



## *Presbytery on the Move. . . Fall 2011*

### **Brainerd, Minnesota**

Roger Gibbons  
Church of the Lakes OPC

We have been encouraged and blessed during the summer months by visitors from several OPC and PCA members who were vacationing in the area. God has blessed us with families who are faithful and eager to hear the preaching of His Word. A men's leadership training class has been started and we look forward to see how God will build his Church. God has blessed us with 14 children, age 7 and younger, and another on the way. This congregation's future rests on God's faithfulness to Covenant.

Pray for God's little ones and their parents. Pray that God would transform this small group into a solid core ready for organization, self-sustaining and self-propagating.

*"He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.'" Matthew 9:36-37*

## **Cedarburg, Wisconsin**

Jim Hoekstra  
Mercy OPC

Pastor Jim Hoekstra and the congregation of Mercy OPC give thanks that the Lord has brought 13 new first-time visitors in the last 3 months. This is more than they usually get in a year. Five of the visitors have stayed. Please pray that more newcomers would visit and then stay.

Mercy ran its second VBS and although the numbers were small the children involved benefited greatly. Eight children from the congregation are memorizing the WSC. A redesign of the church website is being worked on and efforts are starting to be made to make use of social media to help bring visitors to the church.

Please pray for: two men who are entering an officer training program; decisions that will need to be made as far as a breakdown for children's SS. The makeup of the classes is changing; give thanks to the Lord for an amazing year as far as stewardship.

## **Chicago South Loop, Illinois**

John Ro  
Gospel Life Church

It has been an interesting season of change for us this summer at Gospel Life Church. With the closing of Nuevo Pueblo Ministries, some of their members have begun to attend our worship services. As some of our people have moved away, a group of new people have begun to attend our worship services. Thus, our core group has begun to change.

We are thankful for the new people whom God has sent. This change during the summer was unexpected, although as a church plant in the city, we should expect changes like these. Please pray that God may integrate our diverse group and that a sense of unity in purpose and vision may be fostered among us all. Pray that we will continue to flourish and grow as a church plant and that we may be established as a faithful witness in the city.

## **Crystal Lake, Illinois**

Brandon Wilkins  
Christ Covenant

Christ Covenant OPC (Crystal Lake, IL) is a mission work under the oversight of Hope Presbyterian Church in Grayslake, IL. It was formed back in 2007 and, as of this past summer, licentiate Brandon Wilkins has been preaching and teaching there, regularly. The church has been blessed with growth and a fairly regular stream of visitors over the past several months. In the morning sermons, Mr. Wilkins has been preaching from Colossians, and the Sunday evening Bible study has been looking at Romans. At present, one of the pressing needs of the church is a new meeting location--one that is more visible and more functional for Sunday school classrooms and other needs. Please pray for the congregation at Christ Covenant as they begin to take strides towards effective outreach, service, and evangelism within the Crystal Lake community."

## **Doniphan, Missouri**

Kent Harding

Sovereign Grace Reformed Church

The Presbytery is on the move among our mission churches, and this is no less true for the mission church that is on the southern frontier of the Midwest Presbytery, Sovereign Grace Reformed Church in Doniphan, MO.

One of the main areas of encouragement for us has come through the avenue of brothers in our Presbytery, who carry oversight over us, coming to visit with us. I know that we are not the only mission church that is separated by many miles from their overseeing church, but how strengthening it is to have someone visit and say, "you are not alone," or to preach or offer advice. This is very important to us, and it invigorates a small work like ours through connectedness with brothers who love the Lord Jesus and who are familiar with the challenges that we face.

A few weeks ago Pastor Joe Hall filled the pulpit at Christ Presbyterian Church in St. Louis (thank you, Pastor Hall!) so that Pastor Churnock and his wife, Marsha, could travel 3+ hours for a visit with us. Besides preaching from Luke 15, Pastor Churnock took the opportunity to summarize what our church was working toward in order to become a particular church, i.e., leadership independence, stewardship independence, etc. This was very helpful.

Then, not too many weeks ago, elder John Lindley, from Christ Presbyterian, blessed us with his presence. Besides preaching a great message out of Hebrews, he spent a substantial amount of time over the weekend helping to interview our people for membership. We are thrilled to have experienced this kind of sacrificial and loving help and to now have people officially established as committed members. This is a pretty big deal to us, we are very encouraged, and the Presbytery is, indeed, on the move. In addition, it was "icing on the cake" to have been graced with a visit from Jim Bosgraf and Greg DeJong on the same weekend that elder Lindley was with us. We do not take it for granted!

