

In Chicago, church mourns a slain judge

A 'GOLDEN VOICED' song leader who 'truly believed' in his city's youths becomes a victim of its crime wave.

BY CHELLIE ISON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

CHICAGO — When he wasn't presiding on the bench, Raymond Myles was standing at the pulpit, leading worship for the Stony Island Church of Christ, where he was known as "The Golden Voice."

That's what the 66-year-old Cook County associate judge was doing less than 24 hours before he was shot to death outside his south Chicago home in what police call an attempted armed robbery.

Days later, his family struggled with a question they may never stop asking: *Out of all people, why Ray?*

"Ray was always trying to help people, always pouring in to people — always," Luke Myles, the judge's cousin, told *The Christian Chronicle* as he sat in the fellowship hall of the Stony Island church, two weeks after the shooting. "And then, for something like this to transpire, it just leaves a lot of questions."

He was more than a terrific song leader, added James Carter, minister for the 80-member congregation, as he reminisced with the judge's cousin.

"He was a terrific Christian," Carter said. "He was a terrific man, a terrific brother in Christ, and he inspired people."

Raymond Myles' death came amid a wave of violence in America's third-most populous city. Chicago's 2.7 million souls experienced their deadliest year in nearly two decades in 2016 — 762 murders, 3,550 shooting incidents and 4,331 shooting

See **CHICAGO**, Page 8



Christians from Colombia, Venezuela and the U.S. sing hymns during the Cúcuta Church of Christ's Sunday worship.

A rescue mission

A TEAM OF YOUNG Latin American Christians moves to Colombia to plant a church — and hears a call to serve the suffering in nearby Venezuela.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

CÚCUTA, Colombia

From across Latin America, a team of Christians has come to this border town in northern Colombia to save souls.

They may save a few lives, too.

The seven church planters — all graduates of the Baxter Institute, a ministry training school in Honduras — chose the South American city of Cúcuta as the site for a new Iglesia de Cristo, or Church of Christ. Sponsoring their work is Great Cities Missions, a nonprofit dedicated to planting churches in every major city of the Latin world.

The city of 1 million souls sits

across the Tachira River from Venezuela, a once-prosperous nation whose years-long economic decline has become a humanitarian crisis. In droves, Venezuelans cross the border into Cúcuta in search of food and medicine.

In response, the church planters are filling the shelves of their rented facility with relief supplies.

A few Venezuelans are among the 30 believers who gather for Sunday morning worship in what will be the Cúcuta church's auditorium.

It's a building under renovation — in need of paint, furniture and more plastic chairs before the official inaugural service in two weeks.

Kelley Grant and Blake Crowell,

See **RESCUE**, Page 14



PHOTOS BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD

People in Cúcuta, Colombia, walk toward the Venezuelan border — some carrying food they can't buy at home.



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Restoring sight, sharing the light

OKLAHOMA CITY
‘Why are all these people helping me? I don’t understand.”

I was driving 60 miles per hour on Interstate 40 one morning when Luz asked me that question. A

Inside Story
humbling conversation followed as I tried to explain (in her native Spanish) how God’s love compels us to do all we can to show his son to others



Lynda Sheehan

through our service — all while keeping my eyes on the downtown traffic.

Her name, Luz, means “light” in Spanish. When I first met her, she was living in near-darkness. Cataracts caused by gestational diabetes had rendered her legally blind.

Out of desperation, the 40-year-old single mother drove herself — plus her 6-year-old son with autism and her 3-year-old daughter — to our monthly vision check at the Lighthouse Medical Clinic. It’s a ministry of our congregation, the Memorial Road Church of Christ, that operates in the building of our inner-city church plant, the Capitol Hill Church of Christ. Dr. Darrell Pickard, a Memorial Road member, donates his skills as an ophthalmologist and I translate for our Spanish-speaking patients.

See **LIGHT**, Page 4



Seeking redemption for a long, dark chapter

PHOTOS BY BOBBY ROSS JR.

MINISTRY STRIVES to overcome – and atone for – Canada’s 120-year history of snatching indigenous children from parents.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

DAUPHIN, Manitoba

The boy felt nauseous. A knot gripped him in the pit of his stomach. He couldn’t explain the feeling, but it overcame him each time he walked into the long, rectangular building.

Nearly four decades later, the Métis tribal member — who grew up to be a social worker in this rural Canadian community — understands better why the Mackay Residential School caused him such inner turmoil.

“Even if you weren’t the one abused and suffering the genocide and loss of your culture, you absorbed that just by being there,” said the tribal member, who asked to be identified only by his first name, Dave. “They call that the common experience.”

Jamie Harvey can’t escape the ugly history of the building where he and the 30-member Dauphin Church of Christ serve the needy in this town 200 miles northwest of the provincial capital of Winnipeg.

For many in Dauphin, haunting



Parkland Crossing, a ministry of the Dauphin Church of Christ, features children’s playrooms and a free clothing store. The Christian nonprofit focuses on serving the rural Canadian community.

memories remain attached to the 26,000-square-foot building that now houses low-income apartments, a free clothing store, a community food bank, children’s playrooms and the congregation’s worship area.

Until the late 1980s, the structure served as an Indian Residential School — one of 139 such facilities nationwide that were built by the government and run by Christian denominations.

“They forced kids on the reservations

See **REDEMPTION**, Page 12

One church’s response to opioid crisis

AMID A NATIONAL EPIDEMIC, Connecticut’s largest Church of Christ joins its community’s fight.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Connecticut’s opioid crisis — part of a national epidemic — claimed more than 900 lives last year.

“That is about three times more than the number who will die in car accidents and about six times more than will die from gun violence,” said Deirdre Daly, U.S. Attorney for the District of Connecticut.

The overdose epidemic — linked to the illicit drug heroin and prescription pain relievers such as oxycodone and fentanyl — spurred the Constitution State’s largest Church of Christ to organize a recent community forum, which drew about 140 attendees.

The 250-member Manchester congregation sponsored the event in cooperation with Marc Montminy, police chief in the suburb 10 miles east of the state capital of Hartford, and Sarah Howroyd, who overcame her own struggle with drug addiction.

Montminy and Howroyd co-founded a community-based program called the HOPE Initiative. HOPE stands for “heroin/opioid prevention and education.” Patrick Barber serves as pulpit minister for the Manchester church, which is perhaps best known



Howroyd



Barber

See **OPIOID**, Page 9

LIGHT: God works through a patient, a doctor and a church

FROM PAGE 3

After the eye exam, my husband, Pat, and I drove the family home safely. It was the first of many times we would donate our time and transportation to bless the family.

Dr. Pickard offered to perform both procedures to remove the cataracts for free, but that still left a pricey bill for two uses of the surgery suite. God, however, already had begun to work in the lives of Luz, our medical staff and our congregation.

Beverly North, the clinic's director, spoke to one of Memorial Road's Sunday morning Bible classes about the need. The class immediately took up a contribution and, within minutes, had collected the funds for the suite both times.

I'm happy to report that, after the procedures, Luz now has 20/20 vision in each eye. She was blind, and now she can see.

She told me it's like being born again. She's newly aware of the colors, the details she's missed. She can work now as she takes care of her children. She continues to search spiritually. Many seeds have been planted.

Treatment for Luz has meant multiple doctor appointments on different sides of the Oklahoma City metro, and I've been glad to offer my time for transport and translation. She's told me repeatedly how



LYNDA SHEEHAN

Luz and ophthalmologist Dr. Darrell Pickard at the Lighthouse Medical Clinic in Oklahoma City.

thankful she is for the generosity she's been shown.

And I'm thankful that she asked why.

CONTACT: lynda.sheehan@christianchronicle.org

TO OUR READERS

A fiscal year of thanks, challenges

Dear friends of *The Christian Chronicle*:

The fiscal year's end means book-keeping and budget balancing. We're deeply grateful to all of you who support this ministry to inform, inspire and unite — to tell the many wonderful stories of our fellowship.

We are thankful to each of you for your financial support — and for the 478 donations from churches that support the *Chronicle*.

Your support inspires us to produce quality stories — in print and online. We're thrilled that, for the third consecutive year, we received the first place Award of Excellence from the Associated Church Press for the Best in Class category for national/international newspaper. And this year we also won best online newsletter for the first time.

For 20 consecutive years, you have enabled the *Chronicle* to operate in the black, an amazing accomplishment.

Again, we are grateful to you.

This year, however, we have faced new and necessary challenges that have stretched our budget. We've launched new digital initiatives to upgrade our online offerings. We switched printers after the company we used in Oklahoma City shut down its presses, resulting in higher printing and transportation costs.

All of this has resulted in the

Chronicle facing a projected financial shortfall of \$50,000. With 20 straight years of reaching our annual operating budget, this is indeed an unusual situation for us.

So in the next few weeks I'll be reaching out to our supporters, friends and readers of the *Chronicle* to ask for your financial help, as

well as your continued prayers that we can overcome these financial challenges.

You can be assured our operating budget to produce and mail 1.6 million annual copies of the *Chronicle* remains a lean \$1.1 million per year, and our small, dedicated staff of four full-time and five part-time employees are

responsible stewards of the financial support we receive.

All of us, including our outstanding board of trustees, stand behind this ministry and humbly ask you to help us continue the mission. If you've never contributed, this is the perfect time to begin. Please find our easy-to-use donation form online at www.christianchronicle.org or mail a check to us at P.O. Box 11000, Oklahoma City, OK 73136-1100 or call (405) 425-5070.

Please make a new or additional gift to the *Chronicle* now. Thank you.



Lynn McMillon

Joy F. McMillon

Prayers and best wishes,



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SPOTLIGHT

Miss Tuskegee 2017

ORANGE GROVE, Miss. — Jessica Dedeaux, a member of the Orange Grove Church of Christ, was recently crowned the 88th Miss Tuskegee University.

"It shocked me, like complete shock," Dedeaux told the Alabama university's campus newspaper. "That a Mississippi girl, from a small town, could become the national and international representative of a prestigious university like Tuskegee is a lot to process."

Fellow Christians joined Dedeaux in celebrating. "Jessica is a super young Christian woman, and I think the sharing of her accomplishments bring much glory to our Father," church member Sarah Carranza said. "Our church at Orange Grove has experienced so much grief in the past with the loss of a former minister's wife and son. I find myself wanting to find good narratives to share from our membership."

Minister Les Ferguson Jr.'s wife Karen, 44, and son Cole, 21, were shot to death in the family's home in 2011.



Dedeaux

JEAN WILCOXSON

Can't resist taking a selfie ... even on Old Fashioned Sunday

Brent Wear snaps a picture on Old Fashioned Day at the East Colbert Church of Christ in Muscle Shoals, Ala. The event was started 40 years ago "as a way to go back to the country roots and reminisce about the good ole days of country living and dinner on the grounds and church house revival," preacher Brian McCutchen said. After worship, church members enjoyed a fellowship meal that included beans, cornbread, taters and other fixings. Also pictured are Dee Wear, Rickey Lyell, Sondra McCutchen and Jane Butler.

ALABAMA

MONTGOMERY — In a show of racial unity, the Southside Church of Christ and the Landmark Church of Christ joined together for a day of service and a joint prayer assembly.

Landmark minister Wes Kohring and Southside minister Ron Simmons helped organize the recent event that involved 250 church volunteers.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Wes Kohring and Ron Simmons

ARIZONA

TUCSON — As it closes, the Mountain Avenue Church of Christ will sell its building and donate the majority of the proceeds to the Heritage 21 Foundation and Kairos.

The donation will support the planting of new churches in Tucson and across the nation, minister Andrew Hill said.

"We want you to know that Mountain will be leaving a legacy that will reach out for untold generations," Hill wrote in a note to the church's family and friends.

The church's last assembly was planned for May 21.

"No one wanted this day to come," Hill said, but "the numbers have been moving in a downward trend long enough that we have become financially unsustainable."

GEORGIA

ROME — For the first time, the Oak Hill Church of Christ sent a group to the Lads to Leaders convention in Atlanta.



Sides

And one of the congregation's young people came home with a first-place award.

Fourth-grader Ada Cate Sides received the honor in the "Art Says It" bulletin board event.

TEXAS

GARLAND — The Eastside Church of Christ hosted a recent immigration seminar to address fears of Hispanic neighbors, said Kenneth Rhodes, Eastside's personal evangelism and outreach minister.

VIRGINIA

RICHMOND — NBC 12 television in Richmond recently honored James Nesmith, minister for the West Broad Church of Christ, with an "Acts of Kindness" award.



Nesmith

Nesmith was recognized for his work in urban ministry and community service in downtown Richmond. Church member Connie Hill nominated him.

The congregation, which started with six people in 1999, has grown to 140 members. Nesmith has worked to build bridges between citizens and police. The church's ministries include a food bank, a clothes closet and a blood drive.

Seeking Pulpit Minister

The University City church of Christ in Gainesville, Florida, is seeking a dynamic servant of the Lord to be the Pulpit Minister for this 350-plus member congregation.

This candidate would join an active team of College, Youth, and Recovery ministers.

We are an established, diverse, and active congregation with one of the top college ministries in the country, a K - 4th grade "Faith City" educational program, an active middle school / high school youth ministry, and an established Lads-to-Leaders program. We are actively involved in two foreign missions, a substance abuse recovery ministry, a prison ministry, and other efforts seeking to serve the needs in our community.

The minister we are seeking should be able to effectively share the Word from the pulpit, in the classroom, and in more personal settings; be well-versed in Bible doctrine and a student of the Bible. He should be able to interact on a personal level with all segments of the congregation.

