

NEW HORIZONS

NOVEMBER 2024

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rejoice

in the Lord

Always



2024 OPC Thank Offering

HOME MISSIONS • FOREIGN MISSIONS • CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

NEW HORIZONS

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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

REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS: 2024 THANK OFFERING



DANNY E. OLINGER

The theme of the 2024 Thank Offering in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is “Rejoice in the Lord Always.” This declaration of the Apostle Paul from Philippians 4:4 teaches us what the posture and disposition of the Christian should be at all times. Notably, the rejoicing that the Apostle speaks of is not tied to how we feel about things going on around us personally or corporately. Rather, our rejoicing is based on our saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God who has died for our sins and been raised for our justification.



Church planters and pastors participating in CCE-led Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC

This joy-giving good news concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ is the reason that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church sends forth the Word of God in every place (1 Thess. 1:8). We endeavor to do this with full confidence that the Lord is building his church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. In over 330 local congregations in North America and in mission stations throughout the world, Orthodox Presbyterian pastors, evangelists, and missionaries faithfully proclaim salvation in the name of Jesus, and that proclamation brings rejoicing—here and in heaven!

As a connected body, we in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church plant new churches, send and support missionaries, and publish Christian literature because of our joyful appreciation of the gift that is ours in Christ. To provide the resources to assist OPC endeavors in home and foreign missions and Christian education, the goal of this year’s Thank Offering is to raise 1.5 million dollars.

With joy in our hearts for what Jesus Christ has done for us poor sinners, let us give generously to this year’s Thank Offering. May we rejoice that we have the opportunity to spread the Word about Jesus throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, Canada, and to the ends of the earth that he might be worshiped and receive glory. **NH**

The author is editor of New Horizons and general secretary of the Committee on Christian Education.

WHAT IS THE THANK OFFERING?

You may notice that *New Horizons* looks different this month. On pages 5, 16, and 19 are prayer sheets designed to be removed for display in your home. The sheets feature the work of the OPC’s three program committees: Foreign Missions, Christian Education, and Home Missions. The work of these committees, collectively known as Worldwide Outreach, is funded during the year by contributions from churches and individuals. Every November, a giving goal is set, which is called the Thank Offering. Since a quarter of the funding comes from the Thank Offering each year, a robust collection is needed. This year’s goal is \$1.5 million.

FOR PASTORS AND CHURCH ADMINISTRATORS

Thank Offering promotional packages are sent to OP churches in early October. They include the Thank Offering poster, three sets of bulletin inserts (that present the work of each committee), three prayer map posters, and remittance envelopes. PDF versions of the inserts will be sent to all churches for posting on websites and distributing by email. Additional print material can be obtained from Charlene Tipton at the OPC administrative offices (215-935-1005 or charlene.tipton@opc.org).

Videos highlighting the work of each committee in Worldwide Outreach are available at OPC.org. They could be shared in Sunday school or sent to members.

The inserts can be included in bulletins on consecutive Lord’s Days prior to the collection of the Thank Offering. We suggest using them from October 27 to November 10, with a collection being taken up on November 17 and 24. Some churches collect the Thank Offering on more than one day or at a special Thanksgiving service.

Checks collected in local churches should be made out to those churches with “Thank Offering” in the memo line. Also, using the envelopes included in this issue of *New Horizons*, you may mail a check made out to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church with “Thank Offering” in the memo.

REQUESTS FOR 2025

The 2024 General Assembly of the OPC determined to make the following requests for the financial support of the denominational ministries in 2025 (generally made through congregations):

Worldwide Outreach: \$5,614,030. This averages out to \$228 per communicant member. Smaller churches may not be able to give this much, so larger churches should give more than the average. Ideally, Thank Offering giving takes these missions and education ministries beyond the budgeted goal.

GA Operation Fund: Churches are requested to give \$20 per communicant member.

GA Travel Fund: Churches are requested to give \$12 per communicant member.

Diaconal Ministries General Fund: Churches are requested to give \$30 per communicant member.

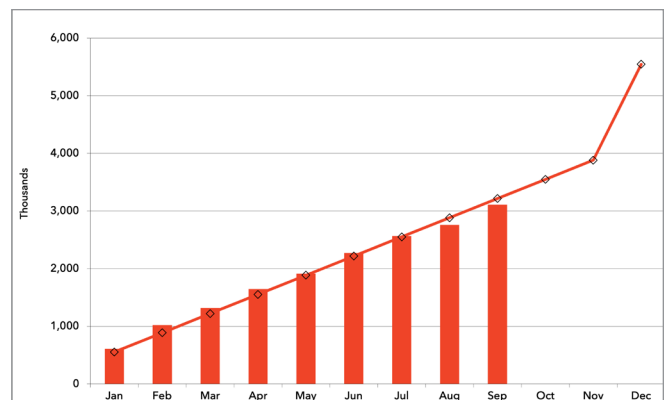
Ministerial Care: Churches are requested to give \$20 per communicant member.

Send contributions to: Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 607 Easton Rd., Bldg. E, Willow Grove, PA 19090-2539. Checks should be made payable to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Contributions are credited to Worldwide Outreach and support all its ministries, unless specifically designated.

For the digital files to print your own copies of the prayer map posters or the prayer sheets, contact Judith Dinsmore at judith.dinsmore@opc.org.

WORLDWIDE OUTREACH YEAR-TO-DATE 2024 RECEIPTS WITH 2024 GOAL

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| Christian Education deficit: | \$ (18,168) |
| Home Missions deficit: | \$ (203,250) |
| Foreign Missions surplus: | \$ 113,957 |
| Total YTD budget deficit: | \$ (107,461) |

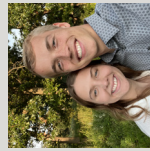




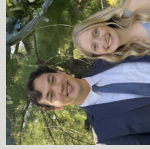
Committee on

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

SUMMER INTERNS



Dane and Olivia
BOUTH
South Holland, IL



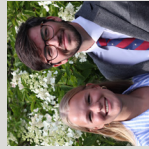
Jeremy and Hannah
CHONG
Orland Park, IL



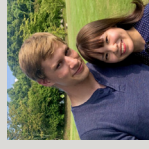
Clifton & Breanna
FOSTER
Wyoming, MI



Trent and Alicia
HORDYK
Zeeland, MI



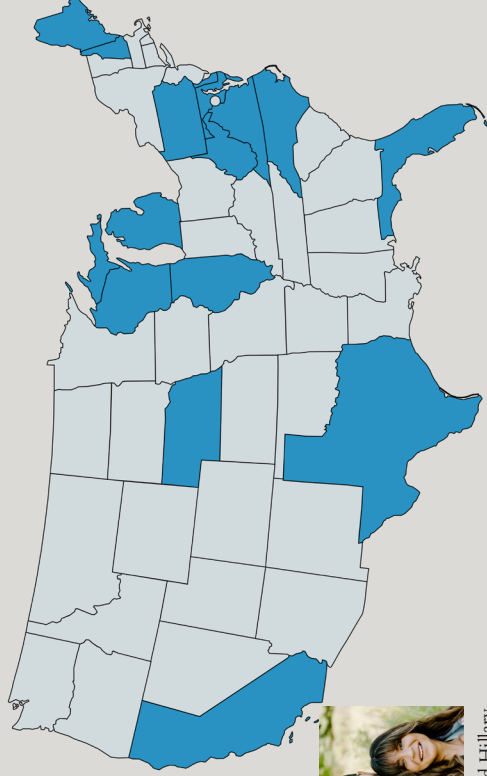
Daniel and Anna
KARLSON
Neenah, WI



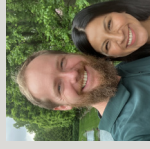
Paul and Sara
LAUER
Sendai, Japan



Eddie and Hillary
MERCADO
San Marcos, CA



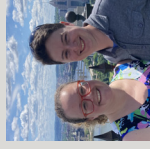
YEARLONG INTERNS



William and Mayra
DEVENNEY
Merrimack, NH



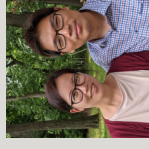
Alec **DUNLAP**
Oviedo, FL



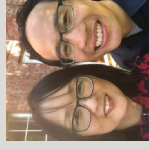
Isaiah and Calli
JADE
ENGLISH
Sewickley, PA



