

On a mission to get the church working

AS THE SLUGGISH U.S. economy struggles to recover, Christians offer Bible-based advice on resume writing and interviewing.

BY HAMIL R. HARRIS AND ERIK TRYGGESTAD
THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

BALTIMORE

Souls in need of prayer fill the seats closest to the pulpit of the East Baltimore Church of Christ — as they do most Sunday mornings after minister Kevin Bethea's sermon.

Some ask for healing for loved ones.

Others come repenting of unspoken sins.

Arnesia Thomas asks the church to pray that she finds a new job.

Near the back of the auditorium, Dan Hager listens to every prayer request — especially that last one.

After the closing prayer, he hurries to find Thomas and offers to help.

For Hager, employment is ministry. An administrator at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, he tries to live by the words he reads in the Bible, including Colossians 3:23, *"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men."*

Hager and his family began attending the East Baltimore church about a year ago. Week after week, he heard prayer

requests similar to Thomas'. He saw an opportunity to help his church and his community.

Recently, he and Eric Lorick, the congregation's Christian life minister, hosted a "Working Heartily as Unto the Lord" seminar for 10 members.

"In all honesty, it is incredibly unfair that employers are judging your potential based on a 10-second glance at your resume or a 30-minute interview," Hager said.

To capture employers' attention, he urged church members to "think fruit," following Jesus' words in Luke 6, *"For every tree is known by its own fruit."*

"Don't just tell me you were responsible for customer service. Show me the fruit — good customer satisfaction scores, employee of the month recognition or your sales performance," he said.

Many of the 5.8 million people who live in Maryland, which nearly surrounds Washington, D.C., depend on government jobs. A recent round of politically

See **WORKING**, Page 12

INSIDE: An Alabama ministry uses biblical principles to help the unemployed, Page 13.



HAMIL HARRIS

Arnesia Thomas speaks to Dan Hager about her job search after worship at the East Baltimore Church of Christ.



QIONGFANG NI

In the heart of Cajun country, Chinese believers find new life

At the South Baton Rouge Church of Christ in Louisiana, Jingtao Feng performs his first baptism as attendees of the congregation's Chinese-language service watch and snap photos. Feng baptized Hong, a woman from China who stayed with Feng and his wife, Qiongfang Ni, while Hong's son underwent surgery in nearby New Orleans. The Chinese Agape Foundation arranged for the surgery. "Qiongfang and Jingtao taught and encouraged the mother, and she made a decision to be baptized," said David Finch, the church's Chinese minister. "God is so good."

Oh, Brothers! Baseball not pitcher's top priority

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

LOS ANGELES — Rex Brothers portrays himself as "just a normal dude."

Except that he's standing in the visitors' clubhouse at Dodger Stadium as he makes this claim — a few hours before pitching yet another scoreless inning for the Colorado Rockies.

"People look at me as an athlete, but I want people to look at me as a normal human being, too," says Brothers, 25, a left-handed reliever who fires 97-mph fastballs.

A faithful Church of Christ member and former Lipscomb University star, Brothers stepped into Colorado's closer role in



RICH CLARKSON AND ASSOCIATES

Left-hander Rex Brothers throws a strike for the Colorado Rockies.

late May after an injury to Rafael Betancourt. The Shelbyville, Tenn., resident has been a top prospect since the Rockies made

him the 34th overall pick in baseball's 2009 amateur draft.

He has compiled amazing numbers so far this season: At press time, he had thrown 31 straight scoreless outings covering 29 innings.

"He's a great talent," said Rockies pitching coach Bo McLaughlin, a fellow former Lipscomb player. "From the time we got him, we knew that he was going to help us in the big leagues."

More importantly, fellow Christians describe Brothers as a humble, down-to-earth disciple of Jesus who pursues a higher calling than baseball.

"He's one of those kids that

See **BROTHERS**, Page 11



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Youth sports: a modern-day idol for some families?

Sunday used to be reserved for worship and rest.

Now, youth sports compete for many families' time and attention on the Lord's day.

"I would go so far as to say that children's sports are the idol of this generation," said

Inside Story



Bobby Ross Jr.

Judy Square, whose husband, Woody, serves as youth and family minister for the San Leandro Church of Christ in California.

"Everything on the family's schedule bows down to it."

That includes the Sunday morning assembly.

In a study of 16 declining Protestant congregations in the U.S. and Canada, the reason most cited by clergy and members for falling attendance was the secularization of Sunday, with many identifying children's sports as most responsible, according to the Association of Religion Data Archives.

"The repeal of 'blue laws' that kept stores closed on Sundays has resulted in many more people working or shopping on Sundays, and children's athletic activities are often scheduled on Sunday mornings at the very time when many churches traditionally have provided religious education," reported researcher Stephen McMullin of Acadia Divinity College in Nova Scotia.

At the Canyon Church of Christ in Anthem, Ariz.,

See **SPORTS**, Page 4

The Tabernacle comes to Tulsa



JENNIE RIDDLE

As the parking lot of the Park Plaza Church of Christ became the Tabernacle of the Wilderness, minister Mitch Wilburn preached about how God "wants to dwell with us, in us and through us."

TULSA, Okla. — The Park Plaza Church of Christ welcomed 5,657 guests, ages 2 to 102, to the congregation's parking lot to see a full-size replica of the Tabernacle of the Wilderness from the Old Testament.

It was the first visit to Oklahoma by The Tabernacle Experience, a traveling exhibit that features an interactive, audio tour of the temple.

Guests were clothed in the white linen garment of priests, laid sacrifices at the altar of burnt offering, washed in the laver in preparation for the work of the Lord and gave a half-shekel donation before entering the Holy of Holies.

More than 250 Park Plaza members volunteered, said Ken Factor, who helped coordinate the recent 12-day event. Many visitors endured a triple-digit heat index to gain a better understanding of God's Old Covenant, Factor said, "yet emerged with smiles and, sometimes, tears of joy."



WWW.TABERNALEEEXPERIENCE.COM

A visitor views a lampstand in the Tabernacle of the Wilderness.

Christians help Colorado wildfire evacuees

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Churches of Christ in Colorado are helping with recovery after the Black Forest fire burned 16,000 acres in nine days, killing two people and destroying more than 500 homes and businesses.

"You don't know how many people care about you until something stupid like this happens," Brian Evans told the *Colorado Springs Gazette*. Evans and his family, members of the Eastside Church of Christ in Colorado Springs, lost their home in the blaze — and immediately had two dozen offers of shelter from fellow Christians.

The Eastside church sheltered, fed and comforted evacuees at its building, about six miles southwest of the flames. Patrick Mead, the church's senior minister, "shared lunch, stories, laughter and tears with families who lost their homes," he said via Twitter, which he used to send updates about the fire.

"This is already the most destructive fire

in Colorado history," he told his Twitter followers. "Your prayers are carrying us."

Nashville, Tenn.-based Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort sent a shipment — including food, cleaning supplies, blankets, new clothing, bottled water and wheelbarrows — to the Mountain View Church of Christ in Colorado Springs.

Members of Colorado congregations including the Pikes Peak Church of Christ in Colorado Springs, the Castle Rock Church of Christ and the Tri Lakes Church of Christ in Monument distributed the relief.

Reflecting on what was lost in the fire, Brian Evans said, "It's just stuff. The wife and the kids are out. The dogs are out. After that, the rest is just ... stuff."

SEE UPDATES at www.christianchronicle.org/blog.



Mead



LARRY BERTRAM

Larry Bertram of church-supported Orphans Lifeline International captured this view of the wildfires near his home in Monument, Colo.

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CORRECTION: A story on Page 17 of the July issue incorrectly identified a source. Isaac Sanyu is an administrator for the Kampala Church of Christ in Uganda. He is not associated with the Sanyu Foundation, a nonprofit based in Kyotera, Uganda, focused on health and elimination of poverty. For more information, see sanyufoundationuganda.blogspot.com.

SPORTS: Game times create tension for families

FROM PAGE 3

families often miss services for soccer, baseball and gymnastics tournaments, senior minister Timothy Gunnells said.

"I think this is a real dilemma for many people," Gunnells said. "They feel like sports are an important part of their children's physical and psychological development. But I think when sports are chosen over corporate worship, it sends the message to the children as to what is more important.

"I do know," he added, "that some people work extra hard to worship somewhere else, do something privately or at least make the effort to attend Bible classes or a later assembly."

Instead of hearing the call to worship, too many young people hear a different message, said Ron Buch, pulpit minister for the Aledo Church of Christ in Texas. That message: "Play ball!"

As youth minister for the Mt. Carmel Church of Christ in Illinois, Gary Ford II coached and refereed soccer and worked with cross country runners.

Although sports may hurt church attendance, Ford said his volunteer experiences provided tremendous opportunities to demonstrate "missional living."

"Few things made me more proud as a youth minister than seeing and over-hearing my teens talk about spiritual things or inviting their friends to youth group during a practice," said Ford, who is transitioning to the mission field in Bangkok. "Or seeing them treat a competitor on the field that wasn't acting fairly with kindness and compassion when they didn't deserve it."

Kevin and Lisa Gordon, members of the Memorial Church of Christ in Houston, have experienced the tension

between sports and church firsthand.

The Gordons declined to let their son Blake, 14, play select baseball because of concerns about weekend travel and games. Two years ago, though, the parents allowed him to join an elite basketball team — with the coach's understanding that Blake wouldn't miss church.

On a recent Saturday, Blake played three games and got home at 10 p.m. The next morning, he attended an early service at the West Houston Church of Christ before a 10:20

a.m. game. Then he played in a championship game at 4:20 p.m. before making it to his home congregation's Sunday night assembly.

"Yes, it can be a distraction," Kevin Gordon said of juggling game and church times, "but it can actually be a great way to show your kids and others how important Jesus is to your family."

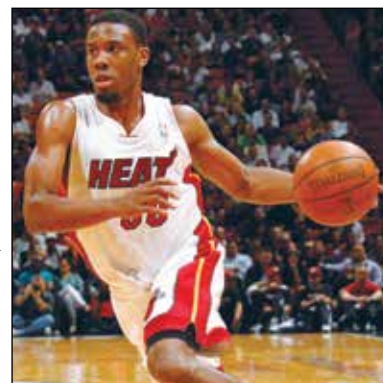
A high-profile example: Norris Cole.

When Cole began playing basketball at age 3, his parents explained to coaches that if games or practices occurred on Sunday or Wednesday night, he would need to leave early or not participate because of services at the Webster Street Church of Christ in Dayton, Ohio.

"His coaches respected our choice, and he never had a problem with his teammates teasing him," his mother, Diane Cole, told *The Christian Chronicle* earlier this year.

Norris Cole still managed to succeed on the basketball court.

In his second professional season, the Miami Heat guard just celebrated his second NBA championship.



NBA PHOTO

Norris Cole brings the Heat in Miami but still makes time for church.

CONTACT bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org. See more comments from readers on Page 27.

AUGUST 2013

ARIZONA

TUCSON — Palo Verde Church of Christ members spent a recent day at Santa Rita Park, a homeless hangout.

"We offered to wash feet, gave a pair of brand-new socks for the clean feet and grilled barbecue chicken for three hours until we ran out," pulpit minister Bobby Valentine said.

Valentine praised "all the teens for braving the 93-degree heat and just loving God."

COLORADO

BOULDER — The Boulder Valley Church of Christ, just east of Boulder, puts a special emphasis on meeting the needs of the poor and disadvantaged.

The church works with Boulder County Cares, a street outreach program of the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless.

