

# REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

## All Things New

By Pastor Brian De Jong

Revelation 21:5 *And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."*

There is a theme running throughout Scripture of newness. It appears on the opening pages of Genesis, as God makes a new thing – the heavens and the earth and all things in them.

That theme surfaces in other respects, but none more significant than the promise of God in Jeremiah 31 of a New Covenant. This new covenant would be not unlike the old, but better in many regards.

When we arrive at the New Testament, we find that new covenant dawning over the world as another unique event transpires in the incarnation of God the Son. He comes as the Redeemer of God's elect, to bring new birth and new life to those whom the Father had chosen.

Jesus' earthly ministry was in many ways new. He brought new and fresh revelations of the Father from heaven above. He did unprecedented miracles in healing



the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead and feeding the hungry multitudes. His were not the tired old miracles of past prophets. He did amazing things –

unthinkable things – fresh manifestations of power and glory. As Jesus went to the cross and died, the whole world seemed to groan under the weight of that horrible death. Yet with a new day, Jesus arose on the

third day and ushered in the new covenant in all its fullness.

As that grace and mercy flow to lost sinners, the Lord brings new life to those previously dead in their trespasses and sins. This is how Paul describes our conversion in 2 Corinthians 5

*"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."*

So we now walk in newness of life as new creatures in Christ Jesus. Moreover, we look forward to a new heaven and new earth – that land where

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### Mnemonics...

- *Session Meeting, January 4th*
- *Meadowview Manor, January 7th*
- *Men and Boys' Leadership Breakfast, January 20th*
- *Annual Congregational Meeting, January 24th*

# Outreach after Hurricane Harvey in Houston, Texas



By Judith M. Dinsmore

When the rain started in Houston on August 26, it didn't stop until the whole city was at least three feet deep in water. "Some areas in the thirty-inch range, some in the fifty-inch," explained Steve Larson, Disaster Relief Coordinator for the OPC in Houston and member of Cornerstone OPC.

"It overwhelmed the bayous, it overwhelmed the rivers, it overwhelmed the reservoirs ... all of [them] failed miserably, at the same time," Larson said. As a result, Houston was ravaged by catastrophic flooding from Hurricane Harvey.

## Deed and Word

When the water receded, Cornerstone in northwest Houston, sister church Providence OPC in northeast Houston, and church plant Good Shepherd OPC Bible study in southwest Houston, all sprang into action. Their timeline was simple, explained Larson. The top priority was to help those within the household of faith; then, as donations began coming into the denominational disaster relief fund, to help those in need outside the church.

"We are trying to help as many people as we can in two ways: physically relieving their distress by helping them recover from the flood, but also ... with outreach and ministry in the name of Christ."

"Deed and word" is how Mark Sumpter summed it up. Sumpter, Regional Home Missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest, and his wife, Peggy, moved to southwest Houston in 2015 to focus on a church plant in that suburb, now the Good Shepherd Bible study. He believes that Harvey has given the Houston believers a unique chance to minister. "The bottom line is that we see ourselves with a completely providential window of opportunity," Sumpter said.

Ministry in deed has been hard work. Step one was to clean and dry out flooded sites—a job that has to be done almost as soon as the water recedes. Wait too long, and mold sets in. Step two, which will take years, is to rebuild.

The need is widespread. One family from Providence owned a family business that was ravaged. Another OPC member referred the churches to two sisters who lived with their mother in a small house their father had built. Without flood insurance or resources, these women had no way to restore their flooded home. Yet another referral was to a family who lived in an area that was never supposed to flood—and now their home had to be completely gutted.

But even as the OPC teams work at these sites and others, the end goal is never just a back-to-normal home. "We don't want to be known as 'OPC Building and Construction,'" Sumpter said. "We want to be known as 'OPC Building and Ministry.' ... Our number one goal is not to restore a house, but to reach out in Christ's name."

