#METOO MOVEMENT inspires Christians to share their stories of sexual assault and harassment.

**BY CHELLIE ISON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE**

Seven years of pain, embarrassment and shame kept Cassie Holder from sharing her story. Then the member of the Del City Church of Christ in Oklahoma began to see post after post in her Facebook feed with the hashtag #metoo — a social media movement of women sharing their painful experiences of sexual assault and harassment in the wake of the Harvey Weinstein scandal. Even some of Holder’s friends from high school and college were sharing their stories. Still, her first instinct was to ignore the posts and push the painful memories back down — deep inside, where she had buried them for years.

But as more and more women stepped forward, she decided, “I need to do this,” she told The Christian Chronicle. “I hadn’t talked about this before.”

Holder was attacked during her senior year at a Christian university. She managed to fight off — and even broke the hand — of her attacker, a student she barely knew. While he stopped short of raping her, the attacker violated her body, her privacy and her sense of security.

She confided in a couple of people but felt if she reported it she would be ""
When we look at the world around us, it’s easy to feel that things are out of control. The truth is that every generation has felt this way to some degree. As time continues and new generations come of age, it is vital for us to remind one another of the great deeds of God and of His divine power.

“I don’t think I could recommend a more meaningful investment in the spiritual growth of your family than this.” - Jimmy Neatherlin, Carlsbad, NM.

Register Now at http://www.sibi.cc/workshop
Amid tragedy, a mission to share God’s love in N.Y.

For two consecutive editions of The Christian Chronicle, we’ve had the terrible task of reporting front-page news about mass shootings during Sunday worship — first at a Church of Christ in Tennessee and now at a Baptist church in Texas. Amid the sadness, anger and confusion I’ve felt after these two senseless acts, it’s easy for me to forget the massacre that happened between them — New York’s deadliest attack since 9/11. I learned about the Halloween attack — in which a man drove a rented truck down a bicycle path near the World Trade Center, killing eight people — when I saw a Facebook update telling me that Seth Bouchelle was OK. Seth, a graduate of Abilene Christian University in Texas, lives in the Bronx. I thought of Bouchelle again when I learned that the attacker, 29-year-old Sayfullo Saipov, is an immigrant from the Central Asian nation of Uzbekistan. Saipov told police he was proud of what he did, and that he acted in the name of the Islamic State, or ISIS. President Trump called on Congress to dismantle the visa lottery program that allowed Saipov to enter the U.S.

Bouchelle spends most days working with, occasionally eating with and praying with immigrants — many of them Muslim — as part of Global City Mission Initiative. Amid tragedy, a mission to share God’s love in N.Y.

A Church of Christ on wheels

THE GOSPEL CHARIOT, an African-led ministry, sends its signature red trucks across the continent. ‘If we find a sinner, we stop and pick him up,’ a preacher explains. ‘If we find the devil, we roll over him.’

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

MOLEPOLOLE, Botswana

At once, he left his nets and followed Jesus. Actually, it was a meat cleaver that Robert Reid set aside when he saw the big red truck, emblazoned with the words “Gospel Chariot,” park across the street from his butcher shop in this southern African town. He watched as men opened the truck’s side panels, set up loudspeakers and began singing.

Then, like the apostles Peter and Andrew — who stopped fishing when Christ said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” — Reid “took off and ran” to the truck, said his wife, Malebogo.

It was strange, she recalled. He’s not usually a curious guy. “I felt pulled to the Chariot,” said Robert Reid, 59, in his native language, Setswana, as minister Dennis Malepa translated. “I was looking for truth.” What he found was a Church of Christ on wheels, one of a fleet of trucks that travel to big cities and rural villages across the African continent, in Ghana, Kenya, Botswana and beyond. Each carries the essentials for a gospel

‘He was a good kid,’ minister says of slain 19-year-old

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

After Hurricane Katrina, Charles and Angela Marsalis found their calling in New Orleans’ high-crime Hollygrove neighborhood — where both grew up.

The couple started Bible studies for boys and girls on the front porch of a relative’s flood-damaged home, serving snacks and soft drinks in return for the young people’s attention. Gregory Hawkins was one of the first children to join the group. “Greg had been with us since we started,” said Charles Marsalis, who baptized Hawkins. “We practically raised him up here.”

But on a recent Sunday — after worshiping at the Hollygrove Church of Christ, the congregation the Marsalis’s planted after Katrina — the 19-year-old Christian was shot and killed, church leaders said.

Neighbors heard multiple shots about 2 p.m. Oct. 29, and when officers arrived, they found a victim with at least one gunshot wound, New York,...
NEW YORK: Act of terror created fear in city’s Muslims

Seth Bouchelle talks about “Beatitude Evangelism” — in which Christians see elements in the lives of non-believing friends that reflect Jesus’ words in Matthew 5, call those elements to their friends’ attention and “ask them to help us be more like Christ in that way.” Find links to a video on this subject and one on sharing the Gospel with Muslims at www.christianchronicle.org.

Resource Network and other ministries associated with Churches of Christ are partnering in the work.

On every continent, in every city, “the church is the vehicle of God’s mission, the primary means by which God breaks into the world,” he said.

All churches shouldn’t look the same. But in big cities, perhaps small groups — meeting in apartments or coffee shops, focusing on the Bible as their authority — have the best chance of thriving and keeping up with the rapid pace of urbanization. To me, this sounds a lot like the method of replication used by the first century church.

And I believe it’s going on in a lot more places than we realize.

The frequency of the attacks that have dominated our coverage is overwhelming. I pray that we don’t have a third consecutive front page of tragedy next month.

But I also hope we recognize that, just a few blocks beyond these horrors, amazing stories of transformation are taking place.

People, even those from places we’ve come to fear, are working to bring reconciliation — in the here and now and in the world yet to come.

CONTACT: erik@christianchronicle.org. Find links to Global City Mission’s podcast and other resources at www.christianchronicle.org.

FROM PAGE 3
It’s a nonprofit that focuses on cross-cultural evangelism, disciple-making and church planting among the diverse immigrant populations in big cities around the world.

The nonprofit brings Bouchelle into contact with a lot of people who came to New York from Bangladesh and Albania, nations with significant Muslim populations. He’s also worked with immigrants from Montenegro, Iran and Turkey.

“When these kinds of attacks happen, these are the people who tend to be most afraid,” he said of immigrants from the Muslim world. Many already feel like aliens living in a strange land, and an act of terror in the name of Islam “further isolates them and causes them to feel that they don’t belong.”

Too often, America’s media and its people buy into the narrative the attackers want — that it’s them against us. “In reality,” Bouchelle said, “our Muslim neighbors are as much a part of our city as we are.”

Even Saipov’s notion that he was somehow targeting America seems myopic, he added, noting that five of the eight killed were visitors from Argentina. An attack on New York, London, Paris or almost any other large city these days is an attack on a transnational, multicultural society.

Part of Bouchelle’s job is training churches to reach out to their ever-diversifying communities.

One concern he hears frequently is, “I don’t even know how to talk to a Muslim.”

Try talking about jobs, kids, family, he suggests, noting that, in the meals he’s had in American Muslim homes, topics include favorite shows on Netflix and funny YouTube videos.

Yes, there are religious differences, but “that doesn’t make them completely alien to us,” he said. “They’re human beings.”

The goal of Global City Mission Initiative is to bring Jesus to the city. The mission’s four full-time workers in New York help form small communities of faith among their city’s 8.4 millions souls.

They help immigrants gain the skills to plant new churches wherever they go — whether they move to other cities or return to their home countries. For example, a Korean immigrant the ministry trained returned home and planted a church in Seoul, South Korea.

Bouchelle recently traveled to Europe to help a small group of Italian Christians train for work among the thousands of refugees who have come to their continent from the Middle East. Missions
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Arkansas congregations — one black, one white — engage in dialogue, prayer

Members of two Little Rock, Ark.-area congregations pray during a joint Wednesday night assembly. The predominantly black Rose City Community Church of Christ in North Little Rock and the predominantly white Sylvan Hills Church of Christ in Sherwood came together for a night of dialogue and prayer, hosted by the Sylvan Hills church. Rose City minister Thomas Jackson and Sylvan Hills minister Greg Clark responded to questions from the audience. The churches planned a later fellowship event at the Rose City church.

NEVADA
LAS VEGAS — “The Bible says the devil is real and a force in the world today.”
After a gunman killed 58 people at a country music festival Oct. 1, minister J.B. Myers made that point at the Bright Angel Church of Christ.
Myers’ sermon, titled “The Depths of Satan,” can be downloaded online at www.jbmyers.net.

SOUTH DAKOTA
OPAL — Zona Vig, a Church of Christ member in rural western South Dakota, was nominated for the state’s 2017 Ag Woman of the Year award.
The Rapid City Journal quoted a family friend who called her “a gem in a wide open space of prairie land.”
The newspaper described Vig and her husband of 49 years, Dwayne, as an outstanding Christian ranch family. They have four daughters, a son and 17 grandchildren. Dwayne Vig preaches twice a month at the Prairie City Church of Christ.

