



Gay marriage legalized — now what?

LANDMARK RULING ALARMS *Christians who view marriage as a sacred union between a man and a woman.*

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

“If Caesar gives it, he can take it away.” So warns minister and lawyer Melvin Otey in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court’s landmark 5-4 decision legalizing same-sex marriage.

Despite declarations of support for religious freedom by President Barack Obama and the high court’s majority, Christians “definitely should be concerned,” Otey said.

“I believe churches and Christian institutions will be significantly affected by the larger movement that has ushered in the



Otey

acceptance of same-sex unions,” said the former U.S. Justice Department attorney, now an associate professor of law at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Ala. “It is at least possible that churches and organizations that speak against homosexuality, for example, will lose their tax-exempt status because the exemption is a benefit bestowed by the government, added Otey, who preached for the Georgia Avenue Church of Christ in Washington, D.C., for eight years.

For members of Churches of Christ — most of whom believe God ordained marriage as a sacred union between one man and one woman — the ruling has sparked myriad questions and concerns:

- Will the government try to stop

See **GAY MARRIAGE**, Page 10

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JESSICA COLEMAN

A splash — and a smile — at Texas church’s family camp

Jaxon Coleman slides down a water slide into a lake during the recent ninth annual family camp organized by the Woodland Oaks Church of Christ in The Woodlands, Texas, north of Houston. The retreat is an opportunity for church members — young and old — and their families to come together for a weekend of fun, fellowship and spiritual growth, said Jessica Coleman, Jaxon’s mother. This year’s theme was “Do Hard Things,” and more than 175 people participated, organizers said.

CAMP OF AGES: For 61 years, Christians have experienced a big God on Tennessee’s Short Mountain, **Page 24**

In Tennessee, prayers and questions of why



TED PARKS

A poster near one of the shooting scenes urges people to “Pray for Chattanooga.”

AFTER SHOOTINGS CLAIM LIVES *of five U.S. servicemen, church members in Chattanooga pray for the families of the victims — and the shooter.*

BY **TED PARKS** | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. — Three days after a shooting rampage in this Southern city left five U.S. servicemen dead, Churches of Christ offered prayers of compassion for the families of the victims and the shooter — a young man known to several church members here.

“I’ll be honest with you, this has been a very difficult week for me,” said Mark Beckham, an elder of the Red Bank Church of Christ, just north of downtown

Chattanooga. “I remember what happened on 9/11 and how we got together that night and had a devotional here at the building, because we were hurting so much. But that was in New York City.”

During a Sunday morning prayer service, Beckham was tasked with praying for the family of the shooter, 24-year-old Mohammad Youssef Abdulazez.

“He was a student of our school system,” Beckham said. “This is close to home. And there are so many questions of why.”

See **CHATTANOOGA**, Page 6

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Wedding day has a ring to it — hopefully

If you've seen the movie "Father of the Bride" (with Spencer Tracy or Steve Martin), you know how crazy wedding planning can be. Fortunately, I'm the father of the groom. So I bought a bow tie, agreed to read a Scripture at the ceremony and set a calendar reminder so I won't forget to show up.

Inside Story Seriously, I couldn't be more excited about my oldest son, Brady, marrying Mary Simpson, whom he met at Oklahoma Christian University.

Brady, 22, graduated with a bachelor's degree in preaching ministry. He's pursuing a master of divinity degree at Oklahoma Christian while working with the youth ministry at the Edmond Church of Christ.

Mary, 21, is majoring in family studies/child development with a minor in Bible. She's a member of Oklahoma Christian's Summer Singers, a group of seven that performs at camps, youth rallies and other special events.

On their first date, Brady and Mary ate pizza, shared hopes and dreams and — as their wedding planning website describes it — "gazed into each other's eyes."

Their first kiss came later. Beautiful inside and out, Mary is the answer to a lifetime of prayers. Like our son, my wife, Tamie, and I quickly came to love Mary. We thank

See **WEDDING**, Page 4

Praying against Greek tragedy

TWO THOUSAND YEARS after Paul addressed the Areopagus, Greece still matters, say Christians as they reach out to a diverse population.



Paul's speech to the Areopagus from Acts 17, in Greek, is inscribed on Mars Hill.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

ATHENS, Greece

Unknown gods are made known here. On ancient Mars Hill, the apostle Paul once stood and preached to the Greek high court, using their altar "To the unknown God" as an opportunity to tell them about the one true God.

Nearly 2,000 years later, Paul's words from Acts 17 stand in bronzed Greek letters at the hill's base, seen by millions of tourists each year.

But beyond the ice cream parlors and souvenir stands that line the streets near the Acropolis, the modern, European nation of 11 million souls faces "the most difficult and challenging moments in Greek history since World War II" as it struggles to repay its debts, said Alexander Melirrytos. So the minister for the Omonia

Church of Christ appeals to an authority higher than the banks, the eurozone and the world.

"We ask you to flood heaven with prayer," Melirrytos said in a message to U.S. supporters, including the Hillsboro Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn.

Greece's financial crisis threatens not only the stability of the eurozone — 19 nations that share a common currency, the Euro — but also the work of Churches of Christ in Greece, who serve and share Christ with immigrants from around the world — including places where practicing Christianity is difficult and dangerous.

On a recent Tuesday, four young immigrants arrived at the meeting place of the Glyfada

Church of Christ, on the south side of Athens, to study the Bible with ministers Dino Roussos and Dimitris Argyropoulos. One of the young men



PHOTOS BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Dimitris Argyropoulos, a minister for the Glyfada Church of Christ, helps conduct a Bible study with a group of immigrants.

Love the preacher who left? You won't like the new one

INSTEAD OF HIRING a 'sacrificial lamb,' interim ministry advocates urge a process of reflection and discernment.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

WICHITA, Kan. — Mark Frost drives a Ford Focus.

His other vehicle, he quips, is a Cessna. "So I feel like I'm coming home," Frost jokes as he introduces himself to the RiverWalk Church of Christ — in the home city of Cessna Aircraft Co.

The Detroit-area resident flies his Cessna Skyhawk mostly for recreation.

But for the next six to 18 months, he'll commute each weekend via Delta Airlines — a 1,600-mile round trip — and fill the pulpit of this downtown church.

Frost is one of a growing contingent of "interim ministers" who help Churches of Christ make the transition from one preacher to the next.

Too often, congregations grieve the departure of one minister by making the next a "sacrificial lamb," Frost said.

"What happens," said Jerrie Barber, interim minister for the Northside Christ of Christ in Jeffersonville, Ind., "is we keep a preacher for 15 to 20 years. Then we want to have a going-away party one Sunday and the new preacher in place the next Sunday."

But in many cases, Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul could go as co-ministers, and the church still would reject them, said Barber, a preacher for 54 years.

"Everybody wonders, 'Why doesn't anybody like the new guy?'" he said. "The reason they don't like him is because he's not like the one who left."



BOBBY ROSS JR.

See **GREECE**, Page 14

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WEDDING: Pay the preacher; don't ask how much

FROM PAGE 3

God for her parents, Max and Diane, who raised a remarkable woman of faith.

Like most brides, I suspect Mary dreams of a perfect wedding — with all the bridesmaids shining like angels, the cake and punch absolutely delectable and the father-in-law's corny jokes kept to a minimum.

But the unexpected — even the wacky — is likely to happen.

Why? Because it always does.

"I like to tell the bride and groom at the rehearsal that something probably will go wrong in the service," said Steve Cloer, minister for the Southside Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas.

"I have experienced bridesmaids fainting, wedding music foul-ups, last-minute changes to the wedding site and trouble with putting on the rings," Cloer added. "The one that takes the cake was the wedding where the ring bearer came down to the front, and we all expected the groom to get the ring off the ring bearer's pillow."

Only one small problem: The ring wasn't there.

It had bounced off the pillow. Fortunately, the bride's mother retrieved it on her way up the aisle. She slipped it to the groom.

But whether it's children acting up in the wedding party or the bride and groom getting the giggles, something *will* go wrong, agreed Jay Kelley, evangelist for the Austin Street Church of Christ in Levelland, Texas.

"But those are sometimes the most magical memories," Kelley said.

On the day before our wedding 25 years ago, Tamie and I went to the county clerk's office to get our marriage license. But when Tamie opened her wallet to fish out her driver's license, she couldn't find it.

"There was no time to do anything but leave and go to our rehearsal dinner," Tamie recalled. "The next day at our wedding, Dr. Elmo Hall wove in some funny material about us not having a license. I just laughed and figured we'd sort it out afterward."

(We did sort it out ... 15 years later. But that's a whole *other* story.)

Kevin Jensen, minister for the Summit View Church of Christ in Yakima, Wash., offered this advice:



KELCY NASH
Brady Ross and Mary Simpson met at Oklahoma Christian University.

Don't hold an outdoor ceremony near a racetrack on a racing night.

"One wedding I preached was held in a beautiful park with flowering shrubs and trees and perfect weather — and a car race going on about a block away," Jensen said. "The wedding *looked* great, but I doubt that anyone beyond the wedding party heard a word I said."

Good news: Brady and Mary plan to wed *indoors*.

Bad news (for Brady and Mary): David Duncan, the close family friend conducting the ceremony, likes to tell funny stories. I've offered to pay him extra to embarrass my son. By the way, does anybody have change for a \$20 bill?

Speaking of the wedding preacher, my research indicates that (1) you *should* pay him and (2) you *shouldn't* ask him how much.

"People spare no expense when it comes to weddings," said Jim Hackney, minister for the Heritage Church of Christ in Keller, Texas. "Why should the minister not be compensated for his service and time?"

"I can't tell you how many times I've been asked in front of others, 'How much do I owe you?'" Hackney added. "My standard answer for that is, 'Whatever you think she is worth!'"

Proverbs 31:10 says: "A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies."

Welcome to the family, Mary. May God bless you and Brady with a long, happy marriage in service to him.

CONTACT bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org. See additional comments in "Voices" on Page 28.

SPOTLIGHT

100-year celebration

CALDWELL, Idaho — The Caldwell Church of Christ marked its recent 100th anniversary with a three-day celebration. Members new and old came to worship and share memories.

"It was great to see people who had been part of Caldwell in the past and came from out of town, some from fairly far away," minister Jay Hawkins said.

Carrie Hawkins, Jay's wife, said members spent months planning the event and making wall displays.

"We put up a timeline over 8 feet long and indicated significant events ... such as marriages, baptisms, when families joined, when ministers and elders served," she said.

For more information, see www.caldwellcofc.org.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY CARRIE HAWKINS

Guests register during the Idaho church's 100th anniversary celebration.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY SARAH HARMON

FaithBuilders workshop uplifts church members in Washington state

Members of Churches of Christ in the Puget Sound region of Washington state gather for the recent FaithBuilders spiritual growth workshop. Twelve congregations supported the workshop, sponsored by the Puyallup Church of Christ and the Springbrook Church of Christ in Renton. "The singing was beautiful, and the facilities were fantastic," said director Ken Wilson, a Puyallup elder. More than 430 church members attended the three-day event held at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma. Speakers included Jim McGuiggan, Keith Parker and Dan Owen. The auditorium seats 625, and Wilson hopes to fill it next year. For more information, see www.faithbuildersnw.com.

ARIZONA

ANTHEM — The Canyon Church of Christ's "care bear" ministry provides stuffed bears and backpacks for children experiencing trauma and displacement. The items are distributed through the fire department and a child protection agency.

KENTUCKY

HENDERSON — For the seventh year, the Henderson Church of Christ thanked emergency responders and colleagues with an appreciation lunch, *The Gleaner* reported.

Police, state troopers, sheriff's staff, firefighters, emergency medical service personnel and detention center staff were invited to the recent meal. "It's just an opportunity to say thanks for their service," deacon Mica Busby told the newspaper.

MARYLAND

LANDOVER — Anthony Wutoh, an elder of the Prince George's Church of Christ, has been appointed provost and chief academic officer of Howard University.

Wutoh has "displayed amazing leadership inside and outside the classroom," said Wayne Frederick, president of the prominent, historically black university in Washington, D.C.

A member of the Prince George's church since 2003, Wutoh was born in Accra, Ghana.

As a student at the University of Maryland in Baltimore County, he was baptized at the Central Church of Christ in Baltimore in 1983.



Wutoh

MINNESOTA

ROCHESTER — Eighteen teens and adults from the Pitman Road Church of Christ in Sewell, N.J., spent a week helping with the Hands of Compassion ministry.

That ministry of the Rochester Church of Christ provides housing for up to 30 people per week who come to the Mayo Clinic.

The New Jersey group served as the "hands and feet of Jesus," ministering through song and encouragement to those who had lost loved ones, had brain surgery and were confined to wheelchairs, Rochester member Patti Sikes said.

The teens also cleaned rooms, hauled trash and painted, among other projects during the summer mission trip organized by Tim Davis, deacon over youth.

WEST VIRGINIA

MORGANTOWN — The Morgantown MakeOver project helps residents in need.

Painting houses and installing new windows and shutters were among the recent projects completed by teen and adult members of the Morgantown Church of Christ.

"It's been a passion of our church just to make sure that the community knows that we care about them and that we love being part of the Morgantown community," preaching minister Matt Lowe told WBOY-TV.

"And so we reach out by painting houses for free for people here in Morgantown, just as a way to assist them and hopefully make Morgantown a little bit more beautiful one house at a time," Lowe added.

CHATTANOOGA: Don't let fear keep you from serving, minister urges

FROM PAGE 1

The Red Bank church is less than a mile and a half from Red Bank High School, where Abdulazeez graduated in 2008. Jeff Reese, a 25-year-old missionary in the Dominican Republic with Manna Global Ministries, went to middle school with Abdulazeez and graduated in the same class. They had 11th-grade English together.

Reese remembered that Abdulazeez would usually leave class early on Fridays so that his dad could pick him up for Muslim prayer service.

"I thought that was very neat to see the discipline that they had in practicing their beliefs," Reese said, adding that he "never thought anything of that ... at the time."

Reese's mother, Jill, taught math at Red Bank High and recalled having Abdulazeez's sister in class. Both children were "very respectful, very friendly," Jill Reese said.

"I can just see the smile on his face," she said of Mohammad Abdulazeez.

As he watched coverage of the shootings in his hometown, Jeff Reese said, "My immediate thought was, 'man, what changed?'"

