

# REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

## Reformation Take-Aways

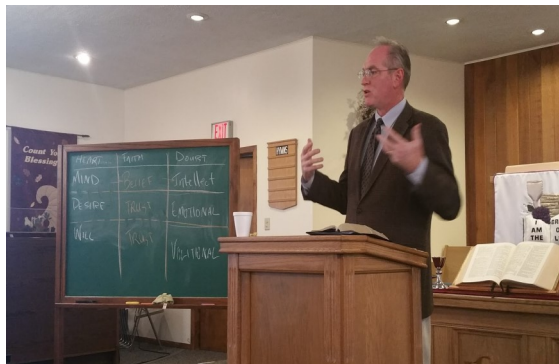
*By Pastor Brian De Jong*

This year’s Reformation Conference was enjoyable and edifying – as good as anticipated. Our speaker, Dr. Craig Troxel, gave us much to think about on the questions of doubt and faith. I found myself pondering things I’ve never taken time or had opportunity to consider, and I thought it would be worthwhile to pose five of these “take-aways” for further reflection and discussion.

Take-Away #1 came early in his first talk when he said that **doubt and unbelief are not the same thing**. Locating doubt on the continuum between faith and unbelief was helpful, and relieves

a sense of guilt commonly associated with doubts. Have you ever said to yourself, “If I have doubts like this, I must not be a Christian.” When we equate doubt with unbelief, we necessarily say that anyone pondering a doubt is therefore demonstrating that they are no true Christian, but an unbeliever instead.

A second idea that was helpful is that **doubt can be a sign of healthy faith**. That may seem to be self-contradictory, but it is not. If doubt is struggling over some facet of Christianity, it demonstrates a real faith that doesn’t just shrug and turn away in rejection. Unbelief doesn’t particularly try to struggle over whether something is true or not. Faith won’t give up easily, even in the face of doubts. Unbelief throws up its hands and walks away from everything. Even though you might not feel like your doubts indicate faith, remind yourself that if you didn’t believe, you wouldn’t care at all.



Thirdly, **honesty is crucial in expressing and resolving doubts**. If a believer who is struggling can’t and won’t be honest about their struggles, then the doubts remain bottled up within their heart and mind. That is a recipe for discouragement and prolonged

difficulty. When a person has a doubt, they should be willing to share it with a trusted friend and counselor. Sometimes the very act of putting doubts into words, and speaking those words, can begin to untangle the knots. When doubts are spoken, and discussed, much good

can come. Another believer’s perspective might clarify or even resolve the issue. Sometimes a counselor can give a viewpoint that the doubting Christian hadn’t considered.

The fourth take-away is that **God can use doubt for spiritual good, and Satan will employ doubt to drive us to despair**. Dr. Troxel’s exposition of Genesis 3 was especially helpful in showing how Satan introduced doubt into Eve’s mind, and then exploited that doubt to drive her toward eating the forbidden fruit. But Satan isn’t the only one to use doubt. God can redeem doubt and employ it to sanctifying purposes. Here is where God’s use of trials comes into view. He ordains suffering for us in order to aid us in our growth in grace. Doubt is part of that equation, and we often see God’s **Continued on page 10**

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### Mnemonics...

- *Harvest Home Dinner, 12th*
- *Thanksgiving Eve Service, 23rd*
- *Thanksgiving Football Game, 24th*

# Ask the Pastor

By Pastor Brian De Jong

“What are some good Reformed tools for serious Bible study?” That’s a great question, which presupposes that Reformed Christians can and should be studying their Bibles seriously. It also recognizes that good resources can be of great assistance.

As we prayerfully open our Bibles to study the word of God, we should rely first and foremost on the Holy Spirit. He will guide us into all truth. That doesn’t mean that He doesn’t use means, however. Often the Spirit employs these “tools of the trade” for the serious student of the Bible. I’ll list them, but not in any specific priority.

First we can gain much from a good study Bible. This is a one-stop-shop for sound helps. My particular recommendation would be the Reformation Study Bible (originally known as the New Geneva Study Bible). This resource was produced by a group of Reformed scholars, and then adopted by the folks at Ligonier Ministries.

