



Minister's wife Ruth Byrne snaps a photo of a "Love God" symbol she drew in the sand on the island of Oahu's North Shore.

A heart for Hawaii

PEARL HARBOR CHURCH has served military families for 59 years, but future at risk

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

HONOLULU

'Aloha!'
Mark Young stretches out each syllable of the traditional Hawaiian greeting as 150-plus church members and visitors fill the blue-gray wooden pews in a simple, A-frame auditorium.

"Welcome to the Pearl Harbor Church of Christ, where we keep a little bit of the States and a lot of the Polynesian culture together," says Young, an Army major sporting shorts, sandals and a flowery shirt.



PHOTOS BY BOBBY ROSS JR.

Minister and elder Steve Byrne, right, shakes hands with Ra'heim Bass.

As the Sunday assembly starts, a fighter jet roars overhead — a reminder of the nearby U.S. Air Force and Navy bases known as

Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

Over nearly six decades, the Pearl Harbor church has served as the temporary home for an estimated 3,000 military personnel and their families, minister and elder Steve Byrne said.

"I've been to congregations from Germany to Italy to all over the place, and there's no place like this," said Army Master Sgt. Q.P. Bean, arriving with his wife, Charidy, and infant daughter, Lily.

But Hawaii's largest Church of Christ must raise \$1.3 million to avoid eviction from the Navy property it has leased since 1956, said

See **PEARL HARBOR**, Page 12

'Be bold in the city'

AS THE LATEST NUMBERS show ongoing decline in Churches of Christ, urban ministry advocates urge Christians to find new ways to reach growing cities.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

OKLAHOMA CITY — Like many of their fellow believers, Amber Taylor and Shannon Davis are troubled by declining membership among Churches of Christ in the U.S.

But there are other statistics that the members of the Del City Church of Christ, in a rapidly changing suburb of Oklahoma City, find equally grim.

Fifty percent of their state's prison inmates don't have basic literacy skills.

On any given day, 1 out of 10 high school dropouts will be incarcerated.

If that child is a black male, it's 1 in 4.

"Too many young men and women are being fed into the school-to-prison pipeline and end up wearing orange," they said, in unison, at the National Urban Ministry Conference, an annual gathering of Christians representing ministries and nonprofits that serve the nation's growing and increasingly diverse cities.

But orange need not be "the new black," they said, referencing the racy Netflix series. Dressed in orange prison jumpsuits themselves, they talked about Whiz Kids

See **CITY**, Page 11



ERIK TRYGGESTAD

In prison orange, Amber Taylor and Shannon Davis talk about helping at-risk kids.



THE POWER OF GIVING

Eddie Thompson’s story reflects the power of giving, from seeing his father’s example in his childhood through his work today as a planned giving expert.

Eddie’s father exemplified philanthropy, as he drove around Southern Illinois asking farmers, bankers and business owners to make monthly payments for students who wanted to attend Freed-Hardeman but couldn’t afford it. Through that work, he made a difference in the futures of 23 students. During Eddie’s final semester as a student at Freed-Hardeman, however, he ran out of funds to pay his bill. That meant he would be unable to take his final exams and graduate. Eddie was shocked when the business office told him an anonymous donor had contributed \$500 to pay the balance of his bill. Eddie added, “Since that time, I’ve gone on to get additional education, but I would have stopped right there if it hadn’t been for one person who made the difference.” Hear Eddie’s story in his own words at fhu.edu/50thBenefitDinner.

Eddie Thompson, ‘73 | CEO, Thompson & Associates



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NBC's Lester Holt a humble newsman with a serious faith

A few years ago, a group of communications students from Harding University in Searcy, Ark., visited NBC's "Today" show studios in New York.

A familiar face greeted them.

"Lester Holt was so kind to take a few minutes and visit

with each of our students about their goals and plans," said Jack Shock, a Harding professor. "I was impressed with Lester's focus on

each student, even for just a few minutes, making each feel at ease in what could have been an overwhelming environment."

I know the feeling.

Holt, a member of the Manhattan Church of Christ, extended a similar warm, friendly welcome to me in 2009.

Millions know the hard-working newsman as the anchor of "Dateline" and the weekend anchor of "Today" and the "NBC Nightly News." In recent weeks, he's made headlines of his own as the interim anchor of NBC's top-rated weeknight evening news.

For at least six months, Holt, 55, will fill the anchor chair of Brian Williams, who was suspended for making false claims about being aboard a helicopter forced down by rocket-propelled grenade fire in Iraq in 2003.

"Lester is humble but takes his responsibilities very seriously as a news

See **HOLT**, Page 4

Inside Story



Bobby Ross Jr.



BOBBY ROSS JR.

"Next Gen Preacher Search" contestants and coaches enjoy fellowship as they gather for two days of training at Pepperdine University's Stauffer Chapel in Malibu, Calif.

A search for preachers — reality TV style

A DIGITAL QUEST for aspiring young ministers puts a modern twist on efforts to inspire a new generation to work full time spreading the Gospel.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

MALIBU, Calif.

American Idol" for future ministers?

"Survivor" with an emphasis on the Holy Spirit? Welcome to the "Next Gen Preacher Search," developed by Pepperdine University's Youth Leadership Initiative.

The national contest invited students interested in preaching and teaching to submit five-minute videos for review

and critique — and a potential opportunity to speak at a major event such as the Tulsa Workshop in Oklahoma or the Pepperdine Bible Lectures.

"I'm hoping idolatry is nowhere near, but we wanted to use an idea that young people would be kind of familiar with and something that would challenge them," said Jeff Walling, the Youth Leadership Initiative's director.

The ultimate goal: to inspire more young Christians to devote their lives to sharing God's word.

See **NEXT GEN**, Page 24

'Go, go, go!'

IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, new generations of Christians are on the move.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

SINGAPORE — From this small island, sandwiched between Malaysia and Indonesia, you can go almost anywhere in Southeast Asia.

Christians in Singapore are doing just that — with Bibles in their hands and on their phones.

Though still the minority in countries dominated by Buddhist and Muslim faiths, Christianity has grown tenfold in the Asia-Pacific region in the past century, the Pew Research Center for Religion and Public Life reports.

Members of Churches of Christ — planted among colonial brick buildings a half-century ago by missionaries from the U.S. — are boarding planes to serve as missionaries themselves, healing the sick, feeding the hungry and reaching lost souls in Cambodia, Vietnam — even China.

Mit Vikraman grew up in a Church of Christ in Malaysia and now worships with the Moulmein Church of Christ in Singapore.

Instead of dwelling on doctrinal disputes that plagued congregations here in decades past, "the atmosphere among churches is, it's time to go, go go!" he said. "It's a really good time to be here."

MORE FROM SINGAPORE: The Moulmein Church of Christ says goodbye, prepares to rebuild. **Page 17**



Vikraman



TOMMY CHIA

After years in gangs — and in prison — Vincent 'Tattoo' Tan found salvation in Singapore. See his story on Page 19.

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BRIAN NICKLAUS

Bobby Ross Jr. interviews Lester Holt at the "Today" show studios in New York in 2009. Read the story by searching for "Anchor for his soul" at www.christianchronicle.org.

HOLT: He finds journalism 'faith-affirming'

FROM PAGE 3

professional," said Dave Swearingen, a former elder of the Manhattan church. "His objectivity, fairness and judgment are unmatched. His new role will only enable his viewing audience to know and better appreciate him as an approachable, thoughtful news professional of balance and integrity."

But it's not Holt's journalistic abilities that impress Swearingen most.

"Lester's faith is solid," said Swearingen, now a member of the Southern Hills Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas. "Each Sunday, he leaves NBC's Midtown Manhattan studios at Rockefeller Center to hail a cab and hustle to worship at the Manhattan Church of Christ, some 30 blocks uptown."

"He comes from a wonderful Christian family," added Swearingen, who retired as vice president of corporate communications for Johnson & Johnson.

The anchor's father has served as a church elder, as did a grandfather and a great-grandfather. Lester Holt Sr. and his wife, June, attend the Cordova Church of Christ in Rancho Cordova, Calif., near Sacramento.

"We are doing well for a couple of old folks," June Holt told me. "Just thankful to the Lord for his goodness to us and our family."

Christians who visit the Manhattan church find June Holt's famous son to be as friendly in person as he is on air.

"It has been a joy to see Lester and his wife, Carol, there a few times," reader Cathie Owens Liles wrote on *The Christian Chronicle's* Facebook page. "We were the typical tourists, and they were very gracious and

kind and allowed us to take photos."

In 2009, I covered the Northeastern Lectureship at Harlem's historic Apollo Theater.

Before traveling to the Big Apple, I contacted Lester Holt to see if he might be open to an interview. He invited me to visit with him after that Saturday's edition of "Today."

"Have a safe trip," he wrote. "I look forward to meeting you in person."

Brian Nicklaus, then minister for the Echo Lake Church of Christ in Westfield, N.J., hosted me on that trip, and the two of us took a train and then the subway to Rockefeller Center. A relaxed Holt gave us a tour before the interview.

During our conversation, Holt noted that he's often asked whether it's hard to be a person of faith in his profession. Whenever that question is posed, he said, the implication seems to be that "this business is not for people of faith."

"I think there's a connotation that we're the liberal, atheist media," Holt said. "And I know a lot of people in this business who are people of faith — maybe not this specific faith that I share, but people who believe in God and follow their faith. So I don't find it hard."

"In fact, I find in many ways that this job is a blessing, in that as a journalist, I really get to see life in all its permutations. ... I see death. I see people going through the depth of tragedy, and I see people going through the highest of things. It just reminds you of how short life is ... and I think it's the kind of thing that in many ways is faith-affirming."

CONTACT bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org

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CARLA MCKINNEY

Missouri church teens shovel snow, pick up groceries for older members

When it snows, teenage members of the Owensville Church of Christ in Missouri spring into action. The teens shovel snow for older members of the congregation. "This year, we also asked if any of them needed some groceries that we could pick

up for them since it is too dangerous for them to be out," teen Blaine McKinney said. Pictured, from left, are Megan Dunlap, Blaine McKinney, Landon McKinney, Emmy Dunlap, Miles McKinney and Graham Dunlap.

ARKANSAS

BENTON — A recent joint worship assembly by the predominantly white Northside Church of Christ and the predominantly black Johnson Street Church of Christ drew an attendance of 529.

The Northside church hosted the gathering, and Johnson Street minister Chris Threatt preached. "This is an annual commitment of the two churches to worship together, fellowship together and work together in the Kingdom," Northside minister Jim Gardner said.

FLORIDA

LEESBURG — An emphasis on "Missions 101" led to the South 14th Street Church of Christ developing a biweekly homeless ministry.

Every two weeks, the congregation serves between 30 and 40 homeless people, elder Benny Hunton said.

They "come to our facility for a hot breakfast, showers, clothing and all sorts of incidentals that they would need where they live ... woods, streets, bridges, etc.," Hunton said.

MISSOURI

MOUNT VERNON — Five years ago, a

group of men who wanted to be more active in the Mount Vernon Church of Christ got together to brainstorm.

That meeting led to the creation of a ministry to build ramps for people with physical disabilities, elder Ralph McClurg said.

The ministry includes a core group of six men and recently completed its 106th ramp project, McClurg said.

Wade Atkeson, the group's leader, is a self-employed builder.

"Wade leads by example and will take the time to explain what he is doing and why," McClurg said.

TENNESSEE

CHATTANOOGA — The East Brainerd Church of Christ recently welcomed 125 Spanish-speaking members and 45 English-speaking members from the former Brainerd Church of Christ, which closed.

"East Brainerd, now with a membership approaching 900, has a new look and feel, as can be seen on Sunday mornings when black, white and brown, young and old, Spanish speakers and English speakers all join in worship," said Chris Barnett, East Brainerd preaching minister.

Mario Diaz, who served as Hispanic minister for the Brainerd church, has joined the East Brainerd staff and will coordinate service and outreach to the Spanish-speaking community.

The Brainerd church, established in 1936, long stood as one of the larger congregations in Chattanooga and helped plant multiple congregations, including the East Brainerd church, Barnett said.

VIRGINIA

FAIRFAX — Eighth-grader Gina Nored, 13, started a Bible study club at her school called "JOY," which stands for "Jesus, others and you."

Eight students and four teachers attended the first meeting, said James Nored, Gina's father, who preaches for the Fairfax Church of Christ.

"She said that the question that generated the most discussion was, 'Where do you see God in creation?'" James Nored said. "She is doing far more at her age than I was in reaching out. I'm so proud of her."



Gina Nored

SPOTLIGHT

L.A. homeless count

LOS ANGELES — The Culver Palms Church of Christ served as a deployment center for the recent Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count.

Youth minister Zachary Luben coordinated the church's part in counting people sleeping outside.

"We appreciate the opportunity to work alongside the Palms Neighborhood Council as we look to serve the community we find ourselves living in," Luben said.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY BILLIE SILVEY

Youth minister Zachary Luben, left, discusses the count with Wayne Byrd.



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VIDEO STILL VIA WWW.WEARONESHAREONE.ORG
LeEllen Smith, right, and Lisa Salazar discuss OUTsideIN's newest products in a video.

