

Camp Shamrock

IN NORTHERN IRELAND, after decades of terror and mistrust, Churches of Christ urge a new generation to become 'instruments of peace.'

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Campers and counselors gather around a stone monument at Tollymore Forest Park and prepare skits to demonstrate a Bible lesson.

BRYANSFORD, Northern Ireland

From this forested patch of paradise, you could hear the car bombs.

Even the beauty of Northern Ireland's Tollymore, a lush, green campground dotted with Gothic arches and stone bridges, failed to provide escape from "The Troubles" — bloody years of conflict between Protestants loyal to the British crown and Catholics who sought unification with the Republic of Ireland to the south.

Joe Bright, who served as a missionary here in the mid-1970s, remembers lying in his tent at Camp Shamrock — a week-long youth retreat sponsored by Churches of Christ — and listening to explosions in the nearby village of Newcastle.

"During the first days at camp, the Protestant kids were singing



PHOTOS BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Roy Angell monitors campers as they play a hunting game at Camp Shamrock.

unrepeatable songs about the pope, and the Catholic kids were singing equally unrepeatable songs about Protestants," Bright recalled.

"Within days, however, these two groups had forgotten the hatred they had learned from their parents, and they left camp as fast friends."

Four decades later, sword fights are the only armed conflicts in Tollymore, captured by film crews for the medieval drama "Game of Thrones."

No bomb blasts are heard at Camp Shamrock — just the shouts of boys, ages 8 to 16, playing soccer behind a uniform row of white tents.

At times, the match gets a wee bit heated, and a few of the lads let fly words not commonly heard at church.

The goalie, Roy Angell, does his best to keep the ball out of the net and the boys out of each other's faces.

"This may be the only place they get to see an example of godly people trying to live godly lives," says Angell, who served in Northern Ireland for two years as part of Adventures in Missions, a program of Sunset International Bible Institute in Lubbock, Texas. Now attending

See **CAMP SHAMROCK**, Page 12

Homosexuality and the church

AS SOCIETY EMBRACES *same-sex couples, a Texas conference equips the faithful to respond.*

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

SAN ANTONIO — NBA player Jason Collins comes out as gay and makes the cover of *Sports Illustrated*.

The Boy Scouts of America votes to allow openly gay boys into its ranks.

The U.S. Supreme Court gives federal recognition to same-sex marriages.

As homosexuality gains increasing acceptance in America, Christians can't escape the headlines.

But how should members of Churches of Christ — who believe God reserves sex for marriage between a man and a woman — respond?

Here in the Alamo City, the Northside Church of Christ hosted a recent "Peacemakers Conference." The focus of the two-day conference: equipping the faithful to show Christ's love to everyone — including those who experience same-sex attraction — while maintaining strong convictions on the Bible's teachings.

"It seemed to me that this would be a great way to move beyond the headlines

and the rhetoric that's out there and talk about how we can truly 'be Jesus' to people," said David Allen, preaching minister for the 1,000-member Northside church. "Somehow, Jesus was able to (minister to) broken people in ways that made them feel valued and loved and not condemned."

The conference provided helpful insight "to get the ball rolling for churches to consider how to address an issue that is not going away," said Mark Abshier, preaching minister for the MacArthur Park Church of Christ in San Antonio.

See **SAME-SEX**, Page 15

ABOUT THIS SERIES: How can Christians relate to those with whom they disagree — without compromising the truth? See Page 30.



First in a series



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Mission trip leaves father hungry for more

HOUSTON

I step off the plane on a spiritual high. I've just spent a week in a Third World country on a mission trip.

I've worked side by side with my two younger children — Keaton, 16, and Kendall, 14 — to show God's love to precious souls with far fewer material possessions than our family enjoys.

Inside Story



Bobby Ross Jr.

But after skipping lunch to catch our three-hour flight back to the U.S., I'm hungry. Actually, I'm S-T-A-R-V-I-N-G.

Before I can eat, we endure a too-long Customs and Border Protection line.

By the time we make it through the line, it's past 5 p.m. My blood sugar level is running low. My grumpy meter is spiking.

I'm feeling the physical effects of a week of rewarding but exhausting workdays.

Fortunately, I'm close to the finish line — just a short connecting flight from home.

But first: dinner.

I salivate at the thought of the half-pound burger that I'm about to devour.

Hello, my beefy, cheese-topped friend!

My son and I get in line at the airport Fuddruckers, one of my favorite burger joints. He orders right before me.

Soon, Keaton's Texas-sized burger and fries arrive. I lick my lips. The

See **MISSION TRIP**, Page 4



Anna Philyaw directs "Thee Glorious" — a youth chorus formed for the 100th anniversary celebration of the Church of Christ at 16th and Decatur — during Sunday school in the church's lower level.

Reaching the heart of D.C.

FOUR MILES FROM THE WHITE HOUSE, the 100-year-old Church of Christ at 16th and Decatur ministers to a multiethnic, multinational, transitory flock of believers.

BY TED PARKS | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

WASHINGTON

Women couldn't vote. The United States hadn't fought in either World War. The struggle for civil rights was a half-century away.

That's when the Church of Christ at 16th and Decatur — the first in the nation's capital — got its start.

Nurturing hundreds of Christians whose careers would take them to Washington over the ensuing decades, the church recently celebrated its 100th anniversary. Washington mayor Vincent C. Gray proclaimed "Church of Christ Day," grateful for the congregation's "legacy of service, ministry, fellowship, and compassion for all."



PHOTOS BY TED PARKS

"The Lord has blessed us with it," Ed Wilson says of the 16th and Decatur church's meeting place, completed in 1951, "and we're going to try to take care of it and try our best to fill it up."

Well-known preachers in Churches of Christ — T. B. Larimore, Hugo McCord and Burton Coffman — stood at the pulpit of the 16th and Decatur church, inside the Washington Beltway, four miles north of the White House. The congregation was the first to serve in the official role of endorsing military chaplains on behalf of Churches of Christ, said Donnis Crump, whose husband, Wayne, was minister from 1981 until his death in 2007.

On the cusp of its second century, 16th and Decatur is a multiethnic congregation. While Christians black and white worship together, members come not only from the United States but across the globe.

"Look up. It's just a gob of nationalities

See **16TH AND DECATUR**, Page 22

Missionary robbed of \$7,500 to build houses for the poor

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

"Another great day in Honduras."

That's Marc Tindall's typical sign-off as he posts news about his mission work on Facebook. It's a mantra he continues to profess — even after being robbed of \$7,500 intended to build four homes for the poor in the Central American nation.

Tindall, a retired executive for Nabisco, moved to Honduras six years ago with his wife, Terri, to oversee a children's home. He had just withdrawn the money from a bank in the capital, Tegucigalpa, when two men he mistook for police ordered him to pull over.

The men snatched the money from Tindall's truck and fled on a motorcycle.

Tindall pursued them, eventually knocking them from the motorcycle and damaging the truck, Honduran newspaper *El Heraldo* reported. The thieves fled on foot.

"We are all fine, and God is good all the time," Tindall told his Facebook friends, adding that he was "confident that the families won't lose homes because of this."

Trey Morgan, minister for the Childress Church of Christ in Texas and a longtime supporter of the Tindalls' work, launched a campaign on his website to replace the stolen funds. More than 800 people shared Morgan's post on Facebook, and within 24 hours, donors gave more than \$7,500.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, see treymorgan.net.

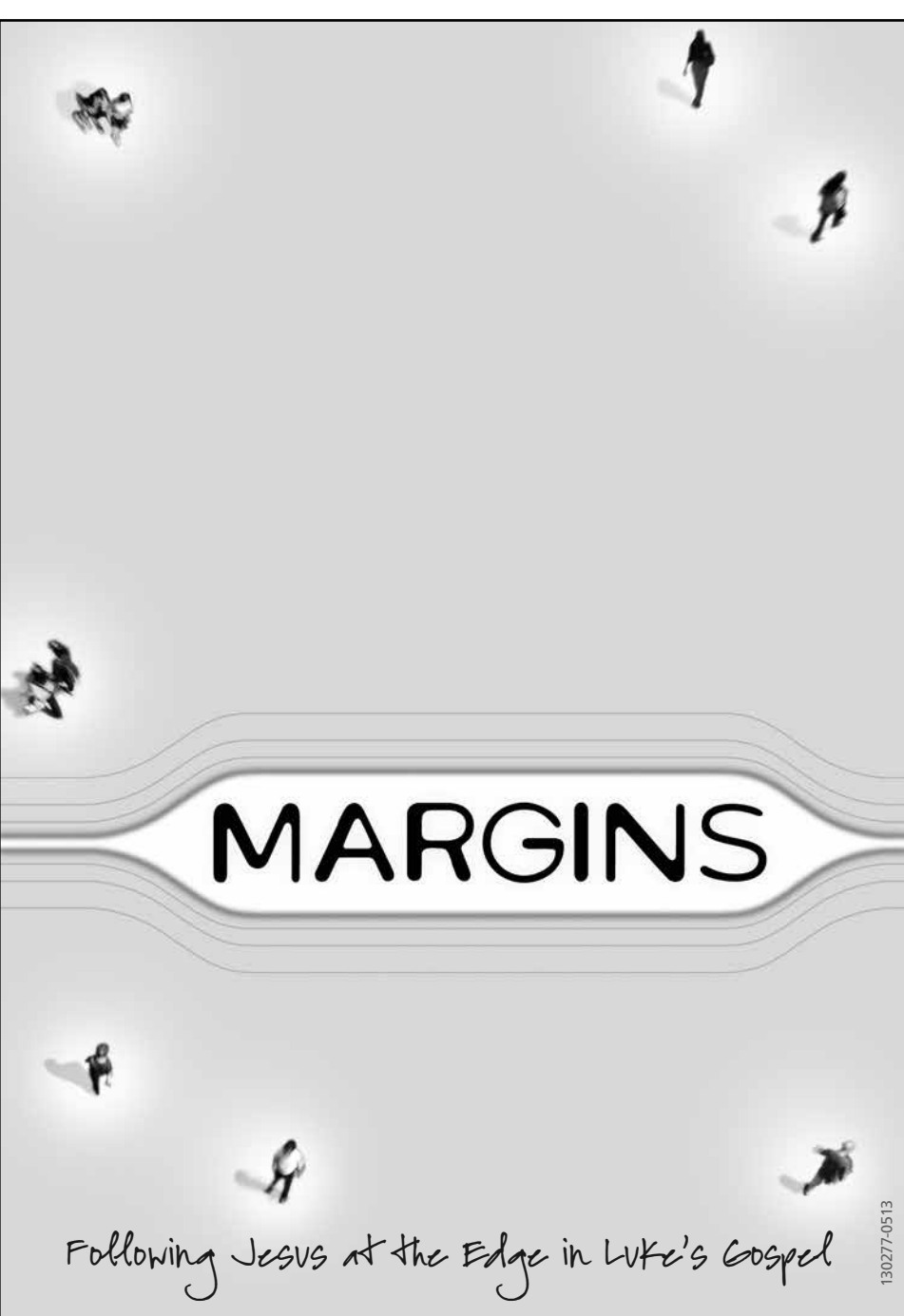


ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Marc Tindall shares a laugh with one of the Hondurans he serves at a dump in Tegucigalpa.



Tindall



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MISSION TRIP: Why crossing borders matters

FROM PAGE 3

savory aroma drifts to my side of the table. My nostrils celebrate.

Five minutes pass. Then five more.

My stomach growls. Loudly. I approach the counter.

"Oh, I'm sorry," the woman tells me. "You'll have to get your money back."

Whaaaaaaaaaat!?

There's a gas leak in the terminal. The leak has forced the restaurant to turn off its grill. They can't fry any more burgers.

My spiritual high crashes in a hurry.

I sulk and eventually settle for a cold turkey sandwich at Schlotzsky's.

A thought strikes me: Surely the devil wouldn't test my priorities so soon after a remarkable mission trip, right?

Hours removed from a world where children sleep on dirt floors and families survive on less a day than my sandwich cost, I know the answer, of course.

A mountaintop experience is called that for a reason. At some point, you have to come down from the mountain.

Alas, I am familiar with the letdown after a mission trip, as God has given me the opportunity to serve in places such as Brazil, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua and South Africa. Still, I can't think of any better experience for an individual Christian — or an entire family — than taking a week to go and serve the Lord.

At this point, I assume more than a few readers are hollering at the page: "You don't have to leave the country to do God's work!"

Yes, I understand that. I appreciate the need to serve our neighbors at home. I know that huge pockets of our own nation remain unreached. And I'm all for

improving our efforts in those areas.

But for the purposes of this column, here are a few reasons why I love mission trips outside our nation's borders:

• **Perspective:** You learn about your brothers and sisters in Christ around the world and gain a better understanding of their circumstances. A mission trip can challenge and increase your faith and remind you that God's family is global.

• **Investment:** These trips aren't cheap, but ultimately, many more thousands of dollars are funneled into mission work because Christians personally

know the people and congregations they're helping.

• **Memories:** Away from the daily grind, you get to know people in your home church family better and create lasting memories. Text messages, sports scores and developments on your favorite reality show become less important. You might even take time to enjoy the colors in the sunset.

Of course, some ask if people in the nations served actually benefit. I sure hope so.

The best mission efforts occur when Americans listen and learn instead of telling foreigners what to do. In that scenario, our brothers and sisters abroad see us as more than walking dollar signs.

From a purely selfish standpoint, I pray that exposing my own children to mission work will nurture their faith and soften their hearts for Christian service.

As for me, I'm feeling rejuvenated — and extremely blessed — after a good night's sleep in my own bed.

But I'm craving a burger.



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Kendall Ross, far right, and Hannah Gigstad visit with Nicaraguan kids.

CONTACT bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org.



ELISE HALEY

A summer tradition: New Mexico family encampment mixes praise, fellowship

Children sing during the Red River Family Encampment in New Mexico. The annual event draws about 1,500 Christians for fellowship, Bible study and worship under a large tent. "One of the best

bonuses of attending the encampment is the chance to visit and catch up with friends from over the years," said Elise Haley, a member of the Cuba Avenue Church of Christ in Alamogordo, N.M.

