

NEW HORIZONS

≡ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ≡

MAY 2020



RESPONDING IN FAITH TO

COVID-19

CONTENTS

FEATURES

- 3** Our Sure and Living Hope in Christ
By Danny E. Olinger
- 4** One OP Congregation's Pandemic Pilgrimage
By Joel D. Fick
- 6** Pressing Spiritual Truth from COVID-19
By Judith M. Dinsmore
- 12** In the Valley of the Shadow of Death
By J. V. Fesko
- 18** COVID-19 and the Church
By Alan D. Strange

DEPARTMENTS

- 8** Stewardship
Giving to the Church in Times of Economic Distress
- 9** Prayer Calendar
- 11** Christian Education
Keep Breathing • CCE and Coronavirus
- 15** Home Missions
Christ's Unshakable, Virus-Proof Kingdom
- 16** Foreign Missions
When Pestilence Comes
- 17** Ministerial Care
Effect of COVID-19 on the Work of the CMC
- 20** Diaconal Ministries
COVID-19: Deacons Mobilized in Response
- 21** News, Views, & Reviews

New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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The OPC Committee on Diaconal Ministries recently opened a COVID-19 Pandemic Response fund. This fund will be used to bring financial relief to those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. If you would like to contribute beyond your local diaconal giving, please go to our website: OPCDisasterResponse.org. If you have any additional questions, please email us at opcdisasterresponse@opc.org.



“ For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. ”

2 Corinthians 1:8-10

OUR SURE AND LIVING HOPE IN CHRIST



DANNY E. OLINGER // On the Lord's Day of March 8, I was standing before a combined adult and young people's Sunday school class at New Covenant Community Church in Joliet, Illinois. In my update to them about the work of the Committee on Christian Education, I singled out two young men in their midst,

Hans Mininger and David Robison. Hans and David, I declared, would soon be traveling to Philadelphia for the OPC Timothy Conference scheduled to start ten days later on March 18. Little did I know that before the next Lord's Day the conference would be canceled. Even further removed from my mind was the possibility that many OP congregations across the United States and Canada would not be gathering for public worship that day. By that time, civil magistrates in both countries had begun to prohibit more than ten people gathering together in public settings due to the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019, commonly known as COVID-19 or just coronavirus. In many areas, these prohibitions soon became even more severe.

In the eighty-plus years since the birth of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, there have been many periods when congregations have encountered hardship. But there has never been a time when members of the OPC have not been able to gather together corporately for public worship as has been the

case for the overwhelming majority of congregations since March.

"OPC" is not shorthand for the "only perfect church." Our joint confession is that sinners are saved solely by the grace of God through the gift of Jesus Christ. But sinners though we are, it is such a blessing to be joined to sisters and brothers who love the Lord and desire to serve him in that expression of his church that is the OPC.

I realized this in a very personal way during this season. The day before I left home to be with the saints at New Covenant Community, I was informed that I had thyroid cancer and would need surgery. I shared the news of my condition with the committees that I serve in the church and with Calvary Church in Glenside, Pennsylvania, and asked for prayer. With every passing day, as the national news became increasingly dreary, I received emails, notes, phone calls, and cards from friends in the OPC. They were encouraging me in the Lord from Scripture and letting me know that they were praying for me.

Humbled and grateful for the

brotherly and sisterly concern that has been shown to me by others, I could not help but think of the love that is shown regularly in the church. It made me realize that any members of the OPC who contract COVID-19 or are hurt financially in the aftermath will be showered with that same love, which flows from our union with Christ. Love for others during this crisis flows from the love of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In the articles that follow, we hope to encourage in the Lord from Scripture and help members and friends of the OPC as we make our way together through these uncharted waters. The articles also provide an update on how the situation has impacted OP ministries.

We who believe have a sure and living hope in the risen Christ, and to experience that being worked out in his church encourages me all the more in my labors. My prayer is that the Lord would use the content of this issue to encourage you likewise in your worship and service of him. □

The author is editor of New Horizons.

ONE OF CONGREGATION'S PANDEMIC PILGRIMAGE



JOEL D. FICK // On March 17, in response to the global outbreak of COVID-19, Alachua County, Florida—where our church, Redemption OPC, is located—issued an emergency order including the injunction that “public gatherings of more than ten individuals are discouraged and may be ordered to disperse.”

This injunction simply mirrored what other local governments all across our country were doing and therefore what other sessions across the OPC were facing. What is the church to do when, in the providence of God, it is prevented from assembling? Should the church ignore the injunction of the state? Should the church assemble virtually? Is such a thing even possible? Is preaching actually preaching if no one is present? And what about the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper—how are they to be administered and received?

These are just a few of the difficult questions that your session has likely had to wrestle with, and these *are* difficult questions. So please understand that this article is not intended to diminish either the difficulty of the questions or the answers given to them by others. Rather, it represents the reflections of one session and of one pastor in response to this difficult providence, the principles that informed our response, and the practices that we adopted during the present crisis.

Providence

The first thing that we as a session wanted to affirm, acknowledge, and encourage our congregation to accept is that this present ordeal is part of the most “holy, wise, and powerful” providence of our good and gracious God (Shorter Catechism Q. 11). Being mindful that not a hair can fall from our head apart from the will of our Father in heaven (Matt. 10:29–30), we wanted to remind them that we can be “patient in adversity” precisely because “no creature will separate us from [God’s] love” (Heidelberg Catechism Q. 28). If, as Paul says in Romans 8, “tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness or sword” will not separate us from his love, then surely COVID-19 will not either. It is simply one more aspect of the “anything else in all creation” which cannot break this bond. No, even in this “we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” and “did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all” (Rom. 8:31–39).

But while it may not separate us

from his love, it may in his providence temporarily serve to separate us from one another.

Principles

With God’s providence as our presupposition, we asked ourselves, “What are the principles that should inform our response?” We desired, of course, that our response might conform with the scriptural teaching that we should “Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor” (1 Pet. 2:17). All four of these biblical directives seem to be particularly relevant and to converge in this curious context.

And, of course, we wanted to continue to honor the Lord’s Day, calling God’s people to public and private worship, all the while maintaining some measure of continuity and community. We considered the Bible’s teaching that in this new covenant the locus of our worship is with the heavenly assembly. We remembered that when the Samaritan woman wondered on which mountain to worship, Jesus answered:

The hour is coming when neither on

this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. (John 4:21–23)

Jesus was not saying that the Jews were false worshipers; as he plainly says, “we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews” (v. 22). Nevertheless the “true” worshipers of which he speaks are those who participate in the “true” and “heavenly” things of which the earthly things are but a copy. “For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, *which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself*, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf” (Heb. 9:24, emphasis added).

To worship in Spirit and truth is to gather and ascend the heavenly Mount Zion by faith. It is to come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the realm of the Spirit, and to Jesus himself, the Mediator of the new covenant who speaks from heaven (Heb. 12:18–24). And while this is a corporate covenantal ascent, the Apostle John, although alone, was clearly not prevented from being “in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day” (Rev. 1:10).

With this heavenly orientation in our minds, we also remembered that we continue to confess that we are “strangers and exiles on earth” (Heb. 11:13). And as those on earth, this adversity is part and parcel of what characterizes our life and worship. The preacher of Ecclesiastes put it this way:

In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him. (Eccles. 7:13–14)

Truly, God has not given us to understand just what he is up to, but we can trust that all that he is up to is for our good and for his glory.

Practice

With these principles in mind, here is how our session determined to proceed.

First, with a view to promoting and protecting the life of our neighbor, we have temporarily suspended all our midweek gatherings. When the bubonic plague was ravaging Europe, Luther wrote,

I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. (“Whether one may flee from a Deadly Plague?”)

He understood that his absence might actually be the most powerful means of loving and preserving the life of his neighbor.



Fick livestreaming Redemption’s service

Second, while we have continued to call a corporate worship service, we are limiting its participation in order to conform to our county requirement of no more than ten individuals. We are then livestreaming this worship service to the rest of our congregation. Those who meet together are appropriately spaced out throughout the large sanctuary and included myself, an accompanist, and two or three other family units totaling no more than eight additional persons. By rotating alphabetically through the membership rolls of those who wish to be present, at least part of our body is corporately gathered each Lord’s Day. We publish a weekly

bulletin to be printed out for use at the church or at home, we have dropped off hymnals, we have invited online giving, and we have encouraged families to gather to hear God’s Word and participate remotely. For the present, we have determined not to administer the Lord’s Supper because of the “communion” aspect of the meal, because we believe the sacraments should only be administered by those who are ordained to the task (which could not happen at home), and because the context of the meal is specifically, “when you come together” (1 Cor. 11:17).

Third, we are doing as much shepherding by phone as possible. Our elders and deacons are regularly touching base with those who may have health or financial concerns due to the crisis. In addition, I am personally calling through the rolls of the church every other week to encourage our members, to check on their welfare, and to solicit prayer requests for a shared sessional prayer document that I have unofficially dubbed “Operation CCC: COVID Calling Concerns.”

Finally, in an effort to encourage ongoing covenantal community, we are meeting Sunday evening via a video-conferencing platform that gives us the opportunity to chat together, pray with and for each other, and have a time of instruction and catechism.

