

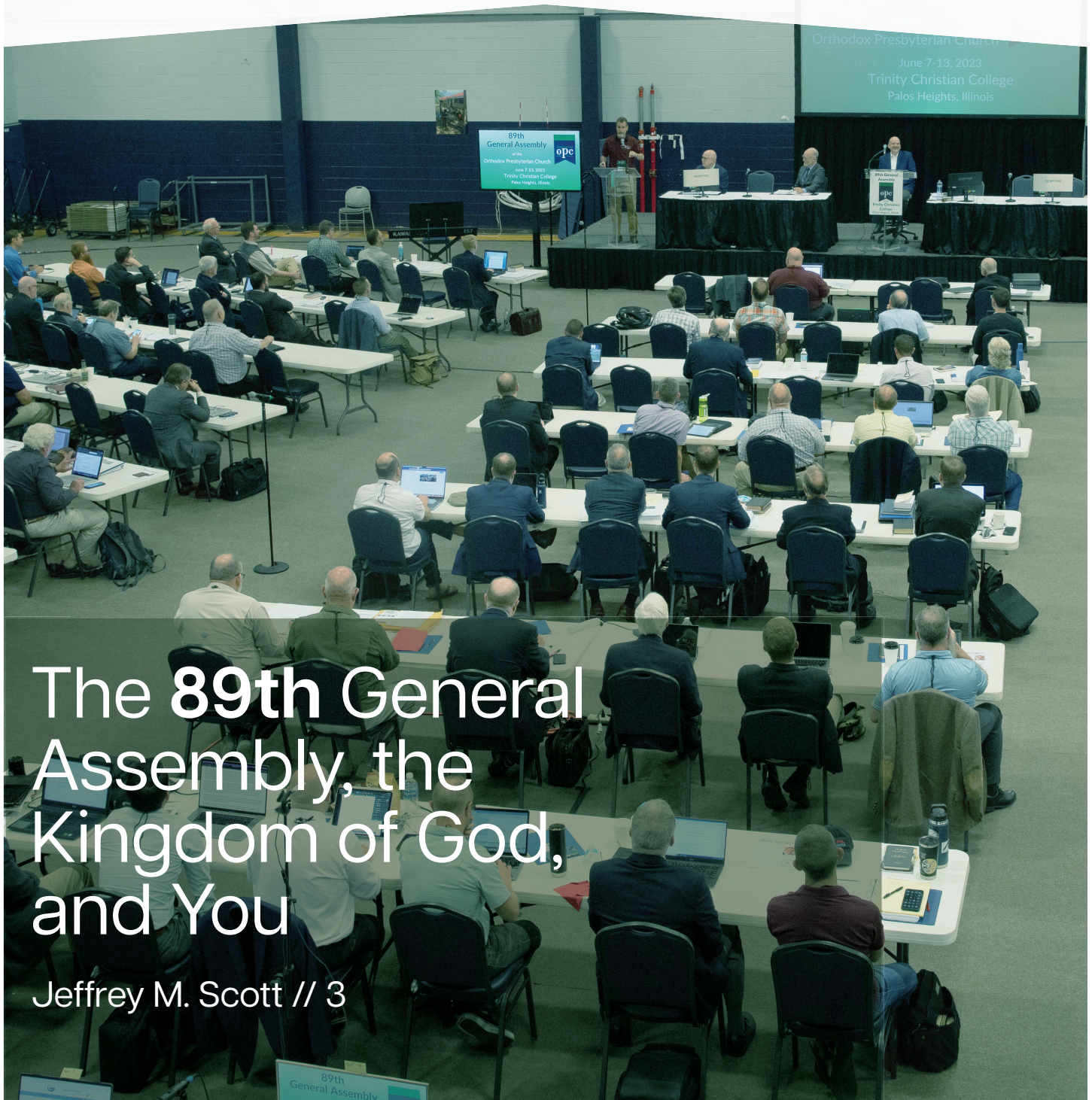
# NEW HORIZONS

— in the ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH —

**8** Music and Worship  
// by George C. Hammond

AUG-SEPT 2023

**12** Review: Robertson's *Christ of the Consummation*  
// by Charles B. Williams



The 89th General Assembly, the Kingdom of God, and You

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## New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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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 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.

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The digital edition (PDF, ePub) 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 [ccesecretary@opc.org](mailto:ccesecretary@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 Easton Road, Bldg. E, Willow Grove, PA 19090-2539.

Rev. L. Charles Jackson, OPC missionary to Uganda, updated the Eighty-Ninth General Assembly about his work at the Knox School of Theology. He reported that the college is now accredited with the Uganda National Council for Higher Education to offer a bachelor's degree and a diploma degree. Jackson also urged men to apply to be OPC foreign missionaries.



# THE 89TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY, THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND YOU



**JEFFREY M. SCOTT //** When I told the dear saints of my congregation that I would be gone for a week attending the OPC General Assembly, some of them probably wondered what a “general assembly” even is. Not a few of our members and attendees have come from independent, nondenominational congregations that

do not have substantial connections to other churches, let alone the regional churches, presbyteries, and general assembly to which OPC officers and churches willingly submit themselves. And most of the members of OPC churches will never have opportunity to attend one of our annual general assemblies. It was these brothers and sisters I was thinking about as the moderator of the Eighty-Eighth General Assembly, elder David Nakhla (Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pennsylvania), called the Eighty-Ninth Assembly to order and welcomed Rev. Lendall Smith to lead the body in the worship of God. When I got home, how would I answer their questions about what this general assembly is that took their pastor away for a week, what happened when we met, and why it should matter to them?

The answers to those questions were framed for me in the first few minutes of the opening worship service of the assembly as the body sang “God,

My King, Thy Might Confessing” and recited in unison the Lord’s Prayer and Apostles’ Creed. In that moment, the Ozinga Chapel on the campus of Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois, was filled with what seemed like ten thousand voices, all joyfully trumpeting the praises and promises of our triune God. I thought, surely this is not unlike what the Apostle John heard from heaven when the 144,000 sang a new song before the throne of God and of the Lamb. It was “like the voice of many waters” (Rev. 14:2) and a reminder that, by virtue of Jesus Christ’s life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and the pouring out of his Spirit upon the church, the kingdom of God is present today. This is manifested in the church and her members, who cheerfully surrender themselves to the worship and service of Christ the King.

No doubt the acoustics of the room and the exuberance of commissioners, not yet wearied by the work that lay

ahead, had something to do with creating this heavenly atmosphere. I’ve participated in equally sublime times of worship in our local church. But it did get me thinking about how the general assembly manifests the kingdom of God in either ways or degrees that we don’t ordinarily experience in the local church. It is my hope that, by telling you about how the presence of the kingdom of God was manifested in the business of the Eighty-Ninth General Assembly, you will better understand not only what our general assemblies are but why they should matter to you.

## **The Good Order of the Kingdom**

One of the first things a person will notice about our general assemblies is the orderliness of the proceedings. This does not come from a legal spirit but rather is meant to display the fact that “God is not the author of confusion” (1 Cor. 14:33). He desires that “all things be done decently and in order”

and for the edification of the whole church (vv. 26, 40).

Long before the assembly began, the Committee on Arrangements, chaired by elder David Mahaffy (Sovereign Grace OPC in Oak Harbor, Washington), was at work coordinating with the host college's staff, gathering a small army of servant-hearted volunteers from OP churches around the country, and building the technological infrastructure that helped the meeting to run efficiently. Rev. Hank Belfield (Providence OPC in Chilhowie, Virginia), the stated clerk of the general assembly, prepared and sent out the agenda many weeks in advance. This enabled commissioners to formulate intelligent questions from the floor about committee reports and recommendations as well as to make well-formed speeches during times of debate. The stated clerk and his assistant, Rev. John Mahaffy (Trinity OPC in Newberg, Oregon), kept careful record of the actions of the assembly that would be used to communicate its decisions to all our churches.



John Shaw, moderator of the 89th General Assembly

Rev. John Shaw, the general secretary of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension, was elected to serve as moderator of the Eighty-Ninth Assembly. It was his responsibility to make sure members of the assembly conducted themselves in a charitable and orderly fashion, which duty he skillfully discharged with wisdom, well-timed humor, patience, and firmness.



Christopher Cashen, one of 142 commissioners who gave their time to GA

## The Mercy of the Kingdom

During the assembly's opening worship service, Mr. Nakhla delivered an impassioned exhortation on Matthew 25:31–46, in which he described how Christ empowers his sheep to hold loosely the things of this world in order to exude a manifold ministry of mercy. One of the implications is that, through the church's ministry of mercy, Jesus Christ manifests his power, rule, and the presence of his kingdom here on earth.

In addition to the diaconal work of local OP churches, Jesus has empowered members of the OPC to exude an increasingly manifold ministry of mercy around the globe in several ways. As administrator of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries (CDM), Mr. Nakhla later reported to the assembly that in 2022, OP churches gave over a million dollars to the CDM's disaster relief efforts in Ukraine and in Neon, Kentucky. Over 170 volunteers went to

clean up and repair the damage done to Neon Reformed Church by the July 2022 flood. Through the work of the CDM, members of the OPC participated in relieving the needs of refugees in Greece and South Sudan and supported the diaconal ministries on our mission fields in East Africa, Ethiopia, Haiti, Uganda, and Uruguay. Notably, at the Akisyon A Yesu ("Compassion of Jesus") Presbyterian Clinic in Nakaale,

Uganda, over eleven thousand souls encountered the presence of God's kingdom in 2022, while being treated there in Jesus's name.

Mr. Nakhla also reported on the efforts of the CDM to expand the OPC's manifold ministry of mercy through its National Diaconal Summits, presbytery Summits, and the newly launched *Reformed Deacon* podcast at [opc.cdm.org](http://opc.cdm.org).

## Stewardship in God's Kingdom

In the parable of the talents, Jesus teaches that citizens of the kingdom are expected to faithfully steward the resources the Lord Jesus has given to them (Matt. 25:14–30). If the faithful stewardship of resources is empowered by the gospel of the kingdom, then the reports presented and budgets proposed to the assembly by the trustees of the OPC for the General Assembly Operation Fund and by the Committee on Coordination (COC) for the denomination's standing committees were wonderful displays of Christ's presence to rule in his church.

The careful oversight, judicious decision-making, and forward thinking exercised by those who serve our church in these capacities were strikingly illustrated by the representatives of the COC during a question-and-answer time, when one commissioner asked about the safety of our committees' funds, in light of the recent banking crisis. Both COC controller, Melisa McGinnis, and COC treasurer, elder Keith LeMahieu (Bethel OPC in Oostburg, Wisconsin), gave precise, knowledgeable, and well-reasoned answers to questions about this complex and fluid issue. Mr. LeMahieu also reported that the COC has partnered with the Barnabas Foundation to provide stewardship resources, so that now OPC members can give non-cash assets to the church and its worldwide mission without tax implications, thus maximizing the resources the Lord has provided his people for gospel work.