Tennessee church member works to repurpose T-shirts – and people

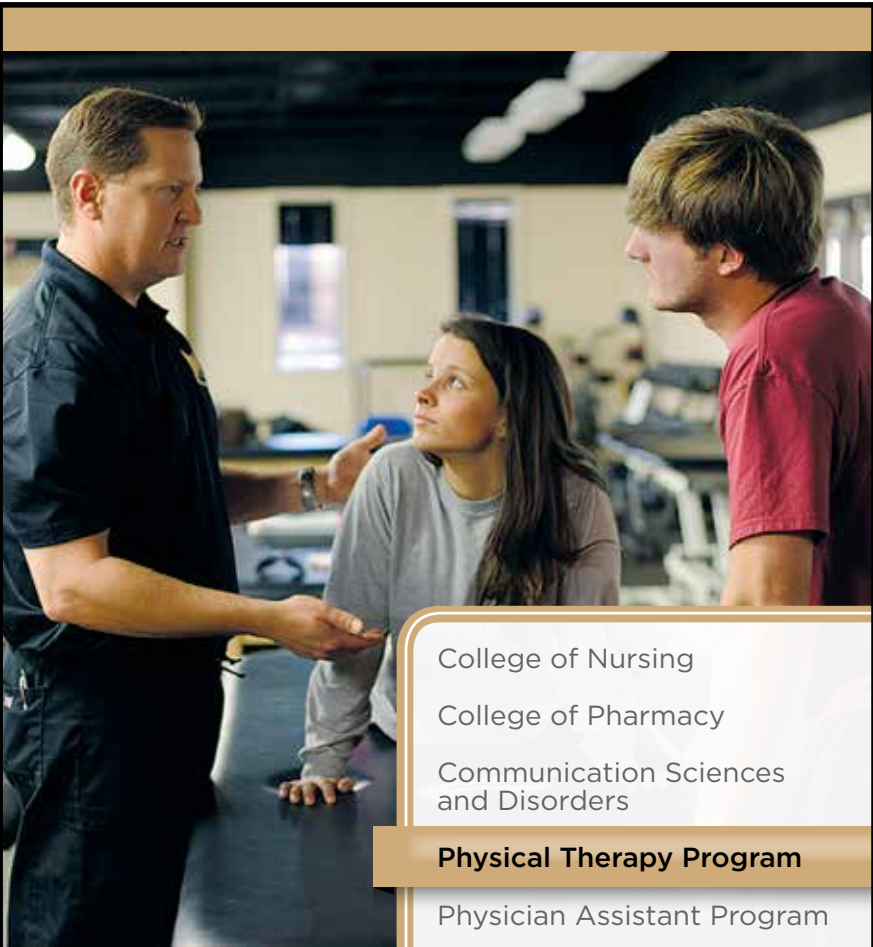
BY LAURA AKINS | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

LeEllen Smith takes materials others see as useless and turns them into something beautiful. She believes God can do the same with people. The longtime member of the Troy Church of Christ in rural northwest Tennessee — who learned to sew at age 12 — runs OUTsideIN. She and her staff produce everything from the long, popular “maxi skirts” for women to dresses for girls. They also make keychains and bracelets — all from donated T-shirts. From sleeve to hem, it all gets recycled. If anything is left, it becomes stuffing for dog beds the nonprofit donates to the local shelter. “Wear One, Share One” is the nonprofit’s slogan. For every purchase made, OUTsideIN sends a “BlessDress” to one of Kerin’s Kids, a ministry that serves orphaned, abandoned, neglected and sick children in the African nation of Zambia. Smith, who has a degree in accounting, traces the nonprofit’s genesis to a church-sponsored recovery program. About two years ago she started volunteering with the program — and she saw a need. “I was burdened,” she told *The Christian Chronicle*. “I began to have such a heart for people struggling.” She saw a common denominator — people in recovery who “need a place to be and work to do,” she said. For that reason, OUTsideIN focuses on mentoring the chronically unemployed — people whose past

mistakes or lack of qualifications make it hard to find and keep jobs. The nonprofit’s store, located in Troy’s historic town square, employs two women — with others coming and going through court-ordered community service requirements. One employee, Kristi Smith, said she couldn’t sew on more than a button before she came to OUTsideIN. Previously labeled as disabled, she’s now an accomplished seamstress. More importantly, “it’s given order and direction to my life,” said Kristi Smith, who’s not related to LeEllen Smith. Because of her mentor’s influence, Kristi Smith attends church regularly and hopes to go back to school. But she doesn’t plan to leave her job with the nonprofit anytime soon, she added. Though job training is important, “the real need has been for self-esteem and empowerment ... healthy, positive women in their lives,” LeEllen Smith said. OUTsideIN sponsors “employee enrichment activities” that allow women to socialize and befriend members of their community. “I try to pay attention to the things that make me sad, make me mad or make me glad,” she said. Then “I try to listen and use the gifts and abilities I know I have” to make things better. After that, “Whatever happens, moving forward, is up to God.”



Kristi Smith



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DEB TODD

LCU welcomes 'McFarland, USA' coach Jim White

Coach Jim White, a lifelong Church of Christ member whose story is featured in the Disney movie "McFarland, USA," discusses his faith at Lubbock Christian University in Texas. Academy Award winner Kevin Costner portrays White in the PG-rated movie. LCU hosted a special screening of the movie Feb. 17 and welcomed White, his wife, Cheryl, and their three daughters to campus. Daughters Tami Wolfe, Julie Tuttle and Jami Bell all graduated from LCU. If you missed last month's story on the Whites, search for "McFarland, USA" at www.christianchronicle.org.

Dyeing for a good cause: Ministers go purple to tout 'meals at home'

BY LAURA AKINS | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

The ministerial staff of the Glenwood Church of Christ in Tyler, Texas, is looking a little purple — for a good reason. The East Texas church began a "meals at home" campaign in October as part of a larger emphasis on family ministry, children's minister Tim Hicks said. The challenge? To eat 17,000 meals in homes during a four-month period with a promise of the ministers dyeing their hair purple once the goal was reached. That figure was based on the church's 350 families multiplied by three meals a week for 16 weeks. After four months, the congregation had reached 10,486 meals accumulated — nearly two-thirds of the goal.



STEVEN SMITH

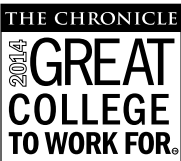
Dustin Dossey, 8, sprays the head of equipping minister Jerry Frazier.

"As a sign of goodwill, the ministers only dyed half of their hair," Hicks posted on Facebook. "The children were glad to help spray our hair for us!"



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The **Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry** invites applications for a tenure-track position as assistant or associate professor in organic chemistry beginning Fall 2015. The successful candidate will demonstrate a commitment to excellence in teaching and in research appropriate for an undergraduate department. An M.S. in organic chemistry is required, with a Ph.D. and post-doctoral experience preferred. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/chemistry.

The **Department of Engineering and Physics** invites applications for two or more talented engineers for its new and rapidly growing engineering program. These tenure-track faculty positions offer excellent opportunities to contribute to and substantially shape the new program. Applicants should have especially strong skills in teaching, scholarship and mentoring students. Ideal candidates will have a Ph.D. in mechanical, electrical or another engineering discipline, demonstrated potential to teach effectively in our program's curriculum, and experience in research and scholarship activities appropriate to the discipline. Experience in leading or contributing to the senior design experience will further distinguish a candidate. Candidates having a B.S. and M.S. degree and a license or certification in an engineering discipline and significant experience in industry or consulting also will be considered. Previous involvement with ABET accreditation would be helpful. Expected start date is August 2015. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/engineering.

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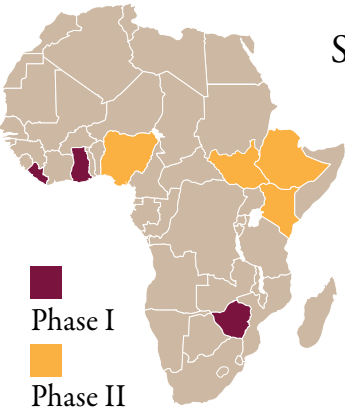
See acu.edu/academics/provost/positions.html for complete descriptions of these positions. In a letter to the appropriate dean or chair, applicants should address their qualifications for the position. They should include in the application a statement of how faith informs their teaching; a discussion 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.

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CITY: Churches must see ‘what our community really looks like’

FROM PAGE 1
Oklahoma. Their church sponsors a local branch of the after-school program, which helps at-risk kids improve reading skills and provides them with food and mentoring.

The Del City congregation reflects the national trend for Churches of Christ, which have experienced a drop in membership of 7.8 percent (about 100,443 souls) since 1990. That’s according to the newly released edition of “Churches of Christ in the United States,” a directory produced by Nashville, Tenn.-based 21st Century Christian.

In the 1970s and 80s, Del City was “a very typical, suburban church” of 700-plus souls, Davis said. Then, as the community gentrified and nearby Oklahoma City underwent urban renewal, poverty and gang violence rose as housing prices declined.

Now, the Del City church has about 400 members — 70 percent of whom don’t live in Del City, Davis said.

To survive, “we’ve got to start looking at what our community really looks like and addressing the needs of those people,” she said, “so that they see us as what we’ve always been — a church that’s community minded.”

‘I DON’T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO’

The Capitol Hill Church of Christ, an inner-city congregation, hosted the first night of the conference.

In the auditorium, keynoter Harold Shank urged believers to “be bold in the city,” finding ways to serve in urban settings. A few feet away, Christians were doing just that — taking blood pressure and blood sugar readings for those in need.

The church, which meets in a former funeral home, hosts the Lighthouse Medical Clinic, providing free care on Thursday nights — concurrent with midweek Bible study.

Upstairs, nearly 100 children learned about God in Bible classes. They marched into the auditorium to sing with the adult church members and conference-goers before loading onto buses to go home.

Shank is president of Ohio Valley University in Vienna, W.Va., a

National Urban Ministry Association
Learn about the 2016 conference in Atlanta
www.nationalurbanministryassociation.org



Jamie Simmons, youth minister for the Park Plaza Church of Christ in Tulsa, Okla., leads singing at the Urban Ministry Conference.

430-student university associated with Churches of Christ. He’s also a longtime advocate for ministries that alleviate poverty and serve children.

Time and again, he’s seen Christians attempt to help the poor improve their lives, to get jobs. After years, they seem to have little to show for their efforts, and they say, despondently, “I don’t know what else to do.”

The Bible tells of people who felt the same way, he said. Then they realized that nothing is impossible for God.

“He takes this slow, two-legged creature ... to have dominion over all the earth,” Shank said. “He calls to a farmer, ‘Build a boat, save the world.’ He calls to an ex-con, ‘Go save the people out of slavery.’

“Instead of saying ‘I can’t,’ say ‘He can.’ Instead of looking in, look up.”

Laura Bearden, a member of the Capitol Hill church, described Shank’s message as “awesome.” Plenty of times, she’s been in a place where “I didn’t know what else to do.” Her faith in Jesus pulled her through.

She started attending the church six years ago, after Christians served her at the clinic. “It’s a family,” she said. “Everybody loves everybody.”

URBAN MINISTRY GOES SUBURBAN

At the conference, participants gathered around tables in a down-

town convention center and heard presentations on topics including prison ministry, foster care, children’s homes and reaching Hispanics with the Gospel — all in nine- to 11-minute bites.

David North, the conference’s organizer, modeled the format after the popular TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) Talks, short presentations, circulated online, designed to be “ideas worth spreading.” After blocks of five to eight talks, presenters sat at the tables to answer questions.

It was a nice alternative to the “divide and conquer” format of similar events, where presenters speak simultaneously in separate rooms, said Jim Harbin, coordinator of the National Urban Ministry Association, which oversees the event.

The diversity of speakers and topics reflects the changing nature of urban ministry, said Harbin, minister for the Raleigh Community Church of Christ in Memphis, Tenn.

Increasingly, young professionals are making urban landscapes their home — and they’re looking for churches that address the fundamental needs of their communities.

At the same time, “suburban



Harbin

areas can look very much like former inner-city neighborhoods,” Harbin said. Those concerned about declining church attendance must understand the ever-changing demographics of their neighborhoods, serving the small pockets of poverty and pain in their backyards.

That’s happening in Mustang, Okla., a suburb of Oklahoma City, and home of the Lakehoma Church of Christ, said Kent Hinds, one of the church’s deacons.

“There are people out there for us to reach and touch,” he said. “I think we’re getting better at it. I think we want to get better at it. I think these kinds of (events) help us learn how to get better at it.”

In Del City, the Whiz Kids program is energizing the young believers who volunteer, Amber Taylor said. It’s influencing new generations of children who, prayerfully, will never wear orange jumpsuits — and will know the love of Christ.

Younger Christians “don’t want to sit,” she said. “They want to go do.”

“Hopefully, we’ll start seeing an incline in church attendance because, finally, we’re ... doing something. Instead of sitting and filling our cups, we’re filling other people’s cups.”

RELATED: Longtime Oklahoma church member JoAnne North helps yield a harvest of souls through prison ministry. See **INSIGHT**, Page 34

PEARL HARBOR: Congregation works to raise \$1.3 million



PHOTOS BY BOBBY ROSS JR.
Members and guests gather for Sunday morning worship at the Pearl Harbor Church of Christ.



Clarence and Gladys Stanley, visitors from the Anchorage Church of Christ in Alaska, bow their heads in prayer.



The Pearl Harbor naval base is less than a mile from the church, which has members from all military branches.



Sharing concerns and studying the Bible in a Sunday class are Jenni Logsdon, Priscilla Mathison, Joy Corpuz, Velma Fontanilla, Becky Braga, Maria Williams, Espy Garcia, Doriann Yuson, Ruth Byrne, Rebecca Rudder and Mandy Smith.