The Presbytery is also on the move in Missouri because the 3 OPC churches in "the Show-Me-State" joined together for a summer picnic thanks to the organizing efforts of Pastor Wagenmaker's church. We have been strengthened by this connectedness.



Another way that the presbytery is on the move is that SGRC has added two more covenant children to the rolls through baptism, and we are very much looking forward to the birth of two more covenant children in the new year (especially since one of these will be our first grandchild...see, I'm not so old after all!). In addition, our congregation is very encouraged after recently changing our meeting facility. The new building is a much better fit for our current needs, and it offers much better potential for the future.

We're excited here in Doniphan. Thank you for remembering our efforts here that God may continue to build up His people in Christ, as well as bring in others who are not yet in the fold.

## **Eau Claire, Wisconsin**

Under the oversight of Hammond, Wisconsin Church  
Covenant Presbyterian Church

We thank God for the 5 faithful families that attend the work in Eau Claire, WI. During the month of September we are doing a 3 part series on Modern Church Issues. We have advertised these services in the local Newspaper, the University Newspaper and also put up posters around the city. We have advertised on Facebook, which has gotten us 6 different hits. We have also redesigned our Website, which has brought in one family to visit, and also another young man who is actually attending in Hammond right now and pursuing church membership. Please pray that new families will come and join with this work during these special services in September.

## **Independence, Iowa**

New Covenant Fellowship

Please remember this important work in prayer.

## **Moline, Illinois**

Ken Golden

Sovereign Grace OPC

God is slowly building his church. Sometimes it's easy to lose sight of this. When door-to-door invitations are poorly received, when evangelistic events seem to produce little fruit, when local visitors are far and few between, it becomes easy to lose focus. It becomes easier to evaluate progress based on tangible fruit. God's timing, however, is not our timing. He builds the church according to his schedule, not ours.

In saner moments, we reflect upon our growth over the last six months. We consider the commitment to corporate worship and Sunday school. We reflect on the willingness to attend missional identity meetings and grow as a community. We think about the desire to host Home Bible Studies. We contemplate the eagerness to go door-to-door and invite their friends and neighbors to baseball games, picnics, and worship services. And we remember that God is slowly building his church.

As we reflect on this, we see a mission work growing in its commitment to God. We perceive a community deepening in its love for one another. In worship we are learning to carry our crosses. In missional identity, we are learning how to pray. In Home Bible Studies we are opening our homes to God's word. In fellowship we are growing as an inclusive family of God. So when we come to our senses and observe what God is doing in his church, we are reminded of the scripture we chose as our theme verse: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9) We are far from strong and God is at work among us. He is slowly building his church in the Quad Cities.

## **Madison, Wisconsin**

Mark Jenkins

Providence Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Providence is petitioning this meeting of Presbytery to recognize them as a new and separate congregation—no longer a Home Missions work. Praise the Lord for the Lord's gracious providence and nurture as Madison has been a mission work for some 15 years.

## **Pella, Iowa**

Charles Muether

Hope Reformed Presbyterian Church

John R. Muether, our denominational church historian, stated in his pre-General Assembly address this year, "The OPC is a doctrinal church in an anti-doctrinal age, according to Woolley, a culture of dissent in an establishmentarian age, per Dennison, and a spiritual body in a politically-saturated and culture-obsessed age, writes Hart. If this is a countervailing narrative to the broader and more popular telling, it is not a new story that is being narrated. Rather, this is an echo from our Presbyterian past."

Hope Reformed Presbyterian Church is a mission work of the Presbytery of the Midwest in Pella, Iowa, that is just that—an echo from our Presbyterian past. As an echo in a town that once prided itself with a strong confessional Continental Reformed presence, Hope Reformed is a bit of an anomaly. What is this little Reformed Presbyterian church doing among the big mainline denominational churches that have moved toward a more congregational spirit in the last few years? There is no shortage of specialized ministries in Pella, but to have a little group that rents a space and touts polity, doctrine and something called regulative worship has seemed a little out of place. Those who visit us are often take notice of the small size (anything less than a few hundred in a Pella church is considered tiny), and then they notice that the thrust of the worship is not so centered on congregational participation, but the action seems to be pulpit-driven and quite vertical—God speaks and the people respond! More than one visitor has also observed that our fellowship is quite warm and close.

