

NEW HORIZONS

in the ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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The newest congregation of the OPC: Christ the King Presbyterian Church in Naples, Florida. Christ the King held a service of recognition and installation on April 27, becoming a particular church and installing Eric Hausler, its church planter, as pastor. (Eric and Donna Hausler are front row, center.)



WEEPING TARRIES FOR THE NIGHT



JEAN Y. GAFFIN // “Are we there yet?” We might hear this question from little ones in the backseat after only ten minutes on the road. They are too preoccupied with getting there to endure the ride, so we haul out a bag of time passers, or start the alphabet game, or, these days, hand over a smartphone!

You and I, on our journey through life, have the opposite problem. We are often so absorbed with the trip itself and find our journey so satisfying, we can't take the time to think about our destination. Unlike earlier generations for whom disease and war were part of an everyday reality, we are in many ways protected by the medical advancements and health advantages we have today. In the early twentieth century, the average life span in the United States was forty-seven. Today, it is in the high seventies. And so we, preoccupied with our comforts, pursuit of pleasure, and the here and now, don't often ask the question, are we there yet?

With few comforts and days full of long, hard work, the African-American slaves did ask, are we there yet? They brought forth out of their beaten condition beautiful spirituals, such as “Deep River,” which richly expressed their longing for heaven:

Deep river
My home is over Jordan
Deep river, Lord
I want to cross into campground

Oh don't you want to go
To that Gospel feast
That promised land
Where all is peace?

When death and difficulty come, so many of us, busy enjoying our freedoms and comforts, are surprised. We suddenly enter a place in our journey that I call the valley of tears, and we experience perhaps the strongest of human emotions: grief.

What Is Grief?

Grief is an anguish of soul, a deep remorse over loss. There is a confused notion in some quarters that we shouldn't grieve over loss because grief offends God by criticizing his care for us. That's like saying that when you break a limb, you shouldn't wince in pain.

The reality is that when we lose someone we love, the Lord has taken to himself a unique person whom he created. He doesn't expect us to cast off such a relationship with a shrug. No, a great wrenching has taken place. Nowhere does the Bible tell us to just get over it. We are emotional beings, not

automatons. Mourning has a proper place in our lives. Our Lord himself mourned when Lazarus died.

We Christians must allow the feelings of loss and sorrow in both ourselves and others; we must allow the tears, the confusion, and the disorientation. The reality takes time to sink in: our life may become disorganized, our feelings come in unpredictable waves, and our faith be tested. Yet we must let the process take place within us.

Everyone responds to grief differently. Some people seem to function purposefully for the Lord very soon after their trauma. Margaret Kent, a friend and member at Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pennsylvania, got a call from the Philadelphia police one evening that her husband had been murdered as he was trying to sell encyclopedias to a couple. She was left with four children. Margaret, who would never see her husband again this side of glory, yet witnessed for Christ to the murderers in the courtroom.

Similarly, Eleanor Meeker, a fellow member of mine in the 1960s at Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pennsylvania, lost

her eight-year-old son and only child, Robert, when a car grazed him while he was riding his bike. This was before the helmet laws. He fell off and hit his head, passing away a few days later. Eleanor went out of her way to console the driver and speak the gospel to her.

Grief can also plunge one into unexpected feelings. C. S. Lewis remarks in his book *A Grief Observed*, which he wrote after he lost his wife: “No one ever told me that grief felt like fear... the same fluttering in the stomach, the same restlessness, the yawning. I keep on swallowing” (chap. 1). The chapter goes on in merciless detail, describing the ping-ponging emotions he felt.

Donald Howard writes that during his wife’s years of battling cancer, they worked to plan her funeral, plan what he would do when she was gone, and so on. Yes, he was prepared for death. But, he said, “I was ill-prepared for grief” (*Christians Grieve Too*, 32).

My own mother was a nominal Christian in her early twenties when she became engaged to one she called “a fine, Christian young man.” He was killed in an auto accident. A few years later, she again became engaged and then married. Three months after the wedding, her new husband was killed in a hunting accident. At twenty-five years old, my mother thought her life was over. By God’s grace, she came to understand the gospel, as well as eventually meeting my father. She would be widowed again when Dad died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of sixty. Only the gospel spared her from total despair in her grief as she sought to be a godly wife and mother

and, finally, a widow yet again.

Grief Propels Us Toward Our Hope

Yet grief is not a dead-end. It is not a cruel, random fate. God is not an arbitrary being dangling us on a string for his own amusement. No, he has sent this grief into our lives for a purifying purpose.

This can be very hard to understand when we are in deep pain. But God, in his love, holds out the wonderful hope that our loved one, if they loved the Lord, are now with our Savior, and we will see them again. This hope teaches us to depend on God because he is in

is spelled out for us in 1 Peter 1:3–5:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Part of grieving with hope is praising God for our loved one and the value of that person’s life and the blessings he or she now enjoys. How beautifully

the Westminster Shorter Catechism explains our hope in Question 37: “Q. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death? A. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection.”

Memorial services are appropriate for Christians because they help us to review and give thanks for the

person who was allowed to be a part of our lives and to be a part of God’s story. It helps us to praise God who does all things well. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Grief Reminds Us of Those Who Have No Hope

As we grieve in hope, we learn to care deeply about the hopeless grief of unbelievers. We want to share with them that hope which is ours.

Our society today is far removed

What is thy only comfort in life and death?

That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who, with his precious blood, has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto him.

When Jean Gaffin was grieving the loss of her daughter, Lisl, she was sent this quotation from the Heidelberg Catechism by a friend. Gaffin kept it on her refrigerator.

control of everything in our lives, even the trials, for our good. A careful reading of Romans 8:29 reveals that “for our good” in verse 28 means that everything we go through is conforming us to the image of Jesus, so we can be sisters and brothers to him. Find comfort in that. Pray that this purpose will be met in your life.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Paul writes, “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.” That hope

from biblical hope, deriding it or trying to suppress it. The horror of death is pushed under the rug as grievors throw parties celebrating “good old Joe.” Along with somewhat exaggerated eulogies, they might cremate the body and pour his ashes in a place he loved, such as the baseball field of his team. I’m not commenting on cremation but on the fanciful idea that ashes on the baseball field are somehow comforting. There’s no hope there.

Or consider that the number-one song played at funerals is Frank Sinatra’s *My Way*. Set to a beautifully seductive tune, it brags of a life lived the way one pleases. There’s no hope there.

Another popular custom is to talk about closure. When a perpetrator is brought to justice in a courtroom, the TV journalist might say that the family of the victim now has closure. The truth is that the verdict gives closure to everyone else—but the bereaved family, although they may be relieved that justice has been served, isn’t suddenly ready to move on to the next phase. Closure does not solve grief. Grief can’t be managed with closure. There’s no hope there.

So much vague language surrounds death—an angel took him, she’s at peace, he’s in a better place, and so on. People often don’t quite know what they believe about the afterlife, but they really like the idea that something nice is waiting. Their hope is based on wishful thinking, and there’s no true hope there.

Our hope as Christians, however, is sure. We have this confidence because God has promised us eternal life, and he always keeps his promises. How we yearn to see our unbelieving friends and family find the hope we have in Christ!

In Grief, We Rest in the Triune God

As someone once said, we should be prepared to let go of everything but God’s hand. This doesn’t make sense to anyone but a Christian. Why should I trust and love a God who took this precious person from me or who allows me to suffer this loneliness? Because no one in this life has loved us more than God.

Because of his tender mercy and love, he sent his own Son to die for us and restore us to fellowship with him. How can we question a God who was willing to do that instead of casting us off forever?

As our God, his purpose is always to bring us back to him stronger in our faith. I had a friend who lost her daughter. On the tenth anniversary of her death, she said to me, “I wish I had the closeness to the Lord now that I had when he took my daughter.” That closeness is nourished as we remain in his Word, pray, and stay in fellowship with God’s people while they support us, encourage us, and remind us in a tangible way of God’s love.

As we rest in the Lord’s forgiveness and mercy, we must learn that he truly cares about what we are feeling. Jesus understands how weak we are. He has been there before us. “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (Isa. 53:4). And, as our high priest, Christ is interceding for us in those sorrows.

