

NEW HORIZONS

JULY 2024

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



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TEACHING ENGLISH LIKE A SERVANT



TYLER C. DETRICK

Language barriers are awkward. As the pastor of a church with an English as a Second Language (ESL) Ministry, I'm familiar with the difficulty of speaking with people who don't know my native language. Almost every week, someone knocks on the front doors to our church and greets me with words I don't understand: "*Disculpe, ¿cuándo son sus clases de inglés?*"

This time, the Hispanic gentleman asking the question is pointing to our sign, which promotes free English classes. I know he's speaking Spanish because I studied Spanish in high school. I can't talk with him, though, because I didn't pay much attention in high school Spanish. (I thought pastors only needed to know Greek and Hebrew?)

I pull out my iPhone, fumble to my "Google Translate" app, and start speaking in awkwardly loud English: "Hello, my name is Pastor Tyler. It's nice to meet you! We would love for you to come to our English lessons here at the church on Tuesday evenings. Classes begin at 6:45 p.m. They are free—no cost! There are many people there who speak Spanish. They are glad to help you learn English."

My phone quickly starts to translate this into Spanish. Smiling, the man nods. As I watch him walk away, I pray that he comes to our classes. I pray that he receives a warm welcome. I especially pray that he hears the gospel and delights in the Savior.

AN ESL MINISTRY FOR DAYTON

Light of the Nations OPC has invested in language ministry since it began. Years before the congregation had chosen its name or location, its overseeing elders identified ESL as a strategy for gospel outreach.

Dayton, Ohio, is an immigrant-friendly city. The city boasts East Third Street as a Welcome Dayton Corridor, a place where refugees can thrive. Our church leadership started thinking: What if our church leads the way in reaching out to these immigrants? What if we teach them English and tell them the good news of Jesus? What if we plant our church along the Welcome Dayton Corridor and become a light for the gospel to unsettled refugees? What if Dayton becomes known for Christ's warm welcome to sinners who repent and believe the gospel? This dream excited the congregation. It seemed like a natural way to show hospitality to our neighbors, extend the reach of the gospel, and express our gratitude to the Savior through intentional acts of service in his name.

In another sense, our ESL vision borrowed from the early church. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit reversed the language confusion of Babel by causing the Jews in Jerusalem "to speak in other tongues . . . And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:4–5). There is something particularly appropriate about Christians, indwelt with the Spirit of Pentecost, leading the way in overcoming language barriers so that the gospel can be understood and believed. As language-learners come to understand and embrace the gospel, they find fellowship with Christ and his church. This is where refugees find true rest.

THE VISION TAKES SHAPE

Over time this vision took shape. In 2021, our church purchased a building on East Third Street in the center of

the Welcome Dayton Corridor. We put up a sign inviting people to attend our upcoming ESL classes and notified the city that we were welcoming students. We prayed for the Lord to open doors for the gospel. In preparation for the classes, volunteer teachers from our church joined Pastor Brad Peppo in receiving ESL training through the PCA's Mission to North America. Then it was time for classes to begin.

On the first day of class, zero students were present. The next few weeks there were three. Then there were seven, then eleven, then twenty. Over three years, more than two hundred different people have come to our church for English classes. We have welcomed students from various countries, including China, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, and Ukraine.

On a typical Tuesday evening, students enter our church's front doors and ascend to our multi-purpose room. New students take a quick placement quiz to determine whether they should join the beginner, intermediate, or advanced class. The classes begin, and laughter spills into the hallway as students chuckle at their own grammar mistakes or the funny way their teacher sounds in a foreign language.

After an hour or so, the classes break and join together in the main room for a Bible lesson. The good news about Jesus Christ is clearly proclaimed in our listeners' native languages. The leader invites everyone to attend our church where they can hear more about God's salvation. Then classes resume, and students finish off the night learning how English verbs work or how to order a hamburger from an American restaurant menu.

Signs advertising ESL outside Light of the Nations OPC



The Salazar family providing free childcare during class

VOLUNTEERS FOR THE WORK

Of course, this ministry would not be possible without a team of volunteers who have committed themselves to this work out of love for the Lord. Pastor Peppo, Light of the Nations' church planter, was instrumental in forming the vision for an ESL program in downtown Dayton. After the congregation particularized, Peppo remained as its evangelist. In this outward-facing role, he kickstarted the ESL program. He battled the August wind which kept tearing our ESL sign from its posts. One summer, he studied Spanish intensively in Costa Rica so that he could communicate on a more personal level with our Spanish students.

Others quickly joined him. One of Light of the Nations' deacons, Paul Downs, has faithfully served as a teacher from the very beginning. Anna Jackson is a member of Covenant OPC in Vandalia, Ohio, but she has donated her time and talents this season to teach our students. Susannah Tobias also attends another church, but she has joined in our ESL efforts. Aaron and Julie Salazar, along with their three kids, staff a free nursery for students with children.

Recently, Aaron took over for Peppo as the ESL director. Aaron speaks Spanish fluently as a second language and regularly teaches the Bible lessons in Spanish. There are many others who have served faithfully, and I am a very proud pastor when I think of each of them!

TEACHING ENGLISH LIKE A SERVANT

I asked these workers about their involvement in the ESL ministry. What stands out?

One common theme was the servant role one must take on to be part of this kind of effort: Aaron Salazar



Aaron Salazar, director of the ESL school at Light of the Nations



Paul Downs, a deacon, teaching an ESL class

stressed that there is no worldly glory to be found in language instruction: “The students attending on Tuesday nights aren’t rich or famous. They aren’t important by worldly estimation. Many of them have no status in our country. These are the ones we serve.” Indeed, ESL ministry is not glamorous or in the spotlight. It’s sometimes clumsy and often awkward—a lot like washing feet.

Our ESL volunteers also noted that the sporadic nature of attendance can make the work difficult. Some Tuesdays there are thirty students or more present, and then a week later the numbers shrink to six or seven. Many of the students have irregular living and working situations, so it’s hard to predict who will come to class and with what kind of regularity. Teachers must be able to accommodate regular attenders as well as students who have missed months of lessons. Aaron had something to say about this: “Their lives are confusing and unpredictable. This is exactly why we need to be consistent in the way we handle ESL. We need to be here and ready to teach every Tuesday, so that we can reflect God’s consistency.” Another volunteer agreed: “If even one person shows up, we need to be here and ready to serve with joy.”

Yet another challenging aspect of ESL is the long-term nature of the work. ESL is a seed-sowing kind of ministry because it often takes a long time to see what kind of fruit the Lord will produce through our efforts. In some ways, our church is already seeing the fruit of an ESL ministry. Many Spanish-speaking Christians have joined our church, in part because they feel welcomed by our willingness to work through language barriers. In other ways, however, we wait for more fruit. Our church longs

to see people from the ESL ministry come to worship, hear the gospel, and profess faith in Christ. We long to be able to speak to these students with greater clarity about the gospel. Yet these things take time. We have had visitors worship in our church regularly in the past, and some students have evidenced faith in Christ. But thus far we have not seen a student commit to fellowship in our congregation.

Reflecting on this aspect of ESL ministry, Aaron adds, “We may not see the visible results we’re hoping for this side of the grave. I don’t know what all this effort will turn into. All I know is that I must be faithful.”

Light of the Nations is grateful to the Lord for the opportunity to be faithful in this ministry. We know that we are not alone, as there are many gospel-preaching churches pursuing similar ESL programs in order to proclaim the gospel into the world. We pray that our story encourages these churches to remain faithful in their outreach efforts. We hope that the Lord opens more doors for the church to be a light for Christ in this world.

Who knows? Perhaps a church will kickstart a Spanish as a Second Language (SSL) ministry to help pastors who didn’t pay attention during high school Spanish class. **NH**

The author is pastor of Light of the Nations OPC in Dayton, Ohio.

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH ESL



MARTHA WRIGHT

“Affection and appreciation” was the phrase that most stood out to me in recent conversations with friends who have been involved in English as a Second Language (ESL) ministries. Now, perhaps you were expecting to read here about how to teach grammar rules or pronunciation. It’s not to say that those are never part of the process of acquiring English, but for both learners and instructors in many ESL ministries, *developing relationships* was by far the most significant part of their experience.

These ESL instructors have found through years of interacting with learners the very thing that linguists have “discovered” through formal research: a positive interpersonal environment helps people learn better, in part by reducing the sort of anxiety that can hinder language acquisition.

You may want to create such a supportive environment but not know where to begin. Let me share from the experiences of a few different ESL program participants at Resurrection OPC in Westminster, California; at Redeemer OPC in Clarkston, Georgia; and at the nonprofit Revive South Jersey in Bridgeton, New Jersey.

