



Harvest Call

August 26, 2018

OPC Ecumenicity

The church of the apostolic days embraces all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues. There is no evidence in the New Testament for the diversification of distinct denominations and anything tending to such diversification was condemned (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10-13). The emphasis falls upon the oneness of faith (cf. Ephesians 4:5) and the oneness of the fellowship of the saints (cf. Ephesians 4:2-4; 11-16; Philippians 2:2, 3; 4:2).

Jesus' Prayer for Unity (John 17:20, 21):

It is a travesty of this text, as of all others bearing upon the unity of the church, to think of the unity for which Christ prayed apart from the unity in the bond of truth. Verse 21 must not be dissociated from verse 20. To divorce the unity for which Christ prayed from all that is involved in believing upon him through the apostolic witness is to sunder what Christ placed together. Furthermore, the pattern Jesus provides in this prayer—*"as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee"*—makes mockery of the application of the text when unity is divorced from the characterization which finds its analogy in trinitarian unity and harmony.

But while these and other distortions of this text are to be shunned, the prayer of Jesus does bear upon our question in two respects.

1. The fragmentation and consequent lack of fellowship, harmony, and cooperation which appear on the ecclesiastical scene are a patent contradiction of unity exemplified in that to which Jesus referred when he said, *"as thou, father, art in me and I in thee."*
2. The purpose stated in Jesus' prayer—*"that the world may believe that thou hast sent me"*—implies a manifestation observable by the world. Jesus prays for a visible unity that will bear witness to the world. The mysterious unity of believers with one another must come to visible expression so as to be instrumental in bringing conviction to the world.

OPC Sister Church of the Week

The Presbyterian Church in America

The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) was formed in 1973 to be a denomination that is *"Faithful to the Scriptures, True to the Reformed Faith, and Obedient to the Great Commission."*

The PCA is an evangelical denomination that proclaims the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The word *"evangelical"* comes from the Greek word meaning *"good news."* The PCA desires all people to trust in the saving work of Jesus and enjoy eternal life in him.

The PCA is a reformed denomination that believes in the biblical truth proclaimed during the Protestant Reformation. The Word of God, rather than tradition, is the only guide for the Church. God alone saves through his immeasurable mercy and according to his sovereign plan. They believe the system of doctrine taught in the Bible is summarized well in the Westminster Confession of Faith with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

They also desire to unite PCA congregations who hold common theological convictions but have diverse ministry practices, in order to expand the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ to multiple generations of people of *"every tribe and language and people and nation"* (Revelation 5:9). The PCA longs to join in cooperative ministry with other parts of the universal church to pursue God's global mission. They hope to engage the culture with Reformed thinking and leadership, along with deeds of love, mercy, and justice to show the transformational power of the gospel.

PRAYER:

- Please pray for the ministry, presence, and faithfulness of the PCA.
- Pray that the PCA may be steadfast as a living church with clear Reformed and Presbyterian roots.

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- Pray that the PCA may hold high her confession of Christ with testimony as living water in a dry and barren land.

OPC Congregation of the Week

Coeur d'Alene Reformed Church, ID - Praise God that he continues to bring new families and add them to the congregation.

Coeur d'Alene Reformed Church began four years ago when two brothers-in-law, Ryan Vander Feer and Brad Salie, formerly of Branch of Hope OPC in Torrance, California, became dissatisfied with the lack of a reformed presence in the Coeur d'Alene area. They began a Bible Study in 2014, and the Bible Study was received by the Presbytery of the Northwest as a mission work in 2015. The Presbytery called the Rev. Dr. David Graves to be the organizing pastor in 2016.



Rebekah and David Graves

Since Pastor David Graves and his wife Rebekah arrived in October of 2016 the Lord has doubled the congregation, largely come from families moving to North Idaho from California in search of better economic conditions. In fact, 75% of new communicant members have been Californian transplants - younger families with children.

PRAYER:

- That God would add older believers to our numbers as well. More fruit from evangelism efforts would see the conversion of the Lost. One unique outreach that is currently underway is an evangelistic Bible Study held, at the owner's request, at the Bulldog Pipe & Cigar Lounge.
- That the Lord would cause this outreach to bear fruit.
- Several men are currently in officer training, and the overseeing session hopes to petition Presbytery in the fall of 2019 to particularize the congregation. Pray for their preparation.

OPC Mission Work of the Week

Pasadena OPC, California - Matt Cotta shares two requests for prayer related to outreach in Pasadena. The first request is for a man (and his wife and son) who Matt met through his Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Bible study. This man was badly hurt by the church in his childhood, and while still professing to be a Christian, he has not been a member of the visible church for some time. Matt asks for prayer that his interactions with him will help to heal old hurts and show his need to worship with a body of believers.



Matthew and Lois Cotta

The second request is for a new ESL outreach held at the church on Sunday afternoons called “*Pasadena English Corner*.” This has primarily been attended by visiting scholars from China who have come to L.A. to finish degree work. After the class all are invited to attend the church’s evening Bible study and so far, many of them have chosen to do so. One of these men, whose English name is Ben, also asked about getting a Bible. Please pray for Ben, the continued development of this ministry, and that many would be led to Christ.