ALABAMA

TUSCALOOSA — *"The church is not the building. It's the people."*

Lee Jamieson, minister for the Central Church of Christ, made that point during a recent sermon.

But church members already knew it, having survived two-plus years without a building after a 2011 tornado destroyed theirs.

Jamieson's sermon came as the Central church recently worshiped for the first time in its newly constructed building at the original location.

"Everything we lost was just physical," Jamieson said. "What was remaining was faith, hope and love — what was only there from the beginning."

To view videos from the dedication service, go to www.christianchronicle.org/blog and search for "Tuscaloosa."

KENTUCKY

CAMPTON — The Walled Lake Church of Christ in Michigan put on a "Jerusalem Marketplace" Vacation Bible School at the Campton Church of Christ.

"We attempted to recreate first-century Jerusalem where tribes — groups of children with teen leaders — traveled from tribe homes to the marketplace," Walled Lake member Frank Schipani said.

Thirty-four children from the community attended.

LOUISIANA

RACELAND — On a typical Sunday, the Raceland Church of Christ has an attendance of about 10 people. But on a recent Sunday, 25 souls showed up.

The draw? A special singing service.

The congregation dedicates fifth Sundays to singing. Member Frank Poskey describes the "Singing Sunday" approach as an effort to "reach out to the community, bring glory to God and encourage each other."

MISSOURI

SPRINGFIELD — *"Keep Christ in your marriage."*

That was the most frequent advice as the 800-member Sunset Church of Christ honored 53 couples in the congregation who have been married at least 50 years, minister Joe Bright said.

"Together, these 53 twosomes constitute over 3,200 years of marriage," Bright said.

Arnold and Vaulta Montgomery took the grand prize with 74 years of life together.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

MANCHESTER — A burglar broke into the Manchester Church of Christ building recently and stole thousands of dollars worth of items. WMUR, the local ABC affiliate, made the crime its lead story.

"It's certainly not the way that we wanted some recognition," minister Park Linscomb told *The Christian Chronicle*. "But with our VBS sign out front and our preparation for our annual 'Give Away Day' in full swing ... I guess it got the attention of the local media."

TENNESSEE

MT. JULIET — In a recent seven-day period, the Mt. Juliet Church of Christ youth ministry celebrated 17 baptisms.

Youth minister Philip Jenkins praised the "contagious spirit of evangelism" evident in the youth group.

The young people "are the ones talking and studying and praying with people," Jenkins said. "I think it's got everybody in the pews fired up."

TEXAS

DALLAS — The Jefferson Boulevard Church of Christ has sold its building and begun worshipping at a new location.

The newly named Edgefield Church of Christ is sharing a building with a Spanish-speaking congregation.

"We are grateful to the Hispanic congregation for allowing us to renovate and use a portion of their building," minister Wes Price said. "We are joining forces with them in reaching out to this community for both Anglo and Hispanic prospects."

SPOTLIGHT

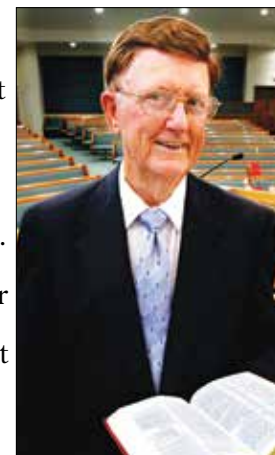
Red River retiree

For years, Lewis Hale and Robert Oglesby have joked often as part of a friendly Red River rivalry — preacher style. Now that Hale has retired after 57 years as pulpit minister for the Southwest Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, Oglesby will have a chance to catch up, said Hale, 87.

Oglesby, 80, has preached for the Waterview Church of Christ in Richardson, Texas, for 50 years.

"I've been very fortunate because the Lord's been very good to me," Hale told *The Oklahoman*. "I recognize that and I'm grateful."

To read the full story, go to www.christianchronicle.org/blog and search for "Lewis Hale."



STEVE SISNEY, THE OKLAHOMAN

Lewis Hale stands in the Southwest auditorium.

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STEVE MEEK

In their 90s, three sisters remain faithful

Mary Joe Whitefield, 98; Ann Moran, 94; and Margaret Kinney, 97, are sisters — biologically and spiritually. All three still live independently and faithfully attend services of the Berry's Chapel Church of Christ in Franklin, Tenn. "These sisters are an inspiration and encouragement to all of us each week," Berry's Chapel member Jan Meek said. "They are lovingly brought to worship by John and Rozanne Kinney, Margaret's son and daughter-in-law."

Al Robertson joins 'Duck Dynasty'

WEST MONROE, La. — Al Robertson — who has described himself as a "Jacob in a family of Esaus" — is joining the cast of the hit reality series "Duck Dynasty."

The clean-shaven Robertson stepped down last year as a minister for the White's Ferry Road Church of Christ to help with his family's thriving Duck Commander business.



Al Robertson

Now he'll appear alongside his bearded

brothers and father, Phil Robertson, a White's Ferry Road elder, on the A&E series. The new season starts Aug. 14.

"What I do for our church ... impacts a lot of people, but because of my association with the show, I'll get to minister to a lot more people," Alan Robertson told the *New York Post*. "Any person that's an evangelist, that's what you want to do, so I had to give (my ministry position) up for something possibly bigger."

To read the full story, go to www.christianchronicle.org/blog and search for "Duck Dynasty."

West Virginia church shows love with paint

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. — The Morgantown Church of Christ knows just how to brighten the day of needy neighbors — with buckets of paint.

Ignoring the summer heat, members spent a recent week painting a half-dozen homes and doing minor repairs such as fixing windows and railings, reported WBOY, the local NBC affiliate.

Everyone in the congregation donated money or volunteered time,

minister Matt Lowe told WBOY. "It's something that every person can be involved in and we can do as a church family," Lowe said. "And we really believe it offers hope." That was the case for Christine Wilcox, a homeowner and mother of a young child. "For someone like the Morgantown Church of Christ to come in ... and fix up the house for me," she said, "I think it's just fantastic."



HAMIL R. HARRIS

Participants in the 2013 Crusade for Christ march to the Alabama State Capitol in Montgomery, following in the footsteps of civil rights crusaders who marched there in the 1960s.

Marchers crusade for Christ

BY HAMIL HARRIS AND ERIK TRYGGESTAD
THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

MONTGOMERY, Ala.

Hundreds of church members braved the afternoon heat as they marched to the steps of the Alabama State Capitol — a half-century after the marches and demonstrations here at the peak of the civil rights movement.

Then, African-Americans were on a crusade for equal rights — in the voting booth and the school classroom — and justice. This time, they were on a Crusade for Christ.

“I believe that, if men were always looking to Jesus, we would not have had all of the racial problems that we have had ... not only in Alabama but all over this world,” Jack Evans said from the capitol steps after the Christians sang, *“I’ll live with him forever, in glory by and by.”*

Earlier that day, nearly 3,000 people packed into the Montgomery Convention Center for Sunday worship.

Evans, a longtime minister and president of Southwestern



FACEBOOK.COM/CHURCHOFCHRISTCRUSADE

A member of the Tonto Church of Christ in Phoenix hugs her newly baptized grandson at the Crusade.

Christian College in Terrell, Texas, was the keynote speaker at the Crusade, a weeklong evangelistic campaign hosted by Churches of Christ every two years in a major U.S. city.

A group of ministers in Chicago launched the Crusade in 1979 and chose Daniel Harrison, a native of Montgomery, to lead it.

“I felt a need to come back home,” Harrison told the *Montgomery Advertiser* as he made the ceremonial march to

the Capitol. He’s kept up with news of a recent increase in homicides in Montgomery and hoped the Crusade could help make a difference.

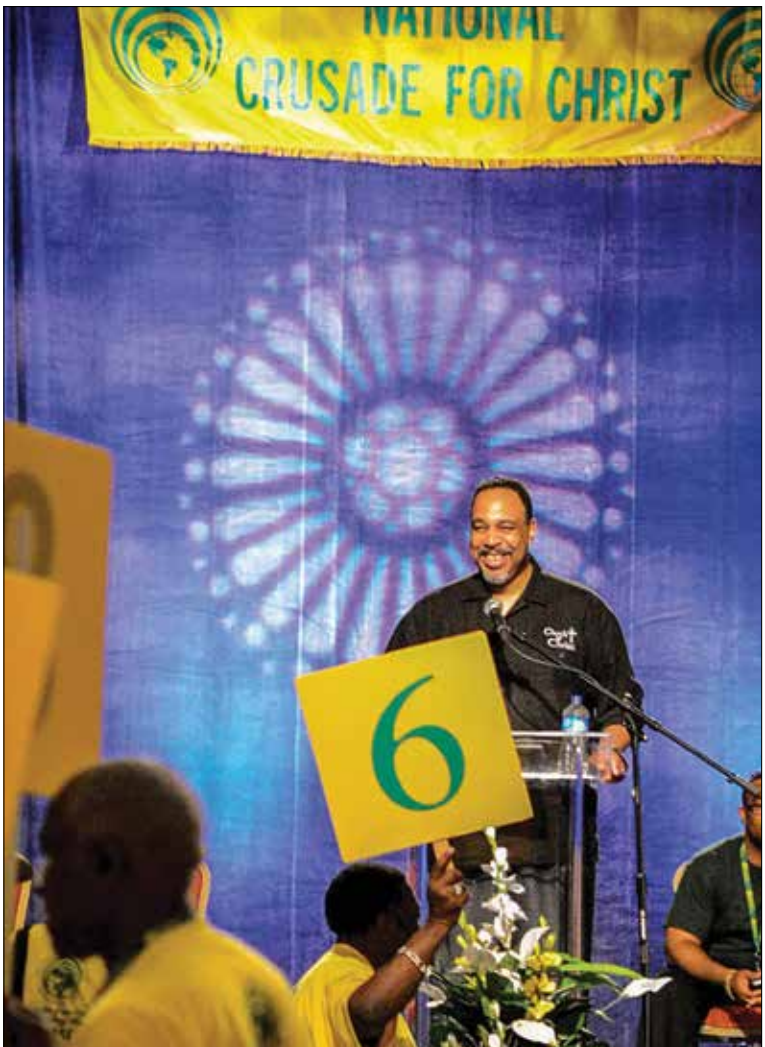
“If you can bring about some type of spiritual metamorphosis,” he said, “it gives people another sense of direction.”

In addition to days of door-knocking, Bible studies and gospel preaching, crusaders gave away 20,000 pounds of food to the needy in conjunction with the Montgomery Area Food Bank, organizer Herman Wesley III said.

The group also conducted free health fairs at three area Churches of Christ.

Fred Gray, an attorney and elder of the Tuskegee Church of Christ in Alabama, defended Rosa Parks during the bus boycott in Montgomery 58 years ago. He spoke during the Crusade.

After years of tension and mistrust, “I certainly hope that the black church and the white church — terms that should have never existed in the first place — come together,” Gray told *The Christian Chronicle*.



LAURI ITSON

At the Montgomery Convention Center, crusaders divide into groups to board buses for door-knocking and studies. Ken Jackson is at the podium.

BRAZIL

CAMPO GRANDE — Twelve university-age students learned about church missions from Bryan Gibbs, director of Brazilian team and church development for Texas-based Great Cities Missions.

“These young people study theology every morning,” said Gibbs, who taught the students at the SerCris School of Theological Training. “Every evening they work toward their bachelor’s degrees at local universities in fields as varied as education, business administration and law.”

Gibbs prays that the students will soon serve as vocational missionaries.

CROATIA

ZAGREB — Church members celebrated Croatia’s entry as the 28th member of the European Union by giving free a cappella performances and distributing new editions of the modern Croatian language version of the New Testament.

Meanwhile, more than 80 children from Zagreb participated in Champs Camp, a Bible-based youth retreat led this year by church workers Steve Taliaferro and Mislav Ilic.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Bunny ears and peace signs abound at Champs Camp in Croatia.

FRANCE

LYON — About 150 members of Churches of Christ in France, Belgium and Switzerland attended an annual retreat in the mountains of Central France, about two hours from Lyon.

Speakers included Lyon missionary Arlin Hendrix



PETE BAKER

Sweet smiles and tortillas for church builders in Mexico

Smiling girls sit on stacks of bricks destined to become the meeting place of the La Libertad Church of Christ in the central Mexican city of Leon. Members of the Coldwater Church of Christ in Michigan worked alongside missionary Ben Baker, former mission intern Chris Reid and Mexican church members to construct the facility.

In the plastic bag is the volunteers’ dinner — handmade tortillas provided by the Mexican Christians.

It was a labor of love for the men of the La Libertad church, who are construction workers by trade, said Baker’s father, Pete Baker, a member of the Coldwater church. After a full day’s work, they labored from 4 to 10 p.m. with the U.S. church members to build the church’s meeting place. The Leon Centro Church of Christ planted the La Libertad congregation, which has met in the courtyard of one of its families for two years, Pete Baker said.

and Steve Allison and David McAnulty, psychology professors at Abilene Christian University in Texas.

HAITI

PIGNON — A “chain reaction” of baptisms has swept across this small town in central Haiti in recent months, said Clifford Yeldell, a church member in Cedar Hill, Texas. For about a year, Yeldell had taught Bible to students in Pignon using a computer program.

Three students were baptized, with assistance from Manius Vixamar, a minister in Haiti’s capital, Port-au-Prince. Yeldell traveled to Haiti in February to work with the new converts.

During the trip, the mayor of Pignon invited him and Vixamar to the town, where they preached to 400 people.

In the months since, nearly 30 people have been baptized — including the mayor.

Experienced Christians are needed to help train these new converts, Yeldell said.

NORWAY

SANDNES — Christians in this Scandinavian nation — home to a handful of Churches of Christ — are praying twice per day for 30 days, said church member Colin Beharie.

During the “30 Days of Prayer,” Christians are “asking God to open doors for the

Gospel in Norway, to provide more workers to enter the field and to bless and strengthen the Christians in the country,” Beharie said. He asked participants to read and meditate on Jesus’ teachings about prayer in Luke 11:1-13.

