



# Harvest Call

February 10, 2019

## OPC Ecumenicity

### Missionary Zeal: Unspent Treasure

Scripture conveys significant measure of God's foremost intention for his Word and for the church to whom it is entrusted: It is intended to glorify his great name in its orientation toward the salvation of the lost! God had a missionary purpose when he gave mankind his Word. His desire to reveal himself to men pervades Scripture from Genesis to Revelation (Genesis 3: 15, Revelation 22: 17) .

The fervor of men like Calvin, Whitefield, Spurgeon, Knox, Edwards and Newton to reach out to the world with the gospel came out of their embracing of that purpose as their own. This is what we need to learn from our forebears; indeed, this is what we need to learn from God himself. We need to come to grips with God's missionary purpose for his Word. John Newton once commented that *"Calvinism was one of the worst systems preached theoretically, but one of the best preached practically."*

I fear that Reformed Christians today have fallen into the error of preaching the doctrines of grace theoretically instead of preaching them practically and using the truths of Scripture to draw men to Christ. Instead of using the Bible as our instrument to draw men into fellowship with God, biblical doctrine has become our grounds to exclude those-even other believers-who disagree with us. Instead of using Scripture as the sword of the Spirit to conquer men for Christ, we spend our energies defending it, as if it were fragile and easily broken. Yet we have seen throughout history that God's power and blessing has been most evident not on those who have assumed a defensive posture toward the lost of the world, but on those whose first concern is to see God save them.

I do not wish to dismiss the church's responsibility to guard her sheep from wolves teaching false doctrine. My problem lies solely with the assumption that such concerns must have first place in the normal ministry

of the church. I am persuaded that this overturns God's standard order for the church and its ministry. God's first priority for his church is to proclaim the gospel to the lost, bringing them to salvation. This is followed by a cultivation of the life and unity which that gospel produces among the people of the Lord Jesus. And finally, in that context, as a living testimony to the power of the Word, the church defends herself against error.

We know that Calvin shared our concern for true doctrine, but it is noteworthy that he did not suffer from the reversal of priorities that we do. Calvin knew the Bible as a great missionary book in a way that few moderns do. For him it was largely a book of promises centering on Christ's conquest of the nations through gospel preaching. This can be seen in his commentary on Isaiah 2:3, where he says that men out of *"all nations"* will be conquered by *"the doctrines of the gospel"* and stream to Christ.

Commenting on the verse that follows, he adds: *"By these words he first declares that the godly will be filled with such a desire to spread the doctrines of religion, that everyone not satisfied with his own calling and his personal knowledge will desire to draw others along with him. And nothing could be more inconsistent with the nature of faith than that deadness which would lead a man to disregard his brethren and to keep the light of knowledge choked up within his own breast."*

Calvin was not slow to translate his own missionary vision into action. During the years 1555 to 1562, eighty-eight men were trained and commissioned by Calvin as pastors to France. Additional works established in Holland and Scotland by men trained by Calvin were greatly blessed. In Scotland, the response to Christ was so overwhelming that one contemporary observed that *"the sky rained men."*

In other lands like Germany, England, Wales, Poland and Hungary, flourishing Presbyterian and Reformed churches were planted and strengthened by men trained in Geneva. Even such ardently Catholic lands as Italy and Spain were touched by their influence. An amazing zeal for Christ's cause and the glory of God were instilled in the men Calvin taught.

Yet somewhere in the years between Calvin's century and ours, our working theology has become abbreviated in a way that would have dismayed such a pioneer in missions. Our emphasis on the wonderful doctrines of grace have somehow come to mask and perhaps (in our own minds) even justify a deep-seated indifference to the lost.

Evangelism, God's first priority for his Word and his church, has become a peripheral activity in the lives of many local congregations. Often it even raises eyebrows as a theologically questionable undertaking because it is so far afield of our usual defensive posture! Louie Barnes noted this attitude in his aforementioned report. Unlike other denominational leaders whose church rolls were shrinking, Barnes observed that Reformed churchmen *"sense very little urgency in this situation."* In fact, he says, *"many of my colleagues believe that a rapidly expanding, active 'church' is proof positive that doctrinal or ethical compromise has certainly taken place."* ...

If we as a Reformed community are to regain our strength, we need to recover a biblical theology of expectancy founded upon the knowledge that the sovereignty of God is not restricted to the salvation of a few individuals. Scripture clearly connects it to God's saving purpose as it relates to all the world, as evidenced in his own missionary character, as sealed in his promises, and as defined by his gift of all authority to the Son as the Lord of the Great Commission. Scripture's great message to man is the offer of life in Jesus Christ, and God's intention is that many hear the message and be saved.

**Extracted from:** *The Unspent Treasure: Our Missionary Legacy*, C. John Miller, Presbyterian Guardian, October 1979, pages 5-6.

## PRAYERS:

- For a spirit of urgency to proclaim Christ's resurrected glory and His rule over all dominions.
- For the overwhelming proclamation of the gospel.

- For ears that hear and hearts that follow Christ.

## OPC Congregation

### Reformation Presbyterian Church, New York, NY - Jonathan Shishko

Reformation Presbyterian is a growing congregation of the OPC in the NYC borough of Queens. Planted in 2009, the congregation has grown to 75 members.

