

REFLECTIONS

The Monthly Newsletter of Grace OPC

THE LIVING ONE

By Pastor Brian De Jong

At the time of year when many people ponder the resurrection of Christ, I wonder if most folk realize the unbelievable importance of this event for the whole of Christian doctrine. Furthermore, how many actually understand and experience the radical power of Jesus' resurrection in their own lives?

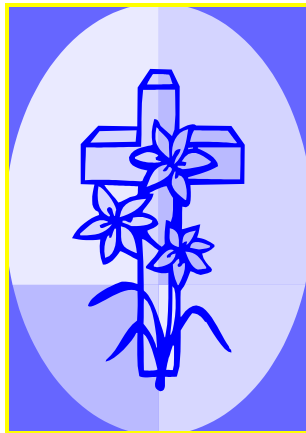
In I Corinthians 15, Paul logically and persuasively argues that if Christ did not rise from the dead, then the whole plan of salvation falls apart. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ was not resurrected either. And if Christ was not raised from the dead, then we are still in our sins – indeed, we are to be pitied above all men. Christianity becomes a cruel joke if there was no resurrection. Jettison the resurrection and you have gutted the entire system of Christian truth.

In addition to appreciating the centrality of the resurrection for our system of doctrine, we also need to know something of its power for those who believe. Paul hints at this in Philippians 3:10, where he yearns “that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection...” Paul not only wanted to know about the power of Christ's resurrection, but he wanted to know it in his own experience.

Jesus also referenced this on the night in which he was betrayed. Having spoken plainly about his upcoming suffering and death, he pointed His disciples to his resurrection on the third day. In John 14:19-20, he said this: “After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. In that day

you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.”

Though the disciples didn't understand at the time, Jesus was promising that he would rise again, and that they would see Him in His resurrected state. And then He gives a powerful promise: “Because I live,



you will live also.” The resurrection of Christ from the dead ensures our own resurrections. Because He lives again, we too will live. On that day Jesus' followers would know that Christ is in the Father, and the Father is in Christ, and that we are all in Christ. In other words, the enjoyment of our fellowship with the Father and the Son is cemented through the resurrection of Christ. Because

Jesus rose again from the dead, we now enjoy union and communion with God.

This is just what Jesus had previously told Martha in John 11:25-26. “Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”

Therefore, because Jesus is “the Living One” who is alive forevermore, we too live. Even if we die, we will live and never die. Our eternal life is bound up in the resurrected Christ. Let us therefore be deeply appreciative that our resurrected Lord conveys His life to us. We can walk in newness of life through the power of His resurrection, and we will enjoy this glorious blessing through all eternity!

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April 2006

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Mnemonics...

- *Men's Breakfast & Study, April 8th*
- *Youth Group, April 9th*
- *Session Meeting, April 18th*
- *Church Workday, April 29th*

Remembering Christ

By Pastor Brian De Jong

At this time of the year many people around us are in the midst of Lent – a forty day period stretching from Ash Wednesday through Easter. Ash Wednesday signals the beginning of Lent, calling practicing Roman Catholics to repentance and faith.

According to the pro-Catholic website www.catholicculture.org, *“For the next forty days, the faithful willingly submit to fasting and self-denial in imitation of Our Lord’s forty-day fast in the desert. It is in these dark and still nights, these desert-times, that the soul experiences its greatest growth. There, in the inner arena, the soul battles the world, the flesh and the devil just as Our Lord battled Satan’s triple temptation in the desert...”* Thus Lent is not merely a remembrance of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, but an imitation of the experiences of his earthly ministry.

As Orthodox Presbyterians, we do not observe Lent. Does that then mean that we pay no heed to the life, ministry, sufferings, death and resurrection of our Lord? Are we indifferent to His earthly ministry? Are we forgetting His humiliation on our behalf? Quite the contrary – we seek to remember and honor our Lord by careful attention to His holy Word. Our commitment shines through in practical ways in the life of our church.

First, we remember our Lord each and every Sunday as we gather for worship. The very reason we worship on the first day of the week is because of the resurrection of Christ. Every Sunday is a celebration of His victory over the tomb.

We also remember the life of the Lord through

the regular and faithful teaching of the Word of God from our pulpit. The life and ministry of our Savior is at the focal point of Scripture. We preach Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. The Old Testament foreshadows His work. The Gospel accounts provide the details of his life, teaching, miracles, suffering, death, burial, resurrection and ascension. Then Acts, the Epistles and even Revelation tease out the significance of His finished work for our salvation. Whether in the Old or New Testaments, the spotlight is always upon Christ.