It also pleases Jesus to bestow honor on servants who have proven faithful (Matt. 25:23). Throughout the assembly,

exemplary service to our standing committees by several people was noted, such as that of Judith Dinsmore, Linda Foh, Abby Harting, Tin Ling Lee, and Charlene Tipton. Dozens of volunteers who generously gave their time to serve at the assembly were also acknowledged. The following men were publicly recognized for their long, distinguished, and faithful service: Rev. Mark Lowry (PCA) for twenty-seven years of service to Great Commission Publications; Rev. John Mahaffy for twenty-four years of service as assistant clerk of the assembly; elder David Winslow (Resurrection OPC in Westminster, California) for thirty-four years on the Committee on Christian Education; and the retired Rev. Roger Wagner for fifty years of pastoral ministry. Mr. Wagner asked the assembly for a point of personal privilege to honor his wife, Sherry, who has ministered lovingly at his side. By honoring faithful service, Jesus compels us all to labor for the dominical approbation, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

### Expansion of the Kingdom

Jesus likened the kingdom of God to a tiny mustard seed that, when it is sown, grows up, spreads out, and becomes exceedingly expansive (Mark 4:30–32). One of the greatest privileges Jesus has bestowed on his church is the task of sowing that gospel seed, so that the kingdom of God expands. The OPC’s Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension (CHMCE) is tasked with assisting presbyteries and congregations to plant new churches as outposts of the kingdom of God.

In his report for the committee, Rev. John Shaw provided encouraging news about the start of eight new church plants in 2022, bringing the total mission works supported in that year to thirty-seven. Seven new works have already started in 2023. In answer to the prayers of God’s people, the Lord has raised up six new regional home missionaries since 2021 to spearhead church-planting efforts in our presbyteries, with at least two more slated to



*Brad Peppo speaking*



*Advisory Committee 2 gathering*



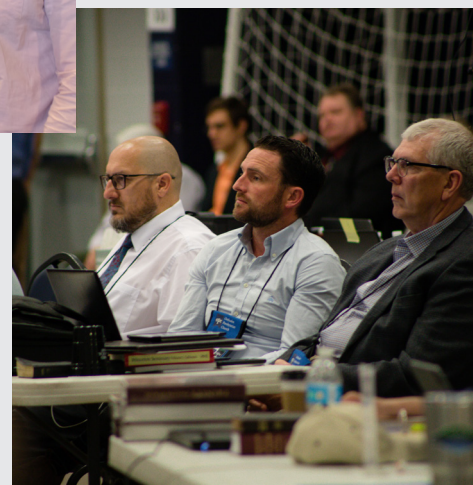
*James Gidley presenting the majority report for the special committee working on the Standards*



*Larry Oldaker and Jonathan Hutchison*



*Heero Hacquebord*



*Matt Holst, Caleb Smith, and Keith LeMahieu*

begin their labors this year. Mr. Shaw also gave an update on CHMCE's developing program for church revitalization, noting how the committee is gathering a list of vetted men to provide mentorship to pastors serving churches in decline.

CHMCE president, Rev. Mark Sallade (Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pennsylvania), concluded the committee's report with the announcement that Mr. Shaw will complete his service to the committee on December 31, 2023. After Mr. Sallade read a resolution of thanks to Mr. Shaw for his ten years of distinguished service, the assembly concurred with the committee's resolution by giving Mr. Shaw a standing ovation. Rev. Jeremiah Montgomery (Covenant OPC in Vandalia, Ohio) was introduced as Mr. Shaw's successor, drawing the applause of the assembly.

The report of the Committee on Foreign Missions (CFM) was one of the highlights of the assembly, not only because four of the foreign missionaries the OPC supports were present and gave riveting updates on their work, but because of the plea delivered by CFM general secretary Rev. Douglas Clawson. He began his report by reading Isaiah 6:1-8 and then urgently stated that there are many vacancies on OP mission fields and open doors for others, yet there is not even one ordained minister applicant, presently, who is standing up to say, "Here am I! Send me." Mr. Clawson implored the commissioners to consider prayerfully if God would have them go. (See "A Need

for Missionaries," page 15.)

In his Friday devotion on Acts 12:20-24, Rev. Matthew Holst (Shiloh OPC in Raleigh, North Carolina) reminded the assembly that "the voice of God will stand over the clamoring voices of men." The reports received from our foreign missionaries testify to this truth. One of many such examples is from the Nakaale base in the Karamoja region of Uganda, where, Mr. Clawson said, for the first time in twenty years of missionary labor, it appears there are Karimojong men qualified to serve as officers in the church. Some of the children our missionaries ministered to in the early days of the mission are now men, "Timothy Men," who have spurned the substance abuse and polygamy practiced by their forefathers and are becoming leaders who desire to minister the gospel of the kingdom to their people. Praise the Lord!

### Kingdom Discipleship

In the Great Commission, Jesus Christ called his church to the work of kingdom expansion but also to the discipleship of those who are gathered, so that they learn to live as citizens of the kingdom of God. The OPC's Committee on Christian Education (CCE) exists to assist local churches to present each member of the body mature in Christ, "both in faith and life," as Rev. Dr. Craig Troxel, president of the CCE, reminded us. In addition to detailing the efforts the CCE exerts to this noble end (including the production of various publications, Christian education mate-

rial, and online resources), Rev. Danny Olinger, the general secretary of the CCE, also highlighted the conferences the CCE hosts throughout the year that are designed to encourage young men to consider ordained ministry in the OPC. Mr. Olinger reported that seventeen past attendees of the Timothy Conference have now become ordained ministers of the gospel in the OPC. With the latest expansion of CCE's ministry through the new podcast, *Ruling Elder*, church officers are encouraged and equipped to continue laboring to see Christ formed in his people (Gal. 4:19).

The assembly also debated what to do with the fruitful labors of the Special Committee to Update the Language of the Doctrinal Standards. The committee presented to the assembly over thirteen hundred suggested updates to the language of the Westminster Standards, with the goal of making the Standards more accessible to uninitiated disciples. The assembly determined to have the CCE publish by 2025 the proposed changes as a modern English study version for the use of the church.

### The Keys of the Kingdom

God's kingdom is a kingdom of righteousness and justice (Ps. 45:6; 89:14). Jesus has given the keys of the kingdom to ministers and elders, who open the kingdom to the penitent, close it to the proud, and judge all church controversies by the Word of God (Matt. 16:19; 18:18; Acts 15:2). An essential component of biblical justice is the right to appeal (Ex. 18:21-22; Deut. 17:8-11).



The general assembly is the highest court of appeal in our church. At this assembly, one complaint came on appeal from a minister of the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic, and two matters of controversy concerning the OPC's *Book of Discipline*, with proposed amendments, were heard and decided. While these cases were not concluded to everyone's satisfaction, we are, nevertheless, assured by Jesus that he was there in our midst to rule (Matt. 18:20).

The body also received encouraging reports from two special committees of the assembly that were constituted to promote peace and unity in two of our presbyteries, the Presbytery of the Dakotas and the Presbytery of the Southeast. Representatives of both committees detailed how God's hand was at work through their peacemaking efforts to bring about measurable progress. The committees were dissolved with the assembly's gratitude.

### The Catholicity of the Kingdom

Our Confession of Faith states that [t]he visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. (WCF 25.2; see 1 Cor. 1:2; Rev. 7:9)

The OPC's Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (CEIR) helps our churches and presbyteries to remember to maintain this catholic or universal vision of the kingdom. The CEIR also forges and strengthens our bonds with churches of like faith and practice. One of the most enjoyable aspects of our general assemblies is the fellowship with many fraternal delegates who come to represent churches from around the world with which we have some level of relationship. Of the forty-nine such church bodies around the world, thirteen sent delegates to this year's assembly to bring warm greetings. They came from North America,



## WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP AT GA

*Anneke Fesko, Care Coordinator for OP Ministers' Wives*

The Committee on Ministerial Care hosted a time of fellowship at the Eighty-Ninth General Assembly for the women present, including wives of commissioners, wives of fraternal delegates, local OPC ministers' wives, and OPC employees and volunteers. The women enjoyed brunching, discovering connections with each other, welcoming newcomers, and praying for the committees of the assembly and each other. One attendee noted, "Being new to the denomination, I felt warmly welcomed. I'm thankful to be part of this wonderful community." Another expressed, "I loved the easy opening game and that there was time set aside for intentional prayer. We all felt very welcome. I think we all left feeling that we aren't alone on an island, but rather that there are people looking out for us on a denominational level and fellow ministers' wives we can reach out to." Special thanks to OPC social media coordinator Kerri Ann Cruse for the photo of those who attended. How can there be so much beauty in one snapshot? Thank you to all the women who attended. We belong together!

Brazil, Australia, South Korea, South Africa, Uganda, Scotland, and Switzerland. These addresses cheered the hearts of the commissioners, for, as Rev. Malcolm Macleod of the Free Church of Scotland stated, "the same heartbeat of God's kingdom is beating in us all."

### The General Assembly, the Kingdom, and You

If this summary of the Eighty-Ninth General Assembly's proceedings has had its intended effect, the reader now has a clearer picture of what the assembly is. It is the church at worship and work by which the presence of the kingdom of God is manifested in a broader and more fulsome expression than we ordinarily experience in our local churches. The work of the church

conducted through the assembly's committees is done by members of our local churches and ministers of our presbyteries. It is kingdom work that was started right outside each of our back doors. In that way, it provides each member of the OPC a way to experience and participate in the global work of the kingdom of God, through the pastors and elders who are sent from our local churches and by our presbyteries to represent us. May the presence of the kingdom manifested in the assembly's ministry capture your interest and compel you to pray for, support, and find ways to participate in its ongoing work. □

*The author is pastor of Covenant Grace OPC in Roseburg, Oregon. He quotes from the NKJV.*

# MUSIC AND WORSHIP



**GEORGE C. HAMMOND // In his book *Taking Note of Music*, musician and Westminster Theological Seminary professor William Edgar points out that the creation of music as it is presented in the Bible is unique when compared to the ancient Near Eastern and Greek origin-of-music myths. In these stories, music is the creation**

of the gods and given to human beings. In the Bible, however, music has its origin with human beings (Gen. 4:21), specifically with Jubal, who is a son of Cain, who in turn is among the seed of the serpent (Gen. 3:14–15). This fact caused the early church fathers to be highly suspicious of music.

