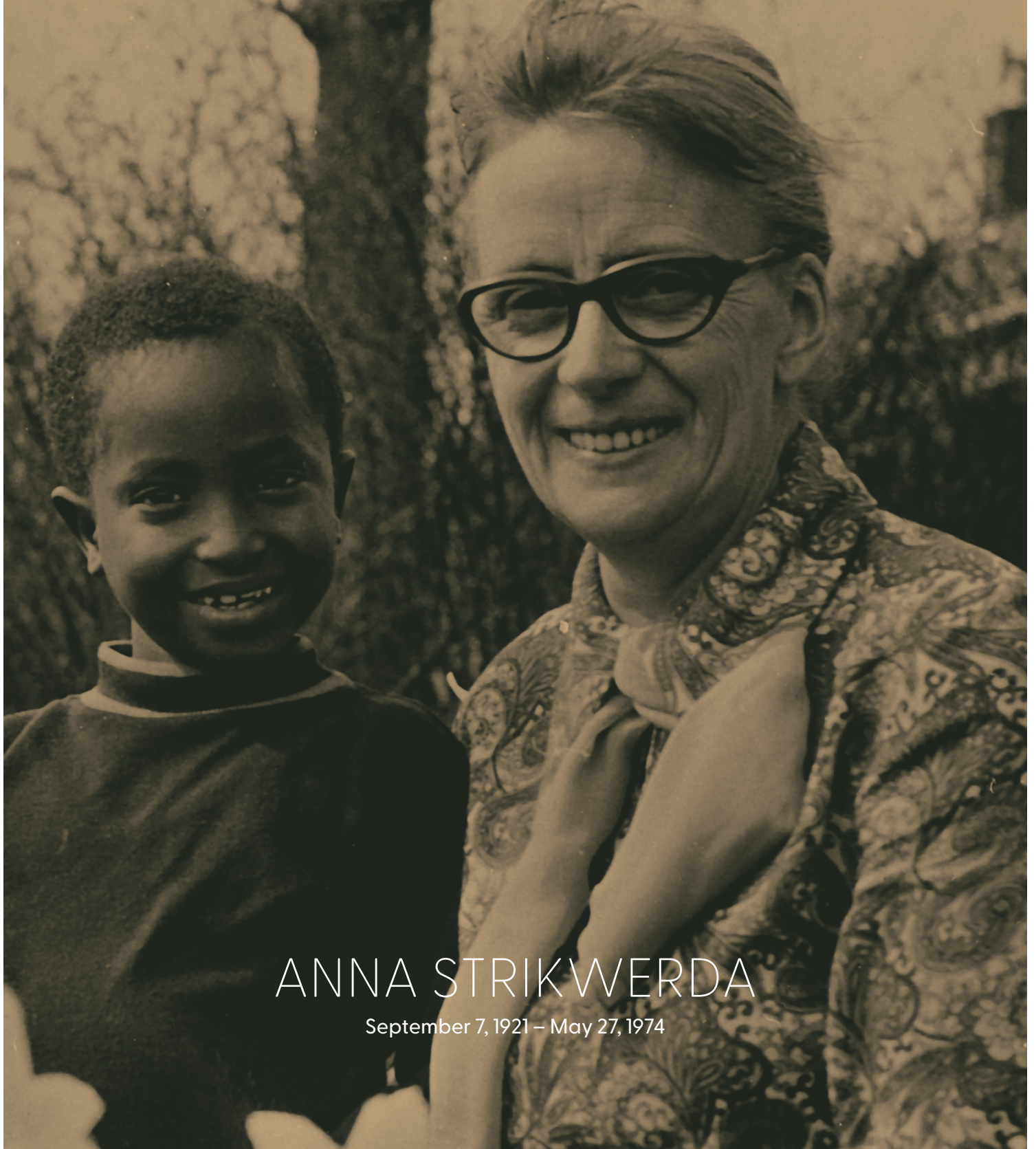


NEW HORIZONS

MAY 2024

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



ANNA STRIKWERDA

September 7, 1921 – May 27, 1974

NEW HORIZONS

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Eritrea,
1973



THE OPC'S FIRST MARTYR: ANNA STRIKWERDA



DANNY E. OLINGER

On the morning of May 27, 1974, freedom fighters looking for hostages entered the Orthodox Presbyterian Church-operated Mihireta Yesus Hospital (“Compassion of Jesus” Hospital) in Ghinda, Eritrea. Nurse anesthetist Anna Strikwerda, already prepped for that day’s surgeries with mask, green operating gown, and stethoscope, was confronted at gunpoint. In the midst of terrified hospital staff, she exclaimed, “I’m not afraid; I’ll go with them.” Led outside by four men armed with machine guns, Anna saw another hostage that the soldiers had captured coming out of the hospital door, nurse Debbie Dortzbach. Anna said, “Don’t be afraid, Debbie. The Lord is with us.”

Yelling at Anna and Debbie to hurry, the mercenaries hit the two women in the back with sticks. The women grabbed hands as they descended a bank behind the

building and saw other armed men waiting for them, which caused Anna to cry out, “O Lord, help us!”

The men drove Anna and Debbie as if they were animals through the brush and mountainous terrain, screaming at them “Keedee! Keedee!” (“Go! Go!”). Anna might have been outfitted for surgery, but not for the forced march. She struggled to keep up, her single-strap sandals not suited for being marched at gunpoint through the rugged Eritrean terrain, at a 4,000-foot elevation, in 104-degree heat. Bending down to put her sandal back on her foot, she was shot and executed. In trust of the living God, Anna had finished the course and entered into the presence of Christ to whom she had willingly given her life.

Fifty years later, there are still numerous Orthodox Presbyterian congregations that display on their walls the memorial passed by the Committee on Foreign Missions sixteen days later on June 12, 1974. Signed by committee president Richard B. Gaffin Jr. and general secretary John P. Galbraith, the declaration gives thanks to God for the faith and life of Anna Strikwerda, handmaiden of the Lord and the first martyr of foreign missionary work in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

THE NETHERLANDS

Born on September 7, 1921, in Winsum (Friesland), the Netherlands, Anna was the sixth of fourteen children born to believing parents who were members of the Christian Reformed Church of the Netherlands. The poverty that her family experienced in the 1930s forced her and her older siblings to grow up quickly. She explained, “It was impossible for me as well as for my older brothers and sisters to go to high school. We all had to earn our own living.” At

the age of fourteen, Anna went to work as a domestic, first for a doctor and his family, and then for a minister and his family. What Anna heard and saw working for these families encouraged her to pursue education, but then World War II came and there was no opportunity to do so. Once the war finished, Anna entered nursing school with the goal of serving in a missionary hospital in the Netherland East Indies, but Indonesia gained self-determination and the hospital closed. She continued on to graduate school and then worked seven years at a district hospital in the Netherlands before deciding to go to Australia. There she joined the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Hobart, Tasmania, and heard of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and its need for nurses in Eritrea. She said, "Through the years I had the desire to do something for the people in undeveloped countries and to work amongst people who lack the care they so very much need." Her heart was set on serving in such a manner. She later testified, after she had been received into the OPC mission at Ghinda, "It was the only thing that I could do."

ERITREA

Although Anna's appointment was announced to OPC members in December 1962, it would not be until January 1966 that she arrived on the field. The Committee on Foreign Missions (CFM) proceeded cautiously in expanding the mission. Part of the delay was the political situation in Eritrea. In 1962 Eritrea ceased to be a separate state federated with Ethiopia. It was now included in the Ethiopian empire as the northernmost province. This led to the mission having to negotiate with the new government in Addis Ababa about the mission's right to exist in Eritrea, much less getting permission to build a hospital. Part of the delay was also the committee's desire to remain true to its stated purpose in missions. The committee reported that "we must be careful not to place such emphasis on our medical work that the main task to which we are committed and for which we went to Eritrea, namely, the preaching of the gospel so that the church of Jesus Christ may be built in that land, will be either neglected or ultimately lost sight of."

On February 5, 1966, Mihireta Yesus Hospital was completed and dedicated. The rhythm of her first year had Anna working two months in the hospital, often seeing and caring for fifty-plus individuals a day. That would be followed by two months of intensive language study, although she was often called in for emergency duty and to help with maternity cases. In 1968, the work intensified for Anna and fellow nurse Yvonne DeBlaey when Dr. Lyle Nilson and his family had to leave the mission. Dr. Nilson's



wife, Mary, and daughter had developed an intolerance to antimalarial drugs, which put them at great medical risk since Ghinda was in a malarial area. Dr. John Den Hartog and family were already on furlough, which meant that Anna and Yvonne had to do everything. And yet, the nurses kept the hospital running at an amazing level. Mihireta Yesus that year admitted 434 patients, delivered 67 babies (Anna delivered 29 herself), and made 15,988 outpatient visits.

In the midst of such work, Anna led morning devotions with the staff, continued in her language study, and helped with teaching a Bible class for boys and girls.