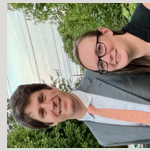
Stuart **IRELAND**
New Bern, NC



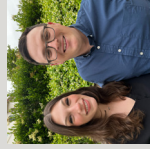
Jon and Stacey
JUNG
Glenside, PA



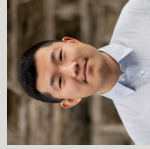
Vince and Eri
LAM
Austin, TX



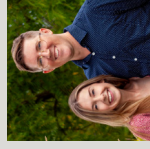
Sam and Annie
PHILLIPS
State College, PA



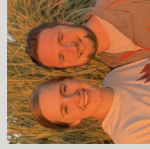
Zac and Caroline
REEVES
San Clemente, CA



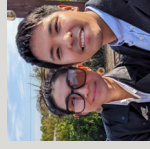
Yuhan **SONG**
Ambler, PA



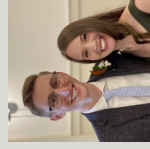
Alex and Hannah
STEWART
Lincoln, NE



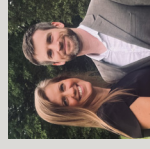
Jonathan and
Elyssa **VOS**
Gainesville, FL



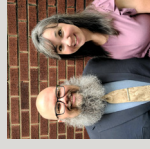
Evan and Coco
ZHOU
Vienna, VA



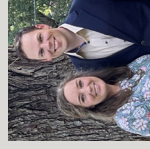
Joseph and Myranda
SCHERSCHLIGT
Wilmington, DE



Josiah and Hannah
ST OCKWELL
Bangor, ME



Luke and Laurie
WALKUP
Morgantown, WV



Mitchell and Calilee
WATSON
Silver Spring, MD

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editor



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DINSMORE
managing editor



Gregory
REYNOLDS
Ordained Servant
editor



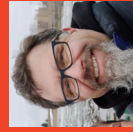
Escher
PARKS
Administrative
assistant



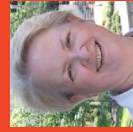
Aryian **YASAR**
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associate for
OPC.org



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Assistant website
administrator for
OPC.org



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assistant for
OPC.org



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TOBIAS
New Horizons
cover designer

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Chad **VAN DIXHOORN**
Dale **VAN DYKE**
Eric **WATKINS**



TOTAL ECLIPSE



CHRISTOPHER D. DREW

Like many last spring, I decided to spend some time with my family attempting to observe the solar eclipse which, in God’s providence, passed in totality over a significant band of the continental United States, and partially over a much wider area, including East Grand Forks, Minnesota, where I live.

My wife, Sara, diligently sought out and purchased the necessary “eclipse glasses” bearing the all-important ISO 12312-2 certification so that we might have confidence our eyesight would not be damaged as we gazed upward. With about a week to go, we checked our local weather forecast and wondered if the skies would be clear. Alas, the day arrived, and our skies were completely overcast. The sun was only visible for less than five minutes near the conclusion of the eclipse, when you could catch the tiniest sliver of dark on the otherwise white-hot, retina-burning glare of our local star.

When we accepted that the clouds weren’t going to cooperate, we decided to experience the event vicariously

via NASA’s video webcast of the event. NASA’s coverage was excellent. They had stations set up all along the path of totality. As the day progressed, NASA would switch to the next spot that would experience totality so that viewers were able to watch the same total eclipse event five or six times. They would do a split screen with the sun on one side and the hosts and crowd on the other. Everyone watched as the path of the moon slowly crept across the visible disk of the sun.

THE CROWD’S RESPONSE

Watching the eclipse unfold in this way was interesting because viewers could easily compare the reactions of the hosts and assembled crowds at each location. Having watched many of them, I noticed a few similarities.

First, there was a massive expression of awe and wonder and excitement just as the moment of totality arrived. NASA hosts across the different locations all burst forth with rapid exhalations and expressions like, “This is amazing! I cannot believe I’m seeing this! How wonderful!” Crowds in the background could be heard cheering as if they were watching someone score a touchdown.

Second, there was an expression of awe and wonder as the darkness of totality set in and, paradoxically, planets could be seen during the day. “There’s Jupiter! There’s Saturn! Look! You can see the solar prominences!” the hosts would exclaim.

Third, a calm and stillness set over the crowds. The cheering gave way to a much quieter aural landscape. Why? So that people could concentrate during the remaining four minutes of totality, a time when the ISO-compliant eye protection could be removed. You could hear people murmur appreciative sighs at what they were seeing. Even the hosts adopted this same quietude of admiration and awe.

Fourth, the cheering began to pick up again as everyone began to sense that totality would soon end. As the moon began to pass out of the sun’s circle, you could see something called the “diamond ring,” a piercing gleam of light that bursts forth from one side of the sun while the ring of the sun’s corona is still visible round the moon. The cheering began again and quickly settled into excited murmurs like, “Can you believe that just happened?”

After each totality ended, NASA would refer to the hosts to get their reactions. Many were visibly emotional. One woman had clearly been weeping. She remarked that she could not understand her emotional response to the eclipse.

Well, isn’t that interesting, I thought. My mind was suddenly filled with the words of Psalm 19:1:

*Watching the
heavens declare
the glory of God*



The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

I wanted to shout to this woman, “You just got a mere glimpse, ma’am!”

REVELATION OF GOD

Paul wrote in Romans 1:20,

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

The theological term for what Paul describes here is “general revelation.” The creation itself bears witness to its creator. The truth that there is a creator is known by all humans. In our fallen nature, we suppress the truth in unrighteousness and deny the evidence presented to us by our own eyes. That is why it takes the special revelation of God’s holy Word to pierce the darkness of our hearts so that we can see and hear and embrace in a saving way the God who spoke everything into existence by the word of his power in the space of six days and all very good, and whose Son upholds the universe by the word of his power (Heb. 1:3).

Eclipses are amazing, but they are actually common. The number of lunar and solar eclipses varies by year, but on average there are about four. Total eclipses are less common, however, and so they tend to unlock the door to

a kind of childlike awe that should be apparent to us every day if we would simply spend a bit more time looking around and observing.

Christians take refuge under the wings of God through the means of grace in worship: Word, sacrament, and prayer. But for the Christian there is also value to “touching grass,” as the kids say these days. That means you take your Bible, head out into God’s general revelation in nature, and read and watch. It’s the Word of God that explains what the NASA host was unable to understand about her own emotional response to the Lord’s providential work with the stars and planets. Read. Watch. Relish the truth that the triune God, who alone is worthy of our worship, is so much more wonderful and awe-ful than what we can presently see. Remember also that Jesus is coming soon, and consider with joyful anticipation the coming glory that will permanently eclipse all of the remaining sin, evil, injustice, sorrow, and tears of this present evil age. **NH**

The author is church planter of Faith OPC in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

THE TIMOTHY CONFERENCE

JUDITH M. DINSMORE

Joel Fick’s sense of call was born out of a personal crisis. The son, grandson, and great-grandson of pastors, Fick was planning to work with his hands—maybe the military, maybe law enforcement, but certainly not the ministry. While attending a Bible college for a gap year after high school, however, Fick became convinced of something. The Bible he thought he knew well as a pastor’s kid taught what he felt repulsive: Calvinism.

“It was destabilizing; it became an existential crisis,” he remembered. His friends had begun talking about Calvinism, and he headed to the library to collect the evidence to prove it wrong. He couldn’t. So great was his distaste, he wrestled with walking away from Christianity altogether. It was not an easy time. But in it, he turned toward the Lord.

“I can still remember praying and just telling the Lord, ‘You have my heart. I can’t walk away, so I’m going to submit to what I think the Word teaches.’”

That was the first domino, as he explained. After it fell, the rest of his story toward ministry is simply told: “That act of submission was the beginning of my sense of calling. Wherever I felt the Scriptures were leading, that’s what I was going to believe and obey. With that came a desire to teach others what the Scriptures taught.”