The point of the Bible's statement regarding the origin of music is surely that it is something shared by all humanity, whatever their spiritual condition. The views of the early fathers regarding music in worship are contradicted by the Bible's own prescriptions for worship, which include singing (as indicated by the direction to use certain tunes in Psalms 9, 22, 45, 56–60, 69, 75, 80) as well as musical instruments (Psalms 33, 57, 71, 81, 92, 108, 144, 150). Music in worship is alluded to in the New Testament (1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Jam. 5:13) and is a part of the worship of heaven (Rev. 5:9; 14:3; 15:3), including instrumental music (Rev. 5:8; 14:2; 15:2).

The Psalms demonstrate that they are musical compositions, but the mu-

sic itself is not preserved. There is musical allusion, but no musical notation. While the words are God's Word, the music was a purely human expression. Consequently, musical expression in the church's worship changes by location and throughout time.

## **The Introduction of Modern Musical Forms**

Early on, the church practiced "plainsong," the exercise of all voices singing in unison in flowing, free-form meter. As harmony and rhythm (in the West) were developed in the late medieval period, Martin Luther and the German Reformers became early adopters of the new style for use in worship.

Luther translated sacred songs from Latin into vernacular German and, to the horror of the Roman traditionalists, wrote four part-harmony for it (soprano, alto, bass, tenor), along with rhythmic notation. Later, melodies and musical form were borrowed from non-church music. The introduction of this musical novelty was vindicated in that there was more vigorous participation in

singing on the part of the congregation.

Since music is a human creation, it does not bear the attributes of being infinite, eternal, or unchangeable. Isaac Watts caused a stir when he introduced completely new hymns into the church's worship at the turn of the eighteenth century. Watts grew concerned as he watched people sing the old hymns with detached boredom. What had at one time stimulated God's people to joyful adoration was now a source of tedium reflected in their unenthusiastic participation.

His new hymns met with opposition by traditionalists at first, including his own father. It was not long, though, before his church embraced them because they breathed new life into the expression of worship made by the people, a new life which was reflected in their enthusiastic participation in singing.

## **How Music Means**

In *Taking Note*, William Edgar argues that music itself carries no content. Its meaning comes through association. Music historian and scholar Ted Gioia,



for example, has noted that songs in certain cultures that are performed at fast tempos with strong percussive rhythms are experienced by most Westerners as joyful and exuberant but are in fact funeral dirges and laments.

The lyricist E. Y. Harburg famously observed, “Words make you think a thought. Music makes you feel a feeling. A song makes you feel a thought.” The phenomenon can be observed with Fanny Crosby hymns. When I first entered the ministry thirty years ago, Fanny Crosby hymns were popular with the mature saints. Younger saints (those my age at the time) didn’t like them very much but would sing them on occasion out of deference and love.

The tunes are campy. Lyrically, they are subjective, having more to do with a personal experience with Jesus than with objective doctrine. These “new” songs, sung by people in their youth at the time they were having their first real spiritual experiences, became a powerful touchstone for them. Their children, however, hearing the music as dated and not having the same associations as their parents, were not thrilled.

Because generations rise and pass away, very few of the hymns we regard as “traditional” are sung with the music that was originally written for them. A quick look at the bottom of the pages of any hymnal will show that the music they are sung to is significantly newer—sometimes centuries newer—than the words of the hymn itself.

I remember when the old (blue) *Trinity Hymnal* was replaced by the new (red) *Trinity Hymnal*. The differences between the two fell into four broad categories: 1) The keys were generally lowered across the board because all but children and sopranos found it difficult to sing in the registers of the old hymnal. 2) New hymns which had

come into usage in the churches were added, while old, little-used ones were deleted. 3) Lyrics were adjusted or replaced to be more theologically accurate or to update archaic language. 4) New tunes were paired with old hymns that had particularly good theology but that had fallen into disuse because the music was sorely dated and disliked by many.

### The Body As God Has Arranged It

An important principle often overlooked at best, denigrated at worst, is that “God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose” (1 Cor. 12:18). This has bearing on music in the church. Several years ago, an



Hymnwriter Isaac Watts wrote so people would sing

acquaintance was part of the musical ensemble providing his church with accompaniment for worship. One night the pastor came to their rehearsal and thanked them all for their service but told them that the coming Sunday would be their last. “We’ve decided to go in a different musical direction and hire musicians,” he said. These faithful ser-

vants were not “adequate for the task” and were summarily dismissed. I don’t know if the direction they were going in was more contemporary or more classical. It hardly matters. The point is that a preference in worship was allowed to trample the principle that God had arranged the members of their local body. God had brought *those* musicians to *that* church.

Contrast that heartbreaking account to a God-honoring one. One Sunday when I was on vacation, I went to visit a friend at his new church plant. The message was spiritually uplifting and nourishing, but I judged the music harshly. It was simplistic, lacking in sophistication, even “jangley.” During the fellowship time, when I heard the story of the church plant, I was ashamed of my judgmentalism. As plans were laid

for the launch of the new church, it became evident that there was not a musician in the group. A small number from within the group volunteered to—within four months’ time—learn how to play musical instruments to accompany and lead the church in her musical worship. The music they played was the music they *could* play. When I heard this, my conscience was stung. They played the only music they could, as best as they could play it, unto the Lord.

### God Has Determined Our Time in History and the Place Where We Live

I say with some confidence that Watts would be surprised that his hymns are still sung in the churches. I am not sure he would be happy. To the degree that Watts’s hymns are meaningful and cause enthusiastic participation in worship, Watts would be humbly gratified. To the degree that his hymns are mumbled dutifully and with long faces, he would be displeased, for that is why he introduced his new hymnody in the first place.

It has been a joy for me to hear the exuberant participation on the part of the congregation as they sing new songs, or old songs in new ways. Over thirty years in the ministry, I’ve heard the music change, but in every change, God has remained faithful, and by his grace his Word has been faithfully proclaimed and reflected in the changes. God has placed his church in *this* place, here and now, with *these* people to reach *this* generation. He has not placed us in the seventeenth, eighteenth, or nineteenth century, but rather in the twenty-first. “God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose” (1 Cor. 12:18). He has “marked out [our] appointed times in history and the boundaries of [our] lands” (Acts 17:26 NIV). Through the years, our own church’s music has reflected and continues to reflect both these biblical truths. □

*The author is pastor of Bethel Presbyterian in Leesburg, Virginia.*

# A NEW HUNGER AND THIRST FOR THE WORD

// ALLISON GROOT



*Redemption Life, now an OPC mission work*

Nearly four decades ago, Rev. Tyler Jackson attended his first service at the New Castle Church of Christ in New Castle, Indiana. Given that he was a newborn, he doesn't remember much. But in the years that followed, he became quite familiar with the church.

Nestled in the heartland of America, this small body of believers was an independent, nondenominational church of Christ founded in the 1960s by two men out of the Campbell-Stone movement. The believers in that congregation formed a tight-knit community committed to the Bible and its teachings. Eventually, this commitment to God and his Word is what would lead them to abandon their original name—as well as the doctrinal positions associated with it.

Jackson grew up in the church. And even as the church aged and developed, navigating the winds of various doctrines, so also did Jackson. While in college, he was converted and drawn to the doctrines of grace, as taught by prominent pastor-theologians such as John Piper and John MacArthur. Still relatively new to the faith, he and his now-wife, Kara, were invited on staff to work with youth at a Methodist church local to their university.

In the fall of 2015, New Castle Church of Christ called Jackson back home as their pastor. Despite his lack of formal theological training and despite knowing his convictions were Calvinistic, the church still welcomed him and embarked on a journey none of them—not even Jackson—would have expected.

## Reformed Doctrine

After Jackson was called as pastor, the church changed its name to Redemption Life Bible Church, reflecting a relative uncertainty in systematic and denominational affiliation but a surety that God's Word—the Bible—is truth. This allegiance soon led them to change more than just their name.

When Tyler Jackson entered the pulpit in 2015, he made his intentions clear. He would endeavor to teach the character of God the Father consistently, preach Christ clearly, and present the work of the Spirit authentically, all as the Scriptures prescribed. It was his goal to apply that theology consistently in every sphere of doctrine and life. Though not everyone in the congregation agreed or was even aware of the specifics of the systematic doctrine Jackson subscribed to at that point, they were content enough knowing that they would hear about the God of the Bible from the Bible. "They had such a high view of Scripture that they didn't think any type of confession was necessary. But, they admitted that if you could show them arguments from Scripture, they would believe it," Jackson said.

So, as Jackson put it, for the next few years they simply exegeted Scripture together, consistently and often.

It didn't take Jackson long to want more depth than what he had found online and in his studies up to that point. If he was to feed the church with rich, biblical doctrine, he would need to find a deep well of it himself. In a glimmer of providence, he stumbled upon the ministries of Lane Tipton and Camden Bucey and their work through the Reformed Forum podcasts and website.

From there, during and after a period of intense study, consideration, and conversation, Jackson would come to embrace full-orbed confessional Presbyterianism.

Jackson took great care to be transparent with the congregation regarding his beliefs. He says, "Before it ever came out in my preaching, I just told people in the congregation where I stood—what I had come to believe and love."

From all appearances, the congregation appreciated his honesty. Many in the congregation were open to hearing him out and patiently listened to his teaching on particularly sensitive subjects such as baptism and confessionalism. Because the people of the congregation maintained above all else their conviction that God's Word is truth, they were able and

willing to consider these new doctrines so long as they were firmly rooted and represented in the Scriptures.

In time, they were convinced of the Reformed system of doctrine, and soon Jackson even began referencing the Westminster Confession of Faith from the pulpit. “People started embracing Calvinism and then eventually subscribed to the Standards altogether,” Jackson said.

### Refreshed Affiliation

The difficult departure of an elder ultimately led Jackson to attend seminary. During his time at seminary, he not only became convinced of Reformed, covenantal, confessional theology, but he was also exposed to the biblical legitimacy and necessity of Presbyterian polity.

After several months of working alongside OPC regional home missions coordinator Mike Diercks and sitting under the long-distance mentorship of Rev. Bill Shishko, it was time to present the congregation with an opportunity to enter the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The vote to petition the OPC to receive them as a church plant was unanimous. Thoroughly convinced of the tenets of the Reformed faith as reflected in the Westminster Standards and confident of the OPC’s commitment to those convictions, the congregation was glad to come under the wing of a mother denomination.

“There is a beauty to belonging,” Jackson shared. “We’ve already felt so loved by other ministers, the presbytery, and the denomination as a whole.”

Though Jackson himself was drawn to the OPC for its rich, bold heritage and history, as well as the formative relationships he had developed with multiple OPC ministers, for the congregation it boiled down to what had proved to be most important to them time and time again. The attraction lay in the fact that they saw the OPC as a denomination founded on, grounded in, and persevering with a loyalty to what the Scriptures teach. Jackson recalled, “We all fell in love with the OPC because of what we knew it existed to stand for.”

