

NEW HORIZONS

NOVEMBER 2026

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Take Up Your Cross Daily

2026

Thank
Offering



HOME MISSIONS • FOREIGN MISSIONS • CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

NEW HORIZONS

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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by Jeremiah W. Montgomery

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TAKING UP OUR CROSS DAILY: THANK OFFERING 2026



JEREMIAH W. MONTGOMERY

From its earliest days, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) has been a church accustomed to carrying the cross. All but three of our founding congregations lost their properties. All our founding members and ministers sacrificed the social capital that came with being part of the prestigious mainline Presbyterian Church (PCUSA). Our first generation of home and foreign missionaries labored in desperate places—sometimes under shocking poverty.

The men and women who sacrificed to establish the OPC were not motivated by hopes of fanfare or influence. The ignominious way in which the PCUSA had silenced their leaders, seized their sanctuaries, and leveraged state power to deprive the fledgling denomination of its first name thoroughly inoculated our first fathers and mothers against any delusions of earthly power or worldly splendor. To join the OPC was to accept scorn, embrace loss, and surrender any seat at society's "big table."

Yet all this did not make our members, ministers, and missionaries morose. Rather, they rejoiced! What greater privilege could there be than to suffer for the Savior who

died to set them free? What greater mission could any man or woman undertake in this world than to seek to establish new churches at home and abroad that would be faithful in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ?

The OPC was not founded under the shadow of fear, whether the fear of loss or the fear of failure. Rather, the OPC was founded with the conviction—sometimes afflicted, but never fading—that following Jesus was worth more than gaining the whole world. The OPC began with the persuasion that the words of the apostle Paul were as true in 1936 as they were when they were first penned: "I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:9–10).

As the OPC celebrates our ninetieth anniversary in 2026, the theme verse for this year's Thank Offering is Luke 9:23: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." These words call us to self-denial, self-giving, and self-surrender to Jesus.

SELF-DENIAL: GIVING OUR TREASURE

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself . . ."

One of the simplest ways we can deny ourselves for the sake of Jesus is by giving our treasure to him rather than spending it on ourselves. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned us that how we spend our wealth is a direct indicator of where we rest our hearts: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:19–21). In another place, Jesus told a very sobering parable about a wealthy man whose first instinct in prosperity was to provide more comfort for himself (Luke 12:13–21). And in the verses immediately following our theme verse, Jesus asks what is perhaps the most haunting question of all time: "For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?" (Luke 9:25).

Even in the humblest days of our early decades, the OPC has been a generous and sacrificial denomination. Though we are small, our self-denial has enabled us to provide for our ministerial interns and our missionaries (both church planters and those serving overseas) in a way that

differs from many larger denominations: Through regular giving to our denomination's Worldwide Outreach fund, we free them from the burden of having to raise their own support.

The autumn Thank Offering, the only annual special offering in the OPC, is especially focused on gathering additional funds to support this unified approach to ministerial training, Christian education, home missions, and foreign missions. The goal for the 2026 Thank Offering is \$2,000,000. As the season approaches, would you ask the Lord to show you and your family areas in which you might deny yourself for the sake of giving him your treasure?

SELF-GIVING: GIVING OUR TALENTS

"If anyone would come after me, let him . . . take up his cross . . . and follow me."

Our Lord's call extends beyond self-denial to self-giving. As a missionary church, the ministry of the OPC has a perpetual need not just for ministry finances, but for ministry *servants*. More than ever before, we need a new generation of men and women—church planters, their wives, and others—who are willing to forego comfort, give their lives to full-time gospel ministry, and carry the cross.

As of the writing of this article, the OPC's Vacant Pulpit List contains two dozen churches looking for pastors—and half a dozen prospective church plants are looking for organizing pastors. In a denomination of approximately 340 congregations, our pastoral vacancy rate stands at almost exactly 10 percent. Meanwhile, an aging population among serving ministers means that this challenge is only going to increase in the coming years.

The present author's call to pastoral ministry began not through some extraordinary experience, but rather through honest meditation upon the words of our Lord, "Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required" (Luke 12:48). Some years later, our family's call to foreign missionary service began when an OPC missionary asked those gathered at the General Assembly to pray for young men who would give themselves to missions. In both circumstances, my wife and I had no idea how things could work out for us to serve. But God did not need us to bring him a well-formed plan; he had plans of his own. All we did was offer ourselves.

As the Thank Offering season approaches, would you ask the Lord to show you whether he is calling you and your family, or someday one of your children, to follow him into full-time gospel ministry—perhaps at home, or perhaps even abroad? Would you ask your pastor and elders to join you in this prayer?

Pastor John DeWaard helping with construction of new building in Cedar Grove, Wisconsin, in the 1930s



SELF-SURRENDER: GIVING OUR HEARTS

"... let him deny himself and take up his cross daily . . ."

The Lord Jesus does not just want our treasure and our talents. He wants our hearts. His call to self-denial, self-giving, and self-surrender is not just occasional but "daily."

The most fundamental way in which we surrender to Jesus on a daily basis is through daily prayer. Prayer is how faith breathes: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34); "Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him" (Ps. 62:8). Prayer is how we give the Lord our hearts: "Into your hand I commit my spirit" (Ps. 31:5).

Not every Orthodox Presbyterian is possessed of great treasure. Not every Orthodox Presbyterian is able to consider full-time gospel ministry. But every Orthodox Presbyterian can pray.

Every day, the present author prays three things for the OPC. First, I pray that the Lord will make us as fruitful in reaching the lost as in welcoming the found. Second, I pray that the Lord will make new Christians today through the ministry of the OPC—directly or indirectly. Third, I pray that God will raise up the next generation of preachers, pastors, church planters, and foreign missionaries. Will you join me in these daily prayers? **NH**

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

WHAT IS THE THANK OFFERING?

The work of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's three program committees—Foreign Missions, Christian Education, and Home Missions, collectively known as Worldwide Outreach—are funded during the year by contributions from churches and individuals. Every November, a giving goal is set for the work of Worldwide Outreach. This year, the goal is \$2 million. A quarter of the funding for Worldwide Outreach comes from the Thank Offering, so a robust offering is needed this year to make up the current deficit.

HOW TO GIVE TO THE THANK OFFERING

There are several ways to contribute to the Thank Offering. You can give online at opc.org/thank_offering. Or you can give through your local church. Checks collected in local churches should be made out to those churches with "Thank Offering" in the memo line. Additionally, using the envelopes included in this issue of *New Horizons*, you may mail a check made out to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, with "Thank Offering" in the memo. Contributions are credited to Worldwide Outreach and support all its ministries, unless specifically designated.

USE THE PRAYER MAPS IN THIS ISSUE

You will notice that *New Horizons* has a different format this month. The three committees earnestly desire the support of the church's prayers as well as its giving. To that end, a prayer map for each committee is included in this issue (see pages 8, 10, and 12). The maps are designed for you to take *out* of the magazine and hang up in your home or church. (For the digital files of the prayer maps in order to print additional copies, contact ccesecretary@opc.org.)

For decades, *New Horizons* has also included a prayer calendar in each issue with the names and requests of those funded by Worldwide Outreach (see pages 19–20). Like the maps, the prayer calendar is designed for you to remove from the magazine and put on your fridge or your desk. Thank you for your prayers. Please continue to pray!

REQUESTS FOR 2027

The 2026 General Assembly of the OPC determined to make the following requests for the financial support of the denominational ministries in 2027 (generally made through congregations):

Worldwide Outreach: \$6,240,000. This averages out to \$250 per communicant member. Smaller churches may not be able to give this much, so larger churches should give more than the average. Ideally, Thank Offering giving takes these missions and education ministries beyond the budgeted goal.

GA Operation Fund: Churches are requested to give \$18 per communicant member.

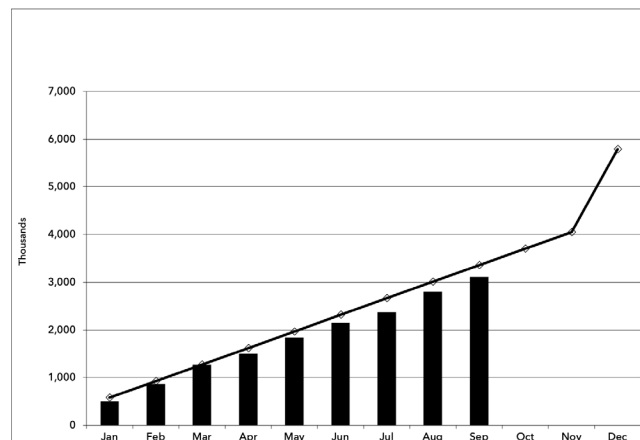
GA Travel Fund: Churches are requested to give \$18 per communicant member.