None of this is ideal, and we long for the time when we can meet together again. Sometimes extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures, but even extraordinary measures should be as prudent as possible. Our fathers at the Westminster Assembly understood this when they wrote, “In extraordinary cases something extraordinary may be done, until a settled order may be had: yet keeping as near as possibly may be to the rule.” This is wisdom for our times as we, like all of you, are laboring to “have good confidence in our faithful God and Father that no creature will separate us from his love” (Heidelberg Catechism Q. 28). □

The author is pastor of Redemption OPC in Gainesville, Florida.

PRESSING SPIRITUAL TRUTH FROM COVID-19



JUDITH M. DINSMORE // OP pastors responded to this spring’s global coronavirus crisis by articulating age-old insights from the Word of God. Like the church through the centuries, from the weight of an all-consuming trial, they pressed spiritual truth.

The health and finances of congregants and communities were the foremost concerns for Benji Swinburnson, pastor of Lynnwood OPC in Lynnwood, Washington, a suburb of Seattle. That area saw the first wave of COVID-19 cases in the United States, in early March. By the middle of the month, the city was a ghost town. Physical needs can be met diaconally, Swinburnson clarified.

But worry? That’s spiritual.

Anxiety

“Anxiety is the main thing,” he observed. “It’s not so much the virus, as people being home. Everyone’s schedule is getting readjusted.” Schools closed, events cancelled, parents working from attics and basements. All are triggers for the anxiety that already pervasively afflicts Americans, including those in Swinburnson’s congregation.

A few weeks before the pandemic, Swinburnson, in his series on Leviticus, preached on the instructions for a Sabbath year every

seventh year, during which the Israelites were to suspend normal farming activity and live off the land. “I kept saying in the sermon, ‘we have no frame of reference for a whole Sabbath year where you don’t work,’” he said. Now, of course, we do.

The whole world does. Countries, industries, institutions—all slowed down for this pandemic.

“We’re basically being thrust into it against our will,” Swinburnson said. “People are resting. They’re not going to work. They’re required by legal authority to suspend all that normal life.”

The forced quarantine has been a

little like the Sabbath itself, outside of our control and awfully inconvenient, from an earthly perspective.

“My wife and I took a brief walk in the neighborhood to get a bit of sunshine. I was considering how quiet it is,” Glenn Ferrell said. He serves as pastor of First OPC in San Francisco, California—the second US city to be flooded with COVID-19 cases. “Then I remembered 2 Chronicles 36:21: ‘To fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.’” When the Israelites were sent into exile, the land that they had unfaithfully plowed and planted during the Sabbath years was able to rest at last.

“Is the Lord reclaiming some of our Sabbaths?” Ferrell wondered. “He’s forcing us to take a rest, whether we want to or not, from all nonessential *stuff*.”

Being suspended of our sense of normalcy and stripped of the affirmation of social contact turns us



Is social distancing a chance to practice Sabbath rest?

toward the essentials in humility. If we cannot work, we can only throw ourselves on the mercy of the one doing the work in the first place: Christ. In his presence, even if quarantined, rest is sweet and anxiety-free.

Sobriety

The quieter outside, the more deafening on-screen coronavirus news became.

“I’ve never experienced such a furor over something,” William Shishko said. He is pastor of The Haven OPC, a new church plant in Long Island, New York, at what became the US epicenter of the coronavirus epidemic. “Look at the relentless pressure of the media: they’re like piranhas with blood. It’s a feeding frenzy.”

The furor wasn’t confined to traditional media. Social media exploded, too, and with more than clever quarantine quips. Long posts scrutinized the self-isolation of others. The “others” bit back.

In the midst of it, “don’t forget the Bible’s call to sobriety,” Shishko cautioned. “You cannot allow yourself to be intoxicated by the media or by economic forecasts.” Paul wrote to Timothy that “God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and self-control” (2 Tim. 2:7). “Self-control” in that verse literally means “a saved mind,” Shishko explained in a sermon shortly after the city shut down. “It means a mind that thinks differently than it is driven to think by external sources, free from undue excitement and excess.”

The Apostle Peter, too, gives a call for sobriety: “The end of all things is at hand, therefore be sober-minded and self-controlled for the sake of your prayers” (1 Pet. 4:7). Plagues like the coronavirus are previews of coming “attractions” at the end of time, Shishko ventured. The next event on the time line, both for Peter and for us, is the end of all things, and, as we look toward that end, both worry and fury distract us from our sacred duty: prayer.

“How much have you prayed, and to what extent have your fears

quenched your prayer life?” Shishko asked his congregation. “[Peter] says, keep a cool head for the sake of your prayers—and keep loving one another earnestly.”

“The future from our perspective is uncertain,” said Dhananjay Khanda, pastor of Holy Trinity Presbyterian in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Like many OP sessions, Khanda and his elders agonized over the decision to cancel services. They were comforted by God’s sovereignty, even over this. “The future is not uncertain from the Lord’s perspective.”



Piety

In early March, William Shishko flew from New York to Georgia for the funeral of OP pastor Zecharias Weldeyesus’s son, Yafet. In the airports, where sanitary measures were in full force, one thing could not be kept clean: escalator handrails. “I was in angst going down and up the escalators,” Shishko remembered. Permanent signs instructed passengers to use the handrails. Temporary signs warned passengers not to brush the handrails, as they were almost impossible to sanitize. “Every time I touched one, I went through spasms of guilt,” Shishko said, tongue in cheek.

It’s vital that we stay clean. It’s also impossible to stay clean.

Could it be, Shishko wonders, that COVID-19 is giving us a vivid lesson in a spiritual truth? “Sin, historically,

has been called the plague of plagues. If we were as fastidious in dealing with sin as we are about dealing with the coronavirus, we would be an exemplarily holy people,” he said.

Thanks to the good order our good God has given to this world, we can take precautionary measures against disease. We can wash hands for twenty seconds, wipe surfaces, and maintain social distance. Yet even fastidious care cannot totally protect us physically. And it certainly cannot protect us spiritually.

“We’ve got to see this as a reflection of what we’re dealing with in the spiritual realm,” Shishko said gently. “We’re all facing something far worse than the coronavirus, and that’s sin.”

Andrew Miller agrees. Pastor of Bethel Reformed Presbyterian in Fredericksburg, Virginia, Miller wrote a devotional on the danger of spiritual sickness—a danger that is much more poignantly understood in the context of a pandemic. “Wouldn’t it be such a shame if people take so many precautions to avoid a physical sickness, and then neglect their spiritual health?” he reflected.

Miller looked for insight to the letters of hymnwriter John Newton for one particular reason: “Newton loved the image of Christ as our physician,” he said. In a letter to a friend, Newton wrote, “All our soul complaints amount but to this—that we are very sick; and if we did not find ourselves to be so—we would not duly prize the infallible Physician.”

As Christ-followers, each prized bottle of hand sanitizer and spray can of bleach can signal to us, now and for years to come, the precious healing work of our great Physician. He alone is our hope.

“COVID-19 is a good reminder that we are dependent upon the Lord,” observed Khanda. “None of these things can separate us from the love of God which is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord.” □

The author is managing editor of New Horizons.

GIVING TO THE CHURCH IN TIMES OF ECONOMIC DISTRESS

// STEPHEN J. OHAREK

Over the last couple of months, health concerns have been at the fore of the minds of many. But the economic distress that has accompanied the spread of COVID-19 is as real, and for some people, more injurious and long-lasting. As we have watched unemployment climb and markets fall, how might we as Christians embrace the gospel call to give cheerfully and generously to the work of the church?

The Church Continues to Minister

We should realize that in times of disaster and distress, the ministry of the gospel is as important as ever. As carnal securities are shaken (health, employment, wealth, planning), our hearts need to hear the message that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord, and that *he* is our only sure security, even our *eternal* security. In times of great uncertainty, the gospel proclamation must continue at home and abroad, for that is the one certainty we can offer. The church is also able to show this gospel love through its diaconal ministries, as needs will surely continue to rise.

In order for the church to continue to discharge these gospel ministries, it needs the resources to do so, and the continuing contributions of God's people are an essential part of that.

Give As You Are Able

God's people are not called to give *comfortably*, but to give *sacrificially*. Yet sacrificial giving is not the same as reckless giving. Being good stewards means that we consider all of our responsibilities. It would be poor stewardship to give so

much to the church that one could not put food on the table for one's family.

So for those who are truly facing great financial distress, give like the widow who gave only what she could, but gave something rather than nothing (Luke 21:1-4).

For others, this economic distress might affect them far less severely. To those, I would issue a call to give above and beyond what you might ordinarily. We have every reason to expect that giving to the church overall may go down this year, and perhaps next year and beyond. Let us look for ways in which each of us through our giving might lessen the adverse effect of this pandemic upon the church and her ministries.

Three Ways to Give During the COVID-19 Crisis

With these things in mind, let me commend to you the following three ideas to jumpstart thinking creatively about our giving.

Hoarding vs. Giving: As Christians, let us flip on its head the widespread hoarding mentality we have seen. Instead of gathering well beyond what we truly need for ourselves, let us consider giving generously to the work of the church (Eph. 4:28).