Every year, Fick, now pastor of Redemption OPC in Gainesville, Florida, speaks to Timothy Conference attend-

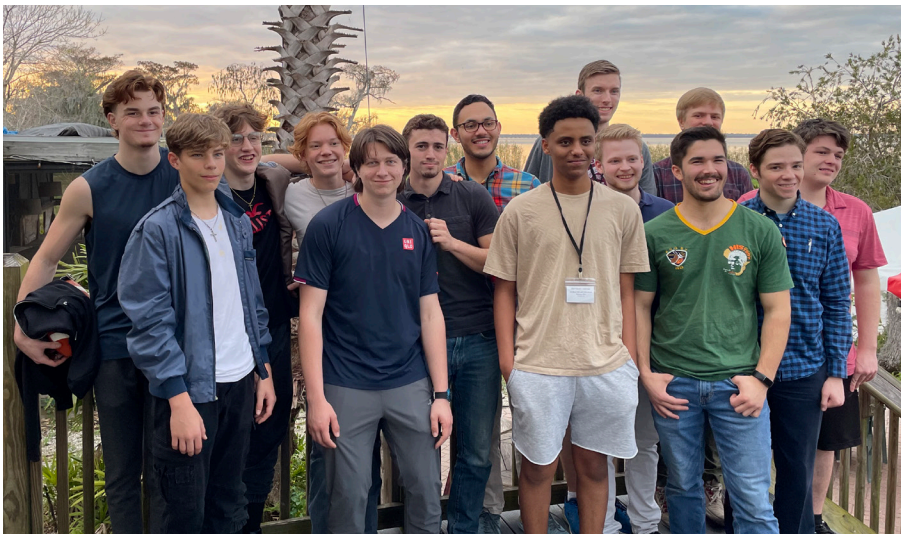
ees about the call to ministry. To these young men, who may themselves be grappling with the big questions of life, Fick endeavors to bring clarity about the call.

“What I’m passionate about is to sort of demystify it,” he said. While God’s calling is always supernatural, Fick explained, young men often think about the extraordinary calls in Scripture—Paul on the road to Damascus, Gideon with his wet wool, Moses in bare feet—and compare them with their own experiences. “And yet in spite of those extraordinary calls, those men still thought of themselves as unworthy and unready. How much more so when we are trying to discern an ordinary call?” Fick reflected.

A SHARED SERIOUSNESS ABOUT THE LORD

Aijalon Church can relate. When he came to the Timothy Conference thirteen years ago, he was “resistant” to the idea that he might have a call to ministry. “I went because my session wanted me to go,” he happily admits. Nothing visibly changed at the conference. But now, years later, he sees how the Lord worked.

First, the conference caused him to confront an assumption. “I didn’t think I was the kind of guy who would be a pastor in the OPC,” he said. But after spending time with others who were considering ministry in the OPC but who had varied personalities and interests—from church history nerds to sports lovers—Church began to question



At the 2024 Timothy Conference in Oviedo, Florida

his assumption. What these guys had in common was something that might seem ordinary: a seriousness about the Lord. “I had a gift of loving God’s Word and wanting to share that. Hanging out with others who believed the same thing was important for me,” he reflected.

The conference also connected Church to one of the speakers, David Winslow Jr., who later became a mentor to him. “I’m from New Jersey, he’s from California, and we wouldn’t have had this relationship,” without the conference, Church said. Winslow is the one he emailed later in college, asking the big question: “What should I do with my life?”

When Church came back to the conference in 2023 as a speaker, it was still the fellowship that Church enjoyed the most. “I spent the whole day with the guys,” Church said. “They had a lot of questions. I talked late into the night with one and had a really deep conversation.” They’ve kept in touch. Church encourages young men to consider the Timothy Conference even just for that reason alone: it’s two days of fellowship with others who take their faith seriously.

EYES OPEN TO GIFTED MEN

The committee does not promote the conference directly to potential attendees—at sixteen to twenty-one years old, future church leaders might, like both Fick and Church, be far from thinking of themselves as cut from pastoral cloth. Rather, Fick explained. “We’re going first to sessions, secondarily to parents.”

Fick’s encouragement for sessions and parents is this: “Actively think about the young men in your church who might be called to ministry. Who are the young men who are actively involved in the church, who are asking questions in Sunday school, who are leading godly lives?” The gifts may well need much nurturing, but when someone comes to you and recognizes your gifts, “that can be a huge boon,” he said. “Take the next step, and think about them in context of public ministry or missions.”

WHAT’S OFFERED IN 2025?

This year, the Timothy Conference will be held in Escondido, California, from February 19–22. The speakers are Joel Fick, David VanDrunen, David Winslow Jr., and Danny Olinger. Applications and more information are at opc.org/timothyconference. The deadline for sessions to submit applications is December 14.

The author is managing editor of New Horizons.



TRINITY PSALTER HYMNAL ANNIVERSARY SALE

The *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* has been in production for seven years, and more than 100,000 copies are in print. With over half the OPC already using this excellent resource for congregational singing, we have decided to run a one-time sale, through January 15, 2025. Church discounts of 10–20 percent apply based on volume.

The purpose is so that churches new to the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* can join the chorus, and other churches already using it can augment their original purchase. Great Commission Publications is fully stocked! Visit the website trinitypsalterhymnal.org for more information or contact Beth Myers at Great Commission Publications (beth.myers@gcp.org).

EXTRA RESOURCES

The mobile app has proven to be an excellent tool for planning services, learning new songs, and family worship. Find it in the app store for both Apple and Android.

Also just released this month is *Trinity Psalter Hymnal Album 1*, featuring twenty psalm selections sung by The Genevans, the choir of Geneva College, directed by Dr. David Smith. The album is available on iTunes, Spotify, or wherever you stream music.

CONGRATULATIONS

The *Shorter Catechism* has been recited by:

- Cameron Shannon, Covenant Church, Orland Park, IL
- Lauren Shannon, Covenant Church, Orland Park, IL

AN OPC CHINESE CONGREGATION

JOSEPH WAN

If you were sitting in the pew two years ago at the ordination and installation service for Pastor Nate Paschall and myself in Madison, Wisconsin, you would have heard something unusual: when it came time for the closing benediction, we each gave it in both English and Chinese. It was a profoundly moving moment for those gathered, both Chinese and American. Why? Let me tell you.

GOD'S PREPARATION

Our story begins around 1960, when a dedicated group of students and families from Hong Kong and Taiwan started a Bible Study Fellowship group in Madison. The Lord blessed this group, and by 1986 they formally established as Madison Chinese Christian Church (MCCC). The following year, the church purchased a building located in the heart of campus, an ideal location for student ministry, which has been in use ever since. Let us not forget those brothers and sisters who sacrificially gave of their own resources to make this purchase possible!

In May 2010, MCCC opened its doors to an English-speaking congregation, Providence Orthodox Presbyterian Church. This decision was mutually beneficial: MCCC could share its building with a church in need, and Providence could provide valuable, solid gospel messages and



The congregation of Madison Chinese Christian Church

faithful nurturing to MCCC's second-generation children. Under the leadership of Providence's pastor, Mark Jenkins, and MCCC's pastor, Iho Tree, the two congregations have collaborated for fourteen years. Serving side by side, they have brought good news to the world around them and have raised their voices together in worship in the same building!

JOINING THE OPC FAMILY

However, in time, MCCC became very small and struggled to remain independent. In January 2021, under the leadership of Pastor Iho Tree, MCCC joined the OPC and became a Chinese ministry under Providence. Then, in one season, Mark Jenkins concluded his service in Madison in order to become a church planter, Iho Tree retired, and I came to intern at MCCC. At this time, there were only six members. For someone like me who had just graduated from seminary at RTS Jackson and was preparing for ordination exams, this presented significant challenges.

THE LORD'S GRACE IS SUFFICIENT

However, the Lord's grace is sufficient. From the very first day I arrived, God's abundant help was evident in our

Hot pot with local students and members of MCCC



midst. Not only did the seasoned pastor, Iho Tree, guide and mentor me hand-in-hand, but Providence's interim pastor, John Hilbelink, also provided personal counsel and support. Additionally, several veteran coworkers, including Bill Chiu, who later became our elder, offered me their unwavering support. In a letter they wrote to me, they said, "We are very thankful that God has called you to serve at MCCC. Please rest assured that we will support and stand by you in your ministry."

During the ordination process, members of the presbytery were of immense assistance: Pastor Brian De Jong, along with the brothers from the Candidates and Credentials Committee, and Pastor John Hilbelink. Mike McCabe also played a crucial role, nearly becoming my personal instructor on the *Book of Church Order*.

In 2022, God brought my well-equipped fellow laborer, Nate Paschall. We passed our ordination exams together and were ordained and installed as pastors in October 2022—Nate as pastor of Providence and I of MCCC.