FROM PAGE 1
Byrne and fellow elders John Graham and William Wood. The payment deadline: May 2016.
Otherwise, the Navy plans to “excess” — or sell — the 2.5-acre site that houses the Pearl Harbor church’s main chapel, its parsonage, a classroom facility, a training building and a fellowship hall dubbed the “Aloha Room,” the elders said.
A federal bill spearheaded by the late Hawaii Sen. Daniel Inouye gave the Pearl Harbor Church of Christ and nearby denominational churches the “first right of refusal” to purchase their leased land near Honolulu International Airport.
The Holy Family Catholic Church, for example, paid \$1.6 million in November 2014 for its 4.4 acres, the *Hawaii Catholic Herald* reported. On the other hand, St. George’s Episcopal Church intends to give up its property, according to Byrne.
“I believe the Lord’s going to keep us here and keep us up and running,” said Byrne, who ministered in locales as far-flung as Alaska and Albania before moving to this island metropolis six years ago. “But if for some reason it didn’t work out that way, I don’t know how you could replace what’s been established here.”
‘A STRONG CHURCH WITH STRONG LEADERS’
The Pearl Harbor church needs \$1 million to buy the land and anticipates an additional \$300,000 in legal, rezoning and closing costs.
At press time, the congregation had raised \$567,000 — roughly \$400,000 of that from its own members.
Church leaders explored the possibility of a commercial loan. However, banks put a high priority

on long-term contributions by permanent members.
That’s a problem because roughly 80 percent of the Pearl Harbor membership turns over every three years. Military families stationed at bases all over the island of Oahu receive frequent transfer orders.
Still, members remain hopeful — and faithful.
“We’ve got women who are stepping up and doing yard sales. We’ve got a woman named Maria Williams who created a potluck cookbook ... and 100 percent of the price is going toward the church,” said Jenni Logsdon, wife of Army Lt. Col. Toby Logsdon.
Beyond asking members to give sacrificially, the elders have sent fund-raising letters to hundreds of Churches of Christ — with a focus on those close to military installations.
“This is not a luxurious resort church. This is a church that’s serving the men and women of the military who are giving their lives to the service of our country,” said Rhonda Lowry, assistant professor of spiritual formation at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn.
Lowry said she fell in love with the Pearl Harbor church when invited to speak at a ladies’ retreat a few years ago.
At least half a dozen members greeted Lowry and her husband — Lipscomb President Randy Lowry — at the airport, she said.
“I would encourage people to think about the influence that we can have in the Pacific Rim with a strong church with strong leaders,” said Rhonda Lowry, who has consulted with the elders on the fund-raising effort. “Without this church, we’d have no elders in the entire state.”



An outside view of the Pearl Harbor Church of Christ’s main chapel in Honolulu.

‘IT’S IN GOD’S HANDS’
A tall, coconut palm tree pokes through a hole in the overhang just outside the Pearl Harbor church’s entryway as its branches stretch into the blue sky.
“Hawaiian snow” — droppings from monkeypod trees that shade the church property — falls into the hair of members and visitors alike as they exchange hugs and enjoy the cool breeze before Bible study.
“We’re close enough to Pearl Harbor that if you went over this property with a metal detector, who knows what you might find embedded in the ground,” said Byrne, referring to the Dec. 7, 1941, bombing by Japan that propelled the United States into World War II.
Each Sunday brings newcomers, including vacationing Christians and recently deployed military families.
Every guest receives a *lei* made of shells — a welcome gift that also serves as a convenient “visitor detection item,” Byrne said.
“*Ohana* means family in Hawaiian, and that’s kind of our mission,” said Byrne, who met his Filipina wife, Ruth, on a mission trip in the early 1980s. “We are a family to a lot of military families.”
Mandy Smith’s husband, Dustin Smith, is a Marine Corps staff sergeant. The couple and their two young children found a home with the Pearl Harbor church two years ago.
“The first time I was here, I felt like I’d been here for

10 years. I never felt like a visitor,” said Mandy Smith, whose family is being transferred to San Diego in July. “They treat you like you’ve always been here, and they love you and really care about who you are.”
Soon after Rebecca Rudder arrived, her husband — Army Maj. Brad Rudder — was deployed to Afghanistan. “I showed up not knowing anybody, and I looked in the bulletin and saw my husband’s name on the prayer list,” Rebecca Rudder said. “I was just so moved.”
Susan Kubo, who has a Chinese heritage, grew up in Hawaii and is one of the few permanent members. For Kubo, fellow Christians coming and going so frequently is difficult.
“But I know I am going to see them again,” she said.
If the church were to lose its land, it also would give up its buildings, which have an appraised value of \$2.65 million, the elders said. They have looked into renting or buying other property within a 10-mile radius but deemed such options “too costly.”
“It’s in God’s hands,” said elder Graham, a retired Montana sheriff’s deputy who moved here with his wife, Tracy, a year and a half ago. “My faith is in the fact that God answers prayers, and he makes things happen for people that are serving him and doing his will.”
DONATIONS MAY BE sent to: Church of Christ at Pearl Harbor, 515 Main St., Honolulu, HI 96818. For more information, see www.cocph.org.

Churches of Christ in Hawaii

Hawaii’s 14 Churches of Christ are scattered across four islands. The combined membership totals less than 1,000 out of a state population of about 1.4 million. Each year, Aloha Christian Camp draws young people from across Hawaii to the mountains of the island of Oahu’s North Shore. The Honolulu Church of Christ plays a leading role with the Pacific College of Biblical Studies, which aims to train ministers to reach lost souls in the Pacific Rim. The college’s teachers include minister Steve Byrne of the Pearl Harbor Church of Christ.

SOURCES: “Churches of Christ in the United States” (2015) and *Chronicle* interviews

VOICES

THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE interviewed members of the Pearl Harbor Church of Christ in Honolulu. Here are some of their reflections on the congregation.

This congregation has been awesome, a complete blessing. The families, the fellowship, as we say in Hawaii, it’s an *ohana* — it’s a family. And it’s a blessing to worship in a place like this. We showed up here as a family looking for a church home ... and we got pulled in by some Navy folks with similar family structures, and we just got wired right in, and it’s been great.

Army Lt. Col. Toby Logsdon

The way that they embraced me, that is consistent. I wasn’t anybody special. Anybody that comes here, especially if you are tied to the military, we are going to support you. That’s another reason why I think it’s important for us to remain here on the island and for the Christians that are in the military to know that they have a church home to come to.

Civilian educator Jenise Stewart

We were babes in Christ when we became a part of this body. When we studied God’s word, the greatest thing we learned was about giving. My (late) husband said, “OK, God gives us talents, but if we don’t use it to glorify him and praise him, he is going to take it away.” He said, “Espy, since you love to cook, I will support you 100 percent.” That’s how my food ministry started, and I cook and give to everybody.

Tour guide and longtime member Espy Garcia

We are involved with the Hawaiian food bank Feeding America in the island. A lot of our members are involved. We started on a small scale, and the word spread. The profile of the Church of Christ in the island was raised. It’s settled into a routine of feeding 60 families every other week, and we got approached by the food bank about expanding.

Minister’s wife and food bank organizer Ruth Byrne

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BRAZIL

RECIFE — Jerry Heiderich noticed a dangerous trend.

“Most ministers and missionaries prioritize work and ministry over marriage, family and even their walk with God,” said the former missionary to Brazil, now a marriage and family therapist in Denton, Texas. As a result, thousands drop out of ministry.

Heiderich and his wife, Gail, launched the Family Institute of Latin America “to counter this trend of isolation, neglect of our primary calling and relationships and inadequate models of ministry.”

For the past two decades, the institute has offered seminars, training sessions, mentoring and spiritual renewal retreats in Brazil. The Heiderichs conduct the retreats — including a recent “Encountering Jesus in the Desert” seminar attended by 40 full-time ministers.



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Gail and Jerry Heiderich

INDIA

CHENNAI — This bustling port city of 20 million souls was the site of a recent, large-scale evangelistic campaign by Churches of Christ. It resulted in the conversion of some 800 ministers from various denominations, said Ben Renegar, a member of the India Missions Team.

They saw a need “to further train and equip these newly-converted and influential workers,” Renegar said. So they chose Chennai as the site of the annual Haslam-Fulford Memorial Preachers’ Lectures.

Members of the team — along with 27 Indian evangelists — taught intensive courses on topics including worship, the work of the Holy Spirit, surveys of Scripture, structuring sermons and keeping the church evangelistic, Renegar said.



SHAWN TYLER

In Malawi, calamity brings opportunity

Piles of vegetables and fruits line the tables of an open-air market Zomba, Malawi. But the bountiful harvest seen here could be a rare sight in months to come. Recent, widespread flooding in the southern African nation claimed lives and destroyed homes and crops.

“Being in the middle of a disaster on this scale is devastating to see,” said Ben Hayes, director of Namikango Mission near Zomba. The 54-year-old mission includes a ministry training school, primary school and maternity clinic.

“This is a humble reminder of the fact that many things are outside our control,” Hayes said. “But, with this calamity comes an opportunity for God’s people to tell the story of love.” For more information about the mission and its efforts to assist in flood relief, see www.missionmalawi.org.

PHILIPPINES

TUAO — The U.S. doesn’t have a monopoly on mission trips these days.

Recently, a team from the Pasir Panjang Church of Christ in Singapore visited the Tuao Church of Christ, located in the northeast corner of the island of Luzon.

The team visited elementary and high schools and led a Vacation Bible School for the students. The team also conducted a medical mission, treating about 200 patients.

Members of the Tuao church said that the Singaporeans became instant

favorites with everyone they met and greatly encouraged the congregation.

VANUATU

PORT VILA — Tobey Huff celebrated 40 years of mission work in the South Pacific by cutting strips of floor moulding for a new preacher-training school. Huff and his wife, Kathy, secured 30 acres of land for the school.

The couple began their missionary careers in Papua



Huff

SPOTLIGHT

25 years in Croatia

ZAPRESIC, Croatia — In 1990, this Central European nation conducted its first free elections in more than 50 years. That same year, a Croatian missionary, his Oklahoma-born wife and their three sons began gathering with a small group of friends and neighbors in their home to worship the Lord.

A quarter-century later, that group has grown into the Zapresic Church of Christ. The missionaries, Ivan and Ruth Tesic, and fellow church members constructed a Christian Center — a place to worship and conduct community outreach.

The church hosts teams from Let’s Start Talking, a ministry that helps non-native speakers improve their English using the Bible. Church members also operate an English Institute and kindergarten programs. The church publishes faith-based books and produces the “Living Word” radio program — recently reformatted to appeal to a younger audience.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Ivan Tesic, left, records an episode of the “Living Word” radio program.

New Guinea, working with longtime missionary Joe Cannon.

“I think back how that, in 1976, (fellow missionary) Andy Scott and I bought a mimeograph machine with which I printed a sermon outline book of Joe Cannon’s,” Tobey Huff said. “We have never looked back since.”

“Of course, we are saddened as to the number of brethren whom we taught who are no longer faithful to the Lord. But we rejoice with the number who are still faithfully serving the Lord.

“Gee, 40 years is so long, yet so short.”

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ERIK TRYGGESTAD

As worshippers beat drums and chant at the massive Buddhist temple next door, members of the Moulmein Church of Christ take a final group photo in front of their building.

Asia's 'giving church' says farewell

IN SINGAPORE, *the Moulmein Road Church of Christ prepares to demolish and rebuild its 55-year-old home*

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

SINGAPORE

Go ahead, write on the walls. And fill them with lots of pictures — of friends, smiles, games, baptisms. Don't worry about the tape peeling the paint.

It's all coming down anyway. There was a sense of relaxed liberation — rare in this Southeast Asian

city state known for its Swiss watch precision — at the Moulmein Church of Christ. Believers from across Singapore, neighboring Malaysia — even Australia — leisurely perused the walls of memories and laughed as they said goodbye to the congregation's 55-year-old home.

The building, sandwiched between a massive Buddhist temple and a Hindu center, is well-loved among Churches of Christ in Southeast

Asia. It's also well-used, as its creaky, uneven floors testify. Bringing it up to code would cost 2 million Singapore dollars (\$1.6 million U.S.), said Dave Hogan, one of the church's ministers.

Instead, the Christians decided to demolish and rebuild it.

The price tag for the new, four-story facility, which will double the church's space, is 6 million (\$4.8 million U.S.). Members and supporters already

CONTINUED



PHOTO PROVIDED

Jane and Gordon Hogan sign a memory book after Moulmein's farewell service.



Photos lining the walls show the history of the Moulmein church youth group, including Vacation Bible Schools.

‘Moulmein is a mother church, always unselfish, always giving’



PHOTOS BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD
Church members and visitors peruse the walls of photos at Moulmein.

CONTINUED

have raised or pledged half that amount, said Chan Kim Kai, another of the church’s ministers. The project will take two years, during which the church will meet in a nearby hotel. The rebuild seems appropriate in a city on the forefront of Asia’s economic boom — where skyscrapers seem to materialize overnight, said Hogan’s father, Gordon. A former missionary to Pakistan, Gordon Hogan moved here with his family in 1968 and served the church for 25 years. Singapore “is always in a state of renewal,” Gordon Hogan said as he preached during the farewell service. The church should be, too, he said. He encouraged Moulmein’s members to appoint elders to lead the congregation, to “develop the very best Bible school from cradle roll to seniors” and to set the ambitious goal of planting one

new congregation in Singapore per year for the next five years. He remembered the first worship services he attended in Singapore — when attendance totaled eight. “There were days I felt like cursing the fact that we had a building that would seat 200,” he said. A quarter-century later, preaching in an auditorium packed to the walls with souls was a dream come true. Now, he urged his fellow believers “dream again.”

THY NEIGHBOR’S PEWS

“Moulmein is a mother church, always unselfish, always giving, giving, giving,” said Lau Kin Fatt, one of three Malaysian preachers who spoke during an evening of worship and stories before the farewell service. The church once housed the Four Seas Bible College, still active today, and gave from



During a farewell worship service, members of the Moulmein Church of Christ and guests from across Southeast Asia sing hymns, including “Shout Hallelujah.”



