



Couple shows God's love in Afghanistan

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

The most terrifying killer in Afghanistan isn't a Muslim mob, incensed by the burning of its holy book, the Quran.

Nor is it a U.S. soldier, going door-to-door, executing families of Afghans, including children.



JOHN BRADLEY

More than half of Afghans — including this girl, who begs on the streets of Kabul — are under age 18.

For the 34.3 million souls who live in this war-torn nation, no killer this year has proved as deadly as the weather.

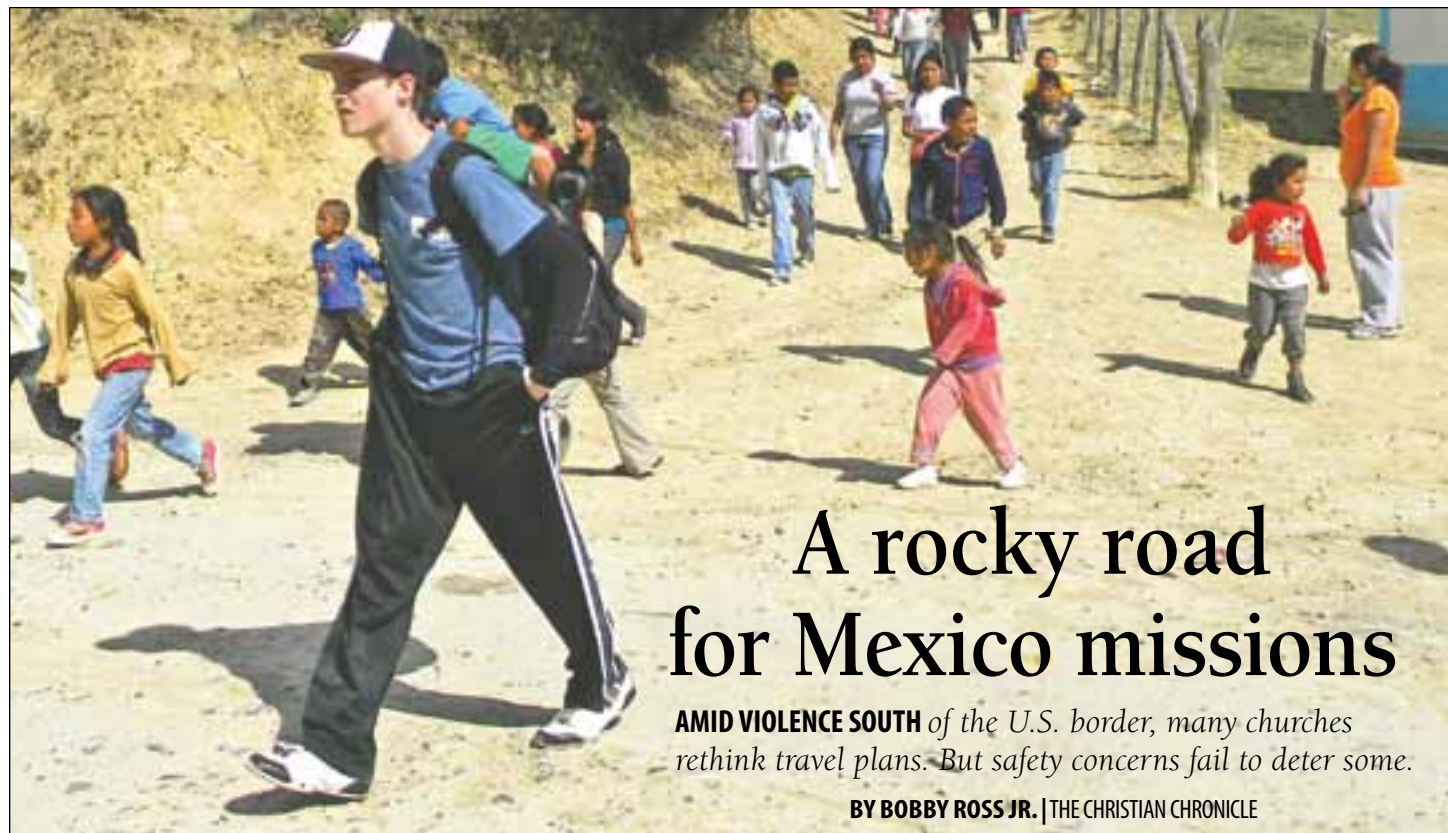
"This has been the coldest winter here in 20 years," John Bradley told

The Christian

Chronicle from Kabul, the Afghan capital. "More than 50 babies froze to death in the camps in the month of February."

Bradley and his wife, Jan, members of the Hillsboro Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn., traveled to Afghanistan to serve some of the 35,000 refugees

See **AFGHANISTAN**, Page 14



A rocky road for Mexico missions

AMID VIOLENCE SOUTH of the U.S. border, many churches rethink travel plans. But safety concerns fail to deter some.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

BOBBY ROSS JR.

Josh Howard, an Oklahoma Christian Academy student, walks with a group of children to a Vacation Bible School in La Cieneguita, Mexico.

AQUILES, Mexico

A year ago, Bethany Gibbs raised more than \$2,000 to buy Spanish-language Bibles for 350 families in this remote mountain village and nearby communities.

Gibbs, then a high school senior, eagerly anticipated sharing God's written word with Mexican friends she had

made on two previous mission trips here.

But safety concerns south of the U.S. border prompted her home congregation — the Edmond Church of Christ in Oklahoma — to cancel its planned trip.

"It was heartbreaking," said Deborah Gibbs, Bethany's mother. "She didn't know if she'd ever get to come back."

Turf wars between drug cartels

have claimed more than 50,000 lives in Mexico since 2006, even as President Felipe Calderon has deployed tens of thousands of soldiers and federal police to combat criminal organizations.

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Trusting God on mission trip to Mexico

AQUILES, Mexico

Alabaré, alabaré, alabaré, alabaré, alabaré a mi Señor!"

Hundreds of Mexican children who flock each spring to Vacation Bible Schools in Aquiles and four other mountain villages

Inside Story



Bobby Ross Jr.

served by the Edmond Church of Christ in Oklahoma love that song.

So does my friend James Lauderdale, a missions

committee deacon for the Edmond church, my home congregation.

I discovered this as I rode shotgun while James steered a white rental van filled with care packages from village to village, avoiding cows, donkeys and goats that shared our rocky, twisting path.

"All-ah-buh-ray," my brother sang loudly, with a distinct Okie accent and *mucho* enthusiasm.

"What's that mean?" I asked when he finally stopped to take a breath.

"I ain't got no idea," he replied.

He winked as he quickly launched into "*Cristo Me Ama*" ("Jesus Loves Me").

I learned later that "*Alabaré a mi Señor!*" means "I Will Praise My Lord!"

Coincidentally, that is exactly what James was doing.

That same day, as James kept delivering 30-pound boxes filled with rice, beans,

See **AQUILES**, Page 4



PHOTO PROVIDED

Christian school serves people, elephants in Thailand

English teacher Lauren Brennan and math teacher Molly Williams scrub an elephant with reeds at a farm in northern Thailand. The teachers were part of a mission team, which included 20 students, from Fort Worth Christian School in North Richland Hills, Texas. The team worked with church-planting missionaries in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Besides learning about elephant care and conservation, the team worked alongside Christians, served with ministries and experienced Thai life.

RELATED STORY, Page 8

Fifty years, one pulpit

MINISTER AND CIVIL RIGHTS ADVOCATE

Andrew Hairston marks a half-century with historic Atlanta church.

BY TED PARKS | FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

ATLANTA — The Simpson Street Church of Christ began shortly after the famous black traveling evangelist Marshall Keeble preached in the "mud hole," a place that filled with mire when rains fell on Depression-era Atlanta.

The church's story would stretch decades, through the post-World War II years, the turbulent days of the civil rights movement, all the way to the election of the nation's first African-American president.



TED PARKS

Andrew Hairston preaches at Simpson Street.

The longest chapter in that story is the ministry of Simpson Street preacher Andrew Hairston, who recently celebrated five decades at the historic Atlanta congregation. The celebration included

See **HAIRSTON**, Page 22

In U.S., Kenyans see God's love after medical nightmare

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

A Kenyan minister and his wife say they have seen God's hands at work since a medical mistake nearly claimed the life of their toddler son.

George Ochieng, who preaches for a Church of Christ in eastern Kenya, and his wife, Juliet, ask for prayers and funds as they care for 2-year-old Jayden George Ochieng, who has undergone surgery and months of therapy at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital in Boston.

The Ochiengs' medical nightmare began in July 2011 at a hospital in Kisumu, Kenya, where Jayden had his adenoids removed.

After the routine procedure, a nurse mistakenly gave Jayden a muscle relaxer that caused hypoxic brain injury, his father said.

The Kenyan hospital paid for Jayden to receive treatment and therapy in Boston. Recently, the hospital released him but recommended the family stay in the U.S. for at least a year as Jayden receives follow-up therapy and care.

The Kenyan hospital won't cover the additional costs, George Ochieng said.

The Church of Christ in Milton, Mass., has adopted the family since their arrival in the U.S. in October and is collecting funds for Jayden.

"We have known God's love in a faraway land like we never imagined," George Ochieng said. "God came ahead of us and prepared his people to be his hands and feet for us."

TO CONTRIBUTE, contact the Church of Christ in Milton, 330 Edge Hill Road, Milton MA 02186, www.churchofchristmilton.org, (617) 274-2409. See an expanded story at www.christianchronicle.org/blog. Search for "Jayden."



PHOTO PROVIDED

Jayden Ochieng gets physical and speech therapy in Boston.



Nursing Faculty Position Full-time, Tenure Track

Oklahoma Christian University (OC) seeks a full-time Nursing Faculty member: Assistant /Associate Professor rank to begin on or before August 2012. A terminal degree in nursing and/or related field is strongly preferred; however a completed Master of Science degree in Nursing is required. An active RN licensure in Oklahoma or the ability to obtain Oklahoma licensure is required. A minimum of 5 years of professional teaching and /or clinical experience is preferred. All applicants should be active members of the Church of Christ and should be committed to the mission of the university. Faculty members are expected to maintain active participation in research, scholarship, college governance, service, academic advisement and professional development activities. The nursing program at OC offers a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing for RNs. Current plans for the addition of an RN-BSN program are underway.

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Interested applicants should provide a letter of application describing teaching and research interests, current vita, transcripts, 3 letters of recommendation (one must be a source from current congregation), a writing sample, and evidence of professional teaching and clinical experience (including statement of teaching philosophy which specifically addresses the integration of faith and learning). Please send the information electronically to Ms. Linda Fly (linda.fly@oc.edu), or by mail to Ms. Linda Fly, Chair and Assistant Professor of Nursing, Oklahoma Christian University, Box 11000, Oklahoma City, OK, 73136. Questions may be directed to Linda Fly at linda.fly@oc.edu or 405-425-1920.

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AQUILES: 'Precious Memories' rings true on trip

FROM PAGE 3

sugar, flour and other foods to appreciative villagers, he switched to hymns in a language I understood: English.

In the van with us were Ishmael Resendez; his wife, Ofelia; and their children, Brandon, 9, and Alejandra, 7.

Ishmael preaches for a 175-member congregation that is the largest Church of Christ in Victoria, Mexico, a city of about 300,000. He also directs the La Sierra Youth Camp, a summer Bible camp in Aquiles launched three years ago by Edmond minister Kent Risley and elder John Trotter.

The Resendezes do not speak English. But as James belted out "Our God, He Is Alive," "Amazing Grace" and "Victory in Jesus," the Mexican family happily sang along — in Spanish.

Talk about perfect harmony!

I don't recall James singing "Precious Memories" that day:

*Precious memories, how they linger
How they ever flood my soul
In the stillness of the midnight
Precious, sacred scenes unfold*

Nonetheless, my sixth trip to Aquiles provided me with precious memories — not to mention chiggers from my ankles to my knees, the apparent result of unwelcome guests in my tent.

Concerning the chiggers, kudos go to Dora Chambers, an Edmond member and the trip nurse, for packing plenty of bug spray and anti-itch cream for our mountain adventure.

In all seriousness, praise God that bugs turned out to be our biggest worry on this trip! If you read this month's front-page story on drug-related violence in Mexico, you know that safety concerns have wreaked havoc on mission efforts south of the U.S. border.

In fact, the day our group left

Oklahoma, a Facebook friend was so kind as to post a U.S. State Department warning for all of us "crazy enough to travel to Mexico." That same day, I read a wire service report where one source suggested that mission groups going to Mexico "bring a body bag along."

I chose to trust in God and not share the above information with my three children who joined me on the trip. But I prayed hard when a convoy of trucks filled with men toting machine guns and sporting green military uniforms zipped past our church vans and set up

a makeshift checkpoint.

As it turned out, the soldiers behaved extremely professionally as they examined cargo in our caravan of 13 vans. They assured us they were trying to protect us from any potential threats.

Once here in the remote mountains of northern Mexico, we felt extremely safe — away

from cell phone signals, paved roads and modern civilization.

In the daylight hours, we focused on doing God's work — feeding entire villages, teaching children about Jesus, fumigating homes and installing concrete floors. On the final day of VBS, the Mexican boys and girls and the short-term missionaries alike shed buckets of tears. It happens every year.

At night, we played cards (my 12-year-old daughter, Kendall, and I lost in the first round of the trip's annual Spades tournament) and worshiped God under a star-studded sky.

After a remarkable mountaintop experience, we began our journey home on a spiritual high.

"*Alabaré, alabaré, alabaré, alabaré, alabaré a mi Señor!*"



BOBBY ROSS JR.

James Lauderdale, right, trades hats with a friend in Mexico.

CONTACT bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org.

ALABAMA

KILLEN — The soundtrack for the hit movie “The Hunger Games” features The Secret Sisters.

Bluegrass duo Laura and Lydia Rogers got their start singing a cappella in church and still can be found in the pews of the North Carolina Church of Christ.

Rolling Stone describes “Tomorrow Will Be Kinder,” the song included on the soundtrack, as a “haunting folk ballad.” To hear it, go to www.christianchronicle.org/blog and search for “Secret Sisters.”



PHOTO PROVIDED

Laura and Lydia Rogers form the bluegrass duo The Secret Sisters.

