



Online wars over doctrine spark concern

AMID HEATED TALK on social media, two-day symposium brings together leaders for face-to-face dialogue.

BY **BOBBY ROSS JR.** | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

NEW ORLEANS — And they'll know we are Christians by our ... *vitriol on Facebook?*

Scriptural and responsible use of the Internet was a key point of discussion as more than 100 ministers and church leaders gathered for the recent "We

Be Brethren Symposium."

Organizers described the two-day event — hosted by the Elysian Fields Church of Christ in the heart of the Big Easy — as an effort to foster unity and face-to-face dialogue on doctrinal issues sparking heated debate online.

"All of us can become victims

of Facebook bullying," said Herman Wesley III, minister for the North Pointe Church of Christ in Montgomery, Ala. "Facebook is not the proper forum to expose people's sins, and Facebook is not the proper forum to correct people's sins."

Tim Anderson, minister for the Southside Church of Christ in Montgomery, said younger Christians wonder, "How is this the church that Jesus died for when we kill

See **BRETHREN**, Page 10



DAVID PROEBER, THE PANTAGRAPH, BLOOMINGTON, ILL., WWW.PANTAGRAPH.COM

Habitat volunteers shine 'the light of God'

Carla Ramos puts some sweat equity into her new home, with assistance from volunteer Ramon Nelson, as they build frames in the parking lot of the Northside Church of Christ in Bloomington, Ill. Members of the church and other faith groups participated in a Habitat for Humanity project to provide a first-ever home for Nelson and her two daughters.

As volunteers hammered, a few used markers to write messages on the beams, including "God bless this house and family," and, "Through this window shines the light of God," *The Pantagraph* of Bloomington reported. "The most rewarding part is meeting the family," Northside church elder Chris Conway said, "and they're helping us with construction, too."



PHOTO PROVIDED

Gigie Carranza and Evelyn Ignacio with song leader Keith Lancaster at the 54th Asia Mission Forum.

In Asia, Christians 'exemplify unity'

PUERTO PRINCESA, Philippines. — "Asia is the place to be. Come join us here," Gigie Carranza said after the 54th Asia Mission Forum.

On tropical Palawan island in the western Philippines, 164 members of Churches of Christ from 14 countries gathered to worship, fellowship and dream about God's plan for their continent.

Michael McLain, a church member in Japan, said he was glad to find fellow Christ-followers "who are not satisfied

with status-quo Christianity and believe something truer is possible."

Carranza, who worships in Manila, Philippines, and helped organize the forum, said she also sees a new breed of believers in Asia who "exemplify unity and the desire to grow as the body of Christ."

FAITH FROM EAST TO WEST

CHINESE MINISTRY IN LOUISIANA CELEBRATES 30 YEARS.....3
CHURCHES THAT WORK: A PILLAR FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA.....17
EDITORIAL, IN THE WORD: ASIA'S GROWING FAITH 29

HURRICANE KATRINA: 10 YEARS LATER

'GOD ALLOWED US TO MAKE IT THROUGH'.....12
ROAD NOTES: THE VIVID FACES OF KATRINA.....13
VIEWS: BRIDGES BUILT AND BURNED IN MISSISSIPPI.....30

For *His* Glory

Setting the Standards



When Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam tapped FHU College of Education and Behavioral Sciences Dean Sharen Cypress for the state's Standards Recommendation Committee, he enlisted the help of a former public school teacher dedicated to preparing the next generation of teachers. Dr. Cypress utilizes not only her own experience as a classroom teacher and counselor, but also the lessons she's learned in the 36 states she has visited as a national board examiner for the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (formerly NCATE) and an educational consultant.

As a member of Governor Haslam's committee, she will help make final recommendations to the State Board of Education on new standards to fit the needs of Tennessee's K-12 students. Most importantly, Dr. Cypress brings that wealth of knowledge and experience back to the classroom, where she mentors the nation's future teachers. Her dedicated leadership is one example of the many ways

Freed-Hardeman faculty and staff use their mission for His glory.



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A lion's death and Africa's true beauty

Alas, I never got the chance to see Cecil the lion.

Though I've been blessed to visit his home continent multiple times, my trips don't usually include game parks.

I did spot some roadside zebras in Kenya once, just before getting hopelessly stuck in the black-tar mud

Inside Story



Erik Tryggstad

of Laikipia, and fearing that I might run into one of Cecil's cousins — at night. But I digress.

News of Cecil's demise at the hands of a

Minnesota dentist reminds me of another life ended too soon in Zimbabwe, though it didn't set the Internet ablaze with condemnations.

His name was Andrew. He should be 21 now, farming, working, marrying, preparing to raise a pride of his own.

But he died at 12, another victim of HIV/AIDS, which claims more than 1 million lives in Africa each year.

He was a patient at the Brian Lemons Memorial Hospital, a ministry of Nhowe Mission. I was visiting the hospital in 2006 with supporters from the East Point Church of Christ in Wichita, Kan.

As the hospital's board discussed heady matters of administration (including the 1.5 billion Zimbabwean dollars it would cost to fix the medical waste incinerator — inflation was out of control at the time) I sneaked away with chaplain Timothy

See **LION**, Page 4

30 YEARS OF MINISTRY TO CHINESE IN LOUISIANA

Faith and crawfish

'BEFORE WE KNEW THE LORD, he sent his servants to teach us,' says one of hundreds of Chinese impacted by the South Baton Rouge Church of Christ.

BY KYLE PEVETO | FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

BATON ROUGE, La.

Growing up in northern China, Jinshan Wang never knew of God.

But he met Jesus more than 7,000 miles from home, in the heart of Louisiana.

"Before we knew the Lord, he sent his servants to teach us the Gospel," Wang said in Chinese to his church family at the South Baton Rouge Church of Christ in July. "If it wasn't for the Americans, none of us would know the Lord today."

Wang is one of hundreds of Chinese immigrants introduced to Christianity by members of the congregation in the past three decades, part of a thriving ministry that began with graduate students at Louisiana State University.

About 170 of those converts attended a recent homecoming — hosted by the church once every five

years — to pray and worship in their native language, enjoy steaming piles of boiled crawfish and celebrate the place where their faith began.

The Chinese ministry is a highly visible part of the 600-member congregation. Most Sundays, Chinese men and women fill the first five pews in the auditorium, worshipping alongside their American brothers and sisters. As many as 70 Chinese participate in the ministry's small-group studies.

Most of them knew nothing of Christianity before arriving in Baton Rouge. The massive People's Republic of China, a communist nation since 1949,

imposes strict regulations on religious observances.

"When I came here, we were all so helpless," said Erhei Liang, a classical music composer who moved to Baton Rouge in 1986 with his wife, Weiping,

See **CHINESE**, Page 14

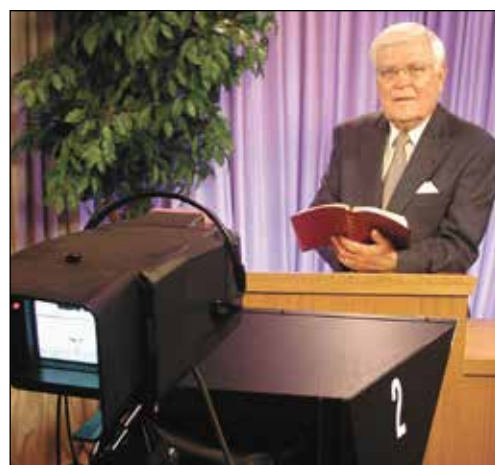


PHOTOS PROVIDED BY DAVID FINCH

Jinshan Wang shares his testimony as he opens the homecoming service in Baton Rouge.



Chinese members of the South Baton Rouge Church of Christ worship on Sunday.



LYNN McMILLON

Mack Lyon tapes a sermon on the "Search" TV ministry set in Edmond, Okla., in 2005.

Mack Lyon of 'Search' TV ministry dies at 93

AS A 14-YEAR-OLD boy, the Oklahoma-born preacher made a promise to share the Gospel via mass media — and he kept it.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

EDMOND, Okla. — Mack Lyon, who founded the "In Search of the Lord's Way" television ministry and served as its main speaker for 30 years, died Aug. 5. He was 93.

"We are saddened for our loss but rejoice that he has reached his goal of being with the Lord forever," the ministry said on its Facebook page.

Lyon's son, Chris, "mentioned how his father had worked all his life for this day," reported the Edmond Church of Christ — the longtime sponsoring congregation for the global media ministry.

"Our thoughts and prayers go out to all the family as well as the 'Search' TV family and church family," church leaders said.

At Lyon's memorial service Aug. 12, Dallas minister Wes Price noted that his close friend was the father of daughter Jo Ann and son Chris.

But Price said, "He was the spiritual father to hundreds of thousands."

Lyon served as a longtime mentor to Phil Sanders, who succeeded him as the main speaker on "Search" in 2009.

"When you are a preacher, you don't always have a preacher," Sanders said. "But from the 1980s on, Mack was my preacher."

See **LYON**, Page 8

LION: A funeral and a loving Savior

FROM PAGE 3

Matangira and East Point minister John Langley. I thought we would visit some church members and — fingers crossed — see a giraffe or two.

Instead, we squatted inside a hut of earth and thatch and stared at a small casket draped with a multicolored, striped blanket. Women from the nearby village sat and cried quietly as they kept vigil over Andrew's body.

Then the mourners ushered us into another hut where they had prepared a stew of chicken, greens and sadza — a doughy mash made from corn.

I feared for my stomach but knew I had to *"eat whatever is set before you,"* as Jesus told his disciples in Luke 10. Meat was reserved for special occasions and honored guests — though I felt more like an intruder.

Determined not to offend, I tore into the meal.

(Too fast, actually. They gave me seconds.)

The family patriarch, Oliver, took a liking to me, especially when I turned down a fork and opted to eat with my hands like everybody else.

So he asked me to preach at the funeral. Luckily, I carried a tiny New Testament in my camera bag. I flipped to Romans 8:18 — my "go to" verse.

John Langley spoke first. (He's older ... and an actual preacher.)

Then it was my turn.

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us," I read as one of the young preachers with us, Nhamo Marunga, translated the words to Shona, the local language. I wasn't familiar with their customs, I told the mourners, but the love and concern they showed for the grieving family needed no translation.

Brother Nhamo spoke next, closing the service with a passionate message from Matthew 18. We must become like children — like Andrew — to enter the Kingdom of heaven, he said.

Then we walked through a field to the gravesite. I think it once had been farmland, but Zimbabwe's politics — which could have come straight from the pages of a George Orwell novel — rendered the earth fallow and the people hungry.

As we reached the humble mound of dirt where Andrew's body would rest, I looked back at the line of mourners

snaking through the tall, yellow grass and snapped a photo. I'm looking at it now as it hangs above the computer screen in my office.

Africa's true beauty and true tragedy are intertwined, and neither can be seen in its big game parks. I lament that too few of us encounter this safari of souls — who teach me



PHOTOS BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD

In rural Zimbabwe, Nhamo Marunga and John Langley walk to a funeral.



Mourners weave through a field of tall grass to the gravesite of 12-year-old Andrew. In the lower-left corner is photographer Erik Tryggestad's shadow.

about the fragility of life and the resulting urgency of the Gospel call.

I pray that dentists who hunt and those who fume at a lion's death will use that energy to be a part of God's work in Africa. There are so many ways to help and so much we can learn from the Christ-followers on this amazing continent. Repeatedly,

they show me true joy — the knowledge that death has no sting in the arms of a loving Savior. The starving smile because Jesus saves.

CONTACT erik@christianchronicle.org. See nhowemission.org for more information about missions in Zimbabwe, and find more links to Africa missions at www.christianchronicle.org.



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SPOTLIGHT

Lifetime of service

LOS ANGELES — As elder Charlie Runnels turned 90 on Aug. 2, the Culver Palms Church of Christ honored him for a lifetime of service.

Daughters of two fellow elders created decorations to carry out the Don Quixote Spanish theme with large flowers, fans and windmills.

Church members prepared enchiladas, refried beans and rice.

A film featured Runnels' life, including contacts with various political and entertainment figures.

Runnels founded the Youth Citizenship Seminar at Pepperdine University, where he serves as chancellor emeritus. He has spent years bringing the Culver Palms church together by inviting and encouraging people to be an active part of it.



TROY PEARSON

Charlie and Amy Jo Runnels enjoy his 90th birthday celebration.

HAWAII

HONOLULU — The Church of Christ at Pearl Harbor has passed the \$900,000 mark in its effort to raise \$1.3 million needed to secure the land it has leased from the U.S. Navy since 1956.

Eight months before the Navy's purchase deadline, the "A Pearl for a Great Price" campaign has been blessed by generous contributions from Christians across the U.S., minister and elder Steve Byrne said.

The 150-member congregation consists of 80 percent military personnel and their families who themselves have contributed almost half of the funds raised. Recently, "challenge coins" were sent out to all contributors as tokens of appreciation and "prayer reminders" for the effort. For more information, see www.cocph.org.



H. SCOTT HOFFMANN/GREENSBORO NEWS & RECORD, WWW.GREENSBORO.COM

North Carolina church becomes department store for those in need

Among rows piled high with jeans, blouses, school uniforms and shoes, Esther Ohene sorts through donated clothing — old and new. The fellowship hall of her congregation, the Friendly Avenue Church of Christ in Greensboro, N.C., doubles as a department store during the church's annual clothing giveaway. Nearly 1,000 people receive free clothing, coordinators told the *Greensboro News & Record*.

Church members do their best to make the setup resemble a department store, coordinator Tricia Roberts told the newspaper. "These people are going through hard times," Roberts said. "We want them to feel like they are out shopping."

SOUTH DAKOTA

SIoux FALLS — The Levy Church of Christ in North Little Rock, Ark., organized a recent "family mission trip" to South Dakota, equipping minister James Telgren said.

Four families — a total of 16 people — spent two weeks serving the 41st Street Church of Christ in Sioux Falls, the Northern Hills Church of Christ in Spearfish and Black Hills Bible Camp, south of Deadwood. The short-term missionaries also looked into possible work for next summer at the Pine Ridge reservation.

"Family mission trip means there is something to do whether you are 8 or 80," Telgren said, "and we all enjoyed getting to know each other and each other's children better. We hope to have a few more churches partner with us next year."

TENNESSEE

LAWRENCEBURG — The Pulaski Street Church of Christ, in partnership with the Christian Student Center at the University of North Alabama, is helping to improve the lives of thousands of children in Haiti.

A peanut butter drive coordinated by students collected 8,700 jars of peanut butter — 25 percent of them coming through the church.

The peanut butter is being donated to LiveBeyond, a Christian humanitarian aid organization, and will feed an estimated 150,000 malnourished children in the Western Hemisphere's poorest country.