Members go out on bitterly cold nights to provide blankets, gloves, hats, warm clothing and food for people who live on the streets and sleep in parks and under bridges.

This past year, the church's "Sock-It-To-Me Sunday" effort collected more than 2,000 pairs of socks for Boulder's homeless population, member Henry Lansford reported.

INDIANA

FRANKLIN — For two years, the Helping Hands Ministry of the Franklin Church of Christ has offered free meals on Tuesdays. The congregation is one of five area churches that provide meals one day each week.

"We're trying to make sure nobody goes hungry in Johnson County," ministry leader Patty Rash told Fox 59 News.

James Fisher and his wife have attended the free dinner for months.

"My wife has medical conditions," Fisher told the news station. "With the high medical costs and insurance and everything hitting at one time, it makes it really tough."

When the program first started, it served about 20 people. Now, that number stands at 120, Rash said.

OKLAHOMA

LAWTON — The U.S. Army has reinstated a Church of Christ service at Fort Sill.

For 35 years, the Northwest Church of Christ had conducted the weekly service. But just before Christmas,



BRITTANY HANNAH / ROME NEWS-TRIBUNE (GEORGIA)

Georgia church finds blessings in good works

Hannah Woodrow with the Oak Hill Church of Christ in Rome, Ga., smiles as she paints the step railing of a Habitat for Humanity house. Oak Hill members spent a recent week working on two Habitat for Humanity homes, giving away clothes, painting apartments, taking goody bags to bank tellers and delivering snack baskets to a hospital. Minister Joey Hanes told the *Rome News-Tribune* that the congregation wants to be less inwardly focused and serve the community more.

the Army post's chaplain suspended the assemblies, "taking away the religious freedom of our soldiers," said Northwest member Don Cherry, who has led the ministry for 10 years.

However, the Army allowed the services to resume in mid-June.

Cherry thanked fellow Christians for their prayers: "In the end, God triumphed, as he always will. But we, as his disciples, must strive to do his work."

Johnny Sandmann, military and veterans affairs caseworker for U.S. Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla., contacted the Army on the church's behalf.

The Liberty Legal Institute, which handles religious liberty cases, also expressed an interest in the case.

TENNESSEE

SPRING HILL — "Shepherd Meals" are helping Spring Meadows Church of

Christ members maintain fellowship during the busy summer months.

The elders are taking turns hosting the weekly Sunday meals at the church building. "It's a good way to help keep us connected through the summer with so many traveling," preacher Dale Jenkins said.

TEXAS

FLOYDADA — For the first time in more than 40 years, the City Park Church of Christ has elders.

Danny Nutt and Ron Graves have been appointed to serve as shepherds for the 50-member congregation.

The church spent four years preparing for "this biblical style of leadership," minister Levi Sisemore said.

"God has blessed us with two faithful men who love Jesus and his people," Sisemore said. "They are very dedi-

SPOTLIGHT**Paul Ghee dies**

TUBA CITY, Ariz. — After 26 years, Paul Ghee's mission trip to the Navajo Nation has ended.

The longtime missionary died May 29 after suffering from blood clots and pneumonia. He was 60.

A memorial service was conducted June 8 at the Tuba City Church of Christ.

Ghee and his wife, Ann, moved to Tuba City in October 1987 to work among the the Navajo people.

The Ghees, both from Nashville, Tenn., trained for ministry at the White's Ferry Road School of Biblical Studies in West Monroe, La. White's Ferry Road minister Mike Kellett described Paul Ghee as a "great friend and soldier who plowed the hard ground."



McKENZIE EVANS

Paul Ghee served the Navajo Nation.

cated to the idea of shepherding the flock rather than governing the policies of the church."

WEST VIRGINIA

PARKERSBURG — About 450 volunteers from Churches of Christ in at least nine states painted houses for the elderly, disabled and poor during the recent Mid-Ohio Valley Work Camp.

The volunteers, mostly teens, came from churches in Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia, the *Parkersburg News and Sentinel* reported. They stayed at Ohio Valley University.

However, the work was not limited to teens. A dozen volunteers from the Grand Central Church of Christ in Vienna, W.Va., ranged in age from 70 to 92.

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Oklahoma churches serving tornado victims endure new round of storms

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD AND MURRAY EVANS
THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Two Churches of Christ involved in tornado relief efforts sustained damage to their buildings during another major storm — nearly two weeks after the twister that devastated the city of Moore, Okla.

High winds blew campers and fifth-wheel trailers across the parking lot of the Central Church of Christ in Moore on May 31, as a massive tornado swept through the city and nearby El Reno, killing 22 people. Eleven days

earlier, the church's building was splattered with mud as another EF5 tornado ripped apart a hospital across the street.

Church-supported relief ministries began using the building as a relief center, even before power was restored. On May 31, the building sustained additional damage — from passing storms and passing motorists.

"It's been a fiasco," said Dennis McClintock, an associate director of Nashville, Tenn.-based Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort. McClintock was one of about 30 relief workers at the church building when tornado sirens blared May 31. The workers took shelter in the church's bathrooms.



DENNIS MCCLINTOCK

High winds overturned a trailer housing a relief worker at the Central Church of Christ.

As McClintock prepared to join them, he found himself surrounded by dozens of soaking-wet strangers — drivers on nearby Interstate 35 who had abandoned their vehicles and broken a door to get in.

Nearly 150 motorists — plus dogs, cats and a pet iguana — crammed into the church building, McClintock said.

About five miles northwest of the Central church, at least a dozen classrooms at the Oakcrest Church of Christ in Oklahoma City were flooded during the May 31 storms, which dumped more than seven inches of rain.

Oakcrest's Family Life Center has served as a relief center since the May 20 tornado. Associate minister Scott Bulmer said that the storms peeled up part of the roof on the east side of the building — where the congregation's children's ministry is based. Some staff offices also were affected.

"There's pretty significant water damage," Bulmer said. "There were ceiling leaks and water in the classrooms. The murals on the walls in that hallway had damage to them."

Bulmer said the Family Life Center was not damaged and will continue to serve as a tornado relief center "for as long as it takes."

Christians help after a lesser-known disaster

SHAWNEE, Okla. — In recent months, national and international media have devoted pages, airtime and online resources to natural disasters including the May 20 and May 31 EF5 tornadoes that tore through central Oklahoma.

Churches of Christ are responding to those storms and several lesser-known disasters, including a round of tornadoes that swept through Oklahoma on May 19. That storm damaged the roof of the Lakeview Church of Christ in Shawnee, about 40 minutes east of Oklahoma City. One member lost her home, said Tim Smith, a minister and elder of the 100-member church.

As many as 2,000 volunteers, from Churches of Christ across the country and Oklahoma Christian University, have used the building as a base of operations as they removed debris from damaged homes in Shawnee, Smith said.

"The response has been overwhelming," he added, but "it's going to be an ongoing process." The church has moved into "phase two" of its relief work, helping people who lost homes with insurance claims and recruiting volunteers with specialized skills, including roofing.

TO CONTRIBUTE, or for more information, contact the Lakeview Church of Christ at (405) 275-2922.

SPOTLIGHT

Single again

GEMUNDEN, Germany — Patrick Boyns, principal of the British Bible School in Corby, England, popped “across the Channel” to present a series of lessons at the Spring European Singles Retreat in this German hamlet near Frankfurt.

“It is quite clearly made known that it is not in any way intended to be an event designed to end the state of singleness,”

Boyns said, “but rather one at which those unattached can find encouragement and draw strength from others who experience the same challenges and blessings of being single.

“And I can now, once more, speak from personal experience.”

Boyns’ wife, June, died in 2011 from complications due to a rare, chronic illness that she battled for years.

“I have certainly come to learn, and in part rediscover, what it is to be single in a world of couples,” Boyns said, adding that he enjoyed being a part of the retreat, which brought together about 20 Christians from at least six countries.

“We enjoyed being there, spent useful time in the Word,” he said, “shared pleasant meals and thanked God for his goodness.”



PHOTO PROVIDED

Patrick Boyns joins singles around a campfire at the retreat.



Boyns



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY KEITH LANCASTER

‘Musicianary’ trains worship leaders in Brazil



George Jo Makita, top, practices song leading and gets a lesson in stage presence from Melissa Lancaster, who films him as he sings. The church member from Campo Grande, Brazil, was one of 12 Christians from across the South American nation who traveled to Atibaia, just north of Sao Paulo, for a Worship Leader Institute. The institute is a ministry of “musicianary” Keith Lancaster. At left, a minister from Rio de Janeiro takes his turn in front of the cameras.

Makita, who has some formal music training, said, “I was amazed to see the progress here, compared to what traditional music schools accomplish in at least six months.”

See a video of the students singing “Give Thanks to the Lord (for He is Good)” in Portuguese at www.christianchronicle.org/blog. Search for “Brazil.”

play with children at Casa de la Esperanza. The team delivered food to the hungry and sorted a closed shoe store’s inventory — purchased by Casa administrator Gil Sanchez — for distribution to kids at the children’s home and people in need. The group gave 13 used laptop computers to Casa.

“As they get closer to their goal of opening an on-campus Christian school in the fall of 2015, laptops and equipment of that nature will be crucial to success,” said Lyn Rudel, a member of the West Houston Church of Christ in Texas.

PARAGUAY

ASUNCION — Christians in this South American nation are learning to teach and preach in

their native tongues — Spanish and Guarani, an indigenous dialect.



Spradlin

in Paraguay since 2010. The academy, designed to train Paraguayan ministers in their own cultural context, is an extension school of the Bear Valley Bible Institute in Denver.

SOUTH AFRICA

BENONI — How do you buy shoes for needy children who don’t know their shoe size?

The youth group at the Benoni Church of Christ devised a clever work-around for children in the Zenzele squatter camp near their community. The youths had the children stand on a piece of cardboard and traced outlines of their feet.

They wrote each child’s age and clothing size on the footprints and asked church members to purchase shoes and winter clothes for them. (In South Africa, winter months are June through September.)

“For our Benoni youth group to do this on their own, we feel this shows initiative on their part to think of others who may not stay warm at this time of year,” said missionary Ann Hogg.

BELIZE

COROZAL — Luis Pedraza recently completed a missionary journey from his home in Santa Clara, Cuba, to the northern tip of the Central American nation of Belize.

Pedraza, outgoing director of the Jamaica School of Preaching’s extension program in Cuba, visited Churches of Christ and explored the possibility of planting a satellite program for the Kingston, Jamaica-based school. The effort is part of the school’s Caribbean Basin Initiative for Christ, designed to reach French- and Spanish-speaking parts of the Caribbean.

The people of Belize speak a mix of Spanish and English. So does Pedraza, who said he was inspired by the trip.

“Being here, we can reach not only Belize and southern Mexico but also, as a second step, Guatemala,” he said.

CAMEROON

BUEA — Forju Mary Forbin, a Cameroonian Christian who studied at Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City before returning to her native country, established a private Christian boarding school, Baird Memorial College. The school is now in its ninth year and has more than 150 students from grades six to 12.

In September, a sixth building, a girl’s dormitory, will be opened and named in honor of Barbara Kee, a mentor and former missionary to Cameroon.

MEXICO

ANAHUAC — Members of the West Houston Church of Christ in Texas and a community church in Denver traveled to this city in Mexico’s Chihuahua state, about 300 miles south of El Paso, Texas, to work and



Pedraza

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PHOTO PROVIDED BY FRIDAY ADIMA

Church leaders plan to take faith behind bars

In Nigeria, ministers, elders, deacons and Bible class teachers discuss their plans to take the Gospel to prison inmates across the West African nation. About 140 leaders attended a seminar on the campus of Nigerian Christian Bible College in the town of Ukpom. During the seminar, minister Friday Adima certified the participants to use curriculum developed by New Life Behavior International, a church-supported ministry in Texas. See www.nlbi.net.

