

NEW HORIZONS

≡ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ≡

NOVEMBER 2023

Countless Gifts of Love

2023 THANK OFFERING

HOME MISSIONS • FOREIGN MISSIONS • CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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by Albert J. Tricarico Jr.

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New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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On September 19-21, the 2023 NAPARC combined World Missions Agencies and Diaconal Ministries Agencies met in Willow Grove, PA. Left to right: Douglas Clawson (OPC); Keith Mann (RPCNA); Heiko Burklin (ARPC); Richard Bout (URCNA); Cartee Bales (PCA); David Nakhla (OPC); Rob Brinks (URCNA); Casey Southerland (BPC); Corney Les (HRC); Tim Worrell (PresRC); Mark Bube (OPC); Kevin Backus (BPC); Steve Park (KAPC); and Se Young Han (KAPC).



COUNTLESS GIFTS OF LOVE



ALBERT J. TRICARICO JR. // **Martin Rinkart was a German pastor who served in unspeakably dark times. The Thirty Years War (1618–1648) was in full force, and Rinkart’s town of Eilenburg was feeling its burden. Not only did Eilenburg serve as a refuge for people displaced by the deadly conflict, it was host to a terrible**

plague that took the health and lives of thousands.

Eventually Rinkart found himself the only remaining pastor in town providing spiritual help to the suffering. In 1637, at the height of the plague’s destruction, he conducted over four thousand funerals, including the service for his dear wife.

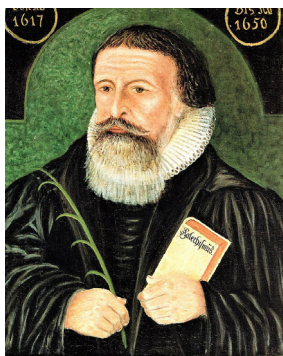
Composing a Song of Thanksgiving

How should a Christian respond when feeling the unique stresses and sorrows that come amidst such devastation? Pastor Rinkart wrote a hymn. Most of us know it and have sung it. We may soon sing it during the Thanksgiving season. Rinkart composed it in 1636 and used it as his prayer until his death in

1649, the year after the war ended.

Now thank we all our God
with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done,
in whom his world rejoices;
Who from our mothers’ arms
has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

Would you have composed a song of thanksgiving while witnessing the unimaginable agonies of so many people? Rinkart did exactly that. And what were the particular “gifts of love” that Rinkart found impossible to count? While this first stanza does not specify, it is easy to start a list. God has been generous toward all of us. He gives life, strength, family, friendship, food, work, and rest.



Martin Rinkart

We are all grateful for these wonderful expressions of God’s common grace to our world. Paul put it this way to the men of Athens:

The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. (Acts 17:24–25)

“Life and breath and everything”—given to all people without discrimination. As residents of this world, we enjoy these blessings. Rinkart knew that. He also watched and served while common gifts were taken from Eilenburg’s residents and refugees. Rinkart was a pastor. But first, he was a Christian. He knew that the greatest joy that produces the deepest gratitude emerges from the gospel and all the benefits that come to those who know and love God.

Disasters that fall upon us in this life, even the deadly forces of war and disease, cannot remove what Christ has won for us.

O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills
in this world and the next.

God is bounteous and generous. We pray that he would be near us in our day of trial. The peace he gives makes hearts rejoice. We pray for his grace, even—perhaps especially—when life does not make sense to us. When circumstances perplex us, we pray with faith that God will guide us. We also pray for deliverance from our present troubles, with confidence that they will finally cease when we are received in glory.

What Gifts?

Let's all think deeply about the benefits we have as children who are loved by God and purchased by the blood of his Son. We are justified (counted righteous) and will never face the condemnation our sins deserve (Rom. 5:1; 8:1). We are adopted into God's family (John 1:12) and have access to him through our risen Savior and unashamed brother, Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:11; 10:19–22). We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit who groans with us while we wait for Jesus and assures us now that we are God's children (Rom. 8:15–17, 26).

We have all of God's promises that are true and find their fulfillment in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20–22). Jesus is with us, will never abandon us, and will not leave his work in us unfinished (Matt. 28:20; 1 Cor. 1:5–8; Phil. 1:6). Though trials cause pain in this life, God uses even the deepest sorrows to make us holy and give us reason to long for heaven (Rom. 5:3–5; 8:18; Phil. 1:21; 2 Cor. 5:1–10). When death comes, life follows (John 8:51). When Jesus comes, we will be raised. We will see him. And when we see him, we will be like him (1 John 3:2).

God's Word is unbreakable (John 10:35). His kingdom is unshakable (Heb. 12:28). His greatest gift—our Redeemer, Jesus Christ—is inexpressible (2 Cor. 9:15). What we have in Christ cannot be fully conveyed in words. And so we give thanks.

Take just one of these precious gifts—or another not listed, there are so many!—and meditate upon it. Take your time. Pray for insight and a deepening faith that Christ has won this benefit for you. Resolve, with the grace that he provides, to live gladly in light of God's love for you, his promises to you, and his rule over you. You will be encouraged. You will be empowered. You will be thankful. And you will agree as you sing with Martin Rinkart. Though we do our best to list them, God's gifts of love are truly countless.

The Blessing of the OPC

One of those countless gifts is the church—God's gathered, worshiping testimony of grace. As members of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, we can

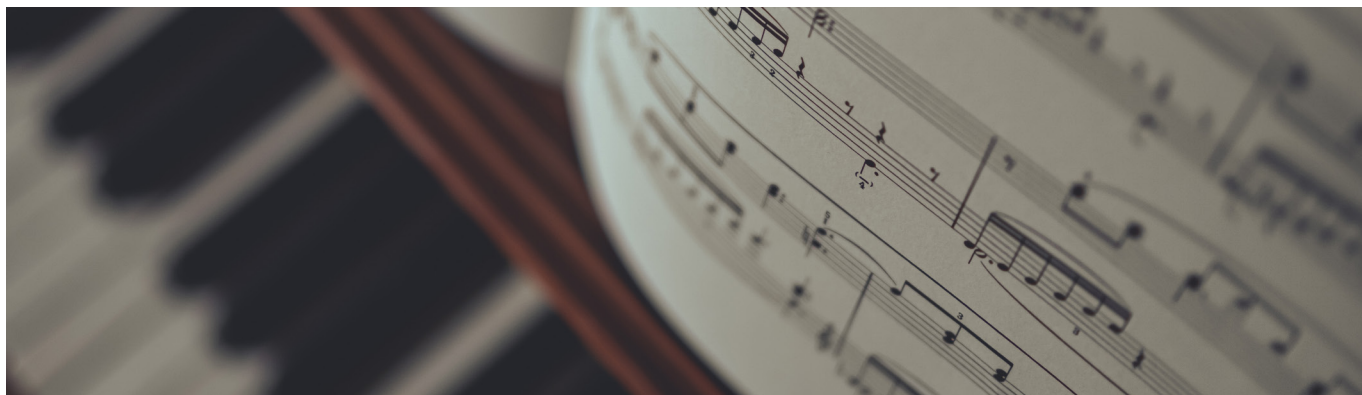
all give thanks for the blessings we have received through the teaching, fellowship, and mission engagements of our church. The program committees of the OPC continue to oversee our corporate response to Christ's Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20). We like to put it this way: the Committees on Christian Education, on Home Missions and Church Extension, and on Foreign Missions support and prosecute "the whole work of the whole church."

The good work done by our committees requires financial support from the members of the OPC. That support comes from congregational commitments, individual giving, and other sources. Every Thanksgiving season, the OPC provides an opportunity for its members to express thanks to God through its Thank Offering. As you reflect on God's generosity toward you, consider responding generously with thanks as you participate in this opportunity to give.

The foundation of gratitude-fueled, generous giving on the part of God's people is the worthiness of our God. We worship him as we offer our gifts to him. So we sing with Pastor Rinkart:

All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given,
The Son, and him who reigns
with them in highest heaven—
The one eternal God,
whom earth and heav'n adore;
For thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore. □

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



WHAT IS THE THANK OFFERING?

