



Christians react to Osama bin Laden's death

Many Christians greeted Osama bin Laden's death May 1 with shouts of joy.

For some, though, excitement over the killing of the world's most-wanted terrorist quickly gave way to mixed feelings.

"I do think there is something wrong with throwing a party



Bin Laden

to celebrate the death of an unsaved human being," said John Dobbs, minister of the Forsythe Church of Christ in Monroe, La.

"On the other hand, the Hitler of our generation has been eliminated.

"For years, I have prayed for the hearts of terrorists to be melted and for them to know the love of Christ," Dobbs said. "I still do. To destroy someone who is bent on killing thousands is not a rejection of the command to love our enemies, in my opinion."

JOIN THE DISCUSSION online at www.christianchronicle.org/blog.

'Dear Lord,' please help us



JEREMY D. SMITH

Members survey tornado damage inside the Central Church of Christ auditorium. Some gather songbooks and begin removing pews.

IN TORNADO-RAVAGED SOUTH, stories of hope emerge as churches, disaster ministries launch relief efforts.

BY JEREMY D. SMITH AND BOBBY ROSS JR.
THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — Moments before a tornado wiped out the Central Church of Christ building, six students huddled in a small cinderblock closet at the church.

Carl Naylor started to pray, but he managed just two words before the twister came.

"By the time he said 'Dear Lord,' our ears started popping, and hairs stood up on our arms," said Caleb

Durden, a Central member whose brother, Trae, serves as campus minister. "Glass was hitting us in the head. Debris. We had glass and rust and just pieces of metal in our hair."

The students — all active with the Tide 4 Christ campus

ministry — couldn't hear anything as the storm drowned out the heavenly plea of Naylor, whose home congregation is the Forrest Park Church of Christ in Valdosta, Ga.

"The old saying is, 'A tornado sounds like a freight train,'" said Andrew Broadfoot,

who calls the Beltline Church of Christ in Decatur, Ala., home. "Well, it almost sounded like 10 freight trains. We were lucky that that room held."

After about 15 to 20 seconds, the noise quieted.

The students — who also included Kyle Henderson and Caleb Bradford from the Austinville Church of Christ in Decatur, Ala., and Justin Miller from the Wetumpka Church of Christ in Alabama — opened

See **TORNADOES**, Page 12



KATHRYN CHAMPION

The Central church building sustained heavy damage.



Giving soles in Ohio

Clothing giveaways, sports are part of North Canton church's work. **19**



Young leaders for Christ
Leadership Training for Christ, Lads to Leaders draw crowds. **6**



WBS targets U.S.
Ministry known for overseas evangelism comes home. **3**

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A cemetery walk provides odd comfort

CEDAR GROVE, Tenn.

Danial Ross. Born: 1791. Died: 1842." The name and the dates on the tombstone jump out at me immediately.

My grandfather, father, brother and I have driven out to this middle-of-nowhere cemetery in rural West Tennessee on a lazy Saturday afternoon.

Leaves crumble under my sneakers, and the sun bears down on my balding head, as I explore this piece of my family's past.

At first glance, I tell myself this could be any old country cemetery. The ugliness of faded plastic flower arrangements and skinny, branch-exposed trees strikes me. I smell dust and see weeds and wonder how often anyone ventures out to this seemingly forgotten patch of God's green earth.

Yet, I sense that I am experiencing something significant, that somehow this is sacred ground for me.

"W.A. Ross. Dec. 16, 1828-Dec. 25, 1909. He died as he lived, trusting in God."

I am lost in thought when Papa's voice jars me back into the moment.

Papa is my dad's dad. He has white hair, wears overalls and loves fishing and hunting. He worked most of his life as a farmer and carpenter. He always voted for Democrats until Ronald

See **PAPA**, Page 4



PHOTOS BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD AND ROBIN CANNON

From Africa to the United States, World Bible School students correspond with teachers, including Carly Canon, right, by postal mail and e-mail.

Can WBS reach the U.S.?

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD
THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

CEDAR PARK, Texas — There's a box full of souls with Mary Nell Kemper's name on it.

"Just look at that," she said, lifting a stack of pink and blue World Bible School pages — water-stained, dog-eared and bound with rubber bands. "That represents hundreds of lessons going back to teachers. And every single one of those is someone studying God's Word. It is just awesome."

The box is from the World Bible School's office in Zimbabwe, where



African Christians collect lessons from students via business-reply mail and send them to the ministry's Texas headquarters — a two-story office building near an industrial park in this Austin suburb.

When she's not sorting lessons here, Kemper teaches World Bible School through a program at her congregation, the Westside Church of Christ in nearby Round Rock.

Among Churches of Christ, World Bible School, or WBS, is synonymous with evangelism.

More than 2 million souls study the Gospel through the program, particularly in the Global South — Latin America, the

Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia and Africa — where souls are hungry for low-cost Christian education.

The ministry estimates that nearly 30,000 of its students request baptism each year, based on records from churches that participate in the program.

After 38 years of soul-winning, World Bible School has set its sights on what may be its toughest mission field yet — the United States.

"Why? Because the church in America isn't growing — not even keeping up with the growth of the population," said John Reese, the ministry's president. "We all must do more to share Jesus right here in the U.S."

In the 21st century, Churches of Christ in See **WORLD BIBLE SCHOOL**, Page 24

Universities face pressure on gay, lesbian students

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

A recent front-page *New York Times* story highlighted battles for acceptance by homosexuals at Christian universities across the nation, including two schools associated with Churches of Christ.

Weeks earlier, an underground website detailing the anonymous experiences of gay and lesbian students at Harding University in Searcy, Ark., created "quite a stir on our campus," President David Burks said.

As these developments illustrate,



Burks



Schubert

Christian universities face intensifying pressure to embrace society's changing ideals on homosexuality, administrators say.

"Ironically, as our society becomes more diverse, there is less tolerance for the traditional biblical perspective," said Mark Davis, dean of student affairs at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif.

The *Times* reported that several students at Abilene Christian University in Texas are openly gay, and many more are pushing for change behind the scenes. Last spring, ACU refused to allow the formation of a Gay-Straight

Alliance, the newspaper said.

The story prompted ACU President Phil Schubert to write an op-ed in the *Abilene Reporter-News* clarifying the university's stance.

"There is growing debate throughout our culture regarding the shifting mores surrounding the issue of homosexuality," Schubert wrote. "Christian universities everywhere find themselves in a precarious spot on this topic, having drawn increasing public criticism."

Schubert said ACU remains committed to biblical principles and believes sex is reserved for the marriage bond between one man and one woman.

See **UNIVERSITIES**, Page 14

The reviews are in!

"Life-changing"

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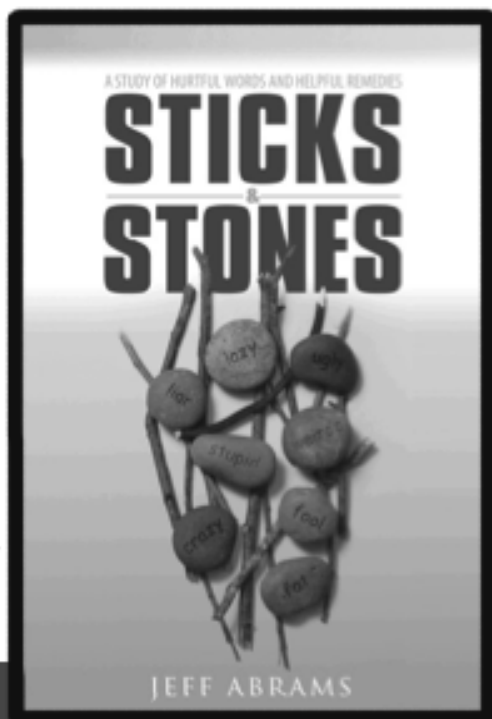
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PAPA: So much life between born-and-died dash

FROM PAGE 3

Reagan came along.

Papa fought in World War II and was shot in the face. The famous war correspondent Ernie Pyle happened to be in the operating room the day Papa was wounded and wrote this about him in his book "Brave Men": *"One soldier had caught a machine-gun bullet right alongside his nose. It had made a small clean hole and gone through his cheek, leaving — as it came out — a larger hole just beneath his ear. It gave me the willies to look at it, yet the doctors said it wasn't serious at all and would heal with no bad effects."*

I could tell you so much more about Papa.

How he drove a sky-blue "JOY Bus" in the 1970s and brought busloads of black children to a small white congregation. How he accepted responsibility when he learned in his 80s that he had fathered an out-of-wedlock daughter more than six decades earlier — before he met my grandmother or gave his life to Jesus Christ. How he built a legacy of faith in his five children, 15 grandchildren, 24 great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren.

But then, this essay isn't about Papa — at least not entirely.

"John A. Ross. Born: 1864. Died: 1955."

I see the names on the tombstones and wonder who they were and how they died. More importantly, what kind of lives did they live? Did they worship in the one-room white church that overlooks the cemetery? Did they make the world a better place?

Ross. Ross. Ross. My family's name is all over Palestine Cemetery, and I feel like I belong here, if only for a moment. I am here for a reason.

I say little as I walk alongside Papa in the cemetery. I listen to him as he tells me about the people buried here.

"Who was Danial Ross?" I ask, curious about this man who died 20 years before the Civil War.

"He was my great-great-grandfather," Papa tells me. I quickly do the math.

That would make him my great-great-great-great-grandfather.

I am in awe of the roots I find here. But I am only partly here for the past.

I realize that when Papa shows me an empty space he has marked off in the cemetery. This, he explains, is where he will be buried someday beside Grandma. I swallow the lump in my throat. At the same time, I am oddly comforted.

There is no dread or apprehension in Papa's voice. He has lived a long life — a faithful and honorable life. When his

time arrives, he will be ready.

Papa, a member of the Huntingdon Church of Christ, celebrated his 93rd birthday March 24, just a few weeks before he died.

"Lloyd Lee Ross. Born: 1918. Died: 2011."

We buried Papa in the exact spot that he chose. But praise the Lord, those are just bones under that chunk of rock.

The walk in the cemetery that I described occurred in 2004. I last saw Papa a few months before he died. Frail and bedridden, he made it clear that he wanted to go home — the eternal one promised by his Savior.

"You may not see me again," he told me the morning I left to drive home.

"Yes, I will," I replied.

CONTACT BOBBY ROSS JR. at bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Lloyd Lee Ross with two of his great-grandchildren in 2009.

CALIFORNIA

CHICO — Church members across the nation contributed \$60,000 to buy a handicap-accessible van for Tim Kelley, senior minister of the Chico Church of Christ.

Readers helped with the effort after *The Christian Chronicle* reported on it.

"It has taken several weeks for all the necessary work to be completed on the van, but recently the finishing touches were applied," said Carolyn Tyler, a member of the Caramillo Church of Christ in California and a leader in the fund-raising effort. "The van is now paid for and fully equipped to meet Tim's every driving need."

For an expanded report and video, see www.christianchronicle.org/blog and search for "Tim Kelley."



PHOTO PROVIDED BY CAROLYN TYLER

Tim Kelley, with his new van.

MICHIGAN

LANSING — 1968 was a tumultuous time for racial relations in the U.S. But that year, a white Church of Christ and a black congregation merged.

The Holmes Road Church of Christ, which began meeting at its present site in 1961, combined forces with the black Butler Street Church of Christ.

"Now, the church has 43 years of merged history, a significant Hispanic membership, a Michigan State University outreach, a microcosm of an international community, an integrated leadership, and is looking forward to the next 50 years," said Bob Young, a former minister. The Holmes Road church recently celebrated its 50th anniversary.

MISSISSIPPI

FULTON — Friends, relatives and fellow Christians dealt with shock and heartbreak after the recent stabbing deaths of a retired Church of Christ minister and his wife. Funeral services for Fred and Mildred Joy House were



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Shelter in the storm at LTC in Arkansas

Students and sponsors at the Great Plains convention of Leadership Training for Christ in Rogers, Ark., pray during a recent tornado warning. Hundreds of church members from Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas crowded into a hotel ballroom where a Bible quiz was scheduled. Until the storm passed, 30 minutes of singing and praying mostly drowned out the thunder overhead.

MORE PHOTOS, Page 6

conducted in Fulton.

"Fred was a Church of Christ minister for many, many years," said his nephew Carl Royster, data compiler with 21st Century Christian publishing in Nashville, Tenn. "The sad thing is that Fred and Joy had helped out their



PHOTO PROVIDED

Fred and Mildred Joy House

killer on multiple occasions in the past."

For an expanded report, see www.christianchronicle.org/blog and search for "Fred and Mildred Joy House."

OKLAHOMA

OKLAHOMA CITY — Hundreds of church members from across central Oklahoma were "United in Christ" during a gospel meeting at the Memorial Road Church of Christ. The meeting encouraged unity and fellowship among black and white churches.

Speakers were Vernon Taylor, minister of the Southlake Church of Christ in Jonesboro, Ga.; Jim Baird, minister of the Wilshire Church of Christ in Oklahoma City; Calvin Bowers, minister of the Figueroa Church of Christ in Los Angeles; and Lawrence Murray, minister of the Spencer, Okla., Church of Christ.

SPOTLIGHT**A gift of love**

CLYDE, Texas — A retired postal worker, 80-year-old Chal Burgess said he is not financially able to make many donations.

However, Burgess recently sent a \$10 check to *The Christian Chronicle* to help support the newspaper's mission of informing, inspiring and uniting Churches of Christ.

The Clyde Church of Christ member made the gift in memory of his late grandson, Army Staff Sgt. Bryan A. Burgess, who died March 29 while serving in Afghanistan. (The *Chronicle* does not release information about donors, but he gave his permission.)

"I tell you, it's devastating," Chal Burgess said of his grandson's death. "But we knew what he was doing and that it was possible at any time. The sad thing is, he had only 26 days left on his third tour." Bryan Burgess had served two Iraq tours and a third in Afghanistan.

"He was very dedicated to serving his country," Chal Burgess said. The staff sergeant also was a faithful Christian. In his school years, he was active with the youth group at the Granbury Street Church of Christ in Cleburne, Texas.



Burgess

TEXAS

ROUND ROCK — A memorial fund has been set up to benefit the family of Jenny Mae Cope-Gosch, a 33-year-old mother of five who recently suffered a fatal stroke.

Jenny and her husband, Tyson, were members at the Simi Valley Church of Christ in California before moving to Texas just before her sudden death. The Pepperdine University graduates had found a new home with the Westside Church of Christ in Round Rock.

Donations may be sent to: Jenny Gosch Memorial Fund, 325 Village Drive, Blythe, CA 92226.

For an expanded report, see www.christianchronicle.org/blog and search for "Jenny Mae Cope-Gosch."



Gosch



STACY DARWIN

Olivia Schexnayder, Caleb Baldwin, Justin Booker, Taina Ortiz and Noah Baldwin from the Brooks Avenue Church of Christ in Raleigh, N.C., prepare for their Bible Bowl competition at the East Regional Leadership Training for Christ event in Charlotte, N.C.

Leaders for Christ

For thousands of young people in Churches of Christ, Leadership Training for Christ and Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes events build faith. At recent LTC and L2L conventions across the nation, students preached, led singing, sang in choruses, took Bible quizzes, put on puppet shows, performed in skits and enjoyed time with friends.



DAVID ROGERS

Loran Trent, 9, from the Holly Hill Church of Christ in Frankfort, Ky., receives a first-place trophy at Lads to Leaders in Indianapolis.



