

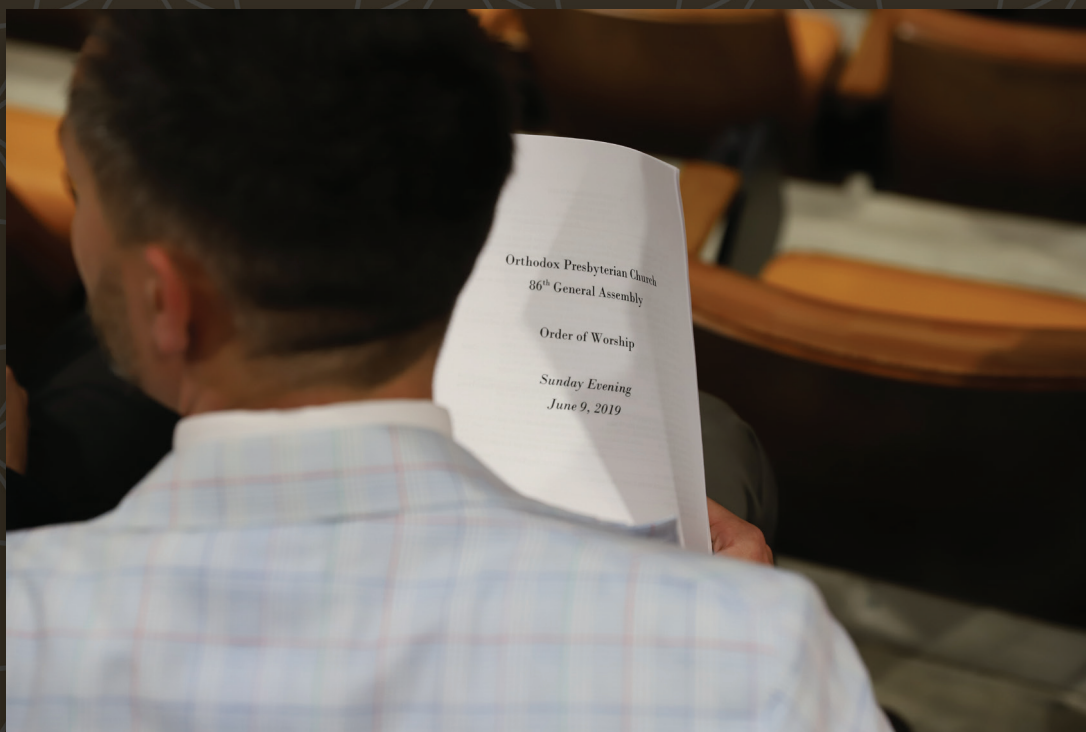
NEW HORIZONS

═ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ═

6 Garret A. Hoogerhyde
// by Patricia E. Clawson

AUG/SEPT 2019

22 Review: *Abide with Me*
// by Joel and Janet Bacon



REPORT ON THE 86TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Jesse Montgomery // 3

CONTENTS

FEATURES

- 3** Report on the Eighty-Sixth General Assembly
By Jesse Montgomery
- 6** Garret A. Hoogerhyde: The Embodiment of a Ruling Elder
By Patricia A. Clawsom
- 8** A Blessed Providence after the Horror at Chabad of Poway
By M. Scott Johnson

DEPARTMENTS

- 10** Christian Education
Ten Tips for Surviving a Pastoral Transition
• *Our Membership Vows* • *Out of the Mouth ...*
- 12** Home Missions
A Tale of Two Wilmingtons
- 14** Stewardship
Where Does Your Gift to Christian Education Go?
- 15** Prayer Calendar
- 18** News, Views, & Reviews

Photos of General Assembly courtesy of Kerri Ann Cruse.

New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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(Left to right) Phil, Ken, Ralph, Jesse, Bill, and Alan Montgomery. Phil and Ralph struck up a blind conversation at general assembly and discovered that they were cousins. They hadn't seen each other for fifty years. Phil is a ruling elder at Covenant OPC, St. Augustine, FL; Ken is pastor of Geneva OPC, Marietta, GA; Ralph is a ruling elder at First OPC, San Francisco, CA; Jesse is a ruling elder at Faith OPC, Garland, TX; Bill is a ruling elder at Redemption OPC, Gainesville, FL; Alan is a ruling elder at Westminster OPC, Hollidaysburg, PA.



REPORT ON THE EIGHTY-SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY



JESSE MONTGOMERY // On June 5, for the first time in the history of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), the General Assembly met in the state of Texas. The Presbytery of the Southwest and the OPC congregations in the Dallas area welcomed some two hundred commissioners, committee members, fraternal delegates, and

visitors to the campus of the University of Texas at Dallas. A little over half of commissioners were ordained in the last two calendar decades; nearly a quarter of commissioners were attending their first assembly—while on one level a mere statistic, on another it brings to mind the reminder in Psalm 145 of the need for one generation to commend our Lord’s acts to another, that they may meditate on his wonderful works, proclaim his great deeds, and joyfully sing of his righteousness.

Ruling elder David Haney was elected as moderator. Mr. Haney noted that he was honored to serve as moderator, his father, George Haney, having served in the same capacity exactly forty years

prior. Mr. Haney served the assembly admirably throughout, keeping the body on track and requiring order as needed; and seasoning his duties with humor on occasion.

The first major item of business the next day, Thursday, was the election of the next stated clerk to succeed retiring Stated Clerk Ross Graham. The trustees of the OPC nominated Hank Belfield, pastor of Providence Presbyterian in Chilhowie, Virginia. Mr. Belfield was elected to a three-year term which will begin officially on January 1, 2020.

Reports on the Work of the Church

Reporting in the place of Statistician Luke Brown, who was celebrating his fiftieth wedding anniversary, Stephen Migotsky summarized the statistics of the whole church, the regional churches, and local congregations.

Overall, the statistics for our denomination held steady over the past year; there were small net gains for congregations (an increase of one) and mission works (increase of two), and at year’s end the total number of congregations (282) and mission works (42) stood at 324. Total membership saw a slight decrease of 0.77 percent, to 31,043; however, both



David Haney, moderator



Danny Olinger and Peter Sim at the book table

morning worship and Sunday school attendance saw slight increases, of 0.73 percent (to 24,161) and 1.25 percent (to 12,302), respectively. Reflecting on the

many figures contained in the report, Mr. Migotsky tenderly reminded us that they represent souls, individual sheep for whom our Savior died, and they reflect the work that our Savior is doing in building and preserving his church.

In the report on the work of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension (CHMCE), General Secretary John Shaw noted that thirty-four home mission fields received financial assistance in 2018, including seven that saw the arrival of organizing pastors and began to receive denominational funding this year. He also expressed enthusiastic optimism for the nascent but promising work of Nick Lammé, who has been called by the Presbytery of the Southwest as an evangelist in Houston—a call which the CHMCE and the Committee on Diaconal Ministries are helping to fund and facilitate.

Eric Hausler and Lowell Ivey also reported on their work as church planters. Each gave color to the particular circumstances in which they labor and the opportunities they have to engage their communities. Presentations like these are a highlight of the assembly, as they provide a vivid snapshot of what our home missionaries are doing and how they are faring; it brings to life what many of us only read about in a newsletter or the back of a bulletin, and it spurs us on to more faithful prayer for these men and their congregations.

As the assembly returned to work after dinner, the Committee on Foreign Missions reported. In contrast to the

tenor of the assembly thus far, General Secretary Mark Bube's report had a decidedly sorrowful, even anguished note. This was due in part to the increased persecution that many Christians are experiencing in parts of the world where our missionaries serve, affecting them either directly or indirectly and, at least in one field, causing us to involuntarily reduce our presence there. Another cause for sorrow was the necessary decision of the committee to remove a family from our largest mission field, the Uganda mission, thus leaving it shorthanded. The sobering report may tempt us to grieve this season of sadness, and yet we believe that God is good and will temper even these ills and use them for his glory. Yes, despite cross and trial, there is great cause for rejoicing as we continue to have many opportunities to call men, women, and children everywhere to faith and repentance.

Next to present Thursday evening was the Committee on Christian Education (CCE). General Secretary Danny Olinger stated that sales of the 2018 *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* were so strong that a third printing is scheduled for this

fall. The work of Mr. Bryan Estelle as Hebraist on the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* was given special recognition, with the assembly applauding him for his labors.

After the report of the CCE, the assembly recognized and thanked Donald and Carolyn Poundstone for their service to the OPC at home and abroad. A video tribute was shown, and the assembly responded with a standing ovation for the Poundstones.

The Committee on Ministerial Care—newly erected, but already

very busy—presented Friday morning. Within this committee's purview are: informing presbyteries and sessions of tools available for the care of their ministers, providing counsel and assistance in financial planning, managing and overseeing the OPC Retirement Fund and the Obadiah Fund, and maintaining denominational salary scale guidelines. The committee's important work is guided by its director, David Haney.