"A jar of peanut butter may not seem like much in the U.S., but in Haiti, it can mean the difference between life and death," said David Vanderpool, Live Beyond's founder.

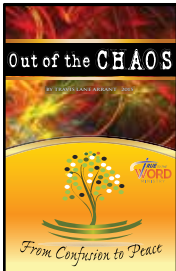
WISCONSIN

MILWAUKEE — The multiethnic Northtown Church of Christ conducted a recent series of four roundtable discussions focused on racism and racial reconciliation.

The discussions — open to the community — focused on how the church can make a positive impact in those areas, minister Alex Clayton and member Evan Bane said.

An average of 60 people attended each session. Organizers said the discussions produced positive results as the church endeavors to:

- "Educate one another on the definitions of racism."
- "Show compassion for the ignorance of the majority when it comes to racism."
- "Learn how racism is not an excuse for not living as a disciple."



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Members of the Harlem Church of Christ in New York dine and enjoy the sunshine during a barbecue “Love Feast” at the Van Cortlandt Park track in Bronx, N.Y.

Soaking up the final rays of summer

PHOTOS BY ADRIAN FUSSELL | THE RIVERDALE PRESS



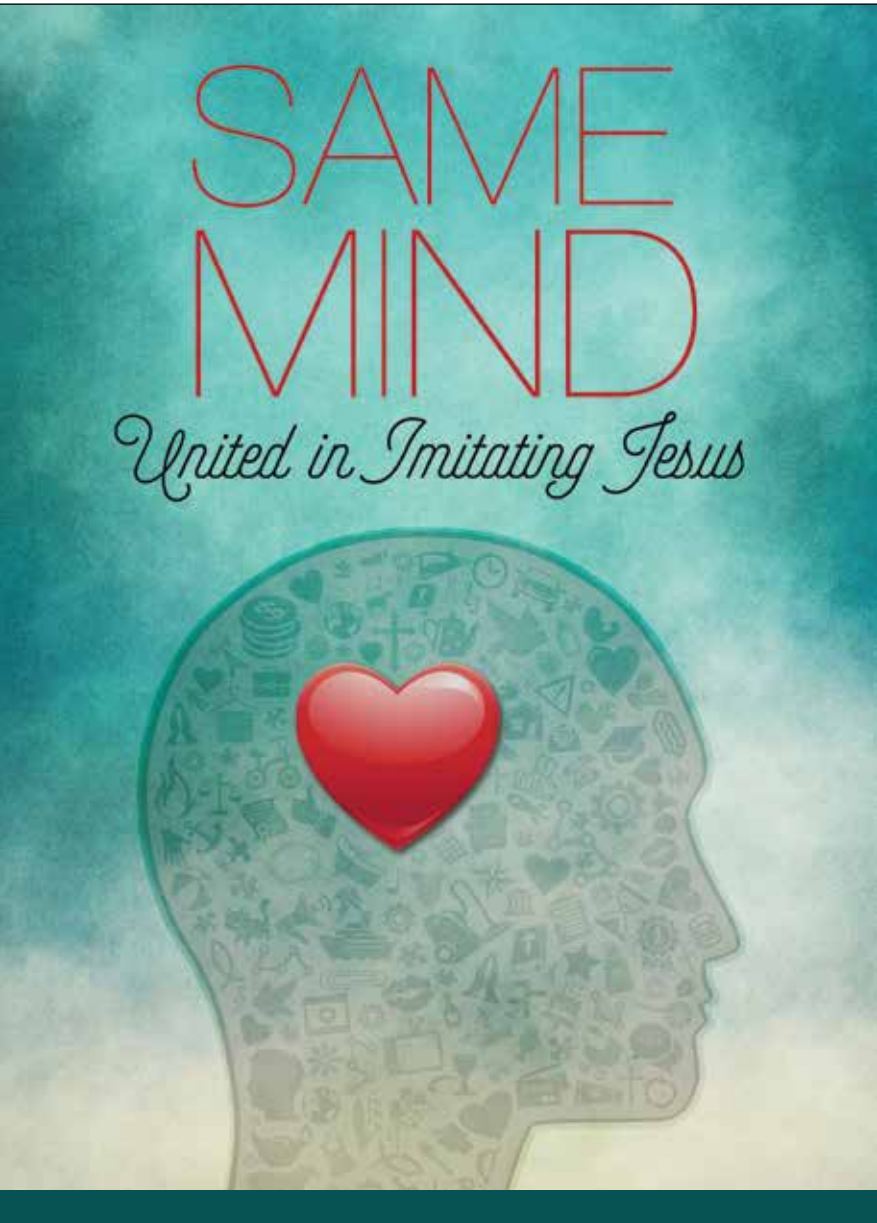
Essence Gantt, 10, Finesse Gantt, 6, and Kayla Montero, 8, pose during the Harlem Church of Christ’s barbecue “Love Feast.”

NEW YORK — In the waning days of summer, the Harlem Church of Christ left its building for Sunday worship. Under the shade of giant oak and maple trees in Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx, the entire congregation and guests praised the Lord before sharing a “Love Feast” of salad, fruit and five kinds of chicken wings — Italian, fried, jerk, barbecue and spicy. The church dates back to 1940, when Paul D. English began preaching for a small group of believers in the Bronze Studio on Lenox Avenue in New York. In October 1965, R.C. Wells began ministering for the congregation. After nearly four decades of service, he stepped into the role of minister emeritus in 2002. The congregation now has about 250 members, led by elders and deacons and served by minister O.J. Shabazz.



Church members and visitors enjoyed plentiful plates of chicken and salad.

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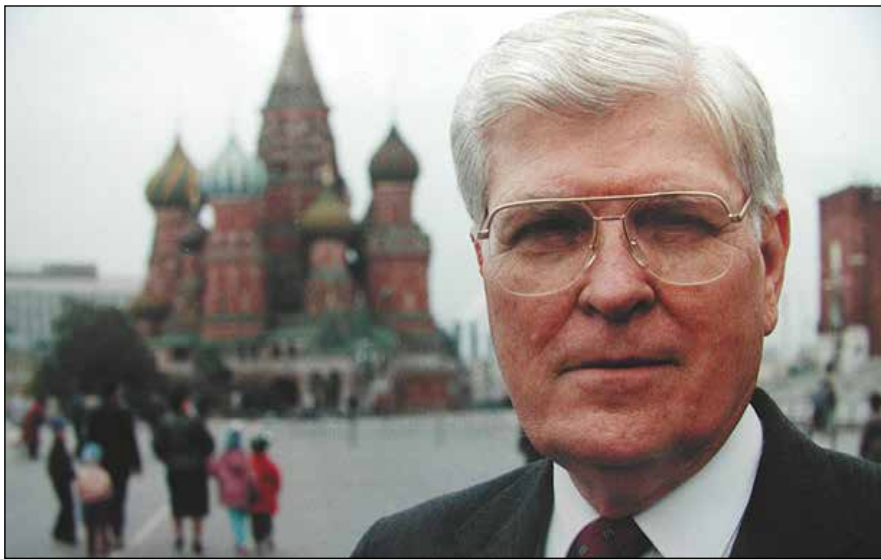
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ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY



Mack Lyon stands in Red Square in Moscow in 1990. The Oklahoma-born minister preached extensively in the Far East, Middle East, Russia and Eastern Europe.

LYON: 'Wanted to present the simple Gospel'

FROM PAGE 3

A miracle of modern technology changed Lyon's life, as he shared in a 2005 interview with *The Christian Chronicle*.

At a time when not every family owned a radio, the 14-year-old's father brought one home. The young Lyon started listening every Sunday to evangelist W.L. Oliphant's program out of Dallas.

Lyon, who grew up on the banks of Muddy Boggy River in rural southern Oklahoma, had never traveled farther than the Coal County seat. He certainly had no idea how far Dallas was from his family's white, two-story farmhouse.

"I just knew it was a long, long way by horseback," Lyon told the *Chronicle*. "And yet I can sit out here at the end of the road, and I can hear the Gospel preached in a powerful way in my home. And that just overwhelmed me."

One night that summer, after Oliphant's program ended, Lyon dropped to his knees. "I just prayed to the Lord that if he would let me live to be an adult, I would give my

life to preaching the Gospel using radio," Lyon said.

God, of course, had bigger plans.

Lyon's television ministry made him one of the most recognized faces in Churches of Christ. But his kindness and gentleness were what resonated with viewers, ministry supporters said.

Anything but flashy, Lyon resolved not to be a showman.

"I just wanted to present the simple Gospel," said Lyon, who wore his wedding band but no other jewelry — not even his wristwatch — while taping the program.

Lyon also refused to ask his audience for money or sell anything on the air. Rather, the

ministry relies on support from congregations across the nation, many of which pay for airtime in their areas.

Lyon and his first wife, Golda, were married for 53 years before she died in 1996. He remarried, and his second wife, Lois, survives him.

IN LIEU OF FLOWERS, memorial donations may be sent to "Search" at P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083. For more information, see www.searchtv.org.



PHOTOS PROVIDED

Seldom seen without a suit and tie, Mack Lyon rides his bicycle to a ministry appointment in the early 1940s.



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BRETHREN: 'We have got to find a way to be positive and loving'

FROM PAGE 1

each other on social media?"

The symposium was developed "to give a last-ditch effort to help bring together a brotherhood we saw splitting right before our very eyes," said directors Antwan Brown, minister for the Barton Avenue Church of Christ in Luling, La., and R.L. Clark Jr., minister for the Crowder Boulevard Church of Christ in New Orleans.

In a written statement of purpose, Brown and Clark voiced hope the undertaking "will start a national dialogue among the African-American Churches of Christ to bring us closer together than the current trend which has seen us driven further apart."

Genesis 13:8 (King James Version) inspired the event's name: "*And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.*"

Emphasizing dialogue — as opposed to debate — the symposium gave panelists with diverse viewpoints an opportunity to discuss what the Scriptures say or don't say concerning divisive issues.

Biblically acceptable worship, lines of fellowship and whether clergy robes are sinful were among the topics addressed in mostly cordial

but sometimes testy presentations.

"What we set out to do was to get those men from different sides of the aisle to have the conversation," Brown told *The Christian Chronicle*. "So, in that point, the objective was reached."

John Lewis, minister for the West Fifth Street Church of Christ in Summerville, Ga., said he welcomed the symposium's emphasis on respectful dialogue.

"Facebook can get out of control, and people can be really mean and nasty," Lewis said. "That's what's happening."

Talking in person benefits the tone of conversation, he added: "We can disagree with each other and not be disagreeable."

A desire for unity drew Jeffrey Pointer, minister for the Southern Hills Church of Christ in Charlotte, N.C., to the symposium.

"I would hope that rather than picking a side, we would use the biblical references and Scriptures to draw conclusions," Pointer said. "We don't have an issue with any of the churches here, even though we may not do some of the things that they do in worship."

"But some people want to make it a test of fellowship," he added, "and hopefully this weekend we can come up with an idea that, 'Look, we're different in different areas, but we are all on a united front, and we're going to support the work of the Kingdom.' That's what I'm hoping comes out of here."

But on Facebook, purported defenders of the faith frequently call out certain ministers and leaders



Brown



Clark



PHOTOS BY BOBBY ROSS JR.

Attendees bow in prayer during the recent two-day "We Be Brethren Symposium," hosted by the Elysian Fields Church of Christ in the heart of New Orleans.

as "heretics" and "false teachers," panelists lamented.

"Just a few weeks ago, there was a long list of brethren who were considered heretics in the church," Wesley said, "and I think we ought to be very careful about throwing out these types of labels."

"What we're seeing now is, if you are associated with somebody who is doing something that is questionable, you are being labeled a heretic on Facebook," he added. "You haven't received a call. You haven't received a letter. There's been no conversation, I'm sure."

Wesley said he appreciated the symposium bringing together disagreeing brothers to dialogue "from their hearts ... in a spirit of love."

Omari French, minister for the Uptown Church of Christ in San Francisco, said a Facebook group with which he is associated publicly apologized for a false accusation made against a Christian woman.

"We want to make sure that there are men striving for integrity," French said of that group's online activity.

But French said, "My question is, when there is something that offends the doctrine, whether it's fellowship with a denomination or whatever have you, is it not outside of the

purview of Matthew 18:15 if something is sin?" (That verse concerns the need to confront a brother or sister who sins one on one.)

A doctrinal issue, French suggested, should be an appropriate subject for a biblical dialogue in a public forum.

But Michael Crusoe, minister for the East End Church of Christ in Memphis, Tenn., said, "I'm not so sure I can take care of a doctrinal issue in California from Tennessee. ... When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, you know they had all kinds of problems, but he's writing to the church at Corinth. He's not writing to the church at Rome about Corinth's problem."

Discussions with — and about — fellow believers ought to be seasoned with "an overwhelming amount of love," Anderson said.

Younger Christians can't distinguish between nasty words on social media and declarations of love on Sunday, he cautioned.

Without a change in tone, Churches of Christ risk losing that generation, he said.

"We have got to find a way," Anderson said, "to be positive and loving in the way we communicate on social media."

And they'll know we are Christians by our ... love.



Speaking during a panel discussion at the "We Be Brethren Symposium" are, from left, Jefferson Carruthers of Winston-Salem, N.C., Loyial Williams of Longview, Texas, Omari French of San Francisco and Herman Wesley III of Montgomery, Ala.

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If you are energetic, enthusiastic and interested in a good work with great potential, we invite you to submit your résumé along with supporting materials via email to: For further information please contact:

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'God allowed us to make it through'

A DECADE LATER, church members who survived Hurricane Katrina keep counting their blessings.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

NEW ORLEANS

Ten years after Hurricane Katrina waged war on the Gulf Coast, Christians in hard-hit New Orleans are looking back — and ahead.

Frank J. Harden, an elder of the Louisa Street Church of Christ, recalls fleeing 260 miles west to Beaumont, Texas, as the “storm of the century” raged toward the Crescent City.

“The Lord was with us, trust me,” Harden said. “I mean, every move we made was the right move.”

In the Lone Star State, the Harden family — Frank, wife Annastasia and daughters Jennifer and Frankie, then 13 and 11 — found fellow Christians willing and eager to help them and other Louisa Street members.

“All of the Churches of Christ got together to help us,” Harden said, specifically mentioning Beaumont’s Ridgewood, South Park and Westgate congregations. “Oh, man, they really, really, really took care of us. I mean, we didn’t want for anything.”

Flooding during Katrina claimed the home of Yolanda White, then a



PHOTOS BY BOBBY ROSS JR.