You may notice that *New Horizons* looks different this month. On pages 10–13 are three prayer sheets designed to be easily removed for display in your home. The sheets feature the work of the OPC’s three program committees: Foreign Missions, Home Missions, and Christian Education. Their work, collectively known as Worldwide Outreach, is funded during the year by contributions from churches and individuals. Every November, a giving goal is set, which is called the Thank Offering. Since a quarter of the funding comes from the Thank Offering each year, a strong offering is needed to make up the current deficit. This year’s Thank Offering goal is \$1,400,000.

How Does the Thank Offering Work?

Thank Offering promotional packages are sent to OP churches in early October. They include the Thank Offering poster, three sets of bulletin inserts (that present the work of each committee), three prayer map posters, and remittance envelopes. PDF versions of the inserts will be sent to all churches for posting on websites and distributing by email. Additional print material can be obtained from Charlene Tipton at the OPC administrative offices (215-935-1005 or charlene.tipton@opc.org).

Videos highlighting the work of each committee in Worldwide Outreach are available at OPC.org—they could be shared in Sunday school or sent to members.

The inserts can be included in bulletins on consecutive Lord’s Days prior to the collection of the Thank Offering. We suggest using them from November 5 to 19, with a collection being taken up on November 26. Some churches collect the Thank Offering on more than one day or at a special Thanksgiving service.

Checks collected in local churches should

be made out to those churches with “Thank Offering” in the memo line. Also, using the envelopes included in this issue of *New Horizons*, you may mail a check made out to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church with “Thank Offering” in the memo.

Requests for 2024

The 2023 General Assembly of the OPC determined to make the following requests for the financial support of the denominational ministries in 2024 (generally made through congregations):

Worldwide Outreach: \$5,545,000. This averages out to \$230 per communicant member. Smaller churches may not be able to give this much, so larger churches should give more than the average. Ideally, Thank Offering giving takes these missions and education ministries beyond the budgeted goal.

GA Operation Fund: Churches are requested to give \$20 per communicant member.

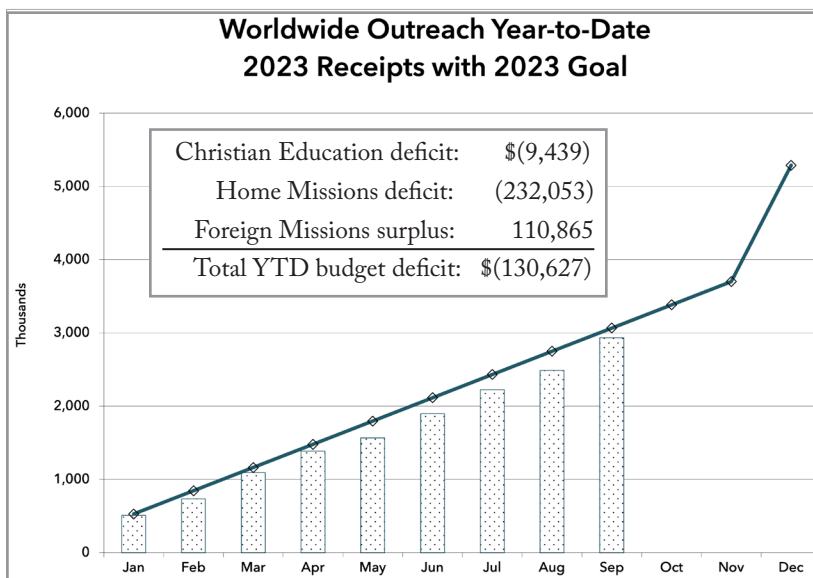
GA Travel Fund: Churches are requested to give \$12 per communicant member.

Diaconal Ministries General Fund: Churches are requested to give \$30 per communicant member.

Ministerial Care: Churches are requested to give \$20 per communicant member.

Send contributions to: Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 607 Easton Rd., Bldg. E, Willow Grove, PA 19090-2539. Checks should be made payable to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Contributions are credited to Worldwide Outreach and support all its ministries, unless specifically designated.

For the digital files to print your own copies of the prayer map posters or the prayer sheets, contact Judith Dinsmore at judith.dinsmore@opc.org.



MEET THE EMMETTS, NEW MISSIONARIES TO UGANDA

// DANNY E. OLINGER



Travis and Bonnie Emmett with Clayton, Adalyn, and Jackson

Travis and Bonnie Emmett, newly appointed OPC missionaries as of August 1 to serve in Karamoja, Uganda, have known each other most of their lives. They first met as missionary kids at a missionary conference their parents attended. Travis's parents, Robert and Sharon Emmett, labored as Christian missionaries in Sri Lanka. Bonnie's parents, Donald and Ellen Jackson, worked in children's ministry in Pennsylvania.

Both Travis and Bonnie testify to the Lord's goodness to them as they grew up in solid, Bible-believing families that trusted in Jesus Christ and sought to serve him. But both also testify to how God was at work in their hearts as their families endured suffering. Due to civil unrest in Sri Lanka and an unstable visa situation, the Emmett family had to return to America. The Jackson family endured heartbreak and change of a different sort. Ellen died of cancer, leaving Donald to raise six children that ranged in age from an eleven-year-old to a newborn. Bonnie was six.

Bonnie testifies that her hope was in the Lord even in that loss. A few years before her mother's death, she heard her siblings telling a neighborhood friend about Jesus and

that friend's need for him. While she listened to them share the gospel, God opened her eyes to the truth of his Word and her need of Jesus.

Journeying Together to the OPC

Bonnie and Travis's paths crossed again when his parents invited Donald to serve as a Bible teacher at the camp they oversaw. From that point forward, the two families frequently spent summers serving the Lord together. The friendship between Bonnie and Travis grew, and they were married on August 18, 2018. In Bonnie's words, she considers Travis to be "one of God's greatest gifts to her," and Travis believes he has been blessed with Bonnie being joined to him as his wife. They have also been blessed with four-year-old twins, Clayton and Adalyn, and one-year-old Jackson. Their fourth child is due in February.

When they were first married, they were Baptists. Travis attended Word of Life Bible Institute for a year and then began working online on a nonprofit management degree at City Vision University. Part of his degree

What's New

// Appointments

Mr. Jedidiah T. Homan (Immanuel OPC in Bellmawr, New Jersey) has been re-appointed to serve as a missionary associate in Nakaale, Karamoja, Uganda, for one year beginning in November 2023.



The Uganda mission team, which the Emmetts are joining

program mandated that he participate in an extended two-year internship, which led him to Camp Sankanac in Spring City, Pennsylvania. There he met OPC minister Ben Alvira and his wife, Milca. Ben and Milca took him in as if he was one of their own, feeding him meal after meal, and talking to him about the Reformed faith, Presbyterianism, and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Many long conversations followed with Ben leading Bible studies and Travis asking questions. Slowly, by the grace of God, it began to dawn on Travis that the Reformed faith was biblical. It would take a little longer, however, for Travis and Bonnie to make the jump to join a Presbyterian church.

After completing his nonprofit management degree, Travis accepted a position on the staff at Camp Sankanac as development and communications manager. During that time, the Lord worked in Travis and Bonnie's hearts about seeking out an OPC congregation to join. Travis comments, "In 2020, we started searching for a new church that was confessionally Reformed. We started attending Christ Church OPC in Downingtown. It was like a spiritual oasis in a desert for us. We became communicant members in 2021."

Called to Missionary Service

At Christ Church OPC, Pastor Greg O'Brien prayed regularly from the pulpit for OPC foreign missions and, in particular, for the Lord's provision of individuals and families to serve. By 2022, Travis and Bonnie felt called to explore foreign missions service in the OPC. Pastor O'Brien, who had been encouraging them to consider applying, contacted General Secretary Douglas Clawson and recommended them. Travis and Bonnie filled out the preliminary information form; the Committee on Foreign Missions and the Uganda Mission reviewed their preliminary application and then their full applications and their references. The Emmetts were then invited to visit Uganda and the mission team there, which they did in early 2023. They returned excited about the opportunity, and both the CFM and the Uganda mission were excited to have them join the team.

For Travis and Bonnie, one of the toughest things in accepting the appointment to Uganda is to leave Pastor O'Brien and a congregation that they love, but their hearts are in serving the Lord where he would have them.

Prayer Requests

// from the Emmetts

- 1) Pray that they would faithfully serve both the mission members and the church in Karamoja.
- 2) Pray that their children would process and adjust well to the many changes coming with their move to Uganda, and for the safe pregnancy and delivery of their fourth child.
- 3) Pray that the Lord would give them wisdom in the decisions ahead.
- 4) Pray that the Lord would raise up other OP members to serve as home and foreign missionaries.

