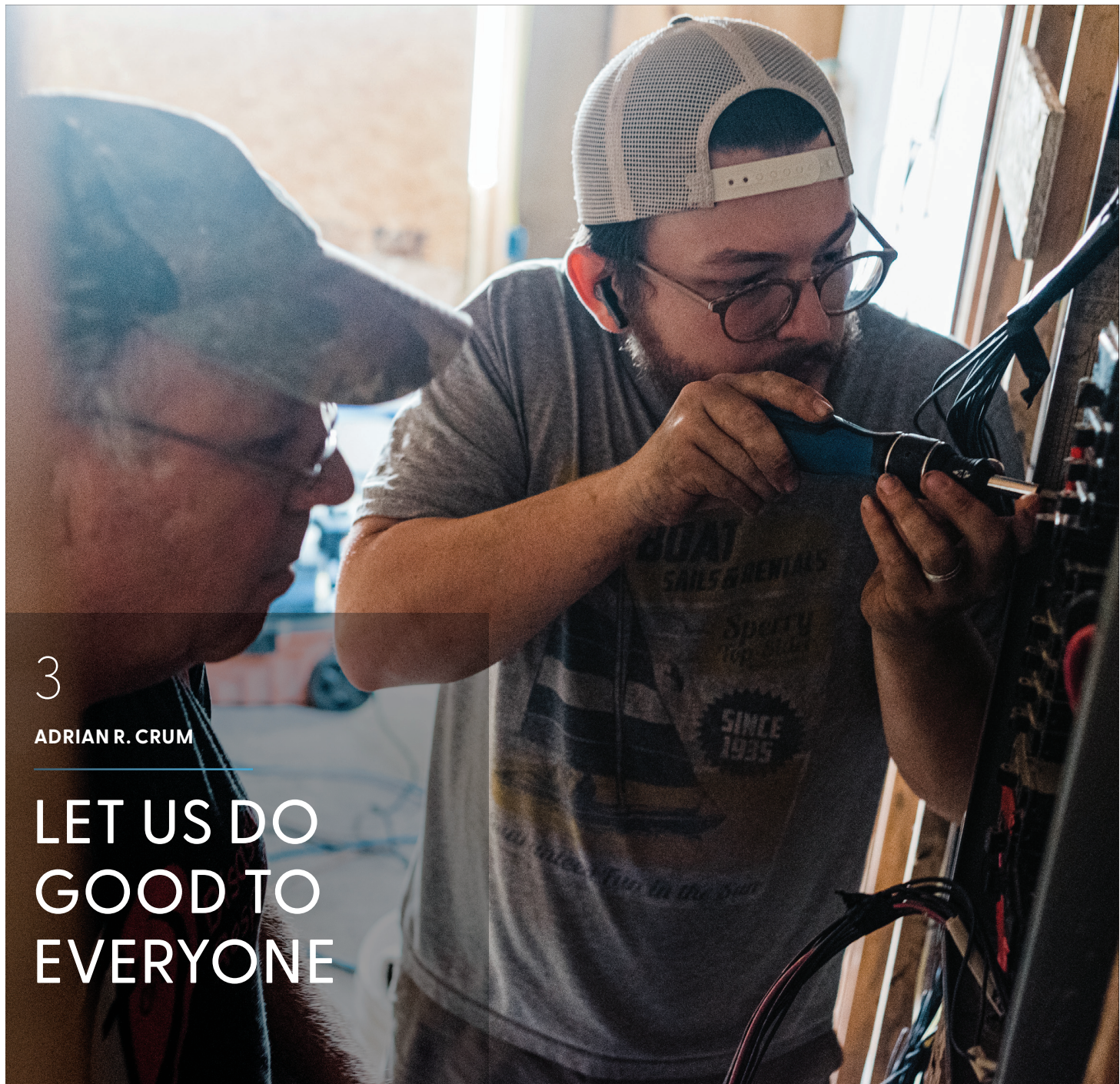


NEW HORIZONS

FEBRUARY 2024

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



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GOOD TO
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Editorial Board: The Committee on Christian Education's Subcommittee on Serial Publications

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Subscriptions: Free to members and friends of the OPC. Nonmembers: \$20.00 annually; \$30.00 for addresses in Canada; \$40.00 elsewhere abroad. A free email PDF subscription is available. Contact: 215-830-0900; or 607 Easton Road, Bldg. E, Willow Grove, PA 19090; or ccesecretary@opc.org.

Periodicals postage is paid at Willow Grove, PA, and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *New Horizons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, 607 Easton Road, Bldg. E, Willow Grove, PA 19090-2539.

Views expressed by our writers are not necessarily those of the editors or official positions of the OPC.

Send inquiries, letters to the editor, and other correspondence to the editor at danny.olinger@opc.org.

OP volunteers after Hurricane Katrina



LET US DO GOOD TO EVERYONE



ADRIAN R. CRUM

Feeling used by someone ostensibly in need can make your stomach drop. Maybe you've been in this situation—wondering if you are being taken advantage of by a stranger in a grocery store parking lot who's asking for money to buy diapers, or by someone at the gas pump with an elaborate story of being stranded. Maybe you give some cash, and then watch the person turn around and use it in self-destructive ways.

Many deacons are familiar with such stories. It's just one reason why some argue that deacons should reserve benevolent funds for members of Christ's church. After all, most of the New Testament references of benevolent care focus on Christians caring for other believers (2 Cor. 8:4, 1 John 3:16–17, James 2:15–16).

I would set forth, however, that all Christians—and deacons especially—are called to show benevolent mercy also to the lost. In Paul's words, "As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone" (Gal. 6:10).

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR MERCY MINISTRY TO NON-MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

The last pagan Roman emperor, Julian the Apostate, begrudgingly admitted that Christians "support not only

their own poor, but [Romans] as well, all men see that our people lack aid from us." Those Christians in Julian's day were simply following a pattern discernible in the Scriptures. In *The Deacon: Biblical Foundations for Today's Ministry of Mercy*, Cornelis Van Dam explains that both Old and New Testaments call God's people to care for sojourners and strangers. In Deuteronomy 14:28, God calls Israelite farmers to bring a tenth of their crops to store in their towns, for the purpose of caring for Levites, orphans, widows—and sojourners.

In Leviticus 19:9–10, farmers are instructed not to harvest the edges of their crops, nor gather "the gleanings." They were to leave some on the vines of their vineyards and leave fallen grapes on the ground, which would become fruit to nourish the poor and sojourners in their midst (cf. Deut. 24:14–18). Ruth, the Moabitess, benefited from this law while gleaning in Boaz's field and fell down in wonder exclaiming, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, *since I am a foreigner?*" (Ruth 2:10, emphasis added). Boaz, however, wasn't practicing something extravagant. He was simply keeping God's prescribed kindness to care for the tangible needs of non-Israelites living in their midst.

Van Dam explains Galatians 6:10—"As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone"—by saying,

The good in view is, according to the immediate context, spiritual help and encouragement and bearing each other's burdens (Gal. 6:1–2), but material help is not excluded (Gal. 6:6, 9). The apostle Paul repeats this principle of loving God's people first but to also be intentional to love outsiders as well. (cf. 1 Thess. 3:12; 5:15)

Hebrews 13 encourages love for brothers in verse 1, right alongside hospitality to strangers in verse 2. When we love even our enemies, lending to them and expecting nothing in return, Jesus tells us we resemble our Father who "is kind to the ungrateful and evil" (Luke 6:35). Romans 12:14 and 20 tell us the way to "overcome evil with good" (12:21)

is to extend tangible blessing to those who persecute us. Christians should be known for nourishing our enemies with food and drink.

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church has formalized this biblical conviction in its Book of Church Order: “Deacons are called to show forth the manifold ministry of mercy towards saints *and strangers* on behalf of the church. To this end they exercise, in the fellowship of the church, a recognized stewardship of care of gifts for those in need or distress” (XI:1, emphasis added). The United Reformed Church of North America echoes this when it writes in Article 15 of its church order, “Needs of those outside the congregation, especially of other believers, should be considered as resources permit.”

COMMON OBJECTIONS

Loving the stranger in this way is not easy. Objections start to rise in our own hearts as we think about this difficult work. First, will ministry in deed toward the lost tend to obscure the priority of the ministry of the Word? Charles Spurgeon, the “prince of preachers,” helped support sixty-six benevolent ministries, according to *Spurgeon and the Poor* by Alex DiPrima. Spurgeon carefully selected ministries that would be connected to both private and public proclamation of the Word: “Good works served witness. Practically every one of Spurgeon’s benevolences incorporated gospel proclamation in some way.”

As a missionary kid growing up in Mexico, I frequently saw how this worked in practice. Many nominal Catholics, or those completely unchurched, were invited to the churches we worked with in Tijuana. Along with their lack of understanding of and belief in the gospel, these new friends had many tangible and physical needs. Deacons worked closely with elders and pastors to make sure that families had basic necessities supplied to them even before they joined our church. Similar to the way personal evangelism comes more naturally during the early stages of a church plant, benevolent ministry went hand-in-hand with Word ministry in these new congregations.