Elder Frank J. Harden, right, sings during a Sunday morning assembly of the Louisa Street Church of Christ in New Orleans. The church in New Orleans’ Ninth Ward closed for more than three years after Hurricane Katrina struck a decade ago.

member of the Carrollton Avenue Church of Christ.

White and her family escaped to Grand Prairie, Texas, where they showed up the Sunday after the storm at the Freetown Road Church of Christ.

“They took us in and told us we were not going anywhere,” said White, who stayed in the Dallas area about a year before rebuilding in New Orleans. “They stuck by us the entire time.”

“Never did you hear the word ‘refugee,’” she added. “They took care of us like we were home until the time we came home.”

NEW ORLEANS, BACK FROM THE GRAVE

Katrina killed more than 1,830 people and caused \$150 billion in property damage.

About three weeks after the hurricane made landfall on Aug. 29, 2005, Harden and deacon Wayne Treaudo visited the disaster zone.

Police wouldn’t let most people off the interstate, but an officer — the nephew of a Louisa Street church member — granted the church leaders access.

“It looked like a nuclear bomb had gone off,” Harden said of the Louisa Street church property in New Orleans’ devastated Ninth Ward. “You couldn’t even see the streets. It was just cars on top of buildings. Brother Treaudo started crying when he saw it.”



Members bow during the communion service of the Hollygrove Church of Christ, a congregation planted in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.



The Carrollton Avenue Church of Christ — a hub of disaster relief efforts after Hurricane Katrina — sings during a recent Sunday morning assembly.

Harden called his wife in Beaumont and told her, “Forget about New Orleans. It’s history.” But as it turned out, New Orleans *wasn’t* history.

Neither was the Louisa Street church, even though it remained closed for more than three years. “We didn’t want to go building back and be the only ones there,” elder Winston Flakes explained.

But as residents returned, so did the church.

The Louisa Street church reopened in February 2009 — one of the last hurricane-damaged Churches of Christ to do so.

“I thought New Orleans would never be back, but God made it possible,” deacon Mac Stampley said.

God’s people helped.

Insurance only partially covered the \$400,000 renovation.

Christians across the nation donated sweat and money to help Louisa Street — and other Churches of Christ throughout the Gulf Coast — overcome the storm.

Minister Preston Olive said the congregation has recovered nicely as it works to improve its community outreach.



Flakes

Before Katrina, attendance averaged about 220. Now, it’s less than half that. Many church members never returned to New Orleans.

“The people that are here now, they really want to be here,” Harden said. “They made an effort to come back. We all have the same purpose. We want to build the body back up again at Louisa.”

MOVING BEYOND THE HURRICANE

Men, women and children dressed in their Sunday best stand under a shiny, V-shaped ceiling amid bright yellow-and-white walls — and the muck and the mildew of a decade ago seem like a long-ago nightmare.

“It’s something that you never forget,” Harden said before worship at the church he has called home since 1987. “It’s not something that you want to dwell on.”

But the memories linger, said White, now a member of the Hollygrove Church of Christ, a church planted in the aftermath of Katrina and sponsored by Carrollton Avenue.

“It’s always going to be somewhere in your mind. It’s that sore spot,” she said of Katrina. “But like I tell my kids, God allowed us to make it through, so we have to show him how grateful we are by the things that we do.”



Hurricane Katrina survivor Yolanda White, left, poses with her granddaughter Jaelyn, 10 months, and daughter Dorionne Huntington at the Hollygrove church.



BOBBY ROSS JR.

At the Hollygrove church in 2014, John Ellis prays as Angela Marsalis, Shekeira Honor (hidden behind Angela), Kevinisha Honor and Charles Marsalis bow their heads.

The vivid faces of Hurricane Katrina

NEW ORLEANS

I see the faces, and the memories come rushing back.

Since Hurricane Katrina a decade ago, I’ve made repeated trips to report on the faith and resiliency of God’s people — both victims and volunteers.

I’ve lost track of the exact number of times I’ve traveled to New Orleans. However, the faces — and experiences — remain fresh in my mind.

At the Elysian Fields Church of Christ, site of the recent “We Be Brethren Symposium,” I make eye contact with church leader Otis Shields, and he leans over to embrace me.

I first met Shields in Baton Rouge, La., just days after Katrina made landfall on Aug. 29, 2005. I had flown there with a disaster assessment team from the White’s Ferry Road Church of Christ in West Monroe, La. Shields had fled there to escape the storm.

Shields’ home and church were under water, but he trusted in God.

“I don’t know about my home or anything else,” he said at the time. “But we’re just keeping our heads and our prayers up because God is good, and we know that.”

His faith inspired me then — and now.

At the Hollygrove Church of Christ, I show up for Sunday worship, and Charles Marsalis chuckles at the sight of me. He scolds me for not telling him I was coming, and his belly — full of catfish, shrimp and crawfish — shakes with the joy of a disciple fulfilling his calling.

I first met the Marsalises as I reported on how they survived the storm by escaping to the balcony of the Carrollton Avenue Church of Christ.

In the decade since, Charles and Angela have dedicated their lives to Hollygrove, the high-crime area where both grew up. They started sharing Jesus with boys and girls on the porch of a hurricane-damaged home. Those studies led to the planting of the Hollygrove congregation in a small, red-brick church building abandoned after Katrina. (That’s the Marsalises’ 5-year-old grandson, Jaden, with me in the photo.)

On this Sunday, I can’t help but smile as Hollygrove’s worship assembly starts with a rousing singing of “Shelter in the Time of Storm.”

Jesus certainly has been that — for the Marsalises and countless other victims of Katrina.

I see the faces, and the memories come rushing back.

Road Notes



Bobby Ross Jr.

CHINESE: ‘Because they were open, we just studied with them’

FROM PAGE 3
to pursue a doctorate at LSU. “The language was difficult, and we didn’t know how things worked here.”
Then they met Doug Traylor, a fellow student who invited them to a worship service.
“We went to church, and immediately we met brothers and sisters here who treated us as a family,” Erhei Liang said. Traylor and Ray Morris, a member who volunteered with the youth, offered to study with them at their apartment.
“They were very intellectually honest about things,” Traylor said. “They questioned everything.”
Although she had trouble with the language, Weiping Liang loved the a cappella worship services.
“What touched my heart was the singing — the praying and the singing,” she said. Though she barely spoke a word of English at the time, “the singing was so precious.”

Soon, the couple asked to be baptized. And a ministry was born. Within a year, Morris was meeting with 10 small groups of Chinese students each week.
“Really, God opened that door,” Morris said. “I had never studied with the Chinese. I don’t know any language. They were open. We were open. Because they were open we just studied with them.”



QIONGFANG NI

At the South Baton Rouge Church of Christ, Jingtao Feng baptizes a woman from China after studying the Bible with her.

FROM CONVERTS TO LEADERS

For the next decade, Morris and a few members of the South Baton Rouge church studied with Chinese students and their friends and family.
The ministry grew.
“The fact that they didn’t speak any Chinese and accomplished what they did was remarkable,” said David Finch, whom South Baton Rouge hired in 1997 as a full-time minister to the Chinese population.
Finch understood that the new converts needed to take leadership roles. He encouraged the men to

say prayers and serve communion during Sunday worship. Eventually, the men formed a committee to oversee the ministry. The church now has three Chinese deacons.
“You stretch people slowly until they get a little more faith and confidence and they excel,” Finch said. “Once they start taking leadership, that changes everything.”
Because most of the Chinese members are students, many leave after graduation. However, enough have found jobs locally that the ministry maintains a foundation of mature Christians, Finch said.



Erhei Liang

The Liangs now live in Toronto. Other converts, including Jinshan Wang, have stayed in Baton Rouge. Wang serves as one of the deacons.
Through small-group ministry, the Chinese Christians reach out to their non-Christian countrymen.
“What we have is unique,” Finch said. “We have an opportunity for two cultures to come together and at the same time to meet the needs of those Chinese who need opportunities to study.”
Longtime church members including Sue Carter have watched the Chinese ministry grow and add to the congregation’s diversity.
“Our church represents the make-up of our city,” Carter said.

New generations of Chinese believers have raised their children in the church, said Lance Hendrix, who directs Camp Smiling Acres, which serves Churches of Christ in the area.
“They really focus in on some of the fundamentals” of the Christian faith, Hendrix said, “and they don’t really get caught up in what I would call the peripheral elements.”



Finch

The Chinese members hope to spread God’s word in their home nation, where interest in Christianity is on the rise. The Pew Research Center estimates that as much as 5 percent of the nation’s 1.3 billion souls now profess Christ as Lord.
Three years ago, the Chinese ministry of the South Baton Rouge church started supporting mission efforts in China. They devote about one-third of the Chinese ministry’s budget to the work, and the congregation’s missions committee has promised to match it.
For all of those back home who don’t yet know God, the love of Christ will change their lives, Erhei Liang said.
“We have hope,” he said. “I think Christianity is the most wonderful thing on the earth. To live in that life is the ideal life in this world.”



KYLE PEVETO

Gene Fu signs a piece of art that reads “Jesus is the Lord of our House” in Chinese. The art was framed and given to volunteers who helped the Chinese ministry grow.

SPOTLIGHT

Serving soles

NOTTINGHAM, England — A church in the homeland of Robin Hood doesn't steal from the rich but gives to the poor an ocean away.

Throughout the year, the Stapleford Church of Christ collects shoes — and money for shoes, to take on its annual mission trip to Honduras. The project, Soles for Souls, donates the footwear to people living and working in the dumps of Tegucigalpa.

Since 2013, the church has raised thousands of dollars for the project — sparking interest from non-church members who insist on helping.

"People are good, and people are generous," minister Bob Eckman said. "The responsibility is heavy to make sure that all donated goes for this great need."



Eckman

WEBSITE: www.staplefordchurchofchrist.co.uk

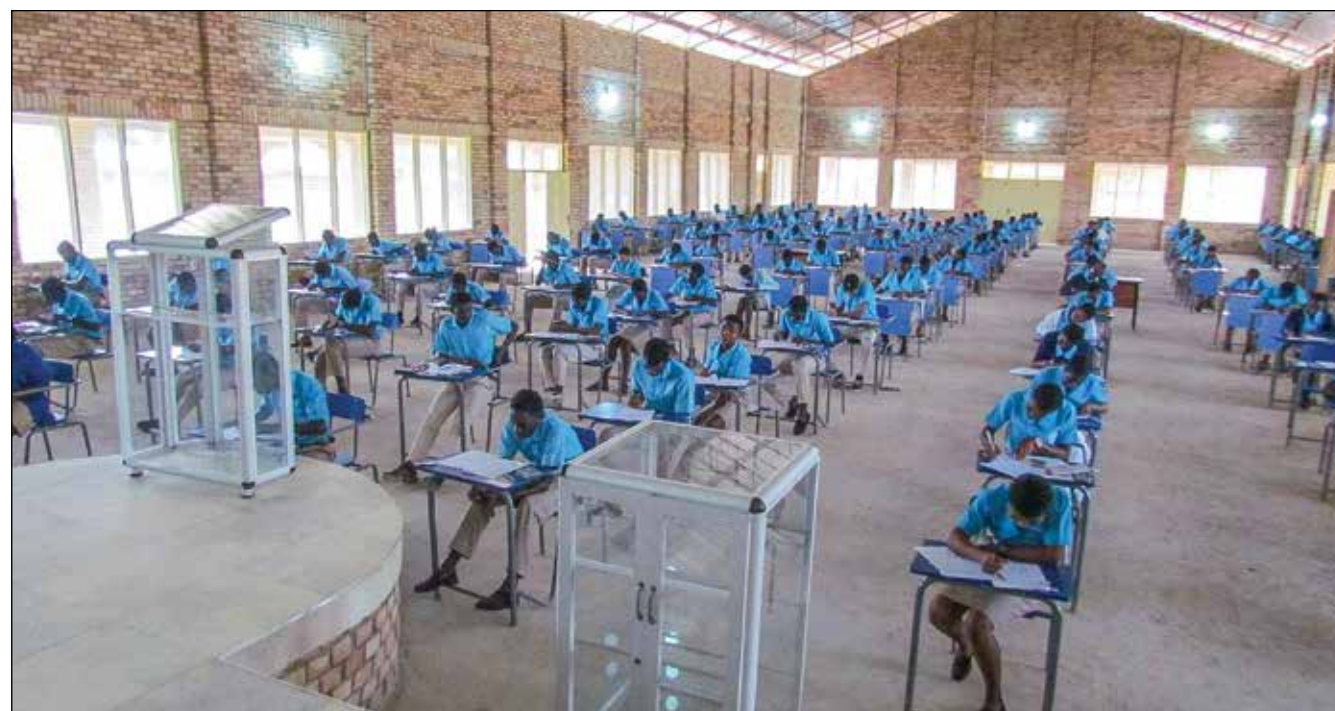


PHOTO PROVIDED BY FRED ASARE

Back to school: Christian students in West Africa prep for tests

Students at Hope College in Ghana take exams in the Christian school's Hackmann Hall. The 220-student school is part of the church-supported Village of Hope ministry. Director Fred Asare wants the students to be used to taking exams in the large auditorium in time for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination. The school recently implemented an honor code to prevent cheating.

"So far, our students have conducted themselves with integrity, discipline and dignity," Asare said. "It has been beautiful to behold. ... If you train students well and create the right culture and environment, they can be transformed to change the world for good."

GREECE

ATHENS — The recent Greek debt crisis pushed the unemployment rate within



PHOTO PROVIDED

Dino Tzanetos and his wife, Mata, serve in Athens.

the Evrou Church of Christ — already at 85 percent — to nearly 96 percent, minister Dino Tzanetos said. The few church members

with paying jobs could not receive money from their employers until the country's banks reopened. Nonetheless, church members proclaimed "God is good," Tzanetos said. That was the theme of a Vacation Bible School hosted by church members from Nashville, Tenn. Fifty-one children participated.

"It was a successful VBS, perhaps the best ever," Tzanetos said.

INDIA

VIJAYAWADA — The name of this southern Indian city means "place of victory." That's Mark Bryson's dream for this city of 1 million souls.

Bryson, minister of missions for the McDermott Road Church of Christ in Plano, Texas, led a one-day seminar for 70 men from various religious groups. They heard Bible lessons and got to know each other.

"We all appreciate the work which was done through brother Mark to

convert the denominational pastors in our area," said Prabhu Kumar, director of World English Institute India. "I hope that we can see good results in the future."

SOUTH AFRICA

BENONI — The Benoni Church of Christ is on a mission — to cover children in squatter camps with blankets and Christ's love.

Operation: Anti-Freeze began a few years ago when church members recognized the children's need for winter-weather necessities.

With assistance from a Kentucky church, the congregation collected money, blankets and jackets for South Africa's winter, which runs from May to July. Temperatures can dip into the mid-30s Fahrenheit.