ANNA AND OMAR

Although the mission was greatly enhanced by the arrival of Dr. Grietje Rietkerk at the end of 1969, the political unrest in Eritrea escalated in the 1970s. The Eritrean Liberation Front, seeking independence from Ethiopia, began raiding villages, taking supplies, destroying crops, and leaving orphans in its wake. Omar Mohammed, seven years old yet so malnourished that he weighed only fifteen pounds, was one such orphan brought to the hospital. Anna realized that he was not only physically starved, but also devoid of love. She became "Mother" to him, letting him eat meals with her, providing a place for him to sleep (a little box that served as a playpen during the day), and sharing with him the news of the love of Jesus.

Anna's goal was to adopt Omar, but when she asked one of the Muslim workers at the hospital if the government would allow her to do so, he answered, "Never would they give him to you." Still, Anna was determined



Dr. Grietje Rietkerk at Anna Strikwerda's grave in Eritrea in 1995



Omar Mohammed at seven years old

Anna with a new mother at the hospital



not to give up. She said, "How, we do not know yet, but the Lord will show us and make it possible."

After Anna's brutal murder, a funeral service was held for her at Mihireta Yesus Hospital. The entire community gathered around the compound to pay their respects to the woman who had treated them so kindly and cared for them in the name of Christ. OPC minister and missionary Arthur Steltzer preached the sermon to an estimated two thousand Christians and Muslims present, including Omar. When asked why he wasn't crying for the loss of his "mother," Omar replied, "Yes, I am sad, but don't cry. Today is my mother's festival. She is rejoicing in heaven." After the funeral, elder Haleqa Kifle and his wife added Omar to their family.

In early 1975, civil war became a reality in Eritrea. The breakdown of public order—local assassinations and exploding land mines—eventually spread to Ghinda, and it became clear in early March 1976 that the missionaries would have to flee for their safety. Even then, an army colonel refused to allow the missionaries a road permit to travel until Dr. Rietkerk handed over the keys to the hospital. After thirty-one years of continuous labor in Eritrea, the mission was closed.

OPC FOREIGN MISSIONS

After thirty years of armed combat, Eritrea gained its independence from Ethiopia in 1991. The next year, CFM representatives visited Eritrea, and the mission was soon reopened. By 2007, though, persecution of Christians had escalated and reached the OPC mission and the Asmara congregation.



Anna teaching a Bible class

Although it has been sixteen years since Orthodox Presbyterian missionaries have been in Eritrea, the CFM asks us to pray that the Lord would reopen Eritrea as a fully functional mission field. And in that light, it is fitting that OPC congregations still give praise to God for the labors of Anna Strikwerda and her gospel heart for the people of Eritrea. As Tertullian rightfully remarked, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. **NH**

The author is editor of New Horizons.

The Grimsley family at their home in Concho, Arizona



THE CALL TO MISSIONS



D. JOSHUA GRIMSLEY

Most Christians, when asked the question, “Have you ever considered whether God might be calling you to the foreign mission field?” would immediately hesitate. “God wouldn’t call me! I don’t have what it takes! There are so many others who are more qualified! Aren’t those chosen for foreign missions usually super Christians?”

I think our foreign missionaries would be the first to say that there is nothing “super” about themselves. They don’t see themselves as more qualified or holier than their brothers and sisters in Christ. Piety or zeal didn’t qualify them for missionary work—it was the call of God on their lives to serve his kingdom in distant lands. God called, and they answered.

EXTERNAL CALL

An external call occurs when believers recognize qualifications in others and encourage them to consider God’s calling to serve in his church. Perhaps the most common example of an external call is when a local church formally asks a minister to serve their congregation or when a congregation elects a man to be a ruling elder or a deacon. For missionaries, the external call often begins by fellow believers asking something like, “Have you ever considered whether God might be calling you to the foreign mission field?”

In the case of a church extending a call to a pastor, it’s important to ask, “By what authority does the church extend that call?” The answer, of course, is by the authority of Jesus Christ, the church’s King and Head. Our Lord Jesus entrusted the keys of the kingdom to the officers of the church, delegating authority to call, commission, and send qualified individuals where the kingdom requires them. Therefore, answering his call is equivalent to receiving marching orders from the King himself to “share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:3). The external call, especially when echoed by many believers, should not be taken lightly. God often speaks through his church to draw believers into deeper service to their Savior (Acts 6:3).

INTERNAL CALL

While the external call is vital, there is another call that is deeper and more personal: the internal call. An internal call occurs when God shapes the desires of our hearts

toward his purposes. We begin to see the church's need, yearn to reach lost souls, and desire to serve God however he sees fit. Ultimately, our desires are confirmed by the external call, as we are both prompted in our hearts by the Holy Spirit and urged by fellow believers to heed our heavenly Father's call. Paul encourages this internal call in 1 Timothy 3:1, where he says, "If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task." Let us recognize the nobleness of desiring a calling: God has placed in some believers' hearts a desire to serve as church officers. It is God who plants "servant desires" in our hearts.

OUR MARCHING ORDERS

On a personal note, let me briefly explain how God gave "marching orders" to my family. Over the past decade, our small OP congregation in Concho, Arizona, has been visited by several foreign missionaries. These missionaries would often ask the thought-provoking question about considering foreign missionary service. For several years, my wife, Danielle, and I prayed that if God opened a door for us to serve in foreign missions, we would eagerly step through it. The seeds planted by visiting missionaries, nurtured by regular prayer, were gradually brought to fruition by Christ our King.

In June 2023, while serving as a ruling elder commissioner at the Eighty-Ninth General Assembly, I listened as the Committee on Foreign Missions gave their report, especially when Douglas Clawson called us to pray, "Here I am, Lord; send me." During the break following the report, I was approached by two fellow commissioners who said, "Joshua, you need to speak with the men on the missions committee!" The rest of that break felt like a whirlwind as I met several men involved in foreign missions. That was a turning point. When I called Danielle that evening and asked if she was still willing to go to Africa, her answer was a resounding "Yes!"

Our experience may not be typical, but it followed a pattern seen before: a general call is issued, taking root in the hearer's heart. The desire grows, fueled by fellow believers' encouragement. Finally, the need becomes so pressing that the one called can do little more than say, "Here I am, Lord; send me." When God calls us, it is imperative not to shut our ears to that calling. Instead, with fear and trembling, we should consider: "Is God using my fellow believers to call *me* to service in the mission field?"

MIGHT GOD BE CALLING YOU?

Some are drawn immediately to service—like Simon, Andrew, James, and John—while others are drawn despite their reluctance—think of Moses, Gideon, or Jonah. Still

Josh Grimsley in the Mission's workshop in Karamoja



others see their misplaced desires shaped or transformed by God himself. The Apostle Paul is a sharp illustration of desires being radically transformed. In Acts 9, as Saul pursues Christians in Damascus, God knocks him into the dirt and calls him to salvation in the name of Jesus. God basically opens a door and pushes Saul through, transforming him from being a hunter of Christians into a fisher of men. Paul's zeal did not diminish after his conversion! Rather, he preached "Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2), "in season and out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2). He desired to do this, counting his own suffering as next to nothing compared to the glories of being with Christ. Paul preached and suffered for the name of Christ with abundant joy.

Please ponder and take to heart whether God is calling you. In Colossians 4:2–3, we read, "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ." God commands his people to continue in prayer and especially to pray for open doors for those declaring the good news. This is so relevant to our current need: Fervently pray that God would call missionaries to the field. And this is also relevant to you: Pray that God would open a door for you to declare the mystery of Christ to the lost. **NH**

The author is a missionary associate serving with the OP Uganda Mission in Nakaale, Karamoja, Uganda.

WHY I BECAME A FOREIGN MISSIONARY

BEN AND HEATHER HOPP

Ben: Our family was happily serving the Lord in small-town South Dakota when the Lord began his work of calling us to Haiti. In 2006, Douglas Clawson, then the associate general secretary, visited our church. We were excited to hear about what God was doing around the world and especially what was beginning on the island of La Gonâve, Haiti. Douglas was interested in our Canadian background and particularly Heather’s French-English translation degree that she had completed way back in 1992. At the time, we were not thinking of the mission field as a ministry field, but rather as an opportunity for our local congregation to support what the OPC was doing. It is easy to be content in your current situation—and we were content.

But then, in May 2006, missionary Matt Baugh died on the field in Haiti. The news seemed particularly difficult because he was so well suited to the work. He had even learned Haitian Creole as a child. How was God going to provide for the Haitian church now?

WHO WILL GO?

A few weeks later the mail arrived with a copy of an article titled “Remembering Matt Baugh,” subsequently published in *New Horizons*. I read it right away. Heather saw it lying on the counter and read it a little later. At the end of the article were these words: “Who will go? Who will share in the sufferings of Christ, face the dangers, and be used to see Christ glorified and his church built?”

Later in the evening, after we had put the kids to bed, we talked about the article. The Lord was making it clear to both of us that we could not pretend God had someone else. That question “Who will go?” rang loudly in our hearts. We agreed that night to say yes if someone asked us



if we would consider going to Haiti.

