

Crisis in South Sudan: Christians mourn losses, pray

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Santino Haar survived snakes, crocodiles, near-starvation and gunfire as he fought for the independence of his native South Sudan.

Now living in Middle Tennessee, the newly baptized Christian watches the news and prays as his beloved homeland tears itself apart.

"I cannot eat because my heart hurts too much," he said, apologizing to members of the Mt. Juliet Church of Christ who invited him to lunch after a recent Sunday service.



Haar

Haar, a former refugee, child soldier and "Lost Boy of Sudan," earned his U.S. citizenship in 2011. That same year, South Sudan became independent from the Republic of Sudan, after decades of civil war between the mostly Muslim north and Christian and animist south.



Cady

In recent weeks, Haar has lost 10 relatives — not soldiers, he said, just men, women and children struggling to survive — as forces formerly united against the north turned on each other.

"Why do we kill *ourselves*?"

Haar asked his fellow church members, bewildered. "It is like how you would feel if you worked hard to plant and grow a garden — and then saw wild animals come in and ruin it."

Across the U.S., church members from South Sudan and supporters of mission work in the world's newest nation watch for news, pray for peace and wait for the chance to help rebuild what can be rebuilt.

Dennis Cady and Chuck Dennis, members of the Faith Village Church of Christ in Wichita Falls, Texas, have helped construct a Christian vocational boarding school in the town of Bor, a focal point of the conflict. The town — and the school — were seized at least twice by rebels

See **SOUTH SUDAN**, Page 12



PHOTOS BY BOBBY ROSS JR.

Christian Relief Fund's Bobby Moore, right, leads a prayer during the National Conference on Youth Ministries in Daytona Beach, Fla.

iGods and other devices

DEMANDS OF YOUTH MINISTRY in a techno-crazed age tackled at national conference.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla.

If zombies attack, Vic Pruett will be ready.

The Florida minister jokes that he has a smartphone application that will help him fight back.

"I do love my smartphone," said Pruett, who preaches for the Holly Hill Church of Christ, north of Daytona Beach. "I've got a map app, a running app, a calculator app, a movie listing app, a weather app, a level and measuring app, Bible apps, news apps and game apps, of course."

Unfortunately, Pruett hasn't found an app to make him a better husband and father or cause him to be faithful, honest and righteous, he said during the National Conference on Youth Ministries.



At the conference, Emily Hudkins and Michalie Brown catch up on their messages.

The advantages — and limitations — of technology were among the topics explored as nearly 400 youth ministers, vendors and speakers from

26 states and Canada gathered at the Hilton Daytona Beach Resort.

From Pruett's "There's an App for That" presentation — focused on the fruits of the Holy Spirit — to Ultimate Escape ministry director Steve Holladay's session on "Hook-ups, Sexting and Porn," the recent conference reflected the changing realities of youth ministry.

"They're plugged in. They're technologically equipped," Houston Heflin, a ministry professor at Abilene Christian University in Texas, said of today's teens.

Heflin, author of "Teaching Eutychus: Engaging Today's Learners with Passion and Creativity," addressed a roomful of youth ministers.

His topic: "New Apps and Teaching Tricks to Help Students Learn."

See **TECHNOLOGY**, Page 14

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Make time to read good books — and the Good Book

In the age of byte-sized, graphic-drenched information, reading paper-and-ink books still is an important part of my daily life.

As reviews editor for *The Christian Chronicle*, it's also part of my job, but I

Inside Story



Kimberly Mauck

read books — both electronic and “analog” — of my own choosing every day. How in the world do I find the time, as a work-at-home mom of four young children, to read for pleasure? As my husband sometimes says, “You make time for what you love.”

Despite what everyone seems to think, I do have some free time. Everyone does — even if it tends to come in 10-minute stints, the occasional afternoon hour or the exhausted half-hour or so after the kids are in bed and the chores are all done.

Just like any other activity in the world that brothers and sisters in the Lord's body undertake, reading must be a worthy activity, an attempt at “redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16).

There are so many ways to relax and be entertained during free time, even at home. My smartphone alone offers several options for killing time, between social media, Pinterest and news and blog feeds. But

See **BOOKS**, Page 4

Muscle, a shovel and thousands of baptisms

A SELF-PUBLISHED BOOK fosters evangelistic excitement among some Churches of Christ — and raises concerns among others.

BY KIMBERLY MAUCK | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

“You know that guy Randall believes that Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Catholics — everybody but his church are all going to hell?” ...

But was that really what Randall believed? How could anybody believe that? Cults believed that kind of thing, didn't they? Weren't we all headed to the same place but just taking different roads to get there? ...

Through the myriad of mental questions sprouting up in my mind, a central premise came to the surface: All denominations teach conflicting doctrines; therefore, it isn't possible that all of them are biblically correct.

— From “Muscle and a Shovel”

Michael Shank never meant to be an author.

His wife talked him into it. “Thank God for good women,” said Shank, a 46-year-old former electrician from Metropolis, Ill. His wife of 29 years, Jonetta, hinted, encouraged and even commanded him to share the story of his conversion.

Time and again he resisted, until one morning, as she poured him a cup of coffee, Jonetta Shank said, “Michael, what if one person read your story and became a Christian?”

Two years later, his self-published memoir, “Muscle and a Shovel,” has sold 67,000 copies — and currently is out of stock at Amazon.com. The 380-page book, now in its fifth edition, recounts the faith journey of Michael Shank, who grew up in

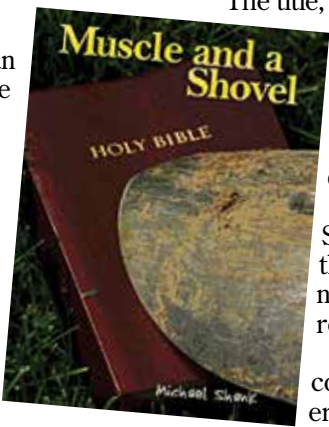
a Baptist church, studied the Bible with a coworker over an eight-month period and was baptized, along with his wife.

The title, “Muscle and a Shovel,” refers to the “mental muscle and a willingness to use honest intelligence to dig deep beyond all of our preconceived ideas, our false beliefs and our comfortable traditions,” according to the book.

It happened 25 years ago, but Shank kept meticulous notes on the experience in a spiral-bound notebook, unearthed during a recent move.

The simple story — which contained a few grammatical errors and punctuation faux pas in its early editions — has grown into a movement thought to be responsible for more than 6,000 baptisms, Shank said. That estimate comes from reports he has received from churches that used the book

See **MUSCLE AND A SHOVEL**, Page 24



A Serenity Prayer tattoo is among the recent work done by church member Harry J. Ake.

Faith on his arm

AFTER YEARS OF SEARCHING, a tattoo studio owner finds a new way of life — and salvation — with a New Jersey congregation.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

SEWELL, N.J.

Tattoos cover most of Harry J. Ake's body — from his wife Linda's name on his neck all the way down to his ankles.

“I have things on me that are not real holy, and then I have other things that are nicer,” said Ake, owner of Headlight Tattoo and Body Piercing.

His newest tattoo — displayed prominently on his right arm — reflects the transformation in his life since his baptism for the forgiveness of sins more than two years ago.

“Church of Christ,” that tattoo proclaims. Since his conversion, the 52-year-old Ake



Ake

has become an active member of the Pitman Road Church of Christ, a 300-member New Jersey congregation, about 20 minutes south of downtown Philadelphia.

From leading a Monday night men's Bible study to helping prepare Wednesday night fellowship meals, Ake is “every preacher's dream for what a new Christian should be,” longtime Pitman minister Dan Cooper said. The servant-minded tattoo artist even rolls the church's garbage cans to the street for weekly curbside pickup.

Ake's long journey to a strong Christian faith began as a young boy who attended Roman Catholic schools.

When Ake was 11, his father abandoned the family, leaving the boy's mother to care for him and his three siblings.

“I thought there couldn't be a God that I wanted to worship if this was the case,”

See **TATTOOS**, Page 16

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NEW: See web-exclusive columns by Christian journalists.



Fast-food faith. Bobby Ross Jr. serves up seven lessons from dining out and other insight gained waiting on special orders.

Road notes. Erik Tryggestad shares stories from his travels to Sudan and the Philippines — and offers prayers for relief and healing.



Today's news and the Good News. Doug Poling, retired CBS News correspondent, shares stories of faith beyond the headlines.



BOOKS: Amid digital distractions, seek the truth

FROM PAGE 3

for me, free time is almost always spent reading.

I do believe that some books meet the criteria put forth in Philippians 4:8 — works of real faith that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy.

I've found many books that don't meet that test. (It's much easier, in fact, to find books that don't than it is to find books that do.) But I think it's up to me to resist that temptation and put away a book that doesn't meet the Philippians test — even if it's one I just bought and have just settled down with an afternoon mug of vanilla latte to enjoy.

Too many times, though, I've found myself getting sucked into an unworthy book — or, sometimes, television show or movie — that forces my mind into places it should not be, places that it can become difficult to escape.

But I do believe some books, films and even television shows can redeem the time we have on this earth. They allow us to encounter experiences and ideas beyond our own and give us greater empathy and wisdom for the souls around us.

Instead of turning us inward, good books guide us to more confidence and connection with those around us. They grant us the ability to express ourselves in ways that gives grace to our hearers.

I hope that I have brought some of those works to the attention of *Chronicle* readers. I am sure I have let some

diamonds slip through my fingers — books that are worthy of mention that I never heard about or didn't choose for inclusion. I know I have disappointed some authors who have sent their books to the *Chronicle* and have never seen their work mentioned in print.

Like most of you, I labor at a job that requires hard choices — ones I don't always get right.

But I continue to do this job because I believe it's important.

Of all the books recommended in these pages, the greatest, of course, is the Good Book itself. All of us at the *Chronicle* urge you to spend time — alone time, meal time, family time — immersed in the truth of God's Word.

Regular Bible reading should be a part of our lives, even if it means putting this publication aside (for just a few minutes).

In my time with the *Chronicle*, I have been blessed to discover worthy books — nonfiction and fiction — that enhance and enrich our understanding of God's plan.

Regardless of how busy your life becomes — regardless of the technological distractions that compete for your attention — I urge you to make time for good books.

Whatever it is we love to do with our free time, we must seek out that which is worthy and redemptive.

KIMBERLY MAUCK is reviews editor for *The Christian Chronicle*. She and her family worship with the Northwest Church of Christ in Durant, Okla.

MARCH 2014

ARIZONA

TUCSON — The Southside Church of Christ set a goal of reaching an attendance of 300 — and did so three times in the last year.

Moreover, the congregation set a goal of 50 baptisms — and welcomed 54 souls into Christ.

“Please rejoice with us as we continue to bring the lost to Christ and strengthen those already in the body,” minister Donald G. Priddy Sr. said. “Pray for the work here at Southside and let us know of your work that we likewise might rejoice and continue with you in prayer.”

CALIFORNIA

SAN DIEGO — Snow in Southern California?

It's possible — with a little help.

The Canyon View Church of Christ provided 10 tons of machine-made wintry mix for playing, sledding on saucers and making snow angels as part of a recent Winter Wonderland event.

“This was the church's ... gift to the community,” said Jim Hinton, spiritual formation minister.

SAN FRANCISCO — Richard Blythe, long-time minister for the Lake Merced Church of Christ, lost his battle with cancer Jan. 19. He was 68.

“Richard Blythe lived a life of service and faith,” said organizers of a memorial fund to help his family with final expenses, since he did not have life insurance. “His work as a minister, a director of children's homes and a CEO of foster care agencies touched many lives.”



Blythe

Survivors include his wife, Rhonda, and 12 children.

For more information, see www.christianchronicle.org and search for “Richard Blythe.”

COLORADO

BRUSH — The Northeastern Colorado Bible Bowl was hosted recently by the Brush Church of Christ, *Rocky Mountain Christian* reported.

Five Churches of Christ participated, including the Golden, Miller Street, East, Keenesburg and Brush congregations.

About 50 people, from toddlers to adults, attended.



JOSHUA LINDSEY, BOWLING GREEN (KY.) DAILY NEWS

Kentucky teens sing at assisted-living center

Betina Asele, 14, and Ginny Page, 15, members of the Greenwood Park Church of Christ in Bowling Green, Ky., sing with residents of Chandler Park Assisted Living. Greenwood Park members conduct a service at the center once a month. Songleader Howard Frazier told the *Bowling Green Daily News* he tries to pick songs the seniors will recognize, such as “How Great Thou Art” and “Amazing Grace.” “It really brings a lot of good cheer and fellowship,” he said.

MARYLAND

BALTIMORE — A new church plant — the Inner City Church of Christ — is focusing evangelistic efforts near a local recreation center.

“We have to come back to the neighborhoods,” senior minister Eric A. Lorick said. “Driving in and driving out does not build relationships.”

Lorick and education minister Rodney Dashiell planted the new congregation — which started with less than 50 members — with support from the East Baltimore Church of Christ. For more information, see cocinnercity.org.

NEW MEXICO

ALAMOGORDO — Al Maxey, minister for the Cuba Avenue Church of Christ, served as the main speaker for a recent legislative prayer breakfast.

More than 200 people, including

lawmakers, judges, commissioners and other local officials, attended.

Maxey told the gathering he was pleased to be in a place where everyone could come together and pray, *The Daily News* reported.

“We have a wonderful freedom in this country,” he said. “I hope we never abuse it and never lose it.”

TEXAS

KELLER — For 34 years, Jim Hackney served as preacher for the Heritage Church of Christ — formerly the Midtown Church of Christ in Fort Worth.

Now Hackney has passed the ceremonial baton of senior minister to Brock Paulk, who spent seven-and-a-half years as youth minister and spent the past year in a mentoring role sharing the pulpit.

“The shepherds led the church in a reaffirmation to the mission of reaching

SPOTLIGHT**Overcoming addiction**

CEDAR HILL, Texas — The Cedar Hill Church of Christ hosted the recent World Convention of Overcomers Outreach.

Church member Karl Berry said the convention drew nearly 400 participants.

The event was open to anyone who wanted to know how to use faith to battle addictions and habits such as alcoholism, drug abuse, pornography, gambling, overeating and codependency.

“The church has looked away from such problems in the past. Therefore, we think it is noteworthy,” said Berry, who overcame a 28-year drug addiction and has been sober for 19 years.



KARL BERRY

Participants sing during the convention.

the lost and in affirming Paulk as the lead minister at Heritage,” said Hackney, who will remain in a full-time role as executive minister.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY HERITAGE CHURCH

Jim Hackney passes the baton to Brock Paulk.

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JEFFREY SAULTON, NEWS AND SENTINEL (PARKERSBURG, W.VA.)

