



Harvest Call

January 6, 2019

OPC Ecumenicity

Visitation: Pulse of Faith & Practice

A new year has begun and your session has set itself the goal of visiting each member family during the year. Good! So when are you going to start? It is easy to let the first months of the year slip by.

Summer comes, and of course elders are super busy and with families having vacation schedules it's tough to make visits. Families are super busy, so we wait until fall. Ah the fall, everyone's back in school.... now if we can only work around those holidays. Honestly, did your congregation get to the end of last year without elders making nearly the number of home visits that are necessary for the well being of the congregation?

At Presbytery (Classis) meetings a frequent lament is that sessions don't think they are keeping up with home visits the way they ought to. It is so easy to get into this situation. However the intent of this article is not to make you feel guilty. Rather it is to encourage the elders to commence early the fruitful work of shepherding the flock entrusted to their care, especially in this particular aspect of that care: the Family/Home Visit.

Suggestions for Families

In this modern world we are all busy, and the demands of life seem endless. Proactive planning is the key to stress relief. Begin with prayer, our heavenly father hears your prayers and answers them with tender care for His saints.

Pray for your minister and elders, ask the Lord to grant them the temerity of grace and mercy as they minister to your spiritual needs. Encourage those who serve you, and assist them in their preparation for a year of care for you with love and affection deserving of their office.

Above all, pray for the work of your church, for your Presbytery and for the church at large. The battle is a demanding spiritual challenge, but the battle and its outcome are the Lord's. Facilitate that outcome by being proactive in being open to meeting arrangements. Perhaps you can take an active lead in helping to organize visitation for your session.

Suggestions for Sessions

Let's consider some suggestions toward a productive year calling on the families of your church, although many of these may already be practiced in your congregation. Take courage to discuss how any that may be new to you may help your ministry.

- Organize the church so that each elder is responsible for particular individuals, households, or families in the congregation.
- Communicate to your congregation this division of labor and ask the congregation to assist the session by being proactive with scheduling of visits.
- Divide the visitation schedule so that this important duty does not over tax your elders.
- Don't procrastinate! Be urgent enough about the Lord's business.
- Docket time at session meetings to review the general thrust of concerns that have been raised in visitation. After the session meeting give feedback to families who have raised concerns or made suggestions. When you have prayed for a family during your session meetings, be sure to inform those families of this - let them feel your love for the sheep.
- Consider having a theme or a particular scripture passage to use in visitation for the entire year?
- Commence each visit with prayer, a Bible reading, and a brief devotional. It is so important to set the home visitation ministry apart from the social calls that the pastor and elders may make at other times. Beginning with these three elements as soon as is politely possible sets the tone from the very beginning for serious ministry to the family.

The OPC Form of Government says in Chapter II 4. "*The work of the church, in fellowship with and obedience to Christ, is divine worship, mutual edification, and gospel witness*". The goal of visitation is to assure that families are growing in their life of worship, mutual edification, and witness for Christ. We want to be sure that they are receiving and giving in these areas.

As elders and ministers, ask: "*Are the Lord's people being equipped for this manifold service for Christ and are they in turn contributing to the life of the church according to the measure of grace given them in Christ?*"

Questions to consider:

- How important is a Home Visitation program to our nurturing of the congregation?
- What are the impediments to accomplishing this ministry?
- What would make Home Visitation more fruitful this year than last year?

Edited from: “Start those Home Visits Now!,” David Winslow, Ordained Servant, January 1998, page 20.

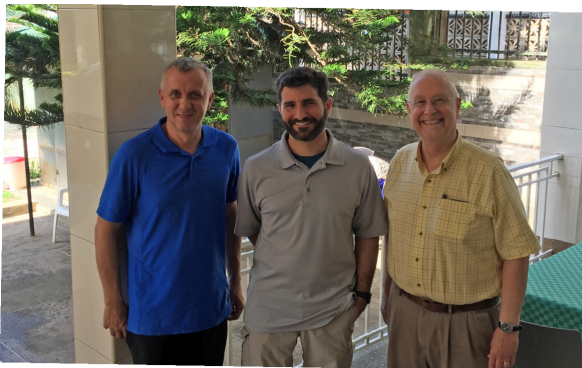
PRAVERS:

- For the faithful nurture of the saints.
- For fidelity in walk and witness.
- For the work of the ministers of God’s grace and mercy.
- For the labors of the elders, and for the time and energy they sustain for the church.
- For growth of the congregation through the ordinary means of grace, evangelism, and outreach.
- For excitement within the congregation to share the gospel with strangers and to invite them to worship.

Sister Church

URCNA Mission Work

Pastor Rich Bout is Missions Coordinator of the URCNA. Extracted from his report in The Trumpet (Missions newsletter of the URCNA, January 2019):



**Richard Bout (URCNA), David Nakhla (OPC)
and Mark Bube (OPC)**

“Our federation is also maturing in its relationship with other like-minded denominations. A trip in April to see URC diaconal missionary Mark Van Essendelft, working with the OPC team in Uganda, was a highlight. The OPC is interested in working more closely with us and cooperating in sending missionaries to joint fields. NAPARC World Missions Consultations, which happen only every four years, had me seated with representatives from 21 different Reformed churches from all over the world, many who are being persecuted in their home countries. What a humbling experience to hear of their faithfulness, zeal, and organization in reaching the lost in their own countries.”