Ong Chong Fatt of Malaysia talks about church pews and generosity.

its own coffers to help plant new congregations across the island and in Malaysia. In recent years, Moulmein has launched nonprofits that benefit its community, including the Friends of the Disabled Society and Centre for Fathering. Ong Chong Fatt, minister for a Church of Christ in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, remembered attending gospel meetings at the building when he was a student at Four Seas in 1974. He acknowledged, however, that

“Moulmein has always been the iconic building — the building where we always come together as one,” he said. Time and time again, the church has emptied its treasury to help other congregations buy land, Ong said. Moulmein even donated 22 of its pews to the congregation where he preaches. “We love them, and we’re still using them,” Ong said. The Moulmein church now uses interlocking, stackable chairs — but still has a couple of its old pews in the back of the auditorium. With a grin, Ong pointed to the pews and claimed them for his church as the audience laughed. Ong Kok Bin, a minister for the Seremban Church of Christ in Malaysia, also has fond memories of Moulmein’s building. He told the church’s members that he prays their new facility “will allow you to serve better.”

he was fighting the urge to “put my arms around this building and say, ‘Please don’t tear me down.’”

PASS IT ON, PAY IT FORWARD

Younger Christians don’t quite feel the same way. Sure, there are plenty of memories of camp-ins, Vacation Bible Schools and devotionals here, said Xiang Wong, an active member of the church’s youth ministry. But they’ve run out of space, she added, and are excited about the new opportunities a new building will provide. The church is much more than its meeting place, said Mit Vikraman, who moved from Malaysia to Singapore four years ago for education. The congregation — especially in recent years — has developed



Wong

a heart to reach souls across Asia. Young Christians help coordinate Angkor of Faith, a yearly gathering of youths from Churches of Christ across the region who spend a week serving impoverished children in Cambodia. When his mother, Mosharakini Arulandu, died about two years ago, Moulmein’s members were especially encouraging, Vikraman said. Known as Mosha, she was a stalwart among the region’s Churches of Christ, and Vikraman said the outpouring of support helped him as he mourned. Members of Moulmein “have blessed me tremendously,” he said. “And they always say, ‘Pass it on, pass it on.’ “What’s the word they use? Bless it forward? Carry it forward? “Pay it forward! Yeah. I have a lot of paying it forward to do.”

WEBSITE: www.moulmeinchurch.com

The faith of ‘Tattoo Tan’

SINGAPORE

His face preaches. So do his arms, chest and legs. They tell a sermon about pain and loss, sin, a misspent youth, imprisonment and blessed redemption. His name is Vincent Tan Tiong Leng, but to his fellow Christians he’s just “Tattoo Tan.” My camera lens found him as I circled the auditorium of the Moulmein Church of Christ. Here in Singapore — a country so fastidious that it once banned the sale of chewing gum to keep vandals from sticking it on train doors — was a guy covered head to toe in spider webs, flames and lotus flowers. At church. I didn’t have to look for him after worship. He found me. No one, it seems, gets out of the building without a “God bless you” from Tan — and possibly a hug. He asked me for a photo, so I whipped out my phone and “selfied.” (That’s me on the left.) He told me a smattering of his backstory. Later, two of the church’s members, Jee Kim and Chan Kim Kai, interviewed him and sent me the rest. Tan’s grandfather was adopted by a rich merchant, but the Japanese wiped out the family’s fortune when they occupied Singapore during World War II. His dad was in a gang before he got married, and lived his life in bitterness. Tan dropped out of school after third grade and, like his father, started running with street thugs. By 1974, he had embellished himself with more than 100 tattoos. That same year, he did the first of 12 stints in prison for fighting and gang activity. He probably chewed gum, too.



Erik Tryggestad

Road Notes

One of his crimes earned him three “strokes” from the authorities. (Caning, that is. Remember Michael Fay?) He also learned how to game the system, feigning illness so he could spend time in a hospital instead of a prison cell. In 1989, during one of his “furloughs,” he wandered into the church building — a six-minute walk from the hospital. He met missionaries Gordon and Jane Hogan and started coming to church. For years, he still had troubles with the law, but he also started to change. On Christmas Day, 2011, at age 53, he was baptized. Since then, he has stayed out of trouble. Not too long ago, he bumped into some old cellmates. He said he couldn’t be a part of their gang anymore since he was a Christian. “You, tattoo maniac? A Christian?” they laughed. He replied, “If you don’t believe me, come with me to church. You will see how much the brothers and sisters there love me. Do come!” He rarely misses a Sunday, and often is “the first one to greet you with a big smile as you walk into the doors of Moulmein,” said Katherine Gould, an American who worshiped with the church when she lived in Southeast Asia. “He loves to tell you about how God has redeemed and changed his life ... before he proudly shows off his Moulmein tattoo.” That’s right, he’s got “Church of Christ, Moulmein Road” tattooed on his chest. He’s also emblazoned a cross on his forehead and, on his chin, the words “God bless me.” Preach it, brother.



Vincent Tan at worship.

CONTACT erik@christianchronicle.org

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TENNESSEE EDUCATION COMMISSIONER Candice McQueen on her faith, Common Core and the role of Christians in public schools

‘The first in line to engage for good’

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

As an educator, Candice McQueen has a long list of accomplishments.

But the newly named commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Education says one of her proudest teaching moments was when she helped her brother, Craig, learn to ride a bike.

“No one ever thought he would, but we proved them wrong,” says McQueen of her older sibling — a special-needs student who, she adds, has taught her as much as she’s taught him.

Education — and ministry — are in her blood. Shortly after her birth her family moved to Iran, where both of her parents taught at the Tehran American School for three years.

Her mother, Brenda Hunter, later served as a teacher and principal for three Department of Defense schools at Fort Campbell in Kentucky.

Her father, Nelson Hunter, was a minister for almost 45 years before his death in 2007. He taught college science courses for military personnel at Fort Campbell and served as an education director in two prisons and at a mental health facility in Tennessee.

Long before she had her own classroom, McQueen taught students in an after-school program — and knew how to run a laminating machine and put up a world-class bulletin board.

A graduate of Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn., McQueen taught in elementary and middle schools before returning to Lipscomb to train future generations of teachers. For six years she served as dean of the College of Education, also overseeing Lipscomb’s K-12 schools. She was senior vice president for one year.

In late 2014, at age 40, she accepted Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam’s appointment to his cabinet — at “a time when public schools have never been more debated in the state,” *The Tennessean* reports. One issue is the state’s implementation of rigorous Common Core academic standards.

Her husband, Andy, was a standout 3-point shooter for the Bisons basketball team at Lipscomb. Now a partner at a Nashville law firm, he serves as a deacon of the Hillsboro Church of Christ, where the couple worships with their two children, ages 11 and 8.



LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY

Candice McQueen

Public education sometimes gets negative critiques from Christians — for not allowing prayer in schools and other reasons. How do you respond to the criticism?

I think this criticism may be based on particular experiences they have had that were negative, but I have been fortunate to be surrounded with colleagues and friends that exemplify how to engage and support our public schools as parents, volunteers, faith-based institutions and nonprofits.

All teachers and leaders in every kind of school need to know that they have community support in doing the important work of educating our youth. We all have a part to play in our schools, and I would hope that Christians would be the first in line to engage for good.

What is the role of an education commissioner in Tennessee? How does it differ from a state superintendent of schools?

In Tennessee, the commissioner

of Education is appointed by the governor to join his cabinet and lead the Department of Education for the state. State superintendents often are elected, but the job is essentially the same. Different states have different structures.

Tell us about the biggest influences on your faith and your decision to go into education.

I learned so much from my father — speaking skills, interpersonal skills, being passionate about your work, how to have a deep, personal relationship with your heavenly father, how to laugh and enjoy life.

To this day, I can hear his many sermons in my head, and they continue to influence my decisions.

My mother has been my inspiration and model of a Christian woman who lives out her faith in her profession. She can only be described as a positive ball of energy with a love for children and the profession of teaching. She worked with excellence every single day until the job was done. Her teachers loved her for her energy, excellence and humility.

I lived and breathed education every day of the year and loved to share in this experience with mom.

Anyone else?

I would be remiss if I did not note that my passion for education also came from my relationship with my older brother, Craig.

Craig was a breech baby and suffered brain damage at birth. He was always in special education at the public schools we attended in Clarksville (Tenn.). My mother was his fearless advocate and made sure he had high expectations in each and every school. She would always say, “Craig can do more than we think.”

She was exactly right.

I am amazed at what Craig has learned and can do despite the challenges he faces. My childhood was both about teaching Craig and

learning amazing things I could have only learned from him.

He has taught me about loving others and meeting them where they are while holding high expectations. He has taught me about celebrating all types of accomplishments.

What is Common Core and why has it become so controversial?

The Common Core state standards are basically learning goal outcomes for mathematics and English/language arts, created to show what every child should know and be able to do at the end of each grade.

In 2009, the state school chiefs and governors that comprised the Council for Chief State School Officers and the National Governor’s Association coordinated a state-led effort to develop the standards to set college and career expectations that would be similar across state lines.

The standards have become controversial for a variety of reasons. These range from concerns about local control and federal intrusion to concerns about specific standards.

In Tennessee, Governor Haslam is addressing concerns related to the quality and rigor of the standards by requiring a full vetting of the standards that were adopted in 2010.

All Tennesseans have an opportunity to give feedback from now through spring 2015 before review teams of educators from Tennessee use this feedback to suggest changes.

You’re moving from a faith-based campus to a secular job. How do you see your faith playing a role in what you’re be doing?

When your faith influences your personal decision-making and behavior, it can’t help but impact your professional life.

Prayer was a critical part of my decision to accept this role — and it will continue to be so.

I love God, and I love others. This won’t change.

Evangelist Seeking a Position

My name is John W Smith. I have a BA degree in English. I have MA degrees in Bible, Education & English. I have written 15 books and sold 1.4 million copies. I am 77 years old, (it isn't my fault, it's my parents fault.) I am a gifted speaker, very physically active and in excellent health. I am not looking for a place to "retire." I am looking for an "unusual" congregation; one that is truly seeking the person that "God" wants them to have; a congregation that is on fire for God, or at least wants to be; a congregation that believes strongly in prayer; the indwelling Holy Spirit; the absolute authority of scripture and Restoration principles; a congregation that is not "in love" with change, but is not "afraid" of it either. My only desire is to use the gifts and the experience that God has given for His Glory.

You may contact me at: john@johnwsmith.com or (918) 645-8114



Central Texas Children's Home Seeking Executive Director

Job Summary: Responsible for the administrative, business and logistical operations of Central Texas Children's Home.

Job Qualifications: Must be a faithful member of the Church of Christ. Master's Degree preferred with a minimum of five years' experience in the field of child care, preferable, as an administrator. Must have a valid Child Care Administrator's License issued by the State of Texas or be qualified to be licensed by the State of Texas. Must have public speaking/presentation/public relations skills and be available for travel as needed.

Applicants can submit a resume and cover letter to:

Scott Epperson
Chairman Search Committee
13200 Crane Rd
Buda, TX 78610

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Potter Children's Home and Family Ministries in Bowling Green, Kentucky, is seeking a Counselor for our SPARK(Single Parent's Alliance for Raising Kids) program.

The counselor/therapist is responsible for assessing personality/temperament, aptitude, and counseling needs of single-parent families, developing a counseling plan, and meeting each age-appropriate family member weekly for individual and family counseling until counseling goals are met and additional needs/goals assessed are achieved. They maintain appropriate records.

The counselor must be an active faithful member of the Church of Christ. They must have a master's level degree in counseling, social work, or marriage and family therapy. They should be licensed in Kentucky, be eligible for licensure or be willing to pursue their license. Experience in direct counseling is preferable. Knowledge of play therapy would be ideal. See our website for further info.

If interested, contact Tom Doty,
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Thank you for supporting *The Chronicle's* mission as we continue to inform, inspire, and unite the church. We recently received a generous offer of a dollar-for-dollar matching gift up to \$70,000. That means that your financial support can be **doubled** during this challenge — what an opportunity! As always, we appreciate your faithful support and your love of *The Christian Chronicle*.

To participate in this challenge, please send your tax-deductible gift to **PO Box 11000, Oklahoma City, OK 73136-1100**, or you may contribute by credit card by calling (405) 425-5070. Thank you!



The Christian Chronicle

HIGHER EDUCATION

FREED-HARDEMAN UNIVERSITY

HENDERSON, Tenn. — Freed-Hardeman recently invited Kelvin Pugh, minister for the Midwest Church of Christ in Ferguson, Mo., to be a featured speaker in its Ayers Leadership Series.

Pugh, who received his master of ministry degree from FHU in December, has preached for the Midwest congregation since 2010.

He said the church, located less than a mile from the Ferguson Police Department, sought to serve the community after the highly publicized shooting of Michael Brown.

“Pray for this area, and pray for us as we work in this area,” Pugh said. “Pray for the hearts of all involved, and pray that we’ll have a positive impact on them.”



YOUTUBE.COM

Kelvin Pugh preaches for the Midwest Church of Christ in Ferguson, Mo.

OKLAHOMA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma Christian and Japan’s Ibaraki Christian University have announced a dual degree program.

The two universities are in the 40th year of mutual exchange of students and faculty members.

The new program creates the opportunity for students from Japan to complete undergraduate degrees from both Oklahoma Christian and Ibaraki Christian. Students will attend classes at Ibaraki Christian for two years and complete their final two years at Oklahoma Christian.

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

MALIBU, Calif. — “Pray without ceasing,” the apostle Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

In an effort to encourage that type of prayer life on campus,



JUERG KAUFMANN, TEAM ALVIMEDITA

Chinese Agape fixed his heart ... now he’s making a splash

Tang Kai Wei plunges into the waters of the South China Sea after riding in a “jump seat” with Team Alvimedita during the Volvo Around the World race. The race, which traverses four oceans, is known as the “Mount Everest of sailing,” said Jeffrey Robertson, CEO of Chinese Agape Foundation. Team Alvimedita hosted an auction for the chance to ride along with the crew during part of the race — and leap from the boat before it left for the next port. Proceeds of the auction benefitted Chinese Agape, a nonprofit supported by church members that provides heart surgeries for underprivileged children in China. Tang, 20, received such a surgery and was chosen for the voyage “because he is a great example of a survivor of congenital heart disease,” Robertson told *The Christian Chronicle*.