"In addition to the blankets and jackets, we handed out to each child a knitted beanie, gloves, a pair of warm socks, a couple of oranges ... and small cartons of orange juice," said Jerry Hogg, missionary and teacher

at Southern Africa Bible College. "It was a good day for these kids."

UKRAINE

STANYTSIA LUHANSKA — Dmitry Grischuk recently visited this settlement in eastern Ukraine, near the conflict zone between his country's military and pro-Russian separatists, to distribute aid though the church-supported Let's Love ministry.

"Every night this town is being shelled. People here are in fear and despair," said Grischuk, a

minister and teacher at the Ukraine Bible Institute, which relocated from eastern Ukraine to the capital, Kiev, as the conflict intensified.

Grischuk, working with military chaplains, distributed 200 bags of food to the elderly and disabled in the town.



Grischuk



PHOTO PROVIDED

Prabhu Kumar introduces Mark Bryson.



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Christians from across Europe and the U.S. sing during the Central European Retreat.

Retreat is a multilingual mingle for Christians in Central Europe

SLAVIKOV, Czech Republic — There was a sense of euphoria as Christians spilled out of their cars into the gravel parking lot of the Immanuel Conference Center.

As the adults ran into each other’s arms, the kids ran to the trampoline.

The annual Central European Retreat brought members of Churches of Christ from 11 countries to worship, mingle — and bounce — about 95 miles southeast of the Czech capital, Prague.

Christians including Danielle Evans, a former missionary to Prague who now lives in Atlanta, organized the first retreat in 2003 to encourage the small congregation in Prague. Seventeen people attended.

This year’s attendance was 101 — most of whom worship with congregations of 25 or fewer believers.

Matus Dedina, an attorney who shares preaching duties for the Prague church with other Czech Christians, now organizes the retreats.

The multinational mix turned times of worship into a linguist’s paradise. During one session, the Christians sang “Here I am to Worship” in Hungarian, “Thank You” in Dutch, “When the Roll is Called Up Yonder” in Czech, “The Old Rugged Cross” in Polish and “My Jesus, My Savior” in German.

Dino Roussos, minister for the Glyfada Church of Christ, presented messages from the Bible. He said he was impressed that the organizers are indigenous European Christians



PHOTOS BY EILEEN EMCH

Paul and Katie Crook, missionaries in Reghin, Romania, at the retreat.

instead of foreign missionaries — a sign of maturing churches in Central Europe, he added.

Roussos also taught his fellow Christians some hymns in Greek.

“Singing together in so many languages was a beautiful experience, and fellowshiping with brothers and sisters from all over the world was deeply touching,” said Kim Seaman, who lives in southern California and attended the retreat with her husband, Jeff, and their four sons. The family had just participated in a gospel campaign in the east German cities of Chemnitz and Leipzig.

Dedina hopes more Christians will attend the next retreat, although this year’s group filled the conference center to capacity. That’s not a problem, he said, motioning toward the center’s grassy lawn.

Next year, he’ll help pitch tents.

EILEEN EMCH, church worker in Rostov-on-Don, Russia, conducted interviews for this report.

A pillar church for Southeast Asia

AS IT CELEBRATES 50 YEARS, Singapore's Pasir Panjang Church of Christ looks back and asks, 'What have we missed?'



The luxurious Marina Bay Sands Hotel towers over a grove of "supertrees" — solar-powered, vertical gardens — on the southern end of Singapore's main island.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

SINGAPORE

Growing up in this high-tech, fast-paced financial hub of Southeast Asia, Eunice Ong loved slowing down on Sundays to worship alongside her parents.

But sometimes she felt a bit "short-changed" by the experience, she said.

After all, Sunday was one more day she could be studying.

"My parents refused to let me skip church if there was a big exam the next day," said Ong, whose father, Patrick, is a minister for the 500-member Pasir Panjang Church of Christ.

Her parents also taught her about "a higher being I can share my burdens with," said Eunice Ong, now 24 and completing a degree in environmental engineering.

Regardless of her test scores, she

knows God's in charge.

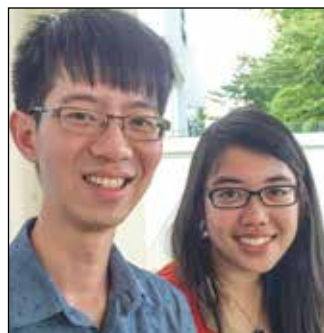
For a half-century, the Pasir Panjang congregation, affectionately known as "PP church," has grown with this tiny city-state, which occupies a group of islands sandwiched between Malaysia and Indonesia.

A former colonial outpost of Britain, the nation of 5.4 million souls is one of the world's most prosperous countries and boasts a high standard of living — with high pressure to succeed.

The church, once a recipient of missionaries and missions funding, now is self-supporting, served by five elders and eight deacons, with three full-time ministers.

As its members reach out to their overscheduled, over-stressed

society, they support missions from the Philippines to England. The church houses a branch of Texas-based Sunset International Bible Institute, which trains ministers from countries including Myanmar and Vietnam.



PHOTOS BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Chen Yi, 26, and Eunice Ong, 24, grew up in the Pasir Panjang Church of Christ.

The congregation's 50-year history "is a testimony to the world that Pasir Panjang is really a mature church and a pillar of the development of Churches of Christ in Asia," said Herbin Simanjuntak, a minister and administrator of Batam Bible College in Indonesia, another Sunset-associated school.

"Pasir Panjang is like the church in 1 Thessalonians," Simanjuntak said, referencing the apostle Paul's praise for a congregation that "became an example to all" as it spread the Good News to its neighbors.

"It is the same with Pasir Panjang — not only in Singapore, but every place," he said.

REACHING OUT TO THE OVERWORKED

Here, Eunice Ong's desire to excel is hardly unique.

"Generally, Asian culture is more results-driven, I think, especially in Singapore," said Chen Yi, who also grew up in the church. His father, Tan Beng Chuan, serves as an elder and minister. "Our parents teach us

to rely on God, but the expectation to perform is still present."

An estimated 97 percent of students in Singapore are enrolled in tutoring programs outside their schools. On Saturdays, they pack into the city's multilevel shopping malls to take lessons at specialized

learning centers — next to boutiques selling the latest Louis Vuitton fashions and Samsung gadgets.

About 75 percent of the country's population is of Chinese descent, with substantial Malaysian, Indian and Eurasian minorities. There are also

many foreign workers from the other parts of Asia, including the Philippines and China.

That mix creates a diverse religious landscape. Located between two predominantly Muslim countries, Singapore's suburbs are lined with Buddhist, Hindu and Christian houses of worship, often side by side.

"Religion is free here. There's no

CONTINUED

 **From the EAST**
Matthew 8:11

See more stories in this series at www.christianchronicle.org.

Pasir Panjang Church of Christ

LOCATION: Southeast Asia, on an island off Malaysia's southern tip, on Pasir Panjang (Malay for "Long Beach") Road.

LEADERSHIP: Elders Adrian Teo, Tan Beng Chuan, Simon Goh, William Wong and Winston Chong; deacons K.C. Cheang, Lim Li Chhoan, Patrick Ong, Paul Lim, Peter Lim, Lim Swee Aun, Terry Wan and Vincent Lim.

STAFF: Ministers Henry Kong, Tan Beng Chuan and Patrick Ong. Kong will step down in 2017 after 50 years of ministry, and Tan will serve as senior minister.

SERVICES: Two Sunday morning services in English and one in Chinese. Bible classes for Filipino Christians and the hearing-impaired. Sunday evening worship in English.

CARE TEAMS: Small-group ministries for youths, young adults, men, women and married couples meet regularly.

MISSIONS: The church supports work in nations including Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, China, India and the United Kingdom. The church works in partnership with ministries including Missions Resource Network, Sunset International Bible Institute, Let's Start Talking and medical mission MARCH for Christ.

HISTORY: The church was launched in 1964 when Ong Aun Nam assembled a group of young people in the low-cost housing estate of Queenstown. Missionaries A.L. Harbin and Pence Dacus worked with the congregation before selecting Henry Kong to take over the work. The church purchased its current property with a loan from the Quail Springs Church of Christ in Oklahoma City. The church repaid the loan and is self-supporting.

WEBSITE: www.ppoc.org



ERIK TRYGGESTAD



ABOUT THIS SERIES

The Christian Chronicle launched Churches That Work in 2005 to inspire Churches of Christ to take an active role in their communities. Churches That Work should be evangelistic, reaching the unchurched at home or abroad; biblical, making Bible instruction central to their mission; united, possessing a spirit of internal vitality; visible, known and appreciated for service in their community. The Pasir Panjang church is the first outside the U.S. to be featured in this series. Find more Churches That Work at www.christianchronicle.org.

At home, overseas, church members 'know the names and the faces' of those they serve

CONTINUED persecution," said Doreen Lim, whose husband, Li Chhoan, is a deacon of missions for the Pasir Panjang church. As a result, people take faith for granted, she said, and focus instead on the "five Cs of Singapore" — cash, car, credit card, condo and country club. Many work 11-hour days and weekends in pursuit of these goals.

"It's even worse because now everything is online," Doreen Lim said. "When you're home, you turn on your computer and, *ka-ching*, you're working!"

Doreen Lim grew up in a Taoist home and was introduced to the church by her sister. Though she studied about the historical Jesus in school, Bible class was the first time she encountered Christ as Savior, she said.

As newcomers get to know Christ and become baptized believers, the church's Care Teams play a vital role in nurturing their faith, said minister Tan Beng Chuan. Members meet in small groups two to four times per month to study and share each other's burdens and anxieties.

Eunice Ong said her Care Team helps young and old believers "support each other through life's challenges. ... It's something we

can't get easily, just meeting on Sunday."

Nowadays church members can't rely on door-knocking to win souls, as they did in the early years of the church, Lim Li Chhoan said. Instead, they practice "friendship evangelism" and focus on ways to help their overworked community.

For example, church members who teach have hosted classes for parents who want to help their children prepare for tests in math and science. These classes have introduced families to the church, including Winston and Hong Ngee Chong, who were later baptized.

Winston Chong, who works in Singapore's financial sector,

now serves as an elder. He sees a need for churches to minister to businesspeople, teaching against corruption and about the value of fair profit, of honoring one's

word. In a culture focused on material gain, "that's where we need to be shining the light the brightest," he said.

The church continues to look for new opportunities to point Singaporeans away from the "five Cs" and toward the one "C" that matters — Christ, Tan said.

Christians, he added, must



Tan



Chong



PHOTO PROVIDED BY HENRY KONG

Members of the Pasir Panjang church sing during Sunday worship. The 500-member church has two Sunday morning services in English and one in Chinese.

recognize that "right at the door there is a mission field."

REACHING AROUND THE GLOBE

The church takes its international mission work as personally as its small-group ministry.

Groups of Pasir Panjang members regularly visit mission points to conduct Vacation Bible Schools and medical missions and to support their fellow Christians.

The church has an internship program that sends about a dozen young believers to assist in local and international work. It also sponsors an annual retreat

for its members and invites church workers from abroad.

"They're looking for partnerships. They don't do missions solo," said Brandi Kendall, one of the instructors at the Sunset school housed in Pasir Panjang's building.

"They have a vested interest in mission points," said Kendall, himself a former missionary in the European nation of Estonia. "They know the names and the faces."

Jhun Ma and his wife, Babe, serve as missionaries in Tuao, Philippines, with support from Pasir Panjang.

"The first few years of the Tuao

church were really a struggle," Jhun Ma said, but the Pasir Panjang church "showered us with the needed support," sending church members "to refresh our spirits and encourage us to continue in the work."

Elders and deacons continue to visit with teams of youths, the missionary said. "They make sure that every member has the opportunity to know and experience life in the mission field."

'WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHURCH'

Despite successes in ministry and missions, there's a sense of

discontent among the church's leaders.

As the congregation celebrated a "year of jubilee" to mark its 50th anniversary, the elders used the opportunity to revisit its mission — with prayer and meditation.

"Looking back, what have we missed?" asked Chong.

Earlier this year the elder delivered a Sunday morning sermon on "Revisiting the New Testament church." Early Christians showed real joy as they came together and shared what they had, he said.

Two thousand years later, "have we fallen victim to forms and forgotten

what it means to be a church?"

He mentioned controversies that cause divisions among Churches of Christ — debates over how many cups to use in communion, whether or not churches should have Bible classes or kitchens.

"Thankfully, not all of this has come to Singapore," Chong said, though congregations here have experienced discord over the years. The elder urged the congregation to return to Scripture and focus on being "a people of restoration" rather than a people so focused on a perceived pattern that they miss the crucified Christ.

After the sermon, Henry Kong addressed the congregation. Kong has ministered for Pasir Panjang for nearly 50 years and helped guide the church through the selection of its leaders.

"Brother Winston has encouraged us to see the forest as we look at the trees," Kong told the church. "Let's look for transformation. Let's look for a better walk with God."

Church shouldn't be one more thing on the people of Singapore's already-too-long "to do" lists, he said.

"Let's make this year a year that our faith means something to us."



Kong

A YEAR OF JUBILEE

The Pasir Panjang Church of Christ declared its 50th anniversary a "year of jubilee." The church followed the example from Leviticus, when God called his people to "proclaim liberty throughout all the land" every half-century.

More than 800 Christians gathered for a celebration on Oct. 19, 2014.

The church also collected more than \$150,000 for missions.

Church leaders asked for testimonials from Christians in the congregation and throughout Southeast Asia. Excerpts are presented here, with additional reporting by Erik Tryggestad.



"I started regular worship at Pasir Panjang after I witnessed the strong faith of my husband, Roland. I could really feel that God was present during worship. "Our daughter's question, 'Mum, dad, why aren't we attending Bible class on Sundays?' started our regular Bible class attendance. "We were blessed and filled with joy over the years as our three children were baptized."

Lynda Wee, Pasir Panjang member



"The Pasir Panjang congregation is a model for mission churches, starting with Brother A.L. Harbin selecting Henry Kong as the local preacher. "(Kong) didn't make the mistake of selecting elders before they were prepared and ready. Today they are the servant leaders that God intended rather than administrators."

Winston Bolt, longtime missionary to Indonesia and founder of Batam Bible College



"We at the Northwest congregation in Singapore are always grateful to Pasir Panjang for their assistance when we first started. You helped us with song books, tracts and even brother Henry Kong preached one Sunday morning. We thank God for Pasir Panjang, for her work especially in ministering to the deaf and the foreigners in Singapore."