Training for the Field

In preparation for his service as facility manager for the Karamoja station, Travis augmented his experience of camp construction and maintenance by serving an apprenticeship with his older brother, Trevor, an electrician and business owner. Then, in August, the Emmetts left for Mission Training International (MTI) in Palmer Lake, Colorado. At MTI, they received instruction on cross-cultural experiences, language acquisition, and how to work with a team. Lord willing, after training in Colorado, they will arrive in Uganda at the beginning of November. Travis states that the training has been a unique opportunity to experience physically what is true spiritually, that "we are sojourners and pilgrims. This world is not our home, we seek a heavenly city whose founder and builder is God."

The reality of the approaching change in their lives is starting to dawn on the entire family. While they were visiting an OP congregation, the pastor prayed for the work in Uganda. One of their twins with wide-eyed excitement turned and said, "Mama, us [our] Uganda?" For Bonnie and Travis, there was just as much excitement knowing that their family belongs to a church that prays for their missionaries and the lost.

The author is editor of New Horizons.



THE LORD LOVES THE GATES OF ZION

// MATTHEW HOLST AND
MATTHEW EZZELL



At the service of commissioning and thanksgiving, as Shiloh Presbyterian in Raleigh, NC, said goodbye to a seed group

The evening worship service of July 30, 2023, was a service our church shall never forget. The Service of Commissioning and Thanksgiving for the members of Shiloh who would leave and plant Zion Presbyterian Church was as sorrowful as it was joyful. Let us explain.

The Desire to Plant? The Need to Plant?

The Presbytery of the Southeast planted Shiloh Presbyterian Church in June 2010 with about seventy-five people. The Lord granted gradual numerical growth to the congregation in the coming years. When COVID-19 struck, the worship services moved outdoors for six months. It was in those months, and the years following, that Shiloh's growth exploded. Between 2020 and 2023, Shiloh's attendance grew from about 160 to 240. Our sanctuary became so full, we had to set up an overflow room in our fellowship hall. It was during this time that Shiloh called David Okken as co-pastor, with special duties for outreach. While church planting had always been on our radar, we viewed it as a more distant reality. But in God's gracious providence, it became clear to us that we needed to

plant sooner rather than later.

The planting of Zion, from conception to the start of worship, was a little over a year. Such was the clarity, direction, and provision of the Lord that everything fell into place almost without us having to think about it. God's hand of direction has been supremely evident throughout the process: quotes to extend our sanctuary proved financially prohibitive; Shiloh had nineteen families south of Raleigh (about a thirty minute drive to church) who were willing to plant; a yearlong intern, Matthew Ezzell, whom the congregation esteemed and loved, would be called as the evangelist; two elders and a deacon would form part of the seed group; and the presbytery and the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension lent remarkable support. In other words, it is our testimony that the Lord put everything in place. The planting of Zion Presbyterian Church was very much of the Lord.

Planning Begins

Soon after deciding to plant, the session erected a steering committee made up of members of the session and the diaconate. This committee laid the groundwork for executing Shiloh's plan to plant a daughter congregation in southern Wake County. The work that this committee did, with the assistance of members of the congregation, involved everything from exploring meeting locations and learning how to pursue denominational funding through the "Seed and Sower Fund" to considering potential candidates to call as a church planter.

Seed Group Bible Studies

Starting in spring 2023, the steering committee had completed many of its goals, and Shiloh was ready to begin forming a new church in earnest. The first step was transitioning Shiloh's southern Wake County fellowship group into a seed group. This transition started with a study focused on church planting, outreach, and evangelism, using the OPC pamphlet "Evangelism in the Local Church" by John Shaw. The session



Commissioning Zion's officers

provided guidelines to the seed group on how to think about naming the church, after which the congregation submitted names. The group eventually decided on the name Zion Presbyterian Church.

From Intern to Evangelist

Shiloh had welcomed the Ezzell family into membership during Matthew's tenure at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2017. From there, he studied at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and became Shiloh's yearlong intern in June 2022. Matthew's ministry at Shiloh was well received. During that year, as church planting drew closer, the session discussed looking for an evangelist. Kevin Joyner, clerk of session and one of the elders planning to go with Zion, stated it simply: "I think we've found our man." Matthew Ezzell checked all the boxes. He is a native of eastern North Carolina, and thus he not only knows the people of Shiloh well but also understands the area and its culture. His ministry of the Word and visitation had greatly blessed Shiloh. Matthew was ordained in June 2023 and called as evangelist to Zion.

Service of Commissioning and Thanksgiving

At Shiloh's service on July 30, elder Mark Kirby presented a remarkable memorial of God's faithfulness to Shiloh: we were about to commission sixty-five members to serve in Zion and, in the year prior to Zion's first service, God had added sixty-four new members to Shiloh!

Following that memorial, Pastor Ezzell and elders Kevin Joyner and Gareth Hughes were set apart for church planting. Pastor Matthew Holst read the statement of commissioning while the ruling elders laid on hands:

In accordance with, and in obedience to, the Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ, the session of Shiloh now sets apart the officers of Zion Presbyterian Church to go out from among us to proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to the people of Southern Wake County. Dear brothers, the Lord has called and equipped you to this task, and now, with the authority of Christ, we commission you to serve the Lord with gladness and zeal, for the glory of God and his kingdom.

Prayer was offered for the officers. Pastor David Okken then read the statement of commissioning to the members of Zion who stood at the front of the church:

Beloved brethren, as you have indicated your willingness to serve the Lord in Zion Presbyterian Church, we hereby set



Zion Presbyterian's first worship service on August 6

you apart and commission you to serve the Lord in Southern Wake County. Serve the Lord with gladness and zeal, delight in the gathering of the saints for worship, submitting yourselves to your elders in the Lord, showing kindness and hospitality as the Lord gives you grace, that you might adorn the gospel of Christ by your worship and behavior.

Prayer was then offered for the members of Zion. With that, the officers and members of Zion Presbyterian Church were commissioned to the task of church planting.

Worship Begins

On August 6, Zion held its first Lord's Day worship services. It was a day of great excitement and rejoicing in the Lord's faithfulness to Zion as a daughter and to Shiloh as a mother church. Zion has been blessed with unity of mind and a great zeal for the mission of the church. Zion received six new members in the first two months, baptized her first covenant child, and continues to have a steady stream of new visitors. While we rejoice in the blessing that the Lord has given us, we are also aware of the danger of complacency. Zion is further considering how we can continue reaching out to our community. Its members plan to conduct two outreach events at local festivals, both focused on increasing Zion's visibility in the target communities of Holly Springs and Fuquay-Varina, North Carolina, and introducing people to the gospel.

Sorrow and Joy

We mentioned earlier that the Service of Commissioning and Thanksgiving was in equal measure sorrowful and joyful. That is because Shiloh was sending out members who were loved and valued. Saying goodbye was an emotional experience. Yet we all believe that it is the right thing to do. God had clearly opened the door for a mother-daughter plant and put everything in place for its commencement. It is our prayer that the Lord would continue to use both congregations to bring glory to his name and to expand his kingdom in this world.

Holst is a pastor of Shiloh Presbyterian in Raleigh, NC. Ezzell is an evangelist of Shiloh Presbyterian, serving Zion Presbyterian in Wake County, NC.

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date news and prayer requests, receive our newsletter by subscribing at CHMCE.org or scanning this QR code.



Countless Gifts of Love

2023 THANK OFFERING

The Committees on Christian Education, Foreign Missions, and Home Missions and Church Extension, collectively known as Worldwide Outreach, oversee the OPC's "corporate response to Christ's Great Commission" (see page 4). Please pray for these committees in their labors. To that end, these prayer sheets are designed for easy removal and display in your home.



