

# NEW HORIZONS

≡ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ≡

4 The Color of Preaching //  
*by Eric B. Watkins*

MAY 2019

6 Four Theses for Reforming  
Race Relationships //  
*by Mark Robinson*

REFORMING

RACE RELATIONSHIPS

IN THE CHURCH



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## New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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Participants in the Readiness for Ministry Seminar which was hosted by the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension and held at Calvary OPC, Glenside, Pennsylvania, on March 1-2. Front row from left, Timothy Broussard, Victor Kim, Ben Peterson; second row from left, Bob Jones, John Shaw, Tim Ireland, Jueon Kim, Josh Valdix; third row from left, Al Tricarico, Joseph Waggoner, Seth Dorman, Matthew Walker, Nathan Morgan, Dave Holmlund, and Danny Olinger.



# BUILDING BRIDGES CONFERENCE

JUDITH M. DINSMORE // On the weekend of February 1–2, Covenant OPC in St. Augustine, Florida, hosted **Building Bridges Instead of Barriers: Reforming Race Relationships in the Church**. Tarence Dickerson, an elder at Covenant, was the impetus behind the conference. “I was hoping and praying for a more common voice to weigh in on this conversation,” he said.

Instead of there being a common voice, Dickerson observed that conversations about race relations, including in the Reformed community, “are not actually handled very well” and tend to be divisive, not unifying.

In contrast, the conference stage exuded gentleness and respect. “Race relations in the church was a palpably personal issue for many of the attendees,” Jacob Valk observed. Not an OP member, Valk is a traveling filmmaker for Ephtwoeight Productions who landed in St. Augustine for the conference. “Yet the discussions and talks were quite balanced and measured,” he said.

The OPC has not issued a resolution or statement on race since the GA’s comprehensive 1974 Report of the Committee on Problems of Race. Yet the OPC’s recent silence doesn’t mean that its members aren’t praying, studying, and acting in response to racial issues. Building Bridges was proof.

The speakers indicated, however, that OP churches could be doing more—perhaps much more—to pursue racial reconciliation.

“Racial reconciliation hasn’t been on our radar screen,” Alan Strange said in a panel. “Why can’t we be biblical and confessional *and* racially reconciled?”

Conference speaker and PCA member Gabriel Williams worried that Christians do not pursue racial reconciliation because they think it is inevitably tied to liberalism. “I’ve been very concerned with how much political allegiances actually govern our discussions on the topic,” he said.

Most OP churches and church plants continue to be majority white, a reality confronted in another panel. Dave Holmlund, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Philadelphia, observed that “sometimes we are too quick to assume that we’re healthy but simply not seeing God bless in a certain avenue of mission. This conference has helped me to see that [we may not be] seeing fruit in that mission because we’re not healthy in that area of church life.”

## Reverence for the Word

An African American, Tarence Dickerson frequently has to spell out to

people why he goes to a “white” Presbyterian church. “It isn’t about the color,” he tells them. “It’s about the reverence for the Word of God.”

That reverence marked Building Bridges as well. “We were truly fed from the Word at this conference,” attendees Gail and Jerold Barnett said, who hail from Oklahoma and have been members of the OPC for more than forty years. “There are many biblical examples of diverse peoples being brought together to worship. This conference emphasized our need to work toward the same.”

In addition to the speakers who have been featured in this issue of *New Horizons* (see pages 4–13) the conference included Dr. H. B. Charles Jr., Dr. Dennis Johnson, Dr. Joel Kim, Diane Olinger, Dr. Gabriel Williams, and Dr. Anthony Bradley. All conference addresses are available online on [Covenant OPC’s Youtube channel](https://www.covenant-opchurch.org) or via [Covenant-opchurch.org](https://www.covenant-opchurch.org). □

*The author is managing editor of New Horizons.*

# THE COLOR OF PREACHING



ERIC B. WATKINS // **What color is God? This is a strange question, but one that many have wrestled with through history, especially as it relates to the subject of social justice and the church (an issue that is becoming increasingly important—particularly among millennials).**

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Having recently finished preaching through the entire book of Exodus, it is striking to me that for all that the Israelites and Moses saw, they never saw God's face. If there were ever a time when God might have given his people an artistic depiction of himself, this would have been the time. A painting of God might have looked lovely in the tabernacle. However, God never gave Moses any instructions for depicting God in any particular way; in fact, God strictly forbade it. As John Calvin would later say, our hearts are idol factories, and the Israelites would surely have worshiped the image of God rather than God himself—if God had given them such an image.

All the “images” that God positively gave Israel were means of grace

to point to God's redemptive work in the covenant, not to a physical description of his person. The Bible does not depict God as being white, black, or any other color. In short, the God of Israel does not “have a body like men,” as the children's catechism rightly states.

When Jesus came, it is equally striking that he never sat down to have his portrait painted (and yes, they had artists back then). The apostles never gave us a picture of Jesus. We are not told how tall he was, whether he was heavy or thin, the color of his eyes or skin—anything. Though the New Testament does not give us a physical depiction of Jesus, his image is sweetly expressed through his Word and sacrament, and through his redeemed people as we walk in his ways.

For this reason, pictures of Jesus have always puzzled me—because they all tend to look like the artists who painted them. Sometimes Jesus is depicted as having wavy blond hair and blue eyes. This is pretty poor history, but it again reflects exactly what Calvin said: our hearts are idol factories, and it

is our constant inclination to conform God to our image. We all want “our own personal Jesus” (to quote a great 80s song). I have seen “white Jesus” in white churches and “black Jesus” in African American churches, and I can't help but wonder if anyone sees the self-reflective narcissism in this. The contemporary zeal to recast Jesus into our image lies somewhere between the pragmatic idolatry of the golden calf in Exodus 32 and the postmodern narcissism of our day. Whatever Jesus looked like, he did a pretty good job of keeping it a secret.

## The Color of the Church

What color is the church? Here again we find the Bible leading down a different trail than many contemporary voices. I am a biracial pastor with biracial children, serving a somewhat diverse church in the South. It has been heartbreaking to hear it said by evangelical friends (and leaders) that that they are leaving their churches to form new ones that better reflect their cultural, ethnic, and political

commitments. To do so has become trendy and provocative, but is it biblical?

Colossians 3:11 tells us that the church

is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all and is in all.

In New Testament times, there was a plethora of potential lines of division. There were ethnic differences, cultural differences, economic differences, distinctions between genders and generations—it was all there. But none of these were lauded as reasons to divide the church. The New Testament rather depicts one holy and apostolic church, striving to work through its differences rather than dividing because of them.

Strangely, for all the problems the New Testament addresses, it yet brings the people of God (culturally divided as they were) into one church to participate in one worship service to the one triune God. The gospel was the bridge that transcended barriers. God calls his people to leave their narcissism at the door, and to strive to be one on earth as in heaven. He calls us to live cross-shaped, servant-hearted lives that depict his image in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness (Eph. 4:24). And it takes the whole body to do that well. As a diamond's many facets allow it to brilliantly reflect light, it takes all the beauty, gifts, passions, and diversity that God has given each one of us to reflect the whole of Christ's glory well.

## The Color of Faithful Preaching

In light of these ideas, what color is faithful preaching? Again, it feels like a silly question. And yet my library has numerous books distinguishing preaching along ethnic lines. Is that a biblical distinction or a postmodern, consumeristic one? Should we go shopping for preachers that look like us or that cater to our cultural and political paradigm? Do we need our own personal preacher to go along with our own personal Jesus? Or would we be better off to drop



Participants in the Building Bridges Conference (left to right) Joel Kim, Dennis Johnson, Elisa Francis, Terry Johnson, Gabriel Williams, Eric Watkins, Alicia Williams, Mark Robinson, Alan Strange, Tarence Dickerson, and Diane Olinger

the mall mentality and long for the “pure milk of the Word” (1 Peter 2:2)?

Social justice is an important subject that should not be ignored either by the church corporately or the Christian privately. But we should not forget what Protestant liberalism did in the last century, making social issues into the cloud that eclipsed the glory of Christ and his gospel. When social issues define the church and her preaching, Jesus will soon become little more than a means to an end of pushing one's political agenda (regardless of what that agenda is).

Watch the full-length conference address at <https://bit.ly/2Uf0yag>

This is contrary to the historic Protestant view of preaching, which regarded faithful preaching as the Word of God to the people of God by the man of God (Second Helvetic Confession). Preaching is one of the outward and ordinary means by which Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption (Westminster Shorter Catechism Q. 88). It is, as the hymn goes, “that Word above all earthly powers” (including politics, racism, and cultural narcissism), and it pierces our hearts as it comforts us with the gospel.