Two weeks later, I was attending the OPC General Assembly for the first time as a commissioner. I was in the lunch line with Douglas Clawson. We exchanged some small talk and then came the question: “Ben, would you consider going to Haiti?” The moment of commitment had arrived. God had already been at work in my heart. I responded with an immediate yes to that external call. When I called Heather that night, she immediately said, “We’re going to Haiti, aren’t we?”

In less than a year we were on an airplane, crossing the Caribbean to the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. You never know what in your background might prepare you for a life in missions. And you never know where God might call you. You must have a willingness to go, an openness to new opportunities, and a readiness to sacrifice without knowing the details. These things might bring you to the ends of the earth. Is the Lord calling you to serve overseas?

Heather: Our call to Haiti was very clear, but our call to Africa was different. After Ben’s first trip to Africa in November 2022, I could see the need and how Ben’s gifts could fit well there. I knew that the Lord wanted us in Africa. But my immediate and unfiltered reply was a firm “No!”

My heart was longing to be back in Haiti. I wanted to

walk alongside the saints there as they persevered through trials and great danger. I was grieving. Did I want to give up all that we had invested during our sixteen years of ministry in Haiti? No! Did I want to start over in Africa? Not really. Did I want to leave behind three young adult children in the United States (two of whom were newly married) and only take one teenager? Certainly not!

This call to serve in Africa required surrendering the known for the unknown and the loved for the not yet loved. Would I be willing to relinquish my plan for Christ's plan for us? I prayed, sought counsel, and wrestled with my heart.

In September 2023, I told the Committee on Foreign Missions (CFM) that I would go to Africa with Ben and would serve beside him with joy, but that my heart was not quite ready for this new field.

One morning in January 2024, I was reminded of Isaiah 43:18–21: “Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth do you not perceive it?” I was gently rebuked and greatly encouraged. I asked the Lord to forgive my stubborn and blind heart and also to comfort my grieving heart. I did want to perceive this new thing he was doing and stand with his chosen people to declare his praise! I was ready to commit wholeheartedly to this “new thing” that the Lord had prepared in advance for me to do. I can rejoice in this call to proclaim Christ in Africa.

Ben and Heather Hopp served in Haiti from 2007–2024. Ben now serves as regional foreign missionary in Africa and Haiti.

AL AND LAURIE TRICARICO

Al: For eighteen years I served as a pastor before the Lord led my family to Uganda. The last eight of those years I was on the CFM, and I had the opportunity to travel to Africa three times, including a one-month visit to our Uganda Mission in 1998.

I returned home and said to Laurie, “I could live there.” She said, “Take me.”

In February 2004, Dr. Herb Prawius, a medical doctor serving in the clinic in Karamoja, pleaded with the committee to send another minister. We all agreed but had no applicants to serve in remote Northeast Uganda.

I called Laurie during the committee meeting and asked, “Do you remember the bigger yard you wanted for the boys?” She asked, “What are you talking about?” I answered, “Karamoja.” She said, “Ok, let's pray.”

We prayed, sought counsel, and brought our eldest to the field for a visit. Then we spoke with each of our children, and we all agreed. It was time to serve the Lord in Karamoja. We applied. I received a call. We left our US home for Uganda and served there for eleven years.

Laurie and I have visited our African home twice since then and are encouraged by the continuing Spirit-empowered ministry that will glorify Christ and serve the increase of his unshakable kingdom (Heb. 12:28).



Laurie: When I was an early teen, I came to believe in the saving work of Christ. From that time forward, I understood the lordship of Christ and that all Christians were called to share the gospel.

In college I was involved with outreach to international students—and I thought perhaps the Lord would use me as a missionary. To prepare, I received Bible training and valuable experience in evangelism with the Boardwalk Chapel in Wildwood, New Jersey.

I thought I was on my way to being a missionary when the Lord dramatically changed my life in another way: I met Al Tricarico. In June 1985, we were married. In 1998, after a trip to Africa, Al said to me, “I could live there.” I concurred enthusiastically.

I sensed an internal call to missions in 1983. Yet it was not until September 2004 that the CFM extended a call to Al to serve as a missionary evangelist in Uganda. This was the external call. It came twenty years after I had first sensed that God might want to use me in foreign missions.

Al and Laurie Tricarico served in Karamoja, Uganda, from 2004–2015.



JONATHAN AND MARGARET FALK

Jonathan: After ten years of ministry at Pilgrim OPC in Bangor, Maine, the session graciously granted me a sabbatical for my physical and spiritual refreshment. I was contemplating a cabin on a lake in Maine, using my mornings for study and my afternoons for hiking and fishing. Instead, the session volunteered my services to the CFM to work with Tony and Kathleen Curto in Mbale, Uganda.

My days were filled with open-air preaching and visits to homes in the villages around Mbale with the goal of planting churches. My eyes were opened to the great need for church planting in Uganda and the urgent need to train young men to pastor those church plants. When general secretary Mark Bube asked us to consider serving as foreign missionaries to Mbale, the Spirit had already been working in our hearts. We did consider our age (I was about to turn fifty), our rather average language-learning abilities, and our children's educational needs. Yet the need for another missionary family in Mbale was great. And, by God's grace, we were willing to go.

In the mystery of God's providence, that was not our only field. After nine years in Africa, our last overseas assignment was Uruguay for our final three years of serving with the CFM.

Margaret: Thirty years after our marriage, after years in seminary, and after pastoring churches in Wisconsin and Maine, Jon went on two short-term trips to Uganda. When he returned from each trip, I could sense the excitement and renewed interest in evangelism that he felt.

DAVID AND SUNSHINE OKKEN

Sunshine: I always said that I would never be the wife of either a pastor or a missionary. Then I met David.

Dave: Although I had been a Christian raised in a godly home, I wasn't really asking the questions, "What is the Lord's will for my life? How can I best serve him with the gifts he has given me?" In college, a good friend started talking to me about foreign missions. I was impressed by the great need in so many places in the world that had not yet been reached with the gospel. I became convinced that there was no better way to spend my life than to seek to make Christ known where he has not been known.

Not long after, the Lord led me to the OPC, and, sensing a call to preach and teach, I pursued seminary studies. Serving in a couple of OP churches provided me with good opportunities to test my gifts. I also familiarized myself with our foreign mission fields and even visited Uganda, working with Tony Curto in the summer of 1997. That eventually led to our serving as missionaries in Uganda in 2001.

Sunshine: I guess I'm an example of the Lord doing things in our lives that we thought would never happen. Serving in Karamoja for seventeen years was not easy, but I was able to serve in ways that I had never expected. It has been a great blessing to be part of his work in sending his gospel to the ends of the earth.

David and Sunshine Okken served in Karamoja, Uganda, from 2001–2018.



It was not a total surprise, then, when Mark Bube asked us whether we would consider full-time mission work in Uganda. “Willing to consider” became a key concept. How could you not be willing to consider something?

The CFM sent us on a three-week exploratory trip in January 1999. Being with the Curtos and Wingards, people “just like us” who were living on the field, helped me to imagine being there. But there were plenty of times that I felt out of my comfort zone.

On the plane home, Jon and I wrote a list of pros and cons. Against our going were all the normal responses: we owned a house; we were content in our present job; our children were settled in school and in their friendships; we were sure there were other people much more qualified for the calling than we were. But there were two reasons we should go: there was a need, and we were willing. We acknowledged to God that we felt inadequate to the task, but he gave us a heart willing to follow him, for which I am grateful.

Jonathan and Margaret Falk served in Uganda, East Africa, and Uruguay from 1999–2011.

BRIAN AND DOROTHY WINGARD

Brian: For as long as I can remember, it was my desire to be a minister of the Word, but I did not feel that foreign missionary service was possible for me. However, when I attended a retreat at First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Mississippi, the Lord took away my supposed impediment. This change of mind and a desire to serve in foreign missions resulted from a presentation by a missionary who had labored among a people known for cannibalism.

It would be a long time, however, before that desire would become a reality, for the Lord was working out needed changes in my life. My call, both outward and inward, was shaped by the need for the training of pastors in Africa. I had concluded that, in evaluating any call abroad or at home, what should be paramount was whether the need matched the gifts that the Lord had given me. That is, it was more important to ask, “Where does God want me to serve?” than to ask, “Where do I want to serve?”

Dorothy: When Brian asked me to marry him, he had already accepted the call to teach future pastors in Kenya. When I said “yes” to Brian, it was “yes” both to marriage and to the mission field. We had no prior visit to the field,

no training, not even time for the CFM to formally interview me. But in every way, in every situation, God supplied just what we needed. What a privilege it was to serve on the mission field!

Brian and Dorothy Wingard served in Kenya, Uganda, East Africa, and South Africa from 1994–2017.



RALPH AND JOAN ENGLISH

Joan: My father, Lewis Grotenhuis, was an Orthodox Presbyterian minister who emphasized OPC foreign missions. From my earliest days, the offering on the first Sunday of the month at Calvary Community Church in Harmony, New Jersey, where he pastored, went to foreign missions. Every OPC missionary on furlough was invited to visit our church, preach, and tell of his mission work.