## Process of Outreach

In the fourth-largest city in the US, however, the question of who to help, and how much help to give, can be overwhelming. As Larson said, "We're a small group.... We can't help tens of hundreds of people." Yet, Sumpter explained, each member and family of Cornerstone, Providence, and Good Shepherd Bible study has a circle of relationships that provide a natural platform for ministry and service. After Harvey, church members began speaking up about neighbors, work colleagues, and relatives who were hurt by the storm. "That effort has been organic up to this point," Larson said. As the churches look to the months ahead, though, they are beginning to build an infrastructure for sustained ministry. "That's a term we're starting to use down here," Sumpter said. "What is going to sustain us? What is going to give us that long-term impact in our spheres of ministry and service to the greater Houston area?"

The beginning of sustained ministry, he explained, is hospitality. The neighborhood where a church member or family lives becomes an opportunity to host a block barbecue, to get to know those who come, and to befriend them. Then, the church members and volunteers

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## Outreach Continued...

who also attended the event are able to knock on doors as familiar faces and offer help—hauling something heavy, reconstructing drywall, clearing trees. The process for outreach is “hospitality, meeting people, then seeking to seize those opportunities for material service,” Sumpter listed.

This measured progression is in stark contrast to the fast-paced, efficiency-focused aid that inundates a city after a disaster like Harvey. But it’s in line with the wisdom from experienced OP deacons who traveled to Houston to volunteer. “These deacons who are coming to us, OP deacons, are absolutely incredible. They are showing us as pastors and showing us as church folks what it means to really minister in Christ’s name down here in disaster response,” Sumpter raved.

The first thing to do, one deacon told Sumpter, is to slow down. In a time of disaster, people are both paranoid and hurting. They don’t know who’s knocking on their door—it could be a looter or a contractor pressuring them into exorbitant rates. When one knocks on the door to offer help, especially for free, one must show respect and listen in order to build a relationship.

And people respond. “You can be in this home for five, ten minutes, and these big Texan, bruising men will start to fall in front of you because their lives have been faced with tragedy,” Sumpter said. “It doesn’t take long at all to start talking about hope, and Christ, and prayer.”

Ultimately, the goal is to invite folks to come to Good Shepherd and the two churches. But the immediate result is often different. Larson reflected on the help given to one Christian family who attend another church in the area: “We’ve made a significant impact on their lives.... They have a newfound appreciation for God’s providential care for his people.”

### **Back to “Normal”**

As devastating as Harvey was, the daily news cycle quickly moved on and national interest faded. For those in Houston, however, it won’t be forgotten any time soon. “There are still going to be people who need help for a long time,” Larson said. In fact, Harvey’s effect on the Houston OP churches may just snowball.

“We anticipate in the months to come that our circle of influence will continue to grow. That means we will be in contact with more families, more needs,” Sumpter said. And to meet those needs, both materially and spiritually, volunteers are required.

Along with volunteers for unskilled jobs such as demolition, cleaning, and painting, and skilled jobs such as carpentry, drywall, electrical, and plumbing, volunteers interested in outreach are needed as well, throughout 2018 and even beyond.

### **Changes Ahead**

Six weeks after the hurricane, Good Shepherd was for the first time finding a balance between what they call “Harvey outreach,” and their already-established ministries. They hope to use their ministries that are already in place as tools along with the Harvey-aftermath ministry.

As they do, the relationship they have with the two OP churches will be stronger than ever. During the storm, the deacons and elders worked together to communicate about the safety and condition of members. After the storm, they’ve collaborated on Harvey relief and volunteer coordination. As Adam York, pastor of Providence, said, they all knew each other before Harvey, but now they know each other much better.

“Before the hurricane hit, I was working with Mark Sumpter on a variety of projects to tie the churches together,” York explained. “We had a plan! And the Lord had a different plan. His plan was Hurricane Harvey, to bring our churches even closer together.”