David Nakhla, administrator of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries, presented a video showing aspects of the ministry of disaster relief. The video, which will soon be made available to the broader church at OPCDisasterResponse.org, focused on the response of a number of families who were blessed by the OPC's disaster relief efforts in the greater Houston area in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey.

Next, the assembly moved to the report of the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations. The assembly determined to invite several fellowships into corresponding relations: the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe, the Presbyte-



Poundstone watching a tribute in his honor





OP church planter Eric Hausler with OP pastor Jonathan Cruse and his son, Jacob

rian Church in Uganda, and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Peru. On a somber note, the assembly also voted to send a communication to the 2020 Synod of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, urging them to reconsider their decision to open the special offices of minister and ruling elder to persons who are biblically disqualified from such offices.

Following the Ecumenicity report, the assembly fittingly had another “historical moment,” this time reflecting on the life and ministry of Jack Peterson, who entered his eternal rest late last year. In addition to serving on the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations for forty-five years, he served on the Committee on Christian Education, the Committee on Foreign Missions, and on the Special Committee for Revisions to the Book of Discipline and the Directory for Public Worship. He also served as the moderator of the Thirty-Ninth (1972) General Assembly. Having served as pastor of Grace OPC in San Antonio since 1979, “Texas Jack” would have been delighted to see general assembly finally held in Texas.

From the Persecuted Church

Mr. Bube then introduced a brother from the Presbyterian Church in Asia, who gave a moving address to the body. This man, from a sister denomination that is under systematic persecution, spoke memorably to us of the Lord’s

work in Asia. He gave heartfelt expression to the ways in which the OPC has been of assistance to their denomination in the past and present. And, looking to the uncertain future, he boldly urged us to look beyond political persecution into heaven itself, that we might see Jesus sitting at the right hand of the Father. He declared that the persecution the church experiences is the world’s re-

bellious response to the risen, ascended, victorious King Jesus; and though the church is outwardly persecuted, it is in fact the invading, victorious army. He assured us that Christians in Asia are not hiding or wavering, but are seeking to make Jesus’s name known. Observing that “the darker the night, the brighter the dawn,” he also assured us that Asian Christians are not merely trying to survive until the dawn but are in fact the very light that the world needs. He reminded us that the church will not merely survive, but will thrive, because King Jesus reigns. He also implored us to continue to labor together with the Presbyterian Church in Asia, that we might together see much spiritual fruit in the days ahead. His words were electrifying; if you were there, this was *the*

moment of the assembly. In response to his conviction and courage, the assembly gave a standing ovation.

Somber Reflection

For the remainder of Friday afternoon, the assembly took an opportu-

nity to reflect on the recent shooting at Chabad of Poway synagogue, an incident which directly affected Rev. Zach Keele and the session and congregation of Escondido OPC, because the shooter is a member of the congregation. Mr. Keele spoke about the heartbreak this incident has caused for both the synagogue and his church. He spoke sorrowfully, admitting that he and the church are perplexed at the events, not understanding how such evil could go out from among them. He thanked the commissioners for their prayers, noting that he had heard from many in the days after the shooting. He asked, too, for prayer for the children in the congregation, for whom these events are especially confusing and troubling. He reflected that in the midst of this trial, even as the church condemns the atrocity and as they grieve with the victims, the session and congregation are striving to honor Christ and to continue to proclaim the good news of the gospel.

This period of somber reflection for the body, led by Eric Watkins, was closed with tender, pleading prayer. Mr.



OP pastor Rob Tarullo and family, plus Julian Montgomery on Sarah Tarullo's lap

Hausler prayed for the synagogue members, for healing relations between the church and synagogue, and for the hope of the gospel to be held forth in the midst of this tragedy. Mr. Ivey prayed for the young member who has been charged with murder, that he might repent; and he prayed for comfort for the family and the members

of the church. Finally, Mr. Watkins prayed for Mr. Keele, for his labors, and for the ministry of Escondido OPC. We recessed for the evening reminded again that only the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring hope and peace in this evil age.

[Continued on page 17.]

GARRET A. HOOGERHYDE: THE EMBODIMENT OF A RULING ELDER



PATRICIA E. CLAWSON // There is a reason why Garry Hoogerhyde is probably the longest continually serving ruling elder in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Whenever the OPC calls, Garry answers. During this year's general assembly, Garret A. Hoogerhyde was recognized for serving as a ruling elder for sixty-

three years in four New Jersey OPC congregations, sacrificing his time and talents and sharing his wisdom just twenty years shy of the OPC's entire eighty-three-year history. His love for the church led to decades of service on committees of his presbytery and denomination, as well as, in 1976, being one of only nine ruling elders elected to serve as GA moderator.

But this June, Garry, at 89, finally stepped down from the Committee on Home Missions after fifty-five years of service. At the request of John Shaw, general secretary for Home Missions, he agreed to remain on the OPC Loan Fund board as the last of its original members.

Garry is the embodiment of a wise ruling elder, said Shaw. "He is humble, a man of prayer, with a great laugh, who brings a Holy Spirit-filled wisdom to every meeting. He loves the church, exemplified by his willingness to give his time over many decades to serve the cause of the gospel."

Shaw believes the future of the OPC depends on strong, faithful, wise ruling elders. "The OPC has been built

on the shoulders of men like Garry Hoogerhyde."

"Garry has set the standard," Danny Olinger, president of the Historian's Committee, told this year's assembly. "His work on behalf of the church has not only been of the highest quality, but also quiet and selfless. He has been one of the great gifts that the Lord has given to the OPC."

A Sure Foundation

Born on March 1, 1930, Garry grew up in the Christian Reformed Church in Paterson, New Jersey. At the advice of his father's friends, he graduated in business administration from PACE Institute, a top ranked accounting college, in 1950.

Drafted during the Korean War, Garry served at an anti-aircraft radar site that protected New York City. On a blind date to the movies, he met Marlene, his wife of sixty-five years. Garry appreciated Marlene's outgoing, friendly manner. Marlene jokes she was attracted to his uniform. After his discharge, they married on May 8, 1954.

Garry passed his certified public accounting exam and soon became partner, and then owner, of an accounting firm. When Garry semi-retired at seventy, his son Doug bought the firm. But Garry still goes to his office weekly. "We're created to work," said Garry. "If the Lord said I'm finished, I'm fine. He calls the shots."



Hoogerhyde at general assembly in 1993

While settling on a church, the newlyweds in June 1954 read in the

paper about Grace OPC in Fair Lawn. After visiting, the congregation's pastor, LeRoy Oliver, won their hearts. In 1956 they became Orthodox Presbyterians.

Their new pastor told Marlene, "I'm coming to your house every Monday at four o'clock so you'll learn the Reformed faith." While Garry watched their kids, Marlene remembers, she "got the OPC and Roy Oliver, and he cared. How could I not want to be a part of it?" To this day, Marlene considers the OPC her family and going to general assembly a family reunion.

The Hoogerhydes were blessed with eight children, all of whom today are part of Reformed congregations: Stephen (PCA); Susan Lindemulder (PCA); Roy (OPC); Kathleen Kline (PCA); Glenn (CRC); Stuart (CRC); Garry Jr. (OPC); and Douglas (URC). Their goodly heritage includes twenty grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren. Garry and Marlene raised their children with devotions after dinner, church twice on Sunday, young people's groups, and education at Christian schools and Dordt College. They sacrificed. Chores were listed on the fridge and those too short to reach the kitchen sink to wash dishes hauled over the stepstool. The kids worked part-time to earn college money, and Marlene taught each how to do laundry, iron, and sew. A musical family, several children accompanied worship. They also learned from Marlene's gift of hospitality. After cooking for ten, what's two more?

Serving the Church

In 1956, the Fair Lawn congregation elected Garry as a ruling elder because he was young and also knew the Reformed faith and catechism. Since then he twice served as an elder at Emmanuel OPC in Whippany, and once in Nutley. Now he is elder emeritus at Church of the Covenant in Hackensack. In these congregations, he taught through the Old Testament in adult Sunday schools.

A new elder, Garry attended his first GA in 1956. He was immediately elected to the Home Missions Committee with Roy Oliver as its new general secretary. Garry also was elected to the Presbytery of New Jersey's Home Missions Committee, Diaconal Committee, and as treasurer. At first, Garry



Garry and Marlene Hoogerhyde at a recent general assembly

just observed and listened at meetings, learning parliamentary procedures. He advises newly elected men, "Don't be quick to speak. Scripture tells us to be quick to listen, slow to speak. But if you have a question, ask the question."

When Garry stepped down from Home Missions at this year's GA, he had served under six general secretaries for fifty-five years (1958–1985, 1991–2019). He also used his financial expertise to serve the entire fifty-five-year life span of the OPC's Pensions Committee (1959–2017) and administered the OPC's hospitalization plan for forty-three years (1966–2009). Garry also represented Home Missions on the Committee on Coordination for twenty-six years (1993–2019) and served for thirty-six years as the only president of the OPC Loan Fund (1983–today). "Who would have thought that a small church like the OPC could have a loan fund of \$14 million to support congregations—even small, young congregations—to purchase buildings? A large piece of that story began with the faithful labors of Garry," Shaw said.