Bulgarian Christians, once immigrants in Greece, minister to new wave of immigrants

SOFIA, Bulgaria — A young Church of Christ in this southern European nation is opening its arms to immigrants — past and present.

Hristo Arnaudov, who ministers for the 35-member Renaissance Church of Christ, was himself an immigrant 18 years ago. Arnaudov and his wife, Vania, traveled from Bulgaria to Athens, Greece, five years after their home nation rejected its communist government in 1990.

In Athens, the couple attended the Omonia Church of Christ and studied in the branch school of Texas-based Sunset International Bible Institute. In 2001, the Arnaudovs began a worship service for Bulgarian immigrants at the Omonia church. Baptisms followed.

Many of those former immigrants, including the Arnaudovs, have returned to Bulgaria in the years since. Recently, Hristo Arnaudov traveled to the city of Russe in northern Bulgaria, just south of the country's border with Romania.

In Russe, “there is a big group of Christians who were members of our immigrant church in Athens,” Hristo Arnaudov said. “However, Russe does not have a Church of Christ and they have all scattered, attending various other churches.” The Arnaudovs will



PHOTO PROVIDED

The Renaissance Church of Christ in Sofia, Bulgaria, welcomes immigrants from Africa.

continue to meet with the group and hope to plant a Church of Christ.

As Bulgaria transforms into a market economy, Christians find opportunities to serve new immigrants there. At a recent worship service in Sofia, the five-year-old Renaissance church welcomed eight visitors — all from Africa.

The Africans “introduced themselves one by one and presented their needs as immigrants to God and the church,” Hristo Arnaudov said.

“We have opened our hearts,” the minister said, “and help these brothers and sisters in any way we can.”

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John Jones

*MA/New Testament
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BROTHERS: Pitcher relies on God, family

FROM PAGE 1
right now has everything going for him, but you would think he's just another guy in the neighborhood," said Jon David Schwartz, youth minister for the Chapel Hill Church of Christ, Brothers' home congregation in Tennessee. "When he comes home, he speaks to everyone," Schwartz added. "He doesn't turn up his nose. ... He's a great Christian kid, and he's trying his best to live for the Lord where the Lord has put him."

While Brothers visits with *The Christian Chronicle*, loud music plays in the background as teammates put on black-and-purple road jerseys.

Calmly discussing his faith and priorities, the third-year major-leaguer seems unfazed by the noise, the television cameras and the thousands of blue-clad Dodgers fans gathering at one of baseball's most storied ballparks.

Even as he lives his dream, Brothers is quick to downplay the significance of professional sports.

"God's cutting me out and molding me to be what he wants me to be," the pitcher says. "He can see that end result."

As for baseball, he suggests, "It's just only a fraction of my life and what I'm going to do in my life. So I'm just enjoying it while it lasts, knowing there are bigger things out there ahead of me."

Lipscomb head baseball coach Jeff Forehand credits Brothers' parents, Andy and Carol, with raising Rex, his brother, Hunter, and his sister, Courtney, "the right way."

Hunter Brothers is a right-handed pitcher at Lipscomb and was picked by the Rockies in the 24th round of this summer's amateur draft. He is expected, though, to return to Lipscomb for his junior season.

"Obviously, they're good baseball players," Forehand said of Rex and Hunter, "but it starts with their family. They're both the kind of kids that you would want your kid to grow up to be like. "They're not looking for any credit,

not looking for any limelight," the coach added. "They are just good ole country boys who have been reared from hard work, dedication and loyalty."

McLaughlin, who pitched for the Houston Astros, Atlanta Braves and Oakland Athletics after leaving Lipscomb in 1975, characterizes Brothers as a "perfect gentleman."

"He's outstanding, you know what I mean?" McLaughlin said. "It's always a pleasure to go ahead and work with

sombody like that. He's got a lot of dedication and a lot of desire to be the best he can be."

Asked how he lives out his faith on a major-league team, Brothers responds that he has learned what he can control — and what he can't.

"I can control myself and how I act," he says. "Other than that, it's out of my control. Whether it may be giving up a hit, or whether it may be reading my Bible verses in the mornings, it all comes back down to that foundation that's been laid."

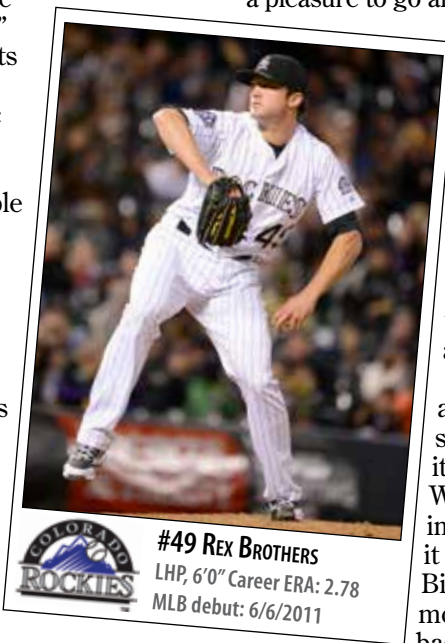
This season, he decided to read the entire Bible. "It's probably going to carry over into the offseason," he says, "but I set out to do that."

He says he can't attend a regular church service during the season but participates in baseball's Sunday chapel program with other Christian players.

Even during the season, he relies on his family to help him on his faith journey — and to serve as his personal support group.

"My dad has always been the rock that I went back to time and time again through life situations or to talk about the Word," Brothers says. "My grandparents, my mother, anyone in the family — they are always so encouraging and helpful. They're there anytime I need them."

"I can't say enough about having that group of people around me," he says of his extended family, most of whom attend the Chapel Hill church. "I'm always in and out of contact with them, via text or phone call."



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WORKING: Job skills, resume writing and faith

FROM PAGE 1

charged budget cuts, known as sequestration, resulted in layoffs. Other sectors of the state's economy have declined, especially the construction industry.

Despite adding 4,600 jobs in May, Maryland's unemployment rate rose from 6.5 percent to 6.7 percent — still under the national average of 7.6 percent, the U.S. Department of Labor reported.

The increase likely means more people are looking for work. Simon Geddie is one of them. For the past 18 months, the 20-year-old has been seeking a job. Eventually, he'd like to design video games. In the meantime, he'd like to work at a video game retailer.

"It's kind of hard to get people's attention," said Geddie, who attended the workshop. "No one ever told me how to perfect a resume. I learned a lot of new stuff about that."

BIBLE-BASED WORK HABITS AND SELF-ESTEEM

Citing the Old Testament stories of Joseph and Daniel — two Israelites forced to labor under foreign kings — Hager told the participants that followers of Christ can "bless those with whom we work and cause even those who don't share our faith to glorify God."

Churches of Christ across the U.S. have applied Bible-based principles to ministries focused on employment, even in the years prior to the 2008 recession.

Congregations including The Hills Church of Christ in North Richland Hills, Texas, the Crieve Hall Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn., and the Naperville Church of Christ in Illinois have programs designed to help people find jobs.

Many of these programs are born from food pantries or other programs focused on the impoverished and a demographic known as "chronically unemployed." Nonprofits including CitySquare in Dallas and HopeWorks in Memphis, Tenn., have job-training components that evolved from the desires of Christians to help the poor.

"For many, the self-esteem is more important than knowing how to put together a nice-looking resume," said

Joyce Dalzell, a member of the Highland Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, and director of FaithWorks of Abilene.

While working with a food pantry, Dalzell said she noticed that many of the people she served "just have never learned the skills they need to find a good job and be a good employee."

In addition to teaching job skills, Dalzell said, FaithWorks uses biblical principles that help many students "get to know a heavenly father and their value as a person."

WALKING — AND JOB SEARCHING — BY FAITH

Even Christians who aren't chronically unemployed feel the pinch as the U.S. continues its sluggish recovery from the recession.

"Twenty years ago, we went to college, got a job and worked our way up in a corporation," said Brenda Bethea, the minister's wife at the East Baltimore church. "Now people are losing their jobs, and they don't know what to do."

Arnesia Thomas, who asked the congregation for prayers in her job search, has a graduate degree from the University of Baltimore.

Oddly enough, she was a counselor for a welfare-to-work program operated by the city — someone who helped people find jobs — before budget cuts eliminated her position two weeks before Christmas. She found part-time work at a financial call center during tax season but needs something stable and full time.

Hager has helped her in her job search, she said. She's polishing her resume and broadening her scope, listening for key words during interviews that tell her the job for which she is applying has long-term funding.

Meanwhile, "my faith walk is still good," said Thomas, a member at East Baltimore for nine years. The church's women are a constant source of encouragement. She's kept busy, teaching Sunday school for the church's children.

"Right now," she said, "I've got all the extra time in the world to fully devote myself to the church."



PHOTO PROVIDED

Rosario, a student at FaithWorks of Abilene, interns as a welder.

Hope in HIM inspires Alabama job ministry

BY ANTHONY RHOADS
FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

MONTGOMERY, Ala.

Steven Edwards was having a bad week. The 24-year-old, with big muscles and long dreadlocks, had dodged bullets before — an occupational hazard for a drug dealer. But when he found himself on the receiving end of gunfire three times in almost as many days, that was enough, he decided.

“It was a one-way road that was very dark,” he said. “I was living the street life very heavy, and I had no values at all in my life. The decisions I was making ... were getting me nowhere but back to where I started from, which was the bottom of the food chain.”

To make matters worse, Edwards had sole custody of his 9-year-old son, whose mother had abandoned him.

Edwards knew he had to turn his life around — not only for himself but also for his son. “I felt like I was doing the devil’s job and what he planned for me instead of God’s work,” Edwards said.

Then he found hope — Hope Inspired Ministries, to be exact. The nonprofit, known as HIM, helps the chronically unemployed find jobs in this city of 208,000 souls.

HIM instructors teach general education courses, life skills and spiritual development — all with the goal of transforming lives and breaking the cycle of poverty and crime.

Edwards lacked direction in his life when he came to HIM, “but he embraced the program,”



PHOTOS PROVIDED

Michael Coleman, far right, stands with students at Hope Inspired Ministries’ facility in Montgomery, Ala. At left, next to the HIM sign, is Leanne Armstrong, the ministry’s program director.

said Michael Coleman, the program’s director and a member of the Vaughn Park Church of Christ in Montgomery.

Though many would rather hide from Edwards than hire him, Coleman saw past the intimidating muscles and dreadlocks. Instead, Coleman saw a person with intelligence, charisma and

a desire to learn.

When considering program applicants, HIM staff members try to see them “through the eyes of Jesus, to love people in an equally undeserved way,” Coleman said. “I try to funnel to them what God gave to me.”

FRUSTRATION AND TRANSFORMATION

Coleman, a 21-year Army veteran, launched Hope Inspire Ministries two years ago.

The ministry was born out of the frustration he experienced in urban ministry.

“I really felt led to work with inner-city programs,” said Coleman, who preached in Fort Deposit, Ala., for five years and spent 18 months as the head of a benevolence ministry. “But I became frustrated because of the lack of transformation. No matter how much help came, there was no change.”

He used the money he had saved for retirement to start HIM. He modeled the program after HopeWorks, a nonprofit begun by Churches of Christ in the Memphis, Tenn., area.

