

REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

HOLDING ONTO HOPE

By Pastor Brian De Jong

In our current world, real hope is in increasingly short supply. It is a quality that is altogether lacking in the political sphere, in academic circles, among the artistic community and from the enter-tainment in-dustry.

What we find instead is an overlay of cynicism and sar-casm, that covers selfishness, despair and bleakness. Laughing at the dark-ness, or sneering at it may momentarily make us feel brave. But such re-sponses do nothing whatsoever to solve problems or find solutions. There is lit-tle that is particularly positive in our time.

This is where God’s word shines a bright light into modern gloom. In Ro-mans 15:13 Paul writes, “*Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Ho-ly Spirit.*” That verse tells us that God – our God – is “the God of hope.” He is the only source of true hope. Indeed, His very presence instills hope to all that He touches.

As the God of hope He is able and willing to fill us with all joy and peace in believe, so that we will abound in hope. Our hopefulness will come about “by the power of the Holy Spir-it.” The Spirit is the agent of the Father to bring hope to our weary hearts. It is by and through Him that we can hope again – even “hoping against hope” as Abraham did (see Romans 4:18).

So how does God’s Spirit bring

God’s hope into our dreary lives? A few verses earlier, in Romans 15:4 Paul says, “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the en-



couragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” So here is the secret – God’s Spirit uses the Scriptures to encourage us to perse-vere in faith. As we sit un-der the instruction of God’s word, and soak in that encouragement

from the Scriptures, our

hearts fill with hope.

It sounds so very simple it must be too good to be true. But it is true – read your Bible, praying that God’s Spirit would use the encouragement of the Scriptures to instill hope in your heart. Pray that your heart would abound in hope – over-flowing in confidence in God.

Scripture has many purposes, in-clud-ing the revelation of God’s nature and character, he manifesting of His plan of salvation, the instruction of His children as they walk through this world, explain-ing the past and foreshadowing the future. But among all of the various purposes of Scripture, this one must not be neglected or despised. God has given His word so that His children might have hope, and that their hearts would not grow weary until they give up and quit.

Draw near to God in His word, read your Bibles and pray the Holy Spir-it to bolster your hope. Try it, and see if He does not do that and more for you!

Volume 10, Issue 4

April 2015

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God the Best Portion of the Christian

Part 2

by Jonathan Edwards

APPLICATION

1. Hence we may learn, that whatever changes a godly man passes through, he is happy; because God, who is unchangeable, is his chosen portion. Though he meet with temporal losses, and be deprived of many, yea, of all his temporal enjoyments; yet God, whom he prefers before all, still remains, and cannot be lost. While he stays in this changeable, troublesome world, he is happy; because his chosen portion, on which he builds as his main foundation for happiness, is above the world, and above all changes. And when he goes into another world, still he is happy, because that portion yet remains. Whatever he be deprived of, he cannot be deprived of his chief portion; his inheritance remains sure to him.—Could worldly-minded men find out a way to secure to themselves those earthly enjoyments on which they mainly set their hearts, so that they could not be lost nor impaired while they live, how great would they account the privilege, though other things which they esteem in a less degree, were liable to the same uncertainty as they now are! Whereas now, those earthly enjoyments, on which men chiefly set their hearts, are often most fading. But how great is the happiness of those who have chosen the Fountain of all good, who prefer him before all things in heaven or on earth, and who can never be deprived of him to all eternity!

2. Let all by these things examine and try themselves, whether they be saints or not. As this which hath been exhibited is the spirit of the saints, so it is peculiar to them: none can use the language of the text, and say, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee*, Psalm 73:25 but the saints. A man's choice is that which determines his state. He that chooses God for his portion, and prefers him to all other things, is a godly man, for *he* chooses and worships him as God. To respect him as God, is to respect him above all other things; and if any man respect him as *his* God, *his God he is*; there is an union and covenant relation between that man and the true God.—Every man is as his God is. If you would know what a man is, whether he be a godly man or not, you must inquire what his God is. If the true God be he to whom

he hath a supreme respect, whom he regards above all; he is doubtless a servant of the true God. But if the man have something else to which he pays a greater respect than to Jehovah, he is not a godly man.