Received into the OPC as a mission work on March 10, Redemption Life OPC has already embraced the benefits of Presbyterian polity. “It’s wonderful to have a sense of how the church of Jesus Christ is much bigger than our particular

church in New Castle,” Jackson said.

The congregation has been emboldened by the validation, support, and interest of the denomination, as well as by the accountability it provides and requires. “They have come to a greater appreciation for the wider body of Christ. They appreciate what that means for their care—they know there is a presbytery that I am accountable to as their pastor, and it gives them a confidence in the way they are being taught,”

Jackson said.

### Reverent Worship

When an individual or congregation beholds the intricacies of God’s glory and discovers the beauties of the Reformed faith, they often reconsider the way they approach God in worship.

This is exactly the case in New Castle. As the people of Redemption Life OPC have grown more confident in their knowledge of God and his Word, they have come to have a higher regard for corporate worship and the Lord’s Day.

“The most incredible thing I’ve seen in this congregation is the new hunger and thirst they have for the Word and for teaching,” Jackson reflected. “For those in our church who have stuck around over the years, along with those who have come recently, there is a love for expositional, Christ-centered preaching.”

And it isn’t just their desire for preaching that has deepened, but also their reverence. “There is a different kind of atmosphere on Sunday morning. And when they leave, there is a greater appreciation for the whole Lord’s Day. There is a weight that comes with Reformed theology that we are seeing in our church and our people, and it’s a blessing.”

### A Refreshing Reflection

Although Jackson confesses it took years of slow, patient learning and leading to get to where they are now, he is quick to point out how the Spirit was faithful to work within him and the people of Redemption Life OPC every step of the way. “We’ve gone through a lot of changes in eight years, but the Lord’s providence is spectacular,” he shares. “I am still in shock, humbled, and forever grateful.”

According to Jackson, the best way to sum up the Lord’s faithfulness to Redemption Life, and the greatest comfort he has moving forward, is in the promise of Isaiah 55:11: “So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

*The author is administrative assistant for the Committee on Home Missions.*



Kara and Tyler Jackson

### Home Missions Today

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



# REVIEW: ROBERTSON'S *CHRIST OF THE CONSUMMATION*

// CHARLES B. WILLIAMS



For nearly three centuries, the field of Gospel studies has been flooded with dead-end approaches that tend either to downplay or deny the supernatural character of the evangelical witness of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Yet even among conservative treatments of this watershed moment in salvation-history, one often finds works that treat the Gospels, as one author has put it, as a mere “footnote to Paul,” rather than allowing the Evangelists to stand as theologians in their own right. Within this context, O. Palmer Robertson’s *Christ of the Consummation: The Testimony of the Four Gospels* should be welcomed most gladly. Three features highlight the usefulness of this long-awaited volume.

### A Methodological Approach

First is his methodological approach to the Gospels (chapter 1). Unlike so many other treatments, Robertson takes seriously the nature and content of supernatural revelation. Since the eighteenth century, higher-critical methodologies have dominated the field, which have repudiated the supernatural character of the Evangelistic accounts, leading to countless hypotheses that have sought to restrict the significance of Christ’s person to that of mere teacher; to characterize his miraculous works as fanciful parlor tricks; and to deny his bodily resurrection, arguing instead that he was merely resuscitated. Unbelief characterizes such perversions of the Evangelistic record, which seeks to strip the four Gospels of the “husk” of supernaturalism to get to the “kernel” of the “Jesus of history.” Yet as B. B. Warfield famously quipped, it is the desupernaturalized Jesus who is the Jesus of myth. To strip the Gospels of their supernatural character is to rob the gospel of its very power, and the purpose for which the Evangelists wrote: that you might believe (John 20:31). Robertson follows in the vein of men like Warfield and Vos who sought without apology to take the testimony of the Gospels on their

own terms, including the supernaturalism that undergirds the historical procurement of our salvation.

### The Unified Witness of the Gospels

Second is Robertson’s focus on the *unified witness* of the four Gospels (chapters 2–6). Robertson identifies the multiple forms of eyewitness testimony found in evangelical records: the angelic annunciations; the prophetic utterances recorded in the Old Testament regarding the person and work of the long-awaited Messiah; the ministry and testimony of John the Baptist as the last of the prophets; Christ’s self-witness regarding his own unique relationship to the Father and his self-conscious messianic mission of redemption; his wonderful works that attest to the truthfulness of his words; and the testimony of those who were witnesses to his incarnate work, penned by his appointed emissaries, the apostles. The similarities in narrative structure to the so-called “Synoptics”—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—as well as their overlapping testimonies, constitute a “triple witness” that conforms to the scriptural requirement for the reception of legal evidence (161–163; cf., Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28). Yet the unified witness of the Synoptics, along with John’s gospel, attest, *not* to the sinfulness of Christ, but to his *sinlessness*, who was for our sake condemned, that we might be reconciled to God, and live.

### The Distinctive Features of Each Gospel

Third, Robertson not only highlights the *unified witness* of the Evangelists; he also teases out the *distinctive features* of each of the four (chapters 7–8). It is here that he allows each of the Gospels to stand, not as “bare” historians, but as theologians in their own right, each author accenting distinctive features of Christ’s incarnate, fully historical ministry (246). Here, one grasps why the church rejected attempts by some (such as in Tatian’s *Diatesseron*) to conflate the four Gospels into a single “super” Gospel. Our Savior, risen and ascended,

had commissioned the apostles to superintend over not one, but four biographical accounts, each one displaying, like facets in a jewel, the fullness of him in whom all the promises of God find their resounding yes and amen (2 Cor. 1:20). Each author speaks with his own distinctive voice, and his own distinctive purpose in bringing to the church's attention the fullness of Christ, who is the fulfillment of all our hopes and promises.

Significantly, Robertson does not shy away from the evangelistic purpose. This work is no dusty academic study, but written *that you might believe*. Accordingly, he repeatedly presses home the claims of Christ upon the reader: that if these events are true, they bear on eternity and where you will stand on the last day in light of your response to the fourfold gospel. The most important question you will ever answer is this: Who do you say Christ is?

Robertson has done the church a tremendous service by clearing away the underbrush of unbelief and navigating the reader through the morass of Gospel studies, to lead us back to the fount of every blessing—to have our hearts once again refreshed by the gospel story, that God has acted in history, to save his people from their sins. *Christ of the Consummation* reflects, not the scrambled writings of an author trying to pump out another book, but the fruit of a lifetime of matured, thoughtful reflection on this significant portion of special revelation.

*The author is an OP minister. Christ of the Consummation, Volume 1: The Testimony of the Four Gospels, by O. Palmer Robertson. P&R, 2022. Paperback, 400 pages, \$25.13 (Amazon). Photo courtesy of Westminster Bookstore.*

## 2024 TIMOTHY CONFERENCE IN FLORIDA

The Committee on Christian Education will hold the next OPC Timothy Conference on February 7–10, 2024, hosted by Reformation OPC in Oviedo, Florida. Conference participants will hear from Orthodox Presbyterian ministers and ruling elders about pastoral ministry and experience a seminary environment, attending classes at Reformed Theological Seminary in Oviedo.

Local sessions are asked to recommend young men between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one years old who are members of the OPC and exhibit potential giftedness for ordained gospel ministry. Applications for sessions to submit candidates can be found on OPC.org under “Christian Education.” Completed applications should be sent to Danny Olinger (danny.olinger@opc.org). The application deadline is November 1. All expenses are paid.

Please consider helping us to follow the inspired words of 2 Timothy 2:2: “What you have heard from me . . . entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”

## ON READING OLD BOOKS

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

### DE DOCTRINA CHRISTIANA (397 AND 426)

BY AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Today, Augustine’s *Confessions* is widely read, and happily so. Throughout most of Western history, though, another of his works was far more influential. Augustine wrote *De Doctrina Christiana* in two parts (Books I–III and Book IV) thirty years apart, as a bishop in modern-day Algeria.

As elsewhere, Augustine invokes powerful language of a traveler longing for home. Along the homeward journey, how should a by-then eight-hundred-year-old classical and pagan system of *doctrina* contribute to the ordering of the Christian’s loves? As Augustine asks, and answers, this question, his ostensible goal is explaining how to interpret and teach Scripture, but the implications are broader. The work has been called Augustine’s “fundamental charter of Christian education” (H. I. Marrou).

The *doctrina* of the title has no single-word English equivalent, but “comprehensive intellectual and moral formation” is defensible. Augustine lays out the ultimate goal of *doctrina* as the awe and wonder that comes from rightly enjoying God by using both his Word and his world to love him more deeply. Anyone who claims to understand a scriptural passage in a way that does not build up the twin love of God and neighbor, he notes, does not actually properly understand it. Augustine delivers a powerful call to know truth deeply and love rightly.

Christians’ ardent pursuit of truth “wherever they may find it,” is likewise a call to profound humility, for everything that is true comes not from us, but from the one who said, “I am the Truth.” Much for which Augustine is now known is spread memorably throughout this little volume, which became the model for Western education from the early Middle Ages up to John Donne. Some even hear direct echoes of it in the famous wording of Westminster Shorter Catechism question one.

—Mark W. Graham

## ☆ Congratulations

The **Children’s Catechism** has been recited by:

- Alicia Bartkowski, Redeemer OPC, Carlisle, PA
- Jonas Bartkowski, Redeemer OPC, Carlisle, PA

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

- Sophia Noe, Reformation OPC, Grand Rapids, MI

# "IF IT DIES, IT BEARS MUCH FRUIT"



*Editor's Note: Names have been removed for security purposes.*

When I was just a lad growing up in the home of my missionary parents in South Korea, my father had a book on the shelf titled *The Seed Must Die* (IVP, 1965). The title was so provocative that I had to read it. It was the history of a Korean man who three times chose to take incredibly humbling paths to express his Christian faith. Rev. Yahng-Won Son (like our OPC missionary hero Bruce Hunt) went to prison instead of bowing to the Japanese emperor; he dedicated his life to serve at a leper colony; and he intervened to save the murderer of his sons from execution, eventually adopting the young man as his own son.

This week, as I teach through the Gospel of John here on this restricted-access mission field in Asia, we have come to chapter 12. Verse 24 reads:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

As my wife and I were swept off our original and longtime mission field in an untimely way, first by persecution and then by COVID, as the local church we work with matures and needs us less and less, as we feel somewhat sidelined by the remoteness and isolation of our current post-COVID place of service, and as we approach retirement age, we wonder if perhaps the Lord is trying to teach us some things about dying to ourselves.

## Working Ourselves Out of a Job

In missionary training over the years, and especially in the OPC program and strategy of missions, we have been taught again and again that the missionary's calling is to work himself out of a job. This is easy to agree with in your head, but I am finding that it is harder to actually do!