I wanted to go to a mission field to teach missionary children and help the work of missions in that way. On the mission field, I met Ralph. When he decided to go into the pastorate in the OPC and later the mission field, it was easy to support him in his desire.

Ralph and Joan English served in Korea and Suriname from 1969–1996.



2024 CAMPS AND CONFERENCES



2023 Summer Bible Camp
Redwood Christian Park

CALIFORNIA—BACKPACKING ADVENTURE

(Presbytery of Southern California)
In the High Sierra Mountains
Ages 15 to about 25: July 31–Aug 8, 2024
Contact: Eli Hirtzel, 310-738-1507

CALIFORNIA—BLUE RIDGE BIBLE CONFERENCE

(Presbytery of Southern California)
PineCrest Conference Center, Twin Peaks, CA
Family / all ages, June 17–21
www.brbcfamilycamp.org

CALIFORNIA—SIERRA CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE

(OP churches in Northern California)
Sierra Christian Conference Association,
Groveland, CA
Memorial Weekend Family Camp, May 24–27
For information, contact Brad DeBoer at 209-604-2940
or bradandjanetdeboer@yahoo.com

CALIFORNIA—SUMMER BIBLE CAMP

(Presbytery of Northern California and Nevada)
Redwood Christian Park, Boulder Creek, CA
Family / all ages, July 8–12
www.pncnopc.org/presbytery-summer-bible-camp

FLORIDA—REFORMED YOUTH CONFERENCE

(Presbytery of the South)
RYC High / Middle School Youth Camp,
June 10–15
Youth entering 6th grade (or age 11 by August 31) through completing 12th grade
Lakewood Retreat Center, Brooksville, FL
www.reformedyouthconference.com

MAINE—NEW HAMPSHIRE—DEERWANDER BIBLE CONFERENCE

(Presbytery of New York and New England)
Junior High (entering 6th–8th grades), August 13–17
Camp Berea, Lyman, ME
Senior High (entering 9th–12th grades), August 17–24
Chop Point Camp, Woolwich, ME
www.deerwander.org

NORTH CAROLINA—FAMILY CAMP

(Presbytery of the Southeast)
Camp Caraway, Sophia, NC
Family / all ages, July 2–6
www.psefamilycamp.org

OHIO—YOUTH CAMP

(Presbytery of Ohio)
Slippery Rock Baptist Camp, Slippery Rock, PA
Junior Camp (ages 9–12), June 10–15
Senior Camp (grades 7–12), June 10–15
www.pohopc.org/youth

OREGON—FAMILY CAMP

(First OPC, Portland, OR)
Camp Morrow, Wamic, OR
Family / all ages, August 14–17
For information, contact office@firstopcportland.org
or call 503-253-0695
www.firstopcportland.org/camp

PENNSYLVANIA—FRENCH CREEK BIBLE CONFERENCE

(OPC affiliated)

French Creek State Park, Elverson, PA

Grades 4–6, August 5–August 10

Grades 7–8, July 29–August 5

Grades 9–10, July 22–29

Grades 11–12, July 15–22

Post-High, July 12–15

Labor Day Family Conference, August 30–September 2

www.frenchcreek.org

SOUTH DAKOTA—OPC-PCA BIBLE CAMP

(Presbytery of the Dakotas)

Camp Judson, Keystone, SD

Grades 4–12 (completed), June 22–28

www.opc-pca-biblecamp.com

VIRGINIA—MACHEN RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER

(Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic)

Machen Retreat and Conference Center, McDowell, VA

Science Camp (ages 10–17), July 8–13

Stronghold Camp (grades 5–12), July 28–August 3

Family / Labor Day Conference (all ages), August 30–

September 2

www.machen.org

WISCONSIN—CAMP WESTMINSTER

(Presbytery of Wisconsin & Minnesota and Presbytery of the Midwest)

Green Lake Conference Center, Green Lake, WI

All ages: June 24–28, 2024

Theme: Walking in the Word: The Inspiration,

Authority, and Usefulness of the Bible

For information, contact nstrom@oostburgopc.org

OTHER RETREATS

Retreats for women, men, singles, and youth are sponsored by presbyteries and local congregations and are held at various times during the year—not just in the summer!

Check out the listing at opc.org/cce/camps.html.

CONGRATULATIONS

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

- **Isaiah Barrett**, *Covenant OPC, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho*
- **Judith Korkie**, *Tyler Presbyterian, Tyler, Texas*

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

The Anatomy of Hymnody (1965)

by Austin Lovelace

*’Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.*

*’Twas Christmas eve, the house was still,
And not a creature stirred.*

Do these two poetic settings of a familiar text give you a different feel when you read them aloud? Does one suggest a more lighthearted topic, while the other something more somber? If so, you may be curious to know why. In his short book *The Anatomy of Hymnody*, hymnologist Austin Lovelace (1919–2010) explores in common, everyday language not only the principles and mechanics of the poetry of Christian hymns—feet, meter, rhyme, assonance, and many other literary devices—but also discusses the emotional impact these devices have on the reader.

The above example is found in the opening pages of the book to entice the reader into the world of hymnic poetry and ask why poets choose one poetic foot (iambic, trochaic, dactylic, anapestic) over another based on the subject matter and propositional content of the hymn. Lovelace uses many familiar hymn examples in the discussion, and the remainder of the book is, in his words, “an attempt made to find a satisfactory answer.”

The book was extremely valuable to my wife and me as we served for over a decade on the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* committee. Hymns and psalms are praise, prayer, lament, and history set to music. Lovelace’s 113-page book is an informative read for anyone trying to understand and appreciate the component parts of hymns and psalms.

In the introduction, Lovelace says, “If the title sounds a bit strange, the choice is intentional. A hymn is not an amorphous bit of spiritual protoplasm designed for . . . enjoyment . . . and the creation of a pious feeling or a ‘religious mood.’ Like the human body, the hymn has a skeleton and . . . a complete body made up of several parts. Underlying all the physical features, however, is the soul of the hymn—man’s response to God.”

—Timothy Shafer

TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?

JOHN JEE

Word of Life is a mission work of the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic that began in 2021. It exists to exalt the name of Jesus Christ in celebration (worship), congregation (community), and commission (evangelism).

Word of Life's story begins with Dr. Peter Lee, OP minister and professor at Reformed Theological Seminary in Washington DC. In 2010, Lee stepped down from pastoral ministry at Living Hope Presbyterian in Clarksville, Maryland, which he had helped to plant. That work had been a wonderful experience, and Lee began looking for a new work in Howard County, Maryland, to join as a co-laborer. He prayerfully waited for almost ten years. In November 2020, he began putting together some twenty-five local individuals who had been looking for a church community. Some had been looking for a long time. The plan was for Lee to begin the work, then to hand it off to a full-time church-planting pastor in the near future.

At first, the group met on Saturday nights for Bible study. In September 2021, they began Sunday morning worship services at the Lee's home. This was during the COVID-19 pandemic—which, although it caused a global shut-down, held some advantages for church planting. First, because everything was virtual, there were little to no expenses. Second, virtual gatherings allowed more people to attend ministry events. Third, the threat of a pandemic caused nonbelievers to seek God, providing a

Receiving covenant children into membership



Word of Life at Jee's installation in fall 2023

wonderful opportunity for evangelism. However, eventually hindrances caused by COVID-19 outweighed the benefits. Visitors were rare. Building a vibrant community life was difficult through Zoom. In time, though, the group was still able to establish a regular Sunday worship service, weekly men and women's prayer meetings, monthly potluck lunches, and various fellowship events.

FAMILY TRANSITIONS

In fall 2023, the congregation called me to be their pastor. My wife, Grace, and I have lived in Maryland for the majority of our lives. However, prior to accepting the call at Word of Life, I was a PCA minister serving at Central Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The pandemic was an interesting time for our family. I had accepted this new call in Pittsburgh while Grace temporarily maintained her job in Maryland. Until this point, the Lord had not given us the desire of our hearts—a child to love and raise in the ways of Christ. In time, however, the Lord heard our prayers, and baby Judah was born in summer 2021. The joy that we felt as new parents was soon joined by the sorrow that came when we received the hard news that Grace had been diagnosed

with breast cancer. This was spring 2022; Judah was only ten months old.

The news of Grace's diagnosis changed our plans to fully transition to Pittsburgh and led me to resign my ministerial call, move back to Maryland full time, and eventually look for another call to serve the Lord and his church.

Grace underwent chemotherapy for most of the second half of 2022. It was a very trying time for her, both physically and spiritually. She had an aggressive form of cancer, which required an equally aggressive form of treatment. By God's grace, the chemotherapy did its job, killing the cancer to an undetectable level by the time of surgery.

As Grace's health improved, I began to entertain the idea of looking for a new call. That's when Peter Lee approached me about candidating at Word of Life. On paper, it seemed to be a good fit. We lived in Howard County, fifteen minutes from where Word of Life met for Sunday worship. The church needed a full-time pastor, and I was without a call. Moreover, Peter had been my professor at Reformed Theological Seminary in DC, and we had established a relationship. In mid-September 2023, I accepted the call and transferred into the OPC as an evangelist.