So what color is faithful preaching? The same color as the church; the same color as the gospel; the same color as God himself—incapable of being color-coded. Perhaps in this time of competing and confusing voices, what we need is to return to a biblical theology of the church, right worship, and right preaching—to see the church the way Christ sees her, and to love the church the way Christ loves her.

After all, there is but one human race, and there is but one body of Christ. What we already are in Christ (our heavenly identity) is that which should define us on earth. Nothing more, nothing less. Jesus is the color of preaching. □

*The author is pastor of Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church in St. Augustine, Florida.*

# FOUR THESES FOR REFORMING RACE RELATIONSHIPS



MARK ROBINSON // I'm happy this conference is happening. Yet, I hate talking about race. It has become so polarizing! We talk about it today the way that C. S. Lewis, in his day, said that Christians talked about demons: either with a disbelief in their existence or with an excessive and unhealthy preoccupation with them.

Given the current climate in the evangelical church, one may easily succumb to a kind of racial reconciliation fatigue. And yet, I talk about race because it is directly tied to redemptive history—to God's plan in Christ to procure his elect from every nation and make one new man out of the many, to gather together one multiethnic family out of every nation, tribe, people, and tongue. So, here are four theses on reforming race relationships in the church.

## 1. Reforming racial relationships must be cruciform from beginning to end.

When Paul says, "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18), he is telling us that the cross—shorthand for God's plan of redemption in Christ—

divides us all into two groups, those who are "perishing" and those who are "being saved." But not only does the cross divide us, it also defines us. It structures our identity and story. Our lives are cruciform—cross-shaped. Like Paul, we have been "*crucified* with Christ" (Gal. 2:20) and know ourselves as ones who were "*buried* with him by baptism" (Rom. 6:4).

The message of the cross is on a collision course not only with the ideologies of the world, but with our own pride as well. The cross is nothing if it doesn't humble us about human ability. In Luther's "A Meditation on Christ's Passion," he writes that we haven't understood the cross if we only note how bad were the Jews and soldiers, how terrible was Jesus's experience of injustice. No, we aren't truly "getting it" until we see the cross and feel its conviction and stinging indictment of *us*. "When you see the nails piercing Christ's hands, you can be certain that it is your work. When you behold his crown of thorns, you may rest assured that these are your evil thoughts." The cross has to kill *us*

before it comforts and consoles us.

Now, consider this in light of Jesus's second great commandment—which is what we're really talking about when we talk about race issues in the church. To love our neighbor means that we can and must admit that we've failed to love our neighbor as we ought. All of us. Own it. And we don't just fail at loving people who *don't* look like us—we fail at loving those who look *just* like us! This searing indictment is good news that drives us back to the cross. The ground really is level at the foot of the cross. There is no race privilege there. The stinging conviction of cross-shaped neighbor-loving is no respecter of persons. It doesn't leave room for one-sided, selective, race-based grief and guilt. We can and should engage each other from places of mutual humility and fearless love, not prickliness, self-defensiveness, and suspicion.

## 2. We must unrelentingly emphasize matters more foundational than race.

The real issues have always revolved, and will always revolve, around matters

of sin and grace, not skin and race. We can say in Pauline fashion, “And sin, seizing an opportunity through differences in melanin content, produces among us all kinds of divisions” (see Rom. 7:8). Our difficulties arise because Adam is our father, not because our skin is colored.

I am not advocating for the misguided approach of a blissful “color-blind” church and society. Arguably the most memorable phrase from the most well-known speech of the most noted black American makes this very point: Martin Luther King dreamed of a time when our children would “not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” Of course these words were not intended to say color or difference doesn’t matter, but that other things matter *more*. (Yes, I quoted King, and yes, I am aware of his failings. The Lord can draw straight lines with crooked sticks!)

Not infrequently in Scripture, when an argument is made for why we should not curse one another or even murder, the appeal is made not on the basis of what is particular about us—like ethnicity, sex, or socio-economic status—but on the basis of what is common to us: we are fellow image-bearers and neighbors. “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image” (Gen. 9:6). As part of the church, with one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all (Eph. 4:5–6), it is our Christian identity and not our sociological, biological, political, or tribal identity that had better be grounding and driving how we relate to one another. Talking this way doesn’t erase race. It puts it in its proper place.

### 3. Reforming race issues in the church calls for wise engagement with the wider race discourse.

The church is an institution in the world but not of the world, an institution that follows her head, Jesus Christ, who was both a “friend of ... sinners” (Matt. 11:19) and “separate from sin” (Heb. 7:26). So, when we’re confronted with the contemporary race discourse,

which has made strong inroads into the evangelical church, how do we engage it? It is not at all clear to me that the church, in its pursuit of racial solidarity, needs to appeal to the language of *intersectionality*, *systemic racism*, *micro-aggressions*, or even *equality*. When you control the dictionary, you have some control over the meaning and the direction of the discourse. Who controls those terms?

The church of Jesus Christ has its own well-developed canonical vocabulary for addressing interchurch conflict and relationships—terms like *confession*, *forgiveness*, *peace*, *unity of the Spirit, one in Christ* (Gal. 3:28), and *reconciliation* (both with God and neighbor). This is the *lingua franca* of the Holy Spirit and it has served the church well through ethnic toil and strife for millennia.

Let me step out and apply this specifically to the notion of white privilege. Though language can be redeemed in its use, I don’t think this term is helpful for the church. It gains its currency within a larger critical, deconstructive ideology that has the aim of conflict, not conciliation. Anecdotally speaking, I’ve never seen “white privilege” function as a conversation-starter, but only as a conversation-stopper. When Christians uncritically embrace it, they have a difficult time extricating the term from the God-hating narrative in which it is embedded. The notion does have a trace of truth in it. But the truth can be better and less acrimoniously conveyed by the use of other terms, like “ingroup bias” or “majority culture advantage.”

### 4. Reforming racial relationships in the church calls for an informed understanding of justice.

Justice is a far bigger subject than race, but when race issues come up inside and outside the church, discussions about justice are not far behind. When Martin Luther King invoked Amos 5:24, he was thinking of justice and race primarily in a socio-political sense. He was endeavoring to answer how civil society could be just to a whole group of people. Does *justice* mean “being fair to everyone”? What does it mean to have

economic justice, food justice, or racial justice?

The Christian who is committed to knowing what Amos means by justice through God’s revelatory work will look to the Scripture (and creation). We will seek to define biblical justice as our starting point, rather than employing the ad hoc, more-intuitive-than-cognitive, emotive ways in which justice causes are taken up today through selective appeals to Moses’s law. Whereas theologians tend to appeal to the law in a way that sounds like traditional conservatism, social justicians seem to be selective theologians, looking to Moses’s law to play up matters like Jubilee and treatment of strangers, which are foundational liberal or progressive social concerns. Both appeal to the law of God, but they reach very different conclusions about true justice.

### Exhortation

A final word of exhortation to persevere in our pursuit of seeing the ethnic barrier-breaching power of the gospel in our local churches: Our labors are not in vain. Press on through the frustrations and difficulties that arise. Christ *will have* the church for which he died and that church *will be* diverse. I love the deep hope that J. Gresham Machen (a man who, like the rest of us, knew better than he did) has for the church:

Is there no place where two or three can gather in Jesus’ name, to forget for the moment all those things that divide nation from nation and race from race, to forget human pride, to forget the passions of war, to forget the puzzling problems of industrial strife, and to unite in overflowing gratitude at the foot of the Cross? If there be such a place, then that is the house of God and that the gate of heaven. And from under the threshold of that house will go forth a river that will revive the weary world. (*Christianity and Liberalism*, 152) □

*The author is a minister in the PCA.*

# DOCTRINE AND LIFE AS A (NEW-ISH) REFORMED CHRISTIAN



**ALICIA WILLIAMS // Having entered the Reformed world only seven years ago, after following Christ for over twenty years, I am deeply grateful for the proper doctrine and sound, consistent, biblical teaching that is now in my life.**

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## **Christian Life with Incomplete Doctrine**

I came out of a traditional Black Baptist church in a rural area of central Virginia. It was not possible to be uninvolved in our church because every person was expected to be doing something in and for the church. My family was at early morning service, Sunday school, and morning service every Sunday. I was a member of the choir, an usher, and a Sunday school teacher for the younger children, as well as helping with Vacation Bible School and with the kitchen committee when our church served dinners before evening services. Our church belonged to a very active local Baptist association, and we visited and served in these other churches throughout the year as well.

In hindsight, I can honestly say that I learned some good things in my years there that have been carried on, like the necessity of holiness in the Christian life and how to be an active and engaged member of the church. However, I can also say that there were quite a few things that were never consistently applied or fully fleshed out.

For example, because I was not taught about total depravity, I focused on being externally good and perfect, while neglecting the need to mortify sin within my heart. Without a true understanding of human nature, I believed that sinful people were normally good but just had “evil spirits” working through them. I thought that what they needed was not to repent but to deal with those spirits so that they could just “act right” and honor God.

