

JEFF MONTGOMERY

Brothers on the gridiron now brothers in Christ

In a swimming pool on the campus of Harding University in Searcy, Ark., football player Jordan Allison baptizes his fellow offensive lineman Braden Hood as their teammates watch. Across the nation, student athletes at universities with church ties made headlines recently for misconduct and crime. Coaches, trainers and athletic personnel at colleges and universities associated with Churches of Christ talked to *The Christian Chronicle* about their efforts to keep players out of trouble — and in the Word. Some schools have created positions focused specifically on players' spiritual needs.

SEE CURRENTS, 'Good News for good sports,' Page 17

After shooting, Tulsa prays for humility

CHURCHES OF CHRIST petition God on behalf of mourning family and police — and call believers to bridge their city's racial divide.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

TULSA, Okla. — Humility is strength born of prayer and devotion to God. That's Warren Blakney Sr.'s Sunday morning message to the North Peoria Church of Christ.

He proclaims it, he shouts it, during the two-hour worship service. He even sings it, bursting into John P. Kee's "Harvest" mid-sermon. The church joins in: "I read that Hebrews 11 and 1, the kind of faith to know my blessing will come."

"I come to tell you that humble people are strong people," Blakney preaches. "Humility means I've got the ability to do you in, but I won't do you in."

The 480-member church prays for justice and healing after police shootings of black men sparked protests and violence in cities across the nation, most recently in Charlotte, N.C. Here in Tulsa, white police officer Betty Shelby shot and killed an unarmed black man, Terence Crutcher.

Protests followed — all peaceful. So did prayers.

Now, weeks after the Tulsa shooting, the predominantly black church also petitions God on behalf of the police. A police sergeant, several officers and retirees from the force worship here, Blakney says. The congregation mourns the recent death of Marvin Blades Sr.,



ERIK TRYGGESTAD

In the Tulsa suburb of Broken Arrow, Okla., Christians from two Churches of Christ pray during a Sunday night service.

Giving from the heart — with a click or tap

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

When the collection plate is passed at the Figueroa Church of Christ in Los Angeles, it's not unusual for minister James A. Maxwell to see members tapping on their smartphones.

Don't worry: These tech-savvy brothers and sisters aren't distracted. Rather, they're contributing what they've purposed in their hearts via a mobile app.

"It takes just a matter of seconds," Maxwell said of the digital transactions.

At a growing number of Churches of Christ nationwide, Christians skip taking cash out of

their wallets or writing a check.

Instead, they use tools such as automatic bank drafts, debit card readers and even text messages to give to God electronically.



Maxwell

"While I sometimes worry about the example I set for others by not putting anything in the plate, I feel the automatic withdrawal is a huge blessing," said Mike Avery, youth minister for the Memorial Church of Christ in Houston.

"I don't have to worry about making up missed contributions when I am out of town for a youth event or

remember to bring my checkbook," Avery added. "Before I gave online, I always missed at least one or two weeks of my commitment each year. Now, it is easy and consistent, and I get an online report at the end of the year for taxes."

In the larger religious world, the concept of "e-tithing" is not new. It has made headlines for at least 15 years. Companies such as easyTithe, PushPay and tithe.ly serve thousands of houses of worship.

However, only in recent years has the practice gained traction among a significant number of Churches of Christ, *The Christian Chronicle* found in interviews with church leaders nationwide.

See E-TITHING, Page 12

See TULSA, Page 10



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Why 'pounding' the new minister is a good thing

WACO, Texas

My youth minister son, Brady, and his wife, Mary, got a "pounding" when they moved to Texas.

Ordinarily, that might worry me. But in the Christian context, it's a positive thing — not a sign of an abusive congregation.

Inside Story



Bobby Ross Jr.

"Pounding" refers to the bygone practice — stretching at least back to the 19th century — of church members arriving at the new minister's door with a pound of something, be it coffee, sugar, flour or honey.

"Of course, a pound wasn't always a pound," notes TexasReader.com, a Lone Star history and culture website. "Someone might give a ham, a bushel of corn or a jug of molasses. Then they would spend the evening visiting with the new preacher, getting to know him and his family."

For the Crestview Church of Christ — where Brady and Mary, both 23, began their first full-time ministry work a few months ago — the tradition remains alive.

When that 650-member church hired Brady, Jim Martin — who spent 20 years as Crestview's preacher — emailed to assure me what a thoughtful, loving group of people they are.

Martin, now vice president of Harding School of Theology in Memphis, Tenn., frequently offers tips

See **POUNDING**, Page 4



LOGAN ABASSI, UNITED NATIONS STABILIZATION MISSION IN HAITI

In the coastal town of Jeremie, Haiti, people attempt to dry their waterlogged belongings.

In the eye of the storm

ALABAMA CHURCH MEMBERS, in Haiti for a preaching seminar, rode out Hurricane Matthew. Now they plan to help Haitians rebuild.

BY CHELLIE ISON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

It was not the homecoming Harry Hames expected.

As he walked off his plane after landing at an Alabama airport, Hames, a member of the Flint Church of Christ in Decatur, was greeted by signs and cheers as his wife, children and grandchildren rushed toward him.

"We stood there and hugged and cried for about 15 minutes. It was very emotional," Hames told *The Christian Chronicle*. He had left his truck at the airport and said he thought he'd simply drive himself home. His family thought differently.

Just days earlier, they had sat waiting, praying for the phone to ring. They didn't yet know if he had survived Hurricane Matthew.

Hames makes frequent trips to serve churches in Haiti. When the hurricane hit, he and three other American missionaries — Chris Pressnell, Nicky



PHOTO PROVIDED

Harry Hames, Chris Pressnell, Nicky Pressnell and Andy White celebrate their safe return from hurricane-hit Haiti.

Pressnell and Andy White — were in Jérémie, a Haitian town about 150 miles west of Port au Prince along the southern peninsula.

They were there conducting a preaching seminar. Hearing the storm was headed right toward them, they canceled classes and encouraged the men to get to safety.

The four Americans, along with six Haitian preachers, decided to ride out

See **HURRICANE**, Page 16

Seeking sons and daughters of thunder

IN POST-CHRISTIAN EUROPE, church leaders urge millennial believers to become disciple-makers.

BY VIVI VITALONE | FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

SAINTE-ELUALIE, France

'Total indifference."

That's the biggest challenge Miriam Fergnani sees for millennial Christians — believers in their 20s and 30s — living in post-Christian Europe.

Faith wavers across the continent — even in Fergnani's deeply Catholic homeland, Italy, where Vatican City itself stands within the ancient capital of Rome. In recent times, the minds of Italian youths have focused on economic concerns. Last year the unemployment rate for youths ages 15 to 24 topped 40 percent.

Although some may see this as a need for prayer, many of Fergnani's peers "don't even wonder or question if God exists," said the member of the Vicenza Church of Christ in Italy, now attending university in Geneva, Switzerland. "From this indifference comes the philosophy that every idea is fine — as long as it's fine for you and doesn't bother others."

It's easy for millennial believers, scattered among the small Churches of Christ that dot Europe's landscape, to feel alone, said Phil Jackson, director for European missions for Missions Resource Network, a church-supported ministry based in Texas. To increase a sense of fellowship, longtime Italian minister Franco Verardi and other church leaders launched Boanerges, a gathering for

See **MILLENNIALS**, Page 14



Fergnani

POUNDING: Filling new minister's pantry

FROM PAGE 3

for ministers and congregations on his blog at GodHungry.org. I asked what suggestions he might give for welcoming new ministers.

Three pieces of advice from Martin:

1. **"Churches need to remember that this new minister often doesn't know anyone in the congregation.** Hospitality is so important and often more important than many longtime members who have never moved realize.

2. **"Perhaps even more important is how they receive that minister's spouse.** When a married minister moves, he often has some 'built-in' friendships (coworkers, etc.). Many will want to spend time with him. However, a spouse can quickly feel isolated and uncertain as to where she might belong or fit in.

3. **"Transition is hard.** Period. Churches sometimes don't like to hear this because they then think something must be wrong. Transitions (even the best of them) take time, patience and understanding."

I've mentioned this before, but one of my favorite childhood memories concerns the time my family ran out of food. People from church showed up with carloads full of groceries. We ate like kings for weeks.

The only problem with that story: It didn't happen the way I remembered it.

As my mother explained a few years ago, we had moved to a new town in North Carolina where Dad had accepted a preaching job. The groceries were part of a "pantry party" welcoming us to town.

While my recollection was not perfect, the church's gesture made a lasting impression on me. Likewise, I'm certain that the Crestview congregation's display of love from the moment Brady and Mary arrived won't be forgotten — by them or their parents.

"Over 20 church members showed up to help us unload our things," my oldest son told me. "It took us seven hours to load our moving truck in Oklahoma City and about 45 minutes to unload it in Waco because of all the help.

"On our first Sunday at Crestview, the elders prayed over us on stage, gave us a gift basket full of gift cards and invitations to spend time with members," Brady added. "That night, they had a special worship and food truck activity that over 300 people showed up for as a welcome event for us."

And yes, the congregation sent them home with a carload full of groceries.

"I was surprised because I thought, 'These people don't even know us; how can they show us so much love already?'" my daughter-in-law said. "But I realized that this is exactly what the church is supposed to do: welcome everybody with open arms even before you get to know them well.

"Their welcome," Mary added, "has made us want to bless others and welcome them just as we have been welcomed."

Amen.

Sometimes, a pounding is a wonderful thing.

CONTACT: bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org



BOBBY ROSS JR.

In Flint, Mich., the 150-member North Central Church of Christ has distributed bottled water to the community since the city declared a state of emergency.

A water crisis and thirsty souls in Flint

"It's very slow still. Very frustrating," Rigel Dawson told *The Christian Chronicle* regarding the lead-tainted water in his community.

Dawson ministers for the North Central Church of Christ in Flint, Mich. For nearly a year and a half, his community has dealt with the harsh reality that the water pouring from their faucets is unsafe — filled with lead.

"They'll tell you it's safe to bathe in, but a lot of people are still having issues with skin irritation, hair loss," Dawson said.

For months, the North Central church has distributed water to the community. It's a daily task that has slowed down but continues for anyone in need.

"Really just need prayers that the things that need to get done get done," Dawson said, "and just prayer for our spirits to remain strong so we can keep on doing what needs to be done."

See Chellie Ison's video interview with Dawson — and Bobby Ross Jr.'s report from Flint — at www.christianchronicle.org. While there, sign up for our email newsletter to get the latest headlines delivered to your inbox.



CHELLIE ISON

Rigel Dawson speaks with *The Christian Chronicle* during a visit to Oklahoma City. Dawson preached at a gospel meeting sponsored by the Eastside Church of Christ and spoke to students at Oklahoma Christian University.



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Phone: (405) 425-5070; Fax (405) 425-5076

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Delivery: 2501 E. Memorial Road, Edmond, OK 73013



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

Editor: Erik Tryggstad
erik@christianchronicle.org

Chief Correspondent: Bobby Ross Jr.
bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org

Digital Media Reporter: Chellie Ison
chellie@christianchronicle.org

Advertising Manager: Tonya Patton
tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org

Administrative Assistant: Lynda Sheehan
lynda.sheehan@christianchronicle.org

Administrative Assistant: Joy McMillon
joy.mcmillon@christianchronicle.org

Administrative Assistant: Melinda Wilson
melinda.wilson@christianchronicle.org

Staff Accountant: Louise Beyer
Editor Emeritus: Bailey McBride
bailey.mcbride@christianchronicle.org

TO SUBSCRIBE: See www.christianchronicle.org, email joy.mcmillon@christianchronicle.org or call (405) 425-5070.

LETTERS: letters@christianchronicle.org

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PHOTO PROVIDED BY KENNETH RHODES

In Dallas suburb, black and Hispanic congregations join together in Christian unity

Members of two Garland, Texas, congregations — the predominantly black Eastside Church of Christ and the Spanish-speaking Castle Drive Church of Christ — gather for a group photo. At a recent joint assembly, Castle Drive minister Damian Matta preached at

the Eastside church building. "We had a wonderful time worshipping the Lord together in unity," said Kenneth Rhodes, Eastside's personal evangelism and outreach minister. Psalm 133:1-3 and Revelation 7:9-17 served as the main Scriptural text for Matta's sermon.

GEORGIA

FAYETTEVILLE — A hit-and-run driver under the influence of drugs struck and killed 16-year-old Caelyn Olds as she handed out literature from her church as part of a door-knocking campaign, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reports.

Olds and a fellow member of the Middle Fayette Church of Christ, Linda Long, were walking in a neighborhood on a Saturday when a pickup truck struck them without stopping, witnesses told police. Long, who was injured, said her husband chased the driver and alerted police, according to Channel 2 Action News. The driver, Marcia Annette Demarcus, 42, of Fayetteville, was arrested. Olds' stepfather, Nicholas Adams, ministers for the Middle Fayette church.

Friends set up a YouCaring page to help the family with expenses. Search for "Caelyn Olds Memorial Fund" at youcaring.com.

MARYLAND

HYATTSVILLE — After nearly 47 years of service as a secretary for the University Park Church of Christ, Lydia Holby is retiring. Holby began work with the church on Jan. 1, 1970.

"She has blessed the lives of so many ... and we want to acknowledge her steadfast devotion and commitment to the body of Christ," minister Dorn Muscar Jr. said. "It is so rare for someone to serve the Lord in a certain capacity for this long." Citing 1 Thessalonians 1:3, Muscar said the congregation is thankful for Holby's *"work produced by faith ... labor prompted by love and ... endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."*



Holby

TENNESSEE

TUCKERS CROSSROADS — One Sunday in 1966, Kenneth and Linda Head hopped in their car and made the 37-mile drive from Nashville to this rural community.

That day, Head preached his first



KEN BECK

Kenneth Head at the Bethlehem church.

sermon at the Bethlehem Church of Christ. October marked his 50th anniversary as a minister to the congregation of 80 kindred souls.

"It's one of the oldest congregations south of the Ohio River in our history and was started in 1823 when Barton W. Stone came through preaching," said Head, 77, who in 2004 cut back to preaching every fourth Sunday.

Read an expanded profile of Head at www.christianchronicle.org.

TEXAS

WICHITA FALLS — A recent combined worship assembly of the predominantly white Faith Village Church of Christ and the predominantly black Welch Street Church of Christ drew a crowd of more than 350.

"We celebrated the unity we find in Jesus who breaks down every racial divide," Faith Village preaching minister Jacob Hawk said. "We prayed for our country, our community and the church worldwide to promote unity in Christ."

Welch Street preacher Rodney Smith led singing, while Hawk preached a sermon titled "Precious in His Sight."

SPOTLIGHT

A model tabernacle

FORT SCOTT, Kan. — A half-size model of the tabernacle helped people learn about its role in the Old Testament.

The 15th and Crawford Church of Christ recently hosted Dorman Diller, minister for the Pagosa Springs Church of Christ in Colorado. Diller built the model in the 1980s and has used it many times at camps and Vacation Bible Schools.

"It drew a great deal of attention from the community," 15th and Crawford minister Matt Jones said.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY MATT JONES

Members of the 15th and Crawford church pose with the model tabernacle.

WESTERN N.Y. CHURCH draws members from miles away but works to connect with its community.

