

# NEW HORIZONS

— in the ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH —

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*// by Stephen J. Tracey*

JULY 2019

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# DISABILITY AND THE BODY OF CHRIST

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For the last few years, Emmanuel OPC in Wilmington, Delaware, has hosted monthly summer block parties in their parking lot. Organized by a committee, the church invites neighbors by distributing around three hundred flyers, putting up banners on the church property, and posting on their website. Recently, they have begun inviting neighborhoods through the NextDoor app as well. The parties have included a welcome station, a children's station, outdoor games such as giant Connect-Four, giant Jenga, ping-pong, and corn-hole, a Bounce House, live music, and, of course, a tasty grilled meal.



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in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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**Managing Editor:** Judith M. Dinsmore  
**Editorial Assistant:** Diane L. Olinger  
**Proofreader:** Sarah Pederson  
**Cover Designer:** Christopher Tobias  
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# DISABILITY AND THE BODY OF CHRIST



**JONI EARECKSON TADA // In April 1995, a domestic terrorist bombed the Federal office building in Oklahoma City, leaving hundreds dead or trapped in the rubble. A pastor-friend of mine asked me to join a counseling team that would be ministering among the families who were awaiting news of loved ones.**

After I flew into the city airport—and before I could see and serve the families—I was escorted to an American Red Cross center to be cleared and credentialed.

When I wheeled into the center, I noticed volunteers placing coffee and snacks on some tables, forms and resources on others. The place was slowly filling up with families and more volunteers. From across the room, an official-looking woman in a white lab coat saw me enter. She put down her clipboard and exclaimed, “Oh my goodness, are we glad to see *you* here!”

I wheeled up to her, curious. At first I thought she must have recognized me from the *Joni* book. But when she introduced herself as head of mental health services for the Red Cross and asked for my name, I realized that wasn’t the case. So I asked, “Why are you so glad I’m here?”

“Oh, sweetheart, you need to understand that when someone like you in a wheelchair comes to volunteer, it speaks volumes to others who are filled with anxiety. When people go through

a terrible crisis—like this terrorist attack—they need to see others who smile through their suffering. People like you who have courage. People who suffer greater conflict always have something to say to those who suffer lesser.”

Then the mental health counselor asked a question I will never forget: “Could you please tell us where we can find others like you to serve with us? We need people with disabilities! You are more valuable to us than you realize!”

## **The Luke 14 Mandate**

Oh, that the body of Christ would recognize the value of including people with disabilities, as did the Red Cross counselor! Perhaps that’s why Jesus specifically mentions the lame and disabled in the gospel of Luke. The woman in the Red Cross lab coat probably never read Luke 14:12–14, where Jesus says, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give

a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed.”

Invite the crippled, the lame and the blind? It’s not often that Jesus gets *that* specific about who he wants invited to his banquet. True, the point of this passage is that God’s grace is lavished on the undeserving—specifically, the Gentiles. But it also contains a principle about hospitality toward the oft-neglected and forgotten. Jesus tells us to break out of the comfort zone of friends, brothers, and relatives, and instead be proactive about reaching out to special-needs families. Do this, Luke 14:13 says, “and you will be blessed.”

## **Blessings Abound**

Just how is the church bolstered by inviting in people struggling with disabilities and their families?

I met Karla Larson, a wheelchair user, while at a Joni and Friends Family Retreat. When I learned that she had lost both legs, had suffered three heart attacks, was visually impaired, had four fingers amputated, had a kidney

removed, and had endured countless angioplasties, I was stunned. Juvenile diabetes was at the root of it all. When I met her, I said, “Karla, I’m surprised you were able to make it to retreat!” To which she replied, “Well, I thought I better come before I lost any more body parts!” Karla had obviously not lost her sense of humor.

Throughout the Family Retreat, I was impressed with the way she poured her time into younger wheelchair users, encouraging and cheering them on during the games and activities. Karla hobnobbed with parents, listening to and praying with them. And she always sat in front during worship time to enthusiastically belt out all the praise songs.

Karla Larson epitomizes Titus 2:7: “In everything set them an example by doing what is good.” Karla inspired courage in people just by showing up; just by getting up, facing the day, and arriving. She instinctively knew that people who suffer greater conflict always have something to say to those who suffer lesser conflict.

My wheelchair-using friend and those like her have a message for the church: God has not redeemed us to make our lives happy, healthy, and free of trouble. God has redeemed us to make us like Jesus. Yes, God has wired life to be hard. *Very* hard for some—just ask any quadriplegic, any parent of a child with autism (ASD), or any young man with cerebral palsy who must reside in a facility.

*Theirs* is the power of example, reminding other Christians that life-altering suffering has a place—an important place—in anyone’s walk with Christ. When a congregation hears the testimony of a couple who must live with a serious disability in the family, it reminds them of an oft-forgotten fact:

Jesus has saved us from suffering in hell, but not from suffering on earth. The testimony of the Spirit-inspired endurance of special-needs families strengthens the church.

### Serving the Savior

What other blessings flow from obeying Luke 14? Serving special-needs families, and serving them sacrificially, is a very personal way of serving the Lord Jesus. When I read Matthew 25:35–40, I picture the joy of serving Christ through helping a disabled person: “Then the King will say to those on his right ... ‘I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink,’ ... Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?’ ... The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever



Joni Eareckson Tada (center) with Karla Larson (far left)

you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (vs. 34, 40).

Imagine yourself at the cross when Jesus uttered the words, “I thirst.” Don’t you think you’d spring into action? Perhaps you see yourself running to get a glass of water—*anything* to quench the thirst of the Lord, right? Sadly, you were not there that dreadful day. You cannot quench his thirst.

Or can you? When you serve a disabled person—the least of the brothers—you are serving Jesus. What a blessing! God draws a connection in Matthew 25 between serving the needy

and serving him. He does this to show how mercy ministry is a way of ministering to Christ himself.

Serving those with disabilities can certainly mean sacrifice. We cannot serve at a safe, arm’s-length distance. We cannot remain untouched. But that’s a good thing. We shouldn’t merely proclaim the gospel; we must *become* the gospel to those in need. And that always involves going the extra mile and making the extra effort. When we show love that costs us our time or infringes on our comfort zones—such as home-sitting with a child with Down syndrome while mom and dad take a much-needed break—we experience Christ’s love in its fullest. Do this and you will be blessed, Jesus says.

Jackie Fernald knows what it means to embody the good news to eight-year-old Arthur. When young Arthur first came to Access Ministry at Jackie’s church in Virginia, he was shrieking, throwing himself on the floor, and thumping his fists on the tiles. More than once, Jackie either had to roll on the floor with this boy while holding him tightly or train college students to help Arthur walk out his meltdowns around the church parking lot. It wasn’t easy.

Arthur’s mother and father were amazed at her care. They told other parents, “Come to this church—they really care about families like ours!” More than a few families came to Christ and joined the fellowship.

The Arthur you would meet today is a self-aware, generous young man who loves talking about Jesus. His prayers include missionaries and the young girl in Guatemala he sponsors through *Compassion International*. It’s all because one church sacrificially practiced Christianity with its sleeves rolled up by giving “a drink to the thirsty.” According to Matthew 25, we can still give Jesus that drink of water.

### What Does Disability Teach Us?

The story of Jackie, Arthur, and Arthur’s parents is a story of redemption. That young boy’s transformation is yet another example I use to remind people

*that we are all a work in progress.* We are all broken and in need of redemption. We are all frail, enfeebled, and in need of God's transforming grace. Never do we enter the kingdom from points of power; rather, we enter Christ's kingdom from points of grace. Disability ministry in a church displays to everyone this powerful principle.

Disability ministry can be complex, such as in Arthur's situation. Some disabilities can evolve into oppositional defiance disorder in children. But remember that these children exist in families, families who are often socially isolated, financially stressed, burdened by nonstop daily routines, and just plain *tired*. God hears their plea for help: "You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry" (Psalm 10:17).

Perhaps it is why Jesus insisted that his followers, "Go out to the roads and country lanes and make [the disabled, lame and blind] come in, so that my house will be full" (Luke 14:23).

When a congregation recognizes a family's disability-need and seeks to meet it, the body of Christ is "working" as it should. For "the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'" (1 Cor. 12:21). We *all* need each other—for we all are a broken work in progress. And so, "those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor" (vs. 22–23).

Why do we treat those who seem to be weaker with special honor? In 2 Corinthians 12:9, the apostle Paul explains, "But he [God] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." We treat those with disabilities as indispensable because their circumstances can be the platform from which God's power is displayed to the church. Perhaps if we embraced more weak people, we would see a more miraculous display of God's power as the

Spirit heals brokenness, cultivates compassion, and instills a spirit of sacrificial love.

The church should not be a picture-perfect institution, all neat and normal, regulated and rule-keeping. Ministry to persons with disabilities keeps the church messy and cluttered, needy and dependent on God. It requires the full immersion of a congregation. And I don't mean a special-needs department, segregated and separated off to the side; I don't even mean mainstreaming or inclusion. I mean *embracing*. People with disabilities want to know that they belong to the body. If they fall ill and are unable to come to church, they want to know they will be missed. God wants churches to embrace families affected by disability, telling them, "We need you here!"