SHOWING LOVE TO FRIENDS AND FOES

Other prayers during the Red Bank church's Sunday service expressed gratitude for first responders to the attacks and those who serve in the armed forces, including the four Marines and one sailor killed in the attacks. A Marine recruiter and Chattanooga police officer also were wounded.

Addressing their Creator, Tommy



A few members of the Red Bank Church of Christ in Chattanooga knew Mohammad Abdulazeez when he attended the high school near the church's building.



Hope Mayberry and Jill, Allison and Jeff Reese sing during a special prayer service during the Sunday Bible class hour at the Red Bank Church of Christ in Chattanooga.

Stone, one of the church's ministers, prayed, "We just thank you so much that there are folks who are willing to go toward the dangers and to stand ready to protect."

The service was "extremely helpful and emotional," church member Becky McCormick said. "It was powerful to remind us that God is the one in charge and the enemy is somebody to be loved and prayed for."

In worship following the prayer service, Steve Lusk, who shares preaching duties with Stone, read from 1 Corinthians 13, in which the apostle Paul states that love "always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

Often referred to as "the love chapter," it was on the schedule for the service weeks before the shootings as part of a congregation reading plan.

Lusk examined the chapter's place amid the problems in Corinth but did not shy away from its special meaning at Red Bank.

"I want us to not allow our fear to cause us to characterize people — from different cultures or different races — as dangerous or threatening simply because we may not understand them, or may not know them," Lusk told the congregation.

"When we see our co-workers, our



Steve Lusk, a minister for the Red Bank Church of Christ, speaks about the apostle Paul's words of love in 1 Corinthians 13.

friends at school, our neighbors, ... whose faith is being practiced in a way different from ours, let us not assume the worst. But let us love them, and let us strive to understand them, for in so doing is the only way that we can ever hope to reach them with the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Lusk also listed ways Christians could respond concretely to the tragedy: help the victims, including the families of those who died. And deepen respect for police officials,

emergency medical personnel and members of the military.

SERVING A CITY 'TURNED UPSIDE DOWN'

Emotions are still raw in Chattanooga, where hundreds visited impromptu memorials at the two shooting scenes, some standing or sitting in silence before the small American flags placed just beyond police tape.

Churches of Christ across the city echoed the compassion voiced by the Red Bank congregation. John Robertson, an elder of the East Brainerd Church of Christ, thought about the fallen servicemen, their families in other places, and their friends in Chattanooga.

"A lot of this city is hurting, some much deeper than others," said Robertson, a former Marine. Among those hurting are military families, Chattanooga's Muslim community and Abdulazeez's family.

The tragedy "has turned their world completely upside down," Robertson said. "The whole city is turned upside down."

In Chattanooga's Clear Creek community, 10 minutes from the Abdulazeez family's home, the Clear Creek Church of Christ had counselors on hand after Sunday-morning worship. The church is seeking ways to offer help to its city, leaders said in an email to members.

PERSPECTIVE AND PEACE

Back in Red Bank, Jeff Reese reflected on the young man he knew eight years ago — whom he regarded as "just another kid" — and the horrors that unfolded in his hometown.

"It helps put life into perspective ... what it's about and what we should be about as Christians," he said. "We mourn with those who mourn, and we reach to those who need that help and that comfort and peace at this time."

"By the love that we've received, that's where peace comes."

RELATED VIEWS: Eric Greer, a church planter in Massachusetts, former Marine and native of Chattanooga reflects on the shootings. He urges Christians to look beyond the debates over surveillance and immigration and focus on the millions who don't know God.

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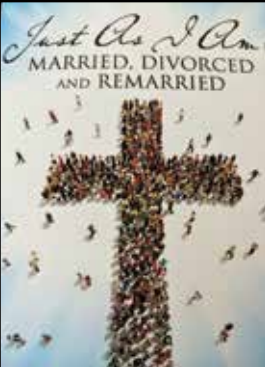
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INTERIM: More congregations see benefits of transition period

FROM PAGE 3

In the Wichita church's case, pulpit minister Rick Cline served the congregation — formerly known as the Central Church of Christ — for 35 years. He retired May 31.

For many of RiverWalk's 250 members, Cline is the only preacher they've ever known.

"He's just a fabulous guy, and we are going to miss him enormously," Julie Scherz said of Cline, who encouraged the church's focus on serving the homeless and underprivileged in inner-city Wichita. "He won't be replaced."

Scherz, a RiverWalk member for 25 years, leads the congregation's 10-person minister search committee.

"We definitely need time," she said. "But I also know we can't take too long because people are already a little bit antsy."

GIVE IT TIME

RiverWalk church leaders feared "that if we just went and hired someone else, (that person) wouldn't make it because people would be comparing him to Rick," elder Scott Ramsey said.

Instead, the elders turned to Interim Ministry Partners, a division of Texas-based Hope Network Ministries, which is associated with Churches of Christ.

Interim Ministry Partners' Tim Woodroof spent a quarter-century in full-time ministry with congregations in Nebraska, Oregon and Tennessee.

Woodroof said he began researching interim ministry after being asked to fill that role with the Palo Alto Church of Christ in Panama City, Fla., in 2009.

"I discovered that Baptists, Methodists and pretty much everybody except for us had understood and recognized the importance of the interim season," Woodroof said of Churches of Christ.

Woodroof, Frost and two other veteran preachers — Greg Anderson and Phil Ware — formed Interim



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Interim minister Mark Frost introduces himself to the RiverWalk Church of Christ in Wichita, Kan., on a recent Sunday morning.

Ministry Partners in 2012. The partners have helped nearly three-dozen churches engage in a process of spiritual reflection and discernment before hiring a new minister.

"The interest is just going through the roof," Woodroof said.

Barber — who is not affiliated with

Interim Ministry Partners — said he, too, is seeing more interest in interim ministry.

He and his wife, Gail, have moved temporarily to a half-dozen locations, working with churches ranging in size from 65 to 1,400.

"It is like a long gospel meeting,"

said Barber, who retired from permanent work in 2007 after 14 years with the Berry's Chapel Church of Christ in Franklin, Tenn. "You're living in somebody else's house and preaching your favorite sermons."

"All you've got to do is mess it up so bad that they'll be glad to get anybody after I leave," he joked. Seriously, he said, "One of the goals is to put

enough time in there that the last preacher is not the standard for the next preacher."

The interim season provokes questions and soul searching that don't happen when churches are "in a routine," Woodroof said. "Instead of rushing through the interim to get to the comfort of a new minister and a new routine, churches should value the interim as a defining moment and a time when listening to God is more likely to happen."

MODERN-DAY ISRAELITES

When Frost starts an interim work, he encourages the congregation to "find hope in the wilderness."

Using Deuteronomy 8 as his text, he likens the "in-between time" to the wilderness experience of the Israelites. He promises to walk alongside the congregation in seeking God's will and direction.

"We will wait on the Lord to reveal his choice," he tells the RiverWalk church. "We believe God already knows who God is calling."

From the moment he arrives Saturday until he flies out Sunday, Frost expects to be running.

"I'm meeting with the search committee, meeting with the elders, meeting with the significant individuals in the congregation," he said. "Then during the week, I go back home. But I'm still working, prepping for the next weekend."

Two weeks before flying to Wichita, Frost finished an interim assignment with the Sonoma Avenue Church of Christ in Santa Rosa, Calif.

Before retiring in 2012, Frost preached for the Trenton Church of Christ in Michigan for 34 years. That same year, Cheryl Frost — his wife of 40 years — died of pancreatic cancer.

He relates his personal experience to churches who lose a minister.

"I am remarried now, but I needed a time to grieve the loss of my wife, to come to terms with who I am," said Frost, whose new wife, Niki, lost her husband to brain cancer.

In the interim, RiverWalk leaders must answer important questions, he said: "Who are we as a group of people separate and apart from Rick Cline? What is God doing here? Where is God leading us? How has he shaped us? What gifts has he put here? What is his call on us?"

While leaders and staff — including minister to adults Jay Plank, worship and children's minister Eric Manlove and youth and family minister Jonathan Reynolds — grapple with such questions, Frost provides a consistent pulpit presence.

"It acquaints the church with the idea that the word of God can come through a voice other than Rick's," Frost said. "Whether they think I'm great and wonderful, or whether they just think I'm so-so, it's OK. They know I'm temporary."

Serving God in between times

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GAY MARRIAGE: Embracing the Bible, not the court

FROM PAGE 1

churches from limiting marriage to heterosexual couples?

- Will Christian universities that maintain policies against same-sex relationships by students and staff lose their tax-exempt status?

- Will faith-based foster-care and adoption agencies that refuse to serve homosexual parents be stripped of public funding?

"The recent ruling ... follows the well-established pattern of removing Christian values from public law," said Harold Shank, a longtime minister and president of Ohio Valley University in Vienna, W.Va.

He cited previous decisions outlawing school-sanctioned prayer, allowing the teaching of evolution and granting women the right to abortions.

"The Exodus story reminds us of those occasions when a new pharaoh arises that does not know Joseph," said Shank, previously a professor of Old Testament at Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City. "Many, if not all, of the faithful people in the Bible lived in times when their morals and values were not reflected in the law of the land."

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AT ISSUE

In the majority opinion, Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote: "Finally, it must be emphasized that religions, and those who adhere to religious doctrines, may continue to advocate with utmost, sincere conviction that, by divine precepts, same-sex marriage should not be condoned."

"The First Amendment ensures that religious organizations and persons are given proper protection as they seek to teach the principles that are so fulfilling and so central to their lives and faiths, and to their own deep aspirations to continue the family structure they have long revered," Kennedy added.

But in his dissent, Chief Justice John Roberts Jr. said the decision "creates serious questions about religious liberty."

"The majority graciously suggests that religious believers may continue to 'advocate' and 'teach' their views of marriage," Roberts wrote. "The First



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

An opponent of same-sex marriage holds up a poster near the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C., just before the court's 5-4 decision.

Resources on Supreme Court ruling

DOWNLOAD FREE, 40-PAGE GUIDE

"Protecting Your Ministry," a free guide produced by the Alliance Defending Freedom and the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, offers advice to help churches, Christian schools and ministries avoid sexual orientation and gender identity lawsuits. Find a link to it at www.alliancedefendingfreedom.org.

APOLOGETICS PRESS BLOG

Melvin Otey, an associate professor of law at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Ala.,

provides recommendations in a piece titled "Now that Same-Sex Unions Have Been Legalized." Access the article by searching for that title at www.apologeticspress.com.

MORE LINKS

Read *The Christian Chronicle's* expanded interviews with Harold Shank, Melvin Otey and Phil Ellenburg, and find links to additional background on the U.S. Supreme Court's decision on same-sex marriage. Also, join the discussion about the ruling on our website. See www.christianchronicle.org.

and Religious Liberty Commission.

The "Protecting Your Ministry" guide offers legal advice for churches, Christian schools and ministries to protect against lawsuits.

Like many, the Crosspointe Church of Christ in Franklin, Ohio, is reviewing its policies.

"Basically, the reason is to be very clear and concise about what we believe Scripture teaches," Crosspointe minister Scott Johnson said. "Our new documents are simply restating all the things we already believe but adding a special section specifically about marriage, gender and sexuality."

"It protects the church from folks who genuinely want to be malicious about all this," Johnson said. "We aren't seeking to be hateful, judgmental or rude — just protecting ourselves and our beliefs."

Shapri LoMaglio serves as vice president for government and external relations for the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, which includes a half-dozen universities associated with Churches of Christ: Abilene Christian, Faulkner, Lipscomb, Oklahoma Christian, Pepperdine and York College.

"The most important thing that all religious organizations can do right now is to ensure that all of their policies are clearly tied to their religious beliefs," LoMaglio said.

THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

Christian universities that rely on government funds — in the form of loans and grants for their students — could face a dilemma, Otey said.

"For instance, if they declined to affirm that they would not discriminate based on sexual orientation in educational programs and activities, they could lose the benefit of some federal funding," he said. "If they go along in order to maintain their funding, these schools could wind up with same-sex clubs and organizations on their campuses, which would be contrary to their missions. I do not mean to suggest that this is imminent or certain, but it is possible and needs to be looked at carefully."

Phil Ellenburg, president of Middle Tennessee Christian School in Murfreesboro, said the Supreme

they are or who they love."

However, Obama noted in his June 26 remarks: "Opposition, in some cases, has been based on sincere and deeply held beliefs. All of us who welcome today's news should be mindful of that fact and recognize different viewpoints, revere our deep commitment to religious freedom."

TAX EXEMPTIONS AT RISK?

At the recent Red River Family Encampment in New Mexico, Ralph Gilmore, a Bible professor at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn., addressed the ruling.

Gilmore urged church leaders to take advantage of resources such as a free, 40-page guide produced by the Alliance Defending Freedom and the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics

Amendment guarantees, however, the freedom to 'exercise' religion. Ominously, that is not a word the majority uses."

In addition, Roberts indicated that the tax-exempt status of religious institutions could become an issue: "Hard questions arise when people of faith exercise religion in ways that may be seen to conflict with the new right to same-sex marriage — when, for example, a religious college provides married student housing only to opposite-sex married couples, or a religious adoption agency declines to place children with same-sex married couples."

President Obama praised the same-sex marriage ruling as an affirmation "that all people should be treated equally, regardless of who



ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Harold Shank, speaking at the National Urban Ministry Conference earlier this year, urges Christians to “be bold in the city” and care for orphans and widows.

Court decision has raised many unanswered questions for Christian schools — including the 62 members of the National Christian School Association, a K-12 accrediting body associated with Churches of Christ.

Ellenburg, who previously served as general counsel for Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn., said those questions include: “Will protected religious practice extend beyond actual churches? Will religious preference in hiring as it relates to sexual liberties still be permitted? Will Christian schools still be able to honor admissions policies that reflect the mission of the school and the ideals of the individual school community?”

Rather than wait for a lawsuit or court ruling, Christian schools should act now, Ellenburg said.

“The administration and board, along with legal counsel, should be reviewing documents for clear adherence to the school’s tenets and beliefs,” he said in an email. “Such documents would include: mission statement, charter, bylaws, statement of faith, hiring policies, admissions policies, student codes of conduct, facilities use policies, etc.”

Along with his work in Christian higher education, Shank serves as spokesman for the Christian Child and

Family Services Association, a group of more than 50 child-care agencies associated with Churches of Christ.

“With the rise in the number of children in state custody and the inability of foster and child-care agencies associated with Churches of Christ to find suitable homes for these children, institutions that reject the biblical definition of marriage have risen up to take up the slack,” said Shank, who spent 32 years ministering for the Highland Church of Christ in Memphis, Tenn.