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM PASTORS AND TEACHERS

Since then, I and the congregation of MCCC have been the recipients of great encouragement and help from a number of pastors and teachers.

Our session has provided us with the most direct and heartfelt support. Although I studied theology in English, applying it in teaching and governance often requires a process of translation and contextualization—what I thought I understood in one language sometimes becomes unclear when translated into another. Throughout that process, Nate Paschall, along with the two experienced elders, Chris Kendziora and John Culley, have given us their unreserved support, both in governance and in pastoral experience. I truly do not deserve their love and care.

My adviser, Pastor Bryan De Jong, has also offered me warm encouragement, patiently answering all my questions and concerns. And, through becoming church planter of a mission work, I gained another adviser, Pastor James



Apple picking as a church outing

Hoekstra. We meet and pray together monthly, which is a great encouragement to me.

The OPC and our presbytery's home missions committee have also provided us with generous financial support. Madison is a university town, so most of our members are students with little to no income, making this financial support incredibly important.

I also stay connected with other Chinese PCA and OPC pastors through City Lights Church Planting Network and its church planting conference that is held each winter.

COUNTING THE BLESSINGS

Under God's caring providence, the Chinese congregation is growing steadily. We ordained Bill Chiu as an elder in February 2023, and, with the help of Bruce Hollister, we applied to become a mission work and were approved at the September meeting of the Presbytery of Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Our ongoing outreach programs include English Corner, tennis classes, and dance classes. Each new school year, we also offer a tour of Madison for incoming international students. In the fall, we go apple picking, and throughout the year we gather for Chinese holidays. Praise the Lord, despite all these efforts, our experience has shown us that it's not our work that brings success; rather, it is God himself who, in his marvelous ways, brings people to our church.

And indeed, the Lord is truly with us. A professor who has been with MCCC for nearly forty years remarked that, as a member of the OPC family, MCCC is in the most harmonious phase of its history that he has ever witnessed.

May all glory and praise be to the Lord!

The author is a church planter in Madison, Wisconsin.

POSITION AVAILABLE IN KENTUCKY

Organizing Pastor: Providence OPC in Louisville, Kentucky, is actively seeking an organizing pastor to serve its mission work of about fifteen members and another ten recurring visitors. Pastoral strengths would include preaching, evangelism, and counseling. Interested candidates should send an MIF or CV to providencekyopc@gmail.com. For more information, visit providencepresbyterian.com.

UNITY AND ETERNITY IN SHORT-TERM MISSIONS

TRISH DUGGAN

“We were out there for twenty-five minutes or so, and nobody came along,” said Chris Byrd, an OP evangelist who served this summer at the Boardwalk Chapel in Wildwood, New Jersey. “We then shifted about ten feet and suddenly people started coming. One guy approached and asked pointedly, ‘I just want to know if I’m going to heaven.’” The man’s tone then got stronger, Byrd remembered, and the man added, “No, seriously, if you’ve done some really bad things, can you still go to heaven?” This man, troubled by his burden, was open to the gospel. “It was a privilege to speak to him about the forgiveness and hope found in Jesus,” reflected Byrd.

Across the globe, God was working similarly in Japan, reports team leader Ethan Hunter. “Only a few people came into the Christian community center for the four-hour duration of our time there, so I began to pray for more. It was just then that three vans pulled up and the room soon filled with people. Eleven Japanese people heard the gospel that day—a clear, tangible answer to prayer that left me in awe of God’s timing and provision,” said Hunter.

This summer, six short-term mission fields were opened: Puerto Rico, Hungary, New Jersey, California, Quebec, and Japan. Overall, 227 participants from 19 states served—a 51 percent increase over 2023.

FIVE TRIPS TO JAPAN—AND COUNTING

Short-term missions play a critical role in encouraging foreign missionaries, and sometimes plant a seed in a future missionary’s heart. Short-term trips can also simply spark a love for those outside of your region, and even a deeper love for a specific culture. That is exactly what happened to Ethan Hunter. A member of Cedar OPC in Jenison, Michigan, Hunter felt the tug to travel to Japan in 2012, after OPC missionary Edie Cummings visited his church and also just after the great Tohoku Earthquake hit off the coast of Miyagi prefecture. Hunter has been on five service trips to Japan to date.



The Japan team on day one of VBS in front of the Nozomi Center

In July 2024, Ethan led a team of fourteen volunteers to work with missionaries Woody and Laurie Lauer and Matt and Annette Cummings in Yamamoto, whose mission is sponsored by the Presbytery of the Dakotas. The team was sizable and young—eight of the members were under twenty years old. God used both the size and the youthfulness of the group. The younger team members attracted local children and mothers to the Nozomi Center, a Christian community center where missionaries Woody and Laurie Lauer minister and Sunday services are held. The larger team meant more could be accomplished, including an English café, where visitors can practice their English-language skills, vacation Bible school, a cultural event at a local school, cooking classes, and a “friends” lunch. The group also helped with maintenance of the Nozomi Center.

Over the span of his five trips, “I have seen this sorrowful, depressed area become lively and excited,” Hunter said. “As curiosity about the foreigners at the Nozomi Center grew, more people were exposed to the gospel.”



The Puerto Rico team helping with crafts at VBS



Members of the Hungary team in church

UNITY IN CHRIST ACROSS CULTURES AND NATIONS

For many short-term missionaries, the global nature of Christ's church made a deep and abiding impression.

In late June, a family of nine from Covenant OPC in Taylors, South Carolina, made up the first group to travel to Puerto Rico. Thomas Woody, the group's youngest member, felt a closeness with brothers and sisters in Christ on this trip, despite the language barrier. "God's Word is so much more than the language it is spoken in," Woody said. "I learned a lot, met many wonderful people, and grew closer to the Lord and his people."

Maddie Nakhla, a member of Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pennsylvania, who traveled to Hungary, agrees. "I truly felt the impact of the global church during my time. On the Sunday before English Camp, we worshiped with other believers in Miskolc, singing hymns and hearing a sermon from Pastor Imre in Hungarian. Despite the language barriers, we were all worshiping the same Savior and Lord." Her fellow Hungary team member Stella Brejwo, member of Grace OPC in Sewickley, Pennsylvania, said, "While I came to serve [the Hungarians], they provided me with more love and inspiration than I ever expected. These brothers and sisters were so eager to share Christ with us and took every opportunity to engage with us. The people of the Hungarian Reformed Presbyterian Church are the most loving people I have ever met."

Sawyer Wiersma from Harvest OPC in Wyoming, Michigan, joined the second team to Puerto Rico in early August. He felt the love of God transcending both language and cultural barriers. He said, "We went to worship at Iglesia Presbiteriana Sola Escritura in Guayama. The service was in Spanish so I didn't understand most of what was said, but the liturgy was the same. I recognized all the songs because I was able to make out the tunes. It was beautiful and gave me a real sense of communion with fel-

low brothers and sisters from a different part of the world, regardless of language."

His teammate Evan Wheat from Good Shepherd OPC in Sugarland, Texas, said, "We got to be human, to show love to people who, although separated by language, understood that we were brothers and sisters in Christ who cared about them and loved them. It has truly been one of the most uplifting aspects of my journey with Christ so far, as I have come to realize how our shared faith can unite us with people who would otherwise be strangers." Nearly every day, the team was in the homes of families from church, sharing meals and fellowship.

Earlier in the summer, Grace Wiersma traveled from Harvest OPC in Wyoming, Michigan, with her brother, Cullen, to help with vacation Bible school at an OPC mission work in Thousand Oaks, California. Getting to know the family of Christ there was the highlight of the trip. "We spent many of our evenings having fellowship meals with families from the church. I enjoyed these dinners because I got to learn more about this church in California and the people we were working alongside," she said.

In Quebec, Elena Behl, who made her third trip to the Reformed Christian Church of Beauce for English Camp, also appreciates what it takes for churches to open their homes to short-term missionaries. "It is hard to express how uplifting it is to have others drop everything, spend a week with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, and work with them towards a worthwhile goal."

The end of the 2024 season signals the beginnings of the plans for 2025. If short-term missions interests you, or if you have questions about upcoming opportunities, contact us at opcshorttermmissions@opc.org.

The author is communications coordinator for Short-Term Missions.