World War II veteran, preacher celebrates 100th birthday

Cecil Dotson and his son, Doug, stand next to Cecil Dotson's military uniform during his recent 100th birthday celebration in Vienna, W.Va. The World War II veteran, a member of the North End Church of Christ in Parkersburg, W.Va., preached for 60 years after serving in the U.S. Army.

Faulkner University president plans to retire after three decades at helm

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Faulkner University President Billy D. Hilyer will retire at the close of the 2014-2015 school year, he announced recently.

The university's seventh president, Hilyer has served as Faulkner's top administrator for 28 years.

In a letter to the 3,200-student university's board of trustees announcing his retirement plans, Hilyer gave credit to past and current board members and to employees for Faulkner's growth during his tenure as president.

"I am grateful for our wonderful faculty and staff," Hilyer said. "For years I have received much too much credit, credit that was due the faculty. Much of the progress we have enjoyed through the years is the result of their hard work, often under difficult circumstances, their professionalism and good spirit."

Hilyer began his career at Faulkner University in 1974 as a part-time counselor and was named director of

student services the following year.

From there, he progressed to the dean of counseling services, then to vice president of campus affairs and in February 1986 to executive vice president. He was named president in July 1986.

A few of the accomplishments during Hilyer's presidency:

- Enrollment has more than doubled.
- Academic offerings have grown, including Faulkner's first doctorate-level degrees, a graduate school for biblical studies,

an honors college, a study abroad program and online degree programs.

- Approval of the Thomas Goode Jones School of Law by the American Bar Association and accreditation for the College of Education by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.



Hilyer

45

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ISRAEL

JERUSALEM — Construction workers — both Jewish and Arabic — are renovating and expanding the meeting place of Netivyah, a ministry of Jewish disciples of the Messiah led by Joseph Shulam, who is supported by members of Churches of Christ.



WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/NETIVYAH

Joseph Shulam inspects progress on the Netivyah building's renovation.

"Praise God we have outgrown our old meeting place," Shulam said. "The importance of this building is that it will be the first time

in nearly 2000 years that there will be a physical home ... that will serve the local community for both humanitarian work for the poor of Jerusalem and as a center for worship, study and service (for) Jerusalem and all of Israel."

MALAWI

DEDZA — Two hundred men applied for admission to the new Malawi International Bible Institute in this southern African nation. The school could accept only five students, but



Nkhonjera

"these five are the best of the best," said Jim Dillinger, president of the school's board. The Church of Christ in Chrisili, near the school, has about 60 new Christians, Dillinger said. Many travel across the border from nearby Mozambique. Priestly Nkhonjera, the school's director, and ministry students minister to the young congregation.

MAURITANIA

NOUAKCHOTT — In this Islamic republic of western Africa, north of Senegal, the law forbids the conversion of Muslims, who comprise 99 percent of the nation's 3.3 million souls.

Nonetheless, a vocational missionary from West Africa works with three house churches in the country's capital, Nouakchott, and one in another part of the country. Each church has between



PHOTO PROVIDED BY ISAAC SANYU

Ugandan Christians share a meal, praise God

Christian women of all ages enjoy a fellowship meal provided by the Kampala Church of Christ in the East African nation of Uganda. The meal is part of an annual gathering that "is not only a celebration Sunday for all our members," minister Isaac Sanyu said, "but an invitation for all our church plant members to congregate in one place to praise God, share communion, share food and drinks, testify about the goodness of our God, meet new faces and have fun in the Lord." The church's goal for 2014 is "serving out of our comfort zones," Sanyu said.

10 and 25 people in attendance.

A U.S. church member visited the missionary, who has been arrested more than once because of his faith. The Christians "feel like spiritual orphans," said the church member, who asked that his name be withheld.

The believers also lack opportunities for in-depth Bible study. The U.S. member and the missionary discussed possibilities to help support the work.

SOUTH KOREA

SEOUL — "Members of the church in Korea are changing, and it appears the changes are all for the best."

That was longtime missionary Malcolm Parsley's reaction after a recent, four-day meeting of preachers in this Asian nation. Twenty-three church members attended, some of whom "are

seriously trying to follow the Bible, but who still have had some differences of opinion," Parsley said.

The church members discussed honestly the issues on which they disagree and "all promised a determination to do their best to go back to the Bible," Parsley said. "I personally feel this is the greatest step which has been taken in the past 30 years."

UKRAINE

KIEV — Three members of the Northside Church of Christ in San Antonio — Dana Grubb, Dannel Rosenaur and Judy Bittick — presented new Bible study material and handmade bags to Christian women in the European capitals of Kiev and Vienna, Austria. The Texas Christians went as part of a Women for Eastern European Mission trip.

SPOTLIGHT

50 years — and still going Dutch

HASSELT, Belgium — A job pulling weeds in West Texas led Roy Davison to Western Europe — where he's served for half a century.

In the weeks before he began studies at Abilene Christian College, he landscaped the campus alongside Cor van Ewijk, who invited Davison to visit his native Holland and taught him to speak Dutch.

Since graduating and moving to Europe in 1963, Davison has served the people of the Netherlands and Belgium. He and his wife, Rita, have helped plant congregations and start house churches throughout the region.

The missionary said he and his wife are thankful for their supporters, "for faithful fellow workers and for dedicated Flemish and Dutch Christians among whom we have been privileged to serve."

READ A RETROSPECTIVE at www.oldpaths.com.



PHOTOS PROVIDED

Roy Davison in 1963 and 2013.

As they listened to Eastern European women describe their struggles with health issues, addictions, raising children and infertility, "over and over, we came to the conclusion that we are wrestling with similar problems," Rosenaur told *Christian News of South Texas*. For more information, see www.weem.org.

UNITED KINGDOM

BRISTOL — Young believers gathered in this southwestern English city for a "Masquerade," the theme of the recent Bristol Youth Weekend. The youths studied the book of Ephesians and were encouraged "to look behind our mask and reveal the true identity of who we are as members of Christ's church," said attendee Ryan Hill. Eddie Fisher led a Sunday Bible study for 167 souls at the conclusion of the weekend, Hill said.



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For either position, contact Dr. Susan Kehl, graduate director, at skehl@harding.edu, Box 12265, Searcy, AR 72149, or 501-279-4941.

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY. Seeking full-time lab supervisor. The successful applicant will organize and supervise freshman level chemistry laboratories. A bachelor's degree in chemistry is required; a master's degree is preferred. Duties include chemical preparation, laboratory set-up, pre-lab lectures, supervision of beginning chemistry laboratories, and grading.

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MUSIC DEPARTMENT. Seeking full-time faculty in woodwinds. The successful candidate will have a doctorate in music (master's considered) with a strong performance background. A strong background in jazz and successful K-12 teaching experience are preferred. Responsibilities include serving as primary woodwind specialist for the department; teaching private woodwinds in area(s) of specialty; teach Class Woodwinds method course; teaching additional areas based on candidate's expertise, preferably including jazz and music education; and participating in recruiting, advising and other departmental activities.

Send letter of application and curriculum vitae to Dr. Mike Chance, associate professor, at mchance@harding.edu.

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.

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 faculty's 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.

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY. Seeking full-time faculty member. The successful candidate will possess a Ph.D. in Old Testament. Preference will be given to applicants with postdoctoral teaching experience as well as ministry experience. Responsibilities include teaching Old Testament courses, teaching Hebrew in classroom and online formats, and serving on research committees.

Submit a letter of interest and curriculum vitae to Dr. Evertt W. Huffard, dean, at dean@hst.edu.

THEATRE DEPARTMENT. Seeking full-time assistant technical director. Responsibilities include assisting directors in set design and construction for the Homecoming musical, Spring Sing all-campus musical revue, and Searcy Summer Dinner Theatre; constructing sets and supervising student workers; and providing supervision for theatre program shop facilities.

Submit application, current resume and portfolio to Robin Miller, chair, at rmiller@harding.edu.

ADDITIONAL OPENINGS ANTICIPATED

Due to increasing enrollments and anticipated retirements, Harding expects to have additional openings in behavioral sciences, American history, graphic design, Spanish and oral communication. Individuals interested in any of these positions should contact Dr. Larry Long, provost, at provost@harding.edu to obtain more information about specific openings. These openings will be filled as funding is approved.

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Additional details are available at www.oc.edu/hr. Inquiries and applications should be directed to Karen Sorensen, Box 11000, Oklahoma City, OK 73136.

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www.oc.edu/hr



PHOTO PROVIDED BY DOYLE KEE

Willy Mputu, André Kabeya and Gabriel Ngwanza train students for ministry at the Hilton Terry Bible School of the Congo in Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Reaching the two Congos: Christians seek 'a spiritual revolution' in Africa

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

There are only two national capitals in the world from which you can see the capital of another nation.

They are the cities of Kinshasa, capital of the massive Democratic Republic of Congo, and Brazzaville, capital of the smaller Republic of Congo. The two cities face each other across the Congo River in central Africa.

Christians are working to plant new congregations and spread the Gospel on both sides of the river.

Doyle Kee, a missionary to the French-speaking world who works with a church in Geneva, Switzerland, traveled recently to Kinshasa to visit administrators and students at the Hilton Terry Bible School of the Congo.

The school's name honors Hilton Terry, a veteran missionary to the French-speaking world. The Prestoncrest Church

of Christ in Dallas supports the operation costs of the school, which includes the salaries of two of the three teachers.

"Five classes of students have now gone through the school," Kee said, "and at least 60 better-trained men and women are now working with churches throughout the D.R. Congo and are establishing new ones. In just 10 years, a spiritual revolution has taken place in this vast country. Starting from three at that time, there are now more than 30 churches in the country."

Kee and the Congolese Christians are focusing their attention and prayers across the river to the other Congo.

A gospel campaign is scheduled for Brazzaville in May, Kee said, and students and administrators at the Hilton Terry school plan to participate.

Though a few church members live in the Brazzaville area, the country has no known Churches of Christ.

Across an ocean, missionary is LinkedIn to France

Bren and Cheryl White proclaim the Gospel to the people of France — in person and across an ocean.

The couple recently visited young churches in the French cities of Colmar, in France's Alsace region, and Pau, on the northern edge of the Pyrenees Mountains. The Whites continue to study the Bible and stay in touch with contacts in

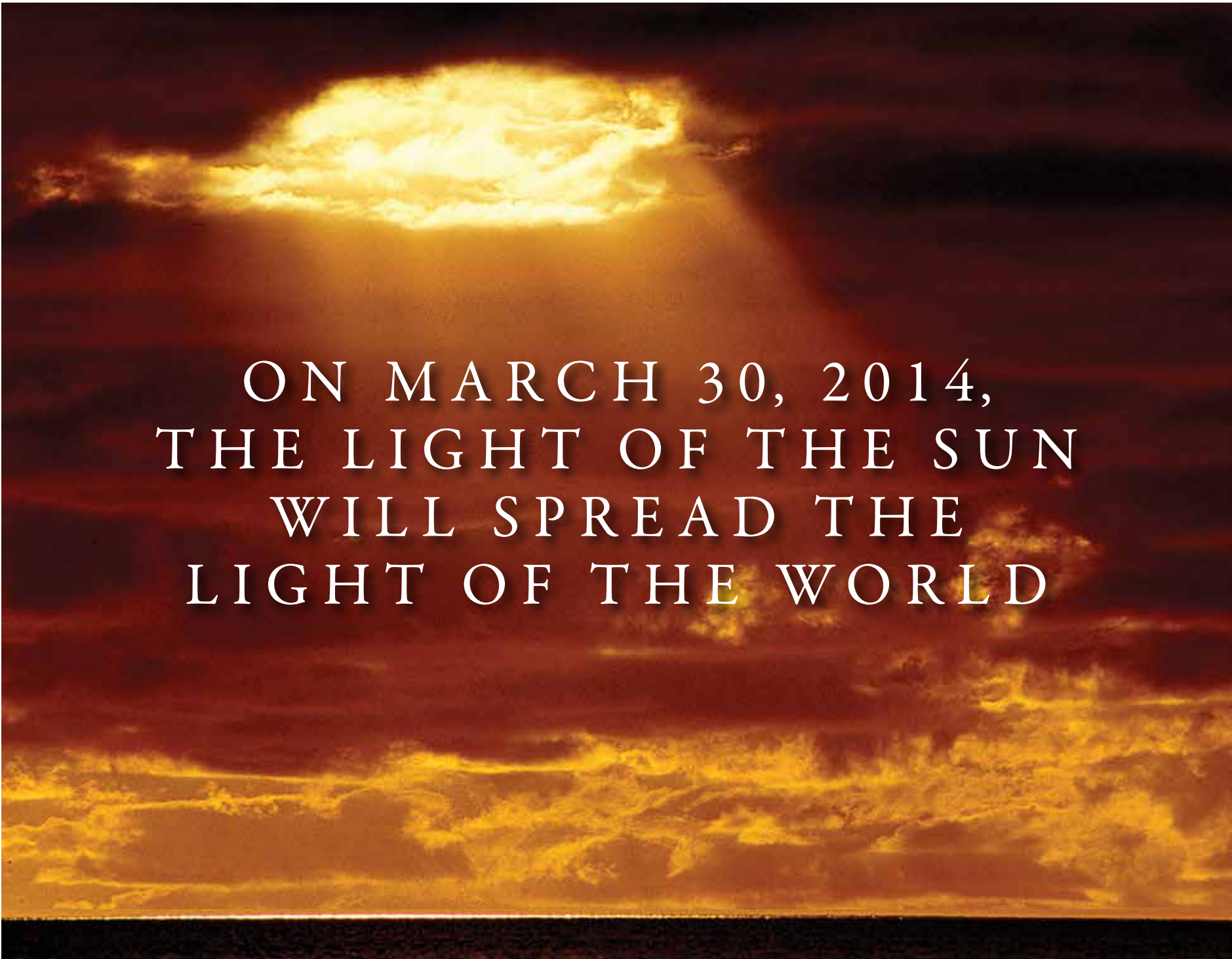


Bren White

France through Skype and the French World Missions Network group on social media site LinkedIn.

"Please pray for the 50 contacts we are working with in these two cities," said Bren White, outreach minister for the Laurel Church of Christ in Maryland. "We also need people to go and visit these churches throughout the year ... just to be a source of encouragement and help with some personal Bible studies."

