Christian nurture of covenant children. By providing

these specialized environments, the church recognizes the "different boat" while keeping everyone in the "same lake" of worship and fellowship.

"We should avoid two extremes: treating people with disabilities as completely different or, conversely, ignoring the unique and often challenging circumstances that they face," Gotch said.

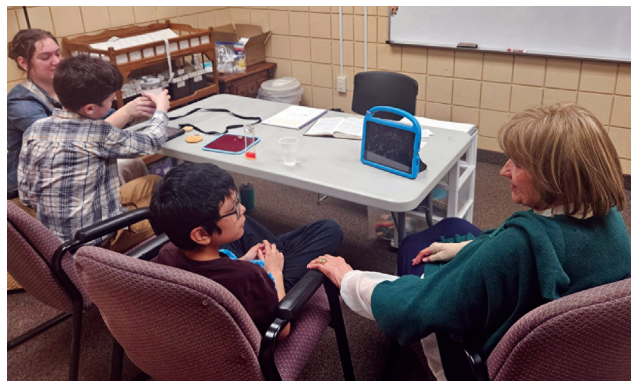
## CREATING A CULTURE OF WELCOME

For a family with a child who might make "strange" noises or struggle with sensory overload, the fear of judgment is a significant barrier. Hillary Mercado, Eddie's wife and mom to Calvin, said that personal engagement breaks down these walls of isolation. "Calvin often seems to be in his own little world, but he knows the people that take the time to engage with him, showing him love and kindness. When you remove the barrier of, 'oh, there's someone who we pity because he can't talk to me,' [you realize that] he has his own personality and his own way to get to know you," she explained.

A welcoming culture is built when congregants intentionally slow down to learn a person's likes and dislikes and warmly greet those who are non-verbal. A simple offer to sit with a child, enabling a parent to fellowship more freely, can mean the world to a family with a special needs member. Hillary notes that even if a family says "no" to an offer of help, the gesture communicates to them that they are loved and seen.

## PRACTICAL STEPS FOR THE BODY

How can we, as a denomination, grow in this? Naomi Schout, Mike's wife, has taught adult special needs classes



*The Wonderfully Made Sunday school class at Harvest OPC*

for four years. She points to the power of including members with special needs in a variety of service opportunities, once you learn their strengths and gifts.

"There are definitely ways to be creative, to involve each person. In our church, one woman [with special needs] has 'buddied up' with a couple to sit behind the welcome desk," described Naomi.

Service should not be a one-way street. When we find ways for members with special needs to serve—whether as greeters, in a card ministry, or as "prayer warriors" who take requests deeply to heart—we acknowledge the intrinsic dignity of their calling as members of Christ's body.

## A CALL TO ACTION

Parents of special needs children walk through a multitude of difficulties: insurance battles, specialized diets, sleep deprivation, and the constant navigation of a world not built for them. God's people can help to bridge this gap in a few important ways:

- *Prioritizing Marriages*—offering specialized childcare so parents can have a date night;
- *Physical Accessibility*—ensuring that the building does not have "hidden" barriers (including heavy doors, light switches that are too high for the wheelchair-bound, or a lack of sensory-friendly spaces);
- *Website Communication*—explaining clearly that people of all abilities are welcome in the service.

As we look forward to the day when every tear is wiped away and every brokenness is healed, may we live with anticipation for Christ's return. I pray our churches will grow into communities where "the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind" are not just invited to the feast but are recognized as the very ones we cannot do without. **NH**

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*The author is associate pastor of Harvest OPC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and member of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries.*

# REVIEW: ACCESSIBLE CHURCH BY SANDRA PEOPLES

STEPHEN J. TRACEY

This is a book written to help your church minister to people with disabilities. The emphasis is not on being a disability expert, rather, the “goal is the gospel.” Sandra Peoples writes from personal experience: She had a sister with Down Syndrome and has a son on the autism spectrum. She also writes from years of experience serving the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention as their disability ministry consultant and helping churches around that state start, and strengthen, disability ministries.

## THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Chapter 1 lays a foundation, a theology of disability, that highlights our creation in the image of God. Peoples briefly notes, “The fall and sin distort our ability to reflect God perfectly, but the image of God remains in each person” (9). She reminds us that “being born with a disability or developing one later in life is not a sign of faithlessness or weakness on our part or a mistake or anger on God’s part. Disabilities may be results of the fall, but they are still part of God’s plan and his purpose for our lives” (13). She draws attention to God’s plan, purpose, provision, and promise. It is a helpful beginning, but in light of the spread of “disability theology” as a movement, I encourage further reading and offer several suggestions below.

Chapter 2 addresses the fact that people with disabilities and their families are often missing from churches. Peoples does not attack us with a guilt stick, but the irony is that most of us are unaware of the absence. She quotes a recent survey,

*According to a Lifeway Research study done in 2020, “Nearly every pastor (99 percent) and churchgoer (97 percent) says someone with a disability would feel welcomed and included at their church.” When special needs families saw that survey result, they felt a disconnect between what these pastors believe is true about their churches and what they had personally experienced. (25)*

The fact is, we sometimes struggle to minister to people with physical or cognitive disabilities, learning disabilities, and mental health conditions.

## SETTING UP A SPECIAL NEEDS MINISTRY

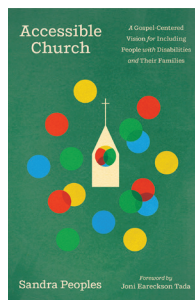
In chapters 3, 4, and 5, Peoples outlines “how to set up a ministry that is inclusive and meets the diverse needs of children, teens, and adults with disabilities. When we

approach special-needs families and ask how we can serve them, we’ll be ready with options to adjust for accessibility” (47). The goal, of course, is to share the good news about Jesus. We are to take the gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16:15), and we are to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19). These chapters contain a wealth of wisdom. Though they often assume a “disability/children’s ministry team,” there are practical suggestions that can be used in organizing Sunday school, VBS, and thinking carefully about ways to help people. Peoples covers areas such as safety, classrooms and classes, and training leaders and volunteers.

There is an excellent section on “Behavior Challenges and Solutions” (101–104).