NOV 2024 PRAYER CALENDAR



The Graves (day 10)



The De Oliveiras (day 11)

1 Affiliated missionaries **Dr. Mark & Laura Ambrose**, Cambodia. Praise God for their son Hugh's profession of faith. Pray for continued growth. / Pray for **Danny Olinger** as he speaks today at the Harvest Dinner at Second Parish OPC, Portland, ME.

2 **Matt & Christine Ezzell**, Wake County, NC. Pray that the Lord would bless Zion OPC as they seek to mature as a congregation. / **Lacy (Debbie) Andrews**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast.

3 Affiliated missionaries **Jerry & Marilyn Farnik**, Czech Republic. Pray for God to open the hearts of Czechs to embrace Christ. / Yearlong intern **Isaiah (Calli Jade) English** at Grace OPC in Sewickley, PA.

4 Home Missions general secretary **Jeremiah Montgomery**. / Affiliated missionaries **Craig & Ree Coulbourne** and **Linda Karner**, Japan. Pray that many would seek the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

5 **Joseph & Christina Wan**, Madison, WI. Pray that the Lord would raise up officers for Madison Chinese Christian Church. / Pray for the **Committee on Diaconal Ministry's Refugee Ministry Subcommittee** as they seek out ways to minister to refugees both in the States and around the world.

6 Pray for joy and fruitfulness for retired missionaries **Cal & Edie Cummings**, **Mary Lou Son**, and **Brian & Dorothy Wingard**. / Yearlong intern **Vince (Eri) Lam** at South Austin OPC in Austin, TX.

7 Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **Douglas Clawson** and administrative assistants **Joanna Grove** and **Tin Ling Lee**. / **Charles (Margaret) Biggs**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic.

8 **Caleb & Erika Smith**, Thousand Oaks, CA. Pray the Lord would bless the discipleship and evangelism efforts of Thousand Oaks OPC. / Pray for children of imprisoned pastors in **East Africa** to grow strong in faith despite growing up without fathers present.

9 **Heero & Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for Heero's leadership of two Bible studies and for his sermon series on Genesis. / Pray for the **Committee on Chaplains and Military Personnel (OPC)**.

10 **David & Rebekah Graves**, Wichita Falls, TX. Pray that the Lord would build his church through the ministry of Living Stone Mission. / **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia. Pray for an important visitor's time of fellowship, influence, and teaching at a presbytery meeting.

11 **Jefferson & Ellen De Oliveira**, Springfield, OH. Pray the Lord would bless De Oliveira's labors as he begins a Spanish language ministry. / Pray for those planning **Short-Term Missions** opportunities for 2025.

12 **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, (on furlough), Asia. Pray for pastors to be encouraged by the retreat this week and not be fearful of security issues. / Pray for **Charlene Tipton**, database administrator.

13 Associate missionaries **Octavious & Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray for saints to be sustained in living godly lives through public and private worship. / **Bradney & Eileen Lopez**, Guayama, PR. Pray for the evangelistic efforts of Iglesia Presbiteriana Sola Escritura.

14 **Brad (Cinnamon) Peppo**, regional home missionary of the Miami Valley for the Presbytery of Ohio. / **Gregory Reynolds**, editor of *Ordained Servant*.

.....
15 Associate missionary **Leah Hopp**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for gospel-centered healthcare at Akisyon a Yesu Presbyterian Clinic. / Pray that the **Ruling Elder Podcast** would bless listeners.

.....
16 **Christopher & Sara Drew**, Grand Forks, ND. Pray that Faith OPC would continue to experience unity and peace in the Lord. / Missionary associates **Josh & Danielle Grimsley**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for perseverance through the transitions of teammates arriving and departing.

.....
17 **Micah & Eileen Bickford**, Farmington, ME. Pray that the Lord would bless Grace Reformed OPC with growth. / Financial controller **Melisa McGinnis**.

.....
18 Tentmaking missionary **Tina DeJong**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the team to have wisdom and godly stewardship while making the 2025 mission budget. / Yearlong intern **Joseph (Myranda) Scherschligt** at Emmanuel OPC in Wilmington, DE.

.....
19 **Travis & Bonnie Emmett**, Nakaale, Uganda. Praise the Lord for the Knox School of Theology conference on how the church addresses African traditional religion. / Home Missions associate general secretary **Al Tricarico**.

.....
20 **Mark & Lorie Wheat**, Sugar Land, TX. Pray that Good Shepherd OPC

would make new contacts in their community. / Pray that the Lord would bless the **Crates for Ukraine 4.0** initiative.

.....
21 Pray for missionary associate **Beatrix Tavernne**, Nakaale, Uganda, to have gospel-oriented conversations with local people. / Yearlong intern **Stuart Ireland** at Covenant Presbyterian in New Bern, NC.

.....
22 **Nate & Amy Jeffries**, West Norriton, PA. Pray that God would prepare men for service as officers at Good News OPC. / Pray for missionary associate **Jed Homan**, Nakaale, Uganda, as he transitions from life in Uganda to life in the United States.

.....
23 **Chris (Megan) Hartshorn**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California. / Pray for stated clerk **Hank Belfield** and his staff as they prepare the 2025 editions of the *Book of Church Order* and the *OPC Directory*.

.....
24 Pray for **Christopher & Chloe Verdick**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they prioritize and balance ministry and family responsibilities. / Yearlong intern **Jon (Stacey) Jung** at Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA.

.....
25 **Charles & Connie Jackson**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for godly new church leaders in the Reformation Church of East Africa denomination. / **John & Katie Terrell**, Dorr, MI. Pray that Living Hope OPC would be a warm community ready to welcome others.

.....
26 **Andrew (Rebekah) Miller**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania. / **John Fikkert**, director of the Committee on Ministerial Care.



Stuart Ireland (day 21)

.....
27 **Stephen & Catalina Payson**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray that cooperation between the OPC and Brazilian Presbyterian missionaries would continue to bear fruit. / Yearlong intern **Josiah (Hannah) Stockwell** at Pilgrim OPC in Bangor, ME.

.....
28 Home Missions administrative assistant **Allison Groot**. / Missionary associates **Lucas & Erica Payson**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray that the Lord would open opportunities for evangelism during the holiday months.

.....
29 **John Paul & Corinne Holloway**, Manassas, VA. Pray that Acacia Reformed OPC would overflow with praise for the blessings they have in Christ. / Loan Fund manager, **Mark Stumpff**.

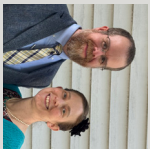
.....
30 **Ben & Heather Hopp**, Africa & Haiti. Pray for Ben's travels and teaching on the church for the Ethiopian Mercy Reformed Church. / Yearlong intern **Mitchell (Calilee) Watson** at Knox OPC in Silver Spring, MD.



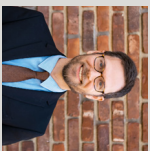
The Watsons (day 30)



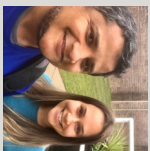
CHURCH PLANTERS



Mitch & Eileen
BICKFORD
Farmington, ME



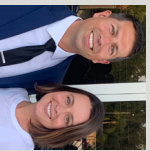
Chris BYRD
Evangelist,
Presbytery of NJ



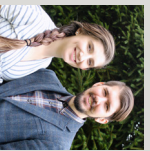
Jefferson & Ellen
DE OLIVEIRA
Springfield, OH



David & Rebekah
GRAVES
Wichita Falls, TX



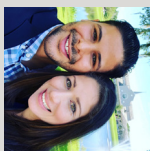
Dan & Stacy
HALLEY
Tampa, FL



John Paul & Corinne
HOLLOWAY
Manassas, VA



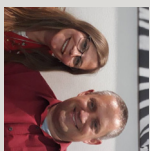
Samuel & Mila
LUKOSIUS
Springfield, OH



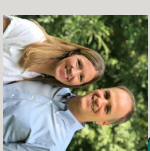
Bradley &
Eileen LOPEZ
Guayama, PR



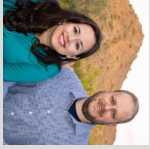
AI & Chelsea
MILLSAPS
Maryville, TN



John & Erin
NYMANN
Suffolk, VA



Greg & Ginger
O'BRIEN
Downingtown, PA



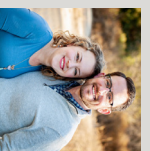
David & Ashleigh
SCHEXNAYDER
Scottsdale, AZ