Julia Ng, Chinese Agape’s managing director in Hong Kong, watched the event. “I was bursting with pride,” she said, “and filled with gratitude to the unknown and unseen sponsors who provided the funds 10 years ago to heal this young boy, now full of promise for the future.” For more information, see www.china-mission.org and www.teamalvimedita.com.

student-led ministries at Pepperdine recently partnered for a “50 Hours of Prayer” event.

ROCHESTER COLLEGE

ROCHESTER HILLS, Mich. — Alumni Mark and Missy Ide recently pledged \$1 million toward the construction of the college’s new gymnasium.

It’s the largest gift in Rochester College’s history and propels the total raised to \$2.7 million, about two-thirds of the amount needed for construction.

The Garth Pleasant Gymnasium will be named after the longtime preacher and retired coach who compiled 720 wins over 38 seasons.

YORK COLLEGE

YORK, Neb. — York alumni and East Hill Church of Christ members raised funds to buy a new home for Mike and Janet Rush.

The project was designed to



MAEGAN DETLEFS, YORK NEWS-TIMES

Mike and Janet Rush thank God for their York College and East Hill church friends.

provide more accessible living quarters for Mike Rush, a York alumnus who has used a wheelchair since suffering a brain hemorrhage in 2002, the *York News-Times* reported.

“That’s the kind of friends you make at York,” Janet Rush told the newspaper. “They are friends who will do anything for you.”

SPOTLIGHT

A mission for Romania

VIENNA, W.Va. — For Ohio Valley University student Kenleigh Ash, a mission trip to Romania proved a life-changing experience.

“I would encourage anyone to think about a mission trip — especially college students,” said Ash, who was part of an OVU mission team. “It’s a great time to get a new experience that can really shape who you are.”



PHOTO PROVIDED BY OHIO VALLEY UNIVERSITY

OVU students Kenleigh Ash and Amanda Jimenez teach English in Romania.

VOICES

WE INTERVIEWED some of the semifinalists at the "Next Gen Preacher Search" training at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif.

I've learned a lot from the two critics I've had so far of my sermon. It's been fun. I've enjoyed the people I've been with and everyone here, and the campus is beautiful. It's the most beautiful place I've ever been. It's crazy. Especially when I'm from Iowa. I don't really get mountains or ocean.

Tim Hurley | Pleasant Hill, Iowa

I think it's important to cultivate in young men the understanding that despite what we think, we don't know everything — that there are things that older Christians, more wiser Christians, can impart to us.

It's also important to emphasize that there are people who are preaching the Gospel outside of being a traditional preacher. As important as it is that we are raising up a whole generation of preachers, we also want to make sure we are hammering home the point that simply by being a Christian you need to be preaching the Gospel.

Eric Miller | Champaign, Ill.

I'm a children's ministry major at Ozark Christian College.

I thought it would be a really great learning experience, and it has been.

I am working part time in children's ministry department at my church, and I thought this

would just be a great learning experience no matter to what age I teach the Bible. I want to teach to children and youth just Scripture and how it brings life and healing and restoration.

Addison Houser | Joplin, Mo.

NEXT GEN: Who will preach the Gospel?



Alexander Jamerison preaches during the two-day training event at Pepperdine.

FROM PAGE 3

"When we listen to folks in our Christian colleges, I hear them saying they have fewer and fewer students walking through the door saying, 'I want to preach,'" said Walling, a frequent speaker at youth rallies and the former longtime preaching minister for the Providence Road Church of Christ in Charlotte, N.C.

No one was looking for a golden ticket to Hollywood, but 40 semifinalists were chosen to work with "mentor preachers" and fly to a recent two-day training event — either at Pepperdine or at Johnson University in Kissimmee, Fla.

Contestants were evaluated based on content, creativity, clarity and passion.

"I don't like thinking about it as a competition because it's all for God," said Joel Duke, 18, a biblical studies major at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Ala.

Duke, whose home congregation is the Crescent Church of Christ in Murfreesboro, Tenn., was one of 21 semifinalists who presented lessons in Pepperdine's stained-glass Stauffer Chapel, overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

"I felt like, at a young age, I was



In a breakout session, Roman Ottinger from the College Hills Church of Christ in Lebanon, Tenn., practices delivering a lesson. Jeff Walling, center, offers feedback.

blessed with the ability to speak publicly," said Duke, who was baptized as a seventh-grader. "I felt like it was my calling, that I could make a difference by telling other people what I already knew about God."

Half a dozen young women were among the semifinalists. However, Walling said "Next Gen" is not pushing any position on gender roles. Most Churches of Christ teach that the Bible limits preaching ministry to men.

"Whether they serve teaching as women's ministry leaders, youth ministers, missionaries or in other roles at a local church, I am hopeful that teaching skills they developed by being a part of this program will be helpful," Walling said of the female contestants.

SUNSHINE AND THE SON

In all, the judges received 127 submissions from more than 20 states.

Entrants ranged in age from 16 to 22 and came primarily from

Churches of Christ and independent Christian Churches. Several Restoration Movement universities served as sponsors, including Abilene Christian University in Texas, Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City and Lubbock Christian University in Texas.

Here in Malibu, the semifinalists focused not on sandy beaches, surfboards or stargazing — but on spiritual formation.

They worked on sermon delivery with Walling and other coaches, including Ohio minister Trevor DeVage, Texas minister Taylor Walling (Jeff's son) and Pepperdine religion professors Greg

Daum and Dan Rodriguez.

"You know, there are all these reality shows on TV," Jeff Walling said. "But instead of judges, we have coaches because we are trying to say, 'No winners and losers here.'"

Alexander Jamerison, 22, a Bible and preaching major at Harding



PHOTOS BY BOBBY ROSS JR.

Zane Witcher delivers a lesson during the "Next Gen Preacher Search" training at Pepperdine.



Semifinalists in the “Next Gen Preacher Search” head into breakout sessions with mentors. Each student received individual attention from five different coaches.

University in Searcy, Ark., said he heard about “Next Gen” while working in the Bible college’s computer lab.

“Next thing, I’m online looking it up,” said Jamerison, whose home congregation is the Ferguson Heights Church of Christ in Ferguson, Mo. “I submitted a video and prayed about it.”

Jamerison, who said his wife, Mercedes, was jealous of his trip to Pepperdine, plans to graduate in May. He hopes to pursue a master of divinity degree at Harding School of Theology in Memphis, Tenn.

“I started preaching when I was 12 years old,” he said. “I really enjoyed it from that moment.”

Asked if he was surprised to be chosen as a semifinalist, Jamerison said, “I had a lot of people praying for it. I was more excited. I don’t know if I had a chance to be surprised.”

But Zane Witcher, 21, a biblical text major at Abilene Christian, said he definitely was surprised to be selected.

Witcher, whose home congregation is the Georgetown Church of Christ in Texas, said a desire to relate to the unchurched as well as lifelong Christians motivates him.

“I want to be a bridge,” he said. His ACU studies have taught him how to open the Bible and write a sermon, he said.

The “Next Gen” coaching helped him improve, he said, in areas such as vocal expression and “how we paint pictures for people.”

AND THE WINNER IS?

Witcher voiced appreciation for the “Next Gen” experience and said he wasn’t worried about winning.

“That part doesn’t even matter,” he said, emphasizing instead the personal connections he made.

But a few weeks after he returned home, Witcher received the good news: He was selected as one of the four finalists.

So, too, was Jamerison, along with Mitchell East, 21, an Abilene Christian student whose home congregation is the Round Rock Church of Christ in the Austin area. The other finalist: Jack Allen, 18, of Baton Rouge, La.

Don’t look, though, for a Final Four competition.

“Finalists’ is the word we are using,” Walling said, “as there will be no winner, except for the Kingdom, we pray.”

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Reggie McNeal

Noted author and missional leadership specialist for the Leadership Network

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Faithful in setbacks and success

TECH COMPANY CEO Dawn Ainger credits her faith and her church family with helping her endure divorce and disease.

BY GINGER RUE | FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Divorced. Laid off. Diagnosed with an unpredictable, often disabling disease.

Dawn Ainger isn't one to let an obstacle — or three — stand in her way.

As CEO of Genova Technologies, an information technology services firm, she has faced personal and professional setbacks.

But she credits her faith — and her church family — with helping her overcome them.

In 2013 she was named one of nine recipients of the Entrepreneur of The Year Award for the Upper Midwest by business consulting firm Ernst & Young.

That's not bad for a girl from "a small little po-dunk town named Hull," Ainger joked about her home in northwest Iowa, where her parents became members of the Church of Christ. She married her high school sweetheart, also a member of the church.

She graduated from the University of Iowa with a bachelor's degree in computer science. Her next goal was to finish her master's, followed by a doctorate.

But, as she learned, plans change.

On Halloween in 1993, as she got their sons — then ages 7, 5 and 1 — ready to go trick-or-treating, she learned that her marriage was ending.

For a long while, Ainger was "just kind of in shock and denial," she said, "but the church helped me through. I had friends from church I could call at any time, and they'd listen to me.

"Also, our house needed a new roof, and I couldn't pay for the labor, so a couple of guys at church hired a crew and they came out and did the work."

She didn't have the luxury of falling apart. Her sons were depending on her. She finished her master's and got a job as a software engineer at Genova Technologies. Her dream of earning a doctorate would have to wait. Still, she enjoyed her job — in spite of lingering concerns about the company's future.

"I knew the company wasn't doing well, because employees would leave and not be replaced," she said.

Then, one day in 1998, she and her coworkers arrived at work and found the doors locked.

Rather than panic, Ainger saw opportunity.

"I went to investors and said, 'I can make this company work.' I bought stock with my savings, and within a couple of years, I bought out the rest of the stock, and the investors doubled their money."

Much of her financial success came from simple frugality, she said, adding that "those of us in northwest Iowa of Dutch heritage know how to pinch a penny."

She remarried the same year.

Six years ago, doctors diagnosed Ainger with multiple

sclerosis, a disease of the central nervous system. She immediately thought of the impact it could have on those around her — including 150 families depending on Genova's success. She didn't have time for self-pity.

"I thought, 'If I go down in a heap, then my company and these families do, too,'" she said. She assembled a team that would allow her to manage the business and her health.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Dawn Ainger, church member and CEO of Genova Technologies, and her three sons.

Now she splits her time between Iowa and Arizona. During the summers, she and her family worship with the Cedar Rapids Church of Christ in Iowa. During the winter, they worship with the Tempe Church of Christ in Arizona.

Members of both congregations consider her an asset.

"She's very willing to work," said Patti Schollenberger of Tempe. "She's an excellent teacher and has taught women's classes and facilitated several Bible studies.

"But she's also always up for fun. She never talks about her MS, never complains."

Chuck Juhl of the Cedar Rapids church agreed.

"For the longest time, I didn't even know Dawn had been diagnosed with MS," he said. "It wasn't something she talked about, and she was never, 'oh, woe is me!' She's always been more, 'OK, this is where I'm at, and

we're just going to deal with it."

The diagnosis has meant some changes. She now walks two miles a day instead of running six, and she recently sold one of the divisions of Genova so that she could focus more on her health. She let her east coast

staff know about the sale before it happened.

"I've always been very up-front with my staff," she said, "and I promised I wouldn't sell them unless I could find them a good home. I think it's a Christian duty as an

employer to be honest, even if it's bad or scary news."

Juhl said he believes that Ainger's concern for others has made her successful both in business and in her personal life.

"My wife has leukemia," he said, "and almost every day, Dawn will text to let us know she is thinking of and praying for us. Even though she has her own health issues ... she isn't too busy to stop and think about somebody else."

'I think it's a Christian's duty as an employer to be honest, even if it's bad or scary news.'

Dawn Ainger



PHOTO PROVIDED

Dawn Ainger and husband Michael.

NEWSMAKERS

AWARDED: Macy McKown, member of West Side Church of Christ in Norman, Okla., with the Miss Oklahoma State Fair Outstanding Teen award.

John Simpson of Moss Bluff Church of Christ in Ocklawaha, Fla., with the Silver Beaver Award from the North Florida Council Boy Scouts of America.

HONORED: Robert Bowers, for 20 years of service as an elder of the Tamarack Road Church of Christ in Altus, Okla.

NAMED: Richard Wright and Kelli Bryant Gibson to the faculty of the Graduate School of Theology at Abilene Christian University in Texas beginning in the fall 2015 semester. Wright currently serves Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City as chair of the Graduate School of Theology. Gibson is completing a doctoral dissertation on Eastern Christian studies at the University of Oxford in England.

Chip Bennett and Andy Starck to the board of directors, **Rick Elam and Vince Swinney** to the council of advisors and **Jane Melton** as Chair for Hope for Life, a Herald of Truth ministry in Abilene, Texas. **Steve Rios**, director of research and strategic initiatives for Foster Care to Success in Sterling, Va.

NEW MINISTERS: Matt Collins, youth minister for the Jefferson Avenue Church of Christ in Cookeville, Tenn. **Alyse Creed**, children's minister for the CrossPoint Church of Christ in Grand Prairie, Texas. **Jordan Hubbard**, preaching minister for the Crestview Church of Christ in Waco, Texas.

Milestones

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

Birthdays

Celia Yoder, 99
Olathe, Kan.

Memorials

Archie Harold Kennamer

Archie Harold Kennamer was born Oct. 8, 1915 in Woodville, Ala., and died on Dec. 19, 2014, in Abilene, Texas. He was buried in Woodville.

He married Cora Elsie Hodges, who passed away in 2002, on Dec. 26, 1934. Following his schooling at Harding and Freed-Hardeman universities, he moved to Cleveland, Tenn., and served 60 years in ministry with Churches of Christ in Tennessee, Kentucky, Georgia, Colorado, California and Texas.

