



REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

New Things

By Pastor Brian De Jong

Who doesn't like something new? As we are into a "new" year, we have hope and anticipation that this year will be different. As 2020 faded into memory, many people were voicing their desire that 2021 would not only be a new year, but a much better year.

The theme of newness finds expression in the Scriptures in such passages as 2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.* God, by His grace, has made us new creatures who receive the new things He has provided. We read of a new song, a new commandment, and a new covenant. All are better than the old versions!

In my estimation, there is no passage that is more intriguing along this line than Revelation 21:1-5. As John looks, he sees a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth had passed away. He also spied the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. But the most powerful statement is in v.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."*

The Lord God, the King of Heaven, declares that He is making all things new. Everything about the eternal kingdom of heaven will constantly exist in a state of newness, with nothing wearing out, breaking, growing old or being discarded. Everything will be perpetually, unendingly new.

Hence the New Heavens and the New

Earth will be unspoiled and fresh. We will live forever in settings both new and beautiful. It is hard to imagine what that will be like, but we have a sense of the sheer exhilaration of such a situation.

A number of years ago we painted our living room. It had been a neutral color – off white, or something along those lines. We painted it a cheerful blue, and it really cheered the room up. Over the years, the brilliance has faded. There are scratches in the paint, and small holes that have been patched up. It no longer has the new feeling of a freshly painted room. Such is our life in this world. Everything is aging. Things are growing obsolete and will end up in the trash can sooner or later.

What is true of our surroundings is also true of our bodies – we are all feeling the effects of the years. What was once relatively easy and effortless is now a chore. Our hearing is not what it once was, and neither is our memory. Eyesight also drops off over time, and other senses also dim.

So can you imagine being in our glorified bodies, living in the New Heavens and New Earth, surrounded by perpetual newness? The hope and joy that is ours is unbounded. And this is why we ought to meditate frequently on the world that is to come.



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Mnemonics...

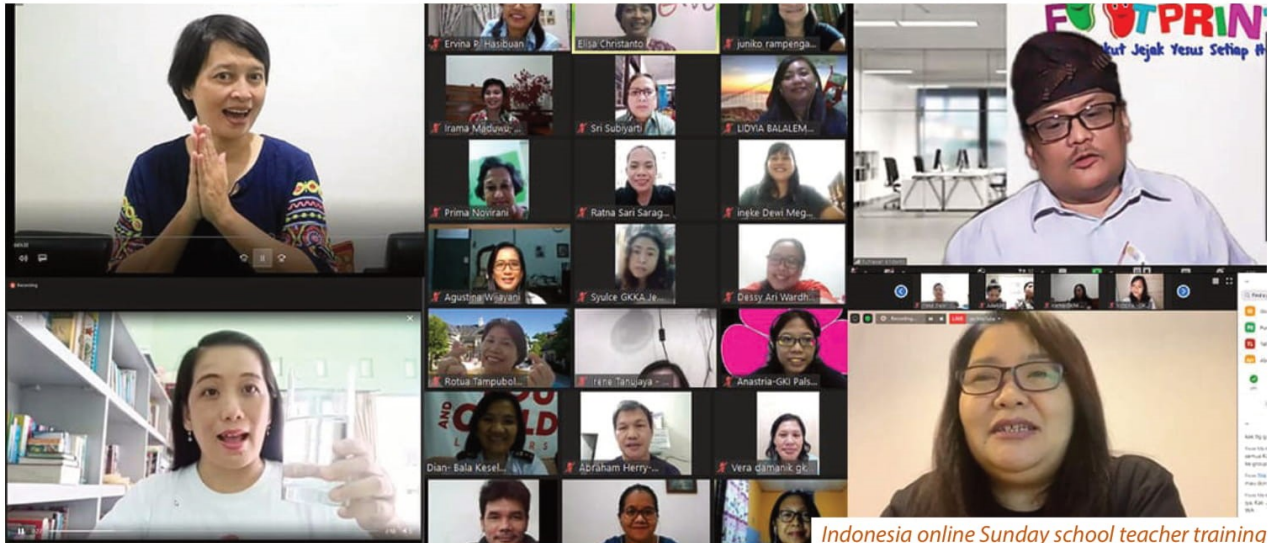
- 1/9 Men & Boys Breakfast
- 1/12 Session Meeting
- 1/15 Bowling & Pizza Party
- 1/20 Congregational & Corporation Meeting
- 1/29 Pastors & Wives Dinner

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Gospel Advances

by Pastor Timothy Burden, Augustine Program Coordinator



Indonesia online Sunday school teacher training

The first online MERF International Council met on November 7th. From early breakfast time in the US and Canada to late at night in Australia, supporters and workers from across MERF's fields gathered via the internet. Modern technology enabled us to meet, overcoming the Covid-19 measures. Savings on airfares, visas and travel time, however, could not compensate for being unable to be together in person. Struggles with some poor internet connections were rewarded by the joy of hearing what the Lord is doing in these difficult times.