Soon Choon Lin, minister, Northwest Church of Christ in Singapore



"Pasir Panjang provided a shelter for us in this foreign land — to know more our fellow Christians, to share our laughter and tears. "For me, to live is not all about 'work and spend and enjoy' ... It is how much I can do to touch lives and how to be a blessing to others. "God is shaping me here. This is not my final destination."

Clarita Simon, Pasir Panjang church member, originally from the Philippines.



"I attended my first Pasir Panjang camp in 2009. I was thrilled to see an efficient and self-sufficient congregation outside the western world. "I was touched by the concern, care, commitment and the great hospitality of the members. It doesn't matter whether you are small or big, rich or poor, you will be embraced with the same love."

Joel Madiki, minister in southern India who has partnered with Pasir Panjang since 2010.



"You have rooted us and guided us spiritually by assigning us to lead the Filipino Bible class, thus giving us no escape from our Christian obligation. "When we came back to the Philippines, we never imagined that all the experiences and lessons we learned from Singapore brethren would be applied right in our own congregation."

Sonny and Gina Catalan, church workers in the Philippines



"Pasir Panjang and Missions Resource Network are in partnership for Kingdom growth in Asia. "We call them a Global Launch Site partner. We work together in their nine mission points, equipping leaders to be disciple makers. "Some of my best partners in the Gospel and my dearest friends in the world are members at the Pasir Panjang Church of Christ."

Mark Hooper, director of Asia missions for Missions Resource Network (mrnet.org)



"It was a time of spiritual growth when I was at Pasir Panjang Church of Christ. I have learned so much from brothers and sisters there in both the English and Chinese congregations. "It is a blessing to know that together as God's family we are fighting this good fight."

Peter Zhu, former student at Sunset International Bible Institute in Singapore, now a minister in China.

In a nation ravaged by war, education is crucial to stability and prosperity, says church member Jan Bradley

Building hope for Afghanistan's future



PHOTOS BY JOHN BRADLEY

Jan Bradley gets smiles from dozens of students at a school in Afghanistan's Parwan Province, where she and her husband, John, handed out school supplies and soccer balls.

BY LYNN McMILLON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me.” Jesus’ words from Matthew 25 are etched deep in the heart of Jan Bradley. Her husband, Lt. Gen. John Bradley, served as a Reserve chief with the U.S. Air Force. He returned from a trip to Afghanistan in 2006 and told his wife about seeing fellow soldiers use their off-duty time to give clothing, toys and school supplies to the Afghan women and children who visited Bagram Air Base for medical care. In response, Jan Bradley collected more than 40,000 pounds of blankets, clothing, shoes, boots and school supplies for her husband to take with him on another trip in 2007. While handing out the donations in an Afghan

village, the general came face-to-face with 9-year-old Lamia, who asked him for boots like his to help her through the cold winter. A year later the Bradleys delivered boots to her family, and the Lamia Afghan Foundation was born.

Now retired, John Bradley and Jan help build schools and provide medical and humanitarian aid through the foundation, which has received more than \$600,000 in donations and pays no salaries. Every dollar goes directly to the needs of Afghans, Jan Bradley said.

Jan Bradley also has worked with programs that serve wounded warriors. In 2008, she received the Air Force Exceptional Service Award.

The Bradleys live in Nashville, Tenn., where they worship with Churches of Christ. John Bradley serves on the board of Lipscomb University. They have one daughter.

Tell us about the purpose behind the Lamia Afghan Foundation.

Our purpose is driven by a strong desire to minister to the needs of the Afghan people, who have suffered through the horrors of 35 years of war and oppression.

Women and young girls have been especially disenfranchised under past Taliban rule and the country’s conservative culture. We’re trying to help by building schools and providing other educational opportunities, along with various types of skills training. We just finished our seventh school for girls.

We have given opportunities in many of Afghanistan’s provinces to

hundreds of women to learn sewing and tailoring skills so they can earn income to support their families. This has involved buying hundreds of sewing machines in Afghanistan and shipping thousands of pounds of donated fabrics and sewing supplies from the United States to support numerous established sewing training programs.

The aid is moved on U.S. military aircraft, free on a space-available basis, because of a law referred to as the Denton Amendment. The Denton Office of the U.S. State Department told us our foundation has moved more humanitarian aid to Afghanistan than any other non-government entity.



In an Afghanistan refugee camp, Jan Bradley hugs a boy who has lost both of his arms. Thousands of children in the war-torn nation have been killed or seriously injured in conflict-related violence, including improvised explosive devices, the United Nations reports.

To what extent have fellow Christians participated in this effort?

We have had an enormous amount of support from hundreds of Christians.

For several years Healing Hands International in Nashville provided work and storage space for the humanitarian aid operation. They gave hundreds of aid items, medical equipment and supplies — blankets, sleeping bags. They helped pack boxes. They trucked the aid to the military bases from which it was flown to bases in Afghanistan.

We would not have gotten the aid program off the ground had it not been for the Christians at Healing Hands.

There are also many Christians from around the world working in Afghanistan. One of the finest was Dr. Jerry Umanos, a doctor in Kabul for eight years until April 2014, when he was murdered by a security guard.

“Dr. Jerry,” as he was known, was what we called a “human neonatal

intensive care unit.” He saved more babies lives in childbirth than anyone ever in Afghanistan. He saved the lives of more mothers in childbirth than anyone ever.

How do you gain trust among the people of Afghanistan?

We have traveled to Afghanistan seven times together, usually twice a year. This has allowed us to support projects firsthand, visit Afghans, listen to them and learn what they need.

We visit many senior officials of the Afghan national government to coordinate our work and get approval for our projects.

One accomplishment is that we have established credibility with government officials, ministries and people at the grass-roots level. Credibility is everything in Afghanistan. The people there know they can trust us.

You have to be very careful when you talk to Afghans. If you say you will try to do something, they may think you said you *will* do it. So if you can’t do it, they will lose trust in you.

Is the status of females improving in Afghanistan?

Yes! In many ways.

There are more girls in schools in Afghanistan now than ever before. They are getting the education their mothers and grandmothers did not have the opportunity to receive. The culture has not changed enough, but you can see some improvement in the way women are treated.

The health status of women and girls is improving dramatically due to having some very basic health care available. Infant mortality rates have dropped substantially; maternal mortality rates have also plummeted. The expected length of life for women has gone up more than 10 years. Some of this is due to health care. Some of it is due to better education.

Not only are more women working outside the home, they are also having more opportunities to own and run businesses. That is not widespread, but the outlook is promising. Many more women hold senior positions in government.

How do continuing conflicts in Afghanistan impact the schools already started?

We have been blessed that our schools have not had any difficulty from the Taliban and their supporters.

As a matter of fact, the schools in Afghanistan have not generally had the problems that were common several years ago. We have not had a single incident in or around our schools, and we have had no reports of the schoolgirls being harassed or discouraged from attending school.

We are very careful where we build schools, and we only build where the local village men want to have a school for their daughters.

Most village elders today want their daughters to attend school. The local men build the school, under the construction supervision of our builder and his architect or engineer. That way they have ownership, and they will protect it.

We tell the men that they need to value their daughters because their culture is so male-dominant. We tell them they need to educate their daughters, because one thing is the same everywhere: when they, the old men, get sick, it is their daughters who will take good care of them.

This really gets their attention. They usually laugh, shake their heads and say, “Yes.”

WEBSITE: www.lamia-afghanfoundation.org



Jan Bradley holds a baby and visits with children in a refugee camp where she helps to distribute humanitarian aid.



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Southern Christian Home is seeking House Parent couples to serve in our ministry to children in need. House parents have the amazing and humbling responsibility of showing Christ to the children placed in their care. Benefits include: competitive salaries, insurance, housing and utilities, food allowances, gas allowances, and van for work use. Couples have one week off per month and retirement benefits are available after only two years.

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MINISTRY TRAINING

BAXTER INSTITUTE

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras — Crowds of 250 to 700 people attended the annual lectureship of the Baxter Institute, which prepares its students to become preachers, teachers, missionaries and leaders among Churches of Christ throughout the Spanish-speaking world.

“*Diaconia* (Greek for “ministry”): Successful Ministry with the Humble

Spirit of Christ” was the theme. Keynoters included former missionaries Dan Coker and Philip Slate, Baxter dean Selvin Monterroso and graduate Leopoldo Villacorta.

Monterroso

Baxter administrators honored those involved in the 1981 to 1989 Global Campaigns, during which U.S. missionaries, including Coker, Baxter students and a chorus from Abilene Christian University crisscrossed Latin America. The group sang in parks, distributed flyers and studied with contacts.

During the campaigns, 93 people were baptized in Santiago, Chile, and 116 in Mexico City.

HIGHER EDUCATION

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

ABILENE, Texas. — After filing for divorce last year, ACU President Phil Schubert and his wife, Jamie, have reconciled.

“God was gracious to Jamie and me,” Phil Schubert said, “and we give him the glory for being where we are today. Our family has reunited, and we are deeply grateful.”

Last August, the university’s trustees decided that Schubert’s leadership “will continue to bless ACU,” despite divorce proceedings.

Board Chairman Barry Packer said he was “thankful God gave our trustees and the Schuberts the space, time, counsel and spiritual



JESSICA COLEMAN

Sisters in life — and sisters in Christ — after camp baptisms

Sisters Lora and Heidi Eisenhour share a hug after Heidi’s baptism at Silver Maple Camp, 12 miles south of Kingman, Kan. Lora Eisenhour was baptized immediately after her sister. More than 350 campers and 100-plus staff members enjoy family and youth weeks at the Kansas camp. Campers come from as far away as California and Georgia, New York and Texas, to experience Silver Maple.

discernment they needed during some challenging days.”

“Phil and Jamie have worked diligently to grow and strengthen their family,” Packer said. “We pray God will continue to bless them and ACU as we serve and honor him.”

Phil Schubert added, “Many people struggle in marriage in ways others never see. Whether we know them or not, we ask God to strengthen all marriages and the important relationships on which they depend.”

HARDING UNIVERSITY

SEARCY, Ark. — The Rhodes Field House — a campus landmark and home court for the Bisons — is getting a facelift thanks to a \$1 million donation from Roy and Becky Reaves.

“The Rhodes needs expanding and renovating now,” said Reaves, chairman of Harding’s board of



PHOTO PROVIDED

Harding’s Rhodes Field House is a converted World War II airplane hangar.

trustees. “Becky and I believe improvements are needed immediately, and we hope our gift will make it happen.”

The renovations will add approximately 2,000 square feet to the entrance, a hospitality box on the second level and an 11,000-square-foot practice facility and dressing rooms to the west side of the facility.

President Bruce McLarty said board members were unanimous in their decision to change the name of

the building to the Rhodes-Reaves Field House. The project is scheduled to begin in November.

OKLAHOMA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

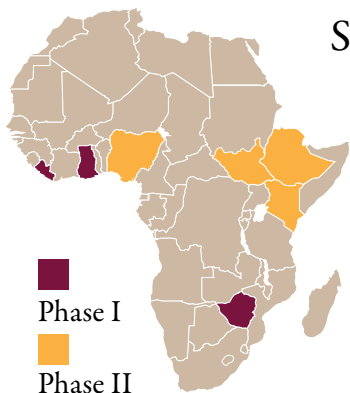
OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma Christian graduated its first-ever RN to BSN students in an Aug. 14 ceremony.

Liz Baxter, Heather Rosser and Kathryn Brown were the first three students to receive the Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree through the new online program.

“It’s online so we can reach out beyond Oklahoma City,” nurse and educator Rhea Ann Lee told *The Oklahoman*. “We need rural nurses to be able to reach the higher education possibilities.”

The program launched in May 2014 and benefits those who live or work in areas where a traditional course would be difficult to complete.

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SUNSET
Means The World.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

NASHVILLE, Tenn.

C lose your eyes and listen. It sounds like Neil Diamond just got saved. *“When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul.”*

But the man pouring his soul into the classic hymn in the Riverwood Church of Christ’s basement is most decidedly *not* Neil Diamond.

“This is one of the songs the ladies would hear me singing and say, ‘Oh my goodness! Young man, do you realize you sound like Neil Diamond, honey?’” Theron Denson said, remembering life as an 11-year-old in the pews of a Missouri church. “I was like, ‘Who’s Neil Diamond? Does he go to church here?’”

Now Denson tours the country as Black Diamond, an African-American Neil Diamond tribute artist. When he’s not belting out “Forever in Blue Jeans,” “Shilo” and “Sweet Caroline,” he lifts his voice to the Lord.

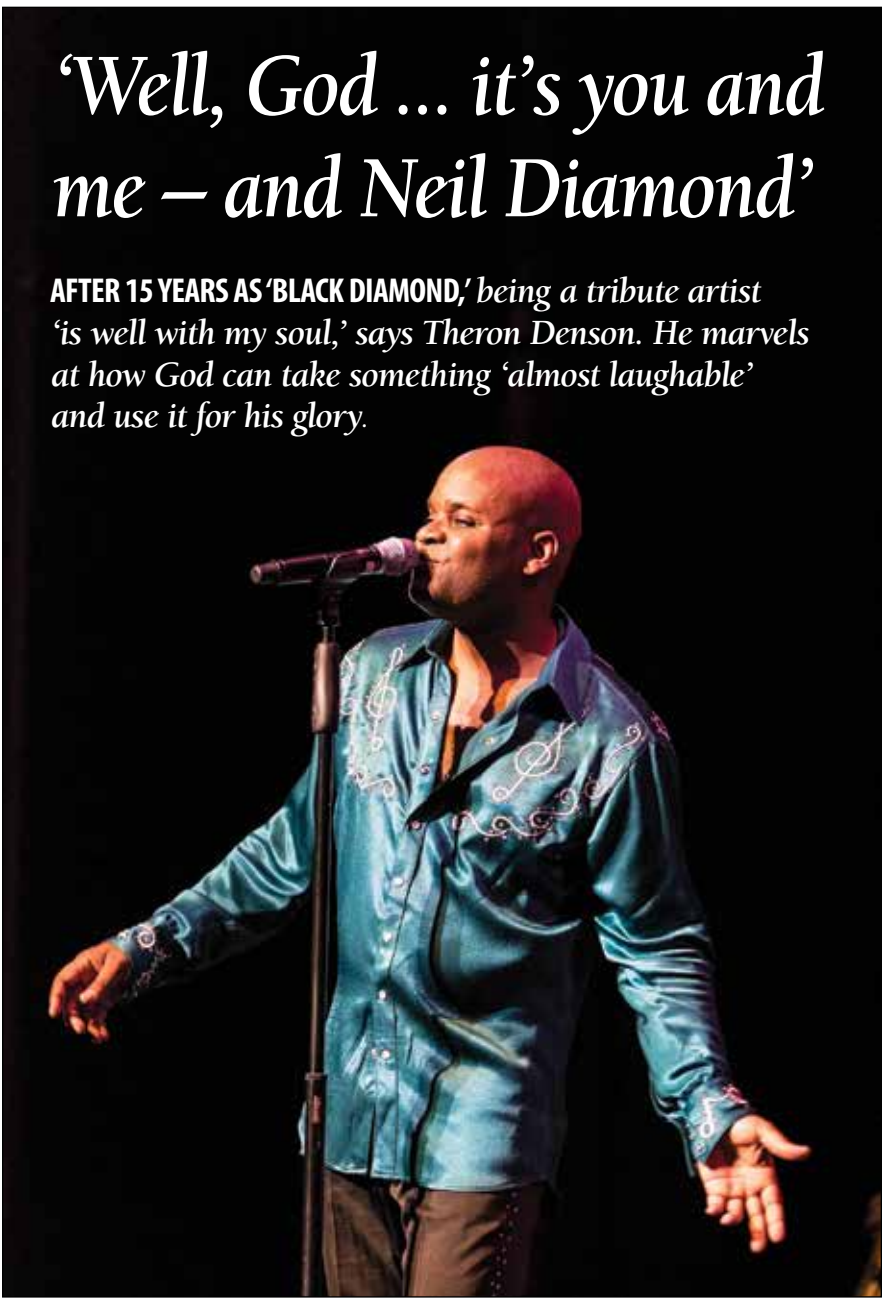
“It Is Well With My Soul” remains his favorite hymn, he says. After years of uncertainty and wavering faith, “that song moves me and touches me beyond all description.”