The funding issue aside, Shank urges church leaders “to teach their members about the biblical nature of pure religion and the responsibility of God’s people to vulnerable children and individuals in society.”

Regardless of the ramifications, Christians must remain united and committed to the mission of God, said church leaders interviewed by *The Christian Chronicle*.

“While we are obviously disappointed in the ruling by the Supreme Court, we are neither surprised nor are we unprepared for the implications of this decision,” said Bruce McLarty, president of Harding University in Searcy, Ark. “We embrace the Bible, not the Supreme Court, as our ultimate authority.

“Because of this, we are confident as we face the future,” McLarty said, “and we are ready for the challenge of standing for ‘the truth in love’ in these difficult times.”



Ellenburg

A poster for the Harding University Bible Lectureship. At the top is a large, detailed image of a heavy metal padlock on a dark, textured background. Below the lock, the text reads: "HARDING UNIVERSITY BIBLE LECTURESHIP SEPT. 27-30, 2015". The main title "SECRETS OF THE KINGDOM" is in large, bold, gold letters, with a key icon between "OF THE" and "KINGDOM". Below the title is the subtitle "UNLOCKING THE TREASURES OF THE PARABLES". At the bottom is the website "WWW.HARDING.EDU/LECTURESHIP".

'The sky hasn't fallen here'

IN STATES, COUNTRIES where same-sex unions have been legal for years, ministers, missionaries still see opportunities to share God's love.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

After the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark ruling on gay marriage, Patrick Odum expects little to change in the lives of church members in Chicago.

After all, same-sex couples in his state have been allowed to wed for more than a year now.

"I can honestly say that it really hasn't had much impact on my daily life," said Odum, minister for the Northwest Church of Christ. "Though it makes headlines and generates a lot of heat on Facebook, I suspect what most of us will find is that little changes."

Illinois is one of 37 U.S. states that — by court decision, legislative act or popular vote — had legalized gay marriage prior to the Supreme Court's ruling. Same-sex unions also were legalized in South Africa in 2006, Canada in 2005 and more than a decade ago in several European nations.

Belgium, where Paul Brazle has served as a missionary for nearly three decades, was the second country after the Netherlands to sanction gay marriage in 2003.



Brazle

"The sky hasn't fallen here," Brazle said, adding that the changing attitudes and laws on the global stage confirm that "we now live in a post-Christian culture."

"It all seems part of the ongoing trend toward a more secular society and philosophy," Brazle said, "which, of course, presents us with a challenge as Christians. But we have long since given up any notion that we enjoy the advantage of working within a society with Christian ideals at its base. And it seems like the U.S. is coming to face that same reality."

In France, same-sex marriage was legalized in 2013. Even before that, Christians in the once staunchly Catholic nation faced criticism for voicing opposition to such unions, said Arlin Hendrix, a missionary in Lyon, France.

"No matter how kindly one expresses his beliefs, anger is often the reaction," Hendrix said. Nonetheless, members of the Lyon church continue to present the Bible's teachings on homosexuality, he added.

Back in Chicago, Odum suggested believers look at the examples provided by Christian youths.

"Our kids are way ahead of us," he said. "They're used to being around people who are different — and loving them and being friends without expecting them to necessarily share their values. Maybe we should be asking them how to move forward."

Rainbows, Rebels, Revelation

AMID HEATED BATTLES over same-sex marriage and the Confederate flag, can followers of Christ stay out of the culture wars? Should we?

FRANKLIN, Tenn.

The apocalypse, it seems, has come to middle Tennessee.

Lo, I beheld it — not in the form of a pale horse but in the face of a teenage girl.

She and the girl she was dating asked me how to get to Puckett's Grocery as my wife and I walked the streets of downtown Franklin on a Sunday afternoon. I looked up the directions for them on my phone — and watched as they skipped ahead of us, hand in hand.

Seconds later, a parade of trucks with giant, mud-caked tires rolled through the town square. Baseball-capped teenage boys flew massive Confederate battle flags from the flatbeds, eliciting scattered whoops and hollers.

We walked on in silence.

Rainbows and Rebels, right there on the same street. Maybe they weren't signs of the end times. But it seemed that, in the midst of our stroll between a.m. and p.m. church, we had stumbled into Ground Zero of the culture wars.

And all we wanted were smoothies.

Those encounters weighed heavy in my mind over the next few days as we visited my dad, my sister and her family. How do I explain *Obergefell v. Hodges* to my 7-year-old (or pronounce it, for that matter)? What will life be like for her, coming of age in a nation that condones — and labels as marriage — a lifestyle that I can't, based on what I read in Scripture?

Will my children, one day, think me intolerant? Will they toss me in with the misguided souls who cling to a symbol of oppression in the name of Southern pride?

I visited my alma mater, Lipscomb University, a few days later. It was Summer Celebration, and the theme was "Deployed in an Uncivil War: The Apocalypse of John," appropriately enough.

Paul Prill, who taught my public speaking class 22 years ago, was a keynoter. He always peppered his lectures with bizarre, random factoids, bits of wisdom. We all loved him. (It startles me to realize I'm as old now as he was then!)

Prill, longtime minister for the Acklen Avenue Church of Christ in Nashville, spoke about Revelation 4 and 5, which describe the throne room of heaven where all creatures praise the Lamb of God.

Of course, he weaved current events into his talk. He had seen the social media postings from Christians — including calls for a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage — that followed the Supreme Court's decision.



LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY

Paul Prill speaks about Revelation during Summer Celebration at Lipscomb University. See a video of his keynote at www.christianchronicle.org.

"And I keep thinking, 'Wow, here's the invitation: join the political thread in the secular state,'" he said. "Enter the culture wars. It's us versus them and us better win as soon as possible or ... or ... or what? Or what? The culture's going to change just as it has up to this point. The church remains eternal."

"If we understand the worship in heaven, if we understand the message of Revelation 4 and 5, then we understand that no decision by any supreme court, liberal or conservative, no decision by any congress or president, Republican or Democrat, can upset the plan of the one who was, who is and who is to come."

Road Notes



Erik Tryggstad

Worship "is the most political thing that we do," he said, "because it calls us into an identity that distinguishes us from everything else that goes on in the world around us." It isn't our job to live as culture warriors, but to serve as "ministers of reconciliation for a God who is holy and eternal and sovereign."

Maybe I can't avoid the culture wars — even in a stroll through downtown Franklin. I know I can't walk in silence forever. I want to give voice to God's plan for marriage. I want to support free speech while decrying symbols that hurt so many of my brothers and sisters in Christ.

I pray that my daughters will see me as someone who stands up for what is right, who shows fairness to all.

May our lives and our deeds invite those who salute rainbow flags and Confederate flags to join us at the foot of the Cross. May we point them to the God who reconciles, the God who makes right, and may we seek his will together.

CONTACT erik@christianchronicle.org

BRAZIL

RECIFE — While most people travel to the privileged neighborhood of Boa Viagem to lounge on its beach — one of the most visited in northeast Brazil — Randy and Kathy Short are in the area for much different reasons.

The Shorts lead outreach classes called “Let the Bible Speak” in the Porta Larga and Boa Viagem communities.

So far, more than a dozen students have concluded the course and received certificates, the missionary said. “The Boa Viagem class is unique,” he added, “as two blind students received certificates of conclusion for the first time ever.”

JAPAN

MITO — A Christian publication in Japan raised skeptical eyebrows recently when it claimed that the country’s Christian population had risen from 1 to 6 percent.

“Why don’t we believe God is at work in Japan?” Joel Osborne asked. “Couldn’t he achieve that?”

Osborne, a missionary with the Mito Church of Christ, noted the magazine’s claim that most of Japan’s new Christians are young people living in cities who seek meaning.

“Every week I listen to youths who have no direction or dream but tons of abilities, experiences and education,” Osborne wrote in a recent newsletter, which also highlighted Japanese youths who are flourishing because of their newfound relationship with the church.

“They hunger for something more,” Osborne said. “Let’s believe that God is truly at work and that he is going to do more than we have experienced or seen thus far. Let’s continue to let God use us in Japan.”

POLAND

SOPOT — Christians across Europe and the U.S.

mourned the death of longtime evangelist Michal “Mike” Dawidow, who died in Sopot on July 13. He was 62.

He was born in Gdansk, Poland, to Walenty and Anna Dawidow, and his father was one of



Dawidow



STANLEY MADIKI

‘Bags of Love’ get thumbs up in Nepal

Children flash “thumbs up” (and a pair of rabbit ears) during a day-long Bible program in Nepal’s Goldhunga district, sponsored by members of Churches of Christ. The Christians sang “If You’re Happy and You Know It,” “Oh Be Careful Little Eyes,” “The B-I-B-L-E” and more songs with the children, said Dr. Stanley Madiki, a Christian physician from India. The children also received “Bags of Love,” which included toothbrushes, toothpaste and other hygiene items as well as school supplies and toys.

Madiki serves with church members providing relief after a series of devastating earthquakes in Nepal earlier this year. MARCH for Christ, a relief ministry based in the Philippines, and other nonprofits including Healing Hands International, Partners in Progress and White’s Ferry Road Relief have provided aid to earthquake survivors.

the first ministers for Churches of Christ in then-communist Poland.

His family played a critical role in a food relief program for Poland in 1981-82. Mike Dawidow helped coordinate relief efforts from Vienna, Austria, where he served as a missionary. He later served as an evangelist for churches across Eastern Europe and as an elder of the Sopot Church of Christ.

SOUTH AFRICA

CAPE TOWN — On a mission trip to South Africa’s eastern coast, members of the Mars Hill Church of Christ in Florence, Ala., hosted marriage enrichment seminars and leadership development classes, working with Churches of Christ in Piketberg, George and Cape Town.

The mission team also helped set up learning resource centers for five congregations in South Africa and

one in neighboring Namibia.

The team worked with missionary Philip Hendricks, an alumnus of Heritage Christian University in Florence, and his wife, Roslyn.

SWITZERLAND

LUCERNE — “If a church isn’t growing, is it doing something wrong?”

That was a question posed to Ivan Voser, a minister in Thun, Switzerland, after he preached for a Church of Christ in Lucerne recently. The congregation has maintained about a dozen members for the past decade.

Many European churches struggle with that question, Voser said.

“The bottom line is that we still can learn in Switzerland to be more mission-focused,” he said, “but we also need to be aware of the difficult task of it and not become discouraged.”

SPOTLIGHT

Serving souls in Siberia

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia — Stas Suchkov traveled across five of Russia’s nine time zones to a place where forests of pine meet the Gulf of Finland.

The Christian banker lives and worships in Irkutsk, Russia, a Siberian city of 601,000 people north of Mongolia. He was one of 110 Christians, representing 14 Churches of Christ in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, who gathered at a retreat center near St. Petersburg for an annual conference for Russian-speaking Christians.

Despite its location, more than 3,500 miles east of Ukraine, Irkutsk nonetheless has received hundreds of refugees from the recent conflict in Ukraine’s Donetsk region. He told the conference attendees about his mission to serve the refugees.

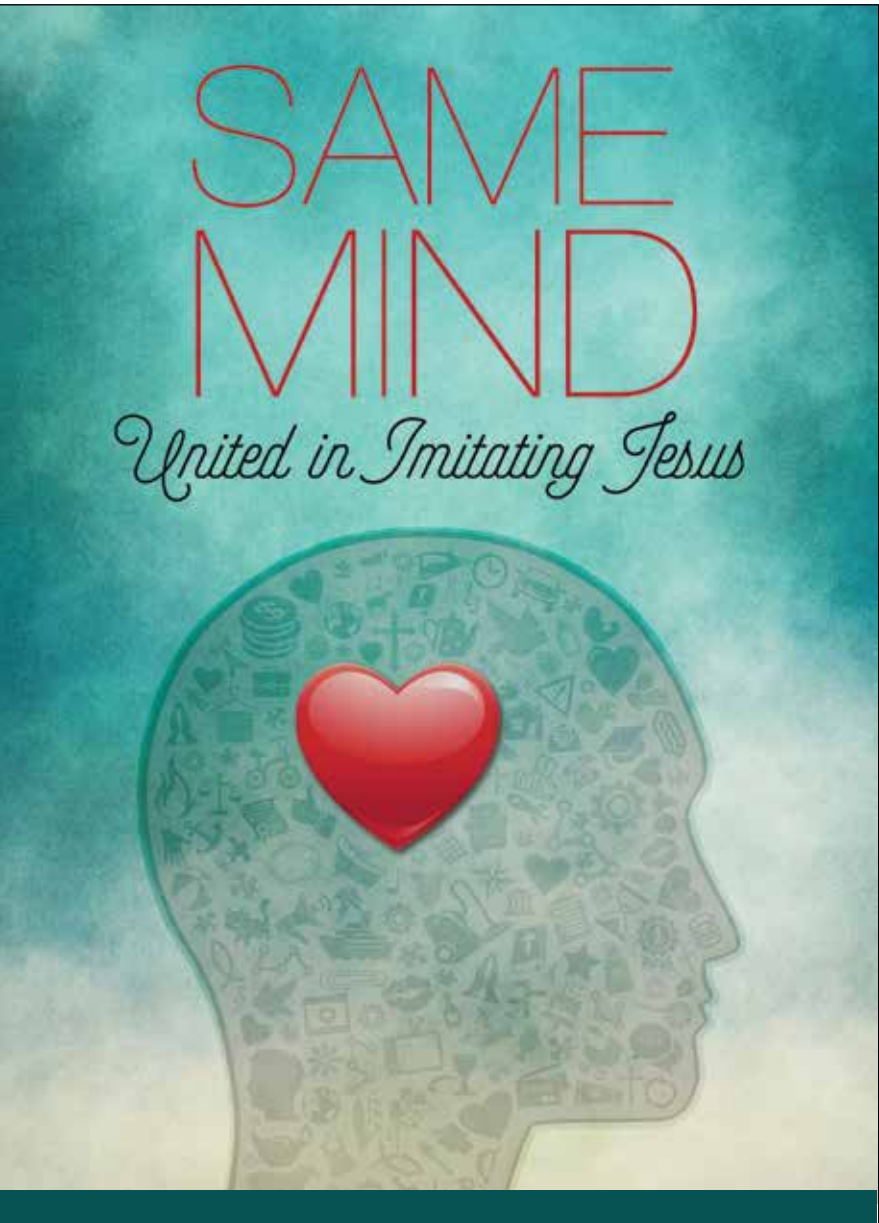
“His philosophy is simple,” said Eileen Emch, a conference participant who works with Christians in Rostov-on-Don, Russia. “Share what’s at hand — a blanket, a cell phone or Internet access — and let go of the rest — solving immigration issues, for instance.”