In our grief, we can also rest in the Holy Spirit’s intercession. In every period of life, we are too weak in our prayers because we are part of this fallen creation. We need the Holy Spirit to perfect our prayers. Surely he is pleading on our behalf when we walk through the valley of tears.

How Can We Be Comforted or Be of Comfort?

It is not always easy to comfort or be comforted in a time of sorrow, but we can learn a couple of things from Scripture.

We can learn how *not* to comfort by reading Job. The one good thing those three men did was to sit with Job for seven days without saying a word. Being present in quietness can be a comfort. (That was a Middle Eastern custom, and it can still be a comfort to mourners in our day.) But then they rattled off a bunch of theological reasons for why Job must have done something terribly wrong to deserve such suffering. Had he really been a hypocrite all his life? As we find out, the answer is no. We must

not assume we know why someone is suffering. Only the courts of heaven know that.

Another mistake is to just repeat platitudes or verses, as if that will settle the matter. We cannot run roughshod over one who may be wounded by our glib “answers.” Each situation must be approached in prayer and godly intent. Nor should we suggest that we know what they are going through. No we don’t. No one’s pain is quite like another’s.

A quiet touch, a hug, even tears are OK. They give the one mourning the right to cry, and crying is surely a gift from God to relieve what is building up inside. You could also mention that you are praying for them. Being quietly helpful is such a blessing. Sending a note saying what memories you have of the one who is gone means so much. Don’t stop mentioning the name of the one who is gone. And continue to mention it in the months and years to follow.

Someone once sent me Question and Answer 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism in a note to comfort me, and I treasured it.

Q. What is thy only comfort in life and death? **A.** That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who, with his precious blood, has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto him.

On our journey to heaven, we will walk through the valley of tears, but we do not walk alone: we are in the loving arms of God and his people. □

The author writes Bible studies, speaks at conferences, and is a member of Grace OPC in Vienna, Virginia.

JOY COMES IN THE MORNING



JEAN Y. GAFFIN // What do we learn from our grief? How is God training us in it? Through grief, God trains us both to be more like Christ and to become more heavenly minded. He takes our pain and uses it to train us in holiness, toward being conformed to Christ's image.

We learn from Christ, the one who suffered for us, as Romans 8:28–29 teaches us. Hebrews 12:10–11 reminds us of our goal: to share God's holiness.

As we conform more to Christ, we become more aware of our destination and begin to look forward to it, not only because we will see our loved ones again, but also and more importantly because we will see our Savior.

Once at a Bible conference, I heard a mother-daughter duo sing, "We shall behold him, / We shall behold him, / Face to face in all of his glory." Their lovely voices, matched with this heavenly concept, sent chills down my spine. Through grief, God is preparing us for heaven and helping us to let go of this world.

Sharon Better, author of *Treasures of Encouragement*, lost her sixteen-year-old son in a car accident. She described the experience of his death as having been "unbolted from the earth." In going through severe loss, her perspective on life became the perspective that Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 7:29–31:

This is what I mean, brothers: the ap-

pointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

These verses insist that we understand we are on the way to heaven where our citizenship is. Our citizenship is not here, as wonderful as this place is. We are seated in the heavens with Christ already. Eventually our whole selves, body and soul, will reside in the new heavens and earth with Jesus. We still do live here, and we have the purpose here to please the Lord, but we also are to hold very lightly to what we have.

Grief unbolts us from the earth. It causes us to look up and look forward to our hope: communing with Christ in heaven. Truly, though weeping may tarry for a night, joy comes in the morning.

On our journey through the valley of tears, however, we will likely meet the following roadblocks to joy.

The Roadblock of Regret

The first roadblock is regret. When our loved one dies, we might find ourselves wishing that we hadn't said that hurtful thing to him when he went out the door. Or that we had asked forgiveness for something that we had done. We might wish that we had said, "I love you" more often.

We can find our grief compounded by regrets. Of course, it challenges us to live our lives so that we wouldn't have regrets if someone we loved were taken from us. Each day is a chance for us to be careful in our words and deeds to support those we love.

But what about the words and deeds that are too late to correct? God is waiting to forgive those in Christ. He is saying to us, "Did I die only for some of your sins, not all of your sins?" Please be comforted that, as you take this guilt to him, confess that you were wrong, and plead his forgiving love, you are forgiven. Leave the burden of

unfinished business with the Lord. He wants you to move on to a new place of glorifying him. He wants you to know that his strength is made perfect in your weakness.

And the ones who have departed? If they are with the Lord, they are not dwelling on what you have done or not done. They are in a far better place.

The most profound regret is feeling responsible for death. Guilt can be a devastating roadblock in our road of grief. Our good friend's married son backed out of his driveway just as his two-year-old rushed out of the house and behind the truck. The child died. This man could have wallowed in guilt. But, by the grace of God, he recognized that he never wanted to hurt his little boy and that he would have given his life for that little boy, but that, nevertheless, in God's timing, this was the way his little one was to enter heaven. He didn't allow guilt to keep him from being sanctified in his suffering.

The Roadblock of Blame

I recently heard of a man who had faithfully raised his family to love the Lord. But when one of his daughters died of cancer, he stopped going to church and concentrated on blaming God. By the age of ninety-four, he was gravely ill in the hospital and still blaming God. His wife asked her new pastor to visit them. At the visit, the pastor insisted that the patient needed to repent and come back to the Lord. The pastor told him of all the wonderful things he had heard about the life and service of the daughter who had died.

The old man's face turned red, and the pastor left the hospital thinking that he had really upset the patient. A short while later, the wife called to say her husband had died. "He wanted me to tell you," she said, "that he had returned home to the Lord." It was a wonderful ending. But think of all those years of fellowship the man lost because he blamed God!

Concentrating on God's perceived injustice will only compound our sorrow and deal a body blow to our sanctification. We will be fruitless. If we find

ourselves blaming God or others for the loss, we should meditate on Christ's example, as Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:21–24.

The Roadblock of Negative Emotions

By giving a home to negative emotions, we may let grief actually ruin our health and well-being.

We may cut ourselves off from those closest to us—family, friends, and the church—and build such a memorial to the past that we refuse to live in the present. In Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, Miss Havisham lives in a cobwebby place where nothing has been touched for twenty years as she seeks to retain a life that is gone.

Elisabeth Elliot warns against self-pity, another very real temptation in loss. In her tract *Facing the Death of Someone You Love*, she writes:

I try to refuse self-pity. I know of nothing more paralyzing, more deadly, than self-pity. It is a death that has no resurrection, a sink-hole from which no rescuing hand can drag you, because you have chosen to sink. It must be refused and recognized for what it is.

The Way Forward

God has taken people through intense grief to a place of peace and joy. Horatio G. Spafford lost all his fortune in a fire. Then the ship that his daughters and wife took to cross the Atlantic collided with another ship. The four daughters perished and the wife telegraphed Spafford, "alone saved." Spafford set sail to go be with his wife, and when he passed the site of the collision, he was inspired to write the words of the wonderful hymn "When Peace Like a River." The first stanza is,

When peace like a river attendeth
my way,
when sorrows like sea billows roll;
whatever my lot, thou hast taught
me to say,
"It is well, it is well with my soul.

When sorrow takes its proper place

in our heart, we move on, like Spafford, in perseverance, which produces character and gives us hope. Christian suffering is done in hope, in resurrection hope.

As we move forward, our life will take on new contours. We will enter a new era in our journey toward heaven. We will always remember the old era and its meaning for us, because grief over time turns into a gentle sorrow that we will never completely lose.

My daughter, Lisl, had been with the Lord for almost eight years when I heard someone playing "The Rainbow Connection" from *The Muppet Movie*. When she was a girl, Lisl and I had gone to see this silly movie starring Miss Piggy, Kermit the Frog, and the rest of the Muppets. Lisl and I liked the music so much, we got the record (something many of you may have never had!). Years later, it wasn't the schmaltzy words but the tune as it was played that dug into my heart in such a way that, for a moment, I was back with my daughter. The tears just welled up in me.