And next time a disaster hits Houston, the area churches intend to be prepared. Larson and others are working to establish a permanent disaster relief committee made up of laypeople and leaders from the churches to manage local relief. That way, he said, “A year or two from now ... when we expect to see another disaster coming down the road, we’ll have the organization in place to really hit the ground running.”

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## Thank You for Giving, Going, Sending, and Praying

*Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.  
1 Thess 5:18 (ESV)*

As we come upon the close of 2017, we would like to acknowledge, with thanks, the many who engaged in the work of Short-Term Missions and Disaster Response this year by giving, going, sending, and praying!

We continue to be amazed at the generosity of churches and individuals exemplified by the hurricane relief donations that poured in, unsolicited, which now seem to be more than enough!

Thanks to all who came alongside us this year with your many contributions!

To God be the glory!



*Houston homeowners and hurricane relief volunteers gathered recently for an Open House celebration*

## Comments on Finance

By Joel Moody

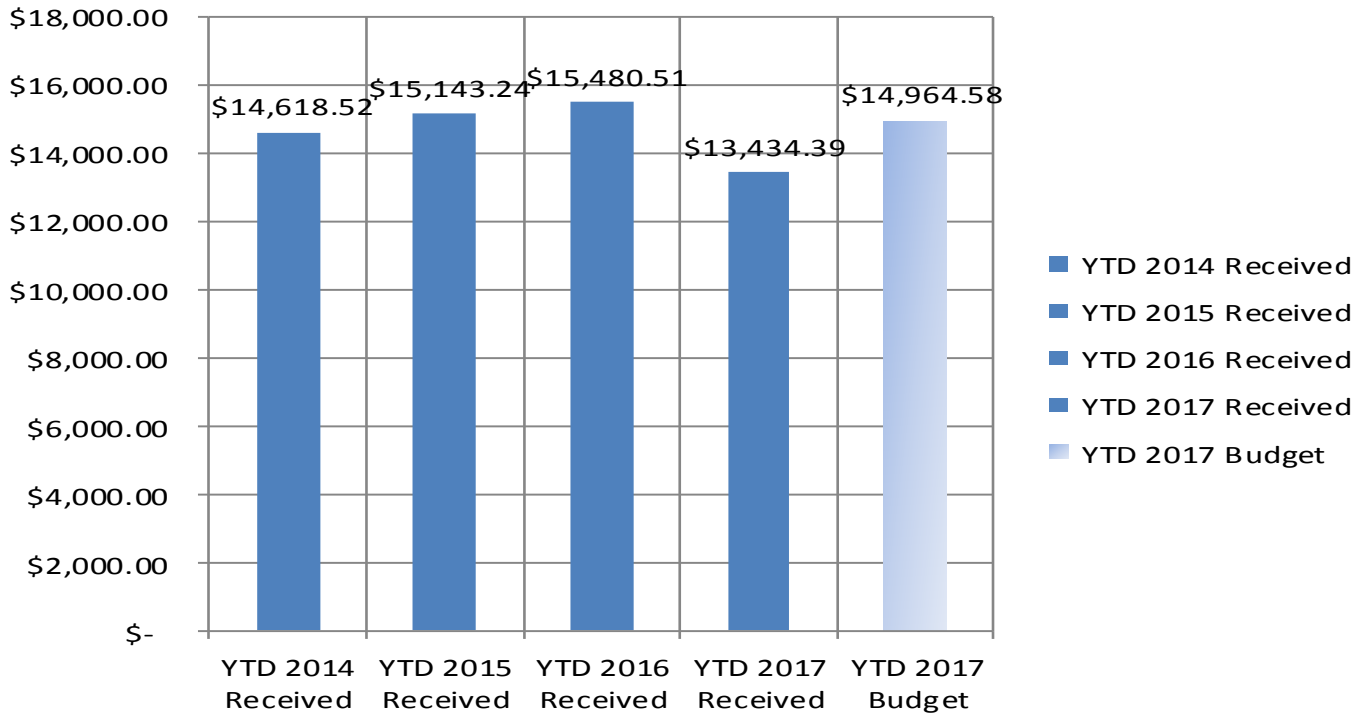
**General Fund** receipts for November totaled \$14,232.00 as compared to the budget of \$13,392.38, while General Fund disbursements for November totaled \$17,665.13. November year to date General Fund receipts totaled \$145,023.24 as compared to the budget of \$160,708.62 (a shortfall of \$15,685.38), while November year to date disbursements of \$153,035.42 were \$7,673.20 below budget. Through the end of November, the General Fund has decreased by \$7,920.56 due to lower receipts which were partially offset by lower disbursements. Year to date General Fund receipts for November were 5.5% below last year's total on an average Sunday while disbursements were 4.3% above the prior year.

