

# NEW HORIZONS

in the ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

**5** Worship Words //  
*by Jonathan L. Cruse*

DECEMBER 2015

**21** Review: Beale and Kim's  
*God Dwells among Us* //  
*by Camden M. Bucey*

## CRIME, CRUELTY, AND CHRISTMAS

*by Allen D. Curry* // **3**



# CONTENTS

## FEATURES

- 3** Crime, Cruelty, and Christmas  
*By Allen D. Curry*
- 5** Worship Words: Selecting Great Hymn Texts  
*By Jonathan L. Cruse*
- 8** Being a Middle-Aged Mom  
*By Naomi Emmett*
- 9** Love Wins  
*By George C. Hammond*

## DEPARTMENTS

- 10** Home Missions  
*A home for Omega OPC in Williamsport, Pa.*
- 12** Christian Education  
*Covenant preaching (part three) • ABCs of Presbyterianism • Out of the mouth ...*
- 14** Foreign Missions  
*Mentoring African students*
- 16** Stewardship  
*An indescribable gift*
- 17** Prayer Calendar
- 20** News, Views, & Reviews

## New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

**Editor:** Danny E. Olinger  
**Managing Editor:** James W. Scott  
**Editorial Assistant:** Patricia E. Clawson  
**Cover Designer:** Christopher Tobias  
**Proofreader:** Sarah J. Pederson  
**Editorial Board:** The Committee on Christian Education's Subcommittee on Serial Publications

© 2015 by The Committee on Christian Education of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. (We use the 2011 revision.)

Articles previously published may be slightly edited.

**New Horizons** (ISSN: 0199-3518) is published monthly except for a combined issue, usually August-September, by the Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 607 N. Easton Road, Bldg. E, Willow Grove, PA 19090-2539; tel. 215-830-0900; fax 215-830-0350.

Letters to the editor are welcome. They should deal with an issue the magazine has recently addressed. Their language should be temperate, and they may not charge anyone with an offense. They should be brief, and they may be condensed by the editor.

Send inquiries, letters to the editor, and other correspondence to the editor at [olinger.1@opc.org](mailto:olinger.1@opc.org).

Send address changes to [CCEsec@opc.org](mailto:CCEsec@opc.org). Allow six weeks for address changes.

The digital edition (PDF, ePub, mobi) and an archive of previous issues are available at [www.opc.org](http://www.opc.org).

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

Copies are distributed free to members and friends of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Nonmembers are asked to donate \$20.00 for an annual subscription (USD \$30.00 if sent to addresses in Canada; \$40.00 elsewhere abroad). A free e-mail PDF subscription is also available. Requests for a subscription should be sent to [CCEsec@opc.org](mailto:CCEsec@opc.org) or the address below.

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 N. Easton Road, Bldg. E, Willow Grove, PA 19090-2539.

Presbyters and some younger guests assembled at the meeting of the Presbytery of the Midwest, held at Mission OPC in Saint Paul, Minnesota, on September 18-19. Among those in the back row are: Christian McShaffrey, stated clerk (third from left), Iain Wright, moderator (sixth from left), and Brent Evans, assistant clerk (seventh from left).



# CRIME, CRUELTY, AND CHRISTMAS



ALLEN D. CURRY // **Have you noticed at this time of year how some people get so upset by stories of crime and cruelty in the news? These are the same people who seem to take all sorts of bad things in stride throughout the rest of the year. Frequently they will comment on how terrible it is that people commit crimes around**

Christmas. For some reason, they believe that this season of the year should bring a moratorium on bad behavior. In fact, some of us may even have similar feelings. We have the idea that Christmas should have such an impact on our world that it makes people better.

Those in the helping professions may notice that Christmas brings on certain kinds of emotional difficulties for some people. Again, some of us may be surprised. We would like to believe that Christmas is such a wonderful time of the year that it should have a therapeutic effect on people.

All of this, it seems to me, misses the very reason for Christmas. Certainly it reminds us of love and giving. But if we think about Christmas simply in terms of love and giving, we miss the point. Christ was not born simply in order to set an example for us to follow.

If there were no crime or cruelty, there would not have been any need for the incarnation. The Lord Jesus was born in order to address the problem of sin. If there is no sin, there is no need for Christmas.

In the first few verses of Romans 8, the apostle Paul reminds us of why Christ came into the world. He tells us in verse 3 that God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful man in order to condemn sin.

## **Christmas Is about Failure.**

Paul explicitly tells us that the law was powerless to free us from condemnation. The weakness of the law was not something inherent in it, but in our sinful flesh. Paul is clear that the law is not bad; rather, the people who are to keep the law are bad.

The problem was that humankind, beginning with Adam, failed to obey God. Because Adam failed and passed his guilt on to all his progeny, we are all guilty of sin. Our guilt is compounded because not only are we guilty of Adam's sin, but we also sin ourselves.

I find it interesting that some who are disgusted with crime and cruelty at Christmas are the ones who encourage greed, self-centeredness, and hedonistic indulgence. They want us to enjoy ourselves. You have heard them say, "Enjoy

yourself; Christmas only comes once a year." They see it as license to engage in a variety of sinful behaviors.

Paul writes to Timothy, "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost" (1 Tim. 1:15). Sinful failure and Christmas are integrally related. The Father in heaven loves sinners and sends his Son to earth to redeem them. The heavenly Son becomes a man in order to save sinners.

Any view of Christmas that does not recognize the role of sin in the incarnation misses the point of the incarnation.

## **Christmas Is about Fraternity.**

Paul is at pains to make sure we remember that the incarnation is real, not mythical. It is not simply a story that brings out the good in people. I think many who get exasperated by the evidence of crime and cruelty at Christmas think of the story of Jesus' birth as a fable like those of Aesop. Well, it is not.

Jesus was a real baby. When we

romanticize the birth of Jesus, we reduce the meaning of what he did. He freely gave up the glories of heaven in order to take on genuine human flesh. The Creator became a creature. When we make Christmas so ethereal that it is no longer real, we diminish the marvel of it all. Jesus did not simply appear and take on an apparent human form. When he was born in the stable, there was an afterbirth to be cleaned up. His mother experienced birth pains, just like every other mother.

Jesus is like us in our weak humanity, yet without sin. Note the way Paul describes the incarnation in a few words in Romans 8:3. He speaks of God “sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.”

Jesus was a man with all the weaknesses that accompany human beings. He faced life without any special tricks or gimmicks that enabled him to fulfill God’s will. He was like us in all ways, except that he did not inherit Adam’s sinful nature and did not commit any sins. In our reflections on Christmas, it is easy to forget this about Jesus.

When Jesus was born in that stable, he experienced cold, hunger, and discomfort. Like any other baby, he was able to communicate his wants and needs only by crying. Yet we often forget this. Even a carol as wonderful as “Away in a Manger” misses this point. The second verse says, “The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but the little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.” Surely Jesus cried—how else would Mary know he was awake?

It is essential that the Lord Jesus was really a man. He had to face and overcome every temptation in order that his righteousness could be imputed to us and received by faith alone. It was as a real, weak human that Jesus faced the cross. It was as a regular person that he endured the pain of crucifixion. If not, it would have done no good. Because we, as humans, sin, it is necessary that a human being suffer in our place.

Christmas is about God taking the initiative in sending his own Son. The babe of Bethlehem is sent by God

the Father in order to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Jesus freely comes because we cannot save ourselves. He comes because he loves us and will die to take away our sin. He is called Jesus because he will save his people from their sin.

### **Christmas Is about Freedom.**

The incarnation provides us with freedom from the curse and penalty of the law of sin and death. In Romans, the apostle Paul helps us to see that Jesus defeats sin by taking the punishment that sinners deserve in his death on the cross. The incarnation was directed toward that deliverance from the penalty of sin.

Jesus was born in order to keep the law and then bear the consequences of breaking the law. Note that Jesus kept the law and then suffered the penalty of law-breakers in order to free us from the guilt and penalty of sin.

Remember the last verse of “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing”: “... born that man no more may die, born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.”

In Romans 8, Paul teaches us not only about freedom from the penal consequences of sin, but also about deliverance from the dominion of sin. Jesus frees us from the necessity of sinning. Sin no longer reigns over us. Paul tells us in verse 4 that God’s people don’t live according to the sinful nature, but according to the Spirit. We are no longer fleshly; we are now spiritual—that is, the Holy Spirit directs us.

In our thinking about Christmas, we need to keep this in focus. When you read of crime or when you hear reports of cruelty, remember that because Jesus was born in Bethlehem and died in Jerusalem, you are no longer mastered by the Evil One and his evil ways. You are now able to love the Savior. You are now able to rejoice in his wondrous love. You are now able to please him by doing as he did, denying yourself and esteeming others better than yourself.

I’m not suggesting that we aren’t supposed to be disturbed by reports of

sin in God’s world at this time of year. But what I am suggesting is that we don’t forget that the babe of Bethlehem was born to set us free, so that we could obey God, rather than always disobeying him.

Try to make sure that your Christmas celebrations include rejoicing in the freedom Christ brought to you.

### **Christmas Is about the Future.**

In the future, a wonderful transaction will take place. Whereas Jesus came to earth in the incarnation and took a true body and a reasonable (rational) soul, in heaven we will become like Jesus. He will still have his body, and we will have a transformed body just like his. But the wonderful thing is that we will be conformed to his image, and will only and always desire to do the will of the Father.

Because we and all others in heaven will be transformed, there will no longer be any crime or cruelty. In the new heavens and the new earth, righteousness will prevail. No one will engage in cruel thoughts or actions. Crime will disappear, and all will be glad followers of the way of the Lord.

We are all disappointed when we hear of crime and cruelty. No Christian person should ever forget the horrible ugliness of sin and how cruel sinners can be.

Nevertheless, when we hear about such things at Christmastime, remember that Jesus came because of our failure to keep his law. Rejoice in his fraternal character—he was born to be like us, in order to save us. Embrace the freedom that the incarnation begins and the cross completes. Live free from the consequences of sin and from its dominion. Most of all, as you celebrate the first advent, anticipate the future advent, when you will be with the Savior forever. Sing with hope the words of Charles Wesley: “Come, thou long-expected Jesus.... Raise us to thy glorious throne.” □

*The author is a retired, but busy, OP minister.*



# WORSHIP WORDS: SELECTING GREAT HYMN TEXTS



JONATHAN L. CRUSE // How do we know what songs are worth singing in corporate worship? Do we sing only the ones we know? Do we sing only the pastor's favorites? Are we only supposed to sing songs written before 1890—or is it only those after 1980? As the phrase “worship wars” clearly connotes, this area of church

life is a touchy subject for many people. Indeed, too many churches have split over issues pertaining to worship music. But are the songs we sing in church only a matter of taste and subjectivity?