When your neighbors aren't your neighbors

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

ROCHESTER, N.Y.

What happens when your neighbors aren't your neighbors? That's the challenge faced by the Lawson Road Church of Christ and other congregations that draw many, if not most, members from outside the immediate area where they worship.

Peter Horne, 41, has served as minister for the Lawson Road church for eight years. The congregation in western New York averages Sunday attendance of 115.

A native Australian who came to the United States to attend Harding School of Theology in Memphis, Tenn., Horne goes by "Pita" on Facebook. He is married to Julie and has a 6-year-old daughter, Sophie.

In an interview with *The Christian Chronicle*, Horne talked about the racially diverse Lawson Road church's efforts to connect with its community.

What challenges does a congregation face when most of your members live several miles from the church building?

There are obvious challenges like transporting teens to events. Or if a member hosts an event, they may live 30 minutes from the building but an hour from other members. The distance makes socializing and coordinating difficult. Even supporting each other in times of difficulty is tough. Driving an hour to deliver a meal to someone who's sick is quite different than "popping around the corner" 10 minutes away.

I would say the biggest challenge is coordinating our outreach efforts. Do we focus on the communities we live in or the community around the church building? I don't have exact numbers, but if 30 percent of our members live in the city that is majority black and has one of the highest child poverty rates in the country, and 40 percent of our members live in a suburb that is 95 percent white and very middle class,



Peter Horne, a native Australian, serves as minister for the Lawson Road Church of Christ in Rochester, N.Y. "We remain committed to the task," Horne says of the church.

and our church building is located in that suburb but near the city line in an older, poorer neighborhood — where do we direct our efforts? How do we decide which needs to address?

Can members who live in the city surrounded by myriad social issues realistically be asked to be wholehearted in their commitment to the mission of the church in the suburbs?

What are some ways that the Lawson Road church has endeavored to love God and love your neighbors?

There are quite a few apartment complexes in our immediate community. The last few years we started hosting monthly summer cookouts for the tenants at the largest complex.

Additionally, we also started a small community garden with the goal of providing space for apartment tenants. Although we've started both of these, they're still growing and haven't reached their full potential yet.

We also continue to host small groups in our members' neighborhoods as we encourage them to be good neighbors where they live.

Why did you decide to focus your community service and outreach on the two-mile radius around your building?

This was a tough decision. In the end, we followed the process of a book titled "Church Unique" that prompted us to ask, "Why is this group of people, in this place, at this time?"

We're still working to answer those questions, but we felt that since this is the geographic area all our members have in common, it was best to focus here.

It's easier to invite members to clean up a main road near our church building than to drive an hour to a neighborhood they have no connection with — other than another member lives

there — to clean up a park. Additionally, we recognized that there's a large neighborhood to our northeast that doesn't contain another church, making us their "local church."

What can you tell me about your community garden, the crops raised and the response you've received from neighbors?

We're off to a slow start. After two summers we have three of our 10 beds occupied by neighbors. None from the apartments, but we did get a couple who attend an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting at our building sign up for a garden bed, so that was nice synergy.

I know some community gardens donate their crops to the food bank, etc. In our case, the families get to keep the food for themselves, although quite a bit finds itself to a giveaway table in our church foyer. Crops include tomatoes, peas, greens, squash, peppers, herbs, sweet potatoes, and this year, sunflowers.

How have you tried to show Christ's love to the apartment complex across the street from the church building? Have you been satisfied with your efforts there?

Besides what I mentioned earlier, we also plan to install a community library (oversized mailbox) on our church's front lawn. If that goes well, we'll approach the apartment management about building and installing one for them.

This year we didn't host any cookouts as other events in our small church family took precedence. We have a lot of potential to become more organized in the ways we interact with those apartments.

We remain committed to the task.



Sophie Horne, daughter of minister Peter Horne, visits the Lawson Road church's community garden.

‘There, but for the grace of God, go I’

KANSAS CHURCH realizes its dream of opening a resource center for former inmates and drug addicts.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

KANSAS CITY, Kan.
The Roswell Church of Christ wouldn't give up. For years, the inner-city congregation struggled to realize its dream of transforming a one-time dry cleaners into "a one-stop shop for ex-offenders and substance abusers." But on a recent Sunday, the church celebrated the grand opening of the Village Initiative Inc. family resource center and re-entry facility. Thousands of hours of sweat by volunteers such as elder Randy George and numerous donations — large and small — by Christians and community partners made the dedication ceremony possible. "We started not knowing how we would finish, but God put the right people in place," said George, co-executive director along with minister emeritus James O. Maxwell. Said Maxwell: "We dedicate the Village Initiative Inc. as a place of resources and of peace, serenity, fellowship, joy, compassion, support, devotion and love for all who need our services." From the beginning, church leaders envisioned the center as a place where the downtrodden could seek employment, housing, food and clothing as well as services such as resume writing, computer training, marriage classes and money management seminars. As Selena Gant, the director of operations, explains, the center is a living embodiment of Jesus' Matthew 25 call for serving the "least of these." "We always remember that 'There, but for the grace of God, go I,'" Gant said. "We do everything from helping find housing to getting their IDs to paying their utilities to getting them back on their feet. "We thank God," she added, "for his



A group of Roswell Church of Christ members sings during the dedication ceremony for the Village Initiative Inc. resource center.

mercy and grace in allowing us — the Church of Christ — to be the one to serve in that capacity." As elder George sees it, Sanford Clarity offers all the proof that's needed of the difference such a center can make. Clarity, 47, entered one of the church's transitional "houses of hope" about a year and a half ago. He shared his story before leading a prayer at the dedication. "I've been in and out of jail and on drugs, off and on, all my life," Clarity said. "But thanks to the grace of God and all the people with the Roswell church who supported me and welcomed me and helped me ... I've been clean and sober for 17 months." As minister Artrell Harris put it: "If we wouldn't give up on this building, you know we're not going to give up on individuals. Everyone deserves a second chance."



Sanford Clarity, 47, thanks Roswell members for their support as he works to rebuild his life. "We just need your help and ask you not to give up on us, Lord," he prayed.

WEBSITE: www.villageinitiativeinc.com

PHOTOS BY BOBBY ROSS JR.

Deaf leaders in hearing churches

AN ELDER AND A DEACON offer advice to help congregations empower the hearing impaired in their pews.

YAKIMA, Wash.

We're grateful when our churches' shepherds listen closely and hear the needs of their sheep. We appreciate deacons who keep their ears open for opportunities to use their gifts to serve.

But what if you were a church leader who couldn't hear at all?

Steve Jensen and William "Dan" Danielson are deaf leaders in hearing churches. Jensen has been an elder at the Highland Church of Christ in Bakersfield, Calif., since 1999.

And he's my dad. I grew up watching him overcome his hearing loss to serve as a deacon with churches in Washington and California and as a Christian school teacher and Joy Bus leader in Washington and Idaho.

After becoming an elder, he used to say that he might be the only deaf elder in Churches of Christ worldwide. But now that he has heard of deaf elders at the Nsawam Road Church of Christ in Accra, Ghana, he restrains himself to the playful — but plausible — claim of being the only deaf elder in the U.S.

Danielson served as the deacon for deaf ministry at the Summit View Church of Christ here in Yakima — the congregation where I serve — from 2013 to 2016. He recently stepped down so he and his wife, Jamie, could relocate to another city to care for her elderly mother.

Danielson, like my dad, grew up in a hearing family and learned to speak English, a skill that is out of reach for many deaf. That ability helps both men communicate, but for "hearing" their brothers and sisters in the church, they have to rely primarily on American Sign Language and, if

necessary, lip-reading.

I asked both of them what they feel is the greatest challenge facing them as deaf leaders in hearing churches. Their answer: communication. After all, how do you serve and shepherd people whose language you can't hear?

But here's the surprise: Their more pressing concern — maybe this is why their churches called them to lead — is how the church communicates with other deaf.

Voices



Kevin Jensen

"Most hearing people have little understanding of the unique needs of the deaf," Jensen said. "Deaf look normal, but have an invisible 'handicap.' They cannot communicate in the dominant language, which happens to be English in our culture."

Hearing people, he noted, "expect the deaf to be able to operate in their culture, their language, their church" — even their Bible classes and worship assemblies. But most deaf simply can't.

Even with the best intentions, many churches struggle to reach the deaf in their communities, Danielson added.

"A lot of times, the hearing will have ideas to help the deaf. But their ideas usually don't work," he said, because they haven't spent time communicating with the deaf. As a result, "we deaf get frustrated."

And, Jensen noted, deaf people who find it difficult to communicate with their hearing church typically leave after a while, even though their hearing brothers and sisters showed them love.

What's the solution? I suspect it's what these two men received from their churches that kept them connected and nurtured them in Christ to positions of leadership.



Steve Jensen teaches a Wednesday night Bible class in Bakersfield, Calif.

Danielson talked about how his church always made sure they had an interpreter, sometimes hiring one from outside the congregation. The church also supplied the deaf with their own classroom for Bible study and welcomed the local deaf club to use its fellowship hall for events.

In short, the church became a part of the deaf community.

Jensen shared that, whenever his congregation was resistant to changes that would benefit the deaf, men in leadership rose up to support those changes. That support, he said, always was "just under the surface, all the time, and it will surface just when we need it to encourage us to keep on and not give up."

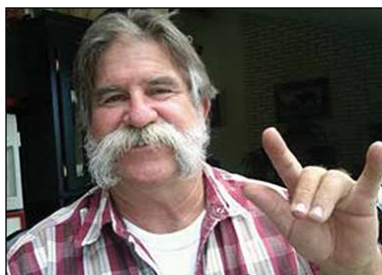
And what about these two men personally? What keeps them going as leaders who need an interpreter

when they meet with other leaders — and who are constantly stretched like ligaments connecting two cultures, the hearing and the deaf?

"I have a big heart to help people," Danielson said. "I see that many deaf love Jesus, but they need to hear more about him. I'm hoping to lead more deaf to become good Christians."

Similarly, Jensen said, he enjoys "the opportunity to serve God and my brothers and sisters in Christ, both deaf and hearing. I also enjoy leading another person to Christ so they have the opportunity to join us on our journey to heaven."

Those, whatever your aural capability, are encouraging words to hear.



PHOTOS PROVIDED

Dan Danielson served in deaf ministry.

KEVIN JENSEN is minister for the Summit View Church of Christ in Yakima, Wash. Find the church online at www.summitviewchurch.info.



HARDING

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Officer charged in shooting still welcome at church

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

GLENPOOL, Okla. — After a week in the national headlines, Betty Shelby received hugs and well-wishes from her church family on a recent Sunday.

Shelby, the Tulsa police officer charged with first-degree manslaughter in the shooting of an unarmed black suspect, offered to stay home from worship to avoid causing a commotion.

But leaders of the Glenpool Church of Christ — a 200-member congregation in this fast-growing community of 13,000, south of Tulsa — made clear she was welcome to attend.

"She got a lot of hugs and a lot of words of personal support," pulpit minister Benjamin Williams said. "Nobody here claims to be a law enforcement expert and to know how that part of it might play out. But we support her as a person."

Shelby, 42, turned herself into the Tulsa County jail Sept. 23 and was released after posting \$50,000 bond. A conviction would carry a penalty of four years to life in prison.

In the opening prayer that Sunday, elder Bill Path mentioned the turmoil in Tulsa, Oklahoma's second-largest city, and asked God to intervene and maintain peace.

"We want to again pray for the comfort of the Crutcher family during this loss," Path said, referring to Terence Crutcher, the 40-year-old man who died, "but also pray for the strength of the Shelby family."

Williams told *The Christian Chronicle*: "Tulsa, in general, has done a great job of responding to this out of a position of faith rather than out of a position of violence, and I hope that continues."

That Sunday was Friends and Family Day at the Glenpool church

with a special fellowship meal after the assembly. The event drew a larger-than-normal crowd of 258.

"My first thought was, 'Wow, this is totally inappropriate for us to have this outreach and celebration on a day when so much is going on,'" Williams said. "But when I thought about it, there's not a better time to remind each other that we are family, and that's what church is about. The community needs more of that, not less."

The preacher titled his sermon "Come To The Table" and talked about people of all backgrounds joining together in Acts 2.

His main message was that Christians must rethink notions of "us" and "them," be it in politics, economics or race relations.

"We can divide ourselves up into little groups that fight and squabble," the minister told the congregation. "Or we can look at what Jesus did and acknowledge the humanity of every person — and recognize who they are and the deep spiritual needs that each one of us has."

Shelby's mother-in-law, Lois Shelby, also is a member of the Glenpool church. The 81-year-old retired teacher told The Associated Press, through tears, that she was grieving for the Crutcher family.

"I cry all the time because I love her so much, because I know what a great person she is and how religious of a person she is," Lois Shelby said of her daughter-in-law.

Bruce Rothell, a deacon and member of the Glenpool church since 1982, said fellow members feel bad for Betty Shelby.

"I believe she has deep regrets and sorrow herself for having made the fatal shot," Rothell said. "I believe it was totally unintentional, a reaction in fear for her and her fellow officer's life. No way I can prove that, of course — just knowing what kind of family she is part of."

"And we love her and support her and are praying fervently for her as well as the Crutcher family."

EXPANDED STORY: www.christianchronicle.org



Shelby



Crutcher

TULSA: Prayers for unity

FROM PAGE 1

a former member of the Tulsa Police Department's Gang Unit and a longtime friend of the church.

Shelby, charged with first-degree manslaughter in the shooting of Crutcher, worships with the Glenpool Church of Christ, a predominantly white congregation that meets 19 miles south of the North Peoria church.

After the shooting, Blakney — a past president of the Tulsa chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People who, at age 9, marched with Martin Luther King Jr. in Alabama — spoke with the Glenpool congregation's minister, Benjamin Williams.

"We talked, and I prayed with him," Blakney tells *The Christian Chronicle*.

Blakney encouraged his fellow preacher to show love and support for their sister in Christ.

"But, on my end, I have to ... say what I believe to be right," Blakney says. "There has to be some degree of justice and fairness in the law. If there isn't, it doesn't work for anybody."

After worship, as North Peoria member BJ Bullock gathers her Bible and church bulletin, she talks about the anger and disillusionment shared by blacks in north Tulsa. New construction and urban development are leaving them behind — forcing them from their old neighborhoods. She longs for a nice grocery store in her neighborhood, like the new Whole Foods and Sprouts in south Tulsa.

This shooting is only part of a long history of tension, she says, dating back to the Tulsa race riot of 1921, a brutal conflict that claimed more than 300 black lives.

"I'm a big, loud community advocate," Bullock says with a chuckle. She's also a believer that Churches of Christ here need to show unity across lines of color.

"On a lot of the issues, we are

teaching the same thing," she says, "but we don't get together."

'THIS IS NOT SOME SECONDARY MATTER'

About five miles southeast of North Peoria, the Crosstown Church of Christ meets in an increasingly diverse neighborhood near the University of Tulsa.

After the shooting, minister Robert Prater was tasked with delivering a message of compassion and forgiveness to the congregation — while acknowledging the community's pain and cries for justice.

"We didn't train for this in ministry school," says Prater, who is white. The church averages

225 people most Sundays, he says. About one-quarter of its members are black, and a few are Latino.