FOR MORE INFORMATION, see www.ofwmissions.com



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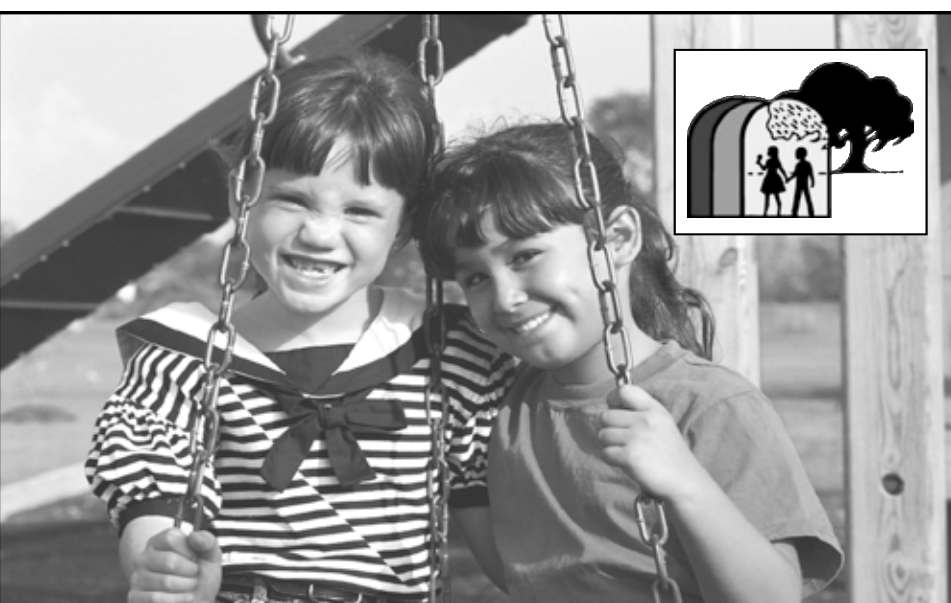
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SOUTH SUDAN: War-weary people 'will forgive again'

FROM PAGE 1
fighting South Sudanese government troops, Cady said.

On the Sunday in December when fighting erupted in South Sudan's capital, Juba, 35 people gathered to worship with the Bor Church of Christ on the school's campus. Two days later, the campus was evacuated, and the church members fled — behind the walls of a United Nations compound or into the bush, eating the leaves from trees or whatever they could find.

Cady said he's hopeful that a recently declared ceasefire will hold — and that followers of Christ will be ready to meet the needs of the South Sudanese people. "We want to be prepared to re-enter Bor when the opportunity is right," said Cady. "Humanitarian needs are huge."

AN ETHNICALLY CHARGED CONFLICT

The conflict that grips the troubled country is complicated and ethnically charged. In July 2013, the country's president, Salva Kiir, fired his vice president, Riek Machar. Kiir is Dinka, the largest of South Sudan's ethnic groups. Machar is Nuer, the country's second-largest group. The firing exacerbated tensions among the ethnic groups that existed during the years of war with the north.

On Dec. 15, that tension erupted into a shooting war among members of the country's presidential guard. Across the nation, the conflict escalated as militias attacked government forces and burned the homes of those they accused of supporting their enemies.

In the years before independence — and even in the weeks leading up to the latest violence — Churches of Christ had experienced success sharing the Gospel with multiple ethnic groups among the South Sudanese.

During the war years, thousands were baptized as refugees in camps in Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia. They returned to their homes to plant churches as the South Sudanese voted to secede from the north.

John Gak, a Dinka who was baptized while living in Nairobi, Kenya, launched a nonprofit, Brothers Organization for Relief, to help the people of his home community, near Bor. The Swope Parkway Church of Christ in Kansas City, Mo., supports the work.

Isaya Jackson, of the Acholi ethnic group, was baptized while living as a refugee in Houston. He is an instructor for

a ministry training school in his home village, Parajok, southwest of Juba. The Sudan Project, a ministry of the Mt. Juliet church, supports the work.

Haar, a Dinka, was 10 years old when he first fled the bloody civil war. He walked for four months, dodging soldiers and snakes, before arriving at a refugee camp in Ethiopia.

At age 15, he was recruited to return to Sudan as a soldier, fighting for his country's freedom. After 16 years of guerrilla warfare, he found refuge at a camp in Kenya before he was relocated to the U.S. as a refugee — part of the group known as the "Lost Boys of Sudan."

He served as president of the Panaroo Community, a network of hundreds of refugees in the U.S., Canada and Australia that seeks to help relieve health problems in their homeland.

As a student at Volunteer State Community College in Gallatin, Tenn., Haar took a math class taught by Ken Thomas, minister for the Beechgrove Church of Christ. Thomas introduced Haar to Don Humphrey, a Mt. Juliet member and U.S. coordinator for The Sudan Project. Humphrey spoke at a convention for the Panaroo Community in Omaha, Neb. Haar, meanwhile, studied the Bible with church members and was baptized Aug. 18, 2013.

FOSTERING UNITY AND FORGIVENESS

In Texas, church members hope to provide more than immediate material aid as the conflict subsides, Cady said.

His nonprofit, the Starfish Foundation, built the Christian vocational boarding school in Bor, the capital of South Sudan's Jonglei state, at the request of the state's governor.

The governor requested the school to help his people, who represent six ethnics groups, to learn moneymaking skills — and to learn to coexist peacefully, Cady said. Living on campus and learning about Jesus together can help accomplish that goal, he added.

In Tennessee, Haar shares that sentiment, and longs for the days when his country will know the peace he knows as a follower of Christ.

"We hoped and prayed that South Sudan would not become just another 'fighting African country,'" he said. "We forgave before and will forgive again."

FIND LINKS to ministries collecting aid for South Sudan at www.christianchronicle.org.

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Price Harding, 678-448-0015
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Dean, Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Pepperdine University invites nominations and applications for the position of Dean of the Graduate School of Education and Psychology (GSEP). The successful candidate will build upon the rich history of the school to promote a learning community fostering academic excellence, social purpose, meaningful service, and personal fulfillment.

As the chief executive of a school containing education and psychology, the dean will hold a commitment to broad social issues, with an appreciation for all levels of research in both education and psychology. The dean works with faculty and staff to oversee strategic planning and the general operation that aligns with the Pepperdine 2020 strategic plan.

Headquartered on the west side of Los Angeles, graduate students attend classes on campuses in Los Angeles, Irvine, Encino, Westlake Village, and Malibu. The school has approximately 50 full-time faculty, 110 adjuncts, most of whom are active practitioners in their professions, and a staff of 48. The school is mission-based, committed to serving mid-career professionals in particular, with a scholar-practitioner emphasis.

With an earned doctorate in education, psychology, or a related discipline, the dean should have informed interests in academic, business, civic, health, and religious institutions, as well as an interest in both public and private education. The dean should support creative uses of technology, both as an instructional and communication tool, and have a global perspective that includes an appreciation for multicultural systems.

The dean must have a strong interest in marketing, enrollment management, and advancement. The academic leadership of GSEP requires a strong awareness of organizational issues and an ability to weave a variety of faculty interests into a cohesive whole. The dean must have a demonstrated commitment to diversity.

Pepperdine University is a Christian university accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The institution is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and Christian values, where students are strengthened for lives of purpose, service, and leadership. The University maintains a vital relationship with the Churches of Christ. The successful candidate will be prepared to advance the Christian mission of the University and the Graduate School of Education and Psychology. Preference will be given to candidates who are active members of the Churches of Christ.

Pepperdine University is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not unlawfully discriminate in employment practices on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, disability, or prior military service. Federal guidelines recognize the right of church-related institutions to seek personnel who will support the goals of the institution, including the right to select members of the church to which the institution is related.



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Houston Heflin, a ministry professor at Abilene Christian University in Texas, speaks on "New Apps and Teaching Tricks to Help Students Learn." "They're plugged in," Heflin said of today's teens. "They're technologically equipped."



BOBBY ROSS JR.

As a brisk wind rocks the trees, a couple walks along the beach in Daytona Beach, Fla., site of the National Conference on Youth Ministries.

TECHNOLOGY: Teens connected — and distracted — experts say

FROM PAGE 1

For example, Kinsley Sells likened an online video curriculum that her Tennessee congregation uses to a "church-based Netflix."

"We have access to hundreds of lessons directed at students, and all this information is just one click away," said Sells, youth minister for girls at the Hillsboro Church of Christ in Nashville. "God has given us technology to further his kingdom, and I hope and pray that we use it to strengthen and guide the next generation."



Sells

At the same time, a gadget-carrying group of teens seemingly more connected — and more distracted — than any generation in history challenges youth ministers such as Charlie Sells, Kinsley's brother.

"Taking up phones on a Wednesday night has become

a necessity," said Charlie Sells, who serves the Holland Park Church of Christ in Simpsonville, S.C. "Texting, Snapchat and checking social networks keeps them distracted, and we have to be more intentional about getting students to focus in for just an hour or so."

With smartphones, teens can carry the Bible everywhere — in the form of an app, Pruett said. But the same devices can present a constant temptation.

"It would be easy," the Florida minister said, "for a well-meaning teen to start off on a Bible study quest, and then 15 minutes later, they are taking 'selfies' and posting them to Instagram or Facebook."

Roughly four out of five American teens have a cell phone, according to a national survey by the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project. Nearly half of those teens own a smartphone.

On the positive side, social media allow for immediate and widespread sharing of

news and updates, said Craig Detweiler, a communication professor at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif.

"So the old-fashioned prayer chain has morphed into Facebook and Twitter and Instagram feeds," Detweiler, author of "iGods: How Technology Shapes Our Spiritual and Social Lives," said in an email interview with *The Christian Chronicle*.

"Teens can communicate their feelings and needs broadly and quickly," he explained, "and, hopefully, youth ministers and local churches can respond to virtual posts with practical, transforming acts of care."

On the negative side, many young people appear "perpetually stressed out" by the constant updates, Detweiler said.

"It is tough to manage your



Gunnells

profile across multiple platforms and to keep up with all the potential drama amongst friends," he said. "Adolescents are hyper-connected to media and yet may end up feeling quite isolated and alone."

Many of 12-year-old Emma Gunnells' friends own the latest smartphone or tablet computer.

She does not — although her parents allow her time with theirs under supervision, said her father, Timothy Gunnells, director of university relations for Amridge University in Montgomery, Ala.

"There will be a time in the future when she has all of these things, but she cannot reclaim a childhood that was taken from her by spending too much time with technology," said Gunnells, who represented Amridge at the conference.

Adults can fight technology — or they can join with teens and use it in a positive way, said Becca Daniel, a team leader with RAVE Ministries, a Nashville-based organization for girls.

Jesus met people where they were, and youth ministers must do the same, Daniel said.

"Some of us might think social media and technology can cause teens to become ostracized," she said. "But when used properly, it can build community that otherwise could not or would not exist."

Eric Tooley said he's excited and alarmed by what technology means for church life.

"I believe young people are more aware of opportunities to serve Jesus due to technology. I see them act on those opportunities," said Tooley, director of school programs for Ultimate Escape, an Allen, Texas-based ministry that helps young people pursue healthy sexuality.

But he said, "I also see teenagers struggling with pornography, peer pressure and being judgmental in far greater numbers today. As always, the church must teach and model how God's eternal truths are as applicable to Facebook as they were to ancient Israel."

Lubbock Christian University Announces the 2014 Alumni Award Recipients



Distinguished Alumnus of the Year

Dr. Evertt Huffard ('69)
VP/Dean of Harding School of Theology at Harding University

Dr. Evertt Huffard serves as Chief Administrator for the Memphis campus of Harding University, Academic Dean for Harding School of Theology, and Professor of Leadership and Missiology. Prior to Harding, Huffard served as associate professor at Pepperdine University. He has been teaching leadership and missiology for over 20 years. After graduating from LCU (A.A.), Harding University (B.A.), and Harding University Graduate School of Religion (M.A. and M.Th.) he served a church in Nazareth, Israel and taught Bible at the Galilee Christian High School for five years. He holds a Ph.D. in Inter-Cultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary with a focus on the Muslim Christian encounter. Evertt and his wife, Ileene, have three children, and five grandchildren.



Young Alumnus of the Year

Shane Shuttlesworth ('01)
President of Osteogenics Biomedical

Shane Shuttlesworth graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Science degree in biology from LCU in 2001. Immediately upon graduation, he began working in the production department as a manager at Osteogenics Biomedical, a medical device manufacturer in Lubbock that develops novel dental bone grafting products used by oral and maxillofacial surgeons, periodontists, and dentists worldwide. Shane received his MBA in general business and an advanced certificate in health organization management from Texas Tech University in 2003. In 2004, he was promoted to director of marketing and operations where he oversaw all marketing, operations, and regulatory activities. Shane was named to his current role of president in 2007. Shane and his wife, Heather, have one daughter.



K.C. Moser Award
Excellence and outstanding service to the church

Dr. John Knox ('84)
Minister of Granbury Church of Christ, Granbury Police Department and Texas Department of Public Safety Chaplain

John received a bachelor's degree from LCU and completed his master's and doctor of ministry degrees from Abilene Christian University. John has been in ministry for 26 years and spent ten years teaching as adjunct instructor for two universities. He was recognized by the Granbury ISD and Inducted into the GISD Alumni Hall of Fame in 2012 for his service to community and education. He officially serves the Granbury Police Department and the Texas Department of Public Safety as Chaplain. He and his wife, Jan (Mason, '83), have three sons.



F.W. Mattox Award
Recognition of excellence and outstanding service to the university

Darrell & Anita (Mansell) Price ('69)

Darrell and Anita (Mansell) Price met while they were students at LCU. After graduating in 1969, they married, graduated from Harding, and returned to LCU. Darrell coached men's basketball, track, and cross-country, winning 11 national track and cross country championships. He was voted national coach of the year six times and was inducted into the NAIA Hall of Fame in 2001.

Darrell continues his 38 years of service in full-time teaching. He is dearly loved and respected for his Christ-like spirit and offers a powerful example by approaching his life as his mission. Darrell serves as an elder at the Green Lawn Church of Christ.

Anita played a significant role in the story of LCU from student leader, to valued assistant to

LCU Presidents Lemley, Jones, and Perrin, and as staff support for the LCU Board of Trustees serving 41 Board members in her 12 year tenure. Anita beautifully embodies the values of LCU.

Darrell and Anita have three children and four grandchildren.



Gary & Pat Estep Award
Outstanding Contributions in the Sciences

Inaugural Recipient: Dr. Gary Estep

Dr. Estep joined the faculty of LCU in 1971 as Associate Professor in the Department of Biology. During his tenure, he served as Department Chair, Division Chair and as full-time professor. In 1988, he became the Dean of the B. Ward Lane College of Professional Studies and served in that role until July 2009, then as Interim Dean until his full retirement in August 2013. He has continuously served as one of the Health Professions Advisors and as a member of the Texas Association of Health Professions Advisors. Throughout his distinguished career with LCU, he has considered student advising to be one of his most important areas of service to the university and to its students. As chairman of the LCU Health Professions Committee he has been responsible for writing recommendations for students applying to medical, dental, physical therapy and other health professions schools. He has made himself available to current and prospective students as they discuss and explore career goals in the health professions.