Chapter 6 looks at whole-family inclusion, emphasizing strengthening marriages and supporting siblings. Disability puts enormous strains on a family, and pastoral care is not simply about serving one person, but whole families. Central to this chapter is the importance of discipling families in the gospel. Note this helpful insight:

*Maybe they had unknowingly bought into a prosperity-gospel message, believing that if they did everything right, God would bless them with healthy kids, and now they are rethinking everything since life didn’t go according to their plan. They have to evaluate what they believed to find out the actual truth that will be powerful enough to get them through life as caregivers. In this season, parents need three things: They need a theology of disability based on Scripture,*



Crossway, 2025.  
Paperback, 200 pages,  
\$19.99.

*they need grace as they rebuild their trust in God and his goodness, and they need solid, biblical resources. (119)*

Chapter 7 is titled “Beyond Children’s Ministry” and as such reveals that most of this book is about ministry to children with disabilities. It is not always obvious that children with disabilities become adults with disabilities, and churches often struggle to reshape pastoral care through that transition. It is all too easy to continue to treat people as though they were children.

The final chapter discusses ways to grow this ministry and includes helpful ideas on how to communicate (including on your website) that your church is accessible. There are good ideas on outreach.

### GLORIFYING GOD WITH ONE VOICE

This is a very helpful little book. It does not ooze with Reformed theology, but it breathes with simple gospel practicalities. The language used throughout is of a particular form and model of church that assumes large, well-organized, staff-run, program churches. For churches that approach church in an ordinary-means-of-grace way, much of this language will sound foreign. Sometimes she uses the language of special education:

*Because every child is unique, we have developed ISPs for each one—individual spiritual plans. Similar to what the students have at school under their IEPs (individualized education programs), our ISPs take into consideration their likes, dislikes, strengths, goals, and behaviors. We decide on the goals after we get to know the student and by talking to the parents about what goals they have while their child is with us at church. (97)*

We may hesitate at the language of an ISP, but it is good to have a pastoral plan for the care of every sheep and lamb under our care. What she suggests is good pastoral practice.

At the beginning of the book Peoples says, “If you’re going to read just one book about inclusion and accessibility, it should be the Bible” (7). She is right, of course. I would suggest, however, that you read this book, and your Bible, and Michael S. Beates’s *Disability and the Gospel*, Stephanie O. Hubach’s *Same Lake, Different Boat*, and OP pastor George C. Hammond’s *It Has Not Yet Appeared What We Shall Be*.

I recommend that pastors, elders, deacons, and Sunday school teachers read and adapt this book to their own congregations. Our aim is not to segregate and separate, but that together we may “with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus” (Rom.15:6).

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*The author is pastor of Lakeview OPC in Rockport, Maine.*

# SUFFERING UNTO GLORY

Excerpts from the *New Horizons* archives of saints alive in Christ while tasting the futility of this world.

**New Horizons vol. 4, no. 4 (April 1983)**

**by Polly Edwards, OP member, on hospice care**

*It was not because I had time on my hands that I became involved in the hospice program a little over a year ago. In fact I was immersed in ministries within our church. It was the work of the Holy Spirit which very decisively awakened me, as a member of the Body of Christ, to see the responsibility he has given each of us to serve the community around us. I became aware that the only place I was really doing the Word of God was within the church. And I was so comfortable!*

But over a period of time everything I read in Scripture and elsewhere seemed to jump out at me, convicting and challenging me. . . . The words of the Lord from Matthew 25 came to me over and over again: “I was hungry . . . thirsty . . . a stranger . . . needed clothes . . . sick . . . in prison” and “whatever you did not do . . . you did not do for me.” The Spirit also used Isaiah 58 to disquiet me and make me realize again that I must be willing to lay down my life to be used for others in their needs. And surely the hungry, the wandering, and the naked spoken of are not only found within the church but are everywhere about us. And so I started praying, asking first that God would make me willing to be obedient to all I heard him saying to me in his Word. Then I prayed for wisdom to know where he wanted me to serve. An ad in our local paper was the answer to that prayer; and so it was that I began a training program for hospice. . . .

My greatest personal encouragement has been to see firsthand what dying grace is. Although I haven’t feared death itself, I have feared the process of dying. But now I see the reality of God’s grace being sufficient.

### CONGRATULATIONS

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

- **Joshua Denny, Redeemer, Dayton, Ohio**

# GOSPEL AMBITION, REAL HUMILITY AS NEW GENERAL SECRETARY

JUDITH M. DINSMORE

This month, Benjamin Hopp, OP regional foreign missionary, will be installed as the new general secretary for the Committee on Foreign Missions, to serve alongside current general secretary Douglas Clawson for six months until Clawson's retirement in September.

One Sunday last fall when Ben and Heather Hopp were home in Florida and considering this big change, they went, as usual, to church, where in the morning and evening sermons Ben found the precise expression of his own longings.

First, in the morning, the Hopp's pastor, Joel Fick, preached from Romans 15 on Paul's gospel ambition to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

"I have that sense," Ben said. "The [general secretary] work really excites me, in terms of just seeing what God is doing spiritually around the world." The Hopp's had just come from Africa, where Ben lived in Uganda but traveled regularly to multiple countries to meet with churches, build relationships, and teach. He witnessed the Lord's work in areas that the OPC has yet to labor but where there are exciting opportunities. "We have to have this gospel ambition so that it just pushes us forward by the Spirit's power," Ben explained.



*Ben and Heather Hopp with their daughter Esther*

is a huge job and responsibility," Ben reflected. He feels, with Moses, that he can't do it on his own. Working as regional foreign missionary had been humbling as well as exciting—when you travel to multiple cultures and try to communicate in languages not your own, "you are constantly making mistakes."

On that Sunday, Ben saw Paul's gospel ambition and Moses's sense of inadequacy mirrored in his own experience. "It was good for me to see that. We need to desire big things and pray that God would do big things, but there is a real humility that is needed," he concluded.

## GOD'S PREPARATION IN HAITI

Ben, as well as the committee, sees that God has been at work to prepare him for the call. Growing up in an evangelical home in Canada—you can still hear his accent—Ben went to Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and was ordained in 2003. Four years later, the OPC's Committee on Foreign Missions called him to be a missionary evangelist to Haiti, where the Hopp's labored for almost twenty years.