No, we will never forget those we have loved and lost, and yes, we will have poignant memories that intrude at the strangest times. But yet we are being sanctified through this loss and finding God's ongoing purpose for us.

As Paul says in Philippians 1:21–23, although we may prefer to depart and be with Christ, there is work here for us still. Even as we long for heaven, we realize that we are on earth for a reason. There is something the Lord has for us to learn or do to his glory.

When we walk through the valley of tears, we must truly grieve and grieve well, but we do not grieve as those who have no hope. We know that God will not leave or forsake us. We see the preciousness of our glorious hope more vividly when we sorrow in this life. If our loved one was a believer, we will see him or her again. It's just a matter of time: there is a time for weeping, but joy comes in the morning. God *will* turn our mourning into dancing. □

The author writes Bible studies, speaks at conferences, and is a member of Grace OPC in Vienna, Virginia.

LOVE TRANSFORMS GRIEF



LEO A. FRAILEY // On July 10, 1509, a baby boy was born in Noyon, France. His name was John Calvin. On that same date 499 years later, a lovely twenty-eight-year-old woman breathed her last—her lungs and brain wracked with cancer. Her name was Jessica. She was my daughter.

The Lord gave the church a great gift in John Calvin, a masterful biblical exegete and one who systematized the Christian faith. Yet, the Lord took from us a great gift in our youngest child. “The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). In 2009, while the church commemorated the five-hundredth birthday of Calvin, I mourned the loss of my daughter.

Is Grieving Christian?

In the midst of my grief, I wondered this: if “in all things God works for the good of those who love him” (Rom. 8:28 NIV), then why should I grieve? Was it OK for me to grieve and feel sadness knowing I would never see my daughter’s face again in this life? How was I to adjust my Christian perspective to living without Jessica for the rest of my earthly existence?

I found the answer in God’s Word. In Acts 20, Paul tells the Ephesian elders that they will never see him again. Luke records that “there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, being sor-

rowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again” (Acts 20:37–38).

Why were these grown men sorrowing and weeping? Why were they so emotional? I suggest it is because of the love they had for each other. Paul was a people person; he loved people deeply and worked tirelessly for their joy and well-being. This quality can be clearly seen in his letters, especially 1 Thessalonians 2:7–8, Philippians 1:8–11, and 2 Corinthians 13:5. Paul loved the Ephesians, and they loved him. When a mutual love like this exists, separation causes much pain. The Ephesians experienced great grief over Paul’s departure from them, and they were not ashamed to express it.

My daughter Jessica, like Paul, loved people and devoted her life to helping them. Everyone in her life felt it. When we lost her, we, like the Ephesian elders, experienced great grief.

Jessica’s Love for Others

The Christian faith to Jessica was much more than memorized catechism answers. Her love for Jesus grew ever

deeper and became more and more contagious through her years in high school and at Covenant College. After graduating in 2002, she returned home to Columbus, Ohio, to attend the College of Nursing at the Ohio State University. That’s when the bomb struck.

Jessica was diagnosed with a rare, slow-moving cancer: Alveolar Soft-Part Sarcoma. Undeterred, she pressed on toward her goal even though she was gravely ill. In June of 2006, she received her Master of Science in Nursing, becoming a psychiatric nurse practitioner. Upon her graduation, the College of Nursing faculty—impressed and moved by Jessica’s testimony and perseverance—invited her to become an instructor.

Less than two years later, Jessica had to make a shattering decision while lying in her bed one morning at the OSU James Cancer Hospital. She called and informed her supervisor that she was simply unable to teach next semester. Her life was waning quickly.

As I looked out the window of her hospital room, seeing the steam rising and disappearing from the stacks

around the building complex, the words of James 4:14 struck me: “What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.” Time is short.

Jessica knew that time was shorter for her than for most of us. And so she made the most of it. The year before, she had thrown a beautiful wedding, telling me, “Dad, I want to celebrate with my friends, because I won’t be here for my funeral!” Jessica wanted to reflect the mandate that man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him. How could I argue with such biblical accuracy?

Jessica had a keen mind, along with a transformed heart. She had a way of making good sense, when many are confused. A prayer petition in her diary (which she began after her cancer diagnosis) illustrates this: “Lord, help me to sort out when my feelings are valid and when they are sinful.” How often since her death have I been in a situation and thought, “I sure would like to talk this over with Jessica”!

I was not the only one who felt the impact of Jessica’s life. A professor and later colleague of Jessica’s, Dr. Jeanne Clement of the College of Nursing at OSU, wrote in the funeral guest book: “On July 10th Jessica left us and went home to be with her heavenly Father. I am richer for living, having learned so much more from her about life than I could possibly have taught her.”

Jessica had this effect on people because she focused on her heavenly Father’s love, not merely on passing earthly relationships. In her diary, she wrote, “I realize, when I look into my dad’s eyes, that he loves me with all his heart. If my earthly father loves me that much, how much more must my heavenly Father, who created me cell by cell?”

Showing Love to the Grieving

Jessica’s knowledge of the eternal love of her heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, her Savior and Lord, was the source of her love toward the people with whom she rubbed shoulders—people within and without the church.

So, what can the church, the body of Christ here on earth, take from

this focus—the focus on God’s love? Our Savior taught, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). How are we doing with respect to Christ’s words, especially toward those who are grieving?

As I reflect upon my experience with grief, which began with Jessica’s



Jessica at the College of Nursing

cancer diagnosis and continues to this day, I find that the church has been helpful to me in many ways. The greatest help was being lifted up before the throne of grace by God’s people. During Jessica’s battle with cancer, many brothers and sisters told me that they were praying for her and for our family. What a comfort to know that God’s people genuinely love us!

Another help was the ongoing support of the local church. Jessica and her husband were members of Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church (PCA) and married under its oversight. The elders and people of this congregation were an incredible support to them and to our family between 2003 and 2008.

Jessica’s husband was especially touched by the elders’ love for them, most notably by the gift of a photo book memorializing their wedding. Through

joys and sorrows, this local church was always there for us. They were there in her death as well, taking care of all funeral arrangements, from conducting the funeral to providing a meal for friends and family, and even to paying all funeral expenses.

More broadly, however, the church could be more helpful to those who experience grief. Most people—including Christians—have an empathy deficiency. We are naturally wired to see and comprehend troubles strictly from our own point of view, based primarily upon *our* experiences and *our* feelings. But this *modus operandi* is inconsistent with the Master’s instruction to “do to others as you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:31 NIV). Jesus wants us to put ourselves in the other person’s place—to consider how we would feel if something tragic, such as the loss of a child, happened to us.

Consequently, we should be mindful of the Golden Rule before ministering to those who are grieving. Are we thinking about how our words and actions will affect them? Are we aware of the fragile state they may be in? Or are we “miserable comforters,” like Job’s friends, who theologians diagnosed his condition and prescribed a remedy accordingly (Job 16:1–5)?

Christ has done the ultimate for us, for our comfort. Therefore, we can and should comfort others with the comfort we have received:

Blessed be the . . . God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (2 Cor. 1:3–4)

Our sufferings in this earthly life should drive us to ponder the atonement of Christ for our salvation and comfort.

Jessica, looking into my eyes, saw my deep love for her. Impressions from this earthly relationship taught her to look to her heavenly Father, who “created [her] cell by cell.” As God comforts us, so we comfort one another. □

The author is a retired OP minister.

IS IT BIBLICAL TO TITHE ONLINE?

// ROGER W. SCHMURR

The practice of passing the plate is changing rapidly in American churches. Sites dedicated to online giving indicate that at least fifty thousand US churches use their services. Their ads claim that churches can expect an increase up to 32 percent by switching to online giving (which, incidentally, could relieve pastors from preaching about giving). Other advantages are easily guessed. Church treasurers might prefer to handle digital records rather than count money after worship services. Giving during summer months (when members are on vacation) might be stabilized.

A Biblical Pattern for Giving

Orthodox Presbyterians aren't Luddites who oppose the use of technology for ecclesiastical purposes. Certainly, there are difficulties that keep people from attending worship services and require them to use alternative ways to send financial support to their church. But the biblical pattern is to normally give such support within public worship. "Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts!" (Ps. 96:8).