To borrow a phrase from my current pastor, there was a lot of furniture available in the rooms of my mind, but there was no design to bring structure and order, to make proper use of that furniture, or to determine what needed to be discarded.

## **God’s Providence**

In God’s providence, Reformed theology brought the structure and order that I desperately needed, and over the past seven years, I’ve been trying to learn and take in as much as I can. The more I have learned, the more I have realized I have to “unlearn.” There were so many things that were just poorly taught throughout my early years of being a Christian.

Also in God’s providence, I had a wonderful opportunity this January to share this testimony and offer some encouragement to my fellow brothers and sisters in the faith at the conference Building Bridges Instead of Barriers in St. Augustine, Florida. This was truly a new and overwhelming experience for me, but I thoroughly enjoyed meeting so many brothers and sisters in the OPC. The conference was my first interaction with the OPC. Dr. Eric Watkins and his beautiful church family have left the deepest impressions of Christ-honoring brotherly love in my heart and mind. So I write these



humble encouragements from a heart of sincere love for you and the whole body of Christ and with a desire for all of us to grow up into maturity in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### Encouragement from the Pew

When we gather together on the Lord's Day, we should be mindful that feelings of discomfort, the feeling of "being out of place," happens to all kinds of people at various times and for reasons that don't always include the color of their skin. Personally, I've felt like an outsider for a number of reasons including: my failure to love essential oils, my vaccination decisions for my kids, our income level compared to others, where we chose to live, not knowing the random Latin phrases in church, and more.

So don't just go out of your way to try and make the ethnic minority in your church feel included and welcomed. Go out of your way for anyone who may be uncomfortable. Go out of your way for the single person when they're in the midst of married couples. Go out of your way for the older people in your church and for those who have disabilities or frequent sicknesses of all kinds. Go out of your way for the introverted homebodies and the extroverts that may leave you a little more tired than normal.

Go out of your way to welcome, know, and encourage all kinds of peo-

ple who are walking through different seasons of their lives because one of the main reasons we come together as a church body is for fellowship (Heb. 10:25). Go to church every Sunday with the intention of welcoming and encouraging your fellow brothers and sisters. Open up your home and be hospitable. Spend time praying for and with one another.

I believe that we should challenge ourselves to be willing to ask or answer hard questions that many people are too ashamed or embarrassed to engage, such as:

- How do you manage to do a daily Bible reading plan, read good Christian books, and still handle all of your other responsibilities without dropping the ball?
- Do you do family worship? What does it look like in your home? How do you do it without making it weird and awkward?
- Sometimes my prayers feel uncomfortable and repetitive. Does that happen to you? How do you work on that?
- How do you get your kids to pay attention in church?
- How much of the regulative principle of worship is just your culture preference? Can a church hold to the regulative principle of worship and be biblically sound while also having a different style and feel?

### People of the Word

Of course, even to be able to answer these kinds of questions, we must be people of the Word who are bound by convictions. We must not only know the proper doctrine, but we must study the Word so that we are fully convinced in our minds and live out what we know is true, right, and pleasing in the sight of God.

It is by knowing the Word of God that we can have thoughtful conversations with one another, even when we disagree. In college, we often reminded one another of Proverbs 27:17: "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." We know that we don't all see things the same way, and that is not always a bad thing. God forbid that a church is full of people who are all short-sighted in exactly the same areas! Who knows how the Lord may use your insight in the life and minds of others?

We are constantly being assaulted by the evil one, and he is trying to replace our sure hope in Christ with a false one (1 Peter 5:8-9). We must be diligent in holding fast to it and not allow our hope to be co-opted for something inferior. Therefore, we must know the Word of God and truly love one another as we are commanded.

This journey into the Reformed world has not been trouble-free for me. But I now have this amazing privilege of hearing God's Word faithfully preached and proclaimed every week—and I say this as someone who left the cultural comfort of the Black church to hear what you hear each week. We are richly blessed, but these doctrines we are hearing make little difference if they are not influencing how we live and anchoring our hope in Christ Jesus. □

*The author is a member of Christ Church Presbyterian (PCA) in Charleston, SC.*



Alicia Williams with her husband, Gabriel, and daughters Alexandria and Victoria



# IS REFORMED WORSHIP EUROCENTRIC?

TERRY L. JOHNSON // **The immediate roots of Reformed worship clearly are anchored in Europe, even Northern Europe. Does this mean that Reformed worship is “Eurocentric” in some kind of limiting way?**

Some critics argue that Reformed worship is what it is because of culturally relative distinctions that can be discarded in favor of other culturally relative distinctions of non-European cultures. They seem to have in mind a more emotionally expressive preaching and praying, a more physically and vocally active participation, and a more musically dominated approach. They tend to describe Reformed worship as overly intellectual, word-dominant, and rationalistic. These characteristics are attributed to the culture of Europe rather than to biblical or theological conviction.

Is this argument correct? Americans at this particular point in our history are obsessed with ethnicity and race. Nearly everything—religion, employment, politics, music, language—is reduced to race. Yet as Christians, our concern ultimately is not with race, but with truth. (This is not to say that there are not important racial issues past and present and future that must be dealt with, but rather

that everything should not be viewed through the lens of race.) Although its immediate roots are in Europe, what are the *distant roots* of Reformed worship? Does it have foundational roots in the patristic church that are non-European? The answer is yes. To be Reformed is to be profoundly catholic.<sup>1</sup>

## **Christianity: Not a European Import**

Consider first that Christianity itself is not Eurocentric. Jesus and his disciples were Middle-Easterners. They were Semitic. The earliest churches were in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Ethiopia, and North Africa. Not until Acts 16 does the gospel cross over into Macedonia and Europe. Thomas Oden, who is general editor of the landmark multi-volume *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, argues that the flow of ideas and influence that have given shape to historic Christianity was not north to south, as has been often assumed, from Europe to Africa, but south to north, from Africa to Europe.<sup>2</sup> The intellectual centers of early Christianity in the earli-

est days were in the Middle East, in Alexandria, Egypt, and especially in North Africa. Classic ecumenical Christianity “was largely defined in Africa,” Oden writes. It is not a European import. “The Christian leaders in Africa figured out how best to read the law and prophets meaningfully, to think philosophically, and to teach the ecumenical rule of trine faith cohesively, long before these patterns became normative elsewhere.”<sup>3</sup>

For example, Tertullian (c. 160–220), reared in Carthage in North Africa (present day Tunisia) created much of Latin Christianity’s orthodox theological terminology (e.g., *substantia* as in “one substance,” *personae* as in “three persons,” and *trinitas*, “Trinity”) and developed the early Christological formulations. Origen (c. 185–c. 254), born in Alexandria, Egypt, was one of the first Christians to develop a systematic statement of faith. He was an energetic Bible commentator and an effective apologist. Cyprian (d. 258), also of Carthage, has been called “one of the greatest theologians in the history of the Christian church.” Athanasius of Alex-

andria, Egypt (c. 296–373), nicknamed the “Black dwarf,” by the way, was the great champion of orthodoxy against Arianism and famously stood for the doctrine of the Trinity *contra mundum*, against the world. His treatise, *On the Incarnation of the Word of God*, is a theological classic. Augustine of Hippo, born in present day Algeria (354–430), North Africa, is, of course, the single most important theologian in the history of the Christian church, writing with decisive insight on the subjects of the Trinity, the dual nature of Christ, original sin, free will, grace, predestination, and the church and sacraments. The Cappadocian fathers, natives of Asia Minor (present-day Turkey), were the decisive influence leading to the final defeat of Arianism at the Council of Constantinople in 381.

Anyone who wishes to identify Christianity as “Western” or “European” or “white” must not only ignore the Middle Eastern origins of the Hebrew patriarchs and prophets, of Jesus and the apostles, but also the development of the defining doctrines of the Christian religion in the first four centuries. Historic orthodoxy and catholic doctrines of the creeds and counsels primarily are products of African and Middle Eastern church fathers.

When Christianity invaded Northern Europe, the missionary preachers did not encounter the Dutch Masters hanging in townhomes or Bach fugues being played in assembly halls. They encountered crude barbarism. The European culture that developed was the fruit of the interaction between Christianity and the native genius of the various people groups. Christianity is not European, but European culture owes much to Christianity.

### Distant Roots of Reformed Worship

Doxology is but the expression of theology. Given that the theological roots of Reformed orthodoxy primarily are non-European (and especially Augustinian), we may expect that the liturgical elements of Reformed worship will

have these same non-European, patristic roots. An examination of those core elements—*lectio-continua* reading and preaching, psalm-singing, covenantal sacraments, and prayer—will confirm our hunch.