Inquire, therefore, how it is with you,—whether you prefer God before all other things. It may sometimes be a difficulty for persons to determine this to their satisfaction; the ungodly may be deluded with false affections; the godly in dull frames may be at a loss about it. Therefore you may try yourselves, as to this matter, several ways; if you cannot speak fully to one thing, yet you may perhaps to others.

1. What is it which *chiefly* makes you desire to go to heaven when you die? Indeed some have no great desire to go to heaven. They do not care to go to hell; but if they could be safe from that, they would not much concern themselves about heaven. If it be not so with you, but you find that you have a desire after heaven, then inquire what it is for. Is the main reason, that you may be with God, have communion with him, and be conformed to him? that you may see God, and enjoy him there? Is this the consideration which keeps your hearts, and your desires, and your expectations towards heaven?

2. If you could avoid death, and might have your free choice, would you choose to live *always* in this world without God, rather than in his time to leave the world, in order to be with him? If you might live here in earthly prosperity to all eternity, but destitute of the presence of God and communion with him—having no spiritual intercourse between him and your souls, God and you being strangers to each other for ever—would you choose this rather than to leave the world, in order to dwell in heaven, as the children of God, there to enjoy the glorious privileges of children, in a holy and perfect love to God, and enjoyment of him to all eternity?

3. Do you prefer Christ to all others as the *way* to heaven? He who truly chooses God, prefers him in each person of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: the Father, as his Father; the Son as his Saviour; the Holy Ghost as his Sanctifier. Inquire, therefore, not only whether you choose the enjoyment of God in heaven as your highest portion and happiness, but also whether you choose Jesus Christ before all

Portion Continued...

others, as your way to heaven; and that in a sense of the excellency of Christ, and of the way of salvation by him, as being that which is to the glory of Christ, and of sovereign grace. Is the way of free grace, by the blood and righteousness of the blessed and glorious Redeemer, the most excellent way to life in your esteem? Doth it add a value to the heavenly inheritance, that it is conferred in this way? Is this far better to you than to be saved by your own righteousness, by any of your own performances, or by any other mediator?

4. If you might go to heaven in what course you please, would you prefer to all others the way of a *strict walk* with God? They who prefer God as hath been represented, choose him, not only in the end, but in the way. They had rather be with God than with any other, not only when they come to the end of their journey; but also while they are in their pilgrimage. They choose the way of walking with God, though it be a way of labour, and care, and self-denial, rather than a way of sin, though it be a way of sloth, and of gratifying their lusts.

5. Were you to spend your eternity in this world, would you choose rather to live in mean and low circumstances with the gracious presence of God, than to live for ever in earthly prosperity without him? Would you rather spend it in holy living, and serving and walking with God, and in the enjoyment of the privileges of his children? God often manifesting himself to you as your Father, discovering to you his glory, and manifesting his love, lifting the light of his countenance upon you! Would you rather choose these things, though in poverty, than to abound in worldly things, and to live in ease and prosperity, at the same time being an alien from the commonwealth of Israel? Could you be content to stand in no child-like relation to God, enjoying no gracious intercourse with him, having no right to be acknowledged by him as his children? Or would such a life as this, though in ever so great earthly prosperity, be esteemed by you a miserable life?

If, after all, there remain with you doubts, and a difficulty to determine concerning yourselves whether you do truly and sincerely prefer God to all other things, I would mention two things which are

the surest ways to be determined in this matter, and which seem to be the best grounds of satisfaction in it.

1. The feeling of some particular, strong, and lively *exercise* of such a spirit. A person may have such a spirit as is spoken of in the doctrine, and may have the exercise of it in a low degree, and yet remain in doubt whether he have it or not, and be unable to come to a satisfying determination. But God is pleased sometimes to give such discoveries of his glory, and of the excellency of Christ, as do so draw forth the heart, that they know beyond all doubt, that

*“What is it
which chiefly
makes you
desire to go
to heaven
when you
die?”*

they feel such a spirit as Paul spake of, when he said, he “counted all things but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus his Lord;” Phil. 3:7b and they can boldly say, as in the text, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. Psalm 73:25” At such times the people of God do not need any help of ministers to satisfy them whether they have the true love of God; they plainly see and feel it; and the Spirit of God then witnesseth with their spirits, that they are the children of God.—

Therefore, if you would be satisfied upon this point, earnestly seek such attainments; seek that you may have such clear and lively exercises of this spirit. To this end, you must labour to grow in grace.