PRAVERS:

- Pray that we would be motivated with a love for Christ and his lost sheep.
- Pray that our work would be characterized by humility and dependence on God. We seek to build Christ’s kingdom, not our own. In the coming year, may the Lord give us souls to sing and rejoice over. Souls, once thirsty and hungry, but now satisfied by the open hand of God.

Sister Congregation

Peace Reformed Church (RCUS), Napoleon, OH - Rev. Steve Altman

Peace Reformed Church is a congregation of the Reformed Church in the United States.

In 1967, a group of believers gathered together with concerns regarding teaching and preaching on the view of scripture, a sovereign God and a faith that was based on Christ alone within the confines of the doctrines at their current church. It was evident to the group that those truths were no longer held in their current church government.

The group needed to seek out a church that held these same truths to be the foundation of the Christian faith. That same year, the families left their church to meet in each others homes and various town halls to eventually seek out a confessional, bible believing denomination to call home. Thus began the first meetings in the early years of Peace Reformed Church.

Fast forward to 1975, many discussions led to land being purchased and a building constructed for this group of believers to gather and officially have a church building.



Rev. Steve Altman

Fast forward to today, Peace Reformed celebrated its 50th year anniversary in the same year of the 500th anniversary of the protestant reformation.

Rev. Steve Altman came to serve the pulpit in 2008 from a PCA church in Toledo, Ohio. Rev. Altman continues to be bi-vocational and faithfully brings the Gospel to Peace Reformed every Sunday.

The Lord has guided the congregation of Peace to a point of growth where a building renovation and expansion are now necessary to make room for the future of the church.

PRAYERS:

- The process of continuing the organization and decision making leading to the remodel and expansion.
- The means to be able to support Rev. Altman full time.
- The thankfulness of the addition of many covenant children to the congregation and prayer for their nurture and growth as they grow up in Christ's church.
- That God will continue to grow His church in Napoleon, Ohio.

OPC Mission Work

Living Water OPC, Springfield, OH - Rev. Daniel Doleys

On behalf of Living Water OPC, Pastor Daniel Doleys shares his great gratitude to the denomination for their support over the last four years.

Now as they complete support and look toward future days, their biggest prayer request is for patience in their aim to become a neighborhood church. Living Water OPC is situated between two historic neighborhoods where most families have lived for at least a couple of generations.



Daniel and Amber Doleys

Having only moved there in the last six months, Living Water is “the new kid on the block”. Daniel knows it will take time to connect with the people and become known as a place of love and caring.

PRAYERS:

That God would bless their efforts to grow their presence in the community as well as provide opportunities to share the gospel.

That the church would continue to dig deeper into their roots in the denomination and Reformed theology as a whole.

SouthWest Presbytery News

Prayers and petitions before the Throne of Grace are sought for the following churches of the Presbytery of the Southwest:

Albuquerque Reformed Church, NM - Rev. John Hunt

Albuquerque Reformed Church praises God for His marvelous grace and mercy. They seek the Lord's blessings on preparations for the new year.

PRAYERS:

- Friends with Cancer: Katie C., Eloisa S.
- Family and friends of the Hood with multiple myeloma
- Cheryl L. increasing MS related problems.
- Lisa H. physical symptoms needing diagnosis.
- Esther, Wendy W. mother had a stroke on Saturday December 29, 2018

Faith OPC, Garland, TX - Rev. Chad Bond

Faith OPC gives humble thanks to the Lord for answering prayers of many years that the Lord would provide another deacon for the congregation. Mr. Mark Henley was recently unanimously elected and installed as the second deacon.

PRAYERS:

- Faith OPC gives thanks for providing employment for several members in recent times.
- For the fruitful labors of deacon Mark Henley as he works alongside deacon Paul Mattoon.
- For some members who remain unemployed or underemployed or are facing uncertain futures in the coming months.
- For a family that will be moving away in the coming months.
- For the upcoming annual congregational meeting — that they would continue to be unified.
- For wise budgetary decisions for 2019.
- For continued blessing on the Word as it is read, proclaimed and heard each Lord's Day.

Tyler OPC, TX - Rev. John H Johnson

Tyler OPC gives thanks for the many blessings the Lord has poured out in the lives of the saints at home in Tyler, and abroad.

PRAYERS:

- For five (5) expectant mothers (Stephanie, Callie, Sydney, Gloria, Brittney)
- For three (3) upcoming marriages
- For families impacted by bereavements
- For seven (7) members with cancer
- For many suffering illnesses and recovering from them. May the Lord grant healing and strengthen His people

Listening In and Sounding Out

Reformed Theological Seminary, Houston:

PRAYERS: RTS Houston asks for the Lord's favor:

- In bringing more students to RTS-H to learn the glories of the Reformed Faith in preparation for ministry service.
- In providing more financial supporters as RTS seek to grow the donor base.
- To answer the search for an Old Testament Professor.

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

To receive this newsletter, or to send prayer requests, please contact: clerk@southaustinpres.org
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**I Love the Lord, the fount of life and grace;
He hears my voice, my cry and supplication, inclines
His ear, gives strength and consolation;
In life, in death, my heart will seek His face.**