### Lectio-continua reading and preaching

Verse-by-verse preaching has been a hallmark of Reformed Protestantism from the very beginning. Why? Because of what can be known from the Bible and church history. The apostle Paul exhorts his successor, Timothy, and all subsequent successors, “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching” (1 Tim. 4:13). The text literally reads, “*the* reading.” It could be called *the* reading because it was a known entity, inherited from the synagogues, of reading sequentially through books of the Bible (see Luke 4:16–17; Acts 13:15; 15:21). The *lectio continua* was characteristic of the Bible readings and preaching in the early church. Of this, liturgical scholars agree.

We also see this clearly in the work of the church fathers. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–205) provides one of the earliest extant Christian sermons, a verse-by-verse exposition of Mark 10:17–31, preached with historical-grammatical awareness in which he allows Scripture to interpret Scripture.<sup>4</sup> Origen may be considered the father of biblical exposition. He wrote commentaries on almost all the books of the Bible, and his homilies are among the oldest examples of biblical preaching. While ministering in Caesarea (northern Palestine) he preached through the whole Bible. John Chrysostom (c. 344/354–407), Syrian by birth, preached through most of the books of the New Testament. His sermons on Matthew influenced Reformer Ulrich Zwingli, leading to his decision to preach verse by verse through Matthew beginning the first Sunday in January, 1519, at Zurich’s Great Minster church. This has been called “the first liturgical reform of Protestantism.” Augustine of Hippo

Watch the full-length conference address at <https://bit.ly/2YOL7nG>

(354–430) is regarded by Hughes Old as not only “a master of classical oratory,” but also “a great expository preacher.” As a former professor of rhetoric, Augustine could have used a more artistic, more embellished, more rhetorically sophisticated and popularly esteemed form of preaching. But he clearly chose not to do so, “sticking instead with the form of the expository sermon as it was developed in the synagogue in the early Christian church.”<sup>5</sup>

These early non-European Christians gave to us the formative examples of straight-forward, text-driven expository preaching. The decision to preach text-driven, *lectio continua*, verse-by-verse sermons is not a decision to preach like Europeans, but a decision to preach after the model of the best of the Christian tradition.

### Psalm-singing

The Reformation revived *congregational* singing of psalms and biblical hymns. The psalter itself, a book of songs in the center of the Bible, was argument enough for the church to undertake psalm-singing as a regular part of its worship. The apostles commend it (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; James 5:13), and so the Reformers embraced it. They also learned of the importance of congregational psalm-singing from the church fathers. For example, Tertullian, in the second century, testified that psalm-singing was not only an essential feature of the worship of his day, but also had become an important part of the daily life of the people. Athanasius says it was the custom of his day to sing psalms, which he calls “a mirror of the soul.” Eusebius (c. 260–c. 340), Bishop of Caesarea, left this vivid picture of the psalm-singing of his day: “The command to sing Psalms in the name of the Lord was obeyed by everyone in every place: for the command to sing is in force in

[Continued on page 21]

# HODGE'S SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHURCH

// GLEN J. CLARY

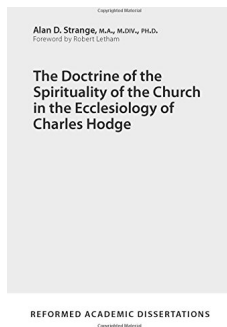


Strange speaking at the conference *Building Bridges Instead of Barriers: Reforming Race Relationships in the Church*

In his book *The Doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church in the Ecclesiology of Charles Hodge*, Alan Strange carefully sets forth Hodge's understanding of this important doctrine. Moving from Hodge's personal life to his theological system as a whole, to his views on slavery, and finally, to his involvement in the debates in the church, Strange leaves no stone unturned in tracing the development of Hodge's thoughts on the church's spirituality.

Here is that doctrine briefly set forth: The church is a divine institution with a spiritual province, furnished with spiritual means for accomplishing spiritual ends. The ascended Christ, as Head and King of the church, exerts his governing power by his Word and Spirit through the ministry of officers to whom he has committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven. These officers form a spiritual government distinct from and independent of the civil magistrate (Westminster Confession of Faith 30.1–2). They derive their authority from Christ, and they exercise that authority by teaching his Word and administering his ordinances. Hence, the church's governing assemblies "are to handle, or conclude nothing, but that which is ecclesiastical." They are "not to intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the commonwealth, unless by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary; or, by way of advice, for satisfaction of conscience, if they be thereunto required by the civil magistrate" (WCF 31.4).

This doctrine of the spirituality of the church was not an invention of nineteenth-century Presbyterians, though in the years leading up to and during the American Civil War it became something of a rallying cry among Old School Presbyterians including James Henley Thornwell, Robert Lewis



Dabney, Stuart Robinson, and Charles Hodge. In the intense debates over the involvement of the church in the affairs of the state, Old Schoolers appealed to the spirituality of the church in their attempts to dissuade the church's assemblies from deciding political questions.

When the 1861 General Assembly passed resolutions calling for members (including those from states that had seceded from the Union) to endorse the federal government, the southern presbyteries responded by forming their own denomination. While Hodge was a strong supporter of the Union, he vigorously protested the assembly's approval of the resolutions. Scripture directs us to be subject to the powers that be, but it is not within the church's province or power, he argued, to determine which particular government is due our allegiance. "We deny the right of the General Assembly," said Hodge, "to decide the political question, to what government the allegiance of Presbyterians as citizens is due, and its rights to make that decision a condition of membership in our Church" (247).

This doctrine is of particular interest to Orthodox Presbyterians because it was a crucial factor in J. Gresham Machen's opposition to modernism and to an indiscriminating fundamentalism that pursued ecumenicity for the sake of social reform. In *Christianity and Liberalism*, Machen repudiated the notion that Christianity only has value insofar as it is a means for achieving some other end like social justice, cultural improvement, or a healthy community. "The persons who speak in this way usually have little interest in religion for its own sake; it has never occurred to them to enter into the secret place of communion with the holy God. But religion is thought to be necessary for a healthy communion; and therefore for the sake of the community they are willing to have a church" (127). Machen contended that Christianity "will indeed accomplish many useful things in this world, but if it is accepted in order to accomplish those useful things it is not Christianity" (127–8). In a 1933 address, Machen insisted:

You cannot expect from a true Christian church any official

pronouncements upon the political or social questions of the day, and you cannot expect cooperation with the state in anything involving the use of force.... [The church's] weapons against evil are spiritual, not carnal; and by becoming a political lobby, through the advocacy of political measures whether good or bad, the church is turning aside from its proper mission, which is to bring to bear upon human hearts the solemn and imperious, yet also sweet and gracious, appeal of the gospel of Christ. (*Selected Shorter Writings*, 375)

Machen concluded *Christianity and Liberalism* by lamenting the church's abandonment of her spiritual mission and heavenly-mindedness in order to pursue an earthly utopia through humanitarian and political efforts. In this regard, he echoed the prophetic words of his Princeton colleague Geerhardus Vos, who warned:

The days are perhaps not far distant when we shall find

ourselves confronted with a quasi-form of Christianity professing openly to place its dependence on and to work for the present life alone, a religion, to use the language of Hebrews, become profane and a fornicator like Esau, selling for a mess of earthly pottage its heavenly birthright. (Olinger, *Geerhardus Vos*, 207)

Understanding the doctrine of the spirituality of the church, which played a crucial role in the founding of the OPC, is essential for discerning the nature, province, and mission of Christ's church. I know of no better place to commence a study on it than this book.

*The author is pastor of Providence Presbyterian in Pflugerville, Texas.*

*The Doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church in the Ecclesiology of Charles Hodge*, by Alan D. Strange. Reformed Academic Dissertations, P&R, 2017. Paperback, 432 pages, \$48.00.

## Spirituality of the Church

*Alan D. Strange*

I believe that D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was correct when he said that when the church seeks to be most like the world she does the world the least good. The doctrine of the spirituality of the church, rightly constructed, cries out, "Let the church be the church." Let it be given to proclaiming the everlasting gospel, as Paul did to Philemon. Paul did not command the liberation of Onesimus. Rather, he urged his freedom as a consequence of the gospel. He clearly distinguished the gospel (the person and work of Christ), our response to the gospel (faith and repentance), and the consequence of the gospel (faith working through love). To confuse these is to lose the gospel. To deny the consequences of the gospel renders it powerless. This is the core of the doctrine of the spirituality of the church.

Many Christians came to find the doctrine of the spirituality of the church repellent, since it was often employed to still the voice of the church against the monstrosity of American chattel slavery. I maintain, however, that the doctrine of the spirituality of the church, rightly understood and employed, need not support an evil like slavery, but may help maintain a vigorous ecclesiology that is the best enemy of all immorality, including racism.

