

BOBBY ROSS JR.

Tom Collier walks to his car after a fellowship meal at the West Liberty Church of Christ, seven miles west of Montezuma, Iowa.

Iowa church refuses to die

156-YEAR-OLD CONGREGATION epitomizes the challenges faced by many small, rural Churches of Christ.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

MONTENZUMA, Iowa

Now coats the ground as Pauline Ell arrives for Sunday worship on her 89th birthday.

A bitter wind brushes Ell's curly hair as she steps out of her daughter's car and into the little white church building where she has worshiped her entire life.

Corn and soybean fields and a cemetery where generations of deceased members rest in peace surround the West Liberty Church of Christ.

The 156-year-old farm church

traces its roots to 1857 when settlers began meeting in a log house. Later, the congregation assembled in a renovated barn. In 1867, the church building that still stands was erected.

The cost: \$1,200.

For Ell, this Lord's house where she grew up warming her hands by a wood-burning stove holds a lifetime of memories.

As a young girl, she often rode to services in a horse-drawn sleigh.

"My dad would put straw in there, and we'd get down in the straw and cover up with a quilt," she said. "Sometimes, the drifts would be so bad the horses couldn't even get through. So my dad would put two, three, four shovels in the sled, and we'd

all get out and shovel snow ahead of the horses so they could go."

In 1880, West Liberty's membership roll listed 229 names. In 1933, a gospel meeting yielded 30 baptisms and 10 restorations. In the 1960s, annual Vacation Bible Schools drew truckloads of children from miles and miles away.

But in more recent times, the Iowa congregation — like many small, rural Churches of Christ across the nation — has struggled to survive.

A year ago, down to six members, the church seven miles west of the town of Montezuma nearly closed.

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MORE COVERAGE

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Jamaican gospel meeting is no day at the beach

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

MONTIGO BAY, Jamaica — On a Wednesday afternoon, winter tourists soak up the sunshine in this Caribbean paradise, known for its all-inclusive resorts.

A cruise ship — not the one being towed to the U.S. — is docked at the harbor as its passengers climb waterfalls and feast on Jamaica's signature jerk chicken and pork.

Blocks away, in a part of the city few tourists see, 439 Christians squeeze into pews and folding chairs at the Montego Bay Church of Christ for a gospel meeting.

Preacher after preacher pounds the pulpit, admonishing the churchgoers to practice integrity in all aspects of their lives. Above, stressed-out ceiling fans struggle to contain the sweat.

It's hardly a vacation, but Bill Davis loves every minute of it. Dressed in a three-piece suit, he stands in the shade, wiping his brow with a handkerchief.

"I've been coming down to Jamaica since before you were born," Davis tells a ministry student from the Jamaica School of Preaching. It was 30 years ago, in fact, when the minister for the

See **JAMAICA**, Page 16



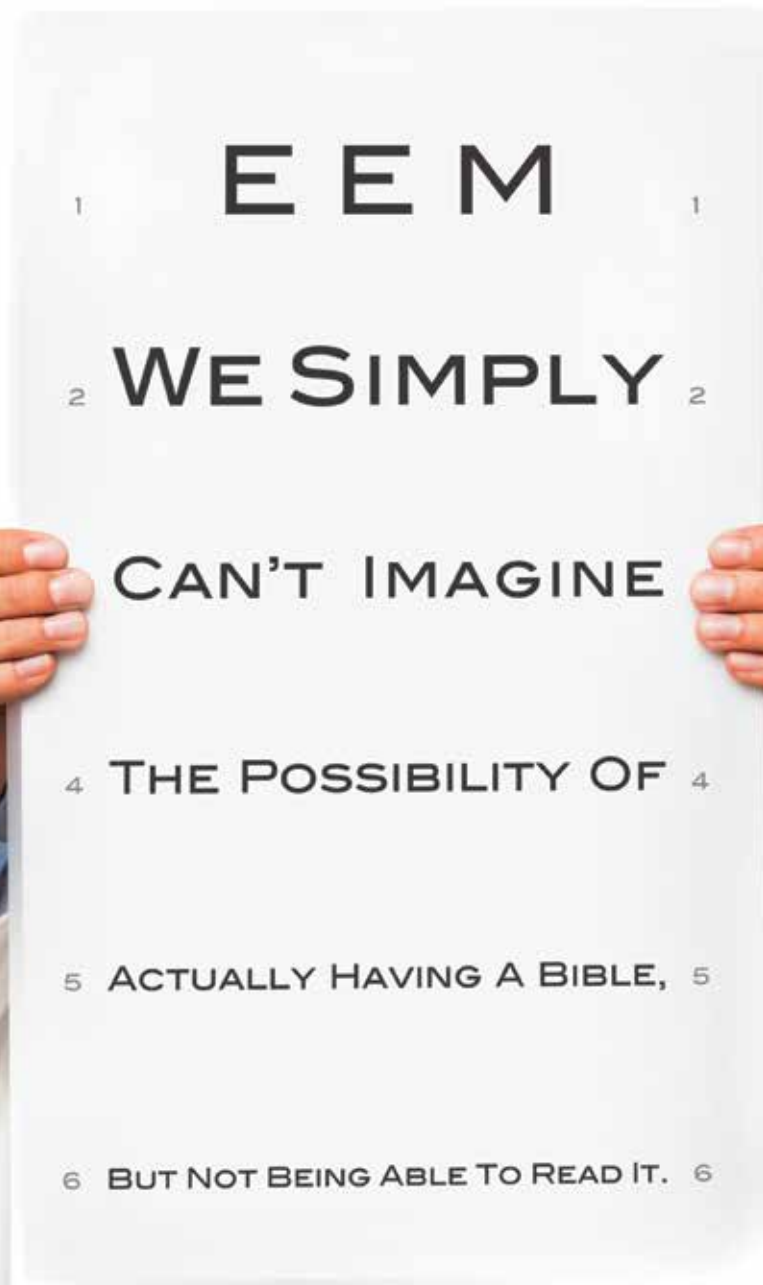
Davis



ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Christians from across Jamaica and the U.S. sing at the Montego Bay Church of Christ.

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EEM is overseen by the Prestoncrest church of Christ, Dallas, Texas.

Out in the country, a little Texas church defies expectations

GREENWOOD, Texas

In its heyday, this North Texas community settled by 19th century pioneers boasted two saloons, four grocery stores, a hotel, a bank, a barbershop, a blacksmith shop and a cotton gin.

More than a century later, a little country store serves the few remaining residents of the unincorporated ranching community, 55 miles north of Fort Worth.

Inside Story



Bobby Ross Jr.

Up the street from the store and the volunteer fire station next door, a faithful group of Christians still gathers each Sunday — as they have since 1896.

In recent years, God has blessed my family — and me — through the Greenwood Church of Christ, which is teeny in number but giant in heart.

My father, Bob Ross, preaches for the Greenwood church, which averages Sunday morning attendance of 15 to 20. Dad drives up each week from my parents' home in Haslet, a Fort Worth suburb.

I make it down to Greenwood from Oklahoma City every few months and have enjoyed getting to know the elders — Wayne East, Jerry Myers and Bill Woolaver — and the rest of the congregation.

When I first started visiting a decade ago, I had a few misconceptions. I assumed

See **GREENWOOD**, Page 4



PHOTO PROVIDED BY BILL McDONOUGH

Baptized in Burma: Churches thrive in Asia

A woman smiles after her baptism in the delta region of Myanmar — one of 17 baptisms during a recent seminar. The Southeast Asian nation, also known as Burma, was devastated in 2008 by Cyclone Nargis, which claimed more than 138,000 lives. Arkansas-based Partners in Progress fed 9,000 people for a year after the storm, said Bill McDonough, who oversees the ministry, supported by Churches of Christ.

Baptisms followed, "and we have watched in wonder as they changed their hearts and lives and brought their friends to Jesus," McDonough said. Ten congregations now flourish in the delta region, he said. For more information, see www.partnersinprogress.org.

Arkansas enacts new church gun law

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Packing heat in the pews — or pulpit — has won the overwhelming approval of Arkansas lawmakers.

The Church Protection Act, which Gov. Mike Beebe signed into law Feb. 11, is drawing mixed reactions from leaders of the state's more than 700 Churches of Christ.

"I don't like it at all," said Ken Jackson, minister for the Lewis Street Church of Christ in Little Rock, citing problems with gangs and crackhouses near the church. "We live right in the middle of where all the crime takes place. We've had some issues with former members coming in with guns." The Lewis Street church has posted "No

Weapons Allowed" signs at its doors.

However, Richard Akins, minister for the Bono Church of Christ in northeast Arkansas, supported the law's passage.



Jackson

"I fully understand the theology of 'turning the other cheek' and the kingdom not being 'of the world' so that Jesus' servants need to fight," said Akins, whose congregation has not decided whether it

will permit weapons.

"But I don't think Jesus would apply those principles to a lunatic shooting

See **ARKANSAS**, Page 21

50 years in one pulpit: Oglesby hits milestone

PREACHER CELEBRATES a half-century with Dallas-area congregation.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Growing up in North Texas, Robert Oglesby knew what he wanted to be: a preacher or a psychologist.

He decided he could "get every bit of psychology" he wanted as a preacher.

However, he worried about the tendency of churches to send preachers packing every few years.

"I had not seen a particularly rosy picture of being a local preacher," said Oglesby, 80. "In those days, it was two years and a cloud of dust."



Oglesby

But after World War II, a young minister named Robert Bankes came to Oglesby's home congregation in Sherman, Texas, and proved that a preacher could stay a while.

It's a lesson Oglesby took with him to the fledgling Waterview Church of Christ in Richardson, Texas, in 1963 — and one he has carried through 50 years as the congregation's first and only preacher.

The secret to Oglesby's longevity?

"He's stubborn," joked Robert Oglesby Jr., director of Abilene Christian University's Center for Youth and Family Ministry.

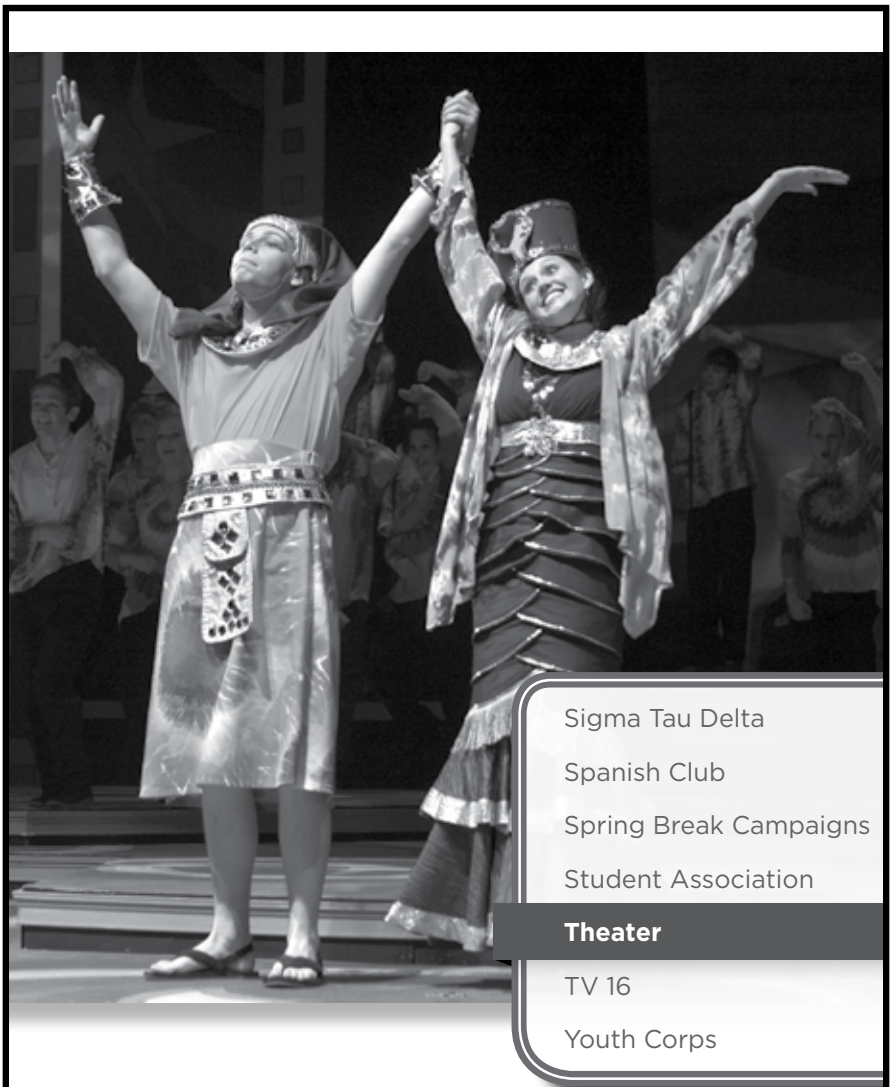
Turning more serious, the minister's son added, "He's always said something that

See **OGLESBY**, Page 14



CLINT WALKER

Robert and Willora Oglesby enjoy an assembly celebrating their 50 years at the Waterview church.



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• **Breaking news:** Don't wait to read all the latest news or check out exclusive online features.



GREENWOOD: Congregation builds a legacy

FROM PAGE 3

that this little country church with mostly older members must be going through the motions and not making a big difference in God's kingdom.

Shame on me.
I could not have been more wrong.
In ways that numbers on an attendance board can't explain, the Greenwood congregation exemplifies what it means to be a Church of Christ.

Some specific examples:
• **Prayer:** As my wife, Tamie, has dealt with health issues over the last few years, the Greenwood church has prayed for her without ceasing, even though we live 175 miles away.

Her name stays on the prayer list that East distributes each Sunday — along with other names that I recognize, such as my ailing uncle Ted Nanney, who lives in San Antonio.

• **Generosity:** The Greenwood church supports missionaries in Cambodia and India and a domestic children's home.

The members — individually and as a church — have given hundreds of dollars to help young people, including my own children, go on short-term mission trips.

Closer to home, my mother, Judy Ross, shared with me how the congregation always rushes to help any needy resident, church member or not.

• **Spiritual development:** My son, Brady, is a preaching ministry major at Oklahoma Christian University.

The Greenwood church always encourages Brady and repeatedly invites him to speak.

"I don't think I would be where I am today if the Greenwood church hadn't given me as many opportunities as they have," Brady said. "I know there were some sermons that weren't all that

great, but they still put up with me." Brady isn't the first aspiring minister to benefit from the Greenwood "cheering section."

Clyde Slimp remembers going with the youth group from the Decatur Church of Christ — about 15 miles west of Greenwood — to lead worship at the Greenwood church in 1987.

"It's funny now, but I think I vaguely remember it being talked up as a way for us to go encourage them since they were a small country church," said Slimp, minister for the 330-member Lakehoma Church of Christ in Mustang, Okla. "The reality was that by giving us a chance to develop and step up, we were the ones who got the biggest dose of encouragement."

Even though he's served in full-time ministry for 20 years, Slimp still makes it a point to visit Greenwood when he can.

"I like to preach there or just stop by with my family ... because that church and several of the people there had a part in the way God has shaped my life," Slimp said. "They seem to love each other and to enjoy being a part of each other's lives."

"Even though it's a dwindling congregation tucked back in the woods, they've done well to look at how they can have a legacy that will live beyond them in supporting missionaries and putting some wind in the sails of future ministers," he added. "That's doing something very valuable in the kingdom of God."

On a lighter note, they put on an impressive fellowship meal with more entrees and desserts than members.

If you're ever in this neck of the woods, don't miss the third Sunday potluck.



CONTACT bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org

APRIL 2013

ARIZONA

ANTHEM — The Care Bear Ministry, an outreach of the Canyon Church of Christ, makes handmade stuffed animals for emergency first responders to distribute.