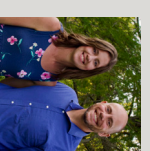
Johnny & Betty
SERAFINI
Morton, NC



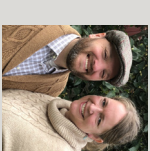
Bill & Margaret
SHISHKO
Cornack, NY



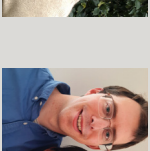
Caleb & Erika
SMITH
Thousand Oaks, CA



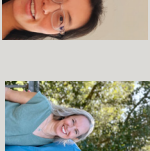
Nate & Anna
STROM
Sheboygan, WI



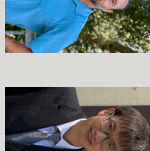
John & Kate
TERRELL
Dorr, MI



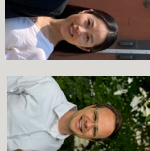
Mar & Hyojung
WALKER
Yorktown, VA



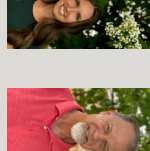
Eric & Heather
WATKINS
Daytona Beach, FL



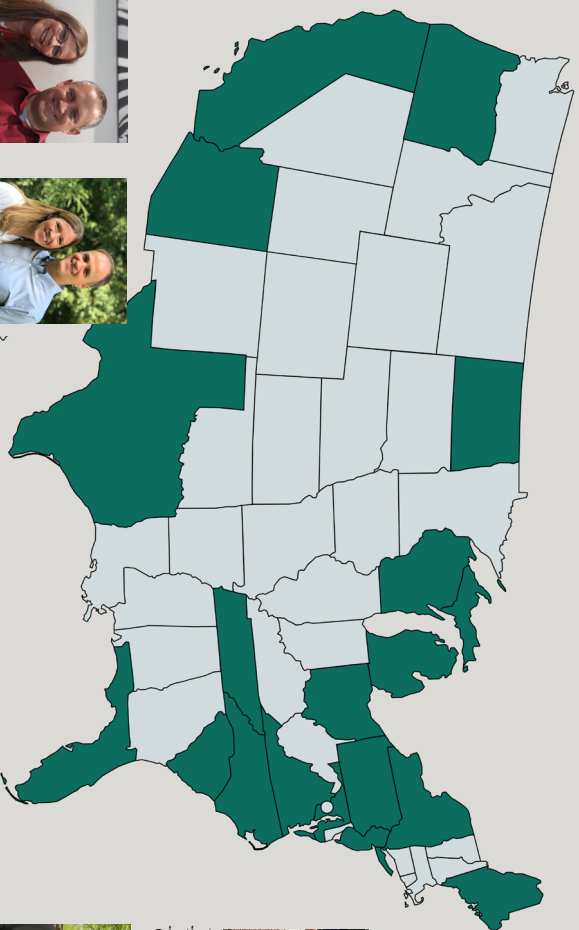
Joseph & Christina
WAN
Madison, WI



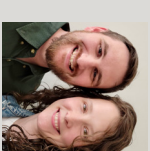
Andrew & Abby
WANN
Bluffton, SC



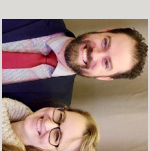
Mark & Lorrie
WHEAT
Sugarland, TX



Chris & Sara
DREW
Grand Forks, ND



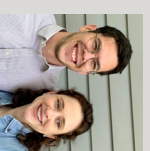
Matt & Christine
EZZELL
Wake Co., NC



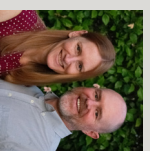
Andrew & Cheyenne
FARR
Klamath Falls, OR



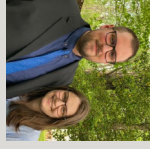
John & Grace
JEE
Columbia, MD



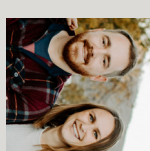
Nate & Amy
JEFFRIES
King of Prussia, PA



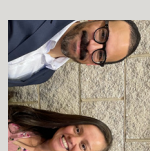
Mark & Celeste
JENKINS
Anaheim Hills, CA



Corey & Andrea
PAIGE
Hays Co., TX



Christian & Hanna
REPP
Doylertown, PA



David & Jazmine
RIOS
Cornack, NY

Committee on

HOME MISSIONS

STAFF



Jeremiah
MONTGOMERY
General secretary



ALTRICARICO
Associate
general secretary



Allison GROOT
Administrative
assistant

REGIONAL HOME MISSIONARIES OF PRESBYTERIES

Lacey & Debbie ANDREWS | Southeast

Charles & Margaret BIGGS | Mid-Atlantic

David & Wendy CHILTON | South

Mike & Elizabeth DIERCKS | (regional coordinator) Ohio

Chris & Megan HARTSHORN | Southern California

James & Bonnie HOEKSTRA | Wisconsin and Minnesota

Bruce & Sue HOLLISTER | Midwest

Dave & Elizabeth HOLMUND | Philadelphia

Andrew & Rebekah MILLER | Central Pennsylvania

Brad & Cinnamon PEPPOLI | Ohio

Mark & Peggy SUMPSTER | Southwest



CUTO founder William Krispin, far right, in the 1970s

NEWS

IN MEMORIAM: WILLIAM C. KRISPIN

William C. Krispin, Orthodox Presbyterian minister from 1970 to 2003, died August 15 at the age of eighty-one. Passionate about evangelism and reaching the inner city of Philadelphia, Mr. Krispin helped to plant Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church in South Philadelphia where he served as pastor from 1970 to 1975. In 1978, he founded the Center for Urban Theological Studies in Philadelphia. Eight years later, he was called by the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension to serve as part-time director of ethnic and urban ministries in the OPC, a position that he held for seventeen years. He is survived by his wife of fifty-seven years, Mary, five children and their spouses, and seventeen grandchildren (and spouses).

IN MEMORIAM: ROBERT M. MEEKER

Robert M. Meeker, longtime ruling elder in the OPC, died at the age of ninety-five on August 20. Ordained as a deacon in 1962 and then as a ruling elder in 1965 at Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pennsylvania, Bob served for fifty-three years on the Calvary session before his retirement in 2018. The Thirty-Fourth (1967) General Assembly recognized Bob's giftedness by electing him to the inaugural Committee on Ministerial Training. Subsequent assemblies elected Bob to the Committee on Pensions for twenty-four years and the Committee on Arrangements for twelve years. Countless students at Westminster

Theological Seminary aspiring to gospel ministry were befriended by Bob and his wife, Eleanor. For those who learned that Bob and Eleanor's son, Robert Jr., had died at the age of eight in a tragic accident, tears were followed by a recognition that Bob and Eleanor did not blame their Lord, but instead fully grounded their hope in Jesus Christ and his righteousness.

UPDATE

MINISTERS

- On May 4, **Dr. Gregory K. Beale** was received by the North Texas Presbytery of the PCA.
- On May 31, **Caleb H. Maltby** was ordained and installed as assistant pastor of Covenant Presbyterian in Abilene, TX.
- On September 6, the Presbytery of the Midwest received **Kim N. Dang** by way of transfer. He is a minister serving out of bounds with a Vietnamese-speaking congregation, Living Church, in Wheaton, IL.
- On September 27, **G. Mark Sumpter** was installed as an evangelist of the Presbytery of the Northwest to serve as its regional home missionary.
- On September 27, **Nathaniel L. Bloechl** was ordained and installed as pastor of Immanuel OPC in Anoka, MN.

MINISTERS

- **Joan Elizabeth Doe** (Joanie), 75, wife of retired OP minister Steve D. Doe, died on September 5.
- **Rhonda Annette Sarafolean**, 65, wife of OP pastor David M. Sarafolean, died on September 16.



Bob Meeker with Chad Van Dixhoorn in 2019

REVIEWS

The Devoted Mind: Seeking God's Face in a World of Distraction, by Kris A. Lundgaard. P&R, 2023. Paperback, 168 pages, \$17.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Philip B. Strong.

What a blessing in God's kind providence to me to be asked to review this book at a time when I found myself to be distracted by news, media, and hardships. *The Devoted Mind: Seeking God's Face in a World of Distraction* touched on what I thought it would, but it went so much deeper than I had anticipated.