SWITZERLAND

GENEVA — Robert McCready, associate professor of foreign language and international studies at Harding University in Searcy, Ark., led a team of 10 Christian students on a two-week summer program.

The students learned about evangelism in Europe’s French-speaking regions from local missionaries.

SPOTLIGHT

Agape in China

PINGGUO COUNTY, China — Julie Jansen doesn’t speak Chinese, but she learned that “the sound of laughter is universal” on a recent mission trip to a children’s home in China’s southern Guangxi region.

Jansen was one of 19 members of the Buford Church of Christ in Georgia who visited two children’s homes in the region, supported by the Chinese Agape Foundation.

For two weeks, the church members played, joked, ran, cried, hiked, sang and worshiped alongside the children, said Brandon Edwards, the church’s youth minister.

Ben Burnette played basketball and rode skateboards with the children.

“It is amazing how optimistic they were in their circumstances,” he said, “and it’s a great testament to the hands of God at work in the world.”

Edwards added, “The journey toward serving God may be long and hard. It may be uphill, across the world or even life-threatening.

“When Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Follow me,’ he meant it. And I am so proud of the Buford church family as they did exactly that.”

WEBSITE: www.chineseagape.org



PHOTO PROVIDED

Ben Burnette plays with children at the John Connor Brown Christian Care Center in Tiandeng County.

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

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At night, the massive lava lake on Mount Nyiragongo turns the sky near Goma, Congo, red.

*Escape from Mount Doom: African Christians
plant churches, flee violence in troubled Congo*

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Welcome to Mordor.

Ten miles north of Goma, a city on the eastern edge of the massive Democratic Republic of Congo, is the volcano Nyiragongo — home of the largest lava lake on the planet. At night, the sky glows ominous red.

That's why Matt Miller equates the region with Mordor — the ashen, forboding home of Mount Doom and the evil Sauron from the "Lord of Rings" books and movies.

The region "has a valid claim at being the most unstable place on the planet, both in terms of security and geological activity," said Miller, who lives in neighboring Rwanda and works with the Africa Transformation Network.

"Many of the government and military leaders who were involved in starting the Rwandan genocide fled to this area and have formed rebel armies who continue to attack villages and steal mineral wealth from the Congo," Miller said.

"The North Kivu province, of which Goma is the capital, has the horrible distinction of being the rape capital of the world, as soldiers use this tactic of terror as a weapon in their fighting," he added.

Miller and Alex Badega, a Rwandan Christian, visited Goma in 2012 to see

the volcano. They stayed in the home of Safari and Sarah Akili, church planters in the troubled city.

"Our visit with Safari and his church was a great blessing," Miller said. "We were able to share with them the principles of obedience-based discipleship and were received warmly."

As Miller and Badega prepared to return to Rwanda, the Akilis asked to stay in contact with them and to work with the Africa Transformation Network.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Safari and Sarah Akili fled the Congo just before the birth of their daughter, named Exodus. Andrea and Matt Miller, right, helped the couple escape to Rwanda.

A week after the visit, a rebel group began fighting in the region north of Goma. Months later, they captured the city — while Sarah Akili was pregnant with their fourth child. As they fled for the border, "they discovered the

bodies of five neighbors who had been killed in the fighting," Miller said.

In Rwanda, Sarah Akili gave birth to a baby girl. They named her Exodus. The family relocated to Uganda and prays for the day when they can return to Goma.

"In the past six months, Safari has helped plant 14 house churches in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda," Miller said in a recent report. "Eight people were baptized into Christ just this past Sunday. It is our privilege to be servants of the amazing leaders God is using to initiate a movement of disciples of Jesus in our region."



**“The trip to Kenya was not about me;
it was about surrendering to God
and being His hands and feet.”**

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Attributed to Francis of Assisi

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THE TROUBLES

More than 3,600 lives were lost, and an estimated 50,000 people were maimed or wounded, as warring factions in Northern Ireland battled for three decades. The British and Irish refer to these years as “The Troubles.”

THE DIVISION: In 1920, Great Britain recognized Irish independence. The six counties of Northern Ireland, known as Ulster, remained under British rule. Unionists, mostly Protestant, were loyal to the British crown while republicans, mostly Catholic, wanted to leave the United Kingdom and join the Republic of Ireland.

THE WAR: In the late 1960s, protests against the unionist-dominated government became violent. Paramilitary and vigilante groups, including the Irish Republican Army and the Ulster Defense Association, battled and bombed for dominance. Although both sides claimed fealty to their churches, “this was a territorial conflict, not a religious one,” according to the BBC.



THE PEACE: On April 10, 1998, after decades of violence with little change, the political parties of Northern Ireland and the governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland signed the Good Friday Agreement, an accord giving unionists and republicans a stake in Northern Ireland’s government.

THE CHURCH: During the war, Churches of Christ used outreach ministries including Camp Shamrock to foster understanding among people on both sides of the conflict. Bert Ritchie, minister for the Church of Christ in Coleraine, Northern Ireland, works with the camp and an interfaith council to encourage peace and reconciliation after years of violence and distrust.

PHOTOS AND GRAPHICS BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD

CAMP SHAMROCK: Healing after years of hatred



After a morning of Bible lessons and skits, campers use their free time to roll down the grassy hills of Tollymore Forest Park. The park has served as Camp Shamrock’s home since 1974.

FROM PAGE 1
college in Lubbock, he scrapes together his own money and donations for plane fare so he can volunteer as a counselor at the camp.

Across the field from the soccer pitch, Angell’s mentors, Bert and Doreen Ritchie, and a cadre of volunteers prepare steaming trays of lasagna and shepherd’s pie for dinner.

The couple, along with fellow members of Churches of Christ in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, continues the camp’s 47-year mission to teach Jesus to new generations — to foster unity and trust.

“They begin the week not knowing each other,” Bert Ritchie says. By the time they realize they’re on opposite sides of the debate over Northern Ireland, “it’s too late because they’re friends.”

BIBLE SKITS AND HARD QUESTIONS

After soccer and shepherd’s pie, the boys play halfhearted games of chess. Kevin MacSweeney, a red-haired counselor from Cork, Ireland, tries desperately to explain how the knight moves, which few of the boys seem to know, and to keep one of them from stuffing his mouth with pawns.

The next morning, the campers awake to the bleating of sheep in a nearby field. Angell leads the youngest ones up a grassy hill to a stone monu-

ment, where he tells them the story of Noah and his faithfulness to God. The boys prepare skits illustrating the lesson — most of them with elaborately choreographed fights.

Though they come from Protestant or Catholic traditions, many of the children arrive at Camp Shamrock with “a jaded sense of God,” mired in politics and mistrust, Angell says. The counselors try to present Bible lessons in a way that encourages them to study on their own.

As the young campers — and their counselors — take turns rolling sideways down the grassy slopes, a group of teenage boys sits around the remains of last night’s campfire. More counselors, from Ireland and the U.S., read questions the campers submitted.

“Does God really care for us all?” one asks. “Will Muslims go to heaven?”

“If Jesus is the king of the Jews,” asks another, “why didn’t he protect the Jews from the Holocaust in World War II?”

“Is God racist?” another asks. “Why did he put all the black people on one continent?”

Bibles in hand, the counselors do their best to help the boys find answers, stressing that God is no respecter of persons and seeks a relationship with everyone. They quote Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”



Campers and counselors abandon chess for a game of checkers during Camp Shamrock.

When Irish Christians and missionaries, including Jack Exum, launched Camp Shamrock in 1966, they intended it as a Bible-based holiday for church members’ children, says Leslie McKay, one of the camp’s directors and a member of the Church of Christ in Coleraine, Northern Ireland. Those early campers invited their friends — many of whom didn’t attend church regularly — and the camp took on a new purpose.

“The unchurched kids, at least in a week here, they see something different,” McKay says. “They keep coming back, and there must be something they’re coming back for.”

Dylan, a 12-year-old camper from Northern Ireland, is here for the fourth year. He loves the swimming, sports and games, he says, but he also enjoys the Bible studies and devotionals.

When asked why he comes back to Camp Shamrock, he puts it simply: “Because a lot of questions I can’t ask at home get answered.”

CAMPFIRES, SHOWERS, BAPTISMS

After a day of skits, tough questions and water slides, the boys gather around the campfire for a devotional.

As the counselors sing “There’s a fish in the nets in the hands of the men in the boat on the Sea of Galilee,” some campers sing along and mimic their hand motions. Others sit and watch, a bit perplexed.



Campers and counselors gather around a fire for a devotional at Camp Shamrock. After the weeklong camp for boys ages 8 to 16, volunteers host a week of camp for girls.

“By the middle of the camp, they’ll be singing along,” says McKay’s wife, Janet, who also volunteers at Camp Shamrock. “It’s like a big family by the time they go home, singing and taking part. They never get embarrassed.”

Some even get baptized and return to the camp as counselors. Sheba Clinton started coming to the girls’ camp, which follows the boys’, when she was 9. Now she’s one of the camp’s directors and a member of the Coleraine Church of Christ.



Clinton

Clinton, who grew up in an era of bomb scares and anger in Northern Ireland, says the camp has played a small role in creating understanding among people who grew up thinking the worst of each other. Camp Shamrock teaches that “there should be no reason for us not to get on,” she says.

For Kelly Thompson, a visit to the campsite brings back “just good memories from my childhood,” she says.

“It was just good fun,” she recalls, at least “until somebody made me get a shower. I was the dirty one.”

The lessons she learned here convinced her to take the plunge and be baptized. Now she attends the Church of Christ in Hollywood, just south of

Northern Ireland’s capital, Belfast. She brought her 5-year-old son, Billy, to see Camp Shamrock. In a few years, he’ll be a camper.

“I probably wouldn’t be a Christian if I hadn’t come here,” she says

CATHOLIC, PROTESTANT OR NEITHER?

Kelly McKee, another Texan who served in Northern Ireland with Adventures in Missions, saved for years so she could return and serve as a cook and counselor at Camp Shamrock.

“The most heartbreaking thing I had to do was get on the plane and leave here,” she says. She’s seen campers grow and mature at Camp Shamrock, including her friend Jessica Brown, now a fellow counselor.

Brown, 18, was born just before the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, which signaled the end of The Troubles in Northern Ireland.

“It used to be rare to see Catholics and Protestants walking down the street,” says Brown, who attends the Coleraine Church of Christ. “It’s different now.”

When asked if she considers herself a Protestant, Brown pauses.

McKee chimes in, “I think she’s just a Christian.”

With a wee grin, her friend nods.

WEBSITE: www.campshamrock.org



Bert Ritchie talks to counselors and cooks during a break at Camp Shamrock. The Irish-born preacher says that serving at the camp is a highlight of his 40-plus years in ministry.

A minister of reconciliation: Bert Ritchie’s fight for peace spans decades

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

COLERAINE, Northern Ireland

In this small corner of County Londonderry, about 25 believers gather for Sunday worship at the Church of Christ

where Bert Ritchie preaches.

Their numbers are down a bit, as several have traveled two hours south to set up Camp Shamrock, which starts tomorrow.

Nonetheless, the sparse crowd fills the humble auditorium with a cappella hymns, sung in a rich Irish brogue.

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let your love increase.

Ritchie, a soft-spoken 64-year-old, rarely seen without suspenders, stands at the pulpit and talks about his preference for potatoes over pasta. (After all, he is Irish.)

He turns the discussion to the gift of

free will and the book of Galatians, in which the apostle Paul urges Jewish and Gentile believers to put aside their differences and focus on their common kinship in Christ.

The sermon mirrors Ritchie’s ministry to his divided home-

land, where people claiming loyalty to Catholic or Protestant churches waged a bitter, decades-long war that cost more than 3,600 lives and left countless others wounded.

In Northern Ireland, “everyone is linked to someone who suffered an atrocity,” he says.

Camp Shamrock, where he’s served children from Protestant and Catholic homes since the 1970s, allows youths to experience the values of Christian faith without the political overtones. In recent years, Ritchie also has helped coordinate an interfaith council in Northern Ireland,

See **RITCHIE**, Page 14



Bert Ritchie uses a van’s mirror for a shave at Camp Shamrock in the 1970s.



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RITCHIE: Peace process requires grace

FROM PAGE 13
designed to bring healing and reconciliation to a land long divided.

MINISTRY IN A TIME OF WAR

Ritchie was a self-described long-haired hooligan on a motorbike before he met members of Churches of Christ. But he studied the Bible with them, was baptized and enrolled at the North Ireland Bible School, where he studied under Irish evangelist and author Jim McGuiggan.

He graduated in 1972, the same year that 13 Catholic protesters and bystanders were killed by British soldiers during a demonstration in Londonderry. "Bloody Sunday" — later immortalized by Irish rock band U2 — heightened tensions on the island and worsened "The Troubles."

For Ritchie, preaching peace, love and forgiveness was difficult as the Irish Republican Army clashed with vigilante groups fighting "for God and Ulster."

He ministered briefly in the U.S. and considered moving his family there permanently. Instead, he decided to continue to preach in his homeland — praying for an end to the war.

Those prayers were answered when, in 1994, the IRA declared a ceasefire. Four years later, the Good Friday Agreement was signed and the violence subsided.

David Trimble, leader of the pro-British Ulster Unionists, lauded the agreement and said, "I see a great opportunity for us to start a healing process."

So did Ritchie.

CHANGING THE HEART OF A NATION

Now, 15 years after the Good Friday Agreement, signs of the ages-old division remain.

Camp Shamrock coincides with a month of parades in Northern Ireland, celebrating the 17th century victory of Protestant King William of Orange over Catholic King James II. Supporters of Britain display the Ulster banner, bearing a red hand and crown, alongside the Union Jack. In Catholic neighborhoods, the flag of the Republic of Ireland flies.



Bert Ritchie talks about peace and faith with Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams in 2006.

PHOTO PROVIDED

There's no flag over Ritchie's home, near the village of Bushmills. As chair of the Coleraine Borough Churches Forum, he interacts with Protestants, Catholics and other faith groups to build understanding and community.

The group has parlayed with the president of Ireland and Gerry Adams, the leader of political party Sinn Fein, once banned from British airwaves.

Participants in the forum "don't compromise belief systems," Ritchie says,

but agree to listen to each other and learn. On occasion, they spend time in prayer.