The goal: “bear-ing a message of comfort and love” to children and their families, member Davina White said.

On a recent workday, members of all ages met to create the bears, assembly-line style, with tags featuring Canyon’s contact information. The group later delivered the bears to fire stations, urgent care centers, sheriff’s offices and children’s hospitals for young people experiencing loss or trauma.

GEORGIA

ADAIRSVILLE — A tornado that ripped through this north Georgia town Jan. 30 destroyed the east wing of the Adairsville Church of Christ’s building.

The congregation lost three of its classrooms, a supply room and a food pantry used to serve the needy in its community.

But church members didn’t let the loss keep them from helping neighbors in their storm-ravaged community, minister Steve McCaslin said.

The congregation filled its annex — across the street from the building and undamaged by the storm — with relief supplies.

Nashville, Tenn.-based Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort packed and shipped a truckload of food boxes and cleaning supplies, which the congregation distributed.

“We feel blessed. It could have been a lot worse,” McCaslin said of the damages the church building sustained.

MARYLAND

THURMONT — When Catoctin Church of Christ leaders planned the recent groundbreaking ceremony for the 17-year-old church’s first permanent worship facility, they asked six widows to share the honor of moving the first ceremonial shovels of dirt.

Johnna Gregory, Ercil Heim, Ruth Henderson, Mary Long, Grace Marine and Ellen Winzer led the group in celebrating the milestone. The congregation has outgrown its rented shopping center storefront near the Camp David presidential retreat, elder Dennis Norris said.

The church started with four founding families and has grown to more than 80 members, Norris said.



CHANDRA CLARK

Mississippi tornado victim helped by disaster relief ministry

A man whose home was struck by a Feb. 10 tornado in Hattiesburg, Miss., receives a box with food and supplies from Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort. Handing him the box are Judy Walker from the Siwell Road Church of Christ in Jackson, Miss., and Amy Hill from the Kensington Woods Church of Christ in Hattiesburg. Chandra and Carleigh Clark from the Central Church of Christ in Tuscaloosa, Ala., drove the volunteers.

MICHIGAN

FLINT — Coffee, cookies, clothing and the love of Christ are on the menu each Tuesday morning at the Bristol Road Church of Christ.

The congregation welcomes neighbors to its free-standing service center, where they can enjoy donated refreshments before they pick out clothing and select from fresh and canned foods purchased at a discounted price from the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan.

The outreach, which began 40 years ago in an upstairs classroom, serves about 100 people each week and is entirely supported and operated by church volunteers, member Janet Cybulski said.

NEW YORK

ROOSEVELT — The Roosevelt-Freeport Church of Christ is rejoicing in its first set of triplets, who recently turned a year old and marked the occasion with their church family.

Simon, Samuel and Samson — along with big brothers Timothy, 3, and Emmanuel, 7, and parents Anthony and Funmilayo Oyibe-Ebije — comprise the happy family.

The Oyibe-Ebijes came to the congregation from the Festac Town Church of Christ in Lagos, Nigeria, two years ago.

TEXAS

PEARLAND — The Central Church of Christ, south of Houston, is proud of its nickname: “Little Church With a Big Heart.”

With an average attendance of 60, the church supports a student working with missionaries in Tanzania, a homeless ministry called Family Promise and Christian Helping Hands, a food bank.

“We can always be depended on in an emergency, too,” said member Linda Shaw, noting that the church provided aid for those in its community after Hurricane Ike and also sent funds to nearby Galveston.

SPOTLIGHT

Going strong at 91

RALEIGH, N.C. — Hearing problems began to plague Sally Turner at age 90, putting an end to some of the community-based ministry work she dearly loved. Her response? Preparing a ladies’ Bible study class called “Life After Death.”

“If there is a woman that fits ... Proverbs 31, Sally is that woman,” said fellow Raleigh Church of Christ member Fran Holland. “Her Bible knowledge is great.”

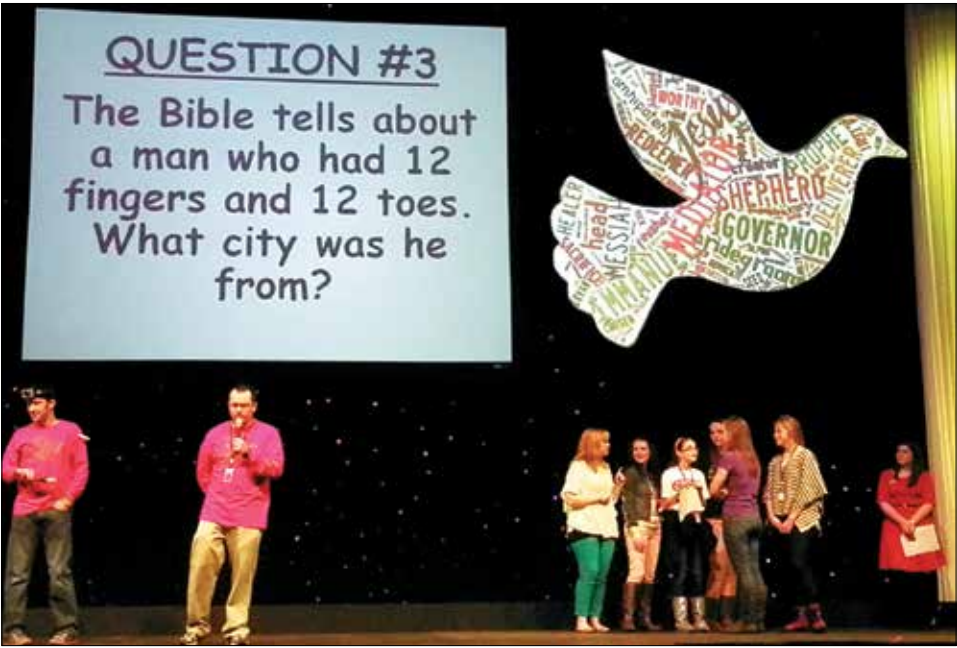
The 91-year-old continues to teach women’s classes, volunteer at the church and serve as a resource for women of all ages, Holland said.



Turner



Counselor and minister Lonnie Jones speaks to CYC attendees about "Jesus the Savior."



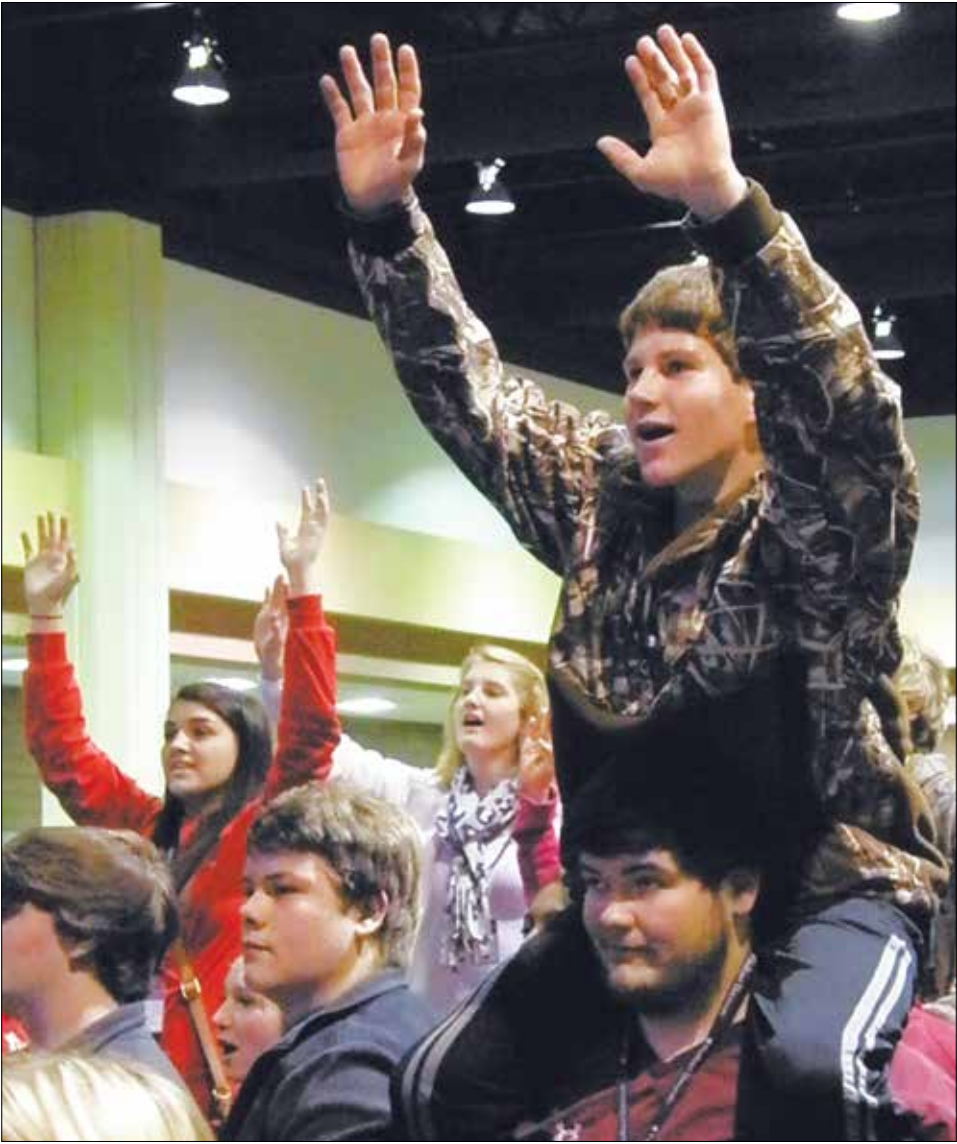
Ministers and first cousins Travis Creasy and Ben Hayes emcee the "Ben and Travis Great Gender Gap Extravaganza," a competitive event including "Obscure Bible Trivia."



Conference attendees line up outside the Gatlinburg Convention Center.



His prop a colorful reminder, minister David Shannon from the Mt. Juliet Church of Christ in Tennessee speaks to Challenge Youth Conference attendees about "Jesus the Door."



Audience members in the convention center's Great Hall stretch for giveaway Frisbees tossed to the crowd before a Challenge Youth Conference session.

'Goofiness with a point'

CHALLENGE YOUTH CONFERENCE *mixes Bible study, fun as 10,000 teens and adults gather in mountain-resort town.*

BY TED PARKS | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

GATLINBURG, Tenn.

What's the longest name in the Bible? From where was the biblical guy who had 12 fingers and toes? Who ate a book that tasted as sweet as honey? Mahershalalhashbaz, Gath and Ezekiel (John, too) were on the tip of your tongue, right?

These and other "Obscure Bible Trivia" questions entertained 10,000 teens, youth ministers and adult leaders gathered for the Challenge Youth Conference — an event whose focus on the Bible was anything but trivial.

CYC meets every February in this mountain-resort town.

The three-day conference begins with a Friday night session, continues all day Saturday and wraps up with Sunday morning worship.

With the Great Hall at the Gatlinburg Convention Center holding 6,000 people, planners accommodate the crowd by



A team of girls competes for best air guitar in a round of the "Great Gender Gap Extravaganza" at the youth conference.

scheduling early and late versions of the sessions and concluding assembly.

On Saturday morning at this year's CYC, ministers Ben Hayes and Travis Creasy primed the crowd for upcoming activities.

During "Fun with Ben and Travis," the ministers led songs, orchestrated a crowd wave and invited the audi-

ence to tweet the Hebrew names of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego for a chance to participate on stage later in the day.

Next came S.W.A.T. — "Skits With a Truth."

As the lights came up on a darkened stage, the audience met the operator of an elevator to heaven. When a judgmental passenger objected to others on board — including someone in bad need of a bath — the operator pointed out the only qualifications for the ride up.

Each person aboard, the operator explained, "believed in Jesus, repented of his sins, confessed him as Lord, been baptized, lived a good Christian life."

"So many times you get in front of kids and you entertain them, and it's goofiness. Well, we have goofiness with a point," said Lonnie Jones, S.W.A.T. member and a professional counselor in Alabama. "We want the kids to maybe look at themselves in the scenario and go, 'If I were there, how would I have reacted?'"

The spiritual messages behind the skits — "values-based entertainment," as Jones called them — illustrated a key quality of CYC: traditional, Scripturally anchored teaching about faithful Christian living in today's world.

Addressing the theme "Jesus" — "Jesus the Child," "Jesus the Man," "Jesus the Door," "Jesus the Savior," "Jesus the Friend" — speakers dug deeply into bedrock themes of Christian faith, drawing a sharp line between what the Bible says about Jesus and society's answers about how to get to God.

"I have labored over this lesson and have no possible way to explain to you the significance of what I'm about to say," Kyle Butt, editor at Alabama-based Apologetics Press, told the CYC crowd.

"Jesus Christ was 100 percent God when he came to this earth but at the same time was 100 percent man," Butt said. "You know what the incarnation means?"

"Jesus wasn't a superhero. ... He wasn't invincible. He wasn't impervious to pain and emotional heartache. You see, Jesus was just like you."

Speaker David Shannon paced in front of a single red door in the middle of the stage as he addressed the audience.

Minister of the Mt. Juliet Church of Christ near Nashville, Tenn., Shannon took issue with those in today's culture who affirm multiple pathways to God.

He insisted that Jesus is the one door to the Father.

When organizers launched CYC in 2000, "our goal was just to have a solid, Scriptural, Bible-based conference, one where the young people would ... be

challenged to live their lives for Christ in a world that's often indifferent to living that kind of life," said director Larry Davenport, a development official at Mars Hill Bible School in Florence, Ala.

The conference has its roots in the Florence area. With local youth events such as special series and singings well attended, leaders decided to plan a bigger activity, Davenport said.

Held in Pigeon Forge, Tenn., the initial event drew 325 people. As word spread, the crowd grew to 800, then 1,300, then 1,800. After two years, the conference moved to nearby Gatlinburg.

This year, CYC organizers counted

9,900 registrants. With that number added to a staff of more than 100, it was CYC's first time to break the 10,000 mark, Davenport said.

While most of the 350 to 370 youth groups in attendance come from Alabama and Tennessee, the rally also draws teens from Michigan to Florida, Davenport said.

CYC is one of two large gatherings for teens in Churches of Christ in Gatlinburg in February. Winterfest drew more than 12,000 people one

week before CYC. The nearly back-to-back Gatlinburg conferences are planned and carried out independently.

"The two probably reflect different communities," said Brad Poe, minister of the Rome Church of Christ in Proctorville, Ohio, attending CYC with 24 people from his church. Poe felt the "format and content" of CYC were aimed at more traditional congregations.

Though the conference is focused on young people, not everyone at CYC is a teen.

"You can't explain how inspiring it is," said Nina Smith, a member of the New



At CYC, prepackaged communion elements — a thin white wafer atop a cup of juice — expedite observation of the Lord's Supper on Sunday morning.

night the group feasted on hot dogs and chili.

Mike McKay from the Wildwood Church of Christ in Florida hopes CYC will make a lasting impact. He recalled his own daughters, now in college. "When they have kids, they'll be looking for something like this," he said. "That's why I'm hoping it doesn't ever stop."

A speaker's reference to next year's CYC caught the attention of 15-year-old Alexis Alvarez.

"I'm not a Christian yet," Alvarez said. Before moving to Charlotte, N.C., where she attends Mountain Island Church of Christ, she had little experience in church.

"I actually like what they were talking about," Alvarez said. "Every time I hear more and more about the Bible ... I learn more new stuff."

ALBANIA

LUSHNJA — A Church of Christ that meets in this southern European city is looking for a new meeting place, missionary Tom Bonner says. Sunday attendance had reached 50 but has dipped in recent months.

"We want to find some place that can handle a much larger gathering without difficulty — in which we can grow for many years," Bonner said.