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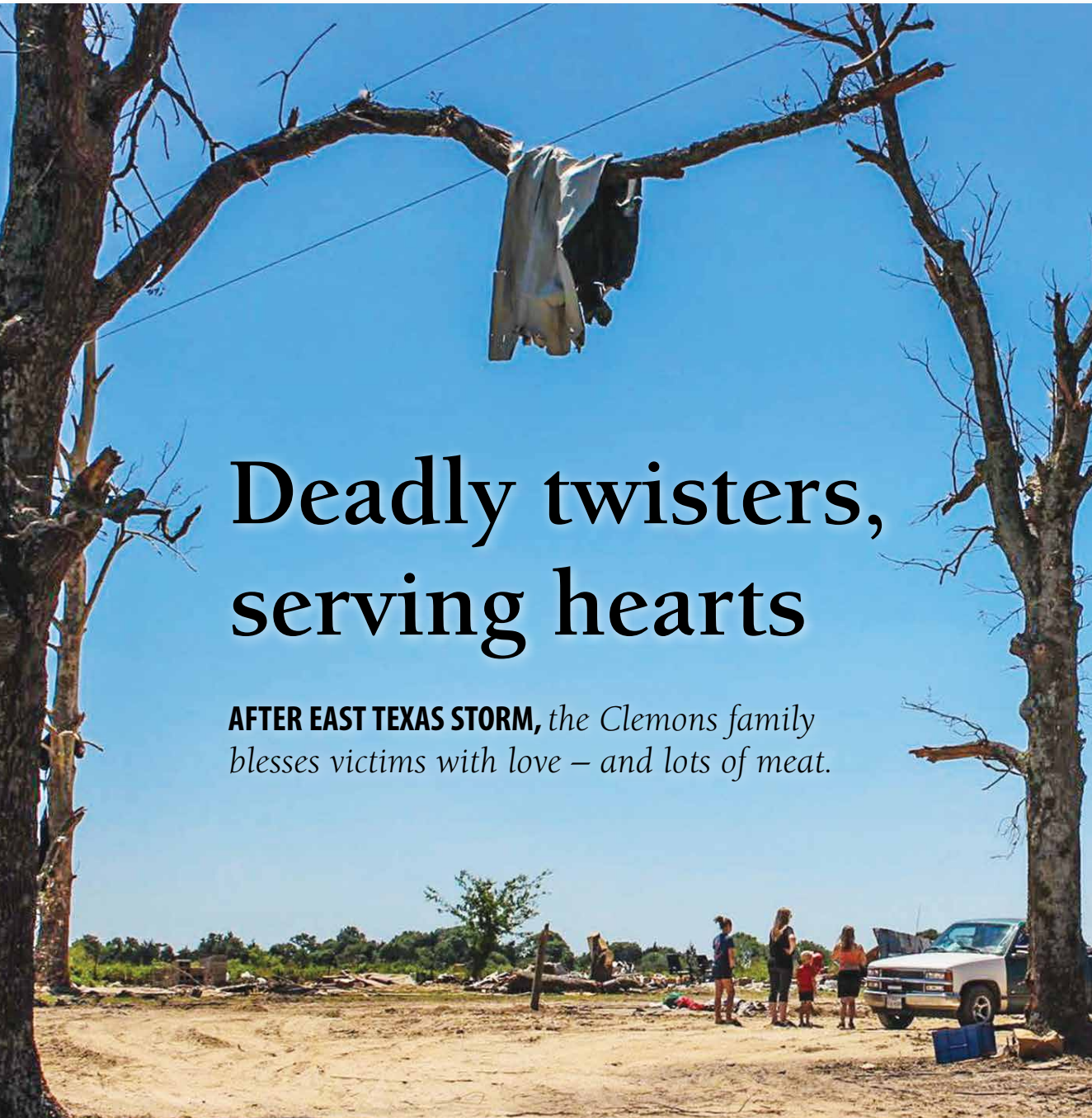
The university seeks in its next leader the values, skills, and knowledge to build upon its commitment to the advancement of churches of Christ by equipping servants through undergraduate and graduate programs and continuing education. The new president will continue HCU's legacy of producing effective communicators, preachers, teachers, and missionaries for real-world ministry with a focus on evangelism and a commitment to scripture.

The new president must be a person of strong faith in Christ, evidenced by exemplary character, personal integrity, respect for scripture, love for souls, and service to the Lord's church.

The Board of Directors has named a Presidential Search Committee that will seek broad input, identify and interview candidates, and make recommendations to the Board.

Interested parties should submit a resume and any relevant information on or before August 15, 2017, to Dale Kirkland, Heritage Search Committee Chair, at HCUPresidentialSearch@gmail.com.

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Deadly twisters, serving hearts

AFTER EAST TEXAS STORM, *the Clemons family blesses victims with love – and lots of meat.*

The deadly path of destruction can be seen after the largest outbreak of tornadoes in recent East Texas history. Nine tornadoes, some packing winds of more than 180 mph, claimed four lives, injured dozens and destroyed hundreds of homes.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

After tornadoes ravaged the East Texas town of Canton, Bryan and Rebecca Clemons hatched a plan to help. “We were in town for a family wedding when the tornado hit and felt helpless when we left that Sunday,” said Rebecca Clemons, who attended high school in Canton. Four people were killed and dozens injured in the April 29 tornadoes, the *Tyler Morning Telegraph*

reported. Hundreds “lost everything and desperately needed help.” Back home, Bryan and Rebecca Clemons — who attend the Austin-area Georgetown Church of Christ — decided to collect food and money and return the next weekend to the disaster area three hours away. Their children — Grace, 11, and Coleman, 5 — were excited to join the relief effort, while about 20 fellow Christians contributed, Rebecca Clemons said. “Ready to bless others!” she wrote

on Facebook as they headed to Canton with \$1,300 in gift cards and enough meat to feed hundreds. In all, the Clemons and other volunteers served more than 75 pounds of brisket, 240 sausage links, 200 burgers and 80 hot dogs. “I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all those who donated time, money and food to help,” Bryan Clemons said. **FIND LINKS** to ministries collecting funds for relief at www.christianchronicle.org.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY BRYAN AND REBECCA CLEMONS
Grace and Coleman Clemons look for valuables in the tornado debris.



Coleman Clemons, 5, helps prepare hamburgers for a Saturday night meal.



Keith Rohlack and Greg King assist in the meal preparation for tornado victims.



A cross is among the items salvaged by a volunteer searching through the debris.

CHICAGO: 'Too many shootings ... too many guns'

FROM PAGE 1

victims, according to police statistics.

For Luke Myles — himself a minister for the Far West Church of Christ in Chicago, where he and his cousin grew up — those numbers became suddenly and shockingly personal on April 10. His daughter woke him up after she saw news reports that the judge had been shot.

"To experience a murder — this is

a whole other level, and it has opened my eyes," Luke Myles said. "It's a very different thing to experience it (when) it's someone that's close to you. It has brought a different type of awareness to myself concerning the murder rate in Chicago and the way these things are transpiring."

Police have arrested two men in connection with the murder, but the investigation continues.

On the bench and in the pews, Raymond Miles "was the kind of person that made sense when sense needed to be made," Carter said.

But his death makes no sense.

THE CHURCH'S ROLE

The Christians who live in Chicago aren't shocked by the national headlines about their city's crime rate — or the lack of an explanation for

it. Some see it as a problem that goes far beyond city limits.

"It seems to me to go in cycles," Carter said. "I've seen this all take place before, and then it will settle for a couple of years and then go back to this."

"But there's way too many shootings — and too many guns on the streets here."

About seven miles from the building in Avalon Park where the Stony Island church worships, another congregation, the Sheldon Heights Church of Christ, works to impact the lives of the city's youths, hoping to guide them down a better path than the ones

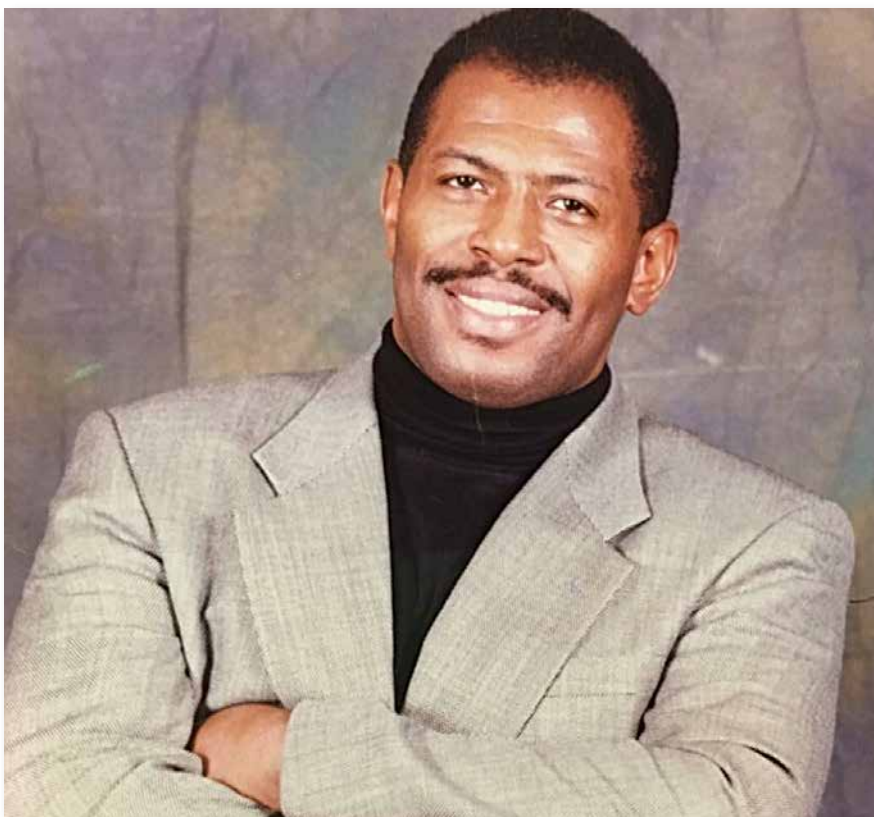


PHOTO PROVIDED

Remembering Judge Myles: See video interviews with Luke Myles and James Carter as they share stories of Raymond Myles at www.christianchronicle.org.

offered by gangs, drugs and violence.

"We try to be a force in the community where people know this is a safe haven," said Brenda Gilbert, wife of Sheldon Heights minister, Leonardo D. Gilbert.

Her sister-in-law, Teresa Gilbert, said that the 500-member congregation hosts a weekly food bank program and owns property near its building that is used for a variety of youth programs.

"They spend their summer with us," Teresa Gilbert said of her community's youths. Since they don't get school lunches during the summer months, the church works with an area program that provides children in the neighborhood with breakfast, lunch and snacks — food they may not be able to get at home.

By showing God's love to at-risk

kids and providing them with a safe haven, the church is trying "really hard to have an impact" on its hurting community, Teresa Gilbert told the *Chronicle*.

The recent rise in violent crime is a nationwide problem, Brenda Gilbert added. She and her congregation pray their humble efforts will, in some small way, help stem the tide of violence.

"I definitely know that we have a role," she said. "You know, God put us in the community not just so we can have worship on Sunday or Bible class on Wednesday, but so we can make a difference and change lives."

RESTORING A CITY'S HONOR FOR LIFE

Raymond Myles also saw his courtroom as a place to start changing lives for the better, his

friends said.

"He wasn't there to fill the jailhouses. He was there to impact lives and make a difference in the lives of our youth. He truly believed in youth," Luke Myles said. "He was hard, but he was fair. He did not meet a person that he didn't want to contribute and make sure he pushed them to be the best they could be."

Even family members affectionately called him "your honor," his cousin added. He worked hard and was well respected.

Although he has dozens of cousins in the area, Luke Myles said that family gatherings won't be the same without his mentor.

He hopes Chicago will notice the judge's absence as well and that his death will serve as a wake-up call for those unconcerned about the crime wave's impact — and as a rallying cry for those who call for its end.

John Kass, a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*, is one of those voices.

"That's where Chicago is now, the violent city, street gang wars raging ... Neighborhoods are terrorized," Kass wrote in a column about Raymond Myles' death. "And now this, in a middle-class black neighborhood of city workers, bus drivers, employees of nearby Chicago State University."

One woman who heard the shooting told Kass, "You don't see judges getting killed in Chicago. But now you do."

To end the cycle, Luke Myles said, "We need to become more involved. We really need to find answers and ways to help our youth understand that life is greater than dying at an early age or killing people because you have a disagreement or a misunderstanding."

With so many questions yet to be answered, the minister said he tries to turn his fears over to the only one who can bring him peace.

"I'm just trusting God every day."

MORE FROM CHICAGO: Do churches reflect Jesus — or society's values — when they select elders and deacons and launch ministries? A benevolence minister shares his Views on **Page 29**.



Luke Myles



Carter



Teresa Gilbert



Brenda Gilbert

OPIOID: Addiction starts with legal drugs

FROM PAGE 3
for hosting the annual New England Church Growth Conference.

In an interview with *The Christian Chronicle*, Barber discussed the opioid crisis and the church’s role in fighting it.

What is the opioid crisis?

Opioids include things like heroin and legal painkillers like OxyContin. I was told that 80 percent of heroin addicts first became addicted to prescribed painkillers. The huge spike in overdose deaths seems to affect nearly every demographic in society. In 2016, 917 people died of drug overdoses in the state of Connecticut. That was a 25 percent increase over 2015.

What inspired the church to host a forum on this issue?

As a church, we recognize the need to be more involved in addressing the problems and concerns in our community. The Gospel is the church’s ultimate response to sin and its effects, but Jesus rarely, if ever, began with a “gospel sermon.” Jesus often began by listening to people’s problems and needs, and then he addressed those things in ways that pointed them to God and the good news of his kingdom.

This year, we’re trying to host a community service event each quarter that addresses a need or problem that is obviously relevant to the community. We learned about a new cooperative effort between the local police department and the city hospital, which aims to get addicts into treatment rather than simply arresting them, and we wanted to help spread the news of this new HOPE Initiative.

How big a problem is this? And how does it affect the church and community?

The problem is not showing any sign of slowing down. Again, the addiction to opiates doesn’t usually begin with street drugs like heroin. It normally begins with an addiction to legally prescribed pain medications, so most people who end up addicted weren’t even starting out trying to get high.

We have dozens of members in our congregation who have had friends or family members die of heroin overdoses in the last couple of years. But the stigma of drug addiction often keeps the problem in the dark, which means many people already have a problem long before most of us know about it.

What lessons or conclusions resulted from the forum?

We learned more about the problem, its causes and a new attempt in our community to help addicts before they overdose. Like our police chief said at the forum, we’ve been trying to arrest our way out of the drug problem for decades, and it isn’t working.