"For a nation moving out of conflict, sharing a room and praying together is a big achievement," he says.

Fiona Bate, a member of the Coleraine Church of Christ, says that Ritchie's ministry benefits the congregation and

people across Northern Ireland.

"My only concern is that he slices himself too thinly," she says, "but he is always there for people, and despite him being 'The Quiet Man,' he is really effective."

Ritchie remains firm in his belief that, though "politics change a nation's infrastructure," only "religion changes its heart."

Before leaving for Camp Shamrock, he emphasizes that point in his Sunday sermon about the apostle Paul.

Paul, once known as Saul, was a member of "the Jewish equivalent of the Taliban," Ritchie preaches. Perhaps he wasn't all that different from the radicals who terrorized Northern Ireland not long ago. Saul dragged Christians to their deaths, believing "that problems are best dealt with by eliminating them," he says. "We cannot overemphasize the ferocity of this man."

After his conversion on the road to Damascus, however, Saul's attitude changed to one of tolerance.

"If God, through his grace, can change Saul of Tarsus, then there's hope for me," Ritchie says. And, when it comes to grace, "unless you have been the recipient, you will never be the instrument of healing."

SAME-SEX: Churches urged to create 'safe places' for conversations

FROM PAGE 1

"I was reminded that this issue cannot be approached one-dimensionally, that is, to declare it to be sin but go no further," Abshier said. "Homosexuality is sin, and that is a starting point. But the Great Commandment and the Great Commission compel us to do more."

Too often, Christians touched by same-sex attraction — either personally or by a family member — avoid talking about it, said Donna Hoyack, whose husband, Gary, serves as a Northside elder.

"There is such fear and stigma associated with same-sex attraction or a gay child or spouse," she said. "When same-sex attraction can be treated as a reality that can lead to sin, the stigma can be removed, and same-sex attraction can be addressed in light of truth and in a loving way."

•••••

"God is good. Gays are bad. Read your Bible."

"I kissed a girl and I liked it. Then I went to hell."

"Homosexuals are possessed by demons."

The signs flashed across the big screens in the Northside auditorium. "These are real signs that real people have carried around in the name of Christ," Sally Gary told more than 200 conference participants. "This is the perception of Christianity."

It's a perception that must change before Christians can have "any voice about God's design for our sexuality," said Gary, director of CenterPeace, an Abilene, Texas-based ministry that provides support and resources for people who experience same-sex attraction.

This summer's national meeting of Campus Ministry United, which is associated with Churches of Christ, also featured sessions on relating to those who struggle with same-sex attraction.

"If a Christian wants to make a positive impact on the LGBT community, they should make a gay friend instead of holding up a sign," said Wes Woodell, a Missouri church planter who attended the campus ministry meeting at Harding University in Searcy, Ark.

Teenage members of Churches of Christ perceive judgmental attitudes as hampering the fellowship's spread of the Gospel, according to the 2012 Church and Relationship Study by



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Sally Gary shares her story of experiencing same-sex attraction as minister David Allen listens.

Oklahoma Christian University's Intergenerational Faith Center.

In their book "unChristian," prominent evangelical researchers David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons reported that young people ages 16 to 29 frequently see Christians as anti-homosexuals who show contempt for gays and lesbians.

"And they're often right," Allen said of that perception. "We have to start changing that narrative if we hope to show people the love of Jesus."

Across the nation, some churches and ministry leaders are taking steps to change that narrative:

- **The Landmark Church of Christ** in Montgomery, Ala., sponsors the Barnabas Group, a support group for individuals who experience same-sex attraction and their family members.

The group offers a safe place to discuss struggles, said Tony Adcock, a Landmark member who with his wife, Jo, facilitates the meetings. Group leaders do not claim to change anyone's sexual orientation, Adcock said, although he believes that's possible in some cases.

"We spend a lot of time in prayer, but it's not to 'pray the gay away,'" he said. "I feel like if we can get into the work of the Holy Spirit in these individuals' lives, then they can change, even if that desire is still there and they choose to become celibate."

- **A half-dozen campus ministry** students at the Crossings Church — a

Church of Christ in Wentzville, Mo. — talk openly about same-sex attraction, campus minister Kerry Cox said.

"They have to fight temptation, just like any of our heterosexual people do," Cox said. "It's just like struggling with lust."

Among those students: John Copeland, who said the support shown by fellow Christians gave him the courage to change his lifestyle, including breaking up with his boyfriend.

But choosing to live as God intended was not easy, Copeland said.

"I had to sit and watch the man that I loved cry as I told him I was leaving him," he said.

- **At the Northwest Church of Christ** in Chicago, minister Patrick Odum preached a sermon titled "Jason Collins and Jesus Christ."

In the sermon, Odum encouraged his congregation to view people as much more than their sexual identity.

"It seems to me that most of our churches have had a 'don't ask, don't tell' policy concerning individual members while letting the current political discourse about gay marriage frame our public statements," Odum said.

"I think churches need to be thinking about how to reframe the discussion in terms of sexual morality," he added. "We also should be talking about love, compassion, support and grace for our brothers and sisters who are dealing with same-sex attraction."

- **The board of trustees of** Members of Churches of Christ for Scouting (MCCS) vehemently opposed the decision to allow openly gay Scouts.

However, the national association is urging church-sponsored Scout units to "stay the course" and "continue to be a positive witness for Christ in the world of Scouting" rather than leave.

- **By reaching out to people "at the margins of society,"** the Agape Church of Christ in Portland, Ore., naturally connects with people who identify as gay and lesbian, minister Ron Clark said. Agape also partners with same-sex organizations in addressing abuse and trafficking in Portland.

The church works to create an environment where anyone can come and feel loved, accepted and able to wrestle with personal issues, Clark said.

"At Agape, we state that we have a conservative view of the Bible, but all people are welcome," he said.

At the conference, Sally Gary described experiencing same-sex attraction growing up in the Tenth and Broad Church of Christ in Wichita Falls, Texas, and later as a student at Abilene Christian University.

Through counseling, Gary came to understand a multitude of influences on her sexual identity. Her circumstances included less-than-perfect family dynamics, but she stresses that no one factor determines sexual orientation and that each person has a different story.

"We haven't even begun to fully explore the impact that biology may have on our sexuality," she said.

Gary credits God's redemptive power with helping her reconcile and heal her relationship with her family and pursue the Lord's will in her life, even though she still struggles.

"I'm kind of like the woman at the well. She couldn't go back to the village and keep her mouth shut," said Gary, 51, who details her personal journey in the book "Loves God, Likes Girls."

Stories such as Gary's illuminate the complexity of same-sex attraction and the importance of avoiding overly simplistic answers, said Allen, the Northside minister.

"One of the most important points," he said, "was the need for us to spend a great deal of time listening and asking questions rather than attacking and condemning people."

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BOBBY ROSS JR.

Maria Dolores Salamanca hugs Eyton Perez, the 19-year-old son of minister Efrain Perez and his wife, Martha, before a Vacation Bible School program at the Almendro Church of Christ.

For a Nicaraguan church, a revival

ONCE-STRUGGLING CONGREGATION finds new life through the work of native missionaries and their American supporters.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

MASAYA, Nicaragua

The front door of the Sacuanjoche Church of Christ swings open.

Children — 260 of them — stream out of the cramped concrete building with a tin roof.

Wearing freshly painted T-shirts that declare “God is our faithful provider” in Spanish, the boys and girls carry Bible-themed crafts and sack puppets with Jesus’ hair colored brown, orange and even blue.

These young residents of Central

America’s poorest country — most of whom live in homes with dirt floors — giggle as they dig into plastic goodie bags filled with coloring books, crayons, candy, stuffed animals, toothpaste and toothbrushes.

It’s the final afternoon of Vacation Bible School in a busy neighborhood where bikes, motorcycles, small cars and horse-drawn carts share a street paved with hand-laid bricks.

In recent years, this congregation in the heart of a city of 150,000 — about 45 minutes southeast of Managua, the nation’s capital — has experienced a

spiritual and numerical revival.

“It’s a 180-degree change from being not unified at all to now being a full, one-for-all congregation,” said member Eduardo Ortega, speaking through a translator.

Just a few years ago, internal strife caused the church to dwindle to less than a dozen adult members, said Ortega, an anesthesiologist who helped found the 15-year-old congregation.

“The previous preacher thought that he owned the church,” Ortega said, blaming the turmoil on poor leadership.

But now, Sunday attendance tops 70

adults, he said. Weekly giving has quadrupled, hitting 1,700 *cordobas* — about 70 American dollars in a country where many live on just a few dollars a day.

The church has grown to the point that kids must gather outside for Sunday school, sitting in tiny plastic chairs arranged on tree-shaded patches of dirt.

Ortega and other members attribute the Sacuanjoche church’s revival largely to three native Nicaraguan missionaries — José Guido, Juan Pablo Perez and Gabriel Rivera — and the American supporters who sent them.

CONTINUED



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Austin Hammonds and Robert Brown toss a girl into the air and prepare to catch her as they play with children at a Vacation Bible School at the Almendro Church of Christ.

A coffee farm sows the seed



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Two girls play in the rain under the awning of the Sacuanjoché Church of Christ in Masaya as they await the start of that afternoon's Vacation Bible School.



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Kyle Mauck visits with three boys during Vacation Bible School at the Almendro Church of Christ, which grew out of a gospel meeting at a nearby coffee farm.

CONTINUED

"They've been more than a blessing," Ortega said of the missionary team, which began work in Masaya in 2010. "They've been the greatest help."

A SCRIPT FROM ABOVE?

It all started on a Nicaraguan coffee farm.

A decade ago, Joe Romero — an American with a passion for Latin American missions — decided to raise coffee as a means of self-sustainable support.

He moved to a rural area about an hour south of Managua, between San Marcos and Diriamba.

In 2004, three large Churches of Christ in Managua — the Ducuali, Tipitapa and Villa Alemania congregations — organized an evangelistic campaign and conducted a nightly gospel meeting at Romero's farm.

A new congregation — the Almendro Church of Christ — grew out of that meeting, which produced two dozen baptisms. Managua native Giovanni Tellez, who had served as a minister for the Villa Alemania church, came to work with the farm church.

The Seminole Church of Christ in Oklahoma sponsors his ministry.

Between their junior and senior years at Oklahoma Christian University, David and Kim Romero — Joe Romero's son and daughter-in-law — traveled to Nicaragua to participate in the inaugural campaign.

After graduation, the couple decided to join the work as full-time missionaries. Friends and fellow Christians in the young marrieds' class at the Edmond Church of Christ — the Romeros' home congregation in Oklahoma — came up with

half their salary. The church's elders agreed to provide the rest.

On the farm, the Romeros met Guido, Perez and Rivera — the future missionaries.

Guido, the oldest of seven children, grew up in Leon, a city in northwestern Nicaragua.

His family raised crops such as corn and beans, and he learned at an early age how to work with tools and oxen. At times, demands of farm life kept him from going to school.

His mother, Patricia, gave her life to Christ when he was a young boy. His



DUSTIN RISLEY

Pictured, from left, are Juan Pablo, Isaac, Fatima, Keyling and Rebecca Perez; José Guido; and Cruz, Jeremy and Gabriel Rivera. Cruz Rivera is Guido's sister.



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Neighbors can be seen through the open-air window as a Masaya resident joins a mission group from Oklahoma in painting her home. Other service projects included installing concrete floors, erecting walls and building outdoor showers/garden planters.

Biblical Institute of Central America (BICA), a two-year preacher training school with campuses in Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala.

Their typical schedule at the Jinotepe, Nicaragua, campus involved three weeks of studies followed by weeklong door-knocking campaigns in various cities.

As the young men prepared to graduate in 2010, David and Kim Romero contemplated their own future.

By 2009, the American couple had begun working in Matagalpa, a hilly agricultural community in northern Nicaragua. There, they became close with minister Efraim Perez and his wife, Martha, who struggled to make ends meet for their family of five.

The Romeros grappled with whether they could reach more souls by returning to the U.S. and supporting Nicaraguan-born missionaries.

"You have to overcome the language and the culture," Kim Romero said of serving as a foreign missionary. "It takes a lot for the people to accept you and for you to understand the culture, but there are plenty of Nicaraguans who are

willing and able to teach if they could get the support."

From the time the Romeros' class took on their support, members began making annual mission trips to this small country the size of Mississippi.

Besides mixing concrete and organizing Vacation Bible Schools, the Oklahomans developed close relationships with their Nicaraguan brothers and sisters — including Guido, Juan Pablo Perez and Rivera.

"It was great because we got to see them in action and see them grow up as young men, so we had a high trust level with them," said Kyle Mauck, a deacon who serves on the Edmond church's missions committee.

BOSS, CHIEF ... AND PREACHER

"*El jefe*" is a Spanish term for "the



DUSTIN RISLEY

Kim and David Romero remain active in supporting Nicaraguan mission efforts.

boss."

Nicaraguans often refer to "*el cacique*," which means "the chief."

Among the 120 or so Churches of Christ in this country of 6 million people, both words frequently apply to the preacher. Only a handful of congregations — including the three large Managua churches — have elders.

"That's been the tradition here in the church, of just having that one individual," Guido said. "There aren't elderships because the preacher is afraid of losing that control, that power."

Some of that tradition can be traced to the role of priests in the predominantly Roman Catholic nation, he said.

When the Romeros chose to return home, the Edmond church turned to Guido, Perez and Rivera — who formed a missionary team to



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Hundreds of children pack into the Sacuanjoche Church of Christ in Masaya, Nicaragua, for Vacation Bible School. They sing and enjoy a Bible lesson before breaking into groups for activities.

'My heart is going with them,' church member says

CONTINUED

bolster small, struggling congregations and teach the biblical model of leadership.

"A lot of people have had bad experiences with supporting locals, but we knew the quality of guys that we had," Mauck said. "We knew their love for God."

Before the team's arrival, the Sacuanjoche church suffered from years of unstable leadership, said Tellez, who has helped mentor the missionaries.

"They had four or five preachers. Every year they got a new preacher," said Tellez, speaking in Spanish. "But whenever these three guys came, they strengthened the church."