Diaconal Ministries General Fund: Churches are requested to give \$30 per communicant member.

Ministerial Care: Churches are requested to give \$25 per communicant member.

WORLDWIDE OUTREACH YEAR-TO-DATE 2026 RECEIPTS WITH 2026 GOAL

Christian Education deficit:	\$(74,748)
Home Missions deficit:	\$(109,082)
Foreign Missions deficit:	\$(69,162)
Total YTD budget deficit:	\$(252,992)



SERVING COLLEGE STUDENTS

SAMUELIS LUKOSIUS

Living Water Presbyterian Church in Springfield, Ohio, is a church plant of Covenant OPC in Vandalia. Living Water became an organized congregation in 2017 and has become home to a number of college students. As one of its pastors, I often hear the surprised question, “You have Cedarville students worshipping at your church?”—especially from anyone familiar with both the OPC and Cedarville University. The latter is a distinctly evangelical, Baptist school that has grown substantially over the last decade, both in its enrollment and in the academic programs it offers. Naturally, its students come from a growing variety of Protestant backgrounds. In recent years, at Living Water, we have increasingly encountered Cedarville students who are curious about Reformed theology, Presbyterianism, and historic Christian worship. Of course, college students who are in their late teens and early twenties today have come of age after “exvangelicalism.”

Our ministry to Cedarville students, however, is not built on a particular socio-religious trend. It is built on something much simpler: God has brought these students to our doorstep.

A CHURCH HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Every Lord’s Day, among the families and individuals arriving at Living Water are students who have driven from Cedarville to worship with us in a quiet suburban neighborhood of Springfield, Ohio. Some were already looking for a Reformed and Presbyterian church; others came because a friend invited them; and yet others were curious about Reformed theology and Presbyterianism. What has encouraged us is how many have stayed.

Why have they stayed? For one, students have found something familiar in the ordinary worship of our church. We gather around the Word, prayer, singing, and the sacraments. Our worship is simple, biblical, and rooted in the historic Christian faith. For students who have grown up in contemporary evangelical settings, there can be something refreshing about discovering that Christian worship does not need to be reinvented every generation.

In addition, students have also experienced the hospi-



Living Water in Springfield, Ohio, is encouraged by the presence and service of college students.

ality of other Christians. Several families in our congregation open their homes to students and visitors on Sunday afternoons. This provides an opportunity, especially for students, to broaden their church connections beyond just other students. During the week, they may find themselves in another home for a Bible study. None of these are special college-ministry events. They are simply faithful Christians practicing hospitality.

Elder Dale Parsons and his wife, Tammy, are a particularly good example of hospitality. Each week they open their home to a group of students and church members for food, fellowship, and the study of God’s Word. The atmosphere of their home, where Christ is honored in all areas of life, makes one look forward to next week’s visit. Many of our Cedarville students have become regular participants at the Parsons’ home.

We know instinctively that Christianity is caught just as much as it is taught. Through hospitality, the students get to experience what life in the household of God can look like. This is perhaps best summarized by Paul, a sophomore Cedarville student. When asked why he continues to worship at Living Water, he simply said, “I like the preaching, the fellowship, and the community.”

INTENTIONAL AND ORDINARY

At Living Water, we desire to resist the temptation to create a separate student church within the church. Instead, we want students to become part of the regular life of the congregation.

This requires intentionality. We try to get to know students personally. Early in each semester, I make a point of meeting individually with new students. Often this first conversation happens over coffee or lunch. We learn a little bit about their backgrounds, their lives, their families, their churches, and sometimes their hopes and their struggles. This paves the way for further relationships and discipleship opportunities.

We want to provide a church home away from home, but we also keep one eye on the future. Each student is a future member of another church, a future husband or wife, father or mother, employer or employee, and neighbor. Some will perhaps serve their churches as elders or deacons, maybe even pastors. Above all else, Lord willing, they will be godly men and women, sons and daughters of their heavenly Father. One question always in the back of our minds, then, is, “How do we better equip them for that future?”

One way this happens is by encouraging them to serve—their current church is a training ground for their future one. Students eagerly volunteer to teach children’s Sunday school, set up and clean up the church before and after worship, accompany congregational singing with musical instruments, and otherwise serve the congregation.

A WIDER CHURCH FAMILY

This ministry is also bigger than Living Water. The Lord has given the greater Dayton area several OPC congregations, and we are grateful that Cedarville students have found a church home in more than one of them.

Redeemer in Beavercreek, Ohio, is one such congregation that has also welcomed a growing number of Cedarville students with love and hospitality. We are thankful that students have multiple opportunities to experience the life of an OPC congregation while they are in college, and that our churches can encourage one another in this work.

AFTER GRADUATION

Most students move away after they graduate. That is a normal part of being a college-adjacent church. Some, however, remain in the area and become even more active members of the church. They find jobs, start families, and get involved in their local communities, becoming an outpost of God’s kingdom in Springfield and beyond.



Students are welcomed into the everyday life of the congregation.

As students come and go, or stay, our prayer is that years from now, wherever they find themselves, they will remember a church where they were welcomed, families who opened their homes, elders who prayed for them, and a congregation that taught them to treasure Christ and his church.

The author is associate pastor of Living Water in Springfield, Ohio.

NEW GOSPEL TRACT

Good News for All People is designed to explain the good news of the Christian message in clear language without complicated religious terms. There are thirty-one questions and answers. Each answer is supported by brief passages from the Bible. By reading and thinking about one question and its biblical basis each day, anybody who desires can come to understand the main ideas of the Christian message in one month. Copies are available at store.opc.org.



2026

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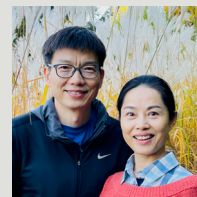
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Ohio



Mark & Peggy
SUMPTER
Northwest



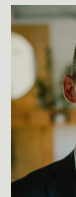
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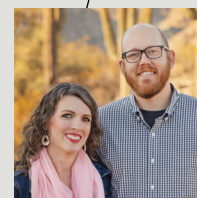
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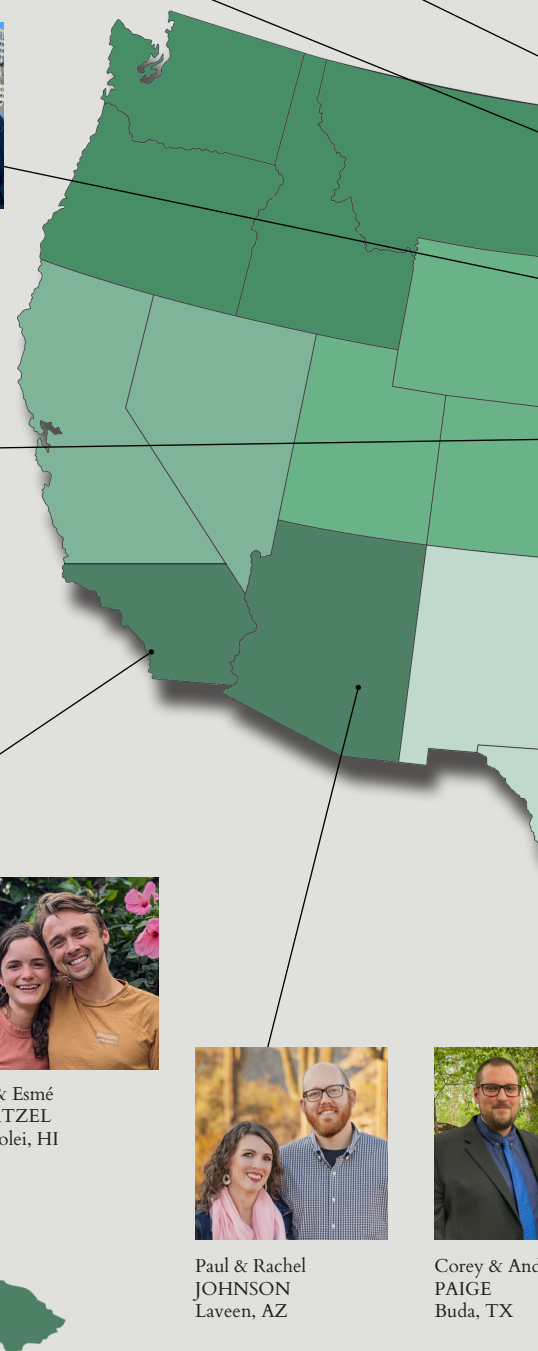
Eli & Esmé
HIRTZEL
Kapolei, HI