STEDDON SIKES

Brady Sikes, Megan Williams and Jeremy Telgren receive scholarships at the Heart of America LTC convention in Kansas City, Mo.



MIKE BOSLEY

Noah Bosley, 9, poses with his puppet N.B. at the Great Plains Leadership Training for Christ event in Rogers, Ark.



WES SCOTT

The third- through sixth-grade chorus from the Canyon Church of Christ in Anthem, Ariz., prays with coaches Laura Shewmaker, left, and Christy Lundy at the Southwest Region LTC event in Phoenix. Chorus members, clockwise from left, are Max Ruecklies, Alyssa Scott, Elena Browne, Ana Gabrielle O'Neill, Kate Shewmaker and Naomi Bass. With her back to the camera is Ellie Lundy, Christy Lundy's daughter.

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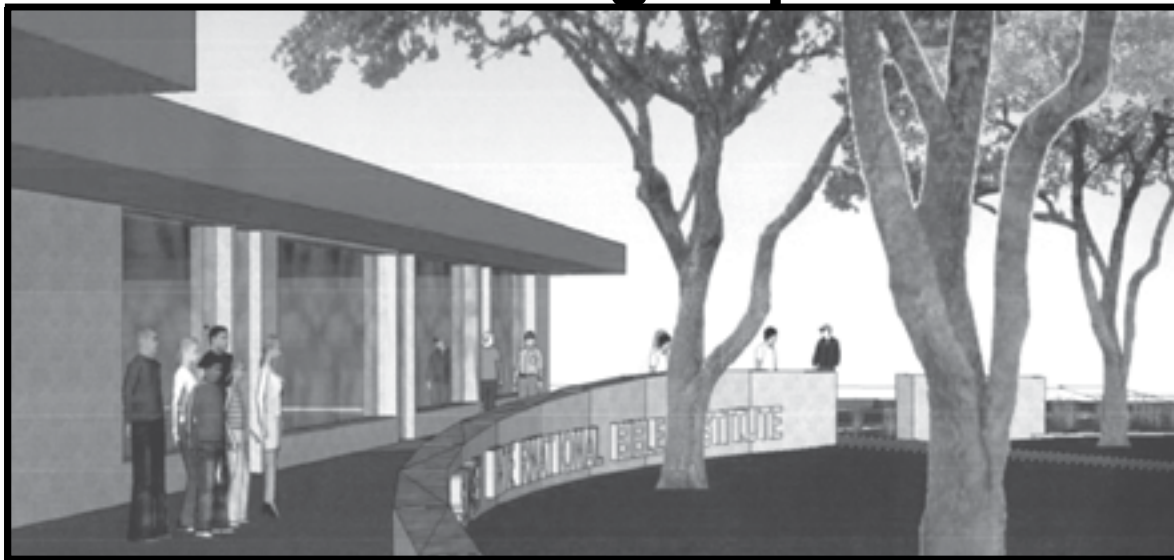
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LINDA HICKS

Arkansas church 'used to the glory of God'

Residents gather for supplies at the Vilonia Church of Christ in Arkansas after an April 25 tornado cut a mile-wide path through the town of 3,800, killing four people and injuring dozens.

With help from fellow Christians from as far as 200 miles away, the congregation worked to help victims. "The facilities in the Vilonia church were not damaged and are being used to the glory of God to help in assisting our community," said Marty Knight, a church leader.

Elsewhere, the Brooks Avenue Church of Christ in Raleigh, N.C., was among congregations actively involved in relief efforts after recent tornadoes wreaked havoc on the Southeast.

Chronicle wins seven 'Best of the Christian Press' awards

CHICAGO— For the fifth straight year, *The Christian Chronicle* received recognition in the prestigious Best in Class category of the annual Associated Church Press awards.

The *Chronicle* earned second-place honors for best national or international newspaper in the ACP's "Best of the Christian Press" competition. In all, the international newspaper for Churches of Christ received seven awards at the religious press association's recent annual convention.

"These awards are one indication of the journalistic quality that we are committed to bringing readers in print and online," said Lynn McMillon, the *Chronicle's* editor, president and CEO.

Erik Tryggstad, the *Chronicle's* assistant managing editor, captured first

place for his September 2010 feature article from Cambodia on "Life, death and rebirth in The Killing Fields."

Managing Editor Bobby Ross Jr. won first place in the interview category for his December 2010 story on the faith journey of "The Rookie" Jim Morris.

Tryggstad and Ross earned second place for in-depth reporting for stories on the 2010 Haiti earthquake. Their entry included Tryggstad's reports from Haiti and Florida, and Ross'

features on Haiti orphans reunited in the U.S. and Christian university students rallying to help victims.

Tryggstad also received second place for front-page design, second place for inside-page design and third place for a staff editorial that he wrote about Haiti.



ERIK TRYGGSTAD

AUSTRIA

VIENNA — For nearly two years, missionaries in this European capital have invited children to the English Kids Club, a weekly, hour-long program of free English instruction.

"It has given us an opportunity to serve kids, meet parents and deepen relationships," church planter Jake Haskew said. "This year we have had consistently 10 to 12 kids."

GAMBIA

BANJUL — Lucner Pierre, a minister in Cap Haitien, Haiti, and his wife traveled from the Caribbean Sea across the Atlantic Ocean as part of a mission team to this West African nation.

**Lucner**

Lucner and U.S. church members hosted a Bible seminar and gospel revival, said Isaac Daye, a church planter in the tiny

nation, where 90 percent of the 1.8 million inhabitants claim Islam as their faith. Other team members were Alan Robertson, a minister for the White's Ferry Road Church of Christ in West Monroe, La., and his wife, Lisa, and Ben Adkins, director of World Radio Gospel Broadcasts.

The team met Gambia's vice president, Isatou Njie-Saidy, and told her about the Churches of Christ and their mission in Gambia.

The vice president "was delighted and expressed thanks on behalf of the government to us for our services and religious contributions toward the growth of the nation," Daye said.

GREECE

ATHENS — The Omonia Church of Christ serves refugees who come to Athens from war-torn countries including Afghanistan and Somalia.

"There are thousands of refugees in Athens that live in deplorable conditions, without



DAVE HOGAN

'Best week of my life,' as teens serve at Angkor of Faith

Cambodian children and youths from Churches of Christ across Southeast Asia squeeze into a group photo at the fifth Angkor of Faith mission in Siem Reap, Cambodia. About 90 representatives of church youth groups in Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Japan and the Philippines participated in the week-long camp, ministering to street kids in this tourist city, famous for the ancient Angkor Wat temples. Katherine Gould, a church member working in China, described it as the best week of her life. "I believe Cambodia and these kids will always be a part of my life," she said.

running water or electricity," minister Dino Roussos said.

His wife, Debbie, works with the Hellenic Ministries outreach center, where refugee women can take showers and get a hot meal. Most speak neither Greek nor English.

"Through translators, we hope to share the love and compassion of Christ with them as we assist with their needs," Dino Roussos said.

NEW ZEALAND

TAURANGA — "The earthquake was not an act of God. Compassion shown afterward was the act of God."

That quote appears in a recent newsletter from missionaries David and Mary Nelson. It's a paraphrase of something an Anglican priest said in the wake of a

6.3-magnitude earthquake that destroyed much of the city of Christchurch on New Zealand's South Island.

Members of the Otumotai Church of Christ in Tauranga, on the country's North Island, helped families displaced by the quake, which claimed more than 180 lives.

The church has received donations for quake victims, and minister Andrew Gearhart is supervising the church's response.

"Individuals and businesses in town dropped off items to our church building and then ... the church hosted a lunch for 10 families and provided them with food, clothing and furniture," Mary Nelson said. "Two households were furnished and many new friends were made.

RWANDA

KIGALI — The Rwandan government honored church member

**Hixson**

Holly Hixson and other leaders of Peace Through Business, a program designed to empower women in this African nation.

Hixson is Rwanda coordinator of the program, an initiative of the Oklahoma City-based Institute for Economic Empowerment of Women.

The program selects 30 women and trains them in business practices. Fifteen of the graduates spend a month in the U.S. to acquire additional training, according to *New Times*, a Rwandan newspaper.

SPOTLIGHT**In search of a shipwreck**

MELLIEHA, Malta — John Harkins traveled to this port city on the Mediterranean Sea to pursue a childhood dream.

For as long as he can remember, the deacon of the Mayfair Church of Christ in Huntsville, Ala., has been fascinated by the story of the apostle Paul and the shipwreck told about in Acts 27.

So Harkins, a diver, made his third trip to Malta recently to continue his quest for evidence of the Alexandrian grain ship that was transporting Paul to Rome before it was destroyed. Miraculously, all aboard the boat survived.

"I'm quite in the minority in thinking there might be some remnant," Harkins told the *Huntsville Times*. "But I know we're going to find something, though it may not be from Paul's wreck."

Harkins told the newspaper he hopes any evidence he finds matching Luke's account of the shipwreck in Acts will help those struggling with faith.

"It could be one more thing where somebody said something didn't exist and we can say, 'Yeah. It did,'" Harkins said. "Maybe it will help someone who has lost their faith and wants to come back."

TO SEE VIDEO of Harkins explaining his quest, search for "Malta" at www.christianchronicle.org/blog.



PHOTO PROVIDED

John Harkins overlooks Mellieha Bay on the island of Malta.

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Praying during the installation of elders in Curitiba, Brazil, are, from left, missionary Alan Nalley, elder Jose Carlos Sottomaior, evangelist Mauro Francisco, elder Vilmar Bucco, missionary Rod Nealeigh and elder Luis Silva. The Curitiba church also named six deacons.

Thirty-year dream realized as Brazilian church names elders

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Christians in Brazil celebrated the realization of a 30-year dream recently as the Church of Christ in Curitiba appointed elders and deacons.

Vilmar Bucco, Jose Carlos Sottomaior and Luis Silva will serve as elders of the congregation. The church also named six deacons: Gilberto Castanheira, Pedro Jory, David Penna, Marcos Siqueira, Maurício Bini and Fernando Dias.

The Curitiba mission had its genesis in 1981 at the Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver. Instructor Bob Waldron taught students there and "opened their eyes to the billions of lost souls worldwide that needed to hear the Good News about Jesus," said missionary Alan Nalley. Waldron now serves as director for research and global planning for Missions Resource Network.

In a chapel presentation at Bear Valley, Gary Sorrells, then a missionary in Sao Paulo, Brazil, talked about the need for workers there. Sorrells represented a ministry called Brazil Break Through, now Continent of Great Cities. Sorrells now serves as the ministry's director emeritus.

Four families committed to work in Curitiba, a city of 2 million souls: Ron and Georgia Freitas, John and Sherena Langley, Alan and Ree Nalley and Rod and Linda Nealeigh. The team set goals

of evangelizing the city and "establishing a strong missionary church, with its own building, centrally located, easily accessible, and with its own biblical and Brazilian leadership," Alan Nalley said.

Today, about 350 people attend the Curitiba church. The congregation launched a preacher-training school, the Bible Institute of Southern Brazil, in 2005. The church and school have helped plant two additional congregations in southern Brazil.

The Curitiba church is self-supporting, Nalley said. It supports a full-time secretary and two full-time evangelists — Mauro Francisco and Cicero Balbino. Ramos Costa recently joined the team as a self-supported evangelist.

Each missionary committed to serve five years in Brazil but stayed much longer. The Langleys returned to the U.S. after 12 years. The Freitases stayed for 15 years and now work for Continent of Great Cities. The Nealeighs recently said goodbye to Curitiba after 23 years of service.

The Nalleys plan to stay in Curitiba, where they will continue to work with the Bible institute and "provide a mentoring relationship for the Curitiba leadership, help with new church plantings, lead an evangelistic small group ... and continue to share the Good News in Curitiba and all the places God leads," Alan Nalley said.

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TORNADOES: Church members among dead, injured



PATRICK FLANAGAN

A church van rests amid debris after a tornado heavily damaged the Hackleburg Church of Christ building in Alabama.

FROM PAGE 1

Broadfoot looked to the left, where the church's family life center used to be. "It was completely destroyed," he said, "and that's when we realized how bad it was."

'THINGS DON'T MATTER'

In an instant, America's deadliest tornado outbreak since the Great Depression obliterated the Central church building. The April 27 swath of twisters that killed about 350 people and injured thousands more across seven states did not, however, destroy the Alabama church. "The building where we worshiped is gone, but the church is here," Central elder Don Wheeler told the 300-member congregation the Sunday afternoon after the storm. "Amen!" agreed a chorus of voices in the already tearful crowd, assembled at a special 2 p.m. service moved to the Northport Church of Christ. About 150 miles north of Tuscaloosa, about 30 people — Christians and non-Christians alike — waited out the storm



PHOTO PROVIDED

Relief volunteers work at the site of the Hackleburg, Ala., church.

in the Bethel Church of Christ basement. "About the best thing I can say is, they didn't have a scratch. They were all safe and sound," said Jimmy Clark, minister of the Bethel church, about four miles east of Athens, Ala., along U.S. Highway 72. All around them, though, was destruction. The church auditorium, a classroom annex and a nearby home where the preacher used to live all were destroyed. "It's like a bomb went off for a half-mile wide," said Clark, noting that 14 of the church's



ROYCE OGLE

Church members and other volunteers take inventory of clothing, flashlights, batteries, candles, baby items and other contributions outside the Central Church of Christ building in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

families lost their homes. The force threw Bethel church elder Jerry West, who lived directly across the street from the building, into his front yard. West suffered a broken collarbone and dislocated shoulder. He stayed overnight in the hospital. His house is gone. That Sunday, the congregation moved its service to the West Hobbs Church of Christ in Athens. A crowd of 360 showed up, and eight members asked to be restored. "People realize now that things don't matter," Clark said.

'TEARS WERE SHED'

In the small town of Hackleburg, Ala., more than two dozen people died as a tornado destroyed the only grocery store, schools, the police station, the fire department and homes. Winds stronger than 200 mph ripped away the front of the Hackleburg Church of Christ building and ravaged the foundation, walls and roof, minister Mike Lane said. The building appears to be a

total loss, Lane said. "I don't know whether we can salvage the pews or not," he added. Lane and his wife, Betty, hid in a closet in their house about three blocks from the church. "It's the only place in the house where we could have survived it," the minister said. "My wife got a broken clavicle. I got bruised up pretty badly. Other than that, I'm in pretty good shape."

Bridget Renee Barnwell Brisbois, 34, a member of the Hackleburg church, died in the storm, Lane said. Her son, Mitchell, less than a month old, was with his grandparents and survived. That Sunday, church members — including a half-dozen or more families who lost homes — gathered for a short worship assembly outside the devastated building. "Tears were shed," Lane said. "I spoke some encouraging words. It was the beginning of the healing process." In the hard-hit town of Smithville, Miss., population 900, the Church of Christ was

converted into a food, clothing and medicine distribution center, and the congregation gathered outside for an open-air service. "People come together when the need arises," Smithville church elder Danny Stephenson told AFP, a French news agency.

'AS THE LORD PROVIDES'

Almost as soon as the tornadoes passed, Christians across the nation began opening their wallets to help, while disaster relief organizations associated with Churches of Christ rushed resources to storm-ravaged communities. At the Kittanning Church of Christ in Pennsylvania, the Summerville Church of Christ in South Carolina, the Jasper Church of Christ in Texas and numerous other congregations, special contributions were taken. "Our church and community were the beneficiaries of this kind of relief when Hurricane Rita hit our town" in 2005, said Sharon Wells, a member of the Jasper church. Among the relief organizations at work:



WAYNE GOODE

The remains of the auditorium at the Bethel Church of Christ in Athens, Ala., testify to the destructive nature of the April 27 tornadoes.

- Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort (www.disasterrelieffort.org) shipped semi-truck loads full of supplies to hard-hit communities in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and Tennessee. In keeping with its practice after wildfires, floods, hurricanes and other tornadoes, the Nashville, Tenn.-based ministry worked with local churches, including the Hackleburg congregation, to distribute bottled water, canned goods, cleaning materials and other essential items to victims — church members or not. "We're just thrilled about the response of our brethren," Lane said. "Our phone has just rung constantly. ... I cannot express enough our love and appreciation for our brethren."
- Mike Baumgartner with Disaster Assistance CoC (www.disasterassistancecoc.com), a feeding ministry overseen by the Lake Jackson Church of Christ in Texas, drove to Tuscaloosa and started cooking.
- The Churches of Christ Disaster Response Team (www.churchesofchristdrt.org),

sponsored by the Melbourne Church of Christ in West Melbourne, Fla., made plans to set up a command center in Tuscaloosa. WFR Relief (www.wfrchurch.org/relief), a ministry of the White's Ferry Road Church of Christ in West Monroe, La., sent money, members and equipment and planned to "do more as the Lord provides," church member Royce Ogle said.

'YOU HAVE RISEN TO THE OCCASION'

In Tuscaloosa, the Central church building and its Tide 4 Christ student center are — or were — about a mile south of the University of Alabama campus. The Sunday after the storm, wreckage surrounded the church building as nearby residents dug through remains. Some trees lay tipped over like fallen chess pieces. Others remained standing but stripped of all bark, holding displaced objects such as shoes and toys. National Guard troops patrolled destroyed neighbor-

HOW TO HELP

Donations for tornado relief may be sent to:

- Central Church of Christ, www.tide4christ.com, 304 Hargrove Road, Tuscaloosa, AL 35401-4927 (earmark for building, student center or disaster relief), (205) 758-1177.
- Bethel Church of Christ, 25815 U.S. Highway 72 East, Athens, AL 35613, (256) 232-1096 (earmark funds for church building or disaster relief).
- Hackleburg Church of Christ, P.O. Box 176, Hackleburg, AL 35564, (205) 935-8332.
- Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, www.disasterrelieffort.org, 410 Allied Drive, Nashville, TN 37211, (888) 541-2848.
- White's Ferry Road Relief Ministries, www.wfrchurch.org/relief, 3201 N. 7th Street, West Monroe, LA 71291, (318) 396-6000.



KRISTIN JENKINS

A woman reflects on the devastation in the neighborhoods surrounding the Central Church of Christ building in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

hoods to keep out looters, while search-and-rescue teams worked to locate missing residents. The gymnasium at the rear of the church building was crumpled into an indiscernible heap. Insulation, leaves and glass were strewn about the auditorium. Giant chunks of classroom and office walls were missing. The collapsed roof of a carport covered a church van in debris. But amid all the destruction — and despite the realization that the church building and surrounding community would soon have to be bulldozed — the faithful brimmed with an undeniable hope. That Sunday morning, members gathered not for their normal worship assembly but at their respective work stations — eager to provide disaster relief assistance to friends and neighbors. Outside the church building, workers sorted and distributed donated food and water. On another side of the building, volunteers took inventory of clothing, flashlights, batteries, candles, baby items and other contributions.

Out front, a gentleman flipped hot dogs and hamburgers on a grill. A group of ladies wrapped the entrees and coupled them with chips to provide sustenance to relief workers and tornado victims. "We're going to build this back," Central member John Box said while working to clear pews and songbooks from the auditorium. "It's going to take some time, but with some help, we're going to build this back."

Central preacher Lee Jamieson and a number of the church's youth loaded pickups and drove to leveled neighborhoods, where they passed out food and cases of water. While they focused mainly on physical needs, they looked for evangelistic opportunities. "The Gospel goes hand in hand with this kind of relief," Jamieson said. Even Caleb Durden and the other students who survived the tornado joined the relief effort. "The people were so thankful," Durden said of the victims he helped. "The sad thing is these

children running around. You know, they don't have a home around. A lot of people are just dazed. You walk around and see people just sitting there. They don't know what to do."

That Sunday afternoon, members of the University Church of Christ in Tuscaloosa and the Rivergate Church of Christ in Birmingham, Ala., took over the relief operation while Central members turned their attention to worship.

Durden

In his sermon, Jamieson praised the congregation's outpouring of love in the face of an ever-increasing death toll. "You have risen to the occasion," he said. "I have never been so proud to be a Christian." His closing thought was simple. "What remains? Faith. Hope. And love," he said. "Those are the only three things we had beforehand anyway. The things that matter have not changed."



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UNIVERSITIES: Leaders decry bullying, verbal abuse

FROM PAGE 3

But there's a difference, he said, between someone who is challenged with same-sex attraction and someone who acts upon homosexual desires.

"This is a complex issue requiring individual care and attention," Schubert wrote. "We are committed to carefully and honestly helping all our students make choices that will honor God in their lives, not just in the area of their sexuality."

"This does not mean that every behavior is acceptable," he added. "But it does mean we desire to demonstrate compassion toward everyone, even when we have serious disagreements."

HARDING BLOCKS WEBSITE

In Harding's case, Burks addressed the underground website in a daily student chapel assembly and explained why the university blocked the site using the campus firewall.

The *Times* reported that Harding's action "helped cause the site to go viral in the world of religious universities." However, the paper provided no details to back up that statement.

Acknowledging that anyone with a smart phone or an off-campus wireless signal could access the site, Burks said Harding wasn't trying to control students' thinking. But Burks said he personally found the site "offensive and degrading."

"While the postings appear to be sincere and heartfelt, several were vulgar and profane by anybody's standards, and the rhetoric is often extreme," he said.

Under Harding's student handbook, all sexual relationships outside the context of marriage between a man and woman can result in a student's suspension, Burks said.

"We believe that sex is the creation of God and is meant to be holy, just as God is holy," he said. "Consequently, we believe that all sexual relationships outside of marriage are immoral. This includes premarital sex and extramarital sex among heterosexuals, as well as homosexual acts. Those who assert that Harding has a double standard and somehow considers homosexuality to be a sin above all other sins misunderstand our position."

Neither democratic voting nor societal norms determine what's acceptable and holy in God's sight, Burks told students.

Both Schubert and Burks said there's no place at a Christian university for

anti-gay bullying or offensive speech.

"We are committed to creating an environment in which every person is protected from abusive behavior," Schubert said. "I believe it is vital for us to nurture a spirit of hospitality at ACU, in the name of Jesus."

Said Burks: "Bullying, whether physically, verbally or on Facebook, is not acceptable behavior at Harding. If we find out about such things, we will act quickly and decisively to protect every member of this campus community."

'BUILDING BRIDGES' WITH GAYS

At Pepperdine, a series of meetings with students, faculty and staff members this past school year reviewed the university's response to the issue, Davis said.

"While our review ultimately reaffirmed the traditional interpretation of Scripture undergirding our sexual relationships statement, it was helpful to be reminded that this issue, like most controversial moral issues, cannot be reduced to two sides," the Pepperdine official said.

"The more we study together, the more likely we can maintain unity even when we do not all agree," he added. "Consequently, we are planning additional opportunities for our community to be involved in small-group Bible studies on sexual relationships."

This past fall, the University Church of Christ on the Pepperdine campus hosted a "Building Bridges" prayer service and invited gay and lesbian students to "share their stories of struggle," preaching minister Rich

Little said.

"The resulting conversations gave everyone a chance to seek deeper understanding of God's word on this matter in a spirit of love and safety," Little said. "The church's intent was not to affirm anyone's personal



Little

decisions but to seek understanding and encourage spiritual conversations within the church."

In the minister's view, the church must become the first place, not the last, that people turn when they deal with questions and struggles.

"Unless we develop a spirit of care and safety," he said, "this will never happen."

READ THE FULL STATEMENTS by the Harding and ACU presidents at www.christianchronicle.org.

Same-sex attraction: How should churches respond?

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Recent events on Christian university campuses — and high-profile media coverage of those events — bring the issue of same-sex attraction into the national spotlight.

Though members of Churches of Christ acknowledge the significance of this issue, many Christians hesitate to discuss it.

To foster dialogue about the challenges faced in ministering to those struggling with same-sex attraction, *The Christian Chronicle* asked Sally Gary, David Lane and Don McLaughlin to share their thoughts and experiences.

All three have counseled Christians — on college campuses or in church pews — who have struggled with sexual sins. Each has extensive experience with people who struggle with same-sex attraction.

What does the Bible teach concerning homosexuality?

● **Sally Gary:** My personal conviction is that Scripture does not condone homosexuality. Beyond the Old Testament prohibitions against homosexual behavior, under the new covenant Paul includes homosexuality as something to be avoided by followers of Christ in his letters to the church at Rome, the church at Corinth, and Timothy.

Most important to me, though, is what Jesus teaches about our sexuality. One of the popular gay theologies sanctioning homosexuality is the fact that Jesus never speaks of same-sex relationships per se in the Gospel accounts of his life and teachings. But to understand what Christ believes about how we are to live out our sexuality comes not from what



● **Sally Gary**, assistant professor of communication at **Abilene Christian University** in Texas, directs **CenterPeace**, a nonprofit that provides support and resources for people who experience same-sex attraction. For more information, call (325) 232-2528 or see www.centerpeace.net.

he *didn't say*, but what he *did say* about relationships. The only way Jesus ever speaks about the physical expression of our sexuality is within the confines of marriage between a man and a woman.

▲ **David Lane:** Homosexuality is a sin against creation.

Through creative force, unimaginable wisdom and logic God made man and woman to be joined together. Matthew 19:4-5 reads: "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?'"

Paul calls homosexuality an exchange of the natural for what is unnatural in Romans 1:26-27. The Bible also teaches homosexuality is a sin against God's law in Leviticus 18:22.

■ **Don McLaughlin:** In comparison to many topics, the Bible has very little to say about homosexuality. However, what it does say is not shrouded in mysterious language.



▲ **David Lane**, a psychotherapist, ministers for the **Marsalis Avenue Church of Christ** in Dallas. He also conducts marriage enrichment conferences. He coauthored "**Low Motives in High Places**" with Thomas Jackson, offering strategies for healing when church leaders commit sexual sin.

It is important to note that, in Romans 1:18-32, engaging in same-gender sexual acts is framed as failing to honor God's intentions for the human body as he created us.

Similarly, 1 Corinthians 6:9-20 notes that the human body is meant for the Lord to function as a temple for the Holy Spirit, and homosexuality, among the other sins listed, is not consistent with that God-ordained purpose.

Do you see a general agreement on this teaching among Churches of Christ? Have attitudes changed?

● **Sally Gary:** In my conversations with leaders in Churches of Christ, I find agreement with the belief that Scripture does not condone homosexuality.

However, there is growing confusion among church



■ **Don McLaughlin** is pulpit minister of the **North Atlanta Church of Christ** and a speaker at Christian events across the country. The 1,400-member North Atlanta church offers recovery ministries for addictions and counts hundreds of recovering addicts among its members.

members because of our hesitance to talk about this issue.

Past generations have grown up with no exposure at all to any conversation about same-sex attraction — in our churches or through the media — except to

'In my conversations with leaders in Churches of Christ, I find agreement with the belief that Scripture does not condone homosexuality. However, there is growing confusion among church members because of our hesitance to talk about this issue.'

Sally Gary

and greater attention to the lack of compassion, particularly by certain segments of Christianity.

Because they see this conflicting with the overarching message of Christ's compassion — and because we have neglected to address the deep, underlying issues of identity

and gender validation which surround same-sex attraction — we are now faced with a generation of believers who do not see anything biblically wrong with homosexuality.

▲ **David Lane:** Congregations that have ministers who use traditional hermeneutics in teaching the Scriptures still hold to the view that the Bible does not condone homosexuality.

However, those who are being fed cultural hermeneutics, or "new hermeneutics," are likely to be very tolerant in their view of the subject. Cultural hermeneutics holds that the Bible must be interpreted in light of the culture in which it is being read. In other words, Scripture may say that homosexuality is wrong, but if the culture accepts it then homosexuality is not wrong for that culture.

■ **Don McLaughlin:** We do not talk about this topic enough to know if there is general agreement among Churches of Christ regarding homosexuality. Recent events at our Christian colleges may demonstrate some differences in how we try to respond to this issue, but I am not certain that these responses indicate differences in what we believe.

The differences in what we believe and how we apply our interpretation of Scripture, when stripped of political and media language, can help us expand our understanding of this issue.

What advice would you give churches for maintaining a biblical perspective on homosexuality?

● **Sally Gary:** To maintain a biblical perspective on homosexuality for future generations, we must change the way we're responding to this issue by simply looking to the

See **SAME-SEX**, Page 26

SAME-SEX: Christ's love compels compassion to all, experts say

FROM PAGE 25

way Jesus has always taught us to respond to people. Invite them to the table, regardless of where they are spiritually, and let them encounter the overwhelming love of Jesus there.

Condemnation and simply quoting Scripture on homosexuality closes the door and doesn't allow any further opportunity to speak to a person's heart when he or she is hurting. We must acknowledge the pain that's underneath this struggle, overcome our own fears and learn how to address the needs of our brothers and sisters who are growing up in silent misery right in our midst.

Perhaps most importantly, we must help parents better understand how critical environment and familial relationships are in the development of healthy gender identity in our children.

▲ **David Lane:** The pivotal questions to be asked are: Is the love of Christ rich enough in our hearts to extend compassion to those among us who struggle with sexual orientation? Has the mind of Christ so influenced our hearts that we are capable of lovingly but firmly loving the sinner while hating sin?

■ **Don McLaughlin:**

My encouragement for churches is threefold. First, build on this conversation. There is nothing to be gained from being combative or extreme. Second, find ways to connect with others so that this is a continuing conversation and open dialogue. Third, lead with understanding, not condemnation.

Somehow, we believe that if

we preach boldly enough and deliver a bullet-proof argument against homosexuality, that we will keep people from this lifestyle. But this is simply not true. That approach isn't keeping you or me out of the sins we know are wrong.

We underestimate the level of difficulty another person may experience when facing temptations that are not common to our personal experience. And for that reason we are much more forgiving toward the sins we battle than those of others.

I am not suggesting that I use "how I am wired" as permission to live in contradiction to the call of Christ and the teaching of Scripture. But it is a simple application of the Golden Rule to give others the grace, respect and support we also need.

How can Christians minister to those who struggle with same-sex attraction?

● **Sally Gary:** We must first confess our own fears, stemming from a lack of information about same-sex attraction.

Because we haven't talked about this, we're fearful and have bought into a lot of misinformation — myths that perpetuate the fears and keep us from forming meaningful relationships with men and women who experience same-sex attraction.

Having a safe place to open this conversation without

fear of condemnation or being treated differently is critical for someone who experiences same-sex attraction to feel welcome in our churches.

For someone who experiences same-sex attraction — even someone who has grown

up in church — there's a great deal of fear in simply admitting those feelings.

It's critical to respond in love — the expressions on our faces, our willingness to really walk with this person, beyond a pat on the back at a worship service. We must all convey a genuine desire to understand and support the person struggling with same-sex attraction.

Spend lots of time listening and less time sharing Scriptural references. If

the person has grown up with Scripture, he or she knows. And, frankly, reading verses from Ephesians 4 to me when I'm angry has never stopped me from feeling angry.