For nearly thirty years now in Asia (longer if you count pre-ordination witness), I have been working to proclaim Christ to Asians, to gather them into churches, and to help those churches be healthy Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Of course, if anything was actually accomplished, it has always been the Lord who was at work, but still it is easy to get so invested in the work that you start to take ownership of it. This is a good thing if it causes you to be more passionate about the ministry, but it becomes a problem when the ministry becomes too much about you.

## Dying and Bearing Fruit

In the area of our field, the Lord used our gospel service to encourage the new life of indigenous people who were gathered into a provisional Reformed presbytery and from among them to call into gospel ministry first one (Pastor H.) and then another indigenous pastor (Pastor P.). These two men in turn faithfully and sacrificially bore gospel witness among their own people, through which efforts the Lord gathered more sheep and called to his service three more pastors (C., J., and R.), so that the church continues to grow and, as it expands, to prepare for organization.

Early this summer, Pastor H. showed us an example of how this is supposed to work when, under presbytery oversight, he commissioned a portion of his own congregation to be shepherded by and, if all goes well, to call licentiate R. to be their new pastor. The process of grains of wheat dying and bearing more fruit, which contain more seeds, continues.

Licentiate C. sacrificially travels each week a long distance to another province to exhort for a flock the Lord has gathered that is hungry for the Word. Licentiate J. continues to gain experience and, as he does so, supports the Lord's work.

## Making Way for the New Generation

Though I am in the country now, in God's wisdom my role is still mostly remote. I am a voting member of the

indigenous presbytery, and they need me to regularize, but once the church is regularized, whether or not I will continue as a member is unclear. At the right time, my services will no longer be needed; I will no longer be needed; and that will be a good thing. The design is that not only foreign (albeit founding) members will be replaced by indigenous elders, but that even the initial generation of indigenous elders will make way for a new generation.

The Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul speaks of the same process in 2 Timothy 2:2: “What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” He is actually instructing young missionary pastor Timothy to be sure his ministry is not too much about himself; to move over and make space for co-leaders; and to make space eventually for those who will take his place.

The ministry tasks that the Lord by his church has called me to all have this “dying” in view: teaching basic New Testament Greek to a new ministerial candidate, instructing in the English Bible young Christians (including children) who want to grow, distributing good Reformed literature, preparing a young man for baptism, preparing a whole congregation to welcome covenant children members by infant baptism, and sharing the good news with unbelievers. These ministry roles are not so glorious, but I believe they are compatible responses to a ministry calling in which the seed is called to die.

But it is not easy. Please pray that we would do well in this stage of our ministry, which is perhaps the hardest stage of all. It’s hard not because we need to step up to the plate and perform in the spotlight, but because—while remaining active and faithful—we need to serve quietly and sacrificially and to die after the pattern of our Lord Jesus.

*The author is a missionary in Asia.*

## What’s New

### // Comings/Goings

Tentmaking missionary **Miss Joanna R. Grove** (Grace Presbyterian OPC, Vienna, VA) completed four years and three months of service with the OPC Uganda Mission in August and will return to begin new duties as an administrative assistant for the Committee on Foreign Missions in September.

### // Appointments

**Mr. and Mrs. Travis A. (Bonnie) Emmett** (Christ Church Downingtown OPC, Downingtown, PA) have been appointed as missionaries with the OPC Uganda Mission in Nakaale, Karamoja, where Travis will serve as facilities engineer. The Emmetts and their three children, Clayton (3), Adalyn (3), and Jackson (1), plan to arrive in Uganda in October.

## A NEED FOR MISSIONARIES

*Editor’s Note: This is an excerpt from the report of the general secretary of the Committee on Foreign Missions, Douglas Clawson, to the Eighty-Ninth General Assembly in June 2023.*

**T**he church is facing a crisis. There are no already-ordained minister applicants for foreign missions.

I wondered whether the church had faced such a situation before, and since nothing is new under the sun, I found that it may have had the same problem just after World War II. In the October 10, 1947, issue of *Presbyterian Guardian*, the first article is by Henry D. Phillips and is entitled “Who Will Go for Us?” After reflecting on Isaiah 6, Phillips writes,

Beholding the glory of God we fall prostrate at his feet. Aware of the world’s need we are burdened with the desire for their salvation. Then comes the question, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” Man, where are you when this question is asked? Do not hide! Do not hasten on and see what else is printed in this *Guardian*. Stop right where you are and face the question—“Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” God is calling men to fill the harvest field, to reap the grain, to gather in the fruit of Christ’s atoning work. . . . You must not sit back in your armchair and say, “If you mean me, Lord, then send me a gilt-edged invitation from the mission board.” Rather, you must feel the burning in your bones to go, and to put forth every effort to get to the field until all doors are closed. If Jeremiah, with his message of captivity, could not contain himself, how can you with your message of deliverance? Complacency in the face of Christ’s commission is sin! Do not grow small in your soul, aware only of the needs of those immediately about you. The harvest is vast; the need is urgent; the command is impelling.

The Committee on Foreign Missions is waiting. It is waiting for rightly gifted evangelists to send to the field. It is waiting for you, as you pray and consider whether Jesus is calling you to serve Christ on a foreign field. As we wait, our highest priority for missionaries includes:

- Experienced evangelist/theological instructor(s) to Mbale, Uganda
- Experienced evangelist to Karamoja, Uganda
- Evangelist(s) to Uruguay
- Regional foreign missionaries for Africa, South America, Asia, and Europe

We need men who are willing to go wherever it pleases Christ, through his church, to send them to serve. We need men who are experienced pastors and presbyters, able to mentor those who have little exposure to functioning sessions and presbyteries, and setting before such men the character of a godly pastor who is humble, wise, and loves the sheep as Jesus loves them. Please consider whether you might be Christ’s answer to the committee’s prayer.

# WHAT'S YOUR NARRATIVE?

// JEFFREY B. WILSON

Instead of offering you some information about stewardship, allow me to tell you a story. It is about a boy who came from a lower-income family, but he worked hard. He began work as a shoe shiner and went on to find jobs with more responsibility and better pay. As his life improved, there were those who tried to cheat him, and he had to learn how to be wily. Eventually he started his own business and was able to buy a house, fill it with comfortable furniture, and acquire many possessions. He had more money to invest, and his savings grew.

That is a rags-to-riches story. But it is not just a story. It is an overarching narrative, or narrative framework, that gives meaning to our resources, possessions, skills, and wealth. It is a narrative of “my” resources. The rags-to-riches narrative became popular in America 150 years ago, and it is still popular today, although it has not proven true for many people. In the rags-to-riches narrative, stewardship is about using “my” wealth and possessions wisely, which includes charitable giving.

## A Different Story

Now let me tell you another story. It is the narrative that the Apostle Paul uses in Ephesians 2–3. Paul sets stewardship right into the great story of God’s redemption. It was God’s great purpose to make us holy and blameless before him and to adopt us as his beloved children through Jesus Christ. Even though we sinned against God and fell into the power of the devil, God heaped his grace upon us through Christ. God sent his Son into the world to bear our sin and reconcile us to him. God himself, in Christ, bore our sin and carried it to the cross. And God raised him to authority and power and dominion

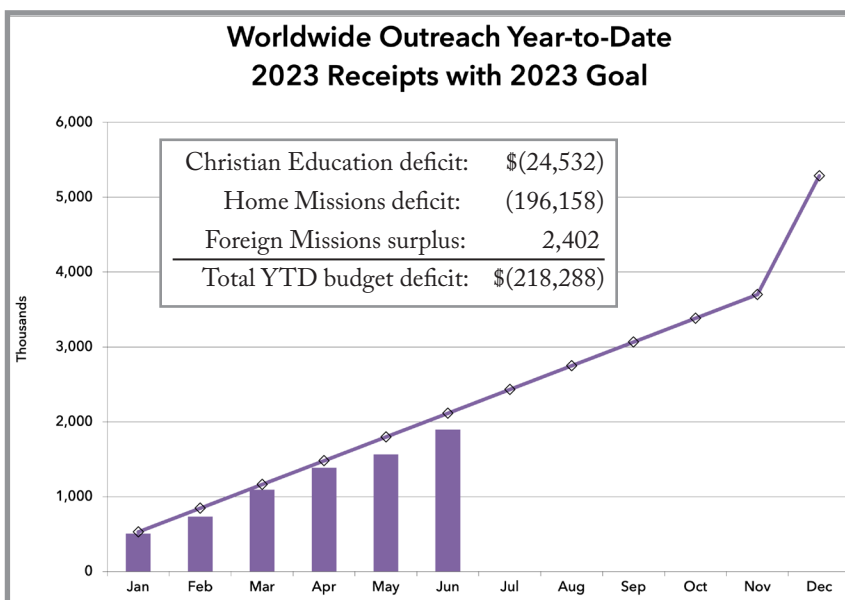
over all other rulers and powers in this world. This is God’s redemption of sinners, and it is for Jews and Gentiles. Paul puts it poignantly: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (2:8).

The Apostle Paul lodges Christian stewardship within the narrative of God’s redemption of us. It is part of an overarching narrative about God’s creation of us and his gift of salvation. It is not a narrative about pulling ourselves up by our bootlaces. Nor is it about our ownership of what we have. Stewardship in this narrative is an administration of the gifts we have been given—spiritual and tangible. In Ephesians 3:2, Paul refers to “the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you [the Ephesian, Gentile church].” This is not something he owned and possessed. It is something possessed by God and something to be administered according to the narrative of God’s salvation for us in Christ.

Christian stewardship set within the narrative of God’s redemption means that our possessions, our wealth, our skills are not ours; they belong to God. Your hard work is service, not clever accomplishment. Your resources are not really yours. You are not a self-made person; you are a God-made person. God owns everything you have, and you are to manage it for him.

This opens up the way for us to give abundantly to other people in need and to give to the church for its ministry. Stewardship, according to the narrative of God’s redemption in Jesus Christ, opens up our giving in ways that go far beyond stewardship according to other narratives in our society, like the rags-to-riches narrative. Have you considered the narrative you follow with your resources, skills, and wealth?

*The author is pastor of Providence OPC in Southfield, Michigan.*





# AUG-SEPT



The Allens (day 1)



The Bloechs (day 12)

- 
- 1** **JAY & ANDREA BENNETT**, Neon, KY. Pray for Neon Reformed's witness in their community. / Summer intern **JOHNATHAN (MONICA) ALLEN** at First OPC of South Holland in South Holland, IL.
- 
- 2** **BEN & HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti. Pray for the security situation in Haiti so Ben can travel to visit churches there. / Pray for **SHORT-TERM MISSIONS** volunteers in Prague, Czech Republic, helping with VBS and friendship evangelism.
- 
- 3** Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**. / **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for the fruition of leadership training in the Salvos por Gracia session.
- 
- 4** **MIKE (ELIZABETH) DIERCKS**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Ohio. / Summer interns **SAM (ANNA) NESBITT** at Trinity OPC in Hatboro, PA, and **DAVID MYHREN** at Covenant OPC in Vandalia, OH.
- 
- 5** **STEPHEN & CATALINA PAYSON**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for community contacts as the mission church opens its doors Wednesday evenings. / Pray for **TRISH DUGGAN** as she produces *The Reformed Deacon*.