Stimulus Checks: Consider giving a tithe (10 percent) on the stimulus check that you may receive. This alone could be a significant help to the church. And beyond that, some may even be able to responsibly contribute the entire amount of their stimulus check to the work of the church.

Online Giving: Even though churches cannot physically gather on Sunday, many churches are providing the opportunity to give on their website. [You can also give to our denomination's Worldwide Outreach and Diaconal Ministries by visiting OPC.org.](#)

As we all try to take responsible measures to ensure that we and our families are provided for in these days, let us remember the need for the gospel to continue to march forth locally and to the four corners of the earth! The Apostle Paul wrote about the churches of Macedonia that:

in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. (2 Cor. 8:2)

May that commendation be said of us followers of Jesus Christ today!

The author is pastor of Reformation Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Oviedo, Florida, and member of the Committee on Co-ordination.

MAY



The Knox family



David and Joelle Carnes

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- 1** Missionary associates **DR. JIM & JENNY KNOX**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for the health of the family and their adjustment to their new home in Mbale. / **STEPHEN PRIBBLE**, senior technical associate for OPC.org.
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- 2** **MATTHEW & LOIS COTTA**, Pasadena, CA. Pray for the men in Pasadena OPC's officer training class to minister well during COVID-19. / Yearlong intern **AARON (JACQUELINE) MIZE** at Trinity OPC in Easton, PA.
-
- 3** **BEN & HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti. Pray for their children Ethan and Emma as they begin university exams. / **RON & CAROL BEABOUT**, Mifflintown, PA. Pray for Grace and Truth's new outreach project in Lewistown.
-
- 4** **SHANE & RACHELLE BENNETT**, Grand Rapids, MI. Pray for Shane as he seeks to share the hope of the gospel. / Pray for affiliated missionaries **CRAIG & REE COULBOURNE** and **LINDA KARNER**, Japan.
-
- 5** Pray for **LACY (DEBBIE) ANDREWS**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast. / **DAVID NAKHLA**, diaconal administrator, asks for wisdom for deacons who are ministering mercy in the wake of COVID-19.

6 Pray for **RETIRED MISSIONARIES** Cal & Edie Cummings, Brian & Dorothy Wingard, Greet Rietkerk, and Young & Mary Lou Son. / Home Missions administrative assistant **KATHARINE OLINGER**.

7 Pray for tentmaking missionary **TINA DEJONG** (on furlough) as she plans for her move to Uganda. / **GREGORY & GINGER O'BRIEN**, Downingtown, PA. Pray that Christ Church would be grounded in the love of Christ.

8 **JAY & ANDREA BENNETT**, Neon, KY. Pray for the calling of more officers at Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church. / **JUDITH DINSMORE**, managing editor of *New Horizons*, and **GREGORY REYNOLDS**, editor of *Ordained Servant*.

9 Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Pray for the safety of people in Haiti under threat of widespread kidnappings. / Wisdom for stated clerk Hank Belfield and others planning the **87TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY**.

10 Pray for the **TIMOTHY CONFERENCE** and **MTIOPC** faculty, students, and coordinators as spring meetings were postponed and decisions are made about rescheduling. / **CHARLES AND CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray that the Lord would provide mature indigenous leaders for the presbytery in Mbale.

11 **DAVID (JOELLE) CARNES**, yearlong intern at Lake Sherwood OPC in Orlando, FL. / **KEVIN & RACHEL MEDCALF**, Cumming, GA. Pray for Providence Presbyterian as social distancing has slowed its progress toward organization.

12 Pray for missionary associate **RICHARD DANIELS**, Mbale, Uganda, that his seminary courses may be fruitful to the students at Knox School of Theology. / **BOB JONES**, interim administrator for Committee on Coordination.

13 Associate missionaries **JAMES & ESTHER FOLKERTS**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the mission at it seeks to minister under Uganda's COVID-19 restrictions. / Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**.

14 **BILL WELZIEN**, Key West, FL. Pray that the Lord would grow Keys Presbyterian Church. / Pray for active duty military chaplains **JOHN (LINDA) CARTER**, US Navy, and **DAVID (JENNA) DERIENZO**, US Army.

15 **MARK AND CARLA VAN ESSEND-ELFT**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for their oldest son, Joshua, who is graduating and hopes to return to NC. / Yearlong intern **JEREMY (KOURTNEY) BRANDENBURG** at Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA.

MAY



The Robbins family

21 Pray for missionary associates **JOANNA GROVE, JOSHUA MARCOUX, JONATHAN ROBBINS**, Nakaale, Uganda, and **ANGELA VOSKUIL**, currently in the US. / **MARK STUMPF**, loan fund manager.

22 **BRENDAN WESTERFIELD**, year-long intern at Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, OH. / **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Praise the Lord for church members who are taking initiative to minister to each other's needs.

23 **NICHOLAS & ROSEMARIE LAMMÉ**, Houston, TX. Pray that hearts will be transformed and that the lost will be found. / Yearlong intern **DERRICK (NICOLE) LEITAO** at Presbyterian Church of Cape Cod in West Barnstable, MA.

24 **MR. AND MRS. F.**, Asia. Pray for God's blessing on the ordination that was postponed due to COVID-19. / **SAMUEL (BETH) ALVIRA**, yearlong intern at Providence OPC and Grace OPC in Mantua and Pennsville, NJ.

25 **CALVIN & CONNIE KELLER**, Winston-Salem, NC. Pray for the Lord to provide a new meeting place for Harvest OPC. / Yearlong intern **ADAM (NOELLE) WELLS** at Lakeview OPC in Rockport, ME.

26 Associates **P. F.** and **M. S.**, Asia. Pray for good follow-up with English class contacts made in January. / **MICAH & EILEEN BICKFORD**, Farmington, ME. Pray for wisdom as Grace Reformed delivers the gospel to its community.



Jerry and Marilyn Farnik

27 Pray for **MIKE (ELIZABETH) DIERCKS**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Ohio. / Affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia, and **JERRY AND MARILYN FARNIK**, Czech Republic.

28 **MR. AND MRS. M.**, Asia. Pray for their children as they finish the school year and as the family considers their next move. / **CHARLENE TIPTON**, database manager.

29 **BRADNEY & EILEEN LOPEZ**, Arroyo, PR. Pray that God would open the door for Bradney to share the gospel. / Yearlong intern **SEOB (RACHEL) KIM** at Rockford Springs Community Church in Rockford, MI.

30 **BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD** and missionary associate **ALETHEA FLORES**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for a good response to registration for the summer's English for Kids camps. / **JOHN FIKKERT**, director of ministerial care.

31 **HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray that the church facility can be expanded to include a sanctuary. / Pray for **DAVE (ELIZABETH) HOLMLUND**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

16 Pray for **DAVID (JANE) CRUM**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California. / **DAVID & RASHEL ROBBINS**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that they would be able to travel back to the US in May for furlough.

17 **BRAD & CINNAMON PEPP**, Dayton, OH. Pray for fruitful avenues of ministry with people living in the city. / **DAVID STEWART** (PCA), president of the board of Great Commission Publications.

18 Associate missionaries **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for adequate medical supplies for the clinic during the global shortage due to COVID-19. / Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**.

19 Pray for associate missionary **LEAH HOPP**, Nakaale, Uganda, as her team promotes practices to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. / **MICHAEL & SAMANTHA SEUFERT**, St. Paul, MN. Pray for Mission OPC during a transition.

20 **JEREMIAH (NATALIA) DICKINSON**, church-planting intern at Harvest Church in East Haddam, CT. / Pray for CCE general secretary **DANNY OLINGER** as he directs the intern program and edits *New Horizons*.

KEEP BREATHING

// LARRY E. WILSON



You've been in a traumatic accident. Your body's going into shock. You hear a first responder reminding you, "Keep breathing!" Even if your breathing's ragged and shallow—even if it hurts—you need to keep breathing. That's a helpful metaphor for our communion with God.

Right now, the body of Christ throughout the world is in trauma. The COVID-19 pandemic is sweeping the globe, with social and economic consequences. We need to keep "breathing." Think of worship—whether secret, family, or public—as spiritual *breathing*. Even in traumatic times when ordinary routines are disrupted, consciously keep "breathing." Keep breathing in: listen to God speak to you by his Spirit through his Word. Then, keep breathing out: respond to God by speaking to him in prayer and praise.

Breathe In: Listen To and Meditate on God's Word

Start by asking the Holy Spirit to illumine you—to open God's Word to your heart and your heart to God's Word. Read aloud if you can. Or listen as God's Word is read. Just keep breathing in God's Word in faith.

Try to get a balanced diet of Scripture. Some find it helpful to use some sort of devotional guide (for example, the daily devotional at OPC.org). If that helps you, then do so. But don't let that supplant your listening to God speaking in his Word. The believer who meditates on God's Word "is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither" (Ps. 1:3). Circumstances aren't what makes the difference. The living God is.

Breathe Out: Respond to God in Prayer and Praise

"Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies" (Shorter Catechism Q. 98). Note well: we can go to God only through faith in Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.

Many have found that it helps their prayers to follow the acronym ACTS.

A—Adore (praise) God for who he is and what he is like. Give God the glory due his name. Try to respond specifically to the Scripture that you've just listened to.