In a recent newsletter, Bonner posted several baptism photos from Lushnja. See them at lushnjanewsletter.blogspot.com.

BRAZIL

RECIFE — About 340 Christians, representing more than 20 congregations in six Brazilian states, attended the 27th annual "Congresso," or lectureship, for Churches of Christ in northern Brazil, said missionary Mike Pruitt.

On the final day of the event, several area churches joined the lectureship for Sunday worship, and the number swelled to about 500. For more information, see www.missionrecife.org.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY GEORGE AKPABLI

Church members in northern Brazil follow a speaker in their Bibles at the "Congresso."

CHILE

SANTIAGO — A mission team arrived in this South American capital in 1999 with the goal of planting "a self-sufficient, Chilean-lead church in a middle-class part of the metropolitan region," said team member Jeff Hatcher.

"In short, we were here to work ourselves out of a job," he said.

Twelve years later, Hatcher and his family are preparing to return to the U.S., leaving the Providencia Church of Christ they helped launch in the hands of newly appointed elders Cristian Rodriguez and Luis Hasbun.

Team members recently participated in the church's first-ever "Retiro de Ancianos" (elders' retreat). The church's website is www.idcp.cl.

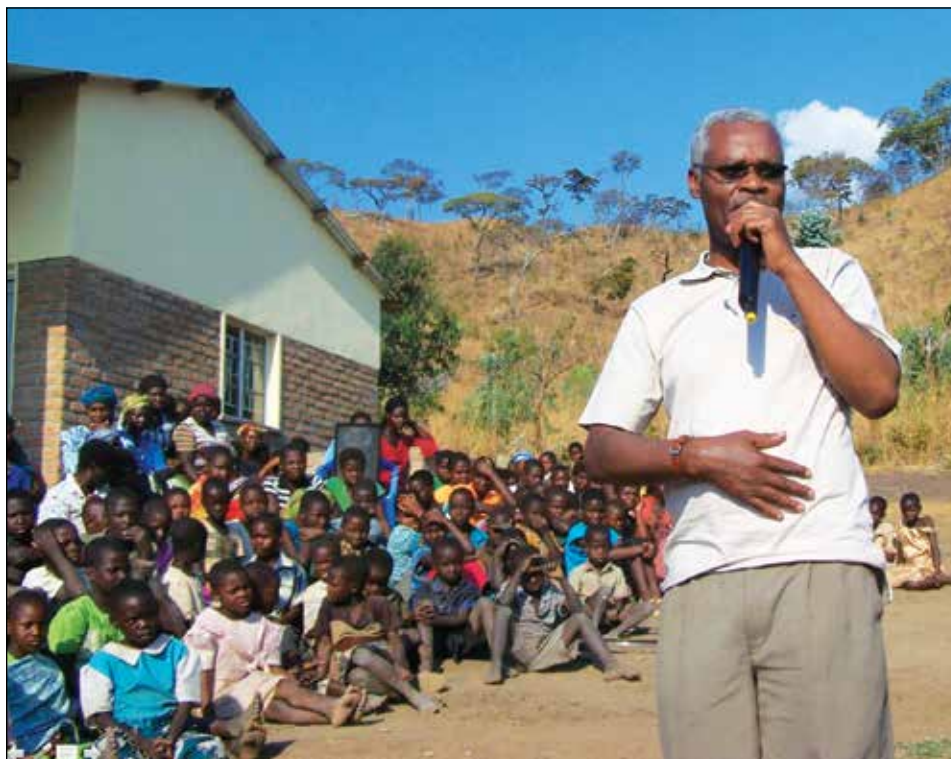


PHOTO PROVIDED BY SCOTT GORDON

Christians have a-'maize'-ing plans for Malawi

Chester Kabinda-Mbewe speaks during the dedication of a maize mill near the town of Dedza in the southern African nation of Malawi. The mill will help the people from nearby villages ground their harvested corn into a powder they can use to make life-sustaining food.

Kabinda-Mbewe is an elder of the Red Cross Church of Christ in Blantyre, Malawi. The church is one of several Malawian congregations partnering with U.S. Christians in the Dedza project. Christians also plan to construct a hospital in Dedza and a meeting place for the Malawi International Bible Institute. The elders of the Green Valley Church of Christ in Noblesville, Ind., oversee the work. For more information, see www.mibisunset.com.

"In this wonderful context, I now beg your prayers as we begin to make the changes necessary to prepare for a new life in the U.S.," Hatcher said.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY JEFF HATCHER

Cristian Rodriguez, with his wife, Sandra, and Luis Hasbun, with his wife, Veronica, are the first elders of the Providencia Church of Christ.

GHANA

DAMBIA — More than 600 Christians, representing 46 congregations, attended

the recent North Volta Bible Camp, said Willie Gley, an evangelist and missionary who works with Churches of Christ in Ghana and Togo.

"Challenges Confronting the Church" was the theme. Gley spoke on "The Challenge of Church Cooperation" and "The Challenge of Pentecostalism."

During the camp, church members participated in times of fasting and prayer, a Bible quiz competition and health screenings, Gley said.

KENYA

MOMBASA — Christians in this East African city pray fervently for peace ahead of their country's general elections. In late 2007, a disputed presidential election sparked violence between ethnic groups across the country, resulting in the deaths of nearly 1,500 people, including 10 church members.

SPOTLIGHT**Tears of joy in Djibouti**

DJIBOUTI — Barry Baggott, a church member who oversees French World Outreach, visited a small group of Christians in this predominantly Muslim nation in East Africa recently.

In 2006, a church member from Ghana traveled to Djibouti (pronounced jih-BOOT-ee), a small, coastal nation bordering Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia.

The Ghanaian Christian helped to establish a small congregation of expatriates. Baggott studied the Bible with a handful of believers from the Congo, Kenya, Ivory Coast and Cameroon and set up opportunities for others to study through the World English Institute ministry.

**Baggott**

One Bible student asked to be baptized. Baggott and the student walked far into the Gulf of Tadjoura to find water deep enough for immersion. As they returned to the shore, the student "fell down on his knees and cried for joy," Baggott said.

The Christians discussed their dreams of renting a center to provide free English lessons through computers as an outreach. For more information, contact fwo.ceb@gmail.com.

Church leaders in the Mombasa area asked political candidates to join them for a prayer service recently, said minister Michael Mutai.

**Mutai**

"They were prayed for and asked to be peaceful and not to incite the people," Mutai said. "These were men from almost every political party."

LITHUANIA

VILNIUS — Church members in this Eastern European capital recently began making weekly visits to a children's home to play games and encourage orphans, minister Juozas Puodziukaitis said.

"We celebrate their birthdays, ... attend their drama nights and help with homework in their studies," the minister said.



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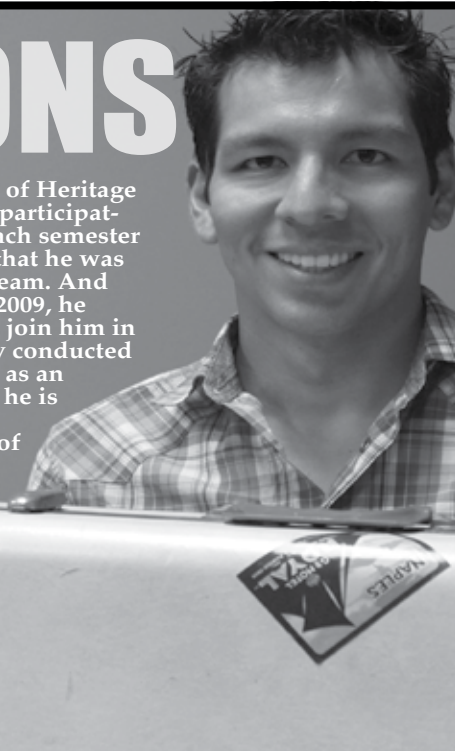
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PHOTO PROVIDED BY JOHN YO

Taiwan style: Christians gather for lectureship

Christians pose for a group photo during the first day of the Taichung Bible Lectureship. The three-day seminar, hosted by the Taichung Church of Christ in Taiwan, featured five speakers from Singapore, Malaysia, mainland China and the Taiwanese cities of Hualien and Taipei.

Missionary sailor Tom Tune dies at 83

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

“Plant me where I drop. I’ll rise with the people I love.”

Those were the words Tom Tune used to describe his desires “when he gets to the end of the road,” his son, Mike Tune, said in a 2009 interview with *The Christian Chronicle*.

Tom Tune had sailed the globe and intended to die in a foreign field — most likely Vietnam, where he had worked for eight years. Instead, the missionary sailor, ship builder, tailor and carpenter died Feb. 5 in a veterans hospital in Little Rock, Ark., after enduring multiple health problems during a furlough from his overseas work. He was 83.

Born in Murray, Ky., Tom Tune joined the Navy at age 16. In 1961 he and his family moved to Hong Kong to serve as missionaries. In 1979 he bought a boat, named after his daughter, Dorcas Sue, and sailed the waters of South America and the Mediterranean, delivering



Tom Tune

medicine, fitting the poor for eyeglasses and teaching about Jesus.

In 1991 he sailed for Hong Kong. He stopped at the Cook Islands, where he found opportunities to serve the people of the South Pacific. While overseeing construction of a medical mission boat in Vietnam, he shared his faith with the people he met. Baptisms followed and a church was born. Soon, nearly 100 people attended. Tom Tune helped establish another congregation in the Vietnamese city of Can Tho.

The missionary also launched “Tom’s Kids,” a program for impoverished children in Ho Chi Minh City. Many of the children are descendants of Vietnamese who supported the Americans during the Vietnam War. The program now has 145 children in school. Four have attended a ministry training school in Singapore, and two have studied at Christian universities in the U.S. Mike Tune, minister for the Church of Christ in Falls Church, Va., helps coordinate the effort.

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IOWA: Rejuvenated rural church looks to the future



ROBBY ROSS JR.
Rodney Playle, Anita Gilbert and Pauline Ell look at old photos in a 1967 church history.



ROBBY ROSS JR.
Minister Tom Collier, seated on the front row, sings with other members of the West Liberty Church of Christ during a Sunday morning assembly.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY WEST LIBERTY CHURCH
Children pose by the church sign in 1967, the building's 100th anniversary.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY WEST LIBERTY CHURCH
Young people study the Bible outside a tent during a Vacation Bible School at the West Liberty church in 1967. Longtime members of the Iowa farm congregation share fond memories of the church's annual VBS programs, which drew truckloads of participants.

'Something had to be done. Churches were closing their doors.'
— Art Wallis, Central Iowa Missions



ROBBY ROSS JR.
Krista Fatzinger, granddaughter of member Norma Jean Farrington, hugs Butch Gilbert.

FROM PAGE 1

"The finances were dwindling quite rapidly," said treasurer Rodney Playle, 66, a longtime member whose family started attending the church when he was 8.

KEEPING CHURCHES FROM CLOSING

Long stretches of highway separate Iowa's 64 Churches of Christ, which boast fewer than 2,900 total members, according to the 2012 edition of *Churches of Christ in the United States*. Fifty-eight of Iowa's 99 counties have no Church of Christ, according to the national directory published by 21st Century Christian.

About 27 percent of the Hawkeye State's 3.1 million residents live in a county with no Church of Christ. Only Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota have higher percentages of such residents.

For the past 14 years, Central Iowa Missions — a ministry overseen by the 150-member Grandview Church of Christ in Des Moines — has worked to bolster Iowa churches.

"Something had to be done," said Art Wallis, the full-time missions evangelist who directs Central Iowa Missions. "Churches were closing their doors."

Through a 13-week Sunday morning course, Wallis teaches basic preaching skills to men of the Grandview church.

Those who complete the course join a roster of trained preachers available to fill pulpits — usually on a temporary basis — within a two-hour drive of the state capital.

"We try to go out and help," Wallis said. "It's easier to keep churches going than it is to let them die and then try to go back later and start from nothing."

'TOO STUBBORN' TO GIVE UP

The West Liberty church's native timber roof needed replacing. The upstairs rest room lacked hot water. The basement flooded when it rained.

Besides maintenance issues, the dwindling congregation had no regular preacher.

Still, the church refused to give up, members said.

"We're too stubborn to do anything else," Playle said. "We're bullheaded."

But without a minister, the mostly older members saw little way to keep going, they said.

In a last-ditch effort to keep the church alive, Playle placed an advertisement last year seeking a self-supporting minister.

Wallis saw the ad, which detailed West Liberty's situation, and told Grandview member Tom Collier about it.

Collier — one of Central Iowa Missions' regular fill-in preachers — had spoken at West Liberty a few times.

The possibility that a church with such a rich history might close shocked Collier.

"It just kind of stirred me," he said. "I thought, 'Are we, as Churches of Christ in Iowa, just going to let our weaker congregations fold?'"



PHOTO PROVIDED BY WEST LIBERTY CHURCH
At left, Pauline Ell, now 89, is shown in her younger years with a fellow church member.

In March 2012, Collier — who works full time as a Wells Fargo analyst — accepted the challenge of becoming West Liberty's part-time preacher.

He and his wife, Dianne, make the two-hour round trip from their Des Moines home each Sunday. In addition, they lead a Wednesday night Bible study and attend other church events, such as West Liberty's monthly Friday night singing.

"Tom decided he wasn't going to let it close on his watch," said Matt Glawe, minister for the Ogden Church of Christ, a 50-member Iowa congregation planted in 2001.

The Ogden church committed \$300 a month to help with Collier's ministry.

"If that one is gone, it's a pretty great distance to the next Church of Christ," said Glawe, a vocational minister whose family operates an auto body shop and a farm services business. "Just too many have closed, and anything we can do to keep them open, we're willing to do."

SPECIAL PLACE IN HER HEART

On this frosty Sunday, 15 souls occupy the seven rows of pews in West Liberty's wood-paneled auditorium — more than double the typical attendance a year ago.

Butch and Anita Gilbert, Ell's son-in-law and daughter, join her on the second row. The Gilberts hold worn maroon hymnals as the congregation sings "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms" and "Faith is the Victory."

Anita Gilbert, 53, grew up at West Liberty but — like many of her generation — moved away.

"I didn't want to work in a factory. I didn't want to work for less than minimum wage in a small store. I didn't want to farm," said Gilbert, who was visiting her mother. "That's really all there is."

But the West Liberty church maintains a special place in her heart, Anita Gilbert said.

She and her husband, who attend the Center Point Road Church of Christ in Marion, Iowa, northeast of Cedar Rapids, donated \$20,000 to help with the needed repairs.

Other concerned Christians contributed roughly \$10,000.

Even a few area residents who do not attend the church but see it as an important community landmark gave funds.

"It's not just the bodies in the pews right now," Anita Gilbert said of West Liberty's legacy. "It's the people that have passed through here ... and are

continuing to do work for the church around the world."

RESTORING A CONGREGATION'S HEARTBEAT

When Collier arrived, he found a congregation of dedicated Christians who had settled into a not-so-exciting routine, he said.

"This was how they were going to finish their days, six or seven of them, trying to sing their songs, maybe closing their doors," he said. "But what I wanted ... was to breathe some new life

and get a heartbeat again."

Building renovations, development of West Liberty's first-ever website and intentional efforts to connect with the community have helped rejuvenate the church, Collier said.

Knocking doors in nearby towns, Tom and Dianne Collier have discovered that nearly everybody is familiar with the little white church.

"They say, 'My dad got married there' or 'My grandfather's buried there,'" Tom Collier said.



ROBBY ROSS JR.
Signs for the West Liberty church and the public cemetery that surrounds the building greet visitors to the 156-year-old congregation, about an hour east of Des Moines, Iowa.

Other residents remember attending VBS at the church. "There's a plethora of people that were taught by these folks when they were kids," Dianne Collier said. "So what I'm hoping is that those seeds that were planted will eventually come back to fruition."

