

A LAMPSTAND

FOR MOUNT AIRY

COVENANT REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

PASTOR SCOTT WILLET

AUGUST 2020

An Open Letter

A so-called “open letter” is a time-honored way of public correspondence intended to reach a much wider audience than is ordinarily possible for a traditional letter with a named recipient. In this modern age of instant and worldwide communications via the internet, the usefulness of such open letters would seem obvious. With its inherently public nature, social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter have all but eliminated private and personal correspondence. For many, especially members of younger generations, personal and private letters addressed to individuals have been completely replaced by social media “posts” and “comments.” Yet, despite any number of negative consequences of that inescapable reality, the legitimacy of an open letter still remains valid in appropriate circumstances in order to address issues that have already been presented in the public domain.

Some weeks ago, toward the end of June, more than 90 officers in the OPC determined that such circumstances existed. An “Open Letter from Concerned Ministers and Elders in the OPC” was published online. It was an unusual step for men typically given to much more traditional means of communication—to say nothing of a more ordinary sense of presbyterian order. The motivating cause of this open letter was to

Welcome!

To our visitors,
we welcome you to
Covenant Reformed
Presbyterian Church.

Visitors, please take a copy of
the burgundy colored

Welcome!

folder located on the foyer
table next to the bulletins.
Please fill out a visitor's card
and either give it to an usher
or put it in the offering plate.

“But now God has set the members,
each one of them, in the body
just as He pleased.”
(1 Cor. 12:18 NKJV)

express “deep concerns” regarding a matter that has become quite the rage online for the past months and even couple of years. To use the exact words of that open letter, the first concern was that some women who are members of our church [the OPC as a whole], “have been subjected to disparaging comments which are ‘corrupt,’ ‘foolish talking,’ and ‘coarse jesting’ (Ephesians 4:29; 5:5).” Those offending comments were published in a Facebook group identified as Genevan Commons, a group defining itself as private and demanding secrecy from its members even though its membership was, at one time, in the neighborhood of one thousand. The concerns of this open letter were not merely that some members of the Genevan Commons “would attempt to hide behind a group that pledges itself to secrecy, as if ‘locker room talk’ could somehow be exempted from the accountability of the church on the basis of an alleged right to privacy” (again, the exact words of the open letter), but that some specific women authors (Aimee Byrd and Rachel Miller were identified by name) had become the objects of critiques which the signers of the open letter found to have an “overtly misogynistic tone.” To express that concern verbatim, “Rather than thoughtful critique, we are dismayed to find officers of the church deriding and mocking others. Such behavior is completely unacceptable towards our sisters in Christ. It is the opposite of love...Rather than honoring women the way that Christ has honored his precious bride, these men have encouraged each other (and indirectly, the rest of the church and the world now that these words are made public) to disparage women.”

Our Session is very sympathetic to those concerns and two Session members were among the signers of that open letter. Additionally, I am

thankful for the profitable, personal conversations that I have had with a number of you about these matters. If you are interested in further details, an abundance of material is available via online searches and I would be glad to point you in the right direction.

I am also thankful that at the July 9-10 meeting, our presbytery approved a request to appoint a special committee “to investigate the matters pertaining to the Genevan Commons Facebook Group and attendant matters.” The motivation for that request comes from the awareness that several of the leaders and more active participants in Genevan Commons come from our presbytery. The Moderator appointed to that committee Ken Montgomery (our new stated clerk), Matt Holst (who had brought the original motion requesting a committee), Vernon Shoaf (a Ruling Elder from the Greenville congregation), Lowell Ivey, and Mike Myers (a contributing member of Genevan Commons). No one who signed the open letter was appointed to the committee. Though I can only wait to see how helpful this committee’s work will be, no doubt the investigation and public scrutiny will be extremely beneficial.