Paul & Rachel
JOHNSON
Laveen, AZ



Corey & Paige
PAIGE
Buda, TX



*Map shaded by presbytery

Pray for the Committee on
HOME MISSIONS



EN
OH



Wayne & Suzanne
VEENSTRA
Grand Rapids, MI



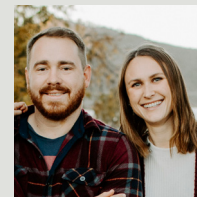
Jefferson & Ellen
DE OLIVEIRA
Springfield, OH



Samuel & Milda
LUKOSIUS
Springfield, OH



Gregory & Ginger
O'BRIEN
Downingtown, PA



Christian & Hanna
REPP
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Jon & Stacey
JUNG
Philadelphia, PA



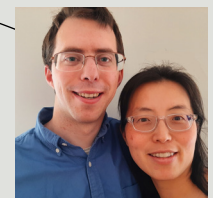
Chris BYRD
Evangelist, Presbytery
of NJ and Puerto Rico



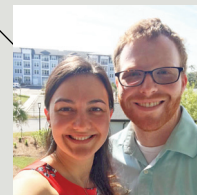
Nate & Amy JEFFRIES
West Norriton, PA



John & Grace JEE
Columbia, MD



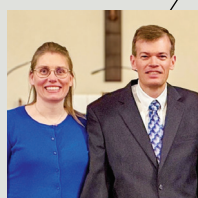
Matt & Hyojung
WALKER
Yorktown, VA



Devin & Megan
GAYE
Richmond, VA



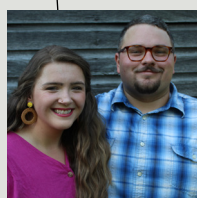
lrea



Phil & Melanie
HOLLSTEIN
Madisonville, LA



Eric & Heather
WATKINS
Daytona Beach, FL
Chicago, IL



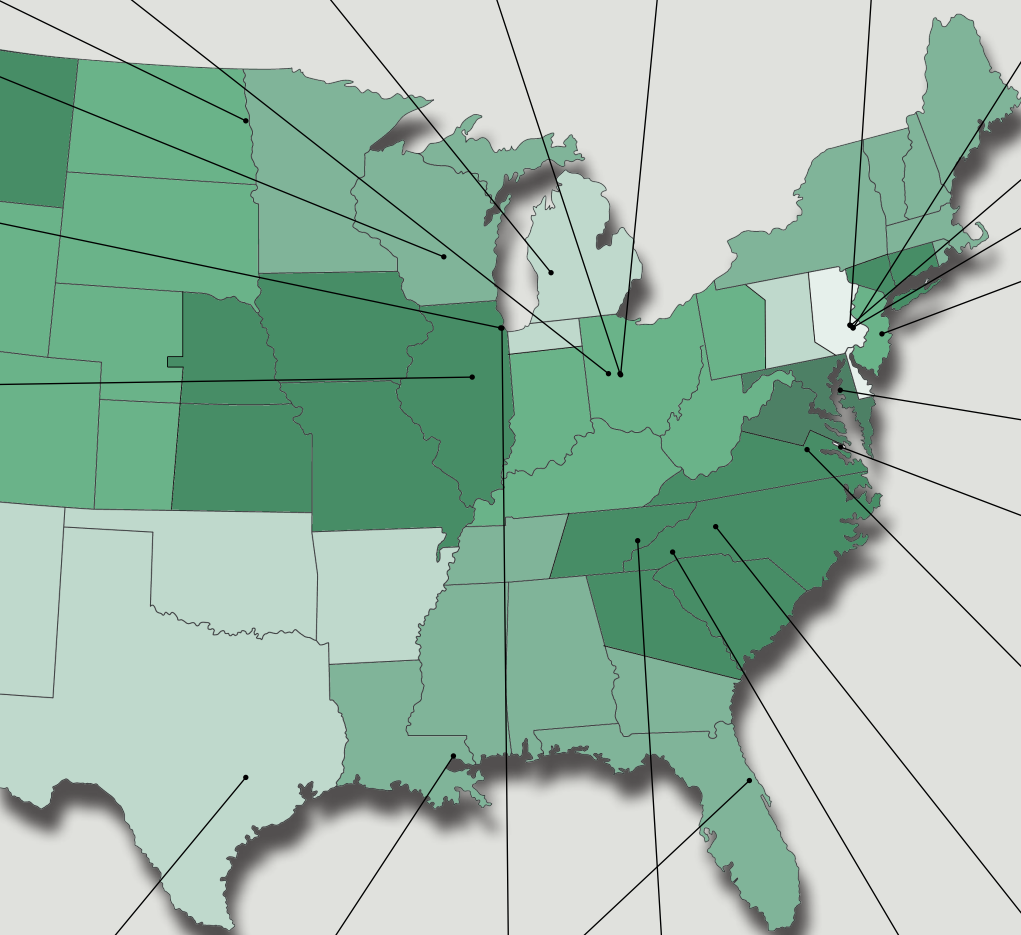
A. J. & Chelsea
MILLSAPS
Zion, TN



Johnny & Berry
SERAFINI
Marion, NC



David & Leah
VOGEL
Kannapolis, NC



CHURCH PLANTERS

A NEW DAM AND PSALM 37

CHRISTOPHER J. VERDICK



Alamacar Valley, where many congregation members live, will be flooded when the projected dam is built.

Interesting days are ahead for Nakaale Presbyterian Church in Karamoja, Uganda. For the last ten years, the Ugandan government has been trying to build a dam in the Alamacar Valley, home to several villages from which the congregation draws its members. These villagers have fought hard against the project, but at last it has lumbered forward to the point where the government is processing claims to compensate villagers for their homes and fields.

In the view of the government, this project is part of a broader effort to make Karamoja a more productive region rather than a perennial drain on government resources. When viewed at this wide aperture, the losses are minimal and certainly worth the cost, or so the logic goes. In any case, the “project-affected persons,” as these villagers are now called, are being handsomely remunerated for their property losses. Every stick of every fence has been calculated generously.

THE RIGHTEOUS ARE NOT FORSAKEN

Still, we are left with many people in the affected villages who will have to rebuild their lives and livelihoods elsewhere. Of course, the sting of this difficulty is tempered by the promise of cash in hand, and the fact that they are not yet forced off the land. When that day does come, the reality of finding a new place to live and farm will be a source

of great anxiety for church members and non-members alike. As I think of this eventuality, I am reminded of Psalm 37. Among its themes is the persistent refrain that trusting the Lord leads to well-being and prosperity. Five times in this psalm, God’s people are promised that they will “inherit the land.” Verse 25 famously records, “I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.”

As our members, and our entire congregation, wonder how this mass dislocation will affect us as a body, this psalm reminds us that we need only trust God to provide our every want. He has promised that he will protect and direct our steps, that he will prosper us, and that we will inherit the land. While we may not hope to inherit a specific land in Canaan, Alamacar, or even generally in Karamoja, God promises that we will be established and have a home. Even if we dwell in tents in this life, something far better is waiting for us.

There is still a further facet of this psalm. The anxiety of the righteous is not a general anxiety over displacement or disinheritance but rather worry over these things *because of the wicked*. This psalm contains a very rich vein of concern that runs throughout the psalter—the psalmist’s lament over the prosperity of the wicked vis-à-vis the righteous.



The family of a church member who will be affected by the dam.

CORRUPTION AND DYSFUNCTION

This seems to play out in Alamacar as well. It is only a very slight exaggeration to say that anywhere I go in Nakapiripirit district, the area is spoken of as being synonymous with political corruption and social dysfunction. The village chairman's son was arrested for cattle raiding. The village bank was robbed by its own secretary while most of the villagers were at a funeral; the thief continued to live in the village and threatened to kill anyone who reported him to the police. A man had his skull fractured by a glass bottle during a disagreement with his wife. Several missing children were found in the bush with acute alcohol poisoning after being given liquor by a relative. A man grew tomatoes and cabbages during dry season, but when cows ate up his field and he applied to the community elders for help, this was the answer: "Who told you to grow crops during dry season?" From time to time, angry drunks will fire off their illegal guns to remind their neighbors not to get any ideas. The list goes on.

In such a milieu, sticking one's neck out for what is right in the community is a good way to lose one's head. Most faithful Christians in Alamacar have learned in such circumstances to keep their views to themselves. The daily reality of their lives, quite apart from questions of the dam, has been how to balance the spiritual and social costs of staying against the monetary and relational costs of relocating.