Offerings in support of gospel ministry today are parallel in nature to the animal and harvest offerings of the Old Testament. Notice how the Apostle Paul uses worship language to describe the support that Philippian believers sent to him:

I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. (Phil. 4:18)

Just as offerings presented in the Old Testament were given during public worship, offerings today for the support of gospel ministry are properly made within public worship.



by Emiliano Horcado via Flickr

See how the Apostle Paul solicited support from believers in Corinth for poor believers in Jerusalem:

Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. (1 Cor. 16:1–2)

Today we might portray those collections as diaconal offerings. But more appears to be involved. When Paul refers to these offerings later, he says that he collected both alms for the poor and offerings (Acts 24:17). In short, Paul instructed diaconal—and evidently other ministry support—to be collected during public worship.

Theologian John Frame summarizes the biblical pattern and historic practice of the church: "I conclude that the collection, by whatever name, is properly worship—something the church should do when assembled in God's name" (*Worship in Spirit and Truth*, 59).

The OPC's directory for public worship reflects Paul's instruction concerning offerings being an element of public worship:

The bringing of offerings in the public assembly of God's people on the Lord's Day is a solemn act of worship to almighty God. (II.B.4.a.)

Kiosks in the narthex may have replaced the occasional offering box at the exit. However, both attempts to avoid appearing like money-grubbers to visitors remove the offering from public worship.

Payment for Service Rendered?

Even if the offering plate is still passed down the row during your worship service, if online giving is simultaneously promoted, you could easily think, "No thanks; I gave at the office." Supporting gospel ministry would be just like paying

any other bill or donating to any worthy cause. You wouldn't even have to give much thought to your offerings; they would be deducted automatically out of your bank account or charged to your credit card at set times.

But should a church ever associate the giving of tithes and offerings with bill paying? The gas company, city utilities, internet provider, my church—are they all in the same category? Payments to the first three entities are for services rendered. Should we also consider our tithes and offerings as payments to God for services rendered? That's not a biblical view. To acknowledge that God commands that we give such offerings is not to say that we are paying a debt.

Paul did view the collection taken in Gentile churches as paying a debt to the Jerusalem church from which the gospel had emanated (Rom. 15:26–27). But note that those offerings were taken in public worship services. Similarly, when church plants become particularized, they often increase their giving to their presbyteries' church-planting efforts as a type of pay-back or thanks for the financial support they had received. But it would be an unwarranted stretch to say that the offerings collected in public worship are paying a debt to God for past services—and therefore could be handled just as you paid Bob's Stump Grinding for removing that nuisance in your backyard.

From animal and grain sacrifices, to a temple tax and alms paid with coins, to checks in offering plates: the church appears to be on a continuum of giving practices that is leading to churchgoers pulling out their tablets and smartphones to text offerings to a church bank account during the offertory. Offertories will be shortened in that case—and that would give pastors more time to preach! But would this be bowing to technology inappropriately? (Of course, people don't complain about the technology needed to cash checks for giving tithes and offerings.)

Consider that most people who use online bill-paying services still maintain checking accounts for special payments. The giving of tithes and offerings might well be an example of such special outlays that call for checks.

If the Reformed community wants to maintain tithes and offerings as an element of public worship, it will have to give attention to giving.

The author is an OPC minister and theological editor for Great Commission Publications.

☆ Congratulations

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

- **Lydia Gilbert**, *Covenant Presbyterian Church of Monterey Bay, Marina, CA*

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

- **Everett Kunda**, *Faith OPC, Grants Pass, OR*

OUR MEMBERSHIP VOWS

The Covenant of Life

Glen J. Clary

When God created Adam, “he entered into a covenant of life with him” (Shorter Catechism Q. 12). God promised to give Adam a higher state of life on the condition of his perfect obedience.

If Adam had perfectly obeyed God, he would have gained eternal life. But God also threatened to punish Adam with death if he disobeyed. The Shorter Catechism explains,

When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death (Q. 12).

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden was a special tree designed to test Adam's loyalty and obedience to God. And that test was the hinge on which everything promised in the covenant of life turned. Genesis 2:16–17 says,

The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Tragically, Adam did not obey God. He ate the forbidden fruit. And the moment he did, he became both guilty of sin and corrupted by sin. The sin of Adam changed him in two ways. It changed his status from innocent to guilty and his nature from holy to sinful.

And since Adam did not act for himself alone but for the whole human race, his sin changed us too. On account of Adam's first sin, we are all born guilty sinners and in bondage to sin, even before we personally commit sin!

But the good news is that there's another Adam, who, by his perfect obedience to God, has merited eternal life for himself and for all who believe in him, and that's the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22, 45, 47).

● Out of the Mouth . . .

I was telling my children the story of Jesus and his disciples on the stormy sea. I could tell that my three-year-old son was listening intently. Right after I said that Jesus walked on the water, he blurted out, “He put on his puddle boots!”

—Candace Bekkering
Bedford, NH

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

OSHKOSH OPC SENDS ITS FIRST SHORT-TERM MISSIONARIES

// ROBERT HOLDA AND WENDY HARNESS



(From left) Wendy Harness, Laura (12), Daniel (11), Aaron (9), and Greg Harness with Christy and Johnny Arendale (far right), wife and son of Cornerstone OPC pastor Robert Arendale

Resurrection Presbyterian Church in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, is just fifteen months old. But it has already had the blessing of sending out a family as short-term missionaries to Houston, Texas.

A Family Team

The Harness family, who became members of Resurrection OPC in 2017, knew they were open to short-term mission work. In spring 2018, Greg Harness, a former deacon in the OPC, and his wife and three children went to Houston to assist the OPC Disaster Response Team with the work they've undertaken in the wake of Hurricane Harvey. Resurrection OPC joyfully and fervently supported the Harness family throughout the trip with prayers and encouragement, and the Lord honored those prayers.

Before their departure, the Harnesses discussed the possibility that a mom and three children might be more of a burden than a blessing. But shortly after their arrival at the work site in Houston, it became obvious that all members of the family could contribute to the needs of the church there. Taking directions from the Disaster Response Team, the whole Harness family dove right into chiseling, sawing, scooping, dumping, tearing, pulling, and generally de-constructing a flood-damaged church building. Once the deconstruction was complete, the reconstruction could begin. Week

two of work in Houston consisted of constructing a moisture-proof barrier on the outside of the walls, insulating those walls, and hanging drywall.

One Body with Many Gifts

For two weeks, the Harnesses worked on the newly purchased church building that will be the future home of Cornerstone OPC in Houston. It didn't take long for that place to feel like home to the Harnesses, as well. Why? Because the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit were with them.

It was refreshingly obvious. Their first few hours in Houston were on the Lord's Day, and as the Lord met with his saints during worship, they were greeted with this encouragement from God's Word:

And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. (Acts 2:44-45)

This was a perfect reminder that Christians are privileged to enjoy the warmth and love of the household of God no matter where they enter its doors, whether in Wisconsin or Texas. And this reminder anticipated what the Harnesses would soon discover afresh: not only had God sent them to Houston to serve and to give, but also to *be* served and to *receive* the blessings of fellowship awaiting them among the saints in Houston.



Laura Harness and Dick Boermann stapling insulation

As the trip progressed, God's Word continued to provide the Harnesses with hope and reassurance. The Lord impressed upon the volunteers the following two verses: "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them" (Rom. 12:6) and "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Pet. 4:10).

God had given the Harness family the gift of strong and healthy bodies, a lifestyle of physical labor, and flexibility in their work and school schedules. Although they had viewed these gifts as unremarkable and inconsequential, in Houston they realized that these very gifts were designed for specific service in the kingdom of God. As a family, they grew in appreciation of the scriptural teaching on the importance of the whole church body: "God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be?" (1 Cor. 12:18-19).

The love of the saints in Houston was every bit as heartwarming as the love they had known back in Oshkosh, and



Two OP mission groups in Houston with homeowners they served, with hosts, and with coordinators Fred and Brenda de Rue (back row, second and third from right)

it provided great comfort to the Harnesses. So, too, did the labors of the OPC's dedicated and well-equipped Disaster Response Team. Their direction and humble service is a delightful testimony to the love of Christ.