**Benevolence Fund** Receipts for November totaled \$937.00 as compared to the budget of \$1,360.42 (a shortfall of \$423.42). Year to date Benevolence Fund Receipts through November totaled \$13,434.39 and fell short of budget by \$1,530.19. Please refer to the graph for a historical trend of benevolence receipts as well as the current benevolence budget. During November, \$500.00 was sent to Worldwide Outreach (WVO) for the General Missions

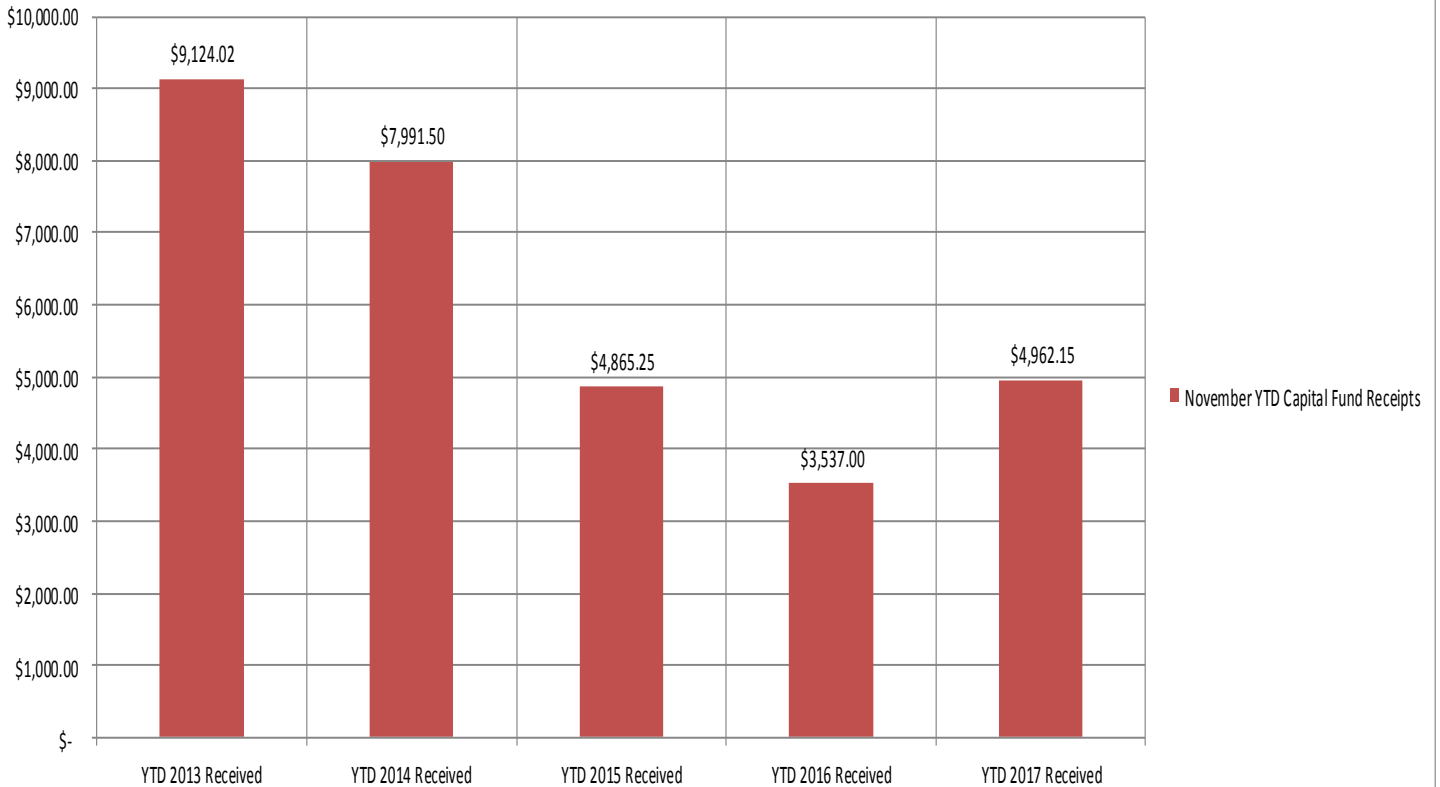
outreach of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and \$200.00 was sent to the Midwest Presbytery's Church Extension Committee (CHEX). We also disbursed \$350.00 for Christian Scholarship expenses to assist parents with Christian School or Home School expenses. In addition, \$100.00 was sent to Elijah DeJong and that amount will continue for the balance of 2017.