INDIANA

PEKIN — A mobile feeding ministry associated with Churches of Christ has served thousands of meals to tornado victims and disaster relief volunteers in this southern Indiana community, organizers said.

Disaster Assistance CoC, sponsored by the Lake Jackson Church of Christ in Texas, set up its mobile headquarters at MJ Auto in Pekin — a business owned by a member of the Borden Church of Christ and



PHOTO BY MIKE BAUMGARTNER

Disaster relief volunteers pray before beginning a day of work.

located just a few minutes from a disaster area.

“We are cooking meals, delivering meals, handing out and delivering other miscellaneous supplies and have volunteers going out to do cleanup and repair,” said Mike Baumgartner, director of Disaster Assistance CoC. “Each meal that we hand out contains a flyer that lists several churches in the area that we are serving.”

The Big Spring Church of Christ in Pekin and the Northside Church of Christ in Jeffersonville, Ind., are assisting with the coordination.

For details on donating or volunteering, go to www.christianchronicle.org/blog and search for “mobile feeding ministry.”

SOUTH BEND — A Church of Christ minister will serve as the next dean of Yale Divinity School.

Gregory E. Sterling, dean of the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame, will assume his new role this summer. Like his father before him, Sterling preaches for

**Sterling**

Churches of Christ.

“I last served the Warsaw Church of Christ (in Indiana) for 16-and-a-half years as the minister,” Sterling said

in an e-mail to *The Christian Chronicle*. “I stepped down as a result of my deanship here.”

KENTUCKY

WEST LIBERTY — A tornado that ravaged this eastern Kentucky town caused major damage to a Church of Christ.

“Our congregation needs your prayers,” said Rusty Hutchinson, who leads singing for the 40-member West Liberty Church of Christ.

While the building’s walls remain standing, “the roof was damaged bad, and the inside was damaged bad,” Hutchinson



JERRI VALENTINE

A minister’s final Sunday worship

Fellow Christians carry Jerry Valentine, minister for the Bolivar Peninsula Church of Christ in Crystal Beach, Texas, from his home to attend the Sunday assembly for the first time in a month. Valentine, 63, was suffering from colon cancer and bedridden. The service turned out to be his last. He died the following Friday, March 2. “I’m just so thankful he was able to attend church the last Sunday of his life,” said his daughter, Jerri Valentine.

said. The church’s insurance coverage on the building will not be enough to rebuild, he said. For now, the congregation meets in members’ homes.

“It devastated the town,” Hutchinson said of the March 2 tornado, which claimed a half-dozen lives in West Liberty.

To help with the rebuilding effort, send checks to the West Liberty Church of Christ, Attn.: Danny Clark, Treasurer, 111 Oakwood Lane, West Liberty, KY 41472. For more information, call Clark at (606) 743-1158.

MISSOURI

FESTUS — Members of the Twin City Church of Christ in this St. Louis suburb praised God for the quick thinking and cool composure of one of their own.

Pilot Michael Walden recently guided United Airlines’ Shuttle America flight 5124 from Atlanta to Newark, N.J., to a safe landing after the plane’s front landing gear failed to deploy, *NBC News* reported.

Walden and his family are active members of the Twin City church, minister Patrick Adam told *The Christian Chronicle*.

The minister described Walden as “an amazing Christian father and member of the Lord’s family.”

“His desire, apart from flying, has always been to be sold out for Christ,” Adam said. “And following this incident, God’s name has been invoked a number of times. God is amazing.” For more details on the landing, go to www.christianchronicle.org/blog and search for “Michael Walden.”

TENNESSEE

UNION CITY — Three years ago, the Exchange Street Church of Christ decided to reach beyond its walls to serve the unchurched, minister Dan Huggins said.

An outgrowth of that endeavor was the “Soul Food Cafe,” offered on the first Wednesday night of each month.

“We prepare a great meal, invite the community, have some type of activity such as karaoke, bingo, a band, blood drive, etc.,” Huggins said. “There are no strings attached, no Bible classes, just fellowship and creating relationships.”

As a result of those relationships, about 28 people have been added to the Lord’s family, the minister said.

“This has been such a blessing for us as a church family,” he said.

TEXAS

WACO — The youth group from the Crestview Church of Christ spent spring break serving victims of last year’s wildfires in Bastrop, Texas, about two hours south of Waco.

The church’s teens worked to clear bricks, ashes, metal and trash and helped with construction projects, youth minister Jack Whiddon said.

“We used chainsaws constantly,” Whiddon said. “We were blessed to be able to spend time with the Bastrop Church of Christ. They are a church reaching out to their community.”



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Video games, Ugandan warlord and flip-flops take the stage at Tulsa Workshop

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

TULSA, Okla. — When Eric and Chad Walker discuss “21st Century Christians in a Third World Church,” they’re not talking about believers in wealthy nations visiting the rapidly growing churches of the Global South.

They’re talking about video games. The Walkers, twin brothers who attend the Duncanville Church of Christ in Texas, have worked for the past 13 years in the video game business. And they’re disturbed by what they see, they told attendees at the Tulsa Workshop.

Church members from across the nation attended the annual workshop, sponsored by the Memorial Drive Church of Christ in Tulsa.

The Walkers told fellow Christians that many churches use the equivalent of Third World technology to reach young people — compared to the lightning-fast, modern devices with which children grow up.

In the U.S., children spend countless hours in virtual worlds, interacting with peers through online games, the Walkers said. Few of these games hold up Christian ideals, yet the vast majority of Americans who buy these games claim Christianity as their faith.

“The Christian dollar is driving the industry forward,” Eric Walker said. The Christian is a “non-influencing enabler” of businesses that use violence and profanity to drive sales, he added.

The Walkers are trying to change that. They operate Texas-based Four Story Creative, designing Christian-themed video games in hopes of using the technology to spread the Gospel.

Two Christians from the Global South, Ronald Bwana and Abraham Mulongo, also attended the workshop, telling attendees about The Kibo Group. The Uganda-based ministry seeks to tackle poverty and injustice in East Africa using self-sustaining methods.

Bwana directs The Water Source, a



ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Eric and Chad Walker spoke about faith and video games at the Tulsa Workshop.

well-drilling and clean water project. Mulongo manages The Mvule Project, a reforestation initiative.

The Ugandans have fielded a lot of questions about Joseph Kony, the subject of a YouTube video produced by San Diego-based Invisible Children. The video, viewed more than 86 million times, calls for Kony, a warlord who turned children into soldiers and terrorized northern Uganda, to be captured and forced to face trial for at the International Criminal Court.

Bwana and Mulongo said they — and many other Ugandans — are perplexed by Kony’s sudden celebrity. Instead of focusing on the warlord’s crimes, ministers in the country’s Churches of Christ have asked, “What if Joseph Kony came here and begged for forgiveness? Could you forgive him?” Some Christians immediately say no, Bwana said. Others say that the Bible compels them to forgive, but the warlord should answer for his crimes, Mulongo added.

Among the keynoters at the workshop was Josh Graves, preaching minister for the Otter Creek Church of Christ in Brentwood, Tenn.

The minister had just returned from a mission trip to Central America and didn’t have time to repack proper shoes. So he preached in flip-flops.

He talked about the Parable of the Talents from Matthew 25. He explained that, in today’s economy, the servant who hid his one talent rather than investing it might seem like the wisest of the three.

But, “in the economy of the Gospel, it never pays to play it safe,” Graves said. “Jesus becomes the parable by going to the cross.”



Bwana



Mulongo

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is seeking a minister. We average 75 in attendance on Sunday morning. Send resume to 3530 Falling Springs Rd., East St. Louis, IL 62206 or tferg@htc.net.

AUSTRALIA

BRISBANE — Church members did some “bush dancing” as part of their annual Camp Gidawarra in Australia’s Queensland province.

Alan Parr, a member of the Wynnum Church of Christ, described bush dancing as something akin to line dancing in the U.S. It’s a common camp activity, he added.

About 100 to 120 people attended the camp, which featured speaker Josh Patrick, minister for the Fourth Avenue Church of Christ in Franklin, Tenn.

CHINA

BEIJING — Twenty-six Christian women attended a recent “all-church sisters’ retreat,” hosted by members of the Jinsong congregation.

The weekend of fellowship and encouragement included a special send-off for Danita Jackson, a church member who plans to return to the U.S. with her husband, Gary, this year.

GUATEMALA

GUATEMALA CITY — Missionaries Hawatthia Jones and Byron E. Benitez request prayers for Christians in this Central American nation.

In recent weeks, the members of congregations they serve have experienced deaths due to cancer, a traffic accident and suicide.

“As you can imagine, we are weary emotionally and physically,” the missionaries said in a recent newsletter. “We are perplexed by many things that happen in this life. However, it is during these times — when we do not have all the answers — that we continue to trust in the God who does.”

SLOVENIA

MARIBOR — After training in Croatia, two native Christians returned to this Central European nation to launch a ministry aimed at young people. Now their work with youths — through Bible camps and outreach efforts — has resulted in a new church.

Andrej and Nina Lovse traveled to



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The Lovse family



PHOTO PROVIDED

Graduates from across India prepare for ministry

In Chennai, India, graduates of the World Bible College listen to prayers and speeches during a ceremony honoring their accomplishments. The graduation was part of an annual preachers’ meeting that drew more than 1,000 church members from across India, said minister Paul Renganathan. Forty-three men graduated from the college’s ministry training program.

Zagreb, Croatia, recently to give an update on their work at the Biblijski Institut, the church-supported school where they trained. Other leaders of the church-planting effort also visited the institute.

“We were blessed to see how they do their work with persistence, discipline, passion and faithfulness,” the institute’s administrators said in a recent newsletter.

ZAMBIA

CHIPATA — An effort to reach lost souls in the eastern swath of this African nation has resulted in more than 1,600

baptisms and 100 church plants in the past five years, said Larry Taylor, an elder of the Baker Heights Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas.



Mwanza

Zambian minister Wellington Mwanza oversees the work, which is funded by the Baker Heights church.

SPOTLIGHT**Living the Thai life**

CHIANG MAI, Thailand — David Allen has mixed feelings about the long-term value of short-term missions.

“But this may have been my most meaningful experience with a short-term mission team in all my years on the field,” he said, describing a visit by 20 students and six adults from Fort Worth Christian High School in North Richland Hills, Texas.

The reason, Allen said, was “that this group of students grew closer to the Lord and served in impressive ways during their short time here.”

The students learned about Thai life as they pulled weeds and harvested red peppers in a child in a Thailand slum. Thai Christian’s orchard. They joined 11 Thai high school students and cleaned out an illegal trash dump. They played with children in slums, planted coffee alongside members of a ministry that serves opium addicts and helped lay the foundation for a new church building.

“These kids can do great things. We were witnesses,” said Brian Miller, the school’s principal and a coordinator for the trip. “We cannot underestimate the power of a high school student with Jesus. A powerful combo.”



PHOTOS BY DAVID ALLEN

Luke Kulp plays with a child in a Thailand slum.



The mission team works side by side with Thais to set a church building’s foundation.



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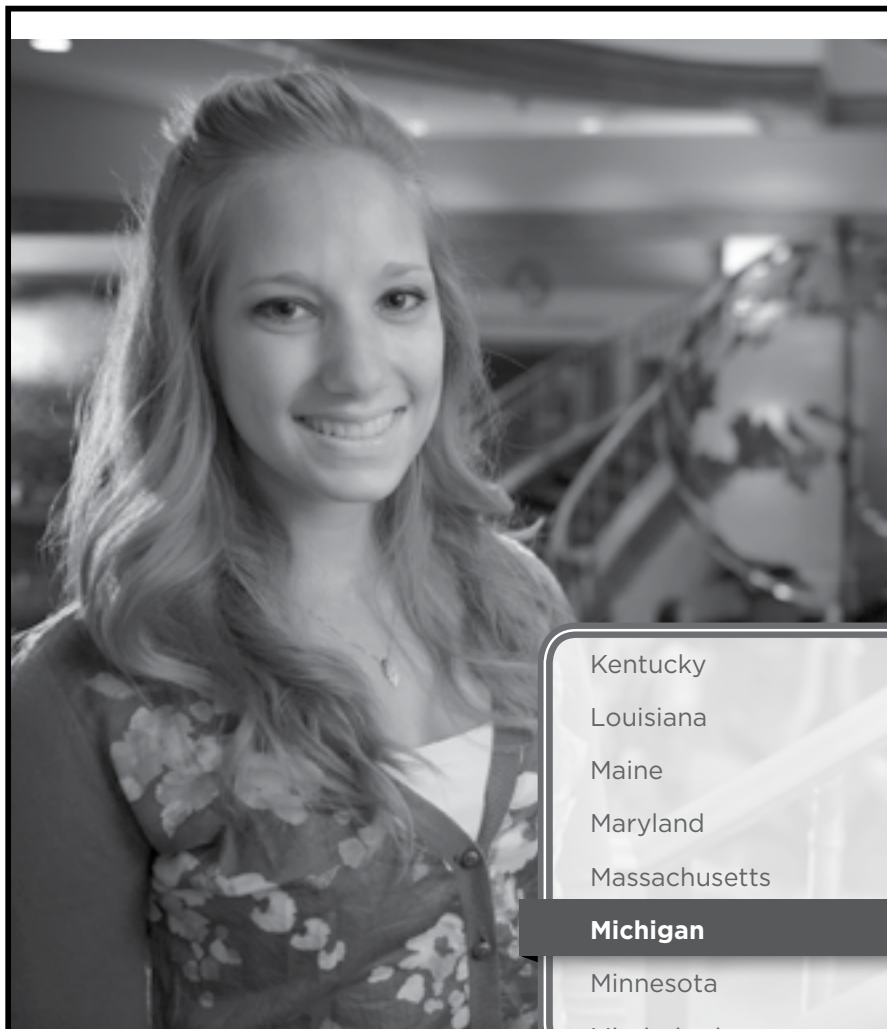
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Indigenous church asks Church of Christ to help replace its slain pastor

ZAPALLO GRANDE, Ecuador — Church members who visited this village on the Cayapas River said they were stunned when a group from an evangelical church asked them to help replace their pastor.

The group's former pastor had served the small church for 35 years before he was killed during a robbery.