He was active in communities where he ministered and was the first president of the Chamber of Commerce in Keller, Texas. He was a member of the Tulia, Texas, Kiwanis Club for 15 years and served as club president. He also enjoyed two trips to the Holy Lands, including Greece and Rome.

Harold conducted gospel meetings in Canada, Montana, Alabama, Texas, Kentucky, Georgia, Tennessee, Illinois and Utah. For 26 consecutive years, he conducted meetings with the oldest congregation in the state of Georgia at Pleasant Grove, which was established in 1848 and integrated from the beginning.

On Saturday, Jan. 10, 2015, a memorial for Archie was hosted at the University Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas.

He is survived by a daughter, Ann Young, and husband, Bill, of Abilene; a son, David, and wife, Helen of Santa Margarita, Calif.; five grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren.

Gary Joe Blakeney

Dr. Gary Joe Blakeney, 60, of Bertram, Texas passed away at Hendrick Medical Center in Abilene, Texas on Jan. 23, 2015.

Gary was born on March 26, 1954, to Joe and Clona Blakeney in Groom, Texas. He was a graduate of Whitney High School in Whitney, Texas, and graduated from Lubbock Christian University with a Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies, a Masters of Divinity from Abilene Christian University, and a Doctorate of Ministry from Abilene Christian.

He was pulpit minister for the Bertram Church of Christ for the past eight years. He began preaching in New Deal, Texas, as a newlywed and continued to be actively involved in ministry for the next 40 years in various Churches of Christ throughout the state of Texas.

He served the community as a member of the Ministerial Alliance and was President of the Burnet Espirit De Corps band boosters. He was actively involved in Boy Scouts of America and was the Scout Master for two troops.

Gary was a great supporter of singing schools, specifically the Foundation School of Church Music. He loved music and the way it glorifies God, uplifts, and edifies the church body. He was an avid genealogist and spent many vacations hunting down graveyards of deceased loved ones across the southern states of America.

The highlight of each year for Gary was "Thanksmas," and he invited everyone to join the celebration. He was known as Gary Joe to family and friends, as Pappaw to his precious grandchildren, as "Doc" to his beloved Scouts, and as "Fred" to Singing School friends.

Gary was a passionate servant of the Word who emphasized daily Bible reading and was always glad to engage anyone willing to listen in a theological discussion. He never knew a stranger. Gary prioritized his life in this way: "Christ, mate, family, church ministry."

Gary will be missed by his family and friends, but his legacy of compassion and ministry will live on for generations.

Gary is survived by his wife, Robin Blakeney; his children Laura Cosper and her husband Andrew, Joseph Blakeney, Caleb Blakeney, and Sarah Willis and her husband Zachary. He is also survived by his father, Joe Blakeney, mother-in-law, Joyce Helen Waldrup, and his sisters, Sharon Ward and her husband Garry, and Janet Sanders; brothers and sisters-in-law, Tommy Aduddell, Roger and Jan Aduddell, and Teresa Hollis. Gary is also survived by his two precious grandchildren, Seth and Karsyn; as well as many loved nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his mother, Clona Blakeney, fathers-in-law Robert Aduddell and Tommy Waldrup, and sister-in-law Cathy Aduddell.

The family would like to express their gratitude to all the relatives and friends for the many prayers, food, cards and messages of encouragement.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Foundation School of Church Music via the Bertram Church of Christ, Bertram, Texas, Memo: Blakeney FSCM Scholarship.

Ted H. Waller, 95
Lebanon, Tenn.

Ardron A. Hinton, 85
Warren, Okla.

Martha Rix, 85
Houston, Texas

Beverly Whiddon, 80
Edmond, Okla.

Frank Nethercutt, 74
Logansport, Ind.

Memorial/Honor Gifts

The Christian Chronicle appreciates and acknowledges a generous gift donated in honor of Bill and Marilyn Simpson.

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

EDITORIAL

'Cradled in freefall'

We didn't know Kayla Mueller. Neither did the pundits and bloggers who have said plenty — and nothing — about the 26-year-old aid worker who died in Syria as a captive of the Islamic State. Some call her altruistic and noble, a fighter for the oppressed. Others brand her as anti-Israel, a supporter of terrorists. U.S. officials believe she was forced to convert to Islam and marry an Islamic State leader, *The Wall Street Journal* reports.



Mueller

The little we know about this young woman — in her own words — comes from a letter she wrote in captivity to her parents, which they released recently to news media. In it, she tells them that the greatest suffering she's endured is "knowing how much suffering I have put you all through." For that, "I do not deserve forgiveness," she writes. "I remember mom always telling me that ... in the end the only one you really have is God."

Visit www.christianchronicle.org to read the entire letter. And lament with us for the terrible loss of this soul — a soul that, in the direst of situations, gave voice to the condition of all humankind.

"I have come to a place in experience where ... I have surrendered myself to our creator because, literally, there was no one else," Mueller tells her parents. "By God, by your prayers I have felt tenderly cradled in freefall."

We pray for the persecuted and the persecutors. May we all realize the need to surrender to God and live for his Son — while there's still time.

This is not the worst thing that can happen

"In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world."

— John 16:33

Along with the rest of the world, I was horrified by the brutal beheading of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians by the Islamic State — an attempt to strike fear in anyone with an internet connection and a heart.

Tactical. Shrewd. Evil.

I immediately thought of my Coptic Christian friends. While my wife and I were students at Harding University, we spent a couple of weeks traveling in Egypt. Even then, the Coptic community was feeling persecuted in their predominantly Muslim homeland. They were cautious to identify themselves publicly, but several whispered to us, "I follow Jesus too," and the like. Sometimes they didn't have to say anything — like Jasar.

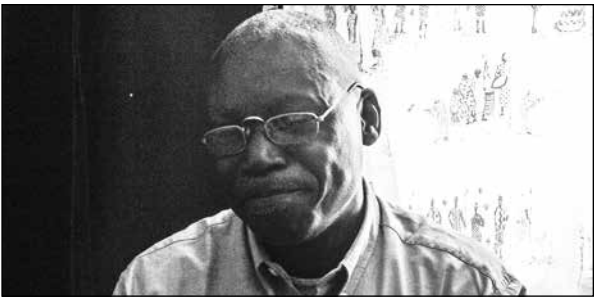
We met Jasar when we stopped at a kiosk to get a snack. He had an Arabic Bible open in his lap. He told me that Jesus followers were all around us, trying to live at peace with people who don't believe like they do.

Often, Egyptians are confused by Christianity and American culture, he said. I soon understood what he meant. Before we left, a Muslim gave me a handwritten note — addressed to me, then-president George W. Bush and Condoleezza Rice. I've kept it for more than 13 years:

Americans: Please tell your film censor board not to release any pop albums which are of bad scenes. This will affect our children in bad manner.

Thank you for your presence.

The man who gave it to me told me that he could never be a Christian because he believed that sex was meant only for marriage and shouldn't be degraded the way he saw it portrayed on imported television shows and in songs from the West.



ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Read Kenyan minister Dennis Okoth's story of persecution. Search for "Okoth" at www.christianchronicle.org.

The Islamic State makes the same mistake — assuming that the way of Jesus is embodied by American culture, politics, territory. The murder of the Coptic Christians is a letter, "signed in blood to the nation of the Cross," they claim.

I'm a part of this nation of the Cross. It has no borders. It is a worldwide community of people who believe that this act of brutality is not the worst thing that can happen to us. Murder doesn't silence the voices of the slain. Their blood cries out to God.

Fear-driven acts of bullying only strengthen our resolve to lay down our lives. "The blood of Christians is the seed of Christianity," one early Jesus-follower wrote — during a much scarier time than this. And he was right.

Back to Jasar, my Coptic Christian friend. After visiting with him for a few minutes, I asked him to read John 16:33. His rough translation from his Arabic Bible was this: *"This life and the world you live in will be hard, but don't be anxious. I win."*

Come soon, Lord Jesus.

JONATHAN STORMENT is preaching minister for the Highland Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas. See jonathanstorment.com for an expanded version of this piece and thoughts on leadership, church and culture.

In the Word



Jonathan Storment



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‘We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves’

AT THE NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST, *Dr. Kent Brantly asks God to forgive the nations for pride and for ‘neglecting the needs of our own people.’*

Dr. Kent Brantly, who contracted Ebola while serving in Liberia, led a prayer before President Barack Obama and leaders of the U.S. Congress during the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington recently. Brantly adapted his words from “The Lord’s Prayer in Time of War” by Wendy Lyons. His prayer follows:

Our Father, who art in heaven, the Lord, the Lord, the God of compassion and mercy, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness, lover of all peoples of the earth.

There is no God like you in all of heaven above or on the earth below. You keep your covenant and show unfailing love to all who walk before you in wholehearted devotion. Hallowed be thy name.

Remind us that all the nations are as nothing before you, their governments but a shadow of passing age. Authorities are meant to be your servants, to do good to the people under their care and to ensure justice for those who have been wronged. But we all, including our leaders, will stand before your judgment seat, oh God. And as surely as you live, oh Lord, every knee will bow and every tongue confess and give praise to you. Thy kingdom come on earth.

Grant to thy children throughout the world — and especially to the leaders of the nations — the gifts of prayerful thought and of thoughtful prayer, that following the example of our Lord, we may discern what is right, and do it.

Bless the leaders of the nations that they may not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. Bless the leaders of the nations that they might delight in the law of the Lord, that they might meditate on it day and night, that Thy will might be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Help us to protect and to provide for all who are hungry and homeless, especially those who are deprived of food and shelter, family and friends.

Views



Dr. Kent Brantly

For true religion that is acceptable to you, oh Lord, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress and to flee corruption. Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive us for neglecting to seek peace and pursue it, and finding ourselves in each new crisis, more ready to make war than to make peace, choosing violence and war over peace and reconciliation. We have not loved you with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

Forgive us for neglecting the needs of our people, for choosing corruption and greed over integrity and generosity. Forgive us for oppressing the minority while the majority is filled with pride and self-reliance. We have all sinned and fallen short of your glory, O Lord.

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Let us not seek revenge, but reconciliation. Let us not delight in victory, but in justice. Let us not give ourselves up to pride, but to prayer. Lead us not into temptation.

Be present, Lord, to all your children. Be present to those who are killing and to those who are being killed. Be present to the oppressed and to the oppressor. Be present to the leaders of the nations. Deliver us from evil.

Subdue our selfish desires to possess and to dominate. Forbid us arrogance in victory and self-pity in defeat. Bless the leaders of the nations, Father, that they might act justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with you, oh God.

For yours is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.

In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

DR. KENT BRANTLY grew up in the pews of the Southeastern Church of Christ in Indianapolis. A graduate of Abilene Christian University in Texas, he and his wife, Amber, worshiped with the Southside Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas, before committing to work as full-time medical missionaries. See our previous coverage of the Brantly family and churches battling Ebola at www.christianchronicle.org.



PETE SOUZA, THE WHITE HOUSE

Dr. Kent and Amber Brantly meet President Barack Obama in the White House in September 2014.

LETTERS

Contemplating the cost of Christian education

I have been greatly discouraged about the rising cost of education. (See “Preacher, lay your debt burden down,” Page 1, February)

For certain careers — including areas of ministry — the cost of an education can be a great hardship without having much financial benefit. Christian universities always are calling for support. I am seeing nice new buildings, fancy banquets and beautiful grounds and offices, but tuition continues to rise at a much faster rate than the earning potential after graduation.

I am a father of college-age children. My Christian education is at the root of the things I value most. However, accruing massive amounts of debt is not responsible. It’s enslaving. I am so glad for people trying to place education in reach.

Ken Sayers | Mena, Ark.

Should Christians support free speech that mocks faith?

I am thankful for this Views piece (“Je suis Charlie?” Page 27, February). Philippe Dauner articulates so well what I have been trying to say. The Bible tells us to speak the truth in love. Holding up to ridicule the views of another is not a loving way to reach them.

This journal (*Charlie Hebdo*) has many times ridiculed our Lord as well. Let us treat others as we wish to be treated.

Darlene Hindsley | Detroit

As pointed out by the author, mockery is not a Christian behavior. However, asking an atheist newspaper to hold to Christian behavior is absurd. In the end, lauding free speech means that we value free will — one of the most important rights given to us by God himself.

I will stand up for the right of others to offend people of faith — even my own faith. And, in that sense, I am Charlie. Because, if Charlie gets to speak offenses, then that means I get to speak of the glories of a forgiving God. And, in the end, people get to actually choose on their own what will bring life and hope.

Sean McClue | Phoenix

Minister’s art inspires worldwide

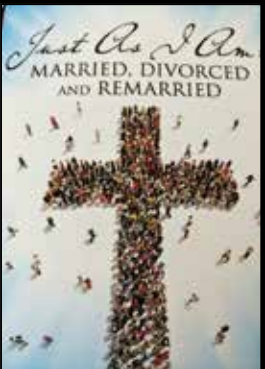
God is good! Thank you, Bill Wiist, for this wonderful ministry of inspiration through visual expressions of Bible verses. (See “Nightly Bible sketches inspire artist,” Page 17, February.) This ministers to me a lot.

Richard Kweyamba | Mbarara, Uganda

Just As I Am: Married, Divorced and Remarried

This book is written primarily for those who have been married, divorced and remarried and have come to Jesus for salvation. Many of you have suffered enough guilt, rejection and/or suspicion because a previous marriage did not work out and you have started over in a new marriage relationship. It is time for healing. It is time to focus on God's grace, mercy and peace. God wants to give you peace of mind and lasting assurance and this book will prove it. Jesus, the great "I AM," accepts us just as we are—even if we are "married, divorced and remarried."

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Wayne Dunaway

From Children to Brethren...