November Year to Date giving for the **Capital Fund** was \$4,962.15. 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.

### November YTD Benevolence Receipts Actual vs. Current Budget



### November YTD Capital Fund Receipts



# The Hopps in Haiti



Christmas is a time for many things. It is an opportunity to reflect on the incarnation - Jesus taking on human flesh to save his people from their sins. It is a time to get together with friends and family. It is the time of year when many anticipate the joy of both giving and receiving gifts. And what better gift to give than the Word of God!

In our previous newsletter, we noted the distribution of the reprinted Haitian Creole New Testament that now includes the Psalms and Proverbs. Earlier this month, the OPC Haiti Mission was able to give copies of these Bibles to the members at Nan Mangot (pictured) and Doglace on the island of La Gonâve. What a great joy to know that your giving to the Bibles/Reformed Literature Fund is putting Bibles into the hands of these dear saints. Pray that they would take them up and read about the Savior in their own language.

While we were on the island, we also held a teaching seminar on the subjects of baptism and prayer with the men pictured on the right. Pastor Octavius and Pastor Ben are thankful for the opportunity to help the leaders in our churches grow. It is also a delight to answer questions from those pastors outside the Reformed tradition who come to learn more about the Scriptures and what they teach. They always keep us on our toes as we study the Scriptures together.



God's continued faithfulness in building His church is pictured on the left. On December 15th, this group of church leaders (and a few wives) and the missionaries representing three Reformed missions working in Haiti met in Port-au-Prince. We are taking steps toward the formation of an indigenous Haitian presbytery. This first step involved giving all the church leaders the opportunity to

meet one another and fellowship together. Pastor Arie Van Eyk taught on officers in the church and this gave the men an opportunity to interact with these important Biblical truths. Continue to pray for us as we unite together to move forward in the formation of the presbytery.



## Kids' Corner

**What do you like about celebrating Christmas in Haiti?**

Ethan: I really enjoy making homemade Christmas cards for my family.

Emma Grace: I like making homemade gifts for everyone and sitting around the Christmas tree singing hymns and carols.

Elijah: It's very nice to spend time with my family and bond with them without Christmas being lost in all the social events and parties.

Esther: I like it because it is only our family and I like sitting around our tree reading the Bible and singing.



## Hopps in Haiti Continued...

On the family front, we can update you on our US citizenship journey. In God's timing, Ben and Heather heard they were both approved for citizenship. The ceremony was not scheduled before our return to Haiti in November, so we waited.