The conference also included a Skype conversation with Charles Whittle. The former missionary to St. Petersburg, now living in Tennessee, “urged the group to become self-sustaining congregations that encourage each other,” Emch said. “Congregations need to serve each other in a network of churches doing mutual building up.”



EILEEN EMCH

A metalsmith and church member from St. Petersburg, Russia, demonstrates his craft during a Christian conference.



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ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY



PHOTO PROVIDED

GREEK FELLOWSHIP: Members of the Glyfada Church of Christ share a meal with students from Harding University in Greece, a study abroad program of the Searcy, Ark., university. Harding President Bruce McLarty preached for the congregation on the Sunday that Greeks voted to reject a financial bailout package.

“He gave us a powerful message of hope,” minister Dino Roussos said. “God is our rescue, even during the difficult times that the people in Greece are facing these days.”

GREECE: Churches serve, save immigrants

FROM PAGE 3
had visited the church on a previous Sunday and was eager to share what he learned with his friends.

Roussos, a longtime evangelist in Athens, made sure that the young men had copies of the Bible in their native language — and a translator. By reaching out to immigrants, Greek Christians have helped win souls and plant Churches of Christ in other countries, including Albania and Bulgaria.

Recently, the church has become a family of refuge for those fleeing the violent conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Leonid Ivanov, a Church of Christ minister and neurologist from Yasynuvata, Ukraine, fled with his family as fighting intensified in nearby Donetsk. Arriving in Greece, they became active members of the Glyfada church, reaching out to other Russian speakers.

“Only here I realized how important it is for people who move to a new country to hear God’s Word in their own language,” Ivanov said.

Learning that the church translates its messages into Russian, some refugees who had given up on their faith have returned, he said, and “many new people come also to hear the Word of God.” Recently, a Russian speaker from the troubled Republic of Georgia was baptized.

including a crushing debt load and nearly 25 percent unemployment nationwide.

On a recent Sunday, as Christians worshiped across the city, citizens in this ancient nation — where democracy was born — went to the polls to vote on whether or not to accept a bailout deal offered by international creditors. Voters rejected the deal, leading to tense negotiations to keep Greece from default.

Banks were closed and automatic teller withdrawals were limited, Melirrytos said. Retirees were allowed to take only small amounts from their pensions each day, “resulting in long waiting lines outside the banks — and in hot weather,” he added.

As they prayed for God’s providence, Melirrytos and his wife, Eleni, promised to serve the Omonia church as best they could.

“We will stand next to each other and share all we have,” Alexander Melirrytos said. “No one will be without food or a roof over his head.”

Their prayers were answered, Greek Christians said, as the nation reached a last-minute deal to remain in the eurozone. But future struggles, including tax hikes and other austerity measures, remain.

Roussos said, “We continue to pray that things will work out. We thank God because our citizenship is in heaven, and the Kingdom of God is not of this material world.”

SURVIVING ON A FISCAL CLIFF
Athens’ multicultural churches share in their country’s woes —

On faith across the pond

TREVOR WILLIAMS grew up in a congregation once devastated by Nazi bombs. Now the longtime preacher discusses the challenges facing the United Kingdom's Churches of Christ in an ever-changing Europe.

BY LYNN McMILLON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

He's introduced countless souls to the Bread of Life. He's also baked bread — quite a lot of it, actually.

Before he was a full-time minister, Trevor Williams held the title of bread baker and flour confectioner when he and his wife, Pauline, married in 1968. Now, in addition to his pulpit duties, he serves as editor of *The Christian Worker*, an online news service for Churches of Christ among the British Isles. He succeeded Graham Fisher, who served the publication for 30-plus years.

Williams, who grew up in a Church of Christ in Birmingham, England, studied under Leon Crouch at the Wembley Church of Christ in London. He later studied at the North Ireland Bible School in Belfast.

They have served churches in Harrogate, Brandon, Northampton, Winchester and Bristol. Williams received an advanced diploma in Christian ministries from Birmingham Christian College and a bachelor's (with honours, as the British spell it) in missiology from the University of Birmingham.

A father of three and grandfather of six, he preaches weekly and serves as a governor of the British Bible School in Corby, England.

And he still cooks, serving with his wife as chef for Bible camps sponsored by British congregations.

Describe the current state of Christianity in the U.K.

Like the rest of Europe, the U.K. has changed from being nominally Christian to being multi-faith.

The Queen is supreme governor of the Church of England, which means that at least lip service is paid to the Christian faith.

There are, however, as many Muslims in the U.K. as there are members of the Church of England.

'Our church movement is very Bible-based. We enjoy searching the Scriptures. But in evangelism we now have to start at the very beginning. Fewer and fewer people believe in God, so that is where we have to start.'

Trevor Williams

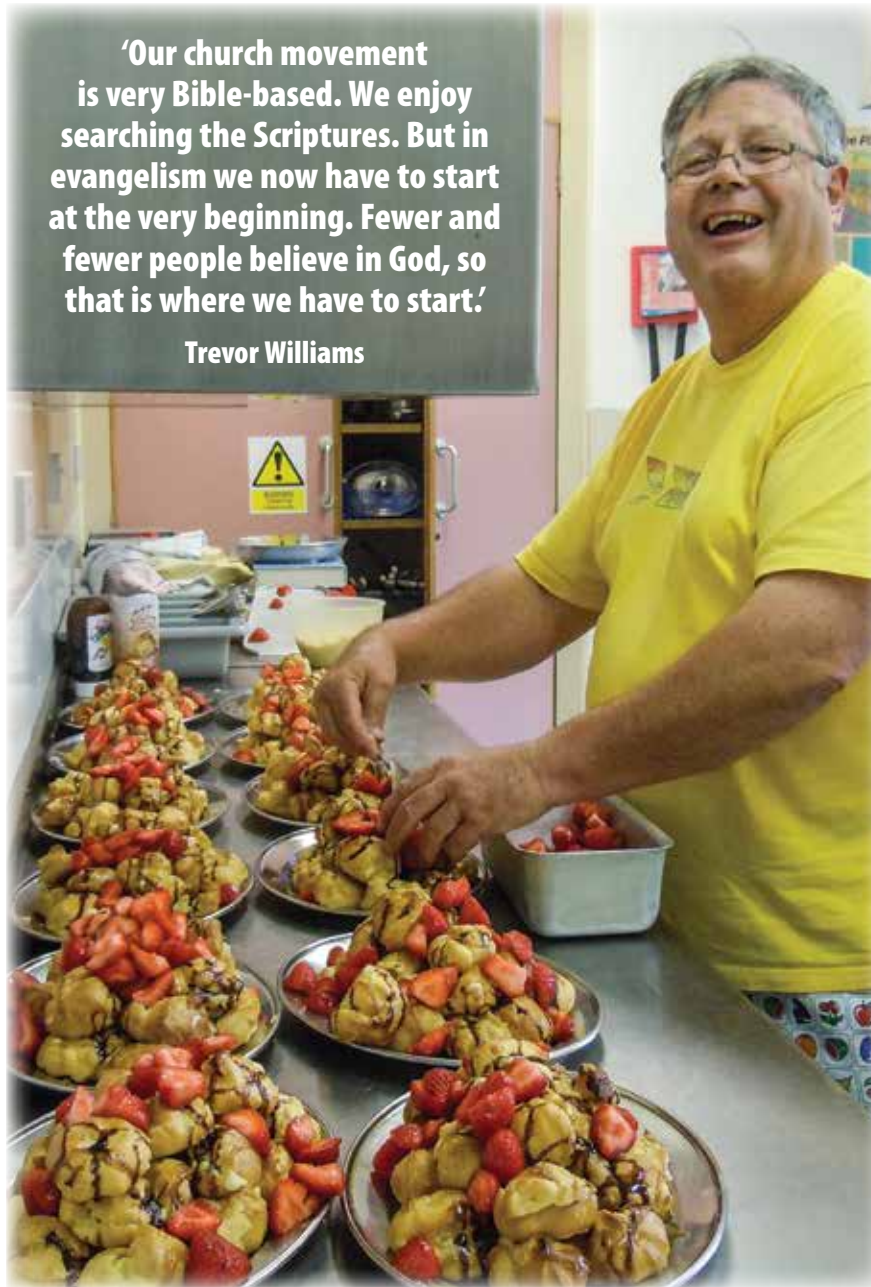


PHOTO PROVIDED

Trevor Williams prepares profiteroles (cream-filled pastries) with strawberries and chocolate sauce during a Christian camp in Leicestershire, England. "We always believed that we were feeding the future leaders of our church and nation," the longtime minister and confectioner said, "and wanted everything to be the best it could be. My vision was to do the best that money would allow."

Tell us about the church where you grew up.

In November 1865, a group of Christians moved into a 500-seat new chapel in Summer Lane, Birmingham. This was the second Church of Christ in this vast, industrial city, England's second city.

In 1940 the chapel received a direct hit by German bombs and was completely destroyed. That same night my parents were also bombed out of their home. Moving to live with relatives, my mother came into contact with the church.

In time the rubble of the chapel was removed and a wooden hut put on the site for meetings. I started Sunday school there at about 4 years of age in 1952-53. Although my family were not members of the church, they allowed me to be immersed in April 1959, a few months before my 11th birthday.

In 1962, a new chapel was erected on the same site and is still used by our brethren today.

Now, 53 years later, what is the state of Churches of Christ?

I would like to say that our churches are holding their own — with about 70 churches and 2,500 members. However, numbers have been boosted over recent years with an influx of African brethren. A number of our older churches are hanging on by a thread. Our African churches and brethren have brought a faithfulness with them that is appreciated.

The U.K. churches are very generous with regard to overseas difficulties and will collectively gather funds for special appeals, especially in Africa and India. Recently, U.K. churches raised the equivalent of \$15,000 after the disaster in Vanuatu.

We try to do our best to work together as much as possible.

See UNITED KINGDOM, Page 16

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UNITED KINGDOM: European churches needed

FROM PAGE 15

What, in your opinion, has contributed to the decline in some British churches?

This may sound negative, but I believe that our churches have been weakened by British brethren moving to the States to preach. I am sure they have done a good job, but if they were going to go anywhere I would have liked them to go to poorer countries.

Europe is getting larger all the time and we need European churches — not American churches.

I know that sounds incredibly ungrateful, but sometimes when Americans plant a church it often leads to negative thinking in society — and often the church has to be supported continually even for the day-to-day running of itself.

Churches of Christ in the U.K.
See christian-worker.org.uk for a directory of congregations, a calendar of events and news updates.

Describe the relationship between U.K. and U.S. churches.

For many years the U.K. and USA churches have held a common bond. We have lots of “mixed marriages,” with some couples living here and some living over there.

Our American brethren have been very kind in financially helping many of our full-time preachers. (I am no longer supported, but I preach somewhere every week.) Our churches try to do what they can, but raising funds for a full-time wage is a huge burden on small congregations.

What are some characteristics of Churches of Christ in the U.K.?

One of the surprises I have when visiting Churches of Christ in the U.S. is how quickly everyone leaves the chapel after the end of worship. Some even go during the singing of the closing hymn. This is unknown here. After the closing prayer we will often sit again and talk. Sometimes the talking goes on a long time. Some of our congregations serve coffee to allow people time to talk.

Communion here is also a little different, usually with what is a mini-sermon given beforehand. In visiting stateside churches I have often found this part of worship rushed through instead of being the climax

of our time together.

Perhaps because of the smallness of our churches there is a family atmosphere. This brings about a realization that we *are* the church and do not “go to church.”

Tell us about some of the stronger congregations and key leaders among Churches of Christ in Britain.

We only have a few churches that hover around the 100-member mark, including Northampton, Bristol, Wembley and Edmonton. Frank

Worgan has been preaching for about 75 years and is our oldest and most notable preacher — a man who has inspired and motivated our churches

and even now has a clear mind and a voice as strong as in his youth.

A note must also be said about the work of the British Bible School under the directorship of Patrick Boyns. The school is under the direction of the Corby Church of Christ and is led by brethren from various places in the U.K. I am one of them. We can no longer host a residential school but offer a variety of courses to brethren on an individual and congregational basis.

What challenges do Christians face in evangelizing the U.K.?

In my early days as a preacher I could visit people at their doors and they would have a basic knowledge of Bible stories. That is no longer the case. The Bible has been sidelined as irrelevant.

Also, because of pedophilia and the like in other, larger church groups, the church — any church — can no longer be thought of as a safe place. Legal restrictions have been put in place that can cause difficulties. However we all want everyone to be safe.

We rarely can have a discussion about Bible doctrine with anyone now because so few people know any Bible. Our church movement is very Bible-based. We enjoy searching the Scriptures. But in evangelism we have to now start at the very beginning. Fewer and fewer people believe in God, so that is where we have to start.

A church gets saved

DOWN TO LESS THAN A DOZEN members, a congregation in rural Oklahoma faced death. Its minister prayed for God's will, and the church found that it possessed the keys to growth.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

CARNEGIE, Okla.

Bryce Marshall was ready to call it quits.

So was his church.

The 27-year-old was "burned out, tired, frustrated and seeing no results," he said, after nearly two years as part-time preacher for the Carnegie Church of Christ — his family's home for three generations.

In its heyday, the church in this dusty, western Oklahoma farm town of about 1,700 people boasted 120 souls in its pews. But that was the late 1970s. The church had declined ever since, said Marshall's father, Greg.

By 2013, Sunday attendance was less than a dozen.

"I never dreamed we would ever get in the situation of having 10 to 12 people," Greg Marshall said. "I'll be honest, we were just sitting there kind of like we thought we were on an island. Everything got negative."

The silver-haired saints who remained consoled themselves by saying, "No one wants to hear the Gospel," and the like, Greg Marshall said. They talked about selling the building, buying a van and busing everyone to a church in Fort Cobb, about 11 miles east.

The church could have been one more casualty of a shrinking fellowship. In the past quarter-century, Churches of Christ declined by 165,177 souls — or 9.8 percent — according to the 2015

edition of "Churches of Christ in the United States," published by Nashville, Tenn.-based 21st Century Christian.

The 2015 directory lists 147 fewer Churches of Christ in the U.S. — 10 fewer in Oklahoma — than its previous edition in 2012.