Montminy and Howroyd conducted the forum together. There were also pharmacists present who were able to provide Narcan. That is an emergency drug that can be easily administered to someone who is overdosing, and it does a remarkable job of stabilizing them long enough to get them medical treatment.

What advice would you have for other church leaders looking for a way to get involved in dealing with this problem and make a positive difference?

Understand that you don’t have to be an expert to get involved, but you do have to be willing to get your hands dirty and take risks. We do not have special expertise, so we aren’t really on the drug-recovery side of the equation. Our focus is more on prevention and the spread of helpful information.

You might be surprised at how big an issue opioid addiction is in your area. I’m sure your local police department and/or hospital can provide more information. More broadly, I encourage all of us to keep looking at the struggles people have in our local communities and then try to figure out how we can address those issues in ways that are compassionate and Christ-like.

IS YOUR CONGREGATION involved in the drug fight? If so, how? Join the discussion at www.christianchronicle.org or email Bobby Ross Jr. at bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org. Be sure to include your full name, home congregation, city and state.



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Teacher: Spring Hill, Tennessee

Middle is seeking a full-time teacher to work at their on-site school for the 2017-2018 school year. Candidate must be able to plan, organize and implement an appropriate instructional program in a learning environment that guides and encourages students to develop and fulfill their academic potential. Qualified candidates:

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College of Arts and Sciences

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Dr. Becky Hammack, Dean, ACU Box 28035, Abilene, Texas 79699-8035

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*Dr. Mark McCallon, Associate Dean for Library Information Systems
ACU Box 29208, Abilene, Texas 79699-9208*

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See acu.edu/academics/provost/positions.html for complete descriptions of these positions. In a letter to the appropriate dean or chair, applicants should address their qualifications for the position. They should include in the application a statement of how faith informs their teaching; a discussion of their spiritual journey; a curriculum vitae; transcripts of all undergraduate and graduate work; and names, addresses and phone numbers of five references. Review of applicants will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. Nominations of and applications from qualified women and minorities are especially encouraged. ACU is affiliated with the fellowship of the Churches of Christ. All applicants must be professing Christians and be active, faithful members of a congregation of the Churches of Christ and deeply committed to service in Christian higher education. The mission of ACU is to educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world. ACU does not unlawfully discriminate in employment opportunities.

ANGOLA

HUAMBO — In this southern African nation, Christians in the Renovo ministry recently invited their friends, family and neighbors to join them for a dinner celebrating marriage.



Meyer

“Renovo is the name of the network of cell churches that our team launched with our friends and brothers and sisters in Christ,” said Teague Meyer, a member of the Angola Mission Team.

For the dinner, “each couple had an opportunity to share a little about how God has strengthened — and is continuing to strengthen — each marriage,” Meyer said. “Marriages in Angola truly need encouragement and resources in order to develop, grow and thrive. It was our hope that this dinner would be an encouragement for the couples who participated and a way to share the good news that Jesus is the foundation of a strong marriage.”

BRAZIL

SÃO PAULO — “*A Batalha de Todo Homem*” (“The Battle of Every Man,” in Portuguese) was the theme of ENOC 2017, an annual men’s retreat for Brazilian Christians, hosted at a campsite outside São Paulo. About 460 Christians from across Brazil attended the two-day event of prayer, praise, preaching and fellowship, said Larry Zinck, a missionary in Rio de Janeiro.

“We were encouraged to think about our own spiritual growth as well as spreading the Good News of Jesus all over this great nation,” Zinck said. “Everyone left renewed and inspired to take this message back to their home congregations.”

THAILAND

KHON KAEN — About 350 people, representing 40 Churches of Christ in Thailand and neighboring Laos, gathered for the Northeast Bible camp, hosted by the Kum Hai Church of Christ.

Four participants — from north-east and central Thailand — were baptized during the camp, said Kim Voraritskul, a missionary in Khon Kaen.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY CHARLOTTE HACKETT

Christian women in Kenya perform a skit during the annual Jipe Moyo conference.

In Kenya, a dramatic confrontation

NAIROBI, Kenya — One day after he stumbled home drunk and threatened to beat his wife and daughter unless they gave him their savings so he could return to the bar, a Kenyan husband (head bowed, in stocking cap) is confronted by his wife’s prayer group.

Sorrowful, he promises to repent and accompany her to church.

The drama was part of the annual “Jipe Moyo” (Swahili for “take heart”) conference sponsored by the Eastleigh Church of Christ in Nairobi. About 250 women attended, representing 40 Churches of Christ.

In the drama, “the actors played their parts so well, especially the dissolute husband,” said missionary Charlotte Hackett. “We all laughed, but at the same time it was sad to know that this is a scenario all too familiar to many of the women. We pray that God will turn the hearts of husbands and fathers to their wives and children.”



PHOTO PROVIDED

Bert Ritchie, left, and Chris Hewer.

UNITED KINGDOM

COLERAINE — “The ultimate ignorance is rejecting something you know nothing about,” said Bert Ritchie, minister for the Coleraine Church of Christ in Northern Ireland.

In that spirit, Ritchie helped organize a community event titled “Understanding Islam as a Christian.” Chris Hewer, a scholar on Islamic and Christian studies, conducted the day long seminar.

The gathering “showed solidarity between the Islamic and Christian traditions in our town to promote understanding,” Ritchie said. “While recognizing the impasse on crucial theological issues, it does not prevent each faith promoting a common core teaching of peace and love.”

GOT NEWS? Send your mission newsletters, photos and videos to erik@christianchronicle.org.

SPOTLIGHT

Christians, Muslims witness baptisms

MARSEILLE, France — Christians and Muslims — representing nations from across the Mediterranean rim — packed into the meeting place of the Marseille Church of Christ to witness two recent baptisms, said missionary Craig Young.

A young woman, Sabrina (her name changed for security concerns), made the decision to be baptized. Her mother, from Algeria, is a member of the church and her father, from



Young

Tunisia, is Muslim. Both parents come from big families and “Muslim or Christian, they came in large numbers for this event of first importance in Sabrina’s life,” Young said.

Stephan (name also changed), a refugee from Syria, was baptized as well. More than a dozen fellow refugees attended worship to witness Stephan’s baptism. Altogether, the church had more than 50 visitors.

“Sabrina and Stephan gave powerful testimonies to the work of God in their lives,” Young said. “Since many of the refugees, including Stephan’s parents, are still in the long process of learning French, our first reading, by Stephan’s father ... was in Arabic.

“French, Algerian, Tunisian, Syrian, Turkish, Kurdish and Armenian ethnic groups were all present to hear and see the Gospel here. God continues to move mightily!”



PHOTO PROVIDED

Church members in Marseille serve refugees from Aleppo, Syria.

REDEMPTION: 'Trust is a hard thing to rebuild'

FROM PAGE 3

to leave their families and come to the schools from the middle of August to the end of June every year," Harvey said, recounting Canada's 120-year effort at mandatory assimilation. "The point was to force them to learn English and math and remove their language and culture from them."

Since 2003, the Dauphin congregation — often partnering with other churches and community groups — has worked to redeem the former residential school and show a different view of Christianity to aboriginal Canadians.

At the old school site, the Church of Christ operates a housing, food and clothing ministry called Parkland Crossing — a name tied to the Parkland region of Manitoba and a Scripture in Jeremiah where the Lord says, "Stand at the crossroads."

Indigenous people comprise over 80 percent of those helped, said Harvey, Parkland Crossing's full-time administrator.

"This is why we do what we do," he said. "They need to know the love of God and find some level of trust again."

ROOTS OF DISTRUST

Canola farms and two-lane highways surround Dauphin, a commercial hub that boasts a Wal-Mart, a Super 8 motel, a McDonald's and a Tim Hortons coffee and doughnut shop.

In the beginning, church leaders purposely avoided putting up a sign tying the congregation to Parkland Crossing's good works.

As Harvey explained, many people who needed help would not come to a church to get it. Lingering hostility toward organized religion's role in the residential school system — a

dark history for which Canadian leaders have apologized and made monetary reparations in recent years — was just too strong.

"Trust," said Wayne Olson, the Dauphin church's community minister, "is a hard thing to rebuild in people."

Roots of the distrust can be traced all the way back to the 19th century.

Between 1876 and 1996, Canada removed 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children

from their homes and forced them to attend residential schools, according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

The government's religious partners included the Anglican Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Roman Catholic Church, the United Church of Canada and the Jesuits of English Canada.

"Notwithstanding the good intent and care of many who worked in the schools, it is clear that Indian Residential Schools, in policy and

in practice, were an assault on indigenous families, culture, language and spiritual traditions, and that great harm was done," those churches said in a 2015 joint statement. "We continue to acknowledge and regret our part in that legacy."

"Those harmed were children, vulnerable, far from their families and communities," the statement added. "The sexual, physical and emotional abuse they suffered is well documented."

HOW THE JOURNEY BEGAN

After the government shuttered Mackay Residential School in 1988, a high school associated with Churches of Christ bought the facility. Decades later, lettering on the floor of the building's cramped gymnasium still spells out "Western Christian."

The dream of a Christian teacher



MAP VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



SEE MORE FEATURES on Churches of Christ in Canada. Look for "The Church in Canada" under the "Series" tab at www.christianchronicle.org.



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Jamie Harvey, a member of the Dauphin Church of Christ and full-time administrator for Parkland Crossing, shows off items — some with French labels — in the food pantry.

named Lillian Torkelson, Western Christian was founded as a residential high school in 1945 in Radville, Saskatchewan.

The school relocated in 1957 to Weyburn, Saskatchewan, where it educated generations of students before the move to Dauphin. After 15 years in Dauphin, Western Christian moved again — this time to Regina, Saskatchewan, where it remained until declining enrollment and beleaguered finances forced its closing in 2012.

When Western Christian left Dauphin, church members who remained in this Canadian Prairies community grappled with an uncertain future, said Harvey, whose parents both worked at Western Christian.



Olson

After much prayer and discussion, the small congregation decided to buy the old residential school and turn it into a community outreach center — with a mission to "practice relevant Christianity by providing life's basic needs."

"We are not a big group and have not been a big group," said Olson, a former Western Christian

student who managed the school's cafeteria during its time in Dauphin. "I honestly believe that God left the people here that needed to be here to make this happen, and it's been a wonderful journey."

'THAT'S THE PAST. THAT'S DONE'

Church member Vicki Swan coordinates volunteers for Parkland Crossing's clothing store.

Swan relishes the excitement when first-time shoppers discover that all the shirts, pants, dresses, shoes and other items are free.

"I enjoy listening to the kids or the moms be excited about getting whatever they need," she said. "They don't have to pick and choose what they can afford."

Parkland Crossing's housing units include 34 dormitory-style rooms for single adults and 20 apartments with up to four bedrooms each. Rental fees set at affordable rates cover 70 percent of the church-sponsored nonprofit's total budget.

Charlotte Mousseau grew up on the Ebb and Flow First Nation reservation not far from Dauphin. The daughter of a former Indian Residential School student, she has lived at Parkland Crossing for two years.

"They have a lot of resources

here,” said Mousseau, who is diabetic and suffers from neuropathy in her legs. “When I moved out here, I decided to apply to this place because of the low-cost rent, and everything is available to you.



Mousseau “If there is anybody that is ever in trouble — a woman, anybody — there is always hope here,” she said of Parkland Crossing. “I’ve been happy living here. I’ve never had no problems.”

Asked about the facility’s history as a residential school, she replied, “That’s the past. That’s done. Now, it’s just a big rooming house for people to stay.”

But Harvey said church leaders want to do their part to acknowledge the building’s history.

One possibility under consideration: opening an archive room to display writings, documents and pictures from the residential school era.

“We’d create a space,” Harvey said, “where an elder (from a tribe) could come make tea, sit with people and talk about their experiences in the residential school program.”

SECOND CHANCES

For some, the negative emotions linked to the old brick building on the outskirts of Dauphin remain too raw to reconcile.

But Dave, the former student, said he sees Parkland Crossing making a difference — a big one.

As a social worker, he refers recovering addicts, abused wives and other troubled souls to the facility. And he’s regularly amazed, he said, at the fresh starts they make.

“It’s a very small church, and it’s truly inspirational to me,” Dave said of the Dauphin Church of Christ. “They believe in second chances. They just offer to support people. They are changing that (Indian Residential School) image one person and one family at a time.”

It took years, but Dave’s stomach no longer churns when he approaches the entrance.

“Now, I almost get excited going there,” he said. “Do I think they’ve changed it? Yeah, they truly have changed it. It’s almost hard to explain.”

Chasing stories – and making precious memories – north of the U.S. border

TORONTO

‘A six-hour layover, eh?” I posted that wisecrack on Facebook as my 17-year-old daughter, Kendall, and I awaited a connecting flight.

It was early afternoon on a snowy, late winter day at Toronto Pearson International Airport. My youngest child and I were in the middle of a four-city, 20-hour travel adventure that was part work and part something deeper.

The work part is easy to explain: I was chasing stories — as I love to do — for *The Christian Chronicle*.

The something deeper part requires more explanation: I was trying — as much as possible — to create memories that will sustain me (and keep the tears from overwhelming me) as my baby bird grows up and flies away.

In just a few months, this intelligent young woman — who is every bit as sassy, charming and fun to be around as her mother and every bit as driven, argumentative and (sometimes) insecure as her father — is leaving home. She’s decided to attend Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif.

I couldn’t be more proud of her. She studied hard, made top grades and was honored as one of her high school’s valedictorians. She joined our home congregation, the Edmond Church of Christ in Oklahoma, on mission trips to Mexico, Nicaragua, Utah and Colorado. She starred in school plays and excelled in debate. She taught herself to knit and worked at a yarn store. In fact, she made me a black cap for this trip.

She plans to major in political science and history and then, at some point, become president of the United States.

In my mind, though, she’s still the little girl with a red hair bow who would stand by the bathroom

door and watch me shave. She’d see the white cream on my cheeks and pretend I was Santa Claus. “Daddy, will you buy me a present?” she loved to ask.

In my mind, she’s still the little girl who donned a football helmet, cradled her stuffed monkey in her arms and sought cover in our bathtub as tornado sirens blared.