C—Confess your sins to God. If all our sins have been forgiven in justification, then why do we believers need to keep confessing sin? Think of it like this. When you trust Jesus to save you, God as Judge declares his once-for-all verdict of justification. He nails all your sins—past, present, and future—to the cross. He takes them away from you as far as the east is from the west. Your guilt is gone forever. God counts you as righteous with the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. Thank God that salvation is by grace alone from first to last, so that your sins never imperil your righteous standing. But they *do* grieve your heavenly Father. They *do* hinder your fellowship with him. They *do* damage you and others. They *do* obscure your Christian witness. And they *do* thwart your usefulness as God's servant. Therefore, it's important that, day by day, you confess and forsake your sins specifically. Ask God to show you your sin and be quick to confess it to him.

T—Thank God for the many gifts that he's given. Giving thanks to God in all things displays faith; it shows that the Holy Spirit is influencing you (Eph. 5:20). Thank him for his many blessings—both of this life and of the better life to come. Thank him for his gift of creation and his gift of salvation. Giving thanks to God expresses dependence on God. It develops humility as you reflect on the true source of your blessings. It encourages you, even in the midst of trials, to remember God's goodness and faithfulness.

S—Supplicate God; in other words, humbly make requests of him. Try to follow the pattern of the Lord's Prayer. First pray for the Lord's kingdom. Then pray for others. Then pray for yourself. It's helpful to draw requests from the Scripture text that you've just listened to.

[Continued on page 14]

IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH



J. V. FESKO // When the Westminster divines say that believers may have the assurance of their salvation shaken, diminished, and intermitted in many ways, there is a strong likelihood that the harsh times in which they lived gripped their minds. The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) famously described the

life of man during that era as “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.”¹ The world was in the midst of a little ice age, which made for bad harvests. Ten out of sixteen years (1646–51 and 1657–61) had bad yields, which meant less food. A 30 percent reduction in a harvest could double the price of bread, whereas a 50 percent decline quintupled its price. The Thirty Years’ War (1618–48) raged and resulted in eight million dead. One Lutheran minister wrote in 1639 that of his one-thousand-member church, only a third remained a decade later. The English Civil War (1642–51) killed 7 percent of the population of England, Scotland, and Wales—some two hundred and fifty thousand. (If the United States lost 7 percent of its population today, nearly twenty-three million would die.)

In 1666, the Great Fire of London consumed eighty-four churches and thirteen thousand homes, leaving eighty thousand

homeless. It basically destroyed London in the span of three days. As if this were not enough, the Black Plague wreaked havoc throughout Europe. In 1663–64, fifty thousand people in Amsterdam died, and it then spread to London where more than one hundred thousand people perished. Fifteen thousand people died in just one week (September 12–19, 1664). One to two thousand bodies were thrown into plague pits and buried every night.

Within this cauldron of suffering, King Charles II (1630–85) ascended the throne and ejected more than one thousand Reformed ministers from their pulpits in 1662.² Destruction, death, disease, war, famine, and persecution all converged in the middle of the seventeenth century.

The Divines’ Response

This historical context gives state-

ments in our Confession of Faith greater texture and meaning. Such heart-breaking times might lead Christians to think that God had forgotten them, and thus they might be tempted to entertain doubts and fears about God’s goodness, faithfulness, and even their own state of salvation. Yet, the divines note that true believers are

never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart, and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may, in due time, be revived; and by the which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair. (18.4)

In spite of difficult circumstances and doubts about God’s love, the divines rested in the hope of God’s unceasing covenant faithfulness.

The divines did not ascend ivory towers and ignore the suffering around them. Rather, they were keenly aware of the comfort that the Bible offers to us. There are two noteworthy passages

1 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 84.

2 For these statistics and historical information, see Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

that the divines cite: “Though he slay me, I will hope in him” (Job 13:15), and “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning” (Ps. 22:1)?

These biblical texts lie on the long, winding path that culminates in the cross of Christ. Job is the righteous man who nevertheless suffered, a shadowy figure of Jesus Christ, the spotless Lamb who was silent before his accusers. Psalm 22:1 contains the words that Christ wailed from the cross in the darkest moment of his earthly ministry. The divines were convinced that we must always look at our lives through the cross of Christ. Only through Christ can we make sense of our lives. Our sinless Savior came into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh when he took upon himself our nature, “with all the essential properties, and common infirmities thereof” (Rom. 8:3; WCF 8.2). He stood in the breach and suffered unto death—he bore the curse upon the tree for us (Gal. 4:4–5). But Christ’s ministry did not end in ignominy and defeat but in his resurrection—his victory over sin and death (1 Cor. 15:54–55). This is the hope to which the divines clung and preached as they ministered in the midst of ruthless times.

Christ never leaves or forsakes us; he promised to be with us through the presence of his Spirit until the end of the age (Matt. 28:18–20; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 15:45). The divines knew that God loved us enough to enter into our sin-fallen condition in order to redeem us and also be present with us throughout our lives, whether in times of plenty or want (Phil. 4:12–13). Christ never promised to eliminate suffering in our lives, but he does promise to be with us—to lead, guide, and provide for us.

The psalmist writes: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (Ps. 23:4). Christ, our good Shepherd, does not lead us *around* but *through* the valley, yet he is with us



The Westminster Assembly (1643–1652) met amid turmoil, war, disease, and famine. The divines did not ignore the suffering around them.

nevertheless! Christ’s presence and comforting speech through his word, gives us hope.

Psalm 22 begins with a forlorn cry but ends on a note of hope: “From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will perform before those who fear him. The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD! May your hearts live forever!” (vv. 25–26). The psalmist, and ultimately Christ, knew that God would not abandon him.

Christ and the Coronavirus

Thus, as we face COVID-19, our present-day plague, we must remember that we are not alone. We are in good company as we unite with the saints of ages past. Our theological forebears suffered intensely but looked at their lives through the cross of Christ. They recognized that their travails were the anvil upon which God was hammering them into the perfect image of Christ. They knew that their sufferings did not go around but through the cross. May we remember in these times of trial that God has not forgotten or abandoned us—far from it! Rather, he is pouring out his love to us in Christ, and nothing in this world can separate us from it.

Even though the Heidelberg Catechism was written in a different time than the Westminster Confession, its author drew from the same fount of

truth when he wrote its famous opening question and answer:

What is your only comfort in life and in death?

That I am not my own but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has delivered me from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, also assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

Not only are we joined in our sufferings by the scores of saints of days gone by, but Christ is always with us. He is always with us whether we walk on brightly lit and even ground or through the valley of the shadow of death. We must pray that God would help us remember that salvation is not merely about the destination of heaven, but that it is also all about the journey of the Christian life. □

The author is an OP minister and professor of systematic and historical theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi.

[Continued from page 11]

Keep Breathing

These aren't rules. They're advice. Don't be overly rigid or hard on yourself in applying them. But whatever you do, keep breathing. If you're doing very little right now, then it's better to start by establishing a habit of spending at least a few minutes each day in deliberate spiritual breathing. Before we can run, we need to walk. Before we can walk, we need to crawl. Don't be ashamed of that. Just keep breathing. Cultivate a habit of communing with God. It is a *means* to the end of drawing near to, and drawing strength from, the God who already loves you, already accepts you, and already welcomes you based on the perfect doing and dying of Christ alone. It is amazing grace, and it is received through faith alone.

So, endeavor to keep walking with God even in the midst of the craziness in your life. Whatever you do, keep breathing. "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you" (James 4:8).

Larry E. Wilson is a retired minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

CCE AND CORONAVIRUS

Danny E. Olinger

On Monday, March 9, the Committee on Christian Education (CCE) was preparing for two events that had been scheduled for that week: the regularly stated meeting of the committee and the Timothy Conference to be hosted in the Philadelphia area. Over the next few days, COVID-19 began to impact life in the United States, and in particular, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, where the OPC administrative building is located. Pennsylvania's governor, Thomas Wolf, declared a shutdown of Montgomery County, and the committee through its Subcommittee on Ministerial Training determined to cancel the Timothy Conference.

Prohibited from publicly meeting together in person, the committee went forward with its meeting by teleconference. The Subcommittee on Ministerial Training agreed that the young men who had been approved for the Timothy Conference would already be approved for a future Timothy Conference to be held later in 2020 or early 2021. Judy Alexander, administrator of the Timothy Conference, worked with the young men and their families to make sure that travel arrangements could be cancelled without monetary loss.

The Subcommittee also approved the cofinancing of sixteen yearlong internships for 2020–2021 and thirteen summer internships for 2020. In approving the internships, the Subcommittee also recommended that an additional \$50,000 be drawn from the CCE's reserves to help the local churches with the internships.

At its meeting, the Subcommittee did not cancel the intensive training sessions of the Ministerial Training Institute

Favorite Psalms and Hymns *Trinity Psalter Hymnal no. 519* "I Asked the Lord That I Might Grow"

Jonathan Landry Cruse

John Newton was a man of prayer, and this is reflected in his hymnody. Previous editions of the *Trinity Hymnal* have included some of his great hymns of prayer, such as "Come, My Soul, Thy Suit Prepare," "Approach, My Soul, the Mercy Seat," and "Behold the Throne of Grace!" To this remarkable repertoire, the new *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* has added a fourth hymn exploring the wonders of prayer: "I Asked the Lord That I Might Grow."