After two weeks, although it was difficult for the Harnesses to leave their beloved brothers and sisters in Houston who had loved them so well, they returned to Oshkosh, thankful to be part of the local body to which God had assigned them. There, they shared with their brothers and sisters at Resurrection OPC what God had done both through them and in them during

their short-term mission trip. (And it wasn't a bad time to share a fellowship meal together, too!)

Never Too Young to Serve

Encouraged by the Harnesses' report on their service in Houston, the members of Resurrection are hoping that more short-term mission trips are in their future. They have been challenged by the Word and by example to value and use the unique gifts given to them by Christ, for the benefit of both their local congregation and the broader church.

Resurrection, a mission work of the Presbytery of the Midwest and a daughter church of Apple Valley OPC in Neenah, Wisconsin, may be a young church, but it has energy. The Lord has blessed it with new members, new regular visitors, and several new babies. The saints in Oshkosh certainly have much learning and growing to do, but they are pleased to be where the Lord has placed them and gladly confess, "The lines for [us] have fallen in pleasant places" (Psalm 16:6).

The joys and difficulties of planting a new church and developing new ministries truly are occasions to see the Lord work in new and exciting ways.

If you enjoy the provision of love and fellowship within the church of Jesus Christ, be encouraged to pray for opportunities to spread that same love in service to those beyond your own local congregation—and when those opportunities come, embrace them! You won't be disappointed by the strength and fellowship that God generously provides.

Robert Holda is pastor of Resurrection OPC in Oshkosh, WI. Wendy Harness is a member of the same.



Resurrection OPC enjoying a fellowship dinner

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date Home Missions news and prayer updates, e-mail HomeMissionsToday@opc.org.
New editions: June 6, 20.

PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL

// JOSEPH L. TROUTMAN

Did you know that when you give to your church, you are making yourself a partner in the gospel? That’s the way the Apostle Paul puts it in Philippians 1:5. In Paul’s view, you don’t have to be an evangelist or a minister to have a partnership in the proclamation of the good news.

Paul tells the Philippians in 1:3–4, “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy.” His prayers for them, which are frequent, are always filled with joy. That comes as a surprise when one considers Paul’s situation. At the time he wrote the letter to the Philippians, he was under house arrest and bound by chains to a member of the Praetorian guard (Acts 28:20; Phil. 1:13). All the ingredients are there for a miserable life. But despite his circumstances, Paul is filled with joy as he prays for the Philippians. He thanks God in his every remembrance of the Philippians, with great joy, “because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now” as he puts it in verse 5.

It has been argued that the Philippians’ partnership in the gospel is the central focus of the letter. The Greek word translated “partnership” in verse 5 is *koinonia*, often translated “fellowship.” But there are other ways the word may be translated. In Romans 15:26 the ESV translates it as “contribution”; Paul uses the word twice in 1 Corinthians 10:16, translated both times as “participation”; and in Hebrews 13:16, it is translated “share.”

Paul understands that although he was told specifically by God to go to Macedonia, the Macedonia mission—and in truth all gospel proclamation work—involves more than just an evangelist or two. What’s more, God had ensured that the very first place Paul ministered in Macedonia, Philippi, was primed and ready to participate with him in gospel ministry. “From the first

day until now,” the Philippians had joined in partnership with Paul.

So what does it mean that the Philippians were in partnership in the gospel? Certainly they partnered with Paul in prayer. They also partnered with Paul in his suffering, sending Epaphroditus to him while he was in prison, to provide companionship and comfort. But Paul makes it clear in chapter four that it was the Philippians alone who entered into financial partnership with him. He writes in 4:15–16:

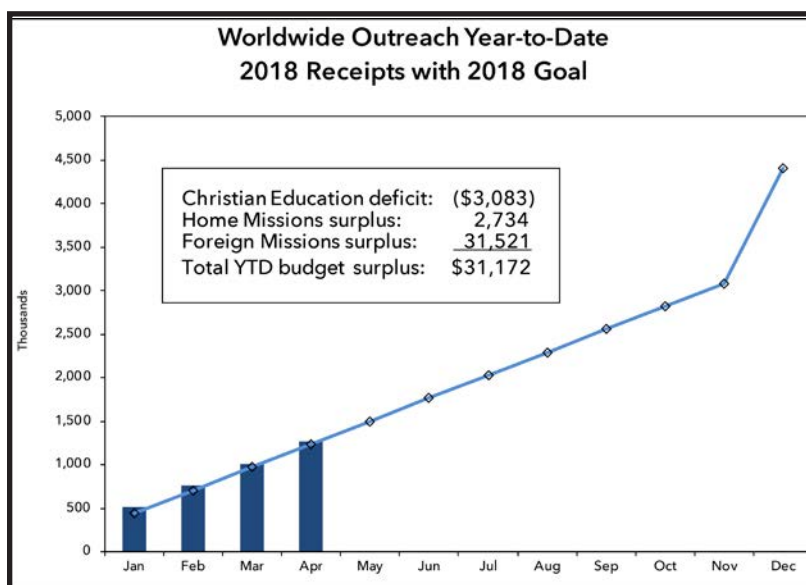
And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.

(The word for “partnership” here is the same as in 1:5.)

Thessalonica was the very next place Paul engaged in gospel ministry after Philippi, as recorded in Acts 17. Paul is reminding them that, from the very beginning, they were aware of the great need for the gospel to spread, and they ensured its spread by supporting Paul financially. So when Paul thanks God as he remembers the Philippians’ partnership with him in the gospel, he is primarily referring to their financial partnership. They gave of themselves in many ways, not least of which financially, to ensure that the gospel was proclaimed.

Like the Philippians, your financial gifts to the church are a partnership in the gospel, being used by God to call sinners to faith in Jesus Christ by the preaching of the good news.

The author is pastor of Mid Cities Presbyterian Church OPC in Bedford, TX.



JUNE

1. **Ben and Melanie Westerveld**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for Ben and the elders as they provide biblical marriage counseling. / **Josh and Kristen McKamy**, Chambersburg, PA. Pray that Covenant OPC would have effective outreach during the summer months. / Pray for the **seminarians** who are beginning summer or yearlong pastoral internships in 2018.

2. Pray for **David (and Jane) Crum**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California. / Pray for missionary associate **Janine Eygenraam**, Quebec, Canada, as she reaches out to local families during the summer Bible camp. / Pray for *New Horizons* managing editor **Judith Dinsmore**.

3. **Ben and Heather Hopp**, Haiti, give thanks for the meetings surrounding the formation of a presbytery in Haiti. / **Jim and Eve Cassidy**, Austin, TX. Pray for South Austin Presbyterian Church as they come alongside the mission work in New Braunfels. / **Charlene Tipton**, database administrator.

4. Pray for **Ryan and Rochelle Cavanaugh**, Crown Point, IN, as Ryan recently began his labors at Northwest Indiana OPC. / Associate missionaries **Octavius and Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray for safe deliveries for several expecting mothers in the congregation. / Summer interns: **Ben Peterson** at Calvary OPC, Tallahassee, FL; **Isaac Baugh** at Bethel OPC, Wheaton, IL; **Ben Woodring** at Grace & Peace, California, MD.

5. Pray for the medical ministry of affiliated missionaries **Mark and Laura Ambrose**, Cambodia. / **Matthew and Lois Cotta**, Pasadena, CA. Praise God for the desire among many visitors to become communicant members at Pasadena Presbyterian Church. / **Kathy Bube**, Loan Fund document specialist.

6. Pray for **Ryan (and Rachel) Heaton**, as he wraps up his internship in Naples, FL. / Pray for retired missionaries **Betty Andrews, Cal and Edie Cummings, Greet Rietkerk, Young and Mary Lou Son**, and **Brian and Dorothy Wingard** as they continue to be a blessing to their communities. / *New Horizons* editorial assistant **Pat Clawson**.