Whether it's an attack on police officers in Dallas or a police shooting in

Ferguson, Mo., "we've tried not to ignore it," Prater says. "We know there are folks in our congregation who are hurting."

After the Tulsa shooting, one of the church's elders read a statement calling for unity and healing. Members white and black joined hands and prayed.

Churches cannot "pretend that there's not a racial problem" in the U.S., Prater says. "This is not some secondary matter. This is very much an affront to the Gospel that we believe."

In central Tulsa, elders of the Park Plaza Church of Christ also acknowledged the racial divide as they read a letter to their 2,000-member congregation on the Sunday after the shooting.

The church is predominantly white but has growing numbers of blacks and Latinos, its leaders say.

"We are committed to becoming a culturally integrated congregation, which is a step in understanding and solving racial tension," says administrative minister Gary Medley, one of the church's elders.

Jamie Simmons, a youth minister



Prater



Bullock

“My heart was hurt when (the shooting) happened, but then you see what God has done through his people, and it encourages you.”

— Mark Farris, an elder of the North Sheridan Church of Christ in Tulsa, Okla.



Servers take the Lord’s Supper before distributing the bread and fruit of the vine to fellow members of the North Peoria Church of Christ in Tulsa. As the congregation waits, minister Warren Blakney Sr. explains the meaning of the church’s weekly communion.



Tim Pyles, minister for the Broken Arrow Church of Christ in Oklahoma, prays with Tim Luster, minister for the North Sheridan Church of Christ in Tulsa, Okla., before Luster delivers a sermon on Psalm 139 to members of both congregations.

for Park Plaza, says he’s glad the elders made the statement, which demonstrates that “we’re here to support anyone and everyone in our congregation.”

Simmons grew up in Tulsa. As the son of a black father and white mother, he and his family “did experience some tension because of that” at some churches, he says.



Simmons

At Park Plaza, the youths he serves — and their parents — view him first as a brother in Christ, he adds.

WONDERFULLY MADE, BLACK AND WHITE

A few hours after Blakney’s sermon on humility, another group of Christians gathers at the Broken Arrow Church of Christ, a 625-member congregation in a suburb about 15 miles southeast of downtown Tulsa.

The predominantly white church scheduled Tim Luster, minister for the North Sheridan Church of



PHOTOS BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD

“We should do this again,” says Tim Luster as he addresses a group of black and white Christians in Broken Arrow.

Christ in Tulsa, to speak as part of its annual focus on missions.

They also invited his congregation to attend the 5 p.m. service. Many obliged, and the Broken Arrow church’s foyer is a place of handshakes, smiles and hugs shared by Christians black and white.

Luster is a graduate of the former Nashville Christian Institute in Tennessee, a school that trained

hundreds of future black church leaders. He studied ministry under the institute’s president, renowned evangelist Marshall Keeble.

About 15 years ago he moved from California to preach for North Sheridan. Once a predominantly white church, the congregation averages about 100 on Sundays, a near-50/50 mix of black and white, Luster says.

After the Tulsa shooting, North Sheridan members hosted a prayer vigil for their community, asking God to unite people of faith.

Now they put those prayers into practice, worshiping as Lee Turner, an elder of the Broken Arrow church, leads “I’m in the Glory Land Way.” Then Mark Farris, an elder of North Sheridan, leads some of his congregation’s favorites, including “Amen,” “Get Right Church” and “How Beautiful.”

After praying with Broken Arrow minister Tim Pyles, Luster preaches on the church’s missions theme, “In His Image, Near and Far,” and reads from Psalm 139. (“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”)

“It makes no difference what the color of my skin is,” Luster says. “I am made in the image of God, and when I’m seen, I need to reflect that image.”

Scott Keele, the Broken Arrow church’s associate minister, serves as a police chaplain. In response to his community’s racial divide, “the best thing we can do is stuff like this,” he says.

Listening to — and praying with — each other played a role in Tulsa’s nonviolent response, Farris says.

“My heart was hurt when that happened,” he says of the shooting, “but then you see what God has done through his people, and it encourages you.”

Farris, who is white, has watched the demographics of his community and his church change. Luster has served as a bridge between races, he says.

When white and black believers get to know each other, “guess what, we’re all people,” he adds. “If we look at each other through the eyes of love, how beautiful!”

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E-TITHING: More giving online

FROM PAGE 1

"Basically, online giving means no more excuses for not being able to support the church financially because you were out of town or you were ill," said Maxwell, who splits his time between serving the Seattle-area Tukwila Church of Christ and the Figueroa congregation, where he preaches the first and third Sundays of each month. "It helps offset slumps in the summertime and at holidays."

Members of the Wetzel Road Church of Christ in Liverpool, N.Y., can't give online — yet.



Owens

But the church is exploring possibilities for changing that, minister and elder David Owens said.

"The younger ones don't carry cash or checks," Owens said.

Just this fall, the Broken Arrow Church of Christ in Oklahoma rolled out an e-tithing option.

The Tulsa-area church hopes to eliminate the ups and downs that occur as members travel and neglect to make up missed offerings, ministry leaders Rob Lee and Caleb Bigham said. Already, most members receive paychecks by direct deposit and pay bills online.

"The only check I wrote was to the church," said Lee, a 35-year-old father of two. "The first week it was available, I signed up on easyTithe. It took about five minutes, and my intention is to never reorder checks again."

Online companies charge fees — typically 1 percent to 3 percent of the amount given online. However, advocates tout increased overall contributions as more than making up for those costs.

Skeptics remain.

"Those who sell the service will tell you that your giving will go up at least 20 percent," said Dale Jenkins, minister for the Spring Meadows Church of Christ in Spring Hill, Tenn. "But I do not believe that will be the case in Churches of Christ. I think that increase comes from churches in the larger religious world where ... to stay on the roll, you have to tithe annually."

Others worry about eliminating the community aspect of putting cash and checks in the plate.

"In our world today, we are getting more and more detached from the church and especially the community we enjoy or should be enjoying in the church together," said Doug Edwards, an elder of the Metro Church of Christ in Sterling Heights, Mich.

"Giving is a part of the relationship we have in the body of Christ," Edwards added. "So, while technically I enjoy the convenience of doing giving online, I wonder if it will become another way of detaching from our community in Christ."

Steve Cloer, minister for the Southside Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas, sees advantages to online giving but understands the concerns.

"People set the recurring feature and then forget about it," Cloer said. "Giving becomes like paying a bill, and there is no sense of worship to God in offering our resources for the church to use."

The solution?

"One way we have tried to negate this," Cloer said, "is during the giving time, we mention that there is an online option. We try to preserve the 'giving moment' in our worship but just recognize that there are

various ways of doing this — in the plate or online."

1 Corinthians 16:2 says, *"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up,*



Cloer

so that when I come, no collections will have to be made."

Some churches make a card available in the pews for those who give online but want to place something in the plate.

The Broken Arrow church's minister, Tim Pyles, scheduled his contribution to come out of his bank account the first day of every week.

"I guess I'm old school enough," Pyles said, "that just knowing that electronic transfer is going to happen on Sunday just kind of seems to fit."

COLOMBIA

PUERTO GAITÁN — A new church is born in this small South American town about seven hours east of Colombia's capital, Bogota, said Bob Young, an Oklahoma-based evangelist and missionary to Spanish-speaking nations.

A member of the Los Angeles Church of Christ in Bogota shared the Gospel with members of his family, who then shared it with others in Puerto Gaitán, Young said. The Los Angeles church sends ministry teams to preach for and nurture the new church. Young helps support the effort and seeks additional partners for the work.

MALAYSIA

MALACCA CITY — About 250 Christians from across Southeast Asia, plus Australia and New Zealand, gathered for the 55th Asian Mission Forum. Days earlier, more than 120 leaders from Churches of Christ participated in an Asia Pacific Elders and Deacons Conference.

Evertt Huffard, professor of leadership and missiology at Harding School of Theology in Memphis, Tenn., spoke at both events, hosted by the Pasir Panjang Church of Christ in Singapore. For the church leaders, Huffard highlighted "spiritual transformation and finishing well," said Benny Tabalujan of the Belmore Road Church of Christ in Melbourne, Australia.

During the mission forum, Huffard "stressed the importance of mentoring a new generation of spiritual leaders," Tabalujan added.

TOGO

KPALIME — Ministry students in this West African nation took a break from their Bible studies recently to learn how to take care of God's creation — namely, pigs, chickens, rabbits and even snails and bees.

Bear Valley Bible Institute International hosted an agricultural workshop for preaching students at the Center for Biblical Studies in Kpalime, which is one of the institute's extension schools, and



Gley



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY JEFF CASH

A former Muslim named Moses gives his life to Christ

Moses, a young man who used to be Muslim, gives his life to Christ through baptism in Fort Portal, Uganda. A crowd of Christians walked to the water to watch and praise God as missionary Jeff Cash baptized Moses. Cash and his wife, Cheryl, have served for 21 years in Uganda. See a recent profile of the missionaries at www.christianchronicle.org. The Cashes' website is www.whereheleads.com.

for members of Churches of Christ.

"The goal is for participants to use the knowledge acquired to make money and have enough to feed their families," said Willie Gley, an evangelist and ministry trainer who works with churches in Togo and Ghana.

Gley plans to add animal and crop science to the curriculum at the ministry school in Kpalime and to raise funds to purchase facilities and livestock to launch the project.

UNITED KINGDOM

EAST KILBRIDE — "The Christian Woman in the Workplace" was one topic of discussion at an annual Ladies' Day in this Scottish town.

About 70 Christian women from 14 Churches of Christ listened to speakers Funmi Glover, Barbara Starrs and Chrissy Vick present lessons on the theme "Faith in Action," said church member Arlene Galloway.

SPOTLIGHT

Woes and new souls abound in Nigeria

ABAK, Nigeria — An economic downturn in Africa's most-populous nation has believers struggling to pay for food and school fees for their children, says minister Monday John Akpakpan.

But the financial trouble has done little to stop the spread of the Gospel, he added.

Akpakpan, a longtime evangelist in southern Nigeria and follow-up coordinator for the World Bible School correspondence ministry, reports 82 baptisms during the recent annual lectureship of Nigerian Christian Bible College in Ukpom.



Akpakpan

Another recent lectureship in Ikot Usen resulted in 54 baptisms.

Akpakpan also reports baptisms during youth conferences at two Churches of Christ in southern Nigeria.

A group of Christians in Nigeria's Akwa Ibom and Cross River states sponsors two missionaries to the West African nation of Sierra Leone. The missionaries spent two years there but returned during the country's Ebola crisis. The missionaries plan to return to Sierra Leone in late November.

"Brethren we have a lot of challenges," Akpanpan writes in a letter to supporters. "God being on our side — and with your prayers — our ministries will be fulfilled."



About 70 Christians attended the first-ever Boanerges ("Sons of Thunder") conference for millennials at Centre Bonnefoi, a camp in rural France owned by Churches of Christ.

MILLENNIALS : In Europe, 'anti-values are becoming values'

FROM PAGE 3

young Christians to encourage each other and strategize about reaching new generations on the old continent.

CAN'T IGNORE EUROPE'S PROBLEMS

About 70 Christians, ages 18 to 35, gathered for the first Boanerges — meaning "Sons of Thunder," the title Jesus gave to the brother apostles James and John — recently at Centre Bonnefoi. The church-owned camp is about three hours north of Marseilles, France.

Members of the Marseilles Church of Christ, including minister Philippe Dauner, served as hosts.

Jackson, who helped organize the event, hoped attendees would "discover some new, practical ways in which they can not only be disciples but can step out in faith to lead others into their faith and make other disciples."

As speakers addressed the theme "Every knee shall bow — how to be an active disciple of Christ," a quiet buzz filled the meeting room as participants translated the messages into the variety of languages represented.

Verardi listened as Lydia Robison, a former missionary to Italy, translated from English to Italian.

The event "gave me the chance to get to know our young people better," said Verardi, speaking in Italian.

His takeaway: "If we believe in their ability, surely they will be able to ignite heaven in the Italian churches."

The gathering also helped "to reignite the fire of faith in us," said Viktor Dolinaj, a 24-year-old

Christian from Aprilia, Italy. In small-group discussions, he and fellow believers talked about the need to lead by example — by following in the footsteps of Jesus.

Such discussions are vital to Christianity's future on the continent, said Stela Sinanaj, a member of the Vlora City

Church of Christ in the Central European nation of Albania.

"I believe that one of the biggest challenges of being a Christian in Europe is the lack of concrete projects that help to create a stronger bond between young Christians," she said. "We live in a society where anti-values are becoming values and vice versa."

To reach millennials with the Gospel, young Christians must be



PHOTOS BY VIVI VITALONE

Franco Verardi, a minister in Italy who helped formulate the idea for the Boanerges conference, speaks with Lydia Robison.



Valbona Cepi, Bethany Reeves, David Bell, Giacomo Negri and Jeremy Piercens take notes during a Bible study at the Boanerges conference for millennial Christians.

willing to address contemporary issues facing Europeans — from unemployment and fears about the future of the European Union to social justice, including the ongoing tide of refugees from the Middle East and concerns about terrorism.

"I strongly believe that, if we ignore the problems that Europe is facing, we will miss the opportunity to shine the light that God has placed in our hearts," Sinanaj said.

FOR EUROPE, PLANS OF ACTION

On the final day of the event, attendees split into groups according to their nationalities and discussed plans of action to reach the lost in their homelands. The idea, participants said, was to provide

concrete strategies for which their fellow Christians could pray — and hold them accountable. Organizers plan another Boanerges event for next year in Italy.

Mateja Stolnik, a 28-year-old from Croatia baptized three years ago, said she enjoyed getting to know her spiritual family from across Europe. She longs to see her country's sons — and daughters — of thunder step out of their comfort zone and "show

everyone God's spirit," she said.

Joele Nataloni, another member of the Aprilia Church of Christ, said the event "spurred much thought, especially about the future of the church, and our role in that."

"I really think that a good work has been started, and I will do my part to make sure it continues."

Old story New Century Third in a series

SEE MORE REPORTS about the pros and cons of approaches to reaching a changing society with a changeless message. Find "Old Story, New Century" under the "Series" tab at www.christianchronicle.org.

'Be patient and creative'

Millennial Christians in Europe talk about the challenges they face as they live out their faith.

France is an institutionally atheistic state. The spiritual default is unbelief. Orthodox Christianity is seen as either an artifact of history or a potentially dangerous ideology. France doesn't even fight against religion or belief in God anymore but rather treats it as if it's a closed case: there is no God.

Most of the time people see us as aliens for actually believing in God, and even more so for regularly going to church. It takes several years of relationship for them to understand that we are not part of a cult.

We need to be very patient and creative with how we interact with people. We need to make them curious about God and get them asking questions. Then they will be more open to hear what we have to share.

Emilie Young | Marseille, France

We don't know how to identify ourselves to others. Italy has always been a mostly-Catholic country, so when

we talk about Jesus or the Bible, people think about Catholicism. Also, Churches of Christ are not numerous, and that's a challenge. We young people can overcome this challenge by

staying close and encouraging each other, and then we must involve more non-Christian young people.

Francesca Masi | Venezia, Italy

Being a Christian is difficult because we must consider our lives from a different world view that comes with a new set of values — God's values. Even though I live on a secular continent like Europe, I'm sure that if we believe in these values everything will be more joyful. We should never give up on hope and faith.