This book addresses a phenomenon that is all too often experienced in Reformed churches today: people who have a knowledge of God that stops short of a delight in our God. In his introduction Mr. Lundgaard asks, "How can our cold minds extend God's warm welcome and taste his joy—not in eternity but in this troubling world? That's what I'd like to know." The book aims to answer this question, and it did so quite successfully.

In the introduction, Lundgaard makes known that the book is a rewriting of the Puritan John Owen's work on spiritual mindedness. Owen's focus was on the Apostle Paul's blessing of the devoted mind, "To be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6 KJV).

Lundgaard represents Owen's teachings through three themes: the devoted mind, seeking God's face, and the Beloved. Lundgaard explains each. By "devoted mind," he means "a mind set apart for the Lord . . . a mind completely given over to him and to his service . . . suggest[ing] a lover whose full attention has been captured by her Beloved." By "seeking God's face," he means the "pursuit of his intimate presence, a sense of closeness, a clearer and deeper personal knowledge of him, and an assurance of his acceptance, love and blessing. We are finding our way back to

the intimacy of Eden, a journey now possible in Christ who is the 'new and living Way' into God's holy presence." And with the final theme, "the Beloved," he means that our triune God or Christ himself is the object of the devoted mind—"not in an academic sense but as the ultimate object of our desire, the One whose presence we seek."

The book divides into two sections covering a total of eleven chapters and an introduction, making it ideal for use in a quarterly adult Sunday school class. Part 1 focuses upon contemplation and addresses what the devoted mind is and what it seeks. Part 2 is about inclination and satisfaction, that is, *how* the devoted mind reaches the goals set forth above.

Lundgaard has brought the riches of John Owen's labors and meditations and has made them accessible to the everyday Christian in the church. He ends each chapter with a section called "Reflection and Praxis," in which the reader is challenged by questions and practices to aid in implementing what he or she has read. This book is both theologically substantive and immensely practical.

Theology, Piety, and Mission: The Influence of Gisbertus Voetius on Missiology and Church Planting, by Ronaldo Lidorio. Reformation Heritage, 2023. Paperback, 144 pages, \$16.00. Reviewed by OP minister Charles R. Biggs.

Missionary forefather and faithful church planter Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676) argued that the crux of missions is not the lost, but God and his glory. Voetius challenges all church planters to consider that the greatest missionary challenge is not church planting, but love (54). True love is learned and expressed in our seeking to glorify

God and enjoy him forever. As recipients of his love in Christ, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit as those "called and sent" to collaborate with our triune God in his loving mission of seeking and saving the lost.

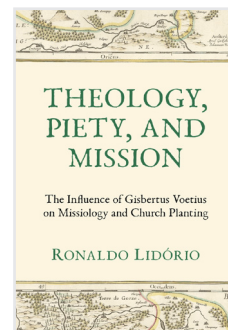
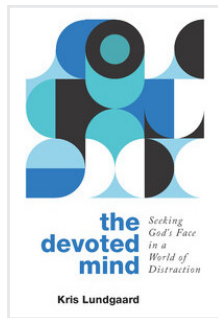
Voetius has sometimes been called the "John Owen" of the Dutch Further Reformation. His commitment to godliness, scholarship, his love for the church, and his voluminous writings testify to this. Many lovers of the history of the Reformation may remember that Voetius was an influential participant of the Synod of Dort (1618–1619).

As a follower of John Calvin, Voetius emphasized the biblical teaching of the sovereignty of God in redemption. In his pursuit to wed theological truth to piety, or a godly life, he also desired missiology to be thoroughly God-centered and Trinitarian. Explaining Voetius's view, Lidorio writes, "If we see mission as theocentric and Trinitarian, we understand that the mission of the church is . . . submissive to God's mission. The church is called by God to collaborate with His mission according to His plan" (61).

Voetius's theology of missions was born out of four basic principles: (1) Practical Theology/Piety: All theology should be practiced, leading to a godly life.

True theology is transformative and relational. This leads to zeal and compassion for the lost. (2) The Decrees of God: The church can be confident in the preaching and teaching of the gospel in missions because God decrees that all sinners may be saved through Jesus

Christ in the power of his Spirit. The biblical teaching of predestination should bring confidence to preachers, church planters, and evangelists. (3) Ecclesiology: The church is "called and sent." This is what characterizes her as heir of the benefits and blessings of salvation in Jesus. (4) Soli Deo Gloria: All missions are



done for the glory of God alone. God is glorified when sinners are saved and churches are planted.

Drawing from Voetius's theology of missions, Lidorio identifies ten principles for church planting and evangelism that he describes in the last chapter. This is the most useful and practical part of the book.

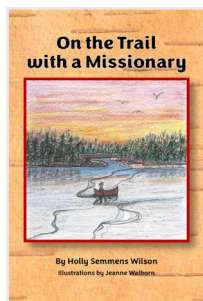
Historically, this book reminds us how fervently faithful John Calvin and his followers like Voetius were in missions and church planting and encourages us to seek to be true and faithful heirs of them. Our belief in the sovereignty of God and in his predestining his people in Christ should lead to courageous, zealous, and prayerful efforts in missions. Theologically, this book reminds us how important it is that every truth we learn about God is for the purpose of knowing God better and becoming more like Christ in holiness and humble obedience, especially in church planting and evangelism. Confessionally, this book guides us in discovering great wisdom for church planting and evangelism in our confessions and catechisms of the Reformation.

***On the Trail with a Missionary*, by Holly Semmens Wilson. Independently published, 2023. Paperback, 28 pages, \$6.99 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP member Patricia Clawson.**

Holly Semmens Wilson, wife of OP pastor Larry Wilson, adapted an autobiography of her great-grandfather to encourage children to become interested in missions. John Semmens was a Methodist missionary to the indigenous peoples of Northern

Canada for twenty-seven years. This true short story, based on his journal and photographs, tells of his dangerous trip with a guide to a new mission station in 1876. Holly's family members, who also are John Semmens's great-grandchildren, helped to bring this story to life. Laurie Semmens Ostrowski designed the twenty-eight-page, self-published book by blending Holly's words with Jeanne Walborn's evocative colored-pencil drawings.

To highlight its authenticity, a photo of John's congregation giving him a tearful farewell is on the back cover. This attention to detail adds a rich texture which builds the tension for the reader and keeps the pages turning.



guide paddled their canoe downstream for several days, then decided one night to camp on an island in the middle of the river where breezes might keep the pesky mosquitoes at bay. All went well until thunder and lightning announced a storm, which proceeded to blow away first their tent, and then their birchbark canoe. Their misery the next morning grew as they realized their food supplies were limited; no one had traveled this river in many days; the shore was a mile away; the waters were rough; and John couldn't

the pages turning.

Experienced Methodist missionary John Semmens answered orders from his mission board to minister to a new flock downriver at the Norway House. John and his

swim. How God in his mercy answers their prayers and rescues these men puts a smile on the reader's face.

This exciting true story will hopefully encourage children to trust in God, not

only as they read of how he spared the lives of John Semmens and his guide, but also to one day answer their own call to missions.

***Suffering: God's Purpose in Our Pain*, by Paul D. Wolfe. Banner of Truth, 2023. Paperback, 120 pages, \$8.00. Reviewed by OP member Chandra Mininger.**

Do we really need another book on the topic of suffering? This is the question I asked myself as I picked up Paul Wolfe's book, so I found myself interested when the author asks the same question in chapter 1. His answer is a good one: there may be thousands of books on suffering, but there are billions of sufferers, and each articulation of gospel comfort that comes from a new vantage point may help some of them. God ordains our sufferings, and he also ordains helps along the way. Perhaps this book will be one of those for you.

The book is part of Banner of Truth's series of Mini-Guides that are formatted to fit neatly into a Sunday school quarter (13 weeks) for group study. As their website states, the Mini-Guides "lay a solid foundation of Bible teaching while encouraging more thorough exploration of the theme with suggestions for further reading." Accordingly, *Suffering: God's Purpose in Our Pain* is a very brief survey of a large and complicated topic. Without the list of further reading at the back, I think the chosen format is too small for this topic. However, a good teacher in a church could certainly use it as a springboard, and every chapter is both clear and Christ-centered.

After discussing preliminaries, Wolfe spends a chapter addressing what is essentially the backbone of his methodology in the book, namely that as Christians we derive our life pattern from our union with Christ: suffering unto glory. The dedication to Dr. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. thanks him for teaching and exemplifying this reality. Wolfe declares that we will never fully make sense of our own sufferings without first beginning with the sufferings



3
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&
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of Christ and understanding our union with him. He then fleshes that pattern out in each of the subsequent chapters.