One writer has opined that in the episode of Abraham's bargaining with the Lord over Sodom and Gomorrah, we see the overwhelming concern of God that the righteous should not be collateral damage in his judgment of the wicked. We see not so much God's relenting to Abraham's pleadings, but rather the progressive revelation to Abraham of God's absolute and perfect justice. One (even questionably) righteous but unwitting family is enough to stay

the Lord's hand. If believers are the salt of the earth, we are preserving our places not only from wholesale spiritual corruption, but perhaps also from the imminent judgment of God. If Lot was the only righteous man in Sodom, his exit allowed the proverbial dam to burst.

GOD CONTINUES TO SEEK THE LOST

It would be too much, perhaps, to view the construction of this dam in Alamacar as a judgment event, even if the villages are, so to speak, swept away in a deluge. But judgment or not, the righteous and the wicked together are slated to be uprooted from the Alamacar Valley. We can trust God has provided a place where he will resettle and re-root his people that will allow them to thrive both physically and spiritually. More than settled, we can pray and trust that they will find peace, and that God is using this uprooting to place them in better communities and near more agreeable neighbors.

We can also pray with the psalmist that all the troublemakers and miscreants will fail to find their feet. If nothing else, this scattering will, we pray, dilute the evil that has been so concentrated in Alamacar. Psalm 37 talks extensively about the destruction of the wicked—they will wither; they will be destroyed; they will go up in smoke. In verse 36 the psalmist writes, "[the wicked and ruthless man] passed away, and behold, he was no more; though I sought him, he could not be found."

Is it possible this verse is not the pledge of judgment but the bright possibility of conversion? Might we be so bold as to pray that these evildoers would not surround and oppress the righteous, but rather be surrounded and suppressed by the Righteous One wherever they go, until they repent and likewise receive the inheritance promised to all those who trust in the Lord?

The author is an associate missionary in Uganda.

WHAT'S NEW

Associate missionary **Miss Leah J. Hopp** (Christ Church Toronto PCA, Ontario, Canada) returned to Nakaale, Karamoja, Uganda, in October after a six-month furlough.

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General secretary



Tin Ling LEE
Administrative
coordinator



Joanna GROVE
Administrative
coordinator



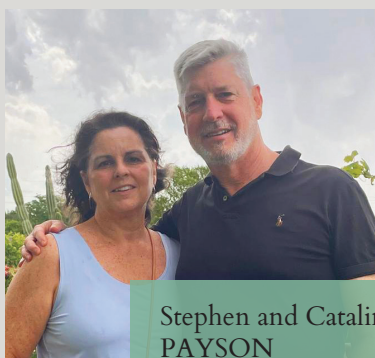
David NAKHLA
Short-term
missions
coordinator

The Committee on Foreign Missions regularly sends non-residential theological instructors/mentors and regional foreign missionaries to explore new opportunities for service and encourage Reformed and Presbyterian churches in Austria and Switzerland (ERKWB), Colombia (PCRC), Hungary (RPCCEE), northeast India (RPCNEI), and Peru (EPCP). It also supports the training of men in churches in Quebec (ERQ), Ethiopia (EMRC), Kenya (AEPC), and South Sudan (SRC).

2026



Octavius and Marie
DELFILS
Haiti



Stephen and Catalina
PAYSON
Uruguay



Jim and Lydia
JORDAN and family
Uruguay



Pray for the Committee on

REIGN MISSIONS

opc



Heero and Anya
HACQUEBORD and family
Ukraine

Mr. and Mrs. F.
Asia

Mr. and Mrs. M. and family
Asia



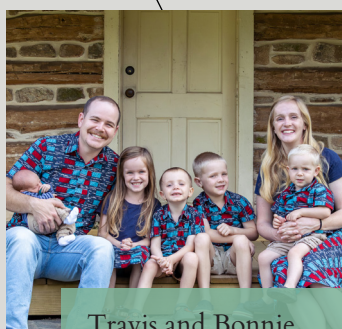
Mike and Jenn
KEARNEY and family
Uganda



Christopher and Chloe
VERDICK and family
Uganda



Fred and Kaling
LO
Uganda



Travis and Bonnie
EMMETT and family
Uganda



Tina DEJONG
Uganda



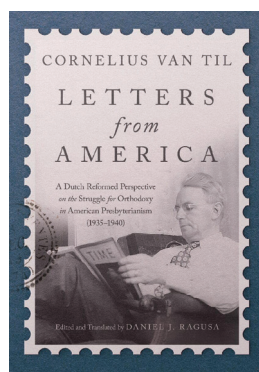
Leah HOPP
Uganda

REVIEW: VAN TIL'S LETTERS FROM AMERICA

WILLIAM D. DENNISON

Daniel Ragusa and Reformed Forum have given Christ's church, especially the OPC, a genuine treasure. Mr. Ragusa has translated into English Cornelius Van Til's *Letters from America: A Dutch Reformed Perspective on the Struggle for Orthodoxy in American Presbyterianism (1935–1940)*. Klaas Schilder, editor of the Dutch publication *De Reformatie*, was pleased that Van Til accepted his invitation of “a monthly letter” describing what was happening in American Presbyterianism. Schilder believed that those who were familiar with the Afscheiding (Secession of 1834) and Doleantie (Grieving of 1886) in the Netherlands would be interested in parallel developments in Reformed Presbyterianism in America. The volume includes twenty-four fascinating letters and two appendixes.

Van Til's letters provide a penetrating synopsis of the terrain of American Presbyterianism from 1935 to 1940. The reader can easily be drawn into a merely causal read of these letters, viewing them simply as the story of J. Gresham Machen and the formation of the OPC *against* the “modernists,” the “ethicists” committed to “peace-at-any-price” versus the “fundamentalists.” The reader must grasp, however, that Van Til's analysis does more than recount the opposing sides of the controversy. One must see the breadth of Van Til's commitment to historic Reformed, biblical, and confessional orthodoxy, as every subject receives his penetrating transcendental analysis. Every letter bears witness to Van Til's unwavering commitment to the truth of Christ revealed in Scripture. Thus, Van Til exposes the roots of competing voices within Presbyterianism that will either preserve or erode the life of the church from the 1930s into our day. If this point is missed, the reader may see only a gallant Van Til fighting for orthodoxy in the 1930s and may merely thank him for an interesting history lesson.



Reformed Forum, 2026.
Hardcover, 170 pages,
\$24.00.

MORE THAN A HISTORY LESSON

Van Til's history lesson, however, demands serious engagement from every reader concerned for the survival of historic Reformed Presbyterianism. He offers insight into the contention between Presbyterian Church USA's Board of Missions and those within the denomination who constructed an Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign

Missions. Machen was part of the Independent Board, and eventually he was brought to trial and deposed for his activity and position within it. Van Til highlights that the modernists and ethicists won, as many former friends of Machen deserted him. Van Til was particularly disturbed by those who remained in the PCUSA under the rubric of letting “the illness run its course.” Van Til did not overlook the self-righteous, pious public statement that was issued by the PCUSA against Machen: It was not a “victory for modernists or fundamentalists but only for law and order” (79; Van Til's tribute to Machen is letter 12).

Van Til's letters also cover the birth and naming of the OPC. At this point, the conflict shifts from “unbelieving ministers” who signed the Auburn Affirmation to a different battle within the new church. Van Til understood this division in the new church as a conflict between the “well-tried Reformed truth” and “Arminian-chilastic fundamentalism” (93). He gave specific attention to the premillennial position expressed in the *Scofield Bible*, a position not found in the Reformed confessional standards (92). Van Til also noted that the premillennial Scofield position undermines the covenant of grace. He further perceived that those committed to the premillennial dispensational viewpoint tended toward Arminianism (93).

At the Third General Assembly, the direction of the OPC was decisively determined. With respect to alcoholic

beverages, the fundamentalists wanted the “teetotaler position as morally or ecclesiastically binding” upon the believer (110). Van Til understood, however, that the issue before the assembly was “much deeper than merely the teetotaler question” (113). When the vote was taken, the fundamentalists were decisively defeated. They subsequently withdrew from the new church and formed the Bible Presbyterian Synod, which accepted the Westminster Confession as it existed in 1936. According to Van Til’s deeper analysis, this meant that they accepted the “more or less Arminian additions of 1903” (114). Van Til was not shy about expressing that it was a “great blessing that Rev. Buswell, Rev. McIntire, and others have left us. They only did damage to the Reformed work that had begun here” (114).

VAN TIL AND BARTHIANISM

Van Til’s letters are relentless in exposing the continual modernism in the PCUSA, Princeton Theological Seminary, and the ecumenical movements seeking denominational union. Van Til brilliantly noted that the pragmatic and utilitarian remnants from the nineteenth century formed the basis for such unity. This broad movement found in Karl Barth a pragmatic means of achieving unity while evading historic biblical and confessional orthodoxy. Van Til noted correctly: “They wanted the eternal counsel of God, but they also want the irrationalism of modern philosophy . . . the truth thus becomes relative” (60). Even early in his career, Van Til had already discerned the fundamental direction of Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and theologians of like mind. Yet persuading others to listen and be on guard proved difficult.