Arjola Sako | Vlore, Albania



VIVI VITALONE

At the Boanerges gathering, Viktor Dolinaj, Danijel Blazotic, Erin Choate and Andrea Feneri discuss strategies to reach the lost.

Sometimes being a Christian in Croatia is very hard, but I guess it is the same anywhere in the world. Croatia is a very Catholic country, but most of Catholics are religious just on Easter and Christmas, so if you go to church often and talk or preach about the Gospel, they'll think you're crazy.

To even talk about the religious aspects of one's life is a challenge because a lot of Croatians don't think about it. It is hard to start a discussion. It is also hard to proclaim yourself a Christian because you might get laughed at. People will always find a way to explain something by science or the placebo effect.

Tin Gregurek | Velika Gorica, Croatia

In Albania, I can definitely say that there are a lot of challenges and blessings at the same time. One of the biggest challenges is the lack of interest about God and Christianity. Most of the people are disappointed by the churches here, and they prefer to worship God in their own way.

Another challenge is the confusion of Albanian society by the presence of so many different churches. It's difficult for me to explain the differences between the church where I worship and the other churches.

Challenges will be always present, but being able to find the solutions as Christian millennials is a must.

Stela Sinanaj | Vlora City, Albania

INTERVIEWS: Vivi Vitalone

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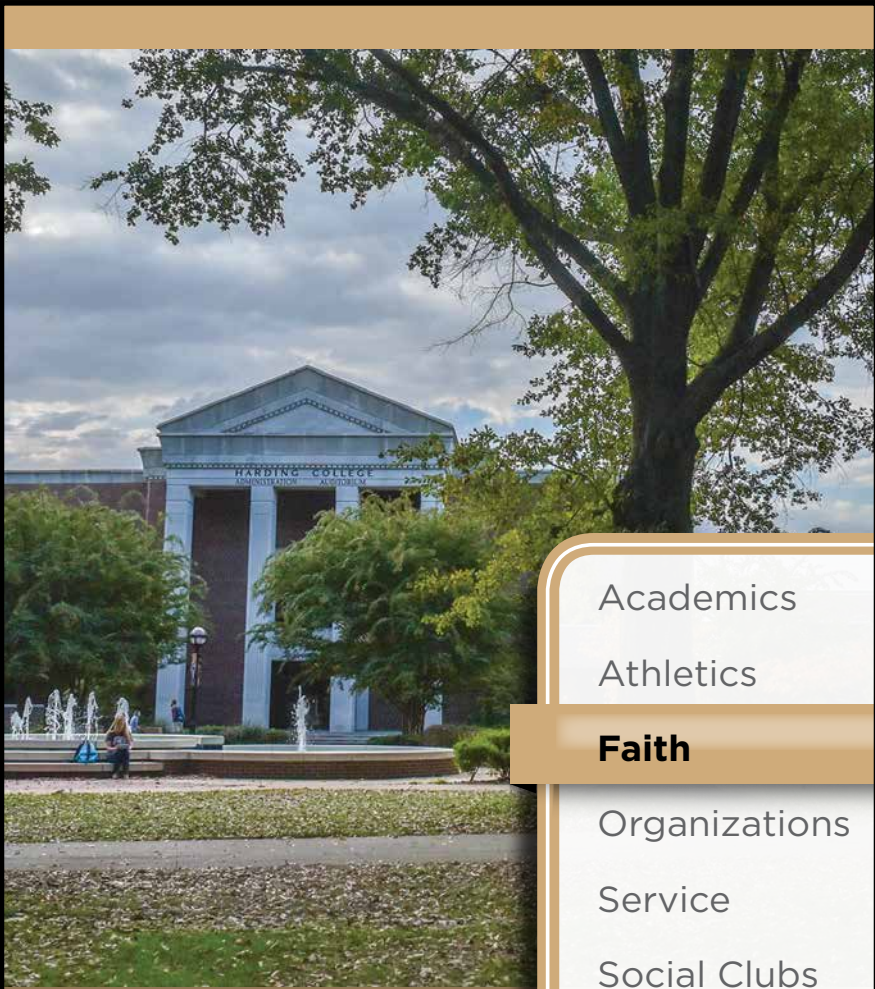
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HURRICANE: Roars and prayers

FROM PAGE 3
the storm in their motel room.
“It was just a huge roar, and the wind was going sideways,” Hames said. “We got down to pray because we weren’t sure we were going to survive it.”

When the storm passed, the damage was beyond what they imagined. “When we walked out and saw the destruction, the trees and the power lines down, the roofs of homes gone, gates blown over, it was sobering to see all of that destruction,” said Chris Pressnell, minister for the Flint Church of Christ in Decatur, Ala.

“Every building, every tree was destroyed except the building we were staying in,” Hames said.

Jérémie, a city of just over 30,000 people, was one of the hardest-hit areas. Trees fell like dominoes. Roads became impassable. The winds ripped the roof from the Catholic church. Haitian officials estimate that more than 1,000 people perished in the storm.

Back in Alabama — and across the U.S. — Christians prayed that the men would be found alive.

Hames said they believed they would eventually make it home to Alabama, but their hearts ached for those around them.

The men pooled their money to buy large bags of rice and beans and shared them with the Haitian ministers, asking them to distribute the food to those in need.

Cut off from all cell phone service and electricity, they found a man with a satellite phone who sent word home that they were alive.

They knew they had to get to Port-au-Prince, but the 180-mile trip would not be easy. Many of the bridges and roads were destroyed.

They loaded into a passenger van with a driver, an interpreter, an elder from a nearby church and a Haitian

preacher who had traveled with them from Port-au-Prince.

The first bridge they came to was gone, but locals had created a makeshift replacement from logs and boulders. They made it safely across.

When they came to another downed bridge, their driver traveled along the bank until he came to an area that seemed shallow enough to pass through. He built up momentum and rushed through the water, making it to the other side.

The vehicle slipped and slid through areas devastated by ocean waves, rain and mudslides. Twice, crowds of Haitians stopped them and demanded money.

“We were holding our breath that we were going to get back,” Pressnell said.

As they neared the top of a mountain, their phones began to ding — the first sign of cellular service. They stopped just long enough for each man to finally, briefly call home.

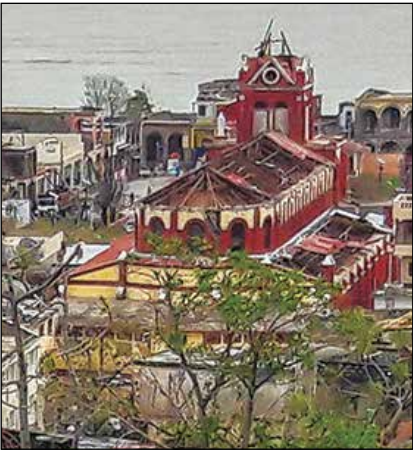
“That was emotional, just to get to hear their voices,” Pressnell said of his family.

After more than eight hours, the men arrived in Port-au-Prince.

Despite the hurricane — one of many disasters endured by Haiti, including the devastating 2010 earthquake — Hames said he knows God is working there.

“We came away not disappointed that we couldn’t finish the lecture-ship,” he said, “but glad we could share God’s love with them through the storm.”

Now, back home, Hames and the others work to coordinate shipments of food, medical supplies and personal items to help those in Haiti. Hames planned to return to Haiti by the end of October to help rebuild the church in Jérémie.



CHRIS PRESSNELL

Hurricane Matthew tore roofs from many of the buildings in Jeremie, Haiti.

FIND LINKS to churches and ministries collecting funds for Haiti relief at www.christianchronicle.org.

Good News for good sports

KEEPING PLAYERS OUT OF TROUBLE *and in the Word is a growing concern on Christian university campuses*

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Anna Buhigas walked onto Lipscomb University's campus with equal amounts of prowess and pain.

At age 5, she endured an ugly custody battle as her parents divorced. Then her mom, after a cancer diagnosis, moved to her hometown in Spain and left Buhigas with her father.

"I remember the day that she left, taking a little piece of my heart," Buhigas said. Her father tried to fill the void with pets and horseback riding lessons. In high school, she lost herself in relationships.

"I just needed that affirmation everyday that I was beautiful, I was wanted," she said.

She found solace in sports. The soccer field became her home.

She came to Lipscomb to play.

On her first day at the Nashville, Tenn., university associated with Churches of Christ, she met goal-keeper coach Shannon O'Brien, who poured as much of herself into Buhigas as the young athlete poured into soccer. O'Brien quickly became a mentor — the mother figure Buhigas craved.

She also met assistant coach Chris "Klotzy" Klotz, now director of spiritual formation for the university's athletic programs. His position is part of an initiative at Lipscomb, launched five years ago, to address the spiritual needs of student athletes.

In his younger days, Klotz also "worshiped the god of soccer," as he put it, and played for the University of California, Irvine. Then he discovered Missionary Athletes International, a summer-league program that taught him how to become a sports



Buhigas



BILLY EBEL

Chris Klotz, director of spiritual formation for Lipscomb University's athletic programs, speaks to volleyball player Lauren Anderson before her baptism on the Nashville, Tenn., campus. With them is Callista Pascarella, a member of the women's soccer team.

minister, a disciple-maker, through his love of the game.

Inspired by her coaches, Buhigas joined her teammates on a mission trip to the Central American nation of El Salvador, where they played with children and served the impoverished.

Though she knew who Jesus was, "I didn't really know him until that trip," Buhigas said. "I just saw the love of my teammates, the joy, the freedom of knowing Jesus."

"We met an old lady there named Matilda. And I remember Klotzy asking her, 'If you had one piece of advice for this group of college girls, what would it be?' And she's like, 'I just want them to know that they should love their moms.'"

She returned to the U.S. encouraged, prayerful and excited.

"Things are going to be better,"

she told herself. "I'm going to go to Spain, and things with my mom are finally going to be better."

BREAKING RULES, MAKING HEADLINES

Not every student has the same experience when they sign up to play for a Christian university.

Back in the 1990s, when Brent High played baseball for Lipscomb, some athletes "would show up on campus in the fall — they'd been recruited — and they'd realize two or three days into being there that there was a curfew, there were Bible classes, that they had to go to chapel."

When they come to a Christian school, some athletes adapt to the rules. Others don't, said High, who later worked in the athletic director's office at Lipscomb. Often, students who repeatedly or egregiously violate policies at Christian

schools lose scholarships or are quietly dismissed from the team.

Sometimes, however, their actions become national news.

In Waco, Texas, the nation's largest Baptist university, Baylor, is plagued by allegations that it failed to adequately handle cases of sexual assault. Earlier this year, a law firm hired by the university to investigate its policies painted a picture of a football program operating "above the rules." The team's coach, Art Briles, was fired, and the university's president, Ken Starr, was demoted and later resigned.

Faulkner University, a 2,500-student school in Montgomery, Ala., associated with Churches of Christ, also made headlines in December 2014 after the off-campus shooting death of Ryan Brooks, who played football for Faulkner, and the arrest

CONTINUED



PATRICK GREGORY

Administrators and students — including football and soccer players — from Faulkner University line the halls of an elementary school and welcome students to class.

CONTINUED
of student athletes Marshall Wall, Ronnie Williams and Tabias Russell — all recently indicted on murder charges.
According to court documents, the four students attempted to enter the home of another Faulkner student and former athlete in an attempt to steal illegal drugs. The homeowner shot Brooks in self-defense, police said.
Billy Hilyer, Faulkner’s then-president, called the tragic incident “completely counter to everything that we stand for at Faulkner” and promised change.
Nearly two years later, Faulkner has intensified its drug-testing efforts and decreased the size of its football program — a Division 1 team in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, or NAIA — from 223 students to 145, eliminating its junior varsity team, said Christopher Kratzer, director of public relations. The more manageable size increases accountability and “lets everybody know everybody,” he said.
But rules aren’t enough, Kratzer

added, and university officials have placed “a renewed emphasis on growing our players into positive, contributing members of our society.”
That includes a new mentoring program, faith-based counseling and team-specific service opportunities. Faulkner partners with a nearby elementary school that has student from underserved communities in Montgomery. Athletes seek to be mentors for the children. This fall, on the first day of school, Faulkner football and soccer players lined the halls and cheered for the children as they headed to class.
Marquis Grays, a junior from Huntsville, Ala., is a point guard for Faulkner’s men’s basketball team. Since age 6, he dreamed of “playing basketball at a higher level,” he said.
But he never thought much about a higher power.
“I was just trying to go find a place to play basketball,” he said, and when



Grays

he enrolled at Faulkner, “I got on the wrong path.” But he also made Christian friends — students and fellow athletes who accepted him and “just let me be myself. I could talk to them about anything.”
His coach, Scott Sanderson, stresses character and faith — and “motivates me to be the best man that I can possibly be,” Grays said. The student athlete attends college ministry classes with the Landmark Church of Christ and was baptized a little more than a year ago.
“I love Romans 1:16, *I am not ashamed of the Gospel*,” he said. “It motivates me.”
“I’m a man now. Time to step up.”
‘THE CULTURE THAT YOU BUILD’
Keeping students on a path to spiritual growth — and out of trouble — requires “a culture that must be prioritized by all coaches and administrators,” said Lisa Gilmore, an associate director of athletics at Abilene Christian University in Texas.
“It’s important for student athletes to see spiritual leadership from not only

their head coach, but also from the athletic director, their athletic trainers, their professors,” said Gilmore, who focuses on the welfare of student athletes at ACU, a 4,500-student school associated with Churches of Christ that plays NCAA Division 1 sports including football and basketball.
Curtis Janz, former athletic director for Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City, agreed that success on and off the field depends on “the culture that you build” and stressed the need for administrators to be honest, accountable and consistent in disciplinary practices. The 2,500-student school competes in NCAA Division 2.
“I think we get in trouble when information stops — when someone tells a coach and the information stops, when a coach tells an athletic director and it stops,” said Janz, now athletic director for the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith.
For nearly 20 years, Bob Crawford



Gilmore

KEEPING THE FAITH, ON AND OFF THE FIELD

YOUNG BELIEVERS enrolled in state colleges and universities share their experiences playing high school and college-level sports. They also offer advice to other Christian athletes on keeping their spirituality in focus as they compete. (Interviews by Katie Jones.)



MIKE HOPPE

JESSE BRACHT: Played high school football and baseball; now a freshman at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Ore., and Linn Benton Community College in Albany, Ore.; a member of Circle Church of Christ in Corvallis, Ore.

“I would get a lot of grief from kids who didn’t understand why I don’t practice or play on Sundays. “In order to be an example of Christ’s love as an athlete, you must be willing to sacrifice. I think that true Christian athletes are the hardest workers. “If they want to succeed and still follow the words of Jesus, they have to first give their lives to him, which means spending more time with him than with sports.”



BRENDAN MALONEY

MIA MUKES: Runs varsity women’s track and field (200- and 400-meter) for the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Okla.; a member of the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City.

“I think that being around different people in a different environment helps me realize why I go back to my faith and why it’s important. I’m really grateful for my family and how I grew up because I know that it’s really hard to not have a root foundation in God and the Church of Christ. “Faith-wise, don’t get discouraged, continue on in what you know. There’s always going to be scary moments, but God is on your side so everything should be fine.”