When there's a tough disability to deal with, there's no time to be a power-broker. Pastor Lon who serves at a church in Virginia was struggling with division and factions in his congregation. His church lacked direction and vision. Just when Pastor Lon was considering stepping down, his wife gave birth to a little girl with multiple disabilities.

Suddenly, factions and in-fighting disappeared. People became focused on the need and rallied around his family. The church's outreach was broadened to include other disabled children in Sunday school. And today, Pastor Lon's church is strong, growing, and has built an early childhood intervention center to minister to local parents of kids with special needs. What a poignant illustration of 1 Corinthians 12:24–26: "God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it."

### "I Could Never Live Like That"

My friend Charlene had to remain for many days in the hospital due to an unexpected neuromuscular condi-

tion. She suffered the indignities of being bathed, using a bedpan, and being hand-fed her meals. After she was released from the hospital, she said, "Joni, I don't know how you do it as a quadriplegic! It's so hard being bathed, toileted, and even fed by others. I could *never* live like that!"

I laughed! I may be a quadriplegic, but Charlene is deaf and blind. I could say the same to her: I could never live deaf and blind! You would probably agree. We all think we could *never* survive without our eyesight or hearing or live without use of our hands or legs. But Charlene and I prove that people do it every day. None of these parts of the human body are indispensable; the eyes, ears, even the use of your legs or hands—none of it is critical to the life and vitality of the physical body.

However, let me remind you of what the body *cannot* live without. You cannot live without your kidneys, lungs, or your liver. Although these body parts may be uncomely and are often neglected, ignored, or unnoticed, each organ is absolutely essential to the life and vitality of the human body.

I am convinced that the church body needs more people who may be uncomely and are often neglected, ignored, or unnoticed. We need "liver" kinds of people. We need "kidney" kinds of men. Ladies who are "lungs" in our church. People with physical and intellectual disabilities. These individuals teach us so much about trusting Christ through inordinate hardships. They provide the opportunity for Christ-followers to exercise sacrificial service. And according to 2 Corinthians 12:22, they are indispensable to the vitality of the body of Christ.

Just ask Arthur and his parents, or Karla Larson. Better yet, ask my friend in the white lab coat from the American Red Cross. Bring in the disabled, and you *will* be blessed. □

*The author, CEO of Joni and Friends, is an international advocate for people with disabilities and lives near Calabasas, California. She quotes the NIV-84.*

# OUR CHURCH'S JOURNEY TO REACH FAMILIES WITH DISABILITIES



**STEPHEN J. TRACEY // Many Orthodox Presbyterian churches warmly welcome, encourage, and disciple people and families with disabilities. At Lakeview OPC in Rockport, Maine, we are learning that to minister to families with disabilities, you don't need to be an expert; you just need a teachable and willing heart.**

There is plenty of reading material on disability and the church, with interesting titles like “How Wide Is Your Door?” or “Through the Roof” or “The Inclusive Church.” But it was not reading any of these that set me thinking, or that pushed Lakeview OPC to learn. It was Finley.

Finley is one of God's precious gifts to our church. He was born twelve years ago, a child of the covenant. His parents and grandparents are believers. He is fourth in a family of six children. At the time of his birth, we did not know there was a problem, but eventually, along with his mom and dad, we learned that the challenges were serious.

## **Recognized, Loved, and Honored**

Around the same time, my own son, Mark, volunteered for one week as a short-term missionary at the Joni and Friends New England Family Retreat (see sidebar on page 8). This retreat provides five days of respite for families who are affected by disability. Each family has at least one companion assigned to them, called a short-term missionary.

Mark wasn't driving yet, so my wife and I went to pick him up at the end of the retreat. We arrived in time for the closing ceremony, walking into a gymnasium with about three hundred people in it. Everywhere I looked, it seemed, there were children with disabilities. Just then, in came Andrew. That year, he was not in his wheelchair. Having just had several surgeries, he was in a kind of small, solid stretcher. He had two buddies assigned to him, and they carried him everywhere as though he was in an old-fashioned sedan chair. Mark later told me that everywhere they went, the buddies would shout, “Make way for the king!” Andrew was grinning a big grin as he came in the room.

Then the slideshow began. As a picture of each child came onto the screen, there were whoops and hollers and cheers. Here were little people, made in the image of God, in a place where they were being celebrated just for being themselves. They were being recognized and loved and honored. They were noticed; not pitied, not mocked, not hidden from sight.

I must tell you that I cried. I didn't know what to say. And to be frank, I still don't know what to say. I'm still trying to find words to describe not simply what I think is the compassion that is shown at Joni and Friends Family Retreats, but the justice, and rightness, if not the righteousness, of it all. This is love. And this love is the fulfilling of the law and the gospel.

## **Where Are the Families with Disabilities?**

That grinning boy, Andrew, passed into the presence of the Lord Jesus a few years ago. He was a wonderful child. He loved Jesus. And he was deeply loved.

Yet not all special-needs children are so warmly received by Christians. Author and advocate Mike Dobes comments,

Families affected by disability spend countless hours and energy navigating the education system, the medical system, the therapy system, and the list goes on. What would it look like if they could attend your church and not feel like there was a list of items

to navigate? What if church was not another place where they felt like a burden, but instead was a place where they were loved, cared for and even celebrated? (*Are You Ready?*, 27)

After the retreat, I began to think more carefully about our church and disability. At first, I was only thinking about Finley and ministering to his family. We began to address the issue of accessibility in our physical space. We realized that our church building needed a better ramp, and then an elevator. We introduced a buddy scheme for Finley in Sunday school.

But a question that first came to me at the retreat kept bothering me: *where were the families with disabilities in our community?* One day I asked Finley's father, a ruling elder, "Does our area just not have very many families with disabilities?" (You see my ignorance.) "Oh no," he replied. "Just be in the therapist's

(New England) to our church to help us think more carefully and practically about these things. It was profoundly helpful. We looked at our building, and we looked at our attitudes. We thought more carefully about the things to say and the things not to say. We learned some etiquette toward people in wheelchairs.

We also began learning about the autism spectrum. As Doug Babbitt teaches all volunteers in the training, "When you've met one child on the autism spectrum, you've met one child on the autism spectrum." It's a spectrum, after all. A buddy system is a simple and effective way to begin to help both the child and the family who are affected by this need. If you're exhausted after serving as a buddy, remember how the moms and dads must feel!

In the last two years, another family arrived at Lakeview, a single mom with a boy on the autism spectrum. His

our church. Their little guy is also on the spectrum. He now sits in the very front row, in the front right seat. And I hear him repeating every word of the Lord's Prayer. In the same year another family arrived, with a five-year-old son who has Down syndrome.

We also set aside one of our rooms as a sensory room and bought equipment for it, including weighted blankets, a huge bean bag, and several sensory toys to help calm an over-stimulated mind. Another family uses that room every week. It has enabled their whole family to attend church.

### How Your Church Can Reach Families with Disabilities

One way to learn more about disabilities is simply to volunteer at one of the thirty-four Joni and Friends Retreats throughout the country. A few years ago, Mark finally persuaded me to volunteer with him at a Family Retreat. I was apprehensive, but agreed. I served for a week as the buddy of a teenage boy who was there with his mother. His medication was being changed, and he was in great pain. (Getting medication right for children on the autism spectrum is not always easy.) I spent a few days with this deeply gifted and artistic young man and glimpsed the daily challenges his mother faces. There are few masks at a Joni and Friends Retreat; the pain and difficulty is all too apparent. But so, also, is the happiness. It is the sweetest happiness this side of glory.

Now, I not only go as a volunteer, to do whatever they need me to do, but I go to learn. I learn from the families: they care the most for their children; they are passionate advocates; they tell the funniest stories and often weep the heaviest tears. I also learn from the staff and the other volunteers. Then, I try to bring it home and fit it into our ordinary church. Now I find myself looking around our community for families affected by disability.

Another way to begin to consider disability in the context of the church is through the parable of the great banquet in Luke 14. Jesus prefaces the parable



(From left) Mark, Stephen, and Joshua Tracey, all volunteers at Family Retreat

or surgeon's waiting room at the right time." That is when I realized that perhaps we just weren't looking.

In the year 2017, an estimated 12.7 percent of noninstitutionalized men and women in the United States reported a disability, according to [disabilitystatistics.org](http://disabilitystatistics.org). The prevalence in Maine is 16.5 percent.

I started to explore the Joni and Friends website—every nook and cranny of it. There's a lot of material there. Then we invited Joni and Friends

grandparents are already members. This young man hears every word I say when I'm preaching, but while listening carefully he also often draws a map of the roads around the church, marking every utility pole, and distinguishing the four different types. There are four different utility poles leading to our church building. Who knew? Well, this little guy knows. He perceives things that I overlook. A gift.

Both Finley's family and the new family invited another family to visit

with an instruction: “But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.” Then Jesus tells the story of a man who gave a great banquet. When those invited turn down his hospitality, the man instructs his servant to bring in the poor, crippled, blind, and lame that his house might be filled.

It is poor exegesis to think we will invite everyone who is suffering from “spiritual” disabilities, but not people with physical or intellectual disabilities. Jesus saw people with disabilities. He did more than notice them; he filled his house with them. He instructs us to do the same.