The Vaughn Park church supports the work, which has “an army of volunteers,” Coleman said — many from

the congregation and the Landmark Church of Christ, also in Montgomery.

The program includes a 13-week course. The first six weeks focus on job and life skills.

“All our curriculum is rooted in biblical principles,” Coleman said. “I personally conduct a daily devotional with our students, and we have a more advanced spiritual training session once a week.”

Beginning in the seventh week, students work two days per week as unpaid interns for local businesses.

“We walk them through the process but don’t carry them,” Coleman said. “We will help them overcome their obstacles. We help turn them in a positive direction so they won’t retreat back into the chaos.”

HIM works with multiple organizations as it seeks to transform lives — including

government agencies, parole systems, homeless shelters and the Salvation Army.

“We’ll partner with anybody who is geared to helping the poor through transformation,” Coleman said. “I think collaboration is key.”

LOSING A CHECK, GAINING A JOB

But HIM does not ask for money from government agencies, Coleman said.

Ideally, neither should its students. One of the ministry’s goals is to free people from the system of dependence that often results from reliance on government funds.

One example is Luventhia Moore, a 23-year-old woman who was misdiagnosed with schizophrenia. The diagnosis caused her to lose custody of her 2-year-old son but meant a regular disability check from the government.

“She was drawing a check for schizophrenia, but she showed no signs of schizophrenia,” Coleman said. “Everyone told her to not go to work because she would lose her check.”

“It took me a lot of time to break through to her that there is not enough government assistance to get her where

she wanted to go.”

Moore stayed in the program and now has a job — and dreams.

“My main goal is to get my son back,”

she said in a video testimonial for the ministry. She also wants to earn a college degree and work as a veterinary technician.

Through the ministry’s spiritual emphasis, she learned that “Jesus loves you for who you are and what you’re about. No matter what, he’s always your friend.”



Moore

FAULKNERLAW

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Faulkner University, Thomas Goode Jones School of Law, a private Christian law school located in Montgomery, Alabama, invites nominations and applications for the position of Dean of the School of Law. Established in 1928 in honor of former governor and federal judge Thomas Goode Jones, the author of America's first code of legal ethics, the law school is part of Faulkner University and is one of only two law schools affiliated with the churches of Christ.

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The law school anticipates the new dean assuming his or her responsibilities in the early summer of 2014. Interested persons should send a letter of interest, curriculum vitae, and list of references, by regular or electronic mail to:

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Faulkner University, Jones School of Law
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Applications should be received by July 15, 2013. Although finalists will be subject to customary reference and other background checks, all applications, inquiries, and expressions of interest will be handled confidentially.

For more information, please visit www.faulkner.edu/jsl/dsc.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Steven Edwards, right, studies auto body repair work during his internship in Montgomery.

HIM: Jobs ministry aims for generational change

FROM PAGE 13

'WE DON'T SUGARCOAT IT'

For each of the ministry's success stories, there is an equal dose of disappointment. The most recent class started with 12 students but then dropped to six. Many are unwilling to take personal responsibility and be held accountable for their actions — two factors that are key to completing the program.

"We don't sugarcoat it," Coleman said. "It's going to be hard. As long as they keep trying, we have tons of mercy and tons of grace. But if they quit trying, we have to break ties."

"When you love somebody, love is more than acceptance — it's accountability."

'NOW I AM ON A STRAIGHTENED PATH'

Instead of dodging bullets, Steven Edwards bangs out dents.

During his time in the HIM program, he interned with an auto body shop. He completed the program and earned his high school equivalency degree.

Now the former drug dealer, whose

life was nearly a car wreck, wants to fix cars for a living. He's a straight-A student at Trenholm State Technical College in Montgomery and dreams of one day opening his own business.

"As I look back at my past and survey my future, I now understand it is my duty to break my family's generational poverty and start a pathway to prosperity," Edwards said in his HIM graduation speech. "Now I am on a straightened path."

For Coleman and all those who share the mission of HIM, "it's hard work, it's intense work," he said. But "you don't do it for the numbers or results."

Instead, "you do it for the transformation, to help them live a life that God wants them to have."

Edwards sees that transformation in his own life.

"I would like to thank almighty and powerful God," he said, "for guiding me down the road to righteousness."

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact www.hopeinspiredministries.org or michael@hopeinspiredministries.org.

Montana church seeks, strengthens, sends

CONGREGATION IN BIG SKY COUNTRY *emphasizes local evangelism while training leaders for service around the globe.*



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Above, Black Eagle Falls is the first in a series of five waterfalls that make up the Great Falls of the Missouri River. Below, Nathaniel Gill arrives for Sunday worship at the Great Falls church.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

GREAT FALLS, Mont.

Lewis and Clark.
The Blackfoot Indians.
The buffalo.

The grizzly bear.
All their footprints figure in the history of this Big Sky community that's home to picturesque waterfalls, scenic hiking trails and — if you venture down the right street — a nondescript green building with steel walls.

Built in the 1970s, the green building is not, to put it kindly, the most visually appealing structure in this Missouri River community of 59,000 souls.

But it's not the outward appearance that draws visitors to

the Great Falls Church of Christ.

"I tell people, 'We've got an ugly building with great people inside,'" said minister Scott Laird, who with his wife, Patty, has served the 250-member church since 1994.

The state's largest Church of Christ, the Great Falls congregation mixes native Montanans, active and retired military personnel from nearby Malmstrom Air Force Base and outdoors enthusiasts drawn to the hunting and fishing culture.

It's a congregation filled with more jeans and cowboy hats than suits and

ties — and a flock known statewide for its support of youth rallies at small churches and family events at Yellowstone

Bible Camp, about 200 miles south of Great Falls.

Converts describe a congregation that presents the Bible in a simple, easy-to-understand way, welcomes newcomers with open arms — and makes delicious apple pies.

That's right: Anyone who visits on Sunday receives a freshly baked pie through the church's "Monday Night for the Master" program.

"It was good!" a smiling Tim Clark said of the pie.

"And they weren't real pushy," he added, referring to the church members who delivered the pie. "They didn't want to come in and sit there and talk to us for an hour."

No hard sell, in other words?

"It was just being friendly," replied Clark, who works as a manager at a Walmart. "You know, 'Hey, if you need anything else, let us know, and we'd love

CONTINUED

Great Falls Church of Christ



BOBBY ROSS JR.

LOCATION: Great Falls, Mont.

MEMBERSHIP: 250.

LEADERSHIP: Elders Gordon Naylor, Jerry Merriman, Jerry Covington and Mike Rocheleau and 12 deacons.

MINISTERS: Scott Laird and Chris Crooks.

CHURCH MOTTO: "Seek, Save, Strengthen & Send ... All for the Glory of God."

ONLINE: greatfallschurchofchrist.com

ABOUT THE SERIES

The Christian Chronicle launched Churches That Work in 2005. Churches That Work should be: **Evangelistic**, reaching the unchurched at home or abroad. **Biblical**, making Bible instruction central to their mission. **United**, possessing a spirit of internal vitality. **Visible**, known and appreciated for service in their community. Read the series at www.christianchronicle.org.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Minister Scott Laird shows off a rainbow trout that he caught.

Seek, strengthen, send



BOBBY ROSS JR.
Air Force Senior Airman Joe Chroback, Kristina Chroback, Katrina Jeffers and Senior Airman Nate Kortan sing during a Sunday morning worship assembly.

CONTINUED
to see you back next Sunday.”
The “genuine friendliness” of the church impressed Kimberly Clark, Tim’s wife and mother of their two children, Hunter, 12, and Chloe, 9.
“I’ve been to other churches, and it seems they are really working hard to be friendly and welcoming,” said Kimberly Clark, who teaches at an elementary school near the Air Force base. “Here, that friendliness, honestly, comes naturally.”
“They’re not having to work at it,” agreed Tim Clark.
The Clarks were baptized in 2006 and now serve as co-leaders for one of the church’s 13 “life groups” — small groups that meet regularly and help keep members connected.
On any given Sunday, the congregation welcomes 20 to 30 visitors, said Silvia Crooks, wife of minister Chris Crooks, who shares the preaching duties with Laird.
“Great Falls is definitely unique,” she said of members’ focus on evangelism.

“I don’t know that most places have guests showing up week after week.”

A KINGDOM VIEW OF LORD’S WORK
A bright yellow banner hangs at the back of the Great Falls Church of Christ auditorium, declaring in



BOBBY ROSS JR.
Church member Sheryl Lute signs as elder Mike Rocheleau prays. Elder Jerry Merriman can be seen in the background.



BOBBY ROSS JR.
Minister and avid hunter Chris Crooks displays the skull of a bear that he shot.

black and red letters: “Seek, Save, Strengthen & Send ... All for the Glory of God.” That motto encapsulates the church’s approach, Great Falls’ elders said:
• **Seek and save:** Members and leaders alike share the Gospel and invite friends, neighbors and coworkers to the church’s small-group meetings and worship assemblies. The relationships developed often lead to Bible studies and baptisms.
• **Strengthen:** Splitting the preaching duties gives Laird time to devote to helping sister congregations in Montana and elsewhere that are struggling or divided. For example, Laird provided support in 2011 as three Churches of Christ in the capital city of Helena worked to heal old wounds and eventually merge.
At the same time, the arrangement allows Crooks to work with teens and participate in youth rallies all over Montana.
“Our goal is to have one of us in Great Falls,” Laird said, “but the



BOBBY ROSS JR.
Clockwise from left, elder Mike Rocheleau, Montana Covington, elder Jerry Covington, Luke Crooks, minister Scott Laird, elder Gordon Naylor, minister Chris Crooks, elder Jerry Merriman and Patty Laird pray before a meal at Rocheleau’s home.

elders are fine with one of us being gone whenever we need to be to help other congregations.”
• **Send:** The church prepares members — such as Air Force personnel who may be in Great Falls only a few years — to serve and lead when they move away.
In addition, the congregation sponsors a two-year internship program that allows young ministers to gain experience working alongside Laird and Crooks. In fact, Crooks — who joined the Great Falls staff in 2001 — was the first intern.
“The way we look at it, the Lord’s work is not just here in Great Falls,” said elder Jerry Merriman, a native Tennessean who stayed in Montana after retiring from the Air Force in 1991. “It’s worldwide.”
A TRANSITORY MEMBERSHIP
The Great Falls church began in 1948 as a handful of Christians meeting in rented facilities at the YMCA and later the Bungalow Bakery.

The congregation’s first building was constructed in 1951, as a group of 40 met at the corner of 34th Street and Central Avenue. A new facility — the green building — was erected on the same property in 1974.
A half-dozen ministers served the congregation before 1969, when the hiring of Gordon Naylor brought stability. Naylor preached full time for 25 years. At age 85, Naylor still serves as one of Great Falls’ four elders and occasionally preaches.
By 1979, membership hit 159. That grew to 203 in 1994 and 235 in 2011.
To deal with auditorium crowding, the church added a second Sunday morning worship assembly in 2004. The congregation owns 27 acres not far from the current location and plans to construct a new building when God provides the funding.
In a typical year, the church baptizes 12 to 22 people — many of them converts from the community, Laird said. Still, the congregation struggles to grow its membership.

“For every one person that moves in, we typically send three people out,” Laird said. “We have to keep converting people or we’re going to go downhill due to Air Force transfers and our economy. Great Falls is not a town that brings workers in.



DENNIS MAYNARD
Boys from the Great Falls church compete in a sack race as part of the congregation’s annual picnic and Olympics. “The boys always go for a diving finish — even if they won’t win,” said Dennis Maynard, a church deacon who serves in the Air Force.

