



# Harvest Call

December 9, 2018

## OPC Ecumenicity

### Turning the World Upside Down

The Lord gave His Church the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20). The disciples to whom He gave instructions to mobilize must have felt overwhelmed as they set out upon the Roman empire and the borders beyond. They were sent to proclaim the gospel of the Living Christ — the One who passed through death unto resurrection. Total assurance of salvation is given Christ's elect who receive the promised resurrection in Him. There simply is no other saving power in all the created order.

By His Spirit, Christ sends the gospel into all the world — thus we must be vigilant in prayer that the message of salvation will sound forth across the four corners of the globe. We may feel intimidated at the task to herald the good news far and near, and through myopia we may miss a most obvious provision that the Lord is working before our very eyes. The Church is being blessed in that the Lord is moving the world closer to us than ever before.

We may see in the rise of the secular religion of humanism an oppressive influence. We may even see the migratory influx of people who adhere to a religion that is foreign to the Word of God as revealed in the Bible as offensive to the foundations of our faith.

Let us not lose sight of the fact that the Lord is bringing the mission field to our front door. Dare we to engage our neighbors to befriend them for the sake of the gospel? God's grace and mercy overwhelm us.

The Lord's ways are not according to human logic. God's righteousness far exceeds our reasoning sense of justice. The Lord's Word will not be silenced, the Lord is bringing in His elect — they will hear and obey the voice of the Good Shepherd.

When countries shut their borders to close off the mission field, the Lord moves the mission field to the front door of the Church. Let us open the doors to invite the stranger in.

#### PRAYERS:

- For Reformed and Presbyterian churches to welcome visitors with enthusiasm.
- For our churches to send out a flood of invitations to hail our new friends to come and hear the good news.
- For the means to reach the crowd.
- For great effect through the simple ministry of Word and sacrament.
- For Kingdom growth and for the protection of the saints.

**Source:** Inspired by The Trumpet (URCNA)

### Sister Congregation

#### Reformation Presbyterian Church, Snellville, GA

Reformation Presbyterian Church, Snellville, GA, is a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), and is one of four congregations in the denomination's Presbytery of the United States of America.

The work began as a preaching station in 2004 and was raised to a fully sanctioned charge in 2006. The church was served by the ministry of Rev. Warren Gardner from 2004 until his retirement in 2017.

Rev. Brent Evans was inducted as the pastor the same year. Pastor Evans is bivocational.

Reformation Presbyterian Church are blessed with about fifteen covenant children in the congregation. Worship meetings are held in a rented church building.

#### PRAYERS:

- For the covenant children, their growth in grace and knowledge of their covenant responsibilities.
- For the means to support Rev. Evans full-time.
- For their search for potential alternative meeting places.

## OPC Congregation

### Shiloh Presbyterian Church (SPC), Raleigh, Presbytery of the Southeast

SPC was founded, by God's grace, eight years ago as a plant out of Pilgrim OPC, also in Raleigh. Planted with approximately 80 people, the Lord in his mercy has advanced his kingdom, by adding approximately 100 more souls in the subsequent years. Shiloh delights in worship, both morning and evening.

The Lord has granted the church a wonderful facility, just five or so minutes from downtown Raleigh, which in the Lord's providence is a rapidly growing city, with the IT and medical sectors dominating the area.

These last few years of growth have seen the need to call a second pastor to work alongside Pastor Matt Holst. The Lord has provided bountifully by bringing the Rev. David Okken to Shiloh, along with his wife Sunshine and children, Caleb, Megan and Jacob. Shiloh rejoices in this provision: the Lord has truly provided over and above their expectations.

David comes with 17 years outreach and missions experience, all of which he has spent in Uganda. Pastors Holst and Okken will pastor, preach and evangelize together, though Pastor Okken will be leading the church in outreach.

Pray that his years of experience will bear fruit in Raleigh, and especially in the lives of the saints at Shiloh. They are especially looking to new areas of outreach, including the University of North Carolina and North Carolina State University. Truly the fields are ripe and God has supplied the laborers.