RELATIONSHIPS

As believers, we want to show the love of Christ through our ESL program. We do this in part by providing a needed service that helps immigrants, refugees, and others to care for themselves and their families. Our classes may help them to reach important goals like passing a high school equivalency test or becoming US citizens. We may think of our own goals as being more related to communicating the truths of the gospel to our learners, who might eventually come to saving faith in Christ. However, these somewhat different aims don’t have to be in conflict. If we focus on developing positive relationships, we will try to reflect Christ’s love. Through our interactions, we will provide learners with opportunities to hear the gospel and see it lived out. Building those relationships will also help them to learn well and achieve their practical goals. Clearly, this will take a great deal of wisdom on our part. Of course, the way we can find clarity and direction will be through prayer by all our brothers and sisters (not only the ESL program leaders) for spiritual strength and also practical wisdom.

PRACTICAL MATTERS

Practical matters are very significant in interacting with communities of immigrants and refugees. There is a great deal that people who have been raised in the States don’t know about the everyday lives of our neighbors. We may never have experienced moving to a foreign country—especially in the wake of serious personal trauma—and we may not share the concerns that newcomers have about finances, transportation, places to live, school for their children, or even where to find food that they know how to prepare.

How can we learn more about our neighbors so that our ESL program attracts them and helps them participate as fully as possible? Most importantly, we can pray that God will bring into our sphere of acquaintance people who can help us reach the learners we are looking for—perhaps a member of an immigrant community who can act as a bridge or liaison. We can also seek out local leaders in community organizations, schools, or other churches who can provide insights into the best ways to interact with local people. One OP church group had a wonderful couple from the community who not only helped to start the program but who have also faithfully continued as bilingual teachers. They have supervised much of the program’s administration because they have a far better sense of how to handle matters in an appropriately intercultural way, which can be critical to the program’s longevity.

LONGEVITY

Longevity is key. Language acquisition takes time, and learners may already be pushed to their limits by the demands of their everyday lives. It may be difficult for them to attend regularly, and they may not understand how critical it is to their progress for them to maintain that consistency. For this reason, those who are planning an ESL program need to thoroughly discuss with community leaders and future learners what would work for *them*. What are the times that they realistically could hope to attend class? Will they be able to get there? What is most important to them in an ESL program?

Community leaders can help ESL program organizers understand what will encourage learners. Are there incentives that will help students continue to attend? I remember some time ago hearing from friends who ran an ESL program for mothers in North Philadelphia that when they started holding a formal graduation ceremony for the course—complete with caps, gowns, and a party with music, balloons, and a big cake—many fewer students dropped out. Actually graduating represented a goal that they thought only other people achieved, so it was tremendously significant to them. I was a bit puzzled that such a thing as a party would matter so much, but I realized it is because, like many middle-class Americans, I've been to lots of ceremonies and school parties. Most people I know have been successful in the educational system. But for these mothers, that ESL program was the first formal education they had ever completed. That party was the first time someone was celebrating them, and they finally felt they could achieve something in America.

FLEXIBILITY

Because of the many variables in maintaining an ESL class, teaching is always an ongoing process of adapting to shifting circumstances. Changes in venue, attendance, language groups, and times can challenge teachers. They will have to draw on their flexibility and creativity in ways they probably never have before. Even if they start with a seemingly uniform group of beginners, within weeks some learners will be far ahead of others. Some students will come to the course with lengthy professional experience and graduate degrees from their home country. Others may never have had the opportunity to attend even primary school and scarcely know how to hold a pen.

Some learners may have negative past experiences that they need to put behind them to advance in their learning. For instance, in many developing countries most students' educational experience is quite discouraging and even traumatizing. School might be a place where under-trained

and poorly supported teachers are expected to keep control of classes of one hundred or more students, with few, if any, books or even a decent blackboard. It might be a place where teachers mete out serious corporal punishment for the most trivial infraction, and students expect to be humiliated in front of the entire class for making a mistake.

For any of these reasons, ESL learners may lack confidence and be quite anxious about undertaking classes in their new country. So, as one of my friends said, "creating community around learning" has particular importance.

Both learners and instructors may have to adjust their expectations of what an ESL class "should" be: learners may expect to sit passively and learn by rote, while instructors may fear they have to be able to provide lengthy grammatical explanations. Learners usually quickly adapt to a more interactive, communicative style of learning, because it does help create a supportive environment that some teachers have described as "like a family." Teachers also usually find they ditch the elaborate terminology in favor of everyday conversation, lots of examples, role-plays, games, and even everyday activities like cooking.

Nevertheless, it can still be challenging for teachers when they are faced with widely varying educational levels and inconsistent attendance among the learners. That is when, as one teacher said, they have to remind themselves why they are there: to show the love of Christ to their students.

MATERIALS

Instructors new to ESL may wonder what materials to use. There are far too many to choose from, but there are good resources among PCA and OPC groups. Teachers may be required to use materials to prepare for a particular exam, such as a citizenship exam, but they can still foster fellowship and community in the way they use those materials. Depending on the group and setting, there may be more or less explicit Bible instruction in the class. Some ESL programs include evangelistic materials that contain Bible teaching from the beginning. Others may be piggy-backing on local public programs that are not faith-based. In the latter instance, teachers might invite learners to other gatherings to share God's Word or find out if it is appropriate to share gospel materials with the learners.

In any case, we hope that we reflect some of Christ's love through our humble efforts, bless the stranger that is within our gates, and even plant seeds of faith. **NH**

The author is a linguist and former OP missionary.

ESL RESOURCES FROM MISSION TO NORTH AMERICA



JUDITH M. DINSMORE

Nancy Booher’s first encounter with English as a Second Language (ESL) ministry was modest: almost thirty years ago, two friends at her PCA church in Maryland told her that they needed another ESL teacher come fall and asked her to please take the training. She did. She did not like it. She committed to teach for one semester and then planned to exit. But once classes started, Booher said, she fell in love with the students.

Now director for nineteen years of the PCA’s ESL Ministry through Mission to North America (MNA), Booher works to provide churches with better training than she received so that they can show Christ’s love to their international neighbors. She, with the help of other volunteers, has compiled a sort of model for how to run ESL classes

as a ministry of Reformed churches. While local churches may differ in the extent to which they adhere to the model, her work provides a starting point that at least two OP churches—Light of the Nations in Dayton, Ohio, (see pages 3–5), and Harvest OPC in Wyoming, Michigan—have found helpful.

First, MNA provides training. Second, it provides materials: a 28-document start-up kit for ESL school directors, other online resources, and, most recently, an ESL curriculum. Third, it provides ongoing support.

TRAINING

“How do you teach English to students who speak or understand no English?” was the question on Harvest member BettyAnn DeVries’s mind last summer when she took MNA’s training class. Actually, she took it twice: first online, then in person. The training answered her question, and then some. “The Zoom training helped to wrap my brain around what the classes would look like and how the fluency levels and curriculum work together,” DeVries said.

The online training that DeVries took is designed for people who are exploring the possibility of an ESL ministry at their church or for people who are planning to join their church’s already-established ministry. The training is held on Zoom from a Friday to a Monday and is limited to twenty-four people per class.

To begin an ESL program, Booher recommends having at least seven committed volunteers: one to do the administrative work as director, and two teachers for three classes—beginner, intermediate, and advanced. To train those initial volunteers, MNA can offer an in-person class at your church with one of its thirty trainers. (If an existing training is happening nearby, they may redirect your group to it.) “We ask for coverage of travel costs and a \$400 honorarium,” Booher said.

The in-person training is twelve hours total, Friday evening and all-day Saturday. That length quickly communicates to potential volunteers that the ESL ministry is a significant commitment, Harvest pastor Adrian Crum reflected. Even then, “the real surprise [for us] was how many people were poised and ready to jump in 100 percent,” he said.

The training made starting an ESL class seem “real and doable,” DeVries said. “Many of our trainees remarked how much more excited they were after seeing (and practicing) what a class would look like.”

Melisa McGinnis, who shares the work of directing Harvest’s ESL program with DeVries and two others, agreed. “So much of the start-up work is administrative, but the

training . . . felt like the first big step toward actually getting the program off the ground.” McGinnis had never worked in ESL ministry before. “I left the training much more confident in our ability to help those coming through Harvest’s doors,” she reflected. Harvest began offering ESL classes in 2023.

MATERIALS

MNA’s website has numerous downloadable resources—from sample fliers to advertise your church’s classes, to a suggested list of where to post them (the dry cleaner, international grocery stores, the local Western Union), to a sample volunteer description for an ESL teacher that would work well as a bulletin announcement. Nancy Booher’s no-nonsense energy propels these written materials. For example, she instructs: “Each student should be prayed for by name each and every week by the teacher. Next, you need to make sure you are teaching well. No one is coming back to a class that isn’t helping them.”