PHOTO PROVIDED

KAMERON COGGINS (far right in photo): Freshman softball pitcher for Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, Ga.; a member of the Lake Park Church of Christ in Georgia.

“One thing that I do — that everyone always remembers me by — is pray before every game. No matter what team we’re playing, I always ask if I can say a prayer ... before the game I always tell everybody, ‘Have fun and give all the glory to God’ in the huddle. “A lot of the young people today, I think, feel like they have forever, but really you don’t know when your time is going to come. So I just always choose to live a life that God would be proud of.”

“I can’t even describe how much my life changed. I don’t need relationships to affirm me or fill that void anymore. ... I know that God has picked me up — literally picked me up out of that abandoned kind of childhood — and placed me here.”

— Lipscomb University goalkeeper **Anna Buhigas** on life after baptism



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In the coastal waters of El Salvador, Anna Buhigas celebrates her baptism with Lipscomb associate head soccer coach Kelsey Fenix and head coach Kevin O'Brien.

Students “come to us with all kinds of baggage,” he added. “You have to walk with kids through that baggage — whether its abuse issues, dependency issues ... eating disorders. The counseling end of this became much larger than I ever expected.”
Chris Klotz now serves as director of spiritual formation for the university’s athletic programs. He coordinates mission trips and local outreach efforts, mentors male students, oversees the university’s chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, conducts chapel programs and serves as a chaplain for the athletic department.
In the past five years, student athletes have participated in 34 mission trips, Klotz said. And 65 have given their lives to Christ in baptism.
‘JESUS ANSWERED MY PRAYER’
For soccer player Anna Buhigas, her trip to Spain didn’t go as planned. She and her mother weren’t able to mend the years of hurt.
“I felt so lonely, so frustrated, at rock-bottom with this relationship,”

she said. She fervently prayed for Jesus to “come into my life and fill that void.”
The next morning, she got a text message from one of her best friends at Lipscomb. She wanted to visit Buhigas in Spain and had found the money to make the trip.
“Jesus answered my prayer,” Buhigas said. “He sent me family.”
This March, Buhigas — the reigning Atlantic Sun Conference Goalkeeper of the Year — returned to El Salvador with her Lipscomb teammates.
There, in the waters of the Pacific Ocean, she was baptized.
“I can’t even describe how much my life’s changed,” she said. “I don’t need relationships to affirm me or fill that void anymore. I don’t need my dad to be my hero, my savior, buy me things ... to fill that void.”
“I know that God has picked me up — literally picked me up out of that lonely, abandoned kind of childhood — and placed me here.”
ADDITIONAL REPORTING: Katie Jones



Crawford

The spiritual discipline of kung fu

HARDING BIBLE PROFESSOR uses Chinese martial art to teach students focus, peace and integrity

BY JOSHUA JOHNSON | FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

SEARCY, Ark. — *The room is dimly lit and quiet. Half of the overhead lights are on, throwing flickering shadows against the back wall.*

The teacher watches from a low stance, legs spread wide, arms crossed. Opposite him are two students, palms outstretched, eyes narrowed to slits.

"Remember to breathe," the teacher says. The students exhale, audibly, as one, and then straighten, allowing their arms to float up, hands becoming fists, heads tilting back. They raise their right knees in a concurrent motion. The pose is bird-like.

"Now we turn, make a crane beak, and then out," the teacher says.

"This is making my hip sore," one of the students says between breaths. The teacher's response: "Good!"

The teacher, Kevin Youngblood, shares the Gospel with his students by day as an associate professor of Bible and ministry for Harding University, a nearly 6,000-student school associated with Churches of Christ.

By late afternoon, he teaches kung fu — a Chinese martial art that emphasizes patience and energy — at Impact 360, a Searcy nonprofit that offers training in martial arts, tutoring and mentoring for the community.

Youngblood was 9 when he was introduced to kung fu. Growing up in Tampa, Fla., he lacked the athleticism of his peers in fourth grade, so his father — concerned for his son's wellbeing and safety — enrolled him in a judo class at a community center.

It wasn't his forte. At age 10, he moved to a slightly smaller room across the hall, where a man named Mr. Geary taught kung fu. Unlike judo, which focuses on holds and throws, kung fu offered a broad spectrum of self-defense, Youngblood said.

One of the students, Matt Wilcox, turns sharply and scoops his hand close to the ground, then plants and



PHOTOS BY BRITTNEY GARRINGER

Bible professor Kevin Youngblood, center, teaches kung fu to ministry students Graeme Gastineau and Matt Wilcox

kicks from the hip. His tennis shoes squeak on the linoleum floor. The second student, Graeme Gastineau, does likewise a few seconds later.

*It is a **gong li quan** form, or "power fist," involving a sequence of strong attacks primarily from the upper body.*

*"Is the fist in the chamber at this point?" Wilcox asks. His teacher nods and moves a bit closer, deftly demonstrating the transitional hand placements from a **mabu** stance to **gumbo**. Gastineau, meanwhile, turns and attacks with an outward-facing palm strike — accidentally striking the teacher above the elbow.*

"I am sorry, I am so sorry," he says.

I guess this has always been my nature, but when I get into something like this, I really study it," Youngblood said.

"So I read. I read everything I could get my hands on — the origins of

kung fu, the different styles of kung fu. I was trying to figure out exactly what I was being taught. But it was just never clear to me. It looked like what I was learning ... was not a pure, traditional style of kung fu."

He later enrolled at the Wah Lum Kung Fu Temple in Orlando, Fla. He became a student of Pui Chan — the kung fu grandmaster who started the Wah Lum program. Chan has been featured on the Discovery Channel and in martial arts magazines.

"He was the real deal," Youngblood said.

Youngblood continued practicing kung fu while he attended Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn., from 1987 to 1991. He earned bachelor's and graduate degrees in Old Testament theology and doctrinal interpretation. He married his wife, Becky, in 1994 and had his first

child, Karissa, in 1996. He earned a doctorate from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2004.

While kung fu has roots in Eastern faith, many Americans regard it as an athletic pastime, Youngblood said. But it has a mental component that students can witness — and experience — as spiritual in nature.

Some Christians may see this as a conflict of interests, but Youngblood seeks to ground his instruction of kung fu in ways that complement the teachings of Jesus, with emphasis on biblical virtues such as focus, peace and integrity.

"To participate in anything cultural ... we have to be thoughtful and critical about how we do it, so that we do it in a way that is true to our Christian convictions," Youngblood said. "And I approach kung fu the same way I approach going to the movies. I am very selective about



Kevin Youngblood helps Matt Wilcox with proper kung fu technique.

what I see, for my own sake and for the sake of my children. But, I don't feel like I should avoid the movie theater altogether simply because they show some bad movies."

When Youngblood teaches students at Harding, he places a strong emphasis on mental discipline — similar to the meditative state that permeates much of Chinese and Japanese culture.

One fundamental difference between Western and Eastern medicine, Youngblood said, is that one's mental state and one's physical state are intimately interconnected.

"I think the Bible teaches this," Youngblood said. "Think of the psalmist who said that when he did not confess his sins, his body wasted away." (Psalm 32:3)

Youngblood's students, Gastineau and Wilcox, are both Bible and ministry majors at Harding. Wilcox said he knew little to nothing about kung fu before enrolling in Youngblood's lessons. Gastineau's father went to Lipscomb University with Youngblood, and the two men studied kung fu together.

"I guess I wanted to live through the legacy," Gastineau said with a laugh.

Both students, sweaty and breathless, relax into an upright stance, hands slowly falling to their sides. "Don't stop breathing," Youngblood says. "Lesson is over; breathing continues."

Gastineau wipes the sweat from his forehead. "Tough one today," he says, forcing himself to take deep breaths. His teacher's response: "Good!"

In Youngblood's lessons, the teacher often relates the physical discipline of kung fu to the study of Scripture, Gastineau said. In the same way that martial arts students strive for discipline over the limitations of their mind and body, Christians strive for discipline in prayer and in exegetical studies, explaining and interpreting God's Word.

"We practice these forms and learn these moves so that, when danger arises, it is second nature to do what we've been doing," Gastineau said. "It should be the same with our Christian walk."

Youngblood said that, ultimately, kung fu was founded and practiced as a tool to maintain health, in the service of rigorous meditation.

"By balancing physical and spiritual health and by recognizing the connection between the two, you will attain health benefits, and you will discover a sense of control over your own body and mind," Youngblood said.

"After that, it is up to you to decide what to do with that. Whether that enhanced control is used for Buddhist virtues or Christian virtues, or to hurt someone, or to plow a field — that is up to you."

WEBSITE: impact360online.com

Why we support The Christian Chronicle® Jim and Leah Keyes

Did you know that 114 individuals, couples and families have contributed to *The Christian Chronicle* for 20 consecutive years — or more?

Jim and Leah Keyes are among them. The couple, married for 47 years, worships with the Altamesa Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas. On most Sunday nights, they host 18 believers in their home for encouragement, prayer and spiritual discussion.

Both are retired — Jim Keyes from the City of Fort Worth and Leah Keyes from Texas Christian University. The parents of two and grandparents of eight have lived — and worshiped — in Wisconsin, Louisiana and Texas.

Jim Keyes, a Texas native, met his future wife in her home state of Illinois, while he was stationed there for the U.S. Army, and she worked in the Department of Defense. They moved to Lubbock, Texas, after marrying and pursued careers in the education system.

After completing graduate school at the University of Wisconsin, Jim Keyes worked for the cities

of Houston, Shreveport and Fort Worth, where they have lived for 25 years.

Leah Keyes taught children's Bible classes, organized workrooms and created bulletin boards for various churches while her husband has served as a deacon, elder, church treasurer and small-group leader for 45 years.

The couple has donated to *The Christian Chronicle* for 32 consecutive years.



Why do you read *The Christian Chronicle*?

Jim: It seems that I have always known about the *Chronicle*. It keeps me in touch with the church at large. It has reported on church issues, but it has never

taken sides in a harsh and demeaning manner. It provides a monthly breath of optimism and encouragement.

Why have you chosen to donate to the paper for so long?

Communication is the tie that binds us together. A small donation maintains a connection with a larger movement.

To make a donation or to find out how to bless the *Chronicle* through the monthly Keepers program, contact Lynda Sheehan at (405) 425-5070.

Milestones

Showcasing the moments of your life and the lives of loved ones.

Anniversaries

Marcilee and Harold Jones, 70 years

Once upon a time in the little village called Los Angeles in the state of California, there was a boy named Harold Jones and a girl named Marcilee Hanna.

Now, on a certain Sunday these two people just happened to attend an open house at Pepperdine College before it was called a university, Harold was an alumnus, and Marcy as a future student.

Harold was on leave from the Merchant Marine, and Marcy was with a Christian young people's group from Alhambra, Calif. After a meeting of singing and worship in the chapel, Harold and Marcy saw each other for the first time. This meeting was set-up by Harold's sister-in-law and was called a blind date. Did Harold and Marcy both like what they saw? Oh, yes!

After that, Harold and Marcy were together as much as possible, but Marcy had to finish high school. In a little while the two decided they were meant for each other and had a beautiful fairy tale, storybook wedding at the Southwest Church of Christ in the village of Los Angeles.

Somehow the idea of attending Pepperdine faded away, for now Harold heard of a place called Alaska. It sounded great. For there he could have the sea that he had grown to love and also have a family.

So they boarded a Greyhound bus in Los Angeles, and, after an uneventful land and sea trip, landed in a town called Juneau. There, during the many ups and downs of mostly financial difficulties, they had three beautiful children: Anita Rae, Christopher Lee and Anthony Lynn. During their long marriage, they also had six Shetland sheepdogs and four cats whose origins were known as the alley.

Harold decided to go into the fishing business in Juneau. So with Marcy's

complete faith and help, they bought a boat named Tacora and fished out of Pelican, Ala., for approximately 20 years.

Then they heard of shrimp fishing in Kodiak, but their boat was too small for such an adventure. So they purchased the fishing vessel Tradewind. As time progressed, they sold the Tradewind and wound up with the fishing vessels Marcy J and Anita J. Soon they decided two boats were one too many, so they sold the Anita J and concentrated on improving the Marcy J. The Marcy J did a great job for them for 20 or so years, but it was finally time to sell the boat and retire.

They traveled some – Germany, France, and Holland – and sailed from Alabama through the Panama Canal back to Kodiak. That was quite a trip! An engine failure had them on a towline behind the fishing vessels, John and Olaf, in San Diego.

At one time Harold joined with nine other fishermen and formed a company called All Alaskan. This was a successful venture, and during that period he owned the Star of Alaska as All Alaskan Seafood's, as well as processing vessels with the same name.

Now with Harold in his 92nd year and Marcy in her 87th year, they look forward to their 70th wedding anniversary on Sept. 20, 2016. It has been a long, sometimes financially difficult, 70 years. Have they ever yelled at each other, then kissed and made up? You bet! If they had it to do over again, would they do it the same way? Oh, yes!

Wendell and Rochelle Wardell, 50 years

Wendell and Rochelle Wardell of Cooksville, Ill., son of Wendell Sr. and Vera Wardell, and daughter of Myron and Mozelle Maddox, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Thursday, Dec. 29, 2016. They were married at the Wilshire



Church of Christ in Oklahoma City on Dec. 29, 1966. Both graduated Oklahoma Christian University, Wendell with a B.A. in Biblical Studies and Rochelle, a B.A. in Education and Language Arts. Rochelle received her Master's Degree in Reading Specialist Certification from Illinois State University in 1989.

While living in Texas, Rochelle was involved in speaking, lobbying and debating on the floor of the Texas Legislature for Christian women's rights and in opposition to the controversial Equal Rights Amendment Bill.

She has been involved in many levels and aspects of education, including writing Christian curriculum for pre-schools, teens and women, and teaching in private pre-schools and at the elementary and university public school levels. She taught at Illinois State University (ISU) for 22 years (including an ISU/Loyola University partnership program) and served as adjunct professor at Eureka College.

She continues to direct and teach Thursday School, a pre-school provided by the Cooksville Church of Christ and serves as president of the Towanda District Library Board of Directors.

Wendell was employed by State Farm for 34 years and has served various roles in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Illinois churches. He currently preaches for the Cooksville Church of Christ and does volunteer work through the chaplain's office at Pontiac Correctional Center.

Both Wendell and Rochelle have extended their passion to serve beyond the borders of their state and country through both foreign and domestic mission trips.

They have been blessed with three children, Alicia, Anissa and Brandon, as well as nine grandchildren.

More Milestones, page 32

NEWSMAKERS



PHOTO PROVIDED

Tony Fernandez was honored with Harding University's Distinguished Christian Service Award.

AWARDED: Tony Fernandez, representative for Herald of Truth's Hope for Life ministry in Cuba, the Distinguished Christian Service Award from Harding University in Searcy, Ark. Fernandez preaches for the Versaille Church of Christ in Matanzas, Cuba.



Larry and Diane Stephens

HONORED: Larry and Diane Stephens, for 40 years of ministry with the Livonia Church of Christ in Michigan. They spent 23 years as the church's missionaries in Kenya. **Nathan Samuel**, chief executive for Childplace Inc. in Jeffersonville, Ind., for 30 years of service.