As far as Van Til was concerned, the PCUSA and Princeton “simply let Barth be piloted into port under the Reformed flag” (124). The compromise was now in place: “One can be conservative and also be called Reformed, while simultaneously living at peace with modernist brothers, who accept biblical criticism and do not take the facts of history too narrowly” (126). When Brunner, and Otto Piper, were offered to come to Princeton, Van Til comments: “The fundamentalists are grumbling; the modernists discreetly laugh, and the Barthians go on their way” (136).

Ragusa provides a fine introduction to the volume, and it should be read carefully for essential background. This volume can serve as a wonderful introduction for those not familiar with Van Til as well as an invitation for Van Til’s critics within the OPC to reassess their judgments. Furthermore, our eyes must remain open to the different forms of fundamentalism that may emerge within the OPC. Van Til provides the kind of principled insight

SUFFERING UNTO GLORY

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

***New Horizons* vol. 7, no. 8 (October 1986)**

by Mary Wynja, OP member

Our church lost a member at the beginning of this year. The member that we lost, Debbie Vandenburg, was one who really loved the church. Our session did not really want her to transfer, nor did she herself. But God had plans for her, and his plans were best. Debbie joined the church triumphant when she died of cancer on January 25.

If you had come to visit our church, you probably would not have remembered Debbie. She was not one to run up to people and introduce herself; neither was she one to stand up and give a testimony. Rather, she was quiet and shy—and many times unnoticed. . . .

Debbie was a friend of the minister’s family. She loved our children. On every holiday, birthday, or special occasion she remembered the children. Sometimes she would bake a cake and bring it over for no particular reason except that she liked us. She was not only willing to babysit all of our children, she enjoyed doing it. Before my fifth child was born, she and her sister took our children to the zoo. Did I appreciate that! No one knows how much a minister’s family needs someone like this in the congregation.

The night before her death, she whispered of her love for her family and the church. God was glorified in Debbie’s life and in her death.

to address that danger. May we all enter deeply into this excellent volume with a spirit of self-criticism, seeking the preservation and advancement of biblical Reformed orthodoxy in Christ’s church!

The author is pastor of Emmanuel OPC in Kent, Washington.

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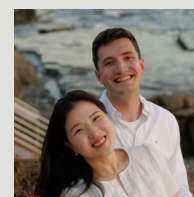
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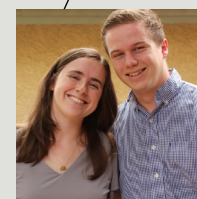
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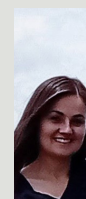
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VANDRUNEN
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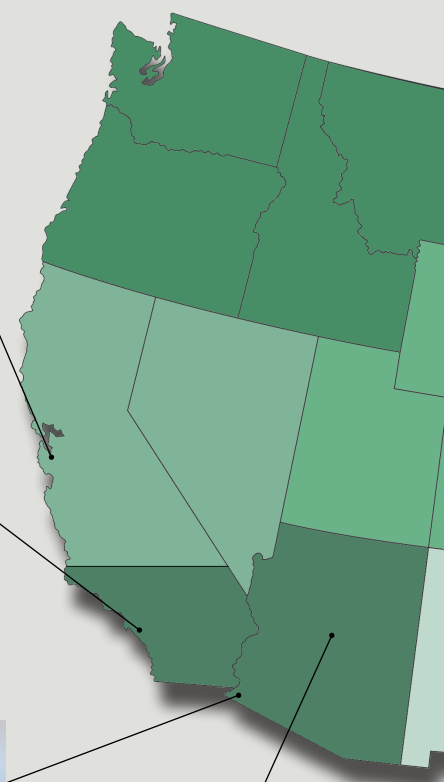
David and Stacy
DIAZ
Yuma, AZ



Caleb and Rachel
GRAMM
Scottsdale, AZ



Corey and
ALDERMAN
Abilene,



2026

SUMMER

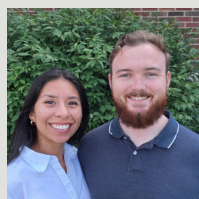
*Map shaded by presbytery

Pray for the Committee on CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

opc



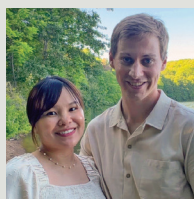
Alex and Hannah
STEWART
Hammond, WI



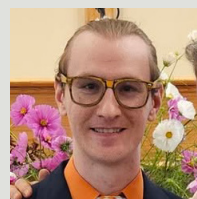
Daniel and Celeste
DYE
Vandalia, OH



Garrett
HOPKINS
Beavercreek, OH



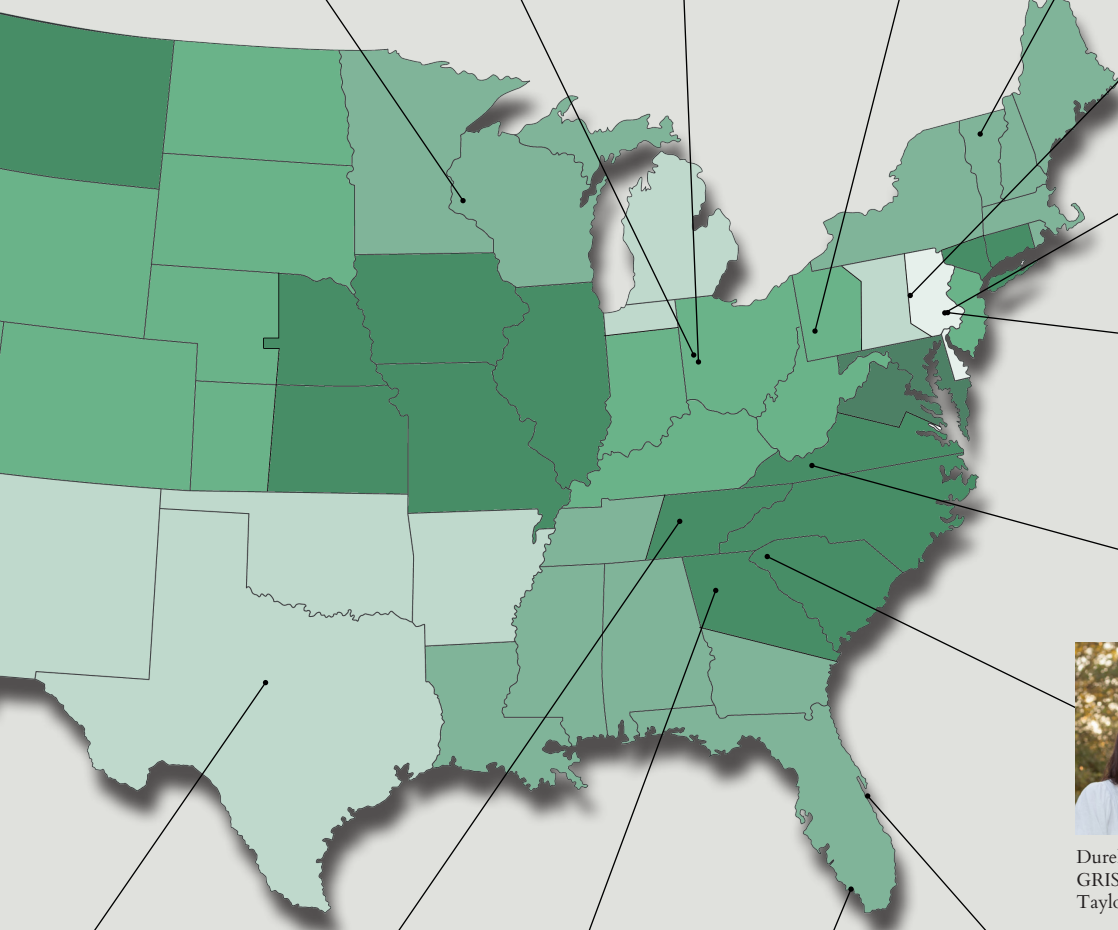
Paul and Sara
LAUER
Sewickley, PA



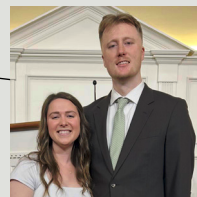
Uriah
RENZETTI
Barre, VT



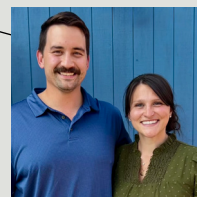
Mitchell and Shannon
GASKINS
Montoursville, PA



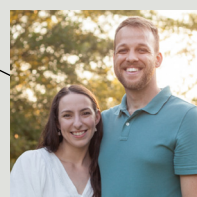
Benjamin and Kara
SIBLEY
Ambler, PA



Chris and Emily
AMBERGE
Glenside, PA



Clark and Grace
SALTZ
Roanoke, VA



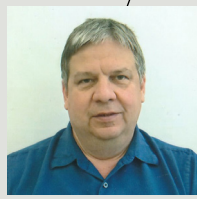
Durell and Danielle
GRISEBAUM
Taylors, SC



Devin and Brianna
BAKER
Silver Point, TN



Tom and Lorelei
LAAMAN
Marietta, GA



Greg and Abby
RITZEMA
Naples, FL



Lance and Amanda
JONES
Fort Pierce, FL



Devin and Brianna
BAKER
Silver Point, TN

R AND YEARLONG MINISTERIAL INTERNS

CARING FOR THE SOJOURNER

GEORGE C. HAMMOND

To what extent should deacons exhibit the mercy of Christ to those outside the church? Because most deacons are mindful that Paul told the Galatians, “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10), most diaconates have developed policies for helping those outside the church that are more limited than the help they may render to people within the church.