This May, MNA also launched a new curriculum for church ESL classes: Neighbor to Neighbor. All three beginner levels will be available by August 2024; the two intermediate levels will be released in 2025.

ESL curricula, Booher explained, are typically designed for college classrooms that meet three to five times per week for three to four hours per session; teachers for church ESL ministries must then adapt and cull the material for a weekly, two-hour class. Those curricula are also secular and sometimes include material that must be skipped, like a lesson on horoscopes. In contrast, Neighbor to Neighbor is written by the MNA and has lesson plans that fit a once-a-week class. Each level includes an illustrated, full-color student’s textbook and a teacher’s manual.

ONGOING SUPPORT

Nancy Booher and other experienced volunteers make themselves available to answer questions and provide further training for churches, including OP churches, that have an ESL ministry. DeVries called their one-on-one help “valuable” but emphasized their love for “us and our students.” For more information about what the MNA provides, visit their website: pcamna.org. **NH**

The author is managing editor of New Horizons.

A BASIC DESCRIPTION OF ESL MINISTRY

by Nancy Booher

adapted from MNA’s website

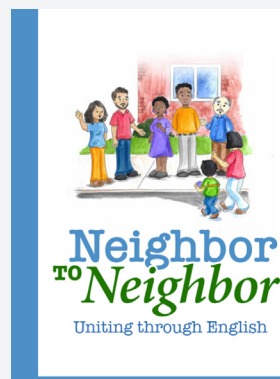
Most English as a Second Language ministries start with an ESL school. These are free schools for adult internationals in your community that are staffed by church volunteers. These classes are divided by fluency level. You determine the fluency level of each student through a short interview process that you learn during our training. The three basic fluency levels are beginner, intermediate, and advanced. But those can be broken down into more levels. The classes are English immersion, meaning that only English is spoken in the classroom. Most classes are about two hours long with a break in the middle. Classes can be in the daytime or in the evening.

Volunteers do not need to speak a foreign language or be professional teachers. All they need to do is speak English and love Jesus, and we can teach them the rest. It is best to have at least two trained teachers per class. This way they can share the workload—it takes about two hours to write a lesson plan—and cover for each other during an illness or vacation.

Although your classes are free, we do recommend that you ask for donations from your students for their textbooks. MNA now publishes a curriculum called Neighbor to Neighbor, available at the PCA bookstore. The cost is \$25 for a student textbook.

The gospel is incorporated into your ESL classes through prayers at the beginning and end of each class (in Jesus’s name) and short devotions during each class. Our hope is that teachers and classroom helpers will be developing relationships with their students both inside the classroom and outside the classroom. The gospel is shared more easily within these relationships.

Once your main classes are going well, you could expand your ministry to include more Bible-based options, such as Sunday school class for internationals or a home Bible study.



REVIEW: ALAN D. STRANGE'S *EMPOWERED WITNESS*

DANNY E. OLINGER

When the now-named Orthodox Presbyterian Church was formed in 1936, a defining issue was the nature of church power. The Presbyterian Church in the USA *constitutionally* held that all church power is wholly moral and spiritual, and that only ministerial (bound in service to Christ) and declarative (bound to the Word of God). However, in the trial of J. Gresham Machen, the PCUSA turned aside this Protestant principle known as the spirituality of the church. In its place, the PCUSA made its councils the final interpreter and arbiter in doctrine and in life, the equivalence of which is the Roman Catholic position that the final authority is the voice of the church speaking through the papacy and its councils.

Consequently, Orthodox Presbyterians have always taken seriously the doctrine of the spirituality of the church. In his stimulating book *Empowered Witness* (Crossway, 2024), Alan Strange, professor of church history at Mid-America Reformed Seminary, does not focus on how the PCUSA abused the nature of church power in its prosecution of J. Gresham Machen, but rather plows fresh ground. Strange staunchly defends the mission of the church as spiritual, but he does so acknowledging the abuse of the spirituality of the church that took place with slavery in America.

The book essentially divides into three parts: the doctrine of the spirituality of the church, slavery and the spirituality of the church in the nineteenth century, and the spirituality of the church and politics today. In the opening section, Strange lays out his thesis that the mission of the church is to proclaim the gospel to the nations. What the church is not to be is another political, social, or economic institution. This is not to say, however, that the prophetic voice of the church should be muzzled against injustices such as abortion, racism, and the abuse of power; rather, the church must know that its primary purpose

is declaring God's Word and ministering to the spiritual welfare of those in and out of the church.

SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHURCH IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Knowing that many today believe that the spirituality of the church contributed to a horrible defense of slavery

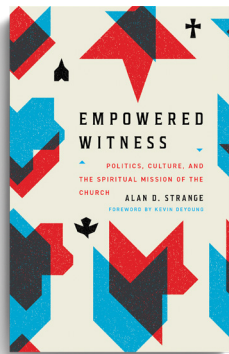
in the nineteenth century, Strange spends most of the book examining the mediating stance by Princeton Seminary's Charles Hodge both before and after the Civil War. Of particular interest for Strange is Hodge's position on the decision of the 1818 General Assembly to uphold the deposing of George Bourne, who had insisted that all slaveholders be excommunicated. Hodge approved of the actions that assembly took. He did not believe that the Bible taught that slaveholders were sinners worthy of excommunica-

tion as Bourne did. But Hodge agreed with the declaration passed by the assembly that stated:

We consider the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another, as a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature; as utterly inconsistent with the law of God, which requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves, and as totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the gospel of Christ.

In Strange's judgment, the 1818 assembly showed forth a proper commitment of the gospel and the spirituality of the church. The assembly in its righteous statement called for slavery's demise without precisely dictating the political steps to end slavery.

This was not the case, however, with the 1861 General Assembly. Convening in Philadelphia on May 16, thirty-three days after Confederate troops fired on Fort Sumter, this gathering of presbyters had a much more political tone. At the assembly, Gardiner Spring put forth



resolutions, which were subsequently passed, that the Presbyterian Church express its devotion to the Union and its loyalty to the federal government. Although Hodge was an enthusiastic Lincoln supporter and Union man, he protested the adoption of the resolutions, arguing that such political matters should not be put before the church.

Four years later, when the war ended, the 1865 General Assembly declared that those Southern ministers and presbyteries that sought entrance back into the Presbyterian Church must declare whether they aided the rebellion against the United States and whether they held that the church's mission was to conserve the institution of slavery as the Confederacy maintained. Hodge protested that the councils of the church in mandating these oaths were denying a ministerial view of church power and promoting the Roman Catholic view that councils held the ultimate power. Hodge said, "The popish doctrine of the infallibility of church courts does not suit Americans" (82).

EVERYTHING IS NOT POLITICAL

In the closing part, the spirituality of the church and politics today, Strange states that part of the difficulty for the church is that what is "properly spiritual" and what is "purely political" is not easily distinguished. Added to this in culture is the current postmodern zeitgeist that crowns politics and makes everything political. Strange writes, "To one who regards everything as politics, Hodge's conviction that the church ought not to pursue purely political ends simply reflects a naïve failure on his part to recognize how political all his convictions were" (113).

But Strange understands, like Hodge before him, that the church is not an institution like other worldly institutions. The church is a body created and possessed by the Holy Spirit. The calling of the church is to gather and perfect believers by the means of grace empowered by the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that difficult matters before the church are simply dismissed with an appeal to the spirituality of the church. Each situation must be thought through in light of the church's calling and the nature of church power. For Strange, leading with the spirituality of the church in theological conversations and actions can have a "salubrious effect" in how the church both distinguishes itself from the world and how it gives itself to the world.

The author is editor of New Horizons.

Empowered Witness: Politics, Culture, and the Spiritual Mission of the Church, by Alan D. Strange. Crossway, 2024. Paperback, 168 pages, \$17.99.

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

Everything That Rises Must Converge (1965) by Flannery O'Connor

A heavysset, duty-proud Southern woman gets smacked upside the head by a college textbook, a grandfather commits pedicide against his favorite granddaughter, a bibliocist wife beats her newly converted husband bloody with a broom, and a landowning widow gets gored through the heart by a bull. No, these aren't stories from the Old Testament (but not a bad guess); these are all events found in the final collection of short stories by Flannery O'Connor, *Everything That Rises Must Converge*. And I cannot commend these edifying stories to you highly enough. If you question the recommendation, you would not be the first. When I set some of the ladies of our congregation off to experience Flannery for the first time, the night of the book club I was greeted at the door with this question: "Why in the world would a pastor have us read these stories?"