Simply love me as my Father loves me — unconditionally — and let me truly experience his love through your living life with me. Feeling that love, through a brother in Christ who was and still is willing to take me right where I am, even when I'm at my most unlovable, has made all the difference in my life.

It is that love — the Father's love that runs out to meet us "while we're still a long way off" — that transforms each of us into the likeness of Christ.

▲ **David Lane:** We must make our congregations safe places for strugglers of all kinds — including homosexuals — to find grace, love and release from the self-destructive grip of homosexuality and anything else that has a hook in us.

We must also be a community that stands up for God's truth, not in an arrogant, pompous way, but in a kind, courageous manner that says we have learned the hard way that God's

ways are higher than our ways. His plans for our family structures, our marriages and our sexual behavior is a righteous plan that ennoble our existence.

Unless we acknowledge that we are all in need of God's grace and healing in our sexuality, we

will continue to prevent homosexuals and others from listening to us. They will hear only our fear and revulsion, not our love and similar need of grace.

We should never cast the light of criticism against homosexuality

without doing the same against immoral heterosexual behavior. Only when we show that we have a greater concern about our own sin will we have a right to confront sin in others.

We must look in the mirror before looking out the window.

■ **Don McLaughlin:** First, you are ministering to them right now. People with same-sex attraction are in your church right now. You may be ministering to them very well by your love, faithful service, teaching and spiritual support.

A bigger question would be: Could they count on you to continue to minister to them if they revealed their struggle?

Perhaps part of our dilemma is wrapped up in our struggle with "serial sins." We have a different attitude toward some more than others. Many in our churches are battling sexual sins related to Internet pornography. This is a problem of epidemic proportion.

Jesus frames our response to all strugglers with his objective to draw them closer to him. Through his grace, forgiveness and call to discipleship Jesus shapes them into his likeness.

What other advice would you give?

▲ **David Lane:** The challenge before us is not only to reach up to God, but to reach out to the homosexual. God holds homosexuals responsible for their sins just as he does with any other sinner.

We should keep in mind that our heterosexual sin includes hatred toward homosexuals. Whenever we initiate or tolerate slang terms, demeaning jokes or derogatory, offhand comments, we send a strong message that these people for whom Jesus died are less valuable to him than we are.

We must find avenues of ministry consistent with our moral stance. Christians should be known for the kind of hands-on help that characterized the ministry of our Lord. That should include counseling support for homosexuals as well as ministry to AIDS victims.

■ **Don McLaughlin:** I know there are some who would like to make this issue go away by somehow making Scripture pro-homosexuality. This is simply a no-win situation. The integrity and veracity of Scripture does not support these conclusions.

On the other hand, others want to "once-and-for-all" end this debate and permanently bury the voice of the gay-rights advocate under a landslide of political legislation or biblical mandate. Historically, this approach has ended poorly in the separation of church from state — with the church behaving so aloof and self-righteous that those among us who struggle are either driven into deeper isolation or leave to find someone who will love them.

Jesus calls us away from the language of defamation, degradation and dehumanization. He calls us to a language and lifestyle of redemption, sacrifice, value and engagement.

His way is our only hope.

'Unless we acknowledge that we are all in need of God's grace and healing in our sexuality, we will continue to prevent homosexuals from listening to us. ... We must look in the mirror before looking out the window.'

David Lane

'We underestimate the level of difficulty another person may experience when facing temptations that are not common to our personal experience. And for that reason, we are much more forgiving toward the sins we battle than those of others.'

Don McLaughlin



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LYNN McMILLON

Tina Dupres and her mother, Brenda Antoszewski, stand among tables of donated items at the North Canton Church of Christ's clothing giveaway. Both were baptized at the church.

A church that gives itself away

IN RECESSION-RIDDLED OHIO, *North Canton Church of Christ finds ways to share its blessings with its community*

BY JOY McMILLON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

NORTH CANTON, Ohio

It's a chilly, gray Saturday in this small town in northeastern Ohio. Hundreds of people are lining up outside the doors of the church waiting for the monthly clothing giveaway to begin. Early arrivals show up at 7:30 a.m. The doors don't open until 10.

Denise Hammond, a tall woman with an easy smile, passes the time by quietly chatting with others in the line. She lives 30 minutes away in an apartment in Canton. She is unemployed.

"This means a lot to me. It's how I clothe my three kids," she says.

Just inside, Sherry Jones crouches on

the brown tile floor near the women's restroom, singing softly to her children. Guests are allowed to use the restroom before the doors open.

Daughters Mary Grayce, 1, and Abigayle, 3, are restless. Abigayle has cerebral palsy and requires constant attention.

"These people are wonderful here, and I find really good stuff for the kids," Sherry Jones says.

At 10, the guests walk swiftly past the registration tables, collecting two large, empty garbage bags — the quota for each family. No smoking or fighting is



Hammond

allowed. People move quickly among the tables, filling their bags. Children eagerly eye the toy and book tables, carefully choosing a new treasure.

The people who come to the church include single mothers, elderly couples, veterans, immigrants, the disabled, the unemployed, the desperate.

The 350-member North Canton church has a passion for the poor.

And members believe God is leading this congregation into ministries that are making a difference.

"Our clothing program serves 150 to 300 families each time, and about 400 hundred families use the church's monthly food giveaway," says Rod Stockdale, outreach minister and

project director of the giveaways.

Clothing is distributed on the second Saturday of the month, food on the fourth. All total, more than one million pounds has been given away since 2003.

HARSH ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The beauty of its gently rolling hills and flowering dogwood trees masks the harsh economic reality that many Ohioans face today.

Like other Great Lakes states, Ohio has suffered major losses in heavy manufacturing jobs.

In Stark County, where the church is located, the unemployment rate is 10.7 percent, according to the U.S.

CONTINUED



LYNN MCMILLON

North Canton, Ohio, Church of Christ

LOCATION: Northeastern Ohio, about 10 miles north of Canton and 55 miles south of Cleveland, with a population of about 17,000

WEBSITE: northcantonchurch.org

LEADERSHIP: Elders Harold Ebert, Norm Hostetler, Jim Lindesmith, Steve Oberlin, Ted Rogers and Ken Smith. The church has 18 deacons. **HISTORY:** Twenty-three members began meeting in 1953 in a YMCA facility. The church has met at its facility on East Maple since 1992. **STAFF:** Pulpit minister Ted Underwood, outreach minister Rod Stockdale, youth minister Travis Williams. All are graduates of Ohio Valley University in Vienna, W.Va.

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.



A church that gives itself away



PHOTO PROVIDED

Rod Stockdale, outreach minister for the North Canton church, and his wife, Sonya, prepare to deliver winter coats to inner-city Canton elementary schools.

CONTINUED

Department of Labor. Nearly 41,000 are living in poverty, says Michelle Hinton, director of marketing at the Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank.

When hard times hit the area, the church could not turn its face away. And the community has followed its lead. “God has commanded us to help the poor and those most in need,” says Ron Mollohan, who drives the church’s 15-foot truck or its three vans and trailers, picking up food and clothing donations from local stores and the food bank.

SHARING DEEP BLESSINGS

Inside the church gym, the scope of this ministry is evident. Thousands of articles of gently used clothing, neatly stacked and sorted by dozens of volunteers, are piled high upon 55 eight-foot tables. Children’s toys and books are heaped on other tables. On the stage are strollers, bicycles and baby equipment. Nearly 500 pairs of shoes line the perimeter.

Almost all these items have been donated by four local clothing consign-

ment shops and three Walmarts. Instead of restocking returned goods or holiday clearance merchandise, the North Canton Walmart gives them to the church, members say.

The roots of this ministry began a dozen years ago with a simple donation of school supplies to students at a Canton inner-city elementary school by young girls in the church’s Tabitha Club, says Maxine Hostetler, their club sponsor.

Today, a host of compassion-based programs — known as “The Giving Tree” — has exploded within the church. They include the monthly giveaways as well as an array of outreach efforts to the community, inner-city schools and the needy.

Working with Stockdale and the volunteers is Giving Tree coordinator Janice Sweitzer, an accountant and financial advisor.

A sampling of these events:

- A snack program for 15 inner-city



LYNN MCMILLON

Eager mothers check out the gently used clothing for their children at the giveaway.



LYNN MCMILLON

Starann Gibson smiles, pleased with her selection of toys, games and books.

schools in nearby Canton.

- An annual new coat program for some 250 needy children.
- Easter community egg hunt, attended by 300-plus people.
- Community Christmas party.
- Thanksgiving meals delivered to 2,500 people.

A “Back to School Bash” in August draws 500 to 600 to the church. Children receive socks and underwear from Walmart, a bag of school supplies and free haircuts from local barbers.

Face-painting is always part of the children’s parties. It’s cheap, gives the volunteers important one-on-one time with the children, and kids love it, Sweitzer says.

“North Canton has been deeply blessed in so many ways by God, and we want to pass on some of those blessings to the more needy in our community,” Sweitzer says.

MEETING SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL NEEDS

Though the programs speak to physical needs, members employ Bible teaching and spiritual encour-

agement whenever possible.

All the crafts at the Easter giveaway party, for example, have a religious theme. “We don’t do cotton balls and bunnies,” Sweitzer says. “It’s sandpaper crosses ... and we talk about Jesus. We’re not just being a social-service agency. We’re trying to teach about Jesus at the same time.”

Carolyn Joliff pushes food carts filled with groceries out to guests’ cars and unloads them. Like other volunteers, she likes talking with the guests and invites them to services.

“Sometimes people thank me. And I say, ‘Don’t thank us; thank the Lord.’ They say, ‘We thank you both.’”

At every event, Linda Blackwood runs a World Bible School booth. Last year 102 people signed up. Several have been converted after additional study and contact with the volunteers.

Tina Despres, 42, and her mother, Brenda Antoszewski, 60, are two of those baptized in 2009 by Ted Underwood, North Canton’s pulp minister for the past 33 years. Both women are on disability, and Tina’s husband is deaf and on disability, too.



LYNN MCMILLON

Ted Blackwood preaches for the church with a Sunday attendance of 350 to 375.

“I could never understand the Bible when I read it, but the course helped a lot,” Despres says. She and her mother now read the Bible together every day and work as volunteers at the giveaways.

Unforeseen blessings of the “Giving Tree” ministries include the many opportunities it has provided for church members to practice their faith.

Carolyn Lindequist explains it this way: “When you have a large project or several large projects like we have, it creates niches for people who haven’t found something to do. There are so many things that are easy to do in these programs that accomplish so much.”

While all ages participate as volun-

teers in the programs, many of the men and women volunteers are retired people. Setting up and taking down 50 to 100 tables every month requires lots of “lugging and loading,” Maxine Hostetler observes.

Three years ago, their desire to expand their outreach ministries meant the church needed to build. They took on a \$3.1 million addition, virtually doubling the size of the building with an 18,000-square-foot addition. A gym, a larger fellowship room and kitchen and adult classrooms were added.

“It took a lot of faith for a church our size to do what we did,” Blackwood says. There was no building fund, but members have already given nearly \$2 million toward their goal, says long-

‘We’re not just being a social-service agency. We’re trying to teach about Jesus at the same time.’

— **Janice Sweitzer**, coordinator for Giving Tree ministry



LYNN MCMILLON

Children in Darlene Ondecker’s fourth- and fifth-grade Bible class sit on the floor and read lessons from Scripture at the North Canton Church of Christ.

time member Kevin Ramsey.

Using the gym, the church also implemented a growing community sports ministry for small children that is bringing in more visitors, says Jim Lindequist, an elder and co-director of a recently added program, Upward Sports.

THE COMMUNITY RESPONDS

Community response has been remarkable. In addition to the support of retail stores, dozens of community people now make up about half of the total volunteers.

A man who often walks through the parking lot and sees the long lines regularly hands Stockdale a check for \$500.

Hundreds of community volunteers show up for the Thanksgiving Day meal deliveries.

“These are folks ... who just love to help the needy,” Stockdale says.

Far from the Bible Belt, the North Canton church is also well known and appreciated by civic and school groups.

Calling them “well organized and

successful,” Jill Oldham, director of the regional food bank, named the North Canton church as the largest food distribution agency among the 94 in Stark County during 2010. They distributed 337,880 pounds of food.

“God has opened door after door for us, and the elders have not been hesitant to walk through them,” Stockdale says.

The elders believe these programs as well as many others — such as their large missions involvement and their

active youth programs directed by Travis Williams — all meet their mission statement: “Glorify Jesus and show him to others.”

The elders evaluate every idea brought to them using two criteria: “Does it meet our mission statement? And do those behind the idea have the passion to really get in there and make it happen?” Jim Linquist says.

“If those two things click, then we let them go, and we step back and let God make it happen.”



Stockdale

Church's basketball program has an Upward focus

BY JOY McMILLON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

NORTH CANTON, Ohio

Conner Stewart, 8, can't wait for next year's basketball season. It will be his third. He learns a lot, has fun, and it's something he and his busy father, Brad — a golf course superintendent — can do together.

Conner is one of the 58 kids who participates in a popular children's sports outreach ministry for kindergarten through sixth graders at the North Canton Church of Christ. Last year — the first season — drew 36 kids. Two-thirds of them are from the community.

Patterned after "Upward Sports" — a 15-year-old, trademarked program based in South Carolina, the program gives children opportunities for skills-building, fun, friendship, competition and spiritual development.

That's exactly what North Canton church leaders were looking for.

When they expanded their building to include a gym three years ago, they envisioned a multipurpose tool that would provide opportunities for community outreach and evangelism.

A Christian sports ministry was high on their list of priorities for the gym, which also is used for giveaways, youth activities, Vacation Bible School and Red Cross blood drives.

"We have families coming

to church as a result of the Upward program, which has nearly doubled in size in only two years," elder Jim Lindesmith said.

He and his wife, Carolyn, are co-directors of the program and sports enthusiasts. They know the popularity and power of sports from experience. All three of their sons played.

"The uniqueness of the program is teaching Jesus Christ along with basketball," Jim Lindesmith said. It teaches Christian values rather than the "win-at-all-costs" mentality found in many children's sports leagues, he added.

Carolyn Lindesmith said parents are "really surprised at the encouragement aspect of the program, and the fairness of playing time. There are no stars."

Connor Stewart's mom, Melanie, agrees.

"The experience has been very positive for Conner," Mealanie Stewart said. "It's important that kids who are learning how to play a sport need to grasp the sport before they start being competitive."

Parents also are pleased about a short playing season

and the spiritual dimension of the program, she said.

Christian coaches are part of the program, providing strong role models for the children. Each practice includes a brief devotional. Coaches share Bible verses and life lessons.

On game days, a devotional is



Randy Howard contests a short jumper by Skylar Albrecht.



PHOTOS BY MARK PRINCE

Players Hogan Sedlock and Bryan Beasley confer with coach Ted Rogers.

offered at halftime so parents can get a taste of the program.

"You are helping kids understand the game of basketball and how to play as a team and work with the other kids," said Trevor Price, a coach and father whose daughter has played in the league since its beginning.

After each game, players get awards for playing good offense or defense. They also get awards for sportsmanship, effort and Christ-likeness.

Though there are no stars in the Upward league, the children receive stars to wear for their performance in each category.

"That really motivated our son," Mealanie Stewart said. "If he wanted a special star, he would strive to be better in that."

Price sees the sports ministry as a creative way of keeping the church externally focused.

"If you are trying to reach

Ninety percent are from North Canton, including all coaches and referees, Lindesmith said. The rest are parents of the players who want to help.