**HOME
MISSIONS**



**FOREIGN
MISSIONS**



**CHRISTIAN
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**WATCH THIS
YEAR'S VIDEOS**



HOME MISSIONS

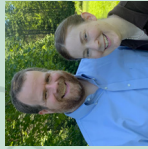
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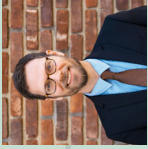
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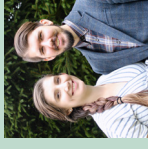
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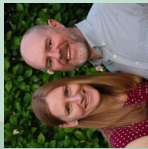
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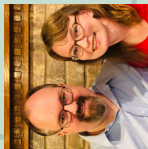
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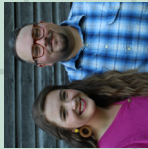
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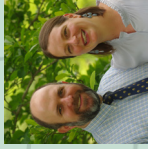
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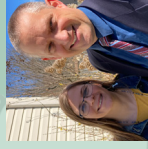
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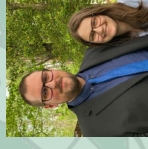
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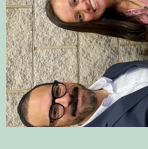
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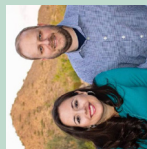
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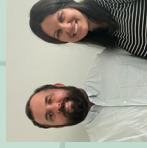
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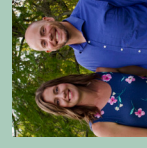
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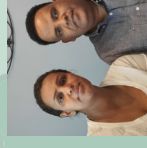
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STROM
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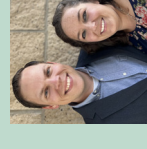
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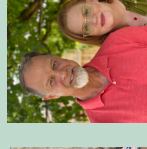
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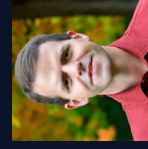


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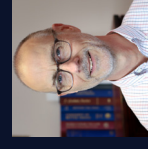
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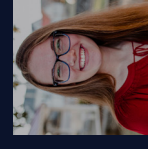
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MONTGOMERY
Incoming
general secretary



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general secretary



Allison GROOT
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Bruce & Sue HOLLISTER | Midwest

Dave & Elizabeth HOLMLUND | Philadelphia

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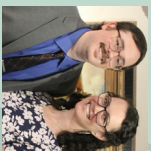
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Mark & Peggy SUMPTER | Southwest

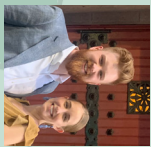


CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

SUMMER INTERNS



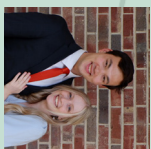
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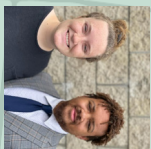
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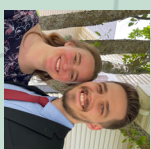
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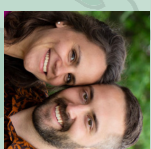
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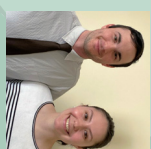
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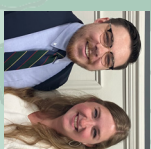
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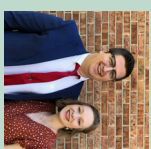
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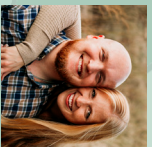


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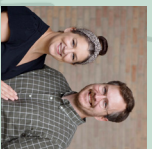
YEARLONG INTERNS



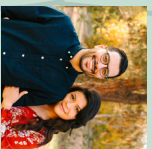
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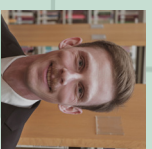
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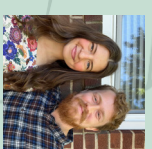
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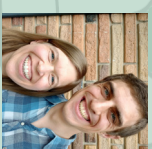
Eddie & Hillary MERCADO
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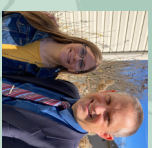
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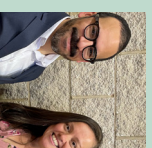
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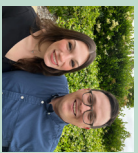
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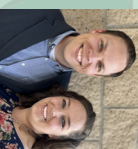
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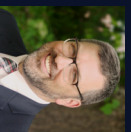


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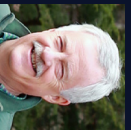
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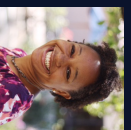
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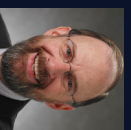
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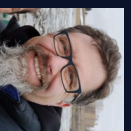
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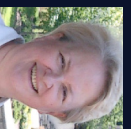
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and *Ordained Servant*
editorial
assistant



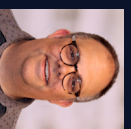
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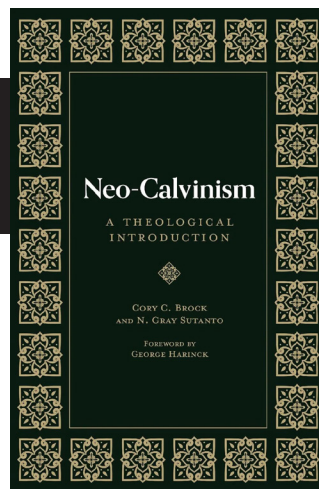
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REVIEW: NEO-CALVINISM: A THEOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

// CORNELIS P. VENEMA



the theologies of Kuyper and Bavinck not only contain promising possibilities for contemporary dogmatics, but are also a significant but sometimes silent influence behind many theological trajectories today: the theological interpretation of Scripture, redemptive-historical hermeneutics, theological retrieval, Christian missiology, apologetics, and eschatology. (2)

Recent decades have witnessed a resurgence of interest in what is known as “neo-Calvinism.” A considerable number of the writings of the two preeminent advocates of the neo-Calvinist movement in the Netherlands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck, are now available for the first time in English translation. These include the Acton Institute’s publication of a number of Kuyper’s writings on the topic of public theology. They also include the publication of Bavinck’s four-volume *Reformed Dogmatics*, a new edition of *The Wonderful Works of God*, and his heretofore unpublished writings on *Ethics*.

A New Book to Fill the Gap

Although most of the interest in neo-Calvinism has focused upon its social, political, and cultural dimensions—what Kuyper and Bavinck termed the “world-and-life view” of Calvinism—Cory C. Brock and N. Gray Sutanto’s new book, *Neo-Calvinism: A Theological Introduction* (Lexham Academic, 2022) fills an important gap in the literature. Their aim is to set forth comprehensively the theology of Kuyper and Bavinck, recognizing that this theology provided the foundation for their articulation of a comprehensive Christian worldview. As one of my colleagues has often lamented: “too many contemporary advocates of Kuyper and Bavinck’s worldview neglect to consider how it was deeply rooted in their biblical and Reformed confessional theology.” The great strength of Brock and Sutanto’s book is their focus upon the theology of Kuyper and Bavinck that undergirded the neo-Calvinist revival in the Netherlands at the end of the nineteenth century. Though Brock and Sutanto maintain that their book is descriptive and not prescriptive, they acknowledge that they are “broadly sympathetic with many of the claims of Kuyper and Bavinck . . . even while [they] may agree or disagree with some of their theological judgments” (7). In their estimation,

The authors arrange their study by identifying the key topics (*loci*) of Reformed theology that reflect the most significant and distinctive features of neo-Calvinism. Before treating these topics, three chapters are devoted to several characteristics of neo-Calvinism that distinguish it from a mere repetition of the theology of Reformed orthodoxy in the period after the Reformation. According to Brock and Sutanto, Kuyper and Bavinck were motivated by a desire to express the broad themes of Reformed theology in a way that was both “catholic” in its breadth and at the same time “engaged” with challenges posed by developments in modern philosophy and culture.

The topics that Brock and Sutanto identify as of particular importance to neo-Calvinism are revelation and reason (chapter 4), Scripture and organism (chapter 5), creation and re-creation (chapter 6), image and fall (chapter 7), common grace and the gospel (chapter 8), and the church and the world (chapter 9). While I will not represent their summary of all these topics, I will note what they observe about several of them.

Revelation and Reason

On the topic of revelation and reason, Brock and Sutanto acknowledge that Kuyper and Bavinck embraced the traditional distinction between general and special revelation. In their understanding of general revelation, both Kuyper and Bavinck distinguished between an original and immediate awareness of God given through general revelation and a secondary rational reflection upon this revelation. Through the influence of modern romanticism, Kuyper and Bavinck accented “an affective and implanted knowledge of God quite independently of the exercise of creaturely reason” (96). Though Kuyper and Bavinck affirmed a robust doctrine of general revelation, neither of them believed that a natural theology, based simply upon general revelation and articulated through “natural-theological proofs for God’s existence,” was possible apart from the more fulsome

light of special revelation in Scripture (94). Though Brock and Sutanto do not associate neo-Calvinism with the apologetics of Cornelius Van Til, it is evident that Van Til's view of natural theology reflects some of the tenets of neo-Calvinism.