Second, some deacons may ask, “What if deed ministry to the lost exhausts all benevolent resources for God’s people?” Amazingly, when we have tried to spend down a benevolent fund, God has provided in remarkable ways. Longtime OP pastor Mark Brown, now retired, encouraged his congregation to give 51 percent of their total budget to missions, with a portion of benevolent giving going toward the unreached. Rev. Brown testifies to the generosity of God’s people throughout his forty-year pastorate in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania: “Generally we averaged between 30 and 40 percent [going] to missions with one

year actually making 50 percent.”

In his work, “Christian Charity: or, The Duty of Charity to the Poor Explained and Enforced,” Jonathan Edwards summarizes a third potential objection: “I don’t want to help this person because he is of an ill temper or ungrateful spirit.” Timothy Keller, citing Edwards’s work in his *Themelios* article “The Gospel and The Poor” explains, “We all want to help kindhearted, upright people, whose poverty came on without any contribution from them and who will respond to your aid with gratitude and joy. Frankly, almost no one like that exists.” In other words, if we wait to help the worthy, grateful people, we will never begin. Edwards writes, “Christ loved us, was kind to us, and was willing to relieve us, though we were very evil and hateful, of an evil disposition, not deserving of any good . . . so we should be willing to be kind to those who are of an ill disposition, and are very undeserving.”

PRACTICAL & PRUDENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Deacons in a local church cannot devote an equal number of resources to all the needy. In *The Deacons Handbook*, a classic text of diaconal training, Gerard Berghoef and Lester De Koster wisely draw concentric circles of need. I list the first five here: First, training and getting to know the congregation. Second, giving to the needy in God’s household. Third, delegating congregational mercy ministry to the congregation (see important principles of 1 Tim. 5:4, 8). Fourth, serving the neighborhood. Fifth, serving the world.

Need is endless. God calls us to have open eyes, open hearts, and then discernment to know which needs should take priority. It’s easy to give into feeling overwhelmed with all the need. But deacons do not carry out all mercy ministry on their own. God gave officers, not to do all the work themselves, but “to equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph. 4:12). Deacons who know their congregation and the neighborhood will be able to make the needs known, gather human and financial resources, and serve both God’s household and those known to be in need.

God, as our Father, has loved us, the evil and ungrateful. Until we can imagine ourselves in the place of the poor person who needs our help, we will not act. But when we remember that God has poured out his endless, persistent grace on us, we will be motivated and driven to love those who truly are unlovely, just like he loved us. “Christ, though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9). **NH**

The author is an associate pastor at Harvest OPC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and member of the CDM.

Hal Hamstra, Pete Onnink, and Lynne Hunter at the Presbytery Diaconal Summit V 2023



EQUIPPING PRESBYTERY DIACONAL COMMITTEES



TRISH DUGGAN

Each one of the OPC’s seventeen presbyteries has a diaconal committee. However, if you asked five different members of presbytery diaconal committees what their work involves, you may get five different answers. Why? Because most work independently of one another—it’s the nature of being geographically scattered. To bring presbyteries together in their diaconal work, in 2012 the Committee on Diaconal Ministries (CDM) began hosting two-day summits full of instruction, encouragement, and fellowship for members of presbytery diaconal committees (PDCs).

The fifth summit, hosted jointly by the CDM and the Committee on Ministerial Care (CMC), was held in November 2023 in Chicago and attended by representatives

from sixteen of the seventeen presbytery diaconal committees. At the summit, David Nakhla, administrator for the CDM, reintroduced a document that the CDM has been refining since 2012: a proposed mandate for the work of presbytery diaconal committees (see sidebar on page 7). It serves to suggest what a comprehensive scope of an active PDC could be. That scope was also demonstrated at the summit as each speaker reflected on an aspect of the work of presbytery diaconal committees.

CONFESSING CHRIST

In the opening devotional, Rev. Chris Cashen, pastor of Trinity Reformed in Lanham, Maryland, and secretary of the CDM, explained that “confessing Christ crucified and raised from the dead is the foundation of mercy ministry. It is only those who believe in Christ, only those who recognize and trust Jesus as Savior—only these will do greater works.”

AIDING PASTORS

Rev. John Fikkert, director of the CMC, addressed the group to thank them for working alongside the CMC in “wading through some difficult, challenging situations” to aid ministers in getting the help they need. “I think PDCs are essential if we’re thinking about how to care for ministers,” he said. Many evangelical or non-denominational church pastors have diaconal needs that the local church is not equipped to help them with. The OPC, in contrast, is equipped with multiple layers of support, Fikkert explained. Whether there are financial, retirement, or counseling needs, the PDC is the first step in aiding a pastor

and their family. Fikkert also encouraged PDC members to regularly check in with their presbytery's retired pastors to discern needs and opportunities to serve.

Deacon Dave Askey, chairman of the PDC of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, expressed his gratefulness for the groundwork that's been set by the CMC: "The letter you sent us [describing the process of ministerial care] was like manna from heaven," he said. The CMC's resources can be found at opcmmc.org.

ASSISTING CHURCHES AND MISSION WORKS WITHOUT DEACONS

"Church planters are overwhelmed with the responsibility of the basic task of preparing a sermon that feeds people well," explained Rev. John Shaw, outgoing general secretary for the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension. Shaw shared his own struggle as a church planter when several deep-seated mercy ministry needs quickly became evident in his church plant. Shaw admitted that during those times he felt that some material needs may have been overlooked while he was focusing on spiritual needs.

David Nakhla, Stuart McKim, John Stahl, and Mike Cloy in a breakout



"It's not uncommon for our church plants to have those kinds of challenges dropped in their lap. In fact, there's something about new churches and church plants and their evangelistic vibrancy that attracts people with significant needs," Shaw explained. "And yet our church plants don't have the structure and capacity yet to know exactly how to meet those needs." The responsibility of the ministry of mercy falls on the shoulders of the overseeing session, which can be a challenge. Shaw encouraged members of PDCs to communicate not just with church planters but also with presbytery home missions

Longtime presbytery diaconal committee member Bob Keys



committees. "Deacons are uniquely gifted to do this work," he pointed out.

COMMUNICATING WELL WITHIN PRESBYTERIES

"I'm here really, fundamentally, because I love Christ's church, and I'm so grateful that he's called me to be a part of it. And because I love Christ's church, I love the government that he's established for his church," Tim Hopper said in his presentation.

Hopper serves as a deacon at Shiloh Presbyterian in Raleigh, North Carolina, as the chairman of the PDC of the Presbytery of the Southeast (PSE), and as a member of the CDM. Hopper suggested several ways PDC members might promote their work in the broader church, including making use of the CDM resources. Like Shaw, Hopper emphasized the importance of PDC members making themselves available to the congregations and mission works who don't have deacons. (A surprising one-third of the churches in the PSE have no deacons!) He also suggested PDC members make themselves available to small, elderly, or newly appointed diaconates. Members of presbytery diaconal committees can only know and be known within their presbytery if they attend presbytery meetings, Hopper pointed out. Keeping an updated contact list of deacons in the presbytery can also be helpful.

RESPONDING TO DISASTERS

"I wanted to remind Neon Reformed that God will take care of them." That's how elder Mike Cloy, regional disaster response coordinator for the PSE, summed up the purpose of his first visit to Neon, Kentucky, shortly after the catastrophic flood of July 2022. Cloy visited frequently over the next few months to help assess the damage, to encourage, and to provide a way forward. "We are all responsible for the unity, peace, and purity of the church,"

Cloy emphasized. Restoring worship after a disaster is not only the goal of the local church but also of the presbytery and the denomination.

Seth Long, an elder at Neon Reformed and president of the CDM, made clear that Neon Reformed was able to gather for worship in a local park the first Sunday after the flood because of the support and efforts of the presbytery. Through the Lord's blessing upon the collective leadership of the PSE, OPC Disaster Response, and the local church—not to mention the hundreds of thousands of donated dollars, equipment, supplies, and volunteer hours—worship in the church building was restored on October 23, 2022, less than three months after the building was severely damaged. To be positioned well for a disaster within the presbytery, Cloy and Long encouraged PDC members to be prepared, to know their deacons, and to get organized for disaster response.

“BEING HERE BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS”

Deacon Chris Wagner, the chairman of the PDC of the Presbytery of New Jersey, excellently summed up the purpose of the presbytery diaconal summit: “The best thing about this conference is getting to know other men on diaconal committees and learning from their experiences. Being here builds relationships. These conferences allow you to grow and [compile] more resources. This is a lot bigger than just your committee; it's a nationwide community of brothers that can help and learn from each other's experiences.” **NH**

The author is communications coordinator for the Committee on Diaconal Ministries.

Speakers John Shaw, Mike Cloy, David Nakhla, Tim Hopper, John Fikkert, Chris Cashen, and Seth Long



DEFINING THE WORK OF PDCs

LOCAL CONGREGATIONS

- Stand ready to assist local diaconates with matters that exceed their local resources.
- Stand ready to assist congregations and mission works that have no local deacons.
- Promote, encourage, and coordinate diaconal work within the presbytery.
- Educate and encourage the presbytery to carry out diaconal responsibilities in response to various needs.