Though the Bible distinguished between church and state (between priest and king), the kind of separation of the institutions of which we are all aware was a post-Reformation (initially American) phenomenon. In the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church claimed that the church was over the state, and the emperors in the East asserted that the state was over the church. After the Reformation, some Protestant civil rulers espoused Erastianism, in which they claimed that the state was over the newly-Reformed church. The way that the Scots particularly

opposed Erastianism was with what they called, "The Spiritual Independency of the Church," especially as enunciated in the Second Book of Discipline (1578), which came, over time, and particularly in the nineteenth-century American context, to be called "the spirituality of the church."

Sadly, the doctrine came to be abused in the American context, both being misused in the defense of slavery, on the one hand, and abandoned, in the promotion of partisan politics, on the other. With respect to the latter, the history of the PCUSA from the reunion of 1869 to the formation of the OPC in 1936 discloses not only a liberalizing church embracing higher criticism but a politicized church more interested in deeds than creeds and one in which the social gospel came to displace the gospel of salvation in Christ alone. It reflects a church that forgot its calling to be the church, lost its way spiritually, and jettisoned the doctrine of the spirituality of the church.

What we need is a rightly constructed spirituality of the church that caters neither to the left nor to the right in the details of public policy that Scripture doesn't prescribe. The pulpit and the church as church should speak where Scripture speaks and be silent where Scripture is silent. Scripture does have something to say not only about same-sex marriage, abortion, and private property (historic concerns of the "right") but also about equity for the poor in our midst, racial equality, and justice for all, especially widows, orphans, and the most vulnerable (historic concerns of the "left"). The Bible provides no detailed blueprint for civil society but tells us how sinners may find acceptance with a holy God through the active and passive obedience of our mediator, Jesus Christ. This is what the church must preach.

*Originally published in The Messenger, vol. 37, no. 3, February 2019. Listen to Alan Strange's Building Bridges conference address on this topic at <https://bit.ly/2TUoqwo>.*

# SLEEVES ROLLED UP IN THE CHURCH'S SERVICE

// KATIE A. STUMPF



*Worshippers at First Street Reformed Fellowship in downtown Dayton*

When a person is preparing himself for hard work, we may describe him as “rolling up his sleeves.” Church planters, it would seem, never roll their sleeves back down.

At the beginning of 2019, Brad Peppo started his labors as the organizing pastor of a mission work in Dayton, Ohio. Around the same time, the denomination, along with the Presbytery of Ohio, welcomed a new area home missions coordinator, Mike Diercks. Their words and example may encourage us to keep our sleeves rolled up, too.

## A New Work in Dayton

First Street Reformed Fellowship took shape around a core group of families who were initially part of a church-planting effort in a rural area to the west of Dayton. However, when a year of Bible study and six months of evening worship had not produced growth, the decision was made to move the work into downtown Dayton, which was in a boom.

“A little over a decade ago, the downtown Dayton area was dead,” Peppo explained. “But as I regularly drove my son into town for college, I started noticing new condos being built and selling out before construction was even finished.” In 2018, Dayton’s population increased by a whopping 30%. Life had come back to the city.

“It got my wheels turning,” Peppo said. Although he was serving as interim organizing pastor at Wilmington OPC, he just couldn’t wait to explore the possibility of a church in Dayton, so he pitched the idea to his send-

ing session, Covenant OPC in Vandalia, Ohio. They gave their blessing and Peppo started “nosing around.” He spoke with the group that had been meeting west of Dayton and found that they were all amenable to moving the work to downtown Dayton. Peppo is excited about this work for personal reasons as well. “Dayton is where I was born. The church building we’re renting from—this massive 1906 Lutheran church with a sanctuary that seats six hundred people—is where my grandparents were members, and where my parents were married.”

First Street held their first evening worship service on Sunday, August 5, with ten households making up the core group. The move downtown immediately attracted multiple families from two local OP congregations as well as several new visitors.

Following their move, Peppo quickly began a weekly home group. “We have a good degree of diversity from young singles to empty nesters. The purpose of the home group is to build our core strength and unity as we fellowship together,” he said.

Besides the home group, First Street seeks to do all ministry out in public. “Our weekly Bible study is held in a very public setting at the local coffee shop. We’ve actually had one eavesdropping customer become a regular participant,” Peppo shares. She said, “Hey, are you guys having a Bible study? Can I join you?” Peppo replied, “Yes, that’s why we’re here!”

First Street’s primary focus of outreach and evangelism has been their monthly Christian and Skeptic discussion forum. They hold this event at different downtown establishments. Topics are announced beforehand, the event is



*At the inaugural worship service of First Street Reformed Fellowship; Brad and Cinnamon Peppo are far right*

advertised through the church's Facebook page, and members invite their unbelieving friends to the discussion. "So far we've only had a handful of unbelievers attend, but we hope that more will come as the event becomes more established."

Peppo shares that they would appreciate prayer for continued growth in outreach and unity as a congregation. They also need wisdom for where they'll firmly establish themselves. The church building they're renting is in the business district, which is bustling during the work week but quiet on Sunday. Long-term, they'd probably like to be nestled in one of the residential areas.

Peppo's service to both the Wilmington and Dayton works has been "a bit of a juggling act, but we've had a lot of support from the local OP churches," Peppo shares. "Covenant OPC in Vandalia has been great about people coming to participate who aren't planning to be part of the work." In these early days, First Street has been greatly encouraged by the support of their brothers and sisters in the Lord.

### A New Area Home Missions Coordinator

There's a message here for those folks who live near a mission work: participate in worship with them from time to time. The new Ohio area home missions coordinator, Mike Diercks, agrees. "You have no idea the blessing it can be for a mission work just to have one more family in their midst," he said.

Churches can show support to mission works in other ways as well, Diercks said. They can "consider adopting a mission work," providing prayer support as well as letters from the congregation, phone calls, care packages, and so on.

We show support to our foreign missionaries, Diercks pointed out, so why not do the same for our home missionaries? Sometimes we forget that even though they're on our "home turf," many church planters feel isolated. "For some of them, their overseeing session or the nearest OP church is hours away," he said.

Another way to support a mission work is to participate in their outreach events. "Whether they're going to canvass the neighborhood or host a chili cook-off, volunteer to serve with

them. It's nice to have someone come alongside you," Diercks said. "We all ought to have the gift of encouragement."

Diercks practices what he preaches. In the eighties and nineties, when their kids were young, Diercks and his wife, Elizabeth, rolled up their sleeves to assist nearly a dozen church plants. "My children, who are all active members of the OPC, tell me that they don't know how to not set up for church," Diercks laughed.

Their servant-minded family history extends back a little further. Elizabeth was the daughter of Francis and Arlena Mahaffy who served the OPC as missionaries in the Horn of Africa for twenty-three years. When they returned from the field, the Mahaffys were instrumental in starting many churches in the Chicago area. "It was ingrained in the family culture, and we talked about it a lot," says Diercks.

In 2010, Diercks was elected to the home missions committee for the Presbytery of Ohio. When the presbytery's regional home missionary, Larry Oldaker, took a call to serve as pastor of Grace Fellowship OPC in Huron, Ohio, the committee elected Diercks as chairman. The presbytery did not have the money to replace the RHM, so they did their best without. Several years later, they reassessed the growing

needs of the presbytery, looked at the budget, and decided they had the funding for a part time coordinator. That's when they hired Diercks.

Though Diercks was set to begin his labors in January of 2019, like Peppo, he could not wait to get started. In December he began making church visits and drafting an operating manual for the presbytery's home missions committee.

His goal is to continually visit all the congregations in the presbytery. When he speaks with congregations about home missions, he often encourages them to identify a city or town near them and start praying that the Lord would raise up a core group. He'd also like a particular focus of his work to be bringing in church planters. One of Diercks's greatest prayer requests is that he would be used to stimulate the whole presbytery to be engaged in church planting. "Whether through prayer partnership, financing, or supplying people, there is a role that every congregation can play," asserts Diercks.

"We have this beautiful, freeing, peace-generating gospel of Jesus Christ. And we want to see churches that are proclaiming the pure gospel of Jesus Christ in every city and every town in the presbytery. You and I are a part of that," Diercks concludes. So let's roll up our sleeves!

*The author is administrative assistant for the Home Missions Committee.*



Mike Diercks (left) with Brad Peppo

### 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: May 1, 15, and 29.

# THE POWER AND POTENTIAL OF GRACE-GIVING

// FRANK J. MARSH

In 2 Corinthians 8:1–15, the apostle Paul challenges the believers of Corinth to the grace of generous giving. Paul’s challenge is intentional, designed to affirm the believers’ restored relationship with the apostle, express tangibly their gratitude for Christ’s love in purchasing their salvation, and bear witness in Jerusalem of the bond of Christ’s love between the Gentiles and Jews brought into one family through Jesus Christ.