Doctrine of Scripture

One of the areas where Kuyper and Bavinck have played an important role in modern Reformed theology is the doctrine of Scripture. The authors title their chapter on this topic "Scripture and Organism" to reflect Kuyper and Bavinck's emphasis upon the "organic" nature of Scripture's inspiration. This language has become a commonplace in modern evangelical and Reformed discussions of the inspiration of Scripture due to Kuyper and Bavinck's influence. An "organic" view of inspiration emphasizes the way the Spirit sovereignly enlists the human authors of Scripture, superintending their writing in such a way that the written Word is truly God's Word and at the same time fully the word of the particular author. By means of their doctrine of organic Scripture, Kuyper and Bavinck sought to meet the challenge of modern biblical criticism without abandoning the historic Christian doctrine of the inspiration, authority, and infallibility of Scripture.

Re-creation, Common Grace, the Church and the World

The most important chapters of Brock and Sutanto's book address three of the main tenets of neo-Calvinism. One of the central claims of Kuyper and Bavinck is that God's work of redemption in Christ does not "supplement" his work of creation but "renews" and "re-creates" the world to the extent that it lies under the curse and is broken through the fall. God's grace in Christ *perfects nature*. As Bavinck expresses it, "recreation ... [is] a joyful tiding of the renewal of all creatures" (33). The doctrine of common grace, especially as it was formulated and developed by Kuyper, emphasizes the general favor of God that sustains the creation order in spite of sin. God's common or preserving grace provides a context within which his work of redemption is able to be accomplished and the cultural mandate carried out. Brock and Sutanto note that these tenets cohere with Kuyper and Bavinck's distinction between the church as an "institution," whose special calling is to minister the Word of the gospel, and the church as an "organism," the body of Christ whose members are engaged in serving Christ in every appropriate calling in the world.

Though this stimulating study of the theological underpinnings of neo-Calvinism is not likely to be the last word on the subject, it is undoubtedly the best single-volume treatment now available. Admittedly, the book is not written for a general audience or the casual reader. However, for attentive students of Reformed theology, whether sympathetic to or suspicious of neo-Calvinism, this book is a must read.

The author is professor of doctrinal studies at and president of Mid-America Reformed Seminary.

ON READING OLD BOOKS

"It is a good rule, after reading a new book, never to allow yourself another new one till you have read an old one in between." —C. S. Lewis

A BODY OF DIVINITY (1645)

BY JAMES USSHER

The book I want to introduce to readers is James Ussher's *A Body of Divinity*, a masterwork in catechesis for its doctrinal depth and practical value. Written in the seventeenth century, Ussher's work represents the best of early modern theology at the height of Reformed Orthodoxy. One writer in the late 1600s even claimed that the Westminster Larger Catechism was nothing more than a summary of Ussher's *Body of Divinity*, showing this book's historical relevance for our tradition in the OPC.

Ussher offers insight for people at all levels of study. Admittedly, I did my doctoral work on Ussher and published my first article defending his authorship of this book, so I am biased in his favor. After years of working with Ussher, I find myself returning to this book over and over again and still learning new things.

Ussher's *Body of Divinity* is also an amazing introduction to rich doctrinal ideas. He likely composed it for use in catechizing church members during Sunday afternoon lessons. This book is, in a sense, by definition, for the church. It is a lengthy catechism covering all the topics of theology. One of its strengths lies in tackling hard concepts in an economy of words. We may need more extensive explanation of some ideas. But Ussher's concise but meaty formulations give us a lot to chew on to begin reflections and enrich our thinking over time. One of this book's unique features is its lengthy exposition of the Ten Commandments and the Christian life, wedding precise theology with the practical dimensions of living for Christ.

—Harrison Perkins

● Out of the Mouth . . .

I was telling my third and fourth grade Sunday school class that if they had questions after a sermon, they could ask an adult in the church, such as a parent or an elder. One of my students is the pastor's daughter, so I said that if her dad didn't know the answer, we were all in trouble. To which she quickly responded, "Then I'd ask my mom."

—Sara Williams
Morgantown, WV

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

SHORT-TERM MISSIONS

REFLECTIONS FROM SUMMER MISSION TRIPS

// TRISH DUGGAN

“I don’t know, Lord, what you want me to do with my life,” Anneliese Ferguson prayed. Thirty minutes later, she got a text from the evangelist at her church wondering if she might be interested in filling a position as a staff member at the Boardwalk Chapel in Wildwood, New Jersey. She wasn’t looking for a summer commitment, but God obviously had other plans for her.

Summer staff positions at the Boardwalk Chapel include serving on the evangelism, domestics, music, and drama teams. Ferguson, a member of Grace OPC in Westfield, New Jersey, is just one of the nearly thirty staff members who served at the Boardwalk Chapel this year from June through the end of August. It’s a big commitment, but, she says, “It’s assisted me in my love of the gospel, helped me to evangelize, and improved my prayer life.”

“God doesn’t call the equipped,” says Seth Van Noord from New Hope Presbyterian in Green Bay, Wisconsin. “He equips the called. You are not called to be a salesman/woman, you are called to give a witness to the gospel. At the end of the day, God is the one who saves, not you.”



Talking to passersby at the Boardwalk Chapel



At the English for Kids camp in St. Georges-de-Beauce, Quebec

Opportunities for 2023 OPC short-term mission trips included an English Camp in Quebec, Canada; an English Camp and Team Praha in the Czech Republic; and the Boardwalk Chapel in New Jersey. In all, over one hundred and fifty OPC short-term volunteers from twenty-one states served this year.

Fellowship in Quebec

Kirsten Behl from Providence OPC in Rockford, Illinois, had an interesting vantage point as the US team chef for the Quebec English Camp: “It was awe-inspiring to see Christ use our OPC young people to serve, teach, lead, and love the children of the small town of St. Georges-de-Beauce and to form lifelong friendships with each other over the course of one week.” Behl explained that the young people exceeded expectations with the responsibilities they showed themselves able to handle. They also enjoyed just being together: “Many of them expressed how lonely it can be in smaller OP congregations with limited interaction with other OP young people. This week was an encouragement to our youth just as much as they were an encouragement to the children.”

A Beehive on the Boardwalk

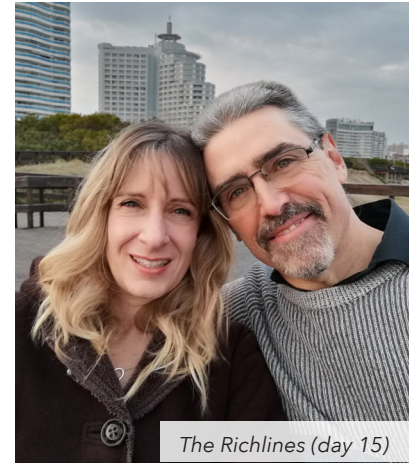
There are an astonishing nine million visitors each year to the boardwalk in Wildwood, New Jersey. It’s a unique opportunity for reaching the lost. Daniel Nannini from Branch of Hope OPC in Torrance, California, had a hopeful interaction with two men. “I asked them questions about the law of God, such as, have you ever lied? Have you ever taken something? When they realized they’d racked up four charges against themselves, they suddenly both started to become much more serious.” Nannini was able to tell these two men about what God promises and what Jesus accomplished for them on the cross.

[Continued on page 19]

NOVEMBER



The Verdicks (day 6)



The Richlines (day 15)

1 Tentmaking missionary **TINA DE-JONG**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the missionary children to grow in godliness. / **BILL & MARGARET SHISHKO**, Commack, NY. Pray that The Haven continues to have weekly, returning visitors.

2 Pray for **MIKE (ELIZABETH) DIERCKS**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Ohio. / Yearlong intern **DAVID (HOPE) GARRETT** at Franklin Square in Franklin Square, NY.