‘The cool thing about being at a church like this is, you always have new people coming in, so there’s never really a stalemate. ... It’s awesome to have the same group of kids around every week, but being able to let new people in is really helpful for us to grow.’
— **Hannah Cabbage**, 16, a member of the Great Falls Church of Christ youth group



BOBBY ROSS JR.
Tim and Kimberly Clark pose with their children, Chloe, 9, and Hunter, 12.

Anytime that we do get a new family in, we’re pretty excited.”
Leading someone to Christ and then watching them move away can be difficult, said elder Mike Rocheleau, who met his wife, Doris, while serving with the Air Force in Germany.



BOBBY ROSS JR.
Grady Johnson, right, gathers his thoughts while Paige Luetzen and C.J. Lewis visit during a youth devotional and pizza party after a Sunday night worship service.

But he said Laird and Crooks have helped change the church’s mindset.
“Rather than looking at it as a detriment, we see it now as a positive because we get these people for three or four years, maybe, if we’re lucky,” Rocheleau said. “So we’ve got to equip them as well as possible before we send them away. It gives us a little more sense of urgency.”
Hannah Cabbage, a 16-year-old high school junior, said: “The cool thing about being at a church like this is, you always have new people coming in, so there’s never really a stalemate. ... It’s awesome to have the same group of kids around every week, but being able to let new people in is really helpful for us to grow.”
SERVING GOD AND COUNTRY
Air Force Senior Master Sgt. C.J. Reeves said the church asked him to serve as a deacon two years ago.
Reeves, who works with explosive ordinance disposal, has served tours in Afghanistan and Iraq.

“A lot of people tell me that I don’t fit the mold of a typical EOD guy,” said the 20-year Air Force veteran, who is married to Gloria and has two sons, Isaiah, 14, and Joshua, 12. “I tell them it’s just because I’ve got God in my life. This stuff is all passing. But it’s been good.”
In his five years in Great Falls, Reeves has helped convert several fellow Air Force enlistees and their spouses, including Staff Sgt. Jason Jeffers and his wife, Katrina.
“This was probably the first church that we came to that was just straight to the point, preached straight from the Bible. They didn’t overcomplicate it,” said Katrina Jeffers, whose husband is serving in Afghanistan.
For the couple, the church has become their family while they’re away from their biological family, she said.
“It’s really just helped us plant our roots,” she said. “We don’t have to feel judged or anything like that. We just come in, worship the Lord and have a good fellowship.”



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Microsoft's Kevin Turner on digital faith

CHRISTIAN FATHER, chief operating officer urges churches to connect with youths' ever-evolving online communities.

BY LYNN McMILLON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

These days, Kevin Turner has his head in the cloud.

Turner, a member of the Bellevue Church of Christ in Washington state, has served as Microsoft's chief operating officer since 2005. He leads a global organization of more than 47,000 employees.

He's helping Microsoft transform from software giant to a "devices and services company" — a term he used in a recent interview with *The Australian* titled "How Microsoft is shaping the post-PC world." Gone is the era when people purchased his company's products on disks in shrink-wrapped cardboard and installed them on bulky desktop computers, he says. Now users access a "cloud" of information through touch-screen devices, carried in their pockets.

Turner is used to change — and making change. The Stratford, Okla., native began his career as a Wal-Mart cashier as he attended East Central University in nearby Ada.

After graduation, he rose through the ranks of the retail giant, eventually serving as president and chief executive officer of Sam's Club, a firm with 46 million members and more than \$37 billion in annual sales.

He attributes his faith in Jesus to the influence of strong Christian parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. He and his wife, Shelley, have been married 24 years and have three children: Blake, 17; Beau, 15; and Brynlee, 11. This fall, Blake Turner will join the football team as a walk-on at the University of California, Los Angeles.

As a Christian father — and avid follower of communication trends — Kevin Turner sees opportunities for churches to use ever-evolving technology to connect with new generations.

The Word of God is there, in the cloud, he says, but people of faith must make it a part of their online "inner circles."

How can the church remain relevant in this highly technological environment?

The church must find ways to connect deeper with young people. Young people have new forums and new ways to communicate and connect, and the church has to become contemporary in those ways. It's not about young people conforming to the way that the church has always communicated. It's about the church adapting to the way the communication evolves.

This is a very fluid time from a technology standpoint. And it's a very interesting time because the level of communication, the quality of the communication and the clarity of the communication has the potential to never be greater than it is today.

The ability to reach people on certain subjects at certain times has never been more timely, has never been more up-to-the-minute, up-to-the-second.

It would be great if the church could continue to make changes, adapt and become contemporary in this new world of communication.

Should a church have a staff member devoted to that kind of communication with the congregation?

It could. But I think it also means that everybody needs to broaden their skill set. Anytime you assign that to somebody, that says that other people don't have to work on it or think about it.

You may need a catalyst to come in to teach, train and bring everybody along, but I think as long as you have the mindset that it's the way that you have to re-transform yourself — and embrace the technology, and make sure that you're not afraid of it.

I think that a catalyst can be very helpful and beneficial. The world needs the Word of God now more than ever.

Why do you see the world needing the Gospel more than ever?

The ability of people to get information has exploded with the Internet. I



MICROSOFT

Kevin Turner, Microsoft's COO, credits his strong Christian family for his faith.

'It's not about young people conforming to the way that church has always communicated. It's about the church adapting to the way the communication evolves. ... It would be great if the church could continue to make changes, adapt and become contemporary in this new world of communication.'

Kevin Turner

don't believe that the spreading of the Word of God has exploded at the same rate as the Internet.

I think there's a chance there for that to be resolved and improved. Utilizing the contemporary means finding and connecting with people and sharing ideas and thoughts.

Think about it. There's never been an

easier forum to discuss, debate, learn things about the Gospel and the Word of God than there is today in a very broad, diverse, opinionated way, which can only make us all smarter and better and give us a different perspective.

Yet the ability to see people use those vehicles is still limited today. I think it can be dramatically changed.

What do you perceive as the relationship of teenagers, technology and the church?

In terms of teenagers utilizing technology to connect to the church — or to connect to the Word of God — they are limited. They're connecting with their circles, their interests, their friends, their family. Everybody is creating their own inner circles.

The inner circles are getting broader and bigger, but the ability to have the church be a core part of people's inner circles is something, from a technology standpoint, that should and needs to continue to evolve.

Technology provides the means for people to belong to a community. Having the religious community be a part of people's personal circles is very, very important — and is underutilized today.

How has technology impacted our work and personal lives?

Today's work environment has positively affected families — the ability for people to work from home, the ability for people to work from a job-sharing perspective. The Internet has created a lot of jobs and opportunities for people to stay connected.

People ask me what I think about work-life balance. The word "balance" throws me off a little bit, because that says one is trying to do two things at once. I'm a real fan of work-life harmony rather than work-life balance.

There are times when family must take priority, and there are other times when work must take priority. It all depends on the situation.

See **TURNER**, Page 20

Youth/Family Life Minister

The Bell Avenue Church of Christ is seeking to hire a Youth/Family Life Minister.

For more information:
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HARDING

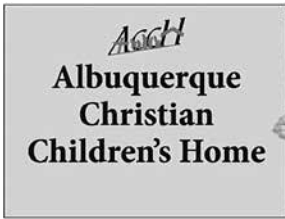
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www.acch4kids.org

TURNER: Microsoft COO enforces 'no technology' rule at dinner table

FROM PAGE 19

How can parents help their children understand this work-life harmony?

The biggest thing they can do is find the quality time that is necessary. Some quantity is important, but it's not the most important thing. The quality of the time is the most important thing. We have a rule in our house that when it is dinner time and we're all sitting around the table, there are no screens, no technology, and we talk and communicate face to face and person to person.

Technology is a real asset. We love it, and it can change our lives in a positive way. But there are times for no technology and making sure that we don't forget that we have to talk to each other and listen to one another and share with one another so that we can totally connect with each other on a deeper level.

What have you learned from managing a large workforce that might benefit church leaders?

The biggest thing I've learned is that almost every person has hopes, dreams and aspirations.

It's difficult to understand exactly where everybody's coming from, but as long as you keep in mind that you can be a positive energy carrier, you can be someone who inspires hope.

People want to feel heard. They want to feel like their opinion matters. They want to feel like the leader really understands where they're coming from. Even though their point of view might be different from the leader's, it's important that the leader connect on an individual basis and have that connection at a deep level, to be able to inspire and motivate and encourage people to do things they normally or ordinarily wouldn't do.

That is one thing that I have found. It's pretty universal around the world, regardless of the organization, culture or country.

'People want to feel heard. ... They want to feel like the leader really understands where they're coming from.'

Kevin Turner

CHILDREN'S HOMES

CITY OF CHILDREN

ENSENADA, Mexico — This church-supported ministry recently celebrated its 40th anniversary. City of Children houses about 100 children on 53 acres in Ensenada, about 70 miles south of San Diego.

Earl and Sue Farmer led the initial efforts to provide a better life for children in Mexico's Baja California state. After 17 years, they passed the responsibilities to Stan and Carol Stout, who continued the work for 23 years.

Staff members past and present attended the celebration, during which the ministry's Mexican directors, Ricardo and Patty Gonzales, were honored for 20 years of service.

HIGHER EDUCATION

FLORIDA COLLEGE

TEMPLE TERRACE, Fla. — Fifty-eight campers — friends and alumni of Florida College from nine states — contributed 1,200 man-hours to the Christian college during its summer Labor Camp. They pressure-washed, mulched, painted and renovated a riverside amphitheater.

Alumnus Craig Bean, a minister for the Spring Street Church of Christ in Racine, Wis., was inspired to start the camp in 2003 when he and his wife, Tami, dropped off their daughter for her first year at the college.



SAMUEL WARD

Julie Brand, Karen McClenny and Anna Cum work on Florida College's amphitheater.

HARDING SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Jim Martin, pulpit minister for the Crestview Church of Christ in Waco, Texas, will become vice president of Harding School of Theology in Memphis, Tenn., in 2014.

Martin will succeed Evertt W. Huffard, who will remain as dean of the school, a branch campus of Harding University in



BRAMBLETT GROUP

Christian school in Tennessee celebrates 'Power of One'

The student body of Jackson Christian School in Tennessee celebrates the conclusion of the "Power of One" program. Students in kindergarten through 12th grade raised more than \$14,470 for various nonprofits by working together and focusing on a different need each month. At right, Dianne Warren, whose face is not shown, tells students what the program meant to her daughter, Alissa, who is pictured. Alissa participated in the school's Daughters of Job pageant, which raised \$3,070 for special-needs athletics. The Israel Houghton song "Power of One" sparked the 10-month project at the school, which is associated with Churches of Christ.



Searcy, Ark.

Martin "brings a solid background in business, ministry and education, to his new job," Harding University President Bruce McLarty said. "He has close ties with churches and preachers all across the country. I can't imagine a better fit for this position."



Martin

IBARAKI CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

HITACHI CITY, Japan — Student at Ibaraki Christian remembered the triple tragedy that devastated their country in 2011 by collecting funds for victims of the recent Oklahoma tornadoes.

Students and families affected by the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear emergency in Japan received assistance from the "Living Together" fund — part of which came from Oklahomans, said Jim Batten, the school's chancellor.

Students and board members at the university — plus students and

staff at Ibaraki Christian High School and Junior High and the staff of the Hitachi and Omika kindergartens — contributed thousands of yen, totaling \$4,174.85, which the university sent to the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City for tornado relief.