Garry is thankful to serve. "We have not lost a penny over the years."

Director of Finance David Haney appreciates Garry's solid foundation.

"Having served for so many years on so many committees, Garry's ability to recall past practices (both good and bad) is tremendously useful in so many aspects of denominational work."

By default, Garry handled the Pensions program, inheriting boxes of records within hours of being asked.

Before computers, Garry set up his basement and Marlene, a legal secretary, manned the phones while Garry processed claims by day and their son Steve took over at night. "I'll use the knowledge I've been granted," said Garry.

In 1966, the Thirty-Third Assembly assigned the administration of the health insurance program to the Committee on Pensions so Garry helped to develop and operate the self-funded health plan for OP ministers. At first they ran it out of

their house while the pension program moved to Garry's office. For thirteen years, Marlene, and their children Steve, Kathy Kline, and Doug helped Garry to facilitate both the hospitalization and pension programs. "We enjoy it and it helps all these pastors and wives," said Garry. "When you look back over the years, many times I wasn't around, but Marlene was always so supportive and so were the kids."

In 1988 the Fifty-Fifth General Assembly gave a standing ovation for Marlene's "unfailing patience and helpfulness to participants of the (Health) Plan." The Seventy-Fifth General Assembly thanked the Hoogerhyde family for "decades of faithful care." At the final Pensions Committee meeting in 2017, they also thanked Garry for more than fifty-three years of "caring for the needs of pastors in the OPC."

"It's astounding to realize that the Lord saw fit to use me that length of time and that the church feels I've been useful," said Garry. "That is encouraging and humbling, but it's the Lord's. Unless the Lord had done it, it wouldn't have happened." □

The author is a member of Calvary OPC, Glenside.

A BLESSED PROVIDENCE AFTER THE HORROR AT CHABAD OF POWAY



M. SCOTT JOHNSON // Like the rest of us in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, I was stunned and sickened to learn that John T. Earnest, who opened fire on worshipers at the Chabad of Poway synagogue in Poway, California, on April 27, 2019, was a member of an OPC congregation.

Our little denomination, virtually unknown to the world at large, was now associated in news articles with white nationalism, anti-Semitism, hatred, and terrorism. As much as we may argue that these evils are categorically opposite to our Christian and Reformed convictions, as indeed I believe they are, the fact is that an OP member committed this atrocity. And so we share the shame, if not the blame.

Yet in the providence of God, the very next day and just a few miles away, another OP member was honored publicly by the Jewish community.

Holocaust Remembrance

The Community Holocaust Commemoration, held in connection with *Yom HaShoah*, or Holocaust Remembrance Day, took place in La Jolla, California. This event had been months in the planning, but the previous day's violence added an urgent poignancy to the gathering.

The program included an official recognition by the Israeli Consulate of Cornelis and Wilhelmina de Ru

who, during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands during World War II, successfully protected fourteen Jewish people by hiding them in their home until they reached safety elsewhere.

Their son, Herman, who was a boy during the war and remembers the events, is a longtime ruling elder at Harvest OPC in San Marcos, California. He is also the father of Fred de Ru, a member of Grace OPC in Wasilla,

Alaska, the church I serve as pastor.

Herman de Ru was present for the ceremony and received the "Righteous Among the Nations" medallion on behalf of his parents, but, due to his poor health, it was Fred and his cousin who spoke for him. In front of an audience of six hundred people, they told the story of how and why the de Ru family risked their safety to save the lives of strangers during the Nazi occupation.

At great risk, Cornelis and Wilhelmina provided shelter to those in need and even took a Jewish baby into their home, whose cries could have unwittingly betrayed them. Fully aware that, if discovered, they could be imprisoned or killed, the de Rus were confident that this was the Christian thing to do.

A True Witness of Christian Belief

I later asked Fred if the people leading the ceremony were aware that he and his dad belonged to the same denomination as the Chabad of Poway attacker. Wondering the same thing, Fred had approached one of the



Herman de Ru with his family's award



The two honorees with their family and friends

rabbi before the ceremony. The rabbi replied that yes, he was aware of the link, but after reading the OPC's statement condemning the attack [see sidebar], he was satisfied that Herman de Ru's church affiliation was not a problem. And so, de Ru was honored by the Jewish community and the government of Israel for his family's brave expression of love for their Jewish neighbors during the war.

The same church body, then, from which came a man who murdered a Jewish woman, injured three others, and terrorized an entire community, is the spiritual home of a man whose family—out of their Christian convictions—risked their lives to save those of the Jewish people. The same community that suffered at the hands of the first man on one day, honored the second the day after.

Against the backdrop of the atrocity at Chabad of Poway, the de Ru family's courageous, self-sacrificial love stands as a true witness to all that we believe about God and Christ.

Vindicated by Christ Alone

As members of the OPC, even as we are grieved to learn that the killer at the Poway synagogue was from one of our congregations, we may be tempted to exult in the story of the de Rus, seeing in it a vindication of our faith and church. To be honest, that was my initial motive for sharing this story.

However, there is a more sobering message in this providential series of events. As much as the shooter's actions saddened us, and even shamed us, the truth is that there is in the heart of each of us a terrifying capacity to do

evil (Mark 7:21–22). The evil that erupted from the heart of the attacker lurks in the heart of us all. As sinners, there is no sin we are not capable of committing. And no church in the world, nor family in the world, can make our hearts good. Only Christ can do that. By his grace alone, God's people may perform extraordinary acts of self-sacrifice and love—as the de Ru family did during the war. But apart from his grace, any person—even with the best upbringing—can do great evil.

Our hope, then, is not in our church or in ourselves, but only in the saving power of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures say that God has made Christ our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Therefore, “as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord’” (1 Cor. 1:30–31). □

The author is pastor of Grace OPC in Wasilla, Alaska.

A Public Statement on the Shooting at the Chabad Synagogue

On April 27, in an act of vicious and deplorable hatred and violence, a gunman entered a synagogue in southern California and proceeded to open fire on the gathered worshipers, killing one and wounding three others before he was driven from the building. Sadly, the nineteen-year-old shooter, John Earnest, was a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Pastor Zachary R. Keele and the session of our hundred-member Escondido Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Escondido, California, issued the following statement concerning that horrific event:

The atrocious crime of violence and hatred that took place at Chabad of Poway synagogue on Saturday, April 27, grieves us deeply and shatters our hearts. As a congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ, we devote our lives to the love and mercy of the Lord to all of God's beautiful children, from every nation, language, and tribe. Our most sincere prayers, condolences, and cares go out to the victims, their loved ones, and the congregation of Chabad. We deplore and resist all forms of anti-Semitism and racism. We are wounded to the core that such an evil could have gone out from our community. Such hatred has no place in any part of our beliefs or practices, for we seek to shape our whole lives according to the love and gospel of Jesus Christ.

We join the session and congregation of Escondido OPC to express the sincere sympathies and grief of all Orthodox Presbyterians to the people of Chabad of Poway in their great loss and heartache. And, along with our Escondido congregation, we condemn in strongest terms the sentiments of anti-Semitism and racist hatred which apparently motivated the shooter. Such beliefs are contrary to the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and have no place within our system of doctrine or in the teachings and practices of our church. We believe that God created man, male and female, in his own image in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. And in love, we offer the gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ to every human being.

May God grant comfort to all who have been affected by this tragic and deplorable act. And may he help all of us, as his image-bearers, to love our neighbor as ourselves.

For the Orthodox Presbyterian Church,

The Rev. John D. Van Meerbeke
Moderator of the 85th General Assembly

The Rev. Ross W. Graham
Stated Clerk of the 85th General Assembly

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TEN TIPS FOR SURVIVING A PASTORAL TRANSITION

// KIRSTEN L. BELH



Kirsten Belh

Anyone who has ever been on a pastoral search committee knows that seeking a new pastor can be a tremendously long and arduous task. But many of us are taken off guard by the challenges that come once a new pastor arrives. Chances are, you came to your church under your previous pastor because you liked the church under his leadership. Now that church is changing.

Many churches can lose a significant number of their membership within the first two years of a pastoral transition. This can lead to discouragement for both the pastor and the remaining members. The discouragement can be so great that we may grow discontent with our church, lay the blame at the feet of our new pastor, and even be tempted to leave the church ourselves.

How can we prepare ourselves and our church to preempt the exodus and the heartache that so often follows a pastoral transition? Having witnessed several churches go through this, here are ten observations I have made that may make the transition go more smoothly.

1. Pray for your new pastor from day one.

Pray that God would accomplish what he has planned for the church through the ministry of your new pastor. Pray for his encouragement. Pray that he would grow in grace and in love for his new congregation. Pray for him each week as he prepares to administer Word and sacrament. Pray that he would have wisdom and insight into the needs of the church. Pray for his family. Do this from day one—don't wait until the pastoral honeymoon is over!