One of the things that players most enjoy is the way they are introduced before the games.

"The church puts lights on them, and they run under a 'tunnel' to center court," Jim Lindesmith said.

Parents like to see their kids have a good time in organized sports. Someone who isn't the best of the best might not get an opportunity in school, but everyone gets equal playing time in this program.

"It's exciting to see a kid score who is not very athletic. Parents and teams get excited about that," Price said.

"It's also great to see very talented kids — who can score any time they wish — throw the ball to someone who can't. That's a proud moment for any parents to see that kind of character," Price said.

Price's daughter, Katelyn, 8, likes playing basketball, too, even though she had never shown a lot of interest before, said her mom, Angie Price.

"She learned a lot, had a lot of fun, and her skill level really improved," Angie Price said. "Most of all, she was thrilled that her two brothers, finally, had to watch her for a change."



Noah Park eyes the goal defended by Bryan Beasley.

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FACES OF WBS

**Tex and Mary Jane Williams**

When Robert Harold Williams was 7 or 8 years old, his Sunday school teacher kept him after class and told him he would be a missionary one day.

"No, I'm going to be a cowboy," he replied.

But Williams, who acquired the nickname "Tex" for his cowboy shirts, eventually fulfilled his teacher's prediction. He and his wife, Mary Jane, served as missionaries in South Africa for nearly 13 years.

In 1987, Tex Williams became president of World Bible School. He recruited another missionary to Africa, John Reese, to join the ministry in 1991.

In 2006, Reese succeeded Tex Williams as president.

**Ernest Bullard**

"There's nothing like World Bible School," said Ernest Bullard, pictured at right with WBS staffer Kevin Rhodes.

Before he became a Christian, Bullard's lifestyle and temper resulted in multiple convictions.

"My longest sentence was 10 years," he said. "That one involved Church's fried chicken, a whiskey bottle and a slit throat."

In a Texas prison, Bullard enrolled in WBS and studied the Bible. He worshiped with Freedom Church, an outreach of the Westover Hills Church of Christ, at a transitional center.

Baptized in 2006, Bullard has sent more than 13,000 WBS lessons around the globe. He studies with more than 2,100 students.

WORLD BIBLE SCHOOL: 'There really are seekers in this country'

FROM PAGE 3

Africa outnumber those in the U.S., thanks in part to World Bible School.

"If it were not for WBS, I could not have known the truth and the Church of Christ," said Julius Mwambu, who began the correspondence program in 1986. Now the lessons are a vital part of his ministry in Mombasa, Kenya, he said.

As churches in Africa have flourished, U.S. congregations have declined. World Bible School's leaders point to statistics from *The Christian Chronicle* that detail declining membership and attendance among Churches of Christ in the ministry's home country.

Since 1980, the U.S. population has increased about 35 percent, but total church membership has suffered a slight decline. Studies by the Pew Forum and the Barna Group show religious groups across the country losing ground.

That doesn't mean Americans have given up on faith, said Lance Tolar, a technology consultant for World Bible School. The U.S. consistently ranks in the top five countries for students of the ministry's printed lessons. Since WBS first offered its courses through the Internet 16 years ago, more than half of its online student body has come from the U.S.

"We have churches that are not growing, but we have people from Baptist ministers, Catholic priests to unchurched enroll in our ministry to study the Bible," Tolar said.

"There really are seekers in this country," he added, "and somebody needs to be teaching these people."

CONNECTING LOCALLY

Jimmie Lovell, founder of WBS, described the ministry as "an opportunity for those

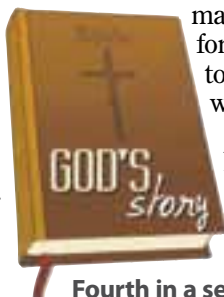


ERIK TRYGGESTAD

At the Westside Church of Christ in Roud Rock, Texas, groups of church members spend Wednesday nights grading World Bible School lessons.

of us in the church, who are supposed to be the light of the world and salt of the earth, to preach the Gospel. ... We are showing how every one of us may go — without waiting for the unsaved to come to our buildings," Lovell wrote in 1974.

Thirty-seven years later, the ministry launched a program designed to help U.S. churches do just that.



Fourth in a series: The Bible and U.S. evangelism

"WBS Connect" is an effort to help Churches of Christ share Jesus locally. A church that participates receives a document with ideas for reaching its community — direct mail, advertising, door-knocking campaigns, posters and business cards. The ministry also sets up a WBS-branded website for the church that helps the congregation connect with interested students.

At first, "the student may

not realize that their teacher is across town or across the street," said Kevin Rhodes, vice president for development. Students and teachers may talk over coffee, and new converts have an immediate church home with friends, he added.

One congregation involved in a pilot program for Connect is the New Road Church of Christ in Waco, Texas. The church, with an attendance of about 225, uses WBS to reach the lost overseas but rarely as part of its local outreach, said member Buddy Shaw.

To prepare for the work, the church's elders and more than 30 of its members worked through online WBS courses. The church also formed a local outreach committee, set up a special website and printed business cards and yard signs.

"Recently, our first non-member student enrolled," Shaw said. "I do not know how she learned about us — card,

yard sign, friend, neighbor or relative. We are hoping and praying that she is the first of many to enroll, and that God will bless our meager efforts to teach the good news locally."

ONE CONVERT'S STORY

In years past, Churches of Christ were known for their high level of biblical knowledge, said Kit Mullins, vice president of Internet ministry for WBS. In America, people still hunger for that knowledge, she added.

One example is Desiree Conover, a 49-year-old cake decorator at a Wal-Mart in Burlington, Iowa. Raised Catholic, she had given up on church but went online looking for Bible studies because, she said, "I didn't feel fulfilled."

She signed up for World Bible School on Feb. 23, 2009.

At 6:31 p.m. on April 4, 2009, she sent an e-mail requesting baptism. Now she's a member of the Burlington Church of Christ.

"Without WBS and its teaching, I would have never understood the true meaning of 'born-again Christian,'" Conover said. "I would not have known that Jesus died on the cross and that there was a new promise made between him and us. The courses explained it in exact detail for beginners — from start to end."

Conover's story demonstrates the opportunity believers have to harness WBS — the same tool they've used for years to teach the Gospel in Mombasa, Kenya — to reach souls across the street, Mullins said.

"There are people we deal with on a daily basis that may be interested in what we're doing," she said. "The new wave of church that's out there is not satisfying them in the same way that knowing the word of God does. We have the opportunity, once again, to be the people of the Book."

FOR MORE INFORMATION, see www.worldbibleschool.net/connect.

WBS: 'Ordinary Christians sharing their faith'

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

CEDAR PARK, Texas — World Bible School's success doesn't come from pulpit-pounding preaching or grand, evangelistic campaigns, says John Reese, the ministry's president.

Sitting at a conference table in the ministry's Texas headquarters, he talks about the thousands of church members who have dedicated their time to study the Bible one-on-one with students through the mail or the Internet.

From its beginning, World Bible School has been a movement of "ordinary Christians sharing their faith," Reese says.

The ministry's founder, Jimmie Lovell, was not a preacher. Lovell, a California businessman who made a living selling dynamite, was a benefactor of many evangelistic efforts and a believer in the power of correspondence courses to spread the Gospel.

During the 1940s, Lovell financed a series of Bible lessons developed for G.I.'s by Gordon Turner, minister of the Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn.

A few years after World War II, the Lawrence Avenue church got a letter from a Nigerian named C.A.O. Essien. The retired police officer was looking for a Bible course and was referred to the church by a school in Germany. He had visited several denominational churches in Nigeria but was frustrated that he couldn't find a church that resembled the one he read about in the New Testament.

After completing the courses, Essien wrote the church again, asking for more lessons. Later he sent another letter, claiming that thousands of Nigerians

were using the courses and getting baptized. Could the church send missionaries?

In 1950, Reese's father, Boyd Reese, and Eldred Echols, missionaries in southern Africa, traveled to Nigeria to meet Essien.

"And they found out that, yeah, it was true. There were thousands and thousands of converts already," John Reese said. "There were lots of Churches of Christ, all from that one correspondence course."

GARAGES TO WAREHOUSES

The response in Africa sparked Lovell's imagination. In 1962 he launched a missions newspaper, *Action*, and urged Christians to evangelize — at home and around the world.

Ten years later, Lovell, age 77, and his wife, Vivian, started a new correspondence teaching program at the Torrance Church of Christ in California.

Missionaries provided them with the names and addresses of 100 students in Africa and 100 in the Caribbean. Within two years, enrollment grew to 400,000. The Lovells dubbed the effort World Bible School.

The ministry has operated from tiny offices in Tennessee and California, run largely by volunteers. In the mid-1970s church members Danny and Donna Compton used the garage of their home in Garland, Texas, to store large orders of WBS materials.

In 2000, the ministry moved from its offices at the Westover Hills Church of Christ in Austin, Texas, to its current facility in Cedar Park. The ministry also has service centers in 17 countries to help process its lessons from around the globe.



RON POTTBERG

World Bible School representative Isaac Daye distributes lessons at a school in the African nation of Sierra Leone.

LIVING ROOM EVANGELISM

More than 600 churches in the U.S. sponsor WBS teaching programs. Some church members have taught in the program for decades, corresponding with thousands of students around the world.

"It's the perfect ministry for me because it involves missions but doesn't involve actually having to talk to people," said Sharon Gardner, who coordinates the WBS ministry at the Westover Hills church. "I'm shy, and talking (about Christ) in person is harder for me. So I have time to think about my answers."

"I'm teaching the lost," she added, "and I'm doing that from my living room."

Carly Cannon, age 17, teaches all of her students through the Internet. When her father, Robin Cannon, who oversees church relations for the ministry, urged her to become a teacher, she said, "I thought it would take too much time or would be too boring. I, quite frankly, didn't want to do it."

Nonetheless, she signed up and, in the next two weeks, got a list of e-mail addresses

of people who wanted to know more about the Gospel. From a couch in Hernando, Miss., she shared her faith with them.

"I have corresponded with people all over the world — France, Australia, Pakistan, Nigeria and even America," she said. Helping them understand God's Word "reminds me of why I became a Christian. It means that I can do something to help someone study and understand the Gospel."

NEW GENERATIONS

John Reese and his wife, Beth, developed a follow-up program for WBS students



Danny Reese

when they served as missionaries in Zimbabwe and, later, in South Africa. The Reeses have four children — all involved in missions.

One of them, Danny Reese and his wife, Katie, are part of a team that plans to move to Angola, a Portuguese-speaking nation in southern Africa. The team lives in Lisbon, Portugal

and works with the Church of Christ there.

As they prepare for work in Angola, the younger Reeses are making plans to use World Bible School in their work.

In the past, U.S. missions to Portugal "created a mindset that the congregation here is a receiver of missions rather than a sender and participant in missions," Danny Reese said.

That mentality is changing, thanks in part to the Angola team's presence and the vision of the Lisbon church's leader, Ricardo Neves.

The Lisbon church has committed to church-planting and missions. Members intend to use WBS lessons to teach students in Angola as the mission team recruits them. The church plans to order the Portuguese lessons from World Bible School's office in Brazil.

"Our prayer is that the demand for WBS in Angola will far outstrip the ability of the Lisbon church to handle," Danny Reese said, "and that many more teachers will step up to the plate in Portugal, Brazil and the U.S.A. Only God knows how this will grow."



ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Copies of *Action* from 1962 and 2010 in the WBS office.

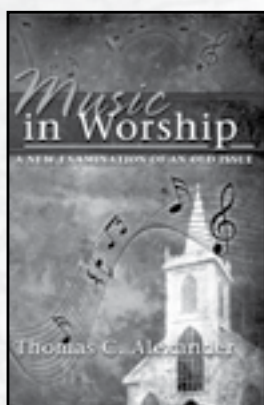


Tennessee Children's Home Job Openings

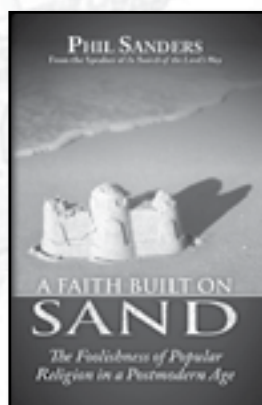
- **Case Manager:** The Spring Hill campus is in need of a qualified Case Manager to work with adolescent boys. Qualified candidates will have a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work or a related field.
- **Houseparents:** The Spring Hill and West TN campuses are recruiting couples to come live on campus and provide care for up to 8 adolescent boys. Previous childcare experience is required.
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CAMPUS MINISTRIES

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

STARKVILLE, Miss. — A student-led Evangelism Strategy Team focuses on gaining personal Bible studies with classmates on campus.

The University Christian Student Center, overseen by the Starkville Church of Christ and campus minister Perry Jinkerson, has worked to equip students to “go into all the world” since 1966.

Last year, 16 college students were baptized at the Starkville church.

“I know that I can go to the student center and be surrounded by a group of people who always remind me who my father is,” said Rudi Acklin, who was baptized in September 2009.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

CHRISTIAN CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

OKLAHOMA CITY — The Christian Child and Family Services Association presented two special awards at its recent annual conference.

Debbie DeSpain Kitchens of Foster’s Home for Children in Stephenville, Texas, received the “One Person Can Make A Difference” Award.

Rod Self, assistant director of New Mexico Christian Children’s Home in Portales, N.M., received the Distinguished Service Award.

HIGHER EDUCATION

FREED-HARDEMAN UNIVERSITY

HENDERSON, Tenn. — Youths who attend the university’s “Go!” camp this summer will help pack 100,000 meals for Haitian children, said camp director Brad Montague.

The camp, in its inaugural year, is designed for children in grades seven through 12 and places a heavy emphasis on service, Montague said.

Participants will partner with the Estes Church of Christ and Feed My Starving Children, a nonprofit, to prepare the meals for Haitians recovering from the 2010 earthquake that destroyed much of the country’s capital, Port-au-Prince. The Estes church helps support Son Light Children’s Home near Port-au-Prince.

“We want to put real-life, world-changing ideas into the hands of a young generation who wants God’s love to be seen and known by all,” Montague said.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY HARDING UNIVERSITY

Bisons for Christ: 2,000-plus Harding students serve community

Harding University students repair a broken waterline at Camp Wyldewood, a year-round Christian camp and retreat center in Searcy, Ark. During the recent ninth annual Bisons for Christ Day of Service, more than 2,000 students worked on 150 community projects, ranging from helping care for animals at the local humane society to repairing His House, a food and clothing donation center run by the College Church of Christ.

HARDING GRADUATE SCHOOL

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — About 80 church elders and their wives participated in the recent “Shepherding Conference” at Harding University Graduate School of Religion.

Eddie Randolph, associate professor of ministry, spearheaded the opportunity for elders and their wives to come together to learn, share, grow and experience renewal, organizers said.

The workshop was sponsored by the Church Leaders Resource Network at the graduate school, which will be renamed Harding School of Theology on July 1.

K-12 CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

COLUMBIA ACADEMY

COLUMBIA, Tenn. — Supporters have pledged \$7.7 million of the \$10 million to a campaign called “Vision 2020,” school President James Thomas said.

The centerpiece of the campaign is a

planned gymnasium and stadium facility with a large meeting space for events.

RADIO AND TELEVISION

CHRISTIAN PRODUCTIONS INTERNATIONAL

MIAMI — Twenty-seven Christians learned how to reach the lost using radio at a seminar hosted by Rex Morgan.