Another key tool is either a Bible dictionary or a Bible encyclopedia. My favorite dictionary is the New Bible Dictionary (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) published by Tyndale. The articles are written from a sound, Biblically conservative perspective that often reflect Reformed thought. The Bible Encyclopedia that I use is the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (Revised Edition) published by Eerdmans. This is a very thorough tool that goes into greater depth than a Bible En-

cyclopedia.

A related resource is a Bible Atlas. There are a number available that are good. I use the New Bible Atlas, the companion to the New Bible Dictionary.

A different sort of tool for Bible Study is a concordance, like the famous Strongs Exhaustive Concordance. Although computer Bibles (and Google.com) have provided similar and sometimes superior searching ability, a concordance will list all the uses of a particular word in the entire Bible. Sometimes Bibles will have a

concordance in the back, but they usually can’t be “exhaustive” due to the size requirements.

Speaking of computer Bibles, I might recommend the Online Bible at [www.onlinebible.net](http://www.onlinebible.net) for a good, serviceable and FREE resource. (Did I say it was FREE??? It is FREE, and FREE is good!) You can download and utilize numerous classic resources in conjunction with the Online Bible. Another good tool for your computer is the Quickverse system, or the Logos Bible Software.

Others will like to utilize a website, and the go-to Bible website is probably [www.Biblegateway.com](http://www.Biblegateway.com). There are other, similar websites that can provide similar services. Sometimes the easiest way to find a verse is to Google the words you remember from the verse, and it pops up quickly.

“As we prayerfully open our Bibles to study the word of God, we should rely first and foremost on the Holy Spirit”

People often want to know, “What about commentaries?” Commentaries can be useful if they are kept in the proper place. When studying a passage, you shouldn’t go directly and immediately to a commentary. Rather, do your own spadework first, then look at what the commentators are saying.

Good commentaries are sometimes hard to find. Some resources are too technical for the average reader, others are written for a seminary audience. Sometimes faulty theology creeps into a commentary and ruins its overall usefulness. A standard resource is Matthew Henry’s Complete Commentary. It covers the entire Bible, verse by verse.

Other authors are favorites of Reformed folk. The Hendriksen/Kistemaker series on the New Testament are always trustworthy, though a bit dated. The late James Boyce was always sound in his commentaries. Calvin can be good, though hard to read. Older authors like Spurgeon and Ryle can be very beneficial. A series that I like is published by Christian Focus Publications and are entitled Focus on the Bible Commentaries.

Finally, you can always consult your Pastor for advice, evaluation or suggestions. I’m here – just “Ask the Pastor”!



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## Harvest Home Supper

The annual Harvest Home supper will take place on November 12th at 5:30pm. Our speaker this year will be the Rev. Mike Wenzler. He is a PCA minister working with Reformed University Fellowship at UW Milwaukee. Sign up on the bulletin board in the fellowship hall, and join us for an enjoyable and edifying evening of fellowship!



# Stamps for Missions

*By Ellen McNeese*



I sent out another shipment of stamps to the Stamps for Missions and this is the letter I received back from them. Please note that they also collect post cards. Thanks again for saving your stamps. If you have any questions please see me.

Dear Ellen,

My name is Katrina Zartman, and I am the office secretary for the OPC Committee on Foreign Missions.

We received your package this morning and would like to thank you for the domestic and foreign stamps you sent for our "Stamps for Missions" project. The variety of pictures are interesting to look at, and it is fun to imagine who is getting foreign mail when I see the stamps from France, Thailand, Germany, etc.

This year, funds received from the sale of stamps and postcards will be designated for translation and publication of Reformed literature (Quebec).

To answer your question, yes, we do collect picture post cards: new or used. Again, we wish to express our gratitude for the effort you have put into supporting our missionaries through collecting these stamps.