The most recent major change has been the calling of an associate pastor, Rev. Sam Chung to work with Pastor Jon Shishko. Queens is, arguably, the most diverse area on the planet. Reformation Presbyterian Church reflects that diversity. While the diversity is beautiful and reflective of heaven itself, it comes with its challenges as everyone who attends is coming from a radically different background.

Having two pastors is an effort to meet that challenge and engage the community with evangelism and the church with household shepherding along with preaching and teaching.



**Reformation Presbyterian Church, NYC**

## PRAYERS:

- For continued growth numerically and spiritually.
- For continued permission to use the public school that is rented for worship.

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- For the Holy Spirit's work within the congregation.
- For the gathering in of many from the Queens area into Reformation Presbyterian Church.

## OPC Mission Work

### OPC Foreign Missions Visit to Bogota, Colombia - Rev. Cassidy Reports

Praise God the church in Colombia is growing and prospering in many ways! Christ is building his church!

I had the privilege of teaching a course on Apologetics in Bogota, Colombia at the end of January. This was a part of a pastor's conference hosted by the Raah Church (Presbyterian Reformed Church in Colombia), pastored by the Rev. Andres Espinosa. I also preached on the Lord's Day on Romans 1:19-21.



**Doug Clawson, Jim Cassidy and saints from Bogota**

The Trip was organized and lead by Rev. Doug Clawson, Associate General Secretary for the Committee on Foreign Missions of the OPC. I joined Doug for a week of co-laboring in Colombia for the building up the church.

I was so very encouraged the church in Colombia. They are positioned for a wonderful extension of the Kingdom. They have men in their midst who are energetic and zealous for the Reformed faith and the spreading of the Gospel.



**Dr. Cassidy teaching in Bogota, Colombia**

Colombia is dominated by Catholicism and Pentecostalism (and by Pentecostal Catholicism). The Gospel is rare jewel in a fair land. But the Reformed believers there are doing the good work of gathering and perfecting the saints.

The church got robbed on the first night of the conference and two projectors were stolen (while the conference was going on!).

#### PRAYERS:

- For Rev. Doug Clawson's daughter who is sick with cancer and now has been ill with fever.
- For the Raah church that they might grow in grace and that the conference would truly grow them in the Lord.
- For the thieves who stole the projectors and their repentance. Also for provision for the Raah church to be able to replace these important tools.
- That God will give the people in Colombia opportunity to put into practice what they have learned.
- For Pastor Andres Espinosa, his ministry and his health. He has been losing weight and doesn't know why. He has a hearty appetite and plenty of energy. But he mysteriously is losing weight. The doctors can't explain it.
- For Pastor Espinosa's follow-up class on apologetics at the Bible Academy and for the on-going training needs of pastors and elders in the churches.

For more information see:

<https://www.iglesiaraah.org/academia-biblica-raah>

## SouthWest Presbytery News

### Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church (CCPC), Amarillo, TX - Rev. Jeremy Boothby

Pastor Boothby will finish his series in the Gospel of Luke in the next two weeks and will then be preaching through the book of Hebrews, which has been the focus of Pastor Boothby's modular T.h.M program at Westminster Theological Seminary in PA.

Elder Rice leads a series on "Seeing Christ in the Old Testament." There are four (4) shepherding groups that meet on the first Lord's Day each month for prayer, bible study and fellowship. The men's bible study recently worked their way through R. C. Sproul's book "The Holiness of God." The women's bible study plan to indulge themselves in the book James during the spring.



**Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church, Amarillo**

John Brack and Dennis Boren continue to teach lessons from the Westminster Confession of Faith at the TDJC Clements prison unit in Amarillo, meeting every Monday night. Two families of the congregation, John Paul and Corinne Holloway and Grant and Stormie Allard are currently studying at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Grant Allard is completing his last semester in the Spring, and Grant his third semester.

The Lord has blessed CCPC with growth, the challenges that build character and strength and will have her annual congregational meeting February 24th. An enquirer's class has just run its course for regular attenders.

CCPC hosts a monthly ministerial luncheon for the Amarillo Reformed Fellowship (ARF) - a group of seven (7) pastors faithfully attend the meetings. ARF meets once per month for a joint worship service, rotating between three of the churches.

We really look forward to the conference with the Rev. Dr. Glen Cleary that we will be having April 5-7 on Reformed Worship. Amarillo Reformed Fellowship (ARF), which is a ministerial alliance made up of a number of reformed pastors in the Amarillo area, will be putting on the conference. CCPC pray that it will be edifying for the congregation, as well as the other churches in Amarillo that attend.

#### PRAYERS:

- For God's Word and Spirit to take root in the hearts of all in the preaching of the Word.
- For the wisdom for the elders as they shepherd and counsel the flock at CCPC.
- For planning of ministries and outreach activities for the year.
- For prayers for a new covenant child that will be born in the coming weeks.
- For the conference that Dr. Glen Clary will lead in April and the fruits thereof.
- For the Amarillo Reformed Fellowship to have a continued strong influence in the proclamation of the gospel.

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

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