THE COMMITTEE ON DIACONAL MINISTRIES

- Promote the work of the CDM within the presbytery.
- Serve as the presbytery's liaison between the CDM and the churches of the presbytery in evaluating local requests for aid that the presbytery is unable to provide for and then referring requests to the CDM.

DISASTER RELIEF

- Promote the work of disaster relief among the churches of the presbytery, in coordination with the CDM, other OPC presbyteries, and the broader church.

MINISTERS

- Inquire and act to ensure that every retired minister of the presbytery, and every minister's widow and dependent family, have adequate resources to meet their normal needs.
- Seek to discover cases of pastors in need and provide aid as circumstances warrant.

ANTICIPATING NEEDS

- Assess needs by conducting surveys of the financial needs of the churches of the presbytery.
- Bring to the presbytery's attention the work of other Christian relief agencies.

DIACONAL FUNDS

- Raise funds from the churches of the presbytery to meet particular needs that come to the attention of the PDC.
- Recommend an annual per capita amount that each church of the presbytery should contribute to the PDC.
- Request funds from the CDM as needed.

DEACONS OF THE PRESBYTERY

- Maintain a roll of active deacons of the presbytery and make it available to the presbytery and the CDM.
- Promote communication between local deacon boards.

WITNESSING AT A PRIDE PARADE



BEN STAHL

October 15, 2023, was a beautiful Sunday morning as over three hundred thousand people rose early and made their way by car, bus, and train to Atlanta. If one looked down from the penthouse of one of many skyscrapers nearby, one would see a great crowd waving flags. At street level, it would be evident that this event was not like other parades. Gathering at a time of day when most Christians in America were worshiping God, this group gathered to celebrate and promote the sins summarized by the letters LGBTQ+ and one word: “Pride.”

More than five thousand marchers made their way along the parade route. They carried signs promoting their company, church, or government organization in connection with Pride. The Atlanta United soccer team changed its name for the day to Pride United. Smirnoff and Salesforce, Microsoft and Micron, Grady Hospital and Google—all these and hundreds of others showed the city they celebrate Pride. The crosswalks of midtown were painted the colors of the Pride flag. Restaurants flew Pride flags and had Sunday brunch specials for participants. Curses were raised against God. Praises were offered to Satan. A Bible was publicly torn to shreds. Indeed, this beautiful Sunday morning

gave light to every evil work that is done under the sun.

In 2000, President Bill Clinton designated June as the first Gay and Lesbian Pride Month, and subsequent presidents have added bisexual, transgender, and queer to the list for celebration. Despite numerous warnings in Scripture, pride—the prerequisite for and precursor to destruction—is not only accepted but celebrated in cities around the world in June. Churches are widely represented at these events, marching in solidarity with Pride and preaching another gospel than the one preached by Jesus and the apostles. Sadly, almost absent are representatives of the Light of the World, Jesus Christ. The darkness is very dark.

BEARING WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

On that Sunday morning, thirteen men from various Atlanta-area churches set their minds to worshiping and serving the Lord. They met together at the early service of a local PCA congregation, where God spoke to them through his Word and blessed them with his benediction. Then, accompanied by the prayers of churches around the country, the men headed for the parade route to bear witness to their Savior. Would they be mobbed and harassed like those who had witnessed in Athens, Georgia?

There was some harassment, but, when they opened the Bible, connected the microphone, and prayed, God closed the mouths of the proud. A silence rested among those gathered to observe the parade. The Word of God went out unhindered, declaring God’s glorious deeds. No sirens sounded. No groups destroyed their equipment. No mobs pressed in. For more than an hour, they proclaimed the gospel of God concerning Jesus Christ our Lord. Thousands were warned of sin and its curse, judgment, and torment in the lake of fire for all who will not believe on the name of the Son of God. Thousands were told of him who was sent by God to save sinners from their sin. The glory of the cross and the perfect salvation worked by God in Christ were made known. Life and salvation were freely offered. The call went out: repent of your sin and believe in the Son of God. The all-powerful God allowed his Word and gospel to burst forth into the darkness, and the darkness could neither comprehend nor stop it from advancing.

Yes, there were jeers, cursing, mocking, insults, lewd gestures, and threats. But these just showed that people were listening, and they helped focus attention where it was needed. In the midst of darkness, Christ is the light of the world, and nothing can thwart him from fulfilling all that he intends. The message of salvation through Christ alone, the Savior of sinners, is the most joyful, powerful message that can ever be proclaimed. The gospel of Christ is still the power of God unto salvation. By this gospel, the

fornicator, idolater, homosexual, thief, covetous, drunkard, evil-doer, and extortioner were both warned and called from darkness to light.

The Spirit of power working through the Word of power still brings sinners to salvation. This is the way God has ordained to bring his light to those who walk in darkness. This is the way he has always done so and will continue to do so until he returns. Our belief is that the lost and dying world needs to hear both the public reading and the preaching of the Bible, for “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). This was the goal of those who bore witness to the truth on that Sunday morning in Atlanta.

ABORTION’S LINK WITH PRIDE

Witnessing to Pride parade participants is possible at sporadic events throughout the year, but, sadly, such opportunities present themselves at abortion clinics virtually every day. While one in four high school students currently identifies as LGBTQ+, according to the CDC, one in four women, coincidentally, will have an abortion by age forty-five, according to the Guttmacher Institute. Pride and abortion are linked in promoting death, attacking the image of God, and following the doctrine of demons (1 Tim. 4:1; see also Chuck and Donna McIlhenny’s insights on this topic in their memoir of ministry at an OP church in San Francisco in the 1990s, *When the Wicked Seize a City*). The promise of the Bible is that Christ is life and gives life; abortion and pride lead only to death. Proponents of both sins are therefore united in despising the living and true God of the Bible (John 3:19).

Proverbs links abortion and pride as things that are an abomination to the Lord: “a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood” (Prov. 6:17 NKJV). In Proverbs 8:36, God says, “All those who hate me love death” (NKJV). Inadvertently testifying to this truth, Planned Parenthood routinely allies itself with Pride events, leading the New York City Pride Parade, for example, in 2022.

Churches that have not wholly embraced Pride and abortion are few and far between. Surveys suggest that for those outside the church, most who have not engaged in these sins still consider themselves allies of those who have. The truth of 1 John 5:19 is all too unmistakable: “And the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one” (NKJV).



THE CHURCH’S COMMISSION

As Jesus prepared to ascend into heaven, he gave his church her marching orders, her commission, her duty until he returns (Matt. 28:18–20). That commission begins with one simple word, “Go”! If the church remains inside her walls, she can maintain a measure of comfort and safety, but it comes at a massive cost in light of the degenerating world outside. Of the many problems with living life exclusively within those walls, consider these two:

First, Jesus did not say, “Stay here and make disciples.” He said, “Go therefore and make disciples . . .” Will Christ’s church not pity the nations, even as she asks God to do? Will Christ’s church “go”? “Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23). He has commissioned his church for this mission—let us go!

Second, the Lord is at work in wonderful ways outside the four walls of the church. If we fail to go beyond them, we will miss out on glorious examples of his power. How it magnifies the Lord when a nurse comes out of an abortion clinic telling Christian witnesses she just quit because she was sinning against God and against these children! Do you want to know the power of God? Go!

All power and authority have been given to him who died and rose again, and behold he is with us always, even until the end of the age. More days are coming when the wicked will gather. Will we go to them and meet them with the proclamation of Christ crucified for sinners? What do we have to fear among the hosts of lost sinners all around us? “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them” (2 Kings 6:16). **NH**

The author is a ruling elder at Redeemer OPC in Doraville, Georgia.

REVIEW: OLASKY AND SAVAS'S *THE STORY OF ABORTION IN AMERICA*

ADELINE A. ALLEN

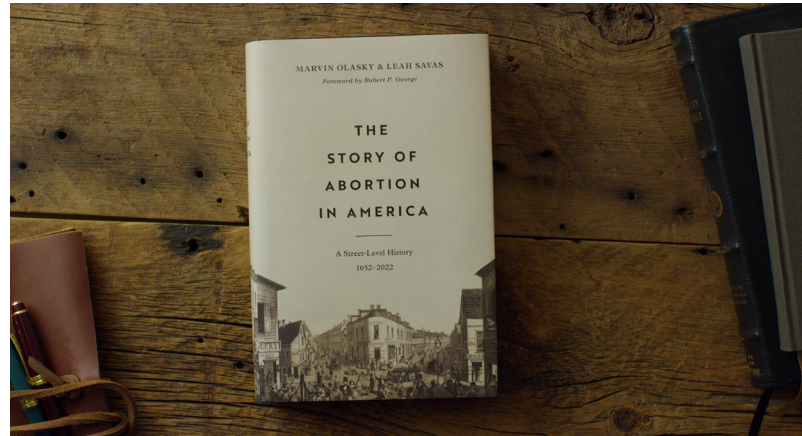
One year after the *Dobbs* decision [at the time of this author's writing], the landscape of abortion laws in America looks like a patchwork quilt. Some states are very restrictive, some frightfully permissive—even pushing for abortion, really—with others in between. Leading up to *Dobbs* and in the year since, much ink has been spilled in court briefs, legislative work, and academic scholarship over the arguments for and against abortion—the why and the why not, the ought and the ought not.