‘WHERE IT BEGAN ...’

In 1964, as a young, unknown Neil Diamond struggled to live on 35 cents per day as a songwriter, Denson was born into a military family.

While his father was stationed at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri, Denson rode a “JOY bus” to the nearby Waynesville Church of Christ. His school’s principal, Marvin Pendleton, was a church deacon — and the bus driver. After church, Pendleton took the kids to a convenience store and gave them each a dime to buy “as much candy as you could possibly get.”

“I probably initially went for the dime and the store afterwards,” Denson said, “but God took hold of me in that process.” He was baptized at age 10. By then, Neil Diamond was a household name. As church members started comparing Denson to his vocal doppelganger, the young Christian became interested in his music. Meanwhile, the church’s minister, Dick Stovall, “mentored me in



Theron Denson performs as Black Diamond at a March 2015 concert in Clinton, Mich. The event raised more than \$16,000 for the Church of Christ Care Center in Clinton.

so many ways about what it meant to be a Christian man,” Denson said. That meant teaching him how to take communion — and leave some unleavened bread for the other Christians, he recalled with a laugh. Stovall also taught him to preach.

Denson delivered his first sermon at age 12 to inmates at the Pulaski County Jail, where the church had a prison ministry.

He thought he’d be a preacher — not a singer — and studied at Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City. He later moved to

Pepperdine University in California but soon lost his focus.

He moved from Colorado to Utah to New Mexico, “just wherever Greyhound would take me ... trying to find my place,” he recalls. “I really was drifting.”

Eventually, he ended up in his parents’ home state, West Virginia, working at the front desk of a hotel. He noticed that many guests seemed irritated as they handed him their credit cards — likely because of the high-priced rooms, he guessed.

“As I gave them their room keys,

I’d say, ‘Tell me who this sounds like — *Hello, again, hello ...*’ I took pride in turning that frown into a smile before they went off to their rooms.”

The hotel’s managers weren’t smiling. They told him to stop singing or look for other employment.

“Singing is like breathing to me,” he told them as he resigned.

It was Sept. 7, 2000.

“I looked up in heaven and I said, ‘Well, God, it looks like it’s you and me and Neil Diamond now, and I pray that this will work.’”

THE GREAT ‘I AM ... I SAID’

He started performing in whatever venues he could find. In Charleston, W.Va., he spent Thursday nights singing at a pizza parlor “for \$50 and all the pizza I could eat,” he said.

There, in 2003, a businessman from Los Angeles caught his act and passed his name along to his friend, a producer for “Jimmy Kimmel Live.” The late-night comedian flew Denson to California to sing on the show — and then took him bowling.

“He was genuinely enthralled,” Denson said, “rooting for my success and pulling for this to take off.”

Kimmel advised Denson to move to Las Vegas and start a tribute show. As Denson prepared for the move, his father died. His plans — and his faith — were derailed. Several years earlier he had stopped attending church. He began to drift again, eventually moving to Kalamazoo, Mich. To his surprise, the predominantly white community embraced Black Diamond.

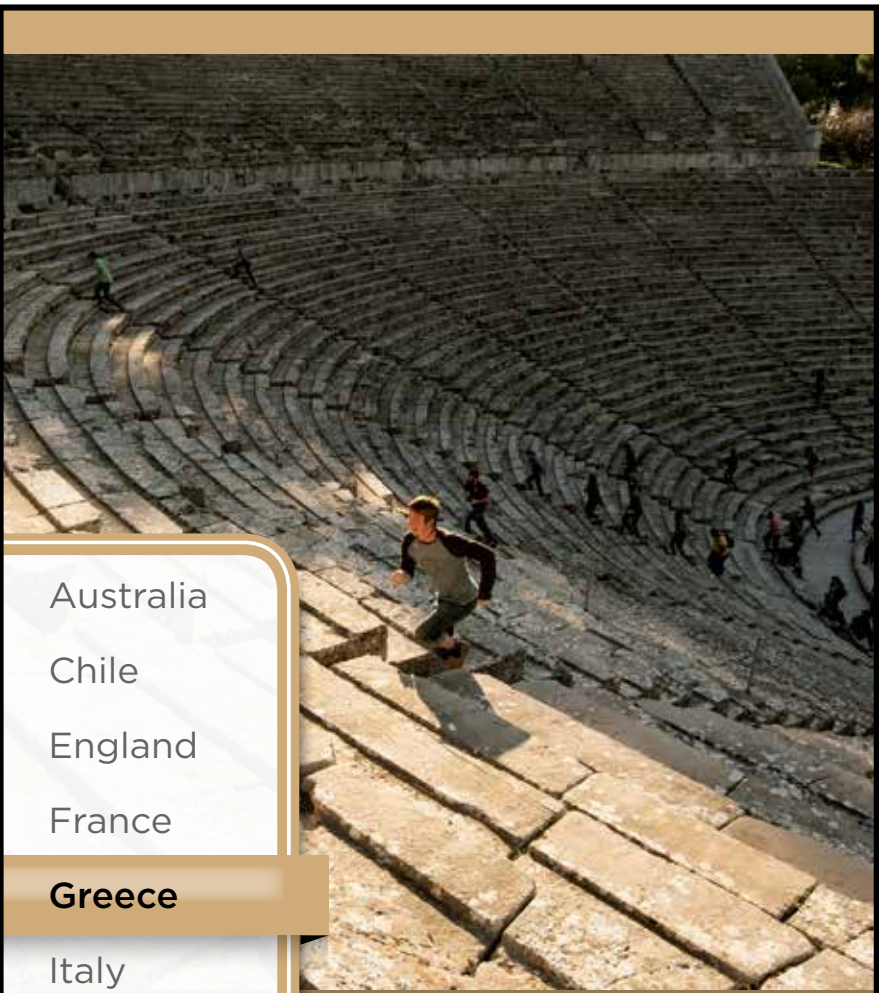
He was equally surprised when one of his neighbors invited him to worship — with the East Main Church of Christ — in 2006. Denson resisted, but finally consented to a visit.

“My plan was to just go one time and that way he’ll stop asking me,” Denson said. “But that very first time ended up being my reunion with the church. The people were so warm and embracing. They never let go of me from that very first visit.

“The very next day I was getting phone calls ... asking what they could do, how they could serve me.”

Ever since, he said, he’s stayed faithful to the church.

The musicians who perform alongside him know of his faith, including Faun Pointer, whose mother, Ruth, is one of the Pointer Sisters. Black



- Australia
- Chile
- England
- France
- Greece**
- Italy
- Zambia

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ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Theron Denson leads a closing prayer during Sunday evening worship with the Riverwood Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn. Denson moved to Nashville in 2011.

DIAMOND: Glorifying God on stage, in the pews

FROM PAGE 25
Diamond has opened for the famous rhythm and blues artists.
“Theron is an absolute gem,” Faun Pointer told *The Christian Chronicle*, “and the Churches of Christ are blessed to have his commitment for sure.”

‘SING A SONG OF SONGS’
Eventually, Denson found his way to Las Vegas, but Sin City didn’t embrace his act. He returned to West Virginia and performed at fundraisers for church-supported ministries.

In Vienna, W.Va., he sang at the inauguration of Harold Shank as president of Ohio Valley University, associated with Churches of Christ.

He thought about putting Black Diamond aside. After 10 years, “maybe it’s time to get a real job and join the real world,” he thought.

Then he got a phone call from “King Errisson” Johnson, a renowned percussionist who has performed with Sammy Davis Jr., Ringo Starr and Barbra Streisand, to name a few. He’s also been a member of Neil Diamond’s touring band since 1976.

Before you give up, try Nashville, Johnson told him. Though known for cowboy hats and country music, Neil Diamond has a huge fan base there.

After one more Greyhound ride, Denson was in Music City.

Here, he’s found new audiences for his music — and a new family at the Riverwood Church of Christ.

“He just appeared,” joked Marsha Boehm, whose husband, Rod, is an elder of the 270-member congrega-

tion. The church has a long history of involvement with inner-city ministry, and Denson volunteers with fellow church members on Tuesday nights.

Denson recalls his days as a child, riding the JOY bus to church, and wants to give a new generation a positive role model.

“I hope it puts them on the path that I was put on as a youngster,” he said.

Longtime church members, including Terry and Claudia Carilon, said they can’t help but grin at the raised eyebrows when they tell friends they have a Neil Diamond impersonator in their church.

Denson performs at church events, including a recent “Young at Heart” banquet. David Fowlkes, the banquet’s organizer, said, “You can’t meet him and not like him.”

His wife, Mollie, added, “When he’s on stage, *he’s* the show.”

When he worships, however, “it’s all the Lord,” she said. “He never promotes himself at the church.”

After 15 years as Black Diamond, Denson said he marvels at how “God can take something that seems almost laughable or insignificant and, for his glory, make it something very significant.

“There have been many times I’ve looked up and said, ‘God, really? Black Neil Diamond, really? ... I can’t be a teacher or a lawyer or a policeman or an astronaut or a fireman?’

“His answer has always been the same: ‘It’s not for you to question. I just need you to *do*.’”

WEBSITE: blackdiamondvocals.com

NEWSMAKERS

NAMED: James Carr to the Arkansas



Carr

Higher Education Coordinating Board. Carr is a senior vice president of Harding University in Searcy, Ark. **Raynard Davis** and **Phil Sanders** to the Lads to Leaders National Board of Directors. **Jeff Simmons**, dean of the College of Business Administration at Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City.



Simmons

RECOGNIZED: Abel Alvarez and Reg Cox by Abilene Christian University in Texas as 2015 Distinguished Alumni. Alvarez is minister for the Harvery Drive Church of Christ in McAllen, Texas. Cox is minister for the Lakewood Church of Christ in Colorado.



Alvarez

RETIRING: Neal Milligan, the first member from Churches of Christ to serve as chaplain for the Federal Bureau of Prisons, after 24 years of service in Florida, Minnesota, Pennsylvania and Virginia.



Cox

NEW ELDER: Eric Milton, the Palisades Church of Christ in Birmingham, Ala.

NEW MINISTERS: Matt Bancroft, senior-high minister for Southern Hills Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas. **Shonni Farley**, children's minister for the Conroe Church of Christ in Texas. **Jason Moon**, preaching minister for the Waterview Church of Christ in Richardson, Texas.



Moon

Anniversaries

Milestones

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

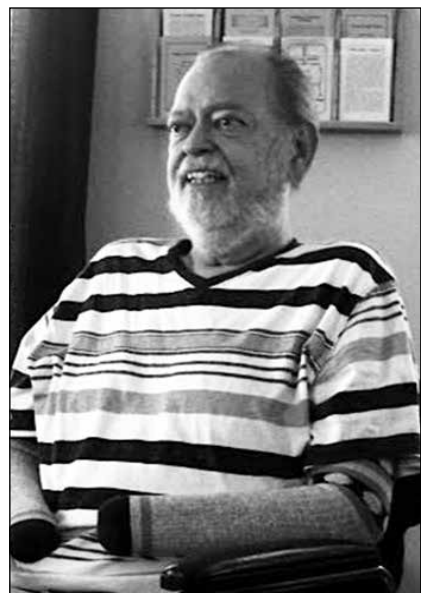
Birthdays

95th: Mary Avella Wallace Bruce, Union City, Tenn. **92nd:** Orville Pruitt, Prescott, Ariz. **90th:** Arlene Brown, Henderson, Tenn.

Tribute and appeal

Sam Holdeman

Sam Holdeman is a brother in Christ from Mississippi who had major heart surgery in 2014. Since then, further complications have led to Sam becoming legally blind and needing to have his hands and feet amputated. Sam was told by his doctors that it would be wise for him to move to Rochester, Minn., to get the care he needs from the Mayo Clinic. After arriving, Sam required further amputations below both knees. Sam and his wife, Tracy, are staying in a care facility a few blocks from Mayo Clinic's Saint Mary's Campus. In Mississippi, Sam served in their congregation as a deacon and song leader. He and Tracy also hosted a life group in their home. Tracy is an artist and was supporting them in Mississippi by teaching 50 art students in a studio in their home. The Holdemans have put their Mississippi house up for sale and are unable to buy one in Rochester until it sells. Their two daughters and their husbands have relocated to Rochester. Zach and Heather Lacefield, Harding University graduates, recently came from Memphis, Tenn., to join Jarvis and Lindsay Melvin, who had already arrived from Mississippi to help their



parents on this long journey. Three of the four have secured jobs with the Mayo Clinic, while the fourth will work from home for Apple computers. On Sundays, you can see several of the family members walking the six-tenths of a mile to the Rochester Church of Christ building, with one of them pushing Sam's wheelchair. Recently, when asked how he was handling all the changes in his life, Sam stated that he felt that God wanted him to "suffer well" as an encouragement to others and to bring glory to our Lord. Sam's change of lifestyle, the many transitions, the expenses and the unknowns can all be truly overwhelming. It won't be long until the cold weather will arrive in Minnesota. There are so many needs — for their house to sell in Mississippi, for a special vehicle to transport Sam, for a handicap-accessible home, for therapies, treatments, groceries, for new art students. It all adds up. They need help! With the aid of the church family in Rochester, the Holdemans have set up a benefit fund. Donation checks can be written to The Sam Holdeman Benefit Fund or to the Rochester Church of Christ (contributions to the church are tax-deductible). Mail donations, cards of encouragement and/or gift cards to: Rochester Church of Christ, Sam Holdeman Benefit Fund, 632 2nd St SW, Rochester, MN 55902. For further inquiries about the Holdemans' needs, feel free to email rochesterchurchofchristmn@gmail.com.