These are important matters. Not only do they deal with the godliness of our behavior related to the sinfulness of coarse joking and personal mockery, but the underlying issues are brought to the surface as well —namely the whole relationship between men and women as male and female. There is much to be debated and much to be rejected in the notions of modern patriarchy which assert simply that women are weaker than men and inferior in their ontological essence, inferior by their very nature, called therefore by God exclusively for domestic work and for submission to the rule of men. Typically included in such patriarchy is the conviction that women are gullible and more easily deceived than men, thus disqualified and forbidden by God to speak or write on matters of biblical doctrine or theology even in the informality of personal conversation (with anyone other than her husband) or public discourse. A clear summary of that view of women is articulated by Joseph Spurgeon (a pastor in Indiana, not in the OPC) in an online article entitled *Will someone love Aimee Byrd*, which article concludes with these words the author addresses to Mrs. Byrd personally: “Stop and be quiet. Go live a quiet life. Love and submit to your husband. Love your children. And be a keeper at home. To her husband: Love your wife enough to tell her to shut up.”

Those words trouble me greatly. In such formulations of the relationship between men and women, gone are the numerous biblical references to relating to *one another* as Christians. Gone is the sense of honor and respect and even submission we give to one another without reference to gender. (Ephesians 5:21) Gone also is the delight which Adam had in the creation of Eve, a helper made corresponding to him, comparable to him, according to Genesis 2:23, “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” The delight of the man was that his “helper” would correspond to him as his ontological equal, created from him to be like him. His delight was that the one who would honor him, the one who would submit to him, would do so freely and willingly as a creature who corresponded to him in her essential being. She was created for him and from him, and they, together, male and female, were created in God’s image. Not one superior in essence to the other, but perfectly corresponding in their essential unity of bearing together the divine image.

None of that denies the biblical responsibility for the exercise of authority and submission within the family, the church, and the state—relationships which God has ordained. But neither do those relationships deny the mutual honor we owe to one another as Christians nor the essential unity we enjoy as human beings created in God’s image, such that there is now “neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)

As men and women, may we delight to be His image bearers, “heirs together of the grace of life.” (1 Peter 3:7) May God to enable us to live out faithfully what it means to be creatures made in His image, male and female. (Genesis 1:27)

Schedule of Preaching

August 16

AM 1 John 5:18-21

August 23

AM Pulpit Supply: Earl Blackburn

August 30

AM Pulpit Supply: Dale Jackson

September 6

AM Deuteronomy 20:1-20

PM Philippians 1:1-2

September 13

AM Deuteronomy 21:1-21

PM Philippians 1:3-8

Wednesday Night Bible Study

Everyone is invited and encouraged to come to our weekly Bible study
each Wednesday evening at 7 pm, via Zoom.
We have just begun a new study on the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
Please join us online. All are invited.
(No meetings on August 19 and August 26)

Men's Reading Group

Each Friday, 9:00 AM
at the church
studying the book, *Devoted to God*, by Sinclair Ferguson

All the men and young men of the church are invited
for a time of study, prayer and fellowship.

Evening Worship and Streaming

The Session has been wrestling with the question of resuming a second worship service, not easily able to identify a good solution with regard to the question of time. Since we aren't planning to resume fellowship lunch in the immediate future, our normal 2 pm service wouldn't work, but a later service poses more difficulty for those who live at some distance from the church. We have decided, therefore, to resume a second worship service on Sunday September 6, beginning at 5 pm. In conjunction with that decision, we have decided to secure high speed internet service for the church and to provide live streaming for all our worship services. We want to continue to encourage you to meet together for worship as often as possible, all who are able without a heightened risk of infection. We want to encourage you to attend the 5 pm worship service as well. Yet, we also want to provide a more acceptable alternative for those who are unable to attend in person, via the live stream. That will, of course, also be useful in an ongoing way for those who are home sick or otherwise unable to attend in person any particular week.

Treasurer's Report

Monthly Income

June	\$10,810.73
July	\$10,439.07
YTD	\$73,268.71

Monthly Expenses

June	\$13,068.01
July	\$8,862.60
YTD	\$72,679.46

Income minus Expenses

June	(\$2,257.28)
July	\$1,576.47
YTD	\$589.25

Monthly Average Income

\$10,466.96

Monthly Average Expenses

\$10,382.78

Monthly Budget

\$12,500.00

Session Actions

Since much of the work of the Session relates to our church membership, here is our current church roll.