NEW ELDERS: Ed Biggers, Herb Fauth and Jim Naylor, Mountain Avenue Church of Christ, Tucson, Ariz.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY ANDREW HILL

Ed and Paula Biggers, Herb and Sue Fauth and Jim and Linda Naylor serve with the Mountain Avenue church.

Entries should be submitted to milestones@christianchronicle.org or call (405) 425-5070.

Rates and guidelines are available upon request (credit card preferred).

From selfies to selfless living

MISS AMERICA'S OUTSTANDING TEEN uses faith in Christ as her guide as she launches a campaign to let real light shine.

BY LYNN McMILLON AND JOY McMILLON
THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Her triumphant walk across the stage at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla., was just the beginning of Nicole Jia's journey.

As Miss America's Outstanding Teen 2017, the 17-year-old high school senior from Oklahoma City will travel the nation in coming months. She'll speak to audiences about her platform, "This Little Light of Mine," emphasizing the need for kindness.

Jia won the title, which includes a \$30,000 college scholarship, after a week of intense competition alongside 51 other talented young women. The 12-year-old Outstanding Teen program encourages positive goals through scholastic achievement, creative accomplishments and community involvement.

Jia's parents, Greg and Mary, grew up just a few miles apart in Beijing but didn't meet until both moved to the U.S. Jia's father is now a urologist, and the family worships with the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City. Their son, Nathan, is currently enrolled at New York University Medical School.

Nicole Jia, an active member of her church's youth group, maintains a 4.08 grade-point average and is an accomplished pianist and community volunteer. She hopes to become a national TV news anchor someday.

Meanwhile, she enjoys opportunities to expand her God-given talents and serve others.

Tell us about how your faith has developed — and the role it played in this competition.

Ever since I was a little girl, my family and I have gone to church every single Sunday and Wednesday, so faith has always been a big part of my life. And throughout the entire competition, I truly believe that it was my faith that guided me.

Anytime I felt anxious or nervous, I reminded myself that God already knew who would win long ago, and I had to trust that, if it was meant to be, then it would be me. But if not,

God had other plans.

Before every phase of competition, I would say a prayer, placing everything into his hands and asking not to be nervous because he would be with me every step of the way.

Even though I wanted to give in to the nerves, I fought the urge to lose confidence in God's power. The sense of peace and confidence that washed over me is hard to describe, but because I placed my worries and fears into his hands, I realized I had nothing to fear.

What attracted you to this competition?

I first heard about the Miss America's Outstanding Teen organization when I was a little girl. As I got older, I saw how this organization positively impacts young girls and encourages them to have a heart of service. After competing for two years, I am not the same person. I've changed in ways I couldn't have ever imagined, and I can say it is due to this organization.

How does this competition differ from other pageants?

Many times, when people hear the word "pageant" they automatically have some preconceived notion that may not have the most positive light, but the Miss America's Outstanding Teen organization is not a pageant. It is a scholarship competition that rewards academic excellence, healthy living and community service.

Explain your platform and how you chose it.

My platform is "This Little Light of Mine" from the Sunday school song I learned as a child. It is a platform about kindness, encouraging people to do exactly what the song says — "let it shine all the time."

When I was younger, I had a friend who was bullied every day. As I sat and consoled her while she cried, I



PHOTO PROVIDED

'My platform is "This Little Light of Mine," from the Sunday school song I learned as a child. It is a platform about kindness, encouraging people to do exactly what the song says.'

Nicole Jia, Miss America's Outstanding Teen 2017

saw how deeply words could hurt someone. So when asked what platform I would promote during my year of service, I immediately thought, "kindness." It is a subject that means a lot to me, and one that I believe is very relevant with what is happening in our world, nation and schools today.

Each of us has a light within us, and that light is compassion and understanding. What we need most is for people to shine that light onto others through their actions and their words. That's what I will encourage people to do.

How will you communicate that platform?

I have a new campaign called #BeSelfLess. During my freshman year I switched high schools, and being the new girl can be very tough. On weekends I would see these photos on social media of all the girls in my grade at sleepovers or birthday dinners that I wasn't invited to. It made me feel like an outsider who didn't belong. Then I read an article that people spend, on average, five hours a week trying to take the perfect selfie. That blew my mind.

I thought, "Why don't we use our time to document people doing good things for others instead of pictures of ourselves?" So that's where the idea for #BeSelfLess came from.

While I was in Atlantic City for the Miss America competition, I kicked it off with a clean-up of a section of the beach. The goal is to capture moments that are truly authentic — the person who helped load groceries into someone's car or a neighbor offering to mow your lawn.

Pictures like these will turn the selfie tide into a selfless wave.

As a Christian, what opportunities or challenges are there for you in this position?

This prestigious title is a wonderful chance for me to use my faith to reach as many people as possible on a national level, to encourage kindness and compassion.

One challenge that many of us encounter is the lack of time in our busy schedules. Although I know this year will be very eventful and filled with exciting opportunities, I remind myself that it wasn't by my own abilities that I won this title, but through the power of believing in God.

So, no matter how busy I may become, or how many people congratulate me, it is important that I remember who I am, whose I am and who got me here.



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PEYTON

MANNING

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HIGHER EDUCATION

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
ABILENE, Texas — Beach volleyball in landlocked West Texas? That's right.

ACU is adding women's beach volleyball as a varsity sport, with competition beginning in spring 2018. Women's indoor volleyball assistant coach Breann Nesselhuf will oversee the beach volleyball program as its head coach.

With the addition of beach volleyball, ACU will now sponsor 17 sports overseen by 11 head coaches. The university plans to convert an outdoor basketball court and the grass area near it into a beach volleyball facility complete with three competition courts.

FAULKNER UNIVERSITY

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Faulkner broke ground this fall on a new, 88-bed, suite-style residence hall with private bathrooms, large common areas and laundry facilities on each of four floors.

The facility housing freshman men will help meet Faulkner's growing demand for additional housing, provide more attractive campus living facilities and position the university for continued growth, spokesman Chris Kratzer said.

FREED-HARDEMAN UNIVERSITY

HENDERSON, Tenn. — Joe Wiley plans to retire as Freed-Hardeman's president effective June 1, 2017, after nine years at the helm.

"Working at FHU is and has been a true ministry for which I will be forever grateful to the board for allowing me to experience," Wiley said in a statement announcing his decision. "While there are always goals and objectives left uncompleted, we have accomplished much together, and I am confident that FHU is well positioned for the future."

Board Chairman John Law praised the performance of Wiley, who has 44 years of experience in higher education.



Wiley



PHOTO USED BY PERMISSION OF YORK (NEB.) NEWS-TIMES

Thanks to York College, inmates get an education

Inmates at the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women in York, Neb., benefit from the Second Chance Educational Program, created by York College, which is associated with Churches of Christ. Taking one or two classes at a time for three years, the inmates can earn an associate's degree behind bars. Terry Seufferlein, a York associate professor of Bible, was the catalyst behind the program's creation.

"He has guided our university with decisive and effective leadership, meeting and overcoming challenges and leading our university to a place of historic growth and strength," Law said.

"Most importantly, he has exhibited to our students, faculty and staff a humble and Christ-like spirit that will define his legacy for years to come."

OKLAHOMA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma Christian recently debuted its newest on-campus dining option: Chick-fil-A Express.

Kurt Hermanson is the owner and operator of U Dining, which provides the university's meals. He began the process to get a Chick-fil-A Express about three years ago and is pleased with student reaction.

The addition of Chick-fil-A Express, open every day except Sunday, has increased the number of on-campus jobs.

More than 50 students work in part-time positions.

ROCHESTER COLLEGE

ROCHESTER HILLS, Mich. — Rochester College recently added majors in urban ministry, worship ministry and theater management.

These additions bring the number of bachelor's degree majors offered by the college to 25.

RESTORATION HISTORY

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HISTORICAL

BETHANY, W.Va. — The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, formerly located in Nashville, Tenn., has moved into new facilities next to the Alexander Campbell study and mansion and across the street from the Campbell cemetery.

The building was completed by renovating the Renner Visitors Center and adding an archives room housing artifacts, portraits, institutional records, books and journals from the early 19th century until now.

For more information, contact interim executive director John Imbler at john.imbler@ptstulsa.edu.

SPOTLIGHT

Batsell's birthday

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Lipscomb's College of Bible and Ministry hosted a recent celebration of the ministry of the late Batsell Barrett Baxter. Baxter, who died in 1982, would have turned 100 on Sept. 23.

The event recalled the "soft style of preaching" by Baxter. He was best known as the primary presenter for the television ministry "Herald of Truth" from 1956 to 1980.



KRISTI JONES

Attendees visit a display recalling the ministry of the late Batsell Barrett Baxter.

‘Who you vote for is between you and God’

A TOUGH CHOICE faces Christians in November, but believers shouldn’t necessarily stay home, panelists say.

BY JOHN R. IRBY | FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

SEARCY, Ark.

A lesser-of-two-evils doctrine — used by individuals and nations throughout history — could determine who will be the next president of the United States.

That path appears possible as many voters express equal disfavor for Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.

But Christians shouldn’t necessarily stay home on Nov. 8, said panelists who spoke during a discussion of “The Christian and Politics” during Harding University’s 93rd Annual Bible Lectureship.

“Vote for the one you dislike the least,” said Jim Carr, a senior vice president at Harding.

Carr, an elder of the College Church of Christ in Searcy, shared numbers from the Pew Research Center indicating that 54 million Americans identify themselves as evangelical Christians, yet only 24 million are registered voters — and only 14 million vote.

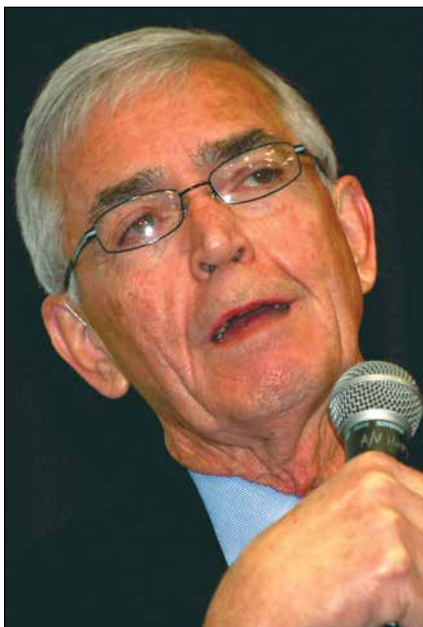
Carr said he has never considered himself to be a one-issue voter, but candidates’ beliefs on abortion — and a justice system that, in his opinion, seems to have run amok — are important to him.

Nonetheless, “we need to keep in perspective that most of the world’s problems are spiritual, not political,” Carr added.

Another panelist, Leon Barnes, agreed.

“The cause of Christ means far, far more than what goes on in politics,” said Barnes, minister for the Central Church of Christ in Little Rock, Ark. “No matter who wins, it’s not the one I would have chosen.”

Referencing the first presidential debate — televised just hours after



Minister Leon Barnes, Harding University administrator Jim Carr and Arkansas Chief Justice Dan Kemp speak about politics and faith.

the panel discussion, Barnes said, “I don’t expect either one to be honest about most things. We are wasting our time if we expect them to come out looking like Christians.”

The panelists discussed issues raised by the candidates, including immigration.

“I believe a country has a right to have borders,” Barnes said, “but we can’t lose sight of the opportunities we have to reach people from all the world as they come here. Evangelism is the primary thing.”

A third panelist, Dan Kemp, recently won an election himself. The church elder from Mountain View, Ark., is the newly named chief justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court.

The next president will appoint new justices for the U.S. Supreme Court, Kemp said. Those appointments could impact Christians across the nation and faith-based organizations, including Christian colleges and universities.

Christian office holders should not be afraid to share their faith, the panelists said, citing the personal responsibility of all believers to seek and save the lost. But they also cautioned the faithful about becoming too publicly involved in supporting candidates and political parties.

“We’ve had bumper stickers ripped off some cars in our parking lot,” Barnes said.

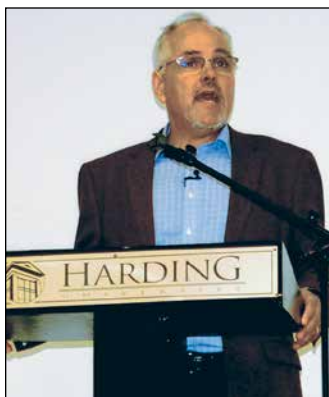
“There are godly Democrats and godly Republicans,” he added. “They need to be in harmony. We need to be Christians first. We should stay off Facebook with political views. Who you vote for is

between you and God.”

About 100 people attended the discussion, moderated by Noel Whitlock, minister for the College Church of Christ. The session was not recorded — unlike most other lectureship sessions — so attendees could discuss their thoughts freely.

Whitlock urged the audience to speak “the truth in love.” Christians have “a spiritual kingdom, not a political kingdom,” he said, and he called for civility as the panelists discussed ways Christians can participate and make a difference in politics.

His warnings on decorum were not needed.



PHOTOS BY JOHN R. IRBY

Noel Whitlock, a minister in Searcy, Ark., moderates a panel on “The Christian and Politics.”



LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY

Should Christians vote?

Should Christians cease voting and all involvement with civil government? David Lipscomb, a prominent name in the history of Churches of Christ and Christian education, was a compelling voice in the debate.

In his 1889 treatise, “On Civil Government,” Lipscomb lays out the history of human governments and why Christians should not be involved in such institutions.

Whether we agree with him or not, Lipscomb’s voice on the subject of voting is important, writes Josh Kingcade in a Views column from our archives. Read it and join the discussion at www.christianchronicle.org.



College of Arts and Sciences

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

The **Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry** invites applications for a position in physical chemistry beginning Fall 2017. The successful candidate will demonstrate a commitment to excellence in teaching and in research appropriate for an undergraduate department. An M.S. in physical chemistry is required, with a Ph.D. preferred. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/chemistry.

College of Biblical Studies

Dr. Dale E. Bertram, Chair, Department of Marriage and Family Studies, ACU Box 29446, Abilene, Texas 79699-9446

The **Department of Marriage and Family Studies** invites applications and nominations for a tenure-track marriage and family therapy faculty position at the assistant or associate professor level, beginning Fall 2017. The MFT program at ACU has held continuous COAMFTE accreditation since 1983. The candidate will be expected to teach courses relative to the family lifecycle, research, career counseling from a systemic perspective, and other MFT courses; supervise graduate interns; mentor student research; and accept committee assignments. The candidate should possess a well-defined program of research as evidenced by peer-reviewed publications and presentations; demonstrate competence in the integration of theological and spiritual issues with therapy; exhibit competence as a classroom teacher; demonstrate eligibility for licensure as an LMFT in the State of Texas; hold Clinical Membership and Approved Supervisor or Supervisor Candidate status with the AAMFT; and must hold the Ph.D. in marriage and family therapy or a closely related mental health discipline. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/mft.