The pastoral transition has been seamless, but the continued work of church planting has not been easy. This community has lost as many people as it has gained. Nonetheless, the people who have stayed remain committed to the work, a commitment that is reflected in its name and its identity.

OUR IDENTITY

The opening passage of John 6 tells of Jesus miraculously feeding five thousand people. Starvation and food insecurity was a constant struggle in first-century Palestine. The crowd was amazed, not only at the provision of food, but also at the abundance of it. The next day, unsurprisingly, the people wanted more; they wanted another meal. So they searched for the man who had provided it. But when they found him, Jesus did not do what he had done on the previous day. Instead, this time he gave them spiritual food: "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). Eventually, most of the people left. Why? As Bible scholar F. F. Bruce wrote, "What they wanted he would not give; what he offered, they would not receive."

In the midst of this mass desertion, Jesus turned to his original core group and asked them, "Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter, responding on behalf of the



The Jee family in 2023

twelve, said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

FUTURE OF WORD OF LIFE

Simon Peter's answer to Christ forms the backbone of our church's identity. This is who we are, and this is what our church is about. No matter how tough life gets and no matter how difficult the work of church planting is, we have nowhere else to go, no one else to turn to, but Christ.

Thank you for your continued prayer support. By the time this article is published, we will have moved into our new location: the AMC movie theater at Columbia Mall. This was a strategic decision, as we sought a public space that could be intriguing and inviting to the "de-churched" and the "un-churched." May God continue to bless our mission work as we magnify and proclaim him in our local community of Howard County, Maryland.

The author is church planter of Word of Life OPC in Columbia, Maryland.

STEWARDING OUR TIME

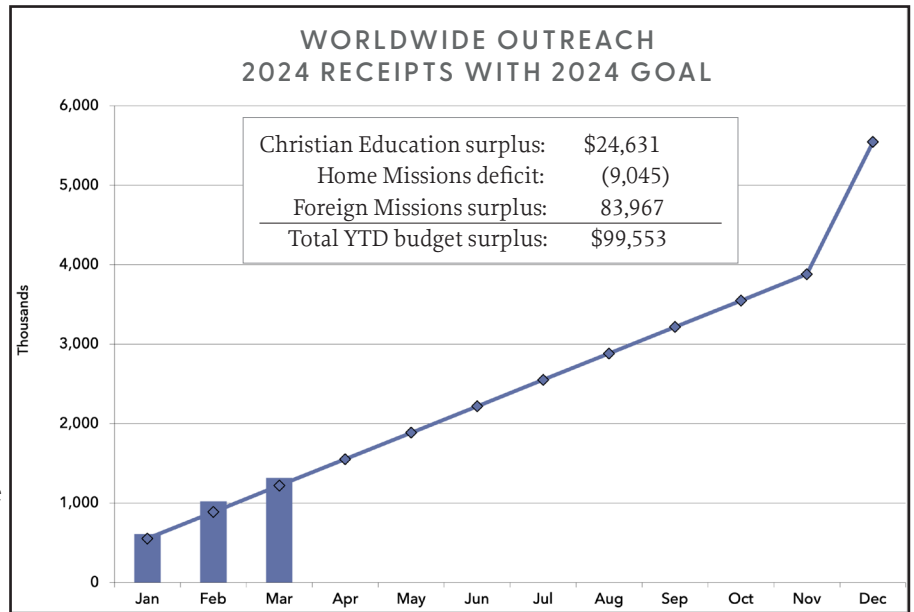
MILLER E. ANSELL

Quick! Name your top five possessions that you long to steward in a godly manner. Does stewardship of time make the list? How have we been at stewarding time? Wasting it? Redeeming it? Time is a valuable possession that is far more precious than our things and even our money. The Apostle Paul bids us to “mak[e] the best use of the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:16).

I know we say things like, “What will we do to pass the time?” Yet, time is a treasured commodity. The foolish eulogize missed time, but the wise see the moments coming and use them to their advantage. In fact, that is what the Greek in Ephesians 5:16 connotes: to gain something by advantage or opportunity. We are to take advantage of time and seize the opportunities to be good stewards of it.

Yet our hearts show us that we have not been good stewards. Our flesh and the devil have robbed us of redeeming the time. We do not guard our thoughts, and vanity robs us. We daydream and think of sinful things. Or maybe worldly care robs us. It is good to pay the bills as we steward our finances, but do worldly cares take over our minds? Do we spend our moments concerned, even worried, about what we will eat, drink, and wear without giving any thought to eternal matters? Let us not allow worldly cares to rob us of heavenly mindedness.

We are also robbed by excessively indulging our outward appearance. There is nothing wrong with making ourselves presentable, but when we spend more time staring into the mirror than praying and communing with God, then we have been poor stewards of time. We could write of other time wasters: unprofitable conversations, immoderate recreations, and so on, but let us turn to the One who is the perfect steward of time, Jesus Christ.



We must turn to Jesus because we cannot be good stewards on our own, no matter how hard we try. Consider how the God-man redeemed his time while on earth: As a child he spent time with his Father in the temple. As an adult he spent time combating Satan with Scripture. He spent his time praying, showing mercy, and loving God and neighbor.

Not only is Jesus an example of being a good steward of time, but it is the time he spent on the cross bleeding by which we may claim forgiveness for our poor stewardship of time. It was his perfect life of redeeming the time by which we may claim his righteousness. Let us find forgiveness in him, and let us resolve today to redeem the time. Time is a valuable gift; may we steward it properly.

The author is pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Waco, Texas.



MAY 2024 PRAYER CALENDAR

1 Pray for the **Ethiopian Mercy Reformed Church** (formerly the Ethiopian Reformed Presbyterian Church). / **John & Erin Nymann**, Suffolk, VA. Pray for All Saints OPC's evangelism efforts in Suffolk.

2 **Andrew & Cheyenne Farr**, Klamath Falls, OR. Pray for Andrew as he begins his work as church planter at Klamath Falls Reformed Fellowship. / Yearlong intern **David Wright** at South Austin Presbyterian in Austin, TX.

3 Affiliated missionaries **Dr. Mark & Laura Ambrose**, Cambodia. Pray for the doctors in training at the clinic; some are unbelievers. / US Army active duty military chaplains **David (Jenna) DeRienzo** and **Stephen (Lindsey) Roberts**.

4 Home Missions associate general secretary **Al Tricarico**. / **Mark & Jeni Richline**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for grace, wisdom, and unity for Salvos Por Gracia's session, now with three ruling elders.

5 **Gregory & Ginger O'Brien**, Downingtown, PA. Pray that Christ would save the lost through Christ Church Downingtown's ministry. / Yearlong intern **Tyler (Jeanna) Freire** at Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, OH.

6 **Stephen & Catalina Payson**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for the Lord to raise up Reformed pastors for sister church plants in Uruguay. / Pray for the GA stated clerk, **Hank Belfield**, and others preparing for the 90th General Assembly, June 19–25.

7 **Ben & Heather Hopp**, Africa & Haiti. Pray for wisdom for Ben as he plans to visit churches in South Sudan and Ethiopia. / **Mike (Elizabeth) Diercks**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Ohio.

8 **Will & Lauren Sloan**, Eastern Shore, VA. Pray that members of Good Shepherd OPC would pursue holiness for Christ's glory. / OPC Short-Term Missions asks for prayer for those in the URCNA's **Cross-Cultural Missions Training program** in Mexico this month.

9 **Heero & Anya Hacquebord**, Lviv, Ukraine. Pray for the church as it seeks to connect with teens displaced by the war. / Yearlong intern **Brennen (Tiffany) Winter** at Harvest OPC in Wyoming, MI.

10 **A. J. & Chelsea Millsaps**, Athens, TN. Pray the Lord would increase Zion OPC's love for the lost. / Pray for more **missionary evangelists** for our foreign mission fields.

11 **Matt & Christine Ezzell**, Wake Co., NC. Pray for Zion Presbyterian to mature as a congregation as they work toward particularization. / Yearlong intern **Andrew (Noel) Davis** at Covenant Presbyterian in Marina, CA.

12 **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia. Pray for ordinations scheduled this month. / **Danny Olinger**, director of MTIOPC.

13 **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia. Pray for fruitful connections as Mr. M travels in the U.S. to share about his work. / **Dave (Elizabeth) Holmlund**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

14 **Melaku & Meron Tamirat**, Clarkston, GA. Pray for Redeemer Mercy Ministry as it seeks to reach refugees with the gospel. / Yearlong intern **Joe (Melody) Gehrman** at Covenant OPC in Orland Park, IL.

15 Associate missionaries **Octavius & Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray for security for church members traveling to and from church in Port-au-Prince. / Pray that the **Ruling Elder Podcast** would bless listeners.



The Holmlunds (day 13)



The Farris (day 2)



The Montgomerys (day 20)

16 **Mark (Peggy) Sumpter**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest. / **Charles & Connie Jackson**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray that the building projects at Knox School of Theology will proceed smoothly and with quality work.

17 **Joseph & Christina Wan**, Madison, WI. Pray for church officers for Madison Chinese Christian Church. / **David Nakhla**, coordinator of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries. Pray for OP deacons as they love and serve their congregations.