FUTURE IN GOD'S HANDS

About 30 West Liberty members have died in the last 20 years.

Just one person in the pews on this Sunday is younger than 50. Thirteen-year-old Krista Fatzinger is the granddaughter of longtime member Norma Jean Farrington, 81.

A recent baptism and the addition of a few new members who had been driving elsewhere give old-timers reason for hope.

"We won't give up," said Bruce Guyer, 65, who grew up at West Liberty.

"Nope," agreed Ell, who has lived on the same 99-acre farm for 62 years.

"We want to teach the Gospel," added Playle.

Still, the congregation's long-term survival remains far from certain.

"It's going to be up to God," Tom Collier said. "He's going to have to give the increase."

OGLESBY: Texas minister marks 50 years preaching at Dallas-area church

FROM PAGE 3

stuck with me: ‘The church where you are seems to have all these problems. The church trying to get you tries to hide their problems. ... So why not try to work out the problems where you are?’”

A PREACHER SINCE HIS TEEN YEARS

Robert Oglesby Sr.’s passion for preaching manifested itself early. At age 17 in 1950, he began his senior year of high school. He preached every Sunday, alternating between two little churches.

His future bride, Willora, attended one of those churches — in the unincorporated community of Shannon, Texas.

“So I got to hear lots of tryout sermons before I married him,” joked Willora, Robert’s wife of 57 years.

Before Robert and Willora were even born, their families knew each other. As Willora explained, “My daddy and his mother used to either date or double-date when they were teenagers.”

Robert and Willora did not date until both attended Abilene Christian. Robert earned a bachelor’s degree in Bible in 1955, then completed a master’s degree in Bible while Willora — a year behind him — finished her undergraduate studies in home economics.

They married on Feb. 3, 1956. Oglesby didn’t preach his freshman year. But his sophomore year, he began driving to Blackwell, Texas, where he preached for four years.

The Breckenridge Church of Christ in West Texas gave Oglesby his first full-time preaching position, hiring him in 1956. But after six and a half years in Breckenridge, he said, he decided he’d “peaked out” and needed a “little more challenge.”

“I got a tsunami of a challenge,” he quipped.

NEW BEGINNING, EVENTFUL YEAR

In 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his famous “I have a dream” speech, Beatlemania struck the United Kingdom, and President John F. Kennedy was shot and killed in Dallas.

In *The Christian Chronicle*, Abilene Christian’s integration, the inaugural Pan-American Lectureship and the Exodus Movement — an effort by Christians in the South to evangelize cities in the Northeast — made headlines. That same year, Robert and Willora



CLINT WALKER

Robert and Willora Oglesby, with son Robert Jr. and daughter Cheryl Bradley, celebrate with cake.

Oglesby began their new ministry at the Waterview church, north of Dallas. Son Robert Jr. was 4 years old.

The Abrams Road Church of Christ in Richardson — later renamed the Richardson East Church of Christ — had “birthed” the new congregation, sending off a group to reach the growing west side of town.

Oglesby preached his first sermon in Waterview’s small auditorium on Feb. 3, 1963 — his seventh wedding anniversary. Attendance that first Sunday totaled 140. Young engineers who worked at nearby Texas Instruments made up a sizable portion of the congregation.

At Waterview, the Oglesbys found themselves at a brand-new church with no elders and most members their age.

“We had been used to having a lot of older people in the congregation who babied us and took care of us,” Willora said. “And you get to this new place, and here are these 30-year-olds just like we were. They didn’t have time to bake us pies.”

Robert didn’t even have an office. But growth came quickly. In 1967, Waterview built a larger auditorium. That same year, the Oglesbys adopted a newborn daughter, Cheryl. Oglesby’s influence spread beyond his home congregation as he began studying small-group processes and innovated a group discussion method of

Bible classes. He has conducted more than 450 workshops about the group discussion method across the nation. Oglesby also developed a method of training members to share their faith called Personal Evangelism Training, or PET.

“It was a different kind of course,” he said. “I’d really worked on it, and I’d done everything but jump out of a plane with a parachute to get their attention. Finally, I broke through their resistance, and they said, ‘Well, maybe I should do something like this.’”

At one point in 1967, the Waterview church baptized 26 people in 26 weeks. “It wasn’t me,” Oglesby said. “Other people were out teaching because I’d trained them to teach.”

TUNED IN TO THE CHURCH’S HEARTBEAT

Robert Taylor’s family came to Waterview in 1968. He was 12 years old. Membership had topped 700. It eventually would hit 1,300 before Waterview sent about 300 members to start the McDermott Road Church of Christ in nearby Plano in the late 1990s. “Throughout my childhood, I had watched lazy preachers preach bad sermons from sermon outline books,” said Taylor, now 57 and Waterview’s minister of administration, evangelism and education. “Robert Oglesby was the

first preacher I ever heard who made sense. He had something to say, and he said it in a way that was compelling.”

Oglesby inspired Taylor to become a minister himself.

Even after a half-century, Oglesby maintains a high energy and a strong work ethic, said Taylor, who spent two decades in pulpit ministry elsewhere before joining Waterview’s staff in 2000.

“He’s not one of those preachers who spends all his time in his study preparing,” Taylor said. “He visits hospitals all the time. He visits shut-ins. He does his share of funerals. He’s among the people, so he hears their joys and their hurts and their needs.”

Oglesby translates those joys, hurts and needs into sermons that match exactly what the 1,000-member church needs at any given time, Taylor said.

Willora said she and Robert have made it a practice never to “cozy up to any one group in the church.”

“The first intern I ever had said, ‘For the life of me, I can’t figure out who your best friends are,’” Robert said. “I said, ‘That’s right, and you won’t.’”

“But that’s not really a subterfuge,” he added. “We just enjoy everybody.”

A MENTOR FOR YOUNG PREACHERS

Like Taylor, Jacob Hawk, 25, cites Oglesby’s influence on his ministry path. “Is he God?” Hawk remembers asking his parents when as a young boy he heard the preacher’s “deep, powerful bass voice.”

“It felt so comforting to listen to him,” said Hawk, minister for the Riverside Church of Christ in Kerrville, Texas.

In 1976, Jacob’s father, Danny Hawk, now a Waterview elder, served as a preaching intern under Oglesby. In 2007, while studying preaching at Harding University in Searcy, Ark., Jacob Hawk did the same.

“His fingerprints can be seen all over pulpits across the brotherhood,” Jacob Hawk said of Oglesby, who has taught “ministry survival” skills to dozens of young preachers.

In 1993, the Waterview church started the Oglesby Foundation as a gift to Robert and Willora on their 30th anniversary with the congregation.

The foundation provides scholarships for preaching students. Waterview members have given most of the \$600,000 in the foundation’s endowment.



CLINT WALKER

Robert Oglesby takes a moment to reflect as he preaches at the Waterview Church of Christ in Richardson, Texas, on the weekend the congregation honored him for 50 years of service.

Two years ago, the Oglesby Preaching Studio made its debut at Harding.

The Waterview church committed to donate \$200,000 to build the state-of-the-art preaching studio.

The studio allows preaching students to watch and learn from their own presentations and film sermons that can be sent to churches when they begin the interview process, Danny Hawk said.

Oglesby said he has a passion for helping young preachers survive their first few years of ministry.

“We’re losing good guys that just don’t have any pragmatic understanding of what to do at first,” he said. “If they can survive for five years, they’ll probably make it.”

“But they blow up. They’re young, and they’re impetuous, and they say, ‘I’m not going to put up with this,’” he added. “And some of the best ones, most capable ones, are the ones that quit.”

RETIREMENT? SOMEDAY, BUT NOT NOW

Certain key traits have contributed to Oglesby’s staying power, his wife believes.

Among them: His speaking ability. His versatility. His willingness to keep up with the times. His commitment to Bible study.

“But to me, another thing that’s equally important is be able to handle troublesome-type situations, to know

how to put out five-alarm fires, and even better still, how to keep a five-alarm fire from even needing to happen,” she said.

Besides focusing on effective conflict management, Oglesby maintains a daily log of his activities — from number of hospital visits made to hours spent preparing his sermon.

That way, Waterview’s elders don’t need to ask how he’s spending his time. They know.

He also encourages young preachers to have a written job description.

“That way, when the leaders say, ‘Why were you doing that?’ you say, ‘Well, because that is what you told me to do,’” Oglesby said. “And the conversation is over. That doesn’t solve every problem, but it really helps.”

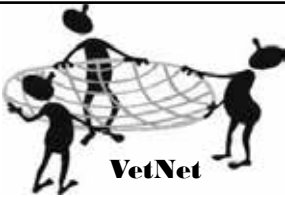
Take it from someone who endeavored a long time ago to avoid “two years and a cloud of dust.”

“My joy and satisfaction have been tied up, obviously, in the Waterview church itself,” Oglesby said. “I’ve loved that church.”

For now, the grandfather of five and great-grandfather of one intends to keep preaching, just as he has since he was a teen.

“Obviously, I will need to retire sometime,” he said, “but my elders say, ‘Not just yet.’”

SEE PHOTOS from Robert and Willora Oglesby’s early years at www.christianchronicle.org.



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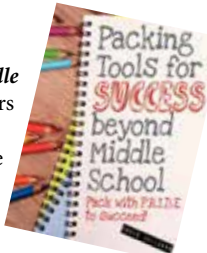
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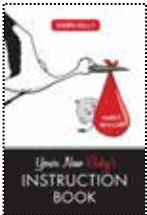
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JAMAICA: Lectures emphasize Christian integrity

FROM PAGE 1

Sylvania Heights Church of Christ in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., traveled to the city known as MoBay for vacation. He sought out the church and found its members meeting at the local YMCA.

He grew to love the Jamaican Christians and made return trips, bringing hard-to-afford medications for blood pressure and diabetes. He raised funds for construction of the church’s building and spoke at its dedication.

“I’m just excited and very happy,” Davis said of his role in the work. “This little island has supplied preachers for a lot of countries.”

The Montego Bay church hosts the gospel meeting on Ash Wednesday, a national holiday in Jamaica. In recent years, the church combined the event with a weekend training seminar for church members. Congregations in Alabama and Tennessee provide funds.

“This is my prime inspirational ground,” said Oliver Bembridge, minister for the Tydixon Church of Christ in Jamaica. The lecturers help him improve his sermon delivery and increase his Bible knowledge, he said.

Another goal of the event is to encourage Jamaica’s evangelistic, growing churches toward self-sufficiency, said Romeo Tomlinson, one of the coordinators. A native of Jamaica, Tomlinson ministers for the Westside Church of Christ in Tuscaloosa, Ala. He notes that U.S. churches, increasingly, are moving to short-term support for international missions. Tomlinson wants to hear more Jamaican ministers preaching on the importance of giving.



Laura Brown

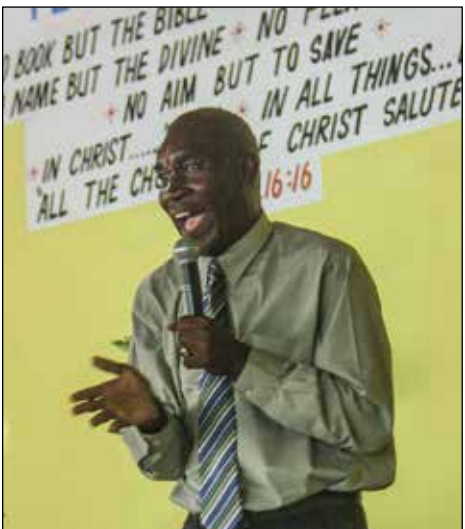


Fenton

This year, coordinators assigned topics to the speakers — from Jamaica and the U.S. — on integrity.

Derrick Brown spoke about integrity in Christians’ sexual relationships. The minister for the Pembroke Church of Christ in Jamaica’s capital, Kingston, acknowledged that the topic makes him and his fellow Christians a bit squeamish.

But it shouldn’t, he said. The topic is found throughout Scripture. And he has seen too many congregations “torn apart by men who lacked integrity” and



ERIK TRYGGSTAD

Derrick Brown preaches on sexual integrity at the Montego Bay lectureship.

got involved in sexual scandal.

“God wants us to understand that there is absolutely nothing wrong with discussing sex in a Christian context,” he said.

Speaking about infidelity and Internet pornography, he urged the Christians — especially preachers — to practice sexual integrity. The crowd responded with frequent shouts of “Amen!”

It was a necessary topic, said Laura Brown, 84, whose late husband was a minister for a church in the Jamaican city of Ocho Rios. A longtime Sunday school teacher, she attends the gospel meeting every year.

“What they speak about is good for the church,” she said.

Camiel Fenton, 18, also teaches Sunday school at her congregation in Negril, Jamaica, and is active in the congregation’s 20-member youth group.

“I knew I would see all my favorite preachers,” she said, adding that she was so eager to attend that she packed two days before leaving for the seminar.

One of the speakers, Michael Dunbar, told attendees young and old that a Christian’s integrity should come from the desire to emulate Christ. Dunbar, who teaches at the Jamaica School of Preaching in Kingston, used two of Jamaica’s heroes to drive home the point.

Those who want to emulate reggae music legend Bob Marley will practice like Bob Marley, he said. Those who want to be like Usain Bolt must train like the Olympic medalist.

“But if we admire Christ,” he said, “we must be like Christ.”

Go into all the world, with respect

IN JAMAICA, a preacher-training school harbors a vision to reach lost souls in the Caribbean and around the globe.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE



A cargo ship sails from Kingston, Jamaica, into the Caribbean Sea. Though the island has a population of 2.7 million, at least 2.5 million Jamaicans live overseas, demographers estimate.

KINGSTON, Jamaica

There's no Bob Marley blasting from the porch of Gladwyn Kiddoe's home — just heartfelt gospel with a Caribbean flair.

The woman of Samaria, the woman, she left her water pot and gone ...

Kiddoe, longtime director of the Jamaica School of Preaching and Biblical Studies, waves one arm in the air and holds his 3-year-old grandson, Jair, in the other as he sings along with the Mona Acappella Chorus. He yells out lyrics, and the chorus responds, flowing seamlessly from song to song.

The singers take a break as Kiddoe and his wife, Alva, serve sandwiches and juice. Before long, they're singing again — this time an anthem by U.S. recording artists Acappella with

"Jamaicanized" lyrics.

From Macedonia, the call is sounding; In Havana the people wait; The countless children in Peking, China; The thirsty souls of Port-au-Prince;

The time has come to go to MoBay; Portland, May Pen and Santa Cruz; Yes from Negril to Morant Point; and every parish in between.

"That's our closing song," Kiddoe says. "We use it to motivate the brethren to get on with the Great Commission."

For the past four decades, the Jamaica School of Preaching has done just that — equipping Christians to spread the Gospel across the Caribbean.

Kiddoe was a tender 29 years old when the U.S. missionaries who founded the school handed him the reins in 1979.

At the time, there were about 18 Churches of Christ on the



PHOTOS BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Rachel Taitt, a Christian from the island of Trinidad, and students from the Jamaica School of Preaching sing "Fearless" with the Mona A Cappella Chorus in Kingston at the home of Gladwyn Kiddoe, the school's director.

island. He and his wife, a family physician, had a bold vision — to help plant a congregation in every major city and town in Jamaica by the year 2000.

That dream became reality in 1998, when a "crusade" yielded 23 baptisms and a new church in Negril, on the island's west-

ernmost tip.

"I am more excited now at 62 than I was at 18 and 19," Kiddoe says. "Why? For one, you see the fruits of your labor walking around you."

The island has about 70 Churches of Christ now, and most of their ministers trained at

the Jamaica School of Preaching.