Flannery knew that her stories are offensive. As she wrote them, she said she could hear her future reader muttering, "I don't get it, I don't see it, I don't want it." This is not an accident of her work. For O'Connor, we modern readers have become so conditioned to what is grotesque, so blind to true virtue, that we need to be shocked back to reality. We have become so accustomed to things like narcissism, greed, self-righteousness, disrespect, pride, envy, and indifference that we need a proverbial dictionary-sized psychology text entitled *Human Development* to smack us upside the head so that we too might develop from being something grossly disfigured into something truly human (let the reader take up her story "Revelation" and understand). For Flannery, the fall of man is so severe and our sin so entrenched that it is only the violence of God's proactive grace that can wake us from our deadly slumber—and in her stories, that grace comes in the many surprising forms mentioned above. Readers of O'Connor will not only have the pleasure of reading near perfectly structured stories full of wit and delightful prose, but the discerning reader will have the added pleasure of seeing themselves in the grotesque, and the beauty of grace amid the gore.

—Jesse A. Pirschel

HELP FROM THE OPC LOAN FUND

W. REID HANKINS

Our church, Trinity OPC, previously located in Novato, California, was officially organized as a particular congregation in 1971. The church's location in the north bay of the San Francisco Bay Area is one of the most expensive regions for real estate in the country. Since its inception, the church had been renting a facility from the Seventh-Day Adventists. While the facility met our basic needs, not only was it aging, but we generally were only able to use it on Sunday as the Adventists used it the rest of the week. Additionally, there were various challenges that came along with renting a shared space. After more than fifty years of renting from them, it was time for our own place.

When I was installed as the pastor of the congregation in 2008, one of several goals in my heart for the church was to see it secure a building of its own. At that time, the real estate market was undergoing a significant downward correction, so we formed a building search committee to explore the feasibility of finding a church home. We had approximately \$300,000 in a building fund, and there was hope that, with the drop in real estate prices, an opportunity might open up. However, the conclusion of that search was that we were still far off from being able to afford anything in our area that would meet our needs.

INVESTOR, THEN BORROWER

It was at that time that I first heard about the OPC Loan Fund. I learned from the session that the reason that the church had a building fund was because, several years prior, the church had received some sizable donations that were designated only for use for a church building. When they received those funds, the church knew that while the funds were sizable, they would not be sufficient for purchasing a building in our expensive area. Consequently, they decided to invest them in the Loan Fund while they waited for an opportunity to purchase a property at a later date. Thus, our church's first experience with the Loan Fund was as an investor.

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church Loan Fund exists to assist churches in our denomination with their cap-

Office space in Petaluma, CA, converted to fit Trinity OPC



ital expansion projects, such as renovations to worship facilities already owned by the congregation, building new structures, and of course, securing new property for the gospel ministry. The Loan Fund accomplishes this through two related instruments. First, it raises funds by issuing promissory notes with interest to those who would like to invest in the Loan Fund's mission. Second, those funds then become available for the Loan Fund to use in issuing loans at a reasonable interest rate to qualified OPC congregations desiring to purchase church property. As someone who has had experience working with the Loan Fund as both an investor and a borrower, I was asked to write about our church's story on how the Loan Fund helped our congregation in multiple ways acquire its first church home after fifty years of ministry.

When I learned about this, I thought this was a wonderful arrangement. Our church had these funds that were given with the intention to fund a church building for an OPC congregation. While we could not yet use these funds ourselves, by investing them in the Loan Fund, we honored the spirit of those donations by using them in the meantime to help other congregations in our denomination acquire church property. Meanwhile, the interest our church received back from our investment in the Loan Fund slowly accrued over time, growing our principal through the beauty of compounding interest.

Fast forward to 2021. In response to various factors associated with COVID-19, we began to look afresh at the real estate market for a church property. Between the interest

the church had received from the Loan Fund, and some additional investments made along the way, we had several notes with the Loan Fund totaling approximately \$700,000 with various maturity dates. We then found a property located one city north, in Petaluma, California, that had been used as commercial office space, which could be converted to suit our needs. The property was priced at \$814,000 and we estimated that we would need another \$100,000 in renovations and furnishings to ready the facility for our use.

THE PROCESS

That is when I picked up the phone and called Mark Stumpff with the Loan Fund. In order for us to be able to move forward with purchasing the property, we would need a loan from the Loan Fund for the remaining balance of the project after our investment proceeds were applied. We ended up applying for and receiving a loan for a little over \$190,000. That, combined with fundraising efforts through a capital campaign, allowed us to move forward with the project. The entire process for applying for the loan, in which we worked closely with Mark Stumpff, was a positive and encouraging experience. Instead of submitting an application for a loan through an unknown and unconcerned third-party lender, we were applying for a loan with the Loan Fund whose very purpose is to see churches like ours secure a property and setup with a loan that we can afford. In other words, Mark Stumpff's expertise helped us through the whole loan process from application to funding, and we could trust that his guidance and advice had the same goals that we had.

Working with Mark Stumpff and the Loan Fund through our extended escrow period also proved painless. It is my understanding that taking a church through escrow on a property purchase often contains added complexities that are not found in a typical residential home purchase. Our property was no exception. We had negotiated with the seller a rather complex set of purchase contingencies

in an extended escrow period to make sure we secured the needed conditional use permit required by the city before we completed the purchase. This was complicated due to the fact that the city was only able to provide estimated timelines with no guarantee of how long the entire process would actually take. We found that the Loan Fund had policies and procedures in place for such circumstances, and that throughout the process they were well prepared to support our purchase even with a more complex escrow period. Despite the various uncertainties, after more than seven months in escrow, we were finally able to satisfy all our contingencies and complete the purchase, with the Loan Fund executing the funding when needed.

Stepping back and reviewing the entire building project as a whole, I was amazed at how many different professionals we had to involve in the process, from architects to engineers, contractors, attorneys, and more. Having minimal experience with such things, it was quite a learning curve, and at times a test of patience working with so many different resources to complete the project. Unfortunately, some of the people we worked with turned out to be less than professional in the service they performed for us. But that was not the case with the Loan Fund. In fact, they were one of the most responsive and professional groups we worked with, and they made that portion of the overall project go very smoothly.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LOAN FUND

God's grace carried us through to the completion of our building project. We held our official service of thanksgiving and dedication in our new church building on November 11, 2022. Looking back, we can recognize all the many things God used to practically bring about the acquisition of our church home. One of those things was our relationship with the Loan Fund. First, as an investor in the Loan Fund, our building fund grew over time. Then, as a borrower from the Loan Fund, we secured the funding we needed to complete the project. We are thankful for how the Loan Fund was so instrumental in Trinity finally having a church home of our own.

Our church's story illustrates the important ministry of the Loan Fund. Churches, presbyteries, and individuals can support the Loan Fund by becoming investors. Churches with a need to borrow funds may find the Loan Fund to be the right solution for their building project. The Loan Fund is a valuable resource for our denomination and a great tool in the pursuit of wise stewardship.

Trinity OPC in its new building



The author is pastor of Trinity OPC in Petaluma, California.

OUR SERVICE IN TAIWAN

LENDALL H. SMITH

Fifty years ago, when I was pastoring Faith OPC in Pole Tavern, New Jersey, I asked my wife, Sherrill, “Do you think we should consider serving the Lord in Taiwan?”

We had served this loving and growing congregation for over six years and were delighted to be a part of it. In the back of my mind, I had hoped that someday the Lord would lead us back to New England, where I was from, to carry out a pastoral ministry there. But in large measure, our congregation in Pole Tavern fulfilled those desires.

THE QUESTION

The work of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church along with the needs of the congregation in Pole Tavern were a vital part of intercessory prayer in worship. We would remember the publicized requests of our denomination in public prayer. One request was for Taiwan. The missionaries there were nearing retirement. The Committee on Foreign Missions was looking to the next generation to continue the work that had begun in Taiwan. So, for a considerable length of time, the need for missionaries in Taiwan would always be included in the prayers in our worship services. It seemed appropriate to do that in obedience to the Lord who once said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matt. 9:37–38). It was because of that need and those prayers that the question arose in my mind whether we should consider serving the Lord in Taiwan.

As I recall, I initially did not share this idea with my wife because I basically dismissed it from my own mind as well. I could think of many gifted colleagues that I believed would be excellent in such a ministry. After all, we were happy where the Lord had called us to serve him. But the need for missionaries in Taiwan remained unfulfilled.

AVAILABLE TO SERVE

We kept praying about this need in Taiwan in the hope that others might respond to serve the Lord there. However, as the need continued, the thought of making ourselves available grew, even when neither of us felt we had the



The Smiths in Taiwan in 1977

abilities to live and work in another culture. We considered our circumstances. We had the support of our Christian families and no health concerns. Ultimately, we were called to serve the Lord wherever he might be pleased to send us.