But suppose someone who is not a member comes regularly to your church. Suppose further that this person lives in a residential care home due to significant disabilities that render participation other than in worship challenging, if not impossible. The person is not a member and has not inquired about it due perhaps to the fact that coming to a class would seem daunting, or to the fact that he does not know how long he will be in the area. But while he is in the area, he is at your church and considers it his spiritual home. What is the diaconal standard of care toward such a non-member? The Bible, in fact, has a category for such a person, and that category is “sojourner.”

WHAT IS MEANT BY “SOJOURNER”?

Our word “sojourner” translates a Hebrew word that means a person who is away from his or her native land and seeks refuge and shelter in a land not his own. Related words in the Bible are “stranger,” “alien,” and “foreigner.” It would be understood and assumed by him that he was in a place of great disadvantage, that he would not have the same rights as the people of that land, and he could expect to be discriminated against.

This would be the natural course of things. But Israel’s commonwealth was to be different, for that earthly kingdom was to be the palest reflection (but a reflection nonetheless) of a coming kingdom that is not of this world. It is a kingdom that looks nothing like earthly and worldly kingdoms, and in fact appears upside down, backwards, and even foolish to the world.

In Israel, the native people were not to take advantage of the sojourner. “You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt” (Ex. 22:21). But Israel’s law required more than merely refraining from doing wrong to the sojourner.

“You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God” (Lev. 19:34). The practical outworking of this was seen in another principle: “You shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner” (Lev. 19:10). Israel was to (almost literally) “leave money laying in the fields” so that the poor among their own people and the sojourners would be provided for. In fact, God has so much concern for sojourners that the way they were treated was the standard by which Israel was to treat their own brothers: “If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you” (Lev. 25:35).

An oft-repeated reason given for caring for the sojourner is “for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt” (see Ex. 23:9; Lev. 19:34; Deut. 10:19). The institutional memory of this difficult stay in Egypt was to provoke compassion in them. The church in the present age has even more reason. We are currently strangers and aliens, sojourners living in “Babylon” until our Lord returns for us (see 1 Pet. 2:11).

The man I asked you to imagine earlier is a sojourner among the people of God. The biblical principle is that such people should be treated the same as those “native born.” The deacons ought to show the same care for him as they would show for a member of the church.

With some reflection, I think all of us would come to this conclusion. Several years ago, when my children were living at home, a young woman who was having some trouble with her family came to live with us. She was not a part of our family, but while she was with us, my wife and I treated her exactly as we treated our own children. She was fed, clothed, had a bed to sleep in, and all her needs were provided for by us while she was under our roof. This was not extraordinary. It was simply what the character of God expressed in his Word required us to joyfully do. And I’m quite certain you would do the same.

The author is pastor of Bethel OPC in Wheaton, Illinois.

NOV 2026 PRAYER CALENDAR

This prayer calendar has two entries per day of those individuals and families supported by the OPC's Worldwide Outreach, to the end that we might support them not only financially but also in prayer.

1 Associate missionaries **Christopher & Chloe Verdick**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the publication of a gospel tract translated by Chloe and the ministry team. / Home Missions general secretary **Jeremiah (Beth) Montgomery**.

2 Home Missions associate general secretary **Al (Laurie) Tricarico**. / Pray for Stated Clerk **Hank L. Belfield** and his assistant as they prepare for the publication of the 2027 OPC Directory.

3 Tentmaker missionary **Tina DeJong**, Nakaale, Uganda. Give thanks for the Karimojong saints' desire to share the gospel. / Pray for **Danny Olinger** in his work as editor of *New Horizons*.

4 Home Missions director of revitalization **Steve (Katie) McDaniel**. / **Travis & Bonnie Emmett**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for protection against sin and temptation for the Nakaale elders and deacons in training.

5 Home Missions administrative coordinator **Lauren LaRocca**. / Pray for *New Horizons* and *Ordained Servant* editorial assistant **Ayrian Yasar**.

6 Associate missionary **Leah Hopp**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the Timothy Discipleship students and their families would attend church faithfully. / Pray for the continued positive impact of *The Reformed Deacon Podcast* as it celebrates five years of encouraging and equipping deacons.

7 Pray for missionary associate **Miriam Sterrett**, Nakaale, Uganda, seeking to bring joy and

refreshment to the missionaries and the church. / Pray for **Lacy (Debbie) Andrews**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast.

8 Pray for **Mike (Elizabeth) Diercks**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Ohio. / Pray for the **Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplaincy and Military Personnel** (NAPARC entity).

9 Missionary associate **Emily Batten**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the light of Christ will shine through her to those around her. / Pray for **Kharkiv Presbyterian Church** in Ukraine as they continue ministering to those affected by the war.

10 Pray for **Jim (Bonnie) Hoekstra**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Wisconsin & Minnesota. / Pray as the **Mobile Theological Mentoring Corps** assists the Presbyterian Church of the Reformation (IPRC) in Colombia in supporting the ministry of a pastor recovering from surgery.

11 Pray for **Brian (Nicole) Tsui**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Northern California & Nevada. / Pray the **Ruling Elder Podcast** would be edifying and encouraging to elders and the congregations they serve.

12 Pray for retired missionaries **Cal & Edie Cummings**, **Mary Lou Son**, and **Brian & Dorothy Wingard**. / Pray for **short-term missions fields** as they begin to consider and prepare to host teams in 2027.

13 **Jim & Lydia Jordan**, Uruguay. Pray that the Lord would help and prepare the elder and deacon candidates in Montevideo to lead his church well. / Pray for **Nick (Rosie) Lammé**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest.



The Verdicks (day 1)



The Jordans (day 13)

14 **Connor & Danielle Underseth**, Carlsbad, CA. Pray for visitors to experience Christ's love at All Saints Presbyterian Church. / Pray for yearlong intern **Greg (Abby) Ritzema** at Christ the King in Naples, FL.

15 Pray for **Stephen & Catalina Payson**, Uruguay, as they expand their work with Soli Deo Gloria church following their move to Maldonado. / Pray for yearlong intern **Frank (Martha) Wang** at First OPC in Sunnyvale, CA.

16 **Jefferson & Ellen De Oliveira**, Springfield, OH. Pray for the upcoming evangelistic activities and outreach efforts led by members of Iglesia Presbiteriana Alfa y Omega. / Pray for the Lord to raise up **regional foreign missionaries** for Africa, Asia, and South and Central America.

17 **Sam & Milda Lukosius**, Springfield, OH. Pray for older women to help disciple the female students at Cedarville University. / Pray for yearlong intern **Alex (Hannah) Stewart** at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Hammond, WI.

18 Pray for Foreign Missions administrative coordinators **Joanna Grove** and **Tin Ling Lee**. / Pray for yearlong intern **Caleb (Rachel) Gramm** at Providence OPC in Scottsdale, AZ.



The Lauers (day 23)

19 Pray that the Lord will use the testimony of the **imprisoned pastors in East Africa** to bring prison guards and other prisoners to faith. / **Christian & Hanna Repp**, Doylestown, PA. Pray for the successful renovation and improvement of Park Presbyterian Church's new facility.

20 **John & Grace Jee**, Columbia, MD. Pray that God would knit the hearts of the members of Word of Life OPC together in love and unity. / Pray for yearlong intern **Mitchell (Shannon) Gaskins** at New Life OPC in Williamsport, PA.

21 Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **Benjamin (Heather) Hopp**. / Pray for yearlong intern **Lance (Amanda) Jones** at Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church in Fort Pierce, FL.