In my mind, she’s still the little girl who cheered wildly as my beloved Texas Rangers staged a late-inning, come-from-behind victory, then asked hours after we left the ballpark, “Did we win, Daddy?”

But as we passed time at the Toronto airport, she looked so grown up — a teenage version of her mother — as she watched Netflix on her computer and nibbled a pastry from Tim Hortons, Canada’s famous chain of coffee shops. When she noticed me staring at her, she pulled out her earphones.

“What?” she asked. “Nothing,” I responded.

When Kendall found out I was headed to Canada on business, she volunteered (read: begged) to accompany me. “This can be my senior trip,” she said with a pouty face. How could I say no to that face? With my wife’s permission, I dug into our personal funds for bargain airfare.

The good news: I found it. The bad news: It required leaving the house at 3:30 a.m. that day — 3:30 a.m.! — to drive to the Oklahoma City airport.

We flew to Dallas and then to Toronto, arriving at 10 a.m. Oklahoma time. Yet our day was

just getting started: We still had to fly halfway across Canada — to Winnipeg, Manitoba — and then drive another three hours to the small farming community of Dauphin.

Short version of the rest of our day: Despite our hunger as we left the Winnipeg airport, we passed up a McDonald’s we saw. We decided to eat somewhere better later. As it turned out, we spotted a bunch of snowy fields and cattle grazing along rural Manitoba’s two-lane farm highways. But somewhere to eat? Not so much.

Finally, at 11:30 p.m., we made it to Dauphin and drove toward our Super 8 motel. And we spotted heaven on earth — the Golden Arches.

Starving and exhausted, we both laughed giddily. Who could have guessed that one of our precious memories from this trip would involve Chicken McNuggets?

Before writing this, I asked Kendall to jot down a few thoughts. Her recollections illustrate — in so many ways — what I love so much about this girl. I mean, this *woman*.

“We only had six hours to sit at the Toronto airport,” she noted. “This may seem long for some people, but as someone who loves to discover the true culture and customs of Canadian airports, six hours was just not enough.”

Um, *what!?* “Just kidding,” she added. “That was the longest six hours of my life. I watched a Canadian family fight

over Tim Hortons doughnuts, and it was the highlight of my time.”

That’s more like it, my dear child. I love you and will miss you more than you’ll ever know. I’d say something mushier, but it’s not your style. Or mine.

Road Notes



Bobby Ross Jr.



ERICK GFELLER

Kendall Ross celebrates her graduation from high school.



In Cúcuta, Colombia, a recently completed checkpoint into Venezuela is closed. Border guards have limited access in and out of the troubled South American nation.



Carrying small bags filled with food and medicine, Venezuelans walk across the Tachira River from Cúcuta, Colombia, to San Antonio del Tachira, Venezuela.

RESCUE: God placed team *'en este momento'*

FROM PAGE 1

of Great Cities, worship with the congregation — after spending the week-end helping to launch the relief work.

Milton Castillo, a 27-year-old Christian from La Ceiba, Honduras, leads a cappella Spanish hymns, including *"Te Exaltaré mi Dios, mi Rey"* ("I will Exalt You, my God, my King").

It's a new experience for Fray, a thin, 38-year-old Venezuelan with slightly sunken cheeks, and Ingrid, a bespectacled 34-year-old with hair pulled into a simple ponytail. The couple didn't grow up in Churches of Christ and only recently started attending.

For Monica Sabino, a native of Cúcuta and member of the church-planting team, the couple is one key reason God has placed them here *"en este momento"* ("at this time").

"I want our Venezuelan brothers to know that, in the midst of this difficult situation, there is a God of love and mercy," she says.

As the new church helps ease the Venezuelans' physical needs, she hopes they can show those suffering across the border "that they are supported, that they are not alone, that we also hurt for what they are enduring."

'LITTLE BY LITTLE, LESS AND LESS'

After worship, four Venezuelans meet in an upstairs children's classroom to talk about their country's plight. Squatting in tiny chairs



MAPS VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

meant for younger bodies, they talk about the man-made crisis that grips their beloved homeland. They're mournful — and angry, very angry — about what's happening. And they're worried about their families.

"We're not producing anything anymore. There's no money. We're desperate," says Maritza, whose son, Ronald Sabino, is on the church-planting team. "We don't know what to do."

She travels by bus — a journey of nearly 24 hours — from Cúcuta to her home in Venezuela, where her daughter and grandchildren live. After one such journey she burst into tears when she saw her daughter, skinny and emaciated from giving what little food she could afford to her children.

About 15 years ago, President Hugo Chavez and his United Socialist Party launched its Bolivarian Revolution, invoking the name of the

19th century revolutionary Simon Bolivar, seen as a liberator across Latin America. Chavez strengthened government control of Venezuela's oil industry and implemented social programs to expand access to healthcare and education. He formed partnerships with Cuba and socialist-leaning governments in the region.

It seemed like "a plan that was very good and very practical," says Luis, a tall, slender Venezuelan who was baptized 40 years ago and worships with a Church of Christ in the capital, Caracas. The government helped the poor and took care of abandoned children, he says.

Then oil revenues declined, "and we started seeing a scarcity of products," Luis says, "little by little, less and less."

Chavez died from cancer in 2013, and Nicolás Maduro became president. Since then, the crisis has deepened. The country suffers from inflation and shortages of medicine. Infant mortality rose 30 percent last year, and maternal mortality jumped 65 percent, according to Venezuela's health ministry. Illnesses including diphtheria and malaria — all but eradicated in Venezuela — have returned.

"If you just want to buy flour or bread, you basically have to get in line for two days," Ingrid says. "You have to leave your national ID number just to wait in line, and the next day you're just hoping there will be something. Sometimes they

put your number in a bag, and if they pick your number you can buy something, but not necessarily."

In line, Venezuelans face harassment by *"collectivos"* who threaten to hurt those who refuse to give up their place in line. The *collectivos* buy the bread and sell it for inflated prices on the black market.

The crisis has driven away Venezuela's physicians, says Fray, who once worked for a medical software company. When his clients left, he lost his job — and once went for 15 days without food.

He pulls two photo IDs from his wallet, taken about 18 months apart. His cheeks are full in one and sunken — much like now — in the other. He's lost 17 kilos (about 37 pounds) since his business dissolved, he says.

In Venezuela, college professors and executives have become scavengers, Fray says. They roam farmers' markets and shopping malls in hopes of finding discarded food.

Reluctantly, "I took off my tie" and joined them, he says. At one fast-food restaurant, he found a cup of soup that a patron hadn't finished.

"I made it last for three days," he says.

CROSSING THE BORDER

After lunch, as the mission team's wives take their children home for naps, the men — Abel Gonzalez, Luis Vielman, Milton Castillo and Ronald Sabino — take their guests



Milton Castillo leads Sunday worship as Ronald Sabino waits to greet latecomers.

from Great Cities Missions to the Colombian border. It's a simple bridge that crosses the river, connecting Cúcuta to the town of San Antonio del Tachira in Venezuela.

As storm clouds darken the afternoon sky, pedestrians walk in near silence, heads bowed, across the bridge. Most leaving for Venezuela carry two satchels apiece, each stuffed with food and medicine. Customs agents stop and search anyone carrying anything larger. They don't want products bought in Colombia to be resold on the black market.

Those walking the other way — from Venezuela into Colombia — carry almost nothing.

Sabino says he and his wife used to drive across the bridge to buy baby formula at a discount in San Antonio. That was five years ago, when he worked with a Church of Christ in Ocaña, Colombia, about four hours away.

Back then, "it was like one big city," he says. Borders almost didn't matter.

Now the Colombian government restricts the bridge to foot traffic. Venezuelans enter on 90-day tourist visas, though some, including Fray and Ingrid, get permission to stay longer.

Those who can't pay for places to stay in Cúcuta camp in the city's shopping centers — in front of signs for Reebok shoes and designer clothes.



In the Cúcuta church building's basement, Luis Vielman puts together the first care package of food that he and his coworkers will distribute to Venezuelan visitors.

The economic crisis also has hurt Cúcuta, which thrived on commerce when the Venezuelan bolivar was strong against the Colombian peso. Now, signs reading "SE VENDE" (for sale) and "SE ARRIENDA" (for rent) appear in windows across town.

The church-planting team got a good deal on its meeting place, rented from a local artist. The building includes a basement full of shelves, intended for handcrafted works that the Venezuelan visitors can no longer afford.

The young Christians are filling those shelves with rice, flour, toiletries — and baby formula. Great Cities Missions has reached out to Churches of Christ in the U.S. and the church-supported nonprofit Healing

Hands International for assistance.

The team never intended for their church plant to be a rescue mission — especially this early, Gonzalez says.

But they did promise to "reflect the love of God, to reach souls for Christ," he says, quoting the team's mission statement. Their vision: "To have an impact on the city of Cúcuta through the Gospel."

They've made contact with about 30 Churches of Christ in Venezuela, assessing needs and offering them what they have. It's a daunting task.

"We can just do a little part," Gonzalez says. "But that's what we can do right now."

NO COINCIDENCE

After Fray and Ingrid, the Venezuelan couple, share their stories in the children's classroom, Luis Vielman guides them downstairs to the basement and presents them with the church's first care package of food.

Ingrid first learned of the new church through Monica Sabino, who was handing out homemade empanadas — meat-filled pastries — on the street. The church planter told Ingrid about the new work and gave her some Christian literature.

Ingrid later talked to her father back in Venezuela and learned that he had just met some members of a Church of Christ there — and received the same literature.

"No es una casualidad. Es una causa," she says, making a play on words in Spanish meaning, "It's not a coincidence. It's a cause."

"God is helping the Venezuelan people through the Church of Christ," she adds. "Everything is done for a reason."

She and Fray recently decided to be baptized — and to be officially married. Both will happen during the church's inaugural service — Ingrid's physical and soon-to-be spiritual birthday.

She hopes her father can attend.

"It's something I want to do," she says of baptism, "to be a part of the kingdom of God."

Her husband says he's been angry for a long time — and went through a period when he didn't believe in God.

Now, he says, "my faith has been renovated."

TRANSLATIONS: Kelley Grant, Lynda Sheehan

TEAM CÚCUTA



Luis and Susan Vielman

Both converted in Guatemala, the Vielmans married in 2010 and enrolled at the Baxter Institute "to dedicate ourselves fully to the work of the Lord," Susan Vielman says. They have one son, Isaiah.



José Abel Gonzalez

A native of El Salvador, Gonzalez grew up in a Christian family and served as a minister in the town of Ilopanga before he attended Baxter.



Ronald and Monica Sabino

Born in Venezuela, Ronald Sabino and his family were baptized after studying with minister Dennis Ruiz. He met Monica, a native of Colombia, online. They have two sons, Ronald Jr. and José.



Milton and Martha Castillo

Milton Castillo grew up in Honduras and served as a youth leader for the La Ceiba Church of Christ. There he met Martha, a children's Bible class teacher. They have one daughter, Emely.

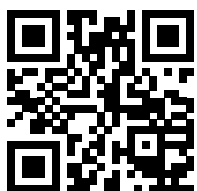


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A preacher president

IN NAMING A MINISTER to its top post, Freed-Hardeman University emphasizes spiritual leadership.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

When trustees of Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn., first identified preacher David Shannon as a candidate for the Christian university's presidency, a key alumnus voiced concern about Shannon's lack of academic credentials and higher education experience.

That alumnus: Shannon himself.

"I didn't want to do anything that would show disrespect to the university or to the academic community that is so strong here," said Shannon, who has served for 18 years as minister for the Mt. Juliet Church of Christ, a growing congregation 20 miles east of Nashville.

"It wasn't a quick process for me to overcome," the 1989 Bible graduate told *The Christian Chronicle*. "After the first meeting, I told them I would have to think about it. ... My wife (Tracie) and I prayed over and over about this, and never once did we pray for it."

But eventually, the couple came to the same conclusion: God was leading them to return to their alma mater.

"We finally just reached a point where we said to each other and (to God) in our prayers, 'If this is what you want, we'll do it, but your will be done,'" said David Shannon, who traces his Freed-Hardeman roots to the mid-1980s, when former President E. Claude Gardner walked into a Centerville, Tenn.-area sawmill and recruited him.

Freed-Hardeman, which is associated with Churches of Christ, has 1,900 students from 33 states and 20 countries. It offers bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees and is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges



BOBBY ROSS JR.

David Shannon greets Barbara Scott at the Mt. Juliet Church of Christ in Tennessee in 2011. Scott had been baptized the previous Sunday.

and Schools, known as SACS.

However, as Freed-Hardeman's trustees searched for current President Joe Wiley's successor, they weren't worried about Shannon's absence of a master's degree from an accredited university — much less a doctorate — or his unfamiliarity with the inner workings of Christian higher education.

They were more interested in his spiritual leadership, his communications skills and his close ties with — and affection for — both Freed-Hardeman and its faith

heritage, board Chairman John Law said.

"The present situation at Freed-Hardeman is that we're blessed with solid academic leadership and stability, from the (administrative) cabinet all the way to our faculty," said Law, an elder of the West Seventh Street Church of Christ in Columbia, Tenn.

Law, a chief operating officer for Tennessee Farmers Insurance Companies, said the university has benefited academically from nine years with Wiley at the helm.

Wiley, who will retire this summer,

earned a Ph.D. in mathematics. He came to Freed-Hardeman with 34 years of higher education experience but had no background — as a student or administrator — with a Christian university.

"In addition to the academic improvement, his tenure will be marked by increased financial stability and an improved physical campus," Law said.

That academic and financial stability will allow Shannon to focus on other pressing needs, the board chairman said.

"Never has there been a time, in our board's opinion, in which the keys to success in a very challenging Christian higher education environment revolve more around relationship building, fundraising, recruiting of new students and church relationships," Law said. "All of those demands today are higher than ever, and David Shannon is the person that the board believes can fill that role."

The trustees selected Shannon as Freed-Hardeman's 16th president at a recent meeting. The minister said he did post-graduate studies in church growth and leadership, but not at an accredited institution. "It was very helpful," he said of that coursework.

DWINDLING POOL OF STUDENTS

For Freed-Hardeman and its sister universities, the pool of potential students from Churches of Christ has declined along with overall membership in the nation's 12,240 congregations.