So where do you start? Joni and Friends provides many free resources at [irresistiblechurch.org/library](http://irresistiblechurch.org/library). These booklets are available to download for free. The booklet “Start with Hello” has a host of practical suggestions, a few of which I have adapted here:

## Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Mark Tracey

During my childhood, I had difficulty learning. Reading and spelling were especially hard, and I struggled through elementary school. Because of this, although I came to know Jesus when I was young, I had a hard time believing that God had a plan and direction for my life. *How was I going to serve him?*

God was good to me, and I received help through educational therapy and wonderful teachers. My godly parents also always encouraged me to persevere. Today, I’m not far from graduating college. I want to share what changed, and how the Lord Jesus helped me and gave me direction in life.

Soon after graduating high school, I was asked to help with the Sunday School program at my home church by being a buddy to Finley, a child with a disability. Eventually, I also helped care for him in his home once a week.

One Sunday after evening service, someone told me about the Joni and Friends Retreats for families with children with disabilities. I have now volunteered at the retreat every year for seven years. It has been a life-changing experience. When I was young, I thought my struggles were hard; I now see they are small compared to the struggles

First: Pray. Ask for wisdom in helping families with disabilities. Recognize that families are often exhausted and may have been hurt elsewhere.

Second: Saying hello is always a good start. We are, after all, commanded to greet one another. Doesn’t the command say there is to be a holy kiss? Well...hugs are good too! We need to greet people. Remember the warning in Matthew 5:47: “And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?”

Third: Ask families what would be helpful. They know their child well. Be gentle and wise. Don’t ask, “What’s wrong with her?” Ask, “How can we be of help today?”

Fourth: Be patient. There might be noise. You won’t die. You might be drooled on. Fret not.

Fifth: Remember Jesus’s compassion in Matthew 19:14: “Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.’”

We all have much to learn. I have much to learn. Lakeview Orthodox Presbyterian Church has much to learn. We thank God for the precious gifts he has given us in these individuals with disabilities. More and more we understand that they are indispensable to the body of Christ. □

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



Mark with twins David and Lauren Adamsen, also volunteers and members of Lakeview

some families face every day. Although these children and their families wrestle with school, with medical providers, and even with unwelcoming churches, at Family Retreats they are welcomed and celebrated.

In serving these little ones, the Lord Jesus is teaching me not to be proud. I am amazed at these children. We are all “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14). Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 12:18 that “God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.” There is a place where each one of us can serve in the church, and I have learned this from children affected by disabilities.

Romans 5:3–5 reminds us to rejoice in our sufferings because “suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” These verses beautifully describe how I have been changed and overwhelmingly blessed by God. Through serving families in church and at retreats who are affected by disability, I know what joyful hope looks like.

*The author is a member of Lakeview OPC in Rockport, ME.*



# JOY IN VOLUNTEERING



**PAMELA HUGHES // For years, I watched a former student volunteer every summer as a short-term missionary at the Joni and Friends Family Retreat. Each year, when this young man shared his experiences with our church, I would think, “Oh, I want to do that someday!” But caring for my aging parent and other responsibilities**

prevented me—until last summer. My responsibilities covered by others, I was finally able to go.

Even though I am a professional educator, I still entered my week as a Joni and Friends volunteer with uncertainty. What type of needs would my camper have? I know about learning differences, but what if my camper’s needs were more profound than those with which I had experience? I was sixty years old; would I have the stamina to keep up with my camper? Would I be in over my head? I held tightly to the God of the impossible, trusting that he would, indeed, display his faithfulness during this week, for my good and for his own glory.

But when I learned who my specific camper would be, and the nature of his needs, my uncertainty increased. His name was Sawyer, he was twelve years old, and he was on the autism spectrum with very limited verbal skills. I had never worked with a nonverbal student before. How would Sawyer and I communicate? I also learned that he had occasionally been known to wander or bolt impulsively in the past. Would I be able to keep up with him? I kept praying, *Lord, you have brought me here. Please give me what I need to help and encourage*

*this young man. I cannot do this without you, Lord!* I knew that volunteers and campers are not paired until the staff has prayed diligently over the assignments, so I had to trust that this match was directed and blessed by God.

As soon as I met Sawyer’s family, his mom and I instantly connected, and I learned that she had relatives in my hometown. In fact, I had even met Sawyer’s grandfather! When she introduced me to her son, this nonverbal boy opened his arms to me and gave me a big hug. I quickly saw that he didn’t need words to communicate: this boy had a heart full of love to share.

The staff and volunteers were all a team, and there was always someone coming alongside to help me with Sawyer, often before I even acknowledged the need myself. Sawyer tried several new activities and delighted in many new experiences during our week together. I learned how to read his “signals” when he needed redirection or less sensory stimulation. I learned how to help him de-escalate and focus his attention on the small details that would bring him joy. I was growing right along with him!

After the retreat ended, Sawyer and his family kept in touch with me. I worshiped with them in their church, and visited when they vacationed close by. He continues to grow and develop in many ways, cognitively and verbally, and his joyful heart is evident for all to see.



*Hughes with Sawyer (left)*

He loves the Lord Jesus, and delights in singing the praises of our Savior. Sawyer has taught me to see others with the eyes of my heart. May God grant us the grace to see others from his perspective, and to communicate the love of our Savior to them in many different ways. □

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

# REAL HOPE AND REAL HELP



ESTHER VANNOY // “Oh no! I forgot Finley’s medicine!”

The singing in the back of the van stopped. Three of my kids and I were on our way to our first Joni and Friends Family Retreat, full of excited anticipation as we drove down the highway that sunny morning in August.

But when I made that announcement, the singing stopped. They all knew that we would have to turn around and go back. Finley had to have his seizure medicine! We left the happy caravan we’d been traveling with and grimly headed back home—an hour and a half away. I felt sick. This was one more mess-up. One more disappointment for my kids. This is what happens, over and over again, when you have a child with special needs and an absent-minded mom.

My anxiety (another unfortunate feature in a mom) crept out of the glove compartment and started choking me. “Maybe you should just not go,” it whispered. “This is too much to ask of your kids, especially Finley. And you will have to do the trip all by yourself now. No more caravan to follow!”

Ignoring these whispers, I drove home, grabbed the medicine (which was right where I had left it), and jumped back in the van. But I was now at the mercy of the GPS for directions, and its evil voice told me to get off the highway and take the scenic route to

Greenfield, where the retreat was located. And of course, I had to listen to this voice. I had no other map—remember, absent-minded?

We inched our way past Fun Town Splash Town where everyone was having fun, and we were not. We meandered through *every* little village and stopped at *every* stop sign between Maine and New Hampshire, and by the time we finally pulled into the camp, we had been in the van for nine hours!

Even though we were so late arriving that it was now dinner time, there were people waiting for us as we pulled up to the Joni and Friends Family Retreat. Before I knew it, the van door was opened and friendly volunteers were talking and helping my kids out of the vehicle. And then, the kind face of our own dear pastor appeared at my window. He volunteers at these retreats, and when I saw him, all my anxiety melted into tears of relief—relief mixed as always with sorrow, because, after all, you don’t get to attend this fun, joy-filled camp unless you have a child with a disability.

## The Deep Sorrow of Disability

Our son Finley is like an infant the size of a twelve-year-old. Adults look away, and children, less concerned about politeness, stare. There is drool. And super loud whooping and hollering in the middle of church. Always, there is this sorrow: sorrow over your son’s disability, over what he will never do, over what he will never say.

For years I had avoided the Joni and Friends Retreat. Pulling in with our minivan that day was like the final step in accepting Finley’s disability. It had taken me nine hours *and* twelve years to get to this point, and all that sorrow came welling up to the surface and streaming down my face.

The kind souls who greeted me that evening may have been surprised at my blubbering, but they did not show it. They only smiled and offered to help me get settled into our cabin.

## Christ’s Love Through His Body

I have found, over the years, that Christians are the only people in the

world who can offer real hope and real help in the face of the deep sorrow and anxiety of disability. During the early, dark days when Finley was first diagnosed, well-meaning unbelievers would say things like, “Good luck!” “Keep your fingers crossed,” or “Just think happy thoughts!” Finley was not sleeping, he was not eating, he was crying for hours on end, and he was having seizures. Their well-meant words were like ice water in my face.

Then a friend from church gave me a CD of Elyse Fitzpatrick reading Scripture and singing praise songs. One passage she read was Psalm 46: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea” (vs. 1–2).

I listened to that CD over and over again. The thought of God on his throne surrounded by joy and beauty, even if the mountains crumbled, truly comforted me. I had an anchor for my soul when everything around me was being washed out to sea.

Another friend from church gave

me a bunch of CDs of Joni Eareckson Tada’s radio program. I listened to those over and over again, too. Joni taught me that caring for a person with a disability is *servicing Christ*. That was my first real ray of hope. The Lord was giving me the honor of serving him in this way! Joni sang hymns to me while I washed dishes and wiped drool. She reminded me of wonderful promises from God’s Word. She took my thoughts off myself and put them on Christ.

My church family not only offered me real *hope* but real *help*. They rolled up their sleeves and brought meals, ran errands, even cleaned out my fridge (an act of true love!). They watched our other kids when Finley was in the hospital. One friend came over and planted tulips in my yard. Another friend gave us a box of granola bars every Sunday. In later years, when things had settled down a bit, a friend came over once a week and played with Finley so that I could vacuum upstairs.