But it's the school's international reach that makes Kiddoe beam with delight. The school trains Christians in Turks and Caicos, St. Lucia, Haiti and Canada. For nearly two decades, the school has prepared preachers to reach lost souls in Cuba.

Recently, Kiddoe began teaching lessons through the Internet to students at a Church of Christ in Connecticut — and halfway around the world in the Himalayan nation of Nepal.

"We really do have something to offer to the world," Kiddoe says. "Everywhere we go, we have discovered that there's a hunger ... for deeper knowledge of the Word. The St. Lucians are hungry. The people of Haiti are hungry. The United States, they're hungry, hungry.

CONTINUED



Listening from the middle of the church auditorium, Gladwyn Kiddoe gives preaching pointers to Edward Pratt, a ministry student from the city of Freeport, Bahamas.



First-year students at the Jamaica School of Preaching review New Testament Greek.



Christians sing hymns during Sunday worship at the Mona Church of Christ. Paul Edwards, a graduate of the Jamaica School of Preaching, is the church's minister.



Gladwyn Kiddoe tapes an episode of "Christ for Jamaica," a weekly program on radio station RJR in Kingston. The program is a ministry of the Mona Church of Christ.



JAMAICA PHOTOS BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Church members line up to serve the Lord's Supper at the Mona Church of Christ. The church meets in an old movie theater it shares with the Jamaica School of Preaching.

Jamaica school trains Christians from Cuba to Connecticut

CONTINUED

"That's what excites me," he says. "I don't know how long I'm going to live, but that is going to be my swan song."

A 'JAMAICANIZED' MISSION

On a Sunday morning in Kingston, the words of two TV evangelists blast from competing television sets — inside a Burger King.

Here, Christianity gets "respect" — a common word in the island's signature slang. Though known for the reggae music of Bob Marley and the mystical Rastafari faith he once professed, denominations of all stripes line Kingston's alleyways. Seventh Day Adventists are strong here, and charismatic faith groups are on the rise. Street signs bear Bible verses.

Among the sea of churches, about 200 souls meet for worship in an old movie theater — the shared home of the Mona Church of Christ and the Jamaica School of Preaching.

Sixteen students live in the renovated-but-humble theater as they study in the school's rigorous, four-year ministry program. During morning chapel, they chat with a guest speaker from the U.S. about misconceptions between the two countries.

Minnesotan faking a Jamaican accent? It wasn't offensive to them in the least — just hilarious, the students say.

But why are some states in the U.S. adopting gay marriage, they ask. Why are churches there slipping away from the Bible-based beliefs that missionaries brought here a half-century ago?

Those missionaries, among them Marvin Crowson, Milo Hadwin, Jerry Thompson and Carl Maples, came to Jamaica to evangelize, baptize and train locals to take over the work — quickly.

The island gained independence from Britain in 1962, and its new government adopted a policy of "Jamaicanization." Missionaries were granted short-term work permits. Whatever they did, they had to train Jamaicans to do. Then leave.

That mandate made the missionaries effective recruiters, said Francis Yorke, who was named the school's assistant director in 1979.

It also allowed Yorke and his fellow Jamaican Christians to craft the school's curriculum, which includes healthy doses of Bible history, Greek and psychology. One class, titled "Things You Need to Know," teaches about the importance of being a good husband and father.

"You learn a lot, but it's a lot, I will



PHOTO PROVIDED BY EDWARD PRATT

Divier Hernandez studies the Bible with women in Santa Clara, Cuba. The minister teaches in the Jamaica School of Preaching's extension school in Cuba. He is a martial arts expert and "a Christian soldier," said Luis Pedraza, the school's director

be honest," says 18-year-old Richard Wright, a first-year student from Portland, Jamaica. "You really have to know how to manage your time."

The curriculum "prepares you physically, mentally, to deal with members in the church," adds Calvin Semple, a fourth-year student from the South American nation of Guyana who plans to preach on the

island of Barbados. The emphasis on psychology "helps me to set my mind on the right path."

Several of the students plan to train in secular fields — from counseling to electrical engineering — to provide income as they minister.

Sheldon Shirley was considering a career as a basketball coach when Kiddoe asked him to prepare a

sermon and "audition" for the school.

Shirley, age 30, still plans to teach physical education — and preach.

Enrolling at the school "is by far the best decision I've made," he says.

TEACHING HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD

Jamaican Christians inherited a missionary zeal from their U.S. counterparts.

In 1971, before returning home, missionary Ken Dye launched the Caribbean Lectures in Kingston, an annual gospel meeting designed to unite souls across the region.

Each year, participants gathered in a circle and left a space open for Christians from an island just 90 miles north of Jamaica — Cuba.

In 1991, as the Cold War ended, a handful of Jamaican and U.S. Christians traveled to Cuba to visit believers there. Cuba's government, which has maintained close relations with Jamaica since its 1959 revolution, allowed five Cubans to enroll at the Jamaica School of Preaching.

In Kingston, the Cuban students attended a language training program to improve their English. "After a while, they could speak Jamaican," Kiddoe jokes.

One of the students, Luis Pedraza,

now directs the school's Cuban extension program, which meets at his home in Santa Clara. More than 200 preachers have graduated from the program — and have contributed to the growth of Churches of Christ in Cuba, which could soon reach 200 congregations, Pedraza said in an e-mail. In 2005, Cuban Christians hosted the Caribbean Lectures.

"We, as cultures, are so different," Pedraza said, but a mutual love for Christ transcends the barriers.

"It is a matter of heart," he added, and then concluded his e-mail with, "*Mi a go mi yard ... see mi pickney.*" (That's "I'm going home to see my children" in Patois, Jamaica's dialect.)

The Jamaican School of Preaching's reach extends 1,300 miles north of Cuba — to the U.S. state of Connecticut. There, the Bridgeport Church of Christ is launching an effort to win souls for Christ along Interstate 95 in New England. Since 2009, the church has grown from 25 to about 70 members, representing at least 18 different nationalities.

A member from Jamaica, Nadine

Keller, suggested the church use the Jamaican school as a resource. On two Saturdays per month, Kiddoe teaches eight of the church's members about Bible history and evangelism, using the Internet program Skype.

"We have learned so many things from this class ... mostly, how to preach," said Dev Lal Moktan, a student in the class who moved to Connecticut from Nepal in 2006.

He recommended the training to Christians in his native country, Nepal. Recently, Kiddoe began training seven Nepalese church members through an online chat program, Google+ Hangouts.

On Fridays at 9 p.m. in Jamaica, Kiddoe teaches the Christians in Nepal's capital, Kathmandu, where it's 7:45 a.m. Saturday. Moktan and his son, David, watch from Connecticut and translate Kiddoe's words to the Nepali language.

It would be easy for Kiddoe to e-mail his class notes to the Nepali Christians — which he does when their Internet connection fails, David Moktan said during a recent interview using the chat program.

"But having brother Gladwyn there is definitely an advantage," he said. "If something is lost in translation,

we have the advantage of actually talking to the author."

'OUR LIMITATION — NOT GOD'S'

Back in Kingston, seven members of the preaching school's staff gather for a meeting to discuss their plans — in Jamaica and around the world.

Jamaica, like the U.S., is in a credit crunch, Kiddoe says. The country's money has devalued, and prices for food to feed the students is rising.

The school has lost some of its support in recent years. The North Davis Church of Christ in Arlington, Texas, oversaw the work until three years ago. Now the West Broward Church of Christ in Plantation, Fla., collects funds for the school.

Kiddoe and the staffers make regular trips to the U.S. to raise funds and encourage Jamaican churches to contribute what they can. But the director doesn't let finances dampen his spirits as he considers the future.

A Christian family recently donated funds for construction of a multi-media studio to help the school train students worldwide.

In the 1980s, Kiddoe shared with his U.S. supporters the vision of a Church of Christ in every major city and town in Jamaica.

He remembers one church deacon who gave him "a long list of can't do's — where are you going to find the money? Where are you going to find the preachers?"

More than 30 years later, "I continue to marvel at how God has provided the means," Kiddoe says. "I discovered that the limitation we place on the church is our limitation — not God's. ... God literally works with you and sends help.

"Let's get on with it."

FOR MORE INFORMATION, see www.jspmona.org or contact the West Broward Church of Christ at www.wbcofc.org or (954) 475-7172.

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ARKANSAS: Church leaders react to gun law

FROM PAGE 3
up a church or to an angry or drunk ex-husband thinking a church assembly is a surefire way to locate and dispatch his hated ex-wife,” the Bono preacher added.
For Akins, the key is that the law gives churches the option of allowing concealed handguns and deciding whom — if anyone — may carry weapons on their premises.
“A person should be allowed to carry a firearm in a church that permits the carrying of a firearm for personal security,” according to the measure passed 85-8 by the House and 28-4 by the Senate.
Arkansas joins a small number of states that have passed legislation specifically allowing concealed weapons in houses of worship, CNN reported. While about 20 states allow the practice because of “right to carry” laws, only a few states have singled out churches in legislation.
Little Rock police Capt. Terry Hastings, a 37-year law enforcement veteran, serves as an elder of the Northside Church of Christ in Benton.
Hastings said he has no problem with certified officers carrying weapons in church services or to church activities, as many already do.
“In fact, I encourage it,” he said. “If something happens, we would be calling them for help anyway by dialing 911.”
Likewise, church members with military backgrounds and special weapons training “are very capable of using restraint and good judgment in high-stress situations,” Hastings said.
But the prospect of “ordinary citizens” bringing handguns to worship concerns him and may necessitate decisions on a case-by-case basis, he said.
“In general, I believe this is a good law and could possibly save lives,” Hastings said. “As an elder, however, I have a responsibility to our members to make sure their safety is being taken care of to the best of my ability. ... This may require me telling a member, ‘No, you may not carry a concealed handgun in services,’ even though they have a permit.”
The Levy Church of Christ in North Little Rock has appointed a group of men — including shepherds, deacons



Hastings

and law enforcement officials — to study the law and make recommendations, preaching minister Danny Dodd said.
“Preliminary suggestions coming out of this group include discreet but visible signage posted around campus indicating ‘no guns allowed,’ along with proper communication to the church family that only law enforcement people should conceal and carry,” Dodd said.
Like the Levy congregation, the Central Church of Christ in Little Rock is reviewing how to respond, preaching minister Leon Barnes said.
One concern: How will the church’s insurance company react?
As an inner-city church, the Central congregation might be “more likely than anyone to have someone come into a service with ill intents, bent on shooting someone or hurting someone,” Barnes said.
“In light of things that have happened around the country, I would think it might be wise to have someone carrying a gun who has been trained in how to use it,” Barnes said. “But the idea of just everyone who has a concealed-carry license bringing a gun with them to worship doesn’t seem like a wise move at all.”
The Southwest Church of Christ in Jonesboro has not determined what its gun policy will be, but preaching minister Jimmy Adcox said he expects “there will be different opinions about the law and what our response should be.”
For his part, Adcox said he prefers that people not carry guns at church.
“While I understand and sympathize with the desire to protect innocent people, the impulse to carry a gun seems to be driven by fear and control,” Adcox said. “I personally choose not to live that way and prefer that we model a sense of peace and faith as we carry out God’s mission.”
If churches face a danger or threat, then intentional protection by trained law enforcement officers would be a better option than arming members, Adcox said.
That’s exactly what the Lewis Street church has done.
The Little Rock congregation hired a police officer to provide security during Sunday and Wednesday services, Jackson said.
“Even though we have posted signs about the weapons, he is at liberty to do as he pleases because he is a policeman,” Jackson said.

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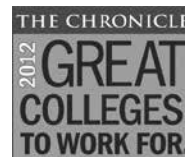
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Founded in 1906, ACU is a premier university for the education of Christ-centered global leaders. It offers 71 majors in more than 125 areas of study, and is known for its top programs in theology, sciences, business and education. Its graduates are accepted into medical schools at a rate double the national average. Its physics program is known for involving undergraduates in world-class research. It is known around the world for innovation, especially in mobile-learning technology. It attracts students from 43 nations, and has 86,000 alumni in more than 100 nations. Its graduates are best-selling authors; winners of the Pulitzer Prize, Olympic medals, and Emmy, Grammy, Telly and Dove awards, as well as national leaders in education, business, science, ministry and the media. Only three universities – UCLA, Stanford and USC – have won more NCAA national team championships. The beautiful, 208-acre main campus is in the city of Abilene, with a population of 117,000. Located 150 miles west of the Dallas and Fort Worth area on Interstate 20, Abilene is the center for education, culture, the arts, health care, and commerce in West Central Texas. Abilene is home to five colleges and universities, and Dyess Air Force Base. ACU is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and also has disciplinary accreditations in many fields.

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130096-0413

A conversation with Wayne Kilpatrick

LONGTIME MINISTER *discusses the strategies, priorities and prayer that lead to church growth.*

BY LYNN McMILLON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Occasionally you hear of a pulpit minister who completes a tenure of a quarter-century with a single congregation.

Rarer is the story of a minister who goes on to another long and successful ministry with a second church in the same city.

Meet Wayne Kilpatrick, a child of the South, and an extraordinary preacher whose ministry skills and heart for building strong churches and evangelizing the lost have enriched thousands.

After 27 years of work with the Homewood Church of Christ in Birmingham, Ala., and nearly 10 years with the Heritage Place church in the Birmingham suburb of Irondale, Kilpatrick, 71, and his wife, Carolyn, recently celebrated 50 years of rewarding, full-time service.

Where Kilpatrick has been, local congregations have grown. Beginning with his first work at the Bellmeade Church of Christ in Evansville, Ind., in 1962, he discovered his gift for outreach, baptizing 18 people in 18 months.

Attendance at the Homewood church grew from 256 people on its first Sunday in 1973 to 1,500 in 2000. Homewood became a cutting-edge church, developing an extensive mission plan, including a long-running weekly television program.

But in 1992 the church began to plateau and then slowly decline. Kilpatrick began doctoral studies with an emphasis on developing a strategy for church renewal. During his last two years at Homewood, the church began a slow process of recovery.

For four years — from 2000 to 2004 — he lived his dream of traveling the country, holding meetings and sharing his church growth knowledge. But when the Heritage Place church called, Kilpatrick said yes. The church has grown from 60 in attendance to a diverse membership of 200 today.

What are some early warning signs that a church may be on a growth plateau?

People who study church growth have discovered that 80 to 85 percent of the churches in America are in decline. This decline is not limited to liberal, mainline denominations. Many conservative and evangelical churches have plateaued, and many conservative denominations are in serious decline.

A plateaued church is not extending and expanding in reaching and assimilating new people. Therefore, growth ceases. Plateaus are part of the life-cycle of any organization, including the church. A plateaued church is in a period of inertia where the church has little movement forward in the area of growth.

Accurate record-keeping is very important in helping to know if a church is growing, plateaued or declining. Churches need to keep and examine their records from month to month in order to know the health of their church.

Can plateaued churches grow again? How?

The church must choose one of three possible responses to this eventual decline.

One choice is to do nothing, maintain the internal status quo, allow cultural forces to run their course and let the church disappear from American society. This is the choice of church members who like their churches the way they are and will not tolerate change.

A second choice is to plant new churches, even if it means abandoning extant churches. C. Peter Wagner, a church growth specialist, says, "Without exception, the growing denominations have been those that stress church planting." Many church growth advocates doubt that existing churches can be revitalized.

'I believe the key issue for churches today is church health, not church growth. When congregations are healthy, they grow the way God intends.'