Though you have had such experiences in times past, and they satisfied you then, yet you may again doubt. You should therefore seek that you may have them more frequently; and the way to that is, earnestly to press forward, that you may have more acquaintance with God, and have the principles of grace strengthened. This is the way to have the exercises of grace stronger, more lively, and more frequent, and so to be satisfied that you have a spirit of supreme love to God.

2. The other way is, To inquire whether you prefer God to all other things in *practice*, *i. e.* when you have occasion to manifest by your practice which you prefer—when you must either cleave to one or the other, and must either forsake other things, or forsake God—whether then it be your manner practically to prefer God to all other things whatever, even to those earthly things to which your

Portion Concluded...

hearts are most wedded. Are your lives those of adherence to God, and of serving him in this manner?

He who sincerely prefers God to all other things in his heart, will do it in his practice. For when God and all other things come to stand in competition, that is the proper trial what a man chooses; and the manner of acting in such cases must certainly determine what the choice is in all free agents, or those who act on choice. Therefore there is no sign of sincerity so much insisted on in the Bible as this, that we deny ourselves, sell all, forsake the world, take up the cross, and follow Christ whithersoever he goeth.—Therefore, so run, not as uncertainly; so fight, not as those that beat the air; but keep under your bodies, and bring them into subjection. Act not as though you counted yourselves to have apprehended; but this one thing do, Phil. 3:12-13

“forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” 2 Peter 1:5-8 “And besides this, giving diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

A sermon by Jonathan Edwards, preached in April 1736, “God the Best Portion of the Christian.” Second part only.

Midwest Presbytery Missions Dinner

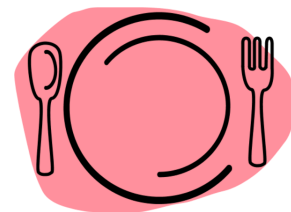
by Arenda Onnink

On March 13th Howard & Audrey Voskuil, Jim & Arenda Onnink, and Pastor Ivan & Carla De Master traveled to Lemont, IL to attend a Mission Dinner sponsored by Covenant OP Church of Orland Park, IL.

This was the fourth dinner that the Missions and Evangelism Committee of Covenant Church has hosted. The idea to host a dinner and raise money grew out of their awareness of the financial struggles of Gospel Life OPC in Chicago.

We had a lovely dinner and heard from two speakers – Pastor John Ro (Gospel Life) and Pastor Christian McShaffery (Grace Reformed, Reedsburg). It was so good to hear about what God is doing in other churches and church plants in our Presbytery. The mission offering collected at the dinner was almost \$7,000.00. Praise the Lord! This money is given to the Presbytery “CHEX” committee to be distributed throughout the Presbytery.

Of the four years that this dinner has been held, this year they had the largest attendance. Five couples are seated at each table. The cost for the dinner is \$40.00 for a couple with your offering to missions in addition to that. We had a delightful time of fellowship that evening. Maybe next year Grace Church could fill up a table or possibly two tables! We will make sure the announcements get in our bulletin so that you can think about joining us next year.



Hospitality Sunday

On Sunday, April 19th, we will have Hospitality Sunday. If you've never participated before, now is the time to sign up! Everyone marks down on the sign up sheet their name, how many are coming and whether they would like to host, be hosted or both. The week before, everyone is contacted with whether or not they will be hosting (if they volunteered) or where they will be going so the individuals, couples & families can co-ordinate what everyone is going to bring in their group for the luncheon on Sunday.



Book Review

by Carla De Master

Book Review on Psalms, Volume 3, by James Montgomery Boice.

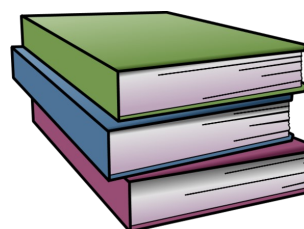
Thinking back to the Women's Retreat at New Hope Presbyterian Church of last year, and thinking of the excellent lessons on the Psalms by Kathleen Nielson, I found it exciting to find another Boice commentary on the Psalms in our book room. This book deals with Psalms 107 through 150. Beginning with "The Pilgrims' Psalm," Boice goes through each Psalm with care for his people, who have found these sermons helpful through hurts, fears, disappointments, faith, hope and spiritual aspiration. I go away from this study with deeper worshipful attitudes, a love for God, and knowledge of His love for me and for all his people. I also appreciate our pastor's conducting Biblical worship including three things often missing in today's worship: prayer, confession of sin, and reading of the Bible.