We concluded we could at least speak to CFM general secretary John Galbraith about our willingness to be considered for service in Taiwan. He promptly responded by indicating what we needed to do to apply for missionary service. After completing that task, we were interviewed by the committee and called to labor in Taiwan. It was not easy to resign publicly from my call at Faith OPC, but the congregation sent us off with their love and prayers. A short time before we were to leave for Taiwan, my father had a stroke. We said our tearful goodbyes in the hospital where he was recuperating, not knowing whether or not we would see him again in this life. Thankfully, he recovered well and lived for many years afterward.

In our seventeen years of service in Taiwan, the Lord God enriched our lives in many ways. We came to have a greater appreciation for the work of God’s Spirit in establishing his universal church. The Lord blessed us with fellowship with believers in another land and gave us the Great Commission opportunity to assist the work of the church there. After our work in Taiwan ended, I accepted a call to be the pastor of Bethel Presbyterian in Wheaton, Illinois, until retirement in 2007.

FIFTY YEARS LATER

This spring, we were blessed to be provided with a trip back to Taiwan with our daughter's family. Wow! What a different country from what we experienced when we were missionaries. There were still picturesque rice fields, scenic shorelines, magnificent mountains, and delicious fresh fruit and dumplings. But the changes were significant. Water buffalo were replaced by machines, bicycles by scooters and cars—and the five-star hotels, freeways, subways, bullet trains, and Taipei 101, made it just about impossible to recognize where we once lived.

We had many delightful reunions with former church members: an elder and his wife who had three sons enter the gospel ministry; a couple at whose wedding I had officiated; and a younger colleague who had suffered a terrible bicycle accident. We also met a retired pastor, a fellow worker's widow, and a former mission co-laborer. We were welcomed at a well-attended worship service at Hsin Ai Church in Kaohsiung.

THE REFORMED CHURCH IN TAIWAN TODAY

We also had encouraging conversations with two young ministers enthusiastic for the Reformed faith. Their goal is to see the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (RPCT) strengthen its witness. And there are areas still in need of maturity. It seems that the RPCT may still need to work on the relationship between the presbyteries and the individual congregations for mutual edification and support. It was also disappointing to learn that the congregation we helped had recently decided to affiliate with another denomination. But, overall, it was impressed upon me again and again to pray for this beautiful, prosperous, and important little island. Only 5 percent of the population is nominally Christian. The people of Taiwan still



Lendall at his ordination in 1969

need to hear the gospel that Jesus is Lord of the nations and a Savior to all who believe in him.

The ministry of the OPC grew out of a missionary context for the faithful proclamation of the gospel to the nations. Though missionary service changes over time, we must continue to serve in furthering, assisting, and supporting the worldwide growth of the church. We are thankful for the years the Lord gave us to be involved in that work and continue to pray that the Lord of the harvest will send out laborers to fields white unto harvest from the fullness of the redemptive work of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The author and his wife were OP missionaries in Taiwan from 1974–1991.



Lendall and Sherrill with Elder Lu and an original member of the Hsin Ai Church in Kaohsiung

WHAT'S NEW

Miss Beatrix V. Taverne (Redemption OPC, Gainesville, FL) was appointed as a missionary associate to Nakaale, Karamoja, Uganda, for a one-year term starting in July 2024.

IN MEMORIAM: DR. GRIETJE S. RIETKERK

Linda Posthuma

Retired Orthodox Presbyterian medical missionary Dr. Grietje S. “Greet” Rietkerk went home to be with her merciful Savior at the age of eighty-six on April 28, 2024.

Greet was born into a Christian family in Lisse, the Netherlands, in 1937, the tenth of twelve children. Her parents taught her to serve the Lord with gladness from an early age. After high school, she received a scholarship to Leiden Medical School, where she studied for eight years. During this time, she began to seriously consider missionary service.

Graduating from medical school in 1966, Greet spent three years assisting in private practice and interning in several hospitals, gaining clinical experience. In her autobiography, *Faithful to God’s Call*, Greet wrote of her time in a maternity ward: “The training there helped me enormously with the thousands of deliveries I had to assist with later. Deliveries remained my passion. It was incredible to experience the miracle of birth. In these moments, I knew that God was very close; He is the one who gives life.”

When a friend wrote Greet about a job opening in a mission hospital in Eritrea, she wasn’t sure if she was ready to go, but with more work experience, she began to feel strongly that God was calling her to the mission field. When the OPC Committee on Foreign Missions invited her to the States to learn more about that work, she accepted.



Greet when she arrived in Eritrea as a young doctor in 1969



Grietje “Greet” Rietkerk in 1992

In 1969, Greet arrived at Mehrete Yesus (“Compassion of Jesus”) Hospital in Ghinda, Eritrea, beginning a thirty-two-year career of practicing medical work in developing countries. In 1974, she saw the hospital invaded and two nurses kidnapped, one of whom was soon martyred. She labored there until 1976, when the OPC suspended its work due to civil unrest. During the next several years, Greet worked at refugee camps in the Sudan and in a women’s hospital in Pakistan. At the invitation of a sister denomination in 1979, she began medical work in a remote area of Kenya, serving as an OPC missionary for the next sixteen years.

After the OPC was able to return to Eritrea, Greet resumed her medical ministry there in 1995. Just two years later, the Eritrean government seized the hospital. Greet was reassigned to a mission hospital in Litein, Kenya, where she completed her career as a missionary doctor in 2001, retiring in 2002. She had done the work she loved most—delivering babies and praying that people would see in her service the compassion that Jesus has for lost sinners.

In the foreword to Greet’s autobiography, former general secretary Mark T. Bube wrote:

[Dr.] Rietkerk is one of those special people whose trust in the Lord Jesus seems positively infectious. As she ministered mercy in the name of her Savior to tens of thousands in East Africa over the course of more than thirty years, her undaunted confidence in the power of her Lord to work His good will, no matter how bleak the present circumstances might appear, challenged colleagues and coworkers alike to rely ever more firmly upon the promises of their heavenly Father.

The author is an OP member.

THE CHURCH'S UNIQUE CARE FOR ITS INTERNS

A. CRAIG TROXEL

When a congregation welcomes an intern, they meet someone who is in a unique moment of a unique calling. Now it is true that most internships share those qualities that one comes to expect with any green apprentice whose heart beats with soaring dreams. All callings have their first steps. But the fresh initiate who is on track for the ministry will be putting to the test a unique medley of gifts and graces. Skill in prayer cannot be plotted like a graph in marketing presentations. Aptitude for shepherding is not calculated like the formulas used by engineers. Work ethic in theological study is not as tactile as the fruits of a hardworking farmer. And as for preaching, it is simply without parallel. Add to these that a ministerial intern is very much on the hot seat in a profoundly personal way. He is striving to grow in the holiness that accords with the Lord's command that a minister be exemplary in all his relationships, most especially at home.

GRACIOUS RESPONSES

These distinctive elements of a ministerial internship call for the special care that only the church can provide. His spiritual character, gifts, and calling should be matched by gracious responses that become the family of God. At the same time, the encouragement he receives should also take into consideration that he has only just commenced his journey toward ordination. He has not yet mastered theology. He is not yet experienced in his gifts. He is often not yet sure about his calling. He is in a vulnerable place.

The goal of an internship is to give clarity to these matters, but not necessarily finality. At the end of the internship, it should be the case (without exception) that the intern is in a better place because of his internship. Even if it becomes evident that he may not be bound for ordained gospel ministry, he will be better off knowing it. But that knowledge need not come by trampling on his dignity, nor by embarrassing his spouse. Rather, it should be forever associated with the respect he feels for the congregation



Kelle C. Craft, a former intern, kneeling at his 2023 ordination and installation as pastor of Calvary OPC in Volga, SD

that spoke the truth to him and did so with unquestionable love.

These comments assume that an internship is first and foremost for the intern, at least for the immediate future. He is not there to give relief to the mentoring pastor. That is a side benefit, which usually comes toward the end of the internship, as he demonstrates increasing ability to show initiative, take on more responsibility, and bless the congregation through his gifts, and by repaying the debt of love. These are the foretastes of the ultimate result of the internship, which will benefit the larger church. Those congregations who cared for an intern rarely get to savor the mature fruit of a ministry that they glimpsed years before in its seed form. Even so, all our churches that sow can rejoice with those who reap, as we rally together around the common cause to care for all the members of our church—without partiality—yet without ignoring the uniqueness of our interns.

The author is an OP minister and professor of pastoral theology at Westminster Seminary California.