7. **Heero and Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for fruit from outreach activities during the Bible camps this summer. / Pray for **Jim (and Judy) Bosgraf**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Midwest. / **Seth (and Eva) Dorman**, summer intern at

Grace OPC, Vienna, VA.

8. Pray for Home Missions administrative assistant **Katie Stumpff**. / Missionary associates **Markus and Sharon Jeromin**, Montevideo, Uruguay, ask us to pray for good health for all the missionary families. / Pray for **Linda Foh**, OPC, org website technical assistant.

9. **Ray and Michele Call**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for the new evangelistic Bible studies starting in Montevideo and Maldonado. / **Jeremy and Gwen Baker**, Yuma, AZ. Pray for more outreach and evangelism opportunities for Yuma OPC.

10. **Bob and Grace Holda**, Oshkosh, WI. May God's Word at Resurrection Presbyterian Church strengthen faith, repentance, and

love. / **Mark and Jeni Richline**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for a stronger sense of unity among the five Reformed church works. / Pray for the work of stated clerk **Ross Graham** during the 85th General Assembly, meeting this week at Wheaton College.

11. Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **Mark Bube**, attending general assembly this week. / **Daniel and Amber Doleys**, Springfield, OH. Pray for the continued growth and spiritual development of the congregation of Living Water OPC. / Pray for the Committee on Diaconal Ministries administrator **David Nakhla** as he reports to the general assembly on various ministries, including disaster response.

12. Pray for **Steve (and Joanie) Doe**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic. / Pray for Foreign Missions associate general secretary **Douglas Clawson**, attending general assembly this week. / Pray for Christian Education general secretary **Danny Olinger** as he presents the work of Christian Education to the General Assembly.

13. Pray for Foreign Missions administrative assistant **Ling Lee** and secretary **Katrina Zartman**. / **Andrew and Billie Moody**, San Antonio, TX. Pray for opportunities for San Antonio Reformed Church to engage with unbelievers in their community. / Army reserve chaplain **Paul (and Mary) Berghaus**.

14. **Matt and Elin Prather**, Corona, CA. Pray that Corona Presbyterian Church would grow in love for God, one another, and their neighbors. / Pray for the labors of affiliated missionaries **Craig and Ree Coulbourne** and **Linda Karner**, Japan. / **Jan Gregson**, assistant to the finance director.



Ben and Melanie Westerveld and family

15. Affiliated missionaries **Jerry and Marilyn Farnik**, Prague, Czech Republic. Pray that the summer teams will be able to share the gospel with many young people. / Pray for **Mark (and Peggy) Sumpter**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest. / Pray for **David Haney**, director of finance and planned giving for the Committee on Coordination.

16. Pray for Home Missions associate general secretary **Al Tricarico**. / Pray for missionary associate **Kathleen Winslow**, Prague, Czech Republic, as she concludes her term of service and returns home. / **Ben (and Cherie) Franks**, summer intern at Ketocin OPC, Purcellville, VA.

17. **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia. Pray for Mr. F. as he prepares four people for baptism this summer. / **Lowell and Mae Ivey**, Virginia Beach, VA. Pray that the Lord would prepare men from Reformation Presbyterian Church for future service as officers. / Pray for the **OPC trustees** who serve on the board of Great Commission Publications.



Lowell and Mae Ivey

18. **Eric and Donna Hausler**, Naples, FL. May the Lord give Christ the King Presbyterian Church wisdom in reaching families in their community. / **Mr. and Mrs. K.**, Asia, give thanks for a new home that will allow the team to expand its ministry geographically. / Army reserve chaplain **Andrew (and Elizabeth) Barshinger**.

19. Pray for missionary associates **E. C., E. K., and M. S.**, Asia, as they prayerfully seek avenues to share their faith. / Pray for **Miller (and Stephanie) Ansell**, as he wraps up his internship in Houston, TX. / **Scott (and Elizabeth) Creel**, yearlong intern at Redemption OPC in Gainesville, FL.

20. **Bradney and Eileen Lopez**, Arroyo, PR. Pray that the Lord keeps adding to Iglesia Presbiteriana Sola Escritura those who are to be saved. / **Mr. and Mrs. M. M.**, Asia. Pray for Mr. M. as he teaches seminars for many men preparing for licensure. / **Janet Birkmann**, communications coordinator for Diaconal Ministries.

21. **Mr. and Mrs. J. M.**, Asia. Pray for Mr. M. as he preaches at Sunday evening gatherings to encourage the team. / Pray for **Kevin and Rachel Medcalf**, Cumming, GA, as they begin their labors at Providence Presbyterian Church. / *New Horizons* cover designer **Chris Tobias**.

22. **Larry and Kalynn Oldaker**, Huron, OH. Pray for four additional families to join Grace Fellowship OPC in 2018. / Pray for wisdom for tentmaking missionary **T. D.**, Asia, as she helps to organize the missionary homeschool co-op for next year. / **Adam (and Joy) Harris**, yearlong intern at Covenant OPC in Komoka, Ontario, CA.

23. **Eric and Dianna Tuininga**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for their Sunday afternoon neighborhood outreach, which draws hundreds of children and youth. / **Chris and Grace Ann Cashen**, Clarkston, GA. Pray that the Lord would open new doors leading to trusting relationships with refugees. / **John Paul (and Corinne) Hol-loway**, summer intern at Christ Covenant, Amarillo, TX.

24. Pray for Home Missions general secretary **John Shaw**. / **Charles and Connie Jackson**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray that the organization of the Reformation Book Room will be a blessing to the local community. / *New Horizons* proofreader **Jessica Johnson**.

25. **David and Sunshine Okken**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for encouragement for the local believers who travel to surrounding villages to share the gospel. / **Jay and Andrea Bennett**, Neon, KY. Pray for Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church's organization by 2020. / **Doug Watson**, part-time staff accountant.

26. Pray for **Lacy (and Debbie) Andrews**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast. / **David and Rashel Robbins**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for David as he prepares tracts to help people distinguish the true gospel from false ones. / **Stephen (and Felicia) Lauer**, yearlong intern at Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, OH.

27. Pray for the labors of **Mark and Carla Van Essend-elft**, Nakaale, Uganda. / **Chris and Megan Hartshorn**, Anaheim Hills, CA. Pray that Anaheim Hills Presbyterian Church would see conversions and growth both numerically and spiritually. / **Mark Stumpff**, Loan Fund administrator.

28. **David and Rebekah Graves**, Coeur d'Alene, ID. Pray for a new facility to accommodate the growing congregation of Coeur d'Alene Reformed Church. / Pray for **Dr. Flip and Anneloes Baardman**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they anticipate the birth of their first child early next month. / **Daniel (and Victoria) Garcia**, year-long intern at Escondido OPC in Escondido, CA.

29. Pray for missionary associates **Leah Hopp** and **Christopher and Chloe Verdick**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they assist the clinic in Karamoja. / **Jason and Amanda Kirklin**, Waco, TX, give thanks for new members joining and the love that members of Trinity OPC demonstrate toward one another. / *New Horizons* editorial assistant **Diane Olinger**.

30. **Bill and Sessie Welzien**, Key West, FL. Pray that Keys Presbyterian Church would grow in holiness and in numbers. / Pray for missionary associates **Schylie La Belle, Paige Vanderwey**, and **Angela Voskuil**, Uganda, as they assist our missionaries and their families. / Army reserve chaplain **Stephen (and Lindsey) Roberts**.

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

QUIÑONES INSTALLED AT SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

On Saturday, March 10, 2018, Roberto Quiñones was installed as pastor of Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana Ortodoxa Jesús es la Verdad.

As the two OP churches and one OP mission work in Puerto Rico are part of the Presbytery of New Jersey, several pastors traveled there to participate in the service, including John Keegan (Grace OPC, Fairlawn, NJ), Dick Ellis (Faith OPC, Pole Tavern, NJ), and Tom Church (Immanuel OPC, Bellmawr, NJ).

Pastor Carlos Cruz gave the charge (Iglesia Presbiteriana Reformada del Caribe OPC, San Juan, PR) and Bradley Lopez (Iglesia Uno Reformada OP Mission Work, Arroyo, PR) translated.