Two parts especially meaningful to me were the 14 chapters on Psalm 119 and the Psalms of ascent

(Psalm 120 through 134), sung as the Israelites came to Jerusalem for the feasts. Psalm 145 holds a special place in my life and Boice discusses this last Psalm of David with thoroughness. "Praise the Lord!" is the theme and the Psalms tell why and how.

Two questions:

1. Where can I get the first two volumes of Boice on Psalms?
2. Who is going to the New Hope Women's Retreat, April 24 and 25?



April Birthdays



Wedding Anniversaries





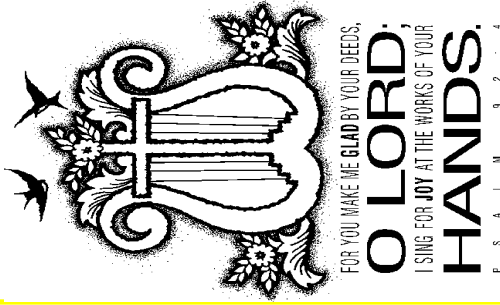
Grace OPC

April 2015

Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
5 Meadowview Manor, 3 p.m.	6 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	7	8 Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.	9	10	11
12 Missions Sunday	13 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m.</i>	14	15 Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.	16	17	18
19 Hospitality Sunday	20 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Session Meeting, 6:30 p.m.</i>	21	22 Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.	23	24 New Hope Women's Retreat	25 Men's Leadership Breakfast, 7:00 a.m. <i>New Hope Women's Retreat</i>
26 Lord's Supper, (p.m.)	27 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. <i>Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m.</i>	28	29 Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.	30 Ladies' Banquet, 6:30 p.m.		



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by Jim Onnink

SCCHS Pies

Sheboygan County Christian High School still has large rhubarb pies and small blueberry and cherry pies for sale. The large pies are \$12.00, and the small pies are \$7.00. There are also bags of frozen blueberries and cherries available. Each bag weighs 2.5 lbs., and the cost for 1 bag is \$7.00 and 2 bags are \$13.00.



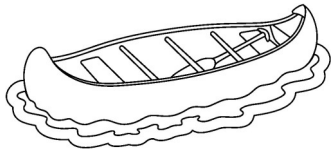
From the Presbytery Youth Committee:

Flambeau River Float

Camping and Canoeing in Creation

July 13-17 · Pembine, WI

Let us know if you are interested to join an excursion on the beautiful Flambeau River in Wisconsin. Youth will enjoy being challenged while enjoying the rest and renewal of being in God's great outdoors. Some details are yet to be settled, but expect the cost to come in around \$200-250 per participant. Please contact Karen Baldwin at ... if you are interested or want more information. Space is limited and those who reach out to Karen first will make the top of the list.



Venture Missions

Serving through Community Outreach

July 18-24 · Zoar, WI

You've been wondering haven't you? Well there is no need to call. The annual Venture Missions Trip *is* being planned for 2015! Save the date and watch for the packet which will have all the details including the application. It should be arriving soon, but if you just can't wait and need to know something about the trip pronto, contact the Rev. Gordon Oliver at ...

Promised Land Paintball

Paintball and Swim

July 25 · Trevor, WI

Last year's paintball and beach outing was huge success, so we're doing it again! Save the date and plan to come. Even if jungle warfare isn't your thing the beach and swimming alone are worth the trip. Don't just send the kids, plan to come with the whole family. Questions? Contact the Rev. Ben Snodgrass at ...