Marshall's wife, Margarite, remembers how disillusioned her husband had become in those darks days two years ago. Pregnant with their first child, she told him, "Something's got to give. Either you just quit and we go somewhere where we can get spiritually fulfilled and not aggravated ... or we need to change it."

"About that time," she said, "God started opening all these doors and windows for us."



'I never dreamed we would ever get in the situation of having 10 to 12 people. I'll be honest, we were just sitting there kind of like we were on an island. Everything got negative.'

Greg Marshall, longtime member of the Church of Christ in Carnegie, Okla.

FRUSTRATION, DREAD AND A PRAYER WALK

That first door wasn't in the church building.

On a hot July afternoon in 2013, Jim Weaver strolled into Carnegie's NAPA auto parts store, where Bryce Marshall works. It's a family business opened by his grandfather 50 years ago.

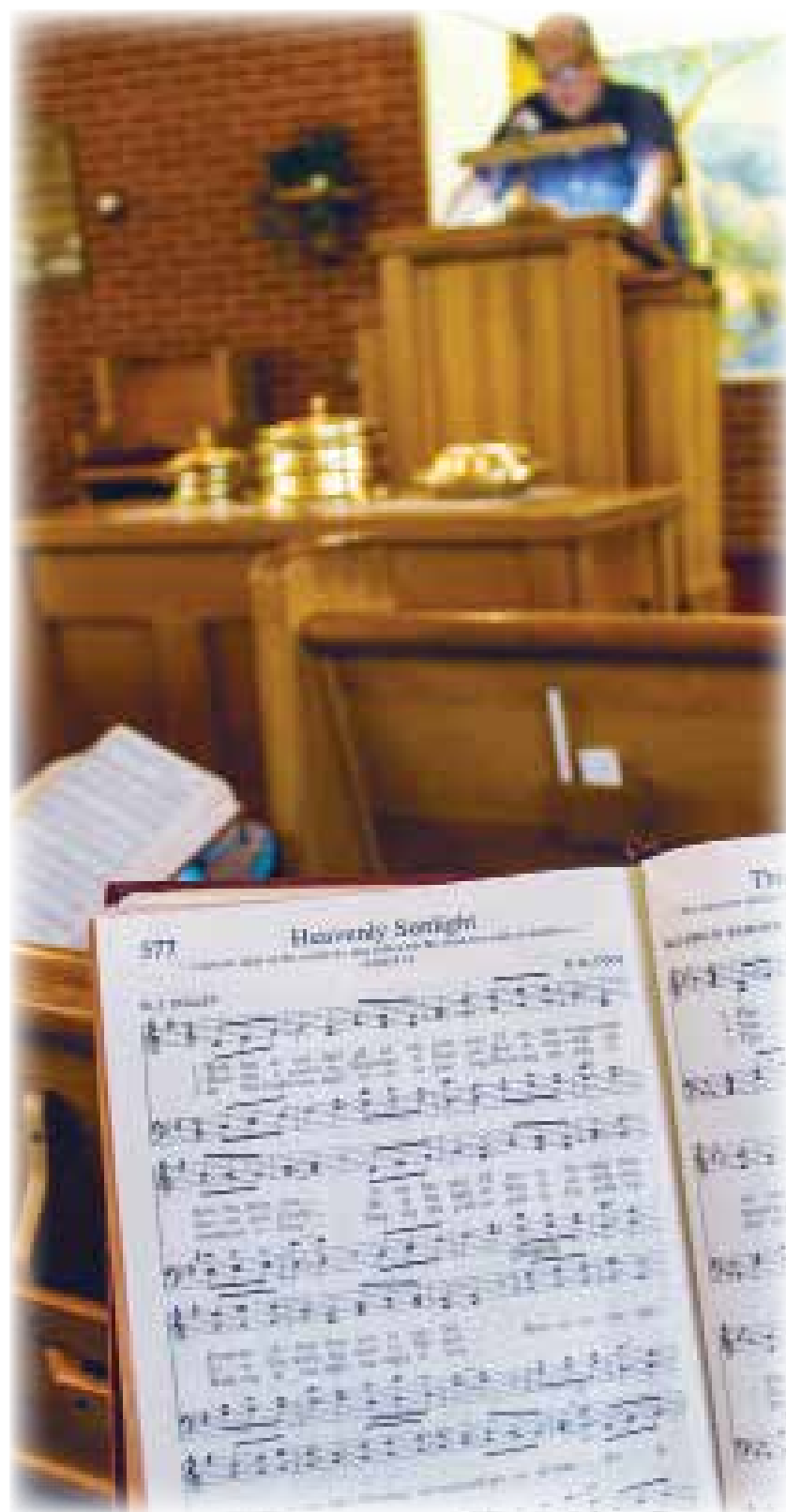
Weaver had been all over town, asking folks who preached for the Church of Christ. His search led him here.

"I had no idea what he wanted," Bryce Marshall said.

He asked Weaver to join him in the store's office.

"I've always been very conscientious about what people would think about

CONTINUED



PHOTOS BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Members of the Carnegie Church of Christ in rural Caddo County, Okla., sing from well-worn hymnals as Greg Marshall leads worship on a recent Sunday. The county's population peaked at about 34,000 in the early 1980s but has slowly declined since, averaging about 29,000 since 2001. A board near the podium lists the previous week's attendance as 27 — more than double attendance in 2013.



ERIK TRYGGESTAD

GENERATIONS OF FAITH: Bryce Marshall and his father, Greg, stand in the auto parts store Greg's father opened in 1963 in Carnegie. As the Carnegie Church of Christ declined, Bryce became part of a youth group at a church in nearby Fort Cobb before leaving to study at Southwestern Oklahoma State University. There he met his wife, Margarite, a native of Lawrenceburg, Tenn.



JIM WEAVER

SMALL-TOWN HISTORY: A worker with Rural America Ministries walks past Carnegie's Liberty Theatre. Opened in 1915, it's the oldest continually operating theater in the state.



STEVEN LANGLEY

THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH: Bryce Marshall carries his son, Kohen, during a community party hosted by the Carnegie Church of Christ and Rural America Ministries. Church members have learned that, to spread the Gospel, "you've just got to be brave," said Marshall's wife, Margarite. "I think Christians as a whole are just complacent, (thinking), 'This is supposedly a Christian country. Everybody knows about God.' Well, what do they know about God? Do they really know who Jesus is? Are you bringing him up in your everyday life?"



ERIK TRYGGESTAD

NEW FACES: Members of the Carnegie Church of Christ greet Juan and Nancy Orduna after Sunday worship. Juan, who grew up in Carnegie, said they used to attend a church in nearby Mountain View but started coming to the Carnegie church because of Bryce Marshall's preaching and the church's sense of family.

'I started letting go of the frustration and accepting that maybe God had a little different plan for us'

CONTINUED

me preaching," he said. "I've never been a heathen or anything, but I've always felt like people might say, 'Who are you to be a preacher? You've got no training. You're just a regular guy.'" He didn't even know what to preach about on Sundays, he told Weaver, so he just focused on what he was going through in his life.

Weaver's response: "You're on track. That's what people are looking for: relevance and honesty."

Weaver, a member of the Oakcrest Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, once served as a missionary in Portugal. Now his mission field included the small towns of western Oklahoma. He founded a nonprofit, Rural America Ministries, to help churches reach and revitalize their communities through the Gospel.

The two agreed to stay in touch and talk about ways to revitalize the Carnegie church. In the months that followed, Weaver made regular visits and invited Bryce Marshall to lunch.

At first, little changed. Margarite

Marshall gave birth to their son, Kohen, and Bryce Marshall had to move his desk and the computer he used to write sermons into the laundry room of their rent house.

"I just got to where I loathed going in there," Bryce Marshall said. The work took time away from his son. He also began to dread the text messages from Weaver inviting him to lunch. On one visit, in March of 2014, Weaver didn't even want to eat. He just wanted to walk around the city park — and pray.

"And I'm thinking, 'Are you kidding me? I haven't eaten,'" Bryce Marshall recalled. "I'm walking around town, where everybody knows me, and they're all looking at these guys who are just talking to thin air."

Soon, he began to realize that "I was holding onto the Christian coma we had gotten into," Bryce Marshall said. "We had the habit of huddling up together and patting ourselves on the back — 'well, you're doing good, you've figured it out, you go to the right church, you've been baptized' — instead of just reaching out to everybody. It wasn't looking like the New Testament church."

By the end of the prayer walk, "I started letting go of the frustration" he said, "and accepting that maybe God had a little different plan for us."

He did.



IN SMALL-TOWN AMERICA, Churches of Christ struggle to remain alive and vibrant in shrinking, rural communities. Find more Rural Redemption features under the "Series" tab at www.christianchronicle.org.

A YOUTH GROUP OF ONE

The Carnegie church's revitalization didn't start with a miraculous catch of new souls.

And it didn't start on Sunday morning. J.W. Prather, a member of the nearby Mountain View Church of Christ, was attending the Carnegie church's Wednesday night Bible study because the start time, 7 p.m., was convenient. His daughter, son-in-law and 12-year-old grandson had recently been baptized and came along.

Margarite Marshall watched the grandson, Brennan, struggle to follow along with the adult Bible class.

"He was bored out of his mind," she said, "so I talked to Bryce and said, 'I've got to do something about this. He's baptized. He's got to be fed, too.' So we started a Bible class for him."

After a few weeks, a woman who had been visiting the Carnegie church brought her 7-year-old grandson, Julian, doubling the size of the youth class. Julian, his mother and his siblings had been attending a nearby Baptist church that offered pizza and games on Wednesday nights. But Julian loved Margarite Marshall's class and begged to come back. Soon, his entire family was attending — and

members of his extended family. The youth Bible class swelled to 11.

Three months prior, Bryce Marshall had considered canceling the church's Wednesday night service, he said, "and now we had more on Wednesday night than we had on Sunday."

After a few months, Julian's mother, Julia Chavez, started bringing her family to Sunday morning services as well. Julian and his cousin, Alan, were baptized. Bryce Marshall asked Julia Chavez if she could sense a difference in her walk with God since she started attending. She said she could.

Why? "Because you guys speak from the Bible," she said. "Your study and lessons are from the Bible, and that's it."

ADOPTING A COMMUNITY

As the Bible class grew, Jim Weaver and the Marshalls started looking for ways the Carnegie Church of Christ could reach out to its community.

Weaver learned that the city had purchased new playground equipment for a park near the church building but needed workers to

assemble it. Weaver put together a team of students in the Rural America Ministries program for the task. The church promoted the new playground equipment in the local newspaper.

Later, the church hosted a fall festival in the park, with assistance from students at Oklahoma Christian University.

Margarite Marshall launched an "adopt-a-grandparent" program to connect the church's influx of children with its senior saints. Now the excited children run into the church building and hug their adopted grandparents.

A new spirit of community exists in the congregation, she added, and with it has come baptisms and visitors. On a recent Sunday, attendance was 52.

Looking back, the couple sees God at work, bringing Weaver into their

lives, challenging them to look for new opportunities — just as new souls began to show interest in the church.

"It could have been like every other time someone walked in those doors — they would have walked right out," Bryce Marshall said. "But God had the timing all lined out to where, when that door was open, we were ready. We didn't know it, but we were ready."

A WONDERFUL PROBLEM

The future of the Carnegie Church of Christ is far from certain. On a summer Sunday, as Bryce and Margarite Marshall visited family in Texas, just a handful of old souls gathered in the pews for Sunday morning Bible class.

Afterward, longtime members including Walter Owens and Ninalea Davis talked about the church's recent

growth. They pray it will last.

"We've got some young folks real interested," said Owens, age 88. "That's a start."

As Greg Marshall led hymns from a well-worn copy of "Sacred Selections for the Church," a few more souls drifted in, including Juan and Nancy Orduna. They started attending recently and love the church's preaching and fellowship, Juan Orduna said.

John Pickens, a visiting minster from Edmond, Okla., preached about the importance of baptism.

"Y'all need to get some water in your baptistery," he said, glancing behind him from the pulpit, "because you never know when you're going to need to baptize someone."

As Pickens preached, the Ordunas' 18-month-old daughter, Juancy, began crying loudly.

In the small auditorium, everyone noticed. And no one minded.

After decades of decline, Greg Marshall said, "It's a wonderful thing to have the problem of kids making noise."

'It could have been like every other time someone walked in those doors — they would have walked right out. But God had the timing all lined out to where, when that door was open, we were ready. We didn't know it, but we were ready.'

Bryce Marshall, minister

Missionaries to rural America

MINISTRY ENCOURAGES *students to clear away distractions, follow God's call to serve small churches close to home.*

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

MEDICINE PARK, Okla.

From the peak of Mount Scott, elevation 2,464 feet, Kaylee Cowan can see hope for the small towns that dot America's landscape — even hers.

That's Cowan's takeaway after an internship with Rural America Ministries, or RAM, a nonprofit that strives to share God's love with the 50 million souls who live far from subways, skyscrapers and shopping malls.

And, too often, far from hope.

Cowan grew up in a rural community north of Houston. Though she loves her home congregation, she was discouraged that the church didn't seem to radiate love to others — only strict rules of conduct. It drove away her friends, she said.

When she left to study at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Okla., she was done with small-town life.

Then Jim Weaver showed up at her campus ministry to talk about RAM and its mission to reach the lost and revitalize churches in rural communities.

Though skeptical, Cowan volunteered and soon found herself in Cordell, Okla., population 2,650. She was a counselor at a Christian camp, served at nursing homes, studied the Bible with adolescent girls and shared her life with members of the 4th and College Church of Christ.

"I've never seen so much hospitality," she said. "They didn't ask you to follow the rules. I became part of a church that gave me nothing but a home."

BUILDING UP SMALL, STRUGGLING CHURCHES

Atop Mount Scott in southwestern Oklahoma, Cowan shared her stories with fellow RAM students who worked with churches in Mangum, Okla., and Seymour, Texas.

Weaver encouraged them to remember and use those experiences — no matter where God leads them.

Like Cowan, he didn't see rural America as his mission field — or even America, for that matter.

As a student at Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City, Weaver gained a love for international missions. He traveled to São Paulo, Brazil, with former missionary Howard Norton. He worked as a probation officer and counseled juvenile offenders before moving with his family to serve as missionaries in Portugal.

Health problems forced the family to return to the U.S., and Weaver found himself in western Oklahoma, serving as evangelist for the 4th and College church.