Then the news came that we were to appear on November 27 for the Oath Ceremony - with only 5 days notice! We decided Heather would go and Ben would reschedule as we could not all travel on such short notice. So Heather is finally a US citizen!

Now we are waiting for Ben to get his new ceremony date. Thank you so much for all your prayers for us through this almost 20-year journey to citizenship.



**One Year Ago** - One year ago, the Hopps were in the middle of their year-long furlough. And December saw Ben and Ethan traveling to Philadelphia for the Foreign Missions Conference. It was a profitable time talking about the ministry in Haiti and meeting men from across the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. As part of our travels, Ethan and I visited the USS New Jersey, a battleship retired from active service but now docked on the Delaware River in Camden, NJ. Ethan has grown and now is decidedly taller than a 16-inch shell the New Jersey fired in conflicts from World War II all the way through Desert Storm in 1991. Other December travels included a family trip to Key West to visit with the saints at Keys Presbyterian church. Key West looks much different this year than it did last year since Hurricane Irma passed through!



### Prayers/Praise for Haiti

- Safety on the roads, on the water, and in our day to day life.
- Spiritual growth of our children and the blessing of seeing three of them profess their faith publicly earlier this year.
- The continued faithfulness of the church leaders on La Gonâve and their desire to see their members grow in grace.
- Unity on the Mission as we continue to seek the Lord for the next steps in growing the church here in Haiti.
- Our yard worker Menorce and his faithful labors even as God supports him through grieving the loss of his beloved wife in July.
- Heather's US citizenship - what a privilege!
- The knowledge that we have so many friends who faithfully pray for us throughout the year.



# Reflections Articles Needed

Have any book reviews, recipes, theological articles, or notices? Submit these to the church secretary to be put into the reflections! You can email anything you wish to be put into the reflections to the secretary at [graceopc@tds.net](mailto:graceopc@tds.net)



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## Men and Boys' Leadership Breakfast



The Men and Boys' Leadership Breakfast will be held on Saturday, January 20th, at 7am at the church. Join us for this encouraging time of food and fellowship!



# January Birthdays

Brady Froh 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Clara Will 14<sup>th</sup>  
Don Schlernitzauer 5<sup>th</sup>  
Debbie Boss 7<sup>th</sup>  
Eyob Kaeiser 9<sup>th</sup>  
Clara Will 14<sup>th</sup>  
Rachel Taggart 15<sup>th</sup>

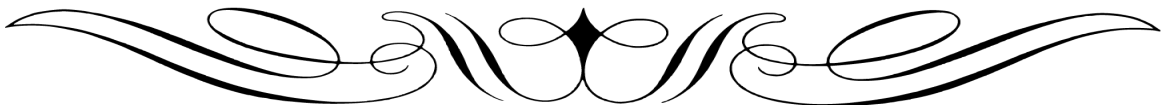


Alyssa Arndt 22<sup>nd</sup>  
Tom Ver Velde 23<sup>rd</sup>  
Kelsey Lorenz 24<sup>th</sup>  
Ian De Jong 26<sup>th</sup>  
Inga Fester 26<sup>th</sup>  
Marge Ten Pas 31<sup>st</sup>

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## *Wedding Anniversaries*

Steve & Megan Boss  
~January 28th, 12 years~





Grace OPC

# January 2018

*Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ*



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4 Session Meeting, 6:30pm	5 Presbytery Meeting	6	
7 Meadowview Manor, 3pm	8	9	10 Prayer meeting	11	12	13
14	15	16	17 Prayer meeting	18	19	20 Men and Boys' Leadership Breakfast, 7am
21	22	23	24 Annual Congregational Meeting, 7pm	25	26	27
28	29	30	31 Prayer meeting			

Church Office:  
4930 Green Valley Ln  
Sheboygan, WI 53083

Phone: 920-565-2160  
Website:  
graceopcsheboygan.com  
Email:  
graceopc@tds.net  
revbriandjong@gmail.com