Another way that we regularly remember the sacrificial sufferings of our Lord is through the celebration of the sacraments. Baptism reminds us that Jesus’ blood cleanses us from all sin. The Lord’s Supper employs the symbolism of the bread and the wine to bring to our minds that Jesus gave up His body and His blood for our salvation. Communion points to the cross.

Returning to the topic of Lent, some might wonder, “Why do Reformed churches not observe Lent?” Why not do all that we already do, and add Lent on top for good measure? One of the main reasons that Presbyterians historically have not encouraged or required their members to practice Lent is the lack of any Biblical warrant. In other words, the Bible nowhere commands, requires, prescribes or mandates the observance of Lent.

The same can also be said for the entire liturgical calendar. In no place in either Old or New Testament do we find the ecclesiastical year as it is practiced by liturgical churches

De Jong Continued...

today. There are no commands or instructions in Scripture calling the church to follow such a schedule. Neither do we find any evidence that the apostles followed the liturgical calendar that is so widely used today.

Looking back into church history, it is widely agreed and commonly accepted that hundreds of years passed before any of these feasts, festivals and observances were practiced. It is beyond reasonable debate that the church calendar was neither prescribed nor practiced by the New Testament church or by the early church for the first two hundred years of her existence.

Church history also shows us that two branches of Reformed Protestantism took strong exception to the liturgical calendar. One of those branches was English Puritanism, particularly during the time of the Westminster Assembly. The other branch was Scottish Presbyterianism, featuring the likes of John Knox, Andrew Melville, Alexander Henderson, George Gillespie and Samuel Rutherford.

The Westminster Assembly, in its Directory for the Publick Worship of God, says the following: “There is no day commanded in scripture to be kept holy under the gospel but the Lord’s Day, which is the Christian Sabbath. Festival days, vulgarly [or “commonly”] called *holy-days*, having no warrant in the word of God, are not to be continued.” (An Appendix, Touching Days and Places for Publick Worship) This statement, undoubtedly influenced by the Scottish Commissioners to the Assembly, reveals the rationale of both English

Puritanism and Scottish Presbyterianism. Matters related to the Public Worship of God must be commanded in Scripture. If no warrant exists in the word of God, such practices are not to be continued. (Also see The Westminster Confession, Ch. 21, Par.1)

Applying these principles to Lent, we must ask, “Is Lent commanded in Scripture? Is there a warrant in the word of God for such a practice?” The answer is plainly, “No such command exists – there is no Scriptural warrant.” Therefore we do not practice Lent, though we are a decided minority in modern times.

The Session of Grace church has wrestled with these issues in relation to both the Christmas season and Good Friday. We have sought to be sensitive to the needs and desires of the members of our congregation, while striving to maintain our fidelity to the revealed will of our God. Applying the Scriptures, and Scriptural principles to the corporate life of the church is our duty to God as ruling and teaching elders. We are particularly responsible to oversee the corporate worship services of Grace Church. It is our desire to be faithful to the word of God and pastorally sensitive to the people of God.

With that in mind, we decided at our February 21st Session meeting that during Easter week we would maintain our regular Wednesday prayer meeting and Sunday worship services, and that there would be no special mid-week services. As has been his practice in the past, Pastor De Jong will be preaching on the resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday. The Session also asked that

De Jong Concluded...

Pastor De Jong write an explanation of this decision, and publicize it in the April Reflections.

The Session further wants to encourage the congregation to regularly reflect upon Christ and His sufferings, death and resurrection through the Scriptural means and methods described in this article – especially the Lord’s Supper. We also believe that if our members desire to have special devotional times in their homes during the week preceding Easter, or if they desire to attend services of another church, they have the



freedom to do so.

On a pastoral note, we would invite any member with questions or concerns to speak personally to Pastor De Jong or to one of the ruling elders. We are always willing to discuss the important matters of the church with our members. We covet your prayers for wisdom and godliness as we lead God’s people in worship and service. May the Lord grant us one mind and one heart as we together serve the only King and Head of the Church, our Savior Jesus Christ!