Among the cotton fields he saw big problems — alcoholism, methamphetamine abuse, depression and small Churches of Christ struggling to keep their doors open. He also saw loving, caring people living without the distractions of big cities.

"We're always looking over the next hill. 'What's out there?'" Weaver said. "And God is saying, 'I've got something right here in front of you.'" With support from his congregation, he launched RAM in 2012.

Luke Nance, youth minister for the 4th and College church, compared Weaver's ministry to the apostle Paul, who moved throughout Asia Minor spreading the Gospel.

'We're always looking over the next hill. 'What's out there?' And God is saying, 'I've got something right here for you.'"

Jim Weaver, Rural America Ministries

PHOTOS BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Atop Mount Scott in southwestern Oklahoma's Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, Jim Weaver listens to a group of interns talk about their experiences as they served small communities with Rural America Ministries.



Ted Merritt, a member of the Oakcrest Church of Christ in Oklahoma City and board member of Rural America Ministries, leads interns in a prayer at Mount Scott.

Instead of planting churches in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, Weaver encourages churches in Cordell, Carnegie and Mangum, to name a few, often helping them establish small-group ministries and serve their communities, Nance said. Weaver also recruits interns to get out of big cities and into the lives of small-town Christians.

Members of the Seymour Church of Christ were a bit skeptical about the four college students who invaded their community this summer, said Lee Skelton, the church's minister and a former missionary to Romania.

The interns helped with the church's food distribution, visitation and an after-school program for kids.

The church had about 200 members in the 1950s and now has 110 "on a good Sunday," Skelton said. The minister has seen a change in the congregation since RAM's visit, though. Members want to reach out — and are eager to host the students again.

"They don't just come and 'do ministry.' They partner with you," Skelton said. When they serve, "they don't say, 'We're with RAM.' They just say, 'We're members of the Church of Christ.'"

FACE-TO-FACE WITH CATTLE AND CHRIST

During the wrap-up session, the students shared stories of people they met who had been hurt or driven away by their past experiences with church. Some had not been back to worship since before the interns were born.

"What they're desperate for is

relationships," Cowan said. In her short time in Cordell, she helped establish new relationships and saw the beginnings of healing — for others and herself. Now, "God's calling me to seriously consider going back to a small town," she said.

Josue Rodriguez had no rural experience when he joined RAM.

He grew up in Miami (the big one in Florida, not the town in northeast Oklahoma) and just graduated from Ohio Valley University in Vienna, W.Va.



Rodriguez

In Mangum, "I was face-to-face with cattle," Rodriguez said. He also found a sense of community and family he didn't expect.

Away from big-city distractions, he focused on spiritual disciplines — including discipleship, service and just being still.

Those practices will serve him anywhere, said Rodriguez, who next plans to serve as an intern for a church in Belpre, Ohio.

Demi Lorey, a student at Lubbock Christian University in Texas, said the experience helped her realize that "mission isn't something you do 'over there' or something you do some of the time."

"It doesn't matter how big the city or how small the village," she said, "there are people there who need to know God."

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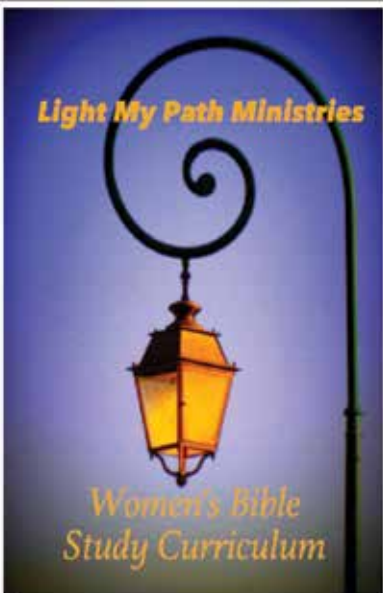
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BIBLE CAMPS

GANDER BROOK CHRISTIAN CAMP

RAYMOND, Maine — Before the summer camping season swings into full groove, Gander Brook counselors undergo a week of intense training.

Work and Worship Week allows counselors to bond with each other and learn to trust themselves, camp president Charlie Harrison said.

“While much work is done prior to Work and Worship Week, the week is critical in ensuring that all systems are ready for full service for the next six weeks,” said Harrison, minister for the Brunswick Church of Christ in Maine.

Gander Brook serves young people from Churches of Christ throughout New England.

HIGHER EDUCATION

FREED-HARDEMAN UNIVERSITY

HENDERSON, Tenn. — The Freed-Hardeman community mourned the July 4 death of alumnus Mykal Moss Daniels, who was killed in a car wreck on her way to help with the university’s Horizons summer camp.

The 40-year-old wife and mother was a faithful member of the Spring Meadows Church of Christ, south of Nashville.

“She was a great lady and a hard worker who had such a zeal about life,” youth minister Jerry Elder told SpringHillHomePage.com. “She was very active in our church with Club 45, our program for the fourth-and fifth-graders.”

LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The university recently launched its latest community service venture with the grand opening of the Lipscomb Family Therapy Center, which offers mental health and relational care services.

Much like a teaching hospital, the center is able to offer services at discounted rates on a sliding scale, because it utilizes a team approach to care. Interns from Lipscomb’s master of marriage and family therapy



BOBBY MOORE

From street child to class leader

At a school in the East African town of Kitale, Kenya, a 14-year-old student tells about how her life has changed since she was sponsored by the Christian Relief Fund. When she was 6, she lived on the streets, eating fruit she found in trash cans, said Bobby Moore, vice president of global operations for the Texas-based nonprofit, supported by members of Churches of Christ.

“Someone sponsored her through CRF,” Moore said, “and now she is a leader in her class, and she says her family is now proud of her. She said, ‘If I did not have a CRF sponsor, I would still be digging in the trash.’”

WEBSITE: www.christianreliefund.org

program offer services under the supervision of licensed therapists.

OHIO VALLEY UNIVERSITY

VIENNA, W.Va. — Michael Moss and his wife, Virginia, led a team of four Ohio Valley students — Michael Rowand, Walker Wright, Michael Mitchell and Kaleigh Robbins — on a three week mission trip to Bucharest, Romania.

The summer effort marked Michael Moss’ 23rd trip to Romania.

The students and Virginia Moss taught English using the Bible as text for over 200 hours of individual instruction. The students also

conducted a Vacation Bible School.

Michael Moss, dean of OVU’s College of Bible and Behavioral Sciences, taught a college-level class each evening and preached for the local church on Sundays.

YORK COLLEGE

YORK, Neb. — Samuel Garner will join York College this fall, serving in the newly created position of director of spiritual development.

Garner has served as the preaching minister at Lee Acres Church of Christ in Tupelo, Miss., since 2012. Prior to that, he spent

SPOTLIGHT

Advocate honored

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — *Gospel Advocate* was honored July 9 by the Tennessee House of Representatives.

House Resolution 55 recognized the 160th anniversary of the longest-running periodical associated with Churches of Christ.

House Speaker Beth Harwell stopped by the Nashville bookstore to present *Gospel Advocate* publisher Neil W. Anderson with a framed copy of the resolution.

Anderson took a moment to show Harwell, a Church of Christ member, some of the *Gospel Advocate* archive materials on display for the anniversary celebration.

The small publication launched in 1855 has grown into one of the largest publishing houses serving Churches of Christ.



GOSPELADVOCATE.COM

House Speaker Beth Harwell visits with *Gospel Advocate*’s Neil W. Anderson.

six years in Windsor, Conn., as the preaching minister at the Connecticut Valley Church of Christ.

Garner also helped to found the New England Church Growth Conference.

“I believe York College is uniquely situated to make a difference in the Kingdom,”

he said. “Because of its size and focus on leadership, it has built-in transformation possibilities.”



Garner

Camp of ages: Churches see a big God on Short Mountain

BY KEN BECK | FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

WOODBURY, Tenn.

At an elevation of 2,074 feet, Short Mountain proves nearer to heaven than any place in Middle Tennessee. On a clear day, a visitor with acute vision can spy the peaks of Nashville skyscrapers some 55 miles to the northwest.

Every summer for the past 61 years, here in a clearing near the mountaintop, hundreds of youngsters have found themselves growing closer to their Maker.

Cell phones, TVs, radios and DVD players are taboo at Short Mountain Bible Camp, but visitors will observe every child carrying a Bible several times throughout the day.

"The mountain is just a special place," said Darla Cunningham, a member of the Woodbury Church of Christ in Tennessee, who has returned for her fifth summer as a counselor. "I feel like you can get closer to God here because you get away from all the hustle and bustle of everyday life and focus on what you need to focus on."

During the week children play volleyball, ultimate Frisbee and basketball, hike trails, swim, ride horseback, canoe and create crafts, but the focus is on Bible study twice a day.

"We're very blessed ... to have all these ministers, eight of them, all teaching and counseling in the cabins," said Darrell Duncan, minister

for the Center Chapel Church of Christ in Mt. Juliet, Tenn. He and Tim Knox have directed Cannon County Week at the camp since the 1990s.

"Some of the campers get to know the ministers," Duncan said. "It's their first time to see their minister in jeans."

Twenty-two campers were baptized during the week, which included participants from the Woodbury, New Hope, Wood, Curlee Smith Grove and Leoni Churches of Christ in Cannon County.

Evan Alley, 14, from Mt. Juliet was one of those baptized.



PHOTO PROVIDED

In the 1950s, boys participate in a devotional at Short Mountain Bible Camp.



KEN BECK

Doug Robbins, 82, a member of Center Chapel Church of Christ in Mt. Juliet, Tenn., teaches Bible to 12- to 14-year-old boys at the camp, where he's served since 1997.

"I had been thinking about it for a while," Alley said, "and last night a bunch of my friends were sitting in the back part of my cabin talking to our counselor, Justin Reed.

"One of my friends talked to me about being baptized, and said, 'I love you so much. I'd hate for you to go away and not be saved tonight.'"

So Duncan got a knock on his cabin door at 30 minutes past midnight, and about 40 campers witnessed Alley's baptism.

"It was very cold. It felt great," said Alley of his plunge into the 3-foot-deep baptistery, a circular tank made from native stone, filled

with cold spring water. "I know it's going to be the best decision I ever made."

BUILT WITH A PURPOSE

The camp's roots go back to 1952, when Dr. J.F. Adams, a physician and member of the Woodbury Church of Christ, bought the land and told his congregation, "This mountain is something special! God has given it to me for some purpose. In searching out that purpose, I can think of no better use to which it could be put than in some use for young people, such as a Christian camp." The camp began operating in 1954.

Jerry and Penny Nash reside atop Short Mountain and have served as caretakers of the camp property for the past 10 years.

"I didn't even know the camp was here until 2000," Jerry Nash said. "But the word is getting out there with social media. People read about the baptisms and are inspired."

The camp averages 35 to 40 baptisms per year, said Jerry Nash, and about 1,200 people have been baptized here since the camp began.

About 1,500 people participated in camp sessions last year, and another 1,500 — mostly church groups and families — use the camp facilities for retreats when camp is not in session.

About 30 churches donate yearly to the camp, and at least 100 congregations sponsor a child to attend.

For Darrell Duncan, one of the directors of Cannon County Week, the camp has special significance. His wife, Tracy, started coming to camp as a counselor through the encouragement of preacher Herb Alsop.

"This is where Darrell and I met," Tracy Duncan said, "and the first time he ever kissed me was at the Short Mountain fire tower — and that was where we got engaged."

Luke Blanton, 19, also a member of the Woodbury church, started camping here at age 8.

Earlier this year, his family planned a vacation to Hilton Head, S.C. Then he talked to co-director Tim Knox and learned that the trip conflicted with camp.

Nonetheless, he asked Knox if it was too late to sign up as a camp counselor. Knox's response: "Not if you don't mind washing dishes."

"So I told my family. 'Hey, I'm gonna go to Bible camp rather than Hilton,'" Blanton said. "I've only missed one year, and I wouldn't miss it for the world."



Tracy Duncan



Blanton



Darrell Duncan



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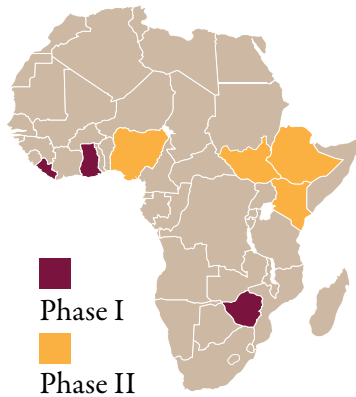
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EDITORIAL

A call for convicted civility

This is a time for Churches of Christ to state what the Bible teaches and stand by it. That's the easy part. This also is a time for meaningful, respectful discussions with those who disagree with us.

The recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage highlights challenges that Christians in America have faced for decades.

Three months before the ruling, Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn., hosted "Tough Topics of Youth Ministry: Sexual Identity, Sexual Abuse and Shame." One keynoter was Mark Yarhouse, a psychology professor and author of **"Understanding Sexual Identity: A Resource for Youth Ministry."** Yarhouse shared that he had adopted the philosophy of Richard J. Mouw, who served for 20 years as president of Fuller Theological Seminary in California.

"We have far too many Christians who are strong on conviction, but you wouldn't want them representing you to the broader culture because they're just mean-spirited people," Yarhouse said, paraphrasing Mouw's position, "but we also have far too many Christians who are so strong on civility you have no idea what they believe in."

Striking this delicate balance — Mouw calls it "convicted civility" and Yarhouse adds compassion — is vital as we engage a culture that embraces lifestyles that Scripture reveals to us as against the will of God.

After the Supreme Court ruling, the leaders of many Churches of Christ read statements to their flocks stating their opposition to same-sex marriage. At the College Church of Christ in Searcy, Ark., that statement also encouraged Christians to recognize that no sinner is beyond redemption and that believers should treat members of the homosexual community with the same love and kindness that our heavenly Father showed us when he gave his only Son for our sins.

The College church elders concluded their statement with a prayer, and we join with them in their petition.

Our dear Heavenly Father, we come humbly before you to request your blessings on us as we face a difficult time in the history of the church and in the history of our nation. We ask you to give us wisdom, strength and courage to do — and stand firmly for — what is right, regardless of the consequences. Help us always remember that you have let us read the last chapter of human history which ends with the absolute victory of Jesus Christ and his church.

READ THE COMPLETE PRAYER, and see our previous coverage of the "Tough Topics in Youth Ministry" conference, at www.christianchronicle.org.