As he looks back at the years in Haiti, one of the lessons that Ben predicts will serve him well as general secretary is flexibility. "As you work on the mission field, things are always changing," he said. Daily schedules are in flux

Then came the evening service. A guest preacher opened Exodus 4, where God is calling Moses. Moses responds that it is too much, that he can't speak well, and would God please send somebody else. "This [the call as general secretary]



*Ben with Reformed believers in Ethiopia*



*The Hopps in 2007, their first year of missionary service in Haiti*

because life is just more unpredictable: “Cars don’t start. Boats don’t run. People don’t always show up.”

More seriously, political landscapes can shift. Readers of this magazine will be familiar with the downward spiral into gang control that has overtaken Port-au-Prince and other areas of Haiti. Many Haitian believers are at risk even in traveling to church, and it was no longer advisable for the Hopps to continue living there—a deeply challenging turn of events.

“That need to be flexible, even though I didn’t always like it, has prepared me for this new role,” Ben reflected. Not only must the committee pivot as needed based on changing circumstances, but the general secretary also needs understanding for the missionaries and church plants doing the same.

Another aspect of ministry in Haiti has prepared Ben for service as general secretary: responding to diaconal needs. He spent a third of his time there responding to diaconal requests that came either through the church or through chance encounters and people in need coming to their gate.

“I hope I’ve learned something from all those decisions over the years, some of them good and some of them bad: how to balance out the compassion side of diaconal work and the wisdom side,” Ben said. As the OPC receives diaconal requests from various churches and denominations through its foreign missions work, he will need the discernment he learned as a missionary.

## **WORKING IN AFRICA**

When the Hopps arrived in Africa from Haiti in 2024, the transition was challenging. But immediately he and his family were also struck by the similarities between

the two. Much of Haiti’s population is of West African descent, captured and enslaved during the French colonial era. Many cities that they visited in Uganda felt not so different from Haiti—minus the Creole language. “As my daughter said, Uganda is like Haiti dubbed into English,” Ben said. Over the last two years, Ben has led several conferences for pastors and elders in Ethiopia; visited with ARP missionaries in Rwanda; made contacts in Malawi; encouraged church leaders in South Sudan; and networked in Kenya. Through it all, the Lord has given him a real passion for Africa.

Memorably, in October Ben and Heather traveled from Uganda to Ethiopia to teach at a three-day conference: Ben with the pastors and elders, and Heather with the women.

“Connecting as women, regardless of culture or color, and as sisters in Christ as we studied the glorious themes of the book of Ruth together was such a blessing,” Heather wrote in an email. Logistics were challenging: they needed a second venue, the attendees traveled great distances from several churches in the denomination, and a female interpreter had to be found. But the Lord provided.

“Eden, my interpreter, was outstanding! She tracked with me and got very excited about communicating the content to her Ethiopian sisters. Because Eden was a woman, the ladies at the conference felt comfortable to address challenging topics for women: widowhood, loneliness, childlessness,” remembered Heather. “There were many tears as the Lord comforted, encouraged, and ministered hope to these sisters who have persevered through very challenging situations.”

“We put so much effort into training pastors and giving them what they need, but their wives are really an important part of their ministry, so they need [teaching] as well,”

*Heather and Esther with conference attendees in Ethiopia*





*Preaching at All Nations Presbyterian Church in Mbale, Uganda*

Ben pointed out. And practically, “Women sometimes need another woman to talk to.”

That’s true not only of local believers but of missionaries and missionary families as well. Knowing as they do firsthand the challenges and blessings of missionary service, including raising children on the field, the Hopps are ready to offer “prayer and encouragement,” as Heather put it, to our OP missionaries.

### **THE MISSIONARY SHORTAGE AND NEW FIELDS**

Ben’s connections through his work as regional foreign missionary over the last three years may open new fields for the OPC. “We need to continue to support what we’re doing,” Ben said, meaning the faithful labors of missionaries in Uganda, Uruguay, Ukraine, Haiti, and Asia. But the prospect of new fields may help with the committee’s biggest material limitation: a lack of missionary candidates.

“When you put in front of people the possibility of working in a new field, that creates a sense of excitement. We’re not doing it just because it’s new but because there are places where the gifts of our church can be used.”

Those OPC gifts Ben sees as doctrinal faithfulness, and teaching and church planting. Some regions, he explained, need pioneer missionaries who can go out and start something from scratch. But that is not the only scenario. “There are other places where there might already be some churches where they really need their pastors and elders to get a firmer and better biblical and doctrinal basis,” Ben said. That’s particularly where he thinks the OPC can be of service to the global church.

Ben also hopes to realize what has been a longtime goal of the committee: sending at least two missionaries to each field, rather than having one labor alone. “If somebody is thinking of going into mission service, we should ask, who is somebody you could take with you?” Ben said. Maybe it’s a ministry colleague, or friend from seminary. Ideal

would be a relationship of one older and one younger candidate.

Working in new fields may include more cooperative agreements with other NAPARC denominations—a partnership like that which the Hopps experienced firsthand in Haiti with Octavius and Marie Delfils, missionaries in Port-au-Prince with the PCA. Thanks to that fruitful working relationship, “I hope I have some understanding to help people work through those team dynamics. It can be done well, and it can work well,” Ben said.

While Ben Hopp serves jointly for six months with the current general secretary, Douglas Clawson, they will visit the OP mission fields together.

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*The author is managing editor of New Horizons.*

### **WHAT’S NEW**

**The Rev. Benjamin K. (Heather) Hopp** was installed by the Presbytery of the South as the general secretary of the Committee on Foreign Missions. He transitioned from his role as regional foreign missionary to Africa and Haiti and took up his labors as general secretary on April 1, 2026. Mr. Hopp and Douglas Clawson will work together as general secretaries until Mr. Clawson’s retirement on September 30, 2026.

Missionaries **Mr. and Mrs. Travis A. (Bonnie) Emmett** (Christ Church, Downingtown, Pennsylvania) and children returned to the United States from Nakaale, Karamoja, Uganda, for the birth of their fifth child and a four-month medical leave beginning in March 2026.

**Mr. Benjamin I. Gifford** (Grace PCA, Hudson, Ohio) was appointed to serve as a missionary associate in Nakaale, Karamoja, Uganda, for six months beginning in February 2026.

**Mr. and Mrs. D. Jeffrey (Gloria) Davis** (Redeemer Presbyterian, Ada, Michigan) were appointed to serve as missionary associates in Nakaale, Karamoja, Uganda, for six months beginning in February 2026.