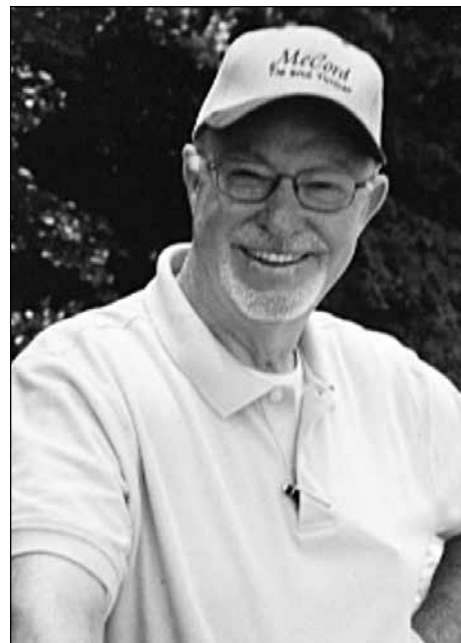


PHOTO PROVIDED

Wayne Kilpatrick

Church researcher George Barna, in his book "Turnaround Churches," states, "The good news is that some churches can reverse a rapid decline and make a full comeback to health. The bad news

is that the odds of experiencing such a turnaround are slim."

There is a third option to the church's plight in America — revitalization.

If established, declining churches can be revitalized, then the combined membership, the accumulated wealth, the buildings, property and furnishings in those churches can be reclaimed and brought to bear on the task of evangelizing America.

I believe the key issue for churches today is church health, not church growth. When congregations are healthy, they grow the way God intends.

In his book "Your Spiritual Gifts," Wagner says, "Church growth and church health are interrelated. Only healthy bodies grow well, and only healthy churches grow well."

Can churches become evangelistic if they currently are not? How?

The major reason for church decline is that churches ceased doing the things that caused them to grow.

When we were experiencing our greatest growth during my lifetime, we were involved in many evangelistic endeavors. We had gospel meetings at least twice a year, taught personal evangelism classes and equipped our members in the use of the Jule Miller filmstrips and Bible charts in converting their neighbors.

We had Monday night visitation and zone programs that cared for the members and provided assistance to the community. We hosted a five-day Vacation Bible School and urged our members to invite friends to come worship God with them.

The church has almost cut out every single thing that caused growth and has not replaced these things with more successful ministries.

One of the most important things churches can do to grow again is to create an atmosphere in their worship services that causes people to want to come worship God. Many members are ashamed to invite their friends into their local church due to boring services, buildings that are rundown and unattractive and unfriendly members.

The difference in a growing church and a dying church is one word — invite! We are not inviting our friends and associates to come worship God with us.

My suggestion is to sit down with some of the leading members of your church and ask them, "What would we need to do to cause you to invite your friends and associates to come worship with us?" Then take their ideas and do whatever is Scriptural and right to become a place where people are excited and thrilled to want to come.

Church growth occurs when the local church supernaturally and faithfully fulfills the Great Commission in its unique context and with a vision for the world.

See KILPATRICK, Page 24

KILPATRICK: Church growth 'must begin with the preacher'

FROM PAGE 23

What do you see as elements of growth in a new church plant?

Many of the new church plants have more passion to win the lost. They begin with a lot of hope and enthusiasm and spend much time in prayer. They understand that no work has ever been accomplished for God outside of much time in earnest prayer.

New church plants begin with a structure to not only bring people into their church but also structure to keep them. Churches must constantly structure and restructure to allow for continued growth and to maintain growth that has taken place.

New churches realize their meeting places and facilities have to be up to par. No matter what type of building they have, they strive to make it look the best it possibly can.

They understand the importance of advertising. They use media and publications in their area to let others know about their ministry. They also understand the importance of signs and church information. Times of services are clearly displayed.

New churches focus on accessibility. They give thought to their location and make themselves available to their members and guests. Since they are a new church, they often pursue excellence in all they attempt to do. They understand the importance of visitors and welcome them without embarrassing them. They get information from their guests and then follow up with letters, phone calls, cards from various members and, if they are open to it, a home visit.

New churches put lots of emphasis on special events. A church needs to have at least four big events each year. These give the members opportunities to invite friends to attend with them.

Do new congregations need to be planted in order to pursue growth?

Wagner observes, "Without exception, the growing denominations have been those that stress church planting." Lyle Schaller, another author who studies church vitality, states that

church planting is "the most useful and productive component of any denominational church growth strategy."

New churches operate with an almost panicked urgency. If a church planter wants to preach to someone on Sunday,

he has to go get them. Whereas many established churches end up relegating outreach to a single night during the week, the new church focuses on going after new people. And without a calendar full of committee meetings and counseling appointments, that's what gets

done. New churches reach people.

New churches are versatile within their communities. A new church is not encumbered in its methodology but can quickly adjust in order to take advantage of newly presented opportunities. They have a freedom that many established churches do not. They never run up against the dreaded, "We've never done it that way before," because nothing has ever been done.

A church planter is able to look around and ask himself, "How can I best get the Gospel in front of these people?" New churches make the most of their circumstances.

What is the role of the preacher in the growth of a church?

Church growth must begin with the preacher. No church can outgrow the preacher. Here are some suggestions as to what the preacher can do to assist the church in growth:

- **There can be no growth if the preacher fails to embark on the journey of personal growth.** The day he stops growing, the church stops growing. Lack of personal growth will show in pettiness, narrow-mindedness, inferiority complex, fear of offending and carnal attitudes. The minister needs to grow spiritually, emotionally,

mentally, socially and in his ability to become a more effective communicator. Personal growth is the key to ministry growth.

- **Preachers need to take courses in church growth.** Bible college and seminary training has little or nothing to offer in real church growth study. Bringing growth to their church means they must unlearn some things and learn new things. They will need to attend quality conferences, buy books, search the Internet and take a practical course in church growth.

- **Preachers need to believe in the theology of growth.** One minister said, "God did not call the church to grow. He called it to be faithful." Yes, God did call the church to be faithful. He also called the church to be fruitful.

Theology of growth is believing that growth is the sign of life in the church. So, everything will be done with growth in view. Whatever does not contribute to growth must be scrapped.

- **The minister needs to analyze his local congregation.** Ask relevant questions such as: How many were converted in the past year? What is our growth rate? How many came from other churches? What growth do we have — conversion, biological or transfer growth? How many were assimilated? Are the people becoming disciples or nominal Christians? What is the strength and weakness of this church? What percentage of our programs are maintenance rather than evangelism oriented? At our growth rate, compared to our birth rate, where will the church be in 10 years?

- **The minister needs to pray for church growth.** Share the vision of growth. Create time for intercession for growth. Plan and set goals for growth. Be willing to initiate change. He never changes the Gospel but must be willing to change his methods. Pinpoint the areas that need change. Communicate change to his leaders. Gain the authority to lead.

Gradual change is the key. Change leads to growth. Without change, growth will be difficult. Be able to know where your church is and how much time is being spent on evangelism and missions. Be abreast with these facts and then communicate wisely, consistently and continuously to your people. In your communication, demand commitment to God, to the church and to outreach.

What is the role of the elders in the growth of the church?

Christians understand that their job is to sow the seed of the Kingdom and depend on God to give the increase. He has promised that his word will not return unto him void and as we sow, we reap. God gives the increase in the church. We know that.

Elders must realize that the man who stands in their pulpit is the most important factor in how the seed is sown and whether the church grows or not. If elders want the church to grow, then they must have a preacher who wants the church to grow and is willing to pay the price to see that it grows.

Elders also must want the church to grow and be willing to pay the price for growth.

Elders need to insist that their ministers attend quality lectureships and conferences, buy books, listen to tapes and talk to ministers of growing churches. They must insist that ministers think, pray, live and breathe how they can reach more people with the Gospel.

Most elders have full-time jobs and have little time to study and learn how to grow a church. With their work, family responsibilities and shepherding God's flock, their hands are full. They need to unleash their minister and urge him to lead in the matter of church growth. Provide him with the resources and back him in his attempts to lead the church in reaching the lost.

I am a firm believer in church growth. I know we can reach many lost people today if we are willing to do what God has taught us to do. May the Lord strengthen us in our resolve to save the lost, edify the saved and help the needy.

'New churches operate with an almost panicked urgency. If a church planter wants to preach to someone on Sunday, he has to go get them. ... New churches reach people.'

'Christians understand that their job is to sow the seed of the Kingdom and depend on God to give the increase.'

'No church can outgrow the preacher. ... The day he stops growing, the church stops growing. ... The minister needs to grow spiritually, emotionally, mentally, socially and in his ability to become a more effective communicator. Personal growth is the key to ministry growth.'

CARE MINISTRY

CHRISTIAN CARE CENTERS

GUNTER, Texas — Christian Care Centers Inc. has set the closure of the 66-year-old Hilltop Haven, which serves more than 100 senior residents, for March 16.

In making the recent announcement, Phil Elmore, president and CEO of Christian Care Centers, promised to work with residents' relatives to find suitable placements for loved ones.

"Competition and convenience have challenged our ministry for years," Elmore said. "Consistent underfunding of Medicaid, our primary service option, and an overwhelming reduction in Medicare payments have made it impossible to continue with this ministry at Hilltop Haven."

For more information, see www.cccinc.net.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHRISTIAN

EASTLAKE, Colo. — The *Rocky Mountain Christian* newspaper dedicated its February edition to one of its editors,



Carter

Jack W. Carter, who died Jan. 29. Carter, 82, was a longtime minister and Christian writer.

"His efforts with this paper and countless other endeavors in the brotherhood make this small tribute a worthy endeavor of its own,"

the paper said in a front-page note introducing three pieces reflecting on Carter's legacy.

A memorial service for Carter was conducted Feb. 2 at the Bear Valley Church of Christ in Denver. For more information, see rmcnews.site.aplus.net.

HIGHER EDUCATION

ROCHESTER COLLEGE

ROCHESTER HILLS, Mich. — Once known as Michigan Christian College, Rochester College is again contemplating a new name. President Rubel Shelly is seeking feedback on the advisability of changing the name to Rochester University.

Shelly said recruiters have had to spend too much time explaining that Rochester College is a four-year, degree-granting institution and not a two-year community college.

For more information, see www.rc.edu.



STEPHANIE BENGE

All smiles at Freed-Hardeman lectureship

John Dale, left, enjoys a lighthearted moment with Laurel and Milton Sewell at the recent 77th annual Bible lectureship at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn. Dale is the retired minister for the Glendale Road Church of Christ in Murray, Ky., while Milton Sewell is Freed-Hardeman's chancellor and former longtime president. The three posed for a picture after an appreciation dinner honoring Jay Lockhart, minister for the Whitehouse Church of Christ in Texas.

K-12 CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

MIDDLE TENNESSEE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. — Lipscomb University general counsel Phil Ellenburg has been named president of Middle Tennessee Christian School.

Founded in 1962, Middle Tennessee Christian is associated with Churches of Christ and serves 672 students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade.

"You never know what God has planned for us," Ellenburg said. "This is a very unique opportunity to help build on the great foundation already in place at MTCS. It was clear that God opened a door that we needed to walk through."

Ellenburg said he plans to spend time "watching, listening and learning" as he begins work in April. For more information, see www.mtcscougars.org.



Ellenburg

MEDICAL MISSIONS

MISION PARA CRISTO

JINOTEGA, Nicaragua — The cost of health-care is going up in this Central American nation — even for medical missions.

"This year we have seen a 50 percent increase in medicine needed for our full-time clinic," said Benny Baker, executive director of Mision Para Cristo, a church-supported ministry whose clinic serves more than 700 patients a month.

The ministry seeks additional funds to cover the rising costs.

Despite the obstacles, the ministry is developing a specialty medical clinic to provide the people of Nicaragua access to pain management, ophthalmology and advanced physical therapy.

For more information, see www.misionparacristo.com.



Baker

SPORTS

A heart for children

OKLAHOMA CITY — "My best friend," Gavin Kuykendall calls Cleveland Browns starting quarterback Brandon Weeden.

Weeden is raising money to help children such as Gavin, a 6-year-old born with a rare congenital heart disease.

Gavin, whose family attends the Broken Arrow Church of Christ in Oklahoma, joined Weeden at a news conference at Oklahoma Christian University. Weeden came to Oklahoma Christian to speak at the university's recent Athletic Hall of Fame dinner, attended by nearly 600 people.



ANDREW CHASTEEN

Gavin Kuykendall, center, poses with Brandon Weeden and OC President John deSteiguer.

SCOUTING

CHURCHES OF CHRIST FOR SCOUTING

ABILENE, Texas — The board of trustees of Churches of Christ for Scouting is opposing the potential removal of the Boy Scouts of America's exclusion of gay members and leaders.

Steve Leddy, national chairman of Members of Churches of Christ for Scouting, sent a letter to the Boy Scouts of America national executive committee.

"Our deep belief in the Bible as God's word is a central, defining tenet of our faith," Leddy wrote in the letter. "The Bible tells us that homosexuality is a sin. We love all people, but we hate sin, and integrating those with a sinful lifestyle would be an ethical and moral compromise against our faith."

Churches of Christ sponsor more than 500 Boy Scout groups serving more than 15,000 young people, according to Leddy.



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BRENT HIGH

Student athletes flip for missions in Honduras

Kaela Pennington, Lacy Hartselle and Katie Collier, student athletes at Lipscomb University, enjoy the Playa Grande beach on Amaplaya Island in Honduras. The free time followed days of labor on a mission trip sponsored by the Nashville, Tenn., school. The students worked with Mission Lazarus, a church-supported nonprofit in Honduras. They built mud-brick homes and played soccer and baseball with Honduran children. For more information, see www.lipscomb.edu/Missions.

Churches in Africa, U.S. partner in Ghana's growing Village of Hope

GOMOA FETTEH, Ghana — Since its founding in 1989, the Village of Hope has grown from a small orphanage with eight children to a multi-faceted ministry.

Located near the capital of the West African nation of Ghana, the ministry now cares for 219 children and includes a hospital with a surgical theater and a full-time staff, Christian schools that serve more than 1,000 pupils, a vocational training center, a feeding program and a 50-acre farm.

"Owing to this phenomenal growth, it has become necessary for the Village of Hope to have focused attention in its operations in the United States," said three Ghanaian Christians with ties to the ministry in a recent letter to supporters — Kwasi Tweneboa-Kodua, a member of the ministry's board of directors; Fred Asare, managing director of the ministry; and John Sackey, an elder of the Vertical Centre Church of Christ in Tema, Ghana, which oversees the work.

Oversight of the ministry's U.S. operations has moved from Searcy, Ark.-based Ghana West Africa Missions, or



ERIK TRYGGESTAD

A child leads a prayer at Hope Christian Academy, a ministry of the Village of Hope.

GWAM, to the Springtown Church of Christ in Texas. The Texas church will partner with the Vertical Centre church in the work. GWAM will continue to receive funds for a rural water development program and evangelism done in collaboration with the Village of Hope.

"We pray the Lord's continuous blessings on you," the Ghanaian Christians said in the letter, "as we labor together in saving precious lives and nurturing children for eternity with God."

FOR MORE INFORMATION, see www.ghanamission.org and www.thevillageofhope.com.