Special music was prepared for this occasion by members of Jesús es la Verdad, including many children of the church. Members of the Puerto Rican OP churches and mission work were also in attendance. The service was followed by a delicious meal of traditional Puerto Rican food.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA OPC WOMEN'S RETREAT

Jane Crum

On April 6–8, 2018, seventy-five women from Southern California and Arizona gathered in the majestic mountains of Idyllwild, California, to sing, pray, and encourage one another. Le Ann Trees, member of Escondido OPC and Dean of Women Students at Westminster Seminary California, was our conference speaker on the topic of “The Beautiful Christian Life: Loving God and Your Neighbor in the Everyday Moments of Life.”

Biblical counselor Tricia Mathys led devotions on “Defiant Joy” from Habakkuk 3:17–19 and on the Psalms of Lament. She encouraged us to remember that our present circumstances are not



(Top) At the ordination of Roberto Quiñones (front row, third from right)
(Bottom) Quiñones with his wife, Irma Díaz, and children, Nicole, Jonathan, and Joel

the final word and that we should pray through the Psalms of Lament when we are distressed and the road we are on is rocky and broken, listening for the Lord's comfort in his many and great promises.

Regional Home Missionary Dave Crum led in worship on Sunday morning, encouraging us to sit at the feet of the Savior as we consider the nature of true beauty. A highlight of our time was the opportunity for corporate prayer each morning. We joined our hearts together in

praise and thanksgiving as well as bringing our personal concerns to our heavenly Father. We had numerous first-time attendees this year, including some from our newest mission works. This annual retreat is an excellent opportunity to celebrate the Lord's faithfulness to us throughout the year, to share our trials and victories in the Christian life, and to enlist prayer support from our sisters from all over the region! We returned home encouraged to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

HOADLEY INSTALLED AT AIRDRIE, ALBERTA

On April 20, 2018, Gregory Hoadley was installed as pastor of Redeemer OPC in Airdrie, Alberta, Canada. John Mahaffy preached from Isaiah 52:1–11 and Romans 10:5–17 on “The Pastor’s Feet.”

Jim Hoekstra gave the charge to the pastor, and Larry Wilson gave the charge to the congregation. Mark Collingridge and Brett McNeill among others also took part in the installation service.



Back row: Mark Collingridge, Larry Wilson, Brock Pavier, Reg Versteeg, Jim Hoekstra
Front row: Ken Minderhoud, Greg Hoadley, John Mahaffy, Brett McNeill

UPDATE

CHURCHES

- **Christ the King Presbyterian Church** in Naples, FL, became a particular congregation on April 27.

MINISTERS

- On August 8, 2017, **John W. Garrisi** was designated teacher emeritus by Harvest OPC in San Marcos, CA. Upon moving to Virginia, he was transferred from the Presbytery of Southern California and received by the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic.
- The Presbytery of the Dakotas dissolved

the pastoral relationship between **Louis J. Cloete** and Bethlehem Reformed Church in Freeman, SD, as of February 1.

- On March 3, **Roberto Quiñones-Cardona** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana Ortodoxa Jesús es la Verdad in San Juan, Puerto Rico.
- On March 17, the Presbytery of the Midwest dismissed **Frank P. Liu** to the Great Lakes Presbytery of the BPC; Liu was formerly the pastor of Mission OPC in St. Paul, MN.

- **Jared H. Van Noord**, formerly an RCA minister, was installed as associate pastor of New Hope OPC in Green Bay, WI, on April 9.

- On April 15, **Brian D. Chang**, formerly the pastor of Christ Reformed Presbyterian Church in Cottonwood, AZ, was installed as pastor of Trinity Reformed Church in Lanham, MD.

- **Andrew W. Fortenberry** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of Grace OPC in Hanover Park, IL, on April 20.

- On April 20, **Gregory P.**

Hoadley, formerly the pastor of Grace OPC in Fargo, ND, was installed as pastor of Redeemer OPC in Airdrie, Alberta, Canada.

- On April 27, **Eric R. Hausler**, formerly the organizing pastor as an evangelist of the Presbytery of the South, was installed as pastor of Christ the King Presbyterian Church in Naples, FL.

MILESTONES

- Former OP pastor and missionary **Arnold S. Kress**, 83, died on March 19.



On April 15, Timothy Carroll was ordained as a deacon, the first ordination since Grace Church, Pennsville, NJ, joined the OPC. (L. to r.) Kevin Parks, Warren Schrier, David Glading, Steve McDaniels, Bruce Fenton, Carroll

LETTERS

THANK YOU, LINDA

Editor:

So much in Linda Posthuma’s article (“From My Desk at the CFM,” April 2018) tempts me to comment, but I’ll mention just one thing. I well remember the 1986 General Assembly. It seemed that the foreign missions program of the OPC was in serious crisis, and most of us commissioners were confused. The chairman of the advisory committee, John Hilbelink, calmly led us to see a way forward. But more impressive yet was Linda Posthuma’s mastery of all the information we needed as commissioners. She says in her article she was nervous. But what we heard was someone who knew the an-



At the installation of David Veldhorst to Bethel OPC, Oostburg, WI: David Cornette, Bob Holda, Frank Marsh, Ben Snodgrass, David Veldhorst, Brian Wingard, Jonathan Falk, and Brian De Jong

swers to our questions and gave them to us in a clear and understandable way. I felt then, and still do, that she was God's instrument in "saving" our foreign mission program at that time. So, thirty-two years later—thank you, Linda.

David King
Janesville, WI

MOTIVATION FOR HOLY LIVING

Editor:

Dennis Johnson asks the question, "Why be good? If Jesus did it all, why should I try to be good?" ("Why Be Good?" April 2018). His answer, "Be good

be careful to obey my rules...you shall be my people, and I will be your God." God goes on to say that these things will happen when the throne is restored to the house of David (see 37:24). The writer of Hebrews 10:15–39, quoting part of Jeremiah 31:31–40, a passage that parallels Ezekiel 36:16–37:28, confirms that this indeed is what was going on in his day and thus will be in our day. To the writer of Hebrews, this was the motivator for persevering in righteousness and for seeking that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (12:14). Paul, as well, saw it as the great motivator when he wrote in Philippians 2:12–13: "Therefore

for love of Christ, who loved us..." is not wrong, but it doesn't quite reach the one most important motivator, that I know of, for holy living "without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).

God, in Ezekiel 36:27–28 says, "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and

... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Paul wrote Ephesians 2:8–10 fully aware that God, in Ezekiel and Jeremiah, had ordained that his people will walk in paths of obedience.

Our confession, chapters XIII, XVI and XVII, is consistent with this, as are the catechisms. Romans 8:29 says God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son. The logic is simple; the motivation is strong: the Son is holy, therefore be holy. Peter gives a variant of the reason I argue. He writes in 1 Peter 1:16, citing Leviticus 11:44–45, "Be holy, because I am holy." It is the holy God of Israel who has decreed that we should be holy; therefore be holy.

John Kinnaird
Nottingham, PA

REVIEWS

O Death, Where Is Thy Sting? by John Murray. Westminster Seminary Press, 2017. Hardcover, 320 pages, \$22.50. Reviewed by OP minister Arthur J. Fox.

This book is a collection of sermons by Professor John Murray, the most esteemed professor of systematic theology during the formative years of Westminster



Sunday, April 1, 2018, marked the eighteenth anniversary to the day of the first worship service of the core group that later became Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church. The first service had an attendance of about ten. On April 1, all thirty-seven members were present. The congregation asks for prayer that they would be organized by 2020.

Theological Seminary. It is almost impossible to adequately recommend this book. In the introduction, Scott Oliphint, one of Murray's successors, notes that, "What must be highlighted here ... is that Murray was, throughout his adult life, bathed in the system of theology that finds its home in the Reformation" (xxxi). This gives us a clue as to how we who preach or teach the Reformed faith might grow to maturity in Christ as Murray did: Let the message of the gospel have its full effect on our hearts so that we will, as another once put it, "Let the flag of the Reformed faith fly high." The Reformed faith is a life commitment that cannot do its work without a heart committed to it.