Anniversaries

Don and Phyllis Taylor



Don and Phyllis Taylor celebrated 50 years of marriage on Aug. 7, 2015. Don grew up in Cahokia, Ill., and Phyllis grew up in West Memphis, Ark. The two met during Phyllis' second year at Harding College when Don, leaving the University of Illinois, enrolled in Harding to study Bible. They were married in Poplar Bluff, Mo., on Aug. 7, 1965. After marrying, the Taylors made their home in Overland, Mo., where Don secured a job at General Cable in St. Louis. They were very active in teaching Bible classes and working in other areas while attending the Overland Church of Christ. In 1979 Don took a position with Indiana Steel and Wire in Muncie, Ind. Don's inventions for the company were very useful in the production of products. The family moved to Muncie in 1980 at the end of the school term. While living in Muncie, the family attended the Fairlawn Church of Christ where Don served as an elder. Phyllis attended Ball State University in Muncie and received her bachelor's in elementary education. After teaching kindergarten for two years and first grade for a year, she went to work on her master's, (continued on Page 28)

Milestones

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

(continued from Page 27)
receiving a kindergarten endorsement along with her master's in elementary education.
Phyllis became the deputy director/education coordinator at Interlocal Community Action Program Head Start. She was also the early childhood education consultant for Q-Net based at Indiana State University.
Don and Phyllis left Muncie and moved back to St. Louis in 2002 to take care of Don's mother until her passing.
In 2008 they moved to Broken Arrow, Okla., to be near their children who had moved into the area. Their family includes daughters Cindy (Dale) Wilson, Christy (Matt) Leach and son Wade Taylor. Grandchildren are Caleb and Jessica Wilson, Seinna Leach, Elizabeth McKittrick and Reese Taylor.

70th: Orville and Wanda Pruitt, Prescott, Ariz. 67th: J.C. and Dorothy Newland, Arlington, Texas. 65th: Ray and Inez Sooter, Plainview, Texas. 63rd: Booth and Helen Dyess, Lubbock, Texas. 50th: Sheilah and Terry Bellow, Riverside, Calif.

Memorials

Harvie M. Pruitt

Former Lubbock Christian University president Dr. Harvie Pruitt passed away Wednesday, Aug. 5, 2015, in Lubbock, Texas. He was 84 years old.
Current president L. Timothy Perrin, who was a student during Pruitt's tenure as president, stated, "The Lubbock Christian University community mourns the loss of Dr. Harvie Pruitt. He was truly one of LCU's giants, serving in leadership roles at the university for more than three decades."
Dr. Pruitt stepped into the presidency in 1976, following predecessors Dr. F.W. Mattox and Dr. W. Joe Hacker. Pruitt actively pursued the spiritual mission on which then-Lubbock Christian College was founded.
Dr. Pruitt stated during his presidency, "The one reason we're here is

to exert a positive spiritual influence in the lives of young people."
Pruitt played a significant role in the Lubbock community and the development of LCU. He answered a call to missions in Germany following World War II then participated actively in numerous Churches of Christ as a minister and member. In May of 1957, Pruitt attended the groundbreaking for LCC, even before he became employed by the university.
Pruitt joined the LCC faculty as a professor of Education in 1966 and was named Teacher of the Year in 1971. He served as chairman of the Faculty Senate and transitioned into the role of academic dean before assuming the presidency.

Dr. Steven Lemley worked as dean during Pruitt's presidency before becoming the president himself when Pruitt resigned. "The man that I observed up close — though I had known him over the years — was a creative and very courageous man. As a leader, he had a very cheerful, optimistic way of relating to those who worked at the institution," Lemley said.
Dr. Don Williams, who served as assistant to the president for Pruitt, fondly recalled his penchant for pranks and humor. Once during the self-study for institutional accreditation, Pruitt donned a wig, goatee and fake teeth to pose as an accreditation official. Williams introduced him as Dr. Grunewald to the faculty throughout the day and Pruitt did not reveal his identity until the dinner that evening. They had the whole campus fooled. Pruitt was also a skilled twirler, which he displayed with fire batons occasionally in chapel and at halftime of basketball games.
In addition to a sense of humor, Pruitt displayed intelligence and determination in his leadership of

LCU. Pruitt's presidency fell during challenging economic times for the university. Despite the hardships, he worked diligently to grow the university. Pruitt acquired a research grant for effluent water irrigation that benefited both the university and the community and paved the way for financial security for the university.
"Dr. Pruitt navigated us through (difficult) times," said Dr. Ken Jones, fifth president of LCU. "Today, we can indeed credit our wonderful existence, credibility and bright future to the leadership of Dr. Harvie Pruitt."



Pruitt stepped down from the presidency in 1982. Afterward, he assumed the role of president of the LCC Endowment Foundation and the LCC Investment Corporation in an effort to help secure the university's financial position. He remained actively involved with LCU, serving on the Board of Trustees from 1985 to 2010.

His family has also been integral to the LCU community. Pruitt's three children — Bryan ('82), Bart ('85), and Brenda ('88) — attended LCU, and several of his grandchildren are attending currently. Bart now serves as LCU general counsel, while Pruitt's son-in-law, Scott Flow, served many years on the Board of Trustees.
"Harvie was a man of many talents, a person of deep faith, and the source of great wisdom," said President Perrin. "We grieve his passing, while also celebrating his life of service and faithfulness. Our prayers are with the Pruitt family and with all those who knew and loved him."

Memorial/Honor Gifts

The Christian Chronicle appreciates and acknowledges a generous gift received in honor of Sherry Arnold.

Sept. 5-6 100th Anniversary, Central Church of Christ. Dalton, Ga. (706) 278-8051, lanie@ccocdalton.org.
Sept. 10-11 Healing Hands International's Sewing for Jesus Fall Workshop. Carrollton, Texas. www.hhi.org.
Sept. 11-12 Ladies Retreat. Enterprise Boulevard. Church of Christ. Lake Charles, La. (660) 676-9857, 3gscooter@zoho.com.
Sept. 11-12 Southeastern Men's Conference 2015. Brunswick Church of Christ, Valdosta, Ga. (229) 244-6066.
Sept. 11-12 Rocky Mountain Reunion. Westminster, Colo. www.rockymountainreunion.wordpress.com, (303) 466-8414.
Sept. 14 First Things Lecture. Austin Graduate School of Theology. Austin, Texas. www.firstthings.com.
Sept. 17-20 Global Missions Experience. Harding University, Tahkodah. www.globalmissionsexperience.com.
Sept. 20-23 ACU Summit, "Same Mind: United in Imitating Jesus" Abilene Christian University in Texas. (325) 674-3750, summit@acu.edu.
Sept. 22 Evening with Lee Ann Womack. Jackson Christian School, Jackson, Tenn. www.jcseagles.org/leeannwomack.org.
Sept. 24-26 Straight Talk: Into Human Behavior, Into the Heart of God. Kingman, Kan. www.silvermaplecamp.org, (620) 546-3433.
Sept. 25-27 French World Mission Workshop. Searcy, Ark. (501) 388-2533, dkee@harding.edu or Thekees@bluewin.ch.
Sept. 26 LST's Celebration Dinner. North Richland Hills, Texas. (800) 794-2175, lst@lst.org.
Sept. 27 Hope Harbor Open House and Auction. Claremore, Okla. (918) 343-0003, ext. 230, titus.robison@hopeharborinc.org.
Sept. 27-30 Harding Bible Lectureship. Harding University, Searcy, Ark. www.harding.edu/events/lectureship.
Sept. 28-Oct. 1 Southeastern Lectureship. St. Petersburg, Fla. www.selecture42nd.com, rsmit117@tampabay.rr.com,
Oct. 1-4 CenterPeace Tapestry. Watchtower Ranch, Strawn, Texas. (325) 232-2528, centerpeace.net.

EDITORIAL

Growing faith in Asia

This coming Sunday, it's likely that more people will worship Christ in China than in the U.S.

Let that soak in for a minute. *China*.

It's hard to believe, but demographers say it's happening. What's more, China is on track to have the world's highest number of people professing Christ, perhaps as soon as 2030, says Fenggang Yang, director of the Center of Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University.

From the EAST

Matthew 8:11

This month we tell stories of Chinese people whose lives have been transformed through a church ministry in Louisiana. We also feature a mission-minded Church of Christ in Singapore that serves souls in China and across Southeast Asia. In our ongoing series, **From the East**, we've also featured Churches of Christ in Thailand and Indonesia. Soon, we plan to add stories of faith from the South Pacific.

The series takes its name from Matthew 8, when Jesus encounters a Roman centurion who believes the Savior can heal his servant — even from a distance. *"Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith,"* Jesus replies. *"I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."*

When we hear reports of Christianity's decline in the West, we should take heart. Great faith is alive in the East today. For that, we praise God.

At home or overseas, a new day to serve

A person's steps are directed by the Lord. How then can anyone understand their own way?

— Proverbs 20:24, New International Version

MANILA, Philippines

Drinking a cup of coffee, I watch people rush by outside the café window.

More than 20 million souls in this robust city, all with their own agendas, head into another busy day of life.

As the "Jeepney" taxis pass by on the busy street, I can't help but think, "Where is everybody going? Do they even know? Do they understand their destiny?"

And perhaps just as important a question, "Why has the Lord brought me here to this place, this country, this culture?"

I know the basic answer: I am here to work with our World Bible School team on the ground in the Philippines, carrying out our mission to reach this nation with the Gospel.

I am also here to attend a mission forum and represent WBS across Asia and its masses of people that need to be reached, need to be touched, by the saving message of Jesus.

But is there more to it than that?

Just a few short days ago I was sitting in my little corner of the world with few concerns, few worries and in relative ease. And now I

find myself halfway around the world after many delays, canceled flights, countless hours on airplanes, looking out of the hotel lobby window at a foreign culture.

And again I ask, "Why me?"

But I already know that's not really the right question. Rather, it's "Why not me?"

Everyone is called to make a difference in this world. That can happen in the little corners of the world where the Lord places us. It also can happen halfway around the

globe, among new peoples, new languages and new cultures.

But in the end, it is the same for every one of us. God has given us a new day to have a new experience. We have the chance to make a difference for him in the lives of the people he will bring before us.

And so, as I sit here sipping the last of my coffee, as the world rushes by outside the window, I am going to go and look for what new experience the

Lord has in store for me today.

What people will he bring into my sphere of influence so that I can make a difference? That is my only goal.

Lord, let me make a difference for you today.

RON POTTBERG has traveled the globe for World Bible School, where he serves as vice president of international church relations.

In the Word



Ron Pottberg

We seek to honor God's gift — your generosity — with transparency

As all of us at *The Christian Chronicle* seek to share news from Churches of Christ around the world, we also strive to be responsible stewards of the funds we receive to carry on this good work.

That's why we're deeply grateful to be recognized for transparency by Intelligent Philanthropy, an organization that educates and empowers donors to evaluate the operational health and impact of nonprofits using 175 key data points.

After compiling our data for the organization, we received this message: "Since you invested hours of staff time into transparently communicating detailed and up-to-date information, we want to recognize your Commitment to Transparency."

Annually, the *Chronicle* provides 1.5 million papers to a readership of about 250,000. The operating budget of the *Chronicle* is slightly more than \$1 million. We pay monthly printing, mailing and postage costs of about \$31,500 — plus salaries for five full-time and three part-time employees and modest budgets for reporting travel and correspondents.

To Our Readers



Lynn McMillon

We also have an ever-growing number of online readers at home and around the world. The diversity of our readership is, we believe, a hallmark of our coverage.

We raise about 51 to 55 percent of our operational funds from donations. The rest comes from advertising — in print and online.

The *Chronicle* has an endowment,

but when the national economy took a tumble in 2008 we stopped drawing from the endowment's small annual interest to protect the principal and allow it to grow. We have not yet resumed drawing from that source.

That means that your donations are the *Chronicle's* main source of income. As president and CEO, I write to generous friends of this news service on a regular basis asking them to support this work.

Of course, I don't expect every donor to contribute to every appeal. I do hope, however, that our donors share their financial blessings as they are able — just as so many dedicated

Christians have done since 1943, when founding editor Olan Hicks asked Christians to help inform, inspire and unite our brotherhood.

On the average, it costs us about 33 cents to raise a dollar.

That's a blessing.

In our quest to serve with transparency, we are assisted by a board of 17 dedicated Christian trustees from across the nation. They carefully monitor all of our finan-

cial activity. Their names are listed in the information box on Page 4.

We thank God — and we thank you, faithful readers — for your prayers and your generosity.

We truly are blessed.

Commitment to Transparency

Recognized by Intelligent Philanthropy



CONTACT lynn.mcmillon@christianchronicle.org

10 year after Katrina, reflections on bridges built – and burned

The death and destruction of Hurricane Katrina is hard for me to capture in my mind, even a decade later.

I had been the minister for the Central Church of Christ in Pascagoula, Miss., for several years when the storm hit. My family left our town under mandatory evacuation. I did not know if there was a church building to come back to — or if my home would still be standing.

As much as I regret the pain that so many had to live through, I know that God worked through Katrina to help us build bridges we needed to build.

• Bridges were built in our church.

As in all of the churches along the Gulf Coast, we saw the development of a new spirit of cooperation as we served the community. I know in Pascagoula we did some things together that I never would have guessed we were capable of doing.

Under the servant leadership of our elders, especially David Kilbern, our auditorium was set up with clothing racks. Each room became a place to store donated items. David's wife, Elaine, led a dedicated crew of ladies who prepared meals daily for volunteers.

We worked together to organize and help community members find what they needed. Working and serving together in the name of Christ will build up the Family of God.

• Bridges were built in our community.

We were able to do cleanup, help with repairs and serve in a hundred different ways.

As people in need came to our church, we also listened. So many had exactly the same experience we did, but they longed to tell their story. I sat with many people and just let them talk, tears coming down both our faces. I remember one lady in particular who said she didn't want any help, but could someone just come and talk to her while she worked?

We set up a large tent in the back of our lot. Many people worshiped with us who had never done so before. Their cars were gone, flooded. They could walk up the street and worship with us. Many did.

• Bridges were built with our extended Christian family.

Not many days after the storm, donated supplies started to arrive. They came from so many states and from so many faith families that I couldn't keep up with it. Disaster response teams associated with Churches of Christ and Christian Churches helped, but so did Lutherans and Mennonites. Often at the end of long exhausting days, there would be gatherings in our church building

where we would join together and worship our Lord. These were special times.

