



REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

Savoring a Sabbatical

By Pastor Brian De Jong

As June turns into July, my first ever sabbatical comes to a close. As it does, I want to express my gratitude to our Session, to the congregation, to the Committee on Ministerial Care and to all of the men who filled in during my absence. A special word of thanks goes to Dr. Brian Wingard, who did much behind the scenes to meet the pastoral needs of the congregation.

In reviewing the past two months, I find that there was real value in this experience. It may be helpful to the congregation for me to spell out exactly what the benefits were. The first benefit may be the most in keeping with the whole concept of a sabbatical – I enjoyed rest. Physical rest, mental rest and spiritual rest. The first three months of 2021 were tiring and stressful. The Spring Presbytery meeting was one of the most personally difficult in recent memory for a variety of reasons. I entered the month of April mentally and physically drained. The week of vacation prior to the actual start of the Sabbatical allowed rest and refreshment as we saw family and friends, and enjoyed a little time “out of Dodge.” May and June were likewise refreshing, and I feel that the batteries are now recharged.

The sabbatical was also helpful in spiritual ways. I richly enjoyed hearing the preaching of several of my brother ministers in my visits to various churches. It was good for me to sit under preaching, which is different from actually being the preacher. I was also able to spend time in the minor prophets during my morning devotional times. I have always loved the minor prophets, and find them direct and challenging. Since I was not responsible for preparing sermons, Sunday School

lessons and Bible studies for prayer meetings, my mind was able to focus more directly on reading the Bible for my own personal edification. In a certain way, my prayer life also benefited from the relaxed schedule. I found myself better able to concentrate, which led to richer times of prayer.

Perhaps the most productive aspect of the work of my sabbatical related to the Perkins project. This included two very valuable research trips. In May I went to the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia and found some very helpful material. Then in late June I was at the PCA Historical Society for another visit to their Perkins collection. That was equally helpful, but in different ways. In

addition to collecting still more information, I had time to digest the materials that I’ve collected. Reading through items like Perkins’ appeal to the Synod of Wisconsin

helped put certain pieces of the puzzle together for me. I’ve also read some books that have bearing on the story, such as a paper that J. Gresham Machen wrote to his presbytery regarding their rulings about his case.

Last, but not least, I had time to write. In April I was floundering in chapter 5. By the end of my sabbatical I was half way through chapter 9. At this point it looks like I have 5 more chapters to write, so I’m roughly two-thirds of the way through the writing process. In recent discussions with my editor – Dr. Ian De Jong – he commented that “you are doing research, analysis and writing all at the

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Mnemonics...

- 7/5 **Golf Outing**
- 7/11 **Men’s Fellowship Lunch**
- 7/13 **Session Meeting**



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MERF News

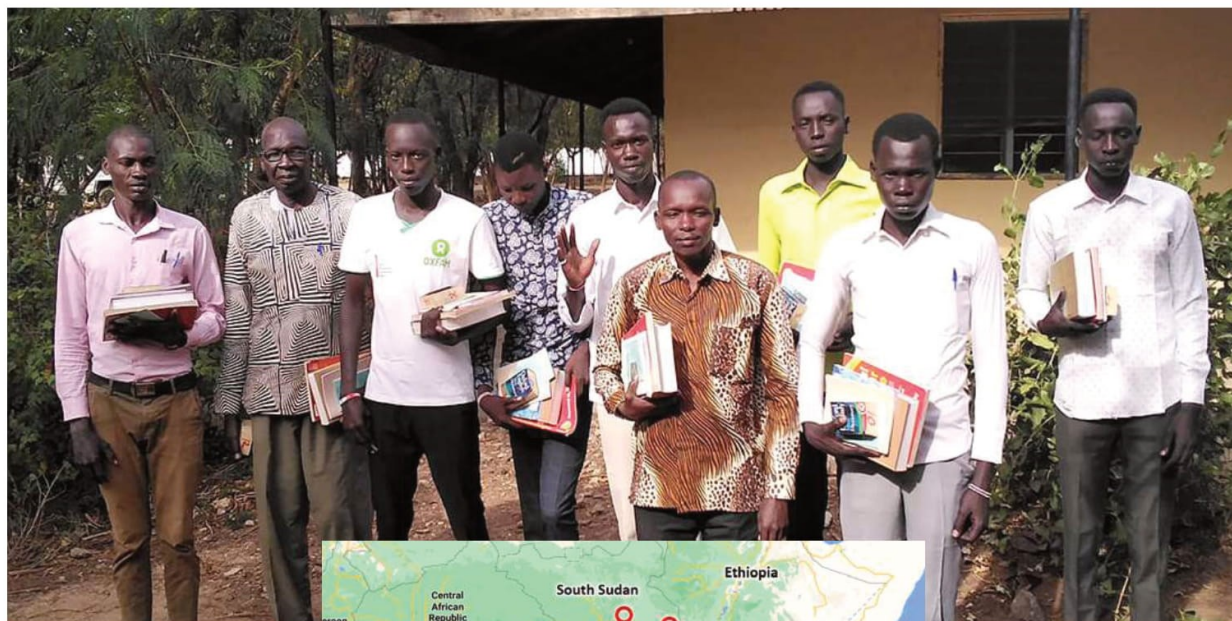
Middle East Reformed Fellowship—"Declaring the Whole Counsel of God"

