



Harvest Call

November 25, 2018

OPC Ecumenicity

OPC Sister Church

Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW)

In 1986 the London Presbyterian Conference drew together a group of ministers and other active Christians who wanted to see a new Presbyterian Church in England. From that conference arose the Presbyterian Association in England (PAE). From 1987, a group of ministers and other men formed a council and started to meet in London on a regular basis. This was the time when a renascent Presbyterianism started to take root in England. Three small congregations started Sunday meetings, and two of these three, Cambridge and Durham, became EPCEW churches in due course.

In 1991, an interim Presbytery was established consisting of elders from five congregations: Blackburn, Cambridge, Chelmsford, Durham and East Hull. In 1996 these churches declared themselves to be a Presbytery, taking the name “*Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales.*”

In 2000, two congregations in Cardiff, Immanuel and Bethel were received into the fellowship of the EPCEW. The EPCEW is aggressively founding new congregations and receiving them into their federation. There have been recent church plants in the Salford/Manchester area and there is work to establish additional church plants in Oxford and Sunderland. They are actively looking to plant churches throughout England and Wales. Today there are approximately 20 EPCEW congregations.

PRAYERS:

- Praises for God’s blessings of growth.
- For faithful walk and witness.
- That the Lord shall continue to establish His work among His people.

OPC Sister Congregation

Omaha Reformed Church (RCUS), Omaha, NE - Rev. Randall Klynsma

The church plant, known as Omaha Reformed Church began holding worship services in September 2015. Early on, under the oversight of St. John’s Reformed Church of Lincoln, NE, Rev. Lee Johnson and Dr. Maynard Koerner committed themselves to hold weekly Bible studies and worship services in Omaha.

From these early days, several families committed to the work. While some have moved away from the Omaha area, members and regular attendees have remained and been faithfully committed to the work. As the current pastor, Rev. Randall Klynsma has labored in the field since February 2016.



Rev. Klynsma with new members Kala & Keith

From his arrival one challenge was developing relationships and finding witnessing opportunities with those whom the Lord places before him. An early key to contact within the community was developing a website and becoming visible on social media. Omaha Reformed set to show forth a clear, bold, and yet inviting and faithful church where the Bible and historic teachings of the faith are heartily embraced and clearly taught.

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Omaha Reformed seeks to practice “explicit creedalism.” Rev. Klynsma says: *“I believe every church should plant their creedal or confessional flag prominently to identify what they believe and that they stand for the historic truths of the Christian Faith. The need for this is apparent. If you ever searched online for a church to visit or attend, it is almost impossible to find out what any particular church believes and teaches. I remember a former member’s account of their search for a faithful church. When visiting with the minister of the church they had recently attended, he said that as a family they were just looking for a church that believed in the Apostles Creed. The minister replied, well I’m pretty sure that some of our members believe that. Sad.”*



The Omaha Reformed church’s commitment to the historic creeds and Reformed confessions is prominent on the opening page of their website. *“We believe and teach what the Christian Church has always believed.”* And again, *“Where the Ancient Truths Live!”* Along this line, they have recently published a booklet that they have been working on for several years. **THE COMPLETE GOSPEL** is a low-cost, mass-produced copy of the Creeds and Heidelberg Catechism, with an introduction suitable for evangelism.

After the RCUS Synod approved the project the initial run was 3,000 copies. They hope to publish another 10,000 and hopefully broaden the influence of the

Faith once for all delivered to the saints (and summarized in the Heidelberg).

This handout is offered to all NAPARC Churches and is available for individuals to use also. See website: www.thecompletegospel.net

Omaha Reformed makes use of new member materials, **THE BASICS OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE REFORMED FAITH**. Those who wish to join Omaha Reformed are interviewed and approved by the spiritual council of St. John’s Reformed (the overseeing church). With thanks to the Lord for their faith and commitment and in gladness they can now join in more fully in the life and ministry of the church.

By God’s grace and providence, Omaha Reformed trust that He will bless their efforts and accomplish the fullness of His will. You are encouraged to join them in praying that the Only One who can will open blind eyes and soften hard hearts, and give life to those who are dead.

Rev. Klynsma says: *“We are grateful that over the last two years we have been enjoying a period of peace and joy. Our core group has remained quite stable and over the last few months we’ve been blessed by a number of visitors that seem quite pleased to have found us.”*

PRAISES:

- For increase in average attendance.
- For ability to pay off the building debt.
- For the Lord’s work in knitting hearts together in the bonds of Christ.

PRAYERS:

- Continued thirst for worship and a growing zeal to pray for God’s gathering His people together.
- That visitors and members would see a welcome sense of belonging and grow in their relationship with the Lord and each other.
- For those who are spiritually lost and blinded by sin, to receive sight to see and ears that hear the Word.