SouthWest Presbytery News

Sowing the Seeds of the Gospel in SW Houston

October 2015-July 2018

God’s Faithfulness through Good Shepherd OPC

In August of 2015, Pastor Robert Arendale contacted Mr. and Mrs. Steve Larson about helping to start a new OPC in Richmond, TX. From there the Larsons met the newly called Regional Home Missionary, Mark Sumpter and his wife, Peggy. Mark and Peggy moved to Richmond in September of that year.

The Sumpters met up with Mr. & Mrs. Grant Pettit of Katy—and they too were eager to launch a new church. For the next 4-5 months, the Larsons, Pettits, and Sumpters met for prayer; and they enjoyed singing, good food, and some planning. To see the work move forward, a Bible study began at the Larson home in April of 2016. What a blessing—to see the Smits and Joneses join in! Also, Casey Jones and her girls began to participate. We were blessed to have hospitality nights, Bible studies, and times of house to house fellowship. Outreach began to increase. We took up matters like, outdoor park evangelism, gospel literature distribution, and setting up a website.

Because our group worshiped at Cornerstone OPC (Jersey Village, TX), we approached the session in late 2016 about adopting us to be our sponsoring oversight and we were accepted. In February of 2017, we launched the video outreach Bible study called,

Christianity Explored. The Lord led us to the Grace Center, a church facility in Stafford, TX in late March/early April of 2017, where we continued as a Bible study. Anytime there’s an opportunity to develop leadership, we are excited to jump in and take part.

In mid-2017, we welcomed OPC Licentiate Mr. Miller Ansell as an OPC Church Planting Intern. Miller and Stephanie, along with the children, joined the group to assist in outreach and evangelism, and to keep working at gathering a core group. Miller Ansell served from July 2017 through June 2018.

We would be remiss if we didn’t include in our story a little of the God-ordained providence of experiencing the awe and terror of Hurricane Harvey over August 27-29, 2017. This gigantic storm humbled us to turn to the Lord in prayer and thanksgiving. Our Good Shepherd group worked together as volunteers to offer the Lord’s mercy to others who suffered in the aftermath of the storm.

With service, hospitality, and outreach, we ministered to dozens and dozens affected by the flooding. One remarkable blessing from the hurricane was the deep, abiding fellowship that we enjoyed through servants who came to Houston from all over the USA as OPC Disaster Response Ministry volunteers. Their service with compassion in the name of Christ resulted in more outreach for Good Shepherd.

On March 4, 2018, an evening worship began. We have continued to meet at the Grace Center in Stafford, where the size of our congregation varies from 20 to 35, depending how many OPC Disaster Response Ministry volunteers attend. Our own fairly consistent core has been around 13-16. Under the guidance of various Houston OPC church officers, in May of 2018, the group determined to petition the Presbytery of the Southwest to be received as a mission chapel of the OPC. What blessing! What opportunity!

We are poised to serve the Lord in a new facility beginning in September over at the Kids R Kids Learning Academy in Greatwood (the Sugar Land area). As God continues to lead us, we know that He will direct our steps in faith and in strength, “*Have I not*

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commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9). God has been our Rock, and we are thankful.

OBJECTIVES

1. For the Rev. Mark Sumpter, the PSW’s Regional Home Missionary, to step up his service over the next 12-18 months in the Good Shepherd work, since he and his wife reside in the SW Houston area.
2. To conduct a conference for our community over the next 8 months on some subject of relevance—biblical or history or theology. We want to make an impact with a strong teaching component for the Lord’s ministry and witness in our community.
3. To learn to work well with our provisional oversight until officers can be trained. We are grateful for the Rev. Adam York, Ruling Elder Coleman Simpkins, and the Rev. Mark Sumpter who serve as the provisional session; these men serve as the session augment on behalf of the Cornerstone OPC session (NW Houston).
4. To reach out specifically to Reformed people and to young families.
5. To make faithful use of a new facility to use for worship and ministry, which sets in a strategic area of SW Houston, where we might have permanence, stability, and community presence.

Please visit <https://gsopc.org/> for more information regarding Good Shepherd Mission work.

PRAYER:

- Ask the Lord to send 5 new families to us—September to December, 2018.
- Give thanks for the generosity of the families and singles who give to this ministry.

- Pray that the Lord would direct our steps with assisting in outreach and follow-up on Hurricane Harvey Flood Victims.

Listening In and Sounding Out

Miller Ansell (Houston church planting intern) will leave Houston August 31. He will report on to the field at Christ Presbyterian Church, Flower Mound, TX, September 1, 2018.

A bunch of local guys down here will help load his moving truck. Monseurs York, Simpkins, Hodson, and Sumpter are trying to gather funds for his last salary payment-check for September 1. God is good... He will supply money to meet all needs.

We’re wanting to plan carefully and help Miller. He goes on the payroll at Flower Mound either the 2nd or 3rd week of September. Mr. Miller will preach one more time at Good Shepherd before he and Stephanie move up to Dallas-Ft Worth.

- Pray for his ordination exams.
- Pray for his adjustments at Flower Mound.
- Join us in giving thanks for the work Miller did while with us. God sent us a gem!

We have 2-3, maybe 4 couples/singles who live in SE Houston. They appear to have some interest in the OPC. Adam York is the coordinating point-of-contact. They have found us on the internet.

- Pray that Good Shepherd may come bear great fruit lifting high the Name that is above all names, even the glorious King of kings.

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