"Less than 10 percent of our faculty, staff and students are 'Christian,' according to their religious preferences," Batten said. "But the love for their fellow man is clearly evident."



PHOTO PROVIDED

Jim Batten collects funds for Oklahoma donated by Ibaraki Christian students.

PUBLICATIONS

BULLETIN DIGEST

MCCRORY, Ark. — Bringing *Bulletin Digest* into the digital age is the goal of new owners Matt and Darcy Clifton.

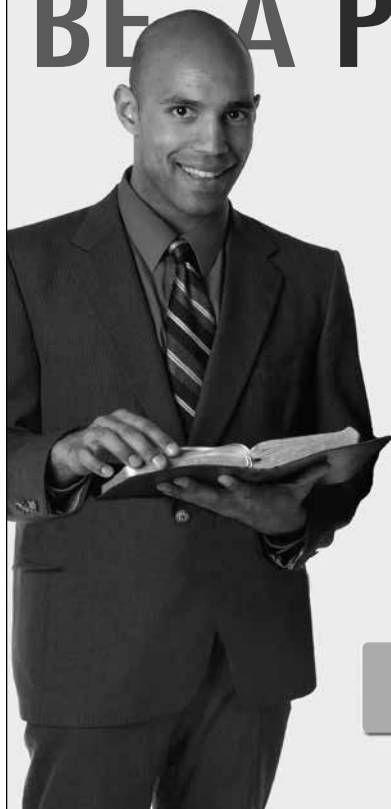
Since 1982, the publication has provided Churches of Christ with Bible-based articles, graphics and filler material for church bulletins. The new owners plan to launch digital versions of the publication, including a PDF format, to make it easier to cut and paste articles into bulletins. The *Digest* will continue to produce a print version.

The Cliftons, members of the McCrory Church of Christ, purchased the publication from Charles and Jane Beebe of Abilene, Texas.

"We are so blessed to know them," Matt Clifton said, "and humbled to be able to carry this important work forward for the church."

For more information, see www.bulletindigest.com.

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How to Apply: Those interested in applying should mail a copy of their resume with a picture, a DVD of at least two recent sermons and three references. Mail or e-mail to the attention of:

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Residential Counselor. *Couples needed for live-in positions as residential counselors, providing frontline treatment and care for up to eight adolescent males, ages 13-18. Good interpersonal, team, and conflict resolution skills are required. Must be willing to undergo extensive training in behavior management techniques in a therapeutic environment. Must be able to adapt to two-weeks-on-one-week-off schedule. Residential counselors are part of an interdisciplinary team consisting of case managers, credentialed counselors, and support staff.*

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To apply, call **Dana Lawson 486-2274 x225** or visit us online at **www.tennesseechildrenshome.org.**

In high-pressure SEC, athletic director manages ‘in a fashion that reflects Christ’

BY MURRAY EVANS | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

ORLANDO, Fla. — With Mississippi State University advancing to the championship round of the College World Series, life is good these days for fans of the Bulldogs like Scott Stricklin.

Stricklin has more than just a passing interest in the success of his alma mater, though. As Mississippi State’s athletic director, he leads a department that fields teams in 17 sports and competes in what’s arguably the nation’s top major-college league, the Southeastern Conference.

It’s a job in which he’s often second-guessed, but Stricklin, who attends the Starkville Church of Christ in Mississippi with his wife, Anne, and daughters Abby and Sophie, said it’s his faith — in God and in his coworkers — that often has helped him deal with the difficult situations faced by someone in his position.

“You can’t control everything, and I think your faith comes in there, because God tells us he doesn’t want us to try to control everything,” Stricklin told *The Christian Chronicle* during a break in the annual convention of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics. “He wants us to trust him, right? There are a lot of times when you realize, we’re going to do the best we can but we can’t control everything here. We’re going to make sure we have the people in place and give them responsibility and trust them to do their jobs.”

Stricklin, 42, took an unusual route to the top athletic job at Mississippi State, spending more than two decades in athletic media relations in stops at MSU, Auburn University, Tulane University, Baylor University and the University of Kentucky. While at UK, he worked with Greg Byrne, who by 2008 had become MSU’s athletic director.

Byrne approached Stricklin to see if Stricklin would be willing to make the jump from media relations to athletic fundraising. Stricklin became MSU’s senior associate athletic director for external affairs. Byrne left to become Arizona’s athletic director, and Stricklin replaced him in May 2010.

Those who have worked with Stricklin say he does a good job of incorporating his faith into his job.

“Every day, as the leader of an organization, you are confronted with dozens of decisions,” said Kentucky athletic director Mitch Barnhart, Stricklin’s former boss. “Scott always managed those decisions at Kentucky, and now as athletics director at Mississippi State, in a fashion that reflects Christ.”

Tony Neely, Kentucky’s media relations director, attends Southside Church of Christ in Lexington, where Stricklin and his family worshiped when they lived in Kentucky.

“Scott taught classes at Southside and also helped teachers keep classes lively with his combination of wit and wisdom,” Neely said. “Scott also sought to live his faith in the workplace. The man I saw on Sunday mornings was the same man I saw at the office.”

Stricklin said he relishes the opportunity to let people know that he’s a man of faith and believes there are ways of doing so, even working at a state school, such as using biblical examples in speeches and highlighting student-athletes who do mission work.

“It’s amazing,” he said, “how God puts you in a position to either share your faith or just try to set an example and show what he has done in your life.”

SEE AN EXPANDED INTERVIEW and read about Scott Stricklin’s three “defining principles” at Mississippi State at www.christianchronicle.org.



MSU SPORTS INFORMATION
Scott Stricklin, left, chats with Mississippi State football coach Dan Mullen.

**Volunteer
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Mission UpReach (www.missionupreach.com), a church planting mission of the churches of Christ, located in Santa Rosa de Copán, Copán, Honduras has a job opening for a volunteer missionary staff accountant. This is a two-year commitment position located in Santa Rosa de Copán. The successful candidate must have a bachelors in accounting and experience working as an accountant. He or she must also raise their own support. No Spanish language required as a prerequisite to be considered. Please send your Curriculum Vitae and other inquiries to:

**Phil Waldron, Director,
Mission UpReach at:
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Milestones

a service of The Christian Chronicle advertising

Service

Karlene and Monique Albuquerque, N.M. — Congratulations to two of our teen residents, Karlene and Monique, for their participation with impact Houston this summer.

In June, they reached out and worked with the inner-city children of Houston.

Karlene and Monique came to ACCH through the Child Welfare Service of a New Mexico Native American tribe, yet have developed a heart to serve others who also come from difficult backgrounds.



Dennis and Sharon Brown
Houseparents for Albuquerque
Christian Children's Home.

Wedding

Lawrence-Clauson



Daniel and Nicole (Clauson) Lawrence were married on June 1, 2013, at the Naperville Church of Christ in Illinois.

Daniel and Nicole met years ago while attending Wisconsin Christian Youth Camp during the summer. After losing contact with each other after graduating high school, these two were reconnected last year through the WCYC college retreat. After spending a year apart (Daniel was serving in the Air Force in Cheyenne, Wyo., and Nicole was attending Rochester College in Rochester Hills, Mich.), they look forward to spending their time together and seeing what God has in store for their future, as man and wife.

Anniversary

Marvin and Dot Phillips — 60th
Marvin and Dot Phillips celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on July 4, 2013. Marvin is the former preacher of the Garnett Church of Christ in Tulsa, Okla. Previously, they were missionaries in Perth, Australia.

New Minister

Ben Driver
Bellevue, Ohio — The Bellevue Church of Christ welcomes new Minister Ben Driver and his wife Katie.

Bellevue is located approximately 10 miles southwest of Sandusky, Ohio.



Ministry Notes



Happy 15th Birthday to **Missions Resource Network!**

This ministry, born August 3, 1998, as a result of conversations about the need for a ministry that could serve as a missions hub to help connect churches and missions ministries with each other and with a broad selection of resources, has grown from its simple beginning into a ministry that has strong relationships with scores of churches and ministries around the world.

Congratulations, and may the Lord bless this ministry for many more years to come!

Thank You

Words cannot adequately express our deep appreciation for all the support, prayers, service, and donations (both supplies and monetary) from literally all across the brotherhood and world after the May 20 tornado struck our community of Moore, Oklahoma.

Your kindness has reflected our Savior's love and service during a time of tragedy and loss and we have been deeply honored by your gracious and generous outpouring of

support. We will forever remember the many acts of kindness that renewed our spirits, energized our bodies, and warmed our hearts during the long and tiring days that followed the tragedy.

While there is still much to do in our area, we have begun the work of renewal and reconstruction. As we partner with others in our community to bring healing and hope, we continue to covet your prayers.

Please know that God blessed us through you in our little corner of the Kingdom!

The Oakcrest Church of Christ
Oklahoma City

Memorials

Eric Andre Brooks
St. Michaels, Md. — Eric Brooks, who died May 13, began his Christian walk of faith in May 1980 when he was added to the body at the Central Church of Christ. A dear friend, Nathaniel Hawkins, was instrumental in teaching him. He served as an elder of the East Baltimore Church of Christ since 2006. Brother Brooks and his lovely wife, sister Alice Brooks, are parents of a son and daughter, Jason and Jamie.



Brother Brooks taught Sunday school and was the worship ministry leader. Brother Brooks believed that serving our Lord and Savior was not only his Christian honor and privilege, but his duty in the Lord.

Mark Alan Kirk

Mark Alan Kirk, 55, died June 13 in Cleveland. Kirk, a graduate of Harding University in Searcy, Ark., was a member of the Pepperdine University Board of Regents. He also was chair of the Board of Trustees of Cuyahoga Valley Christian Academy in Ohio and served on the board of Hope Network Ministries. He formerly served on the Board of Trustees of Rochester College, Board of Visitors of Abilene Christian University and President's Council of Harding University.

He is survived by his wife, Robin and three children, Allison, Alan and Ashley.



NEWSMAKERS

NAMED: Grey Powell, athletic director, football coach, head track coach and head weightlifting coach for Oklahoma Christian Academy in Edmond, Okla. **Justin Lacey**, director of communication for Westbury Christian School in Houston. **Shawn-Patrick Bland**, first class petty officer, U.S. Navy, was named Sea Sailor of the Year. Bland is a member of the North County Church of Christ in Escondido, Calif.



Bland

AWARDED: Josiah Tilton, executive director of Ghana West Africa Missions in Searcy, Ark., received the Award of Merit from the American Water Works Association — an award to those outside the water profession who demonstrate outstanding service in support of providing better water for people. Tilton is a member of the West Side church in Searcy, Ark.



Tilton

NEW ELDERS: Dennis Rogers and Mark Foney, Bellevue, Ohio, church. **Tony Boyd**, Clinton Church of Christ in Clinton, Mo. **Joe Brown** and **Phil Jennings**, South Main Church of Christ in Weatherford, Texas. **Cristobal Portillo**, Silver Spring, Md., church.

NEW MINISTERS: Slate **Moore**, Central Church of Christ in Winter Haven, Fla. **Floyd Williamson**, Silver Spring Church of Christ in Maryland.



Williamson

ANNIVERSARIES: 68th: Bill and Pearl Boyd, Mariposa, Calif. 56th: Bud and Barbara Moore, Barry, Texas. 50th: Harry and Linda Dorn, Blacksburg, Va. Don and Nancy Martin, Robinson, Texas.

BIRTHDAYS: 93rd: Mary Bruce, Union City, Tenn. 90th: Ruth Moore, Blooming Grove, Texas. 89th: Bill Boyd, Mariposa, Calif.