TEXAS
THREE RIVERS — The Satanic Temple caused a stir in this rural South Texas community by posting a billboard that proclaims: “Our religion doesn’t believe in hitting children.”
The message takes aim at the local school board’s decision to reinstitute corporal punishment.
The Three Rivers Church of Christ responded with its own sign: “Satan doesn’t own all the signs in (Three Rivers) — don’t let him own you.”
“Our religion causes us to love our children, and therefore we discipline them,” minister Kevin Mackey told Religion News Service.
“Now, that discipline doesn’t have to be spanking. But it also can be spanking.”

HOUSTON — U.S. Rep. Ted Poe, a longtime member of the Bammel Church of Christ, won’t seek re-election next year.
“Thanks to the good Lord, I’m in good health, but it’s time for the next step,” Poe, 69, said in a statement. “I am looking forward to spending more time in Texas, especially with my 12 grandkids who have all been born since I was first elected to Congress.”
The seven-term congressman recently battled leukemia. He’s one of two members of Churches of Christ in the U.S. House. U.S. Rep. Brett Guthrie, a member of the Alvaton Church of Christ near Bowling Green, Ky., is the other.

PENNSYLVANIA
SAYRE — Thanksgiving will be extra special for the Valley Cities Church of Christ, which was launched three years ago by the Antioch Institute, a church-planting movement overseen by the Elmore Church of Christ in Alabama.
The congregation recently began raising funds for its own building.
“Hearts were warmed and souls encouraged as one young man from the church in Camp Hill, Pa., set up a booth to sell candy and donated his earnings,” minister Arthur Barry said.
Later, a Christian from Ithaca, N.Y., made a large contribution to allow the congregation to buy a building outright and make some needed upgrades. “God has definitely had a hand in this,” Barry said.

A beloved teacher
LIVERPOOL, N.Y. — Not long after becoming a Christian in the early 1970s, Pearley Taylor began teaching Sunday school at the Wetzel Road Church of Christ.
At the time, Taylor was a young widow with eight children. She worked as a hospital housekeeper.
Four decades later, the church recently held a reception for Taylor as she retired from teaching in the church’s children’s program, elder and minister David Owens said.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY DAVID OWENS

Pearley Taylor, left, with some of the children at the Wetzel Road church.
HERO: Retired minister counseled friend after shooting

FROM PAGE 1

And I was scared for my own family that lived less than a block away. I’m no hero. I am not. I think my God, my Lord, protected me and gave me the skills to do what needed to be done. And I just wish I could have gotten there faster.”

“You are a true hero,” Cole told Willeford. The anchor grew up attending San Antonio’s Oak Hills Church — formerly known as the Oak Hills Church of Christ — and said he has known the hero’s family for “a very long time.”

‘IN EVERYTHING HE DOES, GOD IS GLORIFIED’

In addition to those killed, about 20 people were wounded in Sunday’s mass shooting.

Those who know Willeford say they aren’t surprised that he risked his own life to save others.

“He’s the kind of guy who would do that, for sure,” said Chuck Morris, administration and pastoral minister for the NorthWest Church of Christ in San Antonio.

When Willeford’s children were younger, he and his wife, Pam, along with their three children attended the NorthWest church, driving an hour each way.

Pam Willeford, a Harding graduate, was active in helping lead the youth group. The couple also was involved with Members of Churches of Christ for Scouting.

“I called Steve the day after this (the shooting) happened and had a long conversation with him,” Morris said. “I was one of his ministers for a lot of years, and I was just concerned.”

Wood said he first became close with the Willeford family when he was an Air Force chaplain in San Antonio in the late 1980s. He attended the Oak Hills congregation with them.

Wood “adopted” Stephen Willeford after Willeford’s parents died in a motorcycle crash with a drunk driver in 1993. Wood had sold the motorcycle to Willeford’s parents.

As Wood describes it, Stephen and Pam Willeford were heroes long before Sunday: “They worked with teenagers and youth with the church there in San Antonio for years. A lot of kids look up to them. We’re proud of them.

“He has the character of a man,” Wood added, referring to Stephen Willeford. “In everything he does, God is glorified.”

Now, Willeford must learn to live with the aftermath of Sunday’s tragedy.

“That PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) is going to be something that’s with him and the whole family for a while,” Wood said. “He is a blessing to many. They need lots of prayers and blessings to get through this situation themselves.”

John Wood, pictured with his wife, Diana, says Willeford “is a blessing to many.”

I kept hearing the shots one after another — very rapid shots, just pop, pop, pop. And I knew every one of those shots represented someone, that it was aimed at someone, that they weren’t just random shots,” Willeford told Cole.

“I grabbed a handful of ammunition and started loading my magazine,” Willeford added. “I’m trying to survey the situation, not knowing what’s going on, and then I saw a man in a black tactical helmet … (and) a bulletproof vest. And he had a pistol in his hand, and we exchanged gunfire.”

‘MY GOD, MY LORD, PROTECTED ME’

Willeford said he stood behind a pickup for cover as he exchanged gunfire with Kelley. Another man, Johnnie Langendorff, was driving his truck near the Baptist church on Sunday morning when he happened upon the confrontation, the Corpus Christi Caller-Times reported.

“He just shot up the church,” Willeford told Langendorff. “We’ve got to get him.”

The two chased Kelley at a high speed until the gunman lost control of his vehicle, crashed and apparently shot himself in the head.

But Willeford insisted in the TV interview that he’s no hero.

“I was scared for me, and I was scared for every one of them,” he said of the people at the church.

Stephen and Pam Willeford enjoy a motorcycle ride in Sutherland Springs, Texas, a rural community 35 miles east of San Antonio.

The First Baptist Church can be seen in the background of the photo, taken before the Nov. 5 mass shooting that claimed 26 lives.

However, an autopsy indicated that a third shot — a self-inflicted wound to the head — likely killed Kelley.

Wood had just gotten home from worship at the Xenia Church of Christ in the Buckeye State when his phone rang.

The longtime preacher said he relied on his training in counseling as he comforted Willeford, who has long ties to Churches of Christ.

“You do a lot of listening. You do a lot of encouragement,” said Wood, who conducted the marriage ceremony for one of Willeford’s daughters and has been asked to officiate the other daughter’s wedding next spring.

“He doesn’t want to be thought of as a hero — but just kind of like the Good Samaritan, somebody who was willing to step up when it had to be done.”

Willeford was at home Sunday morning sleeping after working late the night before as an “on call” emergency plumbing maintenance man for a San Antonio hospital, Wood said. Sutherland Springs is about 35 miles east of San Antonio.

In an exclusive interview with an Arkansas television station, Willeford described hearing the shots at the nearby Baptist church and rushing into action.

KHBS/KHOG-TV anchor Joshua Cole, who conducted the interview, is a graduate of Church of Christ-associated Harding University in Searcy, Ark.

“I didn’t have any time because I kept hearing the shots one after another — very rapid shots, just pop, pop, pop. And I knew every one of those shots represented someone, that it was aimed at someone, that they weren’t just random shots,” Willeford told Cole.

“I grabbed a handful of ammunition and started loading my magazine,” Willeford added. “I’m trying to survey the situation, not knowing what’s going on, and then I saw a man in a black tactical helmet … (and) a bulletproof vest. And he had a pistol in his hand, and we exchanged gunfire.”

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After massacre, a prayer vigil

IN A COMMUNITY grieving 26 victims, a Church of Christ opens its doors for service.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

The Stockdale Church of Christ in rural South Texas was enjoying a monthly fellowship meal when the horrible news came Nov. 5.

Just a few miles away, a mass shooting at the First Baptist Church in the neighboring town of Sutherland Springs had claimed 26 lives and left 20 others wounded.

“We were all eating when everybody’s Facebook and Twitter feeds started to blow up,” said Kenneth Clapp, minister for the Stockdale church.

A member who serves as the justice of the peace for Wilson County — where both Stockdale and Sutherland Springs are located — got a call to respond to the scene, as did several first responders in the congregation.

That Sunday night, the Stockdale Church of Christ hosted a prayer vigil to give its community a chance to pray and grieve together. About 150 people filled the pews.

Pastor Ray Perales from Christ United Methodist Church in Stockdale and pastor Noah Tillman-Young from Stockdale Assembly of God joined Clapp and other local residents in leading prayers at the hour-long vigil.

“A lot of it was praying for peace, comfort, to not let people lose hope or faith,” Clapp said. The shooting affected “people whose names and faces we know. It makes it very real.

“Part of it is, how can we be safe?” added the minister, whose church averages Sunday attendance of 175 to 180. “The answer is, we never truly will be, so we do the best we can. … It’s really shaken people here because there wasn’t anything anybody could do.”

The massacre disrupted life in a rural area — about 35 miles east of San Antonio — where folks still leave their doors unlocked, everybody goes to Friday night high school football games, and churches “are really a part of the social backbone,” Clapp said.

Tillman-Young said the prayer vigil at the Church of Christ was important because “there are a lot of grieving people from the community with a lot of questions, a lot of pain, a lot of anxiety.

The vigil “was about bringing the community together and letting everybody know, We’re all feeling those things, but the most important thing is, we serve a God who loves us,” the Assembly of God pastor said.

Tillman-Young said his church has about 45 people “on a packed Sunday.”