Tellez has helped his own congrega-

tion — the Almendro church — grow to 115 adult members and 70 children.

The congregation's VBS this summer drew 500 children. Nonetheless, he sees Nicaragua's improving economy as detrimental to ministry.

"Now, the people are a little bit more stable. They've got their cell phones and their cars," said Tellez, who came of age in the 1980s, the decade of the Iran-Contra scandal, when the U.S. used profits from secret arms sales to fund guerillas opposed to Nicaragua's Marxist government, the Sandinistas.

"Whenever the need they have has been fulfilled, they don't pay a lot of attention to God. Every day, it becomes a little bit more difficult to win a soul," he said, quipping that Nicaragua needs more earthquakes and war.

TIME TO SAY GOODBYE

Back in Masaya, Guido, Perez and Rivera focus on evangelizing the community, restoring fallen-away Christians and training leaders to oversee areas such as visitation, new converts and children's programs.

"The idea was to get more members involved in different parts of serving the church," Guido said. "From the very beginning, we wanted to share this responsibility so it didn't fall on just one person."

But soon, the missionaries will move on. After working with the Sacuanjoche church for three years, they believe it has reached a point where it can survive — and thrive — without them.

The congregation has a new preacher, Gerson Bravo. Although it

has not appointed elders, the church is making positive steps in that direction, Ortega said.

Still, he'll miss Guido, Perez and Rivera. His voice fills with emotion as he discusses their departure to work with a Church of Christ in nearby Masatepe: "My heart is going with them."

So are the Oklahomans who have helped lead VBS here for three straight summers. Next year, they'll be going to a different city — and sharing the story of Jesus with different children.

"Even this year, a lot of us have pulled back and let the locals lead all of the crafts," said Audrey Mauck, Kyle's wife. "So at this point, with the missionaries leaving, the church will be fine here."

Even so, she said, "It'll be hard not to see our friends."

A conversation with Calvin H. Bowers

LONGTIME LOS ANGELES minister, educator and author discusses race relations and challenges facing Churches of Christ.

BY LYNN McMILLON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Calvin H. Bowers has served as a minister, college administrator, professor, author and father. At 81, he still preaches for the Figueroa Church of Christ in Los Angeles. His experience, education and wisdom keep him in demand.

Born in Selmer, Tenn., he was the eighth of Ollie Bowers' nine children. While attending Pepperdine University, Calvin Bowers was hired by the Figueroa church as minister of education, then associate minister. From 1994 to 2010, he served as the successor to R.N. Hogan in the pulpit of this historic congregation, which began in 1938. He continued his education at Pepperdine, earning two master's degrees before completing a doctorate in 1981 at the University of Southern California.

On a two-year leave from Figueroa, he served as academic dean of Southwestern Christian College in Terrell, Texas, from 1967 to 1969. He then returned to Pepperdine, where he served as dean of ethnic and urban studies from 1969 to 1976. Later, he served as director of equal opportunity and professor of communication and religion from 1976 to 2004. Currently, he is special assistant to the president of Pepperdine.

He is the author of "Realizing the California Dream, a history of African American churches in Los Angeles from 1902 to 2000." In 2012, he published "Ollie's Kids: A Family's Journey," which chronicles his family's remarkable history.

What are your experiences with race relations within Churches of Christ?

When I became a member of the Church of Christ at the age of 14, I was optimistic about the role and future of the church. I wanted to be a part of carrying the Gospel of Jesus into all the world.

The superintendent of schools in McNairy County, Tenn., where I lived, was a member of the Church of Christ. He wanted me to be the first African-American to enroll at a Christian college

20 miles from my home. The response came back stating that the school had no provision for Negro students and recommended that I go to a high school in Nashville, even though I had graduated from high school.

In 1955, after graduating from Millikin University in Decatur, Ill., I tried to enroll in graduate school in all of our Christian colleges and was only accepted at Pepperdine. When I arrived in Los Angeles, I did not know a single person. I met some benevolent people at Pepperdine, where I completed two master's degrees.

In 1969, I began teaching at Pepperdine. This gave me an opportunity to develop a curriculum reflecting many cultures.

My approach in working with people of other races is to realize that each culture and subculture has its unique set of problems. To begin, we must admit and proceed to work on our problems together, preferably in a Christian context.

African-American and white churches often seem to be almost unaware of each other. How can they develop stronger connections?

First, there must be a desire to come together, talk and just get to know each other. This will help to reduce stereotypes that have existed for years.

Then, we need to find ways to plan and work together as true brothers and sisters in Christ. If this is genuinely done, we will learn to trust each other and do great works together.

The motive for all such action must be love for God and fellow man. Shallow, occasional gestures do little good in the long run. Such efforts should be pursued with mutual respect.

What is the greatest challenge to being with the same congregation for 56 years?

If I had to choose one, I guess it would be trying to keep the congregation relevant and growing. We have trained many workers and developed many programs like the bus ministry, our zone program and Christian Pal program. We've lost many quality workers. Some have passed away, and others have moved on or



PHOTO PROVIDED

Calvin H. Bowers and the Figueroa Church of Christ celebrate the congregation's 75th anniversary Sept. 20-22 in Los Angeles.

'There will always be predominantly African-American and predominantly white churches. The key is that we have the freedom to worship either way.'

Calvin Bowers

grown too old to continue serving.

In trying to meet this challenge, I have often said you may find another person to fill the seat, but it is extremely difficult to find someone to take the place of a trained, dedicated worker.

What are the main challenges faced by African-American churches today?

I cannot speak for all African-American Churches of Christ, but from limited experiences, I may offer some observations.

One, we need to improve our study of the Bible so that more relevant Bible school literature and effective teaching can be developed that leads to faithful application of Scripture to daily living.

Two, the goal of the African-American church cannot be to become a microcosm of its white counterpart. In 1933, Dr. Carter G. Woodson wrote a book called "The Mis-Education of the Negro." I would suggest that both black and white Christians read it.

Three, African-American churches of Christ must marshal, challenge and utilize their professional members by improving their spirituality and increasing their involvement in the work of God. This does not imply using unfaithful people who have advanced educations (2 Timothy 2:1-2).

Four, African-American churches must reach out to other cultures and races to help all to become new in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

What needs to happen for Churches of Christ to become truly integrated?

First, there must be a realization that Jesus came to break down all walls to make us one (Ephesians 2:14-16). Second, we must realize that our unity in Christ enhances worldwide evangelism and that disunity does the opposite (John 17:20-21). Third, when we show prejudice as Peter did, we do not walk according to the Gospel (Galatians 2:11-14).

Realizing these basic truths, we must obey what Jesus wants and make every effort to be like him. There must be efforts to rid our hearts of all forms of prejudice. We must try to understand others in the context of their cultural environment. For example, oppression was the crucible out of which the black experience in this country was born.

I see *The Christian Chronicle* making the right moves in helping us to understand each other. Such efforts must be duplicated and extended. Now is the time to act for, according to Edmund Burke, "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing."

It is my belief that ministry grows out of the context of its environment. In other words, there will always be predominantly African-American and predominantly white churches. The key is that we have the freedom to worship either way.



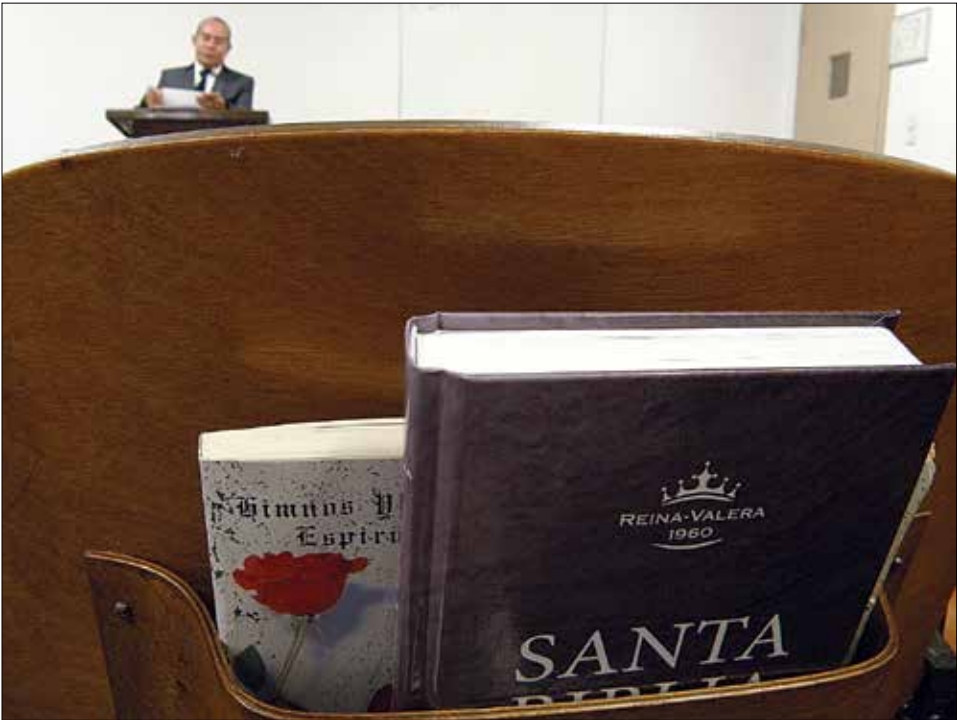
PHOTO PROVIDED
Minister's wife Janelle Baisden and children outside the church building in the 1960s.



TED PARKS
Ed Wilson introduces children at the 16th and Decatur church, accompanied by Donnis Crump, as children make a monthly presentation of canned goods during worship.



TED PARKS
Donnis Crump presents a Sunday-morning Bible lesson to Karen Vasquez.



TED PARKS
Bibles and hymnals in Spanish facilitate worship for 16th and Decatur church's Hispanic congregation. The church began outreach to Spanish-speaking people in the early 1980s.

16TH AND DECATUR: Congregation yearns for multicultural growth

FROM PAGE 3
right here,” said member Anita Charles. “It’s a beautiful bunch of people. It’s trying to be diverse — and stay diverse — and keep an open mind about Christ.”
The countries represented span the globe, including the Philippines, Nigeria, Liberia, Ethiopia, Grenada, Guyana, Trinidad, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, and El Salvador, said minister Ed Wilson.
“In some ways, it makes evangelism a little bit more difficult. In some ways, it makes it a little bit easier,” Wilson said of the church’s diversity. When guests see a variety of people, they know they’re welcome, too, he explained.
But relating to many different needs and customs takes perseverance. Wilson remembers attending the traditional Nigerian wedding of a 16th and Decatur member with his wife, Carolyn. “I didn’t realize that it’s common for those weddings to start two hours late, and ... it’s not unusual for them to be three and four hours long,” he recalled. “We got there at 7, thinking that, by 8 o’clock or 9, we would be ready to come on back home. And at 11:30, we still hadn’t seen the bride or the groom.”

‘A BOLD DECISION TO STAY WHERE THEY WERE’
The diversity at 16th and Decatur developed decades after the church’s beginning. According to a history of Washington-area churches by Dan Groghan, whose parents attended the congregation that would become 16th and Decatur, the church started in January 1913 in the home of Thomas F. Colvin, who had moved to the capital from Round Rock, Texas.
Gathering in various venues — including a Masonic temple — the congregation bought a building in 1919 and became the 14th Street Church of



TED PARKS
Greeters Leonard Vandergriff and Cathie Lancaster Sears chat before Sunday worship.

Christ. After World War II, the church built new facilities nearby.
Long-term members find it difficult to pinpoint when the congregation fully opened its doors to African-Americans. Entering neighboring Howard University in the mid 1950s, Raymond Dickey remembered leading singing on occasion at 16th and Decatur. But his participation as an African-American came at a time when the congregation was early on its journey toward inclusion.
The church had previously helped establish another congregation, the nearby 13th and Irving church, as the destination for black Christians who wanted to worship in the neighborhood, according to Dickey’s recollection and other accounts.
“Thirteenth and Irving became the main ‘black church’ in the area,” he said. After graduating from Howard in 1961, Dickey left for Air Force duty for a few years, then returned. He led singing at 13th and Irving before receiving an invitation to assist 16th and Decatur.
“I started singing and helping in worship, and then it became a part of me,” he said. “I’ve been there since.” Though it happened before his time