Nationwide, the total number of men, women and children in the pews has fallen to 1,510,490 — down 8 percent from 1,645,645 just since 2000, according to "Churches of Christ in the United States," a national directory published by 21st Century Christian.

CONTINUED

‘One of the toughest jobs there is’

CONTINUED

The decline is even more dramatic in terms of freshmen who identify as members of Churches of Christ and choose to attend one of 14 accredited universities — including Freed-Hardeman — that are associated with the fellowship, said Trace Hebert, a higher education researcher at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn.

In 2000, 4,411 freshmen from Churches of Christ enrolled in an associated university, an annual survey by Hebert found. In 2016, that number stood at 2,405 — a 46 percent decline. Christian university presidents supply the data to Hebert on the condition that he can release aggregate figures but not individual institutions’ numbers.

Freed-Hardeman and Harding University in Searcy, Ark., have “performed better than most” sister institutions in recruiting students from Churches of Christ, Hebert said. Together, they accounted for 41 percent of all freshmen from Churches of Christ who enrolled at the associated institutions in 2016.

However, Hebert stressed that “the downward trends have impacted them as well.” Between the two, freshman enrollment from Churches of Christ has fallen nearly 10 percent in the



JUD DAVIS, FREED-HARDEMAN UNIVERSITY

Austen Oakley, Faculty Scholarship-Leadership Medal recipient, leads a prayer during the spring 2016 commencement address at Freed-Hardeman.

last five years, he reported. Total enrollment at Freed-Hardeman rose 4.3 percent this past fall, “which we were excited about,” Law said. “While our enrollment has been flat for several years, we have witnessed similar liberal arts universities shrink during the same time period or even close,” he added. Another Lipscomb scholar, Richard Hughes, who has spent 40 years studying religion and culture, noted that many

Christian universities years ago abandoned the practice of hiring academics as president. “Instead, the trend in our fellowship is to hire lawyers,” Hughes said, suggesting that “the chief job of presidents these days is fundraising and public relations.” Among current presidents with law backgrounds: Andrew Benton of Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif.; John deSteiguer of Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City; Randy Lowry of Lipscomb;

and Tim Perrin of Lubbock Christian University in Texas. **NOT THE FIRST MINISTER CHOSEN** While Shannon’s lack of a terminal degree makes him an unconventional choice, he is far from the first minister chosen to lead a university associated with Churches of Christ. In recent times:

- Rubel Shelly, who spent 27 years as pulpit minister for the Woodmont Hills Church of Christ in Nashville, served as president at Rochester College in Michigan.
- Harold Shank, who served the Highland Church of Christ in Memphis, Tenn., for 32 years, accepted the presidency at Ohio Valley University in West Virginia.
- And Bruce McLarty, whose quarter-century of full-time ministry included 14 years preaching for the College Church of Christ in Searcy, was hired as president at Harding.

All of those ministers, however, had advanced degrees and at least some higher education experience. Accrediting standards by SACS require “qualified administrative and academic officers with the experience and competence to lead the institution.” No standard speaks specifically to the office of president, and SACS spokeswoman Pamela Cravey said the accrediting agency would not take a stand on any president or his credentials. “We do have significant historical precedent among our institutions to

**Phil Schubert**
President of Abilene Christian University in Texas since 2010.
Received a bachelor’s degree from ACU, a Master of Business Administration degree from Duke University and a doctorate in higher education management from the University of Pennsylvania.

**Ken Hoppe**
President of Crowley’s Ridge College in Paragould, Ark., since 2003.
Received an associate’s degree from Crowley’s Ridge and a bachelor’s degree in business from Arkansas State University.

**Mike Williams**
President of Faulkner University in Montgomery, Ala., since 2015.
Received a bachelor’s degree and a Master of Business Administration degree from Harding and a doctorate in education from the University of Pennsylvania.

**H.E. “Buddy” Payne**
President of Florida College in Temple Terrace, Fla., since 2009.
Received a bachelor’s degree from Florida State, a master’s degree in science education from Harvard and a Ph.D. in mathematics education from the University of South Florida.

**David Shannon**
Newly named president of Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn.
Received a bachelor’s degree from Freed-Hardeman and pursued graduate studies in church growth and leadership but not through an accredited institution.

hire candidates who have been noted ministers from Churches of Christ,” said Hebert, associate dean of Lipscomb’s College of Education. “I would also confidently say this practice has yielded mixed results when it comes to their preparedness and effectiveness. “The higher education environment in this country has become extraordinarily complex, and effective educational leadership requires a tremendous amount of insight into that environment,” he added. “Leading a private, faith-based institution is one of the toughest jobs there is in this country, and ineffective leadership can prove to be very costly for an institution.”

Hebert said he prays that God will use Shannon “mightily” at Freed-Hardeman.

‘HIS HEART BEATS’ FOR FHU
In contemplating the Freed-Hardeman position, Shannon said he talked with two presidents of Christian universities, including Harding’s McLarty. In an interview with the *Chronicle*, McLarty said he told Shannon that serving as Freed-



PHOTO PROVIDED BY HARDING UNIVERSITY

On a chilly morning last year, Harding University President Bruce McLarty takes a cold dip in a campus fountain to support Special Olympics.

Hardeman president would be a challenge and that the question of Shannon’s academic credentials would be raised. “The thing that I shared with him was there’s no one road into the presidency, and there’s no single academic road into the presidency either,” said McLarty, who earned his doctorate while serving as Harding’s vice president for spiritual life before becoming president four years ago. “I encouraged him along the lines of being a person who

can articulate the mission and draw the Freed-Hardeman family around that mission.” Two of the Shannons’ four children — and their spouses — attended Freed-Hardeman, while their youngest daughter chose Harding. “Another thing David brings to the table for Freed-Hardeman is: I think his heart beats for the heritage, history and passion of Freed-Hardeman,” McLarty said. “He’s someone who’s experienced Freed-Hardeman as a student, as

a parent, as a preacher ... and I think he will enjoy having a place at the table as he shapes the future of Freed-Hardeman.”

MARKETING THAT’S HARD TO BUY
Among many Freed-Hardeman alumni and supporters, Shannon’s appointment has sparked excitement. “God doesn’t need degrees. He needs open and willing hearts,” said Paula Harrington, a Christian writer and member of the Lone Oak Church of Christ in Paducah, Ky. “I’m sure he’ll bring his compassion, wisdom and love for God and others to his office as president,” Harrington said of Shannon. “I’m excited to see what God is doing at FHU.” Daniel Courington, a 2006 social work graduate of Freed-Hardeman, preaches for the Palisades Church of Christ in Birmingham, Ala. “I believe David’s speaking ability will be a huge recruiting asset



Harrington

for the school,” said Courington, who serves on the board of the Exposure Youth Camp, where Shannon regularly speaks. “He’s in front of thousands of high schoolers that Christian universities target every year. That’s marketing that is hard to buy. It’s something most Ph.D.s don’t have.” At Freed-Hardeman, Ryan Fraser, an associate professor of clinical mental health counseling, said he has not heard a single negative word about Shannon. “I think there’s a hope and energy on campus,” said Fraser, who is also a minister and elder of the Bethel Springs Church of Christ. “David brings a lot of excitement. He’s an inspirational person. He’s got a magnificent personality, and I think folks really connect to him as a real disciple of Christ. He’s the type of leader you want to follow, because you like him.” For his part, Shannon said he’s humbled by the chance to lead his alma mater. “I want and need people’s prayers,” he said. “I want to glorify God in what I do, and I want Freed-Hardeman to continue to exist for the same reason.”

**Bruce McLarty**
President of Harding University in Searcy, Ark., since 2013.
Received a bachelor’s degree from Harding, a Master of Theology degree from Harding School of Theology and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Ashland Theological Seminary.

**Randy Lowry**
President of Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn., since 2005.
Received a bachelor’s degree in political science and a master’s degree in public administration from Pepperdine and a Doctor of Jurisprudence degree from the Pepperdine School of Law.

**Tim Perrin**
President of Lubbock Christian University in Texas since 2012.
Received a bachelor’s degree from Lubbock Christian University and a Doctor of Jurisprudence degree from the Texas Tech University School of Law.

**Harold Shank**
President of Ohio Valley University in Vienna, W.Va., since 2011.
Received a bachelor’s degree from Oklahoma Christian, two master’s degrees from Harding School of Theology and a Ph.D. in theology from Marquette University.

**John deSteiguer**
President of Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City since 2012.
Received his bachelor’s degree from Northeastern State University in Oklahoma and a Doctor of Jurisprudence degree from the Pepperdine School of Law.

**Andrew Benton**
President of Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif., since 2000.
Received a bachelor’s degree from Oklahoma Christian and a Doctor of Jurisprudence degree from the Oklahoma City University School of Law.

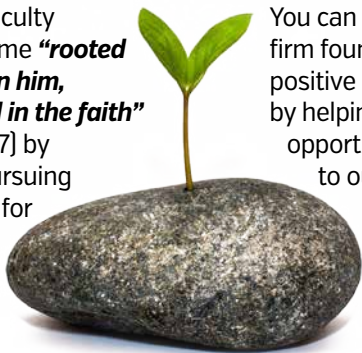
**Brian Stogner**
President of Rochester College in Rochester Hills, Mich., since 2017.
Received a bachelor’s degree from the University of Michigan, a master’s degree from Wayne State University and a Ph.D. from Wayne State.

**Ervin Seamster Jr.**
President of Southwestern Christian College in Terrell, Texas, since 2017.
Received a bachelor’s degree from Southwestern, a Master of Divinity degree from Southern Methodist and a Doctor of Ministry degree from United Theological Seminary.

**Steve Eckman**
President of York College in Nebraska since 2009.
Received a bachelor’s degree from Lubbock Christian, a master’s degree in biblical studies and a Master of Divinity degree from Abilene Christian and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Amridge University.

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Jack Evans, left, served as president of Southwestern Christian College for nearly 50 years. His successor, Ervin Seamster Jr., assumed the top post in January.



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Southwestern names first new president in 50 years

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

After nearly half a century with Jack Evans at the helm, Southwestern Christian College — the only historically black higher education institution associated with Churches of Christ — has a new president.

Ervin D. Seamster Jr., senior minister for the 450-member Light of the World Church of Christ in Dallas, assumed the top post at the Terrell, Texas, college in January.

“I would pray that all of our brethren across racial and cultural lines would join in with us to save Southwestern,” Seamster told *The Christian Chronicle*.

In recent years, beleaguered finances and declining enrollment — which the new president said had fallen to just 43 students before he arrived — have threatened the college’s future.

“Our goal is just to bring it back to its national prominence ... especially among members of African-American Churches of Christ,” Seamster said. “We mostly train the young men that go into our pulpits. Also, elders, deacons and worship leaders — we are the training ground for that.”

Southwestern has a vital role to play in preparing students coming out of low-performing school systems to

continue their educations at sister institutions associated with Churches of Christ, the new president said.

Seamster is a Southwestern alumnus who for nearly two decades has used an event called the Fab Five Revival to raise funds to support students.

From 1999 to 2002, he served as a special assistant at Abilene Christian University in Texas to the former president, Royce Money.

Besides his Bachelor of Science degree from Southwestern, Seamster holds a Master of Divinity degree from the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas and a Doctor of Ministry degree from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio.

Originally known as the Southern Bible Institute in Fort Worth, Texas, Southwestern Christian College moved to Terrell — 30 miles east of Dallas — in 1949.

Evans had served as president since 1967, after four years as academic dean. He helped Southwestern obtain its full accreditation as a two-year junior college in 1973. In 1982, the college began awarding four-year bachelor’s degrees in Bible and religious education.

EXPANDED INTERVIEW: www.christianchronicle.org

Ministry featured in Charles Barkley’s ‘American Race’

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Welcome to the Corners Outreach homework club, Sir Charles Barkley. Barkley, the NBA analyst and Hall of Fame player, recently embarked on a televised exploration of race in America in a four-part documentary series on TNT.

In the final installment, Barkley’s “American Race” featured the Atlanta-area Corners Church of Christ and a nonprofit that the church supports called Corners Outreach. The episode, which aired originally on a Friday night, can be viewed online via TNT on demand.

In a 2014 front-page feature, *The Christian Chronicle* highlighted Corners Outreach and its work in a predominantly Hispanic trailer park in Norcross, Ga.

The ministry grew out of a partnership between the Corners church and a public school with a fast-growing Hispanic population.

While in Atlanta to delve into the U.S. immigration debate, Barkley



Charles Barkley visits the Corners Outreach homework club ministry in Norcross, Ga.

introduced viewers to church elder Larry Campbell, who serves as board chairman for Corners Outreach.

Barkley told the TV audience that Campbell has his detractors.

“He’s helping illegal immigrants find jobs, and he’s also helping their kids with a homework club,” the retired basketball star said.

“What motivates you?” Barkley asked Campbell after greeting children at the homework club.

“These kids,” Campbell replied.

Four million U.S. children have one or two parents who are undocumented immigrants, Campbell told Barkley.

“The parents are scared,” the church elder said. “They have no one they can trust, and they are

doing jobs no one else wants to do for very, very low wages. They’re working sometimes two-and-a-half jobs just to survive. And I would think that that work ethic is something we should celebrate.”

Taylor Hammett, the Corners church’s lead minister, said the 200-member congregation welcomed the opportunity to show how God is using it to make a difference.

“We know immigration can be a divisive issue — especially in the current political climate,” Hammett told the *Chronicle*. “But we believe Jesus is inviting us, through stories like the Good Samaritan, to love our neighbors — even if at great cost. In the end, it’s not about immigration to us, but about loving our neighbors in this city.”

Terry Davis, who served as Corners Outreach’s director at the time of the previous *Chronicle* story, now leads an outreach project called Destination-Monroe in partnership with the White’s Ferry Road Church of Christ in West Monroe, La.

ANCIENT SCRIPTURE

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Dave and DeAnna Harvill

Born and raised in Springfield, Mo., Dave Harvill met his future wife, DeAnna, while working at the Elpyco Church of Christ in DeAnna's hometown of Wichita, Kan.