# CONFSSIONAL AND ACCESSIBLE IN PEORIA, ILLINOIS

KEVIN T. GODSEY

What do you do when you have fallen in love with the unique “flavor” that the OPC presents but are relocating with your family hundreds of miles away to a new city without any OP congregations?

Radiant Orthodox Presbyterian Church was formed, in large part, because a family was moving to Peoria, Illinois, in 2022, but did not want to leave the OPC behind. They loved it too much and saw how Peoria could benefit from an OP congregation. So, even before they had fully arrived in Peoria, they began discussions with our presbytery’s regional home missionary, Bruce Hollister, who very graciously aided them in bringing their beloved denomination with them to Peoria.

For some context, Peoria is a city in central Illinois of a little over 110,000 people. Few of the churches here are Reformed, and those that are thought that it wouldn’t hurt for us to join them in bringing the Reformed faith to this city!

## MINISTRY TO THE CHURCH-WOUNDED

In January 2023, the first informational meeting was held, with a Bible study and core group forming in February 2023. The first worship service was held in May 2023, which included the baptism of a covenant child. Monthly evening services began in July 2023, with the work being received as a mission work of the Presbytery of the Midwest in September 2023. Weekly worship services began in November 2023, meeting in a Holiday Inn in East Peoria. In August 2024, the mission work moved to the location where we currently worship, the Peoria Chinese Christian Church, on the far north side of Peoria. Bruce Hollister drove down from Joliet, Illinois, each week to lead worship and Bible studies, clocking in some fifty thousand miles on his car!

Early in the formation of the church, a specific need arose. The “seed” family who brought the idea to presbytery had relatives who were believers in Peoria. Those relatives, however, had been severely wounded by church leaders in a previous church and were quite nervous to



Radiant OPC in Peoria, Illinois, a two-year-old church plant

join in planting a church that reminded them of the one that had caused them so much heartache. Ministry to those who have been painfully wounded by ministers who had abused their authority thus became an important aspect of Radiant’s work from the beginning.

In December 2024, I preached for Radiant for the first time. After candidating, I received a call in March 2025 to serve as the church-planting pastor. I accepted the call on the condition of finishing seminary, which I did on May 15, 2025. My family moved to Peoria on May 17, and I was ordained and installed on May 30.

## CONFSSIONAL AND ACCESSIBLE

Radiant OPC is not all that unique in its mission and vision. We desire to faithfully preach the gospel to those who will listen and welcome those who will come. It could be said that our uniqueness stops at the Westminster Standards—that is to say, we are not a “homeschooling church” or a “big family church” or some other fill-in-the-blank church. To be sure, many within our church love homeschooling and have big families. My point is simply to say that our identity as a church is truly *confessional*. We are not interested in identifying ourselves as a church with anything beyond the Bible and the summary

of its system of doctrine in the Westminster Standards. Of course, this is the heartbeat of the OPC.

As a mission work, we desire to evangelize the city and to welcome new converts to the body of Christ. Yet, due to the unique history of some within the church, we also want to be a place of refuge and healing for those who have been under abusive church leadership. We want to be a church where the heart of Christ is on display in each member of the church as people who are gentle and lowly in heart.

Last, we are a church interested in making the Reformed faith *accessible*. If we believe that the fullest expression of Christianity is Reformed confessionalism, we want to make *that* Christianity accessible to all. When we evangelize, it is not with a vague notion of Christianity in general, but with the full-orbed Reformed Christianity that we confess in our Standards. It ought to be accessible to anyone, whether that be the unconverted, the lifelong member of the OPC, or anyone in between.

For example, we explain our worship on our website and in a pamphlet that we hand to visitors. The name of the church, along with its website, logo, and bulletins, were all intentionally designed to be accessible even in the little things. Little things matter for first impressions, and we want that first impression to be positive, especially for those who may have never been in a church or who have never been in a church that uses a bulletin.

Front and back of Radiant OPC's trifold to introduce Reformed worship to its visitors



Kevin and Cami Godsey

### COME VISIT US IN PEORIA

Currently, Radiant OPC meets for Sunday school at 9:30 a.m. and for worship at 11:15 a.m. at the Peoria Chinese Christian Church. The arrangement to share a space with the PCCC has already proven to be fruitful. Not only do they desire their English speakers (especially the kids) to join our number, but we have had opportunities on several occasions to worship with them. On one occasion, we were able to hear from one of our own OP missionaries to Asia, who had mentored the current pastor of PCCC!

We continue to see slow and steady growth. This growth has been a very significant encouragement for those who have been a part of Radiant from the beginning. We are continually looking for ways to reach out while patiently waiting on the Lord to build this church in his own timing.

If you are in the Peoria area, or know someone who is, and would like to join us for worship, we would love for you to join us!

### PLEASE PRAY FOR US

As a young church plant, there are several ways that you can pray for us. Pray for:

- Trust in the Lord, not in our own strength, to build his church;
- The power of the Spirit in the preaching of the Word and ministry to the congregation;
- The Lord to raise up men to serve as elders and deacons;
- Unity within the church;
- A culture of evangelism within the church, as well as more opportunities for outreach and evangelism;
- Protection against spiritual attacks.

# APR 2026 PRAYER CALENDAR



The Wans (day 13)



David Myhren (day 10)

1 Pray for **Ben Hopp** as he begins his work as Foreign Missions general secretary this month and travels in Asia and Africa. / Pray for Home Missions general secretary **Jeremiah (Beth) Montgomery**.

2 **Chris (Megan) Hartshorn**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California. / Pray for Stated Clerk, **Hank L. Belfield**, as he and his staff prepare for the 92nd General Assembly.

3 **Fred & Kaling Lo**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for progress in Knox School of Theology's application for the final level of government accreditation. / Pray for the **short-term volunteers** preparing for summer travel and service and for the mission fields as they prepare to receive them.

4 Home Missions associate general secretary **Al (Laurie) Tricarico**. / **Mike & Jenn Kearney**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for the session at All Nations Presbyterian Church to faithfully shepherd and mobilize the saints for outreach.

5 **Kevin & Cami Godsey**, Peoria, IL. Pray for the congregation of Radiant OPC to connect with new people in the community. / Pray for active military chaplains **Stephen A. (Lindsey) Roberts**, US Army, and **Jeffrey P. (Jennifer) Shames**, US Army.