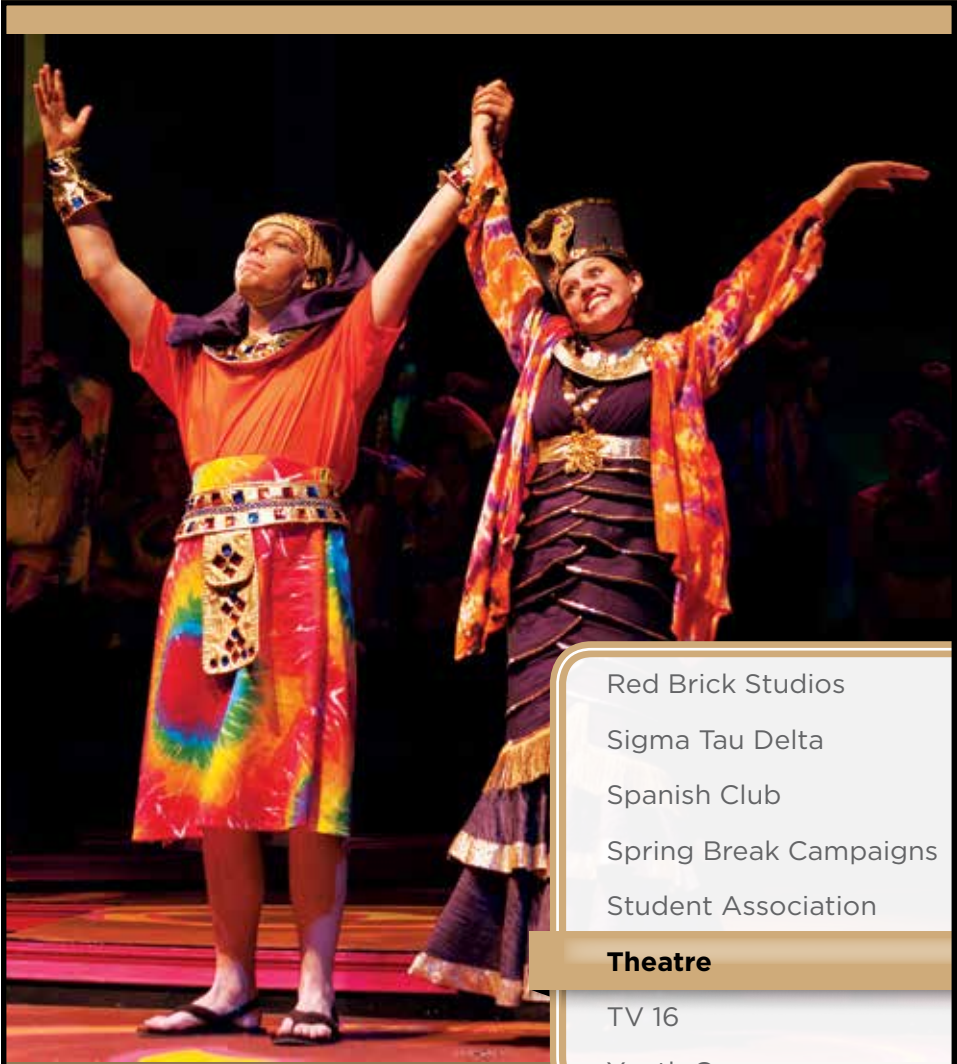
at 16th and Decatur, Wilson called attention to the impact of the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. “There were riots and all kinds of unrest in the city,” he said.
Wilson linked the elders’ decision to remain in the city with their desire for sharing the Gospel. “It was just a bold decision to stay where they were and to evangelize the neighbors,” he said.
Joe Baisden, associate minister from 1965 to 1967, said a key part of his responsibility was to reach out to the community as membership dropped due to whites fleeing to the suburbs during the tense 1960s.
SERVING A TRANSITORY, MULTICULTURAL MIX
Though crossing racial barriers was a gradual process, the congregation had long attempted to be a friendly place.
The church’s oldest member, Ethel Strube, started attending in the early 1940s at age 20, newly arrived in Washington from business college in Pennsylvania.
“There were a lot of people coming in here to work then, and the church grew quite a bit from the young people coming in,” Strube said.
“We had picnics down in the park,”

she said. “It was just a nice time for our young people to get together and get to know each other.”
Two decades later, Barbara Roy, 21 at the time, started attending 16th and Decatur, also drawn to Washington for work. “The first Sunday I came, two ladies came to get me,” she recalled. “I think people are still friendly. ... I know for myself that I’m loved.”
As 16th and Decatur leaves behind a century of ministry, its welcoming approach continues to confront the demographic realities of a changing city.
Attendance was highest around the time of the congregation’s move in the early 1950s. Membership was “considerably over 500” in 1954, according to a booklet prepared for the 100th anniversary.
Valencia Philyaw and fifth-grader Dylan Johnson prepare refreshments for the youth chorus during the Sunday school hour.



TED PARKS
Valencia Philyaw and fifth-grader Dylan Johnson prepare refreshments for the youth chorus during the Sunday school hour.

versary. As more congregations formed in the area, attendance dropped to about 350. Wilson estimates an average Sunday crowd now at 85 to 100.
“You get people early in their careers or early in their marriages ... and then you lose them,” Crump said. “Those people come, and then something else draws them away.”
Matthew and Ingrid Quigley, who attended 16th and Decatur from 2005 until Matthew accepted a U.S. government job in Beijing this year, are a case in point. The couple was part of a young adults ministry that met at each others’ homes.
“Unfortunately, by the time we left, at least four of the young adults that were faithful attendees when we started had since started attending other churches,” Ingrid Quigley said.
“I do think it’s harder for smaller congregations to meet the needs of each demographic group,” she added, “but with God all things are possible.”
Despite the challenges, Wilson hopes for 16th and Decatur to grow in a way consistent with its uniquely welcoming character.
“To me, it’s always the hope to build up a congregation,” he said. “I would really like to continue to build it in a multicultural way.”
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CAMPUS MINISTRY

GATORS FOR CHRIST

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — Gators for Christ members build wheelchair ramps as part of monthly service projects.

The University of Florida campus ministry, associated with the University City Church of Christ, has been doing the projects for about 10 years.

“There are many handicapped folks who cannot access their own homes very easily, so we try to make a difference in their lives by giving our time and resources,” campus minister Donny Dillon said.

The ramps have helped lead people to Christ, Dillon said.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

CHRIST’S HAVEN FOR CHILDREN

KELLER, Texas — Christ’s Haven has opened a “teen mom cottage” to serve mothers and children. Up to four teenagers and their children will live in the cottage.

The program will provide for physical, medical and educational needs of the residents, the ministry’s newsletter said. In addition, the mothers will benefit from parenting classes, life skill classes and counseling.

WESTVIEW BOYS HOME

HOLLIS, Okla. — Westview received the 2013 Gov. Frank Keating and Carrie Keating Leonard Award for Youth Development, presented by the Oklahoma Center for Nonprofits.

Westview, which is associated with Churches of Christ, has served more than 2,000 at-risk boys since its founding in 1956, executive director Ron Bruner said.

MEDIA

HOUSE TO HOUSE/HEART TO HEART

JACKSONVILLE, Ala. — The direct mail ministry recently celebrated sharing the Gospel with the entire state.

Nearly 300 Churches of Christ cooperated to send House to House/Heart to Heart publications to 1.9 million Alabama households.

Next, the ministry hopes to reach all of Tennessee.

“To date, we have covered about 25 percent of Tennessee,” said Matt



STEDDON SIKES

Feeling the Spirit at York College’s Soul Quest

More than 400 teens gather at York College in Nebraska for Soul Quest, described as a week of fun and spiritual growth. Through Bible classes, service projects, worship times and fellowship, hearts are touched and souls stirred, said Chrystal Houston, York’s director of alumni and communication.

MINISTRY TRAINING

SUNSET INTERNATIONAL BIBLE INSTITUTE

LUBBOCK, Texas — Sammy Flanary, a longtime minister and trainer for international missions, died July 11 at age 72.

For the past 16 years, he served as missions coordinator with the international division and advancement department of Sunset.

He was involved in training programs in Athens, Greece, and Donetsk, Ukraine, as well as mission work in Paris and Cairo.

Flanary

“Sammy was a skilled teacher of the Word and a constant soul winner,” Sunset officials said. “Through the years he has excelled in mentoring younger men, who will undoubtedly continue his mission efforts.”

SPOTLIGHT

Bible dean named

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — G. Scott Gleaves has been named dean of the V.P. Black College of Biblical Studies at Faulkner University, where his college experience began a generation ago.

“What a thrill to be dean at the university where my walk with Christ basically began,” Gleaves said.

He became a Christian during high school and came to then-Alabama Christian College as a Bible major “with hardly any knowledge of the Bible,” he recalled.

Gleaves succeeds Cecil May Jr., who retired to assume a new role as dean emeritus and focus more time on writing.



Gleaves

Wallin, a House to House/Heart to Heart staff member. “Our current plan is to finish the other 75 percent by 2020, although we are hoping we can finish it sooner.”

Nationally, House to House/Heart to Heart publications reach 2.5 million households each month.

IN SEARCH OF THE LORD’S WAY

EDMOND, Okla. — “Search” has begun appearing on Inspiration International, a network that goes to 150 countries, speaker Phil Sanders said.

“The Lord has opened a marvelous door, and for the first time in my knowledge the Gospel of Christ will be preached each week throughout every corner of the United States and in 161 other countries by a television ministry among (Churches of Christ),” Sanders said. “By television and radio, ‘Search’ virtually circles the globe.”

Church of Christ Family Reunion Lamar, CO

Lamar, CO Church of Christ

is having a family reunion on
August 18, 2013.

Activities are planned from
9:00 am to 6:00 pm at the building at
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**Aug. 3 Preston Road School of
Preaching/Center for Christian
Education.** All-School Reunion. Preston
Road Church of Christ in Dallas, Texas.
Contact chrisv@cscoc.com.

**Aug. 1-4 57th Annual National Campus
Ministry Seminar.** "Change the Campus >
Change the World." University of Delaware
in Newark, Del. Hosted by Blue Hens for
Christ. Contact www.campuscrosswalk.org
or (302) 766-3003.

**Aug. 9-11 60th Anniversary, Eielson
church in North Pole, Alaska.** Contact
Don Robinson at (907) 488-6664 or
dhrobinson@yahoo.com.

**Aug. 11 50th Anniversary, Concord
Street church in Orlando, Fla.** Contact
Halo Fernandez at hferm12@earthlink.net.

**Aug. 18 Lamar, Colo., Church of Christ
Family Reunion.** Contact Joyce Neuhold at
(719) 336-7652 or joyceneuhold@cminet.net.

**Aug. 30-Sept. 2 37th Annual National
Christian Singles Seminar.** "Becoming
One in the One." Hosted by North Las Vegas
church. Contact www.churchofchristncss.com.

Aug. 30-Sept. 2 Quest Retreat (English).
Wisconsin Christian Youth Camp. Contact
Jim Frost at (312) 420-859, jimfrostphoto@yahoo.com or www.wcyc.org.

**Sept. 8 40th Anniversary, Christian
Care Center, Mesquite, Texas.** Contact
(972) 686-2400.

**Sept. 10-13 National Christian
Camping Workshop.** Maywood Christian
Camp, Hamilton, Ala. Contact www.naccamps.org or (205) 412-9004.

**Sept. 19-22 All Africa Missionary
Conference.** A'Zambezi River Lodge,
Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. Contact Fielden
Allison at fieldentz@gmail.com.

**Sept. 20-22 75th Anniversary, Figueroa
church in Los Angeles, Calif.** Contact (323)
753-2536, figueroacoc@aol.com or www.figueroachurchofchrist.com.

**Sept. 23-25 Midwest Preachers'
Retreat.** Wisconsin Christian Youth
Camp, Black River Falls, Wis. Contact (414)
281-8667 or www.midwestpreachersretreat.wordpress.com.

**Sept 27-28 33rd Annual New
Mexico Ladies Retreat.** Embassy Suites,
Albuquerque, N.M. Contact Nancy Jacobs at
(505) 250-7382 or www.riversidecoc.org.

**Sept. 28 9th Annual An Evening of
Spiritual Harmony.** Northside church in
San Antonio, Texas. Contact (210) 659-4233.

**Sept. 28-29 70th Anniversary, Pacific
Grove, Calif., church.** Contact Dean Bixler
at (831) 375-8052 or deanbixler1@aol.com.

NEWSMAKERS

NAMED: York College welcomes three new faculty members: **Jennifer Dutch**, assistant professor and chair of the English department; **Milton Eckhart** to the natural sciences department; and **Kirk Mallette** as associate professor in the education department. Pepperdine University has named **Peter James Johnson Jr.**, **John Plueger** and **Kimberly Lindley** to its Board of Regents and the university's fourth president, **William S. Banowsky**, to post of life regent.

AWARDED: Oklahoma Christian University alumni **Kyle Roberts** and **Lucas Ross** won



PHOTO PROVIDED

Lucas Ross and Kyle Roberts show off their Emmy Awards. Ross won in the "Talent-Performer/Host/Moderator" category for his work with Oklahoma City's KFOR and KAUT television stations.

NEW ELDERS: **Clint Davis** and **Daryl Johnson**, Memorial Drive church, Tulsa, Okla.

RETIRING: After 28 years of service, **Donald L. O'Connor** is retiring from active service as an elder of the Round Rock, Texas, church.



O'Connor
and **Lexie Ray**, Benton, Ky.; **David and Martha Arnold**, Houston, Texas. **50th:** **John and Ann Smithson, III**, Chattanooga, Tenn.

BIRTHDAYS: **100th:** **Walter Bryan, Edmond, Okla.** **88th:** **Chuck Cromwell, Lubbock, Texas.**

PASSAGES: **Silas Gene Chumley**, 85, June 24, Woodbridge, Va. **Floyd B. Jones**, 89, June 26, Topeka, Kans. **Clifford Reeve**, 87, July 9, Okmulgee, Okla.

Milestones

Showcasing the milestones in your life or the lives of loved ones.

Birthday

Leon Freeman — 90

Leon Freeman will celebrate his 90th birthday on August 8, 2013. Leon has been a longtime member of the Airline Drive Church of Christ. He was married to Billie Freeman for 41 years until she lost a battle with cancer in 1987. A World War II veteran, Leon retired from the U.S. Air Force after 28 years of service as a CMSGT. He enjoys fishing, woodworking and gardening. He is a man of many talents and he enjoys using his talents to bless others. Friends and family often enjoy his delicious fish frys. Leon has brightened many homes with his beautiful handmade wooden tulips. The "Tulip Ministry" at Airline delivers the colorful tulips to the sick, shut-ins and visitors in the community. His family is thankful for his inspiring Christian example and the way that he continues to serve God and be a blessing to those around him. All three of his children, eight grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren and their families look forward to gathering together and celebrating his birthdays with him each year!



Anniversary

Glover and Margie Ship - 65 years

My beloved Margie,

I will never forget the day we met, when I crashed your 15th birthday party. You were charming and outgoing. Two years later we were engaged and four years later we were married. We had nothing but each other, but that was enough. Now, 65 years later, I still find you charming and outgoing. You have remained at my side through five difficult years in a publishing plant, a near-fatal illness, poverty, serving with small churches, a tour of duty at Pepperdine, 18 years in Brazil, my graduate studies, service at Abilene Christian, our years at OC and the *Chronicle*, and now teaching at Austin Grad,



not to mention four sons and two daughters, 13 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. What a journey we have had!