Created in God's image, we are required to reflect the perfect character of our Creator by offering our very best to him. To that end, our worship is *not* subjective, and it is my belief that there are certain principles to which our worship songs must adhere.

Our discussion will focus on only one aspect of hymns: the texts. We will not discuss tunes—my experience is in authoring hymn texts, not composing music. If you would like to learn more about what musical elements are required for good hymnody, I recommend the excellent *New Horizons* article by Timothy and Lou Ann Shafer, “What Makes a Good Hymn?” (March 2009).

But as we now attempt to determine which hymn texts belong in our worship, I have found it helpful to ask two baseline questions:

- Is this text *acceptable* to God (pleasing to him)?

- Is this text *accessible* to the congregation (singable for us)?

These questions should serve as helpful guidelines in determining which “worship words” are worthwhile and worthy, as well as which ones are not.

## Acceptable to God

### *Bible-Based*

Simply put, great hymnody must be saturated with Scripture. This does not mean that every line has to be directly lifted from a specific passage, but one should be able to defend every line of poetry with a Bible verse or at least a biblical concept. This should guarantee that our hymns are doctrinally orthodox. Furthermore, when we learn and sing biblically robust hymns, it is an opportunity to ensure that God's Word abides in us. This is what the apostle Paul is getting at in Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly ... singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.”

Take, as a great example, “Crown Him with Many Crowns,” written by

Matthew Bridges in 1851. This song is drenched in Scripture (the KJV, at that date), specifically the book of Revelation. Note these references in the first stanza alone:

- “Crown him with many crowns” reflects Revelation 19:12 (“on his head were many crowns”).
- “The Lamb upon his throne” echoes Revelation 7:17 (“the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne”).
- “Hark! how the heav'nly anthem drowns all music but its own: awake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee” is based on Revelation 5:11–12 (“I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne ... saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain”).
- “And hail him as thy matchless King through all eternity” brings to mind Revelation 19:16 (“And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS”).

## *God-Centered, Christ-Focused*

When hymn texts are grounded in the Bible, they naturally tend to be God-centered and Christ-focused. While Bible-based hymns safeguard us from unorthodox texts, God-centered and Christ-focused hymns will spare us from me-centered texts. When we sing to God, our primary concern should not be our feelings or emotional experiences, but rather God—who he is and what he has done for us. Good hymns will therefore focus primarily on God’s works of creation and redemption through Jesus Christ, as well as his attributes: love, power, wrath, wisdom, etc.

Michael Horton writes that “the Biblical text never gives us the subjective (my experience or my offering of praise or obedience) apart from the objective (God’s saving work in Christ)... It never concentrates on what we are to do before establishing what God has already done.”<sup>1</sup> Herein lies the difference between a hymn like “I Come to the Garden” and “Come, Thou Almighty King”—one is a reflection on a secret, Gnostic-like spiritual encounter; the other is a corporate cry for the presence of the triune God in our worship.

Does this mean that hymns cannot be personal or experiential? By no means! In fact, the arguably most famous hymn of all time is about a man’s personal testimony: “Amazing Grace.” But what makes that hymn so well-loved is that John Newton’s experience is applicable to the general body of believers: “Amazing Grace!—how sweet the sound—that saved a wretch like me.” Everyone who has known firsthand the transforming power of the gospel can say “Yea and amen!” to those beautiful words.

## *Theologically Mature*

Lastly we want to consider the important quality of “biblical and theological maturity.”<sup>2</sup> Good hymnody has the challenge of expressing profound doctrine without being overly cerebral to the average congregant, while at the

same time not sounding trite. One can find truthful words that do not reflect an appropriate level of spiritual maturity. While it is true that “the B-I-B-L-E” is “the book for me,” and that “I stand alone on the Word of God,” perhaps a better expression for congregational worship is found in more substantial poetry: “How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in his excellent Word!”

Paul S. Jones, church musician and hymn composer, writes that “hymn singing is a forum in which a broad public encounters Christian doctrine; therefore, the poetry should permit the least educated to comprehend (although not necessarily at first reading), yet give the discerning mind something to ponder.”<sup>3</sup>

Undoubtedly, some of our older hymn texts use words that we do not use in everyday conversation. What do “panoply,” “harbinger,” and “hoary” mean, anyway? And why did some hymn writers a few hundred years ago decide to include them in their compositions? Should we consider these hymns outdated and avoid them? Maybe. Should we replace a word or two by something more modern and recognizable? Possibly.

But I believe that a better option is to take the time and energy needed to learn the meaning of those older words which at first seem foreign to us. The minister could easily help to orient the congregation’s understanding by offering a brief word of clarification on an unfamiliar phrase.

For example, it would only take about thirty seconds before singing “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” for a minister to explain the meaning of “Ebenezer,” and, in so doing, he is also able to give the congregation an exhortation on God’s faithfulness. Besides deepening our understanding of the Bible, this is an exercise that reminds us that we are not the first people to worship with these words. It teaches us that in corporate worship we join with the voices from ages past, just as we will join with them again in ages to come.

## **Accessible to Us**

When considering what makes a hymn easily accessible to a congregation, we are primarily dealing with the artistic qualities of the text. What will make it beautiful, singable, and memorable? While much could be noted, let me mention only a few points here that I believe will draw a distinction between good hymn texts and great ones.

*Rhyming* is a hallmark of English poetry, although it is not an essential aspect of it. Rhymes do not exist to control what the text has to say or to disrupt the flow of poetic thought. In fact, when poorly employed, rhyming can hurt a hymn more than it can help. In a sense, the singer should not even notice the rhymes when they are well written. However, when a rhyme scheme has been established and is then feebly executed, the singer will (if even for a moment) focus on the oddity rather than the worship (“Does ‘lives’ really rhyme with ‘Christ?’”). This will not do.

A wonderful example of rhyming is the seventeenth-century poem by Samuel Crossman, “My Song Is Love Unknown.” Here is the third stanza:

Sometimes they crowd his way,  
And his sweet praises sing,  
Resounding all the day  
Hosannas to their King.  
Then “Crucify!”  
Is all their breath,  
And for his death  
They thirst and cry.

With seven total stanzas, and with four rhyming pairs in each, Crossman executes all twenty-eight rhymes perfectly. You may have noticed the unique rhyme scheme: ABABCDDC. This demonstrates that rhyming, especially in conjunction with the metrical setting of a text (i.e., the number of syllables per line), can be utilized in creative ways to influence the affect of a text.

For instance, “Praise the Savior, Ye Who Know Him!” by Thomas Kelly, has a rhyme scheme of AAAB and a meter of 8.8.8.5. This gives the text a natural momentum, even apart from music, and

also draws attention to the climactic last line of each stanza, where the anticipated rhyme and meter is abandoned. Conversely, a hymn like “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence” has only one set of rhymes in each stanza, and that over an elongated meter, which gives the poem a calm, meditative character.

Next, I would suggest that *content structure* is vital in making a hymn accessible. By this I mean that the hymn should have a unifying theme—it should not be a random collection of thoughts, even if they are true and orthodox. All the stanzas should serve to promote one main idea.

One way to do this is for a hymn to tell a story, so to speak, where each stanza leads into the next, so that if you were to remove any stanza, the hymn would not make sense. Singers are conceptually aided if they can sense a direction and progression in the text. “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” is an example of this—how lamentable it would be to sing only the first stanza of that hymn—the devil would be left seemingly victorious! Incidentally, this is why all the stanzas of a hymn should be sung, as the author intended.

Finally, *parallelism* is important in making hymns memorable for a congregation. Parallelism is the art of repeating motifs throughout the stanzas. This helps the singer to quickly grasp the hymn’s theme or meaning.

There are different ways to employ parallelism. “Rock of Ages” opens its first stanza and closes its last with that phrase, like bookends. Each stanza of “Abide with Me” ends with those words. “Take My Life and Let It Be,” by Frances Havergal, is another example, where each subsequent stanza introduces another aspect of ourselves that we must give over to the Lord: moments, hands, feet, voice, etc. Pick up a hymnal and flip through it—you will find parallelism all over its pages.

### Modern Hymns

All the examples given so far have been hymns written over one hundred years ago. Does this mean that great

hymn texts are only a thing of the past? Of course not! The characteristics we have pointed out in these quality hymn texts can be (and are) still followed today. In fact, it is our duty to “sing a new song.” We should continue to compose texts to be sung in our worship that are both acceptable to God and accessible to us.

Below are two hymn texts of mine that hopefully achieve these goals, with suggested tunes from the revised *Trinity Hymnal*. The first is inspired by Ephesians 2, while the second explores the role of Christ as our advocate (1 John 2:1). Notice the parallelism employed in the first hymn and the progressive, storylike structure in the second.

My passion for hymnody stems from a passion I hope all Christians share: worshipping God in reverence and awe. Let us never lose sight of this. As we consider which hymns to include in our church services, family worship, and private devotions, may our aim always be to glorify God and to please him with the words we sing.

#### A Sinner Saved by Grace

*Tune: ST. MICHAEL*

(as in “Grace! ’Tis a Charming Sound”)

“A sinner saved by grace”  
My daily theme must be.  
Arise, my soul, and now embrace  
This all-sufficient plea.

A sinner to my core  
In Adam’s fallen race,  
But in Christ Jesus something more—  
“A sinner saved by grace!”

When Satan, sin, and shame  
Accuse me to my face,  
I shield myself behind this claim—  
“A sinner saved by grace!”

No harm can now befall,  
No evil can displace  
My ransomed soul when this my call—  
“A sinner saved by grace!”

And when before the throne,  
The Judge reviews my case,  
My peace will be He loves to own  
A sinner saved by grace.

#### Our Advocate

*Tune: KINGSFOLD*

(as in “My God, My God,  
O Why Have You Forsaken Me?”)

Before the dreadful Judgment Throne  
Of holiness and pow’r  
A terrifying scene is shown  
Of sinners’ fateful hour.  
For there the Law reveals their guilt  
And all will fall in shame,  
Arrayed in only rags of filth  
With nothing good to claim.

But hope remains, for near the Throne  
An Advocate now stands.  
He lives the precious ones to own  
Whose names are on His hands.  
Before the sentence comes to bear  
He stays the Judge Divine,  
And makes His strong petition there,  
And calls the guilty “Mine.”

