

OPC Ecumenicity

Toward Perfecting Biblical Unity

The unity of the church is in Christ and it is both a given reality and also a requirement. The unity of the faith is both gift and mandate.

The church is compelled to give expression to this reality and requirement, this gift and mandate, by actively seeking the promised goal, namely, that of being one body which serves the Lord in perfect peace, purity, and unity. The ultimate goal of the unity of the church is nothing less than one world-wide presbyterian/reformed church.

The unity of the church is unity in Christ, unity in the gospel of Christ, *"unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God"* (Ephesians 4:13). This Christ, this gospel, this faith and knowledge, the church must confess. It is summarized for us in our Confession of Faith.

The present division into separate denominations is because of unfaithfulness to God as expressed in beliefs, teaching, and living, on the part of both individuals in the church and the churches that are contrary to the Word of God.

We find ourselves in this sinful situation as we undertake to pursue the mandate to unity. There exists between us and all other churches a sinful disunity that demands reconciliation in a biblical way. This sin must be faced and removed so that true and full unity and fellowship of the church may be reached.

In seeking actively the unity of the church, we must recognize several levels of separateness (i.e., degrees of purity) among the churches. There are presbyterian and Reformed churches that are more or less faithful. There are non-Reformed churches that are more or less faithful. There are also churches that have apostatized, and no longer have the right to be called church.

OPC Sister Church of the Week

The Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)

Reformed churches trace their history to apostolic times (Matthew 16:13-20, Acts 2) and before (e.g. Psalm 122). They trace their history through the 16th-century Protestant Reformation (when Catholicism was challenged by leaders such as Martin Luther) to today.

More recently, in the late 1940s migrants from the Netherlands settling in New Zealand expected to find their spiritual homes in existing churches of Reformed persuasion. Instead they found departures from Reformed doctrine and practice that they could not overlook.



Discussions commenced in Auckland in 1951 to establish an indigenous Reformed denomination. The Rev. J W (Bill) Deenick, arrived from the Netherlands in 1952 to facilitate the founders in the difficult work of starting a new denomination. The RCNZ were officially established in 1953 at a meeting (synod) in Wellington where churches from Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch were represented. Over the years further congregations have been established, and the denomination now comprises about 21 congregations.

Despite the Dutch background of many of the members of RCNZ churches, they strive to be a New Zealand church. The church focus is not on ethnic origin, but on God's calling, striving to practice Paul's words: *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Galatians 3:28).

The RCNZ are groups of Christian believers who confess that by nature they are sinners, but who have been saved by Jesus' sacrifice, and who desire to serve God together. They gather in public meetings to worship the living God. RCNZ services unite in singing praises to God and praying to Him. In worship God's people in the RCNZ hear God speak to from his word, and are encouraged in their Christian lives as His word is explained.

The RCNZ believes that Christian fellowship is important. As believers we share in Jesus Christ and in all his treasures and gifts. Thus the RCNZ consider it their duty to use their gifts readily cheerfully for the service and well-being of members of the congregation.

The membership of RCNZ churches represents a variety of nations and cultures, reflecting both the history and the diversity of the population of New Zealand. Equipping of the saints, and in particular young people in the church, is a challenge in a world that is increasingly hostile to the faith. Walking and living in the truths of the Reformed faith is notably at odds with mainstream culture and norms.

The RCNZ is encouraged to see young people coming to worship, many of whom arrive from evangelical and more traditional church cultures where the Bible is not central to church life. The Reformed faith is not mainstream in New Zealand, and thus is antithetical.

New Zealand has experienced exceptional economic growth over the past 20 years, with accompanying increase in wealth and apparent prosperity. Like Australia, New Zealand's housing bubble seems to be stagnating. The economy of New Zealand, as with that of Australia, is getting shaky. The apparent growth in wealth and prosperity impacts the RCNZ as it obscures the distinction between the sanctified life and the ways of the world.

PRAYERS:

- For continued steadfast faithfulness in Word, walk, and work.
- For warm and tender hearts for the gospel.

- For continued growth in grace and in strength.
- For increased zeal and commitment for mission work.
- For a powerful witness in the communities of RCNZ churches, and across New Zealand.

OPC Congregation of the Week

Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church (CRPC), Mount Airy, NC - is a witness of the gospel to the people of a city affectionately nicknamed Mayberry, since it is the hometown of Andy Griffith and the prototype for the fictional city made famous on the Andy Griffith Show. CRPC began in 1998 as a mission work of the newly formed Presbytery of the Southeast, and Organizing Pastor Brent Ferry began his labors in December, 2000. A graduate of Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, Brent was well known and appreciated for his faithful ministry of the Word in his preaching and teaching.



Pastor Scott Willet

The church began with numerous families and lots of children. Eventually three Ruling Elders were installed, though one has since "retired" and moved away from the area. Ruling Elders Mike Shields and Mark Mattson continue to serve faithfully, with a reputation for consistency and faithfulness in their leadership and servant roles within the church. Though currently there are no deacons in the congregation, there is a very active Deacons' Fund and a widespread spirit of helpfulness within the congregation. The first impression of the church remains one of a warm

greeting and genuine love among the people. The congregation currently worships with an attendance in the 30s, but with an increasing number of people visiting and beginning to attend regularly, that spirit of warm fellowship remains prominent.