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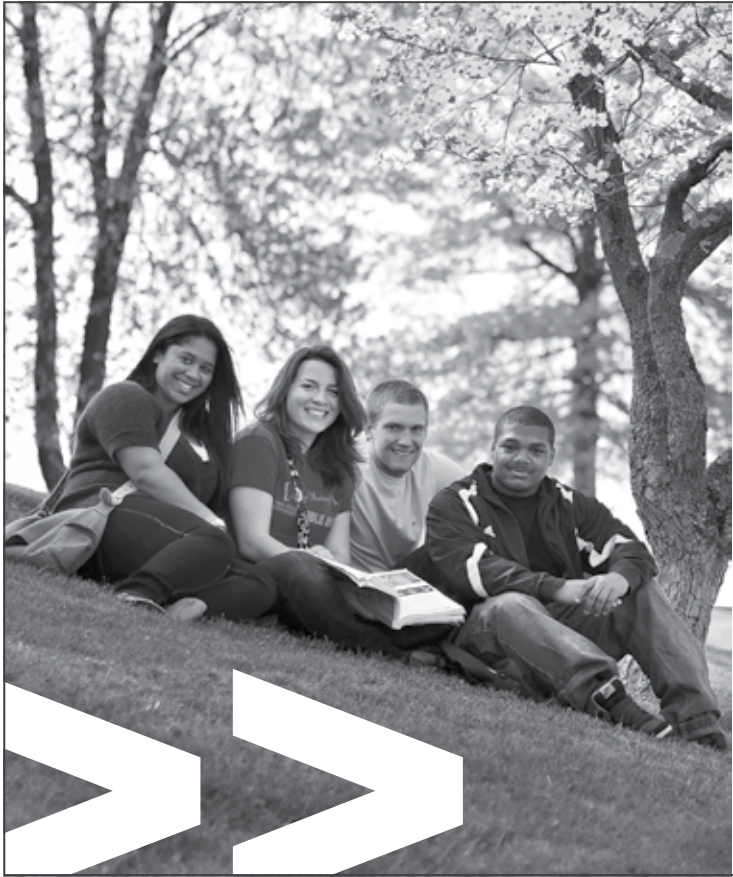
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Dr. Gregory Straughn, Dean
ACU Box 29210, Abilene, Texas 79699-9210

The **Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences** invites applications for a tenure-track position as assistant professor of animal science. It is seeking a visionary animal scientist with the earned Ph.D., Ph.D./D.V.M. or D.V.M. (from an AVMA-accredited institution with M.S. in animal sciences or closely related field). Information about the department is available at acu.edu/agenv.

The **Department of Engineering and Physics** invites one or more talented engineers to apply for its new and rapidly expanding engineering program, whose first class of students entered in Fall 2012. Ideal candidates will have a Ph.D. in engineering or a closely related field and experience in teaching and research. All engineering fields will be considered. Previous involvement with ABET accreditation would also be helpful. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/engineering.

The **Department of Journalism and Mass Communication** invites applicants for a tenure-track position as assistant professor of journalism and mass communication. The ideal candidate will have professional experience in online news or commercial environments including social media. Applicants who can also teach in public relations will receive particular attention. A terminal degree is strongly preferred, but applicants who are ABD will be considered. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/jmc.

The **Department of Language and Literature** invites applicants for a tenure-track position as assistant/associate professor with specialization in world literature, literary theory, or new media. Special consideration will be given to candidates with experience in the field of publishing, a demonstrated ability to establish and supervise internships, and/or experience living abroad. ABD considered, Ph.D. preferred. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/english.

The **Department of Music** invites applications for a tenure-track position of director of choral activities, beginning Fall 2013. Applicants should have an earned doctorate in Music (ABD will be considered) and be accomplished conductors and musicians with demonstrated potential for success teaching at the collegiate level. Preference will be given to candidates with a proven record of success teaching at the secondary level and overseeing all facets of a university choral program. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/music.

The **Department of Political Science** invites applications for a tenure-track position as assistant professor of political science. Applicants should have a Ph.D. (ABD will be considered). The successful candidate must have a commitment to teaching in an undergraduate environment and demonstrated potential for professional development and/or research activities. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/politicalscience.

The **Department of Psychology** invites applications for a tenure-track position as assistant professor of school

psychology, beginning Fall 2013. Applicants should have a doctorate in the field (ABD will be considered) and be a Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSSP) or equivalent credentials. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/psychology.

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Dr. Donnie Snider, Dean
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School of Information Technology and Computing

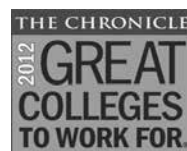
Dr. Brad Crisp, Director
ACU Box 29353, Abilene, Texas 79699-9353

The **School of Information Technology and Computing** invites applications for a tenure-track position as assistant, associate or full professor of computer science, effective Aug. 1, 2013. Applicants should have an earned graduate degree in computer science, software engineering or a related field. A doctoral degree is preferred. (Outstanding ABD candidates will be considered as well.) Information about the school is available at acu.edu/sitc.

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

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March 15-16 Youth Weekend Apologetics Training Camp. Hosted by Concord Road church in Brentwood, Tenn. Contact (877) 350-9222 or office@warrenapologeticscenter.com.

March 20-23 Tulsa Workshop. Experience Eternal Life Now! Tulsa, Okla., Fairgrounds. Contact workshop@memorialdrive.org or (918) 344-3402.

March 24-28 69th Annual National Lectureship. Hyatt Regency, downtown Houston. Contact Teaster Maloy Sr. at (713) 674-5131 or www.69thnal.com.

March 22 Camp Ne-O-Tez 50th Anniversary. Maryland Heights Centre, Maryland Heights, Mo. Contact (314) 739-2802 or www.neotez.org.

March 29-31 Southern Africa International Lectureship. "Contending for the Faith." UNISA, Ormonde Conference Centre, Soweto, South Africa. Contact www.2013lectureshipjhb.co.za.

April 7 50th Anniversary of Monterey church. Lubbock, Texas. Contact (806) 795-5201 or www.montereychurch.com.

April 17-20 India Missions Conference. Hosted by Leoma church on the campus of Heritage Christian University in Florence, Ala. Contact (800) 367-3565 ext. 323 or leapest@hcu.edu.

April 19-21 Gospel Meeting with Roy Lanier, Jr. Eastside church in Midwest City, Okla. Contact (405) 732-0393 or www.eastsidechurchofchrist.org.

April 26-27 40th Anniversary Lariat Creek Christian Camp. Geary, Okla. Contact caretaker@lariatcreek.org or www.lariatcreek.org.

May 3-5 New England Lectureship. "1st Century Christianity in a 21st Century World." Holiday Inn, Taunton, Mass. Contact Maurice Davis (617) 274-2409 or www.newenglandlectureship.org.

May 9 3rd Annual Spring Apologetics Lectures. Grand Pointe conference and Reception Center, Vienna, W.Va. Contact (877) 350-9222 or office@warrenapologeticscenter.com.

May 9-11 The Ascending Voice III. Pepperdine University, Malibu, Calif. Contact www.pepperdine.edu/ascendingvoice.

May 16-18 24th Annual Augusta, Montana Men's Retreat. "In Search of Balance." Sponsored by the Great Falls, Mont., church. Contact Bob Alfred at (406) 78807599 or alfredfamily@hotmail.com.

May 24-26 Manna Global Ministries Conference. Hosted by the Fairfax, Va., church. Contact Mark Gibson at mkgibson@fxcc.org or (703) 631-2100.

NEWSMAKERS

NAMED: Mark Brazle, Co-Director of Missionary Care for Missions Resource Network in Bedford, Texas.



Brazle

graduate, has been inducted into the Surry County, N.C., Sports Hall of Fame. Christian Home & Bible School Band Director **Doug Yopp**, Oliver Hobbs Award for exceptional work as a band director in the state of Florida.

NEW ELDERS: Bob Carpenter, Scott LaMascus, Dave Morton, Barry Perkins and Dan Waugh, Memorial Road church, Edmond, Okla.

NEW MINISTER: Tyler Smith, Neward Road church, Mount Vernon, Ohio.

ANNIVERSARIES: 70th: Walter and LaVerne Szych, Clinton Twp., Mich.

BIRTHDAYS: 99th: Stella Rhoades, Bixby, Okla. 96th: Robert Jones, Lubbock, Texas. 94th: Walter Szych, Clinton Twp., Mich. 91st: Hugh Vick, Bixby, Okla.

PASSAGES: Anita Jackson Hall, 82, Feb. 15, Edmond, Okla., longtime member of the Memorial Road church in Oklahoma City. James Wayman Hallford, 86, Oct. 23, Houston, known for his religious poetry, member of the Westbury church in Houston. Walter Worth Irwin, 87, Jan. 26, Murray, Ky., preacher for churches in Mississippi and Georgia and the Memphis and Nashville, Tenn., area. Linda K. Jones, 62, Feb. 5,



Swann

Lexington, Tenn., member of the Broad Street church in Lexington, Tenn. J. W. (Bill) Nicks, 93, Jan. 22, long-time preacher, Christian educator and missionary. Howard Swann, 89, Jan. 22, Nashville, Tenn. established churches in several locations in Georgia. R. L. Sanders, 89, Jan. 7, Anson, Texas, Navy veteran and member of the board of trustees for Abilene Christian University. Joe Powell Spaulding, 95, Jan. 30, Romance, Ark. preacher for 77 years in many places throughout the United States. Kathryn Kerby Tolle, 88, Jan. 22, Keller, Texas, alumna of Lipscomb University, Nashville, Tenn.

HONORED: Cmdr. David Bynum, 2013 Alumnus of the Year, and Dr. A. Marcus Nelson, 2013 Young Alumnus of the Year, for Abilene Christian University. Keri Whitehead Campbell, an Abilene Christian University

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EDITORIAL

Putting a focus on rural churches

Some of our favorite stories of recent years involved rural Churches of Christ.

We think of the Rimmel Church of Christ near Newport, Ark. In 2007, we reported on how men, women and children, many dressed in jeans, drive 10 to 20 miles to where the pavement gives way to gravel — to worship at a congregation that stresses hugs and handshakes, love and acceptance, prayer and reliance on the Holy Spirit.

We think of the Gravel-bourg Church of Christ in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. We reported in 2009 on how more than 100 children flock each summer — by foot, bicycle and farm truck — to the small church's week-long Vacation Bible School.

We think of the Lobster Valley Church of Christ in Alsea, Ore. We reported in 2011 on how the 40-member church started by pioneer loggers worked to bring healing — and answers — to its reeling community after a string of suicides.

Without a doubt, there are many inspiring stories among rural Churches of Christ.

We plan to highlight some of the best ones in our new "Rural Redemption" series, starting with our Page 1 report this month on a 156-year-old Iowa farm congregation that refused to die.

Moreover, we see a need to explore the issues and challenges facing small, rural congregations that struggle to survive in the wake of urbanization.

Historically, a cappella Churches of Christ and instrumental Christian Churches split more than a century ago. The non-instrumental churches tended to be rural and Southern, while the Christian Churches were more often urban and Northern, although that generalization was by no means universal.

Our fellowship's rural heritage makes it all the more critical to examine how our body of believers can maneuver societal and cultural changes in ways that serve and honor our Lord.

Carl H. Royster, data compiler for *Churches of Christ in the*

United States, a national directory published by 21st Century Christian, notes, "The small, rural congregations find it more and more difficult to, for lack of a better word, compete with more urbanized and usually larger churches located 20, 30 and 50 miles away."

At the same time, as Royster points out, house churches and small-group ministries have gained popularity among many.

Could the desire for strong interpersonal relationships in more intimate church settings be a potential key to revival for rural churches? That's just one question worth pursuing as we launch this new reporting project.

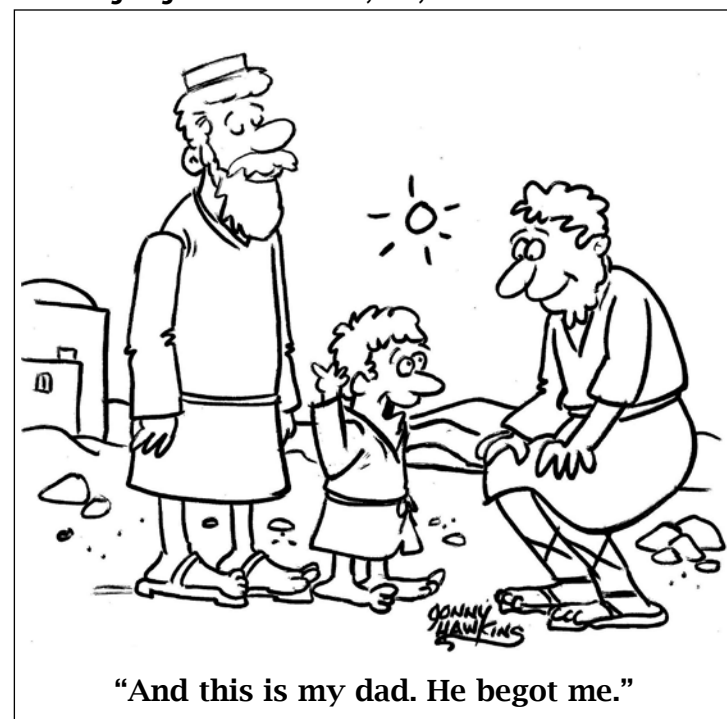
As we begin the "Rural Redemption" series, we do so with open minds — unsure how long the series will last or what lessons will be learned. Our plan is for these stories to appear periodically but not in every issue.

We pray that God will guide us in this endeavor and that you, faithful readers, will contribute insight and ideas.

To recommend churches that we should feature or issues that we should address, write to us at letters@christianchronicle.org or *The Christian Chronicle*, P.O. Box 11000, Oklahoma City, OK 73136-1100, Attn.: Rural Redemption.

Ever-Laughing Life

by Jonny Hawkins



TO OUR READERS

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Delivery: 2801 E. Memorial Road, Edmond, OK 73013

Editor, President and CEO: Lynn A McMillon

lynn.mcmillon@christianchronicle.org

Managing Editor: Bobby Ross Jr.

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

Assistant Managing Editor: Erik Tryggstad

International news, features: erik@christianchronicle.org

Advertising Manager: Tonya Patton

tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org

Editor Emeritus: Bailey B. McBride

bailey.mcbride@christianchronicle.org

Reviews Editor: Kimberly Mauck

kim.mauck@christianchronicle.org

Administrative Assistant: Lynda Sheehan

lynda.sheehan@christianchronicle.org

Administrative Assistant: Tonda Stafford

tonda.stafford@christianchronicle.org

Administrative Assistant: Joy McMillon

joy.mcmillon@christianchronicle.org

TO SUBSCRIBE:

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Close encounters of the country church kind

In my 65 years of church attendance, I have worshiped in congregations from Austria to Zambia, Florida to Hawaii and Michigan to Texas. Many of them were “out in the country.”

Very early in my life, my father, Rowe Benton Schreiber, now 91, preached for the Harmony Church of Christ near Bloomfield, Ind. I vividly remember arriving at the building with my mother, father and four sisters in the dead of winter with several inches of snow on the ground.

The church was off the main road, and Daddy put chains on the tires of our 1939 Plymouth to reach it. As my sisters, Mother and I sat, bundled in coats and blankets, he would bring in kindling to start fires in two tall, pot-bellied stoves.

Then he would go back to the car and drive up an old dirt road to pick up the one other family that attended. Summer and winter they walked to church, and in bad weather, Daddy would meet them on the way. The building had no running water, and trips to the outhouse are best forgotten.

My mother’s family — and mine, on extended stays with my grandparents — worshiped in a rustic wood building about the size of a one-car garage. It sat atop a hill a hundred yards up a gravel road from my grandmother’s house in Shoals, Ind. There were 30 or 40 members, but none of the men were willing or able to lead singing.

Grandmother, who was a music teacher, sat in a pew and started the songs while a coerced young boy stood at the front and waved an arm — sometimes on beat. It never occurred to my grandmother, whose interpretation of “submission” prompted her to wear a hat to church and never cut her hair, that she was, in fact, “leading the singing.”

At 23, I married Bruce Wooley, an unemployed accountant, and moved from Searcy, Ark., to Harrison, Ark., where I had a job playing Mammy Yoakum at Dogpatch theme park for the summer. The preacher at the church we attended heard that Bruce had graduated from Harding University with a Bible major and called him on a Saturday night to ask if he could fill in for a preacher who had become ill.

Bruce agreed and spent the majority of the night working on his first real sermon.

Four years later, I was handed an official-looking Ph.T. (Putting Hubby Through) certificate from Harding School of Theology in Memphis, Tenn., when Bruce matriculated with an M.Th. (master of theology degree).