Report on the Prison Ministry

from Rev. Ivan De Master



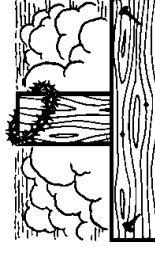
Grace OPC

April 2006

Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 Malawi Dinner & Game Night 7:00 p.m.
2 Choir Rehearsal 4:15 p.m.	3 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	4	5 Prayer Meeting 7 p.m.	6	7	8 Men's Breakfast & Study 7:30 a.m.
9 Missions Sunday <i>Youth Group</i> Choir Rehearsal 4:15 p.m.	10 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Theology Class, 3 p.m.</i>	11 Pine Haven 1:30 p.m.	12 Prayer Meeting 7 p.m.	13	14 Catechism Class 11 a.m.	15
16	17 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	18 Session Meeting, 6:30 p.m.	19 Prayer Meeting 7 p.m.	20	21	22
23	24 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Theology Class, 3 p.m.</i>	25 Pine Haven, 1:30 p.m.	26	27	28	29 Church Workday
30 Lord's Supper						



For that God so loved the world... the only Son...

John 3:16

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April Birthdays



Happy Birthday!!!

Camp Westminster

The OPC Presbytery of the Midwest invites you to Camp Westminster this summer! The dates are July 31-August 4th. Come meet with fellow believers, enjoy the beautiful Green Lake area, and deepen your understanding of biblical truth. The speaker, Rev. Bruce

Hollister, serves as pastor of New Covenant Community Church in New Lenox, IL. He will be speaking on the Holy Spirit.



Missions Cruise—2006

from Don & Pam Schlernitzauer

The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps" (Prov. 16:9). This biblical truth was evident from the very beginning of our trip, which as a result of the recent hurricanes, embarked from a different port and utilized a different ship than that originally planned. We were also unable to stop at one port, Cancun, due to the hurricane damage. But the Lord did indeed unfold His wondrous ways to our group of 62 Christians committed to reaching out in the name of Christ as we sailed in the Western Caribbean in January.

One of the ways was to show that the ship itself is a vast mission field, with crew members from Indonesia, the Philippines, Eastern Europe, and South America. We met with some of them in a joint worship service Sunday evening and also had two subsequent times of sharing and prayer with some of the women. The first port of call, Cozumel, had sustained extensive hurricane damage to the pier and tourist areas, but the church which was our destination was one of the few buildings with an undamaged roof. We painted extensively in the church and there Don also examined patients and distributed very much needed glasses. In addition, a puppet show relating biblical truth, was presented at a nearby school.

Our second stop was Roatan, a beautiful but poor island off the coast of Honduras, famous for its barrier reef. We were encouraged to find a clinic recently established by a nurse, Miss Peggy, within an old hotel being remodeled for Christian outreach. There Don was able to examine and help several eye patients. Other members of the group went into a neighborhood to distribute packets which included New Testaments, and to invite children to a puppet show. The call was effective in that about four hundred

showed up! The delighted faces of the children were a wonderful reward.

...Don was able to treat a good number of eye patients at a small church in Belize. Others of our team painted at the refuge center while the puppet team performed at two different locations. We concluded our visit with a meal at the refuge center where we met several young people who had been helped by the ministry including Pablo, a young man from the street who had recently come to know Christ. He unabashedly showed us a healed stab wound of his abdomen and a healed bullet wound of his leg, left over from his life before Christ.

As we concluded our mission it was stressed that to make a truly meaningful impact on the lives of the people we had met as we served, we needed to hold them before the Lord in prayer. We would especially love for you to join with us as we intercede for Heidi, a member of the ship's crew who is just coming to know Christ, for Margaret, a prisoner we had met on a previous visit who is now free temporally and also in Christ, for Miss Peggy's remarkable Christian clinic, and for Richard's outreach and influence for Christ in Belize. We are very grateful to you and to everyone in Grace Church who undergirded our mission efforts through prayer.