The penalty reserved for them  
By Him is fully paid.  
No longer can their debt condemn—  
Atonement has been made.  
He takes their filthy, tattered clothes  
And gives them His own dress,  
And with this spotless robe bestows  
His perfect righteousness.

No longer bound by guilt and fear,  
Nor dreading punishment,  
The ransomed raise their heads to hear  
The verdict: “Innocent!”  
To those He has defended well  
Assurance now is giv’n  
That since He knew their horrid Hell,  
They all will know His Heav’n. □

*The author, a student at Westminster Seminary California, is under care of the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania. For a free resource of new Reformed hymns, visit [www.hymnsdevotion.com](http://www.hymnsdevotion.com).*

1 Michael Scott Horton, *In the Face of God* (Dallas: Word, 1996), 214.

2 D. G. Hart and John R. Muether, *With Reverence and Awe* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2002), 172.

3 Paul S. Jones, *Singing and Making Music* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2006), 96.

# BEING A MIDDLE-AGED MOM



NAOMI EMMETT // **Being a middle-aged mom (especially in the church) is at times a difficult position to be in. You're no longer bearing children, changing diapers, or potty training, but you also aren't old enough to be considered a senior citizen—so you live in limbo, attempting to find your new “normal.”**

The younger mothers have a hard time relating to you because you are no longer in that stage of life. Because you don't homeschool, you are also not in the loop with those who do. A mom who finds herself being forced back into the workforce can't meet up with other families to go to the park during the day, and the museum visits are suddenly replaced with dropping kids off at school and getting to the office by 8 a.m.

Add to that all the emotions of your firstborn leaving for college, your seventeen-year-old getting a job, and your fifteen-year-old getting his permit and beginning to spread his wings a bit more, and you suddenly have a big transitional time bomb on your hands. There are some days when you'd like to stay home and be an “emotional wreck,” but you know that you have responsibilities to your family and employer, so you have no option but to hold it together.

As that middle-aged mom now, I sit back quietly and watch as new movements spread like wildfire through the church, but the wisdom I've gained through the years doesn't allow me to follow the latest craze. The youthful

thinking that you can outsmart God and somehow add years to your life by eating the right foods and rubbing the right oils on your body are gone. I know that we live each day by God's mercy and grace. He has preordained our days, and they may not look exactly like what we thought they would be when we were younger. That's a valuable perspective that you gain as you go through the trials of this life. The trappings of this world diminish, and your faith deepens. The psalmist reminds us: “Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath!” (Ps. 39:5).

Middle age brings with it a longing to share at a more intimate level with friends. It's the time in your life when you are attending more funerals than weddings. You hunger for the companionship of other women your age who are going through your same experiences, but they can be taxing to find when your congregation is full of young families. You feel like your usefulness has been replaced by the younger and more talented. You're no longer consid-

ered part of the “in” crowd. You're at that awkward stage in your life where you don't want to be considered young, but you're not ready to be looked at as old.

Often I find myself asking, “OK, what now?” I'm slowly learning that it's OK to be middle-aged. These days the house is a little quieter, but that means I get to spend more time with my husband. I now have the opportunity to volunteer with organizations I didn't have time for when I was younger. I have more time to work out, and I have more substantial quiet times. I find comfort in the words of the psalmist: “They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green” (Ps. 92:14).

I may not know exactly where I fit in my Christian community yet, as my family goes through transitions, but I am satisfied and content with what the Scriptures promise. As that great old hymn reminds me, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed, unto him against that day.” □

*The author is a member of Faith OPC in Garland, Tex.*



# LOVE WINS



GEORGE C. HAMMOND // When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled earlier this year that “gay marriage” was a constitutional right, the advocates of that perversion celebrated that decision with signs proclaiming “Love Wins!” Sometimes people speak the truth in spite of themselves (as Caiaphas did in John 11:49–50).

Love does win, because God is love (1 John 4:8). Love was the root of God sending his Son into the world, so that all who trust in him would not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). God expressed his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

When Jesus was crucified, it didn't look like love had won. It looked like evil, injustice, and hatred had won. But it didn't. On that dark, discouraging day, love won.

Love continues to win, and it wins today in the way it's always won, by supernatural grace. You shouldn't be surprised that modern culture has given its blessing to the murder of unborn children, sexual perversion, easy “no fault” divorce, and other immoralities. The consciences of those who practice these things sting them, to a greater or lesser degree. They hope that by making their behavior legal, it will quiet their consciences. Certainly when what is wrong is also illegal, there is more weight on the conscience. But the conscience is independent of legal enactments.

The gospel is liberating in the only way it has always been liberating: by supernatural grace. Think of what it takes for someone to become a disciple of Jesus, to bow to him as Lord and Savior. It requires that they recognize, confess, and forsake their sin.

Yet forsaking sin is the very thing

all people know in their heart of hearts that they are unable to do, so we pretend that it is not sin, pretend that our consciences do not hurt, and try to desensitize them by engaging in the behavior over and over again.

The gospel is glorious and offensive because it requires us to respond to it. The forces behind the pandering decision of the Supreme Court do not like the law and light of nature, let alone the revealed law of God, because it suggests to them that something is wrong with them. It is to that proposition that people react with viciousness.

*The Times* once invited essays on the subject, “What's wrong with the world?” The editor received this famous response: “Dear Sir, I am. Yours, G. K. Chesterton.” The gospel demands that each of us make such an admission.

This is what *everyone* who would find true peace in life, peace with God, must do. There is something wrong with every one of us, not just homosexuals. To admit that takes supernatural grace. Without such an admission, healing is impossible.

But by the grace of God, everyone can be healed, regardless of their sin. The church needs to be ready to offer the grace of the gospel to those who practice homosexuality and who had desperately hoped that their consciences would now stop hurting because the Supreme Court made it “legal.”

Peace and a good conscience cannot come through any law, human or divine (Gal. 3:21). But it can and does come through the gospel of grace. It can change us, beginning with the realization and sorrowful admission, “There's something wrong with me.”

First Corinthians 6:9–11 says:

Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. *And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified* in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

That is what some of you *were*. You are no longer. By the grace of God, you can be changed. The grace of God can overcome any sin. And the evidence of grace in our lives starts with the admission, “Something is wrong with me.”

God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:19). He loved the world and sent his Son into it for people just like you. Thousands—millions—can testify that he has delivered people just like you.

Love Wins. □

*The author is the pastor of Bethel Presbyterian Church in Leesburg, Va.*

# FINDING A HOME IN WILLIAMSPORT

// SEAN D. GREGG



*Pastor Drew Adcock giving the children's sermon at Omega OPC in Williamsport, Pennsylvania*

Drew Adcock seemed to be an unlikely church planter, at least to himself. Williamsport, Pennsylvania, a town of about 30,000 people, known as the birthplace of Little League Baseball and home to New Life OPC, might have seemed an unlikely place to plant another OP church. But God, in his providence, has blessed New Life's daughter Omega OPC during her nearly five-year history.

Omega is not New Life's first daughter. The congregation was in the middle of planting Redeemer OPC in Danville, about forty-five minutes away, when Drew was New Life's summer intern. He left to complete his third year of seminary, while New Life's leaders were considering how they might go about planting another church.

Drew went back to Williamsport for a second summer internship, and New Life's pastor, Paul Browne, asked Andrew what he thought about a church plant. "Going into seminary, I was pretty convinced that I wasn't a church planter," says Drew, who had only seen what he calls the "lone wolf model" of church planting. "I was really hesitant at first, but as time went on, it really seemed to fit like a glove."

Drew then began a yearlong internship at New Life with a view to planting a church. There are challenges to planting nearly an hour away, and New Life's session wanted their next church plant to be closer. It was decided that Williamsport was big enough for a second church. Volunteers were sought, and the core group was announced to the congregation in mid-December 2010.

In January 2011, the core group began to hold midweek meetings. Drew chose Bible study topics to help the group think about who they would be as a church. There were also times for fellowship each week, and the group worked out details like the new congregation's name and meeting location.

Omega's first worship service was held in the spring of 2011. The transition has gone well, but there were growing

pains. Originally the core group was to include several elders, but they were not able to join the work. Three deacons were in the core group, however. One of them was eventually ordained as a ruling elder in the spring of 2012 and installed as part of the New Life session. Having an elder in worship each week was a blessing to Drew and to the congregation.

One of the congregation's biggest challenges was to find a place to worship. New Life is in the eastern part of the city. Going north meant moving into a rural area. South, across the Susquehanna River, put them in the borough of South Williamsport. Most of the core group lived in the western part of Williamsport, so deciding on the general location wasn't hard—but Pennsylvania was in the middle of a natural gas drilling boom, and gas companies were gobbling up almost every empty space in the county. There were some locations—like a steak house that had been remodeled by another church—but prices were high: \$1.5 million.

With the date for the first worship service drawing near, Drew met with a representative from the Pajama Factory. Once the largest pajama factory in the country, the eight-building complex is now home to artists, entrepreneurs, and community groups. The representative was up-front about the fact that they preferred to focus on renting to artists, but they were willing to rent out a back space to Omega. "It was a mess," said Drew, "but the rent was cheap and we'd fit." Drew was soon back with a deacon and a floor sander prepping the floors for refinishing. They also cleaned up trash and ripped out several walls. Others came and painted, and in the end, people were impressed with how the space turned out.

It was a home, but it had its problems. An adjacent storage room was used for prayer before worship and for children's Sunday school. That room wasn't available for long, however, and the Sunday school class was moved to a hall—which was not heated in the winter months. There wasn't much noise from the upstairs recording studio during the morning service, but the evening was a different story. Also, Omega's space

was hard to find in the sprawling industrial complex.

Nonetheless, the space had its benefits. The location near Penn College meant that several students began worshipping at Omega. Drew says, "It was nice to be surrounded by people who needed the gospel."

The congregation looked for ways to reach out to the community. They held ice-cream socials and coloring contests for kids, but they didn't have large numbers of visitors. Some of the original core group moved away; others returned to New Life. But there were new members. The group remained at about forty people.

While Omega is a daughter church of New Life, the congregation has been aided over the years by Chris Walmer, the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania's area home missions coordinator. He was an encouragement as he regularly attended worship, and he served on the overseeing session as well.

Omega called the Pajama Factory home for about four years. A building committee was formed, and the property of a declining Lutheran church just down the road from the Pajama Factory seemed like it might be a good location, but concerns about maintenance and the possibility of a mold problem caused the congregation to vote not to purchase it.

The search eventually returned to the former steak house, still vacant, which now came with a much smaller price tag. Omega's offer was accepted, and a pledge drive was held for one-time gifts and ongoing gifts to the building fund. With the money raised, and support from New Life, the congregation was able to make a large down payment and obtain a manageable mortgage.