How do I know when my child is ready for baptism?

by Bob Whiddon, Jr.

Within the pages of this book you will find that there are no special rules for children. There is no magic age defined in Scripture when a child should be baptized. But the reader will not be left hanging. Answers to this great question, and more, are found here. This book is also useful in Bible and general baptism studies.

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‘Christian’ Grey? Faith-based writers speak out about ‘50 Shades’

In 2012, I lived in a small, west Texas town — population 2,500. We had a grocery store, a Mexican restaurant (in a house) and a few quaint shops downtown. I spent evenings devouring books. I often pulled up the *New York Times* bestseller list to randomly pick a new book, just knowing it would be exceptional.

After all, it made the list. That’s when I stumbled upon “Fifty Shades of Grey.” Without skimming the synopsis — I like to live on the edge — I downloaded it to my Nook and began reading. But just a few chapters in, I was embarrassed. There I sat — in the church parsonage — filling my mind with, what I have decided, is pornography. I stopped reading — and deleted the book. The book, which has sold more than 100 million copies worldwide,

made its way into movie theaters recently. Christian bloggers shared their thoughts on Christian Grey, who enters a dangerous sexual relationship with college student

Anastasia Steele in the story. Eric Dishongh, minister for the Hickory Knoll Church of Christ in Harahan, La., denied the notion that the story merely depicts sex between two consenting adults. He cited the National Center on Sexual Exploitation, which states that the book and film “promote torture as sexually gratifying and normalize domestic violence, particularly violence against women.” Dishongh included research he conducted that addresses abuse and submission from a Christian therapist’s perspective.

LAURA AKINS is Editorial Assistant for *The Christian Chronicle*. Read the full version of this piece at **www.christianchronicle.org**.

Views



Laura Akins

Film produced by Lipscomb professor is an ‘Old Fashioned’ alternative to ‘Grey’

A film that debuted the same weekend as “Fifty Shades” gave followers of Christ the chance to say no to Christian Grey. “Old Fashioned,” a faith-based movie that touts courtship and virtue in its depiction of romance, had earned a humble \$1.2 million domestically at press time — compared to \$102 million for “Fifty Shades of Grey.” Nonetheless, it is one of the most successful Christian films ever to open on fewer than 300 screens, its producers proclaim on their Facebook page. One of the producers, Dave DeBorde, is chair of the College of Entertainment and the Arts at Lipscomb University, a university associated with Churches of Christ. The timing of the film’s release “was in God’s hands,” DeBorde said. “But his timing is perfect. “We have gotten an enormous

amount of attention in the secular press for this film, which tells a much-needed story.” That story follows Clay Walsh, played by director Rik Swartzwelder. In college, Walsh started a profitable business making lewd videos of partying college girls (think “Girls Gone Wild”). Since then, Walsh has found Jesus, (it’s “more like he found me,” he says) but has not yet forgiven himself for his promiscuity, lust and greed. He makes a promise — to not be alone with a woman until he is married to her. “We’re not in the church pointing a finger at the world,” Swartzwelder said, “because there’s brokenness in the church as well.”

On Film



Kimberly Mauck

KIMBERLY MAUCK is Reviews Editor for *The Christian Chronicle*. Read her full review of “Old Fashioned” at **www.christianchronicle.org**.

Misadventures in radical Christianity

A CALLING OR A PERSONAL DREAM? *In new memoirs, young believers share tales of self-denial, heartache and the discovery of simple, transformative grace.*

We've seen a surfeit of Christian bestsellers in the recent years — detailing the lives of believers who equate divine calling with radical adventure.

The books, marketed to idealistic students and twentysomethings, encourage a kind of zeal that can be satisfied only through seismic shifts in lifestyle and focus.

But new books are emerging in response from young people who took to heart the messages of radicalism and have their own stories to tell.

Two recent memoirs detail the lives of men in their 20s who shook off the fetters of middle-class American life to pursue a radical calling and, through doubt and disappointment, began to see grace and calling in a different light.

The shattering power of the book, **“Runaway Radical: A Young Man’s Reckless Journey to Save the World,”** comes from the dual perspectives of a son attempting to live out authentic Christianity and a mother, helplessly watching her son deteriorate.

With the tagline, “When Doing Good Goes Wrong,” mother and son writing team Amy and Jonathan Hollingsworth recount the events surrounding Jonathan’s decision to spend a year as a missionary in the West African nation of Cameroon.

The wounds are fresh, and the pain on these pages is, at times, nearly unbearable. Jonathan’s obsessive

worry that he wasn’t doing enough for God, fueled by books such as “Blue Like Jazz,” led him to give away his possessions, shave his head and sleep on the floor of his closet surrounded by quotes scribbled on the walls to remind him of his vow of self-denial.

He accepts a job with an organization serving in Cameroon, raises funds, takes a year off from college and starts his new life.

His dreams are destroyed, though, at the hands of a corrupt organization, church leaders with unreasonable demands and a living situation that amounts to house arrest.

His parents are unaware of the extent of Jonathan’s suffering, and Jonathan slips into a dangerous depression, becoming disconnected from God and family — a break that lasts long after he returns home, altered and exhausted.

In exquisite prose, Jonathan and Amy share the nightmare that held their family captive for years.

Another young memoirist, Ryan J. Pemberton, also writes about waking up to the knowledge that our calling is to trust God’s persistent love. In his new memoir **“Called: My Journey to C.S. Lewis’s House and Back Again,”** Pemberton takes a quieter look at the complicated forces behind following a radical calling.

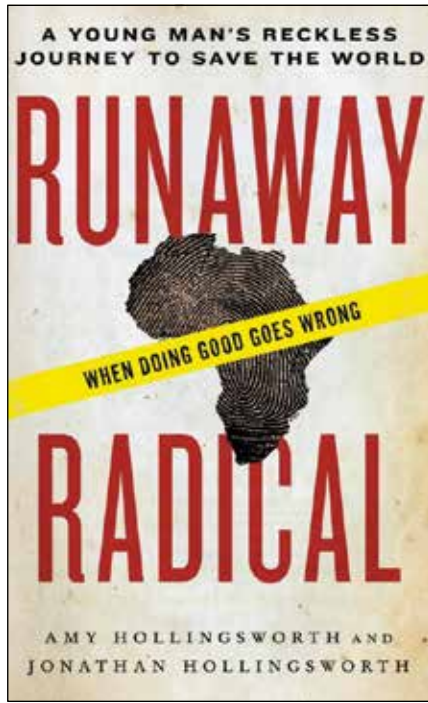
As a college graduate and an up-and-coming marketing executive, Pemberton’s story appeals to readers in the post-college stage of life. “Called” is an earnest portrayal of a young man broken but redeemed.

Pemberton followed his dream,



Laura Anderson Kurk

‘Both memoirs, refreshing in their honesty, provide balance to shelves populated with books that overlook the beauty of the ordinary in favor of radical experience.’



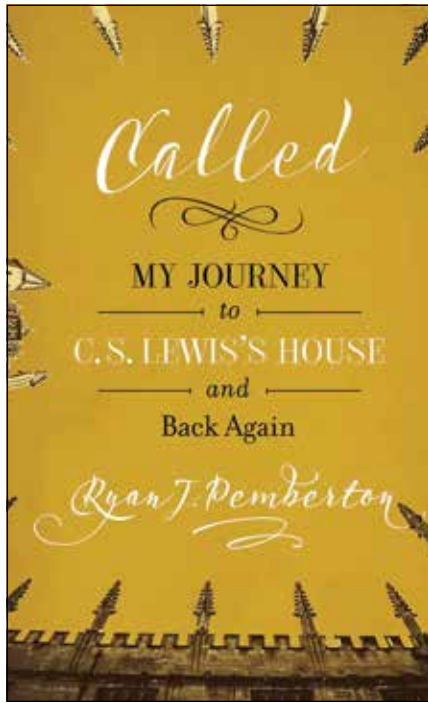
★★★★★
Amy Hollingsworth and Jonathan Hollingsworth. **Runaway Radical: A Young Man’s Reckless Journey to Save the World.** Nashville, Tenn.: W Publishing Group, 2015. 213 pages. \$15.99.

and what he believed to be his calling, from the Seattle area to Oxford University to study theology and to be part of a place still bursting with the ideas of his hero C. S. Lewis. Along the way, Pemberton and his wife had the remarkable opportunity to live in the Kilns, Lewis’ former home.

Pemberton’s book seems to turn on the same motif of the radical Christianity bestsellers: A young Christian liquidates his bank account, quits his dream job and sells his things in order to move to a foreign land to follow the path to which he believes God has called him.

But readers must look more closely at “Called” because this is a story that builds slowly and shines light into the private and needy places of the human heart.

The story, captivating in its transparency, begins with this: “Bob Dylan once said a poem is a naked person. I’m not much of a poet, but I



★★★★★
Ryan J. Pemberton. **Called: My Journey to C.S. Lewis’s House and Back Again.** Abilene, Texas: Leafwood Publishers, 2015. 215 pages. \$14.99.

hope you’ll excuse me if I go ahead and take off all these layers.”

Pemberton asks the question that’s on all our lips — What if what we thought was a calling was just a personal dream?

“Called” is an important book because it takes that most knotty of issues — the Christian calling — and helps to unravel it so that we can better understand our own callings.

Both memoirs, refreshing in their honesty, provide balance to shelves populated with books that overlook the beauty of the ordinary in favor of radical experience.

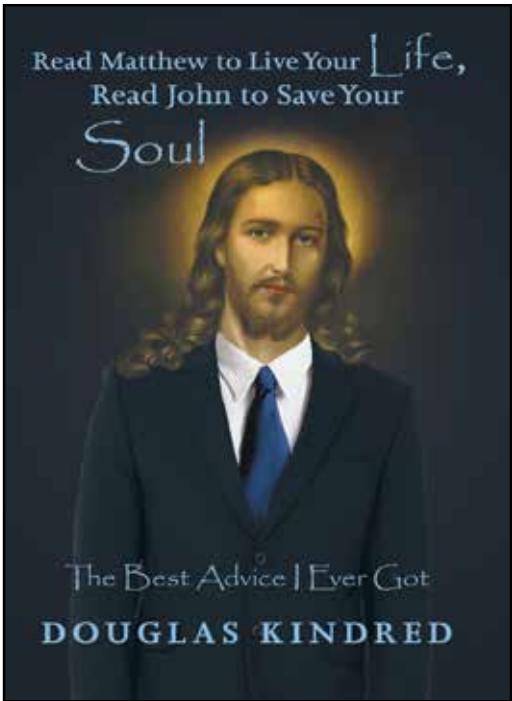
Sometimes, as Jon Hollingsworth discovered, transformative grace comes from simply loving the person in front of you.

LAURA ANDERSON KURK is the author of young adult novels “Glass Girl” and “Perfect Glass.” She and her family worship with the A&M Church of Christ in College Station, Texas.

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NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

FICTION

Serena B. Miller. **A Way of Escape.** Minford, Ohio: L.J. Emory Publishing, 2014. 312 pages. \$14.99.

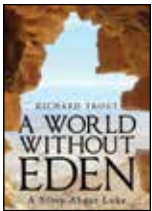


In her latest novel, Miller tells the story of a widow who begins to realize her husband's apparent drug overdose might actually have been a murder. The heroine's life and that of her teenage daughter are now in danger as they try to unravel the mystery.

Miller is a member of the Sunshine Church of Christ in Minford, Ohio, where her husband, Steve, serves as minister. In 2014, her novel "Love Finds You at Sugarcreek, Ohio," was adapted into a film for the UPTV network.

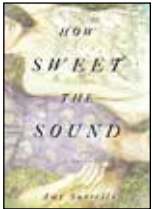
Read our feature on Serena Miller at www.christianchronicle.org.

Richard Trout. **A World Without Eden: A Story About Luke.** Mustang, Okla.: Tate Publishing, 2014. 325 pages. \$22.99.



Trout imagines the apostle Luke's journeys as he teaches the Gospel in Palestine and Egypt after Christ's ascension. Several minor characters from the gospels, including Joanna the disciple of Jesus and Malchus, the guard who lost his ear to Peter's sword in Gethsemane, make appearances in this episodic book. Known for his young adult adventure novels, Trout worshiped with the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City before moving to Texas recently.

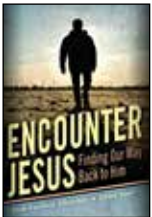
Amy Sorrells. **How Sweet the Sound.** Colorado Springs, Colo.: David C. Cook, 2014. 359 pages. \$14.99.



Inspired by the Old Testament story of Tamar, this modern-day novel follows a Southern family trying to reconcile a horrific past with their perfect facade. Weaving together tragedy and hope, betrayal and redemption, the book includes a discussion guide for reading groups and recipes for foods mentioned in the story.

CHRISTIAN LIVING

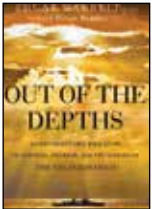
Chad Ezelle. **Encounter Jesus: Finding Our Way Back to Him.** Nashville, Tenn.: 21st Century Christian, 2014. 105 pages. \$8.99.



In the vein of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's "The Cost of Discipleship" and, more recently, Francis Chan's "Crazy Love," Ezelle, pulpit minister for the Main Street Church of Christ in Milan, Tenn., seeks to re-ignite Christians' passion in serving Jesus, leaving behind the old man at conversion and starting a new life. He discusses contemporary American Christianity, which he claims conflicts with real Christianity in many ways.

MEMOIR

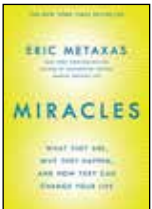
Edgar Harrell with David Harrell. **Out of the Depths: An Unforgettable WWII Story of Survival, Courage and the Sinking of the USS Indianapolis.** Bloomington, Minn.: Bethany House, 2014. 192 pages. \$16.99.