Don & Pam Schlernitzauer

Session Digest

from Rev. Brian De Jong

On Tuesday evening, March 14th the Session met at the church for our regular monthly meeting. We opened with a devotional from our moderator, Don Schlernitzauer, from Luke 10:17-20. He reminded us that our joy should come not from the many good things that we do, and that the Lord is doing at Grace Church, but from the fact that our names are written in heaven. We should be rejoicing in God's mercy toward us! The deacons were with us and we spent some time praying together for the congregation. We then talked at length with the deacons about their work. A time of great encouragement and fellowship was enjoyed by everyone. After the deacons departed, Pastor De Jong gave his report. The worship committee report featured a request from the Gideons to present their work to the congre-

gation. We also discussed various issues with the sound system. The Social Fellowship Committee presented a calendar of activities for the year. The Missions and Evangelism Committee brought a request to invite Paul Jenks, President of AMG, to report on their work on Sunday evening, April 23rd. As always, we reviewed financial statements from our treasurer. Several ongoing projects were discussed, such as the purchase of pew Bibles in the New American Standard Bible translation. Work on an updated photo directory was also reported. The meeting closed around 10:00 pm with prayer and the customary "Hug of Christian Fellowship". Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 11th at 6:30 pm at the church. Members are always welcome to attend and observe our meetings.

Ladies Luncheon

The Ladies Luncheon will be held at the church on May 6th starting at noon. All ladies and girls are invited to attend. Please contact Gail Moody for more information.



SPRING CLEANING INCENTIVE!

SALE



Benevolence Offering

from Joel Moody

The second Sunday of each month we have an opportunity to share in the work of missions and other benevolences through our monthly Benevolence Offering. Through March 19, 2006, we have received \$4,438.30 towards the Benevolence budget. The budgeted amount required for the first three months of the year is \$3,750.00. Each month from the Benevolence Offerings, \$400.00 is sent to Worldwide Outreach in support of the denomination's Foreign Missions, Home Missions, and Christian Education programs. In addition, \$125.00 each month is sent to the Presbytery's Church Extension Committee to

assist some of the newer churches in the Presbytery. In addition, during March, \$500.00 was directed for the support of Karl Thompson in his work with the Menominee Indians in Zoar, northern Wisconsin. Next month in April, \$2,000.00 will be disbursed for the Hub-Spokes Missions Program.

SHORT TERM MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

from Don & Pam Schlernitzauer

At our recent presbytery meeting, one of the most engaging reports was given by Rev. Jim Ferguson of Green Bay. In that report he enthusiastically recounted the short term mission experience of New Hope OPC during the past ten years. A sizeable portion of the congregation has participated in these missions, which have involved evangelism, VBS, and construction, in cooperation with a number of different mission organizations. Their current goal is to have up to four mission trips a year, providing opportunity for everyone to serve.

As likely fruit of these short term mission efforts, the Session of New Hope has noted a greater interest in and support of missions, a greater commitment to and involvement in prayer, and more of a pervasive excitement about the gospel in their body. Their church has become both more outwardly focused and as well inwardly alive.

Pastor Ferguson then related fruit that is more able to be quantified; during this ten year period four members of their body have gone into full time missions or ministry, each testifying of the importance of the short term mission experience in their decisions.

The Foreign Missions Committee of the Presbytery of the Midwest is convinced of the positive influence of short term mission involvement on the health and vitality of our churches, the presbytery and even the denomination, and is promoting such opportunities.

Working through individuals in our presbytery and denomination, the Lord has raised up a number of opportunities in the coming months. More information on these is available at the presbytery website (www.pmwopc.org) and the denominational website (www.opc.org). The directory page of the presbytery website is given as an addendum to this article.

Already in 2006 Pam and Don Schlernitzauer have participated in a mission to the western Caribbean, Rich Nagle has labored in a mercy mission in southern Florida, Mary Buyze and Ethan Ver Velde will soon join other students in laboring for Christ in other hurricane damaged areas, and this summer Ashley De Troye will be part of a Christian medical mission in Nigeria. In all these efforts, God not only blesses the individuals, but our church as well.

The One we acknowledge as Savior and Lord has said that "I will build my church" (Matt 16: 18) and that He has "other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them in also..." (John 10: 16). As we join with Christ in the building of His church, in the gathering of His sheep, a wonderful encouragement to hold before us is the beautiful picture of the church triumphant given in Ps 57:9, "I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the people; I will sing praises to you among the nations,"—the beautiful perfected body of Christ.

Short Term Missions Opportunities

Opportunities on the Calendar



Deacons Update

COMMITTEE ON DIAGONAL MINISTRIES

Dr. Leonard J. Coppes, Secretary-Treasurer 9161 Vine St., Thornton, Co. 80229

Nov./Dec., 2005

Dear friends in Christ,

Ecclesiastes reminds us "for everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven." Never was this more evident than in 2005.