Such “suite-level” scholarship is well complemented by the “street-level” history of abortion in Marvin Olasky and Leah Savas's *The Story of Abortion in America: A Street-Level History, 1652–2022* (Crossway, 2023), as Princeton University's Robert P. George puts it in his foreword. A survey of the history of abortion in America, it is generously interspersed with stories of the figures and characters set in the context of their times.

The abortion stories from early America are the most interesting, if also rarely encountered. The reader travels on the voyage from the Old World to the New with the woman of interest, often of a tragic family background, and sits with her as she falls for a scoundrel who impregnates her. The reader watches with horror as she is given an abortifacient, killing the baby—and often herself.

The pattern repeats itself time and again as colonies settle down, America gains independence, and cities teem with young workers in the rise of industrial urban life. Many of the accounts are grisly, all tragic. Each is reason for us to put on sackcloth and ashes, to weep between the porch and the altar (Joel 2:17).

Notorious abortionists make for a spectacle, and an utterly vile one. Before America met Kermit Gosnell's jars of severed baby feet in Philadelphia, there was, to pick just one, the infamous Madame Restell in nineteenth-century New York. She grew so fabulously wealthy from plying her abortionist trade that her Fifth Avenue house was replete with a grand hall of marble, three dining rooms with



furnishings of gold and bronze, and bedrooms boasting blue brocade satin and bedsteads of gold and ebony. Said a district attorney of her house, “Every brick in that splendid mansion might represent a little skull, and the blood that infamous woman has shed might have served to mix the mortar” (165). The day she was to face trial, she committed suicide at home. Guess what keeps watch over her grave at the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery? A monument with a sleeping baby. You can't make this up.

The size of the book, around five hundred pages, may be a deterrent for those who might otherwise pick it up casually. The authors aid the reader by organizing the book into chronological periods and writing each chapter with a unifying theme, each chapter short and compelling.

THE LAW OF THE LAND

A few themes of note include the authors' perceptive sketch of early America's strong sense of right and wrong expressed through common sense in adjudicating abortion cases, even when there was not much in the common law (and later in statutes) on which to hang their hats. When there *have* been laws against abortion, poor enforcement, government corruption, and difficulty in obtaining conviction are recurring themes.

Honorable doctors, midwives, ministers, public figures,

government agents, and do-gooders earn their place in the book's hall of fame, if you will—as do their dishonorable counterparts, for shame and for posterity. This reader appreciates the authors' chronicle of the life-affirming role that the increased visibility of the babe in the womb has played—from sculptures of the developing baby in the 1930s to ultrasound images. The historical link between the rise in contraception and the rise in abortion makes for a sobering read, perhaps especially for Protestants, who have often been quick to dismiss the theological grounding of the case against contraception.

Olasky and Savas are journalists (Olasky served for nearly four decades as editor-in-chief of *WORLD*), and they write with a journalist's eye and sensibility. They point out throughout the book how much (or how little!) coverage abortion has garnered in newspapers, major and local, as a function of politics and predilection. They also note *how* abortion has been covered: sensationally if a beautiful woman was a victim on the table of the abortionist, but nearly always unfairly to babies, who are dismissed and forgotten as victims.

The book leads the reader to the Fourteenth Amendment in the 1860s, set in context with states' treatments of abortion at the time. This is of utmost interest in light of the debate of whether the baby in the womb is protected under the Fourteenth Amendment's original public meaning, to which some answer in the affirmative. Such understanding would make abortion unconstitutional in the land, not up to each state. Such understanding is also what some, this reader included, think is worthy to be the north star in the post-*Dobbs* fight for life.

Ironically, today's patchwork landscape of abortion returns the American woman seeking abortion to much the same place two centuries ago: "abortion by ingesting a substance" (375). That is, though red states may ban abortion, people can (and do) get their hands on abortion pills by mail. Chemical abortion pills then make for the new battleground of abortion. In the epilogue, Olasky offers some observations and lessons. The pro-life community would be prudent and enriched to read this book.

The author is associate professor at Trinity Law School.

CONGRATULATIONS

The **Shorter Catechism** has been recited by:

- **Caedmon Maloney**, *Harvest OPC, San Marcos, CA*

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

Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ (1684) and Pneumatologia (1674) by John Owen

Anyone interested in profound, yet devotional, trinitarian theology should read John Owen. While increasingly known for pressing communion with all three divine persons in *Communion with God*, the truth is that Owen wrote about the Trinity in almost all his writings. Pressing devotional uses of the Trinity is, in the end, tantamount to saying that the gospel is about knowing God, and that knowing God excites doxology.

Among Owen's voluminous writings, his *Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ* and *Pneumatologia* stand out to this end. *Communion with God* appeared in 1657, early in Owen's writing career. He published these other two books later, towards the end of his life. As such, they mark some of Owen's deepest, clearest, and most mature reflections on the triune God.

Owen wrote *Meditations and Discourses* to teach his congregation to meditate on the Savior as the primary means of promoting progress in the Christian life. In a time when many people separate Christology from "practical" issues, such as overcoming indwelling sin, this book is eminently timely. Particularly, the end of the book presses meditating on seeing Christ in heaven (beatific vision) in order to be more Christlike on earth. The book is brief, readable, and has few peers.

Pneumatologia, despite its Greek title, is one of the most thorough and practical treatments of the Holy Spirit in church history. Building on one of his most profound expositions of the doctrine of the Trinity, Owen traces the Spirit's person and work through the Bible, aiming to distinguish mere "moral virtue" (i.e., moralism), from the Spirit's work in sanctification. Though challenging at points, readers will be hard-pressed to find a more thorough and useful book on who the Spirit is and what he does.

—Ryan McGraw

CHAPLAINS CONTINUE CARE

CORNELIUS JOHNSON AND PATRICK MORGAN



In the past ten years, while our nation’s military has continually been engaged in combat operations across the globe, our government has redefined marriage, gender, and even the nature of life itself. Questions have naturally arisen among members of the OPC about our chaplains’ ability to minister in the face of these changes. To answer that question, we must first understand the nature of military chaplaincy. Second, we want to allay the more serious concerns.

Endorsed OP chaplains serve in the U.S. Armed Forces, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and the Veterans Administration. OP chaplains also serve in law enforcement, state prisons, and civilian healthcare facilities throughout our nation. While not discounting the service of non-military chaplains, this brief article pertains mainly to our military chaplains.

MINISTERING WORD AND SACRAMENT IN UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Who is a military chaplain? He is, first, an ordained minister of Word and sacrament. If he is on active duty, he is a full-time member of the military; if he is a member of a reserve or National Guard unit, he may be your pastor, serving in both the local church and the military.

He wears the chaplain cross on his uniform, signifying that he comes with full credentials from his denomination to work as a chaplain. In the OPC, a chaplain has a call from his presbytery as an evangelist, just like a missionary does, and is charged to administer the Word and sacraments to his fellow members of the armed forces according to that call. He offers worship services in unconventional places (and on unconventional days of the week): in the field, on a ship or airplane, in a hospital or aid station, or any place available for worship. He offers counseling to believers and unbelievers on a multitude of issues while maintaining confidentiality; he ministers to military

members and their families alike, wherever they may be. He performs weddings, visits the sick and dying, visits prisoners, provides comfort to the grieving and bereaved, and honors the dead by providing memorial services and funerals.

When serving in a Marine battalion about four years ago, I (Cornelius) remember a Marine in his early twenties who was arrested and convicted for selling drugs. He got a short prison sentence, and I visited him weekly in the military jail. He told me during one of my visitations that his arrest was a blessing from God. I noticed that he became a different person and became very serious about his relationship with Christ. He started reading the Bible and other Christian books that I gave him. One weekend he prayed and fasted. He eventually was released from jail and went back to his hometown. My meetings with him made a great impression on me.

I (Patrick) was called to active duty to serve in a Cavalry squadron deploying to Iraq in 2003. One of the troopers who deployed with us was subsequently indicted for a very serious crime back home. For a week, he was detained, awaiting transportation to the United States to stand trial. I visited him, and he asked why I was wasting time talking to him about things he didn’t believe. I told him that I was there because he was a member of my “congregation,” just like every other soldier. Eventually, he admitted his guilt to me, and I said that whatever he had done, he could call upon the Lord Jesus Christ and know forgiveness. I visited every day, morning and evening. While he remained hesitant and resistant, by week’s end, he allowed me to read the Bible to him, agreed to face the

charge and speak the truth, and even allowed me to pray for him before he left.

Both of us have served extensively in the military hospital context—Cornelius as a chaplain at a military base, Patrick in a combat hospital in Iraq. The fragility of life, the reality of suffering, and the imminency of death is a constant reminder of the urgency of the gospel. Whether a chaplain is called to be present alongside someone whose loved one is being taken off life support, or to hold the hand of a wounded warrior, or to accompany a next of kin notification of a military family member, it is a profound and solemn honor. Chaplains have the distinct privilege to minister and to pray with and for both the joyful and the suffering, bringing the comfort and peace of God to them as they face some of the most difficult times of their lives.