In this vulnerable text, Newton places the singer in the position of a believer seeking sanctification. The prayer is a good one, asking the Lord to grow the saint in "every grace" and to cause the saint to "seek more earnestly his face."

However, God answers the prayer in a way that the saint was not expecting, and certainly not wanting: "He made me feel the hidden evils of my heart."

Sanctification is surgery: killing sin hurts. So Newton writes in the fifth stanza, "with his own hand he seemed / intent to aggravate my woe, / crossed all the fair designs I schemed, / humbled my heart, and laid me low." ("Humbled my heart," though perhaps not as visceral, is a welcome alternative to the original and archaic phrase, "blasted my gourds.")

We have all experienced the realities of this hymn before. Incidentally, herein lies a genius of this hymn: Newton's ability to take a subject so personal and yet make it universally applicable, and thus quite fitting for congregational singing. We all know the pains of growing in our faith. We can become discouraged and wonder why it is so difficult. At such times, hearing the concluding answer in the hymn will do our souls good: "The Lord replied ... / 'These inward trials I employ / from self and pride to set thee free, / and break thy schemes of earthly joy / that thou may'st find thine all in me.'"

scheduled for May 11–13 at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Illinois, but realized that it might soon be necessary. By the end of March, the Wheaton sessions were postponed.

Wanting to update the readers of *New Horizons* with how the church was responding to COVID-19, but also desiring the news to be as recent as possible, I waited until the last week of March to ask individuals to write for this issue. Managing editor Judith Dinsmore worked tirelessly to put it together. I'm thankful for her work and that of our writers, committees, and staff who served the church in this way.

The author is general secretary for the Committee on Christian Education and editor of New Horizons.

CHRIST'S UNSHAKABLE, VIRUS-PROOF KINGDOM

// ALBERT J. TRICARICO JR.



Church planter David Graves teaching via Facebook Live

These are challenging times. Churches throughout the world are facing the question of how to serve and worship at a moment when we are all urged to keep our distance from each other. Those who serve the Lord in home missions tell us that the current scene has brought unique challenges and unforeseen opportunities. For your interest and prayers, here are some of their observations.

Obvious Hindrances

We have all felt the necessary inconvenience of social distancing and its interruption of regular (gathered) ministries of our churches. What established congregations have faced, mission works also need to address. Corporate worship is limited to virtual formats. Personal ministry is not “in person.” Face-to-face evangelistic efforts are curtailed because close contact at this time is not in keeping with the command to love our neighbors.

Rev. Carl Miller of New Braunfels, Texas, put it this way: “I’m not out in the community as much as I was before, which is a downer. I can’t meet face to face with members, visitors, or regular attendees.” Miller is glad for new opportunities, though. The natural hindrances open up creative ways of reaching and caring for people. Other church planters agree.

Creative Adjustments

The move toward phone and video contact has brought significant limitations. It has also provided ministry breadth as a growing number of people are viewing worship services and Bible lessons online. People have time now. They have devices. Some of them are searching for a good word and have found it in the internet presence of our mission works.

Miller believes that “creative ideas for outreach and evangelism in a virtual world are on the rise for church planters.” The New Braunfels mission “had folks from all over the

United States connected to our service.” Locally, “two men connected/attended that I wouldn’t have expected to see otherwise.” Rev. Ryan Cavanaugh reports from Merrillville, Indiana, that virtual attendance is twice what it has been on a typical Sunday morning.

“Last week, I started a Facebook Live series on prayer using the Larger Catechism,” said Rev. David Graves in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. “I am also increasing my phone calls to at-risk members.” Several church planters note an increase in personal ministry as members are reaching out to each other by phone.

Timely Ministry

Unique opportunities for soul-care have emerged directly from the crisis. In Sandusky, Ohio, Rev. Larry Oldaker is seeing a rise in his phone counseling. “People have lost jobs and feel trapped, depressed, stressed,” he said. The gospel of peace is just the tonic for worried souls in troubled times, and Oldaker is providing good news accordingly.

Rev. Bill Shishko of Deer Park, Long Island, has produced a radio address with the title “The Coronavirus Through Christian Eyes.” In the broadcast, Shishko surveyed Christian responses to epidemics of the past and offered gospel hope to New Yorkers in the present.

Rev. Lowell Ivey of Virginia Beach, Virginia, offered a good summary: “We are thankful for the promise that this microbe that has shaken the nations is God’s microbe and will only serve to glorify God as the Word is proclaimed and the elect are gathered and perfected in Christ!”

The virus is a threat to our health. But it is not a threat to the advancing kingdom of Christ, which cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:28).

The author is associate general secretary for the Committee on Home Missions.

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date news and prayer requests, receive our newsletter by emailing HomeMissionsToday@opc.org. New editions: May 13 & 27.

WHEN PESTILENCE COMES

// MARK T. BUBE



The meeting place at Nakaale in South Karamoja

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge. (Psalm 91:1–4)

To whom do we flee for protection when there is a deadly pestilence on the land? Psalm 91 encourages us to find comfort, especially in troubling times, in our King's faithfulness. Our newest missionary in Uganda, Rev. H. James Folkerts, gave an update for our brothers and sisters laboring there, writing as a fourteen-day freeze of movement and other lockdown measures were being rolled out by the government.

Report from Uganda

We thank the Lord for you all and for your many prayers for us in this time of uncertainty and fear here in Uganda! Pray for us as we navigate all the new rules and regulations for the present troubles. Pray for peace and safety for us and for our Ugandan friends. A few days ago, the police were shooting live bullets to shut down shops in Kampala, and there was looting of trucks carrying goods there. The same day, the police were caning boda (motorcycle-taxi) drivers and their passengers in Mbale for violating the new rules concerning public transport. All public transport is shut down; all flights out of Uganda are shut down. The borders are closed to public transport or people crossing, but they remain open for transporting goods. Even still, prices are shooting up beyond the average person's already low ability to pay for things. Salt has tripled, sugar is rising. If prices keep going up, then there will certainly be civil unrest. This also means that robbers will be very active, and the embassy as well as our Mbale community group is warning expats to cease all unnecessary travel especially to villages, slums,

and even downtown areas where there is any congestion. The government has also banned travel in private vehicles except for those who receive the regional officer's approval. No schools, no church meetings. Pray for our team's safety and health and for our friends and neighbors in Uganda. Like everyone there in America, we are uncertain, and some are worried, so pray for us to trust in the Lord who made the heavens and the earth.

We are currently on lockdown, but we made some preparations for it. We are thankful that although we don't have livestreamed worship services, we do have access to the heavenly worship service that Hebrews 12 speaks of. Christ is reigning! We are encouraging families to pray and read Scripture together. We handed out radios for access to sermons. Pray for our clinic staff who will be the front lines if or when this virus arrives. Pray that all our families would stay healthy physically, mentally, and spiritually. Pray that our communities might not panic but live out of Christ. Pray for the continual unity of our team as we work on this together. Pray that God would give us peace and protection in the midst of the storm. Many gospel seeds have been sown for many years here in Uganda; pray that the Spirit of God would use this unique time for these seeds to grow! We are thankful that Christ will be with us to the end.

Under His Wings

Your missionaries on other fields—Asia, Haiti, Quebec, Ukraine, and Uruguay—are living in the midst of similar lockdowns and quarantines and wrestling with how to minister Christ to populations who know not the comfort of dwelling in shelter of the Most High. Please keep them in your prayers, too. Yes, Christ is our refuge and our fortress, our God in whom we trust. And under his wings we will find refuge, even in the midst of a deadly pestilence.

The author is general secretary for the Committee on Foreign Missions.

EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON THE WORK OF THE CMC

// JOHN M. FIKKERT



CMC member Matt Miner (left) interviewing Wipfli representatives Benjamin Hayes and Scot Roche for January's webinar on retirement

In many ways, the Committee for Ministerial Care has been able to continue its work during the COVID-19 pandemic, most recently with virtual meetings on March 31 and April 1. By God's grace, I was able to begin as the director of ministerial care at the beginning of April as planned. As a committee, we continue to labor in a wide range of areas including hosting webinars, maintaining our voluntary financial planning team, overseeing the Obadiah Fund, and providing training materials on financial planning, social security, and health insurance. These resources can be viewed on our website, opccmc.org.

Retirement Portfolios

As a committee, we are aware that COVID-19 could affect ministers in a variety of ways, and we are preparing to support them as needed. Of primary concern to many ministers is the impact of volatile financial markets on their retirement portfolios. We continue to be encouraged by the excellent support we have received from Wipfli Financial as they manage the OPC's 403b retirement plan. As of the writing of this article, they have provided up-to-date advice on markets and retirement funds. One of the key reminders from Wipfli Financial's recent webinar on March 19 was that, historically, financial markets have always recovered, even from the Great Depression and from the more recent recession in 2008–2009. Even if not participating in the OPC's 403b retirement plan, OPC ministers can still access information provided by Wipfli at their website, wipflifinancial.com.

Diminished Giving

Beyond financial investments and retirement funds, the committee has been considering the many ways that COVID-19 affects ministers and churches. When a church is not meeting in a physical location, taking up the offering is more

difficult. Even for churches whose members faithfully tithe and mail their offerings, some members' incomes have been reduced, which impacts their giving. With diminished giving impacting church budgets, the committee is concerned that our ministers not be burdened with financial worries as they serve their flocks.