A survivor of one of the greatest catastrophes in U.S. Navy history, Edgar Harrell recalls the four days he spent in the South Pacific after his ship was struck by two Japanese torpedoes. Now a businessman and lay minister, he co-wrote this book with his son, David, a Calvary Bible Church preacher who holds a doctorate in religion and society.

INSPIRATIONAL

Eric Metaxes. **Miracles: What They Are, Why They Happen and How They Can Change Your Life.** New York: Dutton Adult, 2014. 333 pages. \$27.95.



Christian biographer Metaxes offers a historical, biblical and scientific exploration of miracles in the first half of this book.

He then gives detailed accounts from people who believe they've experienced modern-day miracles, based on interviews he conducted.

March 1-5 Faulkner Lectures 2015. "iCulture: Pursuing Holiness in a Self-Saturated World." (334) 386-7154, sgleaves@faulkner.edu.

March 3 Youth Ministry Conference 2015. "Tough Topics of Youth Ministry: Sexual Identity, Sexual Abuse and Shame." Lipscomb University. www.lipscomb.edu/bible/youth-ministry-conference.

March 6-7 Fourth Annual Virtue in an Age of Promiscuity. "Lifting as We Strive: Continuing the Christian Journey." Columbia, Md. www.virtue2015.com, (877) 490-3456.

March 14 Biblical Marriage Conference. Fort Wayne, Ind. www.eacchurchofchrist.org. 260.740.5300.

March 14 Church of Christ Care Center Benefit Concert. "The Black Diamond." Clinton Township, Mich.

March 18-21 Tulsa Workshop 2015. "Speak Life." Tulsa, Okla. www.tulsaworkshop.org.

March 19-21 Homeschool Convention. Hosted by Teach Them Diligently. Nashville, Tenn. (864) 235-4444.

March 20-22 Singles Bible Camp. Central Florida Bible Camp, Eustis, Fla. www.cfbiblecamp.org.

March 20-21 Atlanta ElderLink Workshop and Forum. North Atlanta Church of Christ. www.acu.edu/siburt-institute/elderlink.

March 30 McGaw Lecture Series. Oklahoma Christian University. (405) 425-6300.

April 2-5 30th Anniversary Church of Christ Ladies Lectureship Retreat. "The Revolution of Royalty." Washington, D.C. www.ladiesretreat.org, (910) 822-5543.

April 5-9 71st Annual Churches of Christ National Lectureship. "Celebrating the Covenant." Chicago. www.71stnationallectureship.com. (312) 527-5400.

April 9-11 Homeschool Convention. Atlanta. (864) 235-4444.

April 12-15 57th Annual OUV Lectureship Series. "Children Mean the World to God." Ohio Valley University. www.ovu.edu/lectureship

FULL CALENDAR, www.christianchronicle.org



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Submit a letter of interest and resume to Dr. Todd Patten, dean for student success, at tpatten@harding.edu or Box 10749, Searcy, AR 72149.

PAUL R. CARTER COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION. Seeking full-time faculty member to serve as director of finance program. The successful candidate will possess a doctorate degree or have a clear plan to complete that degree. Work and teaching experience is preferred. Responsibilities include administrative duties and teaching undergraduate and graduate classes in finance.

Submit a letter of application and curriculum vitae to Dr. Bryan Burks, dean, at bburks@harding.edu or Box 10774, Searcy, AR 72149.

Also seeking full-time faculty member to teach classes in management. The successful candidate will have a master's degree with doctorate preferred. Work and teaching experience is preferred. Teaching areas include logistics, human resources, organizational behavior, leadership and entrepreneurship.

Submit a letter of application and curriculum vitae to Dr. Allen Frazier, associate dean, at afrazier@harding.edu or Box 10774, Searcy, AR 72149.

COLLEGE OF BIBLE AND MINISTRY. Seeking full-time faculty member to teach youth and family ministry. An M.Div. and a Ph.D. in youth and family ministry or a related field is preferred. Candidates should also bring significant congregational experience in youth and family ministry. The faculty member in this position will also teach freshmen and sophomore textual Bible.

Submit applications to Dr. Monte Cox, dean, at mcox@harding.edu.

DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES. Seeking full-time faculty member for the criminal justice program. Requirements are a master's in criminal justice with a doctorate preferred. J.D. degree with prosecutorial duties is a plus. Teaching duties will be solely in criminal justice including course content in the areas of forensics, investigation and terrorism.

Submit a letter of application and curriculum vitae to Dr. Terry Smith, chair, at tsmith@harding.edu or Box 12260, Searcy, AR 72149.

DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS. Seeking full-time faculty member in mathematics or statistics. The successful candidate will possess a minimum of a doctorate in mathematics or statistics or related field or will have a clear plan to complete

the degree. Teaching experience is preferred. Responsibilities will include teaching general courses as well as upper-level courses in mathematics or statistics as they are available.

Submit a letter of application and curriculum vitae to Dr. Ronald Smith, chair, at rgsmith@harding.edu or Box 10764, Searcy, AR 72149.

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL THERAPY. Seeking full-time faculty member. The successful candidate will have expertise either in musculoskeletal physical therapy or gross anatomy. Establishment of an active research program is expected and will be supported. Qualified candidates with expertise in musculoskeletal physical therapy will possess a D.P.T. or M.P.T. with advanced clinical certification, have specialty certification in manual therapy, have extensive experience in outpatient orthopedic physical therapy, and be eligible for PT licensure in Arkansas. Qualified candidates with expertise in gross anatomy will possess experience teaching graduate-level human gross anatomy or extensive formal education in human gross anatomy. In both cases, preference will be given to candidates with an advanced doctoral degree.

Submit a letter of interest to Dr. Mike McGalliard, director, at mmcgalliard@harding.edu or Box 12292, Searcy, AR 72149.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM. Seeking program director. The successful candidate will have a doctoral degree, eight years of clinical experience in the OT field, administrative experience, and three years in a full-time academic appointment at the post-secondary level. Responsibilities include program development and implementation under the guidelines of the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education.

Submit a letter of interest to Dr. Rebecca Weaver, dean of the College of Allied Health, at Box 12287, Searcy, AR 72149.

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM. Seeking one full-time and one half-time faculty positions. The successful candidate should possess a minimum of a master's degree in physician assistant studies or similar field. Three years of clinical experience and one year of teaching experience preferred. PA applicants should be NCCPA certified and eligible for licensure as a physician assistant in the state of Arkansas. Applicants with other clinical training should have corresponding professional certification and be eligible for professional licensure in the state of Arkansas. Responsibilities include participating in the teaching of the program's core curriculum; advising and mentoring students; assisting with the hands-on practical training of students in various clinical skills needed in clinical practice; maintaining clinical competency through practice at the program's affiliated clinic site; conducting scholarly activity in the area of expertise; and engaging in service to the college, university and community.

Submit a personal statement of teaching philosophy, three letters of professional reference, a transcript of professional degree training along with any other graduate or professional degrees awarded, and curriculum vitae to Dr. Michael Murphy, chair, at mmurphy1@harding.edu or Box 12231, Searcy, AR 72149.

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JoAnne North's devotion yields a bountiful harvest behind bars

JoAnne North is a devoted wife, a great-grandmother and a leader in Bible education for children. For the past three decades, she also has devoted much of her time and energy to serving those incarcerated — and has enlisted countless others in the soul-saving work of taking Christ behind bars.

Prison ministry wasn't something she envisioned until, in 1983, her husband — Stafford North, longtime professor at Oklahoma Christian University — handed her a copy of the *Gospel Advocate* with an appeal by Blake Watson.

Watson, an inmate at the El Reno Federal Penitentiary in Oklahoma, told of about 40 men meeting as a church inside prison walls. They were seekers and had developed a series of questions about the Bible that they sent to several churches. The Cherokee Hills Church of Christ in Oklahoma City sent the only response with answers matching what they read in Scripture.

JoAnne read the report and, in her customary way, decided that Watson needed praise and encouragement. She wrote and offered to send Bibles, gospel tracts and cookies. Watson replied that they couldn't receive cookies — and they already had Bible and tracts. What they needed was preachers. She recruited her husband and other men to preach for the congregation on Sunday afternoons.

Watson and Blake Williams, both inmates and believers, put on JoAnne's heart a mission to teach women in the jails and prisons around Oklahoma City. After six months — and much prayer — she was allowed to launch a Bible class at Mabel Bassett Correctional Center. She showed Jule Miller filmstrips — taking the women through the Bible and discussing salvation — on four consecutive Thursday nights. The warden asked her to continue the class.

That's what she did — for 15 years.

She's also expanded her work to the Oklahoma County Jail and several minimum-security facilities. Getting into these places is difficult, requiring years of prayer and patience, she said.

So does arranging for baptisms, but JoAnne has managed to cut through mountains of red tape. Now baptisms can take place the second Saturday of each month.

Thanks in part to JoAnne, prison ministry has become one of the most fruitful works of her congregation, the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City.

In 2014, 217 inmates were baptized through the ministry, which also mailed 1,853 Bibles to inmates. That same year, inmates completed nearly 49,000 correspondence Bible lessons.

Watson himself developed many of the lessons, which focus on the role of the church as the Kingdom — an idea that was central to the thinking of the El Reno group.

The lessons give students a chance to express interest in baptism. If they do, their names are posted to a list in Memorial Road's prison ministry office. JoAnne and other volunteers study with the women who express this interest.

JoAnne averages two afternoons per week at the county jail, studying one-on-one with inmates. She sees them through a glass and uses a speaker to communicate with them.

She makes sure to send notes of encouragement to her students. When one of them is baptized, she sends a special card and a note. She continues to send Christmas letters to about 80 people she has studied with.

To her, they aren't inmates. They're sisters.

CONTACT bailey.mcbride@christianchronicle.org.



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“No, brother. No one was hurt, only by God’s grace.”

Ramesh is twenty eight years old. He’s a passionate and effective evangelist, like his father before him. So I eagerly accepted his invitation to encourage a congregation he had started about sixteen months earlier.

They meet in a 600 sq. ft. room owned by the government, just 400 feet from the entrance to the largest mosque in the Bidar region.

As I got in the car, I noticed several running cracks in the windshield. And in front of me was a fist size injury to the window, as if a passenger had smashed his head in the force of an emergency stop.

“The guy who hit his head, was he hurt bad?” I asked.

Ramesh shrugged, started the car and said, “No brother. No one was hurt, only by God’s grace.”

“So what happened? A cow run out in front of the car?”

“No, brother. Me and my father were leaving a Hindu village west from here. We planned a gospel meeting with their mayor, but some of the Hindu apprentice priests were angry and threw rocks at us when we were leaving. Some hit the windshield.”

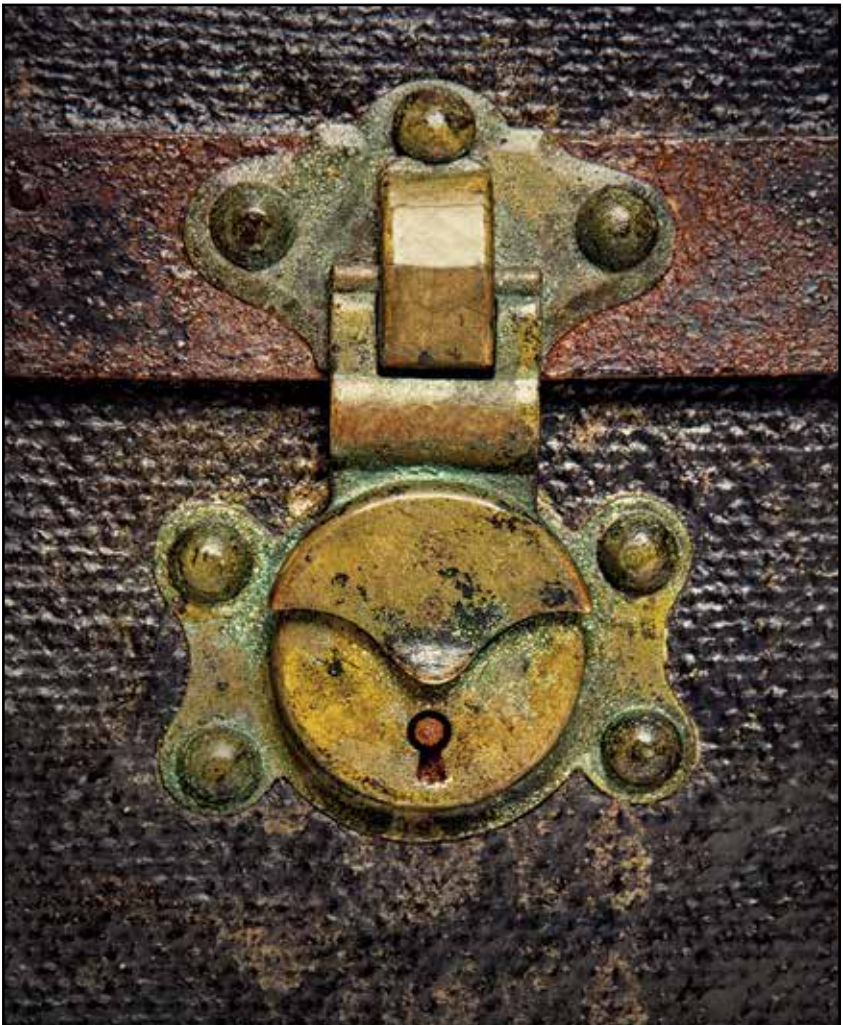
“But do not worry. The preaching was a wonderful success, brother! We have a congregation worshipping there now.”

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The Christian Chronicle

Vol. 72, No. 3 | March 2015 | www.christianchronicle.org

Singapore snapshots

From this Southeast Asian hub, new generations of Christians are taking the Gospel to the unreached people of their lands. **3**



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