The evangelical church, comprised of Chachi Indians, usually is suspicious of outsiders. The group approached the Church of Christ members because of their reputation for helping people through medical campaigns.

The church members operate the Kumanii Christian Center, a base for jungle ministry overseen by the Quito School of Biblical Studies in Ecuador's capital.

The evangelicals asked the Church of Christ members to speak at an all-night vigil and comfort them as they mourned the loss of their pastor. They also asked for assistance in designing an educational curriculum for their church, from children to adults.

The evangelicals wanted "more than our assistance," missionary Kent Marcum said. "They actually asked to come into a covenant relationship with



PHOTO PROVIDED

Laura and Rusty Campbell, with their three children, will minister in Ecuador.

us. ... I have heard of — and witnessed — open doors before, but this one has impacted our lives, and we stand in awe of God's power and confidence in us to reach this community and others up and down the Cayapas River. Please be in prayer as we respond to this."

Workers in Ecuador also requested prayers and additional funds for Rusty and Laura Campbell, who are moving to Ecuador in April to work with the Kumanii Christian Center. The Hillsboro Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn., sponsors the Campbells.

WEBSITE: rustyandlaura.blogspot.com

Africans encouraged to be 'just Christians'

BANKO, Guinea — This small town in West Africa has about 5,000 people — and eight mosques.

Tall minarets rise among the small houses and round huts of the town, which has never had a church of any kind, said Barry Baggott, a former missionary to the neighboring country of Ivory Coast. About 85 percent of Guinea's 10.8 million souls claim Islam as their faith, according to "The World Factbook" compiled by the CIA.

Baggott oversees French World Outreach, a Nashville, Tenn.-based ministry that produces French gospel literature. He traveled to Guinea to meet with Churches of Christ there. While serving in Ivory Coast, Baggott worked with a school of preaching and made visits to Guinea.

A graduate of the school, Etienne Saa, preaches for a Church of Christ in the city of Dabola, Guinea. He took Baggott to the town of Banko and introduced

him to a small group of non-Muslims. Together, they studied the Bible.

"They are primary school teachers and other civil servants who are not originally from Banko," Baggott said. "Some are Catholics. Some are Pentecostals. Some are Protestants."

Surrounded by Muslims, the group put aside religious differences to "present a unified front in order to get concessions from local authorities — concessions such as the right to meet somewhere for worship," Baggott said.

"Etienne ... encouraged them to base their unity on following the Bible alone and being just Christians," Baggott said. "He and other brothers returned to Banko after my visit there. Fifteen people put on Christ in baptism, including the leaders with whom I studied and their wives." The group now refers to itself as "a church of Christ," he added.

WEBSITE: frenchworldoutreach.org

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"Not Ashamed to Suffer"
Saturday - 1:30 PM

Dr. Scott McDowell
"Not Ashamed of Jesus"
Friday 1:30 PM



Dr. Bruce McLarry
"Not Ashamed of Our Hope"
Saturday - 8:00 PM

Dr. David Young
"Not Ashamed to Live Out Loud"
Friday - 8:00 PM



Dr. Jerry Rushford
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MEXICO: For some groups, faith prevails over fear



Mexican members and American visitors leave the Church of Christ in Aquiles after a Sunday morning worship assembly.



Children from the Edmond Church of Christ in Oklahoma greet the men of Aquiles, Mexico, before distributing care packages filled with food, Bibles and other items, including T-shirts.



Bethany Gibbs, right, carries a care package to a woman's house in the village of La Union, Mexico. Gibbs raised money to include a Bible in each box distributed by a mission team from her home congregation in Oklahoma.



Before starting their daily work projects, the mission team from Edmond, Okla., sings and prays around a campfire in Aquiles, Mexico.

FROM PAGE 1

The violence, which includes kidnappings, carjackings and innocent bystanders caught in the crossfire, has caused many Churches of Christ in the U.S. to rethink Mexico missions.

"It has devastated mission work in Mexico," said Rick Owens, a member of the Las Cruces Church of Christ in New Mexico.

Starting in 1988, Owens organized thousands of American volunteers and helped build more than 150 churches throughout Mexico. But after 22 years, the former Alaska oilfield worker — dubbed a "Mexican at heart" — deemed the safety risk too high in 2010.

For a decade, the King of Prussia Church of Christ in Pennsylvania sent a mission team to Mexico each summer.

But two years ago, the congregation began traveling to Honduras instead.

"I cried like a baby," member Jason Pearl said of halting the Mexico trips. "I'm dying to see how the congregation we worked on is doing. We still support them monthly. (But)

in some ways, I feel like we've abandoned them."

Sandy Holcomb, a missionary with her husband, Doug, in Cuernavaca, Mexico, south of Mexico City, said the couple used to receive many requests from churches wanting to send mission groups.

"But now, because of the reports of violence, we've had very few requests," she said.

Although she and her husband do not feel threatened, Holcomb said, many church members live in constant fear.

"But then fear could have driven some people to seek the



Spanish-language Bibles rest at the top of care packages.

Lord," she added.

At a time of darkness, Mexicans seek light and peace, said Tim Rush, a missionary with his wife, Kim, in Guadalajara, Mexico.

"The effect of the drug war," Rush said, "is that it places us in a context where people are looking for what we're offering."

Mexico's drug-related violence has failed to deter every church group.

The Mayfair Church of Christ in Oklahoma City canceled a single trip — in 2008 — to an orphanage in Anahuac, Mexico.

But every spring since, the congregation has returned.

"I work diligently to make certain I have done everything within my power to make the trip as safe as possible," said Gina Clay, the Mayfair church's minister to children and families.

"My motto is 'Let go and let God,'" she said. "There are no guarantees for any of us ... but I feel good about where we are going and what we are doing."

Volunteers with the Vancouver Church of Christ in Washington travel each sum-

mer to El Zorrillo, Mexico, near Ensenada, to build houses.

"Each year, the State Department issues its usual warnings ... and I get lots of calls and e-mails from concerned parents," church secretary Bonnie Miller said. "I reassure them that we are off the beaten path, away from the resort towns and drug wars, and have never had any reason to be concerned for our safety, although we certainly are vigilant and use precaution."

But Owens, who still builds churches using hired laborers and local members, characterizes Mexico as unstable with "no rule of law as we know it."

"Any American who would consider taking a youth group or a college group to Mexico is, in my opinion, ill informed," he said.

'I AM SCARED ABOUT IT'

Bethany Gibbs intended to distribute the Bibles in dusty villages where donkey brays break the silence of night. For a year, though, the sacred texts sat in her family's Oklahoma home.

Gibbs raised money to buy the

Bibles — along with school supplies — as part of a Girl Scout Gold Award service project.

Even as the 18-year-old left home to attend Harding University in Searcy, Ark., she prayed to return to Aquiles.

"It's the relationships that you build," Gibbs said of why she wanted to return. "You kind of leave a piece of yourself down here."

This spring, God granted Gibbs' request.

After a year away, the Edmond church decided to return to the remote mountains of northern Mexico. The green light came after a small group of church leaders made the 2,500-mile round trip and found the travel conditions suitable.

"The roads actually seemed a lot safer ... and no major incident happened on our path," minister Kent Risley said.

Bethany's parents, Steve and Deborah Gibbs, and sisters, Courtney, 15, and Audrey, 11, came with her on the trip.

"I am scared about it," Steve Gibbs said before crossing the border. "But there's a bigger reason for us to go."

'THE LORD TAKES CARE OF US'

For 20-plus years, the Edmond church has traveled to the Sierra Madre mountains in the state of Tamaulipas.

Three decades ago, when Mexican minister Humberto Hernandez first visited Aquiles, he stopped his pickup at the edge of the woods and rode a burro two hours to get here.

Hernandez found a primitive society where people lived side by side with pigs, cows and chickens. Infections, head sores and disease prevailed.

He brought the Gospel — and an improved standard of living.

"Somebody nicknamed him the apostle Paul of this area," Risley said of Hernandez, "because of the way he helped plant the church, and he goes back and nurtures it."

Deep in the mountains, the Christians riding in a caravan of white rental vans wave goodbye to paved roads — not to mention cell phone signals and flush toilets. But what Aquiles and nearby villages lack in modern convenience, they make up for in natural beauty and the sense that God must be here.

The church members from across the border can't miss the canyon-size green valleys, the thick clouds that hover over peaks like melted marshmallows or the beaming brown faces of men, women and children thankful for the smallest blessing, be it a tin roof or a water line.

The short-term missionaries — many of them Oklahoma Christian University students — renew their spirits in a place where spiritual brothers and sisters speak a different language but worship the same God.

The visitors prepare giant batches of beef brisket and open supersize cans of beans and jalapenos as they feed entire villages. They invite children to make Bible crafts, paint Jesus-themed T-shirts and enjoy red Kool-Aid at Vacation Bible Schools. They pour concrete floors, kick soccer balls and trade a zillion smiles.

In past years, the number going on the trip has topped 200.

This year, about 90 signed up for the opportunity to sleep in tents, use outhouses and praise God around a campfire under

brightly shining stars.

"Each of us probably had several people who were concerned and talked to us," elder Mark Coleman said of the safety concerns. "My answer was, 'I'm going, and I'm taking my wife and two of my grandchildren.' I'm a strong believer that the Lord takes care of us."

Mexican immigrant Felix Martinez, minister for the Spanish-speaking Southeast Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, came for the 14th time.

Martinez preached a gospel meeting, led singing at a VBS and studied the Bible with a



A Mexican girl shows off a photo of herself and Emilee Holley taken during a previous mission trip.

bean and corn farmer named Juan Castillo, who accepted Christ in baptism.

"Brothers in my congregation give me advice and say, 'No, don't make the trip because the situation in Mexico is very dangerous,'" Martinez said. "I say, 'No, I want to go.' ... I'm glad my God provides for everything, and everything goes well."

Matias Guzman, a local church leader, said residents were disappointed when the group could not come last year.

This year, his wife, Rosa Guzman, stayed up late before the group arrived and prayed for safe passage. Seeing Martinez and Edmond deacon James Lauderdale, she burst into tears.

"She started to cry because she felt very happy to see Felix, to see James," Matias Guzman said through a translator.

Deborah Gibbs said her daughters benefited from seeing how people with so little can live so contentedly.

The Oklahomans made tortillas in a family's small concrete home, which had a fire pit, a tiny sink and four mismatched chairs. A curtain separated the

kitchen from a room where five people slept.

"We have more stuff in our tent right here than those people have in their whole house," Audrey Gibbs told her mother.

The mission team assembled more than 300 care packages filled with rice, beans, flour, corn meal, pasta, salt, sugar and other groceries. Placed tenderly at the top of each box was a Bible with a card from Bethany Gibbs and a reference to Psalm 119:105: *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."*

"To give a spiritual word as well as physical bread, that's pretty neat," Risley said. "People are hungry for the Word. Not everybody here has multiple Bibles, but now they have at least one."

Bethany Gibbs smiled as she carried a lady's 30-pound care package — with a Bible inside — up a rocky road.

"That woman told me I was strong," Gibbs said with a chuckle, walking back down the hill. "It's been a lot of hard work, but it's definitely exciting to finally finish the whole project and to distribute everything."

AFGHANISTAN: Despite dangers, ‘many good things happen here daily’



Women in rural Afghanistan display the hand-crank sewing machines and materials they received through a program supported by the Lamia Afghan Foundation. Checker Distributors, a U.S. fabric company, has donated thousands of pounds of fabric and thread for the program.

FROM PAGE 1
living — and freezing — in the camps. The couple also visited schools helped by the Lamia Afghan Foundation, a nonprofit they launched four years ago. Two weeks before the trip — the same morning the Bradleys submitted their visa applications to Afghanistan’s embassy in Washington — news broke about the burning of two Qurans at Bagram Air Base near Kabul. U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta apologized for what he called the improper disposal of Islamic religious material, confiscated from a prison at the air base. Protests and deaths followed. Afghans and U.S. soldiers were among the victims. The Bradleys watched the news and prayed. Then they packed. And went. “Most people question our sanity when they learn we travel here,” John Bradley said. “Actually, at first I could not imagine taking my wife to a war-torn country.” Nor could the retired U.S. Air Force lieutenant general imagine himself making regular trips — unarmed and compelled by God’s love — to Afghanistan, all “because a small, 9-year-old girl begged me for some boots.”

WARM SHOES AND A MISSION
Her name was Lamia, a feisty girl who asked John Bradley for the footwear he

and his fellow servicemen were sporting as they distributed relief in her village. Winter was coming, and all she had was a pair of sandals. Though Afghanistan’s arid plains can reach temperatures of 115 degrees Fahrenheit during the summer, its mountainous terrain can fall to minus-15 degrees in winter months. Kabul — and its refugee camps — sit at an elevation of more than 6,000 feet, higher than Denver. Lamia’s request eventually got her a warm pair of shoes. It also gave the Bradleys a mission. The foundation bearing the girl’s name has airlifted hundreds of thousands of pounds of medical supplies, soybeans, rice, hygiene products and baby formula to her home country. The foundation works with a host of nonprofits and church-supported



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY JOHN BRADLEY
Students line up for the first day of classes at The Lamia School at Lakan Khel.



John and Jan Bradley visit children in a refugee camp near Kabul, Afghanistan. The Lamia Afghan Foundation provided humanitarian aid and school supplies for the children, who go to school in a large tent.

ministries, including Healing Hands International and Eternal Threads. The Bradleys’ daughter, Leigh Ann Bradley, said her parents’ trips to Afghanistan make her nervous. But she knows it “truly is where they want to be.” “Honestly, I have the most amazing parents in the world,” said Leigh Ann Bradley, who works in public relations in Alexandria, Va. “They both have true servant hearts, and I’m so lucky that God gave me to them. “My parents believe everyone deserves a fighting chance.”

LIVING THROUGH WAR AND WINTER
More than a decade of fighting between NATO and Afghanistan’s former rulers, the Taliban, has forced thousands of refugees into camps near Kabul. Without heat, winters are a challenge every year. This winter was worse than most. The Lamia foundation diverted supplies bound for other areas of the country to the Kabul camps. The foundation raised more than \$20,000 after a *New York Times* reporter mentioned the Bradleys in a story about the deaths. The foundation’s representative in Kabul talked to village elders in the camps. They asked for coal and flour for the coming months. Meanwhile, the Bradleys collected more cold-weather

clothing to help the Afghans survive the winter — and, hopefully, winters to come.