Dr. Estep is married to Patricia, his wife of 51 years, and they have two daughters and sons-in-law, four grandchildren and two great grandchildren.



Believe. Belong. Be Blue.



HEADLIGHTTATTOO.COM

Tattoo artist and body piercer Harry J. Ake poses at one of his three tattoo studios. Ake has put new limits on his work since his conversion.



SHERRI HERNDON

Harry J. Ake and his wife, Linda, worship with the Pitman Road Church of Christ in Sewell, N.J., on a recent Sunday. The couple first visited the church in 2011. They were baptized by longtime minister Dan Cooper.

TATTOOS: For studio owner, God fills a void that wealth could not

FROM PAGE 3

Ake said of his broken family. "So I turned my back on God."

As a young man, he battled drug and alcohol addictions.

Later, while following Alcoholics Anonymous' prescription for sobriety, he fell on his knees and begged God to help him.

But as he kept "trying out different churches," Ake said, he didn't feel like he fit in anywhere. "There was just way too much judgment and hypocrisy."

For years, he stayed away from organized religion and simply listened to Christian radio.

"When I opened up my first tattoo studio, I was a very spiritual man, and I considered myself a Christian," he said. "I had crucifixes on the wall, and I listened to calm music. But sometimes, like late at night, that calm music would turn into rock 'n' roll, and the next thing you know, a couple of years go by, and I'm just in the world — totally in the world."

SEARCHING FOR A SAVIOR

By 2011, Ake had opened his third tattoo studio.

He had a dozen tattoo artists working for him. He made "tons of money" and owned a "big, beautiful house."

But inside, he was empty.

His marriage was disintegrating, and he began searching for God. Again.

About that time, the Pitman church built a new, 28,000-square-foot worship facility that Ake passed frequently.

Meanwhile, the lyrics in a country song that Ake heard on the radio caught his attention: "*Come Sunday morning service at the Church of Christ, well, there ain't an empty seat to be found*," Montgomery Gentry sings in the 2002 hit "My Town."

Ake checked out the church's website and liked what it said about "just wanting to follow the Bible." He told his wife that he wanted them to visit.

But before doing so, Ake needed to know that he'd be welcome.

On a Wednesday morning, he made his way inside the building and approached church secretary Dottie Grillo. "Do you think if I came at 7

o'clock that I'd be allowed to go?" he asked, referring to that night's Bible classes.

Of course, Grillo replied.

A new quarter started that night, and church deacon Garth Hutchinson, a former missionary to France, began a series on Ephesians.

"I had read the entire King James Bible cover to cover during the 17 years that I wasn't going to church ... but I didn't understand it," Ake said. "But the way that he was explaining the book of Ephesians to



Cooper

me, within about 60 seconds, my heart got soft, and I felt extremely comfortable.

"I looked over to my wife, and she looked at me," he added. "I just said, 'Linda, I'm really glad that we're here.' She said, 'So am I.' We just sat there, and we've never left."

To distract attention from his tattoos, Ake normally wears a collared, long-sleeve shirt to church. Initially, though,

doubts surfaced in his mind about whether church leaders would approve of him — and his profession.

As the couple began personal Bible studies with Cooper — who eventually baptized them — the preacher reassured Ake.

"We sometimes sing the song 'Just As I Am, Without One Plea,' and that's the way we take people, just like you are," Cooper told him. "If you're coming to us with tattoos, then that's fine."

As for Ake's tattoo studios, Cooper said he needed to do more Bible study. But the minister said he didn't foresee a problem as long as Ake conducted his business in a moral fashion.

A few times since his conversion, Ake acknowledged, "I have felt a panging in my heart that maybe I need to explore doing something different for a living. Because it did not make sense to me that this is what a Christian man does all day: tattoos people, body-pierces people, puts studs in their tongues and their lips and their eyes and all that kind of thing."

He added: "I've asked God

multiple times: 'Are you sure? If this is what you want me to do, then please bless it. And if it's not, please shut the door on it and open a door for something else.' Because I really am conscious of my covenants with my people, my debt load, my responsibilities for my mortgage and whatnot, I just don't know what else that I would do."

NEW CHRISTIAN, NEW LIMITS

Ake's Christian faith means setting new limits on the specific tattoos and piercings that he's willing to do, he said.

"I try to have some type of meaningful conversation about God with each person that comes in there," Ake said. "It's going to be very hard for me — impossible for me — to have a conversation like that if I'm tattooing some type of vulgar thing on them or any kind of really heavy, negative type of sign on them."

His heart's desire: to make sure every person who walks in the door knows that "I have God in my heart, that I love them and that God loves them."



PHOTO PROVIDED BY HOLLY HOLLADAY

Church member Holly Holladay displays the “Faith” and “Hope” tattoo on the back of her neck.

To tattoo or not to tattoo? There’s a generation gap among Christians

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

What does the Bible say about tattoos? A single verse addresses the subject, biblical scholars told *The Christian Chronicle*. Leviticus 19:28 says, “Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves.”

However, most commentators regard that Scripture as part of a longer passage concerning the worship of foreign gods, said Timothy M. Willis, a professor of religion at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif.

“The usual thinking is that, unless the tattoo is intended to communicate the support of other gods or sinful behavior, it need not be forbidden,” Willis said. “Ultimately, it is a matter of personal conscience.”

Scholars have an imprecise understanding of the term translated as “tattoo” because it’s used only once, said Lance Hawley, a doctoral candidate in Hebrew Bible at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

“It might intend to prohibit writing by incision or branding,” said Hawley, a member of the Mandrake Road Church of Christ in Madison. “Almost certainly, it is not addressing the decorative body art conveyed by ‘tattoo’ in our culture.”

At one time, tattoos carried a stereo-

type as belonging to the likes of sailors, gang members and ex-convicts, said Scott Adair, an associate professor of Bible and ministry at Harding University in Searcy, Ark. But in recent years, tattoos have gained acceptance in mainstream culture.

“There is a generation gap regarding views on tattoos in the Churches of Christ,” Adair said. “Baby Boomers and older tend to view them as unprofessional, unwise and perhaps tacky, but they do not tend to view them as sinful.”

As part of his doctoral studies, Adair explored the reasons some Harding students chose to put “permanent ink” on their bodies. His research found students’ tattoos “laden with meaning.”

“More than half of the HU students that have tattoos say that they did so primarily for spiritual or religious reasons,” said Adair, who conducted his research in 2008.

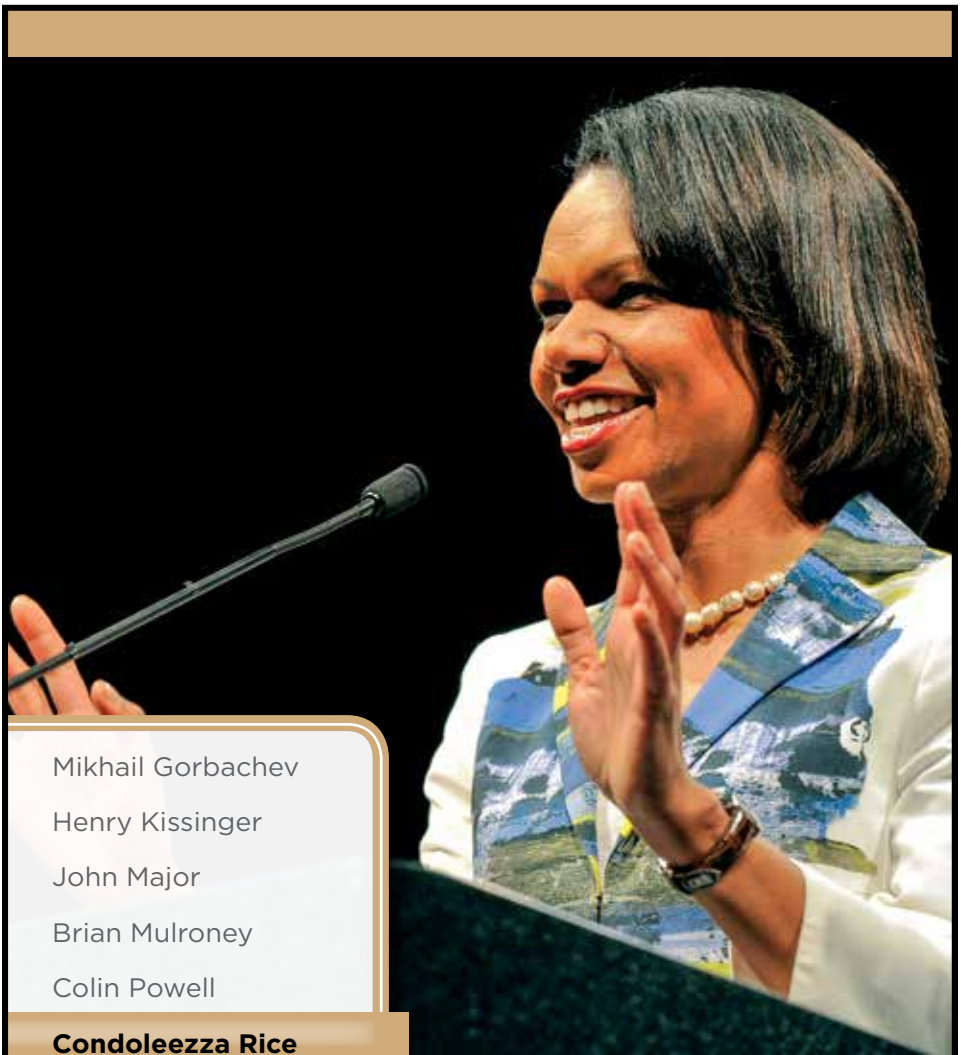
Holly Holladay, a member of the Greenville Oaks Church of Christ in Allen, Texas, can identify with that.

Shortly before she turned 40, Holladay chose a tattoo for the back of her neck that reads “Faith” in one direction and “Hope” in the other.

“Tattoos aren’t for everyone, but for some people, they have special meaning,” she said. “I think the decision to have a tattoo is a personal one and doesn’t detract from nor elevate one’s standing as a Christian.”



Holladay



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PHOTOS BY BOBBY ROSS JR.

At the Hollygrove Church of Christ in New Orleans, Loretta Brooks raises her hands as she praises God. Leading the singing of "Lord, I Can't Make It Without You" is August Marsalis.

In the Big Easy, despair meets hope

IN THE AFTERMATH of Hurricane Katrina, church planters see God at work in a 'dark and difficult part of New Orleans.'

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

NEW ORLEANS

Eight-and-a-half years ago, Charles and Angela Marsalis survived the flood that followed Hurricane Katrina by escaping to the balcony of their home congregation, the Carrollton Avenue Church of Christ.

Later, the couple returned to Hollygrove — the high-crime New Orleans neighborhood where both grew up — to share Jesus with boys and girls on the front porch of a relative's hurricane-damaged home.

From those studies emerged the planting of the Hollygrove Church of Christ, which recently celebrated its

fifth anniversary with a standing-room-only crowd filling the 100 or so seats in a small, red-brick church building.

A siren wailed in the background as the back door opened and another worshiper squeezed into the assembly.

"You better keep God in your life because people are getting killed in their own home or robbed in their own neighborhood," church member John Ellis told the congregation. "We need the church in the neighborhood and the neighborhood in the church."

Too often, despair in the form of drugs, gangs and prostitution besets Hollygrove.

About a year ago, the Marsalises witnessed the spiritual warfare up close.

"We were watching TV about 9 o'clock at night when we heard this *boom, boom, boom, boom*," Charles Marsalis said. "I looked at Angela and said, 'Is that gunshots?' ... A young man was shot like nine times right across from the church. They just don't care where they shoot you at."

"When I went outside, I was still smelling the smoke from the gun," Angela Marsalis said. "That was scary."

The church has brought hope — not to mention crawfish boils and fish-fry fellowships — to a neighborhood that desperately needs it.

"Lord, Be There," the congregation sang on this Sunday — and the

CONTINUED



John Ellis prays as Angela Marsalis, Shekeira Honor (hidden behind Angela), Kevinisha Honor and Charles Marsalis bow their heads.



Gregory Hawkins, with the microphone, sings during the Sunday morning assembly of the Hollygrove church. Charles Marsalis, with the tie, can be seen on the front row.

CONTINUED
Marsalises say there's no doubt that he has been there, every step of the way.

AFTER THE STORM, PICTURE CLEARER

In 2005, leaving the Carrollton Avenue church in a rescue boat, the Marsalises witnessed Katrina's utter devastation for the first time: Houses torn apart in every direction. Oily lakes where streets used to be. Worst of all, bodies floating in the water. Hundreds of evacuees — hot, hungry and angry over their treatment — stretched across a bridge. Some had been there for days. When they didn't know how the story would end, when they feared that they just might melt away on a crowded overpass, a frustrated Charles Marsalis prayed that God would save him — or not. "You're going to bless me now or you're going to bless me later — make up your mind," he reasoned with his heavenly father. "If we're going to die, we're going to die doing

your work. If we're going to stay here, we're still going to witness. So, make up your mind and do what you want to do."

Eventually, a helicopter plucked the Marsalises from the bridge. With New Orleans in chaos, they relocated temporarily to Nashville, Tenn.



Shakayla Honor eats during a fellowship meal after a Sunday assembly celebrating the Hollygrove church's fifth anniversary.



Chantz White shoots as August Marsalis, still in his Sunday best, tries to block him.

Blessed with the full picture, they look back and see God preparing them. Preparing them to come back home after a short time. Preparing them to minister to a city full of lost souls.

God, they believe, led them to Hollygrove, where Angela Marsalis' mother, Verna Wallace, lived in a FEMA trailer as she repaired her flooded home. Wallace let her son-in-law and daughter use her porch for Bible studies. In exchange for the children's attention, the couple served snacks and soft drinks.

On a typical Saturday in 2008, Charles Marsalis played football in the street with a group of boys as Angela Marsalis set up a storyboard of Jesus calling Peter to become a "fisher of men."

Terrance Clark, now 14, was one of the original children who made his way to the porch.

"Everybody just started coming for the food," said Terrance, who was baptized on a recent Sunday. "But



Balloons mark the fifth anniversary of the Hollygrove Church of Christ, as members and visitors greet each other after the Sunday morning worship service.

pretty soon, like every day, everybody wanted to come and sit down and learn about God."

Like her younger brother, Malickah Clark, 17, said the Marsalises taught her about Jesus. "Just the vibe that they give," Malickah said of why she kept showing up and eventually gave her life to Christ. "They really care about you. They push you forward to keep knowing who Jesus is and doing the right things."

THE HURRICANE OPENED DOORS

For more than two years after Katrina, the old Emanuel Spiritual Church — a small, red-brick church building in Hollygrove — sat rotting and abandoned.