This year was the time for disasters and the time for God's people to reach out to help. Early in the year the focus was on the tsunami in Asia where we were able to dispense nearly \$135,000. This fall, disaster hit closer to home during the hurricanes which hit the Gulf region and Florida. Not only did the churches give graciously (both within and outside the OPC), but our Committee on Home Missions set up the Disaster Task Force which distributed \$197,000 in aid and services.

Surprisingly, regular giving did not decrease, so our Committee was able to meet regular budgeted giving to causes here and abroad. We were also able to meet the needs of pensioners and those pastors in need of hospitalization.

We thank you for your prayer support and your faithfulness. May God bless you and yours in the New Year.

In Christ,

Leonard J. Coppes

Deacons continued...



“O Holy Spirit,
As the sun is full of light,
the ocean full of water,
Heaven full of glory,
so may my heart be full
of thee.”

*from The Valley of Vision, a
collection of Puritan Prayers &*



Steve & Megan's Wedding



Steve Boss & Megan Arndt were married at Calvary OPC in Cedar Grove. Pastor De Jong officiated as they took their vows and became Steve & Megan Boss. Sandy Kaeiser played organ and Nancy Harmelink, Gail Moody, and her sang as a trio. Connor Froh claims it wasn't his fault & Jeff Boss still has nightmares about the wedding pillow/rings incident.



There was Contra dancing (like line or square dancing) with a bluegrass band after dinner (the first one was the Virginia Reel.)

Steve & Megan found snow & ski slopes in Breckenridge, CO and then explored a coral reef in warm waters in the Bahamas for the next two weeks.



CHRISTIANITY & LIBERALISM BY J. GRESHAM MACHEN

Report by Ian De Jong

Christianity and Liberalism is J. Gresham Machen’s well-argued defense of orthodox Christian doctrine against the errors of “Liberal” or “Modern” theology. “There is a profound difference, then,” he says, “in the attitude assumed by modern liberalism and by Christianity toward Jesus the Lord... liberalism makes Him an example for faith, Christianity the object of faith.” In this book Machen reaffirms the truth of fundamental biblical doctrines which liberal thinkers of his day opposed.

To fully appreciate Christianity and Liberalism, one must first understand the

position of Machen’s opponents. Actually a blending of Darwinism and German Higher Criticism, Modernism denied the inspiration of Scripture, claiming that the Bible contained errors. Proponents of the liberal religion also rejected the reality of Hell; the second coming of Christ; and all miracles, including the virgin birth of Christ and the atonement. Machen corrects these errors, meeting each heresy with clear logic, and the truth of God’s word. Christianity and Liberalism is an excellent defense of “the faith handed down to us,” and its message is important for every Christian, pastor and church-member alike.

PLANT HAPPINESS author unknown

submitted by Antoinette De Master

First, plant five rows of “peas”:

- Prayer
- Perseverance
- Politeness
- Promptness
- Purity

Then, 5 rows of “lettuce”:

- Let us be faithful to duty,
- Let us be unselfish,
- Let us be truthful,
- Let us follow Christ,
- Let us love one another.

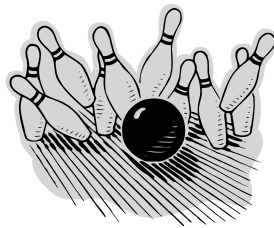
Next, plant 3 rows of “squash”:

- Squash gossip
- Squash criticism
- Squash indifference

No garden is complete without “turnips”:

- Turn up for church,
- Turn up with a smile,
- Turn up with new ideas,
- Turn up with determination to make
everything count for something
good & worthwhile

Lloyd Ten Pas, continued...





**Proclaiming the
Excellencies of our
Lord Jesus Christ.**

The Monthly Newsletter
of Grace OPC

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CHECK OUT THE WEBPAGE:
WWW.OPC.ORG



★ The old “blue” Trinity Hymnal was published in 1961?

★ The newer “red” Trinity Hymnal was published in 1990?

★ The red Trinity Hymnal contains 11 sections of hymns?

★ There are 742 hymns within the red Hymnal?

★ The words and MIDI files for the hymns within the blue hymnal are available on the www.opc.org website?

★ Some hymn texts in the hymnbook have been changed slightly from the original to reflect correct doctrine or for other reasons (note alt. at the bottom of the hymn)?

★ The small print on the bottom left of the hymn is the name of the writer of the text?

★ The small print on the right is the composer’s name, while the letters in bold are the tune name?

Getting to know... Lloyd Ten Pas

continued on p. 13