2. Pray for yourself.

Pray that God would soften and prepare your heart for the work he is doing through this new pastor. Pray that you would grow in grace and in loving submission to his leadership. Pray

that your ears and heart would be eager and prepared to receive and believe the Word preached each week. Acknowledge to yourself and to God that there will be disappointments and ask for his grace to face them even before problems arise.

3. Pray for the congregation.

Pray for peace and unity. Pastoral transitions often bring out the worst in churches as we inevitably hope for a pastor who will reflect our priorities (and not those of the guy on the other end of the pew). This can bring division to even the strongest church. Pray that the congregation would joyfully submit as one body. Pray for unity in the session; disunity among the leadership can destroy a pastor and a church. Pray for the pastor's and elders' wives.

4. Get to know the pastor and his family.

Often, we expect the pastor to reach out to us and get to know us—as well we should. It is one of his duties as pastor. Chances are, he is eager to do so. But remember he is the newcomer, and he may have one hundred new people to meet. If you are a longtime member, you already know the others at church and have only his family to reach out to. Invite him over. Ask him about his hobbies. Ask him about his convictions and who or what shaped him. Aim to do this regularly! As he inevitably brings changes to your church, keep communication open. Try to understand him and the new direction he is taking the church before suggesting your own.

5. Don't compare.

Okay. Let's be honest. This one is humanly impossible. You are going to compare your new pastor with your old pastor. You are going to compare his preaching with your favorite radio or podcast preachers. But don't always give him the short end of the stick. It's okay to miss your previous pastor and even mourn, but don't forget to move on and embrace your new pastor with all his strengths and weaknesses.

Try your best to overlook those weaknesses by God's grace and to actively take note of his strengths.

6. Speak positively about him to others.

When your pastor first arrives, there is going to be a time of excitement. But after a year or two there will most likely be a period of disappointment as you find out that he's just a man and unable to meet everyone's expectations. It's so easy for us to begin to grumble quietly among ourselves. We may even feel justified, with a chapter and verse to validate our discontent. Now is the time to avoid listening to the grumbling—whether inside your mind or coming out of someone else's—and to start counteracting it with praise. Get your congregation excited again about your new pastor by praising him to others.

7. Encourage him.

We've all heard the statistics on pastoral burnout. It's so much easier to complain than to encourage, and as a result, the criticisms your pastor hears probably far outweigh the compliments. Make it a point to encourage him and his family. Your pastor is sincerely devoted to your church and eagerly desires its growth in grace. It is his job to be concerned about its well-being full-time. It can be rewarding, but it can also be emotionally and spiritually exhausting. He needs your encouragement more than you know.

8. Get your hands dirty.

We all have our favorite ministries and priorities, and we want our new pastor to adopt them as well. But what if he doesn't? Remember, the entire work of the church does not rest on the pastor. Get involved! If you see a need, ask him if you can help. Your pastor will be thrilled. Even better, ask him where he sees a need and then offer to fill it.

9. Commit for five years.

No matter what. Your new pastor may arrive and quickly make several changes, or he may arrive and keep things just as they are. Either way, give him time. Just as he cannot get to know an entire congregation in one or two years, neither can you judge his ministry in just one or two years. A pastor doesn't begin to truly have an impact on a church until a few years in. Be patient.

10. Remember that this is the Lord's church.

Things may not go in the direction that you thought they should. But God is sovereign, and he is accomplishing his will in his church, even if we don't understand it. Be committed to the body. Don't make your membership conditional on who is in the pulpit. Pray that the Lord's will would be done, not any one person's. Be encouraged. He will build his church, and the gates of hell will not stand against it!

The author is a member of Providence OPC in Rockford, Illinois.

OUR MEMBERSHIP VOWS

Submitting to the Government of the Church

Glen J. Clary

In the fifth membership vow in the OPC, those who are making a profession of faith promise “to submit in the Lord” to the government of the church. What does that promise mean?

The Lord Jesus is the only Head and King of the church. He alone has the authority to rule, and he does, in fact, rule his church by his Word and Spirit through the form of government that he has appointed in his Word. That form of government includes ordained officers who rule or govern the church under the authority of Christ and as his representatives (1 Tim. 5:17). The governing officers of the church—the ministers and elders—are to rule the church in accordance with the Word of God. They have no authority to rule contrary to the Word or even in addition to the Word.

As they govern the church, they are carefully to follow the Holy Scriptures. And if their decisions are agreeable to the Word of God, then the members of the church are required to submit to them in the Lord. As the Book of Hebrews says,

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Heb. 13:17)

“The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man” (WSC 3). Ministers and elders are responsible for making sure that the saints are being taught the Word of God faithfully. They are also responsible for holding them accountable to what Scripture teaches and commands. That sometimes requires them to administer church discipline to members who are found to be delinquent.

Out of the Mouth . . .

Our three-year old grandson, Hunter, went outside without asking his mom, Cara, for permission. His parents had been teaching him to always seek permission, so she asked him, “Hunter, who gave you permission to do that?” He quickly replied, “Jesus!”

—Patti Palmer
Madison, AL

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

A TALE OF TWO WILMINGTONS

// JUDITH M. DINSMORE



Morning worship at Wilmington Reformed in Wilmington, Ohio

In 2019, two new OP mission works, along with their overseeing sessions, asked two fresh-out-of-seminary men to pastor their churches. Both works also happen to be located in cities named Wilmington.

Wilmington, North Carolina

Heritage OPC in Wilmington, North Carolina, decided “very quickly” that Ethan Bolyard was their leading candidate, said elder Marc Yandle. The search committee began meeting in December 2018 and brought Bolyard to Wilmington in February 2019.

“He met with almost every family in the congregation, usually over meals,” Yandle explained. Bolyard will be completing an internship at Covenant Community Church in Taylors, South Carolina, this month, having graduated from Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in 2017. “We asked members, some in their mid-eighties, whether Ethan was someone they could listen to when seeking counsel,” Yandle said. “Every person said yes.”

Marc Yandle and fellow elder Greg Bebb have been doing much of the pastoral care, including finding pulpit supply, for Heritage OPC since its Sunday services began in October 2017. Will it be weird to hand that off to a young guy? “No. We will be so thankful,” Yandle replied without missing a beat.

Both elders work in the medical field—Yandle is a pediatrician and Bebb is a surgeon—and both have six children. Their faithful labors “on the ground” have been crucial, said Lacy Andrews, the regional home missionary who has been working with Heritage OPC since its beginning. Thanks to the

work of these elders, Andrews is very hopeful for a smooth transition.

“Frankly, my experience has been that humble young men tend to transition pretty well because they know they don’t have all the answers and look to the more seasoned elders for wisdom,” Andrews said.

However, the first years of any pastor’s ministry will hold challenges, Andrews explained, as the pastor seeks to answer difficult questions particular to the church where he serves. “What hill do you die on? When are you firm pastorally and when are you patient and let the Holy Spirit do his work? When do you love people even though they’re a mess and you can’t fix it?” Some new pastors tend to see everything in black and white. “And there certainly is holiness and wickedness,” Andrews said. “But there’s also a process in

each Christian’s sanctification. Our Lord is so patient with us, and shepherds need to learn to be patient with sheep.”

Growth Through Difficulty

Heritage OPC has grown quickly, from an average attendance in the thirties when it began to the mid-eighties now.



Marc Yandle teaching (top) and fellowship at Heritage OPC in Wilmington, NC (bottom)

The members have been knit together through difficulty. In September 2018, Hurricane Florence hit Wilmington with more than two feet of water, flooding vast areas and cutting off the coastal city from the rest of the mainland. The elders of Heritage OPC checked on each congregant, as well as others in the area. And although Lacy Andrews couldn't get through the water on the Sunday after the flooding, Heritage OPC still gathered together, called him up, and put him on speakerphone. "I was sitting there with a telephone to my ear, preaching!" Andrews laughed.

One member of the church later broke his back in a serious accident. The congregation came around to meet his need immediately; a woman from the church stayed with his wife through the first long night at the hospital. "That kind of care is the thing that binds hearts together," Andrews observed.

Wilmington, Ohio

The group of families in Wilmington, Ohio, were already bound together in covenant fellowship as members of a PCA church fifty-five miles from Wilmington, before they even began a church plant. They all desired a Reformed church closer to home, so when they found out that an OP pastor named Brad Peppo—already known to some of them through his work at a Christian school—was planting churches in the region, they got in touch.

"We asked the group why they hadn't considered the OPC earlier," Peppo said, "and they answered, 'We didn't know that the OPC planted churches!'"

But by the time Peppo walked into the first meeting with the seven families and their PCA session in January 2018, a few of the gentlemen had already read through the whole OP church-planting manual. "We spent three months working our way through the manual together, praying quite a bit together, and having some really good, frank conversations about what oversight in the OPC looks like," Peppo said.

Their first service was on Palm Sunday, March 25, 2018. Since then, it's been full speed ahead. "This group has a lot of energy and a lot of zeal. It's been a pleasure to watch. The harder job has been containing them!" said Peppo.