Sincerely in Christ,

Katrina Zartman  
Office Secretary, Committee on Foreign Missions

# November Birthdays

Rebecca Taggart

14th

Gabe Froh

30th



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## *Wedding Anniversaries*

Jay & Gail Buyze

November 6th ~ 45 years



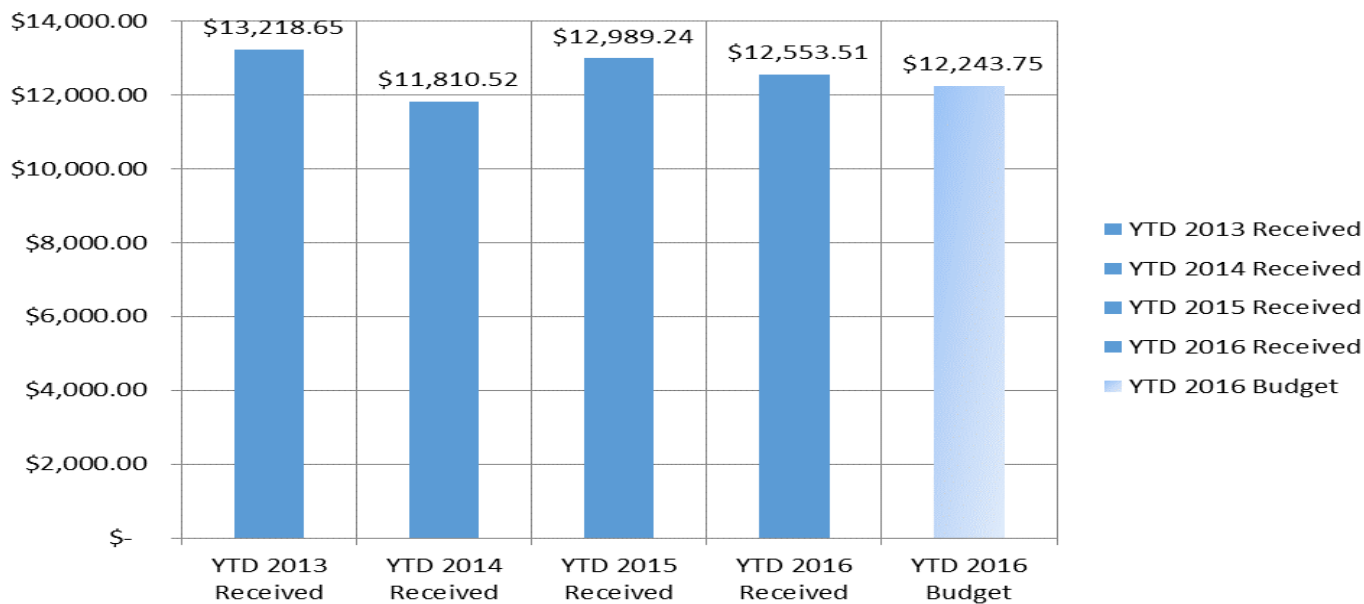
# Comments on Finance

By Joel Moody

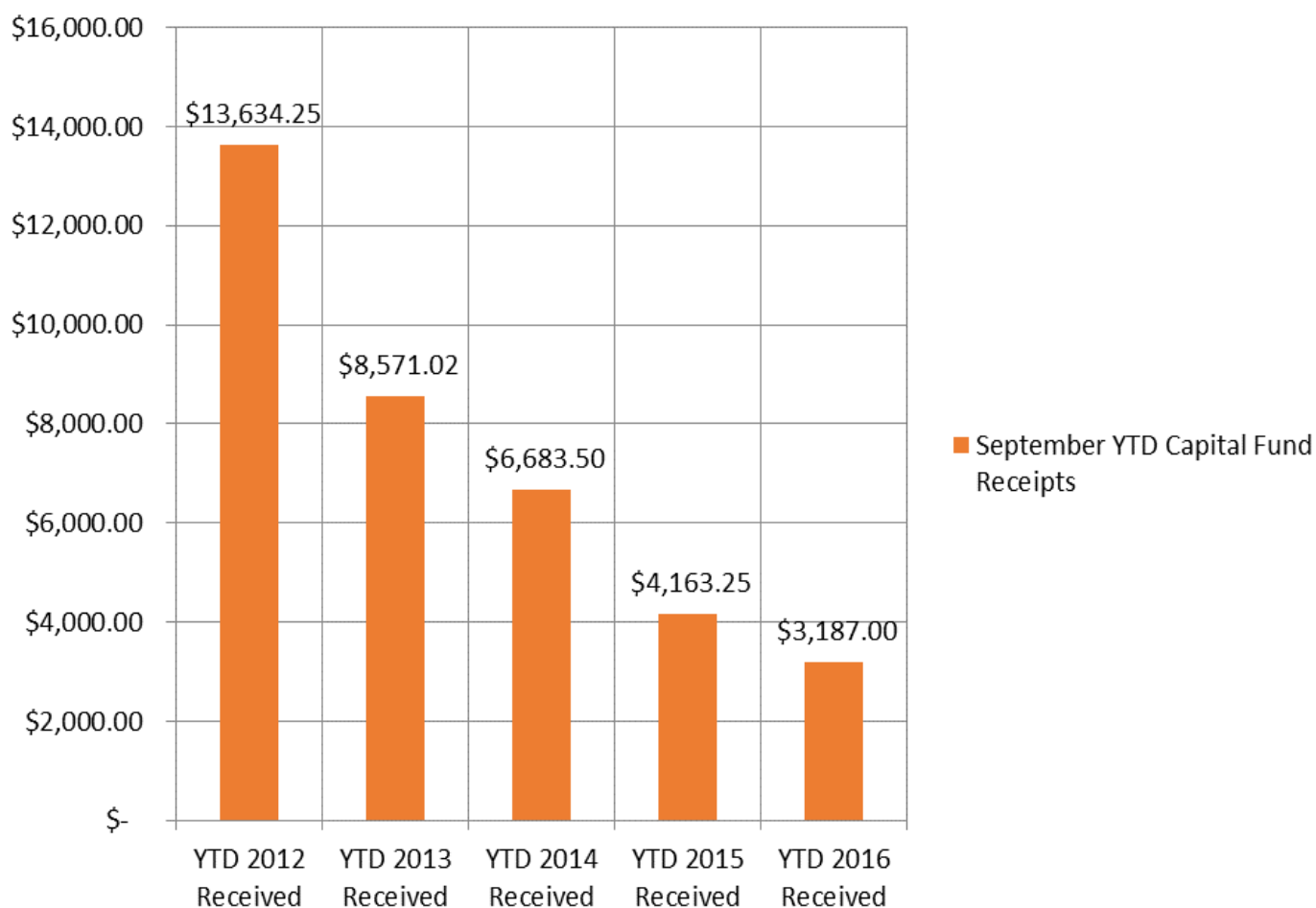
**General Fund** receipts for September totaled \$12,434.06 as compared to the budget of \$12,893.70, while General Fund disbursements for September totaled \$13,737.71. September year to date General Fund receipts totaled \$125,389.20 as compared to the budget of \$125,713.50 (a shortfall of \$324.30), while September year to date disbursements of \$118,119.75 were \$7,593.75 below budget. Through the end of September, the General Fund has increased by \$7,344.44. Year to date General Fund receipts for September were 9.3% above last year's total on an average Sunday while disbursements were 0.6% above the prior year. **Benevolence Fund** Receipts for September totaled \$1,859.00 as compared to the budget of \$1,360.42 (an excess of \$498.58). Year to date Benevolence Fund Receipts through September totaled \$12,553.51 and exceeded budget by \$309.76. Please refer to the graph for a historical trend of benevolence receipts as well as the current benevolence budget. During September, \$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). September Year to Date giving for the **Capital Fund** was \$3,187.00. 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.

**September YTD Benevolence Receipts Actual vs. Current Budget**

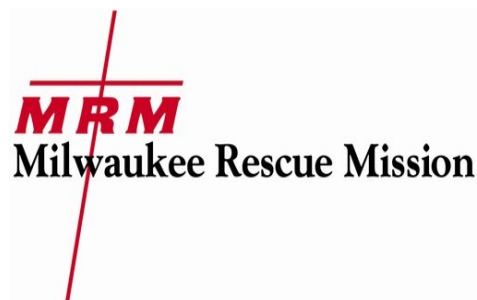


## September YTD Capital Fund Receipts



## Milwaukee Rescue Mission

The deacons have placed a collection box in the main entrance for donations to the Milwaukee Rescue Mission. Please find the list of needs on the box or on the bulletin board in the fellowship hall. Place your items of support in the box through December. Wal-Mart gift cards are also accepted so mission staff can purchase needed items. Let's show MRM the love of Christ through our donations!