MAINTAINING A DELICATE BALANCE FOR THE SAKE OF MINISTRY

The chaplain is also a member of the organization where he serves. In the military, he is an officer. He wears the rank insignia (such as lieutenant, or commander, or colonel), which means he has taken the same oath every military officer takes—to defend the Constitution of the United States and obey the orders of the president. He is given all the respect and status of his rank, but he is uniquely addressed as “Chaplain” as a reminder of his first calling. He is a team member and a personal staff officer of the unit’s commander, and he advises the leadership on personnel matters, the morale of the organization, and other ethical issues. The chaplain is assigned to the unit he serves. He trains with them, visits them in their workplace, attends unit functions, and is deployed and faces danger with them. In some ways, the chaplain is a missionary. “To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people that . . . I might save some” (1 Cor. 9:22). The chaplain seeks to be used by God to bring some into the kingdom.



Whether on active duty or not, he is a ministerial member of a presbytery and endorsed by the church. OP chaplains are endorsed through the Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplains (PRCC), a NAPARC entity. The PRCC certifies the chaplain to the government as a representative of the OPC in the military. The policy of the government is to respect the “traditions” of the church that a chaplain represents—for us, that is the Westminster Standards. A chaplain may not be required to perform any religious rite that conflicts with the Standards, and chaplains also have liberty to conduct their ministry (teaching, counseling, and leading worship) in accordance with those standards. It is often a delicate balance, but by God’s grace, we both have found the chaplain’s work to be a rewarding and joyful calling.

Many folks ask us about the restrictions that chaplains have regarding praying in Jesus’s name, being required to perform certain weddings, or being told what they can and cannot preach. Our experience is that OP chaplains feel they have liberty to preach the Word of God and winsomely and cheerfully lay out the claims of Christ before their fellow military members. Neither of us have ever had our commanders edit our prayers, nor have we been ordered to do anything contrary to our confessional standards. The PRCC works tirelessly on behalf of our chaplains in that regard. There is always, of course, the risk of offending people and being persecuted, so please keep praying that God would grant our chaplains liberty to minister as they proclaim the gospel.

For more information about OPC chaplain ministries, visit opc.org/chaplain/index

For more information about the PRCC, visit pcamna.org/ministry/chaplain-ministries

The authors are members of the OPC Committee on Chaplains and Military Personnel.

TWO CONFERENCES ON EVANGELISM

MICAH M. BICKFORD AND GREGORY O'BRIEN



Micah Bickford
with Jeremiah
Montgomery

Evangelism was the topic of the conference hosted by Grace Reformed in October 2023. A frequent challenge leveled against Reformed theology is that the absolute sovereignty of God leaves little motivation, much less any practical purpose, for the work of evangelism. The session of Grace Reformed has long desired to encourage both

members as well as friends from other local congregations to see how faithful evangelism flows from the faithful application of Reformed theology. God's sovereignty is the very heart and motivation of this important calling.

As speaker, Rev. Jeremiah Montgomery challenged and encouraged the saints at Grace Reformed in faithful evangelism. Forty-one people gathered on the first evening. The excitement was infectious. The conference carried into Saturday, concluding with a time of questions and answers with Montgomery and myself.

Evangelism is a sacred responsibility entrusted to us by our faithful Savior Jesus Christ. Yet so often, evangelism is taught with guilt and approached with fear. We find ourselves drowned in a sea of programs and paralyzed in confrontational evangelism. This is not the way it should be. Montgomery brought us to the text of Scripture to challenge our hearts, minds, and wills as he showed how faithful evangelism is: 1) loving all people well, 2) listening to their stories carefully, and 3) speaking freely the hope of the good news of Jesus Christ.

The congregation joyfully received his teaching. Tom, a friend of Grace Reformed and campus staff minister for the local InterVarsity Fellowship at the University

In late 2023, two OP church plants hosted evangelism conferences. In October, Grace Reformed in Farmington, Maine, welcomed as speaker Rev. Jeremiah Montgomery, the incoming general secretary for the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension (CHMCE). Then, in December, Christ Church Downingtown in Downingtown, Pennsylvania, welcomed as speaker Rev. John Shaw, the outgoing CHMCE general secretary. What follows are reports on each conference, written by the church-planting pastors.

EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS AS OPPORTUNITIES FOR WITNESS: A CONFERENCE IN FARMINGTON, ME

Micah M. Bickford

Keith Dubuc discovered the Reformed faith as a young man. As he subsequently devoured as much content as he could get his hands on, he hoped for a Reformed church in his hometown. This dream came true when Grace Reformed in Farmington, Maine, first organized as a Bible study in 2013. But Keith, who now serves as a ruling elder at Grace Reformed, had another dream. And now, ten years later, that second dream has come to pass: a Reformed theology conference in rural Maine!

of Maine, said, “It was encouraging to spend that time with people who love God, learning together as a group. I think the biggest takeaway for me is that it made me start looking at everyday interactions as opportunities to be a witness of who Jesus is and to love folks.” One eleven-year-old responded excitedly, “I never thought of missions as being at home.”

It has been a rich blessing for the congregation of Grace Reformed to now build on what we talked about at the conference through ongoing mutual encouragement and by praying together for those people with whom we are seeking to build relationships.

Another fruit of this conference is the tangible evidence of the deep connection and fellowship between Grace Reformed and the broader OPC. For those raised in independent churches, the investment of CHMCE has been a rich encouragement and blessing as we witness the love and support of the OPC for church planting—even in rural Maine.

PEOPLE OF THE HARVEST: A CONFERENCE IN DOWNINGTOWN, PA

Gregory O'Brien

All Christians surely know that there is no greater news than Jesus Christ crucified, buried, and raised for us and our salvation. Yet how many of us struggle to open our mouths to tell friends, family, and even enemies this gospel? I would imagine all of us do.

Rev. John Shaw recently delivered five lectures at Christ Church Downingtown to remind the saints of the great reason we have to take up this wonderful privilege. Though the whole conference was rich, there are three considerations that are particularly helpful to the Downingtown congregation. First, amidst our timidity and fear, we need to remember “the promise of the harvest.” That is to say, we need to remember that Jesus Christ is the Lord of the harvest. He shed his blood that he might redeem an innumerable multitude from every tribe, tongue, and nation. Will the Lord of the harvest be satisfied with anything less? Of course not. Instead, “he who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, *shall* come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalm 126:6, emphasis added).

If we need to remember this promise of the harvest, so we need to embody the “attitude of the harvest.” This attitude begins with repentance. Why repentance? Because repentance brings us to the cross, where we find a new and clean heart that is ready to tell others what God has done for us. We often fall into thinking that this or that person



John Shaw in Downingtown, PA

would never become a Christian. But knowing God blots out all the iniquities of a person “like me” enables us to realize that he will do the same for others who are as hardened in sin as you and I were prior to Christ.

Having focused on the promise and the attitude of the harvest, we need to ask an important question: “Are we on our own?” Is it just me and Jesus in evangelism? The Bible’s teaching on “the church and the harvest” tells us that there is one divine institution that draws all believers together to carry out this important work. God’s great evangelistic plan is the church!

Of course, this takes place in worship as our services are structured by the gospel and filled with the content of the gospel. But as the church is centered on Christ and makes diligent, joyful use of the means of grace, we become the very kind of people that want to invite others and welcome them into our churches. Not only that, but more and more we have the confidence to say to our neighbors, “Taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!” (Psalm 34:8).

Rev. Shaw drew out many practical implications from all of this—of which I will mention two. First, prayer. Most obviously, it is not us but the Lord who will bring in the harvest, and therefore we need to pray for the Lord’s work in the hearts of our lost family, friends, and neighbors. We also need to pray for ourselves and our churches to remember the promise of the harvest and adopt the attitude of the harvest. Second, what if every member of our churches not only knew what the gospel is but was able to clearly—if simply—articulate it? That’s an easy goal for each church to aim at as we keep our eyes on the harvest.

The authors are OP church-planting pastors.