PASSAGES: Patricia Landon Dugger, 80, May 13, Nashville, Tenn. **Billye Ayers Gray**, 89, May 30, Weatherford, Okla. **Jean Meador Howard**, 86, June 18, West Monroe, La. **Bert Lana**, 90, May 20, Abilene, Texas. **Beth Lana**, 88, March 15, Abilene, Texas. **Dallas E. Lockhart**, 91, June 11, Newark, Ohio. **Marilyn Jean Pitts**, 77, June 13, Osawatomie, Kans. **Delia Solis**, 89, June 16, Wellington, Kans. **Maxine Dumas Whittle**, 74, May 20, Nashville, Tenn.

Share your milestones. E-mail us at milestones@christianchronicle.org or call (405) 425-5071.

July 4-7 Gulf Coast Bible Conference. Westbury Church of Christ in Houston. Contact (713) 729-7880.

July 5-7 100th Anniversary, 16th and Decatur church in Washington, D.C. "Building on the Foundation that Will Last. Contact (202) 882-4711 or www.coc16th.org.

July 7 50th Anniversary, Memorial Road church in Edmond, Okla. Contact www.mrcc.org or (405) 478-0166.

July 7 50th Anniversary, Park Plaza church in Tulsa, Okla. "Love. Live. Lead." Contact www.parkplaza.org.

July 13 100th Anniversary, Lobster Valley church in Alsea, Ore. Contact Brian Leavitt at save1life@peak.org.

July 13-19 80th Anniversary, Lewis Street church in Little Rock, Ark. Contact (501) 666-2074.

July 18-20 York College Alumni and Friends Workdays. York College, York, Neb. Contact Scott and Lisa Eckman at s.eckman@juno.com or www.york.edu.

July 19-20 11th Annual Central Texas Bible Teachers Workshop. Hosted by Cameron Road church in Austin, Texas. Contact (513) 452-0639 or www.crccaustin.org/ctbtw.

July 20-26 Tahoe Family Encampment. "God's Way is Best." Tahoe Valley Campground, Lake Tahoe, Calif. Contact www.tahoefamilyencampment.com or (916) 989-4885.

July 24-28 Global Reunion 2013. Oklahoma Christian University. Contact Cherry Hart at (972) 983-4184, cherry@intermissionministry.net or www.intermissionministry.org.

July 26-28 75th Anniversary, Hollywood, Calif., church. Contact (323) 463-6352 or hcoc75reunion@gmail.com.

July 28-Aug. 2 Preacher Training Camp. North MacArthur Church of Christ in Oklahoma City. Campers age 15 and up. Contact mel.latorre@northmac.org or (405) 621-5962.

Aug. 3 Preston Road School of Preaching/Center for Christian Education. All School Reunion. Preston Road Church of Christ in Dallas, Texas. Contact chrsv@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 dhrrobinson@yahoo.com.

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EDITORIAL

Running the good race of recovery

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

— Hebrews 12:1-2

As you comforted and fed victims of the Colorado wildfires, as you picked through the debris left

by the Oklahoma tornadoes, a great cloud of witnesses watched on TV sets and computers. You responded with boldness and a consuming desire to show Christ's love.

Well done.

Now the news cameras are gone. Already the disasters of our recent past seem like ancient history. Hurricane Sandy? Katrina? What's left for Christians to do there?

Plenty. Now comes the hard part. Joe Crawford, a church member and disaster relief coordinator in Oklahoma, perhaps said it best in our July issue: "We've got to come up with a system that's long-term, or we're just moving rubble."

As we watch money pour into relief agencies after a disaster, it's easy to think that the victims will be well-served as they recover.

We may even get a bit jaded by the astronomical number of dollars given to relief.

But a lot of agencies "raise money in a vacuum," not knowing the true cost of relief, argues Sandra

Schimmelpfennig, founding director of The Charity Rater (goodintentsof.org) and blogger about international philanthropy.

"With each passing disaster, more and more organizations raise money," she writes. The best-known groups tend to get the most. After international disasters, such as the earthquakes in Haiti and Japan, "too much money is being raised to support groups that provide things like boats or orphanages, while too little money is raised for help with legal issues or assistance to the elderly."

Christ calls us to run the race with perseverance. That means helping in recovery efforts months, even years, after a disaster. That means providing smart, relevant resources to victims as they deal with insurance and the psychological effects of living through a nightmare.

That means staying engaged with the people we serve — building community.

Many in our fellowship are doing just that. Increasingly, we hear talk about coordinated, long-term recovery that goes beyond bottled water.

We see Christians engaged — from Far Rockaway, N.Y. to Ishinomaki, Japan. In Honduras and Indonesia, entire villages have come to Christ after our labors of love pointed them to Jesus.

Never forget that. Even though the TV cameras stop rolling, the witnesses keep watching.



REBECCA YOUNG

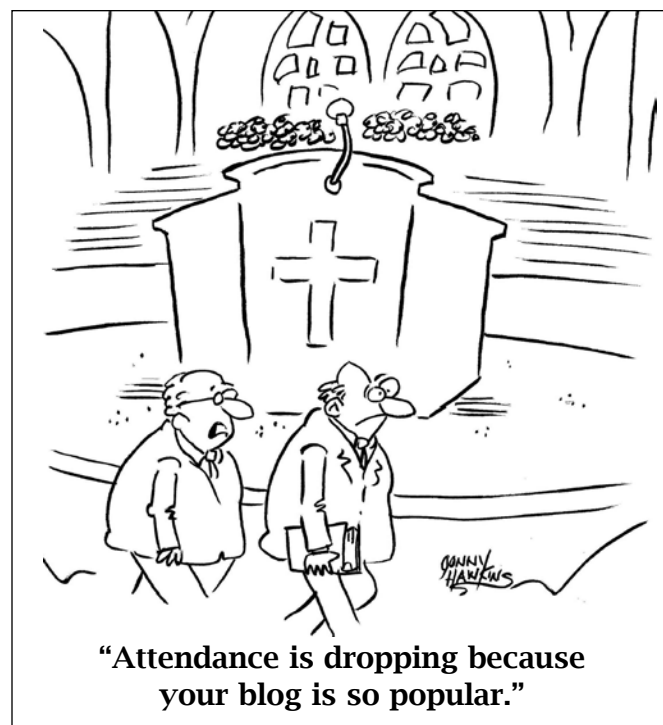
Steve Aponte of the Long Island Church of Christ and New York Yankees pitcher David Robertson pause while unloading furniture for families in Far Rockaway, N.Y., affected by Hurricane Sandy. High Socks for Hope, the David and Erin Robertson Foundation, donated the furniture.

in their communities — from Far Rockaway, N.Y. to Ishinomaki, Japan. In Honduras and Indonesia, entire villages have come to Christ after our labors of love pointed them to Jesus.

Never forget that. Even though the TV cameras stop rolling, the witnesses keep watching.

Ever-Laughing Life

by Jonny Hawkins



TO OUR READERS

All the news that's fit to blog

If you're not reading the news blog of *The Christian Chronicle*, you're missing out.

In recent weeks, we've reported breaking news as a Church of Christ responded to the Colorado wildfires. We've also reported news of Faulkner University's win in the NAIA baseball World Series and Tim Tebow's speech at a fundraiser for a church-supported ministry.

See more up-to-the-minute news at www.christianchronicle.org/blog. If you're an advertiser who'd like to reach our growing online audience, contact Tonya Patton at (405) 425-5071 or tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org.



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VOICES

Kicking around ideas on church vs. sports

The Christian Chronicle asked readers, “Are youth sports hurting church attendance, and does this concern you?” (See Inside Story, Page 3.)

It is a parent’s responsibility to set the example for their children. We are great justifiers when it comes to prioritizing. I can’t see Jesus missing an opportunity to enter the temple — to play sports. Still, it is not my place to condemn or judge what another parent decides is acceptable for their children. Only God knows the heart.

Janice Tharp Garrison | Skiatook, Okla.



I regularly see teens and preteens running to change into their soccer clothes in the restroom during the Sunday morning assembly and rushing out with their parents to get to a game before the morning service ends. Other times, various families are missing because they were taking their kids to soccer games or tournaments.

Bonnie Miller | Vancouver, Wash.

My children don’t really start sports until next year, but I grew up with and continue to see many folks missing worship and Bible study for sports. How can regularly missing church events for sports events not communicate to children that sports are of greater value?

Josh Watson | Edmond, Okla.

What’s the big deal about kids missing irrelevant Bible classes and boring worship assemblies that they and their parents are not getting anything out of anyway? Isn’t this another example of measuring success by how many people show up?

Mark Hodges | Long Beach, Miss.

I don’t think sports is the problem. I think a lack of dedication/commitment to the church is the problem. We show what our priorities are by our attendance.

Johnathan Dobbs | Aztec, N.M.

Sports and other activities can be a great way to be the light of Christ, but many Christians seem to just approach it as general family time or extreme competition time. Church attendance isn’t the biggest deal to me personally, but if people are already pretty unfocused spiritually, regularly missing the assembly sure doesn’t help.



Joshua Tucker | Richland, Wash..

I’ve run into plenty of members who weren’t at the morning service whom I see later on in the day at a restaurant or at the store, with their children dressed in soccer outfits. Out here I think soccer is the biggest Sunday offender, but I’ve also seen it with track and field, golf and cross country.

Josh Jeffrey | Hillsboro, Ore.

LETTERS

Thoughts on mission work, foreign and domestic

I hope the article on the Middletown, N.Y., church (Page 6, July) raises some much-needed awareness of the churches in the Northeast. Too many churches perceive the mission field as something in a foreign country, whereas domestic missions not only lack the exotic, foreign aura, but they also require a long-term, slow grind. Congratulations to the Middletown church. You have given domestic mission work a good name.

Bob Weber | Chatham, N.J.

I’ve been blessed to go to Belize and other places (“Short-term missions: Service or Christian tourism?” Page 33, July). One learns how blessed we are in the U.S. to have clean water from every tap, flushing sanitation, toilet paper — things that we take for granted. But to partake of the Lord’s Supper with foreign brothers and sisters is the best, knowing that we are one in Christ Jesus, wherever we are.

Peggy Pirkle | Midlothian, Texas



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College of Education and Human Services

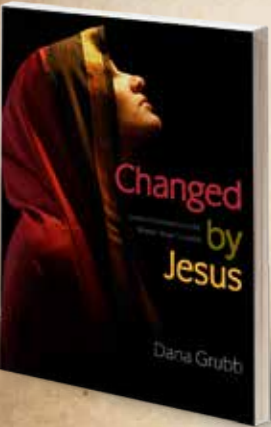
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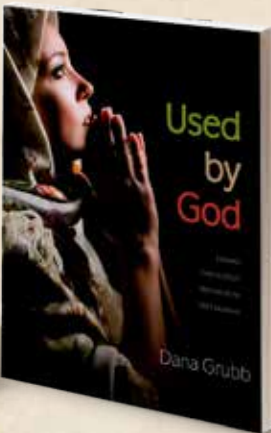
See acu.edu/academics/provost/positions.html for complete descriptions of these positions. In a letter to the appropriate dean or chair, applicants should address their qualifications for the position. They should include in the application a statement of how faith informs their teaching; a discussion of their spiritual journey; a curriculum vita; transcripts of all undergraduate and graduate work; and names, addresses and phone numbers of five references. Review of applicants will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. Nominations of and applications from qualified women and minorities are especially encouraged. ACU is affiliated with the fellowship of the Churches of Christ. All applicants must be professing Christians and be active, faithful members of a congregation of the Churches of Christ and deeply committed to service in Christian higher education. The mission of ACU is to educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world. ACU does not unlawfully discriminate in employment opportunities.