In 2014, five well-established families began a mission work under the oversight of the CRPC Session in nearby Winston-Salem. Two additional families have moved to Winston and joined that group. After more than three years of worshipping together both morning and evening, enduring the natural and easily anticipated ebb and flow of a young mission work, Harvest OPC has just called an organizing pastor. Calvin Keller, currently pastoring at Cornerstone OPC in Chattanooga, will be requesting the presbytery in October to dissolve that relationship so that he can be installed as a Pastor of CRPC to labor as the organizing pastor in Winston-Salem.

Pastor Scott Willet was installed at CRPC in June 2017, having come to Mount Airy initially for an interim period of six months beginning in March 2016. A difficult season of life and ministry had brought about Pastor Ferry's request for a six-month sabbatical, and as that time came to an end he determined that he could not return to the ministry. In God's providence, it was a smooth transition, and Pastor Willet and the congregation were equally delighted when his "interim" status was finally removed! The Lord has blessed his ministry, with equal emphasis upon pastoral engagement and shepherding of individual members of the congregation as well as the public work of preaching and teaching.

Pastor Willet came to Mount Airy with nearly 30 years of previous pastoral experience, first in the PCA then, since 1999, in the OPC. He pastored the Staunton OPC in Virginia for ten years, followed by several difficult years at Redeemer OPC in Atlanta. When he and his wife, Sharon, found the new home near Mount Airy which they wanted to buy, its location in Virginia just across the state line was an occasion of gladness as they were able to return again to Virginia. They now have three daughters in the midst of and recently completing their years of college training. Many people in the OPC will remember praying for their

youngest, Ruth, 20 years ago this January, as the complications of her premature birth nearly ended her life before she left the hospital. By God's grace, not only was her life spared, but her sharp mind and overall vitality are a constant and abiding reminder of God's goodness to her. Some readers of this newsletter may have been among those who prayed for her many years ago.

PRAYERS:

- For our Harvest mission work in Winston-Salem, NC, as Organizing Pastor Calvin Keller will begin his labors there soon.
- For our outreach into Mount Airy, especially with a planned Walk Thru the Bible Seminar on October 27.
- For several families who have recently begun to visit with some regularity, and for others who might visit soon, that God would build up the strength of our congregation;
- For an abiding sense of love and fellowship among the congregation.
- For wisdom, patience and determination of the Session in the efforts to have several families return to the fellowship of the church who have left over the years, and for the fruitfulness of formal church discipline when circumstances make that necessary, such that there would be restoration.
- For Pastor Scott Willet, for the Lord's blessing upon both significant aspects of his ministry—the pastoral care of God's people and the labor of teaching and preaching; for healing within the whole Willet family, still recovering from the many burdens and conflicts they endured in previous years.

OPC Mission Work of the Week

Living Water OPC - In their last report, Living Water OPC had just moved into their new building and the congregation was excitedly preparing for outreach in the community. In the months since they have begun to put their outreach plans into action. First among

these plans was some door to door outreach in the neighborhood closest to the church.



Daniel and Amber Doleys

The results have not been an outright “success”, but God is surely using their efforts. Daniel shares that on one day he “visited 20-30 houses, only had about 10 people come to the door, and talked for a little with about 5 people. But, one woman visited the church the following Sunday, so we were excited about that!”

PRAYERS:

- That this visitor would return, and that good contacts would be made in future door to door efforts.
- For continued boldness, wisdom, and creative ideas for outreach in their new building, so that they may use it not just as a meeting place, but as a tool for evangelism.

building in Flower Mound, where the church prospered and grew.



John and Mary Jo Canales

In 2005, Christ Church welcomed the Rev. John Canales as its new pastor. An astrophysicist by training, Pastor Canales served in the US Air Force in Space Command before entering pastoral ministry and serving pastorates in Florida, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. With Christ Church across the street from the largest high school in the area, next door to a mosque and surrounded by a sizable Hispanic population, Pastor Canales came to Flower Mound because he was attracted to these untapped mission opportunities. In the years since, Christ Church has planted a daughter church in Denton and a Hispanic missions church on its own grounds, and has developed a robust relationship with the mosque next door, engaging in regular activities of dialogue and outreach. The church also enjoys healthy teaching, fellowship, family and music ministries.

Christ Church joined the OPC in May of this year, after becoming increasingly disillusioned with the direction and leadership of its former presbytery in the PCA. The congregation is excited about its new denominational home and has recently called Miller Ansell, formerly a church planting intern at Good Shepherd Mission in Houston, as an Associate Pastor of Outreach as its heads into a new future of ministry opportunities. The church is currently served by two ruling elders and two

SouthWest Presbytery News

Christ Presbyterian Church, Flower Mound, TX - was originally planted in the mid-1980's in Denton, Texas, by the North Texas Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America. After two very short pastorates in the space of three years, the Lord blessed Christ Church with the ministry of the Rev. David Sherwood, who served the church fifteen years. Pastor Sherwood reoriented the worship of the church along classically Reformed lines, and led the congregation from Denton to Lewisville, before finally settling the church in a new

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deacons, with two diaconal assistants expected to be ordained as deacons by the end of the year.