FORMAL TRAINING FOR AFRICAN PASTORS

L. CHARLES JACKSON

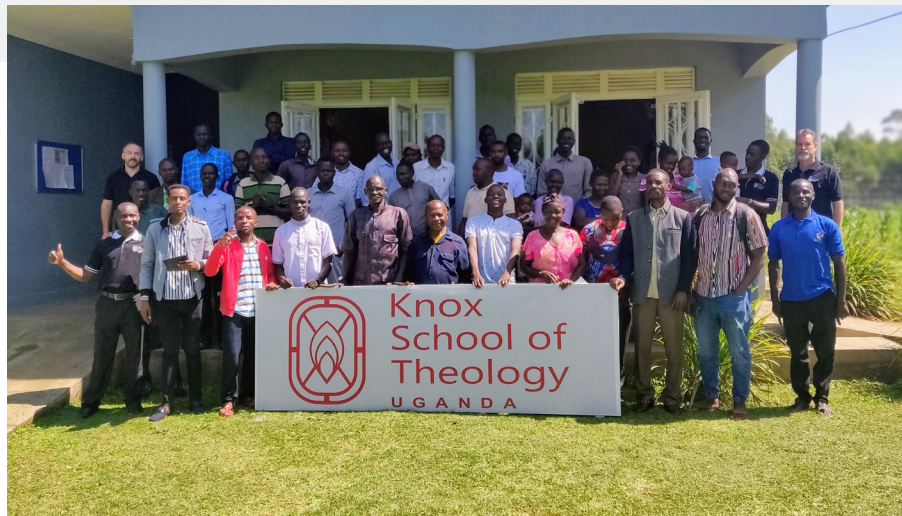
Africa has the fastest growing Christian population in the world and a great need for pastoral training. Demographers predict that by 2050 there will be 1.3 billion Christians in Africa—almost 40 percent of all the Christians in the world. But, by one estimate, 90 percent of all pastors in Africa have had no formal pastoral training. As African Christianity grows at staggering rates, it offers the OPC an amazing opportunity to answer the need for pastoral training.

When the OPC began its work in eastern Uganda, it started a small pastoral training center in Mbale. When my family and I arrived in 2015, the little school was called Knox Theological College. It was mostly focused on training village pastors for a newly forming church, the Presbyterian Church of Uganda. I wondered if the OPC could expand Knox’s horizons, but I was told by almost everyone that accreditation was too long, too hard, and too expensive.

A PROVIDENTIAL PATH TO ACCREDITATION

However, in response to growing pressure from governments all over east Africa, it became clear that pastoral training was going to need accreditation. We realized that there were no serious accredited programs of pastoral study that were confessionally Reformed. Knox’s earliest attempt to solve the problem was to work with a local university, Livingstone International University (LIU). This worked well, and we even had a graduation of our first group of men. However, although LIU was a great partner, it was not Reformed.

When COVID hit in 2020, everything changed. Churches were closed; schools were shut down. I was like most of you. I was told to go home and wait. It occurred to me that this may be the opportunity to do what everyone said



we didn’t have the time to do—create an independently accredited program at our little OPC school in Mbale. We formalized the name as Knox School of Theology (KST), and off we went. We hired a young MDiv graduate named Okuch to help work through the mountain of paperwork, forms, and documents that were involved. God blessed the efforts. In the summer of 2022, Knox School of Theology was given a provisional license of accreditation.

The response to our new program has been overwhelming. Though we never advertised, we have more students applying than we can accept. We are so humbled to now have quality students from all over east Africa. We currently have students from Burundi, Rwanda, The Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Kenya, and, of course, Uganda. We have applications for next year from Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Cameroon.



Knox School of Theology

UGANDA

RESPONDING TO CHRISTIANITY'S RAPID GROWTH IN AFRICA

The new students at Knox represent a rapidly growing field of students looking for Reformed pastoral training at a government-recognized, degree-granting institution, of which Knox will be one of only a handful on the whole continent of Africa when it receives full charter status. God has providentially put us at the center of an amazing situation. Africa's Christian population is growing faster than anywhere else in the world, according to some estimates, and yet there's a dearth of formally trained pastors.

When I see the staggeringly high numbers of growth in "Christianity," I'm not encouraged per se. Vast swaths of this growth are fraught with what we call the "health and wealth gospel." The promises of riches, comfort, health, and wealth play like sweet music in the ears of many people who languish in poverty and disease. The "mighty men of God" who fly into crusades with thousands of people longing for some relief to their terrible situations, fly back to their huge homes—and seem to be the only ones with wealth and prosperity. It's discouraging to watch, but as we train men at Knox, we see a true glimmer of hope for Africa. We are training men to believe and to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the first four centuries of the early church, Africa had theologians like Tertullian, Athanasius the Great, Augustine of Hippo, and many others. Their teachings not only shaped a vibrant African Christianity, they also shaped the whole world of Christianity and encouraged gospel efforts in missions to the once-barbarian peoples in Europe. Our hope at Knox is to teach and train a new generation of young men who will go back to their villages and cities all over Africa to preach the gospel and build strong churches. From these churches, the expectation is that they too will commit such things to faithful men who will carry on the Great Commission, bringing great glory to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

PRAY, GIVE—AND MOVE?

One might wonder, "Can the OPC really have such great effect with such small numbers?" First, God tells us not to despise the day of small beginnings. Second, it's already happening! We praise God that your prayers, giving, and loving support have produced such a great harvest here in Uganda. We thank you for your prayers. We thank many of you who are supporting students here with sponsorships. We thank the presbyteries who are starting to organize to send pastors to teach at Knox.

Please pray for Knox. The next step will be to apply for "charter" status, which is basically permanent accred-



Students at the newly accredited Knox School of Theology

itation. The Lord has provided many new buildings, such as a new dorm, which is already almost full, and a new kitchen. However, we need to build one more building for a larger library, classrooms, and administration. With this new project, Knox is poised to be one of only two Reformed institutions in Africa with charter status. We also need missionaries to come to work here in Mbale. Praise God with me that Knox could be one of *the* most important pastoral training centers in all of Africa. Join us in prayer, in giving—and perhaps even in moving here to join the work.

The author is a missionary in Mbale, Uganda.

WHAT'S NEW

Mr. and Mrs. D. Joshua (Danielle) Grimsley from Concho Valley OPC, in Concho, Arizona, have been appointed to serve as missionary associates with the OPC Uganda Mission in Nakaale, Karamoja, Uganda. They and their four daughters, Paisley (9), Viola (7), Rosemary (4), and Grace (15 mos.), will be in Uganda for one year, starting in February 2024.

FEB 2024 PRAYER CALENDAR



The Paysons (day 6)



The Garretts (day 5)

1 **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia. Pray for Mrs. F as she travels to visit family and for Mr. F as he continues his work. / **John & Grace Jee**, Columbia, MD. Pray for the gospel to spread through the evangelistic efforts of Word of Life OPC.

2 **Lacy (Debbie) Andrews**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast. / **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia. Pray for Mr. M as he begins a season of visiting churches.

3 Pray for the **Ethiopian Reformed Presbyterian Church** and for the persecuted church in **East Africa**. / Pray for GCP Interim Executive Director **John Dunahoo**.

4 Home Missions general secretary **Jeremiah Montgomery**. / **Mark & Jeni Richline**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Ask the Lord to provide Uruguayan pastors for Presbyterian and Reformed church plants.

5 **Corey & Andrea Paige**, Kyle, TX. Pray Hays County OPC's outreach efforts would bring visitors to worship services. / Yearlong intern **David (Hope) Garrett** at Orthodox Presbyterian in Franklin Square, NY.

6 **Stephen & Catalina Payson**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Praise God for families who are seeking membership and beginning membership classes. / **John Fikkert**, director for the Committee on Ministerial Care.

7 Associate missionaries **Octavius & Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray for safety and trust as church members travel for church and daily activities. / **Mark & Celeste Jenkins**, Placentia, CA. Pray for Resurrection Presbyterian's endurance in evangelism and discipleship.

8 **Dan & Stacy Halley**, Tampa, FL. Praise God for his provision of new officers for Bay Haven Presbyterian. **David Nakhla**, Committee on

Diaconal Ministries coordinator. Pray for deacons as they love and serve their congregations, often in countless ways.

9 **Ben & Heather Hopp**, Haiti. Pray for encouragement for the saints on La Gonâve and Port-au-Prince as Ben visits the churches. / **Mark Stumpff**, Loan Fund manager.

10 **Charles (Margaret) Biggs**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic. / **Heero & Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for God to use the war to bring deep, lasting changes in Ukraine and surrounding countries.

11 **David & Ashleigh Schexnayder**, Scottsdale, AZ. Pray the Lord would grant wisdom and direction to the leaders of Providence OPC. / **Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel**.

12 Pray for affiliated missionaries **Craig & Ree Coulbourne** and **Linda Karner**, Japan. / Yearlong intern **David Wright** at South Austin Presbyterian in Austin, TX.

13 Pray for blessing on the work of the **Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ)**. / **Nate & Anna Strom**, Sheboygan, WI. Pray that the members of Breakwater Church would maintain self-denying grace to pursue the lost.

14 **Carl & Stacey Miller**, New Braunfels, TX. Pray that God will bless the parents of Heritage Presbyterian as they raise their covenant children. / Yearlong intern **David (Jazmine) Rios** at The Haven OPC in Commack, NY.

15 Pray for **retired missionaries** Cal & Edie Cummings, Greet Rietkerk, Young & Mary Lou Son, and Brian & Dorothy Wingard. / Pray that the **Ruling Elder Podcast** would bless listeners.

.....
16 **Brad (Cinnamon) Peppo**, regional home missionary of the Miami Valley for the Presbytery of Ohio. / Pray for **Travis & Bonnie Emmett**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they expect the arrival of their fourth child this month.

.....
17 Home Missions associate general secretary **Al Tricarico**. / Pray that churches and individuals would engage in one of the many upcoming **OPC short-term missions** opportunities.