“That could have been our church,” he said of the Baptist congregation where a gunman dressed in black tactical-style gear and armed with an assault rifle opened fire.

At a news conference in Stockdale, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said: “The tragedy is worsened, of course, by the fact that it occurred in a church — a place of worship where these people were innocently gunned down.”

Sunday’s shooting came exactly six weeks after eight people were shot — one fatally — at the Burnette Chapel Church of Christ in Antioch, Tenn., near Nashville.

“Our thoughts and prayers are with the First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs, TX,” the Burnette Chapel church said in a Facebook post.

HOW TO HELP: The Stockdale Church of Christ is collecting funds to benefit victims’ families. To contribute, email the church at stockdalechurch@gmail.com or call (830) 391-8088 ext. 1001.

HURST, Texas — Brent Sandlin, president and CEO of First Security Systems, offers eight tips for making churches safer:

1. Develop an emergency response plan.
2. Develop a security team and hire armed security officers.
3. Establish safety zones.
4. Establish guidelines for dealing with registered sex offenders.
5. Establish a criminal background screening program.
6. Establish an ID system for children and youth programs.
7. Consider a surveillance system to monitor church buildings/premises.
8. Provide adequate lighting and a safe environment.

In an interview with The Christian Chronicle in 2015, Sandlin noted that churches tend to be open, trusting and inviting, which can make them “easy targets.”

Sandlin’s licensed security company and investigation agency has served churches and nonprofit organizations since 1999. He can be reached at bsandlin@firstsecuritysystems.com.

In an online-exclusive column, he elaborates on his eight tips. Find that column by searching for “Brent Sandlin” at www.christianchronicle.org.

Also on the Chronicle’s website, read “God, guns and keeping Christians safe,” our 2015 story on why pistols in the pews make some feel more secure, while others are leery.
Orleans police told The Christian Chronicle. The victim was taken to a hospital, where he later died. Police have not made any arrests or determined a motive, a department spokesman said.

“Greg was one of the quiet kids,” Marsalis said. “He didn’t really bother anybody. He would just go on about his business. If you messed with him, he wasn’t afraid to fight with you. But he wasn’t a kid who looked for trouble.”

Marsalis said Hawkins left church about 15 minutes early Sunday, and something seemed to be troubling him. He was shot about two blocks from the Hollygrove church building.

A neighbor told the New Orleans Advocate that Hawkins was wearing khakis when he was shot.

When the shooting occurred, the Marsalis and some other Hollygrove members were at an annual joint picnic and fall festival with the Carrollton Avenue Church of Christ in New Orleans — about 10 minutes away.

The Hollygrove church, which averages Sunday attendance of 70 to 80, is a satellite campus of the Carrollton Avenue church.

“He wasn’t out there ripping and running. He was a good kid,” Carrollton Avenue minister Kirk Garrison said of Hawkins. “He worked at a grocery store.”

Garrison wrote on Facebook: “After rejoicing on a beautiful Sunday with Carrollton and Hollygrove at our annual fall picnic, we weep now at the murder of one of our young men who was shot around the corner from Hollygrove church after services. Prayers for peace and comfort for his family and all who loved him.”

Unlike some, Hawkins didn’t get pulled back into the streets, Garrison said. But the minister added, “The streets took his life.”

In past interviews, the Marsalis have talked about their desire to bring Jesus to a neighborhood beset with drugs, gunfire and prostitution.

In 2008, Charles Marsalis told the Chronicle, “I saw a person murdered in this neighborhood when I was 12, so I know what these kids are seeing.”

But Marsalis said then that the devil doesn’t scare him — and the drug dealers sure don’t. He maintains that resolve in the wake of Hawkins’ death.

“We are not going nowhere,” Marsalis said. “As long as the Lord will have us here, we will stay here. This won’t stop what we’re trying to do. We’re going to keep on pushing.”

said Garrison: “It’s a dangerous world in Hollygrove. That world is the reason the Hollygrove church is there. We chose that location because of the need for God in people who are literally dying in the streets.”
FRANCE
AVIGNON — Aaron Palmer, youth minister for the Crieve Hall Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn., and his wife, Betsy, traveled to this city in southeastern France and to the city of Colmar to “share God’s word with seeking souls,” the minister said.

The couple studied with 15 people in the two cities. Bren and Cheryl White, longtime missionaries to French-speaking nations, joined them on the mission.

“We are praying every day for those with whom we studied,” Aaron Palmer said, “that God would help them to have a clear understanding of what the New Testament says and what it means to be a true disciple.”

INDIA
PURNA — In India’s northern state of Bihar, where followers of Christ have reported frequent attacks by militant Hindu groups, Churches of Christ are providing relief to Purnia and other towns and villages after recent floods.

Minister David Martin, based in the southern Indian city of Chennai, reports the distribution of flour, rice, green peas, coriander powder and bath soap in Bihar and the neighboring state of West Bengal. Two souls were baptized by minister Massih Tudu during the relief work, Martin added.

ISRAEL
JERICHO — Minister Maurice Jadon preached to 51 believers on the banks of the Jordan River before baptizing a new soul in the waters where Jesus himself was baptized.

The baptism happened during an annual tour hosted by the Nazareth Church of Christ, a congregation of Arab Christians. The site of the baptism was Qasr el Yahud, an Israeli national park about six miles east of the Palestinian city of Jericho.

The group also toured historic sites of the life of Christ in Jerusalem and the Palestinian city of Jericho.

“Why do we want to do that in Khon Kaen? There are more and more mixed marriages between Europeans or Americans and Thai women,” explained missionary Kim Voraritskul.

“There are now over 30,000 foreigners in the northeast alone.”

As a result, a new ethnic group of English speakers is emerging in Thailand, “so we believe we should be ready for this group,” Voraritskul said, adding that the church will soon launch an English Bible school to train ministers for the work.

THAILAND
KHON KAEN — The Kum Hai Church of Christ is launching a new Sunday afternoon worship service in a foreign language — English.

“Why do we want to do that in Khon Kaen? There are more and more

Budding Barnabases at Asia Mission Forum

Mary Nelson gives notes of encouragement to the children of missionaries during the recent 56th Asia Mission Forum in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The South Pacific Bible College in New Zealand sponsored the event, which drew 160 members of Churches of Christ for four days of worship, teaching and fellowship. Featured speakers were Tim Woodroof, Jim Baird and Sean Todd. Children and teachers wrote the notes after studying about Barnabas, the “son of encouragement” from the book of Acts, said Nelson, the founder of Mission Bible Class (missionbibleclass.org). The website offers free Bible lessons, tutorials and low-cost activity ideas for children’s Bible teachers. People from more than 115 countries, including Asia, Africa and the Middle East, have accessed the site, Nelson said.

What causes Cerebral Palsy? An angry ancestor? Witchcraft? A jealous family member? Or is it (echoing the story of Cain and Abel) a curse directly from Almighty God?

Those are the questions Lazaro Gaudence and fellow members of a Church of Christ in this East African village face as they try to improve the life of a toddler with the disorder — the granddaughter of a prominent witch doctor,

Lazaro Gaudence works with a child with Cerebral Palsy.

said Kevin Linderman, a member of a mission team in Mwanza, Tanzania, in a recent report.

Gaudence is medical director of a community health project in the Mwanza, Tanzania, area. Searcy, Ark.-based International Health Care Foundation/African Christian Hospitals sponsors the project.

The Lubuga church provides enriched porridge to help address the child’s malnourishment.

Gaudence visits regularly to provide basic physical therapy. Workers with the health project constructed an adaptive chair to help the child gain muscle strength and coordination “so that one day, Lord willing, she will be able to walk,” Linderman said.

Recently, Gaudence and the church gathered at the witch doctor’s compound, with permission, to pray for the child and other developmentally delayed children in the village.

The child’s family would be most convinced of God’s power if she were miraculously healed, Linderman said. “But God is demonstrating his sovereignty in different ways. He is demonstrating his love, his power and his grace through the church.”
An imprisonment ‘deserving of our outrage’

FAMILY OF CHURCH LEADER Igor Kozlovsky proclaims his innocence and prays for his release in occupied eastern Ukraine.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Bad men came and made noise.”

Slava Kozlovsky didn’t understand what was happening when six militia men forced their way into his family’s apartment in Donetsk, Ukraine, on Jan. 27, 2016.

The 37-year-old, who has Down syndrome and is confined to a wheelchair due to partial paralysis, was waiting for his father, who had stepped out to run an errand. He could only watch as the soldiers rummaged through his family’s belongings.

Outside, militia men had detained Slava’s father, Igor Kozlovsky. They placed a cloth bag over his head, shoved him into a jeep and locked him in a basement cell with only a mattress on the floor.

The 62-year-old preacher, author and theology professor was an outspoken critic of the war that had divided his nation since 2014. A former deputy minister of religion for the Donbass region, he worshiped with and nurtured the Cup of Life Church of Christ in Donetsk, a congregation of young believers.

Many of his fellow Christians fled westward after pro-Russian militias took control of the region and renamed it the Donetsk People’s Republic. But Igor Kozlovsky, unemployed after the militias seized his university, stayed in Donetsk to care for his son.