Praise & Thanks

The meeting was opened with Psalm 111, inviting us to praise God for His great, majestic, and wondrous works. Praise was raised for support com-

mittee reports of sustained giving despite the global economic crisis. Much thanksgiving was offered for the long service of retiring volunteers and for those stepping into their shoes. Earnest prayer is needed for the Lord's help in the year ahead.

Extending the Work

In this year of Covid-19 lockdown and other disasters, field reports tell how gospel work has expanded in new ways. In **Indonesia** ministries of biblical training for spiritual leaders and for children and youth have moved online from MERF's two bases --the capital, Jakarta (Java island) and Makassar (Sulawesi island). This brought an unexpected bonus -- accessibility right across the far-flung island archipelago and

even as far afield as Hong Kong. More online programs are being produced, including short video sermons, theological training and devotionals to encourage those isolated by lockdown.

The teams are also making greater use of different social media. New Sundanese language gospel broadcasts have begun. Listener Communities continue to receive special memory sticks loaded with Christian materials. Also, MERF partners with local Christians in a new radio station on the island of Sumba.

At the MERF Jakarta Center, local donors of children's books and educational materials enabled the opening of a public library to reach the community. Diaconal aid is given from both Indonesian centers to needy pastors and evangelists in remote areas

and others affected by Covid measures. This includes seed supplied to needy students stranded on the INTIM Theological College campus. They plant and reap a harvest. Aid and trauma care are also provided for victims of floods.

In **Pakistan**, needy slum communities are reached with the gospel of Christ through Bible literacy courses, ministries of mercy through free medical care at two clinics, daily public Bible readings are aired on a loudspeaker for the hearing on an entire poor community. Calvin schools continue to operate and annual Bible conventions have been held.

In **Lebanon**, Pastor Samuel Kharrat rejoiced in the Lord's hand of mercy to bring spiritual blessing in a time of material suffering. In 42 years of service, this year has been the most blessed. Five new



Beirut explosion
needy home repair project

Syrian families joined his church, one from an extremist background. Many churches in Lebanon are experiencing similar blessings. Also, many in Kurdish communities are coming to the Lord. A new local Kurdish-speaking congregation is organized. It enjoys close fellowship with other churches. May the Lord to continue to open new doors of gospel opportunity.

A special report on MERF diaconal aid to traumatized victims of the Beirut port explosion told of new openness to the gospel in previously indifferent and closed neighborhoods. The Lord enabled staff to organize teams of handymen and volunteers. They have repaired more than 600 homes and helped more than 2000 families with food and medication. All practical help was accompanied by spiritual care, listening, praying and distributing gospel literature. In 2021 personal follow-up is planned to the thousands of individuals and families served.



Farsi Online
Direct Gospel Radio

Farsi & Arabic Media

MERF Farsi online gospel media ministries reached more Iranians, Afghans and others with the help of added staff. Of the 22 MERF Arabic



MERF-Loki Nuer gospel broadcast recording

gospel online radio programs, the four LIVE *Dardasha7* programs were most impacted by corona virus restrictions. The teams adapted the programs and innovated techniques that succeeded in attracting record numbers of listeners and lots of feedback. Confined at home, many more tuned in to all the various programs and heard the gospel.

The growing Church in the Arab world is encouraging. Also, encouraging is MERF's new project to strengthen it with Reformed literature dis-

tributed via an online library website and Facebook page. Over 23 thousand Facebook followers were gained in the first four months since its launch. Pastors and teachers from many denominations, as well as Muslims interested in Christ, are requesting books.

Africa

It was good to hear first-hand of the work in **Morocco**, especially of recent friendly engagements with some imams. In **Ethiopia** broadcasts continue in Amharic, Oromo and Somali.

Translation work has intensified under Covid restrictions with seven new publication

“May the Lord be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.”

— Psalm 67:1-2

From MERF's **Lokichoggio, Kenya** ministry center, Nuer gospel broadcasts are reaching many in **South Sudan**. Fruitful ministries among the local Turkana continue. This year a three-month biblical training course was accomplished there before the pandemic lockdown. We hope the training will resume in early 2021.

Closing Encouragement

MERF's online International Council closed with a meditation on Psalm 67:1-2 by the Ethiopian team leader. The Lord continues to bless. With His face shining upon us, the work of MERF is advancing. Christ's saving grace is proclaimed in many lands, bringing much glory to His name.



