



Harvest Call

December 23, 2018

Mission Mindedness

SOMETIMES, when the days seem darkened, when friends we have trusted fail us, when God's cause seems unpopular, when we turn our thoughts inward and see there only dismal failure and sin, we are tempted to lose courage, to retreat from life's battles. "Give me a little peace" cries the soul, "away from the malice, misrepresentation and jangling of men." But the soldier cannot withdraw to nurse bruises or to listen to the birds far away from the battlefield where the Lord's truth is being attacked and defended. There is more to being a Christian soldier than wearing the uniform.

ATHANASIUS CONTRA MUNDUM

They call me hasty, of opinion proud,
Untaught to bend a stubborn will.
Ahl little dreams the shallow-hearted crowd
What thoughts this bosom fill.
What loneliness this outer strength doth hide,
What longing lies beneath this calm
For human sympathy, so long denied,
Our earth's divinest balm.

But, more than sympathy the Truth I prize.
Above my friendships hold I God.
And stricken be these feet ere they despise
The path their maker trod.
So let my banner be again unfurled.
Again its cheerless motto seen:
"The world against me? I against the world!"
Judge Thou, dear Christ, between.

-Huntington.

This great poem furnishes an inspiring illustration of this. It is related that at one time Athanasius, the great champion of orthodoxy of the fourth century, felt completely alone. In his banishment in Gaul his friends came to him: "It is no use, Athanasius. The whole Church is against you. The empire is against you. Be reasonable - do not prolong a hopeless fight. Athanasius the world is against you!"

The great Bishop turned and said quietly, "The world against me? Then I am against the world." The battle continued. That one faithful man in God's providence reversed the current of his age and saved the Church from the Arian heresy.

Suppose he had yielded, yielded as he was tempted to yield to the overwhelming majority? Suppose!

Source: The Presbyterian Guardian, November 18, 2935, page 35 - Editorial Comments.

Comments:

The pastor of a reformed church recounted the challenges of his work and his congregation. He mentioned that even with a firm unrelenting commitment to evangelism and outreach, the congregation has grown and shrunken with ceaseless flow over the past decade. Recently congregation finances have forced him to become bi-vocational. His heart aches for growth and stability.

The church has an active outreach and evangelism pursuit, and every opportunity is garnered to reach those yet to be brought into the pale of the church. There is the stream of new converts who come, and go. There are good reasons why people move on. It was such a joyous moment when they come to Jesus, and then they move on for work, family, and a plethora of other reasons.

Recently trusted men suggested to up-beat the worship service, to get with the flow, to pump up the action. In the most subtle way he was informed that his work has a reputation for being a bit too catechetical, too formal about doctrine, and that a change to liven things up is called for. He was perplexed and taken back. His response — *"If that is the reputation we have, then are we doing the right things because our members know the joy and fear of the Lord. We are different from our neighboring churches and we have something special to offer!"*

In other parts of the world, churches are growing in the face of persecution. Saints are being persecuted, yet hope runs high. Affliction and disappointment builds character when the focus is Christ.

The work of Christ's Church faces barriers and offensive impediments. The battle is not ours, it is the Lord's. The disappointments are part of the battle - they teach God's people to cling to the Word and to remain true to the faith.

PRAYERS:

- For zeal and passion to reach those outside the faith with the comfort of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- For the Lord's blessing upon the work of outreach and evangelism. That the Spirit may draw many to the dwelling of the Most High.
- That the work of the church may never be compromised for the sake of desperate expediency.

OPC Sister Church

Dallas Reformed Presbyterian Church (RPCNA), McKinney, TX - Rev. Mark Koller

Dallas RPC was planted in 2013. In 2014 the work was established as a mission church of the RPCNA. She was particularized in 2015.

Pastor Koller pioneered this work, and serves as a bi-vocational minister. Today the congregation is made up of faithful families. Weekly morning attendance is around 25-30 saints seeking to worship the Living God. The congregation has two ruling elders, and a deacon-elect.

PRAYERS:

- For the continued nurture of the Saints, with growth in walk and witness.
- For the ordination and installation of the new deacon and for additional men to serve in office.
- For financial enablement of full-time support for Pastor Koller.
- For influx of visitors seeking the Reformed faith.

OPC Congregation

Immanuel OPC, Andover, MN - Rev. Jim Hoekstra

As some of you are aware, Rev. Jim Hoekstra was the Pastor of Providence Presbyterian Church, Pflugerville, Texas, during the 1990's. During his time in Austin, he was a member of the Home Missions Committee of the Presbytery of the SW. The Lord gave him many church planting experiences - from working with startups to sitting on sessions to helping the Regional Home Missionary. Little did he know how the Lord was going to use these experiences. Since Austin, he has had the privilege of directly planting three churches. The latest of these being in the "Bold North" of Minnesota.