- 
- 6** Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Pray the church finds strength and comfort in the Lord. / **MATT & HYOUNG WALKER**, Yorktown, VA. Pray that Peninsula Reformed would have opportunity to share the gospel with its neighbors.
- 
- 7** Affiliated missionaries **JERRY & MARILYN FARNIK**, Czech Republic. Pray for gospel fruit in the Czech and Ukrainian children attending the church's VBS. / **BILL & MARGARET SHISHKO**, Com-mack, NY. Pray more people visit and join The Haven, OPC.
- 
- 8** **GREGORY & GINGER O'BRIEN**, Downingtown, PA. Pray the Lord brings the lost to himself. / Summer interns **BRIAN (ALLISON) GROOT** at Immanuel Chapel in Upton, MA, and **STEPHEN (SAGE) BYRD** at Bethel Reformed in Fredericksburg, VA.
- 
- 9** Pray for tentmaking missionary **JOANNA GROVE**, Nakaale, Uganda, saying her goodbyes and transitioning to a new job in the OP foreign missions office. / Pray for stated clerk **HANK BELFIELD** doing follow-up work from general assembly.
- 
- 10** **MELAKU & MERON TAMIRAT**, Clarkston, GA. Pray the Lord would bring fruit from the labors of Redeemer Mercy Ministry. / Associate missionaries **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for another missionary pastor who can disciple the young leadership in the Nakaale and Mbale churches.

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- 11** **MIKE & NAOMI SCHOUT**, Zeeland, MI. Pray for Grace Fellowship's associate pastoral search. / Summer intern **TRENTON (ALICIA) HORDYK** at Living Hope in Beamsville, ON, CA.
- 
- 12** Missionary associates **NATHAN & ELISABETH BLOECHL**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for their family's acclimation to Uganda and for joy and purpose in serving Christ there. / **DANNY OLINGER**, general secretary of Christian Education.
- 
- 13** **CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for Knox School of Theology and its staff and students as classes begin in August. / Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**.
- 
- 14** **BRADNEY & EILEEN LOPEZ**, Guayama, PR. Pray the Lord uses Iglesia Presbiteriana Sola Escritura to reach the lost. / Summer intern **CHRISTIAN (MEGAN) RYAN** at Resurrection OPC in Oshkosh, WI.
- 
- 15** Associate missionary **LEAH HOPP**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the community health team walking to villages and carrying the gospel in Karimojong on handheld solar devices. / Pray *THE RULING ELDER* podcast blesses listeners.

# AUG-SEPT

*Items pertaining to September are in italics.*



*The Chongs (day 18)*

**21 MR. AND MRS. M.**, Asia. Pray for Mr. M's Bible studies in the U.S. and that the students will come to faith in Christ. / Presbyterian and Reformed **COMMISSION ON CHAPLAINS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL**.

**22 CHRISTOPHER & SARA DREW**, Grand Forks, ND. Pray for officers for Faith OPC. / *Pray for Foreign Missions administrative assistant **TIN LING LEE** and the September 26-27 committee meeting preparations.*

**23 TYLER & KARA JACKSON**, New Castle, IN. Pray Christ is glorified in Redemption Life Bible Church's worship and witness. / Summer intern **JOSEPH (MYRANDA) SCHERSCHLIGT** at Emmanuel OPC in Wilmington, DE.

**24** *Pray for the Committee on Foreign Missions and for general secretary **DOUGLAS CLAWSON** as they meet this week. / Summer intern **ANDREW (RACHEL) BECHAM** at Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA.*

**25** Pray for **RETIRED MISSIONARIES** Cal & Edie Cummings, Greet Rietkerk, Young & Mary Lou Son, and Brian & Dorothy Wingard. / **JEREMY & GWEN BAKER**, Yuma, AZ. Pray for Yuma OPC during this time of pastoral transition.

**26 BRUCE (SUE) HOLLISTER**, regional home missionary for the Presbyteries of the Midwest & Wisconsin and Minnesota. / **OPC DISASTER RESPONSE** asks prayer for the Lord's protection over OPC churches and members in the Southeast as hurricane season continues.



*The Godseys (day 29)*

**27 HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for a fruitful and safe English camp for college students and for American volunteers. / Summer intern **MITCH (CALILEE) WATSON** at Trinity OPC in Capistrano Beach, CA.

**28 MARK (PEGGY) SUMPTER**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest. / Pray for the **ETHIOPIAN REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** and for the persecuted church in **EAST AFRICA**.

**29 MILLER & STEPHANIE ANSELL**, Waco, TX. Pray for Trinity OPC's evangelism efforts. / Summer interns **KEVIN (CAMI) GODSEY** at Hope in Grayslake, IL, and **NATHAN (HANNAH) MARQUARDT** at Westminster in Hamden, CT.

**30** Pray for **BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada, as Ben teaches a seminary course on covenant theology. / Summer intern **EDDIE (HILLARY) MERCADO** at Harvest OPC in Wyoming, MI.

**31** Pray for affiliated missionaries **CRAIG & REE COULBOURNE** and **LINDA KARNER**, Japan. / **PAUL & SARAH MOURREALE**, West Plains, MO. Pray the Lord blesses Covenant Reformed with officers.

**16 DAVE (ELIZABETH) HOLMLUND**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Philadelphia. / Tentmaking missionary **TINA DEJONG**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for unity and encouragement as the mission faces changes.

**17 MATTHEW & LOIS COTTA**, Pasadena, CA. Give thanks for the Lord's provision of officers for Pasadena OPC. / Short-Term Missions coordinator **DAVID NAKHLA**. Pray the Lord blesses follow-up to 2023 STM efforts.

**18** Affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia. Pray for true and saving faith in their sons as they grow up on the field. / Summer intern **JEREMY (HANNAH) CHONG** at Momenca OPC in Momenca, IL.

**19 MR. AND MRS. F.**, Asia. Pray for the covenant children of the Reformed churches to grow up professing the faith as their own gift from their heavenly Father. / **CALEB & ERIKA SMITH**, Thousand Oaks, CA. Pray for Thousand Oaks OPC's fall conference.

**20** Home Missions administrative assistant **ALLISON GROOT**. / Summer interns **ZACH (CAROLINE) REEVES** at Harvest in San Marcos, CA, and **CLIFTON (BREANA) FOSTER** at Community Presbyterian in Kalamazoo, MI.

# NEWS, VIEWS & REVIEWS

## HERBSTER ORDAINED AND INSTALLED AT MANTUA, NJ

On June 24, Zachary Herbster was ordained and installed as pastor of Providence OPC in Mantua, New Jersey. Rev. Zach Siggins, pastor of Cornerstone OPC in Ambler, Pennsylvania, preached the message. Rev. Dr. Richard Herbster, pastor of Mt. Pleasant EPC in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, gave the charge to the pastor. Rev. Dr. Chad Van Dixhoorn, professor of church history at Westminster Theological Seminary, gave the charge to the congregation.



Members and friends of the presbytery of New Jersey pray over Herbster at his ordination and installation

## ALLARD ORDAINED AND INSTALLED AT AMARILLO, TX

Grant Allard was ordained on June 16 and installed as a co-pastor of Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church in Amarillo, Texas. Mark Wheat preached the sermon from 2 Timothy 1:1–10. Jeremy Boothby, the other co-pastor of Christ Covenant Presbyterian, gave the charge to the minister, and Todd Dole gave the charge to the congregation.



At Allard's ordination: (top) Mark Sumpter, Craig Wallace, Trey Wood, John Brack, Mark Wheat; (bottom) Todd Dole, John Terpstra, Allard, Jeremy Boothby, Nicholas Lammé

## UPDATE

### CHURCHES

- On May 21, **New Covenant Presbyterian Church** in Abingdon, MD (Harford County), previously a PCA congregation, was received into the OPC by the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic.

### MINISTERS

- On May 21, **David G. Barker** was installed as pastor and **Nicholas C. Hathaway** and **Kurt A. Scharping** were installed as associate pastors of New Covenant Presbyterian Church in Abingdon, MD. Barker, Hathaway, and Scharping were previously serving in the PCA.

- On June 16, **Grant W. Allard** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor at Christ Covenant Presbyterian in Amarillo, TX.

- On June 24, **Zachary C. Herbster** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor at Providence OPC in Mantua, NJ.

- On June 30, **Corey T. Paige** was ordained as a minister and installed as the evangelist for the Hays County mission work in the Presbytery of the Southwest.

### MILESTONES

- **George C. Miladin**, 88, died on July 2. He served as pastor of New Life OPC in La Mesa, CA, for twenty-seven years.



At the May installation of Adam Ostella at Covenant OPC in Brighton, MI: Jeff Fink, Wes Reynolds, Doug Felch, Stephen Pribble, Doug Doll, Adam Ostella, Lane Tipton, Harrison Perkins, Everett Henes, Bruce Buchanan

## LETTERS

### GOOD NEWS ABOUT CATECHISM RESOURCES

Editor:

The July issue of *New Horizons* is a fine issue. The descriptions of people teaching the Shorter Catechism is particularly good. Parents described why and how they teach the catechism—including the struggles they have to get their children onboard. They do their best to be creative in their approaches.

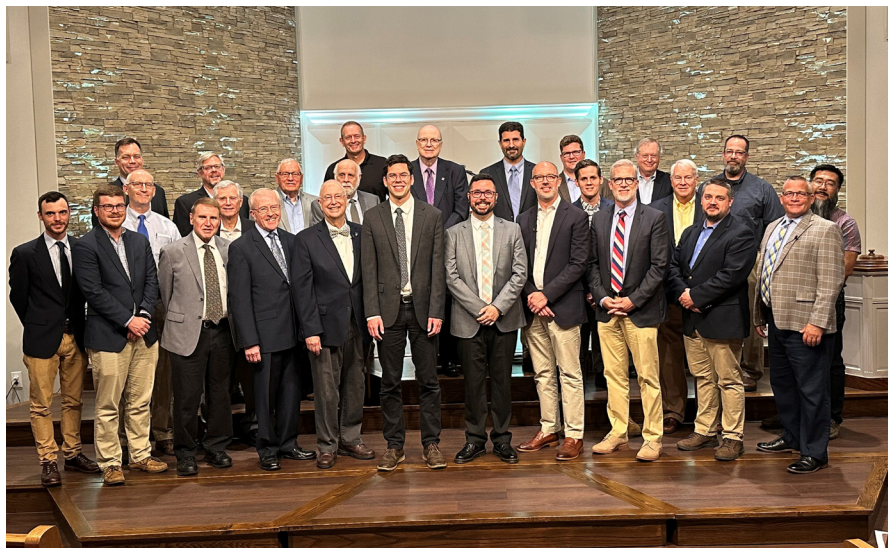
The good news is that Great Commission Publications has just completed a two-year course on the Shorter Catechism entitled *Digging Deeper*. Its teaching methods and modern graphics engage both children and teachers/parents—the very concerns of parents. Great Commission Publications also has teaching materials for the First Catechism.