3 **TRAVIS & BONNIE EMMETT**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for good health for the whole family. / Pray for Christian Education general secretary **DANNY OLINGER** in his work as director of the intern program.

4 Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**. / Missionary associate **JED HOMAN**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for Jed as he arrives on the field to begin his year in Uganda.

5 **GREGORY & GINGER O'BRIEN**, Downingtown, PA. Pray for Christ Church Downingtown as they seek to elect elders. / Pray that many will be saved by the seeds planted from **CRATES FOR UKRAINE 3.0**.

6 Associate missionaries **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for godly stewardship of the gifts and resources God has given. / Yearlong intern **DAVID WRIGHT** at South Austin Presbyterian in Austin, TX.

7 Associate missionary **LEAH HOPP**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for good communication and unity on the mission team. / **BRADNEY & EILEEN LOPEZ**, Guayama, PR. Pray for the Lord's blessing on the evangelism efforts of Iglesia Presbiteriana Sola Escritura.

8 **MATTHEW & LOIS COTTA**, Pasadena, CA. Praise the Lord for the particularization of Pasadena OPC. / Presbyterian and Reformed **COMMISSION ON CHAPLAINS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL**.

9 **CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for local Ugandans to benefit from the resources at the Book Room. / **CHRISTOPHER & SARA DREW**, Grand Forks, ND. Pray that the Lord would gather his people through Faith OPC's ministry.

10 **CALEB & ERIKA SMITH**, Thousand Oaks, CA. Pray that Thousand Oaks Presbyterian finds a more permanent location. / Missionary associates **NATHAN & ELISABETH BLOECHL**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for fruitful relationships with members of the church plant and seminary.

11 Pray for **DAVE (ELIZABETH) HOLMLUND**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Philadelphia. / Yearlong intern **JOE (MELODY) GEHRMANN** at Covenant OPC in Orland Park, IL.

12 **BEN & HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti. Pray for the training of elders and deacons at the Port-au-Prince church as they come up for certification and election. / **MARK STUMPF**, Loan Fund manager.

13 Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Pray for gang members to repent and seek the community found in God's family. / Yearlong intern **DAVID (JAZMINE) RIOS** at The Haven in Commack, NY.

14 **PAUL & SARAH MOURREALE**, West Plains, MO. Pray that Covenant Reformed would be effective in reaching the lost with the gospel. / **STEPHEN PRIBBLE**, senior technical associate for OPC.org.

15 **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for the adult and children's Sunday schools that began in Sept. / Pray for *Ruling Elder* podcast host **STEPHEN TRACEY** and producer **ABBY HARTING**.

NOVEMBER



The Jeffrieses (day 22)

21 MR. AND MRS. M., ASIA. Pray for international students to keep attending outreach activities and that many will make genuine professions. / Yearlong intern **JOHN (ERIN) NYMANN** at Reformation in Virginia Beach, VA.

22 NATE & AMY JEFFRIES, West Norriton, PA. Praise God for Good News OPC's new meeting facility. / Pray for **MR. AND MRS. F.,** Asia, as they teach weekly children's classes and for the children to make good professions.

23 JOHN & KATIE TERRELL, Moline, MI. Give thanks for Living Hope's recent particularization. / Yearlong intern **TYLER (JEANNA) FREIRE** at Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, OH.

24 Affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE,** Cambodia. Pray that God's truth would overcome the lies in the hearts of the girls to whom they minister. / Office manager **ANNELISA STUDLEY.**

25 STEPHEN & CATALINA PAYSON, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for the certification and election process of a new elder for Salvos por Gracia. / Home Missions administrative assistant **ALLISON GROOT.**

26 JOHN PAUL & CORINNE HOLLOWAY, Manassas, VA. Pray that Acacia Reformed Church would have increasing zeal for evangelism. / Pray for developing fields for **SHORT-TERM MISSIONS** and that people would be eager to serve in 2024.



The Terrells (day 23)

27 Pray for affiliated missionaries **CRAIG & REE COULBOURNE** and **LINDA KARNER,** Japan. / Stated clerk **HANK L. BELFIELD** and accounts manager **CHARLENE TIPTON** as they prepare the 2024 Directory.

28 BRUCE (SUE) HOLLISTER, regional home missionary for the Pres. of the Midwest and the Pres. of Wisconsin & Minnesota. / **LINDA FOH,** technical assistant for OPC.org.

29 A.J. & CHELSEA MILLSAPS, Maryville, TN. Pray that the Lord grows Knoxville Reformed Chapel. / Yearlong intern **BRENNEN (TIFFANY) WINTER** at Harvest OPC in Wyoming, MI.

30 Affiliated missionaries **JERRY & MARILYN FARNIK,** Czech Republic. Pray for the church to minister well to those experiencing grief and loss. / Pray for **RETIRED MISSIONARIES** Cal & Edie Cummings, Greet Rietkerk, Young & Mary Lou Son, and Brian & Dorothy Wingard.

16 TYLER & KARA JACKSON, New Castle, IN. Pray that Redemption Life would grow in knowledge and love for biblical worship. / The **ETHIOPIAN REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** and the persecuted church in **EAST AFRICA.**

17 Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW.** / Pray for the fifth **PRESBYTERY DIACONAL SUMMIT** as representatives are encouraged today in the work of presbytery diaconal committees.

18 BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD, Quebec, Canada. Pray for development of an online learning program about Reformed faith and life. / Yearlong intern **ANDREW (NOEL) DAVIS** at Covenant Presbyterian in Marina, CA.

19 HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for the team of student volunteers in the college student ministry. / **MARK (PEGGY) SUMPTER,** regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest.

20 MARK & LORIE WHEAT, Sugar Land, TX. Pray for Good Shepherd OPC as they reach out to the community in meaningful ways. / The staff of **GREAT COMMISSION PUBLICATIONS,** a joint ministry of the OPC and PCA.

2023 MISSION TRIPS

[Continued from page 16]

Associate pastor of Resurrection Presbyterian in Matthews, North Carolina, described the Boardwalk Chapel as a “powerful equipping station for the kingdom.” But, he said, it also feels a lot like a beehive. “One team is preparing a meal for dozens of people, a guy is writing his fifth sermon for our nightly program, and on the other side of the room a seasoned



A Boardwalk Chapel volunteer giving her testimony

man is teaching apologetics, while a couple of young musicians are tuning their instruments to lead us in worship.” All this is happening while volunteers are also taking turns engaging passersby with the gospel. “This really is an amazing place!” Rosser said.

Many “short-termers” are quick to attest that this type of serving is hard and intense but also that they came away with a love and devotion for spreading the gospel and serving the Lord like they never had before. “I would highly recommend the Boardwalk Chapel. It is wonderful training on how to evangelize, and I grew so much in my faith and relationship with the Lord,” reflected Micaela Tennis from Harvest OPC in Wyoming, Michigan.

Kindness and Hospitality in the Czech Republic

Katharine Olinger from Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pennsylvania, served with the Farniks in the Czech Republic



Boardwalk Chapel volunteers from New Hope OPC in Frederick, Maryland



Team Praha sightseeing in Prague

in July. “This year’s Team Praha was assembled to assist the Farnik missionary family and Reformovana Presbyterni Cirkev with several outreach efforts,” she explained. “My favorite part of the trip was getting to teach VBS classes to children (many without a church background) from the community. Ježíš Kristus jest Pán! [Jesus Christ is Lord!]”

Michael Weld from Bonita OPC in Bonita, California, served on the Czech Republic’s three-week Team Praha. He says, “The trip involved three phases for the three weeks: a VBS childcare program, a hiking trip for seven Czech youth, and finally a VBS in Prague. I was excited to be a part of this because there are very few Christians in Czechia, and there are very few opportunities like this for Czechs or those in the surrounding countries.” Weld also appreciated the time with the Farniks, who are “hospitable and kind. Their heart for the people they were serving was obvious. As a side note, the food is amazing, and the architecture is stunning!”

Short-Term Missions in 2024

Short-term mission trips took a big hit over the last few years in the face of COVID restrictions and border closings, but it’s coming back strong, with the Lord’s leading. Short-term mission trips grow those who serve, encourage those with whom they serve, lead lost souls to Christ—and perhaps even spur on future missionaries.

Next summer, OPC Short Term Missions hopes to have at least one more destination to offer. In addition to this year’s opportunities, we plan to assemble a team to assist with a vacation Bible school in Puerto Rico. For up-to-date information on that and all current opportunities, please visit OPCSTM.org.