Morgan produces a television show called “Con La Biblia Abierta” (“With The Open Bible”) and offers resources for Spanish-speaking Christians. He also is senior producer for Latin America for Franklin, Tenn.-based World Christian Broadcasting. One seminar attendee came to Miami from the Dominican Republic, where he produces a radio program.

“He believes the need is growing to reach out through media,” Morgan said. “His dream is to establish a Christian radio station in the Dominican Republic.”

SPORTS

Shock saves coach

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — When coach Joey Spann’s heart stopped during a high school basketball game, bystanders were at his side within seconds with the device that saved his life.

An automated external defibrillator, or AED, sat ready in a cabinet 50 feet away at David Lipscomb High School.

With one shock from the AED, Spann’s heart started beating again, and he woke up. He underwent quadruple bypass surgery the next day. Spann coaches for Goodpasture Christian School. Both Lipscomb and Goodpasture are associated with Churches of Christ.



Spann

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Minister / Evangelist Needed

The Kingfisher Church of Christ, a 100-plus congregation in north-central Oklahoma, is seeking a minister who has a degree from a Christian university or school of preaching. Prefer several years of preaching experience. A man with good work ethics and self-disciplined to take responsibility and get things done.

The candidate must be able to communicate well, both orally and in writing, and have good computer skills. He will be responsible for preaching/teaching the Word, office work, as well as ministering to the congregation and community. Interested applicants may send a resume and recent sermon to The Elders, Kingfisher Church of Christ, PO Box 164, Kingfisher, OK 73750, or call Barry Haynie at 405-375-6335 or e-mail bhaynie@pldi.net

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The **Swope Parkway Church of Christ** in Kansas City, Missouri is seeking an experienced individual to serve as our Ministering Evangelist.

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Visit our website at www.swopeparkway.org and click on the "Our Leadership" and "Minister Search" tabs for more information, applications, and instructions.

Missions Resource Network shifts focus to church equipping

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

ARLINGTON, Texas — In the past half-century, missionaries have assisted in planting thousands of churches around the globe, said Dan Bouchelle.

As a result, “we cannot parent 50-year-old churches like they’re 5-year-olds,” Bouchelle told a crowd of missions supporters at the 10th DFW Missions Dinner for Missions Resource Network.



Bouchelle

“It’s really not our job to be their parents anyway,” said Bouchelle, who became the ministry’s executive director last year. “We need to realize what time it is and where we fit into God’s global economy.”

Bouchelle told supporters about the Bedford, Texas-based ministry’s vision for the future. In the past 13 years, Missions Resource Network, or MRN, has sponsored numerous workshops to help care for missionaries as they serve on the field and as they return from the field. The ministry helped train at least 14 mission teams serving on five continents.

Now MRN plans to shift its emphasis from team training to church equipping, Bouchelle said, although the ministry will continue to help train missionaries. MRN plans to work closely with Churches of Christ in the U.S., helping

them to “think like missionaries” and catch a global vision, he said.

Bouchelle also talked about partnering with churches around the globe — including the Pasir Panjang Church of Christ in Singapore and the Otumoetai Church of Christ in Tauranga, New Zealand — in reaching their own communities and surrounding nations.

“God is on the march around the globe,” Bouchelle said, “and we face an entirely new reality.”

During the dinner, MRN honored Robert S. and Katharine Bell and the Bell Trust with the Crystal Globe Award for distinguished service in missions.

The Bells established the trust in 1956 to support ministers and missionaries. The trust has distributed nearly \$30 million and contributed to thousands of religious, missionary and charitable works of Churches of Christ.

The Hills Church of Christ in North Richland Hills, Texas, received the Antioch Award for congregational excellence in world missions. The church, formerly the Richland Hills Church of Christ, annually contributes more than \$2.2 million to local and global missions, and more than 1,000 of its members participate in short-term missions each year. The church supports 22 long-term missionary families in 13 nations on four continents.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, see www.mrnet.org.

Teacher deals with case of malaria

MESQUITE, Texas — Shane Scott, a teacher and coach at Dallas Christian School, has returned to work after being hospitalized with a severe case of malaria.

John Scott, Shane’s father, said his son remained weak but was thrilled to be back with his students and colleagues.

“We are grateful to the good Lord,” said John Scott, minister of mission effectiveness at Christian Care Centers Inc. in Mesquite. Church members across the nation — and even around the world — prayed for Shane Scott after he contracted the disease during a Dallas Christian School spring-break mission trip to Ateiku, Ghana.

Peggy Good, a church member in

Alabama, died in 2010 from complications due to malaria. She contracted a severe form of the disease on a mission trip to Ghana five years prior to her death. Good’s malaria resurfaced after a mission trip last year and resulted in organ failure.

About 1,500 cases of malaria are reported every year in the U.S., although the disease was eradicated here by the 1950s, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Most Americans who contract the disease get it while traveling to countries with high levels of malaria. U.S. citizens who contract malaria rarely die from the disease, according to the CDC.

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18

The Principle:
Focus on the important things, avoid the things that cause you trouble.

“Blood, which is intended by God to be life-giving, therefore, may continue to stain the highways because of ethyl alcohol, but not by the approval of dedicated Christians! Ethyl alcohol may continue to bring shame and disgrace to the home, but not by the approval of dedicated Christians! Society may continue to crumble and decay because of ethyl alcohol, but not by the approval of dedicated Christians! Ethyl alcohol may continue to wound the innocent and promote health and moral problems by the score, but not by the approval of dedicated Christians!”

(Excerpt from *The Bible and "Social" Drinking* by W.D. Jeffcoat page 192)

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Chemistry and Biochemistry

The Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at Abilene Christian University invites applications for a tenure-track position in organic chemistry beginning Spring or Fall 2012. The successful candidate will demonstrate a commitment to excellence in teaching and in research appropriate for an exceptional undergraduate department. Teaching responsibilities will include organic chemistry lecture and lab and other chemistry courses as appropriate. Ph.D. in organic chemistry is required, with post-doctoral experience preferred. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/academics/cas/chemistry.

Foreign Languages

The Department of Foreign Languages invites applications for a tenure-track position. The ideal applicant will hold a terminal degree in Spanish or linguistics. The primary need is for teaching linguistics applied to elementary and intermediate language levels. Innovative opportunities exist for leadership in language pedagogy and within the Dialektos language program. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/cas.

Journalism and Mass Communication

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication invites applications for a position in online interactive media. The ideal applicant will have professional experience in some dimension of online interactive media as a journalist or producer, or in advertising or public relations. At least a master's degree in the field is required, and a terminal degree is strongly preferred. This faculty member will work closely with faculty and staff colleagues in the department to further integrate the curriculum with the co-curricular student media produced in the JMC Network newsroom, the commercially licensed LPTV station, ACU's NPR-affiliated FM radio station, and the student-run Ad/PR agency. Teaching expectations will include visual and digital media courses for multimedia majors and within the department's core curriculum that serves majors in convergence journalism, multimedia and Ad/PR. Research and service expectations support ACU's status as a comprehensive university and the department's national accreditation by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/jmc.

Political Science

The Department of Political Science invites applications for a tenure-track position. Applicants should have a Ph.D. 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, a Certificate in International Relations and Comparative Politics, and a Peace and Social Justice minor. It hosts the Jack Pope Fellows Program, and is actively engaged in ACU's new interdisciplinary Core courses. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/politicalscience.

Sociology

The Department of Sociology and Family Studies invites applications for a tenure-track position in sociology or a closely related field (e.g., criminal justice). Applicants at all levels of instructional rank will be considered; a terminal degree or ABD status is preferred. Responsibilities include teaching general undergraduate sociology courses, pursuing scholarly research, and performing service for the department and the university community. The successful applicant will demonstrate an ability to work in collaborative, collegial relationships in a multi-discipline department.

In a letter to the 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.

NEWSMAKERS

NAMED: Lydia Lenker, executive-in-residence at Lipscomb University's Andrews Institute for Civic Leadership in Nashville, Tenn. Lenker was press secretary to former Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen.



Lenker

CONGRATULATIONS: David

Walton signed a one-year contract with renowned Minneapolis-based a cappella singing group Cantus. Walton is a graduate of Harding University in Searcy, Ark. **Algene Steele** contributed a chapter to a book about the Torrance Incubation Model of Teaching and Learning. Steele is creative director for design services and lecturer in fine arts at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn. **Justin Arbuckle, Jarrett Carter, Jeremy Coleman, Eli Eck, Davis Thomas and William Walter** received Boy Scout Joyful Servant Awards in a ceremony at the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City.

AWARDED: Dr. Lew Moore, chair of the marriage and family therapy department and director of counseling center at Harding University in Searcy, Ark., the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Louisiana Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. Receiving distinguished service awards from Harding University are: **Penny Hitt**, Harding Academy; **Morris Seawel**, associate director of admissions; **Robbie and Mona Shackelford**, Harding University in Florence, Italy; and **Elaine Wade**, human resources. **Ed Wilson**, professor of chemistry at Harding University, the Outstanding Service Award by the Central Arkansas Section of the American Chemical Society.

ANNIVERSARIES: 72nd: Ab and Bertha Hunter, Merkel, Texas. **61st:** Don and Mary Lee Boston, Benbrook, Texas. **60th:** Dan and LaJuan Fenn, LaJolla, Calif. **58th:** Jack and Loretta Cuning, Centerville, Tenn. **53rd:** Dean and Marie Bates, Centerville, Tenn.

BIRTHDAYS: 101st: Vivian Cline, Vienna, W.Va. **91st:** Lois Sanders, Centerville, Tenn. **84th:** Ellis Maddox, Centerville, Tenn.

PASSAGES: Mary Opal

Baxter, 103, April 23, Searcy, Ark., longtime member of the College church, Searcy, Ark. **Tim Green**, 74, April 12, Ada, Okla., member of Central church, Ada, and director of athletics at East Central University.



Green

May 12-14 Outreach with Patrick

Mead. North Canton, Ohio, church. Contact (330) 499-4303.

May 22 Reunion for Barrow Road

Church of Christ, Little Rock, Ark. Hosted by Central church. Contact (501) 374-2039.

May 26-29 "To God Be the Glory"

soul-willing campaign. Hosted by West Haven church, Texas City, Texas. Contact (409) 945-5241.

May 27-29 50th Anniversary

Lectureship. Wembley Church of Christ, England. Contact addarby@ntlworld.com or www.wembleychurchofchrist.org.

June 12 Jerry Carpenter Memorial

Congregational Sing. Fairview Road church, Columbia, Mo. Contact (573) 445-2213.

June 13-18 Missionary Renewal

Retreat. "Strength for the Journey." Lake Texoma, Texas. Contact gina.waldron@MRNet.org or (888) 641-2229.

June 14-18 Quest 2011.

Wisconsin Christian Youth Camp, Black River Falls, Wis. Contact Jim Frost (312) 420-0859 or www.wcyc.org.

June 16-18 Christian Scholars

Conference. "The Path of Discovery: Science, Theology and the Academy." Pepperdine University, Malibu, Calif. Contact www.pepperdine.edu/csc2011.

June 24-26 50th Anniversary of

Newark, Del., church. Contact newarkchurch@comcast.net.

June 26-30 National Deaf Christian

Workshop. "Golden Jubilee." Fairfax, Va., church. Contact deafworkshop.com or David Hinckley at dhinckley@verizon.com.

June 29-July 1 Summer Celebration.

"In Christ Alone: Learning Kingdom Life from Jesus." Lipscomb University, Nashville, Tenn. Contact summercelebration.lipscomb.edu or (800) 333 4358, ext. 6609.

July 15-17 100th Anniversary, Laings,

Ohio, church. Contact (740) 472-5508 or www.laingschurchofchrist.org.

July 22-25 Blue Ridge Family

Encampment. 61st annual. Black Mountains, N.C. Contact blueridgeencampment.org or (865) 456-6165.

July 27-31 Global Reunion Camp.

For TCKs/MKs and Parents. Oklahoma Christian University. Contact www.oc.edu/tck or nancy.hartman@oc.edu.

July 29-31 Legacy Conference

2011. Sponsored by Pacific Northwest Churches of Christ Women and Girls. Seattle-Tacoma Airport Marriott. Contact www.legacyconferencenw.com.

July 30 Preston Road School of

Preaching Reunion. Contact Chris Vidacovich at chrisv@cscoc.com.

COMPLETE CALENDAR at www.christianchronicle.org

Academic Freedom.... Where it is Might Surprise you!

There have been cries for academic freedom in American higher education for several decades.

The prevailing sense is that public colleges and universities provide the environment that promotes freedom of expression and thought. For many issues that may be true. But as we become an increasingly secular society, the irony is that conversations about God and faith are increasingly unwelcome in such institutions.

There seems to be the freedom to discuss anything — except a Christian perspective of the world.

Stated clearly by the former president of Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee, "Today, research universities are thoroughly secular and comprise one of the few places in America where openly acknowledged religion is not a life option. Consequently, academic freedom has become a casualty at these institutions."

Obviously, there are exceptions. Many faculty at public colleges and universities possess a dynamic faith and through it are Christian examples to their students. In addition, there are dedicated ministers who have accepted the call to campus ministry and serve Christian students at such institutions in admirable ways. It would be difficult, if not impossible, however, to prove that they are the norm rather than the exception to the norm of secular thinking and secular teaching on the public campus.

Ironically, the place where academic freedom exists as it relates to religion and faith are our Christian colleges. It is in our Christian colleges that the existence of God can be freely proclaimed. It is in our Christian colleges that important societal issues can be discussed with the Christian perspective asserted. It is in our Christian colleges that faith can be proclaimed as integrated into all of life, not just a

subset of life. Those opportunities no longer exist in most of American higher education and particularly not at state-supported colleges and universities.

What does this mean? For most people it simply does not matter. But for tomorrow's college students and their parents, it is the difference between an

education that supports a vital Christian faith and one that will not. In a Christian college, academic freedom will allow life's most important questions to be asked, beliefs to be explored and faith to be expressed. As a Christian college environment demands critical thinking and pragmatic preparation for success in the real world, it also proclaims that God, faith and the Christian walk are part of that world, the world God created.

Academic freedom. Public colleges and universities talk about it. Christian colleges deliver it. Those of us in Christian higher education believe the difference is important...eternally important. What about you?



*L. Randolph Lowry
President, Lipscomb University*

If you have comments on Christian higher education please contact me at compellingmission@lipscomb.edu.