Supporting Ministers

Another important consideration for the committee is the relational and emotional impact of COVID-19 on our congregations and the added burden pastors carry as they seek to support and care for those in need while they cannot be physically present with them. Challenges abound, such as caring for seniors who have limited access or skill with technology, coordinating with elders and deacons to prioritize diaconal needs, leading worship in an unfamiliar format, not to mention the difficulties that arise if one or more members contract the COVID-19 virus. It is only by grace that ministers can fulfill their call from the Lord, and, in such difficult times as these, we are especially prayerful for our pastors and the many burdens they bear.

We would encourage any readers of *New Horizons* who are aware of ministers that have particular needs to contact the director or a member of the committee so that we can share in the privilege of supporting our OPC ministers as needed.

Finally, please join me in praying for our ministers during these unusual times.

The author is director of ministerial care for the Committee on Ministerial Care.

For more information on resources from the Committee on Ministerial Care, visit opccmc.org.

COVID-19 AND THE CHURCH



ALAN D. STRANGE // Plagues have bothered us less as general health conditions have improved worldwide. Such threats as COVID-19 poses, however, are no surprise to those who've paid attention to other health crises of recent years. Bill Gates, among others, has warned that a pandemic was likely and that preventative measures

needed to be taken to forestall it. Such measures, however, are expensive, and present life, for politicians of all parties, generally takes precedence over preparing for future contingencies. As a result of such unpreparedness, much of the nation is, as of this writing, in lockdown to “flatten the curve” and prevent the healthcare system from overload. Most of our churches cannot meet for public worship and are limited to livestreaming and personal ministry.

Assurance Amid Plagues

The church has encountered plagues before. The Black Death that swept Europe in 1348 killed a third to half of the population. The fear that the bubonic plague engendered is legendary, chronicled contemporarily by Chaucer and others. The fear of the times was heightened by the lack of clarity on the part of the medieval church, particularly on the questions, How can I gain a right standing before a holy God? and, Can I have assurance of acceptance with God?

The church often replied to such questions with the pabulum of “God will

not deny his grace to him who does his best,” but this offered little comfort to a dying population who feared eternal damnation. Luther’s great discovery was sorely needed in such a world: the righteousness that a holy God expects from and requires of his creatures, God himself provides as a gift, received by faith alone. Thus the work of Christ, his alien righteousness, came to be understood as the ground of our acceptance with God, and thus assurance was obtained by trusting in Christ alone, all a work of grace alone, as taught in Scripture alone, all to the glory of God alone.

There had been enormous plagues before the Black Death and more afterward. Another gripped London in 1665–1666. One of the great differences, though, in London in 1665 over the plague in 1348 was that the Reformation had occurred and there was truly good news for the Puritan pastors to bring to their regained flocks. In fact, a fuller covenantal understanding had come to prevail, and many preached that Christ came to save us not only by his death on the cross (his passive obe-

dience), but by his whole obedience, including his keeping of the law perfectly for us (his active obedience). Hard times confronted London in 1666, but the diamond of God’s grace, as grasped and taught by the Reformers and Puritans, shone lustrously against the dark felt background of all the sin and misery of the times.

Civil Authority and Gathering for Worship

Examples abound of how Christians might act and minister during a health crisis. Luther and Calvin believed that we ought to help all who we can without harming (considering our own lives dispensable), always ministering Christ to all. The bottom line—now that we know more about disease, especially its spread and prevention—is that we follow the guidance of our public health officials and our civil leaders; to the latter, we owe some measure of proper submission, even if we disagree with them based on our own research or even expertise.

Some, both in and out of the min-

istry, have raised questions about the lawfulness of the civil magistrate issuing orders that impact worship, especially ones making it impossible for us to meet for worship. Does the civil magistracy, on the one hand, have the right to tell the church that it may not worship and serve the Lord, contrary to God's command that we do so? No. May the civil magistracy, on the other hand, address that which pertains to the physical welfare of its citizens, even if it impacts the corporate meeting of the church? Yes, as in, this church is in danger of wildfire and must be evacuated, or a hurricane is headed this way and evacuation must proceed, and the like.

The civil magistracy has the right to address such exigencies, even if we disagree corporately as a church in a given case (or individually as persons). Perhaps we believe that the civil authority is acting unwisely. This does not invalidate their authority to act in such cases. If an appeal is open to us in the civil forum, we may take it; we are not free, however, simply to disdain civil authority when it professes to be acting in the public good and is not commanding us contrary to God's will. Although civil rulers are saying that larger group meetings are forbidden, they are not, at least in the United States, saying that we can't worship God on the Lord's Day, only that churches must do so in some way other than mass meetings at the present.

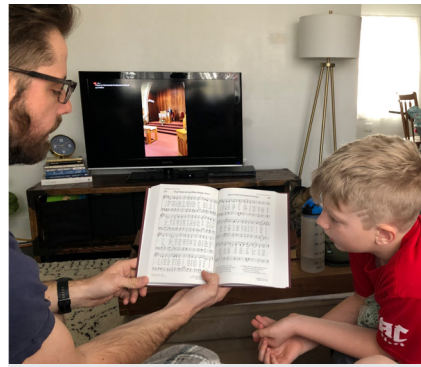
We must distinguish here: the civil magistrate has not told any church here in this situation that it can't meet as part of a campaign of religious persecution against the gospel. Some today believe that the civil authority has exceeded its bounds in ordering "no public gatherings" and that the church must ignore it, lest we fall under greater condemnation and judgment. This is not a sound understanding, however, of the proper roles of church and state, and churches should be quite careful not to appear needlessly as ones hostile to the state's due exercise of its discretion and authority (or cavalier about the welfare of our neighbors).

A proper understanding of the

spirituality of the church concerns itself with the roles and responsibilities of both church and state. The state has the right to prohibit larger group meetings if it believes that such imperil public health. One might argue against this in the proper forum, but the church should not refuse to heed such lawful directives of the civil magistrate, even if particular individuals within the church might think that they are badly misguided.

Worshipful Livestreaming

Online worship is not the same as public worship with a visible local manifestation of Christ's mystical body. However, the desire to attend public worship on the Lord's Day, though providentially hindered, counts as an acceptable act of worship on the part



Livestreaming from Community Presbyterian OPC in Kalamazoo, MI

of the would-be worshiper. The Old Testament prophets make it clear that drawing near to God outwardly while remaining far from him spiritually involves a failure to render an acceptable sacrifice and is no true worship. Take heart, then, if your church is closed to attendees (you can't help that), having only the option of livestreaming. Your desire to worship in person and your heart's devotion to the Lord puts you in a better place than the one who is physically present but with a heart far from the Lord.

What ought we to do in such a situation when we cannot meet together as a whole church for public worship? Should we regard this as judgment? Well, we know that judgment begins

with the house of the Lord (1 Pet. 4:17), and we certainly need to repent of our lack of love for the Lord (often manifested in our public worship, both by our absence from it or coldness in it) and of our lack of love for each other (seen in a host of self-centered ways). We ought to take this occasion to humble ourselves, mourn over, and repent of our sins. Our society is certainly guilty of manifold sin and merits punishment, but all outside of Christ always warrant judgment, and our call to them is to come to Christ, believing and repenting, noting that ultimate judgment is coming, and all must flee to Christ.

We must, at the same time, be careful not to think that we can comprehend God and his ways, which are past finding out (Rom. 11:33–36; see also Isa. 55:9). We should not concern ourselves with matters too high for us (Ps. 131), but we can know in a general way that the Lord calls us to repentance whenever he brings any difficulties our way (Heb. 12:3–17). We must not think that we can exhaustively understand the import of God's providence, and we should be careful about proclaiming that we know what this or that particular thing means.

We should also not languish in discouragement. The Lord would never discourage us. He may chasten us and correct us. It is only, ever, and always the enemy who would discourage us.

In the most difficult of circumstances, let us pray that the Lord would further our sanctification and have us draw near to him. Let us make sure that, in all our proper expressions of grief at being bereft of meeting together at this time as we otherwise would, we not give way to discouragement. Let our hope in him burn brighter than ever so that, as we have opportunity, we might speak to others of the hope within (1 Pet. 3:15). May the hope, which is truly unfading, be undimmed even in this time of darkness and confusion, lending light to all about us. □

The author, an OP minister, is a professor at Mid-America Reformed Seminary.

DIACONAL MINISTRIES

COVID-19: DEACONS MOBILIZED IN RESPONSE

// DAVID P. NAKHLA



Deacons at Bethel Presbyterian in Leesburg, VA, helped to livestream Sunday services. On March 26, members were encouraged to share a picture of their household gathered for worship.

The coronavirus pandemic may be the biggest call to action for OPC deacons in most of our lifetimes. This pandemic is certainly a disaster! But, it's a special kind of disaster in several ways: it is characterized more by an invisible wave of fear and sickness than by a visible fire, rain, or earthquake; it is local, regional, national, and even global; the impact of this disaster is physical (sickness, even to the point of death), spiritual (fear of the unknown, especially the fear of death), and financial (lost jobs and incomes).