When it became clear that Finley would not walk, the church installed a lift so that he could attend Sunday school. A friend offered to go with him

to his class, so that I could have a break. My church family has helped take care of Finley again and again, even sometimes overnight. When we had to move to a house with downstairs bedrooms, my kids counted seventy people who helped either with the actual move, or with cleaning, or with babysitting—all from our church! They have been, as Joni says, “the hands and feet of Jesus” to my family.

And they truly love Finley! People make a point of coming to the back of the sanctuary and saying hi to him after the service. Someone put his prayer card up on our church bulletin board, which is right at the main entrance to the building, and it has been there for years. Finley gets invited to birthday parties. The church, just to show their love for our boy, paid for the ramps that we use to get Finley in and out of our van. Perhaps most importantly, they welcome him into the sanctuary for worship. Instead of complaining about the noise he makes during the service—if you can believe this—people often tell me how much they *like* to hear him!

Most recently, our dear church family covered the entire cost for us to attend the Joni and Friends Family Retreat in New Hampshire where my husband and I were able to relax, our kids were able to make up for missing Fun Town Splash Town, and where we were offered the real help and real hope that only Christians can give.

Johnny Cash has a song called “The Reverend Mister Black” about a preacher who carried a Bible in a canvas sack and told a cussing lumberjack that “You’ve got to walk that lonesome valley. You’ve got to walk it by yourself.”

I am so thankful my pastor never said that to me. I am so thankful that we have not had to walk this path of disability by ourselves. Jesus, our anchor, is always with us. And he has given us real hope and real help from our church. □

*Esther Vannoy is a member of Lakeview OPC in Rockport, Maine.*



*The Vannoy family with other families and volunteers from Lakeview OPC at the 2018 Joni and Friends Family Retreat*

# MORE OF THE LORD'S GRACE IN MONTEVIDEO

// MARK E. RICHLINE



The congregation of Iglesia Presbiteriana Salvos por Gracia

May 2019 marked nineteen years since I was ordained into the Reformed ministry of the gospel. What an awesome privilege it has been to lead people to a sovereign, gracious God who justifies sinners by his grace through faith alone in his Son, Jesus Christ!

Every aspect of this Christ-centered ministry is deeply rooted in the gracious sovereignty of God. We preach scriptural truth with all our hearts and then wait on the Lord to use it as he wills. We evangelize, planting gospel seeds and watching God water them as he pleases. We get on our hands and knees to wash our brothers' feet, resting in Christ who alone sanctifies the heart. We strive with all our might to build Christ's church while fully trusting in Christ to keep his promise to do the building.

## Reformed Ministry Gaining Ground

Because Reformed gospel ministry is so amazing to me, I am thrilled to see it gaining ground in Uruguayan churches. I recently attended a meeting where nearly twenty church officers had gathered from various parts of the country. Representatives from Ligonier Ministries presented materials they offer in Spanish. When Ligonier asked the group what they believed to be the greatest needs of Uruguayan congregations, someone responded, "*sana doctrina*," or "sound doctrine." Every

man in the room nodded in agreement.

In many ways this isn't surprising. Since the early 1900s, Uruguay has been a largely secular and atheistic nation. Rather than one that shakes its fist at God, this brand of atheism shrugs its shoulders and says "Who cares?" Entire generations have grown up knowing little to nothing of the Bible. Into this spiritual vacuum entered the evangelical movement, mostly Baptist and Pentecostal churches, the latter bringing with them their apostles as well as their prosperity teachings. But over the past decade, the Lord has initiated a Reformed gospel ministry that has not existed here since the mid-1800s. A Reformed church in Uruguay first began in Rivera on the northern border of Brazil. Then a Brazilian missionary started a Presbyterian church in Montevideo, which in turn developed a daughter church in Mercedes to the northeast. And now God has raised up another faithful Reformed witness in Montevideo where we are laboring.

Our Reformed circle may yet be small, but it is turning heads in the local evangelical Christian community. In fact, the term "Presbyterian" is becoming associated with sound doctrine in this country.



The church's Sunday school class

## Hearts for Grace

Allow me to introduce you to some of our Uruguayan friends whose heart for the doctrines of grace has drawn them to our ministry.

Sandra is a young Christian woman from an independent church whom I met at one of our English Club outreaches. When infant baptism somehow came up in

our conversation, she peppered me with questions, curious to know why we baptize our children. She now meets with my wife, Jeni, for English lessons, and they often discuss how Reformed theology impacts daily Christian living.

Several members at our three-and-a-half-year-old church plant *Iglesia Presbiteriana Salvos por Gracia* came out of the Pentecostal church hungering for biblical preaching and teaching grounded in God's sovereign grace. Three men from this group are on the way to begin their own Reformed ministry as church officers, having demonstrated a knowledge of Scripture and a love for God's people. I once listened to one of these brothers distinguish between law and grace to a Jewish friend. I listened in humbled awe as he explained the gospel of God's pure grace, stressing how totally incapable man is of saving himself.

A young Baptist brother who moved here with his mother from Cuba six months ago loves Reformed literature, meets with me for discipleship, and is quickly committing himself to our congregation. Another former Baptist brother has embraced Reformed doctrine and is already being sought out by other church members and even regular visitors for spiritual guidance.

One woman was directed to our church by her missionary friend in Paraguay who knew of our Reformed ministry. Because of her heart for missions, she recently presented a project which encourages the church to pray regularly for the 10/40 window of nations (a term coined by evangelical missionaries for the area of North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia between 10 and 40 degrees latitude north of the equator). We also pray for our own country and for neighboring nations in Latin America.

An average of thirty-two people attend our worship service, along with at least one new visitor each week. Our mid-week meeting has grown to more than a dozen people who participate in sermon discussions and in prayer.

### The Library: A Main Attraction

One of the church's main attractions is its Reformed library because such literature is not easily accessible here. Through the faithful giving of Orthodox Presbyterian churches, our collection has grown to include Reformed literature in Spanish covering a variety of subjects. Our visitors regularly borrow from our collection or buy books we are selling. One



*The church's library of Reformed resources*



*Richline at the pulpit*

Christian brother devours book after book in the quiet hours of the night shift at his security job. Another just asked me to reserve a copy of the Heidelberg Catechism until he can pay for it. Friends of ours are recommending our library books to others and handing out the OPC pamphlet, "What Is a Reformed Church?" Seeing the necessity of putting this rich Reformed literature in the hands of others, a couple of our members have begun to promote the library on our website.

Our online outreach has grown beyond a website and Facebook page. One of our members has just organized an online Reformed radio program that will feature broadcasts of sermons from our pulpit, this member's own Scripture meditations, and sermons from other Reformed pulpits in Central and South America. Our worship services are broadcast on another radio program run by one of our regular visitors.

Uruguay's first Reformed seminary will begin in August. The other Presbyterian church in Montevideo has initiated this work to train gifted men for ministry. The program is designed to allow men to attend part-time, completing their training in five years. Several students are already registered, including some from other parts of the country who will attend via teleconference. I am excited to prepare and teach a course on the Gospels.

As I begin my twentieth year in Reformed ministry, I am grateful to the Lord to be here in Uruguay where he is obviously at work building a church true and faithful to his Word.

*The author is an OP missionary in Montevideo, Uruguay.*

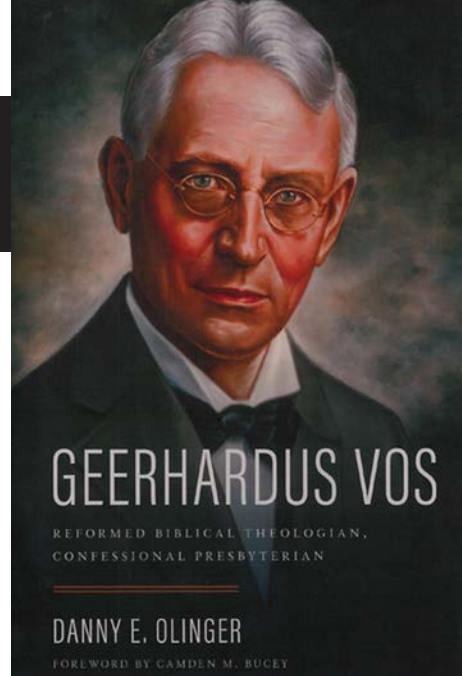
## What's New

### // Comings/Goings

Tentmaker **Miss Tina M. DeJong** (Westminster OPC, Hamill, SD) completed her term of service in Asia and returned to the United States in late June to begin a six-month furlough.

REVIEW:  
*GEERHARDUS  
VOS*

// CHAD B. VAN DIXHOORN



Danny Olinger's recent book on beloved teacher Geerhardus Vos offers the first full account of the theologian's long life and is the best introduction to date to Vos's key biblical and theological insights.

The book opens with a helpful summary of the complex church-world from which Vos emerged. The best of recent scholarship is tapped to help the reader understand the dynamics among Reformed churches in the Netherlands, as well as the background to Vos's friendships and tensions with other major Dutch theologians of the day, including Abraham Kuyper and especially Herman Bavinck. Vos became increasingly convinced that he was a man living in the last times, but he was also a man between two worlds, one Dutch and the other American.

The narrative twists of an immigrant-academic at the turn of the twentieth century are all here: the Vos family move to the United States, a provincial education in a Grand Rapids Christian school, and eventual instruction by American presbyterians and German liberals. So too are the painful decisions: Vos was torn between family and friends, the Netherlands and America, university and seminary, Michigan and New Jersey, and, in his mature

years, the choice to stay at Princeton or move to Westminster.