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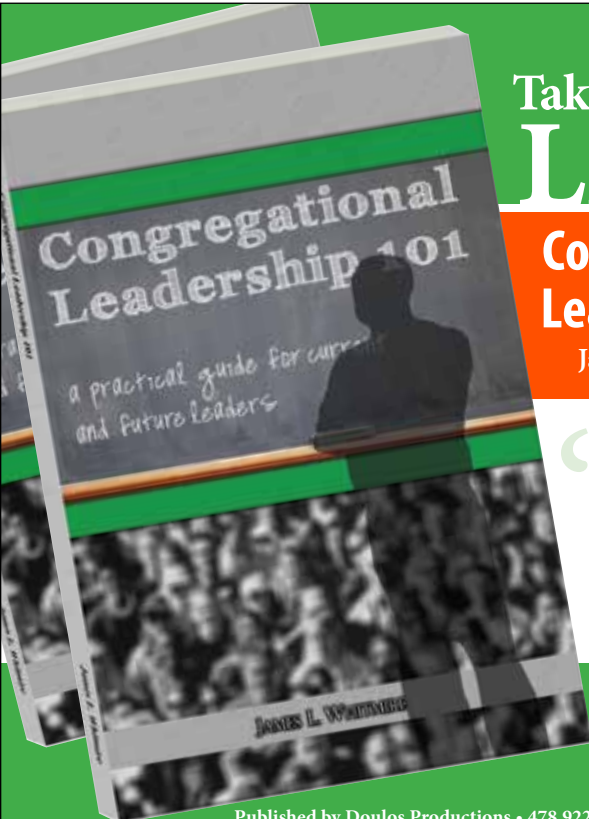
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Why, God? Theologians explore problem of evil

BY BILL BAGENTS | FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

The need to reconcile the goodness of God with a sin-damaged world is as old as Adam, Noah and Job.

For many Christians, the problem of suffering is difficult to understand or explain. A new compilation, **“God and Evil: The Case for God in a World Filled With Pain,”** is fiercely uneven, but for this topic, that’s a high compliment.

Each of the more than 20 authors is allowed freedom of expression without the homogenization that would lead to a neat and simple presentation. More than once, adjacent chapters offer competing or contradictory views, requiring study and meditation from readers so they can decide for themselves.

The book begins by discussing challenges that evil poses to faith in the God of the Bible — namely, that an increasing number of philosophers argue that the prevalence and depth of evil provide strong evidence that it is improbable that an all-powerful and loving God exists.

As the introductory section continues, one of the book’s editors, James Dew, explores “The Logical Problem of Evil” in a rich and challenging way. The brief

history of Scottish philosopher David Hume’s contribution to the logical problem of evil is particularly helpful. Hume’s judgment “that evil cannot be reconciled with the notions of divine power and goodness” continues to hold notable sway in Western culture.

Another challenging philosophical question for Christian apologists is the concept of gratuitous evil — evil that could be prevented without sacrificing some greater good or allowing some greater evil.

The chapter on this topic shows that “God and Evil” is not a light-weight book. It discusses natural evil (floods, earthquakes, disease), moral evil (including human limitations in defining it) and the role of evil (suffering) in building faith and character.

Part Two of “God and Evil” begins with “Natural Evil: A ‘Free Process’ Defense.” This chapter leaves the reader wanting more understanding of chaos systems, free process and how God can or does act through each.

The author cogently asks, “What if God merely created the potential for natural evil, not its actuality?” The reader is invited to explore how sound answers to such a question will affect one’s understanding of God and evil.

Opening Part Three are consecutive chapters in which Paul Copan, author

of “Contending with Christianity’s Critics: Answering New Atheists and Other Objectors,” explores biblical passages that seem to indicate that God is the source of evil and the connection between evil and original sin. He lands solidly on the side of human responsibility due to free choice, adding that humans “are not intrinsically, essentially, or fundamentally evil.”

Other notable ideas in Part Three are why God seems elusive in our times of greatest need, types of prayers and other spiritual tactics available to believers in times of trouble, the reminder that God is big enough to hear both our anger and our disappointment and the idea that all religions, not just Christianity, grapple with this difficult issue.

Part Four, “Issues in Dialogue,” begins by inquiring, “What is the ultimate fate of those outside Christianity, particularly those who have never heard the Gospel?”

The chapter explores two potential answers to the fate of those who have never heard. One asks whether the concepts of grace and hell can be reconciled through inclusivism — “roughly the view that God’s gracious work of salva-

tion can reach people even if they have not explicitly heard the Gospel.” The second asks if it is biblically accurate to assert “that damnation is only reserved for those who decisively reject his overtures of salvation and stubbornly cling to their evil.” The reader is challenged to decide.

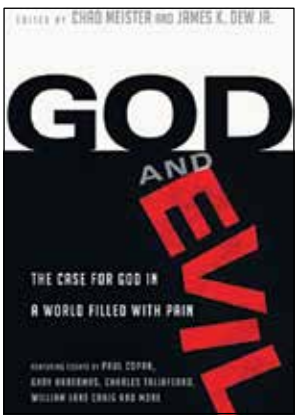
This final section also includes two chapters exploring the intersection of creation, evolution and evil. William Dembski, author of “The End of Christianity: Finding a Good God in an Evil World,” concludes that evolution, “with or without God, does nothing to mitigate the problem of evil.”

The next chapter asserts the opposite: “The theory of biological evolution mitigates objections to religious belief based on the problem of evil, and the conclusions of cosmology make theism a more natural foundation for a worldview than atheism.”

From the same data, philosophers draw opposite conclusions.

Such is the nature of “God and Evil” — no easy answers, no dodging of issues and much food for thought. This book is written more for the head than for the heart, but it powerfully engages both.

BILL BAGENTS is vice president for academic affairs at Heritage Christian University in Florence, Ala.



★ ★ ★ ★
Chad Meister and James K. Dew Jr., eds. **God and Evil: The Case for God in a World Filled with Pain.** Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2013. 360 pages, \$20.

‘More than once, adjacent chapters offer competing or contradictory views, requiring study and meditation from readers so they can decide for themselves.’

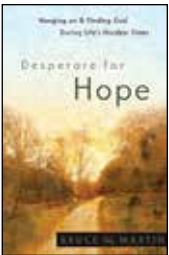
NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

PARENTING
Ted Cunningham. **Trophy Child: Saving Parents from Performance, Preparing Children for Something Greater than Themselves.** Colorado Springs, Colo.: David C. Cook, 2012. 240 pages, \$14.99.



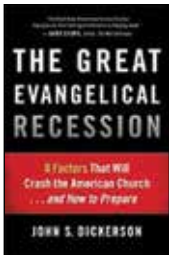
Not so much a parenting to-do, but a what-not-to-do, this book, by a community church minister, helps parents identify “overparenting” behaviors and shows why these fail children and damage marriages. The final chapters focus on nurturing independent Christian kids.

GRIEF AND SUFFERING
Bruce W. Martin. **Desperate for Hope: Hanging On and Finding God During Life’s Hardest Times.** Ada, Mich.: Revell Books, 2012. 224 pages, \$13.99.



Martin, a minister and counselor who has suffered hardship with attempts at bearing children and failed adoptions, offers advice to people who question God and try to manage their lives back to normal. With Scriptures and personal experiences, he counsels readers to adjust to a new normal and to seek grace and hope.

CHURCH TRENDS
John S. Dickerson. **The Great Evangelical Recession: Six Factors That Will Crash the American Church ... And How to Prepare.** Ada, Mich.: Baker Books, 2013. 256 pages, \$14.99.



Dickerson discusses factors causing churches in the U.S. to crumble — smaller and fewer donations, the younger generation leaving, hatred for conservative Christians. The pessimism of the first half is balanced with positive solutions in the second half.

BIBLE STUDY
Gordon Dabbs. **Epic Fail: Gaining Wisdom from Failures of Biblical Proportion.** Abilene, Texas: Leafwood Publishing, 2013. 208 pages, \$14.99.



The Bible includes many stories of people who failed — from the famous failure of Jonah to the grievously regretted treason of Judas. Dabbs, minister for the Prestoncrest Church of Christ in Dallas, gives in-depth studies of 10 failures, with discussion questions at the end of each chapter, making this book suitable for group study.

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A faith-filled family, with a heart for the global church, endures daughter's cancer

Pray for Bella Langford. Just before Father's Day, 3-year-old Bella was hospitalized and had surgery for a blockage in her colon. Days later, doctors confirmed that Bella has Burkitt's lymphoma, a cancer of the lymphatic system named after Denis Parsons Burkitt, a surgeon who first described the disease in 1956 while working with children in Africa. It's a haunting coincidence. Bella's father, Ben Langford, is one of the most remarkable men I have ever known. He grew up playing soccer, then played in college and then coached at Cascade College in Portland, Ore. From his undergraduate days at Oklahoma Christian University, he showed great commitment to mission work in Kenya and Uganda, often spending most of the summer working effectively with the tribesmen there.

When he was at Cascade, he married an equally talented young woman, Kym. They made the decision to join a mission team in Jinja, Uganda. Eventually, Ben's brother, Adam, made the decision to leave his job with an international financial firm to work with the Jinja team.

Adam Langford adjusted quickly and began to be an important part of the team. One evening in January 2007, he decided to go with a Ugandan church leader, Moses Kimezi, and a driver to pick up coffee at a nearby plantation for a coffee shop that provided resources for the church and the community. On a twisting road, the driver missed a curve and plunged into a ravine. Adam and Kimezi died in the accident.

Adam and Ben were an amazing pair in soccer and an amazing pair in mission to Uganda. Ben and Kym served in Uganda a few more years and returned to the U.S., where Ben serves as director of the Center for Global Missions at Oklahoma Christian.

Now, the Langford family again faces a crisis. The family's patriarchs, Kathy and Terry Langford, are people of strong, active faith. They suffered severely with

Adam's death, and now they are facing their granddaughter's critical illness.

Our hearts are so sensitive to the plight of so many families who lose young children to strange diseases. Earlier this year, Lisa and John Pickens

lost their talented, 18-year-old daughter to a long battle with Ewing sarcoma. Just over a year ago, I shared the courageous story of Rebecca Stafford, a precious young lady just about to turn 21, whose death was caused by the same kind of sarcoma.

Years ago, I shared the story of my dear friends Michael and Rhonda Roach, who lost their precious Kyler to a blood-fed hemangioma when he was 4 years old. Since that time, we have seen family after family wracked with indescribable pain as they have given up children to fatal diseases.

Bella's disease is not necessarily fatal, but if we all join together in prayer for her, we increase the prospects of her having a full recovery without the many possible complications that are real threats. When we unite in prayer, we also strengthen the body of Christ of which we are all part.

Please understand that I know death is a wonderful transition for anyone from a cursed and troubled world to an ideal and perfect place with God. Yet the death of a child is such a challenging loss that it takes families years to recover.

Selfishly, I want Ben and Kym Langford to be spared that pain because I know that God is using Ben's work to strengthen his kingdom around the world. Ben's deep spirituality, his strong influence on young people and his godly leadership will make a stronger church around the world.

Pray for Bella Langford, please.

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Bailey McBride



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Ben Langford and Bella.



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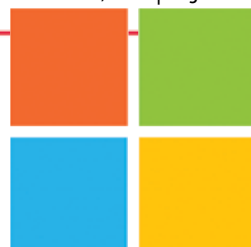
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