His wife, Valentina, was in Ukraine’s capital, Kiev, on business when he was arrested. Unable to reach her husband by phone, she called a distant relative to check on Slava. The soldiers allowed the relative to enter the apartment about 10 p.m. — nearly eight hours after the arrest.

Valentina returned to Donetsk but was not allowed to see her husband. After a month in the basement cell he was transferred to a prison in Donetsk.

His wife quit her job and moved her son to Kiev. There they spoke to Jeff Abrams, minister for the Tuscumbia Church of Christ in Alabama and correspondent for The Christian Chronicle. Abrams’ congregation hosts an annual Camp Amerikraine for children, and the minister makes regular visits to support Churches of Christ in the nation of 45 million souls.

Valentina and Slava live in a small, outdated apartment in Kiev, Abrams said. Valentina hasn’t seen her husband in nearly two years, she told Abrams, and Slava still experiences trauma from the day that the “bad men,” as he calls them, took his father away.

“Being in this humble home, I could sense just how much this wife needs her husband and how much this child needs his father,” Abrams said. “And being among Ukrainian Christians, I can sense just how much the church needs the return of this dynamic leader.”

Back in Donetsk, Igor Kozlovsky was tried and convicted of espionage and illegal possession of weapons, his wife told Abrams. Prosecutors claimed he had hidden hand grenades behind a bookshelf in his apartment. He received a prison sentence of two years, eight months. His wife vehemently denies the charges.

“I am concerned that, if brother Kozlovsky is not released soon, he will have to endure yet another frigid Ukrainian winter in a prison lacking sufficient heat and medical care,” Abrams said. “No international agency has been granted access to Kozlovsky since his arrest. And winter is coming.”

Human rights groups have called for Igor Kozlovsky’s release. He is featured in a recent report by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

“Holy men are to be in prison,” Abrams said. “We still pray hard for his freedom and believe God will continue protecting him and caring about him while he is in a prison.”

Before the war, the Ukrainian Bible Institute was in Donetsk, and Igor Kozlovsky helped with its registration — plus the registration of Churches of Christ in the city, said Ludmila Khalieieva, a Ukrainian Christian who has known the professor since 1997.

“He was very open for cooperation and always ready to help,” Khalieieva said. “He was very good preacher.”

The professor’s future — like the future of Ukraine — seems uncertain, but Khalieieva is optimistic.

“We are looking forward to seeing him out of the prison,” she said.

Abrams added, “The imprisonment of Igor Kozlovsky is deserving of our outrage, and this family is deserving of our fervent prayers.”
A young boy in Kenya’s capital, Nairobi, expressed the desires of Christians across the troubled East African nation.

“I would like to tell my fellow children to go home and tell their parents that we need peace,” the boy told Nyabuto Marube, minister for the Kayole Church of Christ, as Marube visited his school in Nairobi’s Kibera district — home of the infamous Kibera slums.

“This was such a powerful statement,” Marube told *The Christian Chronicle*. “Children are innocent, and they know it is their parents — and the parents of their friends — who cause violence.”

The boy was one of hundreds Marube has encountered through his work with INERELA+ Kenya, a non-governmental organization dedicated to stopping the spread of HIV and helping those affected by the epidemic.

Marube and a group of faith leaders visited Kibra to share messages of hope and prevention in the days between Kenya’s two elections. The first, on Aug. 8, was invalidated by the nation’s highest court for “irregularities and illegalities,” ABC News reports. The second, Oct. 26, was boycotted by members of an opposition party after their candidate, Ralia Odinga, said that electoral reforms had not been made.

Kenyans know the deadly potential of elections. In late 2007, a contested election ignited ethnic tensions and sparked violent clashes that killed up to 1,400 people across the nation, according to estimates.

Nyabuto Marube

Ten members of Churches of Christ were among the dead — seven in Narok, two in Kisumu and one near Mount Sinai Bible Camp, a church-supported facility near Mauche. The violence also displaced about 600,000 Kenyans from their homes.

In the midst of post-election violence, minister Elijah Onyangore baptizes a new believer in Mombasa, Kenya.

The latest elections already have resulted in dozens of deaths, human rights groups report.

Daily protests also have disrupted the nation’s economy and raised food prices, said Richard Rono, director of Mount Sinai Bible Camp, in a recent report to supporters of World Mission Radio Kenya, a church-run ministry. Businesses have closed. Parents struggle to raise school fees for their children, and teachers haven’t been paid.

More than ever, churches must preach Christ’s message of reconciliation across lines of ethnicity, said Marube’s brother, David, who preaches for the Nyamue Church of Christ in the city of Kisii, Kenya.

“I have been using the pulpit to teach and preach genuine forgiveness and reconciliation,” he said, “and to encourage people to love one another regardless of their political affiliation.

In other parts of the country, congregations continue to serve their communities and host Sunday worship. In the coastal city of Mombasa, the Changamwe Church of Christ reported six visitors at its Swahili-language service — and one baptism, minister Elijah Onyangore said.

“As a church, we will continue to engage wisely and peacefully,” he said, “as we also act truthfully.”

Tell your parents, ‘We need peace’
GOSPEL CHARIOT: Red trucks roll through 20 countries, sharing Jesus

FROM PAGE 3
meeting — chairs, tents and a baptismery. After his first visit, Reid “came back singing,” his wife said.
He returned for nightly worship services. During the day, he met with church members and studied lessons from the World Bible School correspondence ministry.
Three days later, he was the first person baptized in the campaign.
In the next two weeks, 34 more souls were immersed in the big red truck. And a new church was born.

BORN AGAIN, AS APARTHEID DIES
Just like the children's song from which it takes its name, Gospel Chariot Missions has a simple purpose, said minister Bongani Mabena.
"If we find a sinner, we stop and pick him up. If we find the devil, we roll over him," said Mabena, a South African, former Seventh Day Adventist who studied World Bible School lessons and was baptized in 2002. Soon after, he joined the Gospel Chariot team.
The ministry has roots in the end of apartheid, South Africa’s policy of racial segregation and discrimination that lasted four decades. In 1994, George Funk, a white South African, and his wife, Ria, left their jobs and began doing World Bible School follow-up ministry out of a small office in their home.
Two years later, George Funk studied the Bible with Machona Monyamane, a black South African who viewed whites as oppressors. But every time Monyamane asked a question, George Funk "put a smile on his face and a finger on the passage" in the Bible, he recalled.
When Monyamane asked to be baptized, George Funk found a hotel swimming pool but couldn’t locate its owner. The minister jumped the fence and performed the immersion.
Monyamane later became a minister for the Seeiso Street Church of Christ in Pretoria, South Africa. When it comes to taking the Gospel to the world, Jesus “didn’t give instructions in black and white,” he said.

REACHING AND TEACHING
To reach more Africans with the Gospel — and to avoid jumping fences for baptisms — the Funks commissioned the first Gospel Chariot in 2000.
Networking with leaders of Churches of Christ across the continent, the ministry has grown its fleet to 15 vehicles. Six, including one under construction in Nigeria, are “Big Chariots,” Mercedes-Benz Ategos and Australian Hino 500s. The rest are “Mini-Chariots” of various makes and models, including a retrofitted school bus in Benin.
Churches of Christ have used the vehicles in 20 African countries. George Funk estimates that 2,000 people per year are baptized through the ministry.
The Funks recently moved to Australia, and now Monyamane and other African Christians, including Dimpo Motimele, coordinate the work of Gospel Chariot Missions.
In the West African nation of Liberia, a recent Gospel Chariot campaign yielded 11 baptisms. More importantly, the ministry’s coordinators worked in partnership with local churches to coordinate follow-up visits, said Liberian minister Alfred Beyer, who participated in the campaign.
The mission also enrolls students in NationsUniversity, a distance-learning institution associated with Churches of Christ. Students earn bachelor's and master's degrees in religious studies online or through training centers in southern Africa, including one in the meeting place of the Downtown Church of Christ in Pretoria.
“We use World Bible School to reach new students,” Monyamane said, “and we use NationsUniversity to equip them.”

ENERGIZING OLD CHURCHES ...
Still rolling after 17 years, the first Gospel Chariot was at the heart of a recent campaign in Swaziland, a small kingdom that borders South Africa and Mozambique.
The Mliba Church of Christ, established in 1975, hosted the campaign as an effort “to bring back the lost sheep, to reconcile the people with God,” said church member Sibusiso Mdzebele.
Three baptisms resulted, including 70-year-old Mabuza Erick Muba, who said he had never before been a part of a church. After decades of ignoring the divine, “he saw that Jesus Christ made him alive,” said Bongani Mabena, who preached during the campaign, as he translated Muba’s words from siSwati, the local language.
“Now he feels excited,” Mabena said. “He wants to hear and listen and learn more about God’s Word.”
In addition to the baptisms, the campaign energized the 42-year-old congregation, said church member Ginindza Lindiwe.
The Gospel Chariot “did bring a lot of people into our community from different denominations,” she said. “They came and worshiped together with us as a church.”