Along the way unexpected relationships are briefly illuminated: the curious family friendship with the political doyen of the progressives, President Woodrow Wilson (first president of Princeton University, later of the United States); the warm relations with Mrs. Anne Warfield, wife of B. B. Warfield, who was usually thought to be too much an invalid to socialize at all; and the reciprocal respect for J. Gresham Machen, who worked to see Vos's *The*

*Self Disclosure of Jesus* (1926) find a publisher.

As the subtitle, *Reformed Biblical Theologian and Confessional Presbyterian*, suggests, this is clearly an intellectual biography. Thus, as one would expect, the book is structured more by the arrival of books than babies. In my judgment, it is the story of Vos's writings that is most compellingly told in *Geerhardus Vos*. Olinger artfully traces Vos's own progression as a theologian from early reflections on the divine decrees, to considerations about covenant theology, to the persistence of eschatology in Vos's more developed writings. Works are put in their historical context, which was often a polemical context. And then for each piece produced by Vos, the biography offers an incisive summary—"Olinger Notes," if you will—that overworked seminary students and forgetful pastors alike will treasure as helpful guides to Vos.

For those accustomed to see-



*Vos, a dog-lover, at Princeton in 1930*

ing Vos's books published by Eerdmans, Presbyterian and Reformed, Banner of Truth, and more recently Lexham, one of the surprises in Olinger's book is the revelation that *The Pauline Eschatology* (1930) was first privately printed. Of course, influential authors from John Locke to Julia Child have brought books into the world without the midwifery of a publisher. Nonetheless, self-publication is no author's dream. It comes as no surprise that Geerhardus Vos's wife, Catherine Vos, was the more popular author in the marriage, as her *Child's Story Bible* was warmly received by Reformed readers around the world.

The final third of the book outlines positions that Vos held with respect to seminary politics. He was never very involved in the courts of the church. The book ends quietly, as did the life of Vos himself. Vos chose to finish his teaching career at Princeton—his wife Catherine chose to attend Westminster Theological Seminary's opening event, but he did not. The Voses retired to California, where he wrote poetry, a small sampling of which makes its way into Olinger's biography.

*Geerhardus Vos* contains remarkably few typographical errors or redundancies. On some occasions there are curious uses of secondary sources where primary sources would have served equally well. And the publisher would be kind to increase the size of the punctuation marks for readers experiencing the adventure of declining eyesight. But the very pettiness of these comments only serves to highlight how successful Olinger's endeavor truly is. For those wishing to move on from reading *Grace and Glory* (1922) to a deeper conception of Vos, Olinger's biography is easily the best guide. I enjoyed it thoroughly, and I commend it heartily.

*The author is professor of church history at Westminster Theological Seminary and an Orthodox Presbyterian minister.*

*Geerhardus Vos: Reformed Biblical Theologian, Confessional Presbyterian*, by Danny E. Olinger. Reformed Forum, 2018. Hardcover, 344 pages, \$29.99.

## ● Out of the Mouth . . .

My cousin was driving past a cemetery with his son and took the opportunity to explain that after death, our bodies remain in the ground until the resurrection, but our souls go to heaven immediately if we believe in Jesus. "What's a soul?" the boy asked. After giving a sound, biblical description of the soul, his dad asked, "Does that make sense?" "Not really," replied his son. "Can we ask Google?"

—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.*

## OUR MEMBERSHIP VOWS

### Communion with God in Worship

*Glen J. Clary*

On Sunday, which is the Lord's Day, believers gather together in the name of Christ to "worship the Father in spirit and truth" (John 4:23). In the service of worship, the triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) meets with us and communes with us through the ordinances of worship that he has appointed in the Holy Scriptures.

The ordinances of ordinary worship are prayer, the reading of Scripture, the preaching and hearing of God's Word, the singing of psalms and hymns, and the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Through these ordinances of worship, we have fellowship and communion with the Father by the Spirit through the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ, our high priest who leads us in worship in the heavenly sanctuary:

We have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. (Heb. 8:1–2)

Communion with God in worship is vital to the Christian life. Faithful participation in the ordinances of worship on the Lord's Day nurtures and strengthens our faith and enables us to live a godly life. The ordinances of worship are the means through which Christ and the benefits of his redemption are applied to us by the Holy Spirit. Shorter Catechism Question 88 asks, "What are the outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption?" Answer:

The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are his ordinances, especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.

Through the ordinances of worship, we commune with God as a friend holds fellowship with a friend. Through the ministry of the Word and sacraments, God speaks to us and blesses us with spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Through prayer and the singing of psalms and hymns, we speak to God, offer our petitions, and "worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness," ascribing to him "the glory due his name" (Psalm 29:2). As "a holy priesthood," we "offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5).

# SHOWING MERCY TO OUR NEIGHBORS

// ALBERT J. TRICARICO JR.



Some time ago, a professional London actor ran into some trouble onstage. He was supposed to pick up a telephone and respond to what he heard, but when he put the phone to his ear and listened, he forgot his line. There he was, on stage for a moment that felt like an hour, with absolutely nothing to say to an audience waiting for him to speak. He did what you or I might do if we thought of it. He gave the phone to one of the other actors and said, “It’s for you.”

A clever trick to save a performance is not at all a proper way to receive the Word of God. But isn’t that sometimes how we treat what God has said? Forgetting our part, we say, “It’s for you.” We have a friend, a child, a spouse, who needs this message. But as for us? Not so much.

Jesus once gave a lawyer a message that he couldn’t squirm away from. (And neither can we.) The lawyer came to Jesus asking a good question from a bad motive. “He, desiring to justify himself, asked Jesus, ‘Who is my neighbor?’” (Luke 10:29). Jesus did not answer the lawyer’s question—at least, not directly. His response was the Parable of the Good Samaritan. In it, a Samaritan sees a beaten victim and delivers the needed help that was not given by those who knew better—a priest and a Levite. He finds a neighbor in need, has pity on him, and generously gives of himself to bring healing.

The direct answer to the lawyer’s question is obvious. All people are our neighbors. Our duty is to love God and to love everyone. But at the end of the parable, through a question of his own, Jesus suggests that the lawyer really asked the wrong question. “Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” asked Jesus. The lawyer said, “The one who showed him mercy.” (See Luke 10:36–37.)

Let’s not ask the question, “Who is my neighbor?” We know that answer. Let’s ask instead, “How can I be a good neighbor to those I am called to love?”

This parable is for all of us. Let’s never look at the lawyer and say, “That’s not me.” Or at the priest and Levite and say, “I am not like them. I would have helped.” Or at the Samaritan and think, “I’m not perfect, but I am basically a merciful person.” Let’s not name others who could use this message before we admit our own need to hear and respond. While we may never find ourselves in the presence of a half-dead victim of violence and theft, we are all called by Jesus to show mercy to others.

When Jesus said to the questioning lawyer, “Go and do likewise,” he is saying it also to you and me. Let’s all listen. Let’s all go and do likewise. Let’s have compassion for those who suffer, with a view toward doing good to them in Christ’s name.

## Consider Eternal Life

The lawyer’s initial question to Jesus was this: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” He was naturally interested in such things. In a way, it was his job to think about them. He was an “expert” in God’s law. He read it and studied it. He was an authority on it—at least, that was the expectation in the religious culture of his time. When Jesus responded, “What is written in the law? How do you read it?” the man was prepared to give an answer. He didn’t understand the answer he gave, but the words he spoke were from the Bible: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27).

While the lawyer’s understanding was defective, and his intention was to justify himself and discredit Jesus, the question he asked was a good one. We should all be interested in eternal life and its relation to our present time. Peter’s confession to Jesus must be our confession: “You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

Grace-empowered mercy-giving is the duty of all believers. Those who have been shown mercy in the gospel are to



deliver that mercy to others in need. But mercy has its price, even when the costs are not material. It is often inconvenient to enter the lives of others. It is time-consuming and interrupts our plans. We might be persecuted for the efforts we make. Those costs, though they feel burdensome, do not compare with the honor of glorifying Christ through attentive, selfless living, and the eternal joy that comes to those who live for Jesus.

## Be a Good Neighbor

The love of neighbor needs to be qualified—surely we cannot love everyone! At least, that is what the lawyer believed. He asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” The man knew that the teaching of the day was an expanded (and corrupted) version of Leviticus 19:18. Jesus knew it too. That is why he said in the Sermon on the Mount,

You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (Matt. 5:43–44)

Do not discriminate and withhold love because, by some twisted understanding of God’s law, you think that people exist who do not qualify as neighbors. That was the message of Jesus to the lawyer.

Right now, in the broadest sense, the neighbor count is 7.7 billion and rising. Our neighborhood is the whole world in a way. No earthly resident is disqualified. But only a small number of our global neighbors are within our mercy-reach. Jesus is not calling us to show particular acts of mercy to every person in the world. He wants us to show mercy to needy people we see. Be like the Samaritan in the story. Be a good neighbor.

While we are not to exclude anyone, we do have to restrict our neighbor-ing in geographic terms. A good place to start is the street where we live. We all have neighbors. Our neighbors have needs. Do you know your neighbors’ needs? Do you know their names? Do they know you? Have you considered how you might get to know them better and contribute positively to their lives?