.....
18 Pray for missionary associates **Josh & Danielle Grimsley**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they and their four young daughters arrive on the field. / Yearlong intern **Joe (Melody) Gehrman** at Covenant OPC in Orland Park, IL.

.....
19 Associate missionary **Leah Hopp**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for a successful examination for Pastor Julius at the Reformation Church of East Africa presbytery meeting. / **Matt & Hyojung Walker**, Yorktown, VA. Give thanks for the strong interest in membership classes at Peninsula Reformed Presbyterian.

.....
20 **Johnny & Berry Serafini**, Marion, NC. Pray that Landis Presbyterian would have a great desire to worship God and grow in love for the lost. / Pray that additional able-bodied, mercy-minded servants would register their interest with **OPC Disaster Response**.



The Ambroses (day 28)

.....
21 Pray for associate missionaries **Christopher & Chloe Verdick**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they help new teammates settle in Nakaale. / Please pray for stated clerk **Hank Belfield** as he and others prepare for the 90th General Assembly, June 19–25.

.....
22 **Chris (Megan) Hartshorn**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California. / Pray for missionary associate **Jed Homan**, Nakaale, Uganda, as he works with other missionary associates on significant maintenance projects.

.....
23 **Bill & Margaret Shishko**, Commack, NY. Pray that The Haven OPC will persevere in the service of Christ. / Yearlong intern **Andrew (Noel) Davis** at Covenant Presbyterian in Marina, CA.

.....
24 Tentmaking missionary **Tina DeJong**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for a fruitful diaconal training by David Nakhla in Nakaale and Mbale. / **Melisa McGinnis**, financial controller.

.....
25 **Charles & Connie Jackson**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for the staff at Knox School of Theology to grow in love for the Lord. / **Gregory & Ginger O'Brien**, Downingtown, PA. Pray for the Lord's blessing on the four men recently ordained as elders at Christ Church Downingtown.

.....
26 Home Missions administrative assistant **Allison Groot**. / Yearlong interns **Tyler (Jeanna) Freire** at Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, OH, and **Brennen (Tiffany) Winter** at Harvest OPC in Wyoming, MI.

.....
27 Missionary associates **Nathan & Elisabeth Bloechl**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for joy and faithfulness in ministry and ordinary life. / Pray for **Danny Olinger** in his work as director of the intern program.



The Millers (day 29)

.....
28 **Will & Lauren Sloan**, Eastern Shore, VA. Pray that Good Shepherd OPC would graciously speak to others about heavenly things. / Affiliated missionaries **Dr. Mark & Laura Ambrose**, Cambodia. Pray for fruit from medical outreaches at village church plants.

.....
29 **Andrew (Rebekah) Miller**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania. / Pray that **OPC.org** would edify the church and help it communicate its message to others.

WHAT PASTORS WISH YOU KNEW

RICHARD N. ELLIS

Some years ago a pastor friend left his church to take a call elsewhere. During his farewell, he learned that many in his church loved him and were sorry to see him leave. He later told me that he wouldn't have left if he had known those things. However, the congregation had made a huge assumption: "He knows that we love him, that we appreciate him and are thankful for his ministry." From their silence, the pastor made some assumptions, too.

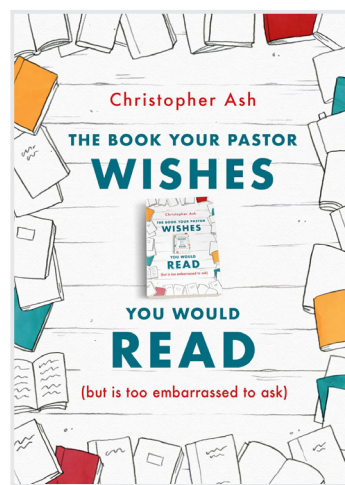
Our churches are rightly concerned that pastors care for the flock. But congregations have a responsibility to "obey [their pastors] and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls . . . Let them do this with joy and not with groaning" (Heb. 13:17). A recent and helpful book on this topic is Christopher Ash's *The Book Your Pastor Wishes You Would Read (but is too embarrassed to ask)*. Ash argues that an unhappy, joyless pastor disadvantages the sheep and describes seven "virtues" for congregations to practice that may contribute to his joy.

1. Practice *daily repentance and eager faith*. Hard hearts are the "great pastor-killer."
2. *Commit to belonging* to one another. Cultivate Christ-centered mutual discipleship instead of leaving most of it to the pastor.
3. Practice *open honesty* instead of pretense and hypocrisy.
4. Encourage your pastor with *thoughtful watchfulness* of his reading, his need for sabbaticals, conferences, regular vacations, and days off.
5. Display *lovingkindness* to your pastor and to his wife and children, as applicable.
6. Have *high expectations* of godliness and integrity for him; he will know you care about him and his work.
7. Practice *zealous submission*; follow his leading.

One way to support your pastor would be to appoint a small group of men (not limited to elders) to meet with him regularly in order to know him better. They would become familiar with his strengths and weaknesses, his relationship with his wife and children, his sinful and indulgent thoughts, and his habits of diet and exercise. For

this relationship to be beneficial, he must view them as loving advocates. Likewise, the session could collaborate with the pastor's wife, as applicable, to identify two mature women who would provide ongoing support. These intentional friends could communicate periodically with the session, giving advice about ways to care more wisely for the pastor and his family.

It's not easy for a pastor to share what's really going on in his heart, his marriage and family, and his finances.



Pastors may feel an unrealistic and unhealthy pressure to be above sin and weakness. If this book's principles were followed with tender, Spirit-given wisdom, it is possible that we could avoid additional tragic losses of ministers who allowed their lives to spin out of control. Close friends are important for all of us, including pastors, so that we

may avoid being "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin," and instead acknowledge weakness to our unflinchingly merciful God (Heb. 3:13).

I recommend that the principles in this book be incorporated into church life. And in so doing you may better fulfill our Form of Government: ruling elders "should have particular concern for the doctrine and conduct of the minister of the Word" (X.3).

Don't make assumptions! You may think, "he's fine; he's content; we're caring for him well enough." The truth may be far different. Elders, take the initiative; your pastor probably won't!

The author is a retired OP minister.



At the installation of Ryan Woods at North Andover, MA



FEB 2024

NEWS, VIEWS & REVIEWS

NEWS

WOODS INSTALLED AT NORTH ANDOVER, MA

David A. Booth

On November 10, 2023, the Presbytery of New York and New England installed the Rev. Ryan Daniel Woods (center) as the associate pastor of Merrimack Valley Presbyterian Church in North Andover, Massachusetts. Mr. Woods previously served as the pastor of Emmanuel Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Colville, Washington.

IN MEMORIAM: MARK L. LOWREY JR.

Alan D. Strange

The Rev. Mark Lowrey, executive director of Great Commission Publications (GCP), joint publisher of the OPC and PCA, went to be with the Lord at seventy-eight, after recent health struggles, on December 24, 2023. He is survived by his wife, Priscilla, and their two children.

Lowrey was born at the end of World War II in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, where his father was editor of the daily newspaper. Hattiesburg remained important to him as he returned there after an Army stint in Vietnam, being graduated from RTS (Jackson) and ordained in 1978. He came back to his hometown to lead the campus fellowship at the University of Southern Mississippi, which became the seed for Reformed University Fellowship (RUF). In committing to the church engaging in campus ministry, Lowrey demonstrated his early conviction that

evangelism and discipleship should not simply be ceded to parachurch ministries but should be performed by the church and its agencies. Lowrey assumed leadership in RUF and served fruitfully at its helm for twenty-five years.

In 1996, he came to work for GCP as the director of publications, shifting his focus from college ministry to a publishing arm of the churches that had a primary focus on the production of preschool and K-12 materials. In recent years he became executive director of GCP, manfully rescuing it from the crisis due to suspension of church education during COVID-19. Lowrey was a visionary whose mastery of facts and warmness of heart made him one of the church's most valuable servants.

IN MEMORIAM: JAMES ANDRUSS

David Thibault

Ruling elder James "Jim" Andruss passed into glory on December 4, 2023, at the age of eighty-two, after serving the Lord faithfully for over forty years in three congregations of the Presbytery of Southern California. He was ordained in 1980 at Covenant Community Church in Placentia. He served on the session at Calvary OPC in La Mirada (1988–1996) and at Grace Presbyterian in Costa Mesa (1997–2023). A faithful attendee of presbytery meetings until his health declined, he was moderator of the presbytery from 2001–2004. Jim is survived by his wife of over sixty years, Judith, five adult children, sixteen grandchildren, and ten great grandchildren.



Mark Lowrey



James Andruss

“WINTER” PICNIC

D. Christian Khanda

Holy Trinity Presbyterian in Fort Lauderdale gathered for its annual church picnic on December 9 in sunny South Florida. Members and a number of visitors enjoyed fellowship, food, a devotional message, and songs of praise to the Lord, rejoicing in him and his great salvation. Praise the Lord for this opportunity! May the Lord continue to build and strengthen his church and cause the message of the gospel to go forth in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

UPDATE

MINISTERS

- On January 5, **J. Jueon Kim** was ordained and installed as associate pastor of Christ the King Presbyterian in Naples, FL.