# Rapid Rolls

## *Ingredients*

- 3 packets active dry yeast
- 1 3/4 cups warm water
- 1/2 cup honey
- 1/2 cup melted butter, plus more for brushing
- 2 teaspoons salt, plus more for sprinkling
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- 4 to 6 cups flour, plus more if needed

## *Directions*

- Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.
- In the bowl of a stand mixer, fitted with the paddle attachment, combine the instant yeast, and warm water. Let it activate for 5 minutes until bubbly. Stir in the honey.
- On low speed, add 1/2 cup melted butter, 2 teaspoons salt, and eggs. Slowly add the flour cup-by-cup until fully incorporated and the dough pulls away from the sides of the mixing bowl. Add more flour if it is too sticky.
- Portion the dough into 24 even servings. Form the rolls into desired shape and place in a cast iron skillet or on a baking sheet spaced evenly apart. Set aside and allow to rise approximately 20 minutes, or until doubled in size. Brush the rolls with melted butter.
- Bake for 25 minutes until the tops are golden brown. Remove from the oven and brush with more melted butter, and sprinkle with a little salt.



*“For He  
has satisfied  
the thirsty soul,  
and the  
hungry soul  
He has filled  
with what  
is good.”*



Showing forth the  
excellencies of Jesus  
Christ

Grace OPC

Church Office:  
4930 Green Valley Ln  
Sheboygan, WI 53083

Phone: 920-565-2160  
Website: [graceopcsheboygan.com](http://graceopcsheboygan.com)  
Email:  
[graceopc@tds.net](mailto:graceopc@tds.net)  
[revbriandjong@gmail.com](mailto:revbriandjong@gmail.com)

## Spurgeon Corner

““And God saw the light.”

Genesis 1:4

This morning we noticed the goodness of the light, and the Lord’s dividing it from the darkness, we now note the special eye which the Lord had for the light. “God saw the light”—he looked at it with complacency, gazed upon it with pleasure, saw that it “was good.” If the Lord has given you light, dear reader, he looks on that light with peculiar interest; for not only is it dear to him as his own handiwork, but because it is like himself, for “He is light.” Pleasant it is to the believer to know that God’s eye is thus tenderly observant of that work of grace which he has begun. He never loses sight of the treasure

which he has placed in our earthen vessels. Sometimes we cannot see the light, but God always sees the light, and that is much better than our seeing it. Better for the judge to see my innocence than for me to think I see it. It is very comfortable for me to know that I am one of God’s people—but whether *I* know it or not, if the Lord knows it, I am still safe. This is the foundation, “The Lord knoweth them that are his.” You may be sighing and groaning because of inbred sin, and mourning over your darkness, yet the Lord sees “light” in your heart, for he has put it there, and all the cloudiness and gloom of your soul cannot conceal your light from his gracious eye. You may have sunk low in despondency, and even despair; but if your soul has any longing towards Christ, and if you are seeking to rest in his finished work, God sees the “light.” He not only *sees* it, but he also *preserves* it in you. “I, the Lord, do keep it.” This is a precious thought to those who, after anxious watching and guarding of themselves, feel their own powerlessness to do so. The light thus preserved by his grace, he will one day develop into the splendour of noonday, and the fulness of glory. The light within is the dawn of the eternal day.

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Evening, January 5th C.H. Spurgeon

## Front Page Concluded...

righteousness dwells. We will live there, in never-ending newness – forever and ever. We will always be with the Lord.

This is all to say that the start of a New Year is not insignificant. It is not just “same-old, same-old.” It is new, and believers in Christ love new things!

So let us live for our Savior this year in new-found zeal and love. Let us turn over new leaves in our devotional habits (or lack thereof). Let us seek for new

knowledge in the word of God. Let us pray fervently that the Lord’s work would quicken in our hearts and lives.