Communicant Members (54)

Sarah Abernethy
Caleb Blackburn
Debbie Blackburn
Earl Blackburn
Angela Bryant
Jonas Bryant
Lane Bryant
Micah Bryant
Noel Bryant
Abigail Carpenter
Diana Chaney
Justeena Chaney
David Childs
Hannah Childs
Jesse Childs
Joshua Childs
Penelope Childs
Stephanie Childs
Tony Childs
Josiah DeGraaf
Blake Hughes
Tannya Hughes

Dale Jackson
Marvin Kaye
Susan Kaye
Mark Mattson
Ruth Mattson
David Newell
Donna Newell
Jean Preston
Robert Preston
Charlie Puckett
Deborah Puckett
Derek Ramey
Shawna Ramey
Cindy Shields
Mike Shields
Callie Sitek
Jason Sitek
Leah Smith
Chris Stauffer
Deborah Stauffer
Ricky Tucker
Sharon Tucker

Camille Walker
Jonathan Walker
Linda Walker
Stephen Walker
David Wilburn
Elizabeth Willet
Gabrielle Willet
Ruth Willet
Sharon Willet
Elizabeth Woltz

Non-Communicant Members (6)

Kezia Bryant
Peter Bryant
Emmett Ramey
Malachi Sitek
Knox Sitek
Oliver Sitek

Total Membership: 60

Volunteers Needed

Are you looking for a job? Here are some specific needs in the church.
Please speak to Pastor Willet if you are able help.

1. Newsletter Writer

I am especially interested in someone who will be able to write brief biographies of our church members from month to month.

2. Live Stream Manager

Do you know how to set up a live stream video feed for the church?
Are you able to maintain a Live Stream week by week?

3. Website Administrator

Are you familiar with WordPress?
Would you be able to work with Pastor Willet to keep our website up to date?

2020 Singles Retreat

Machen Retreat and Conference Center
McDowell, VA
October 2-4, 2020

Theme Statement

Serving God in All the Seasons of Your Life

Theme Verse

*To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven.
Ecclesiastes 3:1*

Speaker

Pastor Scott Willet

Personal Invitation

I want to invite you to the 2020 Singles Retreat at MRCC, emphasizing at the outset that I want to focus your thinking on the concept of seasons of life. Singleness is not simply a temporary prelude to marriage, nor is it merely something to be endured as some sort of struggle or incompleteness. In that context, there is no singular definition of the impact of singleness upon your lives nor broad over-arching goal that should define singleness for everyone uniformly. Thus the broader concept upon which we will focus, beginning with Ecclesiastes 3:1, To everything there is a season.

Recognizing that the providence of God governs all those seasons in all of our lives, the goal of the retreat will be to recognize, define, evaluate, and embrace the seasons of your own life. Ultimately, the goal is contentment and hope. (1 Timothy 6:6)

The great benefit of a retreat at MRCC is that we will have time not only to relax and enjoy all the beauty of Highland County, but also time to talk and interact together. There will be time for questions and for thinking out loud, both in our group sessions as well as informal conversations. I hope you will get to know me as I look forward to getting to know all of you. I expect to present the opening and closing segments (Saturday morning and Sunday worship) in a preaching format, but the Saturday evening and Sunday School segments will be designed much more as interactive teaching opportunities. For those who are able to arrive in time Friday evening, I will also plan a time of informal discussion not simply designed as an ice breaker, but more so as a time to begin the process of thinking (talking and listening) together. I hope that I can stimulate your mind in a good way, and help you to understand not only your current season of life but be well prepared for whatever seasons of life might remain ahead of you.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION:
<https://machen.org/camps-and-events/singles-retreat/>

Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church

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Mount Airy, NC 27030
336-673-3176 (Church office)
336-907-0202 (Pastor's phone)

mtairyopc.org

Pastor Scott Willet: sswillet@mac.com

Sunday Services

Sunday School Classes
Currently cancelled due to COVID-19

Sunday Morning Worship Service
11:00 AM

Sunday Evening Worship Service (beginning September 6)
5:00 PM

Other Activities

Wed. Night Bible Study
7:00 PM
Meeting by Zoom

Thursday Night Youth and Young Adult Bible Study
Meeting will resume when possible.

Men's Reading Group
Friday 9:00 AM
Meeting at the church