That is, until the Marsalises and leaders of the Carrollton Avenue church — still rebuilding itself after sustaining extensive hurricane damages — saw the "For Sale" sign.

The Carrollton Avenue church really couldn't afford to buy a second

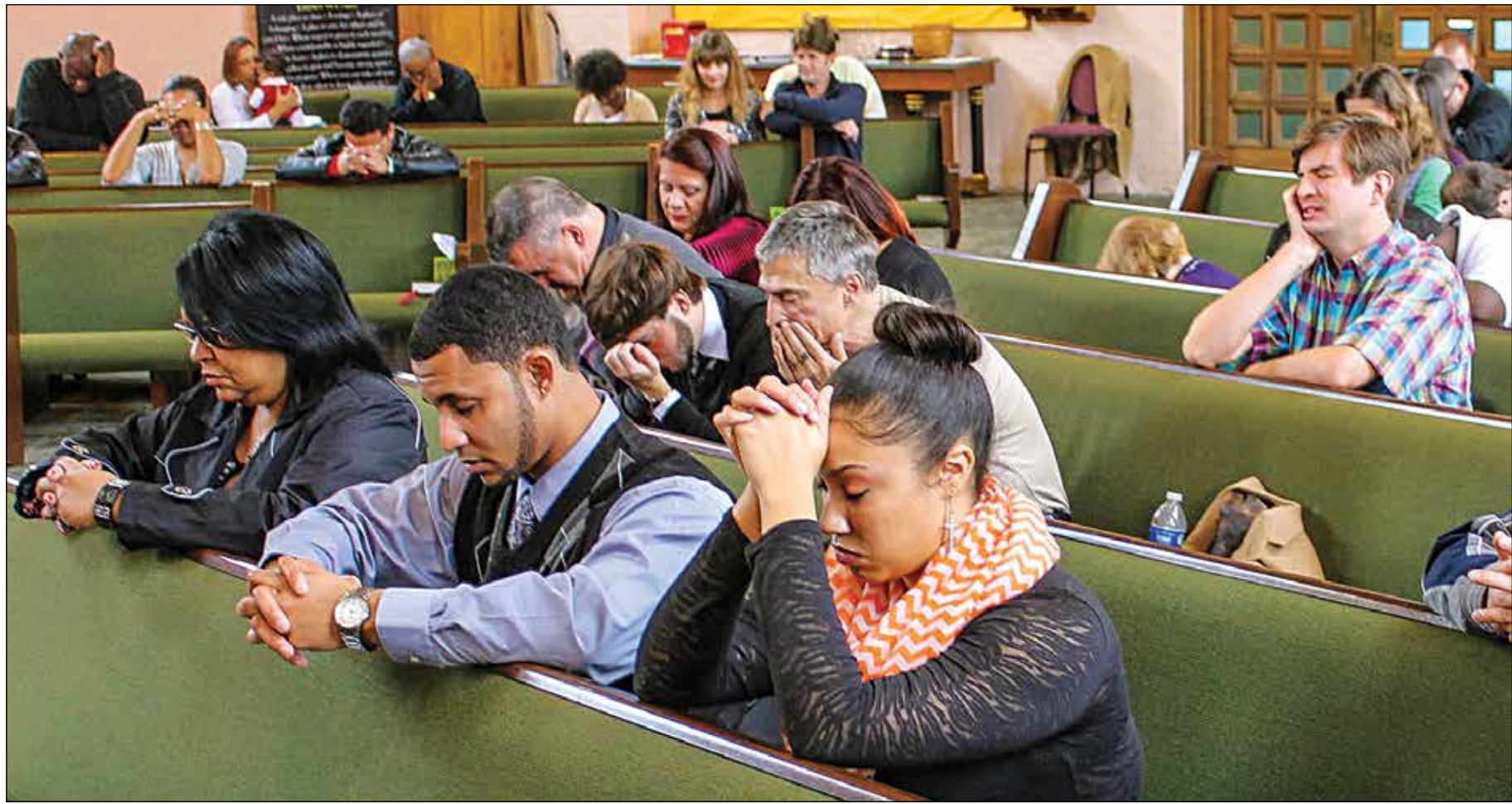
building 10 minutes — and a world — away from its own, minister Kirk Garrison said.

"Yet our elders stepped out in faith and took on this work in a dark and difficult part of New Orleans," he said.

The church plant is just one of many doors that God has opened



In 2008, boys pray during a front-porch Bible study in the Hollygrove neighborhood of New Orleans. Some of the children involved in the original study have become Christians and remained faithful, while at least one ended up in prison. Terrance Clark, at the far end in the group photo, was baptized recently. At right, he and Charles Marsalis enjoy a laugh before the minister takes his confession.



Patrick Bowman, front center, is one of the ministers of the Carrollton Avenue Church of Christ — the New Orleans congregation that sponsors the church plant in Hollygrove. Other churches, such as the White's Ferry Road Church of Christ in West Monroe, La., and the Park Plaza Church of Christ in Tulsa, Okla., also support the Hollygrove work.

since Katrina, Carrollton Avenue elder Robert Carpenter said.

Among other outreach efforts, the Carrollton Avenue church has expanded a summer camp for inner-city kids, hired Xander Waites to serve as an "urban missionary" in bars and coffee shops and launched a

Celebrate Recovery program to help people struggling with addictions.

"Many times in the past, we may have been afraid to go through those doors," Carpenter said. "But especially since the storm, we've had more and more faith that God's going to provide for us."



PHOTO PROVIDED BY HOLLYGROVE CHURCH OF CHRIST

It took four years, but church members from across the nation "gutted" the small Hollygrove church and two adjacent houses and completely rebuilt them, Garrison said. One of the houses provides classroom and fellowship space, while the Marsalises live in the other.

The Hollygrove church has become a hub of activity in the neighborhood, offering after-school tutoring and welcoming children to shoot hoops behind the building.

"I don't know what it is about that basketball goal, but it has been a serious blessing," Charles Marsalis said. "When it starts getting dark, I have to run them off, but they don't want to leave."

August Marsalis, one of Charles and Angela's four adult sons, leads a Wednesday night singing practice that draws between 15 and 25 young people each week. They eat pizza and practice new hymns for the Sunday assembly.

Carrollton Avenue minister Patrick Bowman organizes a Thursday night

teen Bible study in Hollygrove. Then he loads up the church van to take a group to play basketball at a nearby gymnasium.

Women from the Carrollton Avenue church mentor Hollygrove girls through a "Rubies and Jewels Ministry," which Angela Marsalis said involves "tea parties and other girly things."

The church grows, the Marsalises said, as parents and other adults see the transformation in neighborhood children eager to declare that they "know Jesus."

Next up: possibly knocking out one of the church walls and expanding the auditorium — a project that would mean raising an additional \$160,000.

But whether that happens depends entirely on God, the Marsalises said.

They've given up plotting their own path — or the church's.

"We don't know what plan God has for this church," Charles Marsalis said with a smile. "Wherever he's taking it, we just want to hold on to his coattail."



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Professors share a father, a Savior and a campus

NIGERIAN SISTERS remain rooted in their homeland as they faithfully teach students at Faulkner University.

BY LYNN McMILLON AND DAVE HOGAN
THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Uduak Afangideh and Idongesit Mkpong-Ruffin have much more in common than names that are difficult for their students to pronounce.

The Nigerian natives are professors at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Ala., a 3,200-student university associated with Churches of Christ. They are daughters of Okon Mkpog, an influential leader among Churches of Christ in West Africa. He launched Nigerian Christian Institute, which includes a school of preaching, a medical center, a high school and a university-affiliated program.

The sisters earned bachelor's degrees from Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn., and master's degrees from Tennessee State University in Nashville, Tenn.

Both earned doctorates in 2007, but in different fields — and on different continents.

Afangideh studied genetics and plant breeding at the University of Calabar in Nigeria. Since 2008, she has served as a professor in the department of natural and physical sciences at Faulkner. She organized Faulkner's first Research Day to showcase scholarly research conducted by Faulkner's faculty and students. She attends the Landmark Church of Christ in Montgomery.

Mkpog-Ruffin earned her doctorate from Auburn University in computer science and software engineering. She is a professor and chair of the computer science department at Faulkner. A group of her students recently won fourth place in a national computer-coding contest sponsored by AT&T. She attends the Holt Street Church of Christ in Montgomery.

How did you come to study at a Christian university in the U.S.?

Afangideh: Our father was one of the first Nigerian Christians to come to the United States to study at a Christian university — with the goal

of going back to Nigeria to make a difference for our people. He attended Freed-Hardeman and Lipscomb before obtaining a master's in education administration and returning to Nigeria.

He discovered the benefits of Christian education and subsequently all of his children attended Christian colleges.

After graduating from Freed-Hardeman and from TSU, I returned to Nigeria, got married, worked there and started a family. When our daughter was ready for college in 2008, we knew she also had to attend a Christian university. The Lord led us to Faulkner where she was admitted, and I secured employment as a biology professor.

Since coming to the U.S., what has challenged your faith most?

Afangideh: My most recent challenge was the kidnapping of our father in 2008. We had seen him serve the Lord all our lives. When kidnappings of public figures became a major issue in 2007, Daddy constantly told us not to worry about him, that God was taking care of him. When he was kidnapped and held hostage for 12 days by mercenaries, it was difficult for us to deal with it, especially when we didn't know if he would be released alive or not.

Mkpog-Ruffin: Our mom died a week after our father's release, probably a result of the stress from that. The following day my husband's mom had a stroke and had to move in with us, with Alzheimer's and dementia. Then we had a child with a chronic illness.

How have you coped with those challenges?

Afangideh: I learned that faith is truly the evidence of things not seen, for we had to trust God that Daddy would be okay, even when everything was pointing to the opposite.

Mkpog-Ruffin: Knowing that God is always with us and trusting in his providential care, we can do no less than to depend on him. We don't know how people without God make it through their storms. As long as we stay in him, we are



LOREN HOWELL

Uduak Afangideh, seated, and Idongesit Mkpog-Ruffin at Faulkner University.

safe, and he is able to carry us through.

I trust in the fact that nothing happens to me without the consent of my Father in heaven, and this gives me strength to handle anything that comes my way.

How have you used these experiences to work with college students?

Afangideh: As young adults, students deal with challenges every day, and my experiences help me encourage them to trust in God despite difficult circumstances, to realize that God is faithful and will always make a way when it seems there is no way — and to believe that faith is not really faith until it is tested.

Mkpog-Ruffin: Our experiences allow us to sympathize and show empathy to our students as they try to make it through their difficult situations. It allows us to share with confidence that God is able to carry them through — if they choose to be his and depend on him.

What involvement do you have today with the church in Nigeria?

Afangideh: Our father started Nigerian Christian Institute, which includes a school of preaching, a secondary

school and a two-year college, more than 30 years ago. In 2003, my husband and I started a Christian secondary school in the neighboring state.

Being involved in Christian education provides the opportunity to influence Nigerians in a positive manner. Although we moved to the United States in 2008, we go to Nigeria regularly so that we can remain connected to the people there.

Mkpog-Ruffin: We go home every opportunity that we have. We work with local congregations in various ways by teaching, working with youth groups, ladies' lectureships and whatever.

With Nigerian Christian Institute, we've been able to be a part of the whole process of things that are going on. Would I like to be able to do more? Definitely. But there are constraints. Do we support the work there? Yes.

What does the church in Nigeria need?

Afangideh: A whole lot of prayers! Unfortunately, all that people in the West hear about Nigeria is the insecurity, the fighting and the bombings by Muslim fanatics. These stories make it difficult to appreciate the fact that about 40 percent of Nigerians are Christians.

Nigeria is still a mission field.

Mkpog-Ruffin: The southern part of Nigeria is where Christianity has taken root. Islam took stronger roots in the north. The northern area of Nigeria is really going through an upheaval.

There's a need to make sure that we train Nigerians to carry the Gospel to each other. That's part of what the Nigerian Christian Institute is doing.

Unlike here, where you can have a congregation with supported ministers, when you go out into the rural areas of Nigeria, churches can't support their ministers. Therefore, students at the School of Preaching at NCI also need to have an income-making skill.

The more that Nigerian ministers can provide their own income, the stronger the church is going to be. They won't be overly dependent on outside help. That creates a codependency that isn't good.

MUSCLE AND A SHOVEL: In some churches, book ignites evangelism

FROM PAGE 3

in their evangelistic efforts.

The Hilldale Church of Christ in Clarksville, Tenn., experienced 72 baptisms after integrating the book into its Bible studies, evangelist Carl Sims said.

After hearing about the book from an acquaintance in Georgia, the minister “read it within a 24-hour period,” he said. “I just couldn’t put it down.” The book is full of suspense, he added, even though readers know the outcome when they first pick it up.

In the book, Shank describes his friendship with his Church of Christ coworker, identified as Randall Edges, in the context of their day-to-day lives working for a communications service company in Nashville, Tenn. As they begin to study the Bible, Randall challenges Shank’s beliefs about Christian denominations, including the “Sinner’s Prayer,” instrumental music in worship, congregational autonomy and eldership versus pastors who preach and shepherd.

Brittany Clements, a flight information analyst in Castle Rock, Colo., grew up in a Lutheran church. A friend from the Castle Rock Church



PHOTO PROVIDED

Brittany Clements studied the Bible and read “Muscle and a Shovel” before her baptism in 2013.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Michael Shank, who attends a Church of Christ in southern Illinois, travels the country speaking about his self-published memoir, “Muscle and a Shovel.”

of Christ gave her a copy of the book.

Clements said she was surprised to find questions about various denominations’ beliefs answered forthrightly, with Scripture, in Shank’s book.

“I’ve always asked these same questions and never really gotten good answers,” Clements said. She was baptized in August 2013.

In a message to Shank, she wrote, “Thanks to your guidance in the book ... I am finally finding the truth I have been craving for years.”

Shank has received many such messages since he first published “Muscle and a Shovel” — so many that he began writing and distributing an e-newsletter to share them.

FALSE GOSPEL OR NEW RESTORATION?

Not all of the feedback is positive. Some readers voice concern that Shank has limited God’s grace to members of Churches of Christ.

Jay Guin, an elder of the University Church of Christ in Tuscaloosa, Ala., says that Shank’s book teaches “a false

gospel.” Guin, a featured writer for *New Wineskins* magazine, argues that, for those with genuine faith in Jesus, grace covers “both our moral errors and our doctrinal errors.”

Guin also has authored books, including “The Holy Spirit and Revolutionary Grace: God’s Antidotes for Division Within the Churches of Christ.”

The book, written in 1995, “anticipates and answers most of the arguments in ‘Muscle and a Shovel,’” Guin said.

A few reviewers of “Muscle and a Shovel” on Amazon.com said the book displayed an

attitude of exclusivity among Churches of Christ. One Baptist preacher described it as “one of those rare books that will raise your blood pressure.”