The book tackles the usual litany of topics that surround the complexities of suffering, including: the spectrum of our suffering, common errors in our evaluation of its cause, God's relationship to it, the benefits derived from going through it, and even some FAQs about Satan's role in the suffering of Christians and about catastrophes or viruses. I think that the latter of those is the weakest and least helpful to the overall discussion.

In my favorite chapter, Wolfe discuss the beautiful reality we see in 2 Corinthians 1:3–7. Even Christ cried out to his father for comfort, and now, as our sympathetic high priest, he pours his Spirit of comfort into our lives, which we can then share with our fellow sufferers. In this way, our sufferings are not in vain and even give us a new context for ministry. This pattern provides a witness to the unbelieving world and an encouragement not to squander our opportunities to mirror the love of our suffering Savior.

The strength of this book is its union-with-Christ centered approach to a difficult topic covered with clarity and brevity. This provides an edifying overview. However, one who is wrestling with difficult personal suffering might be better served by a deeper, more nuanced book on this topic, like D. A. Carson's *How Long O Lord?* (Baker Academic, 2006).

***Midnight Mercies: Walking with God Through Depression in Motherhood*, by Christine M. Chappell. P&R, 2023. Paperback, 136 pages, \$17.99. Reviewed by OP member Rachelle Bennett.**

This book addresses depression in motherhood by examining the topics of

hopelessness, weariness, sadness, anger, anxiety, shame, and loneliness. Christine Chappell walks the reader through the ways that depression encompasses these feelings and then shows how Christ is walking alongside the Christian in each.

Chappell ends by pointing the reader to the hope that can only be found in Christ.

Throughout the book, Chappell, a counselor, shares her firsthand experiences with depression and explores scriptural accounts of desperate sufferers who encounter God's mercy. Chappell's story and godly advice will be a tremendous help to anyone, not just mothers, who is walking through the depths of darkness.

At the end of each topic, Chappell suggests a next step and offers a summary to remember, as well as some reflections for personal application. What follows is a preview of how she addresses each of the topics (in italics).

In the section on *hopelessness*, Chappell encourages Christians to share their true feelings with someone. Finding another believer who will be able to walk alongside us during a time of great need is how God intended for us to live. When life seems like too much to bear and we become *wearry*, the author reminds us that God is not telling us to "Go get 'em!" and be the supermom we think we need to be, but to "Come to me" and out of faith step into his strength. Some of us tend to suppress our *sadness* when it seems like God isn't helping, but Chappell encourages us to face those emotions and pour out our hearts to Christ. In our *anger* we need to remember that God is not cruel and hates evil and injustice. However, he has called us to suffer, as Christ suffered on earth, before we can share in his eternal glory. Instead of rehearsing what-ifs that cause *anxiety*, we are to meditate on Christ's promise to be with us no matter where we go. The *shame* that comes with having these feelings of depression can cause us



to want to hide from the world, but Chappell encourages us to remember that the Lord is our hiding place. Misery in *loneliness* can skew our perception of reality so that we cannot see the whole story or how God is gracious, compassionate, and merciful toward us.

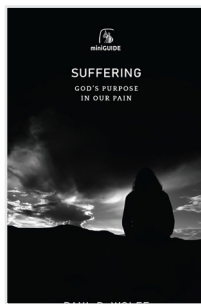
The main point of the book is that in times of depression we should take refuge in the Lord, who gives us hope and offers a love that will never leave us.

***Sunday Matters: 52 Devotionals to Prepare Your Heart for Church*, by Paul Tripp. Crossway, 2023. Hardcover, 288 pages, \$24.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Jeffrey S. Carter.**

How often do we arrive for worship on Sunday without giving a moment's thought about what we're about to do? How easily do we forget or neglect to consider the sobering glory of corporate worship? Paul Tripp knows the answers most believers would give to these questions. He wrote *Sunday Matters* to help readers prepare for the single most significant activity of life: the worship of the triune God.

Tripp needs no introduction. For decades he's proven steadfast in applying the grace of Christ to all of life. This recent devotional is no different. Tripp divides the book into fifty-two devotions, best read before entering into worship. They are short and well-structured. A one-sentence summary introduces each entry, outlining its content and theme.

The devotions themselves are typical of Tripp's style. He offers personal anecdotes and stories that connect with our daily lives. His tone is gracious, even as he presses us with hard, searching, and convicting questions. Frequent references to Scripture from both testaments fill the entries. And each devotion concludes with one or two Scriptures specific to its topic. These are often short enough to memorize and pray in preparation for worship. Tripp also includes questions for personal

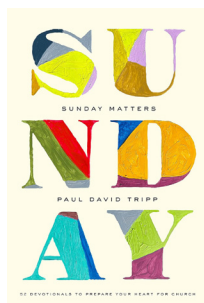


reflection, which help to apply the material, together with instructions for family discussion to aid those leading family worship.

There's much to appreciate about the weekly march of devotions presented in this book. They're down-to-earth and accessible both to young and old, those new to the faith and mature saints. Tripp doesn't hesitate to confront sin, especially in its destructively subtle forms (a strength of his pastoral approach). With a surgeon's precision, he exposes our heart. Yet all along the way, he presents the gospel as the hope for sinners and points us to the ordinary means of grace. Indeed, gathered corporate worship is where we rejoice in the Savior who died and rose again for us. Tripp leads us to rest in the finished work of Christ and to rejoice in him with fellow redeemed sinners.

I found the stylistic variety of the devotions helpful. Some focus on weighty concepts like law and grace, repentance and faith, justification and sanctification. Others deal with specific sins that deaden the ways we enjoy or engage in corporate worship. Among these are the sins of grumbling, worry, or a distracted busyness. A few of the devotions are even set in verse and offer a poetic take on a particular aspect of preparing for worship (a feature I found very refreshing).

Some entries return to similar themes and could thus seem repetitive. But if read over the course of a year (or longer), such



repetition keeps Christ and his gospel constantly before us. In this, Tripp succeeds in his goal. This book helps us all to prepare well for the week-in, week-out worship of the triune God.

***Texts that Transform: Life*, by Terry Johnson. Banner of Truth, 2023. Paperback, 216 pages, \$13.00. Reviewed by OP pastor J. Scott Creel.**

On his death bed, John Knox is said to have asked his wife to “go to where I cast my first anchor.” His dear wife turned in her Bible to a text that had been pivotal to Knox as a young Christian and was so again as a dying Christian. That text was John 17, Jesus’s High Priestly Prayer. This is something of what Terry Johnson does in *Texts that Transform: Life*—he takes the reader through pivotal passages of Scripture, passages where one could cast his or her first anchor. The book is in part autobiographical. Johnson writes, “The Holy Spirit has used a number of key verses to transform my outlook and later the course of my life. . . . Mine has been a text driven life” (2–3). Johnson takes the reader through several key verses pertaining to the new life that the believer has in Christ.

While the book is not divided into sections, it is composed of fourteen chapters that have a movement, taking the reader from the beginning of new life in Christ (conversion) to living out that new life (sanctification). Each chapter is composed of a brief exposition of a key text of Scripture and a description of how that

text was used by God in Johnson’s life. The first four chapters begin with the good news for sinners, which includes the sober reality of our fallen condition and need of redemption, how God justifies sinners, and the great invitation of the Savior to sin-weary men and women. Chapters 5–7 set before the reader the beauty and glory of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Then flowing out of the glory and sufficiency of the Savior, chapters 8–14 address how to live for him. These seven chapters examine the relation of faith and works, the inner struggle that every believer experiences, and the resources we have in Christ.

Texts that Transform is not a thorough study of the rich doctrines of grace, but a short experiential reflection on the

Christian life: how one comes to new life in Christ, how one is convicted of his miserable estate of sin and misery and need of Christ, how Jesus Christ is the believer’s justifying righteousness, and how with eyes set upon Christ, the believer lives for Christ. This book would be a helpful starting

point for new or young believers to get their anchors set. It would also serve as a wonderful devotional to read, reflect, and pray upon. Further, it would be beneficial for readers to commit to memory the fourteen passages of Scripture that are explicated and carry them with them all their days. Here are passages of Scripture to anchor the soul in the tumult of life in a fallen world. Indeed, these are texts that transform life.