THE STEWARDSHIP OF GOD'S GRACE IN RETIREMENT

STEVEN M. BAUGH

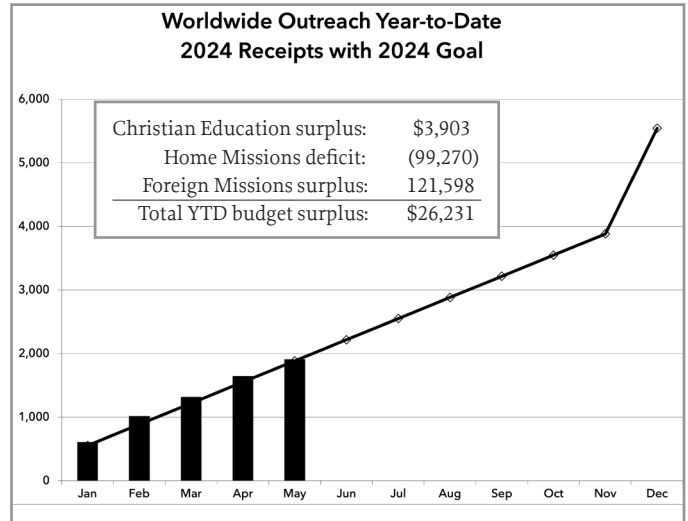
Like me, you probably think that stewardship refers to use of our financial resources to serve Christ. This is good and true, but a recent *New Horizons* article helpfully noted that we should also steward our *time*. It is very easy to waste time instead of redeeming it, especially for those of us who are retired from jobs that used to demand nearly all of our time.

If you are thinking about retirement or have recently retired, I have found it particularly helpful to view it as moving from one occupation to another. And this other occupation can be informed by looking at what Peter and Paul say about stewardship. First, Paul surprises us in Ephesians 3:2 where he describes his ministry as “the stewardship of God’s grace.” How exactly can someone steward *grace*? To understand this we need to talk a little about stewards in Paul’s world.

A “steward” or “manager” was usually a servant in a large household or estate. We read, for instance in Galatians 4:1–2, that stewards could control an estate on behalf of an underage heir. Jesus depicts stewardship in Matthew 25:14–30, Luke 12:41–48, and Luke 16:1–9, where he illustrates through parables what Paul says: “[I]t is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy” (1 Cor. 4:2, my translation). Stewards of Christ do not need to be “flashy” or “prominent” but *trustworthy* to the stewardship given to them by the Lord. And Paul ministered God’s grace to people by preaching Christ.

MERE RETIRED MORTALS

It is fine for Paul to talk about his stewardship. He was an apostle laying the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:10). What about us mere mortals? And retired mortals at that, who take twice as long to get anything done than earlier in our lives? Peter speaks quite appropriately to us now in 1 Peter 4:10, where he says that we are all “to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”



Peter says that God’s grace is “varied” because our gifts vary in accordance with his gifting and strength supplied. I’m sure you see this too, but it seems like the retired ministers in my presbytery preach as often as their strength allows. And one of our men has regularly supplied a vacant pulpit five hundred miles from where he lives. Others must “merely” drive two or three or four hours to preach, but they go on the road faithfully and often.

Yet Peter says that God’s grace is varied because Christ’s stewards serve one another in the church in various ways, not just as pastors. How do you serve as a steward of grace in retirement? Encouraging phone calls to shut-ins? Making meals for a family with a new baby? Sending a card to welcome visitors to your church? Hosting an evangelistic Bible study in your home? The list is endless, and I’m sure your session and deacons can give you plenty more ideas for activities “to retire to.” As recipients of God’s lavish grace, we are stewards of his varied grace for others.

The author is a retired OP minister and professor.

1 Heero & Anya Hacquebord, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray the Lord would use the English camp outreach to bring many college students to himself. / **Matt & Hyojung Walker**, Yorktown, VA. Give thanks for the new members of Peninsula Reformed OPC.

2 Mike (Elizabeth) Diercks, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Ohio. / Active duty, US Army, military chaplains **Jeffrey (Jennifer) Shames** and **Kenneth (Mandy) Kruchkow**.

3 Mr. & Mrs. M. (on furlough), Asia. Pray for opportunities for Bible studies with international students this summer. / Summer intern **David (Antonia) Wang** at Pasadena OPC in Pasadena, CA.

4 Home Missions associate general secretary **Al Tricarico**. / **Mr. & Mrs. F.**, Asia. Pray for God's grace on their elderly parents and on their adult children who are making life decisions.

5 Johnny & Berry Serafini, Marion, NC. Pray for those Landis OPC seeks to minister to. / Pray for **Danny Olinger**, director of MTIOPC.

6 Ben & Heather Hopp, Africa & Haiti. As the family worships in Uganda, ask the Lord to bless Ben's preaching at local village churches. / Pray for those serving at **The Boardwalk Chapel** this summer.

7 Pray that the Lord would grant associate missionaries **Octavius & Marie Delfils**, Haiti, peace as they live amid daily gang violence. / **Carl & Stacey Miller**, New Braunfels, TX. Pray for the several expecting mothers of Heritage Presbyterian.

8 Pray for the Vacation Bible School taking place at **Thousand Oaks OPC** in Thousand Oaks, CA, and the short-term missions team assisting that effort. / Summer

intern **Paul (Sara) Lauer**, OPC Japan Mission.

9 **John & Erin Nymann**, Suffolk, VA. Praise God for the recent visitors and prospective new members at All Saints Presbyterian Church. / Pray for GA stated clerk, **Hank Belfield**, and assistant clerk, **John Mahaffy**, as they handle administrative work following GA.

10 **Dave (Elizabeth) Holmlund**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Philadelphia. / Pray for affiliated missionaries **Craig & Ree Coulbourne** and **Linda Karner**, Japan.

11 Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **Douglas Clawson** and administrative assistants **Joanna Grove** and **Tin Ling Lee**. / Editor of *Ordained Servant*, **Greg Reynolds**.

12 Pray for retired missionaries **Cal & Edie Cummings**, **Mary Lou Son**, and **Brian & Dorothy Wingard**. / Summer intern **Evan (Coco) Zhuo**, Grace OPC in Vienna, VA.

13 Pray for **Stephen & Catalina Payson**, Montevideo, Uruguay, as they take on all the responsibilities of the Uruguay Mission. / **Bill & Margaret Shishko**, Commack, NY. Pray for God's blessing on the new outreaches of The Haven.

14 **Gregory & Ginger O'Brien**, Downingtown, PA. Pray that the Lord would seek and save the lost through Christ Church Downingtown. / Summer intern **Clifton (Bre) Foster** at Harvest OPC in Wyoming, MI.

15 Pray for missionary associates **Lucas & Erica Payson**, Montevideo, Uruguay, as they acclimate to a new culture and become more proficient in Spanish. / Pray that the Committee on Christian Education's *Ruling Elder Podcast* would bless listeners.



The Zhuos (day 12)



The Paysons (day 15)

.....
16 Home Missions general secretary **Jeremiah Montgomery**. / Affiliated missionaries **Dr. Mark & Laura Ambrose**, Cambodia. Pray for their sons, Silas and Hugh, and their growth in grace as they live on the field.

.....
17 **Mark (Peggy) Sumpter**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest. / Pray that able-bodied, mercy-minded servants would register their interest in **OPC Disaster Response**.

.....
18 Pray that the Lord would protect his **persecuted church** and imprisoned believers in **East Africa**. / Pray for **Judy Alexander**, MTIOPC administrator.

.....
19 Affiliated missionaries **Jerry & Marilyn Farnik** (on furlough), Czech Republic. Pray for their rest and refreshment in the US this summer. / **Will & Lauren Sloan**, Eastern Shore, VA. Pray that the Lord would encourage and edify members of Good Shepherd OPC.

.....
20 **A. J. & Chelsea Millsaps**, Athens, TN. Pray for fruit from Zion OPC's outreach at a local festival. / Summer intern **Zac (Caroline) Reeves** at Trinity OPC in Capistrano Beach, CA.

.....
21 **Charles & Connie Jackson**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray that the Lord would provide missionary evangelists to support the work of Knox School of Theology. / Pray for short-term

missions' **Team Hungary English Camp** that is happening this week and for the children who are attending.

.....
22 **Bruce (Sue) Hollister**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Midwest. / Associate missionary **Leah Hopp**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the Karimojong students and the various pressures they face that affect their schooling.

.....
23 **Matt & Christine Ezzell**, Wake Co., NC. Pray for the visitors regularly attending worship at Zion OPC. / Summer intern **Jeremy (Hannah) Chong** at Covenant OPC in Orland Park, IL.