June 2021



Loki and Lockdown: God Has No Limits

by Graham Lodge, Vice-Chair MERF Board



New Loki trainees with their books ready to study

North Kenya borders South Sudan. Strategically it is a great place to situate a training center for pastors and church leaders from wartorn South Sudan plus others from East African countries. MERF's ministry and training center is in Lokichoggio, Kenya, nicknamed 'Loki'. It is approximately 550 miles (900 km) from Kenya's capital, Nairobi. Roads are rough and life is simple, without many modern amenities. Yet MERF biblical training, local outreach and Nuer gospel radio ministry have continued steadily for nearly 20 years.

Loki is mainly populated by the Turkana, traditionally a tribe of nomadic herders. Many of these previously unreached



tribal people have come to faith in Christ over the past two decades. Landing at the local airport, one looks down on the semi-arid terrain with scores of round straw huts next to a few other simple sheet metal and block structures. The airport terminal building is constructed of repurposed shipping containers. It is only 3km to MERF's Ministry Center.

MERF Loki

As well as a building for local church worship, classrooms and a library for biblical training, the MERF compound accommodates trainees, guest instructors and the Nuer gospel radio broadcast team. There is also a broadcasting recording studio. Additionally, the center serves as a hub for evangelistic work among the largely

unreached Turkana peoples and for distribution of diaconal aid when needed.

South Sudanese Pastor David Wat leads the team at the Loki Center and the Nuer language Radio Broadcast work. Kenyan Simon Mueba serves as Physical Plant Manager. He ensures that the compound is well maintained and carries out projects to make the center more practical and efficient to cater for the many ministries and the people who use it.

Biblical Training

Along with the regular local activities, there are scheduled

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“Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.”

— Psalm 25:4

3-month intensive biblical training courses that follow the **Augustine Program**. Normally trainees are taught by well-chosen English-speaking pastors. They are volunteers sponsored by their churches to fly in to the Loki Center and stay to teach a portion of the course for typically 3 to 6 weeks.

Trainees are selected by their home churches on the basis of practical evidence of commitment to serve the church and to study the Scriptures in their native tongue and simple English. Most come from across the vast rural areas of wartorn South Sudan, where rapidly growing churches have created a desperate need for spiritual leaders trained in the Bible. (Due to years of armed conflict, few South Sudanese have had opportunity to learn to read, nor is the entire Bible yet translated into all of the many South Sudanese languages.) From a dozen to thirty trainees are typically picked up by a

small charter plane from Juba, the South Sudanese capital and/or several dirt airstrips near major rural communities and brought to the MERF center in Loki. Others come by the long road from Tanzania or elsewhere in Kenya. They start with introductory intensive English studies and remain for about 3-months of concentrated biblical training.

By Western standards MERF Loki facilities are basic, but are very comfortable for rural Africa, especially for the many who have faced trials of inadequate shelter and hunger due to conflict in South Sudan. Students greatly appreciate the good accommodation and being fed well, which in turn, enables them to learn well.

As with all MERF ministries, through the prayerful support of God’s people, the objective is to train indigenous people in God’s Word so that they can serve as faithful witnesses to Christ in their local communities and beyond. This bears gospel fruit in a very cost-effective manner.

The **Augustine Program** Coordinator for biblical training is Pastor Timothy Burden. Building on years of experience teaching different Bible units to trainees at the Loki center, he continues to develop teaching materials suitable for trainees to take home and share with others.



South Sudanese pastor and church choir excitedly receive the charter airplane

His wife, Rosalind often helps by teaching English and with ministry to local women.