Five years ago, Immanuel Church (OPC) was begun, planted in the northwest suburbs of Minneapolis in a city of 30,000 people, called Andover. The work had some rough days in its first couple of years. Some of the early families are no longer part of the work. Yet the Lord has slowly built

Immanuel into a group of loving, committed, and sacrificial disciples of Jesus Christ.

At present, she typically has 35 people in worship. Since its early days, a small group of men have gathered each Saturday to pray for an hour for Immanuel and its families and for the progress of the gospel. The plant has one ruling elder, and 6 men in a Leadership Training Class. This class has been distinctly blessed by the Lord.

Some highlights for Immanuel are:

1. Gratitude for a faithful ruling elder and 6 men in training. That these men may be blessed and gifted for the work ahead.
2. The second phase of a Sunday School pilot program has just been completed with some 20-28 people in attendance each week.
3. Mr. Nate Strom, a church shared planting intern, has been ministering very capably and faithfully.
4. The Lord recently added five new members and one more new member is waiting to be interviewed.

PRAYERS:

- Give thanks to the Lord for the many blessings showered upon Immanuel OPC.
- For protection of the unity of the congregation.
- For a new treasurer. One person is considering this.
- For more visitors and newcomers especially non-believers to the congregation to come and stay.
- For addition of young families with children.
- For the Lord to make success of bringing the faith to an area that is not familiar with Reformed Theology.
- For sufficient finances for the coming year.
- For the Lord to richly bless the preaching of the Word.

SouthWest Presbytery News

Westminster OP Church in Bartlesville, OK - Rev. Clarence Veld

Is a church desirous of growing in the nurture of Jesus Christ as He is faithfully proclaimed from the pulpit. They are an elderly body of Christians with a need of adding younger families and individuals to our fellowship. Westminster has existed in Bartlesville since the early 1970's. It was a mission

work until it was particularized in 1979. Pastor Clarence Veld was called to serve Westminster OPC in 2016.

Westminster recently held their annual Reformation Conference inviting Rev. Ryan Speck, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, in Columbia, Missouri, as the keynote speaker. The topic of the conference was *Our Only Hope and Comfort: Christ Alone*. The messages focused on the person and work of our Savior, Jesus Christ. They were a tremendous blessing and encouragement to all those who attended.

Westminster runs evangelistic efforts in a series of daily radio messages which are broadcast on local radio stations in Bartlesville called **“Truth Worth Believing”** from 5:00-6:00 pm. Westminster OPC seeks through these messages to increase their visibility in the community in reaching families who are zealous to worship God according to the dictates of His Word.

Westminster OPC urgently seeks to bring the purifying effect of the Covenant of Grace to a lost and dying world.

PRAYERS:

- For ears that are open to hear and hearts that are ready to receive the radio broadcast messages.
- That the radio broadcasts may draw people in.
- For evangelistic messages printed in the local newspaper.
- For faithfulness of the congregation in showing hospitality to visitors and that they may speak the gospel faithfully to friends, neighbors and co-workers.
- For the preaching of the Word of God to reach the hearts of those who hear it and will find fertile ground to convict and convert unbelievers and build up the saints in the faith.
- For qualified men to be trained for office as deacons and elders.
- For the elderly and infirm members of the congregation who are battling cancer, weakness and chronic diseases and weakness.
- For growth that the Lord might add to their number families and individuals who desire to worship and serve our God together with us that we might continue to be a light of Christ in our community.
- For growth in piety and faithfulness to our Lord as we serve Him in our various callings of life.
- May all glory and praise be to our Lord and Savior who has purchased us with His precious blood.
- May His name be ever praised! Amen!

Listening In and Sounding Out

From PSW Regional Home Missionary, Rev. G. Mark Sumpter: Pray for Trinity OPC of Waco, Texas.

Organizing Pastor Jason Kirklin is busy with officer training. That's great! Pray for unity, purpose, and the hand of the Lord to be with the officer training and for God's preparation of men to serve. Also, pray for faithful outreach at Baylor University—especially pray for Jason's ministry to graduate students. There's an opening for ministry within that part of the student population. Pray for the Mid-Cities OPC (Bedford, TX). The session at Bedford is serving and guiding Trinity (Waco) with matters of care, development, and planning.

From Ben Westerveld, Quebec, Canada:

Over the past few years I have had opportunities to interact with the priests and some members of the Roman Catholic Church St. Thomas Aquinas. Their church is located on the opposite side of Laval University from our church location. Led by priests from the charismatic Emmanuel community, St. Thomas Aquinas has attracted the largest gatherings of young adults to the Sunday evening mass in the whole province of Quebec!

One of the priests, Martin Lagacé, recently invited me to view his video presentation of the Christian message. It was surprising evangelical, with quotes from Ephesians 2 declaring that we are saved by faith, not by works.

I shared with Martin a written gospel presentation that I often use. The presentation gives a clearer explanation of justification by faith. Martin met with me for a discussion about salvation only by faith. Please pray for his conviction that the incarnate Christ is the only mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2.5).

Harvest Call is published by South Austin Presbyterian Church (OPC), Austin, TX

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