This volume contains fifteen eloquent gospel sermons and one charge to Dr. Edmund Clowney upon his installation as professor of practical theology, a position in which his specialty was to be homiletics. These sermons are full of grace and the gospel. They reflect the life of the preacher in that he was full of love for Christ and his gospel and for the people of God to whom he preached. The portrait (not included) that covered Murray's collected works depicts a man with a solemn demeanor, but these sermons depict a man who rejoiced in his Savior and God and the privilege of preaching his Word. He clearly loved the congregations he preached to, as a result, when we read these transcripts, we cannot help sensing that love and joy, almost coming to feel that he would rejoice in our reading these sermons, and would plead with God to bring us afresh to the Christ he loved.



There is a fabulous bonus in almost every transcript here. Those who assembled this collection also blessed us with transcripts of John Murray's *prayers!* They make for powerful reading. I found myself hoping that I could learn how to pray from this godly minister. For this gift to the church, I am thankful to Westminster Seminary Press and to John Murray's son, Dr. Logan Murray, who granted Westminster permission to publish this material.

***Living Life Backward: How Ecclesiastes Teaches Us to Live in Light of the End*, by David Gibson. Crossway, 2017. Paperback, 176 pages, \$13.90 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor Stephen J. Oharek.**

Ours is a culture in which many efforts are made to insulate us from the reality of death. Cemeteries are mostly out of sight, and even churches can be reluctant to openly address issues of death and dying. This is part of what makes *Living Life Backward* such a valuable contribution from author David Gibson, who says he is "convinced that only a proper perspective on death provides the true perspective on life" (11). This insight, Gibson explains, is at the heart of the teaching of Ecclesiastes.



Living Life Backward is one of the best books I have read in a long time, and it is *the* best book I have ever read on Ecclesiastes. There are two primary reasons for this.

First, Gibson interprets Ecclesiastes as a consistent stream of positive wisdom. Often, Ecclesiastes is interpreted as a mixture of wis-

dom and folly that the reader must sort through. As when reading through the alleged wisdom of Job's friends, the discerning reader of Ecclesiastes must consider the various teachings from "the Preacher" (the author, Eccles. 1:1) and determine in which passages he was experimenting with hedonism or nihilism, and in which passages he had come to his senses and was then faithful to God. However, Gibson takes the approach that all of the book is true and wise, and that the Preacher remained "upright" throughout (Eccles. 12:10). Gibson does not cover every chapter and verse in Ecclesiastes, but he does provide excellent explanations of most of it, showing how the laments and joys of the Preacher are simply honest, godly responses to living in a broken, sin-stained world.

The second exemplary feature of *Living Life Backward* is the attention it gives to living life in light of death. Gibson notes key themes in Ecclesiastes that relate to this, such as godly enjoyment of the pleasures God gives to his children here, honest bereavement of the losses we suffer during this journey, and reckoning with the impermanence of our achievements. Some readers may find Gibson's words jarring, as he is often brutally honest about the certainty of death—for example, one chapter is titled "One Foot in the Grave"! Having just recently completed an adult

Sunday school series on death and dying, I believe that directly addressing the reality of our own mortality is something that, frankly, most of us could use more of. Gibson, a pastor himself, does exactly this. And as he teaches in his book, the Preacher in Ecclesiastes did it first!

Living Life Backward is divided into ten chapters. The "Questions for Discussion or Personal Reflection" at the end of each chapter make it ideal for a group study, though individuals will be blessed and challenged by it as well. Although it is not a scholarly commentary, I would also highly recommend this book to any preacher or teacher who is planning to tackle Ecclesiastes.

Positions Available

Pastor: Bethlehem Reformed Church (OPC) in Freeman, SD, which has been affiliated with the Reformed faith for the past 125 years, is seeking a full-time pastor. We are located in the southeast part of the state. Send inquiries to Dennis Wollman, 501 South Juniper Street, Box 400, Freeman, SD 57029, or call him at 605-925-7534 or 605-321-5207.

Deuteronomy: A 12-Week Study, by Matthew H. Patton. Crossway, 2017. Paperback, 96 pages, \$8.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Charles B. Williams.

When it comes to Bible reading plans, everyone does well until they reach the wilderness of Deuteronomy. The foreign places and names; the seemingly irrelevant dietary restrictions and civic law codes; the “un-kosher” laws regarding women, slaves, and homosexuals—all tend to leave the lay reader wandering about in the desert, at a loss for what to make of the book. Above all, many walk away asking, where is the good news in all this? It might come as a surprise, then, that next to the

Psalms and Isaiah, Deuteronomy is the most referenced Old Testament book in the New Testament. Not only does our Lord quote Deuteronomy to the devil in his wilderness temptation, but Paul applies Deuteronomy to matters of church governance and discipline (1 Cor. 5:9–13; 1 Tim. 5:17–19). Indeed, the greatest commandment is a summary of the whole of Deuteronomy (Mark 12:30; Rom. 13:8–10).

Few books, then, are both more neglected and necessary to be understood than Deuteronomy. For this reason, Matthew Patton’s *Deuteronomy: A 12-Week Study* is a welcome resource. Patton’s book is part of Crossway’s Knowing the Bible study series, intended for use in private or small groups. The study organizes Deuteronomy into twelve week-long seg-

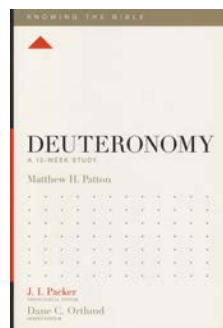


short-term missions

SUMMER PRAYER CALENDAR

APRIL 26–JUNE 28	Anna Kloosterman serving with the OP Uganda Mission (Karimoja)
MAY–JULY	Hurricane Relief Volunteer Teams in Houston (Texas)
MAY–SEPTEMBER	Boardwalk Chapel volunteer staff and ministry teams (Wildwood, NJ)
JUNE 15–JULY 6	Team Nozomi service and outreach (Yamamoto, Japan)
JUNE 23–JULY 5	Team Haiti VBS programs (La Gonave, Haiti)
JUNE 25–29	English for Kids Bible Camp Week 1 (Quebec City, Canada)
JULY 1–31	Joanna Grove teaching English at a university in Asia
JULY 1–31	Janelle Grove serving with OP missionaries in Asia
JULY 2–5	English Club at the OP Uruguay Mission (Montevideo, Uruguay)
JULY 2–6	English for Kids Bible Camp Week 2 (Quebec City, Canada)
JULY 2–6	English for Kids Bible Camp in St-Georges (Quebec, Canada)
JULY 9–13	English for Kids Bible Camp Week 3 (Quebec City, Canada)
JULY 10–16	Venture Missions VBS on Menominee Reservation (Zoar, WI)
AUGUST 6–10	English for Teens Bible Camping Trip (Quebec City, Canada)

Please pray for our short-term mission teams and individuals. For more information, visit OPCSTM.org.



ments. Each unit follows the same basic structure: “The Place of the Passage” situates that week’s readings within the context of the rest of Deuteronomy; “The Big Picture” summarizes the major theme of the passage; “Reflection and Discussion” provides guided questions; “Gospel Glimpses” directs the reader to seeing the gospel in Deuteronomy; “Whole Bible Connections” situates the week’s readings within the context of the whole scope of redemptive history; “Theological Soundings” introduces the reader to Christian doctrines either illustrated or taught by the text; and “Personal Implications” provides space for reflection on the significance of the text’s meaning for daily living.

Too many Bible studies treat the text

superficially, all too eager to jump straight to personal application. The result is often saccharine reflections that fail to work toward lasting change. Patton’s book is quite the exception. It is robustly redemptive-historical, points unabashedly to Christ, yet does not shy away from the abiding validity of the law’s third use in the life of the new covenant believer. This study requires time and energy, but the fruit is well worth the labor.

Though Patton’s book is an excellent primer, a seasoned saint using it might still feel overwhelmed by the size and density of Deuteronomy—and how much more might a new believer! For many, this study will be better appropriated in a small-group rather than private setting. This is not a fault on Patton’s part, but only highlights the riches to be mined in Deuteronomy, an undervalued book in the library of the Spirit.



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