

Testimony of Pastor Phelps

I was raised in a non-Christian home in Rhode Island, and was converted to Christ in the summer of 1990, through the ministry of an evangelical house church. My college sweetheart, Donna, a former Roman Catholic, was also converted that summer. We married the next year. While teaching in the house church, I became persuaded of the biblical fidelity of the Reformed faith—thanks to the teaching resources of R.C. Sproul, J.I. Packer, and G.I. Williamson’s study guide to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Having learned that Dr. Sproul was a minister in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), I found the one PCA church in Rhode Island at the time (1997). Our young family became members of this church plant, now known as Trinity Presbyterian in Providence, RI.

Within a couple of years, I sensed a call to Gospel ministry, and specifically, to plant a daughter church of Trinity. I was mentored by a faithful, confessional pastor, and began to commute to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Massachusetts. I graduated in 2003 with a Master of Divinity and I was ordained to Gospel ministry that year. Christ Our Hope PCA was planted in 2004 and organized in 2009.

I’ve always appreciated the “motto” of the PCA —*faithful to the Scriptures, true to the Reformed faith, and obedient to the Great Commission*—and I believe that these should be the goals of any faithful Reformed denomination. My conscience became grieved when the PCA failed to discipline ministers associated with the “Federal Vision” error*, which seemed like a compromise of our commitment to be faithful to the Scriptures and true to the Reformed faith. I shared my concerns with my elders over the course of several years and could not come to complete agreement on transferring Christ Our Hope into the OPC or the United Reformed Church. So I departed the PCA and my beloved flock at Christ Our Hope in February 2015. I took a call with a United Reformed Church plant in Colorado.

After several years in Colorado, I shared with my elders that I wanted to serve the Lord in his harvest field “back East” once again. My sense of calling to Gospel ministry in the first place was tied to the people and place of this region. My family also wanted to be closer to our remaining family in

Rhode Island. By God's sovereign grace, He provided the opportunity for me to be a pastor in the OPC here at Living Hope.

I love my calling as a pastor. I love the Reformed faith and confessions as summarized in the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity. I love to preach Christ crucified and risen from all of God's Word, as our only comfort in life and in death. I love to see God work through the Gospel to gather His elect to His church, to grow us together in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. I love God's people, and to share this Gospel comfort with my fellow, struggling saints in the context of pastoral care and counsel. I also love to share our "living hope" in the risen Christ with those who do not yet know it. I love to intentionally teach the Reformed faith, as well, to share the biblical and edifying treasure of our historic confessions and catechisms. I love to serve with faithful elders and deacons who are called by God to shepherd and care for the flock. My confidence as a minister is in the power of the Gospel and Christ's promise to build His church, through the ordinary means of grace (Word, Sacraments, and prayer). To God Alone be the Glory!

* - Note – go to the OPC website for more information on the Federal Vision: https://www.opc.org/nh.html?article_id=478