They desire that Shiloh should be a warm place of fellowship for those within the church, and also a place where those who do not know the Lord receive the undiluted Word, with the same warm fellowship.

Above all Shiloh Presbyterian Church seeks to glorify God in all the they do, looking to Him for strength and encouragement.

## PRAYERS:

- For the Okkens as they transition to Raleigh (arriving 11/24) and as Pastor David begins his ministry in December.
- That the Lord will increase the congregation.
- For grace and love for Him and each other.

## OPC Mission Work of the Week

### Christ's Neighborhood

Posted on a wall in Resurrection OPC is a large map of the city of Oshkosh, WI. Resurrection is pinpointed, and five blocks in every direction from the church are highlighted. Every Saturday at 10 am, Pastor Bob Holda and a small group of church members gather in front of the map to plan their route for door-to-door visits that day, and to pray. It is a densely populated area, and in the span of these blocks there are thousands of homes and countless souls who need Christ.

Armed with a checklist, outreach materials, and copies of Christ Proclaims a Better Way, Holda and the church members break into groups and spend about an hour canvassing the neighborhood. The checklist is for the church's sake, to keep record of their visits. But they're not taking notes while talking to people; they do this between visits and pray as they walk from home to home. The things they write down include every address where a door was opened, if the people already had a church home, or if they weren't interested in talking.

This is their first pass of the neighborhood and they are seeking to do it very intentionally. On the second pass they hope to reconnect with those who seemed open to their visit, return to the homes where no one answered the door, and also respect those who did not wish for a return visit. Holda says, *"If someone is frustrated with us, then it could be that the Lord is not calling that person right now. We trust these people to the Lord."*

What are some of the things they say when the door is opened? It's usually quite simple: *"Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_."*

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I'm a member of a church in the neighborhood, and we'd like you to know that we're here. If you have any needs we can help you with, we want you to know that we're happy to serve you." Holda shares they're also careful to ask questions with respect when it comes to things like the person's name or background. "May I ask \_\_\_?" comes across as less threatening and more kind.

Resurrection only recently moved to the area, but the church where they worship still has some lingering roots in the community. Holda says, "This was originally a Roman Catholic church, and ten years ago the neighborhood was filled with Roman Catholics who walked to church each Sunday." The Roman Catholic church was also a hub of activity in the city, hosting a huge festival in their parking lot every fall. "The former presence of this church is still on the consciousness of the middle-aged and older people in the neighborhood," and that sometimes opens the door for conversation on their visits. Holda and the crew at times will say, "We're new to the neighborhood- is there anything you can tell us about it? Were you here when this was a Roman Catholic church?"

Respect and boldness are two things they keep in mind as they walk. Holda says that sometimes it can feel like they are imposing on the neighborhood, but he encourages and reminds his people that, in fact, "this is Christ's neighborhood. We don't need to be ashamed. Yes, we need to be kind and respectful, but we're submitting to Christ first and foremost... Our confidence is not in us, but in God who has providentially put us in this neighborhood to serve it."

Holda further confesses, "This is the turf we've been given by God to interact with, and we feel that burden. On Sunday mornings, the homes are full and the pews are not. We want to see that reversed! But in order for that to happen, we have to go where people live and not simply wait for them to come to us."

Already they are experiencing fruit from this outreach, with three visitors coming as a direct result of their door to door invitations. But God is also blessing this outreach in another way; he is using it to teach the church members involved. "We are growing in boldness, in zeal, in wisdom. An interesting thing we've

seen is that the most receptive people are not those who have the nicest homes or who appear to have it all together. We can have a misconception that those who look good on the outside are closer to the Kingdom, but it's often those who are broken and needy who are, in fact, closest," says Holda.

He goes on, "Sometimes when you're a new church and you know that you need to grow and fill the collection plate, the temptation can be to think, 'this person has it all together- they may have something to contribute.'" But instead, he says, "We should want to be the kind of church that has vagabonds in the pews. People who are only receiving. Who are broken. Needy. Like us. People with an obvious earthly need that reflect the deeper need we all have spiritually. When we look at the example of Christ, we realize that he didn't choose to be served as much as he chose to serve others. We should have that same heart."