CAUTION AND PATIENCE
The freezing temperatures began to warm as the Bradleys arrived in Kabul for a month-long visit. Tempers, however, were running hot, due to the Quran burnings. The couple heeds the advice of their Afghan coworkers and avoids troubled spots, including the site of protests near the air base. “We have learned a lot about what to do and what not to do,” Jan Bradley said. It’s her sixth visit to Afghanistan and her husband’s 11th. Thus far, they have worked without incident — even on March 11, when a U.S. soldier allegedly walked off his base and gunned down Afghan civilians. U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Robert Bales is charged with 17 counts of premeditated murder for the attack. There was “very little reaction across the country to the shootings,” John Bradley said. “You have to be careful, to be sure,” he added. “But the only thing most Americans see in the news is the very bad things that go on here. They are not exposed to the many good things that happen daily.” Across Afghanistan, infant mortality and maternal death rates are dropping,



Children wait for classes to begin at the Amir Dost Mohammed Khan School in Kabul, which Lamia helped renovate. Students received backpacks with school supplies provided by Sheri Gray’s fifth-grade missions class at the Monterey Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas.

he said. Women are working in greater numbers, opening their own businesses and going to college. “The culture is different here,” Jan Bradley said. “You have to sit down and talk and talk and have chai (tea) over and over again, develop trust and relationships, before any work can be done. Patience is not a virtue many Americans possess, but the Afghans possess patience in volumes.”

SERVING IN A DESPERATE PLACE
That patience is paying dividends, she added. Recently, the couple attended the first day of classes at The Lamia School in Lakan Khel. The foundation paid for the school’s construction, thanks to donations from Church of Christ members. The Bradleys also watched as hundreds of excited children streamed into a newly renovated school in Kabul. The Lamia foundation paid for the renovation with grants from two foundations in Decatur, Ala. Small donations also make a difference, the couple said. Audrey Hall, an 8-year-old in Salt Lake City, sent \$3.52 and some handmade scarves after she saw the *New York Times* story. The Bradleys used the money to



Khalida, who lives in a refugee camp, received new shoes.

buy shoes and socks for Khalida, a girl who lives in at tent in one of the camps. “We think this is the most desperate place on earth,” John Bradley said. He and his wife pray that the Afghan people “will remember that someone reached out to them with very simple actions, like putting a knit cap on their heads, handing them a cute, homemade wooden toy, rubbing lotion on very rough hands.” Insurgents — and the people who kill when books burn — are a minority in Afghanistan, Jan Bradley said. Most of the people she encounters express sincere thanks. They feel that, after the U.S. helped them drive away the Soviets in 1988, they were abandoned by the West, allowing the Taliban to rise. When U.S. forces leave in 2014, “life for our people will be worse than ever,” a village elder told the couple recently. “America cannot leave us again.” “My heart broke for him, and I wanted to cry,” Jan Bradley said. “These people have been left behind before. I think God would not want us to leave them behind again.”

WEBSITE: www.lamia-afghanfoundation.org



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...and that rock was Christ. I Corinthians 10:4

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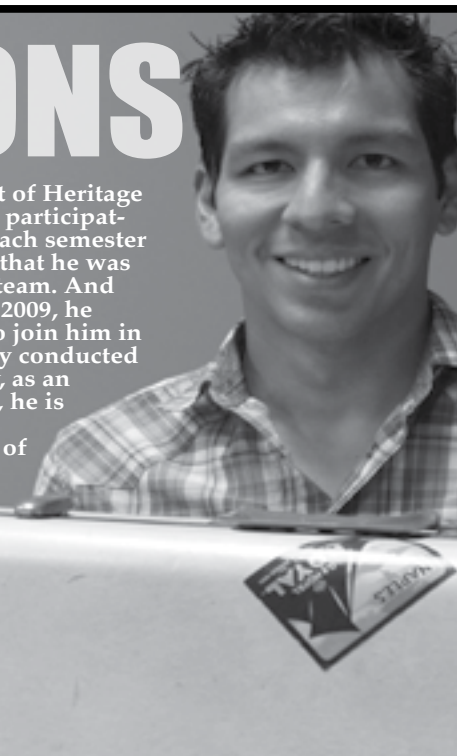
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Securing young hearts in Iowa

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Farmland near Marshalltown, Iowa, a community of 27,000 people in the center of the state.

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

MARSHALLTOWN, Iowa

As early as age 4, little guys at the Church of Christ in Marshalltown practice standing in front of the congregation.

While teens and adult men preside over the Lord's Supper, the young boys carry communion tray lids to the back of the auditorium.

"From the time they're basically old enough to get from the front to the back, they're right up there helping out," said Darlene Battles, wife of elder Bret Battles and mother of Matthew, 15, and Annie, 13.

The 70-member church believes strongly in involving young people in God's work — from planning youth rallies to serving as official greeters at assemblies.

Nick Lacina, 20, started leading singing in the fourth grade. As he recalls, he was too young for the experience to rattle him. "I was just really happy," he said. "I loved to sing."

An emphasis on youth and families characterizes this central Iowa church, which traces its roots back 110 years in this manufacturing and farming community of 27,000 people.

"They're real family-oriented," said Larry Stock, a member and former elder of the Central Church of Christ in Cedar Rapids, Iowa,

whose wife, May, grew up in the Marshalltown church.

"They are a tight, close-knit group that really supports one another and goes the extra mile."

For 30-plus years, the Marshalltown church has sponsored a weekend youth rally in the fall — organized by the teens themselves. Boys from all over Iowa sleep at the church. Girls stay in members' homes.

For the last youth rally, the teens settled on the theme "There's God for that" — a twist on the Apple Inc. slogan "There's an app for that."

"We just did what we thought applies to our lives today," said Katie Bjelland, 17, suggesting the teens appreciate the youth rally more because of their direct involvement.

"Because we plan it, it has a different feel, a different energy," Lacina agreed. "It just feels more youth-centered."

The congregation, about 50 miles northeast of Des Moines, is one of a few churches in this Midwestern state with a thriving youth group.

"For our size, I think we're blessed with a very growing group of young couples and everything from infants to teenagers," elder Jerry Lease said. "I've visited some congregations where, if there were 25 people there, that was stretching it, and probably all of them were in retirement."

The Marshalltown church has done a better job than most of keeping young people in the fold, said Dale Burleson,



APRIL KEARNS

Members help residents carry sacks to their cars during an annual community giveaway.

CONTINUED



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Church of Christ in Marshalltown

LOCATION: Central Iowa, about 50 miles northeast of Des Moines.
SUNDAY ATTENDANCE: 70
ELDERS: Bret Battles, Ray Bjelland, Kyle Lacina, Jerry Lease and Gary Sleege.
MINISTER: Paul Prescott, who has served a total of 24 years in two separate stints with the congregation.
MISSIONARY: Ed Crookshank in Africa.
OUTREACH EFFORTS: Annual community giveaway and “Trunk-n-Treat” event.
EVENTS: Fall youth rally, Midwest Bible Camp, Heart of America Leadership Training for Christ (LTC) and “Pray Over Iowa.”

ABOUT THE SERIES
The Christian Chronicle launched Churches That Work in 2005. The staff consulted the Faith Communities Today (FaCT) study, an examination of the character and vitality of religious congregations in the United States. Churches That Work should be: **evangelistic**, reaching the unchurched at home or abroad; **biblical**, making Bible instruction central to their mission; **united**, possessing a spirit of internal vitality; and **visible**, known and appreciated for service in their community. Read the complete series online at www.christianchronicle.org.



Securing young hearts



APRIL KEARNS

Darlene Battles, wife of elder Bret Battles and mother of teens Matthew and Annie, fills cups with popcorn for “shoppers” at the church’s annual community giveaway.



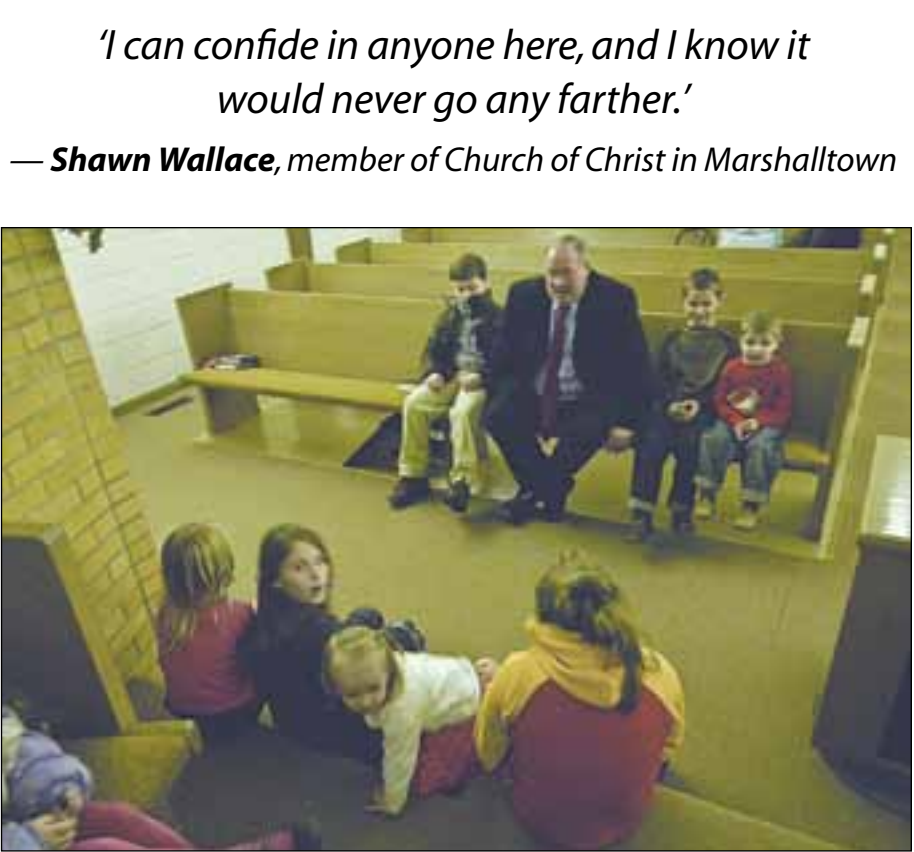
BOBBY ROSS JR.

For Dorothy Sleege, with husband Gary, quiltmaking is a hobby and a ministry.



BOBBY ROSS JR.

With the words of Romans 12:1 painted on the wall behind them, young people pause to pray during a Sunday morning Bible class at the Iowa church. The teens participate in Midwest Bible Camp and Leadership Training for Christ and organize an annual youth rally.



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Marshalltown minister Paul Prescott, seated on the front row, leads a special time of singing and prayer for children before the Sunday morning worship assembly.

CONTINUED
president of the board for Midwest Bible Camp near Brighton, Iowa.
“As you look at different congregations, you look to see how well the kids remain faithful as they grow into adults,” said Burleson, minister for the Avenue of the Saints Church of Christ in Clear Lake, Iowa. “That congregation has done very well in that area.
“I think that’s a part of their emphasis on making sure their kids are growing,” he added. “I can’t think of very many cases where kids from that area have fallen away.”
As church business cards declare, the congregation sees itself as a place “where strangers become friends and friends become family.”
That’s not just a motto, said

Marshalltown teens.
Curt Roseland, 14, said he had no idea who the elders were at his previous church. “But here, I introduce our elders as ‘Papa Ray’ or an elder’s wife as ‘Grandma Judy’ to all my friends,” Roseland said, referring to elder Ray Bjelland and Judy Lease, Jerry’s wife. “We all sit there and talk after church. It really does feel like a family.
“Throughout the week, whenever I’m faced with temptations or trials, I feel like I’m accountable to my family here,” he added. “I also feel like I have them to talk to. I could go to anybody here in the church.”
Curt’s sister, Lori Roseland, 17, said: “Sometimes we kids will sit and talk to each other, but a lot of times you’ll look around and see a group of, you know,

an elder, a middle-aged person and then a kid. So everybody’s friends with everybody; we don’t have cliques.”
The church sponsors an annual community giveaway where residents receive free clothing, shoes, furniture and other household goods. At a yearly “Trunk-n-Treat” event, members distribute Halloween candy to children.
Shawn Wallace, 37, said a neighbor invited her to the church a few years ago. Wallace, who had problems with drugs and alcohol, said she found a welcoming environment, studied the Bible and was baptized.
“I can confide in anyone here, and I know it would never go any farther,” she said.
The camaraderie extends to an annual Bible Bowl between the

congregation’s younger and older members — conducted in preparation for the Heart of America Leadership Training for Christ (LTC) event in Kansas City, Mo.
Asked who typically wins the Bible Bowl, elder Gary Sleege said, “It kind of bounces back and forth.”
On the Old Testament, the adults tend to do better, he said. But the teens excel on the New Testament and claimed victory last year.
“Just by a couple of points!” Sleege’s wife, Dorothy, said with a chuckle. Besides matching wits on the Bible, she works with the girls on LTC sewing projects.
Last year, a contingent of 33 people from the Marshalltown church — about half those present on a typical

Sunday — made the four-hour drive to Kansas City.
“Not only does it help our kids in leadership, but it does so much to help us grow as a congregation,” Darlene Battles said of LTC. “Our eldership — even those that don’t have kids — make that trip and serve as supportive role models.”
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.
“There is so much work to be done, so many special people and such a sense of brotherhood across the entire state due to our small numbers,” said Amy Prescott, a graduate of Harding University in Searcy, Ark., and the daughter of longtime Marshalltown preacher Paul Prescott.
The relatively small circle of church members in Iowa makes opportunities to connect with fellow Christians throughout the state all the more important, Paul Prescott said.
“Here, people hunger for Christian fellowship,” he said.
The Marshalltown church supports

endeavors such as “Pray Over Iowa,” an annual gathering that brings together the state’s congregations, and Midwest Bible Camp, which serves Christian young people from Iowa and three other states.
Nick Lacina began going to camp even before he started leading singing. For Lacina, Midwest Bible Camp means fun and games, “deep talks” with fellow Christians and late-night praise songs at campfire devotionals, he said.
“There’s no other place in this world that I can feel more spiritually high,” said Lacina, whose father, Kyle Lacina, one of the Marshalltown church’s five elders, was baptized at the camp as a young adult. “I don’t know if it’s that I’m just completely surrounded

by people that share the same faith or if it’s the everyday worship,” the son added, “but I always leave there feeling spiritually rejuvenated and ready to take on the world.”
His senior year of high school, Lacina was diagnosed with leukemia. He has undergone three years of treatment — with the church supporting him and his family with meals, cards, hugs and prayers.
Lots of prayers.
“It just showed us how much love we have through this church,” he said. “We know that we’ll always have friends and family here to love, and if anything like my situation would happen to anybody else in the church, I would jump on the chance to help them right away.”