.....
24 Tentmaking missionary **Tina DeJong**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the organization of church membership at the Nakaale Presbyterian Church. / Technical assistant for OPC.org, **Christopher Drew**.

.....
25 Associate missionaries **Christopher & Chloe Verdick** (on furlough), Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for their health and safety as they travel. / **Melaku & Meron Tamirat**, Clarkston, GA. Pray for the refugees ministered to by Redeemer Mercy Ministry.

.....
26 **James (Bonnie) Hoekstra**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Wisconsin and Minnesota. / Summer intern **Jonathan (Elyssa) Vos** at Redemption OPC, Gainesville, FL.

.....
27 Pray for missionary associate **Beatrix Taverne**, Karamoja, Uganda, as she prepares for travel to the field to assist the Emmett family. / *New Horizons* and *Ordained Servant* editorial assistant, **Ayrian Yasar**.



The Ezzells (day 23)

.....
28 Home Missions administrative assistant **Allison Groot**. / **Travis & Bonnie Emmett**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for traveling mercies as they arrive and settle in Uganda this week.

.....
29 **Joseph & Christina Wan**, Madison, WI. Pray that the Lord would bring new members to Madison Chinese Christian Church. / **David Nakhla**, Short-Term Missions Coordinator. Pray that long-term missionaries would be borne from short-term missions' experiences, both in the United States and abroad.

.....
30 Missionary associate **Jed Homan**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for health and safety as he works on various maintenance projects in Karamoja. / Summer intern **Daniel (Anna) Karlson** at Apple Valley Presbyterian in Neenah, WI.

.....
31 Missionary associates **Josh & Danielle Grimsley**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the training of elders and deacons for Karamoja. / **Andrew & Cheyenne Farr**, Klamath Falls, OR. Pray for Klamath Falls Reformed Fellowship's ongoing summer outreach at a local farmer's market.



The Sloans (day 19)



The Southern California Women's Retreat



JUL 2024

NEWS, VIEWS & REVIEWS

NEWS

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S RETREAT

Natalie Rensink

The 42nd annual Southern California OPC Women's Retreat was held April 5–7 in the beautiful mountain town of Idyllwild, California. Caroline Newheiser, a biblical counselor and assistant coordinator of women's counseling at Reformed Theological Seminary, gave four talks over the weekend on the topic, "When Words Matter Most: Speaking the Truth with Grace to Those You Love." The retreat was attended by women from all over Southern California and Arizona. The mission of the retreat is to provide a spiritually enriching environment for women of the Presbytery of Southern California to gather for fellowship, learning, and recreation. This mission supports the broader church by equipping and encouraging attendees to bring glory to God through our churches and individual lives and to make known to the world the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. We invite you to join us April 4–6 in 2025.

IN MEMORIAM: WILLIAM O. SLACK II

John Goretti

William "Bill" Slack II passed away on April 21 at the age of seventy-three. Bill was the founding pastor of River of Life OPC in Phillipsburg, New Jersey, where he ministered for thirty years.

Bill jumped into this downtown ministry with both feet. The church is

in a former supermarket; Bill and his wife, Tina, bought a house right next door. In addition to preaching, teaching, counseling, and serving on presbytery committees, Bill lead worship in the park, sweetheart banquets, and ministry at the Boardwalk Chapel and served as president of the Downtown Business Association.

What drives a man to accept a calling to be a minister of the gospel? The good news that Jesus saves. That is what happened to Bill Slack. He leaves behind Tina and their four children, fifteen grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

UPDATE

MINISTERS

- On April 26, **Arie van Eyk V** was installed as pastor of Providence OPC in Cumming, GA.
- On May 11, the Presbytery of Philadelphia received retired minister **Rev. Dr. Robert W. A. Letham** by transfer from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales.
- On May 31, **Caleb H. Maltby** was ordained and installed as a pastor at Covenant Presbyterian, Abilene, TX.

REVIEWS

The Lord Bless You and Keep You: The Promise of the Gospel in the Aaronic Blessing, by Michael J. Glodo. Crossway, 2023. Paperback, 224 pages, \$16.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Benjamin M. Ward.

In his new book, Michael Glodo puts forward a study on the Aaronic Blessing from the end of Numbers 6 ("The LORD

Bill Slack at Boardwalk Chapel in 1986



At van Eyk's April 26 installation



bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you . . .”). He focuses not only on the blessing itself, but on how it reverberates throughout the rest of the Old and New Testaments. Thus the sections of the book easily delineate into the “context,” the “content,” and then the “consequences” of the blessing. A final section applies what the reader has learned about the Aaronic Blessing to corporate worship and the shepherding ministry of the church.

The book is perhaps a bit mistitled. While the focus of the book is on the Aaronic Blessing in general, it more specifically concerns “to make his face shine upon you.” This one aspect of the blessing is clearly the singular focus of the book. A theology of both God’s face and human faces pervades it, and there is even a lengthy section on four different “veils” or “vales” that cover our faces. These, Glodo argues, are removed through coming to God through Christ, based on 2 Corinthians 3:16, “when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed” (83).

With plenty of illustrations throughout, and study questions at the end of each chapter, Glodo does a great job making what would ordinarily be a high-level theological discussion into something edifying for both pastors and laypeople.

It is not a coincidence that both this book and the article on which it was based came out during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, with its swirl of questions regarding the wisdom and propriety of masking, and the deeper theological question of what it means to cover the human

face for an extended period of time. Glodo really only touches on those questions in his conclusion, and I do not find convincing his assertion that “the covering and masking of our faces makes us less human” (171). It is, however, also difficult to understand whether the point Glodo is making is metaphorical or not, as he will also sometimes critique masks which “create the fictional characters we or others wish us to be” (171).

For the most part, Glodo avoids polemics and makes a convincing case that an important part of the good news is God showing us his face in Christ with his blessing and peace. Because God has “unveiled” himself in Christ, we need not put on the various masks we wear to hide from others. While not persuasive on every point, Glodo demonstrates the importance of God’s “face” and the faces of those made in his image. As Glodo reminds us, paraphrasing C. S. Lewis, “we still have faces.”

***A Mystery Revealed: Thirty-One Meditations on the Trinity*, by Ryan M. McGraw. Reformation Heritage, 2023. Paperback, 256 pages, \$13.50. Reviewed by OP pastor Jim G. Stevenson.**

One of the most important theological concepts of the Christian church is the doctrine of the Trinity. One God in three distinct persons has been the creed of the church for centuries. Yet while Christians have confessed this biblical truth through the ages, it is a doctrine that cannot be fully comprehended by finite creatures. Since it is such a difficult concept for us to

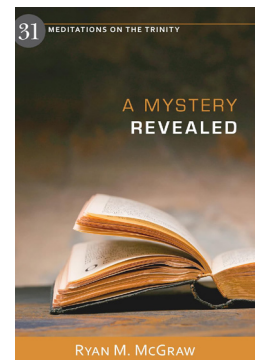
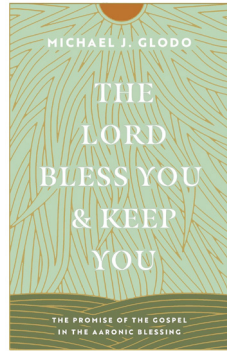
grasp, this rich doctrine may be inadvertently relegated by many as being too philosophical or complicated for serious reflection.

In *A Mystery Revealed: Thirty-One Meditations on the Trinity*, author and professor

of systematic theology Ryan McGraw has provided us with a wonderful aid that we might see the relevance of the doctrine of the Trinity, especially in leading us to more reverent worship of our triune God. Six years ago, McGraw’s book *Knowing the Trinity* was published. We should not think of this current work as a sequel to *Knowing the Trinity*, but rather as a companion to it. In the preface, McGraw notes that “this book lets the Bible’s story of the triune God unfold on its own terms.”

The first two chapters are foundational for the rest of the book. McGraw wisely alerts the reader that the second chapter on the church’s Trinitarian grammar is dense, as it deals with the terms and concepts the church developed to better explain the Trinity. Readers who are not familiar with such terms may conclude the book is too advanced. However, the rest of the book brings the Trinitarian grammar to greater clarity in an informative and practical way. The remaining twenty-nine chapters are brief expositions of biblical texts which show our triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—working all things to his glory especially as he deals with his people. Related topics include the Trinity and creation, providence, salvation, the church, and our lives as believers.

The subtitle is itself an important aspect of this book. Readers who take the time to meditate on the content will be greatly blessed. Given that there are thirty-one, one meditation each day will take readers through the book in just one month. Each meditation is about seven pages. Each concludes with questions for reflection that are thoughtful, challenging, pastoral, and practical. For those who wish to dig deeper into this rich doctrine, McGraw provides a number of recommended works.