18 Missionary associates **Nathan & Elisabeth Bloechl**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for love and deeper understanding of sound doctrine among church members. / **Esther Parks**, office manager and CCE office secretary.

19 Tentmaking missionary **Tina DeJong**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for strength for missionaries carrying extra responsibilities while teammates travel. / **Bradney & Eileen Lopez**, Guayama, PR. Pray for the potential church officers undergoing training at Iglesia Presbiteriana Sola Escritura.

20 Home Missions general secretary **Jeremiah Montgomery**. / **Greg Reynolds**, editor of *Ordained Servant*.

21 Associate missionaries **Christopher & Chloe Verdick**, Nakaale, Uganda, on furlough in the United States. Pray for joyful and sweet times reconnecting with loved ones. / Pray for the **MTIOPC Intensive Training** sessions for Ecclesiology and Book of Discipline at Grace Presbyterian in Columbus, Ohio, today through the 23rd.

22 **Bruce (Sue) Hollister**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Midwest. / Missionary associates **Josh & Danielle Grimsley**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for their four daughters, currently the only missionary kids in Karamoja.

23 **Caleb & Erika Smith**, Thousand Oaks, CA. Pray that Thousand Oaks OPC would grow in love for the Lord and neighbor. / **Kerri Ann Cruse**, video and social media coordinator.

24 **Travis & Bonnie Emmett**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for stability in the Lord during an extended transition as they await documents needed to go to Uganda. / Pray that *The Reformed Deacon Podcast* would spur deacons on to joyful service in the church.

25 Associate missionary **Leah Hopp**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for recently installed Pastor Julius and his work with the local church and developing leaders. / **Christopher & Sara Drew**, Grand Forks, ND. Pray that Faith OPC would effectively reach out to the lost.

26 Please join the **Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario** in praying for the provision of a regional home missionary. / Yearlong intern **David (Jazmine) Rios** at The Haven in Commack, NY.

27 Missionary associate **Jed Homan**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for God to provide food for local believers through their work of planting this

season. / **Mark Stumpff**, loan fund manager.

28 **James (Bonnie) Hoekstra**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Wisconsin and Minnesota. / Pray for the five congregations of the **Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ)** and their need for ministers.

29 **Paul & Sarah Murreale**, West Plains, MO. Pray that members of Covenant Reformed would seek to reach their community with the gospel. / Yearlong intern **David (Hope) Garrett** at Orthodox Presbyterian in Franklin Square, NY.

30 Pray for the witness of **retired missionaries** Cal & Edie Cummings, Greet Rietkerk, Mary Lou Son, and Brian & Dorothy Wingard. / Pray for **short-term missions team leaders** as they prepare themselves and their teams for the opportunities before them.

31 Affiliated missionaries **Jerry & Marilyn Farnik**, Czech Republic. Pray for the Lord to use the church to strengthen believers in their faith. / Home Missions administrative assistant **Allison Groot**.



Tina DeJong (day 19)



The spring meeting of the Presbytery of Southern California was held at Faith OPC in Long Beach, CA. Moderator Joel Ellis is behind the pulpit. The presbytery has thirty-four congregations in CA, AZ, and HI.

NEWS

OPC CHARTER MEMBER JANET SPEER BARNES

Robin Campbell

When Janet Speer Barnes turns one hundred on May 15, 2024, she may be the oldest living charter member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. She joined Faith OPC in Harrisville, Pennsylvania, in 1936. In 1966, Faith and the nearby New Hope joined and became Calvary OPC; its new building was constructed on land donated by Janet's parents.

In 1942, Janet married Robert P. Barnes, a widower with a young son, Bobby. They had three more sons, Dick, Van, and Bruce, and were married for fifty-three years until Robert's passing in 1995. Through the decades, Janet has served as a Sunday school teacher and a member of the Ladies Missionary Society and faithfully attended the worship services of the church.

ECUMENICAL DIACONAL MEETING

David Nakhla

In late January, the diaconal committee of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) met in Recife, Brazil. This seven-member committee, of which I am a member, represents five continents, six time zones, and seven countries. We meet quarterly online and once every four years in person. The committee began work on a practical booklet for deacons and defined what is a major disaster as per its mandate from the ICRC. Brazilian representative Chris Boersema taught

a seminar on personal finances from a biblical perspective, and South African representative Dr. Pieter Boon spoke on "Diaconal Challenges in an Unequal World" for a conference attended by regional church leaders.

Sightseeing in Recife, which has buildings dating to the 1500s, wading in the Atlantic south of the equator, and most of all worshipping with the saints of the Reformed Churches in Brazil rounded out the trip.

One member from Northeast India could not attend due to the conflict in that region; the committee requests prayer for peace and protection for the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Northeast India, a sister church to the OPC.

UPDATE

CHURCHES

- On November 16, **Providence OPC** in Scottsdale, AZ, a mission work of the Presbytery of Southern California, became a particular congregation of the OPC.

MINISTERS

- On October 31, the Presbytery of Southern California dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Roger Wagner** and Bayview OPC in Chula Vista, CA.
- On November 16, **David S. Schexnayder**, formerly an evangelist, was installed as pastor of Providence OPC in Scottsdale, AZ.
- On November 16, **Paul O. Johnson**, formerly a pastor at Calvin OPC, was installed as an evangelist of Providence



Janet Speer Barnes



David Nakhla (far right) in Maragogi, Brazil, with members of the ICRC's diaconal committee

- OPC in Scottsdale, AZ.
- On February 2, **Jerome A. Farnik**, formerly an evangelist of Bayview OPC, was installed as an evangelist of the Presbytery of Southern California to serve in the Czech Republic.
 - On February 2, **Joshua E. Martin** demitted the ministry, and the Presbytery of Southern California erased his name from the roll of the regional church.
 - On February 23, **Michael P. Preciado** was installed as the pastor of Faith Presbyterian in Garland, TX.

MILESTONES

- **Ruth Ann (Barr) Semel**, 78, wife of OP minister Lawrence Semel, died on March 21.

LETTERS

WHY THE ORDEAL?

Editor:

Todd Wagenmaker's "Trial by Ordeal" (March) asserted that people from the Old Testament history who faced trials—the flood, forty years in the wilderness, the fiery furnace—were considered innocent for surviving. To the author, they survived as a depiction of the vindication of Christ who rose from death after his trial on the cross. This concept of God using trials by ordeal is confusing. First, God knew perfectly well who was innocent and who was guilty, but trials by ordeal were done by judges who did not know. Second, each of the "trials" in OT history were actually punishments of people already found guilty by God or by a human authority. Third, if Christ died as a test of his

righteousness, then he did not die for his people's sins, which were imputed to him. But Christ did die to take the punishment that his sheep deserved (Rom. 4:25).

Bruce Stahl
Wentzville, MO

Todd Wagenmaker responds: Christ certainly died as the substitute for the elect, having our sins imputed to him. But just because we affirm the centrality of the imputation of our sins and Christ's suffering on our behalf, it does not follow that imputation is the only truth revealed in Christ's death. Further, Scripture does not use only prose to teach the saving work of Christ. The Old Testament is filled with rich typology, such as the more-familiar typology predicting the sufferings of the Christ (Luke 24:44–46). We should not neglect the typology of the glories of Christ and his resurrection and vindication—including the trial by ordeal. Christ not only died for our sins; as the second Adam, he obeyed—was vindicated—and imputes his righteousness.

DOUG WILSON'S BLUEPRINT

Editor:

In his review of *Mere Christendom* by Doug Wilson (March), Dr. Strange writes that it is "not the purpose of the Bible to furnish us with a detailed blueprint of many things in life but rather to tell us about the person and work of Jesus Christ." But, although Christ, emphatically, is the *sine qua non* of the Bible and of life, the scope of God's Word is comprehensive (see 2 Tim. 3:17; 1 Cor. 6:3; 2 Pet. 1:3; 1 Cor. 2:15).

Strange also says that Wilson's book teaches that heaven demands "theocratic libertarianism." We can debate whether the Bible lays out a preferred form of civil government. But there is no argument over the fact that God has given mankind his moral law, and that it "doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as

others, to the obedience thereof" (WCF 19.5) and that "civil magistrates may not . . . in the least, interfere in matters of faith. Yet, as nursing fathers, it is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the church of our common Lord" (WCF 23.3). We have standards by which to judge the civil magistrate.

Steve Wisniewski
Roseville, CA

Editor:

Respectfully, Alan Strange's review of *Mere Christendom* was mystifying and self-refuting. He posits that "Christians . . . should, seek to have biblical principles . . . given societal expression." Yet he disfavors the notion of people being "forced to submit to . . . God's law." Which is it? Is not God's law included in biblical principles?

Strange asserts that all are indeed "called to bow the knee to Jesus Christ." But then he backpedals. He argues against the law of God as a governor of society because "in this era" unbelievers won't obey it. Is that a good reason to extract it? Does not the law of God restrain the wickedness of the "lawless and insubordinate" (1 Tim. 1:8–10)?