... AND PLANTING NEW ONES
Back in Botswana, nearly a year after the Gospel Chariot’s visit, the newly planted Molepolele Church of Christ has constructed a small meeting place and its members are reaching out to their community of 60,000 souls.
Nearly a year of planning went
A year after the Gospel Chariot’s visit, the Molepolele Church of Christ includes new converts and transfers from other churches, including minister Kenneth Tsheboagae (right, blue stripes), Oarabile Diamond (center, red shirt) and Godi Tshome (left, in glasses). Tshome and six of her siblings were baptized after her sister, Onnalethata, was introduced to a Church of Christ while working in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

That’s no longer the case. A former member at Francistown, Oarabile Diamond, participated in the campaign, during which “we talked to a lot of youths and said, ‘Brethren, don’t just be converted into the church to come and sit in the church and be a member,’” he said. “We are called out to go call out others.”

In Molepolele, and in Francistown, “a lot of people are still fired up for the next Gospel Chariot meeting that will come here,” he said. “They say, ‘Wherever the Gospel Chariot comes, let’s go there.’”

A WITCH DOCTOR AND COLD FEET

The name “Molepolele” itself means “set him free,” Diamond said. Legend has it that the name came from an early settler of the area who was cursed by magic. His community urged a witch doctor to release him from the curse.

Now the name has new meaning, Malepa said, as the young church strives to “claim them from their sins.” Robert Reid was the first, but his wife didn’t follow immediately.

Two days after his baptism in the Gospel Chariot, Malebogo Reid brought a change of clothes to the evening worship service in case she decided to be immersed.

“But I grew cold feet,” she said. After five days, however, she marched up the ramp to the truck’s small baptistery and took the plunge.

A year later, she said, her husband still can’t help but brag, “I’m five days older than you in the Lord!”

int to the campaign that birthed the church, said Dennis Malepa, a long-time church leader in Botswana and minister for the Broadhurst Church of Christ in the country’s capital, Gaborone. Church members were careful to select an ideal site for the campaign and get permission from the tribal chief to use the land.

Members of other congregations, including the Francistown Church of Christ in east Botswana, canvassed the community in the weeks before the campaign, handing out flyers and hosting a “mini-campaign” before the Gospel Chariot arrived.

The new church’s minister, Kenneth Tsheboagae, trained in a ministry program overseen by Malepa. The Broadhurst congregation provides support for the work.

Godi Tshome, a former member at Broadhurst, now teaches Bible class for children at Molepolele.

“It’s been a very good experience,” said Tshome, a computer systems analyst for Botswana’s Ministry of Health and Wellness who, providentially, was recently transferred to a facility not far from the new church.

The Gospel Chariot’s visit attracted a lot of kids, she said, and the church’s Sunday classes can be large. At Broadhurst, on many Sundays she had nothing to do, she remembered, chuckling.
Whether strengthening bonds among generations, helping battle addictions or serving God and others through a small congregation, you make a difference every day. We’ve planned the 2018 lectureship to encourage and feed you.

Eighth-grader Carter Welch looks through his Pop’s Bible. His Pop, beloved FHU family member the late Dr. J. Walker Whittle, preached from this Bible for 50 years.

For a complete schedule and registration, visit www.fhu.edu/lectureship.
‘THESE PEOPLE ARE AMAZING,’ says Iranian immigrant whose Houston home flooded.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

HOUSTON

The homeowner was shirtless and sweating.

He was still angry — he admitted that much — over the devastation caused by Hurricane Harvey months ago.

But he was curious, too, about the strangers who showed up in white vans in his neighborhood and raked trash and debris from his barren yard.

“They came all the way down here for this?” he asked, intrigued that Christians drove 465 miles to serve victims of a storm that dumped a record-breaking 52 inches of rain on the nation’s fourth-largest city.

A slight smile formed on the man’s face. “I usually tell people from Oklahoma to head north,” he joked.

These days, though, southeast Texas can use the help — even it comes from across the Red River.

Emotional scenes of boats rescuing Lone Star State residents from flooded homes have faded from television screens. But for thousands who lost possessions and livelihoods, needs remain immense.

That’s why the Edmond Church of Christ — a 1,200-member congregation north of Oklahoma City — felt compelled to send help.

Right after the storm, the church — like countless others across the nation — took up a special contribution for Harvey relief.

The total raised from Edmond members topped $66,000, elder and administrator John Trotter said.

But along with money, many in the congregation desired to donate time and sweat.

“We want to go to Houston to help,” campus minister Evan Burkett said students from nearby Oklahoma Christian University told him.

As Oklahoma Christian’s four-day fall break began on a recent morning, 150 Edmond members — young families, retired craftsmen and a bunch of college students — gathered to pray for safe travel.

Then they grabbed their sleeping bags and soft-sided luggage. They filled 18 white rental vans and began an all-day journey to southeast Texas. Some travelers would sleep the entire way. Others would plug their iPhone cords into the van speakers and sing Disney show tunes and 1980s pop hits for hundreds of miles.

Participants were warned: Don’t fill up on a super-size drink if you have a tiny tank — this caravan would stop only every few hours at predetermined rest areas and at Buc-ee’s, a Texas-sized convenience store able to handle a large group.

After two decades of organizing mission trips to a mountain village in Mexico and — later — to the border town of McAllen, Texas, the coordinators know how to move a faith-based army down the highway.

The drivers, all of whom completed a safety course ahead of time, communicated via citizen band radios installed on each van. The radios helped them maneuver interstate traffic and — with a few strategically placed comedians — avoid any chance at boredom.

At the lunch stop, a special food team handled unloading giant containers of pre-made chicken-and-bacon wraps, cookies and beverages. The return trip would feature “walking tacos” made by slicing open individual bags of Doritos and dropping meat, cheese, lettuce and other ingredients inside.

“It’s in our group’s DNA to go en masse to an area that needs lots of help and to be a self-sufficient blessing,” Burkett said.

The church used a portion of its Harvey relief funds to send this group to Texas.
It’s a big encouragement to have people come in with energy,” said Jennifer Baxter, a member of the Memorial church.

“Its not everybody can muck,” Baxter added, referring to the grueling process of cleaning out flooded homes. “But everybody has different talents and things they can do.”

PAYING GOD’S LOVE FORWARD
Two of the Edmond vans headed 60 miles east of Houston to the rural Hankamer Church of Christ, a 12-member congregation with only four men on its roll. During Harvey, the fading yellow church building, just off a two-lane stretch of Texas Highway 61, sustained major damage.

Edmond member Lorette Rensford joined her husband, Mark, on the building next to the church. They were hired — including a b tecnical assistant for the church’s pump, who was signing up for one of a dozen-plus projects listed on a giant whiteboard in the church gym.

“The energy and momentum of them bring here gives us hope and encouragement,” said Hernandez, who preaches in English and Spanish at the 30-member Hidden Valley church. “We see people working together demonstrating their love to us.”

IT’S JUST STEP BY STEP
Vahid Tayyar’s wife, Dina, was eight and a half months pregnant with their second child when Harvey struck.

“We had 6 feet of water in the house,” said Tayyar, whose daughter was born a few weeks ago. “We lost everything.”

But in the wake of the storm, the Iranian immigrants received help from the Memorial church to rent a temporary apartment. Christians from an out-of-town — including the Edmond group — have worked together demonstrating their love to us.”

“It’s just step by step. It’s like climbing a mountain,” Bobby Orr said of making the family’s home livable again. Ocr serves as operations director for the Serving God by Serving Others ministry, which is sponsored by the Prestoncrest Church of Christ in Dallas. He and two minimum-wage workers he hired — including a flood victim who is a member of the Fifth Ward Church of Christ in Houston — have been living in temporary housing since Harvey struck.

For Rebekah Kashorek, the motivation for the trip was simple: She was fourteen at the time and seeing something so destructive was “very compelling.”

“The daughter was trying to get her family back in order so the mother could move in and start feeling better,” Kashorek said. “They cooked us a meal, and we were there.”

“It’s just overwhelming. God is good,” Felicia James said. “The outpouring of love they were able to show us — we’re ready to pay it forward.”

ENERGY AND MOMENTUM
Across the nation, Christians have responded with love and compassion to victims of recent disasters not just in Texas but also in Florida, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and elsewhere. Here in southeast Texas, countless members of Churches of Christ have offered prayers, donations, and volunteer labor.

“We’ve had people from Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas,” said Cruz Hernandez, minister for the flooded Hidden Valley Church of Christ in Houston.

As frequently happened when the crew was sent to a flooded home, taken out rotten wood and cleaned debris out front. “It means a lot,” said Tayyar, whose family has started attending the Memorial church. “These people are amazing.”

“They were so sweet,” Kashorek said. “They cooked us a meal, and we prayed with them. They just seemed so grateful.”

On the menu: hot tamales, Mexican rice and a bean soup. Kashorek enjoyed the food — and the company.

“This has been a really good experience,” said Kashorek. “It seemed like a good opportunity to help out,” said Kashorek, an 18-year-old sophomore at Oklahoma Christian.

Kashorek is from northeastern Kentucky, where her father, Doug, preaches for the Flattsborough Church of Christ. Her hometown is roughly a 24-hour drive from Oklahoma City. By that measure, a 10-hour trek to Houston — counting the stop — would seem “close by.” For Kashorek, the journey brought a handful of firsts. She had never been on a mission trip, never been to Texas, never eaten Tex-Mex and “never seen anything like this,” she said of the storm damage.