They quickly organized a nursery rotation, Sunday school classes, and a fellowship meal schedule. Some are involved with the local pregnancy center and its Walk for Life; some are involved with a local food pantry. Others are active in their local home school groups or nursing home facilities.

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date news and prayer requests, receive our newsletter by e-mailing HomeMissionsToday@opc.org. New editions: Aug. 14 and 28 and Sept. 11 and 25.

Mission-Minded

The fledgling church already has deep roots in Wilmington and the surrounding area, simply because many are long-standing residents. And they want to grow strong from those roots. "I believe this group genuinely desires to build community and share their faith," member Randy Dell said. Dell and his wife, Diane, have lived their forty-three years of marriage in a renovated one-room schoolhouse five miles west of Wilmington, which Diane's grandfather attended when he was a boy. For forty-three years, Dell has also had one employer: Champion Bridge Company, established in 1872, a miscellaneous steel fabrication shop.

Dell's oldest son, Noah Dell, also works at Champion Bridge and is involved in a revitalization effort in the county, which experienced a serious downturn in 2008 when a major local employer shut its doors. Champion Bridge recently bought a historic downtown building adjacent to its shop and is restoring it to be a retail space for antique vendors as well

as home goods. "Four of our six kids were arts majors in college so hopefully this space will be developed to serve and encourage the area homemakers to establish homes that are attractive, comfortable, and secure," Dell said.

The pastor coming to Wilmington Reformed has an arts background, too. When Stephen Lauer came to the States as an undergraduate, having grown up on the mission field in Japan, he majored in art and history. But the job he found after school was doing data entry at a software start-up in Seattle, where he also enrolled part-time at North-

west Theological Seminary. Three months later, the start-up hired him full-time, and he kept moving up in the company even as he worked toward his seminary degree.

As an intern in Beavercreek, Ohio, Lauer visited Wilmington Reformed several times. "It wasn't your typical candidating decision," Peppo explained. "He preached five times before we really began seriously considering him." Gradually, it became clear that Lauer, although new to full-time ministry, was an excellent candidate. He was ordained by the presbytery in April 2019 and installed as church planter at Wilmington Reformed—then, with the church's blessing, promptly took a trip to Japan to fill his father's shoes for a month as evangelist.

"Pastor Stephen is very mission-minded on a local level as well as abroad," Dell said. This focus of Lauer's is what impressed and encouraged the group. "I want to figure out how to help us at Wilmington Reformed grasp a biblical vision of the church that's focused on mission in a New Testament sense," Lauer said. "We're very excited," Dell concluded.



Randy Dell

STEWARDSHIP

WHERE DOES YOUR GIFT TO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION GO?

What are you supporting when you give to the Committee on Christian Education (CCE)?

Ministerial Internships

(2019 budget: \$235,000)

Ministerial internships place qualified ministers-in-training alongside pastors in a local church to labor for either one year or one summer. The CCE supports and organizes this effort. In 2019, the CCE provided \$18,000 for each yearlong intern, provided the local church would match or exceed that amount. (The local church almost always provides funds above the matching figure.) For summer interns, the CCE provides \$3600, again matching the local church. In 2019–2020, there are thirteen yearlong interns; sixteen interns for the summer of 2019. Churches can notify CCE of their desire for an intern, and if the church is qualified, “we don’t turn them down,” General Secretary Danny Olinger said. “We want to help the local church support the next generation of ministers.”

New Horizons

(2019 budget: \$280,000)

New Horizons, the denominational magazine of the OPC, is designed to report on the work of the church and to provide edifying content. This is reflected each issue in the table of contents: after the feature articles, the three standing committees—Home Missions, Foreign Missions, and Christian Education—each have two pages in which they update the church on their work. The *New Horizons* budget includes honorariums for writers, art, shipping costs, and printing costs—about \$1.40 per magazine. (*New Horizons* is distributed free of charge to all OP members.) It also includes compensation for the managing editor and editorial assistant, as well as a percentage of editor Danny Olinger’s salary.

Internet Ministries

(2019 budget: \$35,000)

The Internet Ministries budget increased from \$25,000 in 2018 to \$35,000 in 2019 in order to give a face-lift to OPC.org. (Look for changes in 2019 and 2020.)

Ordained Servant

(2019 budget: \$25,000)

Ordained Servant, a monthly online magazine, exists to help encourage, inform, and equip church officers for faithful, effective, and God-glorifying ministry. *Ordained Servant* is also printed annually. Its budget covers printing, proofing, and editing costs.

Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC

(2019 budget: \$15,000)

The Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC (MTIOPC) is designed to provide men who are preparing for the gospel ministry and current OP elders and ministers with instruction supplemental to that which they might receive in seminary. The semester of work is done remotely with a three-day in-person intensive training. The budget covers the defraying of travel expenses of attendees as well as honorariums for the faculty instructors.

Conferences/Visitations

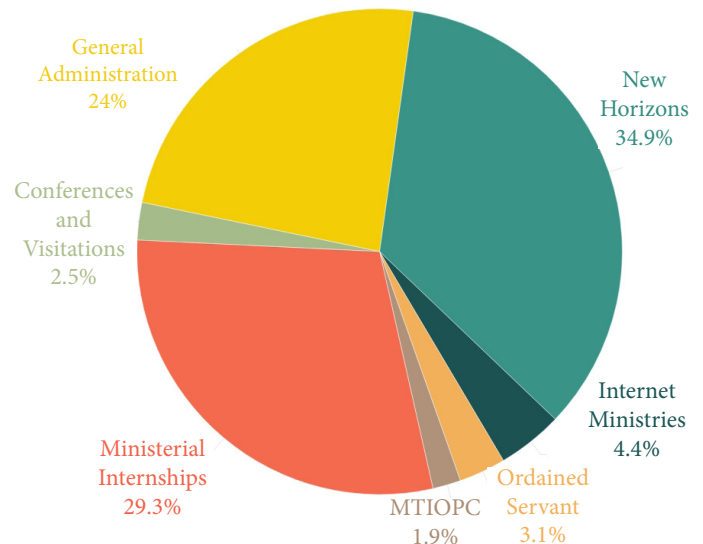
(2019 budget: \$15,000)

Although there are a variety of conferences CCE has hosted in the past, currently its primary focus is the Timothy Conference, which gathers session-recommended young men interested in ministry to learn from experienced pastors and teachers. The CCE also hosts the Shiloh Conference for seminarians and occasionally the Candidates and Credentials conference.

General Administration

(2019 budget: \$192,360)

This budget covers the salaries of Mr. Olinger and the various individuals that make up the CCE staff. It also includes office rental and costs and travel expenses for the staff.



AUG-SEPT

Items pertaining specifically to September are in italics.



The Schout family



Joseph and Andrea Pollard

- 1 **MICHAEL & NAOMI SCHOUT**, Zeeland, MI. Pray that Grace Fellowship OPC would have unity in the gospel and a desire to be welcoming to strangers. / **TIN LING LEE**, Foreign Missions administrative assistant.

- 2 **LARRY & KALYNN OLDAKER**, Huron, OH. Pray that God would lead Grace Fellowship in unity and commitment. / Pray for CCE general secretary **DANNY OLINGER** as he oversees the intern program.

- 3 **GREGORY & GINGER O'BRIEN**, Downingtown, PA. Pray that Christ Church would be gripped by the gospel's power. / **DAVID & RASHEL ROBBINS**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for men being trained to serve as church officers.

- 4 **CALVIN & CONNIE KELLER**, Winston-Salem, NC. Pray for Harvest OPC's new outreach committee and its work. / **MARK & CARLA VAN ESSEDELFT**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the construction work needed for housing.

- 5 **DR. FLIP & ANNELOES BAARDMAN**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for opportunities to share the gospel with patients and their families. / Pray for Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**.

- 6 **RON & CAROL BEABOUT**, Mifflintown, PA. Pray for Grace and Truth's participation in a community movie night tonight. / **NAKAALE, UGANDA, MISSIONARY ASSOCIATES** Leah Hopp, Angela Voskuil, Rebekah Moore, and Joanna Groves.

- 7 Summer interns **SETH (EVA) DORMAN** at Pilgrim OPC, Bangor, ME, and **MASON DEPEW** at Harvest OPC, San Marcos, CA. / Pray for **BILL (MARGARET) SHISHKO**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Connecticut and Southern NY.

- 8 Pray for **BEN (TIFFANY) WARD**, church-planting intern, Christ the King, Naples, FL, as he wraps up his internship. / Pray for missionary associates **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they balance work and homeschooling.

- 9 **MR. AND MRS. S. F.**, Asia. Pray that the university where they've worked for 25 years may reopen. / Summer interns **JAMES STAFFORD** at Grace Presbyterian, Columbus, OH, and **CARL (LINDA) GOBELMAN** at Westminster OPC, Indian Head Park, IL.