Shank uses that testimony on his book’s back cover, though the Baptist preacher asked that his name be withheld.

“You’ll either give it to everyone you know or put it into a

shredder,” the preacher said of the book. “There’s no middle ground.”

Of those two options, members of the Perryville Church of Christ in Arkansas have chosen the former.

The congregation has become energized for Bible study and evangelism since reading the book, preaching minister Jason Almond said.

“It has excited our membership to a level I’ve never seen before,” Almond said.

Shank spoke at a Sunday night service at the Perryville church — to a crowd nearly twice that of regular attendance. Three people asked to be baptized that night, and two more in the weeks that followed.

“This could light a fire for a new restoration,” Almond said.

IF GOD WILLS, IT WILL HAPPEN

The movement started small.

Shank sold only two or three copies of the book during the first month. In early 2013, sales rose from 600 copies per month to 1,500 — and then 10,000. Spanish and audio versions of “Muscle and a Shovel,”

plus a 13-week study guide, are in production.

“It felt like it happened overnight,” Shank said.

Suddenly, his schedule was packed and his inbox flooded — all because of thoughts he recorded in a notebook a quarter-century ago.

“The reason I wrote it all down — I’m not a journaling type of person — but I just knew Randall was wrong,” he said of his former co-worker, now an elder in a Church of Christ, who has asked for anonymity despite his newfound fame. “I just knew Randall was going to hell for being so narrow-minded, and all you Church of Christ people were crazy.” The more he wrote about Randall, the more he wanted to write about his own life and his family, he said.

This year he plans to complete a second book, “When Shovels Break,” the story of the restoration of a close friend of Shank’s who fell away from his faith.

As was the case with his first book, “It’s up to God,” Shank said. “If he wants something done with it, it will happen.”



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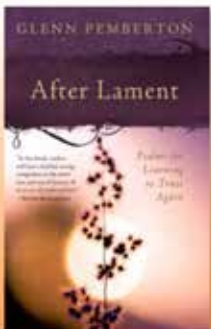
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AID AND DEVELOPMENT

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DAGOU, Haiti — The Dagou Church of Christ can supply the people of its community with clean water, thanks to Healing Hands International.

The nonprofit, supported by Churches of Christ, recently dug a water well on the church's property — the 500th in the ministry's history.

The drilling program began in 2001 in Ethiopia. Healing Hands now owns three drilling rigs and has dug wells in 10 countries around the globe.

"Through the grace of God, we've been able to provide clean water for more than a million people, opening the doors for the good news of Jesus Christ to be shared," said Ashley Reeves, marketing coordinator. The nonprofit also has distributed more than 2,500 Sawyer water filters in communities where wells could not be drilled.

BIBLE CAMPS

PALMETTO BIBLE CAMP

MARIETTA, S.C. — For nearly 50 years, God has used Palmetto Bible Camp to change lives and make a difference to thousands.

Nestled in the Blue Ridge mountains and against the backdrop of a beautiful lake, the camp is among the most scenic places in the Carolinas, leaders say.

Recently, though, a portion of the dam that regulates the water level in the camp's lake collapsed.

"What was once a picturesque lake and baptistery is now a small pond," said Kent Massey, a camp board member.

Repairs to fix the problem may run as much as \$100,000, Massey said. Donations can be sent to PBC Bookkeeper, 126 Chatham Circle, Madison, AL 35758.

CAMPUS MINISTRY

CAMPUS MINISTRY UNITED

PANAMA CITY BEACH, Fla. — More than 500 college students attended the recent Family Vacation 2014.

The event was sponsored by Campus Ministry United and featured the theme "We Are Young." Lessons were inspired by 1 Timothy 4:12 and dealt with topics such as godly conduct, sexuality, discipleship and evangelism.



JEFF MONTGOMERY, HARDING UNIVERSITY

Harding student killed in wreck on return to campus



Students at Harding University in Searcy, Ark., gather to sing, pray and share memories after junior Kailey Massey, 20, died in an automobile crash Jan. 11.

The accident occurred on Interstate 30 in southwest Arkansas as Massey was returning to campus from her hometown in Texas. Funeral services were conducted Jan. 16 at the Bammel Church of Christ in Houston.

Massey spent a semester in Zambia on a Harding study-abroad program. She was tireless about learning and serving, program director Jeremy Daggett told *The Link* at Harding, and "she inspired others to do that as well."

HIGHER EDUCATION

FAULKNER UNIVERSITY

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Faulkner is introducing new online graduate degree programs in biblical studies. The new programs include the university's first doctorate degree in biblical studies.

"The Ph.D. in Biblical Studies offers the best possible opportunity for Faulkner University to position itself as a leader among sister universities by offering (doctoral-level) academic training in biblical studies," said Scott Gleaves, dean of the College of Biblical Studies. "The program is designed to merge distance education with biblical studies using the latest in collaborative technology."

LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Aspiring school principals can earn scholarships toward Lipscomb degrees that will help them serve future generations, thanks to a \$1 million gift from the Ayers Foundation.

Recipients of the scholarship, called Ayers Leadership Fellows, will receive aid for up to half the cost of enrolling in Lipscomb's redesigned educational leadership master's or education specialist programs. Graduates will receive additional support from the Ayers Institute for Teacher Learning and Innovation at Lipscomb.

The program "will serve as the model for how to select, prepare, assess and network new principals in our region," said Candice McQueen, dean of Lipscomb's College of Education.

SPOTLIGHT

Students gather 4,000 food items

CLARKSVILLE, Tenn. — Clarksville Christian School students recently put their faith into action by collecting nearly 4,000 nonperishable food items.

The students donated the groceries to "The Well," an outreach ministry of the Church of Christ at Trenton Crossing.

"You glorify God and demonstrate a student's heart," volunteer Diana McArthur said in a note to the school's Student Government Association.

The project began with a competition between each grade level to design and decorate a box for the food collection. The competition escalated when it was announced that the class that collected the most food items would win a prize.



MICHELLE ROBERTS

A Clarksville Christian School student carries food into "The Well," a church outreach.

K-12 CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

GREAT LAKES CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

BEAMSVILLE, Ontario — To celebrate Tallman Auditorium's 35 years of service, the Great Lakes' community gave or pledged more than \$160,000 Canadian to resurface the auditorium's roof and replace its heating units.

MEDIA MINISTRY

GIVE ME THE BIBLE

PALESTINE, Texas — The East Texas "Give Me the Bible" television program will celebrate its 25th anniversary in April.

The program has touched thousands of lives, said Dan Manuel, one of the regular panelists of ministers featured.

Milestones

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

Memorials

Dennis Harold Bowie

Dr. Dennis Harold Bowie, 82, president of Harding Academy of Memphis from 1961 to 1998, was welcomed into the kingdom of heaven on Jan. 14, 2014.

He was preceded in death by his wife and best friend, Patsy Hogan Bowie, his parents, Paul and Audrey Bowie, and his son Bobby Bowie. He is survived by son Steve Bowie (Tina); daughters Sherri



Bowie Spain (Robert) and Molly Bowie Cook (Rick); daughter-in-law Julie Trevathan Bowie; sister Shirley Cooper; sisters-in-law Aileen Cathey and Sunny Evans; and nephews Ronn and Jerry Rubio. He was Grandad ("Gaddy") to 11 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. Bowie and Miss Pat were longtime members of the Church of Christ at White Station in Memphis, Tenn.

Born in Conway, Ark., a 9-year old Bowie watched the plane crash in which his father died. His sister Shirley was 2, and Bowie immediately became the man of the house. At age 10, he worked in restaurants and fields, and at 14 he worked on a soft drink truck, driving the truck and lifting full cases of bottled drinks. He finished high school in three years, finished college in three and was teaching school by age 19.

He met his Pat when they were 15. While he was in high school, he excelled in athletics — particularly baseball. He played in a semi-professional baseball league and even got a tryout with the New York Yankees. After receiving his doctorate and teaching with Arkansas schools and Harding College, he came to Harding Academy in 1961.

The academy, formerly Memphis

Christian School, was a fledgling school founded in 1952. In 1955, the board asked Harding College in Searcy, Ark., to take over operation of the school. Dr. George Benson, college president and Bowie's mentor, renamed the school Harding Academy of Memphis and, in 1961, sent Bowie to serve as superintendent.

So began Bowie's "Magnificent Obsession" with this Christian school that would span almost four decades. Dr. Bowie stood at the helm of Harding Academy, first as superintendent and then as president and CEO, for 37 years that saw vast and sweeping changes in the country and culture. He prayerfully and skillfully navigated the changes that took the school from an enrollment of 300 to more than 2,900 in the 1970s, making it the largest private school in the nation. He has been the single most influential person in the story of Harding Academy.

Bowie was a visionary, a pioneer and an innovator whose wheels were always turning. He gained energy from dreaming, and he was always planning, creating, rethinking and trying to improve. He created satellite elementary schools in church buildings — a model that was implemented by other schools across the country. Under Bowie, Harding became the first school in the Memphis area to build a week of fall break into its calendar.

As a leader in the Memphis Association of Independent Schools, he was a singular force in establishing best practices and fraternal collegiality among his peer administrators. With his friends Dr. Bill Ruhl of Goodpasture School in Nashville, Tenn., and Jesse Long of Greater Atlanta Christian School, Bowie founded an organization of Christian schools known today as National Christian Schools Association.

Bowie mentored a number of administrators and served as a consultant in Christian schools nationwide. He retired from Harding in 1998.

He gave us all the best of himself with nothing held back. He was honest, sacrificial, inspiring, humble, generous, faithful, selfless, intentional and dependable. His extravagant love was

accompanied by extraordinary, practical wisdom and personal integrity. He believed deeply and lived unapologetically what he believed.

Memorial gifts may be made to the Dr. Harold and "Miss Pat" Bowie Scholarship Fund at www.hardinglions.org/donate.

Dorothy Sue (Dottie) Wright

Dr. Dorothy Sue (Dottie) Wright was born Nov. 14, 1936, in Oxford, Miss., and died Jan. 14, 2014, in Searcy, Ark. Dottie

was many things: a professor, scholar, missionary, writer, poet, wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, mentor and friend. Retired professors of French at Harding University, Dottie and her husband of 54 years, Dr. Winfred Wright, influenced many in the French-speaking mission field.



Cross Roads

*At every crossroads, prayer has brought a sign
From God to show which way He willed be mine.
Although I often grumbled at His choice
And tried to reason with Him, I rejoice
That I've been blind enough by faith to trust
And make reluctant feet wade mud, tread dust
When best. Those feet are toughened now and strong
For walking, be my journey brief or long,
To that divergence where, my sure sign come,
The humble path revealed shall lead me Home.*

— Dorothy Wright

NEWSMAKERS

NAMED: Jordan Siebold to the staff of Dry Bones Denver, a ministry to Denver's homeless youth and young adults. **Christian Home & Bible School** has been named a National Beta Club School of Distinction and eighth grader **Emily Leto** was elected the club's president for the state of Florida.



Siebold

HONORED: Colin and Ellen McKee at the Capitol Prayer Breakfast sponsored by Amridge University in Montgomery, Ala. The McKees are longtime missionaries to Indonesia.



PHOTO PROVIDED

NEW ELDERS: Larry Reagan and Rondle Blesing, Ninth Street Church of Christ, Ballinger, Texas.

NEW MINISTER: Ellen and Colin McKee Gary Davenport, Sunset Avenue Church of Christ, Madera, Calif.

ANNIVERSARIES: 70th: Lloyd and Mildred Bridges, Centerville, Tenn. **56th:** Alfred and Una Crossman, Hyattsville, Md. **50th:** Dickie and Genita Dalby, Mesquite, Texas. Dick and Sharon Harris, New Concord, Ohio. Tommy and Judy Pipes, Wichita Falls, Texas. Thomas and Nancy Richburg, Plainview, Texas. Wayne and Marie Schatzman, Sturtevant, Wis.

BIRTHDAYS: 90th: Penny Dawson, Frederick, Md. **84th:** Bobby Roder, Centerville, Tenn.

PASSAGES: Ann Bentley, 97, Nov. 16, Mesquite, Texas. **Melba Bentley**, 90, Nov. 22, Houston, Texas. **Wheeler Cage**, 84, Dec. 20, Hixson, Tenn. **R. D. Edwards**, 95, Jan. 11, Woodward, Okla. **Alda Gage**, 99, Dec. 26, Hale Center, Texas. **Robert Gibson**, 96, June 1, Santa Ana, Calif. **Patricia House**, 71, Dec. 22, Lompoc, Calif. **Jessie Hunt**, 90, Dec. 27, Gladeville, Tenn. **Neva Ruth Hill**, 88, Nov. 5, Crewe, Va. **Bonnie Langsdon**, 79, Dec. 6, Columbia, Tenn. **Anthony McNulty**, Jan. 14, Cambridge, United Kingdom. **Larry Morrow**, 60, Dec. 5, Columbia, Tenn. **Ruby Mae Watson**, 94, Jan. 21, Abilene, Texas.

Entries should be submitted to milestones@christianchronicle.org or call (405) 425-5070.

Rates and guidelines are available upon request (credit card preferred).

Feb. 2-6 Freed-Hardeman University Lectureship. "The Patience of Hope: First and Last Things in Thessalonians." Henderson, Tenn. Contact (731) 989-6000 or www.fhu.edu/lectureship.

Feb. 7-8 Women of Hope Conference. "A Living Hope." Embassy Suites, Murfreesboro, Tenn. See www.hhi.org/womenofhope.

Feb. 13 Missions Seminar. Speakers: Loy Mitchell and Jeremy Barrier. Heritage Christian University, Florence, Ala. See www.hcu.edu.

Feb. 14-16 Winterfest 2014. "WEAVE — I Will Build My Church." Gatlinburg, Tenn. Contact dudley.chancey@oc.edu or www.winterfest.org.

Feb. 20-22 National Urban Ministry Conference. "Close to God, Close to People." Levy Church of Christ, North Little Rock, Ark. Contact (901) 877-8568 or www.nationalurbanministryassociation.org.

Feb. 21-23 Challenge Youth Conference. "For I am the Lord Your God." Gatlinburg Convention Center, Gatlinburg, Tenn. Contact Larry Davenport: ldavenport7671@gmail.com, (256) 710-7671 or www.cyconline.com.

Feb. 23-26 40th Annual Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies Lectureship. Knoxville, Tenn. Contact (865) 691-7444 or www.wedopreaching.com.

Feb. 28 - March 1 Affirming the Faith Seminar. "For Such a Time as This." North MacArthur Church of Christ, Oklahoma City, Okla. Contact (405) 621-5962 or www.affirmingthefaihtok.com.

March 1-2 50th Anniversary, Baker Boulevard Church of Christ in Richalnd Hills, Texas. Contact (817) 590-0444 or www.bbcofc.org.