6 Associate missionary **Leah Hopp**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the Lord's peace and refreshment as Leah begins her six-month furlough. / Pray for preparations for the **National Diaconal Summit**, to be held June 25–27, 2026.

7 Pray for **Travis & Bonnie Emmett**, Nakaale, Uganda, on medical leave, as they expect the arrival of their fifth child this month. / **Jim (Bonnie) Hoekstra**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Wisconsin & Minnesota.

8 **Mark (Peggy) Sumpter**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Northwest. / Pray for ruling elders and congregations to be uplifted by *The Ruling Elder Podcast*.

9 Pray for associate missionaries **Christopher & Chloe Verdick**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they work with a smaller team and new team members. / Pray for the young men attending this year's **Timothy Conference** in Charlotte, NC.

10 **David Myhren**, Troy, OH. Pray for the congregation of Bread of Life Church to experience deeper joy in the Spirit of Christ. / Pray for missionary associate **Ben Gifford**, Nakaale, Uganda, as he tackles maintenance projects in a context of unique challenges.

11 **Brian (Nicole) Tsui**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Northern California & Nevada. / Pray for yearlong intern **Drew (Monica) Tilley** at Providence OPC in Bradenton, FL.

12 Pray for missionary associates **Jeff and Gloria Davis**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they seek to encourage the other missionaries practically and relationally. / Pray for yearlong intern **Elisha (Kara) Walker** at Reformation OPC in Grand Rapids, MI.

13 Tentmaking missionary **Tina DeJong**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for new students in the school sponsorship program to grow in Christ through discipleship. / **Joseph & Christina Wan**, Madison, WI. Pray that the Lord brings more faithful brothers and sisters to join Madison Chinese Christian Church.

14 Pray for **Eric (Heather) Watkins**, evangelist for Chicago, IL, and Daytona, FL. / Pray for yearlong intern **Jeffrey Shirley** at South Austin OPC in Austin, TX.

.....  
 15 Pray for the **Mobile Theological Mentoring Corps** to encourage godly church leadership in the Iglesia Presbiteriana de La Reforma de Colombia ("Presbyterian Church of the Reformation"), Colombia. / Pray for yearlong intern **Michael (Jessica) Xu** at Grace Presbyterian in Columbus, OH.

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 16 Pray for Chris Byrd, regional evangelist for New Jersey. / Pray for retired missionaries **Cal & Edie Cummings, Mary Lou Son, and Brian & Dorothy Wingard.**

.....  
 17 **Brad (Cinnamon) Peppo**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Ohio. / Pray for yearlong intern **Jeremy (Hannah) Chong** at Covenant OPC in Orland Park, IL.

.....  
 18 **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia. Pray for recently arrested believers who anticipate lengthy prison sentences and for their family members under house arrest. / Pray for the OPC **Committee on Diaconal Ministries** as they prayerfully consider the disbursement of funds to the brothers and sisters in Ukraine as the war continues.

.....  
 19 **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia. Pray for a new group forming into a church plant in the northeast. / Pray for **Steve (Katie) McDaniel**, director of revitalization for the Committee on Home Missions.

.....  
 20 **Chris & Sara Drew**, Grand Forks, ND. Pray for the outreach efforts



The Drews (day 20)

of Faith Presbyterian Church. Pray also for Chris in his work as website administrator for OPC.org. / Pray for OPC Loan administrative assistant **Megan Havrilla.**

.....  
 21 Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **Douglas Clawson** as he travels to encourage missionaries in Asia and South America. / Pray for OPC office manager **Esther Parks.**

.....  
 22 Pray for **Charles (Margaret) Biggs**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic. / Pray for the Lord to use the testimony of pastors imprisoned in **East Africa** to draw their guards to faith in Christ.

.....  
 23 **Mike (Elizabeth) Diercks**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Ohio. / Pray for *New Horizons* and *Ordained Servant* editorial assistant **Ayrian Yasar.**

.....  
 24 Associate missionaries **Octavius & Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray that the Lord may bring children to himself through the Sunday school program. / Pray for OPC financial controller **Melisa McGinnis.**

.....  
 25 **Stephen & Catalina Payson**, Uruguay. Pray for Matías Blanco as he continues his pastoral training and discerns his calling to the pastorate. / **Jacey & Julie Davison**, Grand Rapids, MI. Pray for the Lord to faithfully grow the congregation of Ascension Church by increasing its members.

.....  
 26 Pray for **Andrew (Rebekah) Miller**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania. / Pray for **Judy Alexander**, administrative coordinator for the Committee on Christian Education.



John Fikkert (day 29)

.....  
 27 Pray for **Jim & Lydia Jordan**, Uruguay, as they study Spanish, and for their son Jameson as he attends a local school. / Pray for **Danny Olinger** as he attends the trustees meeting for Great Commission Publications.

.....  
 28 **John & Katie Terrell**, Dorr, MI. Pray for the continued unity of Living Hope OPC. / Pray for Foreign Missions administrative coordinators **Joanna Grove** and **Tin Ling Lee.**

.....  
 29 **Lacy (Debbie) Andrews**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast. / Pray for **John Fikkert**, director for the Committee on Ministerial Care.

.....  
 30 **Heero & Anya Hacquebord**, Ukraine, as they care for their parents with health and mobility concerns. / Pray for **Zeke Yarashus**, website administrator for OPC.org.

The congregation  
of newly  
organized Harvest  
Presbyterian in  
Yuma, AZ



## NEWS

### NEWLY ORGANIZED IN YUMA, AZ

*Roth Reason*

On Friday, February 20, Harvest Presbyterian in Yuma, Arizona, celebrated a service of recognition and installation. The congregation was joined by a number of ministers, elders, and visitors from the Presbytery of Southern California in a worship service to ordain and install two new ruling elders, Jake Wilkins and Brian White, as well as to organize Harvest as a new and distinct congregation of the OPC. Rev. Dave Crum preached a sermon entitled “The Church’s One Foundation.” Rev. Roth Reason, stated supply, gave a charge to the two new ruling elders, and Rev. Chris Hartshorn, ministerial adviser, charged the congregation. After the service we celebrated over chili and presented our two outgoing overseeing elders, Chris Hartshorn and Dave Crum, plaques recognizing their many years of labor helping Harvest.