Loki Lockdown

The past year MERF Loki center activities have been impacted by the COVID pandemic. Following Kenyan government guidelines, the first 2020 training course ended two weeks early and the others were cancelled. In January 2021 training resumed. However, travel restrictions prevented guest instructors from coming from other countries. Therefore, locally available men stepped in to teach using the **Augustine Program** materials. Another lockdown at the end of March 2021, again shortened training by two weeks. Thankfully Nuer gospel radio broadcasting into South Sudan continued without interruption. This month the Loki center was reopened for training. Charter planes brought men sent by their churches from across South Sudan for the second 2021 MERF Loki biblical training course. *Please pray that they will be thoroughly grounded in God’s Word and well-equipped to share the gospel and teach others.*

The Loki lockdowns have brought about alternative opportunities and allowed time to focus on the development and sharing of training material online. For example, Video Lectures on Hebrews;

PowerPoints and notes to support the **Augustine Program**; *The Minister’s Cat Echism* Family YouTube series and support of the translation of Luke Studies into the Nuer language.

The **Augustine Program** has also been shared in Ethiopia, which has proven to be an encouragement as the work continues to expand. *Pray that many more Christians and churches will be built up by these ministry resources.*

Praise & Prayer

We are grateful to God and praise Him for the provision of the Loki Center, its location, the staff, trainees and guest instructors, through MERF’s programs. This has benefited so many pastors, elders and evangelists over the years. Now they are back with home congregations using and sharing what they learned. *Pray for MERF’s Loki Ministry Center to continue to be a blessing for the spread of the gospel and building up of the church among remote tribal peoples in northern Kenya, South Sudan and other East African nations through biblical training, gospel radio and local evangelists.*



Graham Lodge with his wife Catherine



Turkana families are thankful for safe drinking water given freely from the MERF Loki well

Chapter 15: Hope

EGGS are eggs, but some are rotten; and so hopes are hopes, but many of them are delusions. Hopes are like women: there is a touch of angel about them, but there are two sorts. My boy Tom has been blowing out a lot of birds' eggs and threading them on a string; I have been doing the same thing with hopes, and here's a few of them—good, bad and indifferent.

The sanguine man's hope pops up in a moment like jack-in-the-box; it works with a spring and does not go by reason. Whenever this man looks out of the window, he sees better times coming; although it is nearly all in his own eye and nowhere else, yet to see plum puddings in the moon is a far more cheerful habit than croaking at everything like a two-legged frog. This is the kind of brother to be on the road with on a pitch-dark night when it pours with rain, for he carries candles in his eyes and a fireside in his heart. Beware of being misled by him, and then you may safely keep his company. His fault is that he counts his chickens before they are hatched and sells his herrings before they are in the net. All his sparrow's eggs are bound to turn into thrushes, at the least, if not partridges and pheasants. Summer has fully come, for he has seen one swallow. He is sure to make his fortune at his new shop, for he had not opened the door five minutes before two of the neighbors crowded in, one of them wanting a loaf of bread on trust, and the other asking change for a shilling. He is certain that the squire means to give him his custom, for he saw him reading the name over the shop door as he rode past. He does not believe in slips between cups and lips, but makes certainties out of perhaps. Well, good soul, though he is a little soft at times, there is much in him to praise, and I like to think of one of his odd sayings, "Never say die till you are dead, and then it's no use, so let it alone." There are other odd people in the world, you see, besides John Ploughman.

My neighbor Shiftless is waiting for his aunt to die, but the old lady has as many lives as nine cats. My notion is that when she does die, she will leave her little money to the Hospital for Diseased Cats or Stray Dogs, sooner than let her nephew Jack have at it. Poor creature, he is dreadfully down at the heel and lays it all on the dear old lady's provoking constitution. However, he hopes on and gets worse and worse, for while the grass grows, the horse starves. He puts at a long rope who waits for another's death; he who hunts after legacies needs to have iron shoes. He that waits for dead men's shoes may long go barefoot; he who waits for his uncle's cow need not be in a hurry to spread the butter. He who lives on hope has a slim diet. If Jack Shiftless had never had an aunt, he might have tucked up his shirt sleeves and worked for himself; but they told him that he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and that made a spoon of him.

If anybody likes to leave John Ploughman a legacy, he will be very much obliged to them, but they had better not tell him of it for fear he should not plow so straight a furrow; better they make it twice as much and take him by surprise. On the whole, it would be better to leave it to the Pastor's College or the Stockwell Orphanage, for it will be well used in either case. But now we must get back to our subject.