Curt Roseland



Jennifer Dillon



Nick Lacina



Courtney Watts



Justus Bjelland



Austin Watts



Lori Roseland



Nick Wright



Nathan Lacina



Matthew Battles



Katie Bjelland



Nicole Lacina

Presidents to parents: Why Christian education matters

BY LYNN McMILLON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Are Christian parents today as dedicated to Christian education as their parents were?

Many who work in Christian education say no. They look at enrollment trends and conclude that parents today aren't as committed to sending their children to Christian schools as parents were in the past.

The *Christian Chronicle* asked the presidents of four universities associated with Churches of Christ to state the case for Christian education to parents. Two — David Burks of Harding University and Mike O'Neal of Oklahoma Christian University — will soon step down from their roles as president after long careers in Christian education.

Two more, Phil Schubert of Abilene Christian University and Joe Wiley of Freed-Hardeman University, began their tenures as president within the past five years.

Following are their responses to this question: **"What do parents need to know about the importance of Christian higher education?"**

David Burks: If I had to boil down my answer, I would simply take each of those three words and focus on them one at a time.

Very appropriately, the first term is *Christian*. For the Christian parent, nothing in this world is more important than doing all we can to pass faith on to our children. At a Christian university, the teachers are disciples of Jesus who are constantly challenged to teach every subject from a distinctly Christian world view.

While the norm in higher education is to remove God from the classroom before any discussion even begins, our professors



David Burks, president of Harding University in Searcy, Ark., since 1987.

teach every discipline based on the assumptions that God is, that Jesus is the divine Son of God, and that the Bible is the inspired and authoritative revelation of God.

The second term, *higher*, reminds us that we are an academic institution of higher learning. In this, a Christian University doesn't have to take a back seat to any other sort of school, public or private.

Our graduation speaker in December attended Harding back in the 1970s and went on to graduate with an MBA from Harvard School of Business. He assured our graduates that they "have the goods" to compete anywhere with anyone. This is the consistent feedback we receive from our former students. Whether it is in the work world, medical school, law school, or the most highly regarded Ph.D. programs in the world, our graduates tell us that they were at least as well prepared, and often better prepared, than their classmates who graduated



Joe Wiley, president of Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn., since 2008.

from much larger and much more expensive universities. Finally, the term *education* indicates that something is

learned. The critical four years from 18 to 21 often set the course for the rest of a person's life. Will they receive an education in worldliness or godliness, an education in self-absorption or service, an education in godless secularism or in faith-affirming theism?

Simply stated, Christian universities continue to deliver higher education in an academically superlative, thoroughly Christian way.

Joe Wiley: I speak not just as a man who serves in a leadership role at a Christian university, but also as a father and as someone who has also served in public higher education.

In a world where moral ambiguity is celebrated and lines of truth are often blurred, students at a Christian university learn that the Bible teaches absolute truths. Each student is provided with a space to question and be challenged.



Phil Schubert, president of Abilene Christian University in Texas since 2010.

We all, at some point, question the "truth of our fathers."

At a school such as Freed-Hardeman, this question is asked and explored within the context of biblical truth, in an environment of Christian people. All of our professors, staff and adjunct teachers are members of the church of Christ. Eighty-five percent of our students are members of the church.

Because this world is often difficult to navigate, Christian education provides rigorous academic programs taught from a biblical perspective. Each academic discipline has a basis of study in God's Word. For example, FHU teaches a class in personal finance. The professor, who has a Ph.D. in finance, teaches the class and uses biblical teaching regarding stewardship to guide his instruction.

The benefit of a Christian education reaches far beyond the individual student. The product we provide is a highly educated, well-rounded graduate, steeped in the knowledge of God's word.



Mike O'Neal, president of Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City since 2002.

Our graduates are equipped to be leaders in the workplace, at home and in the church.

Because they live, learn and grow in a climate of Christians, our graduates become people of service and fellowship. More importantly, they become people of faith. Because of the constant exposure to faithful, Christ-like examples in the classroom and in the dorm room, Christian college graduates simply out-perform their counterparts from public, non-Christian institutions.

A Christian college or university is not just a place of learning; it is an investment in the future of your child, the church and in the world. Can you think of a greater investment?

Joe Wiley

Phil Schubert: A quality college degree is a must-have in today's fast-moving world and ultra-competitive job market. Employers and graduate schools

think highly of students with a degree from a Christian university such as ACU. They trust us for the way our graduates are prepared academically, for their technical and team-building skills, and for their values and trustworthiness.

Today's employers seek students with innovative minds. We take that seriously at ACU, which has fueled our focus on mobile learning as we re-imagine the 21st-century classroom. Christian colleges and universities provide unprecedented personal mentoring and have generous scholarship programs and a career-minded campus culture to help students choose a major, land a great job or earn a valuable spot in graduate school.

Many of today's most effective elders, deacons, ministers and other church leaders attended Christian colleges and universities. Our campuses are ideal places for young people to learn about leadership, develop servant hearts, make friends with other Christians their age, travel the world to experience other cultures and be mentored by professors who inspire them to lives of purpose in which God is honored and involvement in a local congregation is a priority.

A quality college education is not inexpensive, but one of the biggest factors contributing to the cost is the time it takes a student to earn a degree. For various reasons, many students are taking five and six years to graduate.

The truth is that any delay — changing majors, changing schools, not being able to get the classes they need to graduate on time — can increase the cost of a student's education and give their peers an advantage in the job market or competition for graduate school. ACU now offers an annual block tuition program in which a student can take up to 36 credit hours each year for one price (including summer, online and study abroad), and graduate in four years or less. The potential savings can be dramatic.

Mike O'Neal: I ask parents to consider the following as they evaluate the educational options for their children.

A "Christian" university is not just a safe environment in which one learns

skills for a vocation. The basic premise of Christian higher education (CHE) is this — "God is and He is the creator." This is an ontological claim — a worldview — of enormous significance. Unfortunately, that worldview is no longer found in most of higher education.

The Biblical worldview provides no excuse for academic mediocrity — to the contrary, it calls us to excellence in everything because we are handling His gifts and His learning for His purposes. There is abundant evidence that graduates of CHE are extremely well-prepared to compete in all walks of life.

In CHE there is freedom to ask the great questions of life, probe for deeper meaning, and adopt the values that will guide our lives at a crucial formative time of life under the mentoring of caring Christian faculty and staff.

The universities of past generations are not the universities of today, and many seek to make faith irrelevant and encourage social morays antithetical to God's will. Recent studies confirm that we lose 55 to 65 percent of youth who attend secular universities, but only 10 to 15 percent who attend CHE. Studies also confirm that diligent students who attend CHE are much more likely to graduate in four years — dramatically decreasing the financial cost of

college. The massive financial aid offered at CHE greatly narrows the cost gap with state-supported institutions.

Our children are the most important treasure God has entrusted to us. Helping our children serve God faithfully

is the highest duty of parental stewardship, trumping every other desire for our children. What good is it if our children gain the whole world, yet lose their own souls?

I encourage parents to read Proverbs 1 and 16 as they pray for wisdom in this critical matter. And finally, brothers, encourage our children to consider whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy — think about such things. (Philippians 4:8)

NEW GUIDEBOOKS provide advice for students, parents and staff at Christian colleges. University instructor Brian Simmons reviews four guidebooks on Page 33.

'Many of today's most effective elders, deacons, ministers and other church leaders attended Christian colleges.'

Phil Schubert

'Helping our children serve God faithfully is the highest duty of parental stewardship, trumping every other desire for our children.'

Mike O'Neal

Employment Opportunity for Fund-Raising Executive

Agape, a 45-year old, well established Christian child placement services and counseling ministry in Nashville, Tennessee, has an immediate opening for the position of

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The Director of Development candidate must have a working knowledge of all facets of development and marketing, a proven track record of successful fund-raising and relationship building, able to speak publicly and inspire support, possess good computer skills and be committed to AGAPE's mission.

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The WindSong Church of Christ (formerly the 6th and Izard Church) of Little Rock, Arkansas will be celebrating their one hundred year anniversary during the month of May. The festivities will include special Bible classes, song services, and times of fellowship. Each Sunday morning during the month, the following guest speakers will address the congregation on these topics:

May 06th - Dr. Howard Norton - "Looking Back" (Homecoming & Singing)

May 13th - John Gipson - "Mothers and Children"

May 20th - Dr. Bruce McLarty - "Our Youth"

May 27th - Larry Roberts - "Our Seniors"

Everyone is invited to come celebrate with us at #3 WindSong Drive, North Little Rock, AR 72113; www.windsongchurch.org



HAIRSTON: Friends laud minister’s ‘passion for God ... passion for people’

FROM PAGE 3
congratulations from Atlanta dignitaries and church leaders across the nation — testament to Hairston’s impact far beyond Simpson Street as preacher, attorney and judge.

HAND-ME-DOWNS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Hairston’s accomplishments contrast his beginnings.
Born near Winston-Salem, N.C., the 13th of 15 children, Hairston lost his father, a tenant farmer, at age 6. His single mom cleaned homes during the day to support the family. Hand-me-downs from the whites who employed Hairston’s mother provided clothing for the future minister and his siblings.
After high school, Hairston took a job driving an ice cream truck. When a sister living in Detroit encouraged him to attend historically black Southwestern Christian College, then persuaded her Sunday school class to provide a \$50 scholarship, Hairston took his ice cream earnings and began what would become a lifelong pursuit of education.

With most colleges and universities in Churches of Christ still refusing to admit black students, Hairston became part of a pioneering generation of students at Southwestern, which opened its Terrell, Texas, campus in 1950.
After completing a two-year degree, Hairston stayed for a bachelor’s in Bible, becoming one of Southwestern’s first four-year graduates.

“There hadn’t been a class that went to Southwestern the same as we were. We were kind of a unique group,” Hairston, now 79, said of those early graduates. “They are brotherhood leaders now.”

Before finishing at Southwestern, Hairston accepted an interim minister position in Fort Worth, where he met Jeanne, his wife of almost 60 years.

After graduating, moving to Waco, Texas, to preach and completing two additional bachelor’s degrees, Hairston decided to pursue graduate studies in theology.

Southwestern founder and key African-American church leader G.E. Steward suggested the young preacher enroll in Brite Seminary at the recently integrated Texas Christian University in Fort Worth.

Hairston’s decision to continue studying typified the passion for education that would shape his entire career.
“I ... hadn’t heard anything about



TED PARKS

Andrew Hairston sits among the pews at Simpson Street, where he has ministered for 50 years.

no seminary,” Hairston quipped as he recalled hearing Baptist preacher friends talk about graduate study. “That sounds interesting, I think I’m going to do that,” he thought. His salary was a modest \$50 a week. But he wanted to learn.

SAVING SOULS AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Hairston was studying at Brite and preaching in Fort Worth when he learned of the vacancy at Simpson Street.

He preached his first sermon as the new Simpson Street minister on Dec. 3, 1961.

The move to Atlanta came at a crucial time in the city’s — and the nation’s — history. As the U.S. struggled with race and war, Hairston would come into contact with some of the key organizations and figures of the civil rights movement.

Hairston recalled Atlanta meetings where he sat across the table from Martin Luther King Jr.

The Simpson Street minister was a leader in Operation Breadbasket, a program begun in Atlanta in 1962 by King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

With the program encouraging businesses to adopt fair hiring prac-

tices, Hairston was one of Operation Breadbasket’s “call men,” or local chairmen. “These are white-owned stores sitting in black communities with all-white employees,” Hairston remembered.

One of the beneficiaries of Hairston’s participation was a Simpson Street member who got a job as a Gulf Oil secretary as a result of Operation Breadbasket’s work.

“Gulf Oil did not have a black person in it who did not push a dust rag or mop,” recalled Hairston, who chaired a committee that targeted the Atlanta employer’s unequal policies.

“I never did a lot of preaching on civil rights as such,” Hairston said. “I would deal with the subject, and deal with righteousness, and get my folk involved in the action.”

He observed that pulpits of the time — both black and white — avoided advocacy of the movement.

“It’s kind of a Church of Christ ethos — that that’s beyond, that’s not what we’re here for. We’re here to baptize and save people,” Hairston explained.

“I moved to Atlanta because I was attracted to civil rights ... and cleared that with the leadership here before I came,” he said.

FROM THE PULPIT TO THE BENCH

About five years after moving to Georgia, Hairston enrolled in law school. At first he had no intention of practicing. Believing he could better serve the congregation if he had a knowledge of legal matters, the aim was “making myself a well-rounded-out gospel preacher,” he said.

After passing the bar and working in private practice, Hairston became assistant solicitor general in the state court of Fulton County, Ga.

Assigned to prosecute obscenity violations, one of his most famous cases involved notorious *Hustler* magazine publisher Larry Flynt, convicted by Fulton County State Court on 11 counts of obscenity in 1979.

By the time Hairston helped prosecute Flynt, he had been appointed Atlanta city solicitor by Maynard Jackson, Atlanta’s first African-American mayor. Then came an appointment to Atlanta City Court by Mayor Andrew Young. Hairston was elected as the court’s chief judge in 1982 — the first African-American to hold the office — and served in the office until 2005.

Hairston’s long tenure at Simpson Street included various avenues of leadership.

He was as a U.S. Army Reserve chaplain, retiring as full colonel after more than 20 years of service.

With Roosevelt Wells, minister of the Harlem Church of Christ in New York, Hairston co-founded the Wells-Hairston High School in Monrovia, Liberia. Hairston also served as assistant chairman, then chairman of the board of Southwestern. And he helped steer Simpson Street’s construction of a major new worship and educational facility, completed in 2008.