Ministry of Mercy

What better time for an active, even proactive, ministry of mercy? In one of the most comfortable nations in the world, deacons in our churches are rarely on the front lines of disaster. Until now! The ministry to “shut-ins” has gone from a ministry to a few individuals to a ministry to the whole church in just a few weeks. Deacons in most churches are actively seeking to assist the elderly and most vulnerable with groceries, enabling them to shelter in place without risking exposure to this virus that is so threatening to their health and well-being. Deacons are also making preparations for caring for those who may contract COVID-19 and need to receive care without infecting others. Deacons are planning for the impact of lost income on their families and looking for ways to bring financial assistance.

Further, many deacons have been called to action to assist with the logistics of online worship services and the collecting and receipting of the gifts of God's people.

Work of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries

The Committee on Diaconal Ministries of the OPC (CDM) serves to encourage local deacons in their service locally. CDM has sought to facilitate discussion and idea-sharing amongst the deacons, particularly via the OPC Dea-

cons closed-group Facebook page and the Mercy Minute, our quarterly e-newsletter sent out to church officers. CDM has also opened the [COVID-19 Pandemic Response Fund](#), to which churches and individuals can contribute above and beyond the giving to their local and regional diaconates. These funds will enable CDM to participate in significant diaconal needs presented in our churches as well as to minister to sister denominations around the world, many of whom might find themselves suffering in ways far beyond what we are experiencing.

Of course, travel has been significantly curtailed by COVID-19. This may affect short-term mission trips this summer and has already prevented CDM from meeting face to face at the end of March. Planned speaking engagements and visits to fields have had to be postponed. And there are short-term visitors to fields who are having significant difficulties returning home.

The Lord Is at Work

While it is easy for us to focus on how the coronavirus may negatively impact our daily lives, we must continually remind ourselves that the Lord is at work in this. As Beaver in C. S. Lewis's Narnia whispered, “Aslan is on the move!” The Lord is mobilizing our deacons to lead well in our churches and communities in active mercy ministry and drawing our families into an intense period of togetherness, something for which we have longed in recent years. Further, in this time of crisis and fear, true and everlasting hope that is only found in Jesus is the best ministry we can offer friends, family, and neighbors. This is not a time for despair but for looking to the Lord for strength and guidance as we seek to “give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for [us]” (1 Thess. 5:18). May we steward this unique season well!

The author is administrator for the Committee on Diaconal Ministries.

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

SHISHKO INSTALLED AT COLUMBUS, OH

On Friday, March 6, Jonathan Shishko was installed as an associate pastor of Grace Presbyterian in Columbus, Ohio, to serve alongside William Kessler and Alan Dueck. Members of Grace along with members of the Presbytery of Ohio gathered on this Friday evening for the special service, with participation from Pastors Alan Dueck, Jeremiah Montgomery, and Bill Shishko. Alan, Jeremiah, and Jon all attended Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary together. While there, they each took Bill Shishko's pastoral theology class. The Christian faith is full of happy reunions! The Women of Grace made the time all the more joyful by their fabulous preparation, decoration, and cooking. Shishko and his family are so thankful for the eleven years they spent at Reformation Presbyterian Church in Queens, NY, and are now eager to minister in Columbus.

CREEL INSTALLED AT MANCHESTER, NH

On January 24, Jeffrey Scott Creel was installed as pastor of Amoskeag Presbyterian Church in Manchester, New Hampshire. Andy Wilson, pastor of Grace Presbyterian in Laconia, New Hampshire, preached at the service; Joel Fick, pastor of Redemption OPC in Gainesville, Florida, gave the charge to Creel; and Gregory Reynolds, pastor emeritus of Amoskeag Presbyterian, gave the charge to the congregation.

Creel served as associate pastor of Redemption OPC in Gainesville prior to his call to Amoskeag Presbyterian. He and his wife, Elizabeth, have two children.



Pastors of Grace Presbyterian in Columbus, Ohio: Alan Dueck, newly installed Jonathan Shishko, and William Kessler

UPDATE

MINISTERS

- On March 6, **Jonathan W. Shishko** was installed as an associate pastor of Grace Presbyterian in Columbus, OH. Shishko was previously the pastor of Reformation Presbyterian in Queens, New York.

MILESTONES

- On March 10, **Yafet (Jeff) Zecharias Weldeyesus**, 20, died after sustain-

ing injuries in an automobile accident. He was the son of Zecharias A. Weldeyesus, pastor of Redeemer OPC in Doraville, GA.

- On March 15, **Marsha Strimple Shaw**, 61, knew the end of her many years of severe sufferings caused by her lupus and its many complications. Her praying husband was Kevin, a graduate of Westminster Seminary, California. Her parents were Dr. and Mrs. Robert B. Strimple, first president of Westminster Seminary California.
- **Louise (English) Schnitzel**, 89, a member of Knox OPC, Lansdowne, Pennsylvania, from its founding in 1936, died on March 28. She is survived by her brother, James English; daughters Louise (Porter), Barbara (Williams), Margaret (DeBoer), Dorothy (Whitbeck); and son, Edward.



At Creel's installation: Elder Andrew Sharpe, Elder Thomas Armor, Pastor J. Scott Creel, and Elder Gregory Arce

LETTERS

NOT ADDING TO ABUSE

Editor:

I write to underscore S. Scott Willet's opening line in his review of *What Is a Girl Worth?*: "The story of Rachael

Denhollander is one that every pastor and elder ought to know.” I would like to add that every woman with access to a tissue box ought to read it too—or listen to it in the author’s own voice as I did—for three reasons.

First, Denhollander’s clear example of the spirit that God has given us, “not a spirit of fear, but of power and love and self-control,” ought to be prized, studied, and copied, by both women and men. Second, she tells a story that after years of silence ought to be heard for the sake of compassion and justice and for gaining wisdom. Third, we need to hear this story in order to guard ourselves against mishandling Scripture. It is all too easy to pile up biblical priorities like taking the log out of our own eye first, preferring to be wronged than bring a brother to court, or focusing only on “whatever is lovely” and thinking only “about these things”—and then jumble these priorities in such a way as to justify silence when it comes to addressing abuse.

I used to assert that if I were a victim, I would decidedly speak up. But Denhollander shows why speaking up is so hard and how, sometimes, church members unwittingly add to the strain. We can be painfully blind in how we use Scripture.

Emily Van Dixhoorn
Wayne, PA

REVIEWS

God Is Always Better Than We Can Imagine: Thirty-One Meditations on the Greatness of God, by Iain Wright. Banner of Truth, 2019. Paperback, 256 pages, \$12.00. Reviewed by OP pastor Richard Scott MacLaren.

From time to time, I’m asked to recommend a good devotional for deepening one’s spiritual life. I must admit that I have a hard time doing so. Much of contemporary devotional material is superficial and fails to encourage thoughtful meditation on God’s Word. Some drifts into a mysticism that confuses the Spirit of Christ with our feelings and “inner voice.” Others are moralistic and point to the example of Christ but forget his

atonement. Reformed classics like Spurgeon’s *Morning and Evening* or Kuyper’s *To Be Near unto God* are rather dated now in their language and relevance to modern experience. The wonderful *Confessions of Saint Augustine* would probably tax the patience of most.

In his essay on “The Religious Life of Theological Students,” the great B. B. Warfield reminds us that theological studies should always lead beyond knowledge to doxology. This is the experience I have had in reading OP pastor Iain Wright’s book, *God Is Always Better Than We Can Imagine*. Each meditation is about eight pages in length and reads like a novel. To this former English major, Wright’s prose is a delight, appealing to both mind and heart. His meditations are theologically rich and pastorally sound.

Wright uses Ephesians 3:14–21 as a tour guide through the corridors of redemptive history. Each chapter takes the reader’s hand and points with enthusiasm to the art gallery of God’s glory and grace.

We are left with ever expanding views of the unexpected and unimagined in redemptive history. Surely “God is always better than we can imagine,” and a sense of wonder fills the heart at the sheer abundance of God’s grace. A very human, sympathetic touch is evident throughout as Wright shares common experiences that illumine the narrative.

My only criticism is that I wish Wright found different ways of saying “God is always better than we can imagine.” Its repetition becomes mechanical and somewhat distracting. I’m sure it was designed to serve a pedagogical purpose, but I think it could be just as effective to say the same thing in different ways. Otherwise, of this book I would borrow the words that intrigued a young Augustine in his *Confessions*, “Take up and read!”

Imputation of the Active Obedience of Christ in the Westminster Standards, by Alan D. Strange. Reformation Heritage, 2019. Paperback, 176 pages, \$7.50. Reviewed by OP pastor Zachary R. Keele.

In the doctrinal drama of church history, it is remarked that the line between orthodoxy and heterodoxy often comes down to a word, even, on one occasion, a single vowel. Even if this has a touch of hyperbole, the observation does not miss the target. In the last several decades, some have replayed this argument concerning the imputation of Christ’s active obedience. Opponents of this doctrine, who contend that Scripture only teaches the imputation of Christ’s passive obedience, have employed this argument with the Westminster standards and the word “whole.”