You may remember that originally, at Paul’s encouragement, the Corinthians had begun a collection of an offering for the poor in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:1–4). But this had been blocked when Corinthians fell out with the apostle Paul. With the return of Titus and his good news of the Corinthians’ repentance, Paul reaffirms the call to contribute generously. Even though this passage is about a one-time, special gift to poor believers, there are important principles that can encourage us in our giving to the Lord for Worldwide Outreach.

## The Example of the Macedonians

In verses 1–7, the apostle Paul brings up the subject of giving by emphasizing the remarkable example of the churches in Macedonia. “We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches in Macedonia” (verse 1). Even though the Macedonians were “in a severe test of affliction” and in “extreme poverty,” they “overflowed in a wealth of generosity” (verse 2).

“The surrounding culture kept squeezing them harder and harder because of the Macedonians’ devotion to Christ,” R. Kent Hughes writes (*2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness*, Crossway, 157). Yet, in their difficult circumstances, the Macedonians bubbled over in gracious giv-

ing.

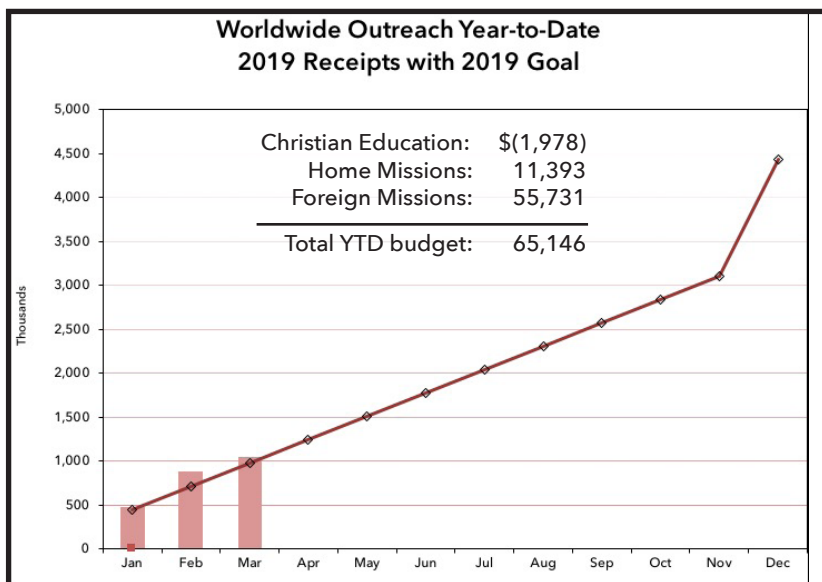
In verses 3–4, Paul emphasizes that they gave beyond their ability. This is the grace of giving—not dictated by human ability but by a surrendering to the grace of God. It has nothing to do with being well off but with being faithful, giving sacrificially in proportion to how God has blessed us. Your standard of living may change, but don’t let it change your standard of trusting in the all-sufficient grace of God.

## The Example of Christ

Jesus was and is the greatest example and motivation for grace giving. Although Christ was and is Lord of the universe with all riches in his hand, verse 9 tells us that he emptied himself of his riches and became one of us in order to sacrifice his life on the cross, clothing us in riches of his perfect righteousness and forgiving grace. When we sacrificially give, we are giving expression to the grace of Christ at work in us and through us.

Be encouraged! Our giving to Worldwide Outreach affirms and demonstrates the power of the grace of Christ as home missionaries and foreign missionaries are sent to proclaim the grace of God to spiritually impoverished men and women. The Lord will use your giving to bring all his lost sheep into the same saving grace you have experienced. They can then be discipled in the grace of God to extend the grace of God to others. The grace of giving demonstrates the love of Christ to the world for the glory of God. May thanksgiving flow out to the Lord as we faithfully give to Worldwide Outreach!

*The author is pastor of Covenant OPC in New Berlin, Wisconsin.*

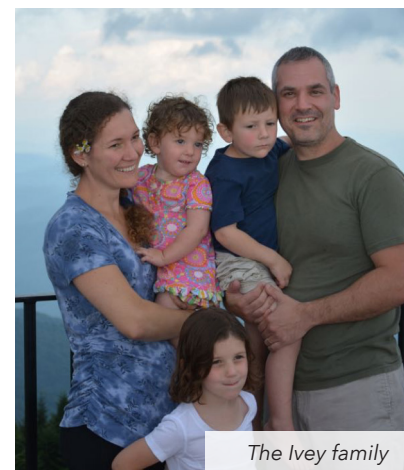




MAY



The Oldakers



The Ivey family

**1** LARRY AND KALYNN OLDAKER, Huron, OH. Pray that God would provide a larger meeting place for Grace Fellowship OPC. / Pray for the April **TIMOTHY CONFERENCE** attendees as they now consider gospel ministry.

**2** Pray for the labors of **MARK AND JENI RICHLINE**, and missionary associates **STEVE AND CARRIE HILL** and **ELISE RUDDER**, Montevideo, Uruguay. / Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**.

**3** Pray for retired missionaries **CAL AND EDIE CUMMINGS**, **BRIAN AND DOROTHY WINGARD**, **GREET RIETKERK**, and **YOUNG AND MARY LOU SON**. / Pray for stated clerk **ROSS GRAHAM** as he prepares for the 86<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

**4** **JASON AND AMANDA KIRKLIN**, Waco, TX. Pray that the Lord would raise up officers to serve at Trinity OPC. / **ERIC AND DIANNA TUINGA**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for growth in the students at Knox School of Theology.

**5** Pray for **BILL (MARGARET) SHISHKO**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Connecticut and Southern New York. / Pray that **OPC.ORG** will edify the church and help it communicate its message to others.

**6** **CHARLES AND CONNIE JACKSON** and missionary associate **JOANNA GROVE**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for their work with the village schools. / Pray for **ERIC (VIVIANE) CUER DE ANDRADE** as he completes his yearlong internship at Harvest OPC, Wyoming, MI.

**7** **DAVID AND RASHEL ROBBINS**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for David as he prepares young men for theological studies. / **GREGORY AND GINGER O'BRIEN**, Downingtown, PA. Pray for hearts to be full of Christ's glory at Christ Church Downingtown OPC.

**8** Home Missions administrative assistant **KATIE STUMPF**. / Pray for the health outreach efforts of **DR. FLIP AND ANNELOES BAARDMAN** and missionary associate **LEAH HOPP**, Nakaale, Uganda.

**9** **MARK AND CARLA VAN ESSEDELFT**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the strengthening of relationships with the local mission workers. / **DAVID HANEY**, director for the Committee on Ministerial Care.

**10** **JOSH AND KRISTEN MCKAMY**, Chambersburg, PA. Pray that Covenant OPC would have renewed outreach this spring. / Pray for missionary associates **CHRISTOPHER AND CHLOE VERDICK**, **REBEKAH MOORE**, and **ANGELA VOSKUIL**, Nakaale, Uganda.

**11** **LOWELL AND MAE IVEY**, Virginia Beach, VA. Pray for the elder and deacon nominees at Reformation Presbyterian Church and for training in the coming weeks. / **MARK STUMPF**, administrator for the OPC Loan Fund.

**12** Pray for the CCE's **SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNET MINISTRIES** as it supervises the work of OPC.org. / Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS AND MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Pray for safety and security of the flock in turbulent times.

**13** Pray for teams and individuals preparing for **SHORT-TERM MISSIONS** projects this summer. / **MATTHEW AND LOIS COTTA**, Pasadena, CA, praise God for the blessing of many new visitors to Pasadena Presbyterian Church.

**14** **LING LEE**, administrative assistant for Foreign Missions. / **BEN AND HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti. Pray that the work of forming a presbytery in Haiti would not be disrupted by the current political climate.

**15** **COMMITTEE ON CHAPLAINS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL**. / Pray for **DHANANJAY (CORRIE) KHANDA** as he completes his yearlong internship at Hope Presbyterian, Grayslake, IL.

MAY



The Shaws

**21** **MR. AND MRS. M. M.**, Asia (on furlough). Pray for M. as he travels in the US to report on his work. / **CHARLENE TIPTON**, database coordinator, and **ABBY HARTING**, office secretary for Christian Education.

**22** **BRADNEY AND EILEEN LOPEZ**, Arroyo, PR. Pray that Iglesia Presbiteriana Sola Escritura would become more intentional in their outreach. / **JANET BIRKMANN**, communications coordinator, Short-Term Missions.

**23** **MR. AND MRS. D. K.**, Asia. Pray for their family's reacclimation to the US. / Pray for the editors and staff of **NEW HORIZONS**, that through their work the magazine may faithfully inform the church.