Your loving husband,
Glover

Memorials

Laura Earp Autrey

Laura Earp Autrey, 49, met her Savior on July 4, 2013, after a five-year-long, courageous battle with metastatic breast cancer. She was born to Clarence and Sarah Earp on Feb. 9, 1964, and was raised in Hennessey, Okla. Laura attended Oklahoma Christian University from 1982 to 1985, majoring in vocal education and participating in Chorale and Chamber Singers. At OC she met Philip Autrey, whom she married in 1985. They were blessed with three children, and Laura focused her love, attention, and gifts on her family from the beginning to the end. Laura was a faithful member of the Pleasant Ridge Church of Christ in Arlington, Texas, for the last 27 years, blessing many ministries with her talents, especially the nursery and LTC Chorus. Laura is survived by her husband Philip, children Victoria, Alexandra, and Nicholas, mother Sarah Earp, sisters Susan Jones and Nancy Stansberry and brother-in-law Mark Stansberry, along with a host of loving extended family and friends.



Otto "Bud" Barron

Mr. Barron of Newport, Ark., departed this life July 16, 2012, at the age of 87.

Mr. Barron was a World War II Navy Veteran who served as a Navy Seabee, Petty Officer Second Class in the Pacific Theater.

"Bud" married Dorothy Rovene Williams on April 21, 1946, at the Holden Avenue Church of Christ in Newport. He retired from the Arkansas Employment Security Division after 31 years, 21 of these as manager. He was a faithful member of the Holden Avenue church, serving on benevolence and mission committees.



His devotion was not limited to his local church. With God's help he and his wife worked side-by-side on 35 mission trips overseas, including work in Ukraine, the Caribbean, Guyana, and the Pacific regions.

Sharing their faith with people around the world was for them truly a labor of love.

Maxine Cato Hunter

Maxine Cato Hunter, 89, of Nashville, Tenn., died Friday, Dec. 21, 2012. She served the Lord all her days and was an inspiration and encourager to all who met her.

She daily tended to other's needs with a servant heart. She was a ladies' Bible class teacher, both nationally and internationally, traveling the world as a missionary. She began the "Monday Meals" ministry at the Granny White Church of Christ, serving meals to those in need.

She was preceded in death by her husband of 48 years, Willie Cato (longtime gospel minister), son, Mark Cato, and is survived by husband of 14 years, Henry Hunter, five children, numerous great and grandchildren and beloved friends.



Alonzo D. Welch

Alonzo D. Welch, 95, passed away on Sunday, July 14, 2013. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife of 69 years, Katherine Netterville Welch; his parents, Samuel Welch and Lucy Emily Garner Welch; his brothers, Roy Welch, Willis C. Welch, and Hatley Welch; and his sister, Eula Leona Welch Earnest. He is survived by his three daughters, Rosalind Seabrook and Mary Cooper of Madison, Miss., and Kanet Thomas of Westlake Village, Calif.; by his sons-in-law Doug Cooper of Madison and James Thomas of Westlake Village, Calif.; and by his seven grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

Service was held on Friday, July 19, at the Meadowbrook Church of Christ, burial Natchez City Cemetery. Donations can be made to the Sunnybrook Children's Home, P.O. Box 4871, Jackson, Miss. 39296-4871.



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

Full-Time Pulpit Preacher/Evangelist

Full time pulpit preacher/evangelist wanted for a congregation located 25 miles south of our nation's capital in a county of ~150,000 people. We have a Sunday morning attendance of 50-60 and we're looking for someone to accept the challenge of growing the church in this area. Some outside support may be needed. College degree or formal preacher training is preferred. Prior pulpit minister/evangelist experience required. Please send resume with references, photo, and two sample sermons on a DVD/CD to:

Waldorf church of Christ

30 Village St., Waldorf, MD 20602
Attn: Preacher Search Committee
Or email: cocw@comcast.net
Website: <http://waldorfchurchofchrist.org/>

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Gilmer Church of Christ is a "mainstream" congregation looking for a pulpit minister.

Send resumes, character references from previous employer & 2 sermons on DVD to:

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www.gilmercofc.org
903-843-2731 (phone)
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The Juneau Church of Christ is searching for a preaching minister. The congregation averages about 100 men, women, and children in Sunday morning participation and is served by three elders.

We envision a brother committed to proclaiming the Word of Christ, the whole counsel of God, the faith once for all entrusted to the saints.

For complete application information, please go online to: www.juneaucofc.org, and follow the "Minister Search" link.

All application materials should be submitted no later than October 1, 2013. We hope to fill the position by November 1, 2013, God willing.

Full-Time Minister

The Brighton Church of Christ is searching for a full-time minister.

We are located 20 miles north of Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Please submit resume with audio/video of three sermons to:

resumesearch2012@gmail.com

Full-Time Minister

The Enterprise Boulevard Church of Christ is searching for a full-time minister.

Send Resumes to:

2801 Enterprise Boulevard
Lake Charles, LA 70601

Fax: 337-430-0093
office@blvdchurchofchrist.org
www.blvdchurchofchrist.org

The Echo Lake Church of Christ is seeking a Minister

We are seeking a man who is strong in Biblical teaching with 5-10 years of pulpit experience, having completed a Bible degree or preacher-training program.

Please send a resume, audio/video of a sermon, 3 references and a written philosophy of ministry to:

Echo Lake Church of Christ
419 Springfield Ave
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For more information, go to: www.echolakechurch.org

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A child enjoys a nap while fans from the Summit View church and the community cheer during a Family Baseball League game. The league features players from ages 6 to 70 and attracts both church members and neighbors from the surrounding community.

Play ball! Ministry hits a home run

PHOTOS BY MARK WARDRIP | FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

The Family Baseball League is a ministry of the Summit View Church of Christ in Yakima, Wash. The congregation uses the league for cross-generational relationship building and for outreach to the community, minister Kevin Jensen said.



Ben Lamb, son of deacon Rich Lamb, makes a strong throw in a Family Baseball League game. His father watches in the background.



Community member Karly White makes an unconventional play at first base to put out deacon's wife Monique Tash.



Noel "Bubba" Cisneros follows through on a swing during a game. The Family Baseball League is in its fifth year.



Church member Josh Cosper makes a play on the ball as his nephew Adam Cox waits at second base during a Family Baseball League game. The league brings together young and old, just like the church itself, minister Kevin Jensen said. "We're an intergenerational church working with children, singles, families and retirees," Jensen said, "and building relationships across the generations."

EDITORIAL

And now, the real work of VBS

As a hot, steamy season of Vacation Bible School draws to a close, many followers of Christ realize that we're desperately in need of a vacation.

But, after the cardboard Ark of the Covenant and life-size replica of the fish "who did swallow Jonah" are put away, our work has only begun.

It's a daunting task to coordinate, volunteer or participate in the activities that define a church's summer months. For many congregations, Vacation Bible School has become a multimedia extravaganza, complete with music videos, elaborate costumes and Broadway-esque, show-stopping musical numbers. There's little wonder why we're tired.

We get just a bit concerned about the message we're sending our kids — especially when the Bible lessons of VBS appear to get lost in the sights and sounds. Will children, as they grow, come to church expecting to be entertained? Will we craft the "worship experience" to meet these expectations?

However, when we see the smiling faces of the children who participate in these activities, we're reminded that it's the personal relationships that define the experience. Each summer we have the opportunity to show our children — and thousands of visitors — that there's more to our faith than

punch and cookies. We get to spend time with them, showing them that God really matters to us.

We're not alone. A recent survey by the Barna Group shows that two-thirds of churches in America offer VBS each summer. About 86 percent of churches surveyed with 250 or more adult members host VBS. We've exported the ministry to nations around the world. (See photos of children in Nicaragua enjoying VBS in our Currents feature, Page 17.)

With such a heavy focus on our youth nationwide, why do we worry about the future of the church? Are we doing the real work of Vacation Bible School — the work that begins when vacation ends?

Over the years, we've heard stories of churches getting stacks of cards bearing the names and addresses of VBS visitors — stacks that disappear into the back of a drawer in the church office.

Is VBS the only time when we'll see these visitors? Are we using VBS as a gateway to transform young lives?

The need is great. Previous research by Barna shows that 43 percent of all Americans who obey Jesus Christ do so before reaching the age of 13. Two out of three born-again Christians make a commitment to Christ before their 18th birthday. We have no time to waste.



PHOTO PROVIDED

A young band of Israelites marches around the walls of Jericho during "Operation: Promised Land" at the Central Church of Christ in Bedford, Ind. Instead of a traditional Vacation Bible School, the church hosted youth activities during Wednesday night Bible study for six weeks, in the hopes that children will continue to attend during the fall, members said.



TO OUR READERS

Difficult, necessary discussion

We can't avoid tough faith questions. Our responses often shape the way a lost and dying world sees Jesus — reflected through us.

This month, *The Christian Chronicle* launches a three-part series, Bridges & Barriers. We gather viewpoints inside and outside our fellowship, asking how we, as disciples of Jesus, can relate to those with whom we disagree. Can we build bridges and relate to each other without compromising the truth?

This month we explore how believers might respond to the homosexual community. At Christian universities and in church pews and social institutions, this is an increasingly challenging and relevant discussion. In our next installment, we will report on Islam — a growing faith around the globe and in the U.S. We will highlight dialogues between Christians and Muslims in our society.

Finally, we'll report on interaction among Churches of Christ and other Christian religious groups. We've heard from church leaders about declining "brand loyalty" to Churches of Christ, particularly among young believers who want to be "Christians only."

We do not court controversy by reporting these stories. We believe these are necessary, though difficult, discussions that our fellowship must hear.

As always, we encourage thoughtful, respectful discussion and feedback. Share your thoughts at letters@christianchronicle.org or see our mailing address below.



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Phone: (405) 425-5070; Fax (405) 425-5076
P.O. Box 11000, Oklahoma City, OK 73136-1100
Delivery: 2501 E. Memorial Road, Edmond, OK 73013

Editor, President and CEO: Lynn A McMillon
lynn.mcmillon@christianchronicle.org

Managing Editor: Bobby Ross Jr.

National, Partners news: bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org

Assistant Managing Editor: Erik Tryggstad

International news, features: erik@christianchronicle.org

Advertising Manager: Tonya Patton

tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org

Editor Emeritus: Bailey B. McBride

bailey.mcbride@christianchronicle.org

Reviews Editor: Kimberly Mauck

kim.mauck@christianchronicle.org

Administrative Assistant: Lynda Hayes Sheehan

lynda.sheehan@christianchronicle.org

Administrative Assistant: Tonda Stafford

tonda.stafford@christianchronicle.org

Administrative Assistant: Joy McMillon

joy.mcmillon@christianchronicle.org

Correspondent: Ted Parks

TO SUBSCRIBE:

See www.christianchronicle.org

e-mail joy.mcmillon@christianchronicle.org

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: letters@christianchronicle.org

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Who will rescue the hungry children? Church shows Christ's love by filling empty tummies

We live in a “Dessert of the Month” society.

With the click of a mouse, we can have a new and exciting dessert delivered to our doorstep the first of every month — without ever leaving the comfort of our home.

Sometimes, we view the church that way. We want the church to provide everything our families need, and we have no reason to leave the comfort of our church buildings.

I’m reminded of Luke 9:59-62, which records Jesus asking several people to follow him. They want to take care of their own needs first.

His reply indicates the importance of putting service to God first in our lives: “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

In their book “The Externally Focused Church,” authors Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson clearly articulate the reasons why churches should move beyond their buildings to serve in the community.

They remind us that Christianity devoid of service to others is nothing more than an empty philosophy.

I like what one preacher had to say: “What we need is to get out of our seat, onto our feet, into the street, where the people meet.”

With so many needs all around us, a natural question is, “Where do we start?”

A good place to begin is by serving those who are most vulnerable in our world.

Society is like a raging river, and many children are drowning in the depths of poverty, hopelessness and splintered families.

Public school systems have their hands full trying to keep kids afloat. Who will help rescue them?

My home congregation — the Granbury Church of Christ in Texas — learned that 48 percent of the children in our public school system have hunger issues and receive free or reduced-price meals at school.

Teachers told us that these students are unable to concentrate at school until Tuesday of each week because

they don’t get adequate food on the weekends.

As a church, we had a choice. We could complain about the problem, or we could become part of the solution. We chose to jump in and do something.

In September 2011, members began donating funds to buy food for children, and the Weekend Food for Kids program was born.

Bags are filled with seven to eight food items that the kids can prepare for themselves — such as energy bars, instant oatmeal, peanut butter and crackers, macaroni and cheese and a pop-top can of fruit — at a cost of \$2 to \$3 per bag. The bags of food are then discreetly distributed each Friday to those whom school counselors have identified as having the greatest need. The church provides about 80 bags of food each week to two schools, with plans to add a third school.

The program has expanded into the formation of a coalition of faith-based groups and other organizations within our community, with the goal of supporting every school in our county with Weekend Food for Kids. Recently, H-E-B grocery chain awarded us a \$2,000 grant to help with this ministry in 2013.

But the story doesn’t end there. As a church, we believed we could do more, so we adopted a middle school to help provide for the needs of the students, faculty and staff at that campus.

We have been privileged to serve in the following ways:

- Furnish snacks and bottles of water for the students who stay after school for tutoring.
- Assist in tutoring students and monitoring their activities during the lunch periods.
- Purchase winter coats, backpacks and toiletry items for those in need.
- Help the teachers with their annual shoe drive for impoverished children.

Views



Billy Martin

‘These kids know that the Granbury Church of Christ cares about them, and that gives them hope for a brighter and better future.’

- Cook and serve a holiday lunch and periodically provide goodies for all the teachers and staff to show our appreciation for the work they do.
- Honor those who excel by giving a \$10 credit at the school’s canteen for each Student of the Month and a gift card to the Teacher of the Month.

What have we learned from these experiences?

First, people of faith can make a huge impact on students and staff by modeling the love of Christ. I cannot count the number of times that educators in the school system have thanked the church for our support. One principal cried when told that we wanted to assist her school with weekend food for her needy students.

For many of these kids, school is the only place they can experience a sense of security. Through our acts of service, we can make a difference in their lives.

Mother Teresa said it well: “I am a little pencil in the hand of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the world.” These kids know that the Granbury Church of Christ cares about them, and that gives them hope for a brighter and better future.

Second, our volunteers are experiencing personal spiritual growth. In fact, I have come to realize that service to others can provide as much or even more spiritual growth than any corporate worship experience, Bible study or prayer.