Fiery tongues and open arms

Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

— James 3:5-6, New International Version

Ever since I came to faith, I have watched people close to me — and people around the world — bring pain to each other.

We hurt each other with our words, with our actions and, increasingly, with our posts on social media.

I've done it too.

Brothers and sisters, this is not what we are called to do.

Our knowledge of the truth, of sin, of heaven, is not a tool with which we are to beat one another. It is a tool of precision — a surgeon's scalpel — for healing the world of its pain.

It is with this tool we are called to spread God's will. Yet, we sometimes use it in an attempt to detach others from the bond we share with our Creator.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16. We all know and cherish that verse. It is printed on our tees, door-mats and bumper stickers. It is a message of hope, of redemption.

Often forgotten and overlooked, however, is the message of God's

open arms — to all peoples, all races, all income statuses, all sinners. Do we, likewise, open our arms to those different from us — recovering addicts, prostitutes, those struggling with same-sex attraction?

In Matthew 7:5, Jesus teaches, *"You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."*

When we see someone struggling — someone who hasn't yet accepted Jesus as their savior and put him on in baptism — we should remember that.

There are lots of hot topics we can discuss in light of recent court decisions and media coverage — gender identity, racial equality, homosexuality, gender discrimination. We must consider the consequences of our words, whether they're spoken out loud or posted on Twitter or Facebook. What do they say about the church?

How can we shine through the madness as the forgiven and loving children of the one true God?

Love them all, and introduce them to Jesus. Heaven's gate may be narrow, but the waiting room isn't.

You may be closing doors before you even ring the doorbell.

KOLBY CALHOUN is a senior at Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City. He plans to serve as a missionary apprentice after graduation.

In the Word



Kolby Calhoun



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VOICES

THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE'S Bobby Ross Jr. asked ministers across the nation to offer insight on wedding ceremonies. Here are some of their responses. Join the conversation at www.christianchronicle.org.

The minister is not the wedding planner. Too many times, the couple/families look at the minister in this role and ask him to make way too many decisions for them. ... As I tell couples, "It is your wedding. You can do it any way you like." ... Have a wedding planner or someone with knowledge to be in charge.

Danny Dodd | North Little Rock, Ark.



I enjoy doing weddings. I typically do four premarital counseling sessions, which I believe are necessary. I give them information to consider for their wedding, ideas concerning all the details, but I also like for them to have choices about messages, rings, vows, etc. The rehearsal shouldn't take more than an hour if we have all done our homework, and this is not always the case.

Don Middleton | Stephenville, Texas



For me, the wedding is an assembly where God is to be honored. I don't want to hear "Keep it short" in general. Or specifically, "We want a very short sermon." If this is not a Christian assembly, then do not ask a Christian minister to officiate. Judges are willing to marry anyone at almost any time and always expeditiously.

Steve Kenney | Indianapolis

I tell the bride this is their wedding — not the sister's, not the aunt's, not the mother-in-law's, not even the wedding planner's. When someone is saying, "I think we should do this," and someone else is saying something else, and still someone else is reminding us what is "traditional," I am going to look at the bride and ask, "What do *you* want to do?"

In that moment, I want her to look inside and choose the option that she likes best and forget everyone else.

Danny Holman | Greenville, Miss.



I try to calm the couple at the rehearsal. I tell them that if something goes differently than planned not to panic, that part of my job is to deal with things in the ceremony that might go "wrong." I warn them about little things, like rings that won't go on due to nerves. I tell them not to force it on ... just hold it there during the ring vows, then he/she can work it on, unnoticed, after they turn around.

Dean Kelly | Highland Home, Ala.

'What he needed was life'

THE TRAGEDY IN CHATTANOOGA is deeply personal for a church planter and former U.S. Marine who fought in the Persian Gulf. Beyond the debates over surveillance and immigration, he urges Christians to focus on the millions who don't know God.

Twenty-four years ago, Mohammad Abdulazeez was born in Kuwait. That wasn't long after many of my brothers in the U.S. Marine Corps and I received orders to deploy to the Persian Gulf, where we later participated in the first Gulf War, an operation to liberate Kuwait from Iraq.

When I saw the initial report of the shootings in my hometown, I learned that the four dead Marines were from Mike Battery, the very unit with which I deployed to the Gulf.

As news continued to roll in, I learned that Abdulazeez, identified as the shooter, was a graduate of my alma mater, Red Bank High School. A college classmate of mine at Freed-Hardeman University, also from my hometown, taught the sister of the shooter when at Red Bank High and personally knew Mohammed.

As I contemplate these coincidences and pray for the families, I brace myself for the war of words as we, in our pain, recite possible solutions, hoping that the next event might be averted. Predictably, we'll argue about more surveillance, higher fences, enforcement and creation of new immigration laws. We'll argue about Second Amendment rights.

I am glad to live in a nation where such debates can take place. Still, I wonder how constructive it is for us as Christians if the greater part of our time is spent at this level — when Jesus tracks in such a different direction.

"Nothing outside of a man can make him unclean by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him unclean," Jesus tells us in Mark 7:15.

If Jesus is right, the often-scurriously debate in which we engage — over how to stop the symptoms of bigger problems — is the tail wagging the dog.

Jesus shows us that we can't solve or prevent problems by regulating or preventing something that doesn't have the power to cause the problem in the first place. Too often we define health and safety in terms of outside behavior instead of inside fullness. We don't address the cause of the problem.

The cause? Idolatry.

The truth is that we have too long seen idolatry

as purely theological. However, we must grasp this concept (not Islam, not presidential politics, not judicial oversight) to truly understand what is going on around us. It is idolatrous to seek our primary security and safety in anything or anyone other than our Creator.

Views



Eric Greer

In the beginning we are introduced to Adam and Eve. At first, God is the source and sustainer of all things in their life. We know the story.

Then they collude with Satan and turn God's creation upside down. They idolize knowledge over God — bringing death upon themselves and all of us.

Like darkness and light, death is not the opposite of life. It is the absence of

life. And the way to life is not by trying hard (building fences or bombs) to not be dead. It is by coming to the God who gives life.

Yes, I acknowledge my first inclination after learning of the Chattanooga shootings was to seek revenge. But that is not who I was created to be. Those personal touchpoints in this tragic story remind me that all of the human intervention that took place in Mohammad Abdulazeez's life did not bring him life.

I do not mean to discourage participation in the public arena of ideas. Instead, I invite all of us to realize that our debates — over who should hold an elected office, over who should or shouldn't be allowed to carry guns — pale in comparison to the tragedy of the millions upon millions around us who do not have life.

This latest tragedy — fueled by a poisonous concoction of clashing worldviews — is only the most recent in a long series of tragedies.

And, as long as God delays the summing up of all things, it will not be the last.

Our call is to pursue life, share

life and to live it to the fullest. Abdulazeez and many like him have been exposed to socialism, capitalism, materialism and other "isms" ad nauseam.

What he needed was life.

ERIC GREER is a church planter who lives in Plymouth, Mass. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve from 1988 to 1992. He and his wife, Traci, have two daughters, Melanie and Rachel. Contact him at eric@restorationcommunity.church.

'Yes, I acknowledge my first inclination after learning of the Chattanooga shootings was to seek revenge. But that is not who I was created to be.'



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College of Arts and Sciences

Dr. Gregory Straughn, Dean • ACU Box 29210, Abilene, Texas 79699-9210

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

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See acu.edu/academics/provost/positions.html for complete descriptions of these positions. In a letter to the appropriate dean or chair, applicants should address their qualifications for the position. They should include in the application a statement of how faith informs their teaching; a discussion of their spiritual journey; a curriculum vita; transcripts of all undergraduate and graduate work; and names, addresses and phone numbers of five references. Review of applicants will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. Nominations of and applications from qualified women and minorities are especially encouraged.

ACU is affiliated with the fellowship of the Churches of Christ. All applicants must be professing Christians and be active, faithful members of a congregation of the Churches of Christ and deeply committed to service in Christian higher education. The mission of ACU is to educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world. ACU does not unlawfully discriminate in employment opportunities.

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Columbus Church of Christ
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Columbus, MS 39705
Ministersearch@columbuscoc.com

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Cincinnati, Ohio. 45220
513-281-2872, cliftonchurchofchrist@fuse.net

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dubjack1949@hotmail.com

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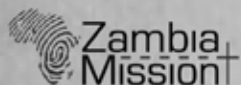
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Acch4kids.org

See more at:

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When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us in her home.

- ACTS 16:15 -

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Please send a cover letter and resume to:

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Please submit your completed resume to **Ken Hoppe, President • Crowley's Ridge College**
100 College Dr • Paragould, AR 72450 • khoppe@crc.edu

Love letters teach about Christian education

Imagine this scene: While going through her late father's things, a Boston professor of religion and culture stumbles on two shoe boxes stuffed with her grandparents' love letters, written a century ago. Sitting down to read them, she finds the writers dreaming of a shared life and a shared mission: improving the quality of Christian education, the "greatest work in the world."

What should the professor do with this archive of her intellectual and spiritual roots? She does what professors do: she publishes them in a book. What connects these letters to us? The writers were members of the founding families of Harding University and Lipscomb University, two of the largest higher education institutions associated with Churches of Christ.

The book, **The Greatest Work in the World: Education as a Mission of Early Twentieth-Century Churches of Christ**, chronicles the correspondence between Lloyd Cline Sears and Pattie Hathaway (Pataway) Armstrong Sears during their courtship and early married life. The letters were written between 1915 and 1921, while Cline spent seasons enrolled in advanced studies in English at the University of Oklahoma and the University of Kansas. He later served as the long-time academic dean at Harding, retiring in 1960.

Also in the published collection

are a few letters from Pataway's father, J.N. Armstrong, the first president of Harding University; from her mother Woodson Harding Armstrong; and even one from her grandmother, Pattie Cobb Harding, wife of James A. Harding, who with David Lipscomb founded the university that bears Lipscomb's name.

Elizabeth Cline Parsons, the heir and editor of the letters, is a lecturer in religion, culture and Development at Boston University School of Theology. Her introduction to "Greatest Work in the World" thoughtfully explores the themes in the letters, such as counter-cultural living, education as mission, dependence on God and attitudes toward race, gender and modernity. A foreword by historian

Richard Hughes and an afterword by Harding University Provost Larry Long frame the contents. Parsons has also developed useful notes, a timeline, a biographical index, a general index and four pages of photos.

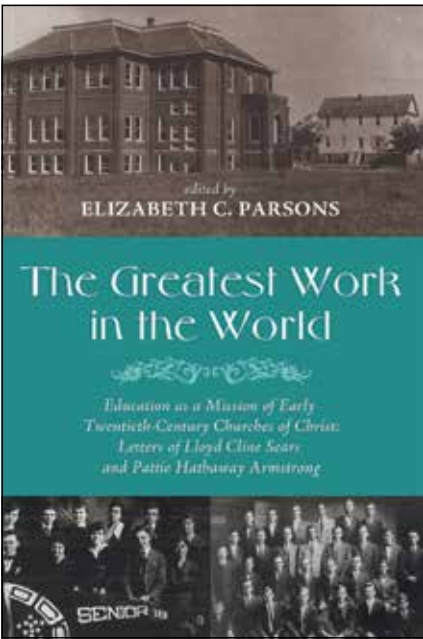
The letters provide compelling glimpses of the family and their social, religious and cultural contexts. Particularly poignant is a series of letters between 16-year-old Pataway, her parents and Cline in August 1915 when the couple announced their engagement.

"I have always tried to be ready and willing to make any sacrifice for your highest and best good," wrote Armstrong. "So I am ready now to

In Print



Carisse Mickey Berryhill



★★★★★
Elizabeth C. Parsons, editor. **The Greatest Work in the World: Education as a Mission of Early Twentieth-Century Churches of Christ. Letters of Lloyd Cline Sears and Pattie Hathaway Armstrong.** Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2015. 256 pages. \$32.00.

sacrifice my judgment in this matter for your happiness, and am willing to give you and Cline my blessing.

"I have but one baby in the world, and it breaks my heart to give her up, even in promise."

When tensions were high during the Mexican revolution in August 1916, Cline refused to donate to a student effort at the University of Oklahoma

to purchase a flag for the Oklahoma regiment called up to serve. "I know this 'patriotism,' as they call it, is contrary to the great principles of Christ's government, and for me to lend encouragement to such a spirit would be to forsake the very principles of Christ."

One sees how this detachment from national culture resulted in the closure of Cordell Christian College for its pacifist stance in August 1918.

"We have had such severe persecution from brethren and the county," Cline wrote a donor, "that we have had to discontinue and there will be no school this year. Nothing has ever pained me so much — except the early death of my father. I could hardly stand it if I did not know that in some way it is best."

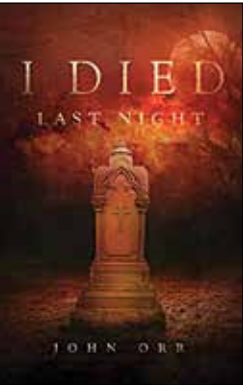
The Armstrong and Sears families moved to Harper College and eventually founded Harding University, which endures today.

While working hard to obtain the academic credibility needed to sustain their efforts in Christian education, Cline and Pataway were even more committed to what Parsons calls an "alternate perspective ... a transcendent idea of the good that could result from God's generous reign."

This way of seeing the church in relation to the world around us may be very instructive in our century as well.

CARISSA MICKEY BERRYHILL is professor and associate dean of the Abilene Christian University library in Texas, where she directs Special Collections and Archives.

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY: AUTHORS FROM CHURCHES OF CHRIST

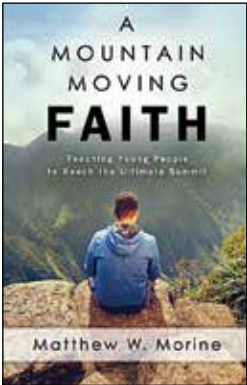


FICTION
John Orr. **I Died Last Night.** Bowie, Texas: Start2Finish Press, 2015. 66 pages. \$6.99.

This slender book gives readers a fictitious, first-person account of a man who finds himself on the wrong side of eternity. With at least one and

as many as 15 biblical footnotes at the end of each chapter, Orr, a preacher for more than 35 years, paints a vivid picture of a terrifying experience.

Orr currently serves as evangelism and outreach minister for the Faith Village Church of Christ in Wichita Falls, Texas.



YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY
Matthew Morine. **A Mountain Moving Faith: Teaching Young People to Reach the Ultimate Summit.** Nashville, Tenn.: Gospel Advocate, 2015. 132 pages. \$9.99.