March 7-8 New England Church Growth Conference. "Disaster Relief for the Soul." Manchester, Conn., church. Contact www.newenglandcgc.org or (203) 265-2787.

March 19-22 The Tulsa Workshop. "Worth the Cost." Tulsa, Okla., Fairgrounds. Contact (918) 344-3402 or www.tulsaworkshop.org.

April 12-17 70th Annual Churches of Christ National Lectureship. Hyatt Regency Atlanta. Contact Hillcrest church at (404) 289-4573, West End church at (678) 444-4170 or www.cocnl.com

April 13-16 Crowley's Ridge College Lectureship. "Genesis....Where it all began." Crowley's Ridge College, Paragould, Ark. Contact 870.236.6901 or www.crc.edu.

The Kandiyohi Church of Christ
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Channelview Church of Christ
in Channelview, Texas, is soliciting applications for a pulpit minister; a college degree or degree/certificate from a school of preaching preferred.
Salary is \$50K+, commensurate with experience; a 3-bedroom house provided.
Interested candidates should forward a resume and sample of a recent sermon on CD-ROM/DVD to:
Elders: Minister Application
Channelview Church of Christ
1301 Sheldon Road
Channelview, TX 77530
281-452-7129

Websites for Churches

- Easy to maintain
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- Post audio sermons
- Maintain member directory

Check out these three websites:

- bluerivercofc.org
- odessachurchofchrist.org
- chillicothechurchofchrist.org

 **PS Tech Group**
682.587.7784 pstechgroup.org

Van or Bus Needed! Please Help!

The Moulton Heights Church of Christ in Decatur, Ala., is a small congregation working to do big things in God's Kingdom. Our inner-city ministry picks up 30-40 children weekly who would not be able to attend without transportation.

We are needing help obtaining a van or bus for this purpose. Please contact Dr. Harold Gilmore if you can help.

(256)355-0836 or (256)303-2475

Full-Time Minister

Wellington Church of Christ in Wellington, Ks., is searching for a pulpit minister; a college degree or degree/certificate from a school of preaching preferred. Salary commensurate with experience. 3-bedroom house provided. Interested candidates should forward a resume and sample of a recent sermon to:

Elders - Wellington Church of Christ
217 W 13th St
Wellington, KS 67152
PHONE#: 620-326-8293

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The **Department of Engineering and Physics** invites applications for two tenure-track assistant/associate professor positions for its new and rapidly expanding engineering program. The engineering program started in Fall 2012 and has approximately 85 students in the freshman and sophomore classes. Applicants should have especially strong skills in teaching, scholarship and research. Ideal candidates will have a Ph.D. in engineering or a closely related field, and experience in teaching and research. Candidates with an M.S. degree also will be considered. Previous involvement with ABET accreditation would be helpful. Expected start date is August 2014. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/engineering.

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

The **ACU School of Nursing** invites applications for two or three positions as instructor or assistant/associate professor of nursing beginning Fall 2014. Applicants should maintain an active nursing license, be eligible for R.N. licensing in the state of Texas and have a M.S.N. A Ph.D. in nursing, D.N.P., related doctoral degree or nurse practitioner is preferred. Applicants from a variety of nursing sub-specialties (medical-surgical, pediatrics, obstetrics, critical care, community health, mental health, and nursing informatics) are encouraged to apply. The successful candidate is expected to work collaboratively in shared governance with nursing faculty toward the Christian mission of the university. ACU encourages applicants who facilitate exceptional student learning environments, value mentoring and advising students, and engage in service for the university, profession and community. Applicants will be expected to pursue scholarly interests and engage students in these activities. Information about the school is available at acu.edu/academics/nursing.

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

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

130320-0314

EDITORIAL

A Christian response to anti-gay laws

In the U.S., an increasing number of states are legalizing same-sex marriage. Sixteen countries have legalized it nationwide, including Canada, South Africa, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and New Zealand, the Associated Press reports. The trend disturbs those of us who hold steadfastly to the biblical truth that God's plan for marriage is one man and one woman.

Meanwhile, in other countries, gay rights advocates decry newly passed "anti-gay" laws. Russia's recent measure against homosexual propaganda, enacted just before the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, is an oft-cited example.

'We should not condone ... any vague, nearly unenforceable measure that could result in ... the violation of basic human rights.'

That law pales in comparison to others. A recently signed Nigerian law sets a 10-year prison term for joining any organization that promotes gay rights.

At least 76 countries retain laws criminalizing homosexuality, the AP reports. In five countries, it's punishable by death.

Followers of Christ should not condone — even by silence — any vague, nearly unenforceable measure that could result in targeting, harassment and the violation of the basic human rights of any person.

While we always stand with Scripture in opposition to sin, we must also distinguish between the sin and the sinner. Jesus did.

We should uphold — for all people — the principle of fairness that our Savior practices as he calls a lost and dying world to reconciliation with the divine.

As we pray that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven, it is imperative that we teach our children personal morality and purity. That includes the permanence and sanctity of marriage.

That also includes respect for all people — even those with whom we disagree. As disciples of Christ, we are for freedom to worship everywhere. We are for freedom of speech everywhere. And we are for freedom from tyranny — everywhere.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

In "Vanitas," Latin for "vanity," circa 1665, Dutch painter Adam Bornaert depicts symbols of his country's wealth and creative endeavors, all of which are transitory. The painting is based on the book of Ecclesiastes.

Chasing after the wind — or a laser pointer

"Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun."

— Ecclesiastes 2:11

the wind, seeking things that may not even exist. Some give up friendships and families in search of unquantified money, pleasure and fairy-tale-like pleasure.

The quest takes us from our Creator and into a vanishing world of our own creation. Like the Preacher of Ecclesiastes, some of us have awakened to realize we have spent our years and energy on nothing.

Jesus promised to give us abundant life, yet we sometimes are enamored by a devil with flimsy promises and fleeting sparkles that steal our joy and true hope.

I pray that in our quest we will fix our eyes on Jesus. We will focus on worship

of the Almighty, teaching our children his precepts, reaching others with the good news and helping those who are struggling to live victoriously. This is the path to the prize that never fades away.

DAVID DUNCAN is preaching minister for the Memorial Church of Christ in Houston.

One of the exciting aspects of the holidays is getting together with family and friends. As usual, we gathered with my wife's family and swapped presents and stories as we watched a small shih tzu, three standard poodles and a hyper boxer navigate through the maze of humans.

The boxer was especially entertaining this year, as someone had brought a laser pointer to the gathering. As the red dot would glow on the carpet, the hyper dog would forcefully stomp almost unceasingly with both paws on the floor in rapid motion trying to retrieve the elusive dot. Each time that the laser pointer was put back in the owner's pocket, the boxer would whine for more.

The determined dog is not much different from us. We sometimes spend our days chasing

In the Word



David Duncan



Our mission: To inform, inspire and unite

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‘Christian fiction’ may contribute to demise of mainstream voices of faith in literature

As a Christian and a novelist, I have to walk softly when considering characters of faith. I discovered — the hard way — that there’s a low tolerance for Christianity in mainstream publishing houses. I’m not talking about characters who “preach.” It seems that mainstream publishers would rather avoid novels (especially those by unknown or little-known authors) whose characters admit, even casually, to being Christian or allow Christian values to determine their motivations.

There are, however, plenty of faith-based books on the shelves today. The “Christian fiction” category, found in Christian bookstores and in the “Christian” section of mainstream stores, has a large readership, albeit overwhelmingly evangelical Christians, and an ever-expanding group of authors who write everything from genre romance and suspense to literary fiction.

My worry, though, is that we’ve taken ourselves out of mainstream literary endeavors. We have ceded ground, and regaining that ground is proving difficult.

As a literature student at Abilene Christian University in the 1980s, I had the privilege of taking classes taught by Darryl Tippens, soon to be ACU’s first University Distinguished Scholar of Faith, Learning and Literature. My favorite class of his was called “Literature of Belief.” While I’d hoped it would be all fiction, it was predominantly nonfiction. We went deep with Bonhoeffer, Weil, and Merton. We memorized St. Augustine and Pascal.

What we didn’t do was read the books I knew to be held up as novels of belief — works by Flannery O’Connor, Tolkien, Lewis, L’Engle and Updike. And this frustrated me because I’d hoped to receive, in the syllabus, a list of contemporary novels of belief.

I began to search for living authors who wrote about sacred themes with critical success. I didn’t get very far. As a society, we were headed down the road, even then, of marginalizing anything that had a whiff of Christianity.

Today, a few remarkable books in the general market stand out. In literary fiction, Marilynne Robinson’s

books evoke a telling reverence for faith and believers, and in the young adult genre, Sara Zarr deals with these issues often and with admirable sincerity.

But as novelist and critic Randy Boyagoda lamented in his recent article, “Faith in Fiction,” the solid, worthy, remarkable group of novelists who deal with belief have a lot in common — including the fact that most of them are dead.

I fear that through the creation of a category of fiction called “Christian” we have added to the demise of literature of belief in mainstream fiction. Our worthy efforts to give Christianity a powerful voice meant that we set it apart and called it ours. This gave us control over content and a set of strict rules to follow.



Laura Anderson Kurk

A problem arises, though, when we view fiction as an either/or proposition. Either it is sympathetic to Christianity and it belongs in the Christian fiction market, or it is not, and it belongs in the general market. The argument must be made that literature of belief has a place in both markets.

Boyagoda makes this point so eloquently: “The challenge for religiously minded literary professionals” is to, “in the books we write, teach and review, make a case for why we should continue to have faith in fiction.”

What can we, as readers, do? We can support authors in both markets who successfully blend quiet reflections of faith and fiction — those who do more than nod at Christianity with an awkward blush and a word of denial ready on the tongue.

After all, stories exist to reflect and reveal the whole of this human existence. We need thoughtful, contemporary literature that sustains the appreciation for life, truth, beauty and goodness.

Sometimes it takes a Whitmanian “yawp” or a Seussian “yopp” to let them know “We are here!”

LAURA ANDERSON KURK is the author of young adult novels including “Glass Girl” and “Perfect Glass” and is a member of the A&M Church of Christ in College Station, Texas. See her website, laurakurk.com.

LETTERS

Responses to ‘Bridges & Barriers’

If “real journalism reflects absolute truth of Christ, as Erik Tryggestad’s column claims (Page 3, February) and if the goal of *The Christian Chronicle* is “to report the news of the Lord’s church with fairness and accuracy,” then why does such a blatantly inaccurate factual statement as “Churches of Christ have roots in the American Restoration Movement, which began on the U.S. frontier in the 1790s” appear in an article written by Mr. Tryggestad? (“Bridges & Barriers: How then should we interact? Page 3)

Romans 16:16’s declaration — “the churches of Christ salute you” — demonstrates that the churches of Christ have their roots in the first century, not the 18th.

John Chowning | Fort Wayne, Ind.

It was refreshing to read your article, “Bridges & Barriers.” ... If we are to reach people, we have to go where they are and know more about what they believe. Thank you for your courage.

Barbara Ward | Montrose, Colo.

Feature on Internet church services provided perfect cure for snow day

Regarding “Live on the Internet: Sunday worship” by Bobby Ross Jr. (Page 1, February): Last Sunday our area had a snow storm that closed down most churches, including ours.

We started our online live services with the Camp Hill Church of Christ. Next we joined the Benton, Ark., congregation — and we didn’t stop there. We went on to Anchorage Church of Christ in Alaska and enjoyed each service.

We are in the Central time zone, so we started at 9 a.m. our time and ended about 2:30 pm. What a Sunday we had!

Thanks for writing the article. We had no idea these services were available.

Dorothy Uebelein | Waterloo, Ill.

VOICES

Using the hashtag #NCYM14, Twitter users posted about their experiences at the recent National Conference on Youth Ministries in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Compiled by Bobby Ross Jr.



Caryn Blanchard
Livonia, Mich.

Enjoying the warmth of my hotel room as outside I hear screeches of youth ministers jumping into an outdoor pool in 40-degree weather. #ncym14 — @YMinisterswife



Tyler Goudeau
Littleton, Colo.

My room number at #NCYM14 is 728b. Retweet if you know why that is funny. — @tylergoudeau



Jenna Lupo
Huntsville, Ala.

Greeted by the morning’s new mercies and the ONE who created it all ... #NCYM14 — @jennalupo



Tyler Jarvis
White Settlement, Texas

My wife and I like to play ‘spot the youth minister’ at #NCYM14. The superhero T-shirts, hipster glasses and goatees make it a bit too easy. — @Tyler_Jarvis

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THE RACE IS ON! will help your students stay on track in their daily lives.



2014 VBS

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New books offer recipes for faith that lasts

Authors have devoted a lot of time and ink to the trend of young people walking away from the church — and from faith. Researchers seeking to identify the cause of the exodus point to cultural secularization, a sectarian climate in many American churches, the mixing of religion and politics, the increasing average age for marrying and starting a family and the breakdown of the traditional family. Blame is easily and cheaply administered; solutions are challenging. How then are parents to go about forming a lasting faith in the hearts of their children?

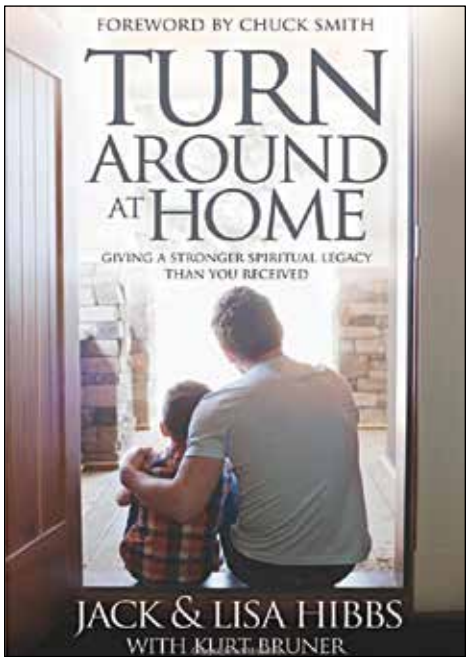
Three recent books give parents specific ways to do this. In **“Turn Around at Home: Giving a Stronger Spiritual Legacy Than You Received,”** Jack and Lisa Hibbs, a minister and his wife, guide Christian parents to reflect on their childhood and be intentional in their spiritual parenting.

Their plan to leave a lasting spiritual legacy involves three steps — “look back, look up and look ahead.” The authors encourage readers to assess the spiritual legacy their parents left for them, looking for both strengths and weaknesses. Readers are challenged to find forgiveness and healing for emotional and spiritual wounds from their past and asked to give their past over to God. They are then guided through the process of designing the heritage they want to leave to their children in the areas of spiritual, emotional and social development.