OPC Congregation of the Week

Bethel Reformed OPC, Fremont, MI

Bethel OPC (formerly Fremont OPC) began as a mission work in the Spring of 2008. A couple of families were disappointed with the lack of a solid reformed and biblical church in the town of Fremont. One of these couples visited the nearby (40 minute drive) Little Farms Chapel (OPC) in Marne, MI, and eventually joined that congregation. In time they asked the session of LFC to assist them in planting an OPC congregation in Fremont. A core group was gathered and Rev. Dr. Norm DeJong, who had been attending LFC, came out of retirement to be the first organizing pastor.

Dr. DeJong retired 'again' when Rev. Vern Picknally was called to be the next organizing pastor in September of 2011. Pastor Vern came from Bethel OPC in rural Carson, ND, having served there for 12 years.



Pastor Picknally

On February 5th, 2016, the mission work was particularized and Pastor Vern was installed as her first pastor. At the same time two elders were installed: Mr. Brian Guikema, a dairy farmer, and Mr. Ted VanderKooi, a general surgeon (who removed Pastor's Vern's gall bladder a few years ago). A year after that, the Lord raised up three deacons to serve the congregation. One of those deacons recently moved

to Wisconsin to be closer to family so Bethel now have two active deacons.

The membership of Bethel Reformed is about 70 at this time. A couple of new families have joined Bethel over the last couple of months. A couple from Austin, TX, just moved to Fremont a couple of weeks ago (they visited Bethel over the last couple of summers to avoid the Austin heat). They are currently members of Redeemer PCA (Austin) and it is expected that they will eventually transfer their membership to Bethel OPC.

Last year Rev. Terry Thole (a retired OPC pastor) moved to Fremont. He and his wife Karen have been a great blessing to Bethel and the work there. He has a great heart for evangelism and is regularly sharing the gospel with those he comes into contact with.

Fremont, MI, is a small town of approximately 4,000 people, about an hour north of Grand Rapids. It is the home of Gerber Baby Food (now owned by Nestle). Fremont (and the surrounding area) is the home of many lakes. Bethel is visited by those who vacation to escape the summer months. Western Michigan has a rich Reformed and Biblical preaching and teaching heritage. However, many churches in the area have wandered from their fertile biblical historical roots. Fremont is consequently in great need of gospel witness. Bethel OPC seeks to shine the full bright light of the gospel in the Fremont area.

PRAYERS:

- For blessings upon the mid-week Bible Study on evangelism.
- For growth in orthodoxy and in orthopraxy.
- For faithful walk and witness.
- That Bethel elders as they balance work and church work and that the Lord would give them wisdom and strength.
- For the deacons as they tend to mercy ministry.
- Pray for strength, wisdom, and faithfulness for the ministry of Pastor Vern.
- Praise God for a couple of new babies born in the congregation.

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- Praise God for the new couples that have joined.
- Pray for a steady stream of visitors with interest to pursue membership.

OPC Mission Work of the Week

OPC Haiti Mission Work - From Ben Hopp

Widespread demonstrations against the government were called for Sunday, November 18th, a national holiday - Battle of Vertières. While there were demonstrations, they mercifully were not to the desired extent of the planners. Haiti still remains paralyzed. Fear has taken hold. Everyone is hunkering down and staying home. Schools have been closed, and most businesses remain closed as well because of threats of violence or because their employees can't make it to work. Public transportation (tap-taps) is non-existent at the moment. Only motorcycles are on the roads from time to time moving people around locally. This has been the case since Saturday afternoon.

Corruption and inaction on the part of the government have protests calling for the president's resignation and the government to step down. In the past, United Nations peacekeepers have been here to back up the police and help restore order. They are no longer here. Uncertainty rules right now. The memory of July's widespread violence remains at the forefront of people's minds. National problems have been compounded by more local issues such as a resurgence of gang activities - threats, gunfights where innocent bystanders are killed, and invasions and burnings of homes. The police force is too small to combat all this crime. People are justifiably fearful.

In our local town, a roving gang has actively threatened landowners on and near the beach for several months. They have burned many homes; burned an elementary school; ruined a health clinic; and stolen goats, cows and horses - all in an attempt to scare people off their land. On Saturday, these bandits shot a security guard just to steal solar panels. Things are escalating and no authority is stepping in.

Only the Gospel can bring hope and peace to Haiti right now. *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling."* (Psalm 46:1-2 ESV)

PRAYERS:

- For an end to the uncertainty and a return to regular activities.
- That the Haitian government will address concerns regarding corruption and living conditions.
- That the churches will be able to worship with security.
- For the Hopp family ability to concentrate on our daily work amid all the upheaval.
- Praise that scheduled demonstrations were not as widespread or dangerous as they could have been.
- Praise that all our church members are currently safe and unharmed.
- Praise that in this "quiet" we can have more focused time in the Scriptures and in prayer.