**24** Affiliated missionaries **CRAIG AND REE COULBOURNE**, Japan. Pray for a new men's outreach group. / Pray for those planning **MTIOPC'S INTENSIVE TRAINING** next month in Philadelphia and Grand Rapids.

**25** Affiliated missionaries **JERRY AND MARILYN FARNIK**, Prague, Czech Republic. Pray for their English outreach training and prep. / **DAVID (JANE) CRUM**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California.

**26** **CHRIS AND MEGAN HARTSHORN**, Anaheim Hills, CA. Join Anaheim Hills Presbyterian Church in praying for new families, adult baptisms, and particularization in June. / Yearlong intern **RYAN (ALISABETH) WOODS**, Covenant OPC, Rochester, NY.



The Westerveld family

**27** **BEN AND MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada. Pray that the summer English Club will draw many unbelieving families to the church. / **BEN (TIFFANY) WARD**, church-planting intern, Christ the King, Naples, FL.

**28** **NATHAN (ANNA) STROM**, church-planting intern, Immanuel OPC, Andover, MN. / Affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK AND LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia (on furlough). Pray for rest and renewal.

**29** **BOB AND GRACE HOLDA**, Oshkosh, WI. May the saints of Resurrection Presbyterian Church pursue Christ daily by his Word and prayer. / Pray for **MARVIN PADGETT**, executive director of Great Commission Publications.

**30** **HEERO AND ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray that young church members may mature under the preaching of the Word. / **DAVE VANDER PLOEG**, interim controller.

**31** Affiliated missionary **LINDA KARNER**, Japan. Pray for opportunities to witness to her students. / **CHRIS AND GRACE ANN CASHEN**, Clarkston, GA. Pray for Muslim friends to grasp the power of God's love.

**16** **JAY AND ANDREA BENNETT**, Neon, KY. Pray for evangelistic faithfulness and fruit and for the calling of more officers to serve at Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church. / Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**.

**17** **BILL AND SESSIE WELZIEN**, Key West, FL. Pray that the Lord would add to Keys Presbyterian Church. / Tentmaker **T. D.**, Asia. Pray for her encouragement in local homeschooling efforts.

**18** **MR. AND MRS. J. M.**, Asia. Pray for new fellowship as they see many transitions on the field. / Pray for **DANNY OLINGER**, general secretary of Christian Education, as he directs the intern program.

**19** **MR. AND MRS. S. F.** and associates **P. F.** and **M. S.**, Asia. Pray for more laborers to join in the efforts of the team. / **GREGORY REYNOLDS**, editor of *Ordained Servant*.

**20** Pray for **MIKE (ELIZABETH) DIERCKS**, area home missions coordinator, Presbytery of Ohio. / OPC and URCNA members of the **TRINITY PSALTER HYMNAL JOINT VENTURE BOARD**.

[Continued from page 11]

all churches which exist among nations, not only the Greeks but also throughout the whole world, and in towns, villages and in the fields.”<sup>6</sup>

### Covenantal sacraments

Jesus said of the Lord’s Supper, “This ... is the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20; Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; 1 Cor. 11:25). By invoking the covenant on an occasion of participation in a covenantal meal, Passover, Jesus was signaling the fundamental meaning of the eucharist. It is a covenant meal which is both a sign and seal of that covenant. Likewise, circumcision is identified by the apostle Paul as “sign” and “seal” of justification in Romans 4:11. Circumcision is identified with baptism in Colossians 2:11–12, Paul even calling it “the circumcision of Christ.” Baptism is the covenant rite of admission.

The Reformers spoke of the sacraments as “visible words” and as “outward signs of inward graces.” Where did they get this language? From the Bible. The apostle Paul says that by administering the Lord’s Supper we “proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor. 11:26). The Lord’s Supper is a form of *words*. He also speaks of “spiritual food” and “spiritual drink” (1 Cor. 10:3, 4), as well as “the washing of regeneration” (Titus 3:6; compare with Rom. 6:3–11), that is, of external signs of inward graces.

Yet the Reformers also learned this language from the African and Middle Eastern church fathers. The Africans Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine all gave prominence to a covenantal understanding of sacraments as oaths by which covenants are ratified or confirmed. Augustine defined the sacrament as “visible words” and as external signs of inward graces, both classic definitions. This covenantal understanding had a profound influence on the church’s understanding of the meaning and manner of administration of the sacraments, and especially influenced the Reformers and subsequent Protestantism. The eucharistic reforms of the sixteenth century are rooted in Scripture and largely non-

European patristic testimony.

### Prayer

Reformed Protestants have insisted on biblical prayer—and by “biblical,” they meant prayer in the language of the Bible. The Bible gives us terminology to use in prayer, as each generation must ask, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). It also gives us the categories: “I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions” (1 Tim. 2:1–2). The Reformers identified six basic prayer genres in Scripture: praise, confession of sin, thanksgiving, intercession, illumination, benediction. Further, they identified five categories into which intercessions might be divided: sanctification of saints; church and its ministry; sick and suffering; civil authorities; Christian mission. They found support for this also in the writings of the fathers: Syrian and Egyptian liturgies, Augustine, Tertullian, Ambrose, etc.<sup>7</sup> By restoring the prayers of praise, intercessions, illumination, and benediction, the Reformers launched a veritable “revolution in prayer.”<sup>8</sup>

### Simplicity

Reformed worship is simple. Reformed Protestants merely urge that Christian assemblies do that which Scripture directs. The resulting services are simple and plain: the Word is read, preached, sung, prayed, and seen. Unauthorized ceremonies, rituals, gestures, symbols, and postures are eliminated so as not to distract attention from the ordinary means of grace, the Word, sacraments, and prayer. Worship must be “according to Scripture,” regulated by Scripture, and therefore limited to what God has authorized. This means that worship will be simple. It will be *focused*. This too was emphasized by the early Christians, especially the Africans. They took seriously the prophetic tradition which warned of external ostentation at the expense of internal or heart service (e.g., Amos 5:21–24; Isa. 1:10–15; Jer. 7:1–11). Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215), Tertullian, and Lactantius (c. 250–325), another North African

theologian, came to their understanding of Christian worship before it had been influenced by what Hughes Old calls, “the trappings of the imperial court.”<sup>9</sup>

We recognize that many questions are left unresolved by our review of the roots of Reformed worship. Yet those of us wishing to see the growth of Reformed and Presbyterian Protestantism can’t but rejoice to discover so many of our “patristic roots” in Africa and non-European sources. Calvin *was* reviving the ministry and worship of the ancient church when he published his “Form of Church Prayers according to the custom of the *Ancient Church*.” Not only did the Reformers look to Scripture for the patterns, but also to the best of the early churches. When we bring Reformed Protestantism to Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the African diaspora around the world, we bring not a European import, but that which is scriptural and indigenous to the African, the Middle Eastern, and non-European peoples. □

*The author, a PCA minister, is senior pastor of Independent Presbyterian Church in Savannah, Georgia.*

### Notes

1 Hughes O. Old’s *Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship* (Theologischer, 1970) evaluates and in the end substantiates Calvin’s claim that his “Form of Church Prayers” expressed more the *convictions* of the church Fathers than the *culture* of the Reformers.

2 Thomas C. Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, volumes 1–30 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998).

3 Thomas C. Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 29–30.

4 See Hughes O. Old, *The Reading & Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 1–7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998–2010); 1:294–305.

5 *Ibid.*, 2:381. See also 4:46 and 2:324

6 J. G. Davies, *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 451.

7 See Old, *Patristic Roots*, 219–250; *Worship*, 91–107.

8 Old, *Class Lectures*, Erskine Theological Seminary, May 11, 2004.

9 Hughes O. Old, *Themes and Variations for a Christian Doxology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 98.

# NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS



Jean Gaffin

## IN MEMORIAM: JEAN GAFFIN

*Diane Olinger*

Jean Y. Gaffin, 82, died unexpectedly on March 15. Married for sixty years, Jean was the wife of Richard B. Gaffin Jr., an OP minister and retired systematic and biblical theology professor at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. The Gaffins first noticed each other at French Creek Bible Conference, where they would later serve as counselors and then cooks. They reconnected at Calvin College, graduating in 1958. Jean was the daughter of E.J. and Lillian Young. Her father was an early graduate of Westminster, and he taught there for thirty-three years. Jean was enrolled at Phil-Mont Christian Academy in its first year, 1943, as a second grader. Her children and grandchildren would later attend the school. For eighteen years she was the school's business manager, and she edited and with others wrote a history of it in 2012.