22 **Matthew & Hyojung Walker**, Yorktown, VA. Pray for the growth and service of potential officers at Peninsula Reformed Presbyterian Church. / **Heero & Anya Hacquebord**, Ukraine. Pray for faith, perseverance, and protection for church members on the front lines.

23 **Nate & Amy Jeffries**, West Norriton, PA. Pray for the discipleship of new member candidates at Good News OPC. / Pray for yearlong intern **Paul (Sara) Lauer** at Grace OPC in Sewickley, PA.

24 Pray for **Megan Havrilla**, administrative assistant, OPC Load Fund.

25 **David & Leah Vogel**, Kannapolis, NC. Pray for fruitfulness in ministry at Kannapolis OPC.

26 **A. J. & Chelsea Millsaps**, Athens, TN. Pray that the Lord would stir up zeal for evangelism among the congregation of Zion OPC. / Pray for *New Horizons* proofreader **Monica Allen**.



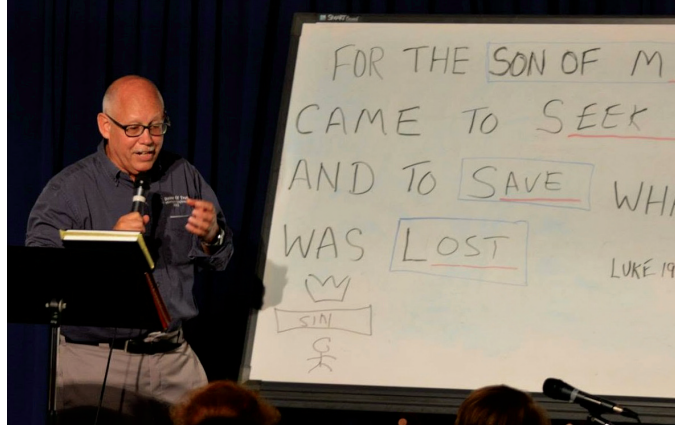
The De Oliveiras (day 16)

27 **Fred & Kaling Lo**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for Kaling's travels to visit family and for Fred's teaching and administrative work. / Pray for media coordinator **Caroline Reeves**.

28 **Paul & Rachel Johnson**, Laveen, AZ. Pray the Lord would grow the gospel reach of Laveen Presbyterian Church. / **Mike & Jenn Kearney**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for perseverance at Knox School of Theology as faculty and students near the end of the semester.

29 **Eli & Esmé Hirtzel**, Kapolei, HI. Pray for visitors to see the goodness of the reformed faith and to join Covenant Kapolei. / Pray for **Zeke Yarashus**, opc.org website administrator.

30 **Octavius & Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray for believers to carry out their lives in a godly way in an environment of corruption and violence. / **Jeremy & Hannah Chong**, Chicago, IL. Pray for fruitfulness in the ministry of Reformation Chicago.



Thomas Church
(1951–2026) at
the Boardwalk
Chapel

NEWS

IN MEMORIAM: THOMAS CHURCH

Aijalon Church

My dad was a lover of many things: sailing, mushroom hunting, fly-fishing, HAM radio, piano tinkering, good books, beautiful music, and, of course, his family (whom he prayed for every day of his life). His treasure was Jesus though. As he described it: “The Lord in his mercy met me one Saturday morning. I woke up just absolutely overcome with this palatable sense of the love of Christ. It was just over-coming. It put this smile on my face that’s never left.”

My dad loved to tell people about the love and grace of Jesus, and he never grew out of needing it himself. At my ordination he warned me, “Get rid of that serious self-deception that you can do anything outside of the grace and power of God. The supernatural God breaks into our lives in wonderful ways, and we need that in our lives or else the ministry will eat you up like it has nearly eaten me up.”

He served in four OP congregations, helped plant churches, went on many mission trips, and served faithfully at French Creek Bible Conference and the Boardwalk Chapel. We will miss him, but his faithful God used him graciously, and there’s no better testimony.

NYMANN INSTALLED AT BEAMSVILLE, ONTARIO

On September 4, John Nymann was installed as an evangelist and church planter at Living Hope OPC in Beamsville, Ontario. Pastor Nymann had previously planted and pastored All Saints OPC in

Suffolk, Virginia. OP pastors Jonathan Hunt preached the sermon, Doug Bylsma served as moderator and delivered the charge to the congregation, and Joe Gehrmann prayed for the minister and congregation. OP elder Dan Cooke delivered the charge to Pastor Nymann. Please pray that the Lord will continue to bless the plans to plant a new OP congregation in Southern Ontario.

VOS ORDAINED AND INSTALLED AT ORCHARD PARK, NY

Robert Walker

On June 12, Jon Vos was ordained and installed as the pastor of Armor Bible Church in Orchard Park, New York. The service was led by Rev. Leonard Gulstrom, who also gave the charge to the congregation. Rev. Jeremy Baker (pastor of the church Vos formerly attended) preached, and Rev. Paul Browne (Vos’s mentor and friend) gave the charge to the pastor. Mr. Jonathan Looney moderated. In addition to the congregation, the service was attended by local church leaders and friends and family of Jon Vos.

CDM FALL MEETING UPDATE

Bill Rozier

The Committee on Diaconal Ministries met August 26–28 in Oak Harbor, Washington, welcoming the author as its newest member. We considered disaster response, refugee ministry, missionary deacon support, diaconal training, and mercy ministry efforts in Ethiopia and Haiti. The committee was blessed and encouraged by a Zoom call from Ukraine, hearing how the Lord is doing a wonderful work through Kharkiv Presbyterian Church.

John Nymann (holding Bible)
with members of the presbytery
at his September installation



Jon Vos (front, center) with members of
the presbytery at his June ordination and
installation

REVIEWS

Make Smart Choices (Not Foolish Ones)—Together! The Theology and Practice of Church Decision-Making, by Andrew H. Selle. WestBow, 2025. Paperback, 452 pages, \$25.99. Reviewed by OP elder James S. Gidley.

Andrew Selle has served the church well with his reflections on church decision-making. *Make Smart Choices* should be required reading for seminarians in practical theology classes, for licentiates and pastoral interns, for elders and deacons, and for any Christian who wants to grow in grace. Selle writes for a broader audience than Presbyterians, but his outlook is deeply Presbyterian, stressing shared decision-making and respect for proper authority properly exercised.

Make Smart Choices has four main sections of roughly equal length, “A Theology of Decision-Making,” “The Process of Decision-Making,” “Resolving Typical Problems in Decision-Making,” and “Decision-Making Errors,” followed by a conclusion and three appendices. In the first section, Selle utilizes John Frame’s tri-perspectivalism, the three perspectives being the normative, the situational, and the existential, which Selle relabels

as God’s Word (authority), God’s world (control), and God’s people (presence) (27). The three perspectives generate six interactions (authority to control, control to presence, etc.), lending both nuance and complexity to the exposition. The figures used to illustrate the perspectives are helpful but densely packed with small fonts.

Interwoven with the exposition of biblical principles are four major fictionalized case studies based on the author’s extensive counseling experience. (1) Faith Community Church has a small parking lot with large potholes and struggles to prioritize the use of limited financial resources. (2) West River Presbyterian Church has a traditional morning service and a contemporary afternoon service, and few members attend both. They must decide on whether to renew an employment agreement with an interim pastor

who lacks seminary education. (3) Calvary Baptist Church faces strong differences of opinion on how to respond to government mandates during the COVID-19 pandemic. (4) The principal of Resurrection Christian School has been verbally and emotionally abusing his wife, who suddenly leaves him, taking their young daughter.

Three other helpful features of the book are worth mentioning. First, Selle often gives a series of full Scripture quotations covering a page or two. The priority of the Word of God is foregrounded, and texts relevant to the topic at hand are made available to the reader conveniently in one place.

Second, Selle gives due emphasis to the fact that not all ethical principles in the Scriptures are of equal weight (36). There are weightier matters of the law (Matt. 23:23), and good decision-making requires giving greater weight to weightier matters.

Third, while Selle adopts Ken Sande’s “seven A’s of confession,” he adds an eighth following “Ask for forgiveness,” namely,

“Allow time” (248). He understands that asking for forgiveness adds a new burden to that of the offense itself. Therefore, it will take time for the victim of the offense to be able to express sincere forgiveness.

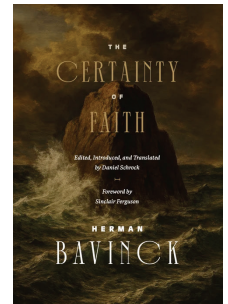
What is the overall message of *Make Smart Choices*? In my opinion, it boils down to this: The end does not justify the means; the means sanctify the end. As the apostle Paul says, “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1–3).