These scholars point out that in September 1643, after a debate upon Christ’s active obedience being imputed to the believer in justification, the Divines approved a revision that read “his *whole* obedience and satisfaction being by God imputed to us” (53, italics mine). This modifier “whole” communicated their distinct support for the imputed active obedience of Christ. By 1646, the final edition, however, omitted the adjective “whole” for Christ’s obedience in the chapter on justification (WCF 11). This deletion, it is claimed, means that the Westminster Assembly did not affirm active obedience and/or it accommodated those who objected to it. Once again, orthodoxy is con-



Position Available

Regional Home Missionary: The Presbytery of Northern California and Nevada is searching for a man to call as a Regional Home Missionary. We invite inquiries from any OPC minister or man eligible for ordination in the OPC. Inquiries, including MIFs, may be directed to the Reverend Robert Herrmann at dawnseeker@hotmail.com, indicating interest and availability.

Mount Carmel OPC Spring Conference

May 28-30 • Somerset, NJ

- Mortification of Pornification: Providing and Pursuing Help for Sexual Sin
- Speaker: Tim Ferguson, Esq., pastor of Grace OPC in Westfield, NJ
- Make checks payable to:
Mount Carmel Church Spring Conference
P.O. Box 126
Somerset, NJ 08873

stricted by a word: without “whole,” active obedience is out. But, is this the correct reading of this missing “whole”?

In this volume, with scholarly precision and pastoral zeal, Alan D. Strange takes up that question. The strength of his answer is first displayed by the organization of his chapters. After laying out the importance of the doctrine of justification and defining terms in the preface, Strange sets forth the question in chapter 1 by helpfully explaining the argument of those who oppose active obedience and rehearsing the historical setting for the Westminster Assembly. In chapters 2 and 3, Strange looks at the medieval antecedents of active obedience and its development within the Reformation. The heart of Strange’s answer comes in chapters 4 and 5, where he carefully interacts with the details of the assembly’s work concerning active obedience and eloquently dialogues with scholarship and the historical records. These chapters are highly commendable, not merely for their accurate content, but for their careful historical work, especially as he shows the dangers of an argument from silence. The footnotes are quite enjoyable, too.

These chapters are so satisfying that readers could walk away at this point, confident that the Westminster standards

do affirm active obedience. Yet, to do so, readers would deprive themselves of the poetry of Strange’s answer in the next two chapters. First, Strange meanders through the entire Westminster Confession and Larger Catechism to show how the roots of Christ’s active obedience twist and turn through a host of other doctrines, from election to creation to final judgment. Secondly, he shows how federal or covenant theology lies within the soul of the system of doctrine contained in the standards, and that an essential ingredient of federal theology is the imputation of Christ’s active obedience. These chapters are must-reads.

What then is Strange’s answer to the missing “whole”? This word is not needed. The confession does not require “whole,” for the imputed active obedience of Christ is *wholly* woven into our system of doctrine. Praise the Lord for Christ’s active obedience. No hope without it.

***Everyday Prayer with John Calvin*, by Donald K. McKim. P&R, 2019. Hardcover, 136 pages, \$12.00. Reviewed by OP minister G. Mark Sumpter.**

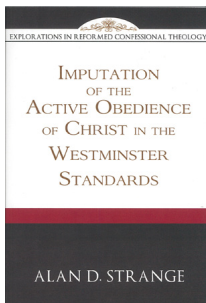
My last name from the French and Latin means *pack mule*. That’s about right. But a noticeable shortfall about living up to my name is my inability to plod along, mule-like. Instead of slow, steady steps with one hoof in front of the other in the Christian life, I’m given to running wind sprints. I welcome a book like *Everyday Prayer with John Calvin* because it offers a bridle and bit, helping me to slow down. With Calvin as a model and teacher about the gift, importance, and practice of prayer, we get to be nurtured and disciplined by the Protestant Reformer himself.

Donald K. McKim, pastor, theologian, and writer, has compiled eighty-five single-page devotional entries, developing themes about prayer, while weaving in quotes from John Cal-

vin. Guidance for the reader comes from McKim’s own introduction and conclusion for each entry, along with a bulleted reflection question or prayer point. On every page, a four-course meal awaits us: Scripture, Calvin, teaching, and prayer.

The dominant themes of the book are: God’s invitation to pray; hope when despairing; perseverance and constancy; faith, humility, and dependency; liberty, sonship, and access; form (a directory, a method), promises, and supplication. As a sample, here is McKim’s entry on perseverance in prayer, based on Romans 12:9–13.

Paul’s next prescription to the Romans in verse 12 is to “persevere in prayer.” This is one thing we can do. We may not be able to manufacture hope or produce patience. But we can pray. We can pray and keep on praying. Calvin wrote that “Paul not only stimulates us to prayer, but expressly calls for perseverance, because our warfare is unceasing and various assaults arise daily. Even the strongest are unable to bear these without frequent acquisition of new vigor. But diligence in prayer is the best remedy to prevent our being wearied.” Our experience with prayer teaches us that prayer is a practice in which we engage over the “long haul” of our lives.

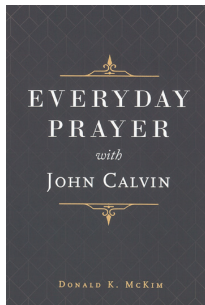


Boardwalk Chapel Openings

The Boardwalk Chapel in Wildwood, New Jersey, still has openings this summer for their training weeks and their volunteer staff positions. At the Chapel, men and women use their gifts for kingdom advancement and receive theoretical and practical training. Prayerfully consider spending time at the Chapel this summer. Contact the Chapel with any questions or comments:
boardwalkchapel@gmail.com.

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS *Continued*

I give the book high marks as a readable, handy tool for personal or family use, though there are some weaknesses. When McKim traces prayer through the psalms with twenty-eight devotional entries, only one of them references the enemies of God, with their threats and mockery. You might think with King David's own repetitive development of this theme, we'd find three or four entries on aspects of this teaching. Also, two other areas are overlooked altogether: prayer and the preached Word, and prayer and evangelism. Likely, McKim had to trim things down.



I invite you to come along with me, slow down and plod in our discipleship, always following the Lord Jesus Christ. *Everyday Prayer with John Calvin* provides plenty for pack mules.

***Not Forsaken: A Story of Life After Abuse*, by Jennifer Michelle Greenberg. The Good Book Company, 2019. Hardcover, 232 pages, \$16.27 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor William Shishko.**

Having a blind eye or a deaf ear to domestic abuse has been called the great scandal of the evangelical church. Wives are too often told that they must submit to it. Children are just to endure it. They are not to report it to the police. "This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

When victims of domestic abuse are given misguided counsel like this, it's no wonder that they develop a deformed

view of God or quit the Christian church (and sometimes the Christian faith) altogether.

Into the painful world of domestic abuse (which—in one form or another—affects *twenty people per minute* in the United States, according to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence) comes the powerful contribution of Jennifer Michelle Greenberg in her testimony of "how faith brought one woman from victim to survivor," *Not Forsaken*.

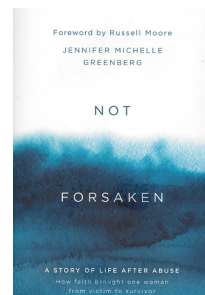
You don't just read this book—you are impacted by it. You don't enjoy it—but your eyes are opened by it. Its fourteen chapters are feasts, although they are very painful ones to eat. And that's what makes this non-clinical, heart-bearing treatment of domestic abuse so helpful.

The book faithfully opens up many strands of teaching in the Word of God, and it is rich in the use of Scripture. The author has clearly been influenced by the Reformed faith. At the same time, with glaring honesty she opens up the internal conflicts and heart struggles of victims of abuse. I appreciated that there were no gory or lurid details of Greenberg's abuse; but, in these pages, there is a masterfully written doorway into her heart.

Each chapter in *Not Forsaken* is rich and profound. I profited particularly from her insights on "Unearthing the Image of God" (chapter 8), and her down-to-earth applications in "Defining Love" (chapter 12). There is superb material for real-life application in preaching in these chapters (and in all the others).

I did have some quibbles with chap-

ter 12, "The Truth About Forgiveness." First, I don't think that the categories "Boundaried Forgiveness" and "Reconciled Forgiveness" are at all helpful. Far better to use the biblical categories of "longsuffering" and "repentance/forgiveness/reconciliation." Second, Greenberg uncharacteristically lapses into the use of the term "apology" on pages 186 and following, when the phrase should be "ask for forgiveness." "Apology" gives a reason for something. Sin is, in the nature of the case, contrary to reason. To genuinely ask for forgiveness is to honestly admit that abuse is sin that must *not* be reasoned away but dealt with ruthlessly at the cross of Christ and humbly at the bar of human conscience. But this is hardly to detract from the worth of this painful picture window on the victims of abuse.



Who should read it? Pastors: To open your eyes to the real internal and external horrors of those in situations of domestic abuse. Counselors:

To help you understand and minister to the hearts of your counselees as your understanding is enhanced and as you are ministered to by this case study. Those who have experienced (or are experiencing) domestic abuse: To make you realize that you are not alone and that there is a way of escape.

Thank you, Jennifer Michelle Greenberg, for taking our hands and leading us into the dark world of domestic abuse, even as you always point us to the light of the world, Jesus Christ, and the hope that comes from the gospel of his sovereign grace and mercy.