Our first official ministry was to the students of Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas, the heart of rodeo country. Bruce and I attended goat ropings, cow chip throws and tobacco spitting contests.

We sampled Texas chili and barbecue but passed on the rattlesnake and “Texas Oysters.”

After building the Christian Student Center from an average of 11 students to more than 150 in five years, we moved to Abilene, Texas, where Bruce took classes at Abilene Christian University and did fill-in preaching for several area churches.

One Sunday evening, we were in the middle of a church service in the small town of Blackwell, Texas, when an alarm sounded. The men of the congregation rose en masse and left the building. The rest of the congregation followed.

It turned out that most of the men were volunteer firemen, and the goat barn at the high school was burning.

At another evening service in a church on the prairie, Bruce was preaching when the lights went out. The resourceful cattlemen went out to their pickup trucks, and Bruce finished his sermon in the ethereal glow of lanterns and flashlights.

When Bruce taught at Crowley’s Ridge College in Paragould, Ark., he preached for the Delaplaine Church of Christ, a dwindling congregation in the middle of mosquito-plagued rice country.

The building was large by country standards, with a sloped auditorium and two full-sized classrooms at the rear. The main entrance was just beside the pulpit, making any latecomers quite conspicuous. The auditorium could have held 300 people, but in the late 1980s, the

Views



Becky Wooley



congregation consisted of Bruce, me, our 7-year-old daughter, two other children, about six other women and fewer men.

The regular members were descendants of families who had established the church many generations back. At times, Bruce was the only male qualified to teach class, lead singing, serve communion and preach the lesson.

We always were asked to dinner.

One hard-working couple in their 80s, Marcy and Bernice Fossett, kept a three-acre garden and a henhouse from which they shared delicious spreads of fried chicken, canned produce and homemade pickles and preserves.

Years later, when they were well past 90, I received a memorable letter from Bernice stating matter-of-factly, “Marcy fell out in the garden again, and I had to drag him back up in the house.”

I attribute all of our country church encounters to that portentous first sermon that Bruce cobbled together through a dark, Arkansas night 41 years ago.

That Sunday morning, we drove about six miles out of Harrison to the Bellefonte Church of Christ, which met in a tall, white, box-like structure that sat just a few feet off the highway. The interior was dim, and the pulpit stood on a high stage that placed Bruce far from the congregation.

As we sat on long, well-worn pews through prayers and announcements, I wondered what sort of speaker my husband would turn out to be. I had majored in speech but had never heard Bruce give a talk of any kind.

When the sermon began, I was dismayed. What I could hear was good, but I could barely hear him. I kept trying to signal him to speak up, but he was looking over my head. On the way home, he asked me what I thought he should preach that night. I said, “Just preach the same sermon — only louder.”

I haven’t had trouble hearing him since.

BECKY WOOLEY is the author of the “Grit and Grace” clerical crime series and blogs at clericalcrime.blogspot.com. She attends the Brainerd Church of Christ in Chattanooga, Tenn., where her husband, Bruce, preaches.

LETTERS

Readers weigh in on ‘social justice’

Showing compassion, feeding the homeless and changing the world through the political process are described as “social justice” in your article (“Social justice vs. kingdom work,” Page 3, January).

But the article does not mention the origin of that “social justice.”

Where does the funding originate? The compassion? From voluntary giving by people who have the resources and compassion in their heart?

Or does it originate by way of a government program funded by taxes? Taxes are not normally voluntary.

Voluntary giving by compassionate people used to be, and still is, called charitable giving and is a high Christian calling (Matthew 25:31-46).

Beverley Becker | Elgin, Neb.

Aside from the fact that I agreed with Scot McKnight’s assessment of social justice, I would add several things. First, many young people have been weaned on social justice as defined by politicians and political groups who would like nothing more than to expunge God from the process. Their idea of social justice is not the same as the Bible’s.

Second, the impulse for social programs will lose its sustaining power the more we detach our desire for social justice from our faith in the God who is a God of justice.

It is popular in society to be concerned for the less fortunate, but what will happen to our desire if society moves on to other causes? Are we following God or are we just riding a wave of popular sentiment?

Bob Weber | Chatham, N.J.

Somehow, the tension between meeting the social needs of others and reaching these same people with the Gospel needs to be relieved.

There is an obvious misunderstanding. It is not “either/or.” You cannot read Matthew 25 and believe that Jesus is not interested in social issues. Also Isaiah 58. It is also obvious that the mission of Jesus was to die on the cross, be buried and raised for the salvation of mankind.

Jim Woodell | Searcy, Ark.

Training for everyday evangelism in the digital age

BY RON CLARK | FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

When I first enrolled in a church growth class at Harding School of Theology, I took notes on how to attract people with high-quality worship experiences and targeted programs.

In the three decades since that class, the attractional movement has given rise to megachurches with tens of thousands of members across the United States.

However, a study released in 2007 by Chicago megachurch Willow Creek Community Church gave many church leaders who followed an attractional model pause. High attendance at worship and activities did not equal members experiencing spiritual growth, the study found.

Perhaps this confirms what members of Churches of Christ have known all along — equipping members for spreading the Gospel results in more church growth than any contemporary worship style or engaging programs. As Church of Christ author Ivan Stewart put it, “Go ye means go me.”

Francis Chan, well-known author of “Crazy Love,” embodies this shift. He left

his position as a megachurch minister to form a small fellowship devoted to discipleship and outreach. Another author, J.R. Woodward, is a church planter who equips ministers to lead congregations in reaching out to their communities. Both challenge church leaders and Christians to attract spiritual seekers by training

Christians to share the Gospel with friends, neighbors and coworkers.

Chan’s new book, **“Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples,”** calls readers to live out the Great Commission in their daily lives. He agrees with Stewart that evangelism is every Christian’s task. “While it’s true that the pastors, elders and apostles in the New Testament made disciples,” he writes, “we can’t overlook the fact that discipleship was everyone’s job.”

This also calls to mind the view of one of the most active missionaries and evangelists of our brotherhood, Reuel Lemmons, who once said,

“We are depending entirely too much on professionals and have forgotten the priesthood of the individual believer.”

This book is meant to be a workbook Christians can use to bring unbelievers to the knowledge of the truth.

The book’s website, MultiplyMovement.com, features short videos of Chan and megachurch

minister David Platt, author of “Radical,” discussing the concepts of each chapter.

Also on the website, Chan provides free downloads of every chapter, each of which is meant to be covered in a weekly meeting between disciple-maker and disciple or disciples.

After establishing the importance of making disciples and of how to get involved with a local church (including baptism), the chapters move through the major points of the Old and New Testaments.

Churches of Christ have a great history of using Bible study to help others come to Christ and grow in their faith, and Chan’s book is a solid supplement. I give it four stars instead of five because much of the material is extremely basic and, in some places, too simple in its interpretation of Scripture.

Woodward’s work is more focused on equipping church leaders to equip its members for evangelism. **“Creating a Missional Culture”** suggests that modern church leaders need to become aware of their culture in order to reach new people.

Since the rise of the digital age, which Woodward places about 2010, people are more skeptical of the tradi-

tional hierarchical forms of leadership and more open to sharing and joining in mission, he writes. To adapt to this, he presents what he calls a “polycentric” leadership structure, based on the model given in Ephesians 4:11-12.

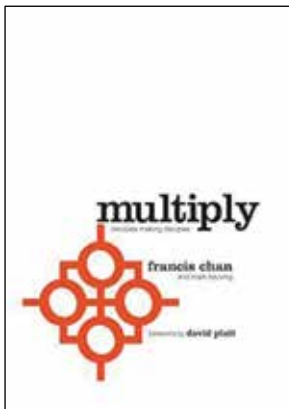
Woodward indicates that the most difficult issue for leaders is not learning something new, but unlearning the models of leadership that may have worked in the past but no longer work today.

One example of this is the method of trying to attract people to worship through advertising alone. The digital age requires that Christians go out of the building and into the chaos of the world, working side by side with others, serving in their cities and developing relationships

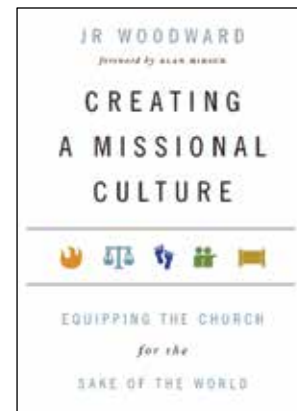
with those who need Jesus.

Chan and Woodward offer great resources for us as they challenge our members and leaders to apply the Great Commission to our own lives, standing on the edge of chaos in a digital age that seeks structure, hope and salvation.

RON CLARK is lead church planter for the Agape Church of Christ in Portland, Ore., and author of “The God of Second Chances: Finding Hope Through the Prophets of Exile.”



★★★★ Francis Chan. **Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples.** Nashville, Tenn.: David C. Cook, 2012. 333 pages. \$14.99.

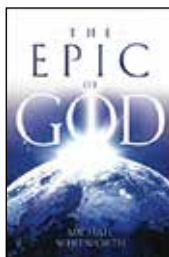


★★★★ J.R. Woodward. **Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World.** Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2012. 226 pages. \$16.

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

BIBLE STUDY

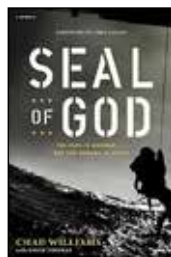
Michael Whitworth. **The Epic of God.** Bowie, Texas: Start2Finish Books, 2012. 396 pages. \$14.99.



The first in a planned series of guides on all the books of the Bible, Whitworth, a Church of Christ preacher in Bowie, Texas, uses an easy-to-read style to give an in-depth study of Genesis. Many footnotes provide opportunity for deeper research, while people in the pew will feel like they’re reading a sermon series.

MEMOIR

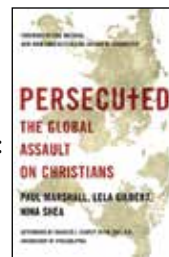
Chad Williams. **SEAL of God: The Path is Narrow ... But the Reward is Great.** Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House Books, 2012. 304 pages. \$14.99.



Williams, a soldier-turned-minister, recounts his intense training and six-year tour of duty as a Navy SEAL. Though he made it to the top tier of the Navy’s elite soldiers, he felt unfulfilled. Then he became a Christian. He endured harassment from his fellow soldiers on top of his difficult missions.

NONFICTION

Paul Marshall, Lela Gilbert, Nina Shea. **Persecuted: The Global Assault on Christians.** Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2013. 416 pages. \$16.99.



Christians in the West largely are shielded from persecution. Worldwide, this is not the case. The authors present stories from the East and Muslim world that will shock most Americans. The book ends with a call to action for those who have freedom to worship to help those who do not.

CHRISTIAN LIVING

Mary DeMuth. **Everything: What You Give and What You Gain to Become Like Jesus.** Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2012. 224 pages. \$16.99.



Best known for her bracing memoir “Thin Places,” DeMuth uses heartfelt, confessional prose to inspire readers to truly follow Jesus. This book begins each chapter with a quote from an “Everything Christian” like Dietrich Bonhoeffer or Mother Teresa and includes many Scripture references.

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Quiet time to study God's word, meditate is vital for spiritual health

Finding a time to quietly think, study and pray remains one of the greatest challenges of life.

I pray many times during the day — when I wake up, while I am in the shower, as I drink my coffee, walking to class, preparing for a class, as I read e-mail, after a phone call, and so on through the day.

Despite the regular expression of faith that a prayer represents, I find it harder to spend even 15 minutes reading the Word. Without the time to read, study and contemplate, I lack the refreshing that comes from listening to God. Without the time to meditate and think about God's great truths and expressions of eternal elements of life, my soul begins to dry up, and my joy in living for Christ begins to fade.

Knowing this important fact, I still struggle to take the time to reconnect with God so that his Spirit can renew the life of my spirit.

At different times in my life, I have tried different approaches to quiet time with God. At one point, I gave up reading the newspaper and spent that time with my Bible open. That worked very well. The time was adequate for really concentrating on what God seemed to be communicating to me.

At another time, I gave up the local news on television and concentrated for 30 minutes on praying and studying Scriptures I had laid out for meditation when I was studying on Saturday. That plan helped me stay seriously connected with God.

When Joyce and I first married, we stayed at the dinner table and studied in the evening. The time was great for our bonding, and we always took more time than we had allotted for the study.

We have again returned to a pattern like that. We begin with one of our favorite devotional books and then study one chapter from the New Testament.

I had an aunt who had a book stand at the entry to her kitchen, and each time she walked by she opened the Bible to read the first verse her eyes lighted on. She would take the idea of the reading and think about it to see how she could apply it to her life.

When I asked her about the practice, she told me she studied early in the morning for her spiritual nourishment.

The verses she meditated on from her open Bible were a constant reminder that God is always there.

I know that serious Bible study must become more of a church priority for the Kingdom today if we are to stand for God's principles and be evangelistic. And our regular, intense study does allow God to touch our hearts and begin to transform us.

Hopefully we are involved in Bible studies where we have to study and prepare for class discussion. In most churches, women seem more likely to

be in serious studies than men. That needs to change. Men need God's informing wisdom very much. Even if your congregation is not providing you a program for serious Bible study, you can begin your own study, using the text and whatever commentaries you need. God's people can only be his people if we are willing to take the time to let him fill our minds and our being.

Time is our usual excuse for not studying or setting aside regular times to focus on God and our unique relationship with him. I recently saw a poster reminding the reader that each one of us has the same amount of time as great people who had done amazing things, people like Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, the president or Mother Teresa. So time is not an excuse. Our challenge is ordering our lives so that we can always have time for God.

My former administrative assistant retired to have more time with her children and grandchildren. She made one room in her house her prayer room. She went there regularly with friends and family to pray. She also spent time there each day with her Bible where she studied and wrote personal commentaries of her study so that she would remember her thoughts and insights.

I realize that few of us will set aside a room for prayer and study, but how precious it would be if we devoted even half an hour to God — praying, studying and meditating.

Insight



Bailey McBride

CONTACT bailey.mcbride@christianchronicle.org.

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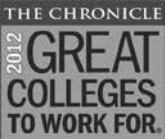
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My wife and I look forward to graduation and a ministry opportunity God has entrusted to us. We will work with a congregation in Rolla, Mo., formed when two congregations merged to be a great force for Christ in their community. With such a unique opportunity comes responsibility and challenges that I would have been ill equipped for without the CAMT program and the ministry classes offered by Harding University. Classes in youth ministry, Christian counseling and Christian home helped prepare me for a personal relationship with God and to influence future generations of the Lord's children. Ministry classes offered are very practical and get at the heart of true ministry and service to God and His people. If you want to grow in your relationship with God, learn more about ministry, and be more fully equipped for service in the Lord's kingdom, take a look at the CAMT program.



Kayla and Josh Adams



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I came to Harding University from California to study in the Bachelor of Ministry program. I was attracted to Harding's 128-hour bachelor's degree that would qualify me to work as a pulpit minister in churches of Christ. Harding offers a well-rounded program that includes 94 hours of Bible taught by top scholars. The best thing about the program is the camaraderie among CAMT students. Lifelong friendships are cultivated by being in classes and daily chapel together. Events throughout the year ensure fellowship not only among the students but among their families as well. The Bachelor of Ministry degree is for the older, nontraditional student — the average age is 36. The full-tuition scholarship made it possible for me to take advantage of this great educational opportunity to prepare for ministry in God's kingdom.



Karina and Chris Kearney

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Teen challenge

Youth conference mixes Jesus and fun. **6**



Faith on the farm

Tiny, 156-year-old Iowa church refuses to die. **1**



Jamaica goes global

Preaching school trains from Cuba to Nepal. **17**

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June 16-21

Camp Zenith (Grades 9-12)

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Camp Cornerstone (Grades 6-8)

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