A member of Grace Presbyterian Church in Vienna, Virginia, at the time of her death, Jean was previously a longtime member of Calvary OPC in Glenside and later Cornerstone OPC in Ambler, Pennsylvania, where she served as treasurer. Jean taught and wrote Bible studies and was a conference speaker. She also authored a number of articles and books, in-

cluding one on identity in Christ that was completed and sent to the publisher just prior to her death. Having lost her dear daughter, Lisl, in 2004, Jean was personally acquainted with grief, one of the topics on which she wrote and spoke. In addition to her husband, Jean is survived by her brother Davis Young, her sons Richard III and Steven, and nine grandchildren.

## UPDATE

### CHURCHES

• On March 1, the Presbytery of New York and New England dissolved the congregations of **Covenant OPC** and **Memorial OPC**, Rochester, NY, as separate entities and, pursuant to the plan of union that the two churches submitted, united them as **Cornerstone Presbyterian Church** in Rochester, NY.

• On March 29, **Hope Reformed Presbyterian Church** in Pella, IA, was organized as a particular congregation.

### MINISTERS

• On February 19, **Robert W. Mossotti**

was ordained and installed as a Teacher at Mid Cities Presbyterian in Bedford, TX.

• On March 1, **Kevin M. Kisler**, previously the pastor of Covenant OPC in Rochester, NY, was installed as the pastor of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church in Rochester, NY.

• On March 29, **Zechariah N. Schiebout**, formerly the organizing pastor, was installed as the pastor of Hope Reformed Church in Pella, IA.

• On March 29, **John M. Fikkert**, formerly a Teacher of the Word at Grace Reformed Presbyterian in Des Moines, IA, was installed as associate pastor of Hope Reformed Church in Pella, IA.

• On March 31, **Nicholas G. Lammé**, previously a URCNA minister, was installed as an evangelist of the Presbytery of the Southwest for the Houston, TX, Hurricane Harvey Mission.

### MILESTONES

• **Jean Y. Gaffin**, 82, died on March 15. She was the wife of OP minister Dr. Richard B. Gaffin Jr., retired professor at Westminster Theological Seminary.



On March 10, Bethel Presbyterian in Leesburg, VA, installed and ordained two elders who have eagerly served the congregation. Kneeling: Michael Blackburn and Timothy Moughon Back row: Alan Aubel, Glenn Taylor, George Hammond, and Doug Saine

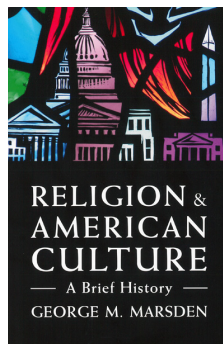
## REVIEWS

*Religion and American Culture: A Brief History*, 3rd ed., by George M. Marsden. Erdmans, 2018. Paperback, 304 pages, \$21.15 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP elder D. G. Hart.

Many assessments of the 2016 presidential election tie President Trump's appeal to white Protestants especially through his use of symbols, rhetoric, and images that signal the nation's white Christian past. The campaign slogan "Make America Great Again" is then, in effect, a code for "restore white hegemony."

George M. Marsden's book *Religion and American Culture*, a revision of the original 1990 version, upsets unintentionally the prevailing view of evangelicals and Trump. The book's point is not to address the current set of arguments and outrage. It is a broad overview of religion in America that explains the mainstream culture, which religion was closest to the center, which groups were on the margins, and how such outsiders negotiated the dominant culture. Without surprise, that approach to American culture puts Protestants of British stock at the center of the nation's history and institutions. Without intending either to applaud Trump or criticize his evangelical supporters, Marsden does lay out a narrative of American history that identifies white Protestants as the most prominent group from the colonial era down to the 1950s. Whether America was great during that period is not a question that interests Marsden. But any reader could easily take away the impression that over the last seventy years, white Protestantism has declined. For anyone who regards the fall of Protestantism as undesirable—either by measures of church health or by cultural indicators—Marsden's book offers indirect support.

By the middle decades of the nineteenth century, a broadly "Puritan-evangelical" tradition had emerged as the dominant persuasion in America. This Protestant mainstream animated the Whig and Republican parties, informed



most colleges, and provided the basis for interdenominational cooperation among the largest communions. During the Progressive era, Protestants forged even greater unity as they cooperated in political and cultural institutions. The characteristic premises of that Protestant outlook were: "1— the superiority of Western civilization, 2— that Anglo-American democratic principles were the highest political expression of that civilization, and 3— that these principles were almost bound to triumph throughout the earth" (98). Such assumptions came in for critical scrutiny during the 1920s by fundamentalists who were not convinced that the United States was on the right side of history. But despite the detour of denominational controversy, Protestants retained their privileged stature in the nation's most influential institutions. Although the 1950s saw the inclusion of Roman Catholics and Jews into the mainstream of Tri-Faith America, "the default religion in the cultural mainstream was one or another kind of Protestantism" (202). Finally, in the midst of feminism, the sexual revolution,

and anti-Vietnam War protests during the 1960s, the mainstream became secular. In Marsden's terms, the United States no longer possessed a mainstream culture. What emerged in the 1970s instead was a standoff between defenders of traditional morality and advocates of tolerance and pluralism. By the first decades of the twenty-first century, a mainstream culture, Protestant or otherwise, has yet to fill the void. Marsden's conclusion comes in the form of a question: can the United States "cultivate a pluralism that encourages so many varieties of reli-



Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA, celebrated the ninetieth birthday of elder emeritus Bob Meeker on March 17

gious and secular groups to live together in peace, despite some irreconcilable differences" (266)? As a historian, Marsden resists predicting the future, but his conclusion remains: the nation's older forms of consensus (largely Protestant) are gone.

One lesson this book may teach Orthodox Presbyterians is how to understand their own identification with both American nationalism and the Protestant mainstream. Although the OPC in 1936 veered away from the Protestant consensus dominated by liberal Protestants, Orthodox Presbyterians were generally reluctant to identify themselves as cultural outsiders. The reason may be that the Protestant mainstream never forced outsiders into cultural exile. Though Orthodox Presbyterians may take some delight in seeing mainline Protestantism lose its way, can the OPC also appreciate how the

### Position Available

**Pastor:** Mt. Rose Reformed OPC in Reno, Nevada, is seeking a full-time pastor. We are looking for a man experienced in preaching expository sermons and committed to Reformed theology as set forth in the Westminster Confession. Two to five years of pastoral experience is preferred. Send inquiries to [armandjusuf@gmail.com](mailto:armandjusuf@gmail.com). View our website at [www.mtroseopc.org](http://www.mtroseopc.org).

## NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS *Continued*

loss of the Protestant mainstream has hurt the very institutions—churches, families, schools—that are vital to sound church life? America may not have been great, as President Trump campaigned. But it was arguably better than a society without a consensus. Looking to Trump as a vehicle either to restore America’s mainstream or to find a new consensus has to be one of the greatest ironies of recent memory.

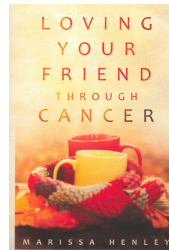
***Loving Your Friend Through Cancer: Moving Beyond “I’m Sorry” to Meaningful Support*, by Marissa Henley. P&R, 2018. Paperback, 264 pages, \$12.00. Reviewed by OP member Linda Jones.**

A quick glance at the front of this book previews the author’s style and tone for this practical guide to helping one’s friends through cancer: the cover art features warm, tastefully vibrant colors, with even the warm orange typography evoking a crackling fire in the fireplace. The reader is guided by Henley’s warmth and compassion as she walks through all the

practical and emotional dimensions of a cancer diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship, and how God weaves the “threads of support,” that is, the community of friends, family, and church, “into a beautiful tapestry to provide for all our needs.”

First experiencing cancer with a close family member, and then as a patient herself, Henley shares what she has learned in first-person sketches of Christian women compassionately supporting their friends through cancer and its aftermath. There are thirteen chapters covering the full scope of cancer, from “When Cancer Strikes a Friend,” to “Your Friend as a Sick Person” and the final two chapters, the sobering “When There Is No Cure,” and “When It’s Not Really Over.” Henley is direct and sympathetic, as she gives the reader practical ideas to help the cancer patient navigate the logistics of managing her day-to-day life during treatment. She also offers

recommendations on how to use words of love and hope to encourage and comfort spiritually the one who is suffering. Each chapter ends with questions for reflection and action steps to consider.



A section of articles and resources close out the book, including several worksheets for managing the logistics of helping, such as a meal delivery plan. There are also two articles in the back matter that the author references as the theological framework of

the preceding chapters of the book, “A Biblical View of Suffering” and “A Biblical View of Community.” One may wish that these two articles were more deeply developed and integrated throughout the book. Marissa Henley provides concrete examples of what it looks like for Christians to love one another and their neighbor. It might not look the same for everyone, but Henley’s suggestions will spur creative thinking for helping our own friends in their various circumstances.

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