The couple, married for 58 years, attended Central Christian College, now Oklahoma Christian University, during its final year in Bartlesville, Okla. Dave Harvill played basketball for the school and DeAnna Harvill worked for professor Bailey McBride, now The Christian Chronicle's editor emeritus.

Three of their sons graduated from Oklahoma Christian and two grandchildren currently attend the university.

Dave Harvill spent 37 years working as a salesman, manager and consultant for Johnson & Johnson, while DeAnna Harvill worked as an administrative assistant and trainer for one of the company's subsidiaries, Ethicon.

The couple has traveled across the country but remained involved in church each place they lived. Dave Harvill served as an elder for more than 20 years. DeAnna Harvill taught children, teen girls and women's Bible classes. She also taught how to

minister to others as part of Stephen Ministries.

The Harvills now worship with a congregation in Farmington Hills, Mich. They have supported the Chronicle for 26 years.

When did your connection with the Chronicle begin?

DeAnna: We learned about the Chronicle through Oklahoma Christian College. We were delighted to find a paper that reported on different congregations throughout the world, since we had lived in several states and were exposed to various world ministries. We appreciate how the Chronicle addresses sensitive and moral issues fairly. Our favorite feature is Dr. McBride's monthly Insight column.

Why have you chosen to donate for 26 years?

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The Christian Chronicle earns top honors for print, online

CHICAGO — In a city known for three-peats, *The Christian Chronicle* earned top honors for the third consecutive year in the "Best of the Church Press" contest sponsored by the Associated Church Press.

The Chronicle received the first-place Award of Excellence in the "Best in Class" category for national and international newspapers.

"The Christian Chronicle is consistently well planned, written, edited and produced," one judge commented. "The stories are compelling, the art is professional and the headlines clear and tight."

The Anglican Journal received the second-place Award of Merit, and the Episcopal Journal claimed honorable mention. Winners were announced April 28 at the ACP's national convention in Chicago.

The Chronicle — an Oklahoma City-based international newspaper for Churches of Christ with 260,000 monthly print readers — received 14 awards for content published in 2016. Since 2007, the newspaper has won 87 national ACP awards and has been recognized in the Best in Class contest for 11 consecutive years. This is the fifth time the Chronicle received first-place honors in the category, winning previously in 2009, 2013, 2015 and 2016.

Named on the Best in Class citation were Lynn McMillon, president/CEO; Erik Tryggstad, editor; Bobby Ross Jr., chief correspondent; Chellie Ison, digital news editor; Tonya Patton, advertising manager; Lynda Sheehan, administrative assistant; Joy McMillon, administrative assistant; Melinda Wilson, administrative assistant; Louise Beyer, staff account-

ant; Bailey McBride, editor emeritus; and Katie Jones, intern.

The Chronicle earned a first place Award of Excellence in the newly created category of electronic newsletter for its twice-monthly list of online offerings, produced by Ison and Patton. Other first-place awards include:

- **Feature article:** "Maid in Hong Kong" by Erik Tryggstad — a profile of an Asian congregation that has created a community of faith for domestic workers from the Philippines.
- **News story:** "In the GOP primaries, do politics Trump values and character?" by Bobby Ross Jr. — an in-depth look at faith-based primary voters during the tumultuous 2016 U.S. elections.
- **Convention/meeting coverage:** "Angkor of Faith: Coverage of a youth conference and mission trip in Cambodia" by Erik Tryggstad — feature stories, a personal column and quotes from a gathering of Christian youths across Southeast Asia.

Second-place awards honored Ross' feature "Young man with autism has a heart for homeless," Tryggstad's news story about the effects of Zika on mission work, Ross' in-depth coverage of the 2016 Orlando massacre, the Chronicle's ongoing "From the East" series and Tryggstad's page design for a six-day tour of Israel.

Third-place awards included Ross' reports on a Canadian church serving Syrian refugees and churches helping victims of the Flint, Mich., water crisis; in-depth coverage of police shootings, racial unrest and churches' response; and newspaper design for the February 2016 print issue.



The Christian Chronicle's twice-monthly newsletter goes to 27,000 email addresses. Sign up at www.christianchronicle.org/#newsletter to receive the latest headlines.

CHRISTIANS MUST COMBAT *a self-absorbed culture and refrain from elevating politics to theology, say Gabe Lyons and David Kinnaman*

Don't find yourself — let God find you

BY LYNN McMILLON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

The vast range of media — from news sites to Comedy Central, late-night talk shows and YouTube videos — can paint realities for us about our political leaders and the very nature of truth.

So say church researchers David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, authors of “unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity ... and Why It Matters” and, more recently, “Good Faith: Being a Christian When Society Thinks You’re Irrelevant and Extreme.”

In part two of our discussion, the authors give more details from their research, including the difficult task of ministering in an “I” world and offer suggestions for parents as they help their children navigate the complex landscape of social media. They also address how online political discussions threaten to divide believers.

Kinnaman is president of the Barna Group, a Ventura, Calif.-based market research firm specializing in the religious beliefs and behavior of Americans. Lyons is founder of Q Ideas (www.qideas.org) — a learning community that urges Christians to advance the common good in society.

You’ve mentioned a “discipleship crisis” in churches. How do we address that?

Kinnaman: There is no simple answer. If you sign up to be a preacher today, you are signing up to address this zeitgeist. The god of the age is about self — about finding yourself in the pages of Scripture rather than God finding you in his story.

So many messages in our culture, television and movies — and some of the most heroic stories that we all love today — seem to follow this pattern used to discover who you are by looking really deeply inside. It has become counter-cultural to show people that trying to find yourself in this way leads to a dead end.



LYNN McMILLON

Modeling faith when society thinks you’re irrelevant: See part one of our interview with David Kinnaman, left, and Gabe Lyons at www.christianchronicle.org.

To do ministry, you have to constantly combat this sort of spirit of the age.

Do you think that social media amplifies that problem?

Lyons: Yes, no question about it. We are kind of living in the “I” world. Even our brands suggest that we individually are the most important thing going — not the community. Social media give more and more platforms to individuals who don’t have the credibility, the years of study and understanding of topics and issues that others do. Yet these uninformed individuals immediately weigh in on any number of critical issues.

Whom are we going to let speak into our lives? Whom are we going to trust to help us think about a certain topic?”

There obviously are benefits to everybody having a voice — not just those in powerful positions — but the downside is that the information is now flattened, and it’s very difficult for people to decipher and discern what’s true, what’s not true.

We focus so much on the internal, saying, “You can know truth by what you feel and by your experiences. You don’t need to really line it up with a bunch of other experiences.” Our whole culture is dealing with this. Our neighbors are dealing with these same problems and questions, and there’s an opportunity for the church to show up in these moments.

What do you suggest to parents as they try to guide their children through this maze?

Lyons: We are both parents of teenagers, so we are right there.

I think an openness to conversation is critical. Listen and learn. I need to do that with my 11-year-old who has questions about God and about faith — really good questions that challenge me to say, “Hey, let’s go

back and look at that together.”

Parents should find the humility to say, “Maybe you *did* hear me say that, and maybe I shouldn’t have said it that way,” or “I didn’t take the time to walk you through how I came to that conclusion.”

As parents, we tend to give our kids the conclusion that we’ve come to — from thinking about it, or from our parents or our church or however we’ve learned it — without really giving them the process. I find that children today are a lot more sophisticated than we were. When we take the time to walk them through the process, we actually are honoring them, we’re honoring the image of God in them, we’re honoring their intellect. We’re telling them, “You *can* be a Christian and think. Don’t just accept this answer. Let’s walk through the conclusion if we take the other path.”

And that takes time. The days of just taking your kids to a Christian school — or to church or to a Christian college — and thinking that’s going to help them be disciples, ready for the world, are not the days we’re in.

Kinnaman: With my teen girls and 12-year-old son, the relationship is the most important thing to keep going. That doesn’t mean I ever sacrifice

being a truth-teller to them, but I have had to learn to live with more empathy.

I am a professional wisdom dispenser. I constantly have these little observations about the research we do

or these little ideas about ministry. I’ve had to really dial that back and not just say, “Hey guys, here’s exactly how you should think about this.”

See **LET GOD**, Page 24

‘The days of just taking your kid to a Christian school — or to church or to a Christian college — and thinking that’s going to help them be disciples, ready for the world, are not the days we’re in.’

Gabe Lyons, author, founder of Q Ideas

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ferred with evidence of three to five years in a managerial position
with increasing responsibilities in academic administration. Respon-
sibilities include mentoring, developing and evaluating faculty in
the areas of teaching, scholarship and service; establishing faculty
workloads; teaching in selected courses; evaluating and guiding the
department's research program; setting, evaluating and achieving
department goals and objectives; and maintaining an innovative
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individuals with disabilities and veterans are encouraged to apply.

LET GOD: Be honest about our struggles

FROM PAGE 23
My kids may make different deci-
sions than I want them to make, but
I want that relationship to remain
strong. As we process really tough
issues — like pornography, eating
issues, all sorts of different things
— we have to talk about this stuff
as a family. I can't just tell them how
to live it. It's something I have to go
through with them. Being honest
about my own struggles — our own
struggles — is critical in that.

**Many Christians have become
divided over issues that emerge
online, such as politics. How can
we recover from that?**

Lyons: It's real immaturity, and
it's sad. I think we've reached a
point culturally where we think it's
acceptable to just kind of tribalize,
divide off into our corners with
people that fully agree with us.
One of the things that we do in the
book "Good Faith" — in a chapter
called "Five Ways to be Faithful" — is
to try to help Christians understand
that the most important filter to put
around all of this is theology. We
must understand that God's design
is for human beings to flourish. The
Gospel is what we believe and what
we confess as Christians.

But when you start to move
out from that core, there are five
different kinds of frames, and one
of them is politics. Great people are
going to disagree on what policies
are best, but we can't expect that
imperfect policies will lead to human
flourishing.

When we move politics up into the
theology category — and say that
we, as Christians, *have* to agree on
this specific policy, this proposal,
this candidate — we really minimize
the strength of the church and the
breadth of diversity that brings life
to our communities.

I think we have to step back from
the emotional edge and understand
what really matters. We need the
church to be more unified than
ever for the years ahead. We need
to not fall for this distraction in this
moment.

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CHAMBERSBURG CHURCH OF CHRIST seeks a self-supported minister to shepherd a congregation of 20 in a community with potential growth.

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e-mail: cofc@innernet.net
www.christianchronicle.org/classifieds

Full-Time Minister

The Grove, Oklahoma, Church of Christ seeks a full-time minister who passionately desires to preach, teach and equip members for service to God. We are a congregation of 80+ members who are strongly committed to grow. The ideal candidate will have an in-depth knowledge of God's word, hold fast to biblical truths and be able to effectively communicate those truths for the edification of the saints and growth of the church. He and his family should be strong in the faith and active in church ministries and should have studied in a biblical school, college or university affiliated with the Church of Christ. He and his family must be willing to relocate to Grove, Okla.

If you desire to be considered for this position, please submit your resume, contact information, salary requirements, three professional references and two of your most recent recorded sermons (preferably in front of a congregation) on DVD/thumb or flash drive (formatted for Windows) to:

The Grove Church of Christ, Attn: Minister Search Committee
1001 S Grand Ave, Grove, OK 74344
For further info: grovecoc@sbcglobal.net or (918) 786-2495 *Deadline July 31, 2017*

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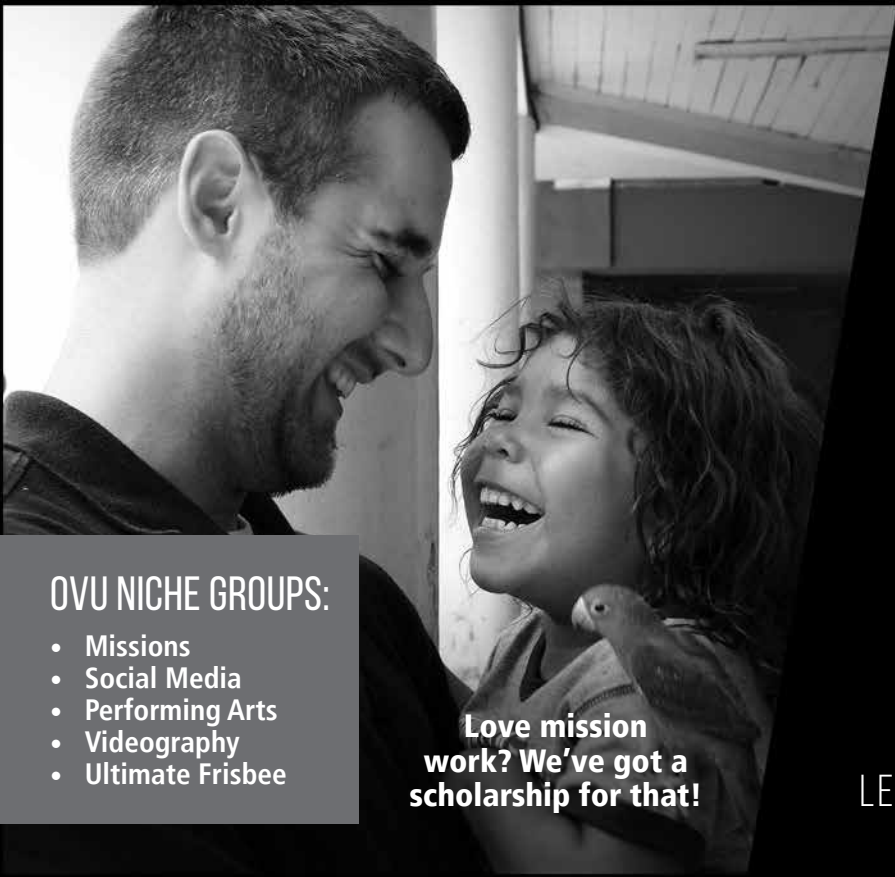
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Attendees sing during the Conference of the Churches of Christ of Northern California.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY LAURA ABELLO

Francisco and Alicia Ramirez cut a cake honoring their years of service to Churches of Christ in Northern California.