With Hairston’s five decades as Simpson Street minister, people who know him — inside the congregation and out — point to factors in his half-century of successful service.

Foye Hollingsworth, a Simpson Street elder since 1979 who met Hairston shortly before he started at the congregation, called attention to the minister’s generosity.

“He’s a giver,” Hollingsworth said,



ERIK TRYGGESTAD

The Wells-Hairston High School in the West African nation of Liberia was co-founded by U.S. ministers Andrew Hairston and Roosevelt Wells. Jack Evans, far right, visited the campus in 2005. Evans is president of Hairston’s alma mater, Southwestern Christian College in Texas. Next to Evans is Liberian minister Ofusu Bomeo. At left is Liberian evangelist Arthur David.

recalling that, to celebrate Hairston’s 35th anniversary at Simpson Street, members raised funds for a gift for Hairston.

“He gave it back to the building program,” the elder said.

GIVING SOMETHING ‘HE COULD NOT GIVE BACK’

Celebrating the minister’s 50th anniversary, the church decided to name its new multipurpose building the “Hairston Family Life Center.”

Hollingsworth explained, “This time we decided we were going to give him something that he could not give back.”

Theresa Morrell, whose mother was one of 166 people baptized when evangelist Keeble started Simpson Street, underscored Hairston’s lifelong interest in learning. Morrell herself directed Simpson Street’s educational program for more than 30 years.

“He ... continued going back to school,” she observed. “He was busy improving himself as he helped the church improve.”

Leaders in the black church point out that African-American congregations traditionally accord ministers special

respect and authority.

“A mainstay in the black community is the black preacher,” Hairston said, adding that the minister was often the only black professional the community knew.

Edward Robinson, Southwestern professor and author of a recent biography of Keeble, referred to the view of author W.E.B. Du Bois that attitudes toward preachers may reach all the way back to the role spiritual leaders played in pre-slavery African communities.

Despite the special position of the preacher in African-American tradition, Robinson stressed the importance of spiritual dedication.

“One must first be committed to God,” Robinson said of the successful minister. A minister must have “some people who are willing to be good followers ... and allow him to be himself,” the historian added.

Abilene Christian University Bible professor Jerry Taylor, who considers Hairston a mentor, sees the Simpson Street minister’s “passion for God and his passion for people” as keys to his long success.

“I think he exemplifies a brilliant mind,” Taylor said. “He’s probably one of the best-kept secrets in Churches of Christ, black and white.”



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Youth Ministry Position Available

The Northside Church of Christ in San Antonio is searching for a minister to lead our youth ministry far into the future. Northside is a Christ-centered, Spirit-led, grace-based, people-loving, forward-looking family of believers, consisting of approximately 750 members in attendance, including about 100 young people in Middle School and High School. Our church family is currently served by sixteen elders, five ministers and a host of servant-minded ministry leaders. The ideal candidate we're praying God will send our way would have a degree in Youth and Family ministry (or the equivalent in experience) and have a heart for cultivating relationships with young people and helping families navigate the challenges of our culture. Potential candidates should visit our website at www.nscoc.org to learn more about us. If interested, please send a resume, written philosophy of ministry, three references and a transcript to Dr. Johnnie Rosenauer, chair of the search committee, at jodaro@gvvc.com or call 210-275-8828. The deadline for inquiries is May 15.

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MARY HANEY

At an Alabama university, campus ministry serves up Acts of Random Kindness

Students involved with the campus ministry of the Jacksonville Church of Christ in Alabama are all smiles as they operate a “free hot chocolate” stand at Jacksonville State University. Whitney

Gaut, Iris Griffin and Logan Petty gave away about 70 cups of hot chocolate as part of the church’s ARK Project, member Matt Wallin said. ARK stands for Acts of Random Kindness.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

SUNNY GLEN CHILDREN’S HOME

SAN BENITO, Texas — Sunny Glen’s playground is and up running again thanks to students from the Yellow House — a Christian student center serving Stephen F. Austin State University as a ministry of the North Street Church of Christ in Nacadoches, Texas.

The campus ministry students spent spring break at the children’s home, teaching at a Vacation Bible School and working around campus, community relations director Kathy Kimball said.

“Then every evening we gathered for singing and devotional time,” Kimball said. “The last day we had water balloon fun and a surprise birthday for one of our girls who was turning 16. We are thankful to groups like the Yellow House, as they bring a little sunshine to our children.”

HIGHER EDUCATION

LUBBOCK CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

LUBBOCK, Texas — On a recent Saturday afternoon, Lubbock Christian University students donated more than 1,200 man hours of heavy lifting, sweeping, paint removal and cleaning assistance.

As part of LCU’s annual student-led community service event, Collide, more than 400 students came together to help transform several acres of cotton gins, warehouses and storage units into shelter facilities for at-risk children and the homeless.

“God is just blessing us,” a smiling Les Burrus, executive director of Link Ministries, told a mass of students circled around him in prayer.

“We’re just praying this will be hallowed ground,” Burrus said, as reported by the *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*. “It is incredible to get this place cleaned up and looking good.”

OHIO VALLEY UNIVERSITY

VIENNA, W.Va. — Frank Higginbotham, minister for the Virginia Avenue Church of Christ in Chester, W.Va., for 48 years, received the Christian Service Award from OVU on April 2.

Tom Butterfield, the Christian university’s director of church relations, lauded the faithfulness of Higginbotham and his wife, Rose.

Besides his local ministry, Higginbotham “has conducted hundreds of gospel meetings throughout our vast brotherhood and served in many other ways, including a daily radio program that has aired for decades,” Butterfield said.

SOUTHERN AFRICA BIBLE COLLEGE

BENONI, South Africa — Southern Africa Bible College has launched a three-year, \$3 million fundraising campaign.

The funds will provide student scholarships, faculty support, distance learning and academic improvements.

The preacher training school, east of Johannesburg, already has raised \$1 million toward the goal, director of development Kirk Eason said.

For more information, see www.southernafricabiblecollege.org.

K-12 CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

DAVID LIPSCOMB CAMPUS SCHOOL

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — David Lipscomb Campus School will become Lipscomb Academy effective June 1, Lipscomb University trustees announced.

With nearly 1,400 students, Lipscomb is the largest private K-12 school in the Nashville area and one of the few in the nation operated by a university.

“The name communicates a high level of academic instruction, the pursuit of knowledge and excellence by both faculty and students and affirms our commitment to do all this in the context of faith,” said David Scobey, chairman of Lipscomb University’s board of trustees.

SPOTLIGHT

Tolerance in Turkey

ISTANBUL — A group of students and faculty members from Rochester College in Michigan traveled to Turkey recently as guests of the Niagara Foundation, a Muslim organization that promotes peace and dialogue among people of different faiths.

“The trip was amazing,” communications professor Lora Hutson said. “The Turkish people were gracious hosts who opened their hearts and homes to us.”

Sites visited included the ancient Ephesus theater, which could seat up to 24,000 people.

Provost John Barton read aloud from Acts 19 as he reflected on the theater’s role in the Bible.



SCOTT LLOYD

Provost John Barton speaks in the Ephesus theater.



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Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

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). A master's degree is required; a terminal degree or ABD status is preferred. The successful candidate is expected to become an exceptional teacher who values mentoring and advising students, and is expected to engage in service and scholarly activity with interest in continued growth and enhancement of the department's participation in ACU's undergraduate research program. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/agenv.

Music

The Department of Music invites applications for the position of department chair beginning June 1, 2012. Applicants should have a doctorate in music (D.M.A. or Ph.D.) with demonstrated significant achievement in an academic or performance discipline that would qualify the applicant for appointment at the rank of associate professor or professor. An academic background in music history and/or music theory is preferred, as well as previous administrative experience. The chair oversees all operations of the department, including the management of budgets, supervising and assigning teaching and non-teaching responsibilities of faculty and staff, faculty and staff evaluations, curriculum and accreditation matters, and works with various campus offices (Admissions, Alumni Relations, Advancement) to advance departmental and university objectives. The chair will represent and be an advocate for the department within the university and to the greater public, as well as promote a focused vision for the department and its future. The position is divided equally between administrative and teaching duties. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/music.

Political Science

The Department of Political Science invites applications for a tenure-track position as assistant professor of political science beginning Fall 2012. Applicants should have a Ph.D. (or have completed the Ph.D. by August 2012). Those from all areas of the discipline are invited to apply, and the successful candidate must have a commitment to teaching in an undergraduate environment and demonstrated potential for professional development and/or research activities. Political science is a dynamic department with a strong pre-law program, Certificate in International

Relations and Comparative Politics, and a peace and social justice minor. It hosts the Jack Pope Fellows Program, oversees the university's criminal justice program and is actively engaged in ACU's new interdisciplinary Core courses. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/politicalscience.

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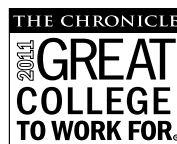
School of Social Work

The ACU School of Social Work invites applications for a tenure-track position as assistant/associate professor of social work beginning Fall 2012. Applicants should have an M.S.W. and an earned doctorate in social work or related field. A Ph.D. or related doctoral degree is preferred, but applicants who are ABD will be considered. Responsibilities include teaching social work courses at both the B.S.S.W. and M.S.S.W. levels, pursuing scholarly research, and performing service for the university, profession and community. Applicants should have experience in diverse areas of social work practice, be able to teach across the curriculum, and engage the broader community in which the school partners. Information about the school is available at acu.edu/socialwork.

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

ACU is affiliated with the fellowship of the Churches of Christ. All applicants must be professing Christians and be active, faithful members of a congregation of the Churches of Christ and deeply committed to service in Christian higher education. The mission of ACU is to educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world.

ACU does not unlawfully discriminate in employment opportunities.



110324-0512

NEWSMAKERS

NEW MINISTERS: Cory Collins, Keller, Texas, church. Scott Johnson, Crosspointe church, Franklin, Ohio, succeeding retiring minister Jim Kinser, who served for more than 30 years. Matt Moore, missions minister, Mayfair church, Huntsville, La.



Collins

NEW ELDERS: Mickey Cox, Danny Dulaney, Ray Henson and Larry Pruitt, Beebe, Ark., church. Shayne Howell, Fort Walton Beach, Fla., church.

ANNIVERSARIES: 76th: Charles and Lucile Nicks, Hayesville, N.C. 70th: Adair and Nancy Chapman, Dallas, Texas. 60th: Howard and Bettye Waldrup, Tyler, Texas. Forrest and Burma Brother, Hiawasse, Ga.

BIRTHDAYS: 91st: Sue Hardage, Altus, Okla. 90th: Marie Cline Hall, Whittier, Calif. Howard Waldrup, Tyler, Texas.

PASSAGES: Ella Beasley, 104, Feb. 20, member of the A&M church, College Station, Texas. Marion Eugene Gilmore, 90, Jan. 17, Smyrna, Tenn., longtime minister and member of the Highland Heights church in Smyrna. Willie Mae Cummings Hale, 99, March 6, Lindsay, Calif., worked and lived at Boles Children's Home in Quinlan, Texas, for 25 years. Marie Hall, 89, March 9, missionary in France, Vietnam and the U.S. and force behind World Christian Broadcasting.



Hall

Winston Jennings Hamby, 76, Feb. 25, Benton, Ark., one of the first youth ministers in Churches of Christ and former elder at the Westbury church in Houston. Juanita D. Leatherwood, 84, Aug. 27, 2011, member of the luka, Miss., church. Gary D. Patterson, 53, March 20, longtime member and songleader at the Harrah, Okla., church. Elizabeth Hobbie Wright Smith, 87, March 21, Montgomery, Ala., fundraiser and trustee of Faulkner University as well as community philanthropist and lobbyist. Samuel Solis, 79, March 12, Monterrey, Mexico, pioneering minister for Churches of Christ in Mexico. Irmal J. Wallen, 87, Dec. 17, 2011, member of the Southside church in Rogers, Ark., and Purple Heart recipient for injuries he received in World War II and the Battle of the Bulge.



Solis

April 15-18 12th Annual Bible Lectureship. Crowley's Ridge College, Paragould, Ark. "Psalms: The Songbook of Israel." Contact crc.edu.

April 20-21 RE:FUEL Memphis 2012 Harding Academy, Memphis, Tenn. Contact refuelmemphis.com.

April 22 Centennial Homecoming for the Everman Church of Christ. Everman, Texas. Contact (817) 478-5122 or leopittman@sbcglobal.net.

April 29 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Bear Valley Church of Christ. Bear Valley church, Denver. Contact kl.watson@hotmail.com.

May 6 WindSong Church of Christ Centennial Celebration. North Little Rock, Ark. Contact windsongchurch.org.

May 16-20 Camp College. Camp Manatawny, Douglassville, Pa. Contact www.manatawny.org/campcollege.htm.

May 17-19 23rd Annual Area-Wide Men's Retreat. "Rise Up." C-N Camp, Augusta, Mont. Contact alfredfamily@hotmail.com.

May 27 Celebrating the Life and Ministry of Clinton Brazle. Southbrooke church, Tulsa, Okla. Contact 918.747.5798 or southbrooke.org.

June 3-8 "Go! Camp." Freed-Hardeman University, Henderson, Tenn. Contact fhu.edu/go.

June 22-24 50th Anniversary Celebration Weekend. "Solid Foundation, Bright Future." Grandville, Mich., church. Contact 616.534.8884 or grandvillecoc.org.

June 28-July 1 Spiritual Growth Workshop. "Not Ashamed." Rosen Centre Hotel, Orlando, Fla. Contact www.spiritual-growthworkshop.com.

June 29-July 1 Houston-Gulf Coast Women of Wisdom Conference. "Metamorphosis: Emerging, Improving, and Unleashing for God's Purpose." Westin Houston-Memorial City. Contact www.wowc2012.com.

July 8-12 Christian Training Series. Open to all Christian adults. Contact fhu.edu.

Aug. 4-8 Campaign for Christ. George R. Brown Convention Center, Houston. Contact houstonchurchesofchrist.org.

Sept. 21 Global Leadership Summit. Laurel, Md., church. Contact ofwmissions@gmail.com.