Comments on Finance

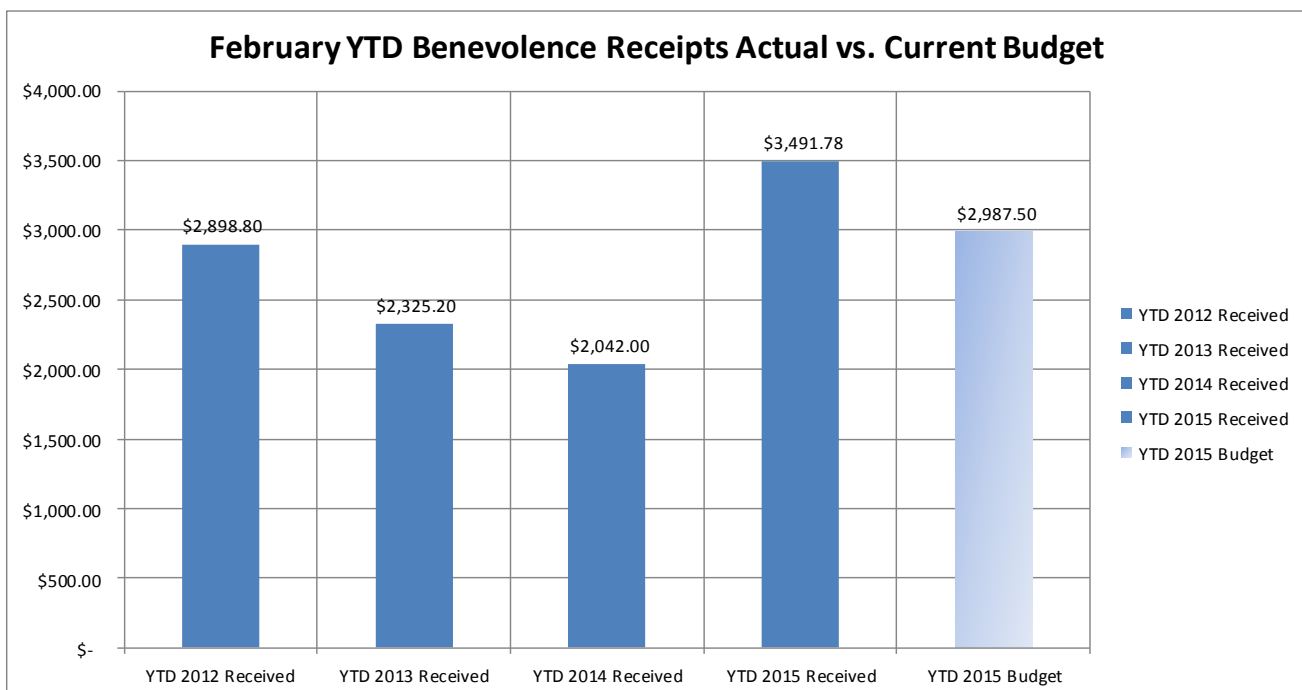
by Joel Moody

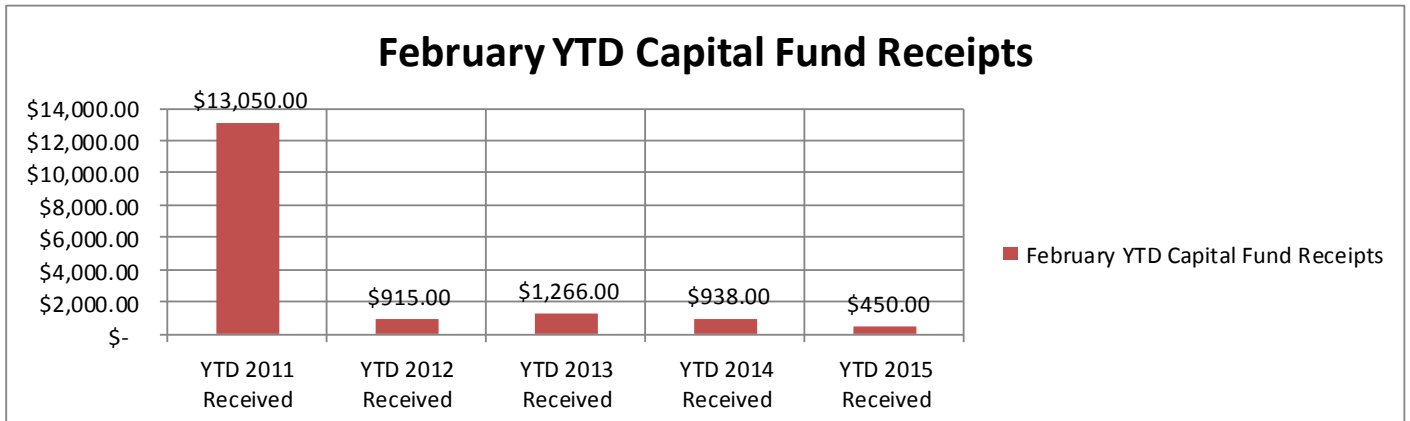
General Fund receipts for February totaled \$9,761.43 as compared to the budget of \$12,927.38, while General Fund disbursements for February totaled \$14,642.45. February year to date General Fund receipts totaled \$19,599.13 as compared to the budget of \$25,854.76 (a shortfall of \$6,255.63), while February year to date disbursements of \$25,267.52 were \$587.24 below budget. Through the end of February, the General Fund has decreased by \$5,652.27. Year to date General Fund receipts for February were 17.4% below last year's total on an average Sunday while disbursements were 10.0% below the prior year.