Kashorek stuffed dried brown sandwiches in a black garbage bag as she worked in the Tayyars’ yard. She later joined a few others across the street at the unidentified church’s place.

“There were a lot of tears,” said Tayyar, who has also been attending the Memorial church. “I’m just so grateful for everything.”

“We lost everything.”

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Troy James, Fel James, Lorrie Renfro and No Renfro worship at Houston’s Memorial Church of Christ, which has become a disaster relief hub.

Mission trip participants wash windows at the flooded home of an immigrant family. The family has started attending the Memorial church in Houston.
Months after Harvey, Texas minister reflects on disaster relief and lessons learned

‘Churches have done far more than the government’

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

BEAUMONT, Texas

Tony Williams is tired. However, he insists he’s not burned out.

Months after Hurricane Harvey, the Westgate Church of Christ — where Williams serves as the preaching minister — remains active with disaster relief in this southeast Texas city of 120,000.

“It’s tiring, but I think it’s something we can continue to do because the need is great,” Williams said. “And I think the cause of the kingdom is blessed through being able to reach out in this way.”

Technically, Harvey was a tropical storm, not a hurricane, when it reached Beaumont. Nonetheless, the rain — 26 inches in 24 hours — proved devastating as thousands of structures flooded.

At first, the 150-member Westgate church focused on distributing food and emergency supplies, including tractor-trailer loads full of items provided by Nashville, Tenn.-based Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort.

Later, the congregation shifted to housing and feeding Christians who came from across the nation to help gut, clean and restore deluged homes. To coordinate the volunteer teams, the church turned to the Churches of Christ Disaster Response Team, known as DRT.

More than 1,100 volunteers from 33 states have helped DRT at three Texas locations: Beaumont, Portland and Wharton, the ministry said in a recent newsletter. The elders of the Cassels Hill Church of Christ in Vandalia, Ohio, oversee DRT.

“Over 1,100 families have been helped by these volunteers, but there are many more families still waiting for someone to help them,” the DRT newsletter said.

The Meadows Church of Christ in Beaumont has joined with the Westgate church in the disaster relief effort.

In an interview with The Christian Chronicle, Williams discussed the recovery work and lessons learned.

• On the facilities and helpers:
  “We’ve got a shower trailer in the church parking lot, and we converted some bathrooms in one of our buildings into shower rooms just so we can take care of the needs of people coming in. We’ve had volunteers come in from Indiana, Georgia, Mississippi, Florida, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri. Who am I forgetting? Texas. And one from Canada, eh. They just keep coming. And it’s a blessing for us to be able to do that.”

• On what has surprised him most:
  “The consistency of how many volunteers are willing to take vacation time to come help. We have a guy who is here — he sold everything he’s got, and he’s here until January. He just said, ‘I heard about this, and this is what I want to do.’ He’s 24 years old, sold all his stuff, and he’s down here working. We’re two months out from the storm, and we still have people who are volunteering. Looking past Thanksgiving, we have people we know are wanting to come down. So just the generosity of the individuals who are taking that time and giving of their time and resources and money to do this.” (The church has received more than $100,000 in contributions to help Harvey victims.)

• On what he has learned:
  “Be careful what you pray for. Be specific. But the sermon that I preached right after the storm is: A lot of times, storms and trials reveal people for who they are. And I have seen some really great things in people, and I have seen some things that are not so great that were revealed by this storm. We all wear masks, and we all have ways of protecting who we really are. But then in a crisis, who we really are comes out, and it’s been revealing.”

• On the role of Christians in disaster relief: “It’s an opportunity. I’ll tell you this: In our community, churches have done far more than the government has to help people. And I really think that it’s in times like this that we can really shine and that we should shine. That’s how we introduce Jesus to our neighbors — by being there for him in times like this. We’re not an organization that’s designed to muck out houses and hang dry wall and distribute water, but that starts the relationship that helps us transition to, ‘Yeah, dry wall is important, but there’s something more important, and I want to talk to you about him.’”

SEE EXPANDED COVERAGE of Harvey relief and related videos: www.christianchronicle.org.
Growing up African, American and Christian

Nigerian-born Israel Afangideh, 19, shares his perspective on a life of faith between two worlds

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

NASHVILLE, Tenn.

African. Immigrant. Student. Poet. Musician. Writer. It takes a lot of words to describe Israel Afangideh — hardly surprising since he has something like eight names.

“And those aren’t just names!” the 19-year-old, Nigerian-born Christian insists, with a laugh, during an interview with The Christian Chronicle at Lipscomb University, where his mother is speaking at a conference. “See, you have to trace your genealogy all the way back to the most notable person in your past, and you have to know each of those stories.”

His grandfather, Okong Mkpong, is a prominent preacher who planted Churches of Christ in southeast Nigeria. Afangideh started preaching at age 9. A year later his mother, Uduak, took a job at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Ala., where she now chairs the science department. His father is an attorney. So is his older sister, Salem, who studied at Faulkner.

Transitioning from majority to minority — in a town that bears the scars of racism and the struggle for civil rights — was a challenge, he remembers. Although his mother studied at Freed-Hardeman University in Tennessee, he had some misconceptions about America that were quickly dispelled. He’s also encountered plenty of misconceptions about Africa. One example: few of his American peers realize the pressure African families place on their oldest sons.

“Every Nigerian parent wants their child to be a doctor or lawyer or engineer,” he said. “You can almost feel the pressure from, like, 500 years ago pushing you to make something out of yourself — and almost every African culture has that.”

As he’s studied at Faulkner, Israel Afangideh has found his own voice, writing and performing his original poetry about his experiences. With a group of friends — Christian and Muslim — he launched The Montgomery Insider, a media company dedicated to local news, commentary, music and culture.

The Insider also focuses on national issues. After President Trump initiated a travel ban, Afangideh wrote an essay titled “We are the future. Here we go!”

“When your country turns 56, you gotta grab the best-looking West Africans you know and go celebrate,” Israel Afangideh, center, posted to Instagram in 2016, on the 56th anniversary of Nigeria’s independence. “We are the future. Here we go!” With him are Nnamdi Nze, Mercy Kalu and Aniekan Ruffin.

“Growing up, I never saw a homeless person in Nigeria until maybe this past summer when I went back home. But if you look at pictures and films of Africa, you would think that’s all there is — poor, homeless people. When I travel to places like Atlanta or Chicago I see lots of homeless people, but you don’t see that on the screen.”

“A sense of community: “I think life is more comfortable living in the U.S. — like air conditioning. It’s very comfortable. But in Africa there is this sense of community that I really love. Being able to sit with a family — five, six, seven people — eating out of this huge tray, just spending time together ... I think those things get lost in translation.”

“African perspective on the South: “In Nigeria, it was kind of similar to America in terms of people not caring about what’s happening in other countries. I didn’t know about the civil rights movement. In Nigeria, everyone is black; everyone looks like you. So it was strange because I felt like I could identify with the white majority in America. But all of a sudden I wasn’t in the majority. It took me a long time to adjust.

“Sixth-grade kids are mean, and there are a lot of pictures of Africa that aren’t correct. A lot of black students would make jokes, and they just didn’t really understand how I’m black, but my culture is different.”

On adjusting to life in the U.S.: “I think one of the biggest adjustments was lunch. In Nigeria, we eat very differently — not just foods, but the culture of eating. We don’t speak while eating, but it’s also very social. If I’m eating and you’re sitting over there, I have a duty to invite you. Come and eat. And then we eat from the same plate. I give you a spoon and I have a spoon.

“In America, lunch and eating together is kind of how you forge relationships. In Nigeria, it’s just a different dynamic.

“For the longest time, I couldn’t call any adult who’s at least three years older than me by their first name. They would say, ‘Call me Mark,’ or, ‘Call me John’ and I just couldn’t. It wasn’t in my DNA.”

Misconceptions about Africa — and the U.S.: “It’s funny that, when we think of other countries, we ‘learn’ so much about them from movies. In Nigeria, when we think about America, we think about movies that were shot in New York. You see a lot of sexually promiscuous people and a lot of tall skyscrapers. But Montgomery, obviously, is nothing like that.

“It’s the same thing when Americans look at Africa. A lot of nonprofits and missionaries, they aren’t going to the rich, prosperous parts of Africa. While they are doing good, they’re not showing Africa as a whole.

“Growing up, I never saw a homeless person in Nigeria until maybe this past summer when I went back home. But if you look at pictures and films of Africa, you would think that’s all there is — poor, homeless people. When I travel to places like Atlanta or Chicago I see lots of homeless people, but you don’t see that on the screen.”

Comparing churches in America and Africa: “The church is home. I love it. Wherever you go, with the Church of Christ you are immediately at home.”
AFANGIDEH: Americans ponder grace while Africans ask, ‘Which God is more powerful?’

FROM PAGE 21
“My grandfathers on both sides of my family started churches in each of their villages. American missionaries taught them the Gospel.