I am not trying to diminish the time spent in any of these areas, but we must put into practice what we are learning. In their book, Rusaw and Swanson put it this way, “We don’t do our people any favors by letting them attend church every week, living with the illusion that they are growing. They may be learning, but they are not growing.”

Don’t allow the church to become just another “Dessert of the Month” club in your life!

BILLY MARTIN is executive director of the Christian Service Center, a ministry of the Granbury Church of Christ in Texas. Martin also serves as a Granbury church elder.

LETTERS

Tornado coverage neglected ministry

Your August issue had some good information about the storms that plagued Oklahoma (“Oklahoma churches serving tornado victims endure new round of storms,” Page 6.)

But you failed to recognize the work being done by the Churches of Christ Disaster Response Team working through the Alameda Church of Christ in Norman, Okla. While providing support and housing for up to 250 volunteers a night, the Alameda church has done a great work in reaching storm-damaged families. DRT and the Alameda church even sponsored a free concert by Acappella.

Steve Johnson | Libby, Mont.

Job ministry impresses

Great article! (See “On a mission to keep the church working,” Page 1, August.) Faith-based organizations in metro Detroit provide networking and job search assistance, but this is the first time that I’ve heard about congregations in the body doing it. As a workforce development professional and a Christian, I’m geeked!

Monique White | Southfield, Mich.

Rockies pitcher inspires

To God be the glory! (See “Oh, Brothers! Baseball not pitcher’s top priority,” Page 1, August.) May we all view our jobs as an opportunity to glorify our Lord Jesus Christ!

Joe Brothers | Elizabethtown, Ky.

Except for the fact that he uses some of that skill to defeat the Dodgers, way to go, Rex! And if the Dodgers don’t make it to the World Series, let’s go Rockies!

Paul Smith | Portales, N.M.

Sports: an idol for all ages

Remove “youth” from the headline, and the message becomes more clear. (See “Youth sports: a modern-day idol for some families?” Inside Story, August.) Sports in general are a modern-day idol for millions of people in this country.

Joshua Jeffery | Forest Grove, Ore.

One man's journey from legalism to grace

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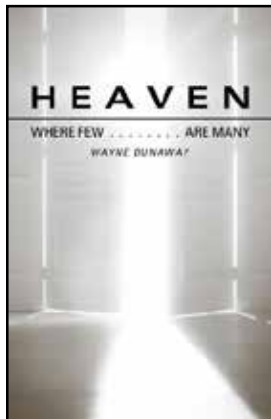
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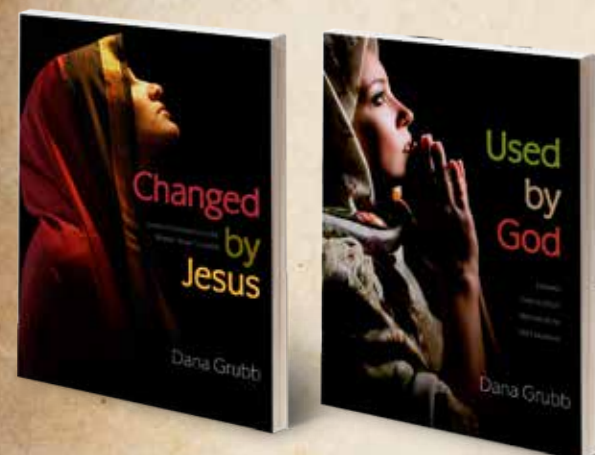
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Crusaders urge churches to seek social justice

BY JOSH ROSS | FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

More churches are declining than growing in the United States, according to a host of recent studies. Much of our culture doesn't seem too impressed by the church. Often, we are known for what we are against rather than what we are for.

Yet, here is something we cannot ignore: Though numbers are in decline, passion for justice is drastically increasing. It is one of the primary rallying cries of the younger generation.

"Justice" is a trigger word in many church contexts. Put "social" in front of it, and conversations immediately turn to bleeding-heart politics and do-gooders doing more harm than good. Many have allowed Glenn Beck or MSNBC to define what justice is more than Scripture.

I prefer the definition given by Christian-based International Justice Mission, or IJM: "Injustice is what happens when someone uses their power to take from someone else the good things God intended them to have — their life, their liberty, their dignity or the fruit of their love or their labor."

Church leaders would be wise to at least entertain what is at the heart of this stirring. In all her beauty and chaos, the local church, thriving and working as God intended, is still one of the greatest hopes for our world's injustices.

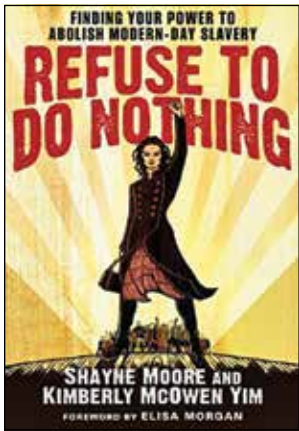
Books on the fight for justice are becoming common, but readers interested in this topic should seek out authors who have written from the struggle — not just about it.

Shayne Moore and Kimberly McOwen Yim, authors of **"Refuse to Do Nothing: Finding Your Power to Abolish Modern-Day Slavery,"** were two stay-at-home moms who were introduced to modern-day slavery in a way that created a holy ache.

Yim founded a nonprofit for women to work together to fight slavery. Moore is author of **"Global Soccer Mom: Changing the World is Easier Than You Think."**

In these authors' collaboration, the two women write for individuals — mostly women — who want to join a global movement to end slavery worldwide.

Yim says, "I believe women like me — women with freedom, liberty, and



★★★★★
Shayne Moore and Kimberly McOwen Yim. **Refuse to Do Nothing: Finding Your Power to Abolish Modern-Day Slavery.** Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press. 192 pages. \$12.69.

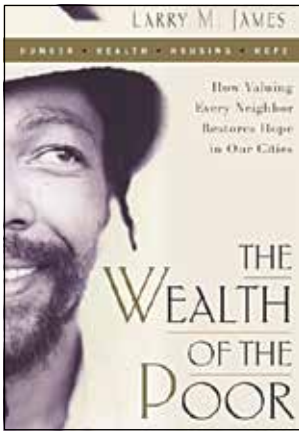
opportunity — have an obligation to speak into our generation on behalf of those in the world who do not have a voice: those targeted, exploited, and held against their will."

Combining startling numbers (the international slave trade enslaves 27 million people and earns profits about the same as ExxonMobil) with impassioned voices, this book makes the daunting task of working for global justice possible and within reach, as the authors themselves are mothers of children in the home.

Another recent book, written by Larry James, director of community development organization CitySquare, approaches social justice from a more local level. **"The Wealth of the Poor: How Valuing Every Neighbor Restores Hope In Our Cities,"** walks readers through the journey of how CitySquare grew to become a powerful agent of hope in inner-city Dallas. The stories of how CitySquare has attacked poverty through housing-first programs, hunger relief, health and hope will leave readers celebrating the wonders of God.

Refreshingly, James tells just as many stories about what didn't work as what did work and shows that part of living with passion is not being afraid to fail. It's why Jesus invites us to take risks.

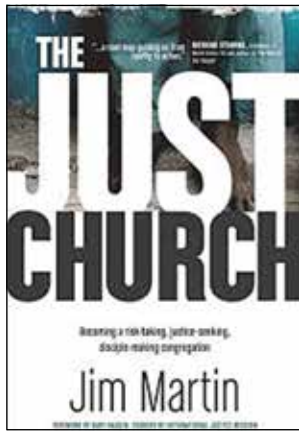
Like James, a former paid minister



★★★★★
Larry M. James. **The Wealth of the Poor: How Valuing Every Neighbor Restores Hope in Our Cities.** Abilene, Texas: ACU Press, 2013. 288 pages. \$24.99.

who left his position to lead CitySquare, Jim Martin, author of **"The Just Church: Becoming a Risk-Taking, Justice-Seeking, Disciple-Making Congregation,"** left his preaching position to become the vice president of church mobilization for IJM.

Martin works with church leaders as they develop strategies to implement justice works into the life of the church. His purpose is to help them prayer-



★★★★★
Jim Martin. **The Just Church: Becoming a Risk-Taking, Justice-Seeking, Disciple-Making Congregation.** Carol Stream, Ill. Tyndale Momentum, 2012. 288 pages. \$14.99.

fully and carefully reallocate funds and energy for justice-oriented efforts locally and globally.

"The Just Church" supports working with both local and global movements for justice. The book is divided into two parts. The first argues that working for justice is a crucial part of church work. The second guides readers to finding ways their church can serve, using their unique talents, needs and call.

Appendices list Scriptures related to justice, offer additional resources for getting involved with causes that work for justice and give a sample church strategy for fulfilling their justice mission.

Both "The Just Church" and "Refuse to Do Nothing" come with questions at the end of each chapter, to continue the conversations they start. Individuals and groups will find the questions inspiring, challenging and impactful.

In these books, readers will be challenged yet edified, disoriented yet hopeful, broken yet believing in God's restoration. Readers will be moved to engage in God's redemptive work throughout the world, kicking down the doors of injustice and bringing hope to the hopeless.

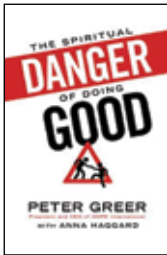
JOSH ROSS is the author of **"Scarred Faith: This is a story about how Honesty, Grief, a Cursing Toddler, Risk-Taking, AIDS, Hope, Brokenness, Doubts, and Memphis Ignited Adventurous Faith"** and the preaching minister for the Sycamore View Church of Christ in Memphis,

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

MINISTRY BURNOUT

Peter Greer with Anna Haggard. **The Spiritual Danger of Doing Good.** Birmingham, Minn.: Baker Publishing Group, 2013. 192 pages. \$19.99.

Greer, who has years of experience working with and for the world's poor and is now CEO of a large nonprofit, warns Christians against doing good in ways that hurt their understanding of grace, short-change their family life or cause them to lose their identity. In all, 14 risks are addressed. Web addresses are given with each chapter for corresponding posts on the author's website.

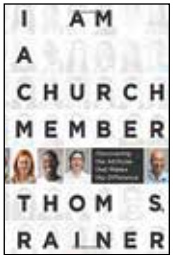


GROUP STUDY

Thom Rainer. **I Am a Church Member: Discovering the Attitude that Makes the Difference.** Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Publishing Group, 2013. 96 pages. \$12.99.

This slim book is meant for congregations to study together. Discounted pricing is available for orders greater than 20 books.

The author outlines six commitments every church member should make, based on biblical instruction on what it means to be part of a local church. Each chapter ends with a brief pledge for readers to sign and discussion questions.



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The *Christian Chronicle* exists to inform, inspire and unite Churches of Christ with stories about effective congregations, mission efforts around the world, outstanding Christians in many walks of life and matters important for the spiritual development of believers everywhere.

Even though churches are much more diverse than they were even 30 years ago, many essential beliefs are held by Christians in all congregations. This international newspaper provides unifying information so that the sense of oneness has grounds for growing and unifying the Churches of Christ.

The *Chronicle* has a long and honorable history, thanks to readers who have supported the paper. Many times the *Chronicle* has faced problems that threatened its mission to "perpetuate the New Testament Church," in the words of Olan Hicks, who founded the paper 70 years ago.

The first edition appeared June 2, 1943, at a dark time of World War II. Hicks had the vision to see the need for a common source of news as the war stressed the nation and as Christians began to have a wider vision of making Churches of Christ more than a regional movement. The international concept of evangelism dominated Hicks' work until he lost the paper in 1954.

After Hicks, the *Chronicle* had numerous leaders, including James Walter Nichols, Ralph Sweet, Haskell Chesshir, Clark Hicks (Olan Hicks' son) and John Beckloff. Each struggled to rally the financial support to sustain the paper. By the end of 1980, Beckloff and his wife, Dotty, realized they could not continue to produce the paper.

When they offered the *Chronicle* to Oklahoma Christian College, then-president Terry Johnson realized that the paper could be a great service to churches and members. He presented the situation to a few key people at the college, and Howard Norton, longtime missionary to Brazil, was excited by the idea and became the editor in 1981. The first issue from Oklahoma Christian appeared in September 1981.

Norton worked through various people to produce the paper. After a four-year struggle, he brought together Joy McMillon and Scott LaMascus,

whose understanding of the church enhanced the *Chronicle's* effectiveness. Then Glover Shipp and Lindy Adams produced the paper.

Now McMillon's husband, Lynn, serves as editor and CEO. A longtime

Insight



Bailey McBride

Bible professor and marriage counselor, he is an elder of Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City. He and his wife have conducted marriage seminars in churches across the country, which makes them appreciative of the diversity of congregations and their influence on communities. Lynn

McMillon's desire to make the *Chronicle* the highest quality paper — with faithful adherence to biblical precepts — assures that the paper will continue to inform and unify Churches of Christ.

In 2001, Erik Tryggstad came on board to cover international news. He had completed a graduate degree in journalism and had worked for daily newspapers in his home state, Georgia. His experience made him invaluable. He recently returned from Ireland — the 50th country from which he's reported for the *Chronicle*. Because of the paper's limited budget, he finds outside funding for many of his trips. He and his wife are faithful members at Memorial Road.

In 2005, Bobby Ross Jr. left The Associated Press to work with the *Chronicle* as managing editor. Ross has 25 years of experience as a journalist and editor, which has enhanced the publication greatly. His monthly column has provided insights about trends and movements within the church.

Ross, who has reported from 46 states, has a unique ability to give a personal face to church work and workers. He is a member of the Edmond Church of Christ in Oklahoma, where he is loved and appreciated for his faith.

Despite financial struggles, *The Christian Chronicle* continues to grow and improve. God is blessing the church through the dedication of these faithful people who love and serve the Churches of Christ.

CONTACT bailey.mcbride@christianchronicle.org.



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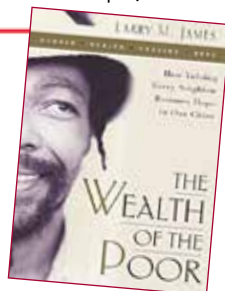
Same-sex attraction

As homosexuality gains acceptance, how should Christians respond? **1**



Nicaraguan revival

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Social justice

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