- 10 Summer interns **ELIJAH (GRETA) DE JONG** at Concho Valley OPC, Concho, AZ, and **LAWRENCE (HAILEY) GALE** at Reformation OPC, Oviedo, FL. / *Pray for the meeting of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension in Willow Grove, PA, on Sept. 10-11.*

- 11 Pray for **RETIRED MISSIONARIES** Cal and Edie Cummings, Brian and Dorothy Wingard, Greet Rietkerk, and Young and Mary Lou Son. / Pray that **OPC.ORG** would edify the church and help it to communicate its message.

- 12 Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**. / Summer interns **JOSEPH (ANDREA) POLLARD** at Faith OPC, Long Beach, CA, and **DAMON (ELISABETH) YOUNG**, Covenant Presbyterian, Barre, VT.

- 13 Summer interns **A. J. (CHELSEA) MILLSAPS** at Grace OPC, Trenton, NJ, and **JOSH VALDIX** at Providence OPC, Bradenton, FL. / **CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for refreshment during a 6-month furlough.

- 14 Pray that the English Bible studies of associates **P. F.** and **M. S.**, Asia, may bear fruit. / Summer intern **LOGAN (MADELINE) SHELTON** at Covenant Community Church, Taylors, SC.

- 15 **NICHOLAS & ROSEMARIE LAMMÉ**, Houston, TX. Pray for boldness in proclamation of the gospel and hearts ready to receive the good news. / Affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia.

AUG-SEPT



Chris and Grace Ann Cashen

16 **CHRIS & GRACE ANN CASHEN**, Clarkston, GA. Pray for children, volunteers, wisdom, and perseverance for the after-school program. / **BOARDWALK CHAPEL**, Wildwood, NJ. Pray for weekly ministry teams.

17 Pray for the labors of **MR. AND MRS. M. M., MR. AND MRS. J. M.**, and tentmaker **T. D.**, Asia, while they are in the US. / **KERRI ANN CRUSE**, social media manager for the OPC.

18 **BRAD & CINNAMON PEPP**, Dayton, OH. Pray that God would bless First Street Reformed in the transition to morning worship. / Pray for **DAVID (JANE) CRUM**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern CA.

19 **BEN AND HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti. Pray for youth participating in the VBS program in the Port-au-Prince church. / Yearlong intern **DERRICK (NICOLE) LEITAO** at the Presbyterian Church of Cape Cod, Barnstable, MA.

20 Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Pray for the translation work of Reformed literature into Creole. / Pray for **MIKE (ELIZABETH) DIERCKS**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Ohio.

21 Affiliated missionaries **CRAIG & REE COULBOURNE** and **LINDA KARNER**, Japan. / Pray for **OP MILITARY CHAPLAINS** on active duty: Stephen (Lindsey) Roberts, US Army, and Jeffrey (Jennifer) Shames, US Army.

22 Pray for missionary associates **STEVE AND CARRIE HILL**, Montevideo, Uruguay, as they encourage the church. / **DAVID NAKHLA** (coordinator) and **JANET BIRKMANN** (communications), Short-Term Missions and Disaster Response.

23 **STEPHEN & FELICIA LAUER**, Wilmington, OH. Pray for new visitors to come to Wilmington Reformed and for opportunities to reach the lost. / **DAVID HANEY**, director for the Committee on Ministerial Care.

24 **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray that the Lord would raise more church officers. / **BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for new elder and deacon leadership for the church.

25 *Foreign Missions general secretary* **MARK BUBE** and associate **DOUGLAS CLAWSON** as they report to the Committee this week. / Yearlong intern **ADAM (NOELLE) WELLS** at Reformation OPC in Morgantown, WV.

26 Summer interns **MARC (RUTH) SCATURRO** at Harvest OPC, Wyoming, MI, and **GRANT (STORMIE) ALLARD** at Christ Covenant Presbyterian, Amarillo, TX. / **MATTHEW AND LOIS COTTA**, Pasadena, CA. Pray for wisdom as the church reaches out to the growing Chinese community.



Silas and Anastasia Schreyack

27 Home Missions administrative assistant **KATIE STUMPF**. / Summer interns **MATTHEW (HYOJUNG) WALKER** at Covenant Presbyterian, Marina, CA, and **SILAS (ANASTASIA) SCHREYACK** at First Church of Merrimack, NH.

28 **DAVID & REBEKAH GRAVES**, Coeur d'Alene, ID. Pray for unity at Coeur d'Alene Reformed. / Pray that the **ETHIOPIAN REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** may be a strong gospel witness in both rural and urban communities.

29 Staff of *New Horizons and Ordained Servant*. / **ANDREW & REBEKAH CANAVAN**, Corona, CA. Pray for Corona Presbyterian's continued growth in worship, discipleship, and outreach.

30 Affiliated missionaries **JERRY & MARILYN FARNIK**, Prague, Czech Republic. Pray that summer outreach may lead to fruitful relationships. / Pray for the meeting today of CCE's **SUBCOMMITTEE ON RESOURCES FOR THE CHURCHES**.

31 **HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray that the English camp may bring many students into the church. / Pray for **LACY (DEBBIE) ANDREWS**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast.

[Continued from page 5.]

Finishing Well after a Texan Storm

On Saturday, Mr. Strange presented the report of the Special Committee on Updating the Language of the Doctrinal Standards of the OPC, which was established last year. By way of reminder, this committee is authorized to propose only such changes as do not change the doctrine or meaning of the standards. In all cases, the committee is to strive to propose changes that preserve the cadence, memorability, and dignified style of the standards. Following a time of questions, the assembly voted to continue this Special Committee for another year, affording them additional time for their trwork.

The remainder of Saturday afternoon was taken up by more addresses from fraternal delegates, and by the presentation of the report for the Committee for the Historian. Committee member Brian DeJong presented a short video describing how to conduct oral history interviews, a recent emphasis of the committee as a way to record and preserve the experiences of ministers and members of the OPC.

Sunday brought a very welcome day of rest and worship for the commissioners. The majority were hosted by the five local Dallas-Fort Worth OP congregations, while a few visited other Reformed or Presbyterian churches.

A handful of hardy folks even made the trek to farther flung congregations of the presbytery in Waco, Tyler, and Longview. What a delight it was to be able to worship with local congregations, and for local members to be able to get to know ministers, elders, missionaries, and church planters!

For many, the return to campus was harrowing, as the metroplex experienced one of its most severe thunderbursts in years. It was a daunting drive



Haney (center) with David Mahaffy and Eric Watkins

that required fighting the wind, weaving around downed branches, avoiding high water, and dealing with power outages that affected traffic signals. With everyone safely back on campus, we were able to have a joint worship service for the commissioners and members from the local congregations. Rev. Joe Troutman, pastor of Mid Cities Presbyterian in Bedford, Texas, preached a sermon

from Job 36 entitled, “Worship: The Path Through Suffering.”

The assembly reconvened Monday morning. The first order of business was to consider an overture from the Presbytery of the Midwest which asked that the general assembly consider changing our form of government in terms of how we receive and install ordained ruling elders and deacons from denominations of like faith and practice. The overture observes that our form of government has a clearly defined approach with respect to ministers, but is less clear regarding ruling elders and deacons. After some discussion and debate, the assembly decided to grant the petition of the Presbytery of the Midwest by referring the overture to the Committee on Christian Education for its consideration and to report back at a future assembly.

The final actions of the assembly were to adopt the recommendations of the trustees regarding the General Assembly Operating Fund, and to adopt and read the assembly’s resolution of thanks to the many University of Texas-Dallas personnel and the many, many volunteers from local churches who helped the assembly to run smoothly. Lord willing, the Eighty-Seventh General Assembly will be held on the campus of Eastern University, St. Davids, Pennsylvania, beginning on June 3, 2020, at 7:00 p.m.

After a week full of peaceable discussion and debate on the matters before our church, and a week full, as well, of much prayer and praise and singing, the assembly sang one final time, concluding with “My God, How Wonderful Thou Art.” Mr. Haney then led in prayer, and the Eighty-Sixth General Assembly was dissolved. □

The author is ruling elder at Faith Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Garland, Texas.



A lighter moment at the Assembly (left to right): Cris Dickason, Josh McKamy, Zach Keele, Shane Bennett, John Van Meerbeke, Eric Watkins, and Larry Westerveld

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

CANAVAN ORDAINED AT CORONA

David Crum

On Sunday, May 19, 2019, members of the churches of the presbytery of Southern California of the OPC rejoiced together to witness the ordination and installation of Andrew Canavan to serve as evangelist and organizing pastor of Corona Presbyterian Church in Corona, California. This mission work of our presbytery meets for Lord's Day worship at a Messianic Jewish synagogue in the city of Corona.

Roger Wagner, pastor of Bayview OPC, presided. David VanDrunen gave the sermon to the congregation from Matthew 16:13–20, pointing us always to him who is the head and chief cornerstone of the church. Dave Crum, regional home missionary, gave the charge to Canavan, and Chris Hartshorn gave a charge to the congregation.