“They married Church of Christ people and had children who grew up in the church. So they call us third generation, and we are expected to marry Church of Christ people and keep it going.

“The church in Nigeria is very, very close, but it faces its own problems and difficulties.

“I think it’s very difficult when you plant a church to understand the culture in which you are planting the church. In Nigeria, a lot of the people who were converted to Christianity were given this notion that God doesn’t actively work in the world anymore. That was very difficult for them to accept.

“In Africa, you can tell that the devil is working. So it’s difficult for them to understand how God could not be working powerfully when they can see the devil working powerfully. I think that has continued to plague the church a lot.

“Even as the Church of Christ in America has evolved, the church in Nigeria hasn’t really changed. We’re still preaching the same message that was brought to us. If you think about the Church of Christ in the 1930s or ’40s, all of the things that were issues here are still issues there now.

“ ‘In America, the questions are about love and grace. Does God love me? Can he forgive me?’

“The questions that people in Nigeria are really asking are, ‘Which God is more powerful? Which God should I serve? Should I serve God or the devil (the ‘devil’ being the idols and the local witchcraft)? The church in Nigeria is still trying to adapt to answer those questions.’

- On history, African identity and faith: “In Montgomery, even if you’re just walking downtown you’re walking where Martin Luther King Jr. walked. You go to Selma and you are driving across a bridge where he marched. There is this instinct to stand up for what is culturally yours.

“That’s hard for Africans because Christianity wasn’t brought to us in a soft way. There’s this history of colonialism, which led the way for American missionaries to come in.

“So I think a lot of kids my age find it difficult to be Christian and authentically African because it feels like, to be authentically African, you have to reject things that are Western, and Christianity is dubbed ‘Western.’ That was the journey I went on when I was 14, 15.

“My grandfather ... I have to trust his judgment. He heard about Christ and threw everything else away — everything he knew and everything his father had known — and clung to Christ wholeheartedly.

“Now, every one of my relatives is a member of the church. That’s our identity. But, on the other hand, I know that I’m African, and I don’t want to betray that.

I think a lot of kids my age find it difficult to be Christian and authentically African because it feels like, to be authentically African, you have to reject things that are Western, and Christianity is dubbed “Western.”

Every one of my relatives is a member of the church. That’s our identity. But, on the other hand, I know that I’m African, and I don’t want to betray that.

Israel Afangedeh, Nigerian-American Christian and student at Faulkner University

God is more powerful? Which God should I serve? Should I serve God or the devil (the ‘devil’ being the idols and the local witchcraft)? The church in Nigeria is still trying to adapt to answer those questions.”

UNDERSTANDING AFRICA: A minister in Swaziland shares his original poetry of faith, Page 28.
Milestones

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

Minister Installation
Minister Dwayne Case

The Northeast Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, Okla., has set the date to formally install its new evangelist, Minister Dwayne Case, on Sunday, December 10, 2017. The installation service is the kickoff to the winter revival being held Dec. 11-13 with guest speaker Minister David E. Wilson from Kings Church of Christ in Brooklyn, N.Y. The theme is “He Has Done Marvelous,” Psalms 98:1. “Evangelist Crenshaw ministered to our brotherhood for over 32 years, and we are celebrating 79 years of our faith journey in this community as a church,” said Case. “I am humbled to have seen his vision for the generations to come, and my vision is rooted in Psalms 90:1.”

Minister Case is a native of Spanish Town, Jamaica, and is the oldest of six children. He obeyed the Gospel at the Willowdene Church of Christ under the leadership of Evangelist Leslie G. Goode in 1991. In 2001, he arrived in the United States to attend Southwestern Christian College, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Religious Studies. He began his internships with Ministers David E. Wilson of Brooklyn, New York, and Timothy Daniels and Richard Barclay of Houston, Texas.

The late Evangelist Arnelious Crenshaw, Jr. began mentoring Case while he was expanding his theological and collegiate studies at Oklahoma Christian University. Minister Case studied alongside Evangelist Crenshaw for over 10 years and assisted with all ministerial duties. He was appointed Youth and Education Minister as well as Capital Campaign Director. In 2007, Minister Case completed his studies with a Master of Arts degree in Family Life Ministry and a Master of Business Administration degree in Leadership Management. He was then appointed to the position of Family Life Minister and served as the Small Groups Director. Minister Case embraces Titus 2, “Healthy teaching promotes healthy people.” Minister Case has continued to build on the foundation and vision of his predecessor, leading the “Salt and Light” ministry of the Northeast Church of Christ.

The mission is to positively impact the lives of people through education, benevolence, worship, and ministry. “I am honored to be part of such a great gospel legacy, and I cling to Judges 2:10, making sure the next generation knows the story,” said Case. “During his lifetime, Bro. Crenshaw poured himself into many sons in the Gospel. None can fill his global footprint.”

Minister Case is married to the former JéChar Carey. Together they have accepted the call to lead and serve the Northeast Church of Christ while developing the Case ministries. The public is invited.

Anniversaries

Wes and Sandy Day 50 years

Wes and Sandy Day of Oklahoma City will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Dec. 29, 2017. They were married at South Woodward Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, and they lived in New Mexico, Colorado, and Kansas before settling in Oklahoma City. They worshiped at Southeast Church of Christ for 25 years and have been members of the Eastside Church of Christ (Midwest City) for the past 21 years, serving as elder, dedicated Bible teachers, mentors to young families, and Sojourner campaigners. They have two children: Kim (Ken) Richter and Ryan (Allison) Day, and five grandchildren.

Memorials

Brent Wiederstein 1968-2017

Brent Wiederstein was the son of Allen and Jeanette Wiederstein. In 1987, Brent attended Oklahoma Christian University where he met Debbie Shotts, and they were married in 1990. He was a devoted husband of 27 years and a loving father to Ryan and Devan. The Edmond Church of Christ member was preceded in death by his sister, April, and grandparents, George Bryan, and Allen and Vivian Wiederstein. He is survived by his wife, Debbie; children, Ryan and Devan; parents, Allen and Jeannette; brother Heath, his wife Tiffany, and their sons Ian and Brody; April’s sons, Hunter and Clay; Clara Mae “Grandma” Bryan, and many more family and friends.

He enjoyed listening to music, and watching WWII documentaries, entertaining and grilling for his family. Brent was always welcoming and warm, and he wanted family and friends around.

Wayne Stafford, 80, Sept. 15, Houston.

Memorial/Honor Gifts

The Christian Chronicle appreciates and acknowledges generous gifts received in memory of Maurice Neathery, W.P. Parker and Art Parsons.

Entries should be submitted to milestones@christianchronicle.org or call (405) 425-5071.
WHY NOT REPORT IT WHEN IT HAPPENS?
Too often, society teaches sexual assault victims — men and women — that it’s not OK to talk, that the subject itself is shameful, said Mary Jo Cochrum, a counselor for the Woodland West Church of Christ in Arlington, Texas.

“I think it’s incredibly important for people to become aware of the scope of the problem,” Cochrum told the Chronicle. Movements such as #metoo bring the issue into the light — and show victims that they are not at fault.

“One of the most courageous things a woman can do is come in my office and share her story of assault and abuse,” Cochrum said.

“That takes so much courage.”

Women often don’t share their experiences because they’re afraid they will be scrutinized rather than believed, the counselor added. They’re afraid they’ll be questioned about what they were wearing or what they were doing in the place where the attack happened.

That’s exactly what kept Holder from coming forward, she said. She considers herself a rule-follower but had made the decision her senior year to attend the party where she was attacked.

“I knew my university would fault me because I was where I wasn’t supposed to be and expel me two months before graduation,” Holder said. “Not only that, they would find out my friends that were there and punish them, too.

“So I didn’t say a word.”

For counselors and fellow church members, Cochrum said, “one of the most important things is to simply believe women when they have a story.”

‘IF GOD’S PEOPLE DON’T DO ANYTHING...’
Stories like Holder’s are not rare.

According to RAINN, the nation’s largest anti-sexual violence organization, one out of every six women in this country has been the victim of a rape or attempted rape.

Despite the troubling statistics, Christians too often ignore the problem, said Ron Clark, minister for the Agape Church of Christ in Portland, Ore.

“We’d rather people keep it to themselves because then we don’t have to do anything about it,” Clark said. “I think churches have to create an environment where victims feel heard and accepted.”

He points to Proverbs 21:13 — “He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be answered” — as a basis for why Christians need to hear and help victims.

“God’s people don’t do anything, then we have to answer to God for that,” he said. “Our salvation depends on our willingness to defend victims.”

Churches should be places of forgiveness for offenders, Clark said, but “we have to be willing to confront oppressors.”

Too many churches, he added, offer grace to offenders but fail to provide victims with the love and support they need.

To help victims, don’t try to “fix” what happened, Cochrum suggested.

“Sometimes just sitting and listening or crying with someone and saying, ‘I don’t know what to say, but I’m here for you’ — sometimes that’s what we need,” she said, “someone to sit with us in our pain.”

WHEN, AND WITH WHOM, TO SHARE
Despite the success of the #metoo movement, Cochrum cautions victims of sexual assault and harassment against sharing their stories on social media before they’re ready.