California conference lauds couple

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Francisco and Alicia Ramirez were honored with a gift and a cake at the recent 14th annual Conference of the Churches of Christ of Northern California. “They are pillars of the *Iglesias de Cristo* in Northern California,” said Laura Abello, using the Spanish term for Churches of Christ. The lectureship for Spanish-speaking Christians drew 200 people to the Parkway Church of Christ, said Abello, church secretary and wife of elder/preacher Carlos Abello. Francisco Ramirez has preached for a San Jose church for many years and was instrumental in the conference’s founding. Now he and his wife are moving to Texas.



Conference organizers include, from left, Alberto Rodriguez, Francisco Ramirez, Javier Estrada, Carlos Abello, Daniel Gomez, Francisco Aguilar and Francisco Zarceño.

NEWSMAKERS



PHOTO PROVIDED BY IBARAKI CHRISTIAN
Randall Voss, left, and Jim Batten.

APPOINTED: Randall Voss, principal of Ibaraki Christian Junior and Senior High Schools in Hitachi City, Japan. Voss, a graduate of Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City, was in the second group of exchange students to study at Ibaraki in 1976. He joins fellow OC graduate Jim Batten, chancellor of Ibaraki, celebrating its 70th anniversary. The school has roots in Churches of Christ.

RECEIVED: \$1.1 million in college scholarships and grants, by the 12 graduating seniors of Clarksville Christian School in Tennessee. Seven of the 12 seniors will attend a Christian university — either Lipscomb or Harding. This is the school's fourth and largest graduating class so far.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY MICHELLE ROBERTS
Clarksville Christian School graduates.

NAMED: Perry L. Stepp, president of the Biblical Institute of Zagreb in Croatia. Brian Walton, executive director of the Central European Education Foundation. Aaron and Denise Arthaud, houseparents at Carpenter Place children's home in Wichita, Kan. Tim Bewley to the Harding University board of trustees. Lynn Waller Kelly, member of the Pleasant Ridge Church of Christ in Arlington, Texas, as Tarrant County associate probate judge.

Milestones

Showcasing the moments of your life and the lives of loved ones.

Birthdays

97th: A.F. Fitzhugh, May 22, Houston. **95th:** Shirley Genrich, July 12, Albion, Neb. **90th:** Clifford S. Owens, May 13, Nashville, Tenn.

Anniversaries

70th: John and Mary Townley, June 14, Porter, Texas.

John and Mary were married on June 14, 1947, and will be celebrating 70 years together with family and friends in June.

John and Mary sold their business in 1983 and then began the work that fills their hearts — traveling all over the United States, teaching and baptizing souls into Christ. They are truly loved by their family and friends and have touched so many lives over the years.

Congratulations, John and Mary!



Elder Transition

Gordon Naylor

On April 23, 2017, the Church of Christ in Great Falls, Mont., announced the resignation of Gordon Naylor as elder. Gordon first moved to Great Falls to serve as the full-time minister after preaching in places like Benkelman, Neb., St. Francis, Kan., and other communities in Kansas and Colorado. He continued to minister in Great Falls until 1993 and then traveled to preach in Chinook and Havre, Mont., for years. This year marks more than 65 years of ministry and

the 48th year for the congregation in Great Falls and the state of Montana.

Due to the tireless work and wisdom of Gordon and his wife, Betty, countless lives have been changed for eternity.

On June 4, 2017, Gordon and Betty will be honored at a combined worship service at the Northwest Center in

Great Falls followed by a Mexican potluck. Everyone is invited to attend. Letters and cards are encouraged and welcome. Please mail cards to: Church of Christ, 3400 Central Ave, Great Falls, MT 59401. You may contact the church office at: office@greatfallscoc.org, (406) 453-3379, or greatfallscoc.org.



Memorials

Ernest R. Raines

1931 — 2017

Ernest Ray Raines, beloved father, grandfather, great-grandfather and brother, passed away on April 30 at the age of 86.



He was born on March 15, 1931, in Humboldt, Tenn. His residence was in Rosharon, Texas, and he worshiped with the First Colony Church of Christ, in Sugar Land, Texas.

Ernest is preceded in death by his wife, Margaret J. Raines; a daughter, Naomi Raines Penn and a sister, Louise

Chapman. He is lovingly survived by sons: Frazer (Barbara) Raines, John Mark Raines, Paul Edward Raines, and Timothy (Yim-Mie Nevle) Raines; daughters: Glenda Holleman, Denise Brown, Stella Raines (Ken) Mire, and Trish Raines; brother Robert William (Pat) Raines, Jr.; sister Kathleen Hutchinson; 14 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

Ernest was featured in the March 2017 issue of *The Christian Chronicle*: "A Toymaker's Tale: Preacher's Hobby Was Born from Devotion."

Keith Allen Bradley, 61, April 5, Houston.



Wilma Jean 'Jeanie' Keith, 88, April 14, Tecumseh, Okla.



Jeanetta Sprayberry, 71, May 14, Edmond, Okla.



Elmer 'Joe' Avery, 84, April 15, Spiro, Oklahoma.

Memorial/Honor Gifts

The Christian Chronicle appreciates and acknowledges generous gifts received in memory of Wilma 'Jeanie' Keith.

Entries should be submitted to milestones@christianchronicle.org or call (405) 425-5071. Rates and guidelines are available upon request (credit card preferred).

EDITORIAL

Small, world-changing faith

In these pages you'll find plenty of reasons to despair. Violence grips the city of Chicago, taking the life of a beloved judge, a song leader in his congregation. In Venezuela, a man-made economic crisis has former professors scavenging for food. Opioid addiction ravages our communities. Police shootings threaten to divide us along racial lines. Studies show our young people giving up on church. And it's tornado season. We report on Christians' responses to these challenges. But their humble efforts seem so small, so inconsequential to the tide of sorrow that grips this world. How can we expect to make even the slightest difference?

And yet, we see transformed lives in the midst of the storm. A couple from Venezuela has "renovated" faith thanks to a church in Colombia. In Canada, a tiny congregation is helping heal old wounds caused by mistreatment against the nation's indigenous people. At times like this, we remember the words of anthropologist and author Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." That change is possible only through God, who uses our small, seemingly weak efforts to shame the strong, to make a lasting difference — one soul at a time.



BROOKE WILLIAMS

A reflection on baptism and new life

Brooke Williams, a ninth grader from the Hawley Church of Christ in Texas, shot this photo of her brother, Hunter, inspired by the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch from Acts 8. "The sunrise in the picture is symbolic," Williams said. After his baptism, the eunuch "awaits the new day, rejoicing in the Lord."

In foster care, I found — and shared — the Gospel

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. — Colossians 3:15-16, New International Version

Unlike many of you reading this, worship and faith are fairly new to me. Like 400,000 other kids in the United States, I am in foster care. Three years ago, I was placed in a children's shelter — a temporary stop in my journey to my home now. At the shelter, I got my first chance in life to explore the Gospel and faith. While I did not attend church, I was able to access Bibles and study materials to help me find and build my faith. Younger girls at the shelter would attend church but did not understand what they were being taught. I would use the study materials and the Bible to build my understanding — while trying to help them understand. At my next stop on my journey, I continued doing Bible studies with girls in the house, but I discovered many roadblocks to sharing the

message. Though we were in a place that was supposed to be a Christian home, often we weren't allowed to attend church. Sometimes, we even were asked to stop the Bible studies. I got mixed messages on what faith truly is, but this only made my desire to share the message I was learning stronger. In one meeting, I asked my case workers to require my foster parent to take me to church on Sundays. It wasn't until moving to my current home that I was able to dig deeper into the truth of Bible and get help growing the faith that I proclaim. In a world filled with brokenness, disbelief, distrust and criticism, what exactly is faith, and how do we make our faith known? Even in a society that claims to be Christian, this is not always clear. Many Christians want to share the Gospel, but all too often

they do it in a way that non-believers do not understand. They know nothing about this man we call Jesus. Is sharing the message enough to make people believe it is not just a story? Or is there more? In Hebrews chapter 11, we are given many examples of heroes of faith. "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for," we read in the first two verses. The writer then gives examples of faith heroes such as Noah, Abraham, Moses and many other Old Testament figures, showing how they lived out their faith. They followed God's commands. Their faith had action. As we read in James 2, "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." Colossians 3 says it like this: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility,

gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.... And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." If we are to truly make God known in the world, we are going to have to live our faith out loud. We should show others who Jesus is through the way we act and speak. Above all, we need to show the love Christ had for us when he died on the cross. I encourage you to not be afraid to share the message of Christ — even if your faith story has not been perfect. ELIZABETH OXFORD and her foster family worship with the Austin Avenue Church of Christ in Brownwood, Texas. She will attend Ranger College in Texas this fall and hopes to become a teacher. This piece is adapted from a speech she gave at the 2017 North Texas Leadership Training for Christ convention in Dallas.

In the Word



Elizabeth Oxford

Do we reflect Jesus – or society’s values – when we appoint leaders, launch ministries?

Do not love the world or anything in it. If anyone loves the world, love for the father is not in them.
— 1 John 2:15, New International Version

When we look at the state of many churches in this country, we see a reflection of American values and a rejection of Christian values.

I am not talking about benevolence to the poor. Christians individually and collectively give countless resources to people in need. Nor am I speaking about the tolerance of changing social norms regarding sexuality or secularism. Christians do not shy away from those debates.

Rather, I am talking about the defense of and devotion to the societal standards of class, power and prestige. Our country places value on the superficial notions of wealth and financial success. A person who serves as CEO of a Fortune 500 company is more valued and respected than a maintenance worker at a public school. Not only do CEOs make significantly more income, but they also have more influence and impact in society. Unfortunately, blue collar workers often are ignored, treated as second-class citizens, perhaps even thought of as lazy or irresponsible.

The church in America has done little to challenge these societal standards. Instead, we have conformed to them in three ways:

- **Church Leadership:** The Bible clearly states the qualifications for elders and deacons, which include being spiritually disciplined, faithful in marriage and well-respected among the Christian brotherhood (1 Timothy 3).

These qualifications transcend societal separations of class and power, yet the people who often secure such leadership positions in the church hold socially acceptable and powerful positions in their respected professions. They're doctors, professors and entrepreneurs. While churches may not intend to marginalize qualified Christians of less prestigious professions, the preferential treatment and selection bias shows the degree to which we allow society's values to influence us.

- **Ministry:** There are countless Christian charities — domestic and international — that serve the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable people in our society. Too often, however, churches view the poor as people to minister *to* — not people to minister *with*. This creates a power dynamic where

people with more resources assume that they are in a more spiritual and moral position to minister than those who are poor.

The Christian faith is not more widely practiced and followed by one particular social class than another, yet we subconsciously believe that people who are poor lack moral values simply because of their position in society. This is in direct contradiction to scriptures such as James 1:9:

“Believers who are poor have something to boast about, for God has honored them.”

- **Money:** Many churches have rightly rejected the prosperity gospel preached by televangelists including Joel Olsteen and Creflo Dollar. Churches across the country are educating themselves on financial stewardship and using curriculum from faith-based consultants such as Dave Ramsey to encourage each other to get out of debt.

Many conversations about financial stewardship, however, unintentionally demonize poor people by making false generalizations about the causes of poverty. When poor people perceive that they are being stigmatized and shamed for their social position by Christians, it reflects how society devalues and punishes people based on social conditions.

Our social status should not define how the church values us. Christians must look to the example of Christ and follow the Bible rather than conform to American society.

When looking for leadership, the church should use the passages in 1 Timothy for guidance — not the financial status of qualified candidates.

When doing ministry, the church should be inclusive and look to partner with people from different social classes to serve and minister to people of all social classes.

When discussing money, the church should talk about the need for financial stewardship and discourage members from getting into debt. The church must teach this in a way that does not demonize people with limited resources and generalize about the causes of poverty.

The church must reject the way that the world values power and embrace the Gospel, which liberates us from the limited and superficial mores that enslave and control us.

JONATHAN HOLMES is benevolence minister for the Lakeview Church of Christ in Chicago and an advocate for racial and criminal justice in Illinois. He blogs on issues of race, class and faith at coloredchristianity.com.

Views



Jonathan Holmes

‘Our country places value on the superficial notions of wealth and financial success. The church in America has done little to challenge these societal standards. Instead, we have conformed to them in three ways.’

FROM OUR READERS

How would Christ respond to police shooting verdict?

TULSA, Okla. — And now, in my town, another trial begins.

The acquittal of Betty Shelby, a member of the Glenpool Church of Christ, has brought joy and anger not just throughout our city, but within our churches. Shelby, an officer with the Tulsa Police Department, was found not guilty of manslaughter in the shooting of an unarmed black suspect. The May 17 acquittal came after a jury deliberated for nine hours.

The day after the acquittal, the *Tulsa World* prominently featured Warren Blakney, minister for the North Peoria Church of Christ. Blakney voiced concern about the message the jury’s decision “sends to black males, and males period, about the value of your life.”

So what would Jesus do? I know what he wouldn’t do. He wouldn’t ask me to debate the merits of the case on social media. He’d ask me who’s hurting, and why I’m not helping.

Jesus set up his kingdom in a rather bizarre fashion. Christianity doesn’t work well when given political power. It works best when all its power is taken away. Jesus knew this: The only time he was asked to speak to a political leader, he said nothing.

His kingdom was about service. Jesus served prisoners at one moment and took requests from Roman rulers at the next. Yet, so far as we know, he did nothing for Joseph. His own earthly father apparently died before his child’s ministry began, without the benefit of a miracle.

It leaves me with a painful understanding of his will: to turn outward, to understand that sacrificing myself sometimes means sacrificing my opinions. And so I pray for my town. I pray not just for peace and understanding, but also for motivation and clarity. We will move forward. The Kingdom can’t be stopped.

BRUTE WOLF worships with the Park Plaza Church of Christ in Tulsa, Okla. He serves on the *Tulsa World* editorial department’s Community Advisory Board.



Brute Wolf

Christian inmate did the right thing

I was there the day they took her away forever. (See “A baptism, then a murder confession,” Page 3, May.) I met Lucinda Wilson at church and grew to love her as a sister. As hard as it all was for all parties concerned, I believe she did the right thing confessing.

Monica Estrada | San Antonio

ENGAGING FAITH IN A POST-TRUTH CULTURE

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Grady King, D.Min
Director of Church Resources
Co-Leader, Hope Network

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Urban missionaries offer sage advice to reach changing cities

Some people rail against immigration. Others welcome it.