Pastor & Mrs. Timothy Burden

Chapter 8: On Keeping One's Eyes Open

To get through this world, a man must look about him and even sleep with one eye open; for there are many baits for fishes, many nets for birds, and many traps for men. While foxes are so common, we must not be geese. There is a very great difference in this matter among people of my acquaintance: many see more with one eye than others with two, and many have fine eyes and cannot see a jot. All heads are not sense boxes. Some are so cunning that they suspect everybody, and so live all their lives in miserable fear of their neighbors; others are so simple that every knave takes them in, and makes his penny out of them. One man tried to see through a brick wall and hurts his eyes, while another finds out a hole in it and sees as far as he pleases. Some work at the mouth of a furnace and are never scorched, and others burn their hands at the fire when they only mean to warm them. Now, it is true that no one can give another experience, and we must all pick up wit for ourselves; yet I shall venture to give some of the homely cautions which have served my turn, and perhaps they may be of use to others as they have been to me.

Nobody is more like an honest man than a thorough rogue. When you see a man with a great deal of religion displayed in his shop window, you may depend upon it that he keeps a very small stock of it within. Do not choose your friend by his looks: handsome shoes often pinch the feet. Don't be fond of compliments: remember, "Thank you, pussy, and thank you, pussy," killed the cat. Don't believe in the man who talks most, for mewing cats are seldom good mousers. By no means put yourself in another person's power: if you put your thumb between two grinders, they are very apt to bite. Drink nothing without seeing it; sign nothing without reading it, and make sure that it means no more than it says. Don't go to law unless you have nothing to lose: lawyers' houses are built on fools' heads. In any business, never wade into water where you cannot see the bottom. Put no dependence upon the label of a bag, and count money after your own kin. See the sack opened before you buy what is in it, for he who trades in the dark asks to be cheated. Keep clear of the man who does not value his own character. Beware of everyone who swears: he who would blaspheme his Maker would make no bones of lying or stealing. Beware of no man more than of yourself we carry our worst enemies within us. When a new opinion or doctrine comes before you, do not bite till you know whether it is bread or a stone. Do not be sure that the gingerbread is good because of the gilt on it. Never shout "hello!" till you are quite out of the wood, and don't cry fried fish till they are caught in the net. There's always time enough to boast—wait a little longer. Don't throw away dirty water till you have got clean; keep on scraping the roads till you can get better work: the poorest pay is better than none, and the humblest office is better than being out of employment. Always give up the roads to bulls and madmen, and never fight with a coal heaver or contend with a base character, for they will be sure to blacken you.

"Neither trust nor contend,
Nor lay wagers, nor lend,
And you may depend—
You'll have peace to your ends."

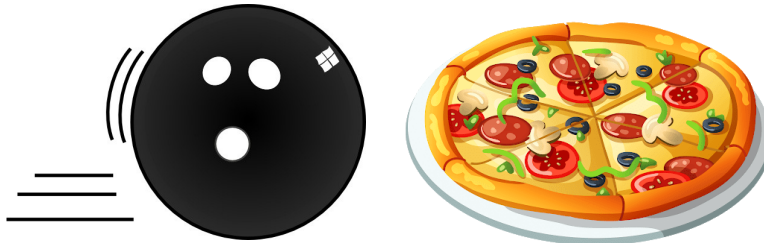
I cannot say quite so much as that old rhyme does, for there's more than that which is needed to give peace, but certainly it will help toward it. Never ride a broken-kneed horse: the trader who has once been a fraudulent bankrupt is not the man for you to deal with. A rickety chair is a dangerous seat. Be shy of people who are overly polite, and don't be too fast with those who are forward and rough. When you suspect a design in anything, be on your guard: set the trap as soon as you smell a rat, but mind that you don't catch your own fingers in it. Have very little to do with a boaster, for his beer is all froth; and though he brags that all his goods and even his copper kettles are gold and silver, you will soon find out that a boaster and a liar are first cousins. Commit all your secrets to no man; trust in God with all your heart, but let your confidence in friends be weighed in the balances of prudence, seeing that men are but men, and all men are frail. Trust not great weights to slender threads. Yet be not evermore suspicious, for suspicion is a cowardly virtue at best. Remember that men are not angels; but they are not devils, and it is too bad to think them so. One thing be sure of, never believe in any priest of any religion: for before a man could be bad enough to pretend to be a priest, he must have hardened his heart and blinded his conscience to the most horrible degree. Our governors imprison gypsies for telling fortunes, and yet they give fat pensions to those vagabonds who deceive the people in much weightier things. "Bad company" said the thief, as he went to the gallows between the hangman and a priest; a very honest speech, and a very true word, though spoken in jest. It is the ignorance of fools which keeps the pot boiling for priests. May God clean this land from the plague of their presence and make men wise enough to see through their crafty devices. Lastly, my advice to all is—remember that good wisdom is that which will turn out to be wise in the end; seek it, friends, and seek it at the hands of the wisest of all teachers, the Lord Jesus. Trust Him, and He will never fail you; be guided by His word, and it will never mislead you; pray in His name, and your requests will be granted. Remember, he that leans on man will find him a broken reed, but he who builds on Christ has a firm foundation. You may follow Jesus with your eyes shut, if you please; but when others guide you, keep all your eyes open even if you have a dozen and all of them as powerful as telescopes.