Benevolence Fund Receipts for February totaled \$1,867.78 as compared to the budget of \$1,493.75 (an excess of \$374.03). Year to date Benevolence Fund Receipts through February totaled \$3,491.78 and were above budget by \$504.28. Please refer to the graph for a historical trend of benevolence receipts as well as the current benevolence budget. ...

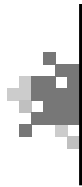
February Year to Date giving for the **Capital Fund** was \$450.00. Please refer to the Capital Fund Graph that shows the historical giving for the

years indicated in the graph. You may contribute to the Capital Fund by marking your gift as "Capital Fund" and placing it in the offering plate. Please note that the Capital Fund is used to pay for current and future needs that may exist to purchase additional equipment (such as computers, the sound system, tables and chairs, etc.) or building-type items (such as a parking lot, driveway, furnace boiler, etc.). Since some capital needs are quite substantial in nature, resources to finance and pay for these projects can take years to pay for them. Even though capital needs may not be large in the current year, we should wisely allocate our giving not only to current needs, but also to these future needs as well. During the current month, two new computers were purchased, one for the secretary and one for the pastor.





by Rebecca Taggart



Grace OPC Church Mentoring Program

by Tim Voskuil

MENTOR, Men-tor, Men-tawr.
What is a mentor?

Some synonyms of the word “mentor” would be: adviser, master, guide, preceptor. A wise and trusted counselor or teacher. There is even a town in NE Ohio named Mentor.

Some uses of the word “mentor” in a sentence might be: “She spent years mentoring to younger employees” or “The new executive wished he could be mentored by some older executives”

Did you know that Grace Church has a mentoring program? Yes, the mentoring program has over 30 people involved in it. The people involved are paired up with other member of Grace Church. They usually meet once or twice a month, depending on their schedule. The purpose of the mentoring program

is to study God’s word, encourage and pray for each other and to help each other grow in faith and wisdom. The groups select their own topic of study. It could be a book of the Bible or maybe a book that both people would be interested in. We have also had people pass their study books to other groups once they were finished with the books. There are many topics out there to help us grow in the Lord.

The Session is wondering if there are other people who would like to get involved in the program, either as a mentor or as someone who wants to be mentored. If you have any questions please let Tim Voskuil know, we will work on getting you involved.

Session Digest

by Pastor Brian De Jong

On Tuesday, March 10th your Session met for its monthly meeting. The highlight of the evening was the interview of Jason Will for membership. It was good to hear of God’s work in Jason’s life, and how he has drawn Jason into our congregation. We also considered Rebecca Taggart’s plans to attend Team ... – a summer mission trip to We reviewed and adopted the wedding policy, which is being published in this issue of Reflections. The greatest concern was the general fund giving report from our treasurer, Joel Moody. According to the report, our income year-to-

date is down by 17% over last year’s giving. Finally, the Session discussed ways to build closer ties between our elders and our deacons. The next meeting will be on Monday, April 20th at 6:30 p.m.



Marriage Policy

Grace OPC, Sheboygan, Wisconsin

God ordained marriage as a covenant union between one man and one woman. The purpose of marriage is the enrichment to the lives of those who enter this union, and the raising up of a godly seed to continue to propagate the race. It is within heterosexual marriage that God intends for children to be born and raised.