If you’re not sure where you’d like to serve, feel free to contact OPC Short Term Missions at opcshorttermmissions@opc.org.

The author is communications coordinator for OPC Short-Term Missions.

NEWS, VIEWS & REVIEWS

SERAFINI INSTALLED AT MARION, NC

Mike Cloy

On September 15, Rev. Johnny Serafini was installed as an evangelist to serve as organizing pastor of Landis Presbyterian in Marion, North Carolina. Rev. Lacey Andrews, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast, gave the charge. Rev. Lowell Ivey, pastor of Reformation OPC in Virginia Beach, Virginia, prayed for Rev. Serafini and his charge. Rev. Dr. Sid Dyer, professor at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, preached the message. Rev. Peter Van Doodewaard, pastor of Covenant Community OPC in Taylors, South Carolina, gave the charge to the congregation. Ruling elder Mike Cloy prayed for the congregation. The installation service was held at First Presbyterian Church in Marion; 127 people from six states attended the service.



At the September 15 installation of Johnny Serafini (left of pulpit, blue tie) at Landis Presbyterian in Marion, NC

SANFORD INSTALLED AT ROCKFORD, MI

W. Vernon Picknally

On September 30, Rev. Kyle Sanford was installed as pastor of Rockford Springs Community Church in Rockford, Michigan. The sermon was preached by Rev. Everett Henes, pastor of Hillsdale OPC

in Hillsdale, Michigan; the charge to the minister was given by Rev. Marc Scaturro; and the charge to the congregation was given by Rev. David VanderMeer, retired minister from Rockford.

UPDATE

CHURCHES

• On September 16, the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania granted the congregation's request to dissolve **Faith Orthodox Presbyterian Church** in Fawn

Grove, PA, as a congregation of the OPC.

MINISTERS

• On September 8, the Presbytery of the Midwest dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Brian E. Belh** and Providence OPC in Rockford, IL, at the request of both parties.

• On September 15, the Presbytery of Wisconsin and Minnesota dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Bryce C. Souve** and Christ Presbyterian in Janesville, WI.

• On September 15, **Johnny Serafini** was installed as an evangelist to serve as organizing pastor of Landis Presbyterian in Marion, NC.

• On September 16, the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Tony A. Monaghan** and Providence OPC in Charlottesville, VA, and granted Mr. Monaghan honorable retired status.

• On September 17, **John Jee** was installed as church planter for Word of Life OPC, a mission work of the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic, in Columbia, MD.

• On September 30, **Kyle Sanford** was installed as pastor of Rockford Springs Community Church in Rockford, MI.



At Sanford's installation: (back) Steven Pierce, Dave VanderMeer, Stephen Pribble, Vern Picknally, John Ritzema; (front) Dana Dawe, David Noe, Doug Felch, Everett Henes, Kyle Sanford, Marc Scaturro, Wes Reynolds, Randy VanLiere

MILESTONES

- **Jane Carlyle Patete**, 79, wife of the late Reverend Thomas Patete, died September 15, 2023.
- **Carolyn Poundstone**, 82, wife of the Reverend Donald M. Poundstone, died September 17, 2023.

REVIEWS

***Meg Is Not Alone*, by Megan Hill. Crossway, 2022. Hardcover, 32 pages, \$14.99 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP member Tiffany Ward.**

Meg Is Not Alone by Megan Hill is a short and sweet picture book about a young girl, Meg, who accidentally gets left at church by her parents on a Sunday. As anxiety sets in, the members of her local church run to the rescue. Some call her parents, others offer her tissues, still others bring her cookies and storybooks to pass the time until her parents return to the building to gather her.



The purpose of the story is to teach children that “God gave us church friends to take care of us.” The diversity of the church is displayed through babies, teenagers, the elderly, those with disabilities, and people of different races, all assisting Meg in her dilemma. Meg even gets the opportunity to help others in return. With a happy ending, her father teaches her that even though many church friends had taken care of Meg, it was really God who was at work taking care of her through them.

The clever illustrations draw young children into church scenes they are familiar with: the messy church coat rack, a narthex filled with people socializing, the outside view of the church building on an autumn day, and big hugs from dad. The last page of the book contains a note to children explaining that this story is based on real life events that happened to the author when she was a child. In this note, Megan Hill explains that before Jesus died, he told his friends to love one another just as he loved them. It is this commandment that is lived out when our



John Jee being prayed over at his September 17 installation as church planter for Word of Life OPC, a mission work in Columbia, MD.

church friends help us by worshiping with us, by “encouraging us not to sin,” and by praying for us.

This book is an uplifting story for small children that teaches them a very simple truth in a relatable way. All children can relate to the anxiety of being left alone, and this story helps them see that they belong to a family in the local church.

***Ten Words from God: An Exposition of the Ten Commandments*, by Gordon J. Keddie. Crown & Covenant, 2023. Paperback, 240 pages, \$15.00. Reviewed by retired OP minister Irfon P. Hughes.**

By the title of this little book, author and pastor Gordon Keddie, who died in May, brings us face to face, not only with the Ten Commandments, or “Ten Words,” but also with the Author of the whole Bible. Because our age has, at best, ignored these Ten Words from God, we have ignored the Bible too, and are reaping a harvest that is frightening to anticipate both for ourselves and for the generations that will follow us.

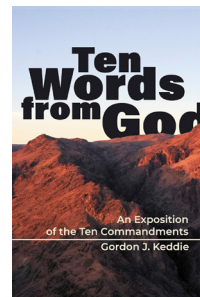
Ten Words from God is the distillation of a series of Bible studies and sermons preached over the many years of Pastor Keddie’s faithful ministry in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, the denomination where he exercised his effective ministry. The book encapsulates the teaching of many

of the classic expositions of the commandments, which make it useful for pastors contemplating a sermon series, heads of families leading family devotions, and any individual Christian or seeker after God.

The first two chapters explain the reason God gives for formalizing these commandments, clarifying the value of these Ten Words from God. Each commandment is only “one word” in Hebrew, but Keddie expands each one most helpfully with many practical observations and applications that give them relevance to our daily lives. We are also encouraged to understand that whilst each commandment is essential on its own, it is also a building block for a total world-and-life view. The first is basic to our understanding for the subsequent nine, but disobeying the tenth means the previous nine collapse, since the tenth lies at their heart.

The personality of the author is clearly seen for our profit in this book. Keddie was a faithful man in home and church life, and those factors are seen at various points as he illustrates his comments. Keddie was primarily a preacher and guide to his congregations, and that comes out in so many applicatory points in these chapters. Although a psalm singer, he can make apt and useful quotations from the hymnology of other traditions, which gives the book a catholic usefulness.

This little book is not meant to replace the classic expositions of the Ten

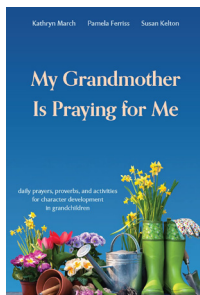


Commandments, but it is useful to the pastor who is preparing a series of sermons on these vital principles that need to be emphasized in an increasingly lawless environment.

***My Grandmother Is Praying for Me: Daily Prayers, Proverbs, and Activities for Character Development in Grandchildren*, by Kathryn March, Pamela Ferriss, and Susan Kelton. P&R, 2022. Paperback, 400 pages, \$13.50. Reviewed by OP member Jane Fadden.**

My Grandmother Is Praying for Me is a yearlong daily devotional written by three Christian grandmothers for grandmothers (or grandfathers)! Kathryn March, Pamela Ferriss, and Susan Kelton have collectively put together a simple daily devotional based on God's wisdom in the book of Proverbs. Each month of the year focuses on a particular character trait like faithfulness, humility, or self-control. Each day features a Scripture verse from Proverbs highlighting that trait, a prayer for your grandchild, and then a special activity that you can do with your grandchild. The activities and conversations are meant to reinforce the wisdom and character traits being worked on that month.