In the book, the authors share stories of individuals with wounded spiritual pasts. This brings a personal element to the process of turning things around and blessing children with a rich spiritual heritage.

In the final chapters, readers find a “toolbox” of suggestions for parent and family activities and faith lessons. Parenting classes could use the material for a hands-on primer on how to form faith in children.

While the Hibbs family’s approach is customizable, **“Holding Your Family Together: 5 Simple Steps to Help Bring Your Family Closer to God**



★★★★☆
Jack and Lisa Hibbs. **Turn Around at Home: Giving a Stronger Spiritual Legacy Than You Received.** Colorado Springs, Colo.: David C. Cook, 2013. 119 pages. \$14.99.

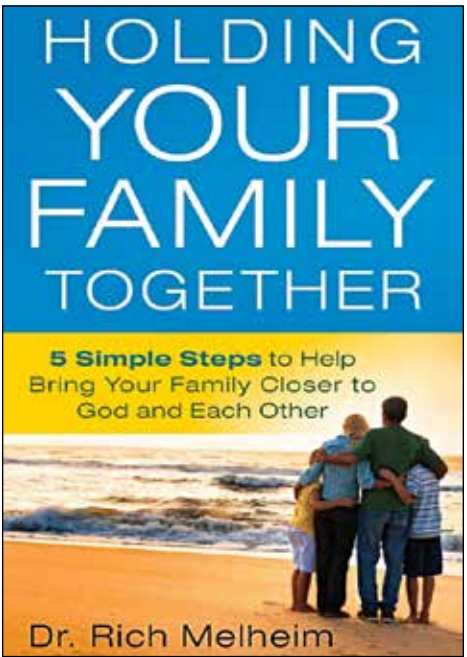
and Each Other” prescribes very specific steps for strengthening the faith of parents and children.

In his book, Rich Melheim suggests a very practical family ritual that, if engaged, certainly would enrich the spiritual heritage in a family and help point children to the Lord.

He calls his plan FAITH5, which consists of a five-step sharing experience each night at bedtime: share, read, talk, pray and bless.

Melheim encourages parents each night to share highs and lows, read Scripture, talk about how Scripture might apply to highs and lows and then pray for and bless one another.

To some, the plan may seem rather formulaic, claiming to be the “magic pill” that will hold families together. However, it is reasonable to expect that family rituals create rich and pleasant memories for children. An appendix even lays out a 52-week plan for memory verses for children, set to music, and the corresponding website offers more weekly resources for parents.



★★★★☆
Rich Melheim. **Holding Your Family Together: 5 Simple Steps to Help Bring Your Family Closer to God and Each Other.** Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 2013. 216 pages. \$14.99

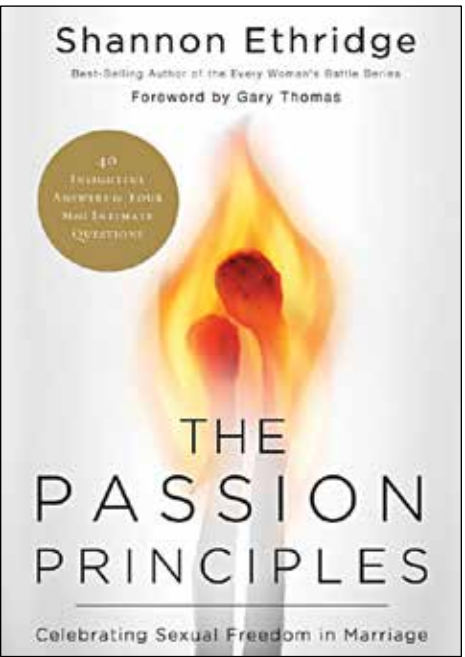
Both of these books have to do with how parents intentionally guide children, but just as important is how parents model selfless, reckless love through their marital relationship. This is the kind of love for Christ parents must cultivate in their children.

Shannon Ethridge in her book, **“The Passion Principles: Celebrating Sexual Freedom in Marriage,”** tackles a tough subject that directly relates to the strength of the marriage bond — the sexual relationship between a husband and wife.

She addresses the topic of intimacy in straightforward terms, but from a biblical and spiritual foundation.

The book is organized by questions that have been posed to Ethridge in her practice as a life coach, marriage author and speaker. She encourages married couples to take very seriously the challenge of not only meeting each other’s needs sexually, but also to take it to the next level and keep the excitement, anticipation and enjoyment in sex that God intended for it to have.

One element that makes the book especially endearing is the author’s



★★★★★
Shannon Ethridge. **The Passion Principles: Celebrating Sexual Freedom in Marriage.** Nashville, Tenn.: W Publishing Group, 2014. 244 pages, \$15.99.

disclosure of her own sexually wounded past. Ethridge draws from that past to challenge the sexually wounded to face their wounds and seek healing, making her book a must-read for Christians who have this kind of past that hinders the strength of their marriage.

Ethridge also encourages the sexually shy or inhibited spouse to throw off inhibitions and embrace freedom in the act of intimacy in marriage. Incredible intimacy strengthens a marriage, and strong marriages help parents form a united front to pass faith to the next generation.

Christian parents are anxiously looking for ways to combat a secular culture and form a faith in the hearts of their children that will last.

Beginning a new trend will start in the home with mothers and fathers who are dedicated to God, to one another and to the principle of passing faith to the next generation.

TIM TRIPP is the family minister for the Northeast Church of Christ in Cincinnati, Ohio. He and his wife, Lenore, have been married 26 years and strive together to pass on their faith to their three children.



Tim Tripp



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NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

BIBLE STUDY

Michael Whitworth. **The Derision of Heaven: A Guide to Daniel.** Bowie, Texas: Start2Finish Books, 2013. 194 pages. \$14.49.



Written by the pulpit minister for the Carter Lake Road Church of Christ in Bowie, Texas, this in-depth study of the book of Daniel compares the Israelite exile to today's church.

Like in his first book, "The Epic of God: A Guide to Genesis," Whitworth makes scholarship accessible and draws surprising applications from the text.

MEMOIR

Lynn K. Wilder. **Unveiling Grace: The Story of How We Found Our Way Out of the Mormon Church.** Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2013. 367 pages. \$15.99.

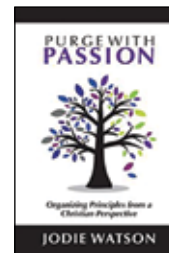


After 30 years in the Mormon church, Wilder, a former professor at Brigham Young University in Utah, experienced a crisis of faith. She left the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and BYU, a university associated with the Mormon church.

Her book is divided into three parts: "Mormon Bliss," "Cracks in the Façade," and "Starting Over." Appendices offer a list of Christian ministries with resources on Mormonism and a quick doctrinal comparison of Mormonism and the Bible.

CHRISTIAN LIVING

Jodie Watson. **Purge with Passion: Organizing Principles from a Christian Perspective.** Bloomington, Ind.: WestBow Press, 2013. 159 pages. \$17.95.



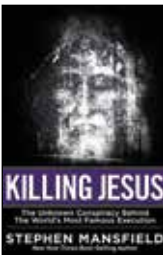
Possessions and schedules can become so crowded with the unnecessary that Christians' lives fail to reflect the God of order and purpose, this author contends.

As an organizing expert on the TLC show "Real Simple, Real Life," Watson has plenty of de-cluttering experience. In this book, she instructs readers on how

to handle finances, time and information and how to purge negative emotions.

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Stephen Mansfield. **Killing Jesus: The Unknown Conspiracy Behind the World's Most Famous Execution.** Brentwood, Tenn.: Worthy Publishing, 2013. 270 pages. \$22.99.



Not to be confused with "Killing Jesus: A History" by Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard, this lesser-known work is written by the author of the bestseller "The Faith of George W. Bush."

Though both books take a similar historical/journalistic approach to the death of Jesus, Mansfield assigns a greater spiritual significance to Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Johnny Carr. **Orphan Justice: How to Care for Orphans Beyond Adopting.** Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Publishing, 2013. 224 pages. \$14.99.



The author, director of the nation's largest adoption and orphan care agency, seeks to guide readers toward "pure religion," caring for the world's 153 million orphans, both for churches and individuals.

Each chapter includes three action steps, with increasing levels of commitment based on talent and time.

INSPIRATION

Leanne Hadley. **Touching Heaven: Real Life Stories of Children, Life and Eternity.** Ada, Miss.: Revell Books, 2013. 161 pages. \$12.99.



A quick and easy read, this book is nonetheless poignant.

Each chapter details the last days of a terminally ill child, told by the chaplain who ministered to the child and his or her family.

Each child had some sort of glimpse of the next world — an experience with an angel, dream, or vision of heaven, guilelessly believed and shared with the author.



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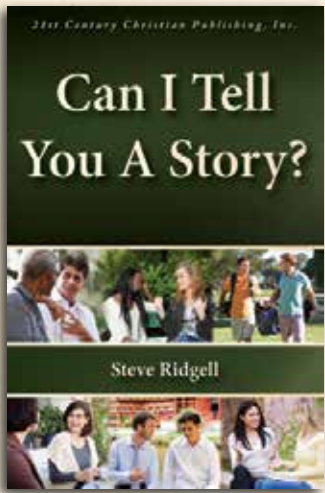
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LIGHTWORKERS MEDIA

John the Baptist (Daniel Percival) baptizes Jesus (Diogo Morgado) in "Son of God." The film, rated PG-13, opens Feb. 28. See www.sonofgodmovie.com for locations and showtimes.

Despite its made-for-TV roots, 'Son of God' will inspire believers

Nearly 10 years to the day since the release of Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ," a new movie about the life of Jesus arrives in theaters. "Son of God" is the grand finale to the highly acclaimed History Channel series "The Bible."

Clocking in at just over two hours, "Son of God" portrays the life of Jesus as told in the book of John (with help from the other gospels).

Overall, it is a powerful film, though no one will mistake it as an artistic masterpiece. If you're searching for an Oscar front-runner, look elsewhere.

"Son of God" was created from footage shot for "The Bible" and it never fully shakes its made-for-TV roots. It is a good movie, though it features unspectacular production, pacing, acting, editing and special effects.

There are, however, plenty of goosebump-delivering moments, especially for followers of Christ.

The film opens with the passage from John's gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." The speech happens over a thundering score from Hans Zimmer and an incredible montage of events leading to Jesus' birth.

As the crucifixion approached, I heard sniffles among the audience of preachers, church leaders and media treated to an advance screening. It was touching to see people raising hands in joy upon Mary's discovery of the empty tomb. More goosebumps.

If you avoided "The Passion of the Christ" because of the violence and wish you could have seen it sans gore, "Son of God" is the answer. The film carries a milder PG-13 rating. Though it also delivers a bloody crucifixion and a few scenes of violence, they hardly approach those in the R-rated "Passion."

Portraying Jesus, Diogo Morgado looks a bit like a Portuguese Brad Pitt. I had a hard time taking him seriously as the Savior of the World since he could also be modeling jeans for Abercrombie & Fitch. Though he comes across as a bit mystical in isolated moments, overall Morgado gives a balanced performance.

As with most biblical movies, there are moments when you'll think, "Wait a second, that's not right." Jesus' calling of Peter is a bit changed, and when Pilate asks Jesus if he is the Messiah, Jesus' "You say that I am" from Luke 22 is changed to a more defiant "I am," underscored with super epic, low, thundering string music. Overall, though, these changes don't distract much from the movie's message.

Jesus was both man and God. For me, nothing drives home his humanity quite like seeing him on film. "Son of God" could help even the heartiest Christian gain a fresh perspective. It isn't a masterpiece, but as a Jesus movie it is right on the money. See it.

On Film



Grant Stevens

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Good preaching requires good listeners: Advice from the pew

God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." With those words of Jesus from John 4:24, I began a reflection on public worship a few weeks ago.

What most people think of when they consider worship is preaching. In Churches of Christ preaching has always been the central shared experience in congregations' worship. Although I am fond of preaching, it is the most difficult aspect of the church experience.

I have been blessed to hear great preaching for as long as I can remember. As a teenager, I heard Delmar Owen week after week. He was a godly man who took seriously his responsibility of teaching and admonishing. During the first couple of years that I listened to him, I learned much about what we often call "the plan of salvation." Then it was as if a light went on in his thinking and he realized that the church needed a greater understanding of God and his nature.

It became very clear that he was studying and personally seeking to know God better. He continued to study the Bible, and it was reflected in his preaching. He also began studying the sermons of great historical preachers. His preaching became a regular call for me to study and work to understand.

Delmar taught me that preaching is not a passive experience for the listener. It is more like a tennis game where the listener not only hears but has to respond to the ideas.

When I begin to feel weary about preaching, I realize that I have become lazy and only want the speaker to fill my plate because I am just a sponge to soak up what is poured over me. Some preachers require more effort from us than others. Preachers who do not think, pray and dig into the subject will only give us the skeleton and we have to do the thinking and understanding.

As technology has become a part of worship experiences, preachers are naturally tempted to simply grab our attention and give us an entertaining experience that may or may not quicken our relationship with God.

As serious worshipers, we need to do whatever it takes so that the preaching we hear becomes increasingly effective

in strengthening our knowledge and love of God. These ideas may help:

- Pray before you go to church that you will fully commune with God. Ask for wisdom to understand and apply the

Insight



Bailey McBride

lessons you hear. Pray for the preacher that he will have thoughtfully developed a lesson to touch lives.

- If you take notes on sermons, you are forced to be more attentive. If you are not good at taking notes, you can find many sources on the web to help you.

When you get home, schedule a time when you can review your notes, test the ideas, see which ones are new to you and see if there are questions you want to ask the preacher to help you understand.

- Always listen to sermons with your Bible open. Today many preachers will put all the scriptures they are using on the screen — and that is great. But if you look at the passage in your own Bible, you can see the context and perhaps even mark the passage for future study to see if other relevant information will help you.

- As you listen to preaching, make notes to yourself about how you will use the ideas you are hearing. Great preaching will touch the important issues of life — morality, spirituality, devotion and service to others, honoring God, growing as a Christian, changing yourself and others and developing faith. All those issues should be important to each of us, and clearly we want to keep those as priorities for our lives.

- If you are at the stage of life where you are caring for young children as you try to worship, get the CD or listen online to preaching when you can concentrate and learn from the preaching.

I confess that, even though I have been going to church regularly since I was 12 years old, I still struggle to make worship the greatest time of my week. I find it really easy and inspiring when we are singing (almost any kind of song). Communion is moving as I remember Christ's offering. Preaching requires the greatest effort.

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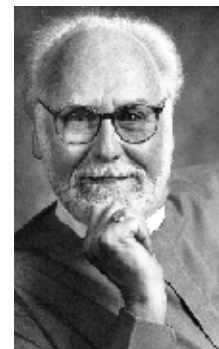
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