I remember one Christian Church youth group that had practiced a song and sang it for us a cappella. They were unaccustomed to this, but in their love for us they made the effort.

This was a new experience for us, and I'm sure it wasn't always comfortable. But we learned that people of faith who love the same Jesus and read the same Bible can tear down the walls between us and just love one another.

• Bridges were burned along the way, too. Not everyone who came to help was a genuine soul. Sometimes we experienced disappointment and were taken advantage of. Some churches, some Christians didn't approve of our approach

to loving and serving everyone we could.

I'm sure not everything we did was perfect, and mistakes were made. It was uncharted territory for all of us. But our goal of sharing the love of Jesus with our broken community was worth every challenge we faced.

I continue to be grateful for those I call "Katrina heroes." They flooded down to the Gulf Coast to do all they could. I remember Marvin Phillips saying that every group should choose one city and just keep sending workers to that place to help them. Then he said, "I choose Pascagoula." His visits and preaching were so encouraging.

If you came to help anywhere along the Coast, our gratitude knows no end.

A great challenge for all Christians is to continue to let God build bridges — not because of natural disaster, but because of supernatural passion. This is what God desires us to do, and we shouldn't have to have a storm to make it happen.

That's why I always love to hear about a new effort to reach out. You never know what hearts will be touched. Who is affected most: the servant or the recipient of service? Only God really knows the impact on the heart.

One particularly exhausting day I was sitting down and just trying to rest for a moment. I felt a hand on my shoulder. A brother told me that he was a minister of spiritual direction for his church (a Church of Christ).

He said, "I just want to pray with you for a moment." He did, and as he did my spirits were lifted. That's just one of the ways that it really wasn't us building the bridges, but it was God all the time.

JOHN DOBBS, former minister for the Central Church of Christ in Pascagoula, Miss., has preached for the Forsythe Church of Christ in Monroe, La., since 2008.

Views



John Dobbs

LETTERS

On same-sex marriage

No matter what we believe, this is a case of separation of church and state. ("Gay marriage legalized — now what?" Page 1, August.) We cannot force our religion on other people. It is easy to denounce a sin that we are not tempted by. I believe sins carry the same weight.

I was proud of the Santa Fe Church of Christ on the Sunday after the Supreme Court decision. Same-sex marriage was not mentioned. Instead, we talked about our part in feeding the homeless in Santa Fe and the three New Mexican orphanages we help support.

Kirk Beard | Santa Fe, N.M.

The "time for meaningful, respectful discussions" is past. (Editorial, Page 27, August.)

Our problem in the Church of Christ is not our culture's acceptance and legalization of same-sex marriage. Our problem is our blindness to our own sin. Our problem is our grievous pride toward those outside of our white-washed selves.

When we see our own sin for what it is and embrace the lavish grace of God, only then are we qualified to "engage a culture that embraces lifestyles that Scripture reveals to us as against the will of God." Because then we aren't all about defending our position. We are about rescuing a dying world.

Ashley Weaver | Newcastle, Okla.

Interim ministry fills a vital role

The Church of Christ in St. Joseph, Mich., was one of Tim Woodroof and Greg Anderson's earliest projects in interim ministry ("Love the preacher who left? You won't like the new one," Page 3, August.) Through their efforts the Lord prepared a congregation whose job description was the perfect fit for us. Having just completed my first year as lead minister, their follow-up with the elders and me has been such a blessing, confirming the value of their efforts.

Steve Pylkas | St. Joseph, Mich.

Praise for response after shootings

I pray for the families and the whole community of Chattanooga. (Page 1, August.) When tragedy strikes, it causes us to rethink our existence. Reactions can be so overwhelming, but I offer thanks to those who have surrendered their lives to Christ, for they react controllably as led by the love of God.

When tragedy hits close to home or at home, we realize how vulnerable we are and that it can happen anywhere to anyone and at any time. Red Bank Church of Christ did what Christ called on his followers to do and to be.

David Tonui | Nairobi, Kenya

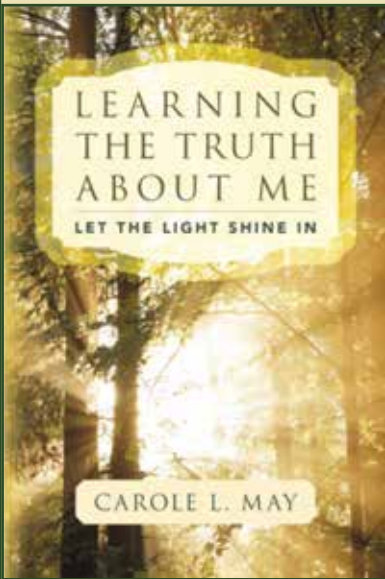
Living in Christ

Christian hope

Relationship with God

FIGHTING SATAN

Mental Healing



Even when the world seems darkest, **Jesus Christ offers hope** for those in need.

Personally affected by more than fifty attempted or completed **suicides**, including that of her beloved grandson, author Carole L. May felt the call to offer **hope** to others suffering from anger issues and suicidal thoughts.

In this moving **spiritual guide**, she details why and how the world was created, God's efforts to instill confidence in man, and Satan's wicked attempts to destroy it.

Along the way, May emphasizes we are all born **spiritually pure**—not with a sinful nature, as many others would have us believe.

Readers will ultimately learn how to overcome the darkness in their own lives by being **reconciled back to God** through Jesus Christ in order to live a life that fulfills his purpose. In the end, the only way to recover from emotional devastation is through **spiritual restoration**.

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If you base every decision on the Word of God, then one good decision will lead to the next; it's a domino effect. If you are really writing your life story one day and one decision at a time, then you have the power to determine how your story ends. But everything hinges on tipping the first

‘Muscle and a Shovel’ author reflects on falling away

Michael Shank’s “**When Shovels Break**” is a personal treatment of the sensitive topic of falling away from the faith and traveling the road back again.

Shank’s previous book, “Muscle and a Shovel,” took the Churches of Christ by storm after its release in 2011. The gritty account of his movement from the Baptist faith to Churches of Christ has in some ways become a litmus test for where one stands in our fellowship today. Some consider the book an unwelcome throwback to our sectarian past, while others view it as a needed corrective to the ecumenism currently sweeping through parts of the brotherhood.

Shank’s latest book retains the grittiness and autobiographical style of its predecessor, but most readers will find “When Shovels Break” to be less edgy and controversial — and more pastoral in tone.

Shank begins where he left off in “Muscle and a Shovel,” describing his new life as a zealous Christian ready to win souls for Christ. However, mounting financial difficulties, personal stresses and disappointments with stagnant Christians and churches eventually contributed to his falling away for more than 10

years. He put aside his Bible, stopped attending worship and went back to a worldly lifestyle. His shovel — a metaphor for his faith — had broken.

When an ill-fated move from his home state of Illinois to Texas led to a nearly complete financial meltdown, Shank hit rock bottom.

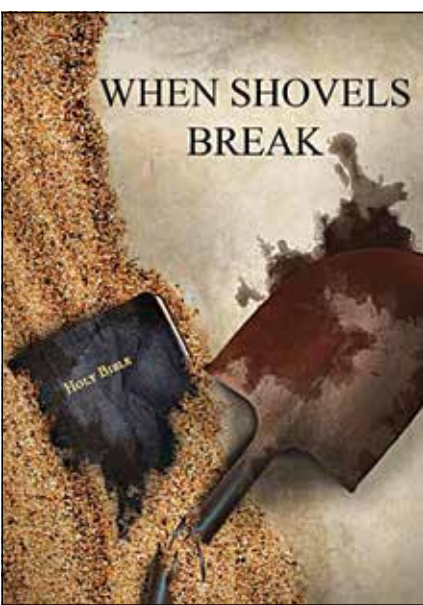
When all seemed lost, his wife Jonetta lovingly prompted him toward God’s Word, and through more digging — this time about the compassion of God for his erring children — Shank returned to the Lord.

After moving back to Illinois, Shank reengaged in church life with greater zeal than before. Through an unlikely series of events, he entered full-time ministry with the Marion Church of Christ in southern Illinois.

At this point, the book abruptly leaves behind its familiar autobiographical style and becomes more sermon in tone and structure, including a section revealing the results of an admittedly unscientific poll about why people fall away.

Shank concludes with several practical chapters that provide guidance to the fallen on how to return to God and how to stay faithful for the long run.

Like the first book, “When Shovels Break” is self-published and thus



★★★★☆
Michael Shank. **When Shovels Break.** Michael Shank Ministries, 2015. 426 pages. \$15.95.

has quite a few grammatical and syntax errors. As for content, the book would benefit from fine-tuning on issues connected to the doctrine of sanctification, the nature of discipleship and the theological questions related to falling away.

In spite of its limitations, the big-picture message of “When Shovels Break” makes it compelling, and its autobiographical style renders it

very accessible and effective for the average reader.

Shank deserves special credit for his humility and candor as he describes his life of sin, which included drug and alcohol abuse, sexual misconduct, greed and despair of life. This rare openness, combined with his story of recovery and restoration, will give great hope to those errant Christians who wonder whether or not Christ will take them back.

One can easily see this book being used in small groups or in personal work to help minister to the fallen.

Shank also provides a needed critique of the way some churches treat visitors and reminds readers that the person visiting church this Sunday may be desperately seeking to return to Christ. The way they are treated can either aid or hinder their journey toward restoration.

The book as a whole is a valuable testimony to one man’s journey back to the God who loves him, forgives entirely and uses broken vessels for his good pleasure and his glory.

DARREN WILLIAMSON is preaching minister for the Keizer Church of Christ in Oregon. He is an adjunct instructor at George Fox University and director of the Campbell Institute for Theological Education, a ministry offering accredited courses in Bible to college students in the Willamette Valley of Oregon.

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY: AUTHORS FROM CHURCHES OF CHRIST

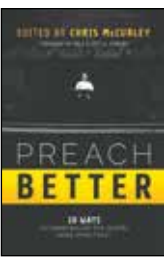
YOUNG ADULT
Nathan Dahlstrom. **Wilder and Sunny: The Adventures of Wilder Good, #3.** Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2015. 132 pages. \$7.95.

This series, recommended by “Hank the Cowdog” author John R. Erickson, is written by Dahlstrom, a member of Quaker Avenue Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas. The main character is a 12-year-old boy who enjoys hunting, fishing and horseback riding. This newest volume introduces a “secret girlfriend” who helps Wilder escape a mishap in the woods.



ON PREACHING
Chris McCurley, editor. **Preach Better: 10 Ways to Communicate the Gospel More Effectively.** Bowie, Texas: Start2Finish Press, 2015. 144 pages. \$12.99.

Ten preachers for Churches of Christ in Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee and California offer lessons on topics including planning, passion, illustrations and attitude. These lessons apply not only to full-time ministers, but to anyone presenting a Gospel message.



MINISTRY AIDS
Doug Hamilton. **Spiritual Giftedness: Empowering the Twenty-First Century Church.** Lubbock, Texas: Sunset Institute Press, 2015. 239 pages. \$15.99.

Hamilton, minister for the Camp Hill Church of Christ in Pennsylvania, attributes the decline in church membership in the U.S. to souls not understanding how they can best serve. He seeks to empower congregations and individuals to identify spiritual gifts and to understand how to put them to work, involving all members in ministry.



FICTION
Rita Brown. **My First Day in Heaven.** Abilene, Texas: Leafwood Publishers, 2015. 65 pages. \$11.99.

Brown, a longtime Bible school teacher and member of the Golf Course Road Church of Christ in Midland, Texas, imagines a humble woman’s first day in heaven.

Beautifully designed and formatted, this book would make a comforting gift for people who have lost a loved one.

It’s also appropriate for a quick, inspirational read.



Preaching Minister Position

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How does the world see older Christians? Some observations from well-lived lives

When people of the world — particularly, people outside our faith — look at the lives of older Christians, what do they see? Happiness? Contentedness? Patience? Or do they see anger? Closed-mindedness? Regret?

Frequently I find myself curious about that question — and troubled by the possible answers.

I have been blessed to know a number of joyful Christians — men and women whose older years are crowned by strong faith, abundant wisdom and valuable Kingdom service. A few observations about these wonderful examples:

- They learned how to forget disagreeable things without compromising the things that matter.
- They mastered the art of saying pleasant words.
- They learned not to expect too much of their friends.
- They waited for their adult children to ask for their advice before they gave it.
- They retained a positive perspective and didn't believe that all the world is wicked and uncaring.
- They gave to the needy and sympathized with the sorrowful.
- They refused to complain.
- They peppered each day with prayer and expressions of gratitude to the Giver of all good gifts.
- They treated others as they wished to be treated.
- They remained flexible, refusing to become stubborn problems for others.
- They did not believe in the myth that their age and experience meant they knew everything about nearly everything.
- They faced and confessed their own sins — not the sins of others.
- They refused to pay the high price extracted by a lifetime of holding grudges.
- They rebuffed the temptation to trust in their self-righteousness and moral superiority.

- They elected to believe the best about people.
- They never forgot that kind words and a smile are priceless treasures to the discouraged.
- Despite times of serious and even chronic illness, they refused to live lives rooted in self-pity, believing instead that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)



Joy McMillon

Once, Ella Wheeler Wilcox wrote a short poem with an impactful message:

“Laugh, and the world laughs with you. Weep, and you weep alone. For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth; It has troubles enough of its own.”

I believe that is true. Life is similar to an echo. It has a way of sending back to us what we send out.

If I send out a tale of woe and sorrow, always feeling sorry for myself, continually criticizing others, then all of that will return to me, pretty much in the same tone.

But if I am the kind of humble, loving person who is grateful for God's blessings, who spreads cheer and optimism, I will be blessed by many friends.

Oh, the struggles of conforming my attitudes to the image of Christ!

But God promises great rewards for those who trust him, transformed by his love and faithful to his call.

Habakkuk 3:17-19 says it best:
Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, Though there are no sheep in the pen, and no cattle in the stalls, Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God my Savior, The Sovereign Lord is my strength; He makes me surefooted as a deer; he sets my feet on high places.”

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Remembering Mack Lyon

The longtime speaker for TV ministry 'In Search of the Lord's Way' dies at 93. 'He has reached his goal of being with the Lord forever,' the ministry says. **3**



INSIDE

CALENDAR.....28	NATIONAL.....5
CURRENTS.....17	OPINION.....29
DIALOGUE.....20	PARTNERS.....23
INSIGHT.....34	PEOPLE.....25
INTERNATIONAL.....15	REVIEWS.....32
MILESTONES.....27	VIEWS.....30

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