In **"Mosaic: A Ministry Handbook for a Globalizing World,"** Jared Looney and Seth Bouchelle do neither. Instead, the two urban missionaries simply recognize that immigration is transforming the makeup of our cities. And they want us, as followers of Jesus, to have the tools necessary to reach these people who are literally coming to our front doors.

Churches — especially in urban centers — must adjust to the changes in their communities at break-neck speed. If your congregation has not yet dealt with immigration on some level, then please know that it will, probably sooner rather than later.

Looney served in New York for 15 years but recently relocated to Tampa, Fla. Bouchelle still serves in NYC. Both work with Global City Mission Initiative and are mission studies graduates of Abilene Christian University in Texas.

Their work focuses on how globalization is changing American society. At the heart of this volume is a concern for how Christians can effectively strategize their mission efforts.

The authors' solution: We must first get to know them. Later, we can witness to them.

There is a lot to like in this book. Most importantly, it is practical. The authors provide many stories from their rich experiences that help to explain the doing of ministry and missions in a globalized context like New York. Similarly, readers in Los Angeles, Dallas, Phoenix, Boston, Orlando, Atlanta, Denver, Austin and Charlotte will

be readily aware of how immigration is changing the fabric of their own cities.

The book excels when it talks about reaching immigrants, especially non-Chris-

tian immigrants, for Christ. The authors give helpful discussion of numerous strategies. Those in multiethnic churches will also find valuable information. If your church is in an ethnically diverse city or neighborhood and you don't quite know how to adapt, then rush out and buy this book.

My main critique is that the book seems aimed at Christians in college and ministry training programs. In places it is quite academic. There is an overuse of terms such as "syncretism" and "contextualization," along with citations from influential scholars and theoreticians of these

issues. The authors do, however, go to great lengths to help you understand the latest theories on culture and globalization.

Non-academics could use a distilled version of this information. In fact, I would recommend just that to the authors. Cut the book in half (it is nearly 300 pages), remove the academic jargon, and tell us more plainly how to adjust to the new realities you so competently describe.

"They're coming to America," Neil Diamond sings. Those words are more relevant today than ever.

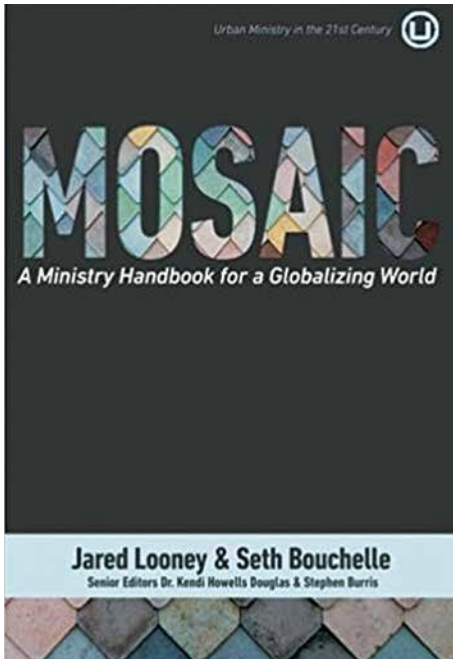
And churches need to be on the front lines if they hope to reach these immigrants with the love of Christ.

DYRON DAUGHRITY is a professor of religion at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif., and the author of books including **"Roots: Uncovering Why We Do What We Do In Church"** (2016) and **"Martin Luther: A Biography for the People"** (coming in August).

In Print



Dyron Daugherty



Jared Looney and Seth Bouchelle. **Mosaic: A Ministry Handbook for a Globalizing World.** Skyforest, Calif.: Urban Loft Publishers, 2017. 282 pages, \$16.95.

Does the Big Bang need a creator? Believer ponders faith and science

The heavens under which we sit are full of wonder, mystery and motivation. We attempt to understand through science — the systematic study through observation and experimentation, with the goal of eliminating ignorance and misunderstanding.

Science is based on fact, but too often we treat our theory as fact. Theory is the analysis of a set of facts in relation to one another. Unfortunately, we sometimes use theories in an attempt to explain away our faith. This is false — and wrong.

One of the most famous theories is, of course, the Big Bang theory — an attempt to explain the origins of the universe itself. Though it is a theory that can't be proved or disproved, many scientists treat it as fact — and have even moved on to determining what happened before the Big Bang. People of faith who accept this theory voice the belief that such a massive, universe-creating event required a divine hand.

One of our greatest scientific minds, Stephen Hawking, disagrees. In **"The Grand Design,"** he and Leonard Mlodinow argue that God isn't necessary to explain the origins of the universe, that the Big Bang could be the consequence of physics alone. This, however, only is true if the laws of physics that exist today also existed before the Big Bang.

When scientists use the classical laws of physics to explore the Big Bang, they encounter a singularity — a place where the laws of physics break down, Hawking writes. We do not understand what happened before the universe reached this point. To me, this indicates that a transcendent God is needed to start the universe. Physics alone is not enough.

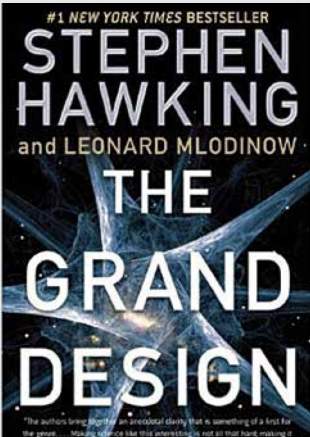
"What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe?" Hawking and many other scientists have asked that question. My response comes from Isaiah 55:8-9: *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'*"

MARCUS ROBERTSON was baptized at age 13 at the Bayside Church of Christ in Virginia Beach, Va. He studied at Virginia State University and finished his bachelor's in communications at Temple University in Philadelphia. He now lives in Durham, N.C., where he worships with the Southside Church of Christ.

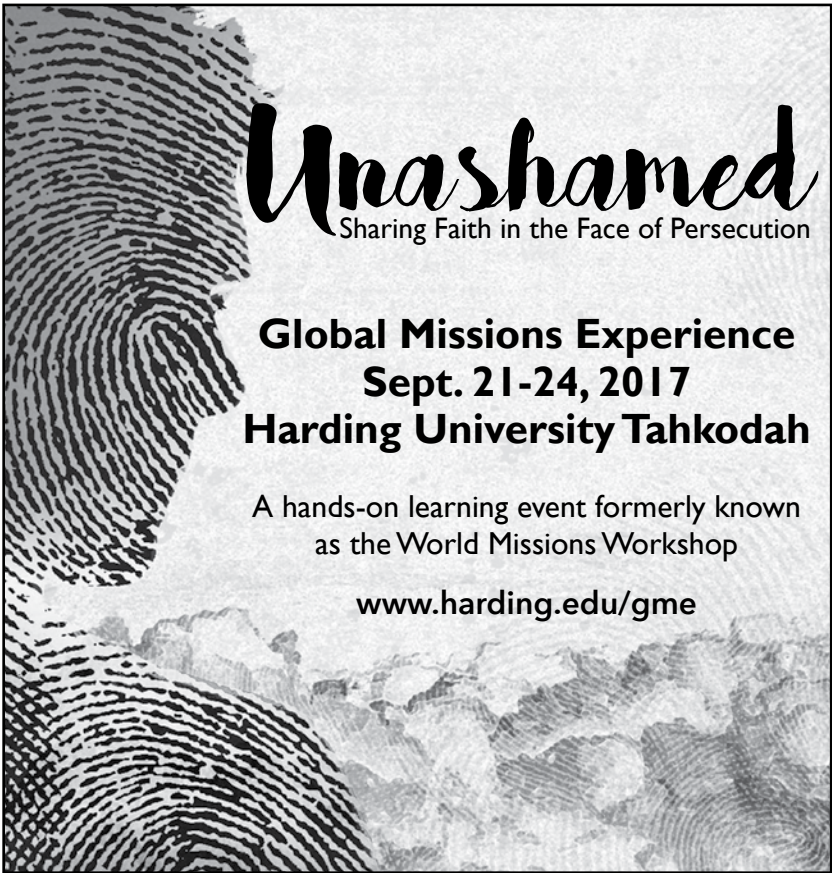
What we're reading



Marcus Robertson



Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow. **The Grand Design.** (Reprint edition) New York: Bantam, 2012. 208 pages.



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- June 2-8 Churches of Christ National Lectureship.** Atlanta. cocnl.com/web.
- June 4 Celebration of Service in Honor of Gordon Naylor.** Great Falls, Mont. office@greatfallscoc.org.
- June 5-8 National Hispanic English Youth Conference.** Lubbock, Texas. NHEYC.org.
- June 6 Sunset International Solar Event.** Phase III in Spanish. sibi.cc/solar.
- June 6-8 Abundant Living Seniors Ministry Conference.** Searcy, Ark. abundantlivingseniors.com.
- June 9-10 Adult Third Culture Kids Retreat.** Emory, Texas. MRNet.org/events.
- June 10-11 Praise & Harmony Workshop.** Sioux Falls, S.D. praiseandharmony.com.
- June 12-16 Come Before Winter Renewal for Women in Ministry.** Andover, Mass. comebeforewinter.org/women.
- June 16-17 Parents of Missionaries Retreat.** Fayetteville, Ark. MRNet.org/events.
- June 16-23 Worship Leader Institute.** Nashville, Tenn. praiseandharmony.com.
- July 2-8, July 9-15, July 16-22 Black Mesa Bible Camp.** Kenton, Okla. bmbc.us.
- July 5-8 Florida State Youth for Christ Conference.** Boca Raton, Fla. fsy4cc.org.
- July 9-12 47th Annual Caribbean Lectureship.** Nassau, Bahamas. caribbeanlectureship.com.
- July 15 70th Celebration: Columbia Christian Schools.** Portland, Ore. columbiachristian.com.
- July 18-21 Abundant Living GrandCamp.** Searcy, Ark. abundantlivingseniors.com.
- July 20-23 Angel Fire Bible Symposium.** Angel Fire, N.M. angelfirebiblesymposium.com.
- July 21-22 Worship Leaders' Conference.** Abilene, Texas. singingschool.org.
- July 21-22 Central Texas Bible Teachers' Workshop.** Austin, Texas. crccaustin.org/ctbtw.
- July 22-28 Tahoe Family Encampment.** South Lake Tahoe, Calif. tahoefamilyencampment.com.
- July 23-28 The Singing School at ACU.** Abilene, Texas. singingschool.org.



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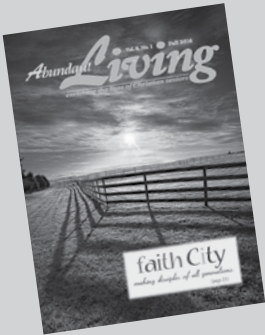
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You will also find *encouragement, inspiration and challenge* to renew your *commitment* to the Kingdom by using the time, talents, energy and finances you have during your retirement years. You will find highlights of years gone by, church humor, jokes about getting older, selections from the internet, a song story, a Bible crossword puzzle and *regular columns* by Howard Norton, John W. Smith, Mike Justus and Dan Williams. Each issue also features a *non-profit ministry* in our fellowship that you may consider for involvement when you are "*retired but still working for the Lord.*"

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Fatherhood: The precious, complex decisions that make a great person

I consider it a blessing that our nation marks one Sunday a year to honor fathers.

I knew my father was a good man, but I had to be a father myself before I valued all he was to me.

He was very quiet. He never made small talk. He tried to teach me to throw a baseball and a football, but my coordination made those impossible tasks. We had better luck with fishing and golfing, but his greatest contribution to my life was encouraging me to study and get as much schooling as possible. He only finished the eighth grade and always felt the handicap of not having education to advance his career.

My dad was a hard worker. He helped me get through college. He was 75 before he was a believer. I really only got to know the heart of my father after he retired and had traveled for two decades. He lived in a retirement center near me, and we had meals together and talked about life.

The births of my three children were among the happiest events of my life. They all gave me endless joy throughout their childhoods. All three look as if they were stamped out of the same mold, but the differences in their personalities were an education for me. All three were strong enough to challenge my patience and my judgment. They helped me grow socially as I saw them face life and change. They enlarged my world by introducing me to new books, new people and new spiritual depths.

Although I have always considered myself a person of faith, having children expanded and enlarged my faith. All three children were born by caesarian sections, which forced me to trust in God's guidance for the doctors caring for my wife. In those days, fathers did not touch their babies until they were going home from the hospital.

For seven days with each child I watched, admired and wept over their new life, depending on God to guide doctors and nurses.

My children helped me learn how to have fun and enjoy the simple things. Then they became adolescents. Learning when to direct, when

to advise and when to step back taught me how complex each human being is and how precious decisions are in making a great person.

The stage of dating and marriage was the stage where I learned the most. The friends my children

Insight



Bailey McBride

brought into my life caused culture shock. I found it hard to remain neutral. Some of them I wanted to keep as friends even after my child moved on. Some confused me. I am thankful my children were wise and understood what they needed and

wanted. My sons-in-law (Phil Roe and Patrick Brown) and daughter-in-law (Karen) are amazing, godly people that I love almost as much as the children born to us.

The best part of being a father is that it leads to being a grandfather. That is the greatest truth about family. My eight grandchildren range in age from 13 to 32, and they are the most precious lives I can imagine. Some of the most joyous times of my life have been spent with them. The memories from baseball games, soccer matches, high school graduations, college graduations and international trips are treasures that enlighten my life every day.

Many of you were earning a living for the family while your wife worked at home and devoted most of her time to the children.

Even more of you shared parenting duties while you wife worked and improved the financial strength of the family.

Many fathers devote most of their time to rearing and training children. Fathers have great opportunities and responsibility to help their children become faithful, loving, serving people. Being a father encourages dependence on God. The complexities of guiding physical, social and spiritual growth are too much for mere men. We need God and his guidance every day.

CONTACT: bailey.mcbride@christianchronicle.org

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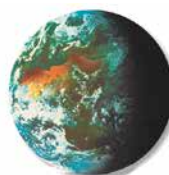


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Isaiah 40:31



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