Sept. 22 French World Mission Workshop. Laurel, Md., church. Contact ofwmissions@gmail.com.

Nov. 3-10 Pan American Lectureship. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Contact lectureship.org or 800.533.7660.

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The department of **Language and Literature** at **Oklahoma Christian University** invites applications for an **Assistant Professor** position to begin Fall 2012.

Candidates should emphasize their ability to teach composition, courses related to the Teaching English as a Foreign Language [TEFL] degree, and basic-intermediate language courses corresponding either to one of the university's overseas programs — German, Japanese, Chinese — or to one of the department's current language offerings: French, Spanish.

Applicants with a Ph.D. or ABD are preferred, but other qualified applicants will also be considered.

Course load for the position is 4/4 with English courses in Linguistics, Structure of the English Language, and/or Teaching English as a Foreign Language, and Composition, and courses in the appropriate language.

As a department committed to the integration of faith and learning, Language and Literature is a dynamic community that serves 100 majors/minors and boasts a variety of academic successes: an active honors society

chapter, an annual faith-based speakers series, a strong student/faculty connection, increasing TEFL and writing internships, and successful placement of graduates. We seek an engaged candidate whose specific expertise will further develop our growing TEFL program.

Oklahoma Christian University is a liberal arts university affiliated with the Churches of Christ. Applicants should be active members of the Churches of Christ and have a personal life that reflects the teachings, example, and love of Jesus Christ.

Applicants should send curriculum vita, teaching philosophy, statement of faith, and writing sample related to the particular specialization to **Dr. Cami Agan**, Chair of the department of Language and Literature at the following e-mail address: camigan@oc.edu.

Electronic attachments and cover letters preferred. The search will continue through Spring 2012 or until a suitable candidate is found.

Oklahoma Christian University is an equal opportunity employer.



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EDITORIAL

Should we go willfully into danger?

Have you been flogged in a synagogue lately? That's the promise Jesus made to his 12 disciples when he sent them out to preach the good news in the Gospel of Matthew. "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves," Jesus says in Matthew 10:16. "Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues."

We struggle with these words. Yes, it's dangerous out there, but go anyway. That's what Jesus seems to be saying. These hardly are words of comfort, yet we long to obey.

And, especially nowadays, we see wolves everywhere. They're in Afghanistan and the Middle East, where militant Islamists call for jihad — holy war. They're just south of the U.S. border, where murderous drug cartels turn cities into battlegrounds.

Bible scholars and former missionaries, including Evertt Huffard at Harding School of Theology in Memphis, Tenn., say that our standards of safety and cleanliness have kept us from going into all the world, as Jesus commands in Matthew 28.

We stand amazed by the devotion of Christians who serve in these troubled lands, despite the horrors we see portrayed in media. The stories of these Christians appear on Page 1 of this issue. Their desire to help those in need — regardless of the risks — inspires us.

It's important to note that the coordinators of mission work in Afghanistan and Mexico are not amateurs. Ministry in such environments requires "shrewd as snakes" strategy. That requires advance planning and a willingness to adapt. Those who work in such ministries must be willing to change or cancel their plans with little advance warning.

Such ministry also requires "local intelligence."

Whether reaching out around the world or across the street, the best mission efforts utilize people who live in the environment being served — people who can assess risks and offer sound advice. In mission work, honest, hardworking, on-the-ground believers are priceless.

Equally valuable are the Christians who support such

works — people who never set foot on foreign soil. Those who donate funds, fill shoeboxes with toys or collect relief provide the "fragrant offering" Paul talks about in Philippians 4 — gifts pleasing to God.

Christ asks us to risk much for the sake of the Gospel, but we err when we conclude that stepping willfully into dangerous reaches of the globe is the only way to serve.

Opportunities to leave our comfort zones and serve those in need are everywhere. Our

hearts rejoice at the renewed efforts among believers to reach America's inner cities.

In communities such as Abilene, Texas, Churches of Christ are finding new

ways to reach out to refugees — people who have endured unimaginable horrors at the hands of brutal regimes.

We may never know what it feels like to be flogged. Some of them do.

May God give all of us — no matter where we serve — the shrewdness of snakes and the innocence of doves.

'Christ asks us to risk much for the sake of the Gospel ... Opportunities to leave our comfort zones and serve those in need are everywhere.'

Ever-Laughing Life

by Jonny Hawkins



"I know I'm a part of the body of Christ, but sometimes I really feel like an appendix."

TO OUR READERS

How to share news, photos

Where do you get your stories? It's a common question asked of *The Christian Chronicle* staff.

The short answer: All over. But readers play a key role in keeping us informed of significant news and sharing feature and profile ideas.

We also love it when readers submit photos for consideration. We need high-resolution

images and prefer action shots.

To submit national news and photos, e-mail Bobby Ross Jr. at bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org.

Send international news and photos to Erik Tryggstad at erik@christianchronicle.org.

To reach us by mail, write P.O. Box 11000, Oklahoma City, OK 73136-1100.

The Christian Chronicle
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The Christian Chronicle welcomes and encourages feedback that promotes thoughtful and respectful discussion. Letters/comments should be 150 words or less and may be edited for length and clarity. Comments to the print or online editions are considered to be letters to the editor and may be published. Please include name, city and state of residence, as well as home congregation.

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Rushford leaves a Bible lecture legacy

On any given Sunday, Jerry Rushford is standing behind a different pulpit. Or maybe he's planning the next Pepperdine Bible Lectures. Or maybe he's writing a new book on church history or conducting research on hymns.

His zeal, energy and personal warmth to spread unity within the church are boundless. He loves to bring Christian people together to study, fellowship and worship. And, yes, to better understand each other.

For the past 30 years, Rushford has planned the Pepperdine Bible Lectures held in Malibu, Calif., each May. This year is his last year to act as director. But he has been more than a planner. He is a bridge-builder and a facilitator.

Rushford always has included a wide range of presenters and topics in the lectures. His goal has been to bring Christians together from all over the country and globe and to promote a positive spirit of unity for the kingdom.

These lectures create a four-day haven for unity for 5,000 people from more than 45 states and 35 countries. More than that, the lectures bring together the diverse elements within the church and help us appreciate one another.

Ted Parks, a correspondent for *The Christian Chronicle* and former professor at Pepperdine, said, "Jerry's work has combined the best qualities of our tradition — the use of our minds to grasp God's will and the tight-knit fellowship that gives us community wherever we go."

This year's Bible Lectures feature 288 classes and 400 presenters. Eighty-four couples also are on the agenda. The 69th annual lectures also feature 13 a cappella singing groups.

Rushford takes seriously the biblical teaching to honor one another. Each year he recognizes and honors at least a dozen people from many walks of life for their

outstanding Christian service.

Rushford began his relationship with Pepperdine in 1978 when he became pulpit minister for the University Church of Christ in Malibu and a professor in the religion division.

Views



Lynn McMillon

In his early years of ministry, the majority of his energy was focused on West Coast churches. More recently, Rushford has fanned his influence nationwide.

From November to May, Rushford traverses the country Sunday after Sunday, preaching, plugging the Pepperdine Bible Lectures and promoting connection among diverse segments of the brotherhood. One Sunday he is in Pennsylvania, the next in Indianapolis, and the following in Vancouver, Wash., or Phoenix.

He tirelessly spreads the Word, and he absorbs the local church history from each city to use as material for one of his books.

On his journeys across the nation, he helps geographically and theologically diverse church leaders stay connected. Rushford's passion has brought Christians together to reflect on their faith and worship, especially

concerning fellowship among the diverse elements of the church.

Scott Laird, a minister in Great Falls, Mont., observed, "Jerry Rushford has the unique ability to make the lives of those who have walked by faith in the not-so-distant past come to life. ... I am thankful for his love of the brotherhood and the actions he has consistently taken to pursue unity."

Rushford reaches Christians all across the country, but he always finds a way to return to the beaches of Malibu. Pepperdine students and faculty hold a special place in his heart.

He currently serves as a professor of religion, director of church relations and director of the Churches of Christ Heritage Center at Pepperdine.

Next school year, Rushford and wife, Lori, will serve as house parents for Pepperdine's study abroad program in London, where he will continue research on hymns, for which he is also well known.

Rushford can tell you the origins of and little-known facts about many hymns we sing today without batting an eye. He strives to have rich and inspiring worship sessions with vibrant music all

within the a cappella practice of Churches of Christ, and these are experienced each evening at the Bible Lectures.

Upon his return to the States, Jerry will devote his time back at Pepperdine to the development of the Jerry Rushford Center, recently announced by President Andrew Benton.

The Center will include the Churches of Christ Heritage Center begun by Rushford in 2009 as a further result of his many travels and collection of local church history.

He loves people and their stories, and he loves to share them with others.

"Jerry is a remarkable force for good among Churches of Christ," Benton said.

LYNN McMILLON is editor, president and CEO of *The Christian Chronicle*. For more information on the Jerry Rushford Center, see www.pepperdine.edu/biblelectures/welcome/rushford-center.htm.



RON HALL

Jerry Rushford steps down as director of the Pepperdine Bible Lectures after the annual event, May 1-4 in Malibu, Calif.

LETTERS

On youth and tradition

I couldn't disagree more with the conclusion of the article, "Declining numbers, but signs of hope?" (Page 1, April) I don't understand how splintering into numerous house churches or independent groups can lead to unity.

We can't seem to rise above our "Restoration" rhetoric. We feel that we need to restore something as if what we now have is never sufficient. I am not sure why we think a new generation doing exactly the same thing will produce a more perfect product.

Don't get me wrong: Our churches can always use renewal and repentance. However, Ephesians 4 suggests that we'll get there by working within a structured environment (given by grace, by the way) not outside of one.

Bob Weber | Chatham, N.J.

Great story. So often we do not ask questions of the people we affect most with our traditions — holding to doctrine that has nothing to do with doctrine but tradition. So many areas of ministry are under the oversight of church staff, and new approaches are ignored, closing out the gifts of women, children, young adults. Good story. Amen.

Andrea Lorick | Baltimore

Young people seem to rebel against so-called "Church of Christ traditions." What is this tradition that seems to turn them off? Is it baptism? The weekly Lord's Supper? Singing without instruments? Three songs and a prayer? What they don't realize is that in their new churches, within a few years, new traditions will develop.

The "rule of God" is within our hearts and does not depend on others. A charismatic youth director or preacher might excite, but excitement does not equal faith any more than feeling equals reality.

Donald R. Taylor | Bon Aqua, Tenn.

Non-denominational is not the same as un-denominational. "Whatever works" is not a hermeneutic. Opposition to tradition is now a fashionable tradition. Avoiding doctrinal judgments is an easy cop-out. Titus 1:9 indicates purity and certitude in teaching.

Young people, begin with gratitude, and pray for wisdom as you make corrections in your inheritance.

Mike Orr | Tahoka, Texas

Walk-on part in 'GCB' criticized

This television program does not glorify God. (See "Extra! Walk-on role in controversial TV show demonstrates the need for Christians to shine," Page 31, April.) How could this minister's participation in it do so?

Simple answer, it doesn't.

Nyla Dominguez | Pecos, Texas

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MEET ONE OF OUR PROFESSORS

Jared Looney, adjunct professor, Bronx, N.Y.

- B.S., Abilene Christian University
- M.A., Houston Graduate School of Theology
- D.Miss., Fuller Theological Seminary

- Urban missionary in Houston, New York City, and short-term service in various locations in the U.S. and Latin America
- Experience in church planting, youth ministry, small groups, mentoring and team leadership
- Family includes wife, Hylma, from England and a daughter, Adalia

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- Orientation with Bill Richardson
- Christian Communication with Kelly Elander
- People Helping with Joe Brumfield
- Small Groups Ministries with Jared Looney

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Though offensive, 'Blue Like Jazz' creates conversations about faith

BY JOSHUA WATSON | FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Donald Miller sets out to make a Christian movie different from the ones currently breaking box office records, namely "Fireproof" and "Courageous." He succeeds.

"Blue Like Jazz," which premieres April 13, is based roughly on Miller's same-named, semi-autobiographical bestseller from 2003.

"This was my story of walking away from faith and then coming back to faith in a very different way," Miller said at a screening of the film in Oklahoma City.

"I wanted this story to be a real depiction of the struggle between the world and God, love and sex, as well as faith and doubt," he said. "We're not encouraging disobedience, but I didn't want to water down sin, either."

He doesn't. The film has a well-earned PG-13 rating. There's a lot of foul language, plus a scene depicting a college prank that involves an oversized prophylactic and a church steeple.

This is a Christian movie that will offend a lot of Christians.

As the film opens, Miller's character, played by Marshall Allman, is a leader in his Baptist church's youth group and is preparing to attend a Christian university in the fall.

His dad, who walked out on the family early in Miller's life, enrolls Miller at Reed College in Portland, Ore., referred to in the film as the most godless campus in America. His dad, a jazz aficionado, wants Miller to learn to be a great writer — and to quit being a part of a religion that, in his opinion, tells people how to think.

Miller has no intention of going to Reed College but changes his mind after discovering his churchgoing mom has been rather hypocritical in her life. In anger, Miller jumps in his car and drives from Houston to Portland. The

rest of the film documents Miller's change from a closeted Christian to a self-absorbed, faithless party-goer. By the film's end, he has transformed back to a believer — although a changed one — made clear in the movie's most powerful, yet muted, final scene.

For those who read the book, regularly read *Relevant* magazine and kickstarter.com, which was instrumental in the film's production, "Blue Like Jazz" will resonate.

The film has more extremes in character stories than perhaps is believable — one of the most glaring differences between the movie and the book. However, "Blue Like Jazz" does work to create conversations with non-Christians about God.

The movie highlights hypocritical behavior by Christians that often turns people off to God while also demonstrating how those pushing God out of their lives are constantly seeking ways to fill a void they can't quite explain.

By the end of the film, Miller comes to love his

faith by watching it transform the life of one of his friends — something he never expected to see at Reed College.

Regardless of your opinion of the book or the film, recognizing the impact our behavior has on those around us is a lesson that more Christians should take to heart.

JOSHUA WATSON teaches communication at Oklahoma Christian University while pursuing a doctorate at the University of Oklahoma. He attends the Edmond Church of Christ. See an expanded review at www.christianchronicle.org.