Also, as Calvin taught, the law functions to show our sin and need for a Savior. Why remove something so beautiful from the massive venue of culture and politics? Strange makes the very common error that because the kingdom of Christ is not *of* this world, that it is not *in* this world, nor should it have any significant effect upon this world, which is simply not what the Bible teaches.

Finally, Calvin is lifted as one who "did not find the Bible committed to any form of civil government." Yet in his preface to the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, written to Francis I, king of France, Calvin warns Francis that he is a "robber" if he does not rule by God's "divine word." Truly, "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Ps. 19:7 NKJV).

Paul Viggiano
Torrance, CA

POSITION AVAILABLE

Church Planter: The session of Covenant Presbyterian in Abilene, Texas, is looking for a church planter for the mission work Living Stone Fellowship in Wichita Falls, Texas. If you are interested, call 214-293-7820 or email Pastor Joseph Keller at pastorjoekeller@gmail.com.

Alan Strange responds: I agree that the Bible is comprehensive, containing everything we need for doctrine and godliness. This is always, and only, however, properly seen through the person and work of Christ. Thus, Paul's resolve to "know nothing but Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2) is a determination to know everything through the lens of the person and work of Christ. We are, in fact, as new men and women in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, said, by such lens, to "have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). This does not mean, though, that we are omniscient in all of life's tasks; instead, it means we have what we need to live as "spiritual person[s]" and not merely "natural person[s]" (1 Cor. 2:14–15).

God's Word does not furnish us with the details for civil government though it contains principles that govern how we go about all our lives. Christians live as they do, in fact, not to garner God's acceptance, which we have perfectly in Christ; we live in obedience, albeit quite imperfectly, out of gratitude, thankful for all that God has done for us in Christ, which is the primary message of God's Word.

To be sure, God has given all mankind his moral law, judging them accordingly. We are judged finally either as those in Adam (and thus die) or in Christ (and thus live; 1 Cor. 15:22). And, yes, the civil magistrate, among his many duties, is, when executing them properly, to protect the church, as he is innocent lives, private property, etc. However, Wisniewski's criticism is not responsive to my basic critique of Wilson's book, as seen in my review: that Wilson's argument for a detailed theocratic libertarianism, unjustifiably unlike any "previous Christendom," is not warranted by nor is it the purpose of Scripture. Wilson believes that God's Word contains a divine blueprint in support of this view as if the purpose of the Bible were to provide a detailed political, social, and economic structure for the nations.

It is hardly self-refuting to argue that

while the Bible addresses all of life in principle, it does not do so in detail, and Christians of the same confession may differ on whether the EPA and IRS should exist or what the proper tax structure should be. The Bible does not resolve all political differences: to act as if it does is to misuse it not only to coerce unbelievers but fellow believers as well.

I trust we will never yield to such tactics as Wilson employs for even a moment.

REVIEWS

***Elisabeth Elliot: A Life*, by Lucy S. R. Austen. Crossway, 2023. Hardcover, 624 pages, \$39.99. Reviewed by OP member Ann Hart.**

Evangelical icon Elisabeth Elliot believed that "we read biographies to get out of ourselves and to get into another's skin, to understand the convulsive drama that shapes, motivates, and issues from the other life." This kind of emotional empathy pervades Lucy S. R. Austen's *Elisabeth Elliot: A Life*. The author succeeds in deftly presenting a complicated woman who vaulted into prominence after the 1956 martyrdom of her young husband, Jim, and his four missionary colleagues by the Auca Indians in the jungles of Ecuador.

Many readers will be familiar with this brief overview of Elliot's story and may expect an inspirational book. However, Austen, after reading Elisabeth's personal journals and letters, conducting dozens of interviews, and examining the twenty-five-plus books that Elliot penned, offers a public and private woman who revised her thinking often through her long life.

Elisabeth grew up in an evangelical home with five siblings. The family led a disciplined and religious life influenced greatly by the Victorious Life movement,

where the quest for full sanctification was emphasized.

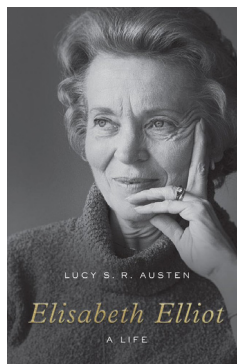
At Wheaton College, Elisabeth Howard met Jim Elliot. She majored in English but changed her major to Greek when she felt called to Bible translation. Jim and Elisabeth shared a strong evangelical piety and a desire for active, mission-driven lives. When they finally married, they shared less than three years together before the "convulsive drama" of Jim's violent death. Elliot was left a widow at age twenty-nine, caring for their young daughter, Valerie.

As Austen recounts, this news event captured the public's imagination. *Life* magazine editor Henry Luce dispatched photographer Cornell Capa to Ecuador twice to document the story. When Capa produced an eight-page photo spread in *Life*, 76 percent of American adults read the magazine piece.

For Elisabeth, mourning was often in solitude. She threw herself into replying to letters and sympathy cards. At one point she was writing one hundred letters a week. Following this time of frenetic correspondence, parenting Valerie alone, and language study, she entered a season of profound sadness. "Sometimes I wonder how I can possibly go on without Jim. The future seems a complete blank to me."

Against the advice of many, the strong-willed Elliot decided to stay on the mission field and try to continue the work she and Jim had started. Elliot lamented that despite her intensive language study, she understood little in her communication with the Indian tribe. She recognized that her daughter Valerie outshined her in language skills. "She not only spoke Auca but thought in Auca," Elliot quipped.

New York's Harper Publishers, aware of the country's continued interest, encouraged Elliot to write the story of the five missionaries. Critical of overly sentiment-



tal Christian books, Elliot determined to tell hard truths. Under deadline pressure from Harper, she finished *Through Gates of Splendor* in an astonishing eight weeks.

From her earliest days, Elliot had spent considerable time in the Bible—reading it cover to cover many times. She studied Scripture and prayed often about her troubled relationship with Rachel Saint, the missionary assigned to help her in the work.

Elliot experienced a paradigm shift while reading Jesus's words "you are my witnesses." Austen writes that Elisabeth concluded that she might be a better witness than formal missionary. In 1961, Elliot announced her departure from the mission field. She became a prodigious writer and conference speaker back in New England. In 1968, Elisabeth married Addison Leith, a professor eighteen years her senior. Austen describes him as an Old School Presbyterian. During these years, Elisabeth began to think more seriously about the organized church and what worship really is. Sadly, Elliot's second husband died a painful death from cancer.

Alone again, Elisabeth took in renters from nearby Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Austen gives the unlikely details of how Elisabeth ended up marrying Lars Gren, a seminary student and housemate. She still carried on her busy schedule—including hosting a radio show and leading weekly Bible studies in Boston and Hamilton, Massachusetts. In her early seventies, Elisabeth was diagnosed with dementia. She worked as long as she could write and speak, dying in 2015 at age eighty-eight.

This 530-page biography will be loved by many and disappointing to others. It is not a triumphal strength-to-strength narrative, nor a devotional guide. Instead, it is a beautifully written spiritual and psychological portrait of a sometimes-inconsistent woman who represented the evangelical ethos of the late twentieth century. At the close of her book, Austen writes, "For Elisabeth Elliot, the founda-

tion of life was trust in the love of God. [N]ot trust that things would go well, but trust in who God is."

***Christianity and New Religious Movements: An Introduction to the World's Newest Faiths*, by Derek Cooper. P&R, 2023. Paperback, 280 pages, \$22.50. Reviewed by OP member Peter Morrison.**

What do you have in common with your new Sikh coworker? How can you relate to your Wiccan family member? How should you share the gospel with Mormon missionaries? These are the type of questions Derek Cooper seeks to answer in this book.

Cooper excels in the use of history, biography, and theology to introduce other religious ideas to the Christian reader in an earnest way. He takes his subjects seriously and presents their beliefs in the sincerest light possible. He writes from experience, not just research, often relating personal interactions with his subjects like visits to their places of worship and evidencing a deep familiarity with their beliefs and practices.

Cooper's subjects are newer religious movements that act as offshoots, fusions, or reinterpretations of earlier faith traditions. He divides the new religious movements into five sections based on the religion they evolved from—Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Pagan, and Uncommitted. For more background on the major world religions, the reader would likely benefit from Cooper's earlier work, *Christianity and World Religions: An Introduction to the World's Major Faiths* (P&R, 2013).

For the first eight subjects—Jainism, Sikhism, Baha'i, Nation of Islam, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witness, Wicca, and Scientology—Cooper begins with the group's creation mythology, explains their historical origin, details what, if any, religious writings are foundational, which leads into a discussion of key or distinct beliefs, explains their worship practices,

and concludes with a "point of contact." The final section is his advice to the Christian on how to approach adherents to this movement.

The final two, Atheism and Nones, are distinct enough from the other subjects that it forces the author to break his format; these sections feel slightly disjointed, given the flow of the rest of the material. However, because of the apologetic drive behind the book and the reality of our post-Christian age (as discussed in Michael Horton's foreword), it does make sense to include these two.