Christians live in neighborhoods. Congregations worship in neighborhoods. Emerging mission works are located in places where people live. Even when a church building is not surrounded by homes, its ministry has reach to people who live nearby. It is so important that we see this and love our neighbors well.

The victim in the parable was in bad shape, as are many

in our communities. They may be lonely, underemployed, or troubled by a decision that needs to be made. Some have medical conditions, addictions, or disabilities that make life very hard. Some neighbors flourish and seem to have everything put together, but they may be the neediest of all if they are relying on themselves and see no need for God.

Consider that God has positioned his church and its members in places where opportunities to show mercy abound. And then ask how mercy can be delivered.

It is possible to feel overwhelmed by the brokenness of the world and the particular trials faced by our neighbors. God is not calling his people to address every issue and fix every problem. But he does want us to be involved with people. He wants us to love them. He wants us to see them as he sees them—broken, loved, needy, and invited to believe in his Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the ultimate mercy-giver. We who know his mercy recognize ourselves in the injured man on the side of the road—weak and incapable of helping ourselves. We are in trouble, but not left for dead. Jesus came, lived, died, and rose in order to save us from our sins and bring us to heaven. We wait for his appearing and a time when all things will be made new. He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy. (Titus 3:5)

The ways to show mercy are many, and it is good for us to think creatively about how to show the mercy we have been shown. The very best gift of mercy we can give to our neighbors is Jesus himself. We have Jesus. Our neighbors need Jesus. Let’s give him to them.

*The author is associate general secretary of Home Missions.*

## Home Missions Today

For up-to-date news and prayer requests, receive our newsletter by e-mailing [HomeMissionsToday@opc.org](mailto:HomeMissionsToday@opc.org).  
New editions: July 3, 17, 31.



# GIVING IS PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

// JOSHUA L. MCKAMY

In Scripture, the Lord often asks us to examine our attitudes and behaviors toward money, prompting us to consider what our giving says about our relationship with God in Christ. One passage that encourages us to ask this question is the story of the rich young ruler in Matthew 19.

By the time we arrive at chapter 19, we have already read much in Matthew concerning possessions. We have been commanded to store up treasures in heaven rather than on earth (Matt. 6:19–20); we’ve been encouraged to trust God’s provision in this life (Matt. 6:25–33); and we’ve been warned about the dangers that accompany wealth (Matt. 13:22). All these come to bear in the story of the rich young ruler.

The scene opens innocently enough in Matthew 19:16. A man approaches Jesus and asks, “What good deed must I do to have eternal life?” From Jesus’s answer, we see that this man’s thoughts about himself and salvation are in serious error. Jesus rebukes the premise of the question, that the young man might do some “good deed” in order to earn eternal life. “There is only one who is good,” answers Jesus. In other words, the only true standard of “good” is God himself. “If you would enter life,” Jesus continues, “keep the commandments.” He is pressing the young man to see the impossibility of earning eternal life on his own merit. Similarly, after instructing his listeners to love their enemies in Matthew 5, Jesus gives the standard of God’s righteousness: “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (v. 48). No sinner is able outside of Christ to meet the high demands of God’s law.

The young man at this point ought to have recognized this; he should have seen his sinfulness and need of Jesus. But in his

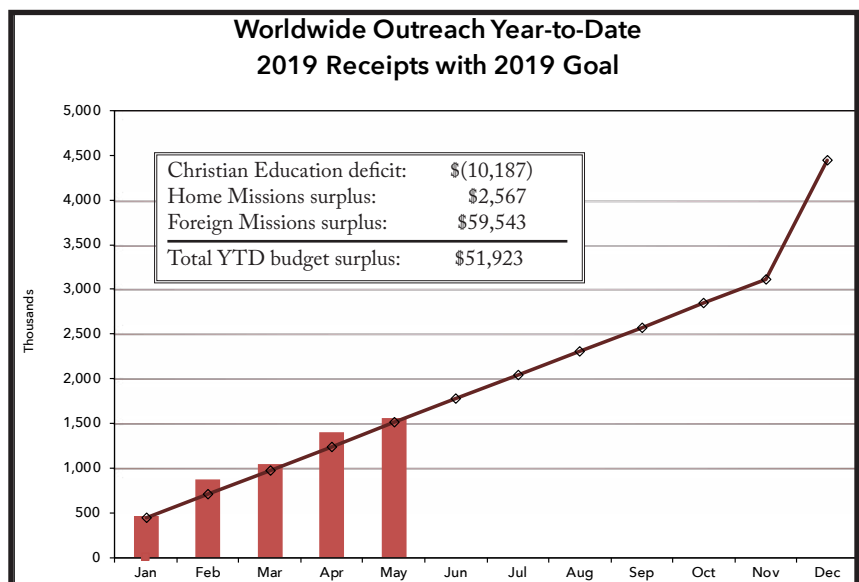
self-deception, he instead replies, “all these [commandments] I have kept” (v. 20). So Jesus tells him to go and sell all his possessions, give away the money, and then follow him (v. 21). It’s a bold request, and it exposes this man’s idolatrous love of wealth. The man has not kept even the first commandment to “have no other gods before me”! He “went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions” (v. 22). The condition of this man’s heart, his unbelief, is laid bare by his unwillingness to give as Jesus commands. Sorrowful, he walks away from the Son of God and hope of true life.

This story is not a condemnation of wealthy Christians, nor does it elevate poverty as the desired state for the Christian. Jesus is not after the “great possessions” of this man. Jesus is after his *heart*.

As we read this text, we must examine our own hearts. Our approach to giving away our money and possessions is a practical and, at times, convicting barometer of our theology. Rather than thinking, “all these commandments I have kept,” we must see our sinful estate and lack of righteousness, then look to God’s provision of a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we have salvation and life by grace through faith. To put this theology to the test, we must be willing to freely give of our earthly treasures to God.

We do not do so to merit God’s favor or out of compulsion, but rather because God’s favor already rests upon us in Christ. Giving freely and generously in this way, to the local and to the denominational church, also allows us to flee the temptation to love our money more than the Lord who bought us with the precious blood of Jesus.

*The author is pastor of Covenant OPC in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.*



JULY



The Bakers

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- 1 **JEREMY & GWEN BAKER**, Yuma, AZ. Ask the Lord to bless Yuma OPC's monthly outreach efforts. / **Mr. & Mrs. J. M.**, Asia. Pray that effective medical treatment may be identified for Mrs. J. M. as they're in the US.

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  - 2 **MATTHEW & LOIS COTTA**, Pasadena, CA. Pray that God would add to Pasadena Presbyterian Church. / **MELISA MCGINNIS**, the OPC's new controller. Pray for her as she trains and becomes familiar with staff.

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  - 3 **Mr. & Mrs. M. M.**, Asia (on furlough). Pray for the family as they vacation and travel to visit churches in the West. / Tent-maker **T. D.**, Asia. Pray for rest and spiritual refreshment while on furlough.

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  - 4 **JAY & ANDREA BENNETT**, Neon, KY. Pray for evangelistic faithfulness and fruit, and the calling of more officers to Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church. / **BOARDWALK CHAPEL**, Wildwood, NJ. Pray for the volunteer staff.

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  - 5 Pray for **MARK (PEGGY) SUMPTER**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest. / Pray for **ROSS GRAHAM** as he completes the minutes and year-book of the 86<sup>th</sup> (2019) General Assembly.

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6 Pray that our **ASIA ASSOCIATES** may have opportunity to fellowship and share the good news during the annual team invitational picnic. / Pray for **DAVE (ELIZABETH) HOLMLUND**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

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7 **Mr. & Mrs. S. F.**, Asia. Pray for Mr. S. F. as he travels to teach a seminary course in South Korea. / **LARRY & KALYNN OLDAKER**, Huron, OH. Pray that God would lead the combined group in unity at Grace Fellowship OPC.

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8 Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**. / **RYAN (ALISABETH) WOODS**, Covenant OPC, Rochester, NY, and **CHRISTOPHER BYRD**, Knox OPC, Silver Spring, MD, as they complete yearlong internships.

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9 **MARK & CARLA VAN ESSENDELDT**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the children as they adjust to the departure of friends on the field. / **GREGORY & GINGER O'BRIEN**, Downingtown, PA. Pray for the Lord's blessing on new members at Christ Church.

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10 **ETHAN & CATHERINE BOLYARD**, Wilmington, NC. Pray for Heritage OPC as they begin receiving denominational field support. / Pray for health and strength for **NAKAALE, UGANDA, MISSIONARY ASSOCIATES** Leah Hopp, Rebekah Moore, Angela Voskuil, and Christopher and Chloe Verdick.



Menominee 2018

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11 **CHRIS & GRACE ANN CASHEN**, Clarkston, GA. Pray for more volunteers to join in summer ministry to refugee children in Clarkston. / Pray for the short-term mission trip to **MENOMINEE MISSIONS**, Zoar, WI.

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12 **DAVID & RASHEL ROBBINS**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the villages of Akuyama and Alamacar would be released from the bondage of witchcraft. / **MARC (RUTH) SCATURRO**, summer intern at Harvest OPC in Wyoming, MI.

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13 **DR. FLIP & ANNELOES BAARDMAN** give thanks as the clinic is now fully staffed, allowing Flip more interaction with patients. / **DAMON (ELISABETH) YOUNG**, summer intern at Covenant Presbyterian in Barre, VT.