Please pray that the Lord would prosper this church plant, strategically located as the gateway from Orange County to the Inland Empire and Riverside County.

UPDATE

MINISTERS

- On May 19, **Andrew W. Canavan** was ordained and installed as an evangelist of the Presbytery of Southern California to serve as organizing pastor of Corona Presbyterian.
- On June 28, **J. Zachary Siggins** was ordained and installed as associate pastor of Living Hope OPC in Gettysburg, PA.

LETTERS

USE OF "SYSTEMIC RACISM"

Editor:

I offer a cautionary remark about Mark Robinson's May article, "Four Theses for Reforming Race Relation-



Andrew and Rachel Canavan with their children Amelia, Asher, and Ansel

ships." In it, he discourages readers from using the phrase "systemic racism," but the OPC's Report of the Committee on Problems of Race urges congregations "to emphasize in their ministries of preaching and discipline the obligations . . . to reject every form of racial discrimination and racism; to reject every attempt to maintain racial supremacy by military, economic or any other means; to reject the subtle forms of racial discrimination found in many countries today with respect to housing, employment, education, law enforcement, etc." These areas of obligation overlap with what scholars mean by "systemic racism." Hence, we have good reason to employ the phrase.

Nathan Luis Cartagena
Wheaton, IL

DISABILITY AN IMPORTANT TOPIC

Editor:

Thank you for the July issue, "Disability and the Body of Christ." Everything in it about disability is true, important, and should be read and reread by everyone. My youngest daughter was born almost eighteen years ago with severe intellectual disabilities, and, while her condition

has made life hard in some ways, it has brought unexpected blessings in others. My older daughter served as a short-term missionary for several summers at the Joni and Friends Family Retreat, and our church in Leesburg, Virginia, not only has families in our midst contending with autism who are loved and accepted but has become heavily involved with Tree of Life, a cooperative ministry of churches caring for the poor and needy in our community, among them those with disabilities.

George C. Hammond
Leesburg, VA

REVIEWS

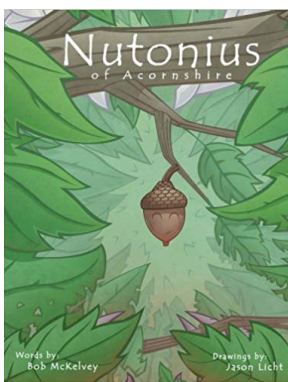
Nutonium of Acornshire, by Bob McKelvey, illustrated by Jason Licht. *Theozoa*, 2017. Paperback, 32 pages, \$8.99 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP member Cliff Leigh.

"Just the facts, ma'am," was Sgt. Joe Friday's refrain on TV's *Dragnet* when witnesses would stray from the bare bones of their stories. This might be prudent in criminal investigation, but, when dealing with undoubtedly the greatest story ever

told, this will never do. Our Lord rarely spoke without use of parable to give visceral meat (as well as to conceal) the truth he was conveying. Therefore, it is always a joy to see Christians exercise their sanctified creativity to bring forth from their treasure “something new and old” in the proclamation of the gospel. *Nutonius of Acornshire*, by Bob McKelvey with illustrations by Jason Licht, does just this. Written for ages six to twelve, it is a new allegorical telling of the old, old story. McKelvey, an OPC pastor, first prepared this tale for his young children and now presents this fully fleshed out version to us.

Loosely based on Bunyan’s *The Holy War*, our main character, Nutonius, is fallen like the town of Mansoul. Except, in his case, being an acorn, he is literally fallen from a mighty oak. He is doomed to perish like all other acorns under the clutches of a particularly nasty squirrel named Scatterhoard, appropriately illustrated with jagged menace by Licht. Of course, as in all Christian allegory, redemption must come in a personal form, and in this forestry setting the wise and powerful Snowy Owl swoops in to save our despairing protagonist. The noble owl, having once suffered death at the squirrel’s hands yet rising to newness of life, ultimately delivers the enemy a gruesome and deadly wound. This enables Snowy Owl to snatch at will our powerless acorn from Scatterhoard’s decaying dungeons.

Unlike *The Holy War*, *Nutonius* mainly focuses on the basics of the redemption story and does not go into depth on the life-long gauntlet of the world, the flesh, and the devil, that the redeemed must pass through. This aspect of the Christian life is often glossed over when relaying the Good News, which may cause some a rude awakening when confronted with taking up one’s cross, mortifying the flesh,



Covenant Presbyterian Church in Amsterdam, New York, celebrated its fortieth anniversary in September 2018. Covenant began in 1978 as a mission work of Calvary OPC; above are pictured some of its original members.

and bearing this world’s tribulations and the wiles of the evil one. *Nutonius* mildly touches on this during his sometimes-harrowing ride in the Snowy Owl’s talons, but perhaps Mr. McKelvey will use his talent for allegory to delve deeper, à la Bunyan, into identifying the methods of and means of confronting our adversaries lest his young readers be ignorant of their devices. One hopes he will.

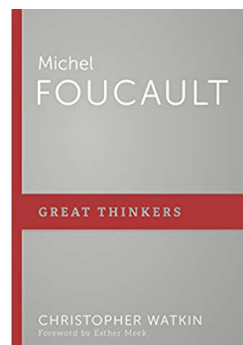
Michel Foucault, by Christopher Watkin. P&R, 2018. Paperback, 216 pages, \$11.50. Reviewed by OP pastor James J. Cassidy.

Have you ever wondered where current trends in feminism and queer theory come from? They preeminently have their academic foundations in Michel Foucault. Dr. Watkin gives us a study on perhaps the most influential thinker of the middle to late twentieth century in this biography, part of P&R’s “Great Thinkers” series.

The book is very well written. Watkin has done his homework and we are the beneficiaries of that labor. He also displays a deft ability to explain abstract philosophical concepts. In the first four chapters, he gives us a clear and useful overview of Foucault’s thought and writings. The reader is further assisted in this with two appendices (charts containing Foucault’s main publications and his periodizations of history), a glossary of key

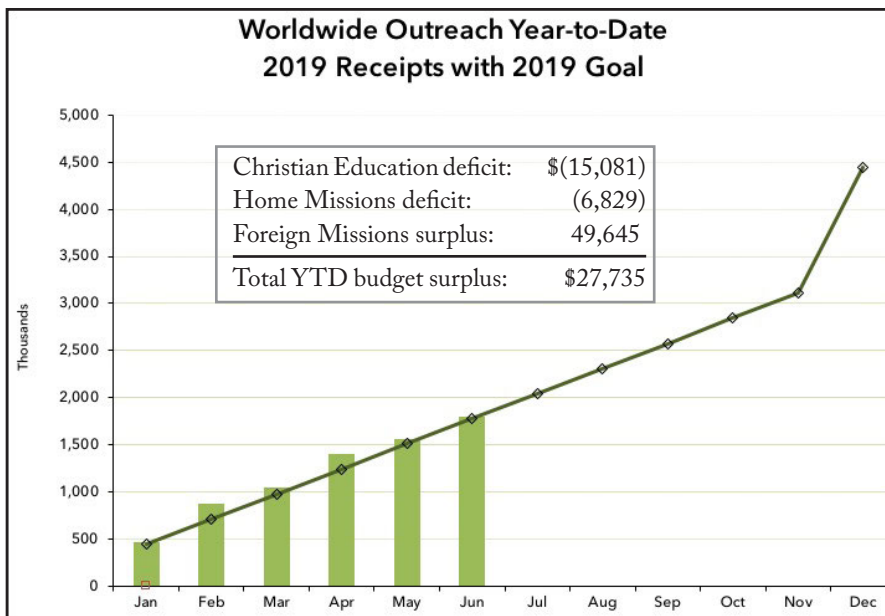
terms and people, a select bibliography (some of the entries are annotated), and indices of Scriptures and subjects/names. This book packs a lot of information for a mere 179 pages!

In the second half of the book, Watkin brings Foucault into conversation with the Bible. This is where I think the book is at its weakest. Admittedly, Watkin is quite upfront that he does not seek to “adjudicate between Foucault and the Bible



on the question of truth” (136). Rather, Watkin seeks to offer “an open invitation to dialogue” with the “biblical story of the incarnation, cross, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ” (xxiv–

xxv). Further, he argues that Foucault and the Bible “share a set of common concerns and problems to which they offer analogous but distinct responses, and that the Bible’s responses tend on the whole to be more complex and multidimensional than Foucault’s” (xxiii). He executes that plan in chapters 5 and 6 as he compares Foucault’s notion of power structures to Paul’s teaching in Philippians 1 and 1 Corinthians 1. The upshot is given to us in chapter 7, where he challenges Foucault’s idea of self-transformation of the autonomous



self with the biblical idea of “the autonomy,” a term Watkin coins to describe the God-human relationship in the identity of transformation (132).

