

NEW HORIZONS

≡ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ≡

NOVEMBER 2017

A photograph of a church service. A priest in a light blue shirt is standing at the altar, gesturing with his right hand. A large congregation is seated in the pews, facing the altar. The church has a high ceiling with arched windows and a balcony. The text "DELIGHTING IN THE LORD" is overlaid in large, white, serif capital letters. Below it, the text "2017 Thank Offering" is written in a smaller, white, cursive font. The background image is a photograph of a church service, showing a priest at the altar and a large congregation seated in the pews. The church has a high ceiling with arched windows and a balcony. The text "DELIGHTING IN THE LORD" is overlaid in large, white, serif capital letters. Below it, the text "2017 Thank Offering" is written in a smaller, white, cursive font. The background image is a photograph of a church service, showing a priest at the altar and a large congregation seated in the pews. The church has a high ceiling with arched windows and a balcony.

DELIGHTING IN THE LORD

2017 *Thank Offering*

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION • FOREIGN MISSIONS • HOME MISSIONS

HOME MISSIONS

FROM DOOR TO DOOR IN VIRGINIA BEACH

// AL TRICARICO

I used to think that way.” These are the words that a man named Mike heard in a conversation with Rev. Lowell Ivey, our church planter serving in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

One sunny September afternoon, I had the privilege of joining Lowell and his family in their regular visitation ministry to homes in the Indian Lakes neighborhood of Virginia Beach. Reformation Presbyterian Church, a mission work of the Presbytery of the Southeast, meets in the community center located there. Lowell wants people who live nearby to know about the church. He also wants them to know that they are loved and welcome to join the congregation on Sundays. He communicates these things to them through the practice of door-to-door evangelism.

When I first heard about Lowell’s practice, I contacted him and asked for a summary of his approach. Here is what he wrote.

At this point, what I’ve been doing is going from door to door in the neighborhood around our worship location and trying to get to know the families. I carry a bag with literature and cards with the church information on them. If someone comes to the door when I knock, I introduce myself and explain that I’m the pastor of the church that meets in the neighborhood community center on Sundays and that I’d like to get to know our neighbors. I try to ask if they’ve heard the gospel; if so, what is their understanding of who Jesus is and why he came? From there, I try to assess whether or not they are Christians. If Christians, I ask if they have a church. If they do, I ask if they have an evening service (most don’t). If non-Christians, I try to further engage with the gospel and invite them to church, prayer meeting, or to our home for a meal.

One thing I’ve found is that people really respond to personal, face-to-face involvement. My goal is to visit every



Home missionary Lowell Ivey with his wife, Mae, and their three children (by age): Geneva, Titus, and Lydia

home in the Indian Lakes neighborhood and return again and again. Over time, I believe people will open up as they respond to authentic Christian love and as they have real spiritual needs that only Christ can meet with the gospel.

This is a whole-family ministry. Lowell’s wife, Mae, joins him, as do their three children. Lydia is seven months old, so she doesn’t say much. Geneva, four, is responsible for handing out copies of the OPC tract *Christ Proclaims a Better Way*, along with information about the church. Two-year-old Titus is the doorbell ringer. Sometimes he needs a lift from dad, but he does a great job and loves it. When Lowell announces to the family that it is time to do some evangelism, they all know what that means: time to go straight to the car and head over to Indian Lakes!

We visited fifteen homes. Contacts were made at most of them. Some visits led to substantial conversations about Jesus.

Roy, an atheist, was our first contact. He prefers golf to church and did not seem open to visiting RPC. He believes himself to be nothing more than a collection of chemicals and denies that life extends beyond the grave. He admitted to having read some of the Bible, but found it impossible to

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FROM DOOR TO DOOR

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believe—especially the story of Adam and Eve. He was set in his position, but not antagonistic toward us. He seemed genuinely grateful that we cared to come and talk. We responded to his views and were able to cover the basics of our faith in about twenty minutes. At the end, Roy thanked us and said he would be glad to meet again. Lowell noted it and will contact him with the hope of continuing the conversation.

Is this kind of ministry for everyone? Perhaps not. Would it be good for every Orthodox Presbyterian congregation to engage in this way? I hesitate to say no. If a church has neighbors, and some of those neighbors lack faith in Jesus or a place to worship, then why not make simple efforts to reach out to them directly and personally? The best result would be new life in Christ. The “worst” would be a friendly greeting, an invitation to church, and a growing reputation of being a warm and welcoming congregation. Not bad.

Lowell's opening is simple and effective. “Hello. My name is Lowell and I am the pastor of the church that meets at the community center. I want to get to know my neighbors, so I am here to introduce myself and invite you to join us for worship.” Those warm welcoming statements always produce a response: often a word of thanks, sometimes an expression of deeper interest. On occasion, Lowell gets a dismissive reply, meant as a conversation stopper. The talk may seem to end, but Lowell has a way of winsomely continuing the dialogue.

Mike was doing some yard work when we approached him. He was with two friends and seemed busy, but not intensely so. Lowell began with his regular introduction and greeting.

Mike said, “I have never been a religious man. I am not now a religious man. I will never be a religious man. But I respect people who

are.” What would you have said to Mike? How does one respond to words that seem calculated to close a conversation? Lowell's reply was amazing: “I used to think that way. Let me tell you what happened to me.”

Mike paid careful attention as Lowell delivered the story of how Christ saved him while he was serving time in a Texas prison. I was barely able to hold back tears as I heard him testify that it was during his fifteen-year incarceration that he became a free man through faith in Jesus Christ. Lowell spoke as a man changed by the power of the gospel.

Mike listened. Lowell invited him to lunch. Mike neither accepted nor declined the offer. But he did say, “I can always use a free lunch.” What seemed to bring the conversation to a sudden halt was shaped by Lowell into a gospel-sharing moment and an invitation to meet again to discuss the things of God.

Reformation Presbyterian Church enjoys a healthy attendance of around seventy people. Lowell reports that there is currently an “explosion of visitors” making their way to RPC. Do rejoice with the saints in Virginia Beach. These are good times for a young congregation and for a neighborhood that has a precious gift in its midst.

As you think about this new work, pray that neighbors who see the Ivey family approaching their home would open their doors and hearts to them. And pray that many would find life through faith in Jesus (John 10:10).



Titus doing his job with an assist from Dad

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date Home Missions news and prayer updates, e-mail HomeMissionsToday@opc.org.
New editions: November 5, 19.



The congregation of Reformation Presbyterian Church in Virginia Beach, Va.