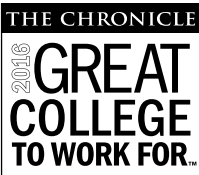
School of Information Technology and Computing

Dr. John Homer, Director, ACU Box 29304, Abilene, Texas 79699-9304

The **School of Information Technology and Computing (SITC)** invites applications for an instructor or tenure-track faculty position in digital entertainment technology (DET) beginning Fall 2017. DET is an interdisciplinary major catering to students interested in game design and development, film production and special effects, and animation. ACU's program was recently ranked 27th in the *Princeton Review's* top 50 game design programs in the nation. Faculty responsibilities include engaging with undergraduate students and colleagues in teaching, research and service. A terminal degree in a field related to the teaching discipline is preferred; a master's degree is acceptable if combined with significant professional experience and commitment to ongoing professional development. SITC is a growing academic unit within the College of Business Administration and offers majors in computer science, digital entertainment technology, information systems and information technology. The undergraduate computer science / computing theory and information technology programs are accredited by the Computing Accreditation Commission of ABET. Information about the school is available at acu.edu/sitc.

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

ACU is affiliated with the fellowship of the Churches of Christ. All applicants must be professing Christians and be active, faithful members of a congregation of the Churches of Christ and deeply committed to service in Christian higher education. The mission of ACU is to educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world. ACU does not unlawfully discriminate in employment opportunities.



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EDITORIAL

Banish prejudice, a survivor urges us

"I prayed for you" is a phrase Dr. Kent Brantly never tires of hearing. Nor does the Christian physician and Ebola survivor tire of thanking all of us who prayed for God to spare him as he battled the deadly virus.

Brantly, a member of the Southside Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas, spoke to *The Christian Chronicle* during a recent visit to Oklahoma City, where he preached during Oklahoma Christian University's annual lecture-ship. He urged believers to "choose compassion over fear" as we face the evils of this world — oceans away and at our doorsteps.

He talked about the long road to recovery in Liberia, where he served with Samaritan's Purse in a mission clinic during West Africa's horrendous Ebola outbreak in 2014. The virus killed 11,310 people and nearly took Brantly's life as well. The outbreak devastated the region's economy and infrastructure.

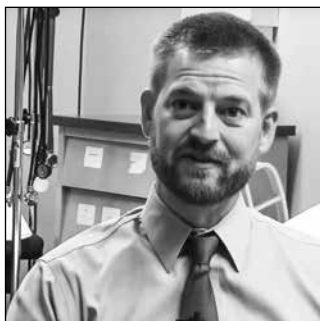
When we asked him what Christians here can do for the people of West Africa, Brantly's answer was a bit surprising.

"I think if we pay attention to the prejudices and the stigmas that we hold against people in our own communities — and if we start asking God to help us overcome those stigmas and those prejudices — it's going to change our community," he said. "And so, as our community changes, communities around us will change."

"Just like we saw the interconnectedness of our world when there was an outbreak of an illness in West Africa that greatly impacted America, I think the breakdown of stigma and prejudice and racism in our country ... can impact even places across the ocean."

Lord, may we be the city on a hill that guides souls around the globe to you.

As we prayed fervently for God to heal Kent Brantly, let us pray with equal passion for God to heal our world.



Dr. Kent Brantly speaks with *The Christian Chronicle*: See Chellie Ison's exclusive video interview at www.christianchronicle.org.



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Bobby Johnson, left, and Steve Brosey shake hands after worship at the Laurel Church of Christ in Maryland in 2013. The 300-member church, in the shadow of the U.S. Capitol, is a "politics-free zone," leaders say. See our feature, "One church's vote for Jesus," plus other stories in our Churches That Work series at www.christianchronicle.org.

On church, politics and civility

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love."

— Ephesians 4:2, New International Version

In past election years, the political differences within our churches have led to disagreements.

But this is the first election season I recall there being so much animosity, and I've lived through a lot of them.

As Christians, we need to be concerned both about the spiritual and the physical needs of those around us. We are to tell people about Jesus and the salvation available in him.

At the same time, it's hard to claim to care about the spiritual needs of others while disregarding their physical needs. The same Jesus who tells us to preach the Gospel also tells us to feed the hungry. And he himself was an example of meeting both the spiritual and the physical needs of those around him.

Thus we consider politics from the standpoint of how well it enables us to express our concern.

As Christians, we don't just live in our church buildings. We live in the world, and we form opinions about it. That's why some brothers and sisters in the same congregation may find themselves coming down on different sides of the political divide. Some of us may be Republicans while others are Democrats.

Scripture doesn't tell us how to vote, but it does

tell us how to treat each other. When we find ourselves on different sides of any question, the requirement is the same. We must do all we do in love. We must be kind to one another and respect each other's rights to have different views. And we must be careful not to be judgmental.

Jesus said, *"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca' (an Aramaic term of contempt) is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool,' will be in danger of the fire of hell."* (Matthew 5:21-22).

As we judge others, so God will judge us, as we read in Matthew 7:1-2. If we insist on our own rights to believe what we believe about human government, which is not supported one way or another in Scripture, we must accord that same right to our brothers and sisters.

And we must learn to express our disagreement with love and respect.

In the Word



Billie Silvey

BILLIE SILVEY, a Christian for more than 60 years and a journalist for more than 50, authored the popular *"God Has ..."* series of Bible study guides, and edited *Trusting Women*, a book by and about women serving God by ministering to people. She is former outreach minister for the Culver Palms Church of Christ in Los Angeles. Her books include *"God's Child in the City: Catching God's Vision for Urban Ministry"* and *"The Victory Lap: Growing Old With God."* See her website at billiesilvey.com.

We need dialogue – not angry words on Facebook – in this age of tension

"To the churches of the United States: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I am writing to remind you that you are one body through Christ and are united through the Spirit. In saying this, you need to get over yourselves and talk to each other face-to-face (not on Facebook) about politics."

If Paul were to write a letter to the church today, I think it might read like that.

The church is divided, though few of us talk about it. We shove it under the pew, listen to the sermon and move on. We ignore a major stumbling block that we need to address.

It's not easy to be a Christian in this intense political atmosphere — especially when you know that your political views may be polar opposite from your brothers and sisters in Christ. Disagreements are inevitable, but they shouldn't keep us from being transparent with one another and having the relationship that God intended for members of the church to have.

While it is easy to say that we, as Christians, put our faith in God before our allegiance to America, the political debates in which we engage — and our social media accounts — suggest otherwise. The phrase "conservative Christian" itself puts political ideology before religious identity. This is unfortunate, as Christians could be spending their time combatting the intense climate of this political season rather than adding to it.

There are so many other things that should capture our attention and prayers right now. Christians suffer in the Middle East. ISIS and other terrorist groups commit atrocities. Here at home there's racial tension. Children are separated from their parents. Drug addiction destroys lives. Souls are lost.

Yet we bicker about a politician's email or a real estate mogul's tax returns. Or we complain that neither is addressing the real issues.

We are the issue. Our obsession with things that don't matter has taken our minds

Views



Elise Miller

away from God's call to seek and save the lost. The demeaning rhetoric used by many Christians about other souls — including political candidates, protesters and those practicing different religions — drives people away from us.

In Matthew 15:8-11 Jesus says, *"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me... What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them."*

While I admire people of faith who proclaim the truth about God's Word on Sundays, I am disappointed when I see them post hateful things on social media.

Do we apply God's commands equally when we take stances on the issues that divide us politically? We oppose abortion because of the sanctity of human life while we rail against any attempts to limit our access to firearms. What about the lives of victims of gun violence? We preach about love and unity, but have we tied our faith to a particular political stance?

In John 16:12-14, Jesus tells us, *"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."*

We need to talk with one another — and talk to those with whom we disagree — to find understanding.

This should not be an "I'm right, you're wrong" kind of conversation. If we listen and understand, this dialogue has the power to mend churches and make us into the family that God envisions.

Soon, all of the sound bites, advertisements and endless chatter of this political season will vanish.

Let's not live for the things that will pass, but for the body that will last for an eternity.

ELISE MILLER is a senior at Plano East High School in Texas. She worships with the Waterview Church of Christ in Richardson, Texas. Though she isn't old enough to vote on Nov. 8, she's an avid follower of news. As editor-in-chief of her school newspaper, she hopes to pursue a career in journalism — and to have a positive, Christian influence on news media.

'While it is easy to say that we, as Christians, put our faith in God before our allegiance to America, the political debates in which we engage — and our social media accounts — suggest otherwise.'

FROM OUR READERS

Column on reporting in 50 states kindles a few memories

I am a former classmate of Bobby Ross Jr.'s dad, Bob Ross, at White's Ferry Road School of Biblical Studies in West Monroe, La. We graduated in 1976 together. Bobby and I have met once before. Anyway, regarding "Reporting news that informs and inspires — in all 50 states" (Road Notes, October), Bobby's comments on South Dakota brought back many memories.

My first work after graduating from WFR was in Brookings, S.D. While I was there, I studied with and baptized Calvin Chapman (or at least helped do that). At my age, I sometimes forget details. One detail I did not forget was getting a call from Calvin at midnight on a freezing cold South Dakota night, while he was still a student at South Dakota State University in Brookings. I went over to his place, where he and five other cowboys (members of the rodeo club) were living. They were engaged in a Bible study (Calvin was leading it), and they asked me to come and help answer questions.

We studied all night, and at 5:30 a.m., we went to the church building — freezing weather, snow and all — and baptized some young men. Calvin has always had a deep love for souls and for the Lord's work in South Dakota. I was privileged to have had a small part in his starting his preaching ministry. I also taught at the Black Hills Bible Camp and dearly loved those experiences.

Anyway, thanks for the update on how Calvin (and his wife, Darla) are doing. It helps me to remember my ministry has not been in vain and that those people at WFR who taught us made a big difference, too — that they are not even aware of at times. God bless those who were our teachers there and have gone on.

Awesome story about Calvin and the South Dakota work. Thanks.

DAVID NESTOR is a minister who lives in Albuquerque, N.M.

The piece on "distance worship" in North Dakota (Page 3, October) elicited a host of memories about worship and congregational establishment and growth in northern California and western Nevada — a clinical definition of "mission field" if ever there was one.

My parents worked on the large Sierra Army Ordnance base in Northern California, situated 60 miles west of Reno and 35 miles east of the nearest California city, Susanville. In 1946, following World War II — when gasoline became plentiful and long distance travel possible — my family became affiliated with the Church of Christ in Reno. It was the only congregation in northern Nevada. The closest California church was about 150 miles away, in the Sacramento Valley.

Like the North Dakota Christians, we commuted the 120-mile round trip to Reno each Sunday for three years.



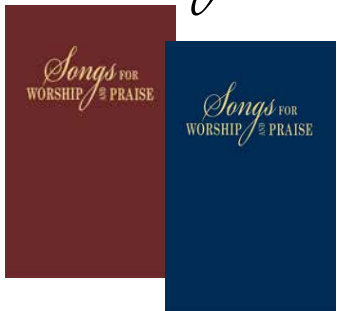
David Nestor

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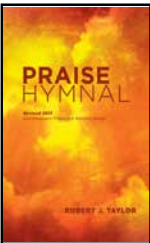
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"Really great information for the truth-seeking heart."
- Name withheld

"Reading this work was refreshing and I again experience the joy of liberation from false and binding restraints put on divorced Christians and the divorced who would become Christians. I wish other Christians would read the book... if they did, closed mindedness would prevent the comprehension of the authors arguments."
- Name withheld

"This is the best book ever written on the issue... You closed all loopholes."
--Charles Hodge, author, *On the Banks of Onion Creek*

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Ministers take a deep – yet easy to follow – dive into John’s gospel

As a minister whose primary job is Christian education and spiritual formation, I’m continually grateful that people are hungry for opportunities to study Scripture. They need good resources. I have come to see my role not just as a content creator, but as a content curator. With so many resources available for group studies, I try to recommend ones that reflect Scripture well and will benefit the ones asking for recommendations.

After reading and viewing “**Daring Faith: Meeting Jesus in the Book of John**,” by Randy Harris and Greg Taylor, I know I have another excellent resource to add to my list of recommendations.

Harris, a professor at Abilene Christian University in Texas, and Taylor, a minister in Tulsa, Okla., and former missionary to Uganda, previously teamed up in 2012 for “Living Jesus: Doing What Jesus Says in the Sermon on the Mount.”

Each of the 12 video lessons features the same formula. First, Harris provides a short introduction in a location that matches the theme — a funeral home or a cafeteria, for example. Then he gives us a mini-lecture on that unit of text, recorded at a previous event. The session closes with a wrap-up and challenge. Philip Dosa and his team continue the great camera and editing work they practiced on the duo’s first series to make these videos — especially the introductions and closing — compelling visual events. The DVD comes with a small booklet of discussion questions. I am unsure how to categorize the book. It is not really a commentary, since it makes no

attempt to cover all of John’s gospel. And it is not a devotional book. (Imagine you sat the authors down and asked them to give you an informal lesson or sermon on 12 interesting parts of John’s gospel. That seems to be the best description.) I really enjoyed the way the authors help the reader understand complex concepts — including the intricacies of the many titles claimed by and about Jesus, or the difficulties with the way people apply cause-and-effect theology.

Harris and Taylor challenge us to read some familiar stories in new ways, such as Jesus and the woman at the well. I may have cringed a time or two during the discussion of “Christian cannibalism,” but the statements were spot-on.

Maybe I’ve become cynically accustomed to popular-level works that don’t take deep dives into Scripture, so I’m pleasantly surprised with this book. Along with a serious look at John, we get some good humor and compelling personal stories mixed in. The book is an easy, captivating read.

Each of the two items can stand alone. An individual could read the book for personal growth. A small group could use the DVD and accompanying questions for a study series.

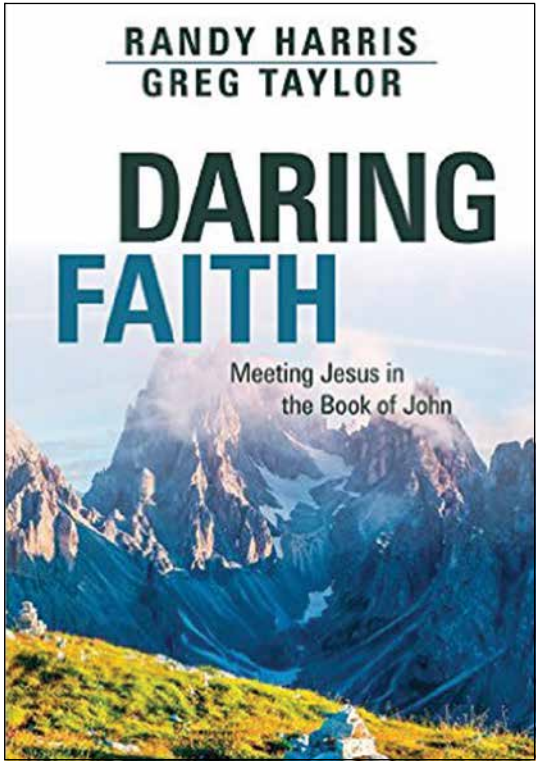
Neither product is an academically robust resource you might use to build a complete understanding of John’s gospel, even though both authors easily could produce one.

Instead, these ministers dare us to read the Gospel of John and follow Jesus. Imagine that!

JOSH KINGCADE is education minister for the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City. He maintains a website with resources for Christian education and formation at faithform.com.



Josh Kingcade



★★★★★
Randy Harris and Greg Taylor. **Daring Faith: Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of John**. Abilene, Texas: Leafwood Publishers, 2016. 192 pages. \$14.99 (book), \$29.99 (two-DVD set).