Roger Schmurr  
Cleveland, Ohio

## REVIEWS

*The Shadow of Christ in the Book of Lamentations*, by C. J. Williams. Crown & Covenant, 2022. Paperback, 208 pages, \$14.00. Reviewed by OP pastor Zachary R. Keele.

Upon the bookshelf of our piety, certain biblical books gather more dust than others. Often we are not brave enough to admit this, but where Romans and the Gospels are well worn, other books hibernate under a layer of fine particles like a long lost first edition never cracked. Hence, it is good to grab the duster and let such stranded books see the light of day, and we ought to tip the hat to Dr. C. J. Williams for doing so with *Lamentations*. This short book squished between the giants of Jeremiah and Ezekiel is regularly lost in their shadows. Besides, our fondness for the cheerful and happy deprives us the stomach for *Lamentations'* raw display of ruin, wrath, and spiritual bereavement. Dr. Williams, however, unfurls the grim verses of *Lamentations* to apply to our souls the faithful mercies of God amid sin's darkest realities.



Members of the presbytery and participants in the June double ordination service for Nathaniel G. Jeffries and Filipe Schulz dos Santos (center). Jeffries was installed as an evangelist of Calvary OPC in Glenside to work with the church plant in King of Prussia, PA; Schulz dos Santos was installed as associate pastor of Trinity OPC in Hatboro, PA.

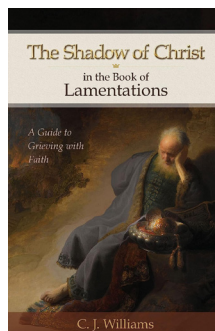
This book sprouted from a sermon series sown by Williams, which gives it a decidedly sermonic tone, despite his assessing it a commentary, though an atypical one. Rather than focusing on technical issues like date, authorship, and the history of scholarship, Williams's exposition of the text of *Lamentations* is devotional, aimed at the saint in the pew. With his clear and approachable writing, this book would work well for a Bible study or Sunday school class, though some adaption would be required to fit its twenty-one chapters into your average quarter.

Its devotional purpose, however, does not make this book a bowl of confetti, as is typical for what passes as devotional nowadays. Williams labors well to walk through the biblical text with care and reverence in order to feed the reader with the meaty truth of God. Particularly, the author expounds *Lamentations* with a view to Christ, while eschewing any hint of allegory or fanciful retrojections of the New Testament. Based upon a point made by Herman Witsius, Williams judges that it is better to “over look” for Jesus than to overlook him (xvii). He boldly proclaims Christ and his work for

us from *Lamentations* as the gospel arises naturally out of the text.

Another strong point of this book is its honesty. Topics like divine wrath, God as enemy, and gruesome covenant curses as the penalty for sin (including cannibalism) replay over and over in the stanzas of *Lamentations*. Frequently, we are prudes who cannot sit with these truths, or worse, we are too self-righteous to admit they apply to us. With refreshing candor, Williams, though, shows the terror of God's wrath in all its awful splendor due to sinners. For, as he reiterates, if we photoshop or domesticate the judgment of God, then we dishonor and snub the pains of hell that Jesus suffered for us upon the cross.

The only minor quibbles with this edifying journey through *Lamentations* are some of Williams's applications. The majority flow accurately from the text and are heart-searching, but a few of them are a stretch. *Lamentations* deals with the eternal wrath of God as expressed in the fall of Jerusalem, fulfilled vicariously by Jesus for us, and poured out forever in hell, and the author can be overly eager in a few places to relate this to our everyday hardships.



## Women's Presbyterial Midwest Conference

Oct. 7 • Wheaton, IL

- Topic: Humility
- Speaker: Erika Allen, director of Bible editorial for Crossway
- Location: Bethel Presbyterian  
1401 S. Naperville Rd.
- For more information, contact Carmen McKenna at cmckenn5@yahoo.com.

Nevertheless, this book is a welcomed and needed dusting off of a precious book of Scripture. Therefore, go forth and read Lamentations, behold the love of Christ to suffer for us, and taste new every morning the mercy of God.

***Isaiah: Good News for the Wayward and Wandering*, by Jonathan Gibson. New Growth Press, 2022. Paperback, 136 pages, \$15.99. Reviewed by OP pastor C. Steven McDaniel Jr.**

Isaiah can be a daunting book for small group Bible studies to tackle, but Dr. Jonathan Gibson's new work on Isaiah breaks it into manageable pieces and shows readers Isaiah's promised Savior. Gibson identifies Isaiah's main theme as "the gospel story of how God saves his people, through judgment, for the transformation of the world" (7). He shows how that theme is revealed in Israel's destruction and restoration and how those trials show us the greater story of God saving us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Readers are challenged to see their sin, how they have been rescued from sin to live as Jesus's beloved people, and to look for the day when Christ makes all things new.

The book's ten chapters are designed for use as a small group Bible study. Each chapter includes a big idea or central

thought, study questions for the text, an article reflecting on the main theme of the chapter, and an exercise to help apply the passage and encourage participants to share what they learned. At the end of the book are Leader's Notes for further background information. Gibson encourages leaders not to look at them too quickly or to treat them as an answer guide. His goal is to get the group to read Isaiah carefully for themselves.

One of the strengths of the study is the way it divides Isaiah into accessible portions. The group reads and reflects on one or two chapters of biblical text per week, highlighting passages like chapters 6, 11, 40, and 53. The end of each chapter tells which passage the group will look at next and what they should read to go through the entirety of Isaiah. This keeps the study at a reasonable length while encouraging readers to take in the whole breadth of God's Word.

Another strength is Gibson's appeal to our hearts. He challenges us to feel the effect of Christ's work on us. It is not just Isaiah's original hearers who have their scarlet sins washed white, Christ has made us clean, too. Gibson asks perceptive questions designed to help us connect the truth of Christ's work to our circumstances. We are the ones Jesus has rescued, he is with us in our trials, we will be with him forever. I found chapter 7 on Isaiah 49 particularly moving. Our God has not forgotten us, he has engraved us on the palms of his hands (Isa. 49:16).

Some small groups may find the study's format challenging to use. It is designed for minimal preparation, and it depends on the group reading and responding together. People will have different levels of comfort reading out loud, so a good leader will need to adapt the

instructions to best fit the context.

I think this study is an excellent resource for small groups looking to dive into the text of Isaiah. Gibson consistently points readers to the Suffering Servant who came to lay down his life for his people.

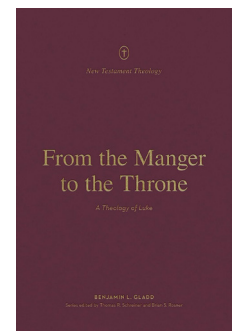
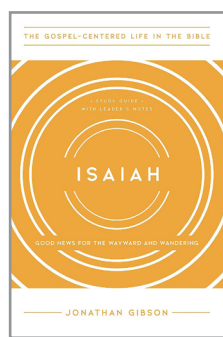
***From the Manger to the Throne: A Theology of Luke*, by Benjamin L. Gladd. Crossway, 2022. Paperback, 208 pages, \$19.21 (Amazon). Reviewed by retired PCA minister Robert R. Drake.**

Is it not true that when we read any new book we say to ourselves one of four things?

1. I knew that.
2. Oh, of course, why didn't I see that before? (Here I think particularly about the parallel Dr. Gladd points out in the chapter on the Son of Man, how the devil's offer of the kingdoms of the world echoes the language used in Daniel 7, as if the devil is usurping the role of the Ancient of Days.)
3. Really? I'll have to think about that.
4. No way.

Dr. Gladd's book is heavy on the first two, with maybe a bit of the third, but none of the fourth. That's why I enjoyed the book and recommend it. In fact, the introduction alone, a thirty-seven-page survey of Luke's gospel, is wonderful. Before I even finished it, I had to go to my wife and with some excitement read something to her and say, "Listen to this!" I could imagine reading it to a Sunday school class. But alas! Much of the content is too rich to find its way into a Sunday sermon, except by bits and pieces in order to serve the end of what all preaching should be about. Edmund Clowney would have said the goal is to be "doxological," in the sense of lifting our hearts to worship. It is after all a worship service and not a lecture hall.

This book made me think about that



old adage regarding the trees and the forest. I have listened to accurate exegetical sermons that have been like a detailed analysis of a particular tree but that never saw the beauty of the forest to which the tree belonged. Gladd has a way of looking at the trees but also at how the trees in question fit into the beauty of the whole forest. For example, he uses the words of Mary and then Simeon to introduce the theme of “the great reversal.” Then, he traces that theme through the whole Gospel, noting all the references to “high and low” and “up and down,” not just spiritually but even geographically. During the wilderness temptation, did not the Tempter take Jesus up to a high mountain and ask him to bow down?

Those who share Gladd’s love for biblical theology will enjoy how he opens up Luke’s obvious references to Old Testament (OT) texts but also how he appears constantly to be inferring OT references. The presentation is rich and wonderful, but I wish Gladd would have said something about how he thinks Luke, who is assumed to be a Gentile, knows so much OT that he can’t write without the OT coloring everything? Is it just explained

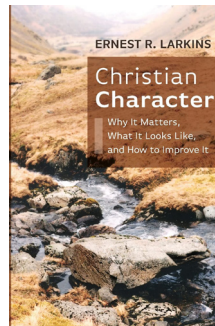
at the divine level of inspiration, where the Spirit knows more than Luke? Has Luke absorbed the reflections of his traveling companion Paul, the number one rabbinical student of his day? Did people in those days, both Jews and Gentile God-fearers (like Luke?) know the OT so much better than we do? (Isn’t that what the whole book of Revelation seems to indicate?) If Luke assumed, as a Gentile, that his readers would get all these allusions, the ancient catechism system must have been amazing.

***Christian Character: Why It Matters, What It Looks Like, and How to Improve It*, by Ernest R. Larkins. Resource Publications, 2022. Paperback, 320 pages, \$36.27 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP minister Thomas S. Champness.**

Dr. Larkins, a former OP member, has given us a practical guide for developing twenty-six Christian character traits. Far from being a mere self-help book, Larkins tells us (twenty-six times): “Remember, the Lord’s help is vital to cultivating Christian character. Only his power can enable you to change.” This book is biblically informed, theologically astute, read-

ily accessible, and highly applicable.