Our newest  
members at  
Hope OPC



The unity at Hope Reformed has been its strength since its formation, but the saints are concerned that we are growing old together like a family, which can become a detriment to our evangelistic efforts. Small fellowships like the former Protestant Reformed Church had fallen into an insular church mindset, and that is something we at HRPC do not want to do. We love each other dearly, but we want to have that little discomfort, properly understood, and challenge each other further to promote the glorious gospel witness.

As HRPC enters her third year of denominational and presbyterial support, we want to continue to seize on the church plant's strengths as well as work through the perceived challenges that have kept the work from substantial numerical growth. To that end, Hope is gearing up for more community-oriented Bible studies and the pastor's office will be floating from various coffee shops and other public places. Advertising and promotion will increase as well.

This past summer we and friends enjoyed "Hope Drive-In," an outdoor movie experience on the pastor's deck. Pastor Chuck Muether also taught New Testament Greek and led a Reformed primer class on Reformed Presbyterianism. This fall we resume our education program continue with "Evenings with Uncle John" (a study on his *Institutes*) along with a new DVD study, "The Truth Project." For our Sunday evening study we just completed a DVD study entitled, "Knowing Scripture," and the saints will be working through Michael Horton's *Introducing Covenant Theology*. Our studies on the covenant have previously included, O Palmer Robertson's *The Christ of the Covenants* and materials from J. Ligon Duncan.

For Sunday school we will be experiencing an interactive multi-media format on church history entitled, "Where in the World is Herman, the Flying Dominie?" We are retooling our Diner's Club and Sola Soupa programs to get more community involvement.

As important as these programs can be, nothing compares to the faithful preaching of God's Word. We have been blessed by God in the past year's expository preaching through the Gospel of Mark, the Letter to the Galatians, The Book of Ruth, The Epistle According to James, meditations on the Psalms and now the Letter to the Ephesians.

Hope Reformed Presbyterian Church is indeed an echo of our Presbyterian past, but we desire to be a faithful presence in Pella that radiates a submission to God's Word and a love to serve our neighbor according to Galatians 6:2.

## **Rockford, Illinois**

John Hilbelink  
Providence OPC

We give thanks for the faithful prayers and giving of the Presbytery of the Midwest. We are grateful for officers and members who love the Lord and the Reformed faith, and for the support in oversight, prayer, and fellowship of Christ Presbyterian Church, Janesville. We have been blessed with visitors from the Rockford area who have continued to worship



with us. Some have come because they were moved by the joy evidenced in the personal witness of members of the Providence congregation. Rejoice with us on the return and good report of Elliot Fowlks, a member of Team One of the short term mission trip for Japan disaster relief. We have also been blessed with the attendance of Yee Ming Lee, a member of Gospel Life OPC in Chicago, who has been in Rockford for six weeks this summer as part of her studies toward an advanced degree in pharmacology. She has been active in inviting her colleagues to church events. Give thanks for the baptisms of two infants.



Pray for the officers' training course that started this summer. And, pray that the Lord will bless the preaching of the gospel to Providence Church and to the visitors who attend.

Pastor John with new member Annelise Claire Greenwood

## **St. Louis, Missouri**

Todd Wagenmaker  
Gateway OPC

While I was trying to plant a church as a tentmaker in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Bill Acker, my overseeing pastor, said that he never saw a lot of fruit from direct outreach efforts, but as he faithfully shared the Gospel, God brought people to the church in unexpected ways. We see the "Acker principle" at work in St. Louis. We planned community Bible study/cookout/wiffle ball nights throughout the summer, and we passed out invitations to almost 2,000 homes surrounding our church. We did not have one person from the neighborhood come to any of the six fellowship nights. However, God continues to send individuals and families to our church to hear the Gospel and be encouraged. Although we have lost two key families to out of state job transfers, there are fewer empty seats than ever during our worship services. None of the people have come through our direct efforts, but God is sending people according to His plan and purpose.

If you were to visit Gateway OPC, you would see senior citizen "fathers and mothers in the faith," single college students, many young children, and some empty nesters. We have been averaging between forty and fifty souls on a Sunday morning.

We thank God for signs of His blessings. Please pray for wisdom for us-- I have been serving in a very part time capacity (my full time job is serving as headmaster of a local classical Christian school), but the growing number of people and needs mean that we will need a full time pastor very soon.

Also please remember our Regional Home Missionary Jim Bosgraf and the CHEX Committee in prayer as they carry out this important ministry of our Presbytery.

If you have any contacts in and of the respective areas, please contact the respective pastor. If you have contacts in any other area within our Presbytery, please contact Rev. Jim Bosgraf at [bosgraf.1@opc.org](mailto:bosgraf.1@opc.org) or 1-630-462-9201.



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