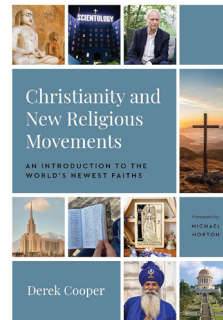
Christianity and New Religious Movements presents like a college textbook with full-color pictures, footnotes, and margin notes. The reader will also benefit

from the discussion questions, suggested further reading, a glossary to help identify less familiar terms, and an index of subjects and names. William Edgar's endorsement captures the spirit and use of the book perfectly: "The book is an apologetics treasure trove. It should equip believers not only to observe more

carefully but to engage adherents and bring them the gospel, with both accuracy and compassion."

***Impossible Christianity*, by Kevin DeYoung. Crossway, 2023. Hardcover, 160 pages, \$19.99. Reviewed by OP pastor W. Reid Hankins.**

Kevin DeYoung wrote *Impossible Christianity* to address a common temptation: making the Christian life so difficult that one is constantly mired in guilt or doubting one's salvation. The problem, he argues, is incorrectly interpreting biblical standards of godliness as something completely unattainable, or adding things to the standards that are actually impossible to fulfill. DeYoung emphatically affirms justification by faith alone, yet critiques the well-intentioned sentiment, "God loves us even though we are spiritual failures,"



as something that is “unbiblical, inaccurate, and unhelpful” (6). While admitting that the Christian cannot have “perfect obedience” in this life, the book instead makes a nuanced case for a “true obedience,” by which the ordinary Christian may live a life pleasing to God. Each chapter sets forth an aspect of what DeYoung calls an “impossible Christianity.”

An impossible Christianity undermines the biblical category of subjective assurance—how can one evaluate one’s life for fruit of the Spirit if one believes such is unattainable?

An impossible Christianity takes the proper rejection of perfectionism and incorrectly applies it to make Christians feel like they can never do enough to please God. Personal times of devotion and efforts at evangelism are common examples where a Christian might be tempted to think that they can never satisfy God.

An impossible Christianity can make someone think that unless they have given up all their riches to live a life of poverty, they cannot please God.

An impossible Christianity can make someone feel perpetually guilty, especially when it comes to all the world’s problems. Contemporary culture has contributed to this by blaming people for problems they haven’t personally created and can’t possibly solve.

An impossible Christianity takes biblical commands, such as those found in the Sermon on the Mount, and makes them to be an unattainable standard, so that they don’t serve their God-given intention to guide in godliness, but simply expose one’s ongoing failures and keep one feeling guilty.

An impossible Christianity effectively makes the Christian life only about our justification, since it doesn’t believe Christians can actually live holy lives pleasing to God. In contrast, biblical Christianity teaches that through God’s work of sanctification,

Christians can live a life that is pleasing to God, even though none will do so perfectly.

An impossible Christianity has unrealistic demands for everyone to live some extraordinary life that accomplish-

es grandiose things, while biblical Christianity commends a quiet life through an ordinary calling lived in faithfulness to God.

God’s law has both pedagogical and normative uses. In the pedagogical use, it is the impossibility of keeping God’s law that drives us to find justification by

grace in Christ. But in the normative use, born-again Christians are enabled to truly use the law as a guide for Christian living. While DeYoung affirms the pedagogical use, his strong emphasis on the normative use might cause readers to miss that when studying God’s law both uses are simultaneously there.

In conclusion, DeYoung shows a shepherd’s heart to counsel those who have become exasperated with Christianity for the wrong reasons. His book is a helpful reminder of the possibility of the ordinary Christian life.

***Unfolding Redemption: Exploring the History and Order of Salvation*, by Camden M. Bucey and Lane G. Tipton. Reformed Forum, 2023. Paperback, 52 pages, 10-pack for \$49.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Tyler Jackson.**

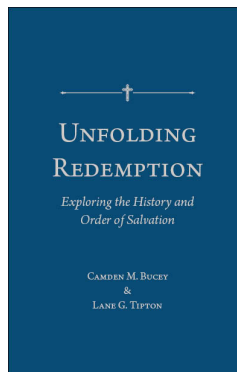
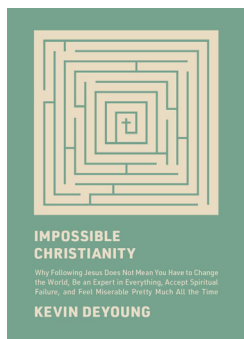
Imagine a short, single, easily digestible resource that brings together and advances the biblical theology of Vos, the clear distinctions between the *historia salutis* and the *ordo salutis* of Ridderbos, the penetrating analysis of redemption accomplished and applied in the vein of Murray, and the way redemption accomplished connects to redemption applied as expounded by Gaffin—and you will come close to

imagining the booklet under review. Drs. Camden M. Bucey and Lane G. Tipton have done a great service by giving the church this booklet.

In the first section, the authors lay out the distinction between redemption accomplished and redemption applied, helping the reader break free from the “personal and subjective lens” that so often plagues the Christian church. When one only considers their personal salvation or justification, the glory of the unfolding drama of redemption goes unexplored. Yet, the authors desire far more for us. They draw our attention to the importance of the history of salvation primarily because “the beauty of centering the *historia salutis* is that it focuses the theology of the church on what has been once and for all accomplished by Jesus.” To use the words of Robert Murray M’Cheyne, for every look we take at self we ought to take ten looks at Christ.

In the second section, the authors lay out the progressive and unfolding history of redemption that climaxes in the historical life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, which is then followed

by the pouring out of his Spirit on the church. They use Pentecost as a case in point, showing how often Pentecost is considered from an *ordo salutis* perspective instead of viewing this great eschatological event as a climactic fulfillment in the *historia salutis*. With pastoral sensibilities they show us that these categorical distinctions have far reaching effects: viewing Pentecost through the *ordo* lens leads to the



CORRECTION

In the April issue of *New Horizons*, the location of First OPC of South Holland should have been South Holland, Illinois.

expectation that Pentecost will be repeated in every saved saint (speaking in tongues, etc.). And, what is the result when this doesn't occur? "Turmoil and self-doubt." These categories, therefore, are indispensable tools in a pastor's toolbox.

In section three, the authors connect redemption accomplished to redemption applied, showing how redemptive history and the finished work of Christ is the solid rock under the application of redemption to all who are united to Christ, those partaking of all the benefits that are in Christ (justification, adoption, etc.). In this section, reminiscent of Gaffin, they show the connection between Christ's justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification—and ours. Again, with pastoral sensibilities they keep the deeper Protestant conception in mind, understanding that all this "serve[s] the development of covenantal fellowship with Jesus Christ."

I thoroughly enjoyed this booklet and highly recommend it for use in an adult Sunday school class or even for personal devotional purposes. What warms our hearts more as Christians than focusing on Christ and all that he is, has done, and will do for us for his own glory? *Tolle Lege*.

***You Are Still a Mother: Hope for Women Grieving a Stillbirth or Miscarriage*, by Jackie Gibson. New Growth, 2023. Paperback, 96 pages, \$11.99. Reviewed by OP member Natalie Rensink.**

One week away from her due date, Jackie Gibson's daughter Leila died unexpected-

ly in the womb. Seven years after Leila's death, Gibson has written *You Are Still a Mother*. The author courageously and skillfully tells her story, empathizes with her readers, illustrates compelling theological concepts, and discusses practical considerations. She accomplishes all this while constantly pointing readers to who they are—and who their children are—in Christ.

This is a vulnerable work. The author invites readers to experience each stage of her grief. We see her shock at finding out her womb has become a tomb. We glimpse the dread she experiences while waiting to deliver her stillborn daughter. We wince at the words offered to her as cold comfort in her suffering (even by those called to help bear her burdens). We follow her to the crossroad at which she chooses faith in the truth over her feelings. We consider with her the life of Job, concluding along with John J. Murray that "it was when Job was willing not to understand that he began to understand." By the end, readers understand that pain does change, that suffering conforms us to Christ, and that our suffering can and will help others. As sojourners on this earth, we are called to walk with God in hope, even when our children have been called to his side.

The author acknowledges that readers are likely part of the "sad soli-

arity of mothers who carry around the hidden grief of a baby who died," and she recognizes that she doesn't speak for every grieving mother or family. Gibson's husband, Jonny, is fond of saying, "Each person's valley is each person's valley."

While our stories have fundamental similarities, everyone's path is different. Using excerpts from Scripture, poems, hymns, and other historical quotations, the author illustrates how countless parents have experienced the pain of child loss throughout history. Honoring these stories, the author interweaves these testimonials and ultimately points us to the "one character who is the same in all our stories. It is the God who made our precious children, and who called them home."

I found this book helpful in my own grief journey and also commend it to anyone looking to deepen their understanding of the valley of child loss. The author provides a robust list of references and suggestions for further reading that was clearly curated with great care.

I especially recommend the audiobook of *You Are Still a Mother*, read by the author (two hours and thirty-seven minutes). You will have to read the book to understand why I will be thinking of the Gibsons and the faithfulness of the Lord whenever I see a daffodil.