HURRICANE SEASON

OPC Disaster Response is now registering volunteers to assist with relief efforts when needs arise. For more information, visit opcdisasterresponse.org.

The book lacks a Scripture index and a glossary of terms, but those are matters of convenience or preference. Though the Lord's Supper is mentioned often, it did not receive a dedicated meditation as baptism did. Despite these minor things, *A Mystery Revealed* ought to be added to your library.

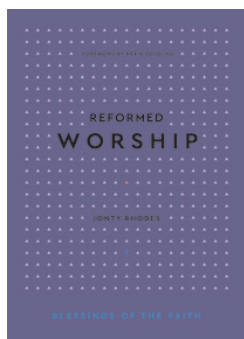
***Reformed Worship*, by Jonty Rhodes. P&R, 2023. Hardcover, 152 pages, \$15.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Andrew W. Canavan.**

Many Christians rightly celebrate the Protestant Reformation's zeal for recovering the biblical gospel. Few, however, realize that leaders like Calvin, Knox, and Bucer were also zealous to reform the worship of God.

These two Reformation emphases closely relate. The joy of salvation issues forth in wholehearted worship, while right worship rehearses the gospel story every Lord's Day. Because the Bible reveals corporate worship as the joyful but serious business of heaven, the church on earth—an embassy of heaven—sets worship at the center of its life and ministry.

Yet Presbyterian and Reformed believers must face the facts: our worship patterns and practices can seem like a foreign language to others. The songs we sing, the ways we pray, and our firm commitment to worship according to Scripture can be met with incomprehension even by our fellow believers from other traditions. If we truly believe in the blessing of Reformed worship for all Christians and long to see our churches filled with worshipers, we need to help people clear common hurdles in understanding our worship.

Jonty Rhodes, a Presbyterian pastor in the north of England, provides a helpful guide to this central topic in *Reformed Worship*, one of the latest volumes in P&R's Blessings of the Faith series.



This short book introduces key concepts in the Reformed approach to worship, such as its God-centered purpose, the regulative principle, the ordinary means of grace, and the pattern of a Reformed worship service. Throughout this work, Rhodes models clarity, charity, and Christ-centeredness. His explanations are appropriately detailed for an introductory book and never tedious. He writes with a warm, pastoral heart.

What most stands out about this book is Rhodes's aim to root our worship practices in the biblical text. Though we learn much from our Presbyterian forebears, our commitment to Reformed worship is founded on the practices commanded

by God and the patterns exemplified by his covenant people in the Scriptures. So, for example, Rhodes clearly connects the necessity of sacrifice for worship in the Pentateuch with the finality and perfection of Christ's sacrifice. His atoning death grounds the frequent invitation in Hebrews for new covenant worshipers to "draw near."

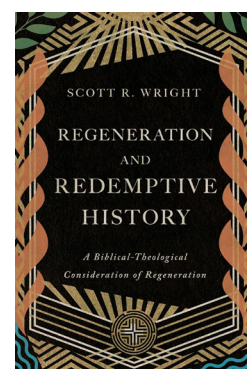
While some of the topics addressed and some of the turns of phrase employed will be unfamiliar or less relevant to a North American audience, Rhodes has done the church a great service by providing a warm, accessible introduction to Reformed worship. This book would serve well as a resource for a membership class or as a guide for interested visitors. Pastors will want to learn from Rhodes's fresh explanations of the elements of a Reformed worship service. As with the other volumes in this series, *Reformed Worship* includes a lengthy section of frequently asked questions. These questions and answers are pastoral, accessible, and worth the price of the book. *Reformed Worship* demonstrates that biblical worship is one of the great blessings of the faith because it brings us to Christ and to every spiritual blessing found in him.

***Regeneration and Redemptive History: A Biblical-Theological Consideration of Regeneration*, by Scott R. Wright. Reformed Forum, 2023. Paperback, 222 pages, \$27.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Zachary C. Herbster.**

When Dorothy enters Oz, she's not "in Kansas anymore." She has entered a new world. Christians experience something similar when we're "born again" or "regenerated." But this is no dream. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." We have entered a new world.

Scott R. Wright's *Regeneration and Redemptive History* contends that Christians inhabit a renewed spiritual environment. Christ's historical work of redemption has brought the church into a world where "believers breathe the air from the age to come" (50). Wright defends his thesis by offering a study of the doctrine of "regeneration" or "new birth" in the context of Jesus Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Theologians call this focus the *historia salutis*, or the "history of salvation." If Christ did not accomplish salvation on a real cross in real history, then we have no hope (1 Cor. 15:14).

When we hear the term "regeneration" or "born again," however, we think about our individual coming to Christ, or "conversion." Theologians call this focus the *ordo salutis*, or the "order of salvation." In chapter 1, Wright traces this narrow association of "regeneration" as a step within "conversion" to the Synod of Dort, a Reformed ecclesial assembly in the Netherlands in 1618–1619. To safeguard God's sovereignty in salvation from human contribution (i.e., Arminian theology), the Synod of Dort affirmed that only the "regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit" can convert sinners (Canon III/IV.3).



While this doctrinal statement is true, Wright notices that, before Dort, Reformed theologians like John Calvin, Zacharias Ursinus, and William Perkins spoke of “regeneration” more broadly as akin to “sanctification” (13–16). To retrieve this broader understanding, Wright examines several biblical texts in chapters 2–7.

In Genesis 3:15, God himself puts enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. His promise to send a Messiah to crush Satan’s kingdom is the historical foundation for Old Testament saints like David receiving new hearts at enmity with the serpent. For example, David’s cry in Psalm 51:10 for a “right spirit” is not a request for a jolt of contextless Spirit-lightning, but a plea for a more sanctified trust in the coming work of the Christ to atone for his sins finally and completely (79). David longs to breathe in more deeply the “eschatological” or “end times” air of the new heavens and new earth, wafting back in time through both Testaments.

This final kingdom of God is what Jesus calls “the regeneration” in Matthew 19:28. “The regeneration,” therefore, is not primarily “my” regeneration or “yours,” but the fulfillment of Christ’s historical work to reign as King forever (103). Just as Jesus is the “way, truth, and life,” so too he is the regeneration. Christ’s finished work electrifies the Christian heart at every beat: this is regeneration.

While Wright’s book ends with several applications, I note just one. His renewed emphasis on the broad and historical aspects of regeneration is a blessing

to Christian assurance. Confidence in salvation rests not upon my subjective experience of being “born again,” but upon Christ’s objective work on the cross and his resurrection to secure my salvation

Wright’s book will help pastors preach more redemptive-historically about regeneration, particularly from passages like Genesis 3:15, Psalm 51, John 1:9–13, and John 3:1–8. Therefore, saints will breathe in more deeply their new world air, energizing them to tell others about the power of Christ the Regenerator!

Tiny Hands series, edited by Hannah Duguid Estes. P&R, 2023. Hardcover, 16 pages each, \$12.99 each. Reviewed by OP member Ayrian Yasar.

The Tiny Hands series by Hannah Estes with illustrations by Jessica Hiatt is a wonderful addition for drawing our children closer to their heavenly Father. There are three books in the series. Each is a small, light, sixteen-page board book with text on one page opposite vibrant illustrations on the other (none of Christ). But child-friendly design does not mean childish content.

Tiny Hands Prayers contain eight prayers from Scripture to meditate upon with your little one, including prayers of Jesus, Hannah, Mary, Paul, and others. These prayers are wonderful examples of the things we ought to pray for, the challenges we often face, and the reality of our heavenly Father who hears and is mighty to save. These prayers would be a lovely

accompaniment to a children’s story Bible, even for older children—one could read the story of the saint (for example, Paul), then read the corresponding prayer.

Tiny Hands Hymns curates eight well known hymns, three of which are “Holy, Holy, Holy,” “Be Thou My Vision,” and “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.” For each hymn the book includes one verse, except for “Amazing Grace,” which includes two. For parents desiring an aid for introducing their children to a variety of rich hymns, this is a great tool.

Tiny Hands Promises helps parents or Sunday school teachers introduce God’s promises to the littlest covenant children. The promises, most from the New Testament, cover God’s presence during times of fear, God knowing his sheep, God answering our prayers, and more.

I especially appreciated the translation work by Iain Duguid in both *Prayers* and *Promises*. His translations were simple, taking words or concepts in the passage and using language that a small child would understand. Just one example is his translation of John 10:27–28: “My sheep hear their Shepherd’s voice. I know each and every one, and they follow after me when I call them. I give them eternal life so that they will never die, and no one can grab them away from my care.”

These books are a wonderful aid for teaching young ones more about their Savior. But you will likely find they are a blessing to you, too.