### GROOT ORDAINED AND INSTALLED AT ELMER, NJ

Brian Groot was ordained and installed as pastor of Faith OPC in Elmer, New Jersey, on February 13. Dr. Jonathan Gibson preached from 1 Timothy 4:11–16. Rev. Richard Ellis gave the charge to the minister, and Rev. Claude Taylor gave the charge to the congregation.



At Groot’s Feb. 13 ordination and installation:  
James Zozzaro, Richard Ellis, Brian Groot,  
Jonathan Gibson, and Claude Taylor

## UPDATE

### MINISTERS

- On January 23, **Drake A. Barnhill** was installed as the pastor of Redeeming Grace OPC in Port Angeles, WA.
- On February 6, **Shawn Spalti** was ordained and installed as a pastor of Grace Reformed Church in Walkerton, IN.
- On February 7, **Christopher L. Post** demitted the ministry.
- On February 13, **Winthrop Whitman Groseclose** was installed as a Teacher of the Word to serve at The Log College and Seminary.
- On February 13, **Brian Groot** was ordained and installed as pastor of Faith Church in Elmer, NJ.

## LETTERS

Editor:

Thank you for the March issue of *New Horizons* and “Stories of Gospel Engagement.” The narratives of people involved in sharing the good news of Jesus with their neighbors was uplifting and encouraging. I particularly enjoyed the short piece by John Paul Holloway. As a member of the OPC for thirty-three years, it is heartening for me to see our church’s new zeal to love our neighbors through word (winsome gospel witness) and deed (the amazing work being done by our Committee on Diaconal Ministries).

Chip Hammond  
Wheaton, IL

## REVIEWS

**Numbers 1–19**, by L. Michael Morales. Apollos, 2024. Hardback, 528 pages, \$53.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Jonathan J. Bartlett.

The book of Numbers is undoubtedly one of the more challenging portions of the Bible. L. Michael Morales's 2015 book, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?* masterfully unstuck Bible readers from their journey through Leviticus, and Morales now likewise unsticks readers from the wilderness of Numbers.

The apparent disorder that greets the superficial reader opens the way to a profound unity and a powerful gospel message. Morales ably guides the reader to rich spiritual treasures in this Old Testament handbook on ecclesiology.

Morales argues persuasively that Numbers is not merely about preparations for departure or God's testing in the wilderness, but it is the "flowering of YHWH's engagement with Israel at Sinai" (13). He writes, "Numbers is chiefly an analysis of Israel as the covenant community formed at Sinai, structurally expressed as the camp of Israel," and Israel's second generation "serves as a paradigm for God's people in every generation" (2). The camp of Israel is a historical fulfillment of God's covenant promise to dwell with his people.

Having established that premise, the entire book begins to unfold. Key passages such as the law of restitution, the law for the strayed woman, and the law of the Nazirite vow find their place as exemplary laws to maintain the purity of the camp in relation to one's neighbors, one's family, and one's God (47). The three-tiered structure of the camp reflects the camp's ideal leadership, especially Moses's office as prophet, Aaron's office of priesthood, and YHWH's office of kingship (42).

Comparisons to Ezekiel and Revelation confirm Morales's findings, as both prophets draw heavily on camp imagery to portray Christ's church. It is in the camp of Israel in the wilderness that Israel learned how to live as the covenant people of God; thus, the camp forms a pattern for the church today as we travel through the wilderness of this world.

The commentary begins with a lengthy introduction (seventy-four pages) followed by repeated sections of translation, notes on the text, notes on form and structure, commentary, and explanation. Multiple charts and illustrations clarify the design of

the camp and important parallels through the text. Potential buyers should note that volume 1 covers only Numbers chapters 1–19, and that this first volume doesn't contain a bibliography or indexes. It would be best to purchase volumes 1 and 2 together to maximize the usefulness of each. Both volumes are avail-

able in Logos as well as in hardcover.

One strength of Morales's commentary is its abundant connections to Christ and the New Testament. Morales unashamedly points the reader from the text to Christ. This is a welcome approach considering how some commentaries remain too narrowly confined to the Old Testament context. I found myself praising God for the knowledge I was gaining. Israel's God is our God: the same yesterday, today, and forever! Another strength of the book is Morales's interaction with Jewish scholarship. This is new territory for many of us. Morales utilizes Jewish scholarship to corroborate his findings, as well as to raise intriguing possibilities, such as connections between the design of Israel's camp and the signs of the zodiac (23).

While one endorsement calls the book a "page-turner," the average reader will find the commentary dense reading. Anyone familiar with Morales's earlier works, *Who Shall Ascend?* and *Exodus Old and New*,

will recognize that this commentary is on another level. The book is best suited for pastors who are preaching through the book of Numbers and for biblical scholars looking for a comprehensive evangelical commentary. That said, the lengthy introduction is quite accessible to most Christian readers and worth the price of the book.

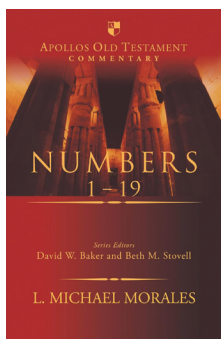
This book will be the primary modern evangelical commentary on Numbers for a long time to come. Morales has paved new ground while remaining rooted in historic orthodoxy. The church owes a debt of gratitude to Morales for advancing our understanding and appreciation of God's Word. May God use this commentary to increase our faith and love as we hide its truth in our hearts and practice it in our lives.

***Impossible to Be Restored? Temptation and Warning in the Epistle of Hebrews***, by Marcus A. Mininger. B&H Academic, 2025. Hardcover, 200 pages, \$34.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Mark A. Winder.

Consultants may advise that the first things to consider when investing in real estate are location, location, and location. Biblical exegetes may advise that the first things to consider when interpreting Scripture are context, context, and context. Consistent with the careful scholarship of the New Studies in Biblical Theology series, Marcus Mininger's *Impossible to Be Restored?* provides a masterclass on rigorous attention to context, thus bringing clarity to one of Scripture's most debated passages: Hebrews 6:1–6.

Engaging both classic and contemporary scholarship, Mininger begins by examining eight distinct views, presenting strengths and weaknesses of each position. In every case, he shows that the position falls short in making its argument from within the epistle's own literary and theological context.