Despite being vacant for over four years, the building was in good shape. Professionals were hired to do some mold remediation work, and the congregation held a big work day to clean up the property inside and out. A woodworker from



*Drew Adcock, with his wife Sonja, baptizing their child Olivia Faith*

New Life is making a sign to go in front of the building.

Unlike the hard-to-find location at the Pajama Factory, the new building is on a busy road with good visibility. There have been new visitors at worship each week since the move, and some of them have returned several times. Attendance is now in the mid to upper forties. The congregation has several new communicant members. One covenant child was recently baptized, and several more babies are due soon. Several people have expressed interest in becoming members.

The Lord has provided financially, and, despite the higher costs of ownership, the congregation is close to meeting its budget. The congregation hopes to be completely self-supporting before particularization.

Praise God for:

- A visible building where the congregation can grow
- New communicant members
- Two members of New Life's session who are part of the group
- Stable finances

Pray for:

- More deacons
- The congregation to become completely self-supporting financially
- New visitors
- Wisdom in becoming a particular congregation



*New members being received at Omega OPC*

### **Home Missions Today**

For up-to-date Home Missions news and prayer updates, e-mail [HomeMissionsToday@opc.org](mailto:HomeMissionsToday@opc.org).  
New editions: December 2, 16, 30.



# COVENANT PREACHING (PART THREE)

// ROBERT RUSSELL DRAKE



Robert R. Drake

In last month's installment, I said that my first principle was my awareness of exegeting a covenant document. Now I want to expand on how I do that. If you are a preacher, you probably won't hear anything new in the steps below. However, it may be an exercise in consciousness raising.

**1. I chose a text.** Sometimes it's just the next block of material in the book I'm going through. Sometimes it is a text selected because of a series I'm preaching. (My choice of book or series topic is the result of prayer and my conviction that I and the congregation need to hear it.) In any case, I work my way through the passage, verse by verse, without worrying about making a sermon outline. I just want to know the text. What does it mean? What is God saying?

**2. I'll do word studies.** I check the Hebrew and Greek lexicons (I really like Strong's) and then track how a word was used. This is always great fun. What I find may not always be useful for that particular sermon, but I'll most likely come back to my findings on another day.

For example, I remember starting with the New Testament use of "mercy" and checking on the usages of *hesed* in the Old Testament, which is sometimes translated as "mercy." That led me to Moses hidden in the cleft of the rock. I tried to distinguish *hesed* from the Lord's introductory words describing himself as "compassionate and gracious" (Ex. 34:6 NASB; the KJV and ESV say "merciful and gracious"). Together those words "compassionate and gracious" refers to one who caresses and stoops to do so. I wasn't expecting that. I had to ask myself, "Is this the great revelation of God's goodness, which would be so overwhelming that Moses had to be protected from it?" It's like that line in the hymn "Crown Him with Many Crowns": "Behold his hands and side, rich wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified; no angel in the sky can fully

bear that sight, but downward bends his burning eye at mysteries so bright." But that had to wait for another day.

**3. I'll look at sentence structure.**

**4. I'll compare the structure and theme of this particular text to parallel texts,** noting what it has in common with the others, but also how it is unique. For example, I might compare and contrast Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 regarding the image of God. If I'm working with Colossians 3:10, I want to learn from the parallel text, but I don't want to end up preaching the parallel text.

ABC

**5. I'll ask questions** such as, "Why did the writer say this, when I expected him to say that?" Using the above example about the image of God, why did Paul speak of just "knowledge" in Colossians 3:10 and not "true righteousness and holiness," as he did in Ephesians 4:24? Should I just add these characteristics together, or is the reference to knowledge meant to be all inclusive and invoke the new covenant from Jeremiah 31:34, "They shall all know me?" Is that why "knowledge" has a significance place in the Pauline Epistles?

God is not afraid of my hard questions, so I try not to run from them. Sometimes, I'm not the one asking the hard questions. I remember years ago getting an unrequested newsletter from a Jewish woman who had become a Christian and then returned to Judaism. Her newsletter was filled with challenging problems. She had the tone of "Oh yeah, well if Jesus is the Messiah, then how do you explain ...?" I got some pretty good sermons from searching the Scriptures to find the answers.

**6. I'll place the words and structure of the text into the context of the book,** and then into the context of other books by that writer. If I'm preaching from Colossians, I first try to see if I could preach the gospel using only that letter. You might say that I want to work with the color scheme that



that book gives me, to see the particular beauty that the Spirit has put on display. Then I'll step back and add the other colors: Paul's other writings and eventually the whole New Testament. But the color scheme, so to speak, is not complete until I've put things into the context of redemptive history as a whole. Obviously, the theme of the image of God in Colossians took me back to Genesis 1. That led to an interesting observation about Colossians. After Paul refers to the image and gives its characteristics, he deals with the two topics of home and work, which parallel the assignments to the image in Genesis: be fruitful and take dominion.

So far we could call this the use of the grammatical-historical method, except that I do not take "historical" to refer only to what words meant in the text's contemporary environment. With reference to the Bible, "historical" has to include redemptive history. Without redemptive history, an interpreter could check the contemporary culture of the New Testament and conclude that "church" refers to individual assemblies, comparable to local political assemblies, as in Acts 19:32. That's true as far as it goes, but "church" in the context of redemptive history takes us back to the assembly at Mt. Sinai (see Acts 7:38, where the word usually translated "church," as it is in the KJV, is translated "congregation" in the ESV and NASB). Notice, however, that the political assembly is not completely gone. In Hebrews 12:23, we come to the heavenly assembly and to God, "the judge of all."

**7. As I'm collecting data** (and this may even begin with the word studies), **I find myself wondering how I would communicate to others what I'm finding.** This is where exegesis, illustration, and application begin to blend together. In God's grand creational coherence of meaning, we understand through analogies and metaphors. That means I understand the propositions of a text through illustrations about the text's meaning and also by application to my life. I and the other hearers are, in fact, illustrations of the text. After all, we bear the image of God, and thus by our very existence are living illustrations of God. The breadth of life is for this reason at my disposal for opening up a text.

**8. From the desire to communicate, I start to discern an outline.** Outlines are about communicating. A woman in a congregation I served taught science in high school, and she said I should imagine my outline written in crayon. The point was to "make it obvious." I thought that was what I was doing, but I've learned that my crayons were not always as bold as I thought. No need to worry. I've come to understand that people are not going to remember the outline of the sermon. I don't think they necessarily should. The outline is just to get them through the message from beginning to end. They'll remember the tidbits that the Holy Spirit pulls out for them, but my thesis and supporting points will probably pass away. In

[Continued on page 19]

## ABCs of PRESBYTERIANISM

### Authority in the Church (1)

Larry Wilson

Our Lord Jesus ordained that there be officers in his church. But do these church officers really have authority? Authority is the right to rule. And God insists that pastors and elders do have authority. He makes this clear in Hebrews 13:17:

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

God holds the leaders of the church accountable to lead. He commands the members of the church to "obey" them and "submit" to them. In other words, he gives his church officers real authority.

Still, the fact that these officers really do have authority by no means puts them on a par with our Lord Jesus himself. Instead, the officers of the church are stewards of Christ's authority. King Jesus delegates authority to them so that they might represent him—and not only that, but also so that he might use them as the media of his own rule. Therefore, their authority is always under Christ's authority. What does that mean?

For one thing, it means that while our Lord Jesus has *original* authority, the authority that church officers have is only *delegated*. A church officer is like a man whom a marshal deputizes, as in the old American West. The deputy had better not pretend to be equal to the marshal. He had better not pretend to be the marshal. At the same time, people had better not ignore what the deputy says. Why not? Because he speaks in the name of the marshal.

Church officers are to offer themselves as a living sacrifice to our Lord to serve as instruments of his rule, not their own rule. And church members are to follow the Lord himself as he rules them through the instrumentality of his officers.

## ● Out of the Mouth . . .

Recently, we were privileged to hear a sermon from a Spanish-speaking guest preacher. Our pastoral intern translated the sermon into English, line by line. My son Liam, 6, was fascinated at first, but before long he leaned over to me and said, "Dad, this is going to take twice as long."

—Scott Pearce  
Hackettstown, N.J.

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

# MENTORING STUDENTS: A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

// BRIAN T. WINGARD



Missionary Brian Wingard teaching at Mukhanyo Theological College in KwaMhlanga

**A**truism assures us that, in any teaching situation proceeding as it should, the teacher learns as much as the students. After many years of teaching, I have found this to be true, but I have also found that there is a world of qualification in the phrase “proceeding as it should.” This is for the simple reason that when the classroom alone is the arena of learning, something is lost.

In each of the five different theological colleges where I have taught in Africa, the context has been different and the opportunity to have one-on-one (or small group) interaction with the students has varied.

Our first posting provided perhaps the ideal situation for this kind of interaction, for we lived on the compound of the Reformed Theological College of East Africa (Kenya), as did all our students. So the opportunities for interaction were many. In that setting, I came to know the students in a very personal way, and much of my understanding of East African culture was based upon this interaction inside and outside the classroom.

In Uganda, though we didn’t live on the Westminster College compound, ministry opportunities in the churches from which our students came provided some interaction outside the classroom. There were also visits to our home by some students seeking assistance. At a later time, at Knox Theological College, we sometimes invited the dormitory students, all of whom were from Kenya, to our home for Sunday dinner. This was helpful in getting to know them, their church situation, and their personal struggles, being apart from their families and studying in a foreign nation.

Our time in South Africa at Mukhanyo Theological College (MTC) has presented perhaps the greatest challenge to this personal interaction. After trying and failing to find a suitable dwelling in KwaMhlanga, where the college is located, we established our residence in Pretoria, 50–60 kilometers away.

A commute of over an hour each way restricts time actually spent on campus, and free time during classroom hours is at a premium for students, if not for faculty. Additionally, students themselves commute or stay only three nights weekly at the college. Therefore, in many of our missionary updates, we have asked for prayer for increased interaction with students.

This semester the Lord began to answer these prayers by the establishment of a mentoring program using the full-time, ordained lecturers, each of whom mentors a small group of students.

My students represent the international character of the student body: Solomon from South Africa, Liberty from Zimbabwe, and Kidane from Eritrea. (One odd thing about my mentoring group is that I have met with all three together only once during this semester, which started in mid-July. This is because Kidane, who is our only fourth-year B.Th. student, often has classes when the other students are free.)