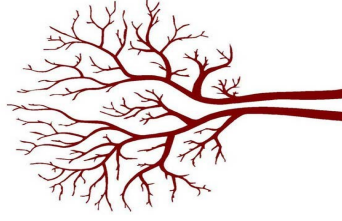




Grace OPC

# November 2016

*Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ*



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8 Session Meeting 6:30 p.m	9	10	11	12 Harvest Home Supper 5:30pm
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23 Thanksgiving Eve Service 7:00pm	24 Thanksgiving Football Game 7:30am	25	26
27 The Lord's Supper AM	28	29	30			

Church Office:  
4930 Green Valley Ln  
Sheboygan, WI 53083

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



## Gluten Free Chex Scotcheroos

- 6 cups Chex cereal
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- 1 cup sugar
- 1½ cups peanut butter

### Topping

- 2 cups semi sweet chocolate chips
- 2 cups butterscotch chips
- ½ cup peanut butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

### Instructions

1. Butter a large bowl, and measure out 6 cups of Chex cereal. Set aside. Butter a 9x13 dish, OR line a baking sheet with wax paper if you would like freeform scotcharoo's like the ones I made that are pictured.
2. In a small saucepan, combine the corn syrup and sugar over medium heat. Once boiling, immediately remove from heat and stir in 1½ cups of peanut butter. Pour over cereal and fold together. Pour cereal into the 9x13 dish, or use a large cookie scoop to drop cereal onto wax paper, and use your hands to press together and form them.
3. Using a microwave safe dish or a double boiler, melt together chocolate chips, butterscotch chips, ½ cup of peanut butter and vanilla. ( I always cut the chocolate topping recipe in half because it makes too much.) If microwaving, heat in 10 second intervals, stirring in between to prevent the chocolate from burning.
4. Once smooth, pour over cereal, or scoop onto the piles you have created.

Allow to cool completely at room temperature

*Sara TenPas*



“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

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)  
[revbriandejong@gmail.com](mailto:revbriandejong@gmail.com)

# Spurgeon Corner

“Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast

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Psalm 68:28

It is our wisdom, as well as our necessity, to beseech God continually to strengthen that which he has wrought in us. It is because of their neglect in this, that many Christians may blame themselves for those trials and afflictions of spirit which arise from unbelief. It is true that Satan seeks to flood the fair garden of the heart and make it a scene of desolation, but it is also true that many Christians leave open the sluice-gates themselves, and let in

the dreadful deluge through carelessness and want of prayer to their strong Helper. We often forget that the Author of our faith must be the Preserver of it also. The lamp which was burning in the temple was never allowed to go out, but it had to be daily replenished with fresh oil; in like manner, our faith can only live by being sustained with the oil of grace, and we can only obtain this from God himself. Foolish virgins we shall prove, if we do not secure the needed sustenance for our lamps. He who built the world upholds it, or it would fall in one tremendous crash; he who made us Christians must maintain us by his Spirit, or our ruin will be speedy and final. Let us, then, evening by evening, go to our Lord for the grace and strength we need. We have a strong argument to plead, for it is *his own work of grace* which we ask him to strengthen—“*that which thou hast wrought for us.*” Think you he will fail to protect and sustain that? Only let your faith take hold of his strength, and all the powers of darkness, led on by the master fiend of hell, cannot cast a cloud or shadow over your joy and peace. Why faint when you may be strong? Why suffer defeat when you may conquer? Oh! take your wavering faith and drooping graces to him who can revive and replenish them, and earnestly pray, “Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.”

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**SERMONAUDIO.COM/**

**GRACESHEBOYGAN**

CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE:

**GRACEOPCSHEBOYGAN.COM**



## Reformation Take-Aways Continued..

hand most clearly when we are struggling most significantly.

Finally, Dr. Troxel was right in saying that **the church ought to be a place where doubt is welcomed, and honesty is rewarded.** The atmosphere in a church should not squelch or suppress honest expressions of doubt. We should welcome such refreshing truthfulness, and endeavor to meet good questions with good answers. This is where your pastor and elders can be most helpful to your soul. If you harbor doubts, or fears, or struggles, don't be afraid to quietly ask your shepherds for some assistance. We are never too busy to aid a struggling saint afflicted with doubts.

Your doubts are welcome at Grace Church, and we don't want you to suppress or hide them from view.