PRAYERS:

- That Christ Church will remain faithful in its preaching, shepherding and outreach.
- For Miller Ansell and his family as they adjust to life and ministry in Flower Mound.
- That the congregation will grow to the numbers it had last year before moving into the OPC.
- That new outreach initiatives in the immediate neighborhood will allow the church to winsomely present Christ.

Presbytery Update

The Presbytery of the Southwest held its 2018 Fall Stated Meeting September 21-22, 2018, at Christ Presbyterian Church (OPC), Flower Mound, TX. The work of this meeting gives great cause for giving thanks and to render praise to the Lord of lords. Here is a brief report of actions taken:

- Mr. Miller Ansell successfully completed his floor examination and was enrolled in the Presbytery of the Southwest as a minister of the Word in the OPC.
- Christ Presbyterian Church, Flower Mound, TX, was recognized as a member church of the Presbytery of the Southwest and the Rev. John Canales was installed as its minister. That

same day the Presbytery ordained and installed Rev. Ansell into service at Christ Presbyterian Church, Flower Mound, TX.

- Rev. Todd Bordow's call to Cornerstone OPC, Houston, TX, was approved. A service of installation is being prepared.
- Rev. Robert Arendale was called to serve the Presbytery as a teacher. His call was approved and a service of installation is being prepared.
- Rev. Todd Dole's call to serve Covenant Presbyterian Church (OPC), Abilene, TX, was approved. A service of installation is being prepared.
- Rev. Nicholas Lammé was examined and called by the Presbytery as its Evangelist to the Houston Harvey Relief work.
- The Presbytery acted to request from the OPC Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension to support two new works: New Braunfels and Wichita in Texas. We will hear more regarding this later in the year.
- Rev. F. Allan Story was granted status as a retired minister of the PSW.
- The Presbytery erected a temporary committee on General Assembly arrangements to facilitate preparation to hold the 2019 86th General Assembly of the OPC at the University of Texas, Dallas.

PRAYERS:

- For the blessings of Almighty God upon these decisions and works.
- That God's Name may be made great and be glorified in the work that has been charged to these officers of His Church.

Listening In and Sounding Out

New Braunfels Mission work of South Austin Presbyterian Church - The Davis & Lovelady families became members of South Austin Presbyterian in 2015. While attracted to the Church's Confessional Integrity and love of God's people they drove over an hour to worship. Both desired to have an OPC church

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closer to their common community in New Braunfels, Texas.

A men's weekly early morning bible study on Tuesdays at a New Braunfels Coffee house was started to lead to a church plant. The initial steady group enjoyed learning but did not have an interest in joining a new work. An informational meeting was organized by Pastor Sumpter (Regional Home Missionary of the PSW. Several people were invited but only one man showed up! A decision was made to lead a few more Bible studies - these finally started to gain momentum.

Eventually some families started to show interest and with a critical mass of 20 people the Session of South Austin Presbyterian Church gave approval to start meeting on Sundays. A total of 13 churches in the area rejected an approach to allow use of their meeting facilities. Then the Lord opened the doors of the local PCUSA church where services are held at 3:15 p.m. on Sundays. The first service was Sunday, March 25, 2018.

Richly blessed with consistent pulpit supply NBOPC can hold afternoon worship service, take a short break, and then start a 20 minute class from the Westminster Shorter Catechism for all families. Many who attend are new to the Reformed Faith.

During the Summer a mid week bible studies is being held at two homes. The midweek studies are on hold to focus on a new members classes.



The group continues to invite anyone they meet to join NBOPC for worship of the Lord. NBOPC are blessed to have a cross section of ages - some seniors, middle aged, young families & little kids. The has directed some to NBOPC via their internet search, but the most

effective means of church growth has been by way of personal invitation. Prayer & study has been a focus of the new work. The catechism classes and mid week studies has caused families get to know each other and to commit to pray for one another. Even though NBOPC are in very early days, they are praying for a church planter. They covet the prayers of the saints that the Lord may bless this work.

PRAYERS:

- A facility that for morning worship services
- Greater community awareness and exposure of the NBOPC work
- For seniors with various ailments
- For young families with small children, babies.
- For hard-working - Gal 6:9
- For growth and for bonding together with a firm commitment to planting a confessional Reformed Church in the New Braunfels area

Hurricane Florence Update

There is a need for significant recovery efforts after Florence impacted North Carolina. The OPC congregations in New Bern and the two congregations in Wilmington were spared from much of the devastation in the surrounding area, but several homes destroyed in the New Bern congregation and more destroyed in Wilmington.

PRAYERS:

- Please pray for the comfort of the saints and for the neighborhoods impacted by hurricane Florence.
- That the cleanup effort may be fruitful to the growth of the kingdom of Christ.

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