I love the concept of this book! It focuses on imparting God's wisdom to our grandchildren through intentional time spent with them in activity, conversation, discussion, and application of Scripture. I used the book by gathering my grandchildren (ages 4, 5, and 7) around me, reading the verse, praying the suggested prayer, and then doing the activity. They really enjoyed the time spent together and the activities that we did (for example, a treasure hunt on February 23). However, I quickly realized that many of the activities required more time and preparation than I had anticipated (for example: take your grandchild to the grocery store on March 18 and take your grandchild to the zoo on March 19). I



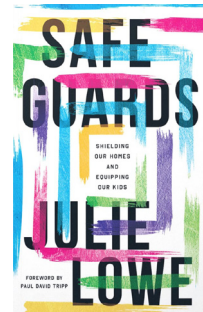
think that's when I put the book on the shelf, so to speak. It wasn't something I could pick up and do with them spontaneously when we had a chance to be together.

I am planning to give it a second round. I will use the Bible verses and prayer in my personal devotions and then invite the grandchildren to join in selected activities with discussion of the themes.

***Safeguards: Shielding Our Homes and Equipping Our Kids*, by Julie Lowe. New Growth Press, 2022. Paperback, 160 pages, \$13.59. Reviewed by OP member YaPing Li.**

Julie Lowe is a counselor, a teacher, and a mother of five. In her counseling classes for seminary students, she teaches her students to help and love children creatively. In her church training seminars, she equips church members to report childhood abuse to protect the vulnerable. In addition to her teaching and counseling gifts, she has written several books, including *Child Proof* and *Building Bridges*, that are filled with biblical and practical wisdom and are well loved by parents and students alike. Her new book, *Safeguards: Shielding Our Homes and Equipping Our Kids*, is her best yet.

Equipping children with safety skills in an increasingly dangerous world is urgent and important. Lowe aims to provide parents with wisdom to equip children with real-life discernment of good and evil. She begins with an accurate diagnosis of the dangers children and teens are uniquely facing today. These dangers can be as well known as technology, peer pressure, and the egocentric culture, and they can also be as alarming as school shootings, childhood sexual abuse, bullying, sexting, pornography, substance abuse, and so on. She delves thoroughly into the issues of childcare guidelines, technology safety guidelines, family safety plans, dating safety plans, and so on. She goes deeper and touches upon the biblical call for children to evaluate the fruit of people, to address bullying, and to respect authorities properly and wisely.



Even more serious in the spiritual sense, dangers also come from the children's own sinful desires. Lowe points out that unbelief is just one generation away, and she calls parents to safeguard the faith of their children and teens. The goal of safeguarding is not only to protect their bodies but to safeguard God's calling for them. When Jesus prepares to send his disciples out, he also gave them hope: "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). With this hope, parents are specially trusted and gifted to equip their children to safeguard their own hearts, for from which is the wellspring of life (Prov. 4:23).

Lowe's theme is to protect children bodily and spiritually. To accomplish her goal, she offers both gospel truth and real-life instruction. Her writing brings comfort to anxious parents by showing them how they can thoughtfully trust our true Protector: as she quotes in her conclusion, "God is our refuge, strength, and a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1). The good news is that our heavenly Father is best able to love and protect his children. Our hope is that Jesus, our true source of safety, is with us all the time. I highly recommend this book for safeguarding the next generation with godliness and true wisdom.

***Reactivity: How the Gospel Transforms Our Actions and Reactions*, by Paul David Tripp. Crossway, 2022. Hardcover, 176 pages, \$27.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Benedict R. Ciavolella.**

Does God's grace extend even to Twitter? Much good comes from the social media platform. Yet even professing Christians can use this and other outlets in ways that are profoundly ungracious, unduly harsh, even hateful—i.e. *toxic*.

In *Reactivity*, author Paul Tripp attempts to address the "culture of toxic reactivity," focusing on how Christians should interact online (p. 14). Though Tripp does not precisely define "reactivity," he characterizes it as a tendency to react in ways that are contentious, disrespectful, self-righteous, vengeful, and "tribalistic" (22–29).

The book begins with Jesus's words: "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). Tripp writes that such love is grievously contradicted in a modern church that he believes is "infected and stained" by "this disruptive and dysfunctional culture of communication" (17).

Turning next to Ephesians 4:29–30, Tripp calls readers to shun "corrupting talk" and embrace "wholesome talk" (33), which he characterizes as "other-centered" (36) and contextually-suitable (38). The next five chapters flesh out some biblical principles that underlie wholesome talk, followed by five more chapters addressing reactivity. Ultimately, Tripp's solution is a better appreciation for God's glory, which is itself a gift of God's grace (91–92).

One strength of this book is its down-to-earth approach to human psychology. For example, Tripp challenges the common reliance upon charged language to gain attention. "As I scan my Twitter feed each day, I wonder if we have functionally lost confidence in the grace that still lives at the very center of our theology" (58). Sadly, Christians may employ outrage as a tool simply "because it gets the job done," without reflecting on whether this pragmatic move is suitable for people who rely on God's regenerating power.

Those who have read Tripp before will encounter familiar lines regarding identity, idolatry, eternity, etc. Though this is not a long book, it strangely seems longer than it should be, with frequent repetition and a puzzling structure (particularly in the latter half). However, readers will also find frequent biblical exegesis and application, features for which we can all be thankful.

One would like to see more thought

given to how Christian conversations could be *constructively* confrontational. Emphasis is placed on the duty to love and listen. Given the book's premise, this is understandable. But is there not still a place for responding to public statements and popular ideas, even on Twitter? Given his own online activity, Tripp likely agrees, yet in *Reactivity* he leaves this thread undeveloped.

Taken alongside unqualified comments like "politics and political power have become too important" (139), the repeated emphasis on unity gives the impression that this book's diagnosis of the church is overly simple, if well intended. It would be unwise for the label of "reactivity" to grow too large,

lest it stifle positive Christian reflection on public thought.

***Worship Matters*, by Cornelis Van Dam. RPpress, 2021. Paperback, 350 pages, \$25.00 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor Archibald A. Allison.**

We are living in a time when people are looking for reasons not to worship the Lord. Whether afraid of illness, tired, busy, entertaining guests, watching sports, or just wanting to relax, many people choose not to gather with God's people on the Lord's Day to worship God. Yet every Lord's Day, untold numbers of Christians defy their civil authorities and gather together to worship God in obedience to the King of Kings. Why do those living under oppressive Communist and Islamic rulers risk everything to gather publicly to praise the Lord and hear his Word? Why do fewer and fewer people go to church in free Western countries, which have a rich Christian heritage? Why do fewer Reformed Christians diligently attend the second worship service?

Christians who are living under anti-Christian regimes seem to have a greater appreciation for the awesome privilege of gathering with God's people in the presence of the Triune God to worship him. They seem to understand

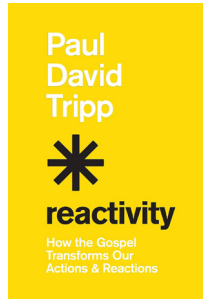
that the highest calling and duty of man is to worship God as Creator, Sustainer, Provider, Savior, and Judge. In Revelation 4:10–11 (NKJV), the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for you created all things, and by your will they exist and were created."

In *Worship Matters*, Dr. Cornelis Van Dam, retired Reformed minister and Old Testament seminary professor, presents an assortment of speeches, special studies, and articles that address many important questions and issues related to public worship. Organized in six parts, the first part addresses whom we worship, why we worship, where we worship, when we worship, and how we worship, as well as chapters on God's presence with his people in public worship and the day of rest and worship. The second part has four chapters on the preaching of the Word, the reading of the Word, the gospel of God's blessing, and the place of the Ten Commandments in worship. The third part has five chapters on the glory of worship, including the privilege of worship and the second service, the glory of the gospel of

Christ crucified for sinners, whom we preach, the glory of the resurrection and the ascension of Christ, and worshiping with the angels. The fourth part discusses singing and music in worship, including why we sing God's praise, why we sing all the psalms, musical instruments, and dancing. The fifth part is five chapters on new

challenges, such as adolescent Christianity, proper dress, seeker-friendly versus covenant worship, baptism, and what should attract those outside the church. The final section discusses our worship in heaven and on earth.

This book gives readers access to rich biblical content, Reformed theology, and church history, while discussing many practical matters. What a privilege of God's grace that Christ redeems sinners who enter into God's holy presence in public worship!



Correction

In the October Update, the presbytery in which Bennie A. Castle served should have been listed as the Presbytery of the Southeast, not Mid-Atlantic.

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