ALSO ONLINE, Reviews Editor Kimberly Mauck says the new film "October Baby" tackles abortion "without politics or condemnation." See www.christianchronicle.org/blog and search for "October Baby."



Penny (Claire Holt) and Don (Marshall Allman) share an umbrella in "Blue Like Jazz."

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Submit introductory letter, curriculum vita and contact information to Dr. Jenene Alexander, director of Professional Counseling Program at jalexander@harding.edu or by mail at Harding University, Box 12254, Searcy, AR 72149. Inquiries regarding this position may be directed to Dr. Jenene Alexander at jalexander@harding.edu or 501-279-4150.

Seeking full-time faculty position in the area of education foundations, specifically in child and adolescent development. The successful candidate will have a doctorate in education and should have teaching experience in a K-12 school setting. Experience teaching in higher education and research and statistics is preferred. Experience working with accrediting agencies such as NCATE would be helpful. Candidates should hold a current teaching license. This position includes teaching responsibilities, advising, serving on committees and other assigned tasks. This is a nine-month contract position located at the main campus in Searcy, Ark. Summer hours will also be required under a separate arrangement.

Submit introductory letter, curriculum vita and contact information to Dr. Donny Lee, associate dean, at dlee@harding.edu or by mail at Harding University, Box 12254, Searcy, AR 72149.

Seeking full-time faculty position in the area of educational leadership and research foundations. The successful candidate will have earned a doctorate from an approved program in educational research, measurement or leadership. Experience teaching in higher education is preferred. Licensure or licensure-eligible as a school district-level administrator and experience as superintendent/central office is preferred. Knowledge SPSS is beneficial. Record of research and online teaching is preferred. Responsibilities include teaching statistics and research courses on the main campus, at satellite campuses, and online; serving on doctoral committees as a statistics/research member; and doing limited research and publishing. Summer assignments will be required under a separate contract. Applicants adding to the diversity of the faculty are encouraged, including underrepresented populations and those with disabilities.

Submit introductory letter, curriculum vita and contact information to Dr. David Bangs, director of Educational Leadership at dbangs@harding.edu or by mail at Harding University, Box 12254, Searcy, AR 72149. Inquiries regarding this position may be directed to Dr. David Bangs at dbangs@harding.edu, 501-279-4514 or 501-279-4117.

Seeking full-time faculty position in the area of special education. The successful candidate will have a doctorate in special education or a closely related area and should have special education teaching experience in a K-12 school setting. Experience teaching in higher education and research and statistics is preferred. Experience working with accrediting agencies such as NCATE and CEC would be helpful. Candidates should hold a current teaching license. This position includes teaching responsibilities, advising, serving on committees and other assigned tasks. This is a nine-month contract position located at the main campus in Searcy, Ark. Summer hours will also be required under a separate arrangement.

Submit introductory letter, curriculum vita and contact information to Dr. Donny Lee, associate dean, at dlee@harding.edu or by mail at Harding University, Box 12254, Searcy, AR 72149.

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Criminal Justice Faculty Position Available, Fall 2012

Qualifications include willingness to uphold the values of Lubbock Christian University as an active member in a congregation of Churches of Christ; earned doctorate in field (JD accepted), but master's degree essential; and relevant college-, police academy-, or military police-level teaching experience. Extensive law enforcement or legal experience in the criminal justice system could be considered.

Responsibilities include directing CJ program, teaching twelve hours per semester in the program, recruiting, advising, and mentoring students, committee assignments, and other related duties. Preferred applicants will be interested in developing the CJ program into a stand-alone department.

Submit resume to Dr. Jill Fuller, Chair of the Department of Social Work and Criminal Justice, by mail at LCU, 5601 19th St., Lubbock, TX 79407.

College guides offer advice for students, parents, staff

BY BRIAN SIMMONS | FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

The years between ages 18 and 25 are crucially formative in a Christian's life. It is within this window that people truly come of age, often making life-changing decisions about career, spouse and faith.

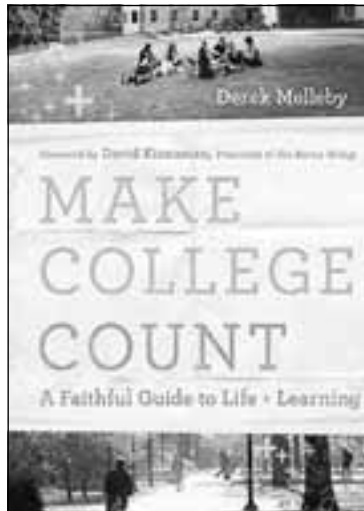
They also cement or reject whatever religious faith they have previously encountered.

Here in America, a little more than half of high school graduates choose to spend the better part of those years attending college. Fortunately, four new books are available to help them successfully navigate the college experience, each designed to address different audiences and needs.

Two recently published books are geared toward students transitioning into their college experience. Derek Melleby's **"Make College Count: A Faithful Guide to Life and Learning"** is a self-professed "graduation book" designed to get soon-to-be college students to reflect on themselves as they prepare to enter college.

Each of the seven chapters in this short, devotional-style book poses a thought-provoking question for the reader to ponder. Though the questions range from "What kind of person do you want to be?" to "How will you choose a major?" the common thread throughout them all is equipping students to think deeply about their place in this world. Each chapter features a brief excerpt of comments from interviews with college students and includes questions for further reflection.

The questions posed are certainly the ones that college students ought to ask themselves as their education unfolds. The chapter on connecting with a Christian community is especially worthwhile as it speaks to a dimen-



★★★★☆

Derek Melleby. **Make College Count: A Faithful Guide to Life and Learning.** Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2011. 128 pages. \$12.99.

sion of a Christian student's college education that is often overlooked, especially if attending a secular school.

Melleby offers his timely advice in a breezy, cozy voice. It would make a solid gift for the high school graduate. However, the book is not an overly deep or intellectual discussion of its topic.

Those looking for something more substantive would do well to examine Biola University philosophy professor David A. Horner's **"Mind Your Faith: A Student's Guide to Thinking and Living Well."** This book is a deep, scholarly discussion of the intellectual and moral challenges that colleges' intellectual experiences pose to Christian faith.

Horner is keenly interested in preparing Christian students for the potentially faith-shaking ideas that they inevitably encounter — no matter what type of institution they attend — and in this regard he succeeds fabulously.

Each of the 13 chapters opens with a Scripture and a quote from a well-known philosopher



★★★★★

David A. Horner. **Mind Your Faith: A Student's Guide to Thinking and Living Well.** Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2011. 272 pages. \$20.

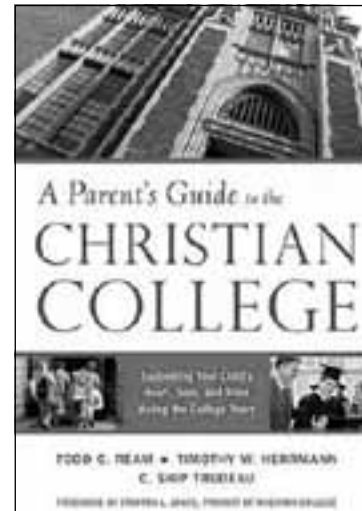
or theologian. The book is sprinkled judiciously with endnotes.

The first section addresses the hefty notions of worldview and the nature of truth. Though these topics could be headache-inducing, Horner makes them easily accessible with lucid writing, helpful diagrams and excellent examples. His first six chapters are among the best I have seen at laying out these sometimes confusing ideas.

The second section deals with the nature of religious faith and belief. Here, too, Horner's gift for explanation is evident, especially in chapter eight on the nature of faith, where he expertly describes and critiques "fideism," the theory that maintains faith is independent of reason.

The shorter, third section offers a splendid discussion of how college students firmly committed to the Christian faith can lead a moral life.

In **"A Parent's Guide to the Christian College: Supporting Your Child's Heart, Soul and Mind during the College Years,"** three authors draw on their



★★★★★

Todd C. Ream, Timothy W. Herrmann, and C. Skip Trudeau. **A Parent's Guide to the Christian College.** Abilene, Texas: ACU Press, 2011. \$14.99.

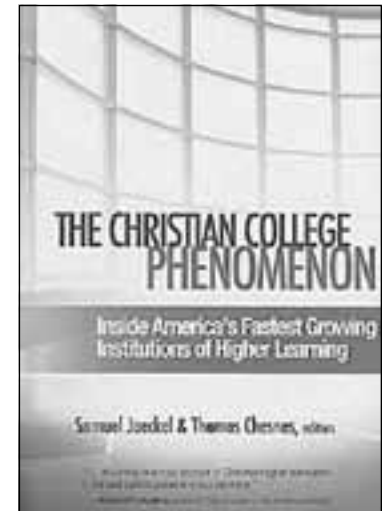
extensive experience as college faculty and administrators. They begin with the premise that the proper kind of parental involvement in a child's Christian education is crucial to the child's college success.

The authors do an excellent job of conveying the rationale and necessity of the Christian college's emphasis on common worship (chapel, for example).

As a college teacher for more than 20 years, I can attest that the chapter on the nature of the Christian college classroom is the most insightful analysis of that setting I have ever read. The section on the seasons of a Christian college student's life well equips parents to understand the rhythm of their students' college career. Chapter six, on how parents can best respond to times of crisis in students' lives, is extremely helpful.

This book ought to be required reading for all Christian college parents.

"The Christian College Phenomenon: Inside America's Fastest Growing Institutions of Higher



★★★★☆

Samuel Joeckel and Thomas Chesnes (eds.). **The Christian College Phenomenon.** Abilene, Texas: ACU Press, 2011, \$24.99.

Learning" seems more narrowly targeted than the other books, yet it is a recommended read for those working in Christian higher education.

The book's 16 contributors reflect on the results of an extensive survey of faculty members at schools affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. As a scholarly treatment of current issues in evangelical Christian higher education, it is a thorough, well-documented resource featuring extensive bibliographies. The discussions of the "In-Loco-Parentis" model of Christian campuses and the role of religious faith in campus culture are especially thought-provoking.

Though intended for different audiences, each of these books has something to offer. Any would be recommended as a blessing to college students, their parents or Christian college employees.

BRIAN SIMMONS is preaching minister for the Metro Church of Christ in Gresham, Ore., and teaches in the communication studies department at the University of Portland.

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Remembering Rebecca: Family showed spiritual strength, peace in cancer battle

At peace. Safe in the arms of Jesus." Tonda Stafford posted that note on Caringbridge.org, signaling to friends and family that Rebecca Ann Stafford had lost her long battle with Ewing sarcoma March 10.

On May 7, Rebecca would have celebrated her 21st birthday.

Her parents, Barry and Tonda Stafford, have been dear friends since before Rebecca and her older sister, Lauren, were born. In fact, we have been friends of Barry's since he began practicing law, before he met Tonda. The Staffords are devout Christians, and they serve faithfully in the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City. Loving, caring for and educating their daughters have been their principal concerns. In 2001, Tonda Stafford joined the staff of *The Christian Chronicle* as administrative assistant.

Rebecca had much energy as a child. She was sweet and a little feisty. She and her parents tackled every obstacle she faced. She loved vacationing with her family, tagging along with her older sister and swimming. She grew into a secure young woman who loved being with friends, sharing activities with her youth group and planning ways to serve others.

In January of her junior year of high school, she fainted and was ill. After undergoing batteries of tests, she was diagnosed with Ewing sarcoma, an insidious cancer that attacks bone and organ tissue. She began chemotherapy and other treatments for the cancer. Her strong, optimistic determination never failed.

In the summer of 2009, Rebecca had surgery to remove four ribs and the cancerous tissue. The waiting area was filled with family and friends from church. Knowing the procedure Rebecca was undergoing, Barry and Tonda showed their strength, faith, courage and determination to help their daughter through the pain and suffering. The Staffords' faith made me see how heroic they are, and during the following months, they communicated only their trust in God.

Rebecca returned to high school to graduate with her friends. During her treatments, she had decided that she wanted God to use her life to help others. Students at her high school

were known for working hard to raise money for important causes. They had decided to collect money for cancer research as their project for 2009-2010.

At the assembly to launch the drive, Rebecca, a shy and somewhat timid person, spoke to 1,500-plus students, rallying their full support for the project. The students raised a record-breaking \$527,000 for the Jimmy Everest Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders in Children at OU Medical Center.

In May 2010, Rebecca graduated from high school, determined to go to college and possibly become a physical therapist. Despite moving in and out of remission, having countless infections, chemotherapy and radiation, she completed her freshman year at Oklahoma Christian University, living in the dormitory. She had one class near my office, and I would often see her going or coming. She always managed a smile and a quiet greeting. If I asked how she was doing, the answer was always "Fine."

She planned to return for her sophomore year, but she decided she would have to find online courses. Her health troubles continued, but she was at church if she was not in the hospital. Her friends continued to rally around her. She and Victoria Wilguess, another teen at our church with health issues, spent a lot of time together, talking about their futures and worrying about their parents.

A few months ago, new tests showed numerous small tumors, too many to deal with. The Staffords faced the inevitable with grace and courage.

Rebecca, Tonda, Barry and Lauren are my heroes. I have seen God giving them physical, spiritual and emotional strength to support each other.

In her last year Rebecca kept warm with a blanket inscribed with Psalms 73:26: *"My strength may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, But God remains the strength of my heart; He is mine forever."*

Peace at last.

CONTACT bailey.mcbride@christianchronicle.org.

Insight



Bailey McBride



Are we thinking long-term or short-term?

“I need to attend a prestigious secular university to get a great job,” say many young students, and sometimes parents are pushing in that direction as well. But is that long-term or short-term thinking? Well, what about this advice: “Build a great looking house, but don’t worry too much about the foundation”? Who would seriously give this advice?

Most secular schools provide only part of a truly effective education. They may provide knowledge and skills in a field, but they purposely removed themselves from the serious business of preparing students for real life. Many of the basic presuppositions of some secular institutions war against the Christian faith. They often find it impossible to teach about ethical and moral judgments, believing those judgments fall outside the realm of education, even as the moral core of society crumbles. But at our Christian colleges and universities, students are taught about life and faith as well as about careers and getting ahead. It’s time to challenge conventional wisdom.

Investigate Christian higher education, the true open mindedness.

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COLOSSIANS 2:9-10



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