Solomon is the only married man of the three, with two little boys, and I have watched him blossom over the four years that I have known him. He has grown both intellectually and spiritually. He is a gentle man, but can be a fiery preacher (as I have heard in the practice preaching class).

Liberty is an unusual student in that he is always trying to figure out the relationship of one doctrine to another. He is also very sensitive and attuned to the pulse of his fellow students.

Kidane is a man who has experienced many difficulties in his life. Starting life in rural Eritrea as a shepherd boy, he didn’t have a chance to go to school until he moved to Asmara when he was much older. His experience in South Africa has not been easy either. This has included everything from being robbed to xenophobic discrimination in his struggle to get a driver’s license. He will be our only B.Th. graduate this year, and he wishes to do graduate studies in Hebrew.

The main goal of this mentoring is that the three students would gain something from my counsel. However, I have

made it clear to them that we meet together as brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ, so the dynamic is to be quite different from the dynamic of the classroom, where, of necessity, the lecturer is seen as an authority figure. Because of this more intimate relationship, I am in a better position to learn from them.

In the first mentoring session, I asked no questions. Instead, in an attempt to begin to establish a relationship of trust and transparency, I tried to open up, telling something of my background and the manner in which the Lord had called me to the ministry and brought me to South Africa.

### Critique from the Students

Sometimes I learn things in these mentoring sessions that I would rather not learn. In one of our first sessions, I asked each of the students if his expectations of how Mukhanyo would help him in his spiritual life were realized. One answer, especially the manner in which it was phrased, was shocking! Further investigation indicated that his answer could have been the result of his failure to understand certain aspects of our institutional life. Also, he may have assumed that his personal experience was characteristic of the entire college. Still it provided me with a matter of serious prayer, that we might better serve our students.

The confidential nature of our conversations makes it impossible to go into detail about these students' personal struggles and challenges, though I have learned much of those things. There is one session, though, which I can talk of more fully because I am violating no one's confidence but my own.

Since in the past I have been involved in the evaluation of each of these students' practice preaching, I thought that for one session it would be only fair to let the tables be turned and let them evaluate my chapel sermon the day after I preached it. I knew that there would be a certain resistance to taking the opportunity of "getting their own back." I emphasized that I was not seeking compliments but constructive criticism, and I also emphasized that there would be no negative fall-out based upon what they said. Nevertheless, it was difficult wading through the overly generous compliments to find the real criticisms. Africans generally hate face-to-face confrontations, which made it extremely difficult for them to tell me the truth!

Finally I did dig out some criticism. One of the students mentioned a part of the sermon text that, in his opinion, I had entirely failed to explain. This was a criticism I could not deny, but I confess that I had to hold my tongue from attempting to defend myself. The amusing part, however, was the flowery compliments that surrounded this criticism to soften the blow.

His colleague was even more amusing as he struggled to find a way in which he could find a manner to soften the criticism of my sermon's lack of "fire." "My problem," he said, "was looking around at my fellow students and seeing how many were not paying attention, some even sleeping." When I asked them why, he went on to explain, "They said, 'Dr. Wingard preaches, but he has no fire!'" Quickly he continued to say, in order to distance himself and his colleague from this near fatal

criticism (in a Pentecostal-rich environment), "We know the way you are, having had so many classes from you, so we understand and appreciate your style." In charity I must believe that he was expressing the opinions of others and not his own, but when I related the comment to a colleague at the college and church, his comment was, "Well, Brian, I have heard you preach with more fire, you know!"

Though the circumstances of these criticisms were amusing, their content was serious and has caused me some introspection concerning the manner in which I ought to present the lectures and the messages that I deliver at the college. This is but one way that mentoring can be a *learning* experience for the *mentor*!



Brian engaging students at Mukhanyo Theological College

## 👥 What's New

### // Appointments

**Rev. David J. Robbins** was installed as a missionary evangelist to labor with the OP Uganda Mission in South Karamoja, Uganda, on October 30. David, Rashel, and their three children will undertake pre-field missionary training before heading to the field in February 2016.

### // Comings/Goings

Concluding seven years of labors as a medical missionary at Akisyon a Yesu Presbyterian Clinic in South Karamoja, Uganda, **James D. Knox, M.D.**, resigned from missionary service and returned to the U.S. on December 1 with his wife, Jenny, and their son, Eoin.

**Rev. and Mrs. Albert J. Tricarico, Jr.**, have resigned from missionary service and are returning to the U.S. with their son Joshua in mid-December from South Karamoja, Uganda, where Al served as a missionary evangelist since January 2005.



# AN INDESCRIBABLE GIFT

// JOHN H. JOHNSON, JR.

The Advent season is upon us—an appropriate time to reflect upon our reasons for generously supporting the Worldwide Outreach ministries of the OPC.

What are some of our motivations for supporting the work of the church? They include love and appreciation for those who labor to plant churches and win souls, both in our own country and in distant lands, and for those who work hard to produce high-quality educational materials to nurture the members of our churches, both young and old.

The Advent season, however, provides the key motivation for giving, as it draws our attention anew to the matchless gift given to us by our heavenly Father. He sent his beloved Son to be born, to live among us, and to endure his just and holy wrath in our place—an overwhelming gift of his love.

As John writes, “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his [only begotten] Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:9–10).

Paul speaks in awe of this gift in Romans 8:32, “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” What greater gift could the Father give us than his Son?

Paul also expresses the grandeur of this wonderful gift in 2 Corinthians 9:15, where he says, “Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!” This gift is so amazing that there is no way to fully describe it.

It is no wonder that the angels welcomed Christ with the chorus, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom

his favor rests” (Luke 2:14).

In this astounding gift, we see the sacrifice of the Father and of the Son. And by this sacrifice, we are enriched abundantly.

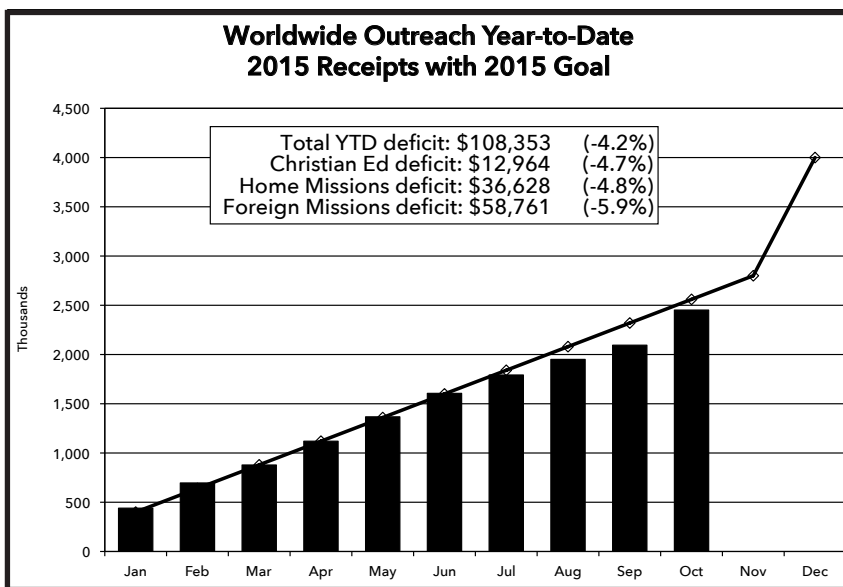
Paul describes our enrichment in 2 Corinthians 8:9 when he says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” He then reminds us that this enrichment leads to our generosity. In 2 Corinthians 9:11, Paul says, “You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.”

Our “becoming rich” is not primarily a material abundance, though many of us are so blessed. It is the infinite wealth of grace that enriches us in every way. We lack no good thing of grace because of the lavish gift of our heavenly Father.

This is a time of year when there is much giving and receiving of gifts. On a human level, when someone has done something for us or given us a kind gift, we are grateful. We are glad to give in return or express our appreciation and love in some way. If we express gratitude for even small gifts, how much more should we desire to respond in thanksgiving and love to God when the gift is overwhelmingly generous?

In response to God’s gracious gift of his Son, let us marvel at this indescribable gift and be filled with immense gratitude for God’s overflowing generosity and kindness. Then, as we are able, let us give joyfully to the Lord’s work, remembering Jesus’ words, “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:8).

*The author is the pastor of Tyler Presbyterian Church in Tyler, Tex. He quotes the NIV.*