I wish people would think less about windfalls and plant more apple trees. Hopes that grow out of graves are grave mistakes; and when they cripple a man's own energies, they are a sort of hangman's rope dangling round a man's neck.

Some people were born on the first of April and are always hoping without sense or reason. Their ship is to come in soon; they are to dig up a pot of gold or to hear something to their advantage. Poor sillies, they have wind on the brain and dream while they are awake. They may hold their mouths open a long while before fried ham and eggs will come flying into them, and yet they really seem to believe that some stroke of luck, some windfall of golden apples, will one day set them up and make gentlemen of them. They hope to ride in their coaches, and by-and-by they find themselves shut up in a place where the coaches won't run over them. You may whistle a long time before goldfinches will hop on to your thumb. Once in a while one man in a million may stumble against a fortune, but thousands ruin themselves by idle expectations. Expect to get half of what you earn, a quarter of what is your due, and none of what you have lent, and you will be near the mark; but to look for a fortune to fall from the moon is to play the fool with a vengeance.

A man ought to hope within the bounds of reason and the promises of the good old Book. Hope leans on an anchor, but an anchor must have something to hold by and to hold to. A hope without grounds is a tub without a bottom, a horse without a head, a goose without a body, a shoe without a sole, a knife without a blade. Who but Simple Simon would begin to build a house at the top? There must be a foundation. Hope is no hope, but sheer folly, when a man hopes for impossibilities, or looks for crops without sowing seed and for happiness without doing good. Such hopes lead to great boast and small roast; they act like a jack-o'-lantern and lead men into the ditch. There's poor Will at if the workhouse who always declares that he owns a great estate, only the right owner keeps him out of it; his name is Jenyns or Jennings, and somebody of that name he says has left enough money to buy the Bank of England, and r one day he is to have a share of it. But meanwhile poor Will finds the parish broth poor stuff for such a great gentleman's stomach; he has promised me an odd thousand or two when he gets his fortune, and I am going to build a castle in the air with it and ride to it on a broomstick. Poor soul, like a good many others, he has windmills in his head, and may make his will on his thumbnail for anything that he has to give. Depend upon it, plowing the air is not half so profitable as it is easy: he who hopes in this world for more than he can get by his own earnings hopes to find apricots on a crab tree. He who marries a slovenly, dressy girl and hopes to make her a good wife might as well buy a goose and expect it to turn out a milk cow. He who takes his boys to the bar and trusts that they will grow up sober puts his coffeepot on the fire and expects to see it look bright as new tin. Men cannot be in their senses when they brew with bad malt and look for good beer, or set a wicked example and reckon upon raising a respectable family. You may hope and hope till your heart grows sick; but when you send your boy up the chimney, he'll come down black for all your hoping. Teach a child to lie, and then hope that he will grow up honest; better put a wasp in a tar barrel and wait till he makes you honey. When will people act sensibly with their boys and girls? Not till they are sensible themselves.

As to the next world, it is a great pity that men do not take a little more care when they talk of it. If a man dies drunk, somebody or other is sure to say, "I hope he is gone to heaven." It is all very well to wish it, but to hope it is another thing. Men turn their faces to hell and hope to get to heaven; why don't they walk into the pond and hope to be dry? Hopes of heaven are solemn things and should be tried by the word of God. A man might as well hope, as our Lord says, to gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles as look for a happy hereafter at the end of a bad life. There is only one rock to build good hopes on, and that is not Peter, as the pope says; neither is it the sacraments, as the old Roman beast's cubs tell us, but the merits of the Lord Jesus. All the hope of man is in "the man Christ Jesus." If we believe in him we are saved, for it is written, "he that believeth in him hath everlasting life." Mind he has it now, and it is everlasting, so that there is no fear of his losing it. There John Ploughman rests, and he is not afraid of being confounded, for this is a In footing and gives him a hope sure and steadfast which neither life nor death can shake. But John must not turn preacher, or he may take the bread out of the parson's mouth. So please remember that presumption is a ladder which will break the mounter's neck, and don't try it, as you love your soul.

Golf Outing

There will be a golf outing on **Monday, July 5, 2021**, at Sunset Hills in Sheboygan Falls. We are planning to meet at the clubhouse at 8:00 am, and then divide into groups. Please sign the sheet on the bulletin board or contact Roger Arndt if you are planning to attend.