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14 **JOSEPH (ANDREA) POLLARD**, summer intern at Faith OPC in Long Beach, CA. / **JASON & AMANDA KIRKLIN**, Waco, TX. Pray that Trinity OPC would make good progress in officer training over the summer.

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15 Yearlong interns **BRENDAN WESTERFIELD**, Redeemer in Beavercreek, OH, and **JOHN PAUL (CORINNE) HOLLOWAY**, San Antonio Reformed in TX. / **DANNY OLINGER**, general secretary of Christian Education.

JULY



The Westerveld family

**21** **HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Praise God for the new worship facility and outreach opportunities in the neighborhood. / Pray for affiliated missionaries **JERRY & MARILYN FARNIK**, Prague, Czech Republic.

**22** Pray for Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW** as he serves for three weeks with Team Praha (in Prague). / Foreign Missions general secretary **MARK BUBE** and associate general secretary **DOUGLAS CLAWSON**.

**23** **BRADNEY AND EILEEN LOPEZ**, Arroyo, PR. Pray that Iglesia Presbiteriana Sola Escritura would become more intentional in its outreach and evangelism. / Home Missions administrative assistant **KATIE STUMPF**.

**24** Praise God for the OPC's fruitful partnership with the PCA in **GREAT COMMISSION PUBLICATIONS**. / **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for Mark as he prepares to teach at the new Reformed seminary. **JOSHUA VAL-**

**25** **DIX**, summer intern at Providence OPC in Bradenton, FL. / **BOB & GRACE HOLDA**, Oshkosh, WI. May Resurrection Presbyterian be grounded in Christ's love as they reach out in love to others.

**26** **CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON** and missionary associate **JOANNA GROVE**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray that the Mbale churches may grow in maturity in difficult times. / Missionary associates **STEVE & CARRIE HILL**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for newcomers to visit regularly.



The Ambrose family

**27** Pray for affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia, as they resettle after their furlough. / Pray for **JIM BOSGRAF**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Midwest.

**28** **RYAN & ROCHELLE CAVANAUGH**, Merrillville, IN. Pray for unity at Mission Church and transparent, redemptive relationships. / **BEN & HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti. Pray for the family as the two oldest, Ethan and Emma, prepare for college.

**29** Pray for OP military chaplains on active duty: **DANIEL (STACEY) HALLEY**, US Air Force, and **CORNELIUS (DEIDRE) JOHNSON**, US Navy. / **OPC.ORG STAFF**, including Stephen Pribble, Andrew Moody, and Linda Foh.

**30** Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Pray for the work on the Book of Church Order for a presbytery in Haiti. / *New Horizons* managing editor **JUDITH DINSMORE** and editorial assistant **DIANE OLINGER**.

**31** Pray for **RETIRED MISSIONARIES** Cal and Edie Cummings, Brian and Dorothy Wingard, Greet Rietkerk, and Young and Mary Lou Son. / **BEN (TIFFANY) WARD**, church-planting intern, Christ the King, Naples, FL.

**16** **SILAS (ANASTASIA) SCHREYACK**, summer intern at First Church in Merrimack, NH. / **BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada. Pray that many children and teenagers may hear the gospel through the English Bible camps.

**17** **LOWELL & MAE IVEY**, Virginia Beach, VA. Pray for the Lord's blessing as Reformation Church looks forward to possibly organizing in 2019. / **GRANT (STORMIE) ALLARD**, summer intern at Christ Covenant in Amarillo, TX.

**18** Pray for the volunteers and staff at **ENGLISH CAMP** in Prague, Czech Republic, and the short-term mission trip **TEAM PRAHA**, which will arrive next week. / *Ordained Servant* editor **GREGORY REYNOLDS**.

**19** Pray for the labors of affiliated missionaries **CRAIG & REE COULBOURNE**, and **LINDA KARNER**, Japan. / **BILL & SESSIE WELZIEN**, Key West, FL. Continue to pray for growth at Keys Presbyterian Church.

**20** Pray for **CHRIS (NANCY) WALMER**, area home missions coordinator, Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania. / **MATTHEW (HYOJUNG) WALKER**, summer intern at Covenant Presbyterian in Marina, CA.

# NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

## BRIONES ORDAINED AS TEACHER OF THE WORD

On May 10, Dr. David Briones was ordained as Teacher of the Word at Reformation OPC in Oviedo, Florida, in order to serve as associate professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary. Mike Francis (pastor, Immanuel Presbyterian PCA in Deland, Florida) read the sermon text and Eric Watkins (pastor, Covenant Presbyterian in St. Augustine, Florida) preached the sermon. John Tweeddale (academic dean and professor of theology, Reformation Bible College) led the prayer during the laying on of hands, and Stephen Oharek (pastor, Reformation OPC) gave the charge to the minister and led the service.



At the ordination of David Briones, left to right: Mike Francis (PCA), John Tweeddale (PCA), Larry Mininger, Bill Montgomery, David Chilton, David Briones, Stephen Oharek, Eric Watkins, Joel Fick, and David Veldkamp



Steve and Joanie Doe

## DOE RETIRES

*Philip Proctor*

Stephen Doe, the regional home missionary of the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic, retired on May 31. The presbytery expressed thanks for Steve's tireless labors, great wisdom, and the gift that he and his wife, Joanie, have been to our congregations. They have been tireless in attending and supporting individual congregations as they engaged in evangelism and in encouraging new works both within the bounds of the Presbytery of the Mid-

Atlantic and within the Presbytery of the Southeast. The caption on the cake reflects the hearts of the entire presbytery: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

## UPDATE

### MINISTERS

• On April 26, the Presbytery of the Southeast received into its membership retired PCA minister **Ronald N. Gleason**.

• On May 3, **C. Phillip Hollstein III** was installed as an evangelist of the Presbytery of the South to serve as chaplain of Providence Hospital in Mobile, AL.

• On May 4, the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania granted the request of **David A. Smiley** to

demit the office of minister.

• On May 10, the Presbytery of the South ordained and installed **David E. Briones** as a Teacher of the Word, laboring at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, PA.

• On May 24, **Dhananjay Khanda** was ordained and installed as pastor of Holy Trinity Presbyterian in Fort Lauderdale, FL.

• On May 24, **Brian M. Guinto** was



At the May 24 ordination and installation of Dhananjay Khanda

ordained and installed as associate pastor of Reformation OPC in Olympia, WA.

- On May 26, the Presbytery of the Dakotas dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Steven A. Richert** and Calvary OPC in Volga, SD, upon his retirement.
- On May 31, **Stephen D. Doe** retired as regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic.

## LETTERS

### REFRESHING AND CHALLENGING

Editor:

The May issue of *New Horizons*, “Reforming Race Relations in the Church,” was refreshing and challenging. It hit me where I live, as they say. I bless the fact that, though I had and have had many challenging interactions over the years related to the topic of race, God graciously allowed me learn early what I think is the biblical attitude: the idea of separate races, some superior and some inferior for whatever reasons, is a lie. There is one human race in many colors, with many cultures, religions, and languages. Who God is, as reflected in his human creation, is too amazing and too detailed to be adequately reflected in one type of human being.

Edith Mcklveen  
Rochester, NY

### BEST LEFT TO THE CONSCIENCE

Editor:

I am compelled by conscience to object to some of the tone in Darryl Hart’s review of *Religion and American Culture* in the May issue of *New Horizons*. Certainly, I have no objection to Mr. Hart having an opinion about the President. He is welcome to hold to his conscience in voting and to express his opinion. But the language “The campaign slogan ‘Make America Great Again’ is, in effect, a code for ‘restore white hegemony’” is inappropriate. It accuses the President and his supporters of being, in effect, racists who want to dominate African Americans. For the most part the review is useful and informative. I agree that we must be careful with our political

affiliations. But that is a matter for each brother’s and sister’s conscience to contend with.

Arthur J. Fox  
Hanford, CA

*Editor’s note:* In his review, Dr. Hart comments that “many assessments of the 2016 presidential election” tie the appeal of President Trump to white Protestants. According to these assessments, says Dr. Hart, the MAGA slogan “is *then*, in effect” (emphasis added) a code for “restore white hegemony.” Dr. Hart then argues that the book being reviewed overturns this idea. The statements to which Mr. Fox refers are largely descriptive, not prescriptive.

## REVIEWS

***Suffering: Gospel Hope When Life Doesn’t Make Sense*, by Paul David Tripp. Crossway, 2018. Hardcover, 224 pages, \$16.75. Reviewed by OP pastor Stephen A. Migotsky.**

Paul David Tripp is a careful student of the two ways God has given us to know him, special revelation and general revelation, and this book reflects his study. In special revelation, God reveals us to himself through the written Word, which, if properly interpreted, is infallible. In general revelation, our observations and experiences of the world, if properly interpreted, never conflict but only support special revelation. In times of suffering, however, we may likely have difficulty interpreting both the written Word and our observations and experiences of the world. *Suffering*, by Paul Tripp, provides a guide.