SouthWest Presbytery News

South Austin Presbyterian Church (SAPC) - Austin, TX

A deeply rooted bible belt runs right through the heart of Texas. Many parts of the state have entrenched religious heritage. The people of Texas have characteristic kindness and charity. They love life and all the freedoms they can muster. Austin, TX, is a very different city. The saying goes: *"Keep Austin Weird!"*

Yet, in many ways, Austin is quite typical. It is busy and industrious. The people there love life, and live it to the fullest. They work, play, learn, exercise and eat (a lot!) in the city. The city is home to the University of Texas. Politics, education and football are the passions of the people of the city.

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Despite the visible culture of a Southern Baptist -based religion there is deep-seated secularism. There are many tattoo shops, graffiti parks, live music and there is an abiding hippie culture.

There are many churches in Austin. And it seems everyone is coming to Austin to start a new church. There are not many church buildings - but new churches being started and are meeting, like SAPC, in school buildings. Many of these churches seek desperately to fit into the Austin culture. Often that means being a “*non-traditional, inclusive church.*”



Pastor James J. Cassidy

How can a straight-laced OPC church, make it in a town of tattoos, hippies and live blues music? Reformed worship, with a blend of historic hymns and Psalms, along with a fairly formal liturgy and expository preaching is about as weird as it gets in Austin. Some Austinites have reported experiencing a certain level of dysphoria when attending our services! So, what is a fairly buttoned-up confessional Presbyterian church to do in such a place?

To use the words of Paul; SAPC seeks to speak the truth in love. Remaining self-consciously and unapologetically Reformed in doctrine and practice. Committed to love the lost, the wandering and the stranger. All this, of course, is done by God’s grace and - in human fallenness - very imperfectly. Yet, from her beginnings God has been kind to SAPC!

In 2008 members of Providence OPC, Pflugerville, Texas, started a bible study in Elder Terpstra’s home. The group grew to 18 regulars and sometimes peaked at 28 people. It was not long before the group began asking to plant a new OPC congregation. The bible study group worked through the Westminster Confession, then book of Deuteronomy, the book of Mark, and finally the Heidelberg Catechism. With passing of time the prayerful resolve to plant a church became stronger. In late 2013 the Presbytery of the Southwest gave approval to move towards planting.



Dr. James "Jim" Cassidy was called to pastor SAPC since its inception as a daughter congregation of Providence Presbyterian Church, Pflugerville, Texas. SAPC began worship services in July 2014 with a core group of 20 folks, drawn from Providence OPC. SAPC was particularized in February 2015 with one elder. The Lord has raised up and gifted SAPC with two deacons and a second ruling elder. Sunday morning attendance runs between 50-70. Evening worship attendance hovers around half of that.

SAPC set its desire to plant another another confessional Presbyterian church within 5 years with robust, historic worship in central Texas. SAPC didn’t know where. The Lord brought two families from the New Braunfels area, a town about 45 minutes south of Austin. They became the core of a group that began worship services in March of this year. SPAC rejoices to help make Christ known in New Braunfels and

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considers this a rather glorious opportunity to grow the reach of Christ's kingdom!

PRAYERS:

- Give thanks to God for all his tender mercies to SAPC over the past four years.
- For continued boldness in Gospel witness.
- Wisdom for SAPC elders and deacons as they seek to nurture the flock of God as faithful servants and under-shepherds.
- For outreach in New Braunfels and the fledgling congregation that is meeting there for worship.
- For meeting locations for SAPC and for New Braunfels.
- For peace and tranquility through the instabilities of moving between meeting places.
- That growth of the congregation will not be stunted.
- For our Lord to graciously and abundantly bless the regular and ordinary ministry of the means of grace.

Listening In and Sounding Out

Cornerstone OPC (Houston NW), TX

This is an exciting time in the life of Cornerstone OPC, Houston, Texas! During the months of November and December, Cornerstone OPC expects to add 22 new members to the church roll.

This is an appropriate time to remember our own entry into the covenant community of Christ the King of kings, to remember our vows of covenant faithfulness, and to remind each other of the mercies and works of our great God. When the Lord adds to the number of His household, not only do those enter the congregation make a promise of fidelity, but the whole congregation affirms their responsibilities to provide covenant nurture for all within the gates of Zion.

The Lord God is due all the glory and the honor of bringing in the elect. He is the Living God who dwells with His people. *"You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy."* (Leviticus 19:2) *"I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God."* (Exodus 29:45-46) *"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel."* (Hebrews 12:22-24).

PRAISES:

- For the seven (7) to be received as covenant members by the rite of infant baptism.
- For two (2) new members who shall be joining by profession of faith and shall receive the covenant sign and seal of baptism.
- Praise the Lord with Cornerstone OPC and continue to pray for the congregation as they press forward for the glory of Christ.

***Harvest Call is published by South Austin
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