“All our perils are nothing, so long as we have prayer.”

- Charles Spurgeon



July Birthdays

Stephanie Arndt	2nd	Phyllis Nyhof	24th
Amy Gross	6th	Graham Ver Velde	25th
Noah Friberg	7th	Steven Doro	28th
Megan Boss	9th		
Paul Doro	15th		
Joel Moody	18th		
Brian Wingard	18th		
Carl Nyhof	19th		
Katherine Bingham	23rd		



July Anniversaries

Tim & Tammy Voskuil
 July 20th 36 Years

Jim & Arenda Onnink
 July 30th 50 Years





Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

Grace OPC

July 2021



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5 Golf Outing	6	7	8	9	10
11 Men's Fellowship Lunch	12	13 Session Meeting	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25 Lord's Supper	26	27	28	29	30	31

The Ultimate Bakery Style Chocolate Chip Cookie

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup unsalted butter softened to room temperature
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup cake flour
- 1 3/4 cup all purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3 to 4 cups milk or semi-sweet chocolate chips



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer, add butter, brown sugar, and sugar and mix on low using the paddle attachment. Increase to medium and mix until smooth, about 1 minute.
3. Add in the eggs and vanilla extract and beat until just combined, about 30 seconds.
4. Add in cake flour, all purpose flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Mix until just combined.
5. Pour in the chocolate chips and use a large spoon or rubber spatula to fold in the chocolate chips by hand.
6. Divide the dough into 8 to 10 equal pieces. Use hands to roll into large balls. Place onto prepared baking sheets, 4 per pan.
7. Bake in the 400 degree oven for 11-14 minutes, until tops are golden brown.
8. Let cool on pan 15 minutes before serving warm, or transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.



Showing forth the
excellencies of
Jesus Christ

Spurgeon Corner

“Our heart shall rejoice in Him.”

Psalm 33:21

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Blessed is the fact that Christians can rejoice even in the deepest distress; although trouble may surround them, they still sing; and, like many birds, they sing best in their cages. The waves may roll over them, but their souls soon rise to the surface and see the light of God’s countenance; they have a buoyancy about them which keeps their head always above the water, and helps them to sing amid the tempest, “God is with me still.” To whom shall the glory be given? Oh! to Jesus—it is all by Jesus. Trouble does not necessarily bring consolation with it to the believer, but the presence of the Son of God in the fiery furnace with him fills his heart with joy. He is sick and suffering, but Jesus visits him and makes his bed for him. He is dying, and the cold chilly waters of Jordan are gathering about him up to the neck, but Jesus puts His arms around him, and cries, “Fear not, beloved; to die is to be blessed; the waters of death have their fountain-head in heaven; they are not bitter, they are sweet as nectar, for they flow from the throne of God.” As the departing saint wades through the stream, and the billows gather around him, and heart and flesh fail him, the same voice sounds in his ears, “Fear not; I am with thee; be not dismayed; I am thy God.” As he nears the borders of the infinite unknown, and is almost affrighted to enter the realm of shades, Jesus says, “Fear not, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Thus strengthened and consoled, the believer is not afraid to die; nay, he is even willing to depart, for since he has seen Jesus as the morning star, he longs to gaze upon Him as the sun in his strength. Truly, the presence of Jesus is all the heaven we desire. He is at once

“The glory of our brightest days;
The comfort of our nights.”

Morning, July 2nd, C.H. Spurgeon

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same time. Most people don’t do that. They finish their research, then do their analysis, and only then start writing.” He meant that not as a criticism, but rather as an appreciative observation for how I am going about this project. My discussions with him have been enormously helpful in thinking through the project, and I’m thankful for his academic expertise.

I am also blessed with a son who is a budding graphic designer. Cameron has agreed to help with the artistic aspects of this project, including the layout of the book. God has given me what I need in the person of my son!

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention

the enjoyable trip that I took to Merrill on May 9th. Accompanied by DeLou, Christian and Wimsey, we ventured to Bible Presbyterian Church. I did an Adult Sunday School program for them on Arthur Perkins, and then preached one of Perkins’ sermons during the morning service. Afterwards we enjoyed lunch at Pastor Andy’s home, and some very good fellowship with several of their elders. The warm response I received there, and the encouraging feedback, was most touching.

As I hope you can see, I am very thankful for my Sabbatical. God has been so good to us and He has blessed us all in this season of rest. All glory to Him who has done unbelievable things!