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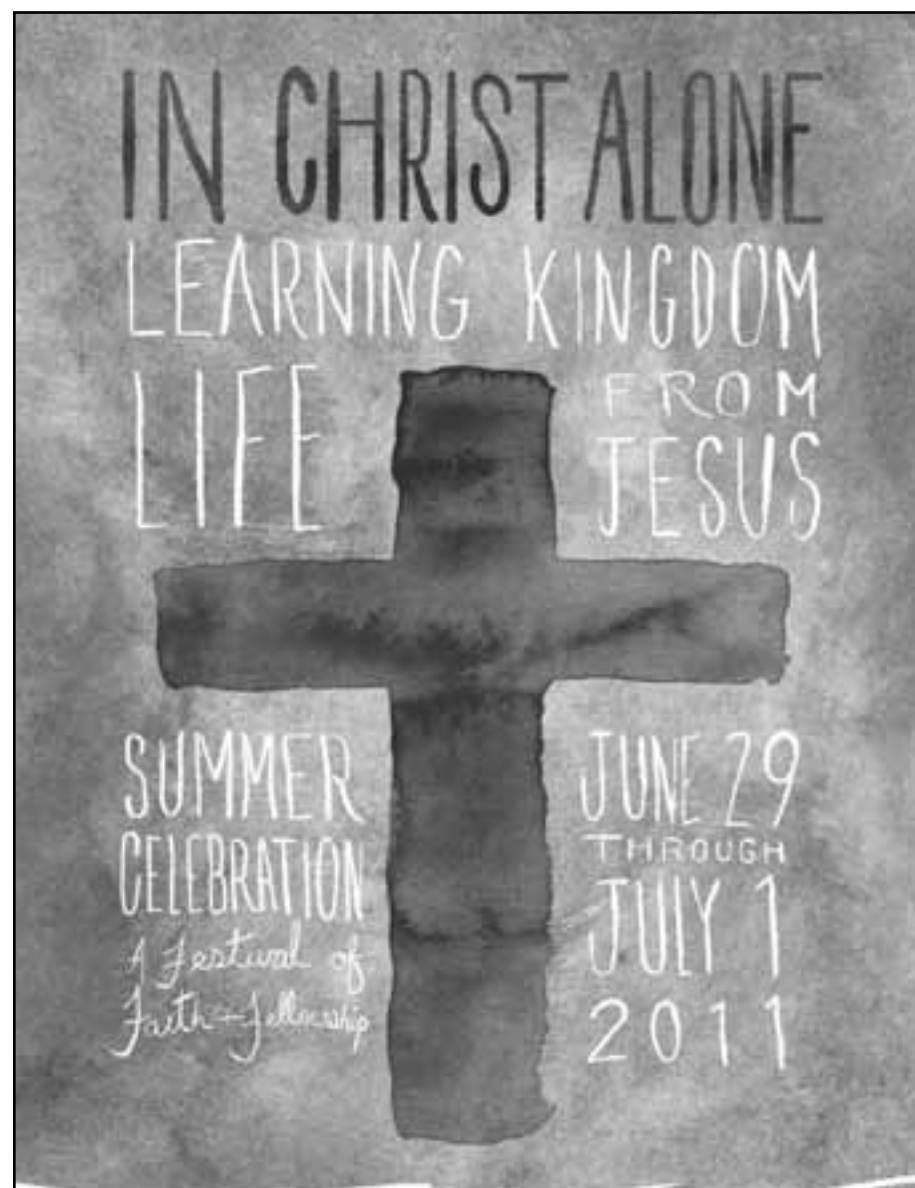
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EDITORIAL

LTC, L2L and lots of blessings

It was an amazing sight, really. On a recent Friday, as tornado sirens sounded in Rogers, Ark., 1,000-plus Leadership Training for

Christ participants and sponsors crowded into a hotel ballroom.

The ballroom served as the shelter in the storm — quite literally — for the young people and adults whose prayers and singing mostly drowned out the thunder overhead.

“I was pleasantly surprised by how calm and understanding everybody was,” said Macey Cossey, an Embassy Suites manager.

After the tornado warning, a Bible quiz on Revelation proceeded in that same ballroom as students tested their knowledge of the Scriptures they had spent months studying.

At Leadership Training for Christ (LTC) and Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes (L2L) conventions across the nation that weekend, not everyone experienced the same level of weather-related excitement.

But in Atlanta, Charlotte, Dallas, Indianapolis, Kansas City,

Memphis, Mobile, Nashville, Orlando, Phoenix and elsewhere, equally amazing sights were on display as thousands of young people filled convention centers.

Some preached. Some led singing. Some read Scriptures. Some competed in Bible Bowls. Others did service projects and used art, drama, puppets and choral groups to connect to the conventions’ Bible-related themes. All showcased their talents for the Lord.

We praise God for the faithful Christians who have worked hard to make these events fruitful for God’s kingdom and pray that LTC and L2L will help future generations of leaders blossom.

At the same time, we urge children and coaches to have a clear perspective:

• **Too much of a good thing:** It’s wonderful when a boy or girl wants to be involved in a puppet show, a drama, a service project, a small chorus and a Bible quiz. But in some cases, young people overextend themselves. If children are so busy with the “events” that they don’t have time to focus on God, then they may lose out on the true spiritual rewards.

• **Too much focus on competition:** We can become so enamored with perfection and results that LTC and L2L become more like youth sporting events than positive tools for training church leaders. We love the giant smiles on the faces of young Christians rewarded with plaques and trophies for their LTC and L2L accomplishments. But let’s help them focus on Christ rather than on the accolades.

• **Too much attention on a single event:** After months spent helping our children develop their talents, let’s not stuff those talents in a closet — or an isolated corner of the auditorium.

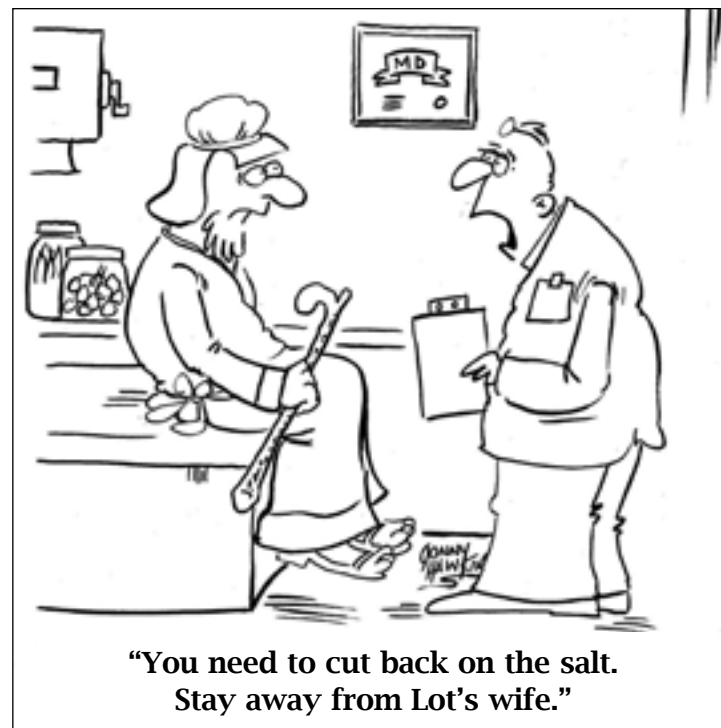
Why not regularly include young men on our congregations’ lists of Scripture readers, song leaders and even preachers? Why not let children help teach each other by using the puppets and drama skits to supplement Bible lessons all year long?

LTC and L2L represent wonderful tools for increasing our children’s excitement about the Bible and their knowledge of it.

With God’s help, may we make the most of these tremendous opportunities.

Ever-Laughing Life

by Jonny Hawkins



TO OUR READERS

Keep those directories coming

The circulation of *The Christian Chronicle* keeps increasing. This edition will go to more than 116,000 individual addresses in all 50 states, reaching about a quarter-million readers.

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As our way of saying thank you, we have asked a few of our longtime supporters why they help the *Chronicle* year after year.

Here's a sampling of their responses:

My wife and I support *The Christian Chronicle* because it presents the activities of Churches of Christ — large and small — very effectively. The writing is concise and to-the-point, with wide-ranging coverage. We frequently hear comments in our congregation about the value and pertinence of the *Chronicle*. The editorials are on target, and Bailey McBride's columns warm our hearts.

Rich and Curt Taylor | San Antonio
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The *Chronicle* keeps us informed about the people and issues that shape Churches of Christ throughout the U.S. and the world. We want to learn what new trends and old traditions shape the collective development of the global church. The expression of different views on spiritual, biblical and church-development topics helps us to become aware of and understand those outside our immediate circle of associations.

We especially appreciate articles that tackle important and sometimes controversial issues that confront churches today and examples of successful, growing churches who think outside the box.

Curt and Ruth Morrow | Columbus, Ohio
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All my life I've been interested in missionary work and have kept up with it. I want other people to know about it too. I'm interested in everybody knowing what everybody else is doing in the church all over the world.

Wanita I. White | Lafayette, Ind.
supporter for 25 consecutive years

What means a lot to me is that the paper tells us what is going on in the church on other continents and in our own country as well. I really enjoy reading it because it lifts me up to know that the church is growing.

From the Editor



Lynn McMillon

We have supported and will continue to support *The Christian Chronicle* because it is a good paper to keep us well-informed of Christians around the world — information we would not normally have available.

Thank you for your tireless effort. Our prayers are for your continued success.

John and Beverly DeLeon | Topeka, Kan.
supporters for 25 consecutive years

I have been, and will continue to be, a supporter of the *Chronicle* as I value hearing news of the churches around the world. Separated by miles, we often lose contact with those beyond our own communities. Every Christian ought to share and rejoice in the publication and support of this paper.

The *Chronicle* has a great past, a valued present and a hopeful future.

Austin and Barbara Emery | Mena, Ark.
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I like to support *The Christian Chronicle* because I am encouraged by the good activities of others. I think about the statement, "Go into all the world ..." and I can read about works being done by churches both here and abroad and mission trips and other good things. I especially like Bailey McBride's column.

Nena Brannan | Albuquerque, N.M.
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The reason I think it is important to support the *Chronicle* is that it keeps all of us who read it connected with the workings of the church throughout the world.

Reading *The Christian Chronicle* helps me see the "gears of the church" turning. It informs me, gives me ideas for implementation in our local church, makes me delighted and, at times, makes me grieve for our Lord's church.

Bill and Virginia Dennis | Natchitoches, La.
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We support *The Christian Chronicle* because it is comprehensive, reliable, well-written news that keeps us up-to-date. Features such as the book reviews and editorials complete the worthwhile aspects of the paper.

Gary and Linda Snow | Seminole, Okla.
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We support *The Christian Chronicle* because it is the single best source for keeping current on what is happening within the church worldwide, including: articles on church issues, needs and successes, a listing of future brotherhood events, pertinent data and information on our schools and missions, and personnel movement and obituaries.

Gene and Carel Muehring | Morton, Ill.
supporters for 25 consecutive years

Glenna and I support the *Chronicle* because we see a need for a church newspaper. Members of the Churches of Christ and others around the world can regularly receive an update on what is happening in the congregations and missions around the world. Now people can even receive daily e-mail updates. This information is priceless.

Tom and Glenna Trimble | Scottsdale, Ariz.
supporters for 23 consecutive years

We live in Pennsylvania, but we want to know about the good things going on in the church in Wyoming, Colorado and everywhere else so we read the *Chronicle* each month. It helps us get an overall picture of happenings in the church, and we find the mission stories especially interesting.

Bill and Erma Heiser | Carlisle, Penn.
supporters for 15 consecutive years

With a variety of assignments in the military, we moved more than 20 times to various parts of the country and overseas. My wife, Cynthia, and I

became active in local churches with each new assignment.

Then and now, through our Christian relationships, activities and travels during our nearly 44 years of marriage, we find that *The Christian Chronicle* keeps us informed, passionate and eager for all the opportunities the Lord has in store for his people worldwide.

Thank you, *Christian Chronicle*, for your faithful service and the support you've richly given us and the Christian community.

Alan and Cynthia Langford | Huntsville, Ala.
supporters for 18 consecutive years

What is going on with Churches of Christ worldwide is of great interest to me. I know of no other source that compares with *The Christian Chronicle* in providing such information. How wonderful to read in a recent issue that Jesus' hometown church in Nazareth now has elders. It is also good to learn that the Park Avenue church in Memphis, Tenn., is coordinating relief efforts for the Japanese earthquake.

Reatha J. Guyer | Lincoln, Neb.
supporter for 25 consecutive years

I support *The Christian Chronicle* because it does an outstanding job in communicating the life, health and challenges facing our fellowship. I appreciate the balanced reporting and enjoy reading stories about churches "Across the Nation" and "Around the World" due to connections from friendships, family and various mission activities.

Jeff Dimick | Los Angeles
supporter for 19 consecutive years

We appreciate the *Chronicle* because it keeps us in touch with what's happening in churches throughout the world. Its coverage is inclusive, encouraging and unifying for our brotherhood.

Leon and Marilyn Sanderson | Collierville, Tenn.
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‘Why the Churches of Christ were right after all’

METHODIST PROFESSOR shares insight after worshiping with the Preston Road Church of Christ in Dallas

EDITOR'S NOTE: Ted Campbell, associate professor of church history at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, posted this piece on his blog with the headline above. A shortened version appears here with his permission. Read the entire post at heartcoremethodist.org.

My great-grandfather and great-grandmother Campbell were members of the Braxton Church of Christ in Cannon County, Tenn., and after my great-grandfather died and my great-grandmother moved her three boys to Texas, she raised them in the South Park Church of Christ in Beaumont, Texas.

My grandfather and one of his brothers married Methodist sisters, and the women succeeded in diverting them into Methodist churches.

The reputation that the Churches of Christ had among my kinfolk was that they were eccentric because they did not use musical instruments in worship, they celebrated the Lord's Supper every Sunday, they didn't have creeds (except the New Testament), and they seemed not to recognize other Christian churches who did not "bear the name" of Christ in the names of their denominations.

In my senior year in high school I responded enthusiastically to an advertisement in a used-book shop promising free Greek lessons. I was taken to a small Church of Christ in Bridge City, Texas, where I got about 45 minutes of instruction in the Greek alphabet.

Then I was treated to an hour and a half of heated discussion sparked by a question posed by a younger and obviously inexperienced minister, "If I go to a Baptist revival and I just sit on the back row and don't sing the hymns or anything, does that constitute having 'fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness' (Ephesians 5:11)?"

The answer, I quickly learned, was yes, it does. And from the conversation in the car on the way to Bridge City and back I figured out that this was a group of Church of Christ folk who regarded a lot of other Church of Christ folk as mere pretenders to the name. They were, I think, what my Campbell relatives called "hard-shell" Church of Christ folk.

Views



Ted Campbell

So I did not have a very positive impression of the Churches of Christ, but I'm beginning to change my mind, and now I'm thinking they may be right on some of those most interesting points that have distinguished them.

I attended the Preston Road Church of Christ on a recent Sunday and deeply enjoyed the service, the singing and the sermon by Scott Sager.

Here are five reasons why the Churches of Christ may be right after all.

First, **they have a profound insight into Christian music and its place in worship.** I'm not sure I buy the rationale that says that because the New Testament doesn't mention musical instruments, congregations should not be forced to sing with them.

The Churches of Christ seem to use plenty of stuff — like collapsible music stands — that are not to my recollection mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. But they sure do sing well and, speaking as a man on this point, I really appreciate a church that does not expect me to sing soprano, even transposed an octave lower.

There's something utterly wonderful about the sound of human voices blending together in harmony. I wonder if we have gone too far with our instrumental fetish in worship.

Second, **they've sure got the right name.** If you think about it from the perspective of a friendly outsider, "Methodist" and "Presbyterian" and "Baptist" are not really ace names for Christian groups. Even "Catholic" sounds a little pretentious and "Orthodox" a little snitty.

"Church of Christ" sounds pretty straightforward by contrast. And you don't find local Churches of Christ congregations named "Wellspring Cornerstone Kewl Informal Non-Stuff Community," just "Preston Road Church of Christ" or "Highway 59 Church of Christ." Like the New Testament, they just name their congregations for the

places where they meet.

Third, **the Churches of Christ celebrate the Lord's Supper every Sunday.** Church of Christ folk haven't fallen for Protestants' quirky idea that words can suffice in place of bread and wine. The service at Preston Road was very simple, with an elder of the congregation offering a simple prayer of thanksgiving for the bread and a prayer of thanksgiving for the wine (which tasted a lot like grape juice), then the elements were distributed to the congregation.