## DECEMBER

1. **Charles and Connie Jackson**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for Charles, a class in teaching church history at the AEPC seminary in Nakuru, Kenya, this week. / **Joshua and Jessica Lyon**, Carson, Calif. Pray for continued development in the ministry of Grace OPC. / **Charlene Tipton**, database administrator, and **Mark Stumpff**, office assistant.
2. **Lacy Andrews**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast. / **James and Jenny Knox**, M.D. and R.N., Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the Lord would provide the Knoxes with opportunities to serve him in the U.S. / Pray for stated clerk **Ross Graham** as he begins preparations for the 83rd General Assembly in June 2016.
3. **Ben and Melanie Westerveld**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for Ben as he speaks to the ninth annual Foreign Missions Conference in Willow Grove tomorrow. / Home Missions general secretary **John Shaw**. / Pray for healing for Great Commission Publication's employees and spouses who are dealing with cancer: **B.A. Snider**, **Art Williams**, **Harper Cossar**, and **Marcia Nyberg**.
4. **Tony and Mica Garbarino**, Morgan Hill, Calif. Ask God to bless Providence Presbyterian Church's outreach plans. / **Ben and Heather Hopp**, Haiti. Pray that God would raise up gifted and faithful men for church office. / Pray for **Rodney King**, chairman of the Subcommittee for Internet Ministries, which oversees OPC.org.
5. Associate missionaries **Octavius and Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray for Octavius as he responds to the needs of the congregation in Port-au-Prince. / **Kim and Barbara Kuhfuss**, Eau Claire, Wis. Pray that regular attenders at Providence Reformed Church will pursue membership. / Navy chaplain **John (and Linda) Carter**.
6. **Chris and Megan Hartshorn**, Anaheim Hills, Calif. Pray that the lost will be saved and join Anaheim Hills Presbyterian Church. / Affiliated missionaries **Jerry and Marilyn Farnik**, Czech Republic. Pray for outreach activities planned for the holiday season. / **Kathy Bube**, Loan Fund administrator.
7. Missionary associates **M. D., D. V., and S. Z.**, Asia. Pray for students as they study for end-of-term exams. / **Paul and Sarah Murreale**, St. Louis, Mo. Pray that God would add young families to Gateway OPC. / Pray for *New Horizons* proofreader **Sarah Pederson**, who is dealing with serious health issues.
8. **Jonathan and Lauryn Shishko**, Queens, N.Y. Pray that Reformation Presbyterian Church will grow in spiritual maturity. / Tentmaker missionary **T. L. L.**, Asia. Pray for a good wrap-up to the semester of teaching. / **David Haney**, director of finance and planned giving for the Committee on Coordination.
9. **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia. Pray that more workers would be sent to do the work of ministry in Asia. / **Everett and Kimberly Henes**, Hillsdale, Mich. Pray that the Lord would grant opportunity for Hillsdale OPC's members to share the gospel. / Pray for **Danny Olinger**, Christian Education general secretary, as he serves as intern director.
10. **Mika and Christina Edmondson**, Grand Rapids, Mich. Pray for the discipleship and ministry of New City Fellowship. / Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **Mark Bube** as he reports to the Executive Committee tomorrow. / **Roberto (and Irma) Quiñones**, yearlong intern at Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana in San Juan, P.R.
11. Foreign Missions associate general secretary **Douglas Clawson**. / **Jonathan and Kristin Moersch**, Capistrano Beach, Calif. Pray for continued growth, harmony, and a gracious gospel witness at Trinity Presbyterian Church. / **Caleb (and Alexa) Nelson**, yearlong intern at First Church of Merrimack in Merrimack, N.H.
12. **Phil Strong**, Lander, Wyo. Pray that the people of Grace Reformed Fellowship will know and serve the Lord faithfully. / Missionary associates **Mr. and Mrs. C.**, Asia. Pray for relationships developed during the school year. / **Lowell (and Mae) Ivey**, yearlong intern at Covenant Community Church in Taylors, S.C.
13. **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia. Pray for the growth in grace of new believers as they face the challenges of leading Christian lives. / **Ron and Carol Beabout**, Gaithersburg, Md. Pray that God would bless Trinity Reformed Church with additional families. / **Chris Tobias**, *New Horizons* cover designer.
14. **Andrew and Billie Moody**, San Antonio, Tex. Pray that the Lord would bless San Antonio Reformed Church's officer training and new evening service. / Foreign Missions administrative assistant **Linda Posthuma** and secretary **Katrina Zartman**. / **Darryl and Anita Kretschmer**, yearlong intern at Lakeview OPC in Rockport, Maine.
15. Pray for **Al and Laurie Tricarico** as they conclude their labors in Uganda and return to the U.S. / **John and Wenny Ro**, Chicago, Ill. (downtown). Pray that more people will come to Gospel Life Presbyterian Church's outreach Bible studies. / **Jan Gregson**, assistant to the finance director.



Tony and Mica Garbarino

- 16. Jim and Bonnie Hoekstra**, Andover, Minn. Pray that the Lord would enable Immanuel OPC to develop good relationships with its neighbors. / **Eric and Dianna Tuininga**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for the local churches' programs for women and children. / **Tim (and Jeni) Son**, yearlong intern at First Presbyterian Church, North Shore in Ipswich, Mass.
- 17.** Missionary associates **Leah Hopp** and **Taryn Dieckmann**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for Leah's community health work in local villages. / **Jay and Andrea Bennett**, Neon, Ky. Praise God for his continuing blessing on Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church. / **Matthew (and Elin) Prather**, yearlong intern at Harvest OPC in San Marcos, Calif.
- 18. Glenn Jerrell**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario. Pray that God would provide more contacts and opportunities to establish new OP churches. / Missionary associates **Sarah Jantzen**, **Fiona Smith**, and **Angela Voskuil**, Uganda. / *New Horizons* managing editor **Jim Scott**.
- 19. Bob and Martha Wright**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that they will continue to have new ministry opportunities among the Karimojong. / **Jim and Tricia Stevenson**, Tulsa, Okla. Pray for growth both in numbers and in love for the Savior and the saints at Providence OPC. / Navy chaplain **Tim (and Janine) Power**.
- 20.** Home Missions staff administrator **Sean Gregg**. / **David and Sunshine Okken**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that many will respond in faith to the message of salvation presented weekly at the clinic. / Short-term missions coordinator **David Nakhla**. Pray that churches and mission fields will consider serving or being served by a team of volunteers next summer.
- 21. Ethiopian Reformed Presbyterian Church.** Pray for Tony Curto as he ministers to the believers and church leaders in Ethiopia this week. / **Mike and Katy Myers**, Hartwell, Ga. Pray that the preaching of the Word at Heritage Presbyterian Church will bring edification and conversion. / **Doug Watson**, part-time staff accountant.
- 22. Bill and Sessie Welzien**, Key West, Fla. Pray that the Lord would add more people to Keys Presbyterian Church. / Missionary associates **Christopher and Chloe Verdick**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for Chloe in her responsibilities as mission bookkeeper. / Pray that churches will be willing to have a 2016 summer or yearlong pastoral intern.
- 23.** Missionary associates **Jesse and Hannah Van Gorkom**, Nakaale, Uganda. Give thanks for their contributions



David and Faith Nakhla

- to the work of the Uganda Mission. / **Brian and Sara Chang**, Cottonwood, Ariz. Pray for new growth at Verde Valley Reformed Chapel. / **Benjamin (and Emily) Gordon**, yearlong intern at Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pa.
- 24. Christopher and Ann Malamisuro**, Cincinnati, Ohio. Pray that God would bless Good Shepherd OPC's outreach with much fruit. / **Heero and Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray that God would bring new students to the Bible studies. / **Brian Guinto**, yearlong intern at Grace Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Ohio.
- 25.** Retired missionaries **Betty Andrews**, **Greet Rietkerk**, and **Young and Mary Lou Son**. Pray for those dealing with age-related problems. / **Jeremy Logan**, Mt. Vernon, Ohio. Pray for Sunday school teachers, Bible study leaders, and a new location for Knox Presbyterian Church. / *Ordained Servant* proofreader **Diane Olinger**.
- 26. Robert and Christy Arendale**, Houston, Tex. Pray that God would save local families and bring them to worship at Cornerstone OPC. / Missionary associate **Jennifer Nelson**, Quebec, Canada. Pray that the Lord would bless her times of prayer and conversation with various contacts. / Pray for the work of **Alan Strange** and **Derick Vander Meulen**, coeditors of the proposed Psalter Hymnal.
- 27.** Affiliated missionaries **Craig and Ree Coulbourne**, Japan. Pray for Craig as he works with two Japanese interns this year. / **Tom and Martha Albaugh**, Pittsburgh, Pa. Pray that visitors to Redeemer OPC Mission will desire to join in communicant fellowship. / **Charles Williams**, yearlong intern at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Ada, Mich.
- 28. Mark and Peggy Sumpter**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest. Pray for church-planting exploratory work in the region. / Pray for the labors of affiliated missionary **Linda Karner**, Japan. / *New Horizons* editorial assistant **Pat Clawson**.
- 29. Brian and Dorothy Wingard**, South Africa. Pray for the students ministering in their villages during Mukhanyo Theological College's term break. / **Eric and Donna Hausler**, Naples, Fla. Pray that the Lord would draw families with children and youth to Christ the King Presbyterian Church. / Navy chaplain **Bryan (and Shelly) Weaver**.
- 30. Jim and Eve Cassidy**, Austin, Tex. Pray that the Lord would bless South Austin Presbyterian Church's outreach Bible study in Dripping Springs, Texas. / **Ray and Michele Call**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for the mission as it develops plans for community outreach. / **Janet Birkmann**, Diaconal Ministries administrative assistant.
- 31.** Pray for **Mark and Jeni Richline**, Montevideo, Uruguay, as they prepare to return to the U.S. to begin a year-long furlough. / **Brad and Cinnamon Peppo**, Springfield, Ohio. Pray that Living Water OPC will be a bright light among those who need the gospel. / **Daniel Adams**, yearlong intern at Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pa.

# COVENANT PREACHING

[Continued from page 13]

fact, I've had people come up to me and say, "I really enjoyed that sermon when you said ..." and then they say something I never said. What happened was that I said something, and that person, with insight from the Holy Spirit, made an application to his life in a way I never anticipated. And I got the credit! Is this a great job or what?

## 9. Whatever my outline ends up being, I will make sure I end with Christ.

Let me bring together at least some of the above points using a passage from Colossians. I had been preaching a series on what I called "kingdom proverbs"—short, pithy statements in the New Testament that have a proverbial quality to them and are easy to remember. Part of my study included refreshing my memory on the uses of the word "kingdom." I was intrigued by the juxtaposition in Colossians 1:12–15 of "kingdom of his beloved Son" and the Son as "the image of the invisible God" (see step 1 above). I envision a sermon entitled "The Kingdom of the Image." I could already see some world-and-life implications, but I wanted to be sure they were valid. I began working my way, verse by verse, through the text. I had to understand "inheritance" and its relationship to "kingdom." What did "qualified" mean? (I'm at steps 2 and 3 above.) When I coupled "qualified" with "inheritance," my mind went to people expecting to be mentioned in a rich uncle's will and their surprise at not being included. What would have disqualified them? What would they have needed to be qualified? I then moved to a person's expectation of being included as an heir of God's kingdom, the person's disqualification through sin, and then Christ's work to qualify us. In that little exercise, I think I was exegeting and illustrating and applying—not all at once, but all together.

I knew from other texts (step 4 above) that the "inheritance" and the "kingdom" were equated, but I soon discovered a preaching problem. I wanted to end with Christ, "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:14), but I also wanted to reflect at some length on Christ as the image of God. I had discovered that the image theme unites the whole book of Colossians, as Christ is the image (1:15), we are renewed in that image (3:10), and we are given exhortations about what image is and does (steps 5 and 6). My problem was that Colossians 1:15, "He is the image of the invisible God," comes after 1:14, "... in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." I wanted to end with redemption through Christ (step 9), so I deliberately saved my elaboration of redemption and forgiveness until the end of the message. The very theme of "image" provided me with that freedom. It is, after all, in the kingdom of the beloved that we have redemption and forgiveness.

My "crayon-like" outline (steps 7 and 8) ended up being:

- I. *Our inheritance is the kingdom.*
- II. *The kingdom is the kingdom of the Son, the image of God.* (Under this point, I could say something about the scope of the kingdom being as broad as the scope of man's life as image of God.)
- III. *In his kingdom, we get our lives back.* (Here I elaborated on the meaning of redemption and forgiveness as untying us from the law and death, to return us to our role of reflecting God.)

It's not the greatest outline, and I'm sure that five years from now I'll come up with a different (better) one. However, the union of kingdom and image will still be stuck in my head. If it will still be stuck in the minds of the people in my congregation, then I will be content.