Pilot’s memoir helps readers focus on what really matters

On Jan. 15, 2009, the world watched in amazement as 155 passengers on US Airways Flight 1549 were rescued after landing on the Hudson River. The pilot, Capt. Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger, became an instant hero.

After watching Tom Hanks portray “Sully” in the same-named film, I decided to read Sullenberger’s memoir, “**Highest Duty: My Search For What Really Matters.**”

Sully credits his success on that fateful day in 2009 to all of the experiences he faced in life. Without the adversities, successes, opportunities, obstacles and challenges, Sully was sure he would have failed to land successfully on the Hudson, giving everyone on board a chance to survive what, otherwise, could have been a disastrous crash.

As I read the book, my mind went to two places in Scripture — first to the story of Esther, particularly Esther 4:14, “*And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?*” The other passage I thought about was when Paul urges the church in Corinth to stand firm in the faith in 1 Corinthians 15.

Sully did not necessarily say he stood firm for his faith, but he did stand firm for his convictions, which, I believe, were an extension of his faith.

One final thing Sully did in his book that impressed me: He remained humble. Yes, he piloted the plane that landed on the Hudson, but without the help of hundreds, maybe thousands, of others, the 155 people on that plane would have perished.

Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up. (James 4:10)

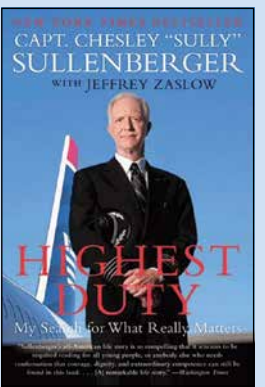
DAVID WILLIS is an elder and minister for the Lupelele Church of Christ in Illi’Illii, American Samoa. Read our recent feature on churches in the South Pacific U.S. territory at www.christianchronicle.org.

WHAT ARE YOU READING? Share your thoughts on the books, music and films that influence or impact your faith. Send your suggestions to erik@christianchronicle.org.

What we’re reading



David Willis



Chesley Sullenberger with Jeffrey Zaslow. **Highest Duty: My Search for What Really Matters**. New York: Williams Morrow and Company, 2009. 352 pages.

Milestones

(continued from page 22)

Memorials

Imogene Fanning Baker 1919 - 2016

Imogene Fanning Baker passed from her earthly life on Aug. 3, 2016, in Bloomsburg, Pa., at age 97. Born June 10, 1919, Imogene was the third child of Inez Palestine Horton and Henry Brooks Fanning.

She was preceded in death by her husband of 52 years, Harold Leon Baker, her parents, one brother, and two sisters. She is survived by one son, Jerry Van McGlawn Baker (wife Becky), of Madison Heights, Va.; two daughters, Priscilla McGlawn Baker Hobby of Paragould, Ark., and Esther Lenore Baker Fatula (husband Kenneth) of Berwick, Pa.; 10 grandchildren and 20 great-grandchildren.

Imogene was raised outside of Cullman, Ala., on her parents' 60-acre farm. She was characterized by having a zest for life, an impish sense of humor and an unconquerable attitude, which she displayed for the rest of her life. From a modest life of caring for livestock and picking cotton but possessing a thirst for knowledge, she graduated from high school at age 16 and, with a \$100 loan from her grandmother, set off to Nashville, Tenn., where she enrolled in and attended David Lipscomb College. After graduation she taught fifth and sixth grade in Alabama, and Dasher Bible School in Valdosta, Ga., where she met Leon Baker, who was on leave from the U.S. Navy visiting her sister. Imogene and Leon married on Sept. 12, 1946. After Leon obtained a position with the National Security Agency, they moved to Washington, D.C., and Imogene gained employment with the General Accounting Office.

In 1947, after the tragic death of Imogene's younger sister and her husband, their children, Priscilla and Jerry, were immediately adopted by Imogene and Leon. They settled their new family in Arlington, Va.; Imogene became a full-time homemaker and in 1949 gave birth to a daughter, Leonore. Initially, the family attended the Alexandria Church of

Christ and later worshipped with the Falls Church of Christ. Imogene had a passion for studying, writing and teaching. While fellowshiping at Falls Church, Imogene taught Bible classes to numerous women and teenage girls. A wider audience was reached by her "Christian Woman" radio broadcast funded by Falls Church and through articles published in "Power for Today," "Christian Woman," and "Teenage Christian." She and Leon always reached out to those needing help, and Imogene made gallons of soup for the sick and recovering and provided comfort and counseling to anyone in distress. As an "older woman" faced with the difficulties of aging, she and Leon were faithful servants of the Lord at Seven Hills Church of Christ in Lynchburg, Va., where she was loved, honored, and ministered to as she had done for so many. Her life was devoted to Christ and family.

The family wishes to thank all those who have lovingly cared for and remembered Imogene even when she could not remember you. In lieu of flowers, please consider a gift to *World Christian Broadcasting*, www.worldchristian.org/ or *The Christian Chronicle*, www.christianchronicle.org in her memory.

Raymond Griffin 1933-2016

Raymond LaVal Griffin began his life's journey on Jan. 20, 1933, in Houston, Texas. He was the only child of Bethel and Raymond Griffin.

His family moved to San Francisco, Calif., in 1942, but soon relocated to Los Angeles. Their church home was at 40th Street and Compton Avenue, currently the Figueroa Church of Christ, where Raymond later served as a beloved elder.

Raymond attended Los Angeles public schools and graduated from David Starr Jordan High School in 1951. He excelled in many activities and sports. He received an Associate of Arts degree from Compton College and earned a Bachelor and Master of Arts degrees from Pepperdine University.

In 1953, Raymond met his future wife, Maybelline Rossum, and they were married in 1956.

Raymond and Maybelline became the parents of two daughters, Rayvalline Lachance and Bethel Melody. In 1999, Melody's only child, Amber, died of cancer at age 17. Rayva died of pancreatic cancer in 2015.

Raymond began his professional career at Lockheed Aircraft in Burbank as a machinist. Soon he was drafted into the U.S. Navy. He served on the USS Bon Homme Richard Aircraft Carrier, stationed in Alameda, Calif., and toured Japan for eight months. After serving active duty, Raymond continued in the Navy Reserve.

Because of a layoff at Lockheed, Raymond began working for the Los Angeles School District and continued his education. He later became employed as one of the first City of Los Angeles Traffic Control Officers, which led him to a career in law enforcement.

In July 1968, he graduated from the Los Angeles Police Academy and was assigned to the Newton Street Division. He served as one of the first Community Liaison Relations officers.

In 1974, he trained and received the Certificate for Appointment as a Federal Drug Enforcement Agent. He also received a certificate in training from the U.S. Criminal Justice Training Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Raymond retired from the Redondo Beach Police Department as a juvenile officer, a member of the elite SWAT team, and an instructor of the DARE program in Redondo Beach Unified School District.

Janet Ellen (Daegen) Eggar, 73, Livingston, Mont., Oct. 4. **Dr. Jules Hutton, 95**, Harvey, Ill., Sept. 16.

Memorial/Honor Gifts

The Christian Chronicle appreciates and acknowledges generous gifts received in memory of Janet Cutshall and Neol Sexton.



Oct. 30 Global Sunday. World Christian Broadcasting. (615) 371-8707, info@worldchristian.org.

Nov. 4-6 National Young Adult Conference. West Oak Grove Church of Christ, Hernando, Miss. sebrunbranch@yahoo.com.

Nov. 4-6 Silver Maple Fall Teen Camp. Kingmon, Kan. (620) 899-5809, bruce.dimick@gmail.com.

Nov. 10 Agape Nashville. 50th Annual Dinner. Franklin, Tenn. (615) 781-3000, kfrederick@agape-nashville.org.

Nov. 10-12 North Carolina State Lectureship. Durham, N.C. (919) 688-3535, www.ncstate2016.com.

Nov. 10-15 Refugee Workshop. Partners in Progress, Athens, Greece. pipwem@aol.com, (501) 779-2724.

Nov. 14 Festival of Trees Gala. Christian Care, Dallas. (972) 686-2401, advancement@cccinc.net.

Nov. 24-26 Christian Acapella Music Awards and Live Inspirational Stage Play "For Crying Out Loud." Orlando, Fla., (904) 207-1278, roxyhall@vanguardsolutionsconsulting.com, www.nacama.com.

Nov. 29 Giving Tuesday. Heritage Christian College Ghana. (972) 931-5042, info@hccf-usa.org.

Dec. 2 52nd Annual Benefit Dinner. Freed-Hardeman, Henderson, Tenn. (731) 989-6019, dclouse@fhu.edu.

Dec. 5 Sunset International Solar Event. (800) 658-9553, www.sibi.cc/solar.

Dec. 12 The Holiday Luncheon and Toy Drive. Capstone Treatment Center, Madison, Miss. (866) 729-4479, info@capstonetreatmentcenter.com.

Jan. 13-14 Medical Missions Seminar - IHCF. Fort Worth, Texas. (501) 268-9511, www.ihcf.net.

Jan. 18-21 Sunset Vision Workshop. Sunset International Bible Institute, Lubbock, Texas. (800) 658-9553, www.sibi.cc/workshop.

Jan. 20-21 Church Involvement Conference. Athens, Tenn. (423) 920-3060, travisirwin@att.net.

June 2-8 Churches of Christ National Lectureship. Atlanta, Ga. (770) 599-7430, questions@cocnl.com, www.cocnl.com.

Sept. 21-23 Senior Seminar. National Associated Celebrated Seniors. St. Louis, Mo., nacs2017@yahoo.com.

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God will give you enough so you can always give to others. Then many will give thanks to God for sending gifts through us.
II Cor. 9:11 NLV

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If interested please contact:
Randy McClure
(248) 310-4456
rmccclure1958@gmail.com

Preacher of the Gospel

Westside Church of Christ in Elgin, Ill., is looking for a preacher to share our vision to evangelize our diverse community. We desire someone who loves fellowship, is able to work side-by-side, and is willing to develop joy-filled service-centered relationships. Provided: three-bedroom parsonage adjoining the church property. Please send an introductory letter, resume, two sermons, and three references to the elders at Westside.

Jeff St. Aubin, (815) 451-0391
Westsidechurchofchristminister@gmail.com
PO Box 6687, Elgin, IL 60124

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Minister Search

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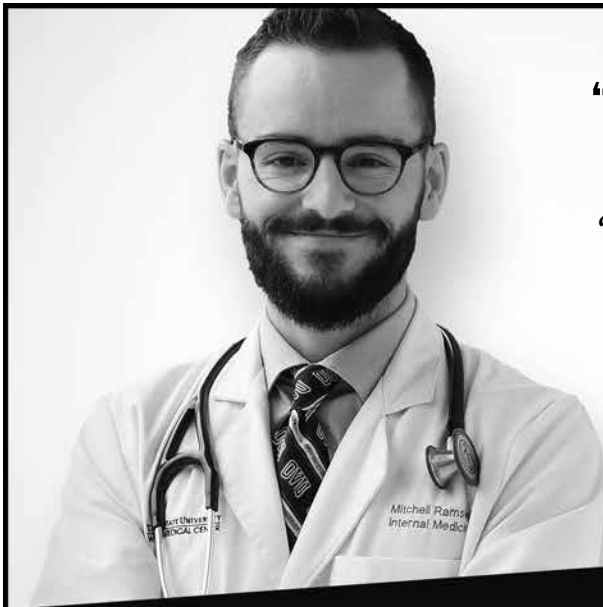
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*God doesn't understand retirement:
Strive for spiritual growth in golden years*

There is a time for every everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens," the writer of Ecclesiastes tells us, "a time to be born and a time to die ..."

William "Will" Eugene Kooi III — a missionary in Vienna, Austria, with his wife, Holly, and my great friend — lived out this passage this summer. In early August his second child, Lucy, was born. A month later, his grandfather, William Eugene Kooi Sr., was called home.

Weeks earlier, in a Montana town called Pray, longtime preacher and church planter Clinton Brazle spent a week with his children at Yellowstone Bible Camp, which he helped found, before he went to meet his God.

He actively encouraged Christians to plant churches. All of his sons and one daughter attended Oklahoma Christian University, where I saw their faith and their energy. His sons preach and serve as missionaries around the world.

As I remember these precious lives, I realize — none too happily — that I also am in the final stage.

God has blessed me with good health and has restored joy to my life through my experience with the Donau *Gemeinde Christi* (Church of Christ) in Vienna.

I am thankful God has blessed me with a wonderful life — nearly 60 years with a woman whose devotion to God marked every day of her adult life; three wonderful children and the ones they have married, who have worked endlessly to make my life easier in this stage; my 12 grandchildren (four by marriage) who honor God and continue a family legacy. This December my fourth great-grandchild will further enrich my life.

God taught me many lessons. In my youth, he helped me understand that a lifetime relationship with a woman does not come easily. Through my children, he taught me that the human heart is big enough to love unconditionally all whom he brings into a life.

In my elderly stage of life, God teaches me that a terrible loss is not a

reason to give up. He opens doors so that I have a chance to keep learning his Word, his love, and his vision for meaning and purpose. He helps me know the importance of taking care of the body he has given me.

God does not, I think, understand retirement. He does not think we ever earn the right to live in a recliner in a mindless state.

God asks us to take stock of our gifts and talents. Are you an expert cook? Share your skills with others. Are you friendly? Help others

deal with their fears and encourage them to see their strengths. Are you a good listener? Find people who have burdens they need to share.

If you think your faith is not as strong as it should be, set aside time to study your Bible each day. If you spend an hour each day watching news, it is possible for you to spend an hour each day listening to the voice of God.

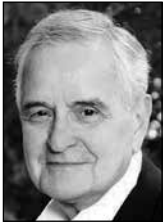
As you strengthen and enrich your life at this stage, prayer should be as fundamental as any daily routine. For the last dozen years, I have worked to pray more effectively. I keep in my hip pocket a list of people I am concerned about. Praying for my children and grandchildren helps me to stay closer to them. I pray for my elders and all those who minister for my congregation.

The sick and bereaved need our prayers. I often use my prayer time to think about all the qualities of God that deserve honor and praise. I sometimes write down those prayers, just to be sure I am not using empty language.

"There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven."

Thank God we have time. That time will be worth whatever we make of it. I am asking God to help me and you make this his time — for whatever he needs us to do.

Insight



Bailey McBride

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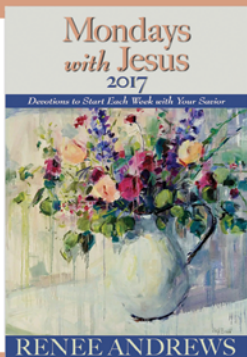
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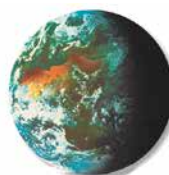


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Good sports

Coaches and staff at Christian universities seek to keep student athletes out of trouble and in the Word. **17**



INSIDE

CALENDAR.....32	NATIONAL.....5
CURRENTS.....17	OPINION 28
DIALOGUE 23	PARTNERS 25
INSIGHT.....34	PEOPLE.....20
INTERNATIONAL 13	REVIEWS 31
MILESTONES.....22	VIEWS 29

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