Morine, pulpit minister for the Castle Rock Church of Christ in Colorado, teaches about

faith as he tells of his experiences on the "fourteeners" in Colorado (mountains of 14,000 feet or higher). This 13-chapter mix of memoir and faith-growing instruction is suitable for high school or college Bible classes. It also is engaging enough to be read independently.

Milestones

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

Anniversaries

Bill and Margaret Ferguson

The family of Bill and Margaret Ferguson would like to announce their celebration of 68 years of marriage on Aug. 16. They were married in 1947 at the Galena Park, Texas, Church of Christ and served with that church family until 1978. As they built a new house, a relationship with the Channelview Church of Christ in Texas began and lasted more than 30 years. Bill experienced the privilege of serving as an elder in both congregations. Presently, the Fergusons live in Montgomery County and worship with the Conroe Church of Christ in Texas, a fellowship of sweet support during their senior years.



Monroe and Julia Hawley

On Aug. 22, Monroe and Julia Hawley will celebrate their 70th anniversary. Seldom do healthy lives and healthy loves permit a couple to reach 70 years of marriage, but the Hawleys have been blessed. The couple fell in love while attending Harding University. Monroe was the editor of the *Harding Bison*, and Julia was the business manager. They formed a publishing partnership that would serve them the rest of their lives. Monroe and Julia were married in Ruleville, Miss., in the home



of Julia's uncle. Monroe's parents could not make the journey, so they provided 10 dozen gladiolas from their farm in Michigan. The couple then moved to Davenport, Iowa, where Monroe began preaching for the Church of Christ there. During this time they also helped establish a congregation in East Moline, Ill. A few years later they moved to St. Louis where Monroe received his master's degree from Washington University. While there, they worked with the Maplewood congregation in Cahokia, Ill. During this time their first child, Wayne, was born. Monroe and Julia moved to Milwaukee in 1951 where they have remained ever since. Three more children were born in Milwaukee: Dale, Glynda and Glenn. The Hawleys were instrumental in establishing the Southside congregation in 1958, where Monroe preached until a few years ago. About that time they also helped found the Wisconsin Christian Youth Camp and have been among its greatest supporters. Late in the 1950s, Monroe wrote the first of four Bible correspondence courses that would become the backbone for Hawley Publications. Over the years, Monroe and Julia sent millions of copies of their correspondence courses to churches and ministries around the world. Monroe also wrote a number of books over the years, beginning with "Redigging the Wells," a call back to the restoration ideal within our brotherhood of churches. His irenic spirit and level of scholarship placed him at the forefront of efforts to bring unity among brothers and sisters of Christ. It is hard to overestimate the influence Monroe and Julia have had in the lives of Christians in Milwaukee, the state of Wisconsin, and across the north central states. Their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren are happy to celebrate this wonderful day with them. Cards and well wishes can be sent to the Hawleys at 5626 S Lorene Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53221.

Dee and Audra Martin

Dee and Audra Martin are celebrating 70 years of marriage on July 24, 2015. They both grew up in Tipton, Okla. After Dee was discharged from the Coast Guard in 1945, they married in Houston, with Burton Coffman officiating. In 1951, they moved to Plainview, Texas, where they farmed with Dee's dad, John Martin. In 1973, Dee retired to spend time with children and grandchildren. Dee was Director on Farm Credit Banks of Texas, Producers Grain, on the Abilene Christian University advisory board, Director of Church Loans and Investment Trust and several others. Through life, Dee and Audra have worked as a team, and they always had a Bible study going in their home, leading many to baptism. They have enjoyed traveling to several foreign countries, both for pleasure and missions. Dee was an elder of the Church of Christ in Plainview for 44 years. In 2004 came their move to Plano, Texas, to be near all their family. They attend Prestoncrest Church of Christ in Dallas. Their family includes daughter Lana (Jeff) Clevenger and son, Joe Don (Janet) Martin; four grandchildren: Don (Jolie) Clevenger, Dave (Jolyn) Clevenger, Jacob (Christal) Martin, and Jennie Martin; and five great-grandchildren: William, Luke, and Joshua Clevenger and Audrey and Caleb Clevenger. All are faithful members of the Church of Christ. Seventy years — what a milestone and influence on their family and friends!



NEWSMAKERS

AWARDED: Perry Moore, the 2015 International Teaching Excellence award from the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs. Moore teaches in the College of Business at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn.

Arielle Saunders, the 2014-2015 Great American Conference Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year Award. Saunders attends Harding University in Searcy, Ark.

CONGRATULATIONS to **Caroline Bower**, **AnnaBelle Hellinger** and **Elise Karinshak**, students at Greater Atlanta Christian School, for achieving perfect scores on the 2015 National Latin Exam.

NAMED: **Elizabeth Ellis**, coordinator of the Students Obtaining Academic Readiness (SOAR) program at Oklahoma Christian Academy in Edmond, Okla. **C.L. Thomas**, to the preacher training faculty at Sunset International Bible Institute in Lubbock, Texas. **Allen Frazier**, dean of the College of Business Administration for Harding University. **J. Lynn Watson** to the council of advisers for Hope for Life, a Herald of Truth Ministry. Watson is a member of the Auburntown Church of Christ in Tennessee.

NEW MINISTERS: **Mike Baker**, minister for the Florence Boulevard Church of Christ in Florence, Ala. **Richard Combs**, pulpit minister for the Port Charlotte Church of Christ in Florida. **Joshua Holloway**, preacher for the Brookway Church of Christ in Brookhaven, Miss. **Craig Suby**, missionary for the Orchard Hills Church of Christ in Covington, Ind.



Moore



Thomas



Frazier

July 30-Aug. 2 Campus for Christ Conference. University of Texas, Austin, Texas. www.CampusforChrist.net.

July 30-Aug. 2 Cane Ridge Restoration Lectureship. North Lexington Church of Christ, Lexington, Ky. www.northlexingtoncoc.org.

Aug. 8 Leading Churches That Work. Ohio Valley University, Vienna, W.Va. www.ovu.edu, missy.wayt@ovu.edu.

Aug. 15-16 Back to School Bash. Garden City Church of Christ, Garden City, Kan. (620) 290-2608, scott7stewart@gmail.com.

Aug. 21-27 Polishing the Pulpit. Sevierville, Tenn. (256) 435-9356, luke@housetohouse.com.

Aug. 23-27 Crusade for Christ 2015. San Antonio. www.churchofchristcrusade.org.

Sept. 11-12 Southeastern Men's Conference 2015. Brunswick Church of Christ, Valdosta, Ga. (229) 244-6066.

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. 22 Evening with Lee Ann Womak. Jackson Christian School, Jackson, Tenn. www.jcseagles.org/leeannwomack.org.

Sept. 25-27 French World Mission Workshop. Searcy, Ark. (501)388-2533, dkee@harding.edu, Thekees@bluewin.ch.

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. rsmit117@tampabay.rr.com, www.selecture42nd.com.

Oct. 1-4 CenterPeace Tapestry. Watchtower Ranch, Strawn, Texas. www.centerpeace.net.

Oct. 2-4 50th Annual Midwest Regional Singing. Independence, Mo. www.50thmidwestregional.net, lavance.anderson@yahoo.com.

FULL CALENDAR, www.christianchronicle.org

Milestones

continued.

Anniversaries (cont.)

70th: Charles and Peggy Moore, Galesville, Md. **65th:** Billy and Melba Burr, Amarillo, Texas. **60th:** Hollis and Ernestine Maynard, Tulsa, Okla., and Bryan and Carolyn Teagle, Missoula, Mont. **50th:** Douglas and Joyce Broyles, Jennings, La.

Memorials

Darrel Emerson

Darrel Emerson, 65, of Franklin, Tenn., passed away at home on May 31, 2015, following a courageous battle with cancer. Darrel was born in Bay City, Mich., to Ken (deceased) and Ida Emerson on July 14, 1949.

His greatest joys in life included serving God, loving his family, teaching, traveling and photography. He took outstanding pictures wherever he traveled.

After earning a bachelor's degree in education and a master's degree in journalism from Central Michigan University, he taught high school for 32 years in suburban Detroit. He spent the last 10 years as a substitute teacher at Franklin High School in Tennessee, where he received the "Sub of the Year" award for 2014-2015. His colleagues and students recognized him as one of the most outstanding teachers they have ever known, and he had a powerful impact.

He is survived by his "Best Girl" Joy, loving wife of 45 years, and his three children: Chad (Betsy) Emerson, Amy (Ed) Baynes and Brett (April) Emerson. He considered them to be his most important legacy.

He also took great delight in his 11 grandchildren, ages 2 to 13. He loved being silly with all of them, and one of the regrets born from his terminal



illness was that he would miss seeing them grow up.

Darrel and Joy were members of the Livonia Church of Christ in Michigan for 26 years. He served as a teacher, deacon, Bible school director and elder while there.

Since moving to Franklin in 2003, they have attended both the Fourth Avenue and Otter Creek Churches of Christ. At Otter Creek, he was involved in leading the men's ministry, serving on the missions committee, as well as ministering to the homeless and supporting young people in world missions.

One of his final tasks was the writing of his book, "The Final Battle: A Believer's War Against Cancer," which can be purchased on Lulu.com. In it, he chronicled his life with cancer and his journey through to his death, and the book is dedicated to his beloved wife Joy, whom he considered to be his rock throughout his battle.

His Celebration of Life service was held at the Otter Creek church on Sunday, June 7. Donations in his memory may be made to Otter Creek Church of Christ, 409 Franklin Rd, Brentwood, TN 37027, with the memo "Teen Service Scholarships," which will honor his passion for world missions.

As one of his former students said so profoundly, "Mr. Emerson, you are loved, and your life is celebrated."

Bernard Horsley

Bernard Elroy Horsley, 83, of Dickson, Tenn., formerly of Maysville, Ky., and West Union, Ohio, died Friday, May 8, 2015, at Skyline Medical Center in Nashville, Tenn.

Brother Horsley was born Oct. 23, 1931, in Soldier, Ky., to the late Harry and Dorothy Perry Horsley. A schoolteacher with master's degrees in agriculture (from



a regional Kentucky university) and religion (from Harding University), he was also a farmer and minister.

He served his country honorably in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean conflict. Mr. Horsley taught agriculture at Paris, Flemingsburg and West Union, Ohio.

He authored a series of audio Bible correspondence courses on the New Testament that are popularly studied by students nationwide and are available at www.searchingthegospel.com.

Olivene Pigg

Olivene Pigg transitioned to her eternal home at the age of 89 on Dec. 1, 2014. She was a native of Lincoln County, Tenn., and the daughter of the late James C. and Mary Foster Green Pigg.

Olivene was a member of the Washington Street Church of Christ in Fayetteville, Tenn., where she blessed many children by teaching Sunday school for more than 30 years.

Survivors include sisters Doris (Robert) Lewter of Louisiana and Joetta Bigham of Tennessee; a brother, James (La Wanda) Pigg of Missouri; and several nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews. Olivene was preceded in death by her brother Thomas Doak Pigg.

Ruby Helen Whitlow Wood, 98, Edmond, Okla.

Memorial/Honor Gifts

The Christian Chronicle appreciates and acknowledges generous gifts received in honor of Neil and Annabelle Lawrence and in memory of Sherry Vee Arnold and Joyce McBride.



Entries should be submitted to milestones@christianchronicle.org or call (405) 425-5070. Rates and guidelines are available upon request (credit card preferred).

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An endless hope, not a hopeless end:
More thoughts on aging (and bicycles)

I can't help but laugh at myself. Neither can my four granddaughters.

Recently, we bought a house. For some reason, it came with a bicycle — the kind with a seat you can lean back on as you pedal.

That wasn't the reason we bought the house, of course, but I considered it a perk — probably because of a recurring fantasy that it would magically melt 10 pounds a week from my body.

In my exuberance over this acquisition, I gleefully announced to my family that they would soon see me on my recalcitrant bike.

They lovingly reminded me that *recumbent* was the word I was looking for, not *recalcitrant*, which means uncooperative and stubborn.

The ability to laugh at my own malapropisms is an important part of “Aging with Class.” That's the title of lesson I was asked to deliver recently at our home congregation, as I discussed last month.

There is no denying that the changes of this period have impacted my roles, status, physical abilities and appearance. A few of these have brought a sense of loss, but a proper attitude works wonders even here.

Proverbs 17:22 reminds us, “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”

Cheerfulness — including the ability to laugh at myself or my predicament — makes me feel joyful. It's like God living inside the marrow of my bones.

And why shouldn't I be happy? The Lord is my salvation; he has promised to bless and sustain me through these changes.

I don't care for the statement, “Life is hard, and then you die.” This life is hard. But — from a larger perspective — we *get* to die.

We leave this life and its sorrows and go to be with our Lord in a place of eternal beauty and delight.

I have an endless hope, not a hopeless end.

Christian maturity is not something to be ashamed of — or something about which we should feel apologetic. The Lord sees this stage

of life as a place of dignity and worth, a time of “fruit bearing.”

The Lord willing, this summer we will move from our home for the past 42 years. We had always planned to size down “when the time comes.” The time came.

Even though the move is a pleasant one — only a mile away — I have discovered pockets of loss and grieving in this process. Shedding many of the “things” we have accumulated and leaving the site of so many wonderful

memories was a logical decision. But it has also been an emotional one.

The writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us that nothing in this world is permanent. Somehow (without sounding too grandiose, I hope) that perspective has recently helped me to see and to recognize this sadness for what it is — brief and temporary — and to give myself permission to express that sorrow. It's part of healing and, I hope, gracefully moving into life's transitions, letting go of what has been and can no longer be.

Yet, doing that has also freed me to turn my thoughts toward a new shore where I believe God has new possibilities waiting for me that will be richer and deeper than ever before.

I'm convinced that I will never fully understand “aging with class” or “aging with grace.”

All I know is I just want to age with the Master. And as I wait for that grand reunion, I want to do my best to spread his blessings — including the gift of laughter.

I'm reminded of one my friends who developed an amazing game plan in regard to aging.

She is 60 years old, but she tells people she's 70 because she really looks great for 70 — just not so hot for 60, she says.

That, in my opinion, is a laid-back, recumbent attitude — definitely non-recalcitrant.

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Insight



Joy McMillon



The Christian Chronicle

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**Missionaries
to small-town America**
A dying church finds new
life as it uses its resources to
reach out to its community.
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