I've told you what I think is gospel preaching, which may also be called "covenant preaching." I've told you the steps I go through, and I've given you an example. However, if all you remember is that to preach is to preach Christ, then I'll be content.

*The author is a recently retired minister in the PCA (and former minister in the OPC). This is the final installment of a three-part series.*

### Brochure for Evangelism and Outreach

The brochure *Christ Proclaims a Better Way* recently replaced the aging *Get to Know Us Better*. This tri-fold brochure offers an introductory welcome to the OPC. It is intended for wide distribution.

This brochure is available in packets of 100. Each packet costs \$10. If you order more than ten packets (1,000 brochures), the cost is reduced to \$8 per packet.

Order your supply at <https://store.opc.org> (to pay through PayPal) or from the Christian Education office at [CCEsec@opc.org](mailto:CCEsec@opc.org) (to be billed).





# NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS



Ross Graham, moderator of the Presbytery of New Jersey (left), asking the installation questions to Todd Smith (photo by Jake Zozzaro)

## TODD SMITH INSTALLED AT BRICK, N.J.

Jennifer Peacock

One hurricane brought them together, and another welcomed their new pastor. Todd Smith was installed as pastor of Faith Bible Church (OP) in Brick, New Jersey, on October 3, while the remnants of a nor'easter brushed the coast and Hurricane Joaquin churned well out into the Atlantic.

Todd was called to Brick with his family late last year from Wyoming, where he was a ruling elder at Grace Reformed Fellowship in Lander. Previously he was a minister in the nondenominational Restoration Movement for many years. He left that group after coming to the Reformed faith.

Faith Bible Church is the result of a merger between two churches: Faith Bible Church, an independent congregation in Brick, and Redeemer OPC, which met in

a rented Seaside Heights church building until Superstorm Sandy slammed into New Jersey on October 29, 2012. Faith Bible Church opened its doors to the displaced OPC congregation, and in January 2013 the members of both congregations joined as one.

“People are still dealing with the impact from the storm in various ways, and the recent threat of Joaquin brought back a lot of old memories. In that context, the church can be a place where people can come to hear biblical teaching and be encouraged in their faith. We have members spread out in different communities in Ocean County; those people can be a positive influence in their communities and minister to their neighbors,” Smith said.

## UPDATE

### MINISTERS

- On October 16, **Shane M. Bennett**, formerly the stated supply, was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of Faith OPC in Fawn Grove, Pa.
- Licentiate **Michael J. Chapa** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of Emmanuel OPC in Castle Rock, Colo., on October 3.
- Licentiate **Timothy Ferguson** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of Grace OPC in Westfield, N.J., on October 24.
- **Timothy W. Flora**, formerly associate pastor of Columbia Presbyterian Church

in Columbia, Md., was installed on September 12 as pastor of Living Hope Presbyterian Church in Clarksville, Md., alongside pastor Clark H. Brooking.

- Army Reserve chaplain **Graham C. Harbman** was dismissed by the Presbytery of Northern California at its March 30–31 meeting to the PCA, which received him on May 1.
- The pastoral relationship between **Daniel J. Halley** and Kettoctin Covenant Presbyterian Church in Purcellville, Va., was dissolved by the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic on May 2, retroactively effective February 28.
- The pastoral relationship between retiring **Robert G. Herrmann** and Sovereign Grace OPC in Redlands, Calif., was dissolved by the Presbytery of Southern California at the end of July.
- **Mark J. Larson** was dismissed to the RCUS by the Presbytery of New Jersey on September 26.
- The pastoral relationship between **Jesse A. J. Pirschel** and Providence OPC in Temecula, Calif., was dissolved as of July 14, and he was transferred to the Tennessee Valley Presbytery of the PCA; there he serves as the senior pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Chattanooga, Tenn.
- **Christopher A. Sandoval** was released by the Presbytery of the Midwest to the South Coast Presbytery of the PCA on September 18, pending his official reception by the latter, which occurred on September 26, when he was called as an evangelist by that body to work in San Diego.
- **Todd E. Smith**, formerly the state supply, was installed on October 3 as pastor of Faith Bible Church (Orthodox Presbyterian) in Brick, N.J.
- The pastoral relationship between **Wendell S. Stoltzfus** and Covenant OPC in Sinking Spring (Reading), Pa., was dissolved by the Presbytery of Philadelphia on September 19.



• **Chad B. Van Dixhoorn**, formerly associate pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church in Vienna, Va., was installed as a teacher by the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic on October 2; he teaches at Reformed Theological Seminary Washington.

## THE GIFT OF LIFE

*Sara Driese*

In June 2014, my father, Harold Keener, was hospitalized for late-stage renal failure. He was placed on dialysis three times a week and learned contentment, often saying, “I am content to spend the rest of my days on dialysis.” My husband and I began praying in early 2015 about the possibility of my donating a kidney to my dad. Through a process of prayer, pastoral counsel, God’s word, and medical advising, we moved forward to see if I would be a candidate for donation.

On August 13, 2015, I was able to call Dad and tell him that I wanted to give him a kidney. It was one of the best moments in our relationship. On August 25, a highly skilled team of professionals at Hershey Medical Center performed the surgeries that resulted in a successful transplant of my right kidney to my father.

At just about six weeks post-op, I shared the story at Calvary OPC in Middletown, Pennsylvania, where my father is an elder. He opened the time by reading Psalm 103 through tears, and closed

the time in prayer after my three children sang a precious children’s hymn, “Dare to Be a Daniel.”

## LETTERS

### PROPOSED PSALTER-HYMNAL

Editor:

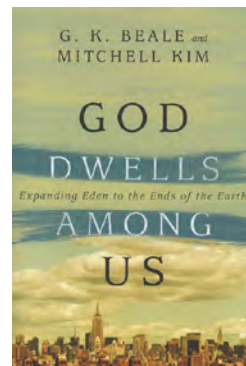
I was extremely pleased to read in the October 2015 issue about the progress on the proposed *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal*. I was both surprised and excited to read that twenty-six of the new hymns presented are compositions from the last twenty years.

Kudos for including one of James Boice’s fine hymns (“Come to the Waters”) from his fantastic CD, *Hymns for a Modern Reformation*. I would have preferred to have at least one more hymn of his included, but I am satisfied with what has been chosen.

Perhaps the best choice on the list of new hymns is the instant classic, “In Christ Alone.” This composition can stand with any of the great hymns of the faith.

I eagerly await the release of the *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* and hope to sing these Christ-glorifying hymns in an OP church someday soon.

Kurt Lofton  
Columbus, Ohio



lead pastor of Living Water Alliance Church in Naperville, Illinois, delivered a seven-week sermon series incorporating the themes of Beale’s earlier work. Together

they designed this book to share those themes accessibly with a new audience.

The authors desire to impart a biblical-theological sensibility that will motivate the church to “fulfill its mission in the world” (p. 7). This mission flows out of God’s plan to bring his chosen people into a holy realm. God reveals this plan progressively in Scripture—through Eden, the temple, God’s glorious presence, and the new creation. Students familiar with Beale’s writings will feel at home with this book. It is a distillation and at points a collection of verbatim excerpts of its predecessor.

Beale and Kim establish that Eden is itself a temple, which signifies God’s presence with his people. This glorious presence progressively unfolds from the garden to the tabernacle and temple and then to the revelation of the Son of God, who “became flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us” (John 1:14). God’s presence will be consummated at the return of our Savior and the coming of the new heavens and new earth—a perfected, expanded, and even greater Eden-temple. The authors proclaim, “God’s purpose and design for his dwelling place from the beginning of creation was to fill the entire heavens and earth” (p. 139). In other words, Revelation 21–22 is a fulfillment of Genesis 1–2.

Therefore, the authors rightly contend that the gospel is not primarily concerned with restoring the original creation. Neither is it merely a promise of subjective well-being. It is God’s cosmic plan of glorious consummation. Through the person and work of Jesus Christ, the church receives a blessed communion with the triune God much greater than anything Adam ever experienced. The body of Christ itself is the expanded temple of God.

## REVIEWS

*God Dwells among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth*, by G. K. Beale and Mitchell Kim. InterVarsity Press, 2014. Paperback, 211 pages, list price \$17.00. Reviewed by OP pastor Camden M. Bucey.

*God Dwells among Us* is related to a previous work by G. K. Beale, who teaches New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary: *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (InterVarsity Press, 2004). Mitchell Kim,



*Harold Keener and his daughter Sara*

The authors succeed by conveying this point, even though the book is limited in other respects. While Beale's earlier book developed its themes through successive covenant epochs, the authors admittedly merged them in this book, thus condensing the depth of the original. Readers familiar with the biblical theology of Geerhardus Vos and the contours of redemptive-historical progression may prefer to begin directly with *The Temple and the Church's Mission*. Nevertheless, *God Dwells among Us* will prove useful to those unacquainted with the finer points of Reformed biblical theology. Those willing to study its pages will come to a better understanding of God's unfolding plan of dwelling among his people in consummate glory.

***Origins: A Reformed Look at Creation, Design, and Evolution*, by Deborah B. Haarsma and Loren D. Haarsma. Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2007. Paperback, 256 pages, out of print. (Second edition: *Origins: Christian Perspectives on Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design*, 2011, 315 pages, \$16.99.) Reviewed by OP pastor Ken Golden.**

Deborah B. Haarsma, a former science professor at Calvin College, and Loren D. Haarsma, a current science professor there, wrote *Origins* as a husband-and-wife team. As committed Christians, they seek to find harmony between general and special revelation. It deals with such touchy issues as the age of the earth, macroevolution, and the historicity of Adam.

I'll start with the positives. Throughout the book, the Haarsmas assert their commitment to Christianity and reject atheistic conclusions. In the early chapters, the authors also offer a healthy corrective to a "science text-book" hermeneutic influenced by fundamentalism (pp. 28–29), while stressing the importance of reassessing biblical interpretation in light of scientific evidence (p. 77).

As with all books, neutrality is impossible. Deborah Haarsma now serves as

president of the BioLogos Foundation—an organization committed to an evolutionary understanding of God's creation. In light of this, two significant weaknesses of *Origins* concern fair presentation and scientific priority. As scientific specialists and gifted communicators, the authors present a digestible and winsome argument for macroevolution while treating opposing biblical arguments in an irenic manner. But the irenic tone isn't extended to their scientific opponents. These are given short shrift (or more commonly dealt with on their website). This lack of fair presentation stacks the deck in favor of the authors' evolutionary presuppositions, leaving the reader to choose between the seemingly rigorous science of the authors and the supposed pseudoscience of their opponents.