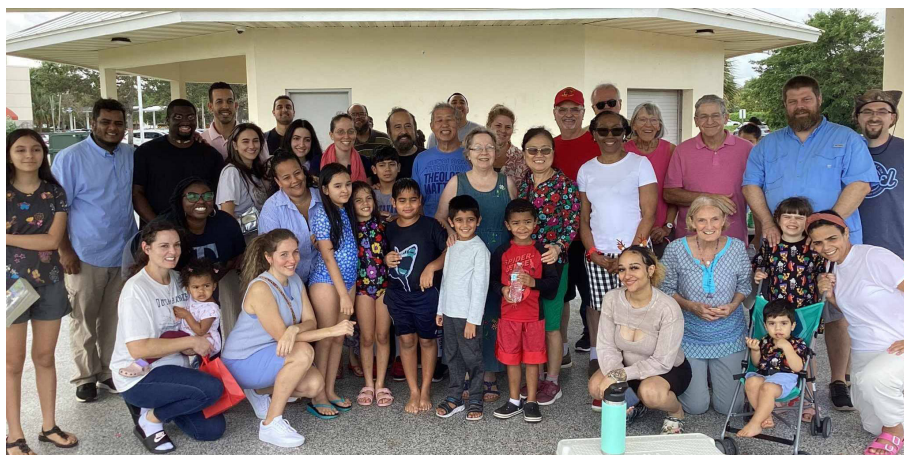
MILESTONES

- **James Andruss**, 82, died on December 4. He was an OP ruling elder for forty years in the Presbytery of Southern California.
- **Mark Leonard Lowrey Jr.**, 78, died on December 24. He was a PCA minister, the founder of Reformed University Fellowship, and former head of Great Commission Publications.

REVIEWS

Social Conservatism for the Common Good, edited by Andrew T. Walker. Crossway, 2023. Hardcover, 400 pages, \$37.99. Reviewed by OP minister Donald M. Poundstone.

Most readers of this review will agree with the premise of the book that “social conservatism” (summarized, for example, by commitments to the protection of unborn children and human life in general; the biblical nature and purpose of sexuality; marriage between a man and a woman; and defense of conscience and religious liberty) is important for the advancement



of human well-being and maintaining an orderly and moral society. At the same time, fewer will be familiar with the name and work of Robert P. George. That’s a pity.

Mr. George, a traditional and devout Roman Catholic, is an outspoken proponent of social conservatism. He has taught jurisprudence (that is, legal theory) at Princeton University for nearly four decades and is a highly esteemed scholar and widely recognized as a public intellectual (a label he disdains).

The volume under review—edited by a Southern Baptist theologian and seminary professor—is a collection of more than a dozen stimulating and informative essays by evangelical Protestant thinkers who engage and interact with the ideas and life of Professor George. Many of the contributors—including OP minister Carl R. Trueman and former senator Ben Sasse (who wrote the foreword)—have decidedly Reformed convictions. All are basically appreciative of and sympathetic to George’s thought and efforts.

Crucial to George’s thinking is his commitment to a form of natural law, the idea that important aspects of divine truth are accessible to human reason, even for those who may be ignorant of the Bible or reject its divine inspiration and authority. In other words, George affirms that what most of us call God’s general revelation

(see Romans 1:18–23 and context) is known by people who dismiss or are unfamiliar with Holy Scripture (God’s special revelation).

The learned essays in this volume deal with George’s various legal concerns and methods of argument. A couple contributors comment upon his widely recognized humility and civility, including an impressive friendship with a fellow scholar, Cornel West. Both George and West acknowledge their conflicting views

on society and politics, but they are bound together by a common faith in Jesus Christ and commitment to seeking truth. The essay by Paul D. Miller exploring George and West’s personal relationship as Christian gentlemen is almost worth the price of the book.

This volume is not for the casual reader or faint of heart; it demands concentration and serious thinking. Christians who desire to live out their deep convictions in the public square, however, will discover much food for thought. One question that presses in on believers is, “Will George’s appeal simply to the natural law accomplish the satisfactory results he desires in today’s intellectual and social environment?” Carl Trueman, for one, has doubts. Our real and better hope is for a widespread spiritual renewal that draws modern secularists into a vital Christian



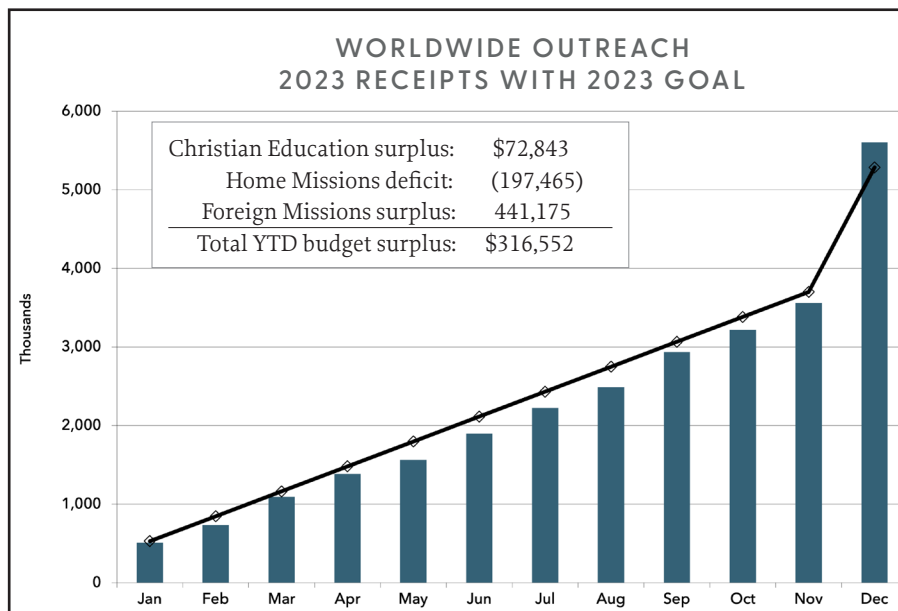
faith and commitment. President John Adams (who held some unorthodox religious views) memorably observed at the birth of the American republic that “our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people . . . it is inadequate to the government of any other.” One needn’t think that most citizens of our country were faithful and practicing Christians in 1800 to acknowledge that biblical knowledge, faith, and life today are not what they were at the dawn of the nineteenth century. If Adams is correct, the United States as founded is in serious trouble.

Church officers and other serious-minded Christians will enjoy and profit from reading and digesting the essays in this volume. It is also recommended as a very useful addition to church libraries.

***A Candle Against the Dark: Reformed Presbyterians and the Struggle Against Slavery in the United States*, by Robert M. Copeland and D. Ray Wilcox. Crown & Covenant, 2022. Hardback, 238 pages, \$27.00. Reviewed by OP ruling elder Sandy Finlayson.**

As racial tensions have increased in the last few years, many Christians have asked how they may appropriately respond and make a positive contribution to the issues of the day. One way to answer this is to look to our past and examine how Presbyterians of earlier days addressed these issues. I therefore welcome the publication of *A Candle Against the Dark*.

This book tells the story of how the Reformed Presbyterian Church was in the vanguard of those fighting for the abolition of slavery in nineteenth-century United States. The book began as a master’s thesis in history written by Reformed Presbyterian pastor and scholar D. Ray Wilcox and submitted to the University of North Colorado, Greeley. After his death, his family gave his research to Robert R. Copeland, retired Professor of Music at Geneva College, and he has taken the earlier work and reshaped it into a highly readable account.



The first two chapters set the historical context for the work. First the roots of the Covenanter church in Scotland and the United States are explained, and then the development of slavery in North America is recounted. It is important to note that the Covenanter church rejected direct involvement in politics because the American Constitution did not recognize that Jesus Christ was King of the Nation. Therefore, their subsequent involvement in the antislavery movement came from outside the nation’s political structures. As Copeland states, the Covenanter Church was both “strongly evangelical and aggressively nonpolitical” (102).

The next several chapters examine how Reformed Presbyterians did have an impact on the emancipation movement. Copeland tells the story of the underground railroad and notes that the Covenanters were strong in their belief that it was legitimate to disobey civil laws like the Fugitive Slave Act, because it was contrary to the law of God. The participation of Reformed Presbyterians in the Civil War is recounted, and we learn how this small group of Christians made a

positive contribution to the rebuilding of the country after the war ended and slaves were emancipated.



One of the most striking things that Copeland points out is that the Covenanter church was among the first Christian churches to prohibit the ownership of slaves by church members, and their seminary and college were among the first to be fully racially integrated. These were actions taken based on the principled belief that “all men were created equal” and in “liberty and justice for all.”

A Candle Against the Dark reminds us that the beliefs and actions of even a small group of principled people can make a difference. Jesus calls all of us to be “the light of the world.” The Reformed Presbyterian Church lived this out in the nineteenth century and played a part in the emancipation of slaves. Their actions were not always well received, but they did the right thing where God had placed them. I hope that this well written, excellent book will inspire many to work for justice—justice that is based on God’s law and his design for society.

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