The idea of cruciformity that Watkin outlines is biblically rich. However, has Watkin missed a golden opportunity to put that cruciformity into practice by engaging Foucault more apologetically? The antithesis between the believer and the unbeliever, as it is effected by regeneration, along with the epistemological

antithesis between Foucault’s narrative of history and the biblical philosophy of history, seems muted at best. Beginning with this antithesis could have led Watkin to offer a transcendental critique of Foucault’s thought rather than a mere beginning to an on-going conversation. If the Bible is true, why would we not adjudicate Foucault’s thought on the basis of the truth? It seems as if Watkin has let Foucault off the hook too easily. Watkin does, for sure, offer Foucault the gospel. That is clear from chapters 5–7. But he does not offer Foucault a compelling reason to abandon his worldview and to repent of an unbelieving and—ultimately—self-destroying system of thought.

The Presbyterian Philosopher: The Authorized Biography of Gordon H. Clark, Douglas J. Douma. Wipf and Stock, 2017. Paperback, 320 pages, \$29.34 (Amazon). Reviewed by professor Alan D. Strange.

Is this book hagiography or a critical look at the subject in his context? I believe that this volume,

despite some mild criticism of Gordon H. Clark here and there, tends to the former, particularly seeking to serve as a corrective to what is perceived to be “bad press” about Clark. Clark has indeed received censure with respect to some events in his life, particularly surrounding his seeking ordination in the OPC’s Presbytery of Philadelphia and crossing swords with Cornelius Van Til in the process.

Clark claimed that human knowledge vis-à-vis divine knowledge is univocal, which is to say, that there is an identity between God’s knowledge as Creator and ours as creatures. To be sure, Clark conceded, God knows in a far greater measure than we do: his knowledge is, in every respect, of an incomparably greater degree than ours. Van Til argued that human knowledge in this respect is analogical, which is to say, that it is both like and unlike God’s knowledge. The difference, in other words, is not just in degree but in kind. God is a different kind of being than humans, an affirmation that is key to the Creator/creature distinction, which Van Tilians commonly allege that Clark failed to make.

With respect to all the facts of Clark’s life, as far as I can tell, Douma gets it right (except for the significant omission about Clark’s view of saving faith). Clark is an important figure in twentieth-century church history, which Douma explores. This book is valuable and worth reading for that reason alone. To the chagrin of some like Edmund P. Clowney, Douma notes, critics have labeled Clark a rationalist. I do not believe that Douma has cleared him of this, either with respect to Clark’s position on univocal knowledge and divine simplicity or with respect to Clark’s position on saving faith.

One of the most egregious positions staked out by Clark theologically is his position on saving faith. Saving faith, as Clark asserts time and again in two works on the subject, consists in intellectual assent to the propositions of Scripture, most particularly to the propositions that define the way of salvation (*What is Saving Faith?* 82–88). What is important here is that Clark defines faith as “assent alone.” All the Reformers rejected such an intellectualized definition of faith, insist-

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Director of Enrollment Management: Mid-America Reformed Seminary in Dyer, Indiana, seeks a Director of Enrollment Management. For additional information, visit www.midamerica.edu.

ing that it properly consisted not only of *notitia* and *assensus* (knowledge and assent), but also crucially and formatively, of *fiducia* (trust). In this work on faith, Clark repeatedly asserts that he does not know what this “something else” that is needed in addition to knowledge and assent is. His rationalism does not seem to permit him to recognize what “trust” is, and he repeatedly evacuates faith of trust, believing that anything in addition to assent must be a work foreign to the biblical notion of faith. I belabor this to note that there is no discussion of this whatsoever in this volume by Douma. Even if one deems that Douma has rehabilitated Clark with respect to the Clark-Van Til debate, Douma’s failure to engage Clark’s deficient view of faith is a serious shortcoming in this work.

The more recondite debate about whether human knowledge is analogical or univocal with respect to God’s knowledge may not be clear, especially to those untrained philosophically. The person in the pew, however, can recognize that to define faith in a way that robs it of trust, which is personal, and reduce it to a knowledge of and assent to propositions, is an inadequate, rationalistic view of faith that is not what the Scriptures teach, and a view not held by the Reformers or our doctrinal standards. Clark’s reputation as a rationalist is a just one, and we must be especially careful to repudiate his deficient view of saving faith.

Those who are interested in a more extensive analysis of this book should see my review in *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 28 (2017): 196.

God for Us: Discovering the Heart of the Father Through the Life of the Son, by Abby Ross Hutto. P&R, 2019. Paperback, 216 pages, \$11.50. Reviewed by OP member Dorinda Beale.

So many Christian books these days tend



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to be long on experience and short on what Scripture can teach us, and I was concerned that *God for Us* would be no different. But Abby Ross Hutto, a PCA member involved in nonprofit ministry, marries these two approaches. While the book includes many personal stories to learn from, there is no shortage of interaction with Scripture, specifically the truths we are taught in the Gospel of John.

The book is divided into thirteen chapters. Each chapter begins with a true story of a person the author has known, each one of whom “struggle to believe that God is who He claims to be,” she states. All of the problems and issues she addresses in these chapters are things that most of us have experienced to some degree or another: grief, a sense of helplessness, feeling lost, being wounded, betrayed, afflicted, and—my favorite chapter—feeling like a failure.

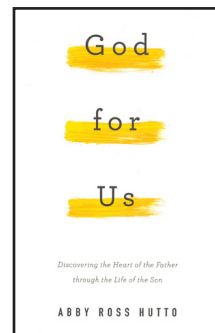
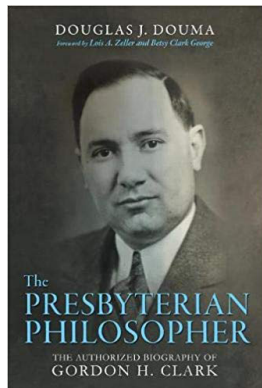
Each story is matched with a particular account from the Gospel of John as Hutto takes us through the Gospel from beginning to end. With that biblical in-

sight, she then returns to the personal story, explaining how each person was able to overcome problems by truly understanding that God is *for us*. His love and care for us overshadow any problem we face. Hutto then provides some Old Testament Scripture to aid in understanding even more deeply the account

in John that was paired with each story. Finally, there are pertinent questions at the end of each chapter to contemplate.

I have already given this book to two women, and I believe anyone would benefit from

reading it. Think especially about the women you know who may struggle with understanding their problems in light of Christ’s accomplishments. This book would be helpful because, as Paul says, “if God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31). It might also be especially



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appropriate for a new believer who needs to understand more of what God has accomplished for us through our Savior, Jesus Christ.

This would also be a great study guide for the Gospel of John, although I would recommend supplementing it with applicable Scripture passages.

***Abide with Me: Great Hymns in New Settings for Horns, Voice and Piano.* Performed by Lisa Bontrager (horn), Timothy Shafer (piano), Sarah Shafer (soprano), and Grace Salyards (horn). Arranged by Paul Basler, et al. MSR Classics, 2018. Audio CD, \$12.95. Reviewed by OP members Joel and Janet Bacon.**

In this era when Scripture choruses are increasingly becoming the norm in worship and recordings of hymns are likely to be performed by choirs from large English cathedrals, it is refreshing to find a recording like this one, where the focus is on traditional hymns of the faith performed in an unusual way.

Lisa Bontrager is a Distinguished Pro-

fessor of Music at Penn State University, a soloist and chamber musician performing on the French horn, whose desire is to use her instrument and the great hymns of the church to the glory of God. To that end, she teams up in this recording with her Penn State colleague, pianist Timothy Shafer, and his gifted daughters Sarah Shafer and Grace Salyards to present eight hymns for solo horn and piano, along with six settings which add a second horn and five which include a soprano line.

Bontrager writes in her program notes that she was seeking “fresh, musically sophisticated sounds for familiar and meaningful hymns.” She certainly has succeeded! The hymns chosen represent a good mix of styles, ranging from spirituals to Irish melodies, flowing Welsh tunes and a number of standard hymns by American and English composers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, plus a nod to the more distant past with a stately ar-

produced settings which showcase the musicians without being overtly showy or drawing the focus away from the hymns themselves.

Particularly effective are the arrangements for two horns. The parts balance well and complement each other beautifully. Both players exhibit a mastery of the full range of the instrument. The upper notes are clear and true while the lower notes display none of the flatness or muddiness that the horn can so easily fall prey to in the hands of less experienced players.

Sarah Shafer has a lovely, rich voice, which is displayed at its best in this recording on those tracks where she is singing at full voice in her upper range. When she lets her voice soar, she more than holds her own with the instruments and the balance is right on target. Unfortunately, there are some occasions where she holds back a bit and the effect is one of distance, as if she were down a hallway from the others.

Timothy Shafer seems completely at home with the elaborate, flowing piano parts, supporting where necessary and taking the lead at other times. His prodigious gifts are well used here.

A complete listing of the texts of all of the hymns represented, rather than just those which include the soprano, would have been a good inclusion for those whose knowledge of these more traditional hymns is incomplete but who still wish to use this lovely recording as an aid in meditating on the truths of God contained within those texts.



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