"We're not here, yet," Holda confesses. "These convictions are just dawning on us. But we hope and pray that they brighten and increase and warm the gospel in our hearts even more."

#### Source:

<https://chmce.org/2018/10/christs-neighborhood/>

## SouthWest Presbytery News

### Albuquerque Reformed Church, NM, Pastor John Hunt

Albuquerque Reformed Church is thirty-seven years into its journey. One founding member, Mrs. Jennifer Takahashi, continues to delight in the life of the congregation. She joined some time after Rev. Chris Wisdom arrived as the organizing pastor of the then mission work.

Though now relocated, Mr. Roger Moore a former ruling elder transferred from Roswell OPC on November 4, 1983. He was a member of the original core team. The first meeting of the Albuquerque Session took place on November 4, 1983. Rev. Chris Wisdom officiated at the weddings of Mr. Moore and also of Mrs. Takahashi.

Rev. Wisdom's successor was Rev. Tim Barrow. Though Rev. Jack Peterson much assisted prior to obtaining official mission status, upon the departure of Rev. Barrow in 1990, Rev. Peterson provided much needed assistance. Albuquerque Reformed Church at the time was called Covenant of Grace Church.

Pastor Hunt has served the congregation since 1991. While the church was without a pastor, in addition to Mr. Gary Davenport's served as an elder and exhorter. Reverends Roger Gibbons, Roger Ramsey, and Jack Peterson provided pulpit supply. These pioneers have transferred their membership to the Church Triumphant. Pastor Hunt finds it an honor to have worked with Rev. Peterson on the Candidates and Credentials Committee, and on the Young Peoples' Camp Committee.

When Rev. Glenn Jerrell left Roswell OPC, Roswell, NM, Rev. Hunt and Rev. Peterson filled a void and assisted the session. When that time eventually came, it was an agonizing decision to dissolve the Roswell congregation. Rev. Peterson was there to encourage and direct. We must not forget the labors of those who have preceded us in death. Albuquerque Reformed Church would not be the same without the generous nurture and influence of key men of the Presbytery of the Southwest.

Rev. Glenn Jerrell originally made contact with Mrs. Janette Mackenzie and her friend Mrs. Addie Alcorn, starting a bible study in Addie's home. The bible study continued to grow until a group of sufficient size was able to call Rev. Chris Wisdom to pastor the new mission work. Under his ministry God brought numerical and spiritual growth. Mr. Davenport came while Rev. Wisdom was completing his tenure. Eventually, Mr. Davenport became the regional home missionary of the Presbytery of the Southwest. He was ordained to assist Rev. Hunt in serving the church in Albuquerque.

The influence of all the men of the Presbytery who have labored to serve Albuquerque Reformed Church is evident. The congregation consistently supports the Presbyterian form of government and worship. The fathers and brothers of the Presbytery have taught them to be welcoming and an always Reformed and

Presbyterian church; singing Psalms and hymns; reciting the Creeds or the Confession; taking seriously the observance of the Sacraments.

Pastor Hunt leads a Bible study in Galatians in Los Lunas, NM, at a coffee/café shop called Europa. It is owned by a long-time friend. One couple began attending two weeks ago — they are hanging onto the words of Scripture.

#### PRAYERS:

- Thanks for Presbytery financial aid.
- For growth and spiritual maturity.
- For wisdom and boldness. (Albuquerque is a challenging city in which to minister.)
- Praise for the excellent location.
- That Hank and Kathleen will find a welcome home at Albuquerque Reformed Church.

## Listening In and Sounding Out

### Stephen Doe Update - day 25 in the ICU

*"Blood work is a little better. Big event of the day was the tracheostomy, that is a short breathing tube through his neck, which went well without complications. After a couple days, it might be possible for him to start talking, even with the trache. His tablet has mostly been used for music, but he did successfully tap a letter on the keyboard, and we might try more tomorrow so he could communicate better, until he can start speaking. Thank you for your faithful prayers."*

#### PRAYERS:

- For Rev. Doe's continued recovery and restoration to health.

**Harvest Call is published by South Austin  
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