A Christian is to marry only another believer. That marriage partner should be a member of a Christian church and should demonstrate a serious commitment to serve the Lord. The couple is to refrain from sexual/physical/marital intimacy until after the wedding.

In marriage, God's people make a lifetime commitment to one another. According to the Scriptures, divorce is only allowed in the case of adultery by one of the spouses, or in the case of willful desertion by an unbelieving spouse. If a Biblically unjustified divorce takes place, the estranged partners are to remain unmarried in order to be reconciled, if possible. According to our Savior's teaching, remarriage in the case of an unjustified divorce results in further adultery. In the case of a Biblically allowable divorce, the innocent party is free to remarry another Christian.

When a member of the congregation wishes to marry, the pastor and elders should communicate with the member, encouraging them to be guided by God's word and to seek God's blessing upon their planned union.

In order for a wedding to take place on the grounds of Grace OPC, the following conditions must be met: (1) at least one of the future spouses must be a member in good standing of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; (2) the officiant must be approved by the Session, and should normally be a minister of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; (3) the order of service for the wedding must be approved by the Session of Grace OPC; (4) the couple should receive premarital counseling from the pastor, or premarital counseling deemed equivalent by the Session; (5) the couple should meet with the Session or representatives thereof prior to the wedding.

According to our Westminster standards, our OPC Book of Church Order, and the Scriptures themselves, unrepentant sexual sin is an offense against the word of God, and therefore a proper ground for church discipline. This includes adultery, fornication, rape, incest, homosexuality, bestiality, polygamy, unlawful degrees of consanguinity or affinity, and other common types of sexual sin. Persons openly and unrepentantly engaged in such conduct cannot be properly married by the pastor of Grace OPC. Such weddings will not be allowed in the building or on the grounds of Grace OPC.

by Rev. Ivan De Master

Deacons' Update

by Jeff Froh

We continue to be blessed by the Lord.
Our current balance is \$7500 and here are some
examples of our outreach:

- Visiting the sick
- Wheelchair Taxi assistance
- Clothes
- Food
- Financial assistance with World Wide Outreach
- Dental issues
- Weekly bible studies





“The eyes
of all look
to You,
And You give
them their food
in due time.
You open
Your hand
And satisfy
the desire of
every living
thing.”



Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

Grace OPC

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CHECK OUT THE AUDIO:

**SERMONAUDIO.COM/
GRACESHEBOYGAN**

CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE:

GRACEOPCSHEBOYGAN.COM



Spurgeon

Corner

“Ye are come to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”
(Hebrews 12:24)

Reader, have *you* come to the blood of sprinkling? The question is not whether you have come to a knowledge of doctrine, or an observance of ceremonies, or to a certain form of experience, but *have you come to the blood of Jesus?* The blood of Jesus is the life of all vital godliness. If you have truly come to Jesus, we know how you came—the Holy Spirit sweetly brought you there. You came to the blood of sprinkling with no merits of your own. Guilty, lost, and helpless, you came to take that blood, and that blood alone, as your everlasting hope. You came to the cross of Christ, with a trembling and an aching heart; and oh! what a precious sound it was to you to hear the voice of the blood of Jesus! The dropping of his blood is as the music of heaven to the penitent sons of earth. We are full of sin, but the Saviour bids us lift our eyes to him, and as we gaze upon his streaming wounds, each drop of blood, as it falls, cries, “It is finished; I have made an end of sin; I have brought in everlasting righteousness.” Oh! sweet language of the precious blood of Jesus! If you have come to that blood once, you will come to it constantly. Your life will be “Looking unto Jesus.” Your whole conduct will be epitomized in this—“To whom coming.” Not to whom I *have* come, but to whom I am *always coming*. If thou hast ever come to the blood of sprinkling, thou wilt feel thy need of coming to it every day. He who does not desire to wash in it *every day*, has never washed in it at all. The believer ever feels it to be his joy and privilege that there is still a fountain opened. Past experiences are doubtful food for Christians; a present coming to Christ alone can give us joy and comfort. This morning let us sprinkle our door-post fresh with blood, and then feast upon the Lamb, assured that the destroying angel must pass us by.



Morning, April 17, by C. H. Spurgeon

Ladies' Banquet

All the ladies are invited to come to the Ladies' Banquet, which will be held on Thursday, April 30th at the church. This year's speaker will be Liz Toslma.