After earning his doctor of ministry in biblical counseling from Westminster Theological Seminary, Tripp became a faculty member at Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation and a lecturer in biblical counseling at Westminster. In 2006, he began his own ministry. What motivated Paul Tripp to write this book was his kidney failure and the accompanying physical agonies, permanent disability, financial challenges, and temptations to sin—as well as the transforming power of God’s grace. To his own experiences, he adds the anonymous experiences

of his counselees, who have endured various forms of suffering—physical, emotional, financial, and spiritual.

Tripp’s account of his life-threatening illness begins the book. He describes how suffering is never “neutral,” but always pushes the sufferer to respond with potentially disastrous or beneficial spiritual results.

The book is then divided into six forms of temptations (called “traps”) and six forms of comfort available to believers who suffer. The traps for a sufferer are (1) awareness of the profound, and potentially permanent, difference suffering makes, (2) fear of more suffering coming, (3) envy of those who are not suffering or who are happy, (4) confusion about what God is doing and doubt that God is good, (5) denial that what happened is as bad



as it seems, and (6) the discouragement that can dominate one’s thinking and life. The comforts are (1) God’s grace as expressed in Romans 8:18–39, (2) God’s presence and the rest it brings, (3) God’s sovereignty and the

absolute control God has over all things, (4) God’s good purposes for suffering, (5) the comfort of God’s people when they love the sufferer, and (6) the comfort of a heart that is resting in Jesus Christ. Each of these twelve chapters has strong warnings, strong encouragements, and healthy advice on finding God’s help and comfort.

This book belongs by *God’s Grace in Your Suffering* (2018) by David Powlison and *The Crook in the Lot* (1737) by Thomas Boston in your library. It is not only for those who suffer now, but it is certainly for them.

***The Soul in Paraphrase: A Treasury of Classic Devotional Poems*, by Leland Ryken. Crossway, 2018. Hardcover, 272 pages, \$29.75 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor Thomas D. Church.**

If you are one of the many who find poetry boring, inaccessible, or altogether disinteresting this good book might honestly move you to a more generous attitude.

The editor is Leland Ryken, who was for nearly fifty years a professor of English at Wheaton College. He is well qualified to choose and present some ninety devotional poems that are truly penetrating and sweet to the Christian heart.

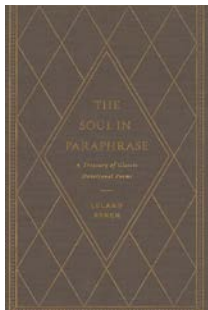
Two features that follow each poem set this collection apart and will commend it to a wide audience. The first is a short paragraph of notes on selected words found in the poem—some of them archaic or simply not in common use (but many of them should be). This is followed by a brief commentary in which Ryken very skillfully progresses through the text, carefully uncovering the author's meaning and purpose in each piece. This is gold. It draws out the deep spirituality of these beautiful classic poems in a delightful and rewarding manner. You'll find yourself happily rereading many of the poems to see his point, saying to yourself: "Of course! What a blessed, clever thought!"

The poetry is largely from the seventeenth and eighteenth century, with a small collection of nineteenth-century examples. Most are composed by clearly Christian men and women celebrated in English literature. Ryken includes works by William Shakespeare, John Donne, George Herbert, John Milton, John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Christina Rossetti, Anne Bradstreet, and others. If his selections are a little heavy on the metaphysical poets, they are all the more provoking.

The book itself is typeset on thick, almost vellum-like pages, bound in a lovely brown cloth cover, with a red ribbon marker to keep your place as you move through the collection.

Here's a taste: from Robert Herrick (1591–1674), "His Savior's Words, Going to the Cross":

For Christ, your loving Savior, hath  
Drunk up the wine of God's fierce  
wrath;  
Only, there's left a little froth.  
Less for to taste, than for to show



What bitter cups had been your due,  
Had He not drank them up for you.

Give it a chance! These poems are filled with Scripture and will light up Christ in your heart. And if you thirst for more, may I direct you to what I believe to be the very best anthology of Christian poetry available: *A Sacrifice of Praise* (Cumberland, 2006) by James H. Trott—another treasure for your groaning library shelf.

***The Ten Commandments: What They Mean, Why They Matter, and Why We Should Obey Them*, by Kevin DeYoung. Crossway, 2018. Hardcover, 208 pages, \$12.62. Reviewed by OP pastor Z. Bulut Yasar.**

In one of the episodes of *Family Feud*, contestants were asked to guess how many of the Ten Commandments a surveyed group said they had broken that month. The most frequent response of the group to this question was "one." That there is a gross misunderstanding of the Ten Commandments in our society would be an understatement. However, the situation is not much better in the church. As Kevin DeYoung so humorously paints the picture, if we were to call on children and adults on Sunday and ask them to recite the Ten Commandments, how many of them would be able to remember all of them? In this context, DeYoung's *The Ten Commandments* is a welcome aid and indeed a breath of fresh air.

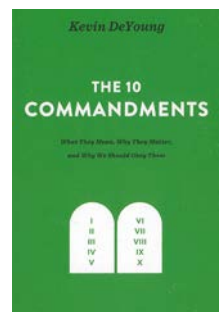
There is no doubt that the Ten Commandments have always been important for the church. In the New Testament, the commandments were repeatedly men-

tioned by Christ and the apostles (Matt. 19:16–22; 1 Tim. 1:8–11). The Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms have large sections on the Ten Commandments. There is a good reason for this. As DeYoung put it, the Ten Commandments are closely related to the nature and character of our God, our Christian life now (sanctification) and in the world to come (glorified life), and ultimately what Christ has done for us. That is why DeYoung takes his task very seriously.

DeYoung sets the stage by telling us why it matters to know and understand the Ten Commandments. In doing so, he engages with postmodern slogans of morality. DeYoung writes this book in almost catechetical form. He asks and answers, anticipating the question of his readers. Each chapter covers one of the commandments, and in each chapter, DeYoung explains what the commandment is, why we should obey it, and how we should obey it. He also keeps the redemptive-historical context in mind.

He is aware that although the coming of the Messiah did not abolish the commandments, it "transposed them."

One of the greatest strengths of this book is that DeYoung does not shy away from hard questions. Whether it is the prohibition of the use of images in the Second Commandment or what living long in the land means in the Fifth Commandment, he is always ready to dig deep into the Scriptures. Study questions make this book a



Presbytery of Ohio Women's Retreat  
Camp Akita, Logan, Ohio  
Sept. 27-28

Diane Olinger, speaker  
"One Thing Is Necessary: Mary and Martha Encounter Jesus"

To register, contact Grace Presbyterian Church at [office@graceopc.org](mailto:office@graceopc.org).  
All women are welcome to attend.

## NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS *Continued*

perfect tool for Sunday school classes and small group studies, but it really would be a great help for anyone who wants to understand the Ten Commandments better. As you read it, you will see that the Ten Words (Decalogue) are not only our duty but our destiny. DeYoung masterfully and with a great sense of humor shows that the Ten Commandments are beautiful and the best options for our lives.

***Broken Pieces and the God Who Mends Them: Schizophrenia through a Mother's Eyes*, by Simonetta Carr. P&R, 2019. Paperback, 368 pages, \$12.00. Reviewed by OP member Christine Wilson.**

“What do you do when you hear voices?” Jonathan Carr’s question to his mother illustrates the delusory nature of schizophrenia, as illusion and reality become indistinguishable. For his mother, the author of the book, interpreting the question is like peering into a dense fog. She sees muted but familiar contours and strains to glimpse the fading reality of who her son used to be. Her answer to him reveals her commitment to loving and serving her son with honesty: “I don’t hear voices....”

The first part of Simonetta Carr’s book chronicles her walk with Jonathan through that fog. The second part offers support and resources to those living with schizophrenia or to friends who come alongside.

Part 1 is raw and honest, a heart-breaking account of the progression of Jonathan’s illness. Schizophrenia, Carr writes, “doesn’t just erase a personality—it substitutes it with another” (13). Jonathan’s two-year battle, beginning in his late teens, was terrifying and exhausting and painful. She recounts the pain of his losing friends, and of friends losing

him, of his desire for isolation and self-medication. She notes, however, that it was also a time laced with God’s grace. She writes of Jonathan’s conversations with his pastor and elders, of finding bits of his poetry that expressed faith in his Redeemer. She writes honestly of her struggles and failures concerning Jonathan’s care, of feeling angry and overwhelmed by the mysterious changes in her son, and of finding comfort in the Scriptures. She recalls King Jehoshaphat’s prayer in 2 Chronicles 20:12: “We are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” God’s answer to the king sustained her: “Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God’s...the LORD will be with you” (vs. 15, 17). Scripture was her daily reminder that “our limited experience doesn’t have the final word in establishing what is real” (344).

Part 2 is a trove of practical informa-

tion and advice for caregivers and for brothers and sisters in Christ who want to come alongside in love to uphold the family in their sufferings. She helps navigate the often-maddening medical system that sometimes seems to prioritize patient

privacy over patient care. She shares suggestions (her own and those she has collected from the medical community and friends) on early diagnosis and brain scans, medical treatment centers, treatment advocacy centers, medications, therapy, alternative therapies, counselors, psychiatrists—as well as thoughts on the benefit of work and the need to

rest. She offers suggestions for those who desire to help and some practical tips for churches that might increase opportunities for those with schizophrenia to attend worship and enjoy fellowship.

God, Carr writes, “is greater than our minds, our circumstances, and our fears. Things are often not what they seem... We can’t see the full reality, but God does” (212).