Mininger discerns Hebrews's context by exploring its self-references describing its nature, audience, and circumstances. He consistently directs the reader's attention



to three key questions: What temptation faced the original audience? What is the principal warning in response to that temptation? And, how does that help the reader better understand the letter? In addition to 6:4–6, he explores other warning texts which function as interpretive keys throughout the volume: 2:1–4 (neglecting salvation); 3:7–4:13 (do not harden your hearts); 10:19–39 (those who shrink back); and 12:15–17 (Esau’s rejection).

Mininger approaches Hebrews 6 considering the categories of covenantal foundation and fulfillment. He explores the “foundation” imagery through its ancient and biblical usage, investigating how the original audience would have understood the metaphor. Belonging to a building’s essence, a foundation was per-

manent, functioned as a source of strength, and was resistant to change. A careful comparison of the two lists of religious experiences in 6:1b–2 and 6:4–5 reveals that the author is describing faith in the old and new covenant eras. He is warning that it is impossible to be in right standing with God by leaving the blessings of the new covenant to return to the foundational elements of the old.

Having laid the exegetical foundation, Mininger explores its implications for understanding the phrase “impossible to be restored.” He returns to the key warning texts, observing that they describe people as having “experienced a sequence of events that bring about an irreversible change in their situation, making their return to a previous state” to be impos-

sible (108). Those who have experienced new covenant blessings (6:4–5) cannot reject Christ and be placed in right standing before God by returning to the old covenant (6:1b–2). Mininger concludes, “What they have now experienced by entering into the new covenant and its blessings brings about a decisive change in their situation that makes a return to the arrangement of the old era and its provisions impossible” (116).

Mininger emphasizes the old covenant as essential preparation for the new, while fully recognizing its temporary, limited character (cf. Heb. 11:39–40). He is thus careful to maintain the gracious nature of the old covenant as he explores the greater substance of the new.

Does Hebrews 6 have relevance for the church today?

Mininger answers this question from Hebrews’s original context and offers contemporary application. Hebrews 6 is not teaching that a person who rejects Christ may never be restored, nor is its warning merely hypothetical. Rather, when seen in the broader context of the New Testament, the warnings of Hebrews can be applied to a plethora of reasons why Christians today may be tempted to fall away from Christ, reject the blessings of the new covenant, and seek an alternative source of comfort and salvation.

*Impossible to Restore?* brings much-needed clarity to understanding Hebrews, particularly 6:1–6. Without sacrificing scholarly rigor, Mininger writes with precision and accessibility. The work is aided by several helpful charts and avoids unexplained technical terms. This helpful work serves as an example of how to apply the “infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture:” Scripture itself, searching those passages “that speak more clearly” to ascertain “the true and full sense” of the text (Westminster Confession of Faith 1.9).

***God’s Lesser Knowns: Ordinary People in the Bible*, by Brian E. Coombs. Crown & Covenant, 2025. Paperback, 304 pages, \$16.00. Reviewed by OPC elder James S. Gidley.**

The epistle to the Hebrews tells us to be “imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb. 6:12). In *God’s Lesser Knowns*, Brian Coombs explains how that faith and patience worked itself out in the lives of his fourteen biblical subjects. In each case, he focuses on a particular gift of grace exemplified in the subject; for example, loyalty (Ittai), faith and contentment (Naaman’s captive girl), hospitality (Mnason), and election (Rufus).

The book reads like a sermon series that has been transcribed for publication. The audience in view is a congregation of God’s people, making *God’s Lesser Knowns* suitable reading for all church members.

There is a danger involved in focusing on the graces of biblical characters: One can

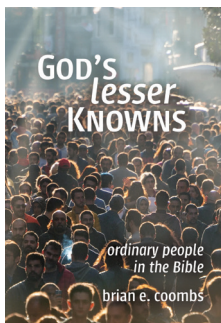


## POSITIONS AVAILABLE

**Pastor:** Calvary Community Church is a committed body of believers in semi-rural Harmony Township, New Jersey, that has been blessed with substantial property and facilities, including a manse. We are seeking a full-time pastor who holds a Reformed understanding of Scripture, preaching, and worship. He will love to boldly preach the whole counsel of God and lead others in reverent, God-glorifying worship. He will also shepherd the flock, equip the congregation for evangelism, and lead us by example in prayer. Please send your MIF and cover letter to Peter DeBoer at pastor@harmonyopc.org.

**Pastor:** Little Farms Chapel, located northwest of Grand Rapids near Coopersville, Michigan, is looking for a full-time pastor passionate about shepherding members to be Christ-committed, biblically literate, culturally aware, and active members of the church. He will lead the church in God-glorifying worship, in an outward focus, and a commitment to Scripture and the Westminster Standards. Please send a resume or MIF to employment@lfcopc.org.

easily fall into moralism. However, Coombs maintains a strong focus on the gospel and the centrality of Jesus Christ. In his first chapter, on Agur (Prov. 30:1), he highlights Agur's humility and desire to know God and his Son. He leads the reader to this point: "In repentance and faith, then, exchange your sins for Christ's own garments of righteousness, to cover your shame and clothe your nakedness" (18).



Another challenge that Coombs successfully handles is the limited biblical data available for each of his subjects. All that we know about some of them is contained

in a single verse: for example, Antipas (Rev. 2:13), Mnason (Acts 21:16), and Rufus (Rom. 16:13). The temptation is to indulge in speculation, but Coombs carefully surveys the context in each case and draws on parallel Scripture texts.

Finally, I would reflect on the author's underlying concern: "Are you content to be unknown in the world's eyes? Do you wonder how significant your life really is in God's purpose?" (xiii). Coombs means to encourage believers who feel that their lives are insignificant, presumably because of their lowly stations in life or their lack of opportunities for meaningful service. Therefore, he puts on display people who seem to be insignificant in the pages of Scripture. However, I wonder if our sense of insignificance stems largely from our sense of failure to be the kinds of people who adequately exemplify the graces of God's lesser knowns. In other words, "we all stumble in many ways" (James 3:2).

Therefore, in striving for "the holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14), it is good to reflect on the fact that our best works are "mixed with . . . much weakness and imperfection" (Westminster Confession of Faith 16.5).

Notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in him; not as though they were in this life wholly unblamable and unreplicable in God's sight; but that he, looking upon them in his Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections. (WCF 16.6)

Nevertheless, I recommend *God's Lesser Knowns* to all readers who are serious about growing in Christian character.

***The Genevan Réveil in International Perspective*, by Jean D. Decorvet, Tim Grass, and Kenneth J. Stewart. Pickwick, 2023. Paperback, 546 pages, \$66.00. Reviewed by Ben Westerveld, minister in the Reformed Church of Quebec.**

Calvin's Geneva is well known to Reformed believers. Much less known is the nineteenth-century Réveil ("Revival") whose center was the same Swiss city. This movement of the Spirit, which spread across the European continent to North America, is rarely spoken or written about in the English-speaking world.

To rectify this, an international team of scholars has produced a remarkable collection of essays published simultaneously in English and French. Their finished product, *The Genevan Réveil in International Perspective*, is truly a feast, to borrow the words from Mark Noll's foreword.

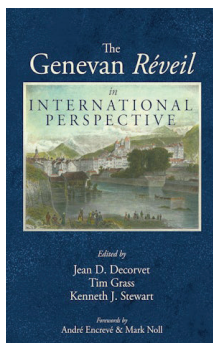
The volume begins with an introduction to the Genevan Réveil, exploring the definition of revival. Different from American revivalism with its conversion techniques, preachers associated with the Genevan Réveil deliberately sought to revive an orthodox and living Calvinism, as opposed to the rationalism that had impregnated the state church. In this sense, the Genevan Réveil was truly evangelical.

Section two traces the missional spread of the Genevan Réveil to France, Canton of Vaud, Germany, the Low Countries, Italy, and the Atlantic coast states, reaching all the way to Ohio and French-speaking Canada. This evangelical movement also gave rise to several French-speaking missionary societies. North American and British believers were active in supporting these missionary endeavors on the post-Napoleonic European continent.

In the third section, readers delve into the biographies and ministries of nine leading figures of the *Réveil*. The names of some preachers and authors may be familiar: Adolphe Monod, whose sermons on his death bed, *Les Adieux*, are still read in French and English; and Jean-Henri Merle d'Aubigné, well known for his *History of the Reformation in the Sixteenth Century*. Many others lived in their shadows: the preacher Frédéric Monod, the song writer César Malan, the high mountain evangelist Félix Neff, the theologian Louis Gaussen, and the Calvinist Scotsman teacher Robert Haldane. To invigorate our Christian ministries, we frequently refer to the well-worn names of certain church fathers, prominent Reformers, and select Great Awakening preachers. *The Genevan Réveil* opens our eyes to a greater cloud of witnesses encouraging us to complete the race!

The final section explores how the Réveil affected France and Switzerland, including its impact on contemporary society. Not only did these zealous believers seek to convert others through preaching and tract distribution, but they also actively founded Christian schools and promoted social activism, including the emergence of the Red Cross.

The anthology includes very helpful indexes of names, institutions, movements, and places. For historical and ecclesiastical scholars, or even young amateur historians, each chapter includes extensive bibliographies as well as explanatory footnotes. The



volume opens avenues for further academic research and writing, which one would hope new scholars will explore.

The Christian church in the Global North has become lukewarm. May our Lord be so good as to make Geneva the center of another Reformational revival!

***A Heart Aflame for God: A Reformed Approach to Spiritual Formation*, by Matthew C. Bingham. Crossway, 2025. Hardcover, 368 pages, \$32.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Harrison Perkins.**

The manifesto *A Heart Aflame for God* contends that traditional Reformed practices remain the best approach to personal piety. Musing upon the maxim “keep your heart” throughout this book, Bingham articulates the rationale for and benefit of multiple disciplines for our spiritual formation.

This book’s key concern is about the trajectory of modern approaches to spiritual formation that undermine traditional, Reformational approaches. Modern spirituality manuals focus on busyness to the expense of practices that form the heart through intellectual and affectional appeals. In this respect, Bingham nobly contends for a contemplative life reflecting on God’s Word in prayer and meditation as well as consideration of our place in the world through self-examination, pondering nature, and Christian relationships.

Perhaps most notably, Bingham mounts a phenomenal case against James K. A. Smith’s project about spirituality

through physical routines. Bingham takes apart Smith’s logical flaws and shows how Smith’s whole premise is anti-Reformational in its assumptions.

Bingham also masterfully takes description of spiritual disciplines in principle to practical outworking. Too many books on the topic paint aspirational portraits of spirituality with no advice for how to achieve them nor recognition of the challenges. Bingham succeeds where others have failed.

With these unqualified commendations in place, I would still ask Bingham two questions. First, from a historical perspective, could we have had clearer understanding of what unites the sources used? While leaning foremost on “puritan” writers, Bingham invoked theologians from England, Scotland, the Netherlands, and America, ranging from the sixteenth century to twentieth. What unites John Owen, Samuel Rutherford, Campegius Vitringa, Charles Spurgeon, Jonathan Edwards, Herman Bavinck, and C. S. Lewis into a meaningful category? Bingham is incredibly well read, especially as he leverages these older sources in conversation with modern thinkers. I am not sure that even he would categorize every figure to whom he appeals as Reformed. This book does argue for a *Reformed* approach to spiritual formation, though. This reviewer at least would raise objections to the repeated appeal to

Richard Baxter as if he were a fully reliable representative of mainstream Reformed theology.

Second, from a spirituality perspective, has Bingham gone far enough? He contends for these disciplines as “means of grace.” Nevertheless, this book explicitly omits robust discussion of the church and her sacraments. Within this scope,

even the focus on our use of Scripture and prayer is more *personal*. Bingham’s case would be stronger had he anchored these disciplines in their foundational place in the life of the institutional church. As it stands, these practices seem to lead toward the church’s gathered life. In traditional Reformed theology, the means of grace in the

church’s assembly are the starting point for the practice of personal piety. However reasoned this omission was, Bingham would have gone further in overturning the individualist, non-churchly approach to spiritual formation that concerns him had he grounded these personal disciplines first in the church’s corporate life in using the means of grace.

Leaving these questions for readers to ponder as they read Bingham’s work, we should end by noting that the best road into those ponderings is by reading his book. Bingham’s book will help and enrich you as a refresher about the importance of using God’s gifts to tend to our hearts as we walk with Christ.