BOWLING AND PIZZA PARTY!

Date: **Friday**, the 15th

We bowl from 3:00 to 5:00 at Odyssey Fun Center in Sheboygan Falls. Cost is \$8 per bowler

Pizza and games at the church from 5:30 onward. Cost is \$4 per pizza eater.



“Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strength.”

C.H. Spurgeon

January Birthdays

Mark Friberg	1st	Clara Will	14 th
Brady Froh	3 rd	Alyssa Arndt	22 nd
Debbie Boss	7 th	Tom Ver Velde	23 rd
Eyob Kaeiser	9 th	Marge Ten Pas	31 st



January Anniversaries

Steve & Megan Boss 28th
15 Years





Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

January 2021

Grace OPC



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
3	4	5	6 Prayer Meeting	7	8	9 Men & Boys Breakfast
10	11	12 Session Meeting	13 Prayer Meeting	14	15 Bowling & Pizza Party	16
17	18	19	20 Annual Congregational & Corporation Meeting	21	22	23
24	25	26	27 Prayer Meeting	28	29 Pastors & Wives Dinner	30
31 Lord's Supper						

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Book Reviews

From Carla DeMaster

Women of the Word

In His Image

None Like Him

by Jen Wilkin

Again, daughter, Ruth introduced me to a series of books that would influence me in positive ways. In Women of the Word, Jen Wilkin helps women study the Bible with our hearts and our minds. Using appropriate illustrations from her life in introducing her topics, she leads women to study the Bible with purpose, perspective, patience, process, and prayer. This is a practical book that transforms the reader for good.

None Like Him leads us to know God's attributes and realize our own limitations. We should be filled with awe and wonder at the God we worship, who has stooped to save and love us. There are 10 ways Jen shows how God is different from us. God is infinite, incomprehensible, self-existent, self-sufficient, eternal, immutable, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, and sovereign. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. This would imply an attempt to know him more and more. There is a freedom that comes when we rest in letting God be God.

In His Image was written to show 10 ways God calls us to reflect His character. Often women wonder what God would want them to do, what choices to make. A better question than what should I do, is what should I be. What should be the character of the Christian since we were created in God's image. In what ways do we reflect the nature of God. Jen goes through 10 ways we conform to God's image as we grow in Him: holy, loving, good, just, merciful, gracious, faithful, patient, truthful, wise. At the end of each chapter, as in each of Jen's books, is a list of further verses that apply to the truth taught. This is another practical book that will transform and bless us.



Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

Grace OPC

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Spurgeon "Perfect in Christ Jesus." Corner

Colossians 1:28

Do you not feel in your own soul that perfection is not in you? Does not every day teach you that? Every tear which trickles from your eye, weeps "imperfection;" every harsh word which proceeds from your lip, mutters "imperfection." You have too frequently had a view of your own heart to

dream for a moment of any perfection *in yourself*. But amidst this sad consciousness of imperfection, here is comfort for you—you are "perfect in *Christ Jesus*." In God's sight, you are "complete in him;" *even now* you are "accepted in the Beloved." But there is a second perfection, yet to be realized, which is sure to all the seed. Is it not delightful to look forward to the time when every stain of sin shall be removed from the believer, and he shall be presented faultless before the throne, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing? The Church of Christ then will be so pure, that not even the eye of Omniscience will see a spot or blemish in her; so holy and so glorious, that Hart did not go beyond the truth when he said—

"With my Saviour's garments on,
Holy as the Holy One."

Then shall we know, and taste, and feel the happiness of this vast but short sentence, "Complete in Christ." Not till then shall we fully comprehend the heights and depths of the salvation of Jesus. Doth not thy heart leap for joy at the thought of it? Black as thou art, thou shalt be white one day; filthy as thou art, thou shalt be clean. Oh, it is a marvellous salvation this! Christ takes a worm and transforms it into an angel; Christ takes a black and deformed thing and makes it clean and matchless in his glory, peerless in his beauty, and fit to be the companion of seraphs. O my soul, stand and admire this blessed truth of perfection in Christ.

Morning, January 28th, C.H. Spurgeon

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**SERMONAUDIO.COM/
GRACESHEBOYGAN**

CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE:

GRACEOPCSHEBOYGAN.COM



Front Page Concluded...

As you consider your New Year's Resolutions, consider adopting this as your main resolution: *Colossians 3:1 THEREFORE if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*