Each chapter begins with suggested introductory activities as a “warm up” for digging into a specific character quality. Each quality is succinctly defined and then elucidated by relevant Scripture passages. Examples from the lives of Bible



characters are presented, enabling us to see the quality in action. This is followed by practical teaching on how to implement the character quality into our daily living with God’s help.

In the chapter on attentiveness, Larkins encourages us to give earnest and sincere attention both to God and to others. In our digital age we are unrelentingly bombarded with information. In this environment, for us to hear God speaking to us in Scripture and to heed the needs of those around us is no easy task. Larkins helpfully concludes each chapter with a suggested prayer. Here is a portion of his prayer from this chapter:

Great Father, how merciful that you fixed your attention on my sinful and lost condition, sending Jesus to bear my sin and save me. . . . Forgive me for not listening carefully to your words and not listening caringly to others. . . . Teach me to be like Mary, who sat at Jesus’ feet and listened with rapt attention.

Reading this chapter convicted this reviewer of his need to focus more intently and more undividedly on those whom God’s providence brings into his life.

Deference is defined as “the volitional yielding to another person’s opinion, judgment, need, wish, preference, or will.” This chapter references Hudson Taylor, the British missionary to China. “Unlike other missionaries of the day, he wore Chinese clothing, ate with chopsticks, shaved his forehead, and braided his remaining hair into a single pigtail or queue.” His deference to Chinese culture created opportunities for sharing the



## OPC LOAN FUND

### Did you know that the OPC has its own loan fund?

Established in 1993, the OPC Loan Fund has helped many Orthodox Presbyterian congregations acquire buildings or complete renovations. Perhaps you worship in one of these buildings every Sunday!

Interested in learning how the OPC Loan Fund might help your congregation? Reach out to Mark Stumpff, Loan Fund Manager, at [mark.stumpff@opc.org](mailto:mark.stumpff@opc.org) or 215-935-1028.

gospel during the fifty-one years he spent in China. When we show deference, we are considering others more important than ourselves. Abraham showed deference to Lot when he gave Lot first choice of land. Jesus showed deference when he surrendered his own will to save the elect. Church members show deference when they distinguish between what are matters of biblical principles in church life and what are personal preferences. The first should be like hardened steel and the second like melted butter. The proper use of deference fosters peace in the church.

*Christian Character* can be used for self-study or classes. At the end of the book is a helpful “Teaching and Learning Guide” (Appendix D), along with an offer of free PowerPoint slides that coordinate with the text.

***Biblical Languages and the Busy Pastor: A Practical Guide to Keeping and Using Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic in Ministry*, by Dr. R. Kevin Carroll. GlossaHouse, 2022. Paperback, 149 pages, \$19.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Christian M. McShaffrey.**

Every faithful pastor is busy and often feels pressed for time as he prepares sermons and studies each week. Much of his time is spent reading books (confessional standards, commentaries, etc.) but sadly, and in spite of all this time reading, sometimes the book he loves most remains closed and gathering dust on a shelf: the Holy Bible

I do not mean his English translation, of course. He reads that daily in private and publicly at every meeting of the church. What typically goes unread is his Hebrew and Greek edition of the Scriptures. This is a great tragedy.

First of all, it is simply poor stewardship. Men spend thousands of dollars at seminary and countless hours in study to obtain proficiency in these languages. Losing these skills is like purchasing a luxury car and leaving it to rust. More

significantly, however, lost proficiency also makes him less effective as a preacher (which is his chiefest calling and highest joy).

Dr. R. Kevin Carroll addresses this problem and invites pastors to recover their language skills in volume 11 of the GlossaHouse Dissertation Series: *Biblical Languages and the Busy Pastor*.

The book begins as most do, with an introduction, but a unique aspect of this one is that it includes the results of a “Language Use Survey” conducted amongst conservative Reformed denominations. While most pastors reported regular engagement with the biblical languages, the level of it was somewhat superficial.

The next section seeks to convince pastors to recover their skills by offering biblical, theological, and historical reasons to read Scripture in its originally inspired languages. Practical reasons are then added, one of them being this choice quote from our own J. Gresham Machen:

If you are to tell what the Bible does say, you must be able to read the Bible for yourself. And you cannot read the Bible for yourself unless you know the languages in which it was written. . . . In his mysterious wisdom [God] gave his [Word] to us in Hebrew and Greek. Hence if we want to know the Scriptures, to the study of Greek and Hebrew we must go. (29)

At this point in the book, I will admit to feeling convicted for my own attrition of skills. At the same time, I also wondered, “But as a busy pastor, how am I going to find the time to relearn all I have forgotten?” Carroll answers this question by recommending a very reasonable plan and, more surprisingly, by suggesting that recovered proficiency actually saves time since we are no longer “vassals to secondary literature” (77).

The most enjoyable section of the book was a sample of Carroll’s weekly engagement with the original languages. It reminded me of what we did every single day in seminary and how enriching it truly is to find exegetical gems while translating.

You should buy this book for *your* busy pastor.

***Radically Whole: Gospel Healing for the Divided Heart*, by David Gibson. Crossway, 2022. Paperback, 216 pages, \$15.97 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor Tyler C. Detrick.**

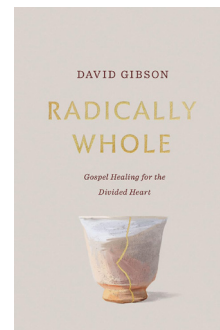
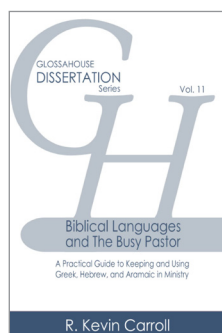
Remember when Martin Luther called the book of James an “epistle of straw”? Well, Dr. David Gibson, minister of Trinity Church in Aberdeen, Scotland, offers an unequivocal response in his recently published book. In *Radically Whole: Gospel Healing for the Divided Heart*, Gibson declares that “Luther was wrong” (25). Gibson assigns proper dignity to James’s epistle, and he does so in such a way that challenges our churches to heed its call to wholeness in Christ.

Readers must understand what they’re getting into when they open Gibson’s book. *Radically Whole* is not an in-depth study of James, and those searching for a verse-by-verse exposition should turn to other resources. Rather, this book is an exploration of the concept of wholeness as that grand theme weaves its way through the book of James. As Gibson guides readers through different sections of James,

he pauses here and there to address exegetical issues, but he is most concerned with showing how the different parts of the book of James present a single cure to

the fallen condition that he calls double-mindedness. The result is a devotional ensemble that is both biblically helpful and pastorally sensitive.

Indeed, *Radically Whole* helps us to understand James’s epistle. Many readers tend to get “lost” in James’s writing as he jumps from topic to topic; yet Gibson finds the golden thread that ties the whole book together. Simply put, the book of James is a “lovingly prescribed course in wholeness” (14). Sin renders us “split personalities,” torn between love for God and love for the world, but God’s design in the book of James is to knit



## NEWS, VIEWS & REVIEWS *Continued*

us back together again with the gospel (64). While Gibson may not be the first writer to observe this unifying theme of the epistle, he has done the church a great service by explaining it in such a convincing way.

Gibson's book also helps us to understand ourselves. Why do we love things that God says are evil? Why do we talk about God's Word but seldom put it into practice? Why are we "happy to cheat on God?" (36). These are the kinds of issues that Christians struggle with daily, and Gibson understands that. With pastoral precision, he asks questions that make us squirm, and then he tenderly leads us to the Savior. He even includes "words to the sensitive" throughout his book so that his readers receive his admonitions in the proper sense. How pastorally perceptive!

If you struggle with inward dividedness (and who doesn't?), then this book will offer you hope. *Radically Whole: Gospel Healing for the Divided Heart* will reintroduce you to James and show you how God's Word speaks to your divided heart to bring healing and wholeness in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

***Partners in the Gospel: Fifty Meditations for Pastors' and Elders' Wives*, by Megan Hill. P&R, 2021. Hardcover, 152 pages, \$13.00. Reviewed by OP member Emily VanDixhoorn.**

As much as I may need encouragement, my stubborn side doesn't always want to receive it, at least not from just anyone. In *Partners in the Gospel: Fifty Meditations for Pastors' and Elders' Wives*, Megan Hill speaks as someone who has been through the trenches of ministry life and

come out praising Jesus. Her well-chosen illustrations make listening to her easy, and she brings comfort and delight as she faithfully presents Christ through God's Word.

As a pastor's daughter and pastor's wife, Megan Hill demonstrates a keen awareness of a minister's family life. She aptly describes both the challenges and the joys of ministry. What is more, she has been well taught in how to handle them. She doesn't just point her reader to her experience, as if we all simply need to be cookie cutter copies of her. No, she gives thanks for the unique talents of the pastors' and elders' wives in her church. To help us to grow as God would have us, she wisely points us to the means of grace for our encouragement in the challenges of ministry life.

*Partners in the Gospel* can be used privately for much benefit, reading and praying through it. Each meditation ends with clear sections—Reflect, Pray, and Act—that direct us to Scripture relevant to the topic at hand. Thankfully, the "Act" section is not imposing. Sometimes it is more about reminding us of the indicatives of our faith, not just the imperatives. For example, one call to action is that the reader remind herself of her identity as a servant of the Lord. This is one example of how the book aims for the heart and leaves the Holy Spirit room for specific application.

Even better than personal use, I recommend that one "partner" with another "partner in the gospel," or better yet, a

group of partners, to stimulate encouraging one another in meaningful ways. Sometimes I really want to encourage a pastor's or elder's wife, and even though I am one, I just don't know where to start. The challenges can be abstract and multifaceted; this book can help get a handle on them. Recently, I met with a group of pastors' wives for a day of encouragement. The book proved immensely useful. We broke into groups to read particular meditations of interest and then discuss and pray together. Some topics were "raising children with gospel hope," "when you live in a fishbowl," and "when you long for friends." I recommend any of the fifty meditations as a discussion starter for a group of elders' wives seeking to support each other and find refreshment.

Pastors' and elders' wives are a great source of encouragement for one another, especially with a tool like this in their hands. But *Partners in the Gospel* does not need to be limited to them. As Catriona Trueman points out in her recommendation in the book, this book helps anyone "know how better to pray for those helpmeets sacrificially laboring alongside their elders and pastors." Encouraging an elder's wife is not rocket science, but it can still be challenging. Whether we are encouraging a pastor's or elder's wife or seeking to receive encouragement ourselves, this book comes alongside with compassion, knowledge, and faithfulness to God's means of grace, which in turn give us much needed hope.