The Certainty of Faith, by Herman Bavinck, translated by Daniel Schrock. Westminster Seminary Press, 2025. Paperback, 152 pages, \$17.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Jonathan W. Shishko.

What is most valuable often comes in small sizes. Herman Bavinck’s *The Certainty of Faith* is one such treasure. Though brief and accessible, it contains profound insight into faith, assurance, doubt, and the Christian life. Before moving to massive works of apologetics, epistemology, or systematic theology, Christians would do well to begin with this small book. Daniel Schrock’s translation beautifully preserves Bavinck’s clarity and elegance, making the work as enjoyable as it is spiritually nourishing.

At the heart of the book is a central question: Is assurance of salvation rare and exceptional, or is joyful certainty meant to belong to the Christian life? Bavinck insists that doubt is not necessarily a sign of spiritual or philosophical sophistication. Human beings were created to rest in truth and ultimately in God himself.

Bavinck also argues that certainty cannot ultimately be grounded in science,



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reason, emotion, introspection, or church authority. All human knowledge depends upon trust at its foundation. Modern people often imagine themselves rational and independent, but even science rests upon assumptions that cannot themselves be scientifically proven. Religious certainty, therefore, cannot arise from autonomous human reasoning or spiritual experience but only from divine revelation.

One of the book's great strengths is Bavinck's historical analysis of how Christians have misunderstood assurance. He critiques Roman Catholicism for keeping believers in perpetual insecurity through legalism and dependence upon the church. He critiques later pietistic traditions for encouraging endless introspection and self-examination, where believers constantly search themselves for evidence of genuine faith instead of resting in Christ. This leads many sincere Christians into lives marked by fear, gloom, and uncertainty rather than joy and gratitude.

Bavinck does not deny the reality of struggle or doubt in believers. Even the Reformers wrestled deeply with temptation and fear. Yet they fought against doubt instead of treating it as a virtue. Their confidence rested not in themselves but in God's grace. This assurance produced vigorous Christian living, freeing them to engage joyfully with family, church, and the world.

Against both modern skepticism and unhealthy spirituality, Bavinck grounds certainty entirely in God's revelation of the gospel. Faith is not something that creates truth but the means by which the soul receives and recognizes the truth God has spoken. Through faith, the believer is restored to childlike confidence in the Father's promises. Beautifully,

[The] gospel corresponds to the purest and most beautiful idea of religion we could ever fashion for ourselves. For, on the one hand, it is nothing but a joyful message of grace and salvation. It does not make a single demand—no demand of age or gender, of people or language, of wealth or status. It poses no sort of condition, it asks nothing,

it demands nothing, and it is no law but the very opposite of all law. It is generally human and absolutely universal, since it presumes nothing other than what belongs to all men: the need of redemption from the misery of sin. (80–81)

***Take and Eat: Recovering the Regular Celebration of the Lord's Supper*, by Harrison Perkins. B&H Academic, 2026. Paperback, 144 pages, \$19.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Jeremy Jones.**

In 2023, a small OP congregation in western Pennsylvania, where I serve as pastor, began its now weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper. The session's decision to move the congregation from a monthly to a weekly participation at the table was not made hastily or lightly. We had been researching, discussing, and considering the idea for years before finally making the transition. Having made the switch, the only regret is that we did not lead the congregation to this point earlier. If only *Take and Eat* by Harrison Perkins had been part of the conversation, we might not have waited so long.

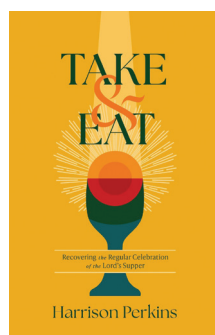
In this book, Harrison Perkins makes a compelling case for restoring the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the weekly rhythm of the life of God's people. The question of frequency, however, is not the focus of the book's argument. Instead, Perkins draws our attention primarily to what the Supper is (an encounter with and participation in Christ) and what it is designed to do (strengthen our bond with him and with one another). A proper understanding of both

the nature and purpose of this ordinary means of grace is the best argument for its inclusion as a staple part of the Christian's spiritual diet. In chapters 2 and 3, Perkins zooms out and sets the question of frequency within a larger theological framework of worship. Chapter 2 unpacks the rich theology of worship expounded in Hebrews 12. And chapter 3 takes the reader through a biblical theological tour of redemptive history to consider the relationship between holy places, food, and fellowship between God and his people. In chapter 4, Perkins zooms in to Luke 24 and helps us to walk with the two disciples on

the road to Emmaus on that first resurrection day. He highlights how the Lord is pleased to use the breaking of bread to bless his disciples with a clearer focus on and deeper fellowship with the Christ whom they have just heard proclaimed in all the Scriptures. Chapter 5 provides a helpful exploration of what it means to partake in a worthy manner, recognizing our unworthiness and

dependence on Christ. The call to self-examination is not designed to keep us from the table but to move us toward the table, in humble reliance upon the one who gave himself for us.

The book is short enough to read in one or two sittings, but rich enough in content to fuel thoughtful reflection and fruitful discussion with others long after the last page is read. It would prove particularly helpful for sessions contemplating the question of frequency or for a Sunday school class or small group study within



POSITION AVAILABLE

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congregations that have already begun or are planning to implement a weekly celebration of the Supper. The book also includes (in the opening chapter) a compelling response to a couple of the most common objections to weekly observance. And Perkins provides a helpful bibliography for those desirous of taking a deeper dive into the topic of the Lord's Supper. Throughout the book, Perkins captures the reader's attention with memorable illustrations and analogies in everyday language, which serves to bring clarity to sometimes cloudy, hard-to-grasp concepts (like ordinary means of grace and the real presence of Christ). As a suggestion for the next edition, the book's usefulness to the church would only be increased by including a chapter or appendix on practical steps for local sessions to consider before making the switch to a weekly celebration.

Take and Eat by Harrison Perkins is a welcome contribution to an important topic and does much to cultivate in the reader an appetite for and anticipation of the joyous meal and blessed fellowship around the Lord's Table.

***The Desecration of Man: How the Rejection of God Degrades Our Humanity*, by Carl R. Trueman. Sentinel, 2026. Hardcover, 256 pages, \$29.00. Reviewed by OP member Jake R. Taylor.**

In *The Desecration of Man*, Carl R. Trueman brings together helpful insights with careful analysis of the present cultural assumptions governing post-Christian approaches to sexuality, reproductive technology, and death. He sets before us the same choice between life and death that

Moses set before the Israelites (Deut. 30), today's antithesis being Christianity and Nietzscheanism. There are only two ways: We must either submit ourselves to God and obediently image his character, or, if we deny God and his revealed will, we must strive to make ourselves into gods through human effort.

Trueman presents the category of "desecration" for understanding what results from man's striving to deify himself, as the perpetual effacement of all reminders of transcendence also destroys every reminder of our humanity. It is a profoundly insightful category. As Calvin notes at the beginning of his *Institutes*, "the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves are bound together by a mutual tie" (I.i.3). To remove theology from the consciousness of culture is equally to remove all ground for proper anthropology. As Trueman demonstrates throughout *The Desecration of Man*, we are observing the day of fruition for Nietzsche's Madman, when we see the effects of an entire culture saying of its Maker, "He has no hands" (Isa. 45:9, NKJV). Morality must collapse under its own weight without the foundation of Christian truth that once supported its absolute claims.

If the problem of our day is desecration, then, as Trueman argues, the only response is consecration, which results from Christian creed, cult, and code. These three elements—the doctrine, the worship, and the morality of the church—are inseparable from one another, and are the only

means of restoring to man his consciousness of bearing the divine image.

My only major criticism of the book is that Trueman is too generous in his reference to the varieties of practice which fall under private devotion. Stating that such practices differ according to tradition, he includes in addition to the biblically sanctioned exercises of prayer, Bible reading, and confession, "saying the rosary, [and] meditation before an icon" (188). Such practices, lacking scriptural support, are emblematic in the religious realm of the autonomous subjectivity that is causing the confusion of our day.

While the disorder of desecration goes back to Adam's first disobedience, our present context is distinctive in its rejection of normativity. As Trueman argues, the language of "disenchantment" is not forceful enough: There is an intensity to post-Christian cultural iconoclasm. However, this gives Christians opportunity to shine as lights in the world (Phil. 2:15). Through implementation of the faith at the level of the ordinary—treating others as persons rather than objects—we can wage a good warfare.

This book is the first place to go for understanding the post-Christian era. Isolating the central question (What is man?) underlying today's cultural chaos, providing an incisive diagnosis and critique of today's desecrating spirit, and meeting this with the solution of consecration through the Christian religion make this book worthy reading for the contemporary church.