Secondly, the Haarsmas, as professing Christians, should know that Scripture trumps science, assuming that both are rightly interpreted. But in their discussion of Galileo, the authors argue for letting science inform Scripture. Unfortunately, this strategy backfires in their handling of key biblical texts. In discussing the relationship between Genesis 1 and 2 (pp. 101–2), they offer the possibility of separate creation accounts, but discount the traditional solution of narrowing creation from universal (chapter 1) to local (chapter 2). In Genesis 3, the authors interpret the Fall exclusively as spiritual death, while neglecting the first occurrences of physical death in chapter 5.

Most troubling is the authors' treatment of our first parents. Their allowance for the possibility of an allegorical Adam and Eve, representing a much larger population, obscures the plain meaning of Scripture. They fail to interact with clear biblical evidence for an historical Adam in genealogies (Gen. 5; 1 Chron. 1; Luke 3), covenants (Hos. 6:7), and the teachings of Christ (Matt. 19) and Paul (1 Tim. 2). Most egregiously, they ignore Adam's pairing with Christ as federal heads of the human race (Rom. 5; 1 Cor. 15). If there

wasn't one historical man who committed one original sin, then why would anyone need another historical man to atone for this sin and restore personal righteousness? The authors urge tolerance of all the views presented in their book, but, in the final analysis, that implicitly undermines the gospel they desire to uphold.

*Origins* provides a useful entry point in understanding some of the divergent views. Therefore, this reviewer cautiously recommends the book for mature Christians who are well-grounded in the biblical arguments for an historical Adam, but not for other readers.

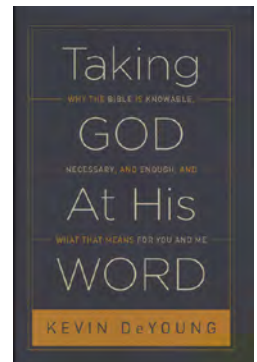
***Taking God at His Word: Why the Bible is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What That Means for You and Me*, by Kevin DeYoung. Crossway, 2014. Paperback, 144 pages, list price \$17.99. Reviewed by Pastor Roger Wagner.**

"This is a book unpacking what the Bible says about the Bible. My aim is to be simple, uncluttered, straightforward, and manifestly biblical." So DeYoung

states his purpose in writing *Taking God at His Word*, and I think he has fulfilled that purpose admirably.

This is a clear, conversational presentation—in a brief eight chapters—of the historic doctrines of Scripture. But it is more than that. It is preeminently a book about Christ: "What we believe and feel about the word of God are absolutely crucial, if for no other reason than that they should mirror what we believe and feel about Jesus."

There are more detailed or polemical books on the subject, and De Young adds an annotated bibliography of "Thirty of the Best Books on the Good Book." But this one provides a fine contemporary introduction to the subject for the Christian or for someone who is skeptical about the Bible, but willing to listen. It's a good



giveaway book for those who regularly share their faith with others and run into these kinds of questions.

DeYoung begins with Psalm 119, a “love song” to the Scriptures. He reviews the passions, affections, and actions expressed by the psalmist as he contemplates the beauties and wonders of the written Word of God.

The author then explains: “I want to convince you (and make sure I’m convinced myself) that the Bible makes no mistakes, can be understood, cannot be overturned, and is the most important word in your life, the most relevant thing you can read each day.”

In the following seven chapters, DeYoung goes on to discuss the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of the Bible, its clarity and finality, and its necessity for Christian faith and practice.

In chapter 7, he answers the crucial question, “What did Jesus think of the Bible?” A Christian, as a follower of Christ, will believe what Jesus teaches. Jesus, DeYoung explains, had a “supremely high view of inspiration and [a] commonsense understanding of biblical history and chronology.”

In his concluding chapter, DeYoung finally comes to the text with which many discussions of the Bible begin, 2 Timothy 3:14–17. He discusses the “God-breathedness” of Scripture and its implications.

DeYoung concludes: “So let us not weaken in our commitment to our unbreakable Bible. Let us not wander from this divinely exhaled truth. Let us not waver in our delight and desire. God has spoken, and through that revelation he still speaks.” Get this book; read this book.

***The Works of John Knox*, edited by David Laing. Reprint, Banner of Truth Trust, 2014. Hardback, 6 volumes, list price \$180.00. Reviewed by OP minister Alan D. Strange.**

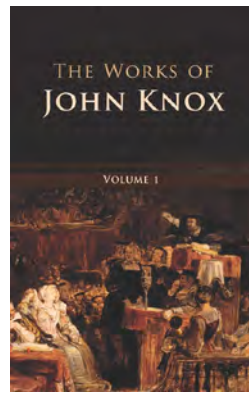
We’ve been celebrating, at least since 2009, various anniversaries related to the Protestant Reformation. We noted last year, in these pages, the five hundredth anniversary of the birth of John Knox, the father of Scottish Presbyterianism. Knox

was no Luther or Calvin, but he neither feared man nor lacked zeal, and God was pleased to use him to accomplish extraordinary things.

Knox was indomitable, manifesting his zeal in actions like throwing an idol of Mary overboard and saying, “Let her swim”; confronting Mary, Queen of Scots; and, near the end of his life, rebuking the visiting French ambassador from the pulpit after the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre with “Your king is a murderer.” Knox took up the Protestant cause in Scotland in the 1540s, defended justification by faith alone and attacked Roman Catholic idolatry, and served as a French galley slave, English Reformer, pupil of Calvin in Geneva, and Scottish Reformer.

As a part of this quincentennial celebration, the Banner of Truth Trust has republished *The Works of John Knox* in six sturdy, clothbound volumes. These volumes, which have not been available in hardback for many years, are a reprinting of Knox’s writings as collected and edited by David Laing in the nineteenth century. This reviewer believes that a competent, scholarly modernizing and editing of Knox’s *Works* (as Kevin Reed did in his mid-nineties *Selected Writings of Knox*) would be most welcome.

Volumes 1 and 2 contain the five books of Knox’s *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, certainly his principal work (though the authorship of the fifth book is disputed). One will have to slog one’s way through all the peculiar spelling and grammatical conventions of the time, but it remains valuable to read one of the Reformers who participated in the events and see how he viewed this work of reformation as a work of



the Holy Spirit among his people.

It has often been noted, and these writings show, that Knox was no systematic theologian. Rather, he was a man of action: a preacher and a churchman, contributing in 1560 both to the Scots Confession and the First Book of Discipline. Volumes 3–5 show that much of what Knox wrote were letters and

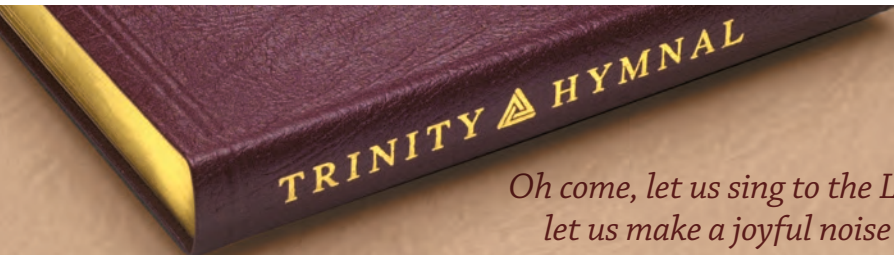
treatises dealing with the issues of his day—not only defending the Protestant faith (doctrine, government, discipline, and liturgy), but also setting forth his vision of a godly commonwealth. He does have, in volume 5, a very comforting treatise on predestination, but little else that is more purely doctrinal. Volume 6 contains a large number of letters and prayers, in addition to an account of his life.

Little love is lost on Knox these days in the Church of Scotland (his grave lies under a parking lot), but even in the areas of disagreement that we might have with him, there is much to learn from this Scottish giant of the Reformation, who, on his return to Scotland in 1559, prayed, “Give me Scotland, or I die!”

## Positions Available

**VP of Advancement:** Mid-America Reformed Seminary invites applications for Vice President of Advancement. This is an exceptional leadership opportunity for an experienced advancement professional to join a team dedicated to preparing students for the gospel ministry in confessionally Reformed and Presbyterian churches. The preferred candidate will have a bachelor’s degree and proven leadership and management skills, as well as familiarity with principles of fundraising, donor stewardship, annual fund development, capital campaigns, and event planning. Applicants should send a résumé and cover letter to Dr. Cornelis P. Venema at [info@midamerica.edu](mailto:info@midamerica.edu) or Mid-America Reformed Seminary, 229 Seminary Drive, Dyer, IN 46311.





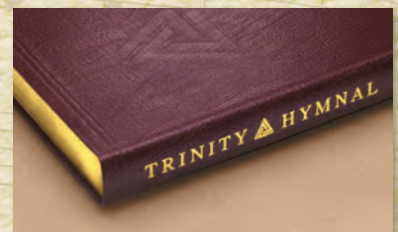
*Oh come, let us sing to the Lord;  
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!* PSALM 95:1

**ENRICH YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE!** Use in your church, personal quiet times, family devotions, or a day alone with God. An essential worship resource, Trinity Hymnal provides you with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs that reflect a rich, varied heritage. The deeply biblical content will disciple your adults and children alike.



TRINITY HYMNAL PEW EDITION		
Red	040010	\$17.95
Navy	040050	\$17.95
Green	040060	\$17.95

FEATURES	BENEFITS
742 Hymns, 960 pages, approx. 6" x 9" x 1.5"	A rich variety of hymns for all occasions, faithfully based on God's Word
A Bible verse with each hymn	Biblical truth directs worship
Topical structure based on the Westminster Confession of Faith	Complements your Reformed belief and worship
The Westminster Confession of Faith	Conveniently at hand for reference and instruction
The Shorter Catechism	Readily available for use in worship or in the training of adults and children
The Apostles' & Nicene Creeds	Use them in worship anytime
Seven helpful indexes	Helps you find what you need when you need it
Guitar chording for 182 hymns	Accommodates informal worship



TRINITY HYMNAL		
Leather & Gold	040020	\$69.95



TRINITY HYMNAL		
Accompanist	040040	\$39.95

TRINITY PSALTER		
Pew Edition	040210	\$8.50
Accompanist	040220	\$21.00

**ORCHESTRATIONS** Visit [www.gcp.org](http://www.gcp.org) to download over 700 Trinity Hymnal accompaniment orchestrations and purchase them one hymn at a time. Call today to learn about quantity discounts or visit [www.gcp.org](http://www.gcp.org).

**ORDER TODAY! CALL 800-695-3387 OR VISIT WWW.GCP.ORG**



Our Family of Products