Fourth, **there really is only one Church of Christ.** That's one of the cardinal claims of the ecumenical movement of the 20th century, and the Churches of Christ were way out front in making us aware of that claim. You don't have to buy the "hard-shell" version of the Church of Christ teaching to own that basic truth.

Fifth, and perhaps most importantly, **the simplicity of the Churches of Christ allows them to focus on what is most important, namely, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.**

There was no congregational creed beyond the songs we sang, of course, but a member of the congregation got up before the offering and exhorted us to consider the sacrifice of Christ as we give ourselves.

The preacher's sermon on the salt and light passage in the Sermon on the Mount

(Matthew 5:13-16) drove home the message that Christians need to be giving themselves for the world. The salt, he said, needs to get out of the salt shaker.

I came away with the sense that Churches of Christ folk really are the hobbits of the Christian world: not a lot of technological razzmatazz, not a lot of heavy emotion, not an elaborate or sophisticated liturgy, they just get the job done. There is a primitive simplicity to their communities that really stands out among other church bodies trying to be the church of Christ.

We'd do well to learn from them and thank God for their witness.

LETTERS

Dory Stoddard's widow thankful for coverage

I am the wife of Dorwan Stoddard, who was killed in the Tucson tragedy of Jan 8, 2011. I go to the Mountain Avenue Church of Christ.

I wasn't there the Sunday you came, but I do really appreciate it.

The article in *The Christian Chronicle* ("He was a hero to his church family," Page 1, March) was such a wonderful tribute to Dory and myself and our great Christian marriage.

Thank you, and I hope it gave a lot of people out there hope.

We were only married 15 years, but it was a beautiful lifetime.

Mavy Stoddard | Tucson, Ariz.

Review amuses reader

I always find it interesting that for those of us with more conservative views of how the Word should be interpreted, there is "potential for us to mature in our thinking" (see "Reese tackles women's roles with straightforward style, Page 32, May).

In addition, we are encouraged to "find mutual repentance on our path to partnership." Suffice it to say, this phraseology is interesting.

Whether this is the wording of author Jeanene Reese or review writer Craig Cottongim, I had to smile when I read these words.

Gloria Beasley | Dickson, Tenn.

Source clarifies position

I still am very concerned about the use of medals and trophies in teaching children about the Bible ("Bible Bowls: Textual preparation or trivial pursuit?," Page 1, May). However, the process as described in this article seems to me to be a very sound way to approach a Bible Bowl event.

We need to get children involved in the text. But we cannot leave the impression that learning a few facts about a text is equal to learning the message of the text. Let's teach for the heart, not just the head.

Paul Smith | Aztec, N.M.



In times of turmoil, books discuss how we talk to God

BY BILLIE SILVEY | FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Democracy is taking root in parts of the world where many of us never expected to see it. Dictators are making desperate, last-ditch stands against their own people.

Turmoil in oil-rich lands is increasing the risk of higher energy prices. Catastrophes around the world demand our attention and prayers.

I've seldom felt more deeply the need for prayer, and I've never found it more difficult to know what and how to pray.

Scripture tells us to "pray without ceasing," and that isn't difficult. There is no time in any day when prayer is not appropriate — and needed.

That's why I was eager to dig into these five new books on prayer. Each is different, but like pieces of a puzzle, they fill out the picture of the Christian's prayer life in challenging times.

The first is R.T. Kendall's **"The Lord's Prayer: Insight and Inspiration to Draw You Close to Him."** A short, easy-to-read book about a very short prayer, it, like the prayer, is packed with meaning.

Taking a phrase at a time, Kendall, for 25 years minister of Westminster Chapel in London, considers its implications for us, our prayer lives and our understanding of God and his will. With a foreword, three special recommendations, a preface and an introduction, I was impatient to get into the meat of the book, but it was well worth the wait.

I appreciated the focus on God, his glory and his will, as well as the focus on praying from the heart and on the

inclusiveness of the prayer. I appreciate that Jesus gave us a pattern for our prayers that can be adapted to all times and circumstances.

In the chapter on "Focusing on God's Interests," Kendall writes, "When Jesus told us to pray, 'Your kingdom come,' this is asking God to actualize — that is, to let us experience — what Jesus has been talking about up to then in the Sermon on the Mount." He defines the kingdom as "God's conscious presence and enabling grace ... the rule of the ungrieved, unquenched Spirit in our hearts."

Only after focusing on God and his will for us do we focus on our daily needs, first physical and then spiritual. Spiritual needs include our need to forgive and be forgiven, our

need to avoid unnecessary pitfalls, to recognize and resist the evil in the world and to seek greater faith.

This book is a mature challenge by a mature Christian who has served for a lifetime and is still challenged and comforted by the Lord's Prayer.

He concludes, "We won't be praying the Lord's Prayer in heaven! This prayer will have been completely answered by then. So pray it now!"

Stormie Omartian's **"The Power of a Praying Life: Finding the Freedom, Wholeness and True Success God Has for You"** lacks the focus of Kendall's book. Into what is still a relatively short volume, Omartian packs 30 chapters. Even though prayer is part of the title, it is more about general Christian lifestyle — how to make life work.

I appreciated her goal of a praying life, "to be close to God and enjoy an ever-deepening relationship with him." Each chapter includes a sample

prayer, Scriptures and practical lists, though each is so short, the topic seldom is well developed.

Daniel Henderson's **"Transforming Prayer: How Everything Changes When You Seek God's Face"** provides the focus and development Omartian lacks. He challenges us to go beyond our "grocery-list" prayers — bless this person, heal that — and truly connect with God, seeking his face, not just his hand in worship-based prayer.

Henderson speaks to thousands a year at conferences and weekend events devoted solely to prayer. The book is sprinkled with case histories, called "trophies of transformation," of people whose lives have been changed by prayer.

Henderson advocates praying with an open Bible as a continuing conversation with God, allowing his attributes to motivate and direct our prayer.

He discusses things in our lives that prevent an intimate encounter with God and the transformation that would

bring, suggesting that we trade our prayer lists for best-practices praying. He analyzes the content of our public prayers, contrasting them with Paul's prayers for the churches, which involve more thanksgiving and spiritual emphasis. They are worship-based, not me-based prayers.

"Perhaps the fundamental difference between our prayer list and the prayer concerns we find in the Bible is that we pray about personal problems, while most of the biblical prayers focus on Christ's purposes. ... Pray that God would change you, *not* simply change things."

Using the 4/4 pattern of song leading, he suggests prayers that first look up to God in reverence, then down in response, then inward with requests and outward with readiness for battle and finally upward again, recognizing God's glory.

He encourages coming out of the prayer closet, or expanding that closet to make room for community, and organizing an awakening in our churches and

communities through prayer.

The fourth book I read was Cindy Jacobs' **"The Power of Persistent Prayer: Praying with Greater Purpose and Passion."** Jacobs, founder with her husband, Mike, of Generals International, works to achieve social transformation through intercession and prophetic ministry, though her definition of social transformation seems unusually limited.

Her emphasis is on effective prayer, which seems to be prayer that achieves our ends as opposed to God's.

One quote sums up both the strengths and the weaknesses of her approach: "Prayer ushers in order out of chaos, pulls peace out of confusion and destruction, brings joy in the midst of sorrow. ... Prayer — and the pulse that beats between us and God through it — is the essence of who we are as believers. Our life without prayer has no meaning, power or purpose."

I wish she had substituted the word "God" for "prayer" rather than making it sound as if he

can't work without our working for him. I feel that more depends on God than on us.

The final book I considered was **"Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals"** by Shane Claiborne, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove and Enuma Okoro.

I am not a liturgical person. My Christianity is more simple, individual and spontaneous — what you might call "low church." "Common Prayer" is a broad work that attempts to bridge between several different groups of believers — high church and low, male and female, multiple cultures and experiences. The emphasis is on peace, justice and service.

Out of fairness to the other volumes, I read it straight through. I plan to go back and work through it a day at a time, reading all the Scriptures as I come to them, although, according to the authors, "It's not a book you try to pick up and read straight through. In fact, this book is not designed to be read alone. It is a book ... meant to be spoken aloud and shared together in some form of community."

I appreciate the emphasis on the diversity of the Christian experience. As our world shrinks with advances in transportation and communications, as we get to know more people from different backgrounds in our neighborhoods, workplaces and churches, it's an emphasis we need to demonstrate Christ on a daily basis.

We need not just awareness and acceptance but love and communion with people who are different from us. It helps us know and imitate Christ and the breadth of his concern for creation.

BILLIE SILVEY is an author, editor and member of the Culver Palms Church of Christ in Los Angeles. Contact her at www.billiesilvey.com.



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An earthly father's love prompts reflection on the immense love of a heavenly one

The coming of June always reminds me of Father's Day. My dad has been gone for many years, but he is on my mind more than ever.

He was a very good man and loved my mother, my sister and me unconditionally. I was never close to him when I was growing up: He was a doer, and I was a reader. An amazing jack-of-all-trades, Dad could build or repair anything. He always invited me to work with him, but I was so disinterested in "projects" that I could not remember what steps he had just taken. He never lost patience with me, but soon he realized I was a hopeless case.

The memorable part of our relationship developed when I had a family of my own. We had given up on our political and religious conflicts. He was never strong-willed, but I was always trying to convince him to change politics or become more open to new ideas.

When we settled down to simple conversations about life and family, we enjoyed a wonderful camaraderie. Through all the years since his death, I have come to appreciate his devotion to family and to making the most of every minute of his life. I regret that I never told him how indebted I was to him for his selfless and endless work to provide his family what he never had.

Thinking about my earthly father fills me with love and admiration, and it is a short move to thinking about my heavenly father. Both gave me life — one physical and the other spiritual — that has enriched my existence.

Like my relationship with my dad, my relationship with my God has become stronger, more powerful as I have grown older and shed many of the concerns, ambitions, goals that filled my heart and mind when I was young. I have an intense desire to know God. I want to be able to embrace him — his love, his power, his majesty, his humility, his compassion, his creativity, his being.

God's power is beyond comprehension. The vastness of the universe stretches the image of God's creative power because it is finite compared to his infinite nature. Nothing can measure the height, the depth and the breadth of his being. His majesty is so intense that devils tremble, spiritual beings cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy," humans

bow knees and hearts.

God's creativity reveals itself in the complexity of our solar system, the galaxy, the endless other galaxies man

Insight



Bailey McBride

has discovered, the vast spaces making up the universe we know. How amazing that in regular cycles the moon waxes and wanes, controlling the tides of the oceans on the earth. The cycle occurs in the bird nest in the tree outside my study, where a mother bird is keeping four tiny brown eggs warm

until tiny birds emerge to be fed until they can fly and seek their own food. In another year those tiny birds will be creating their own nests where the cycle will continue.

The material evidence of God's nature overwhelms the sense and imagination. God's love would be only conjecture if he had not willed that his son become man so that we could view the fullness of God. Jesus shows us divine humility as he comes into the world as a baby, grows as infants do and eventually walks the hills and valleys of Israel to teach and serve.

Jesus is baptized by John so that he can fulfill all righteousness even though he has nothing to repent of. He is completely caring: He embraces and blesses children, he holds conversations with a foreign, sinful woman in Samaria, he makes himself available to the touch of a woman made unclean for years, he calls Lazarus from the tomb, and he loves his disciples and prepares them for spiritual leadership in his Kingdom.

Our God is so pure and good that anything evil is totally abhorrent to him. Yet our God was so loving that he rebelled against his nature and sent his son into the world to become sin and die on the cross for sin, all the sins of all mankind, and offer forgiveness and redemption for all of mankind. God loves.

I never fully knew or understood my dad, but he evoked in me immense love. And even though I struggle to know and understand Father God, my love for him grows, and I hunger to know him fully.

CONTACT bailey.mcbride@christianchronicle.org

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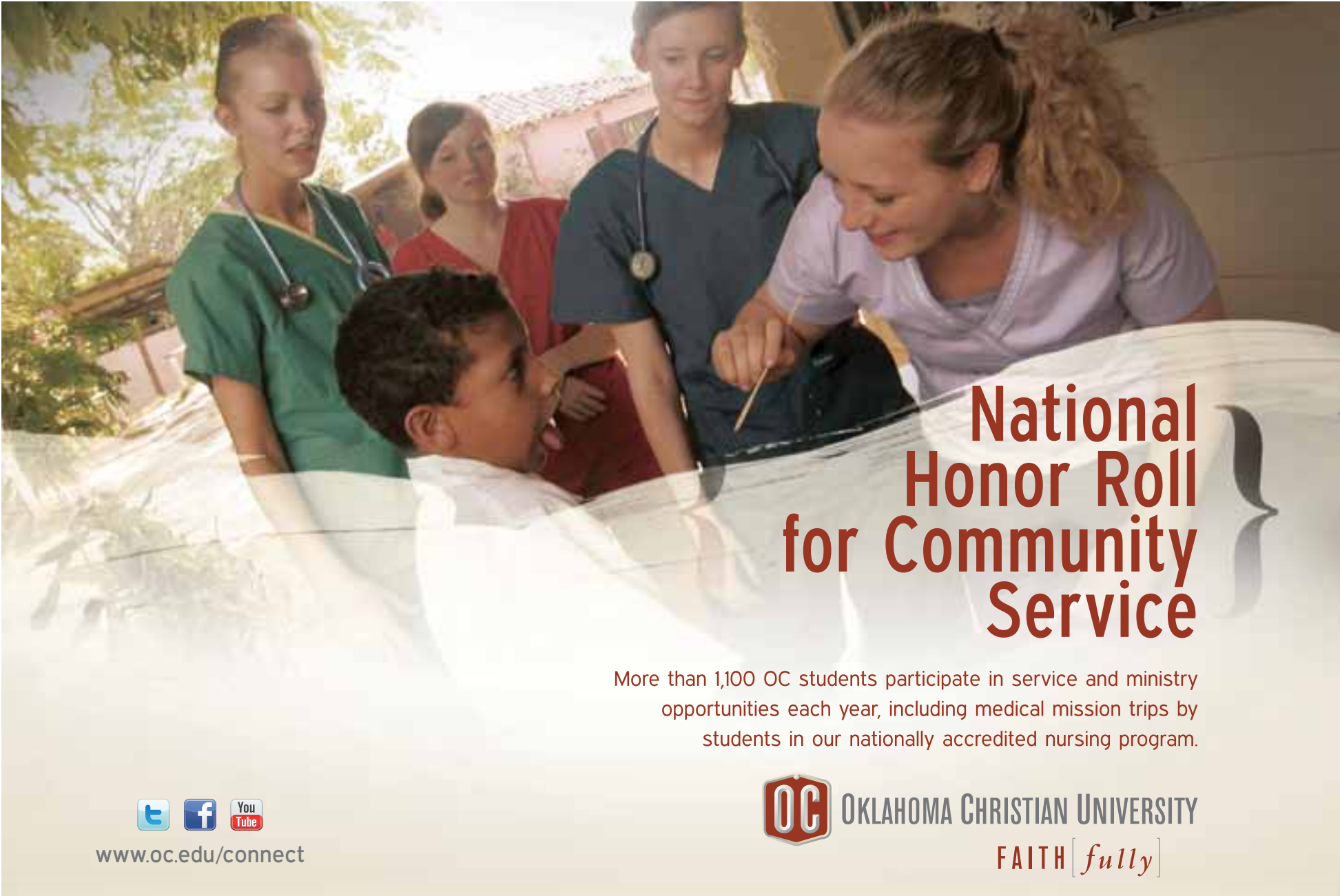
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