In some cases, victims may be retraumatized by such public displays. Cochrum recommends that victims first reach out to a counselor, mentor or a close friend.

Until they’re ready to share, “I think there needs to be permission granted to women who have been victimized to not tell their story,” she said.

For Holder, sharing her story has helped her feel less anxious, she said. She hopes that the pain she’s endured can help bring awareness to the magnitude of the issue.

Like Cochrum, Holder encourages victims of sexual violence to start by sharing their stories, one on one, with someone they trust.

“If you do what I did, and let it sit in your gut and rot,” she said, “you’re going to have troubles.”

‘IT’S RIGHT HERE IN THESE PEWS’
After seeing report after report of long-buried abuse coming to light, Holder’s father, Bill Perkins, decided to address the #metoo movement from the pulpit of the Central Church of Christ in North Athens, Ala., where he preaches.

Although high-profile stories from actors and film studios get the most attention, the minister knows that sexual abuse and harassment aren’t confined to Hollywood.

“As much as it’s in the news, I want to tell you it’s right here,” he told the congregation. “It’s right here in these pews.”

As he prepared the sermon, he asked his social media contacts to share privately, if they were willing, share their stories of sexual assault and harassment.

He called on his social media followers to reach out to a counselor, mentor or a close friend.

“Sometimes just sitting and listening or crying with someone and saying, ‘I don’t know what to say, but I’m here for you’ — sometimes that’s what we need,” she said, “someone to sit with us in our pain.”

SEE BILL PERKINS’ SERMON and find additional resources at www.christianchronicle.org.
Not comfortable, but comforted

CHURCH SHOULDN’T BE a place where hurting people feel they must put on a mask to be accepted, says counseling ministry director.

Today I’m struggling. Sometimes it seems like tragedy has overtaken us. Hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, mass shootings. People dying. People losing their homes. People enduring unthinkable pain.

These are huge, tragic, scary events. We can often feel overwhelmed or even traumatized from just hearing about it all.

But today I’m not struggling with these tragedies. I’m struggling with our inability as believers to sit in someone else’s pain.

You see, we are usually really good at taking action when tragic events take place. We are quick to take up a special contribution to aid in recovery. We will gladly send supplies to people in need or travel to help in cleanup efforts.

As long as we feel like we are doing something to ease someone’s pain, we feel good.

But what about the times when we can’t do anything about the trauma and pain, when nothing we say or do will make things better, when we are completely helpless to fix things, when all our resources are useless in making a situation better?

So often in these types of situations, we tend to withdraw or run away. We soothe ourselves by telling ourselves that there’s nothing we can do, so we do nothing.

I often tell my clients that I can’t fix things for them, but I can walk with them through it. I can sit with them in their pain. I can hear their story and have compassion and empathy. I can acknowledge that they are suffering. I can be their hope when they have no hope left. I can be silent in their presence and allow them to simply be.

I regularly hear from people how they see church as a place where they must put on their mask so they can be accepted and loved.

We hide things like drug or alcohol addiction, domestic abuse, sexual sin, depression, anxiety, financial troubles, marriage struggles, parenting struggles. We hide the things that we believe will make us unacceptable and unlovable.

For many years I believed that church needs to be a place where we feel comfortable. However, I have come to the conclusion that church is not a place to feel comfortable. It is a place to feel comforted. It is a place to feel loved. It is a place to feel accepted, even with all our struggles and pain.

Can it be difficult and scary to be in the presence of such pain? Absolutely. It can overwhelm us when we are relying on our own strength, when we are trying to fix things, when we don’t see the person within the struggle.

But when we are relying on God to be present, when we are seeing through his eyes of love, when we are dependent upon his provision in the situation, then we can be empathetic and compassionate, then we love the way he loves, then we can be present for those in pain. And sometimes, that’s all we need to do for each other.

MARY JO COCHRUM, a Licensed Professional Counselor, is director of the counseling ministry of the Woodland West Church of Christ in Arlington, Texas, where she has served on staff since 2009.

College of Arts and Sciences Dr. Gregory Straughn, Dean, ACU Box 29210, Abilene, Texas 79699-9210

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication invites applications for a full-time, tenure-track faculty member to join six colleagues beginning Aug. 1, 2018, in an ACEJMC-accredited program in a state-of-the-art facility. About 150 students are enrolled in advertising/public relations, convergence journalism or multimedia majors within the department or in an interdisciplinary graphic design/advertising major. Students in the advertising/PR major spend two semesters working at Moriss-Mitchell, a student-run ad/PR agency. The ideal candidate will have academic credentials and professional experience for teaching public relations courses in the ad/PR major. Though not required, applicants who bring a second area of interest in sports communication, social media or film are particularly encouraged to apply. A terminal degree is strongly preferred, but applicants who are ABD will be considered. Research and service expectations support the university’s status as a premier comprehensive university. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/jmc.

College of Education and Human Services Dr. Robert Rhodes, Provost, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103

ACU is accepting applications for dean of its College of Education and Human Services. The college provides nationally accredited training programs grounded in current research and informed practice related to the educational and service needs of individuals across the lifespan. The college comprises five academic units: the School of Social Work, the Department of Teacher Education, the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, the Department of Kinesiology and Nutrition, and the Department of Occupational Therapy. Strong candidates will have a commitment to the mission, values and goals of the university. They will have an appreciation and understanding of the nature and role of Christian higher education and the relationship between learning, scholarship and faith. Applicants must have an earned doctorate; a record of excellence in teaching and research as a tenured associate or full professor; service as an exemplary teacher, mentor and advisor of university students; experience in academic administration including evidence of exceptional leadership in progressively responsible positions; experience with the processes and demands of secondary accreditation; experience as a practitioner in a discipline of the college or a related field; ability to work collaboratively with faculty, staff and administrators within a department, college and university; knowledge of and experience with the interdisciplinary nature of the departments of the college and the communities they serve; and willingness and ability to work effectively with university development in fundraising. Information about the college is available at acu.edu/cehs.

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 vitae; 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.

Mary Jo Cochrum

Voices
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- Since 2007, approximately 56,400 have heard the Gospel of Christ in India, Nepal, and Bangladesh through the WEI-India ministry. Approximately 22,500 WEI students have studied the Bible in 50+ year-round WEI schools operated by Churches of Christ throughout India.
- Support for this ministry is in jeopardy for 2018. **$30,000** is needed to continue this fruitful work. Currently, this work is under the oversight of the Maryville Church of Christ eldership. If you would like to support this work, please send a check to the Maryville Church of Christ.
- Recent Baptisms Statistics:
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KENYA CHILDREN’S HOME

KITALE, Uganda — Members of the Quaker Avenue Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas, traveled to this East African nation recently to celebrate 25 years of ministry to orphans.

The Kenya Church of Christ Children’s Home hosted a reunion for children who grew up at the home and former staff. Administrator Steven Muturi helped the reunion.

“Though several activities were planned, it seemed the older children were content to sit together and catch up on each other’s lives, introduce their own children, take pictures ... and laugh and play with the younger kids at the home,” participants wrote in a recent Uganda Mission newsletter.

NICARAGUA CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

LEON, Nicaragua — Nicaragua Christian School serves children in one of the largest cities in Central America’s poorest country.

Students receive free meals, an education and daily Bible instruction.

The dream for the school began when a group of Christians on a medical mission trip to Nicaragua recognized the need.

For more information, see www.nicaraguachristian.org.

HIGHER EDUCATION

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

ABILENE, Texas — “Walking With C.S. Lewis,” a new 10-part video series about 12 of the best-known, most beloved works of the renowned author and theologian, was introduced at the recent ACU Summit.

The video series was developed and narrated by Tony Ash, professor emeritus of Bible, missions and ministry at ACU.

Lexham Press, publisher of the series, reports national distribution will begin Jan. 1, 2018, by LifeWay Christian Stores, while online sales and access began in November.

Complimentary copies will be sent to Brown Library at ACU and all other U.S. universities and colleges associated with Churches of Christ.

FAULKNER UNIVERSITY

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — At Faulkner University’s recent annual benefit dinner, President Mike Williams announced plans to create an autism center on campus in 2019.

The center, which would be the first in the area, would combine the resources from the College of Education with new master’s and doctoral programs in speech-language pathology and physical therapy.

Earlier in the fall, Faulkner hosted an autism conference as the first step in that undertaking.

“For me, it’s more than a professional conference,” Williams said. “Lisa and I have an autistic son who is 24 years old. This is a critical conversation to have simply speaking as a parent.”

Southwestern Christian College wins $150,000 prize

Ervin D. Seamster Jr., president of Southwestern Christian College in Terrell, Texas, celebrates the college’s grand prize win in the first Ford HBCU Drive2Greatness program. He’s joined by “A Different World” stars Jasmine Guy and Kadeem Hardison. Supporters of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) cast votes for their favorite school. SWCC earned a prize valued at $150,000.

SPOTLIGHT

DeHart featured on ‘The Voice’

Anna Catherine DeHart, who grew up in the Shady Acres Church of Christ in Sikeston, Mo., was featured on this season of NBC’s “The Voice.”

“I thought before this that I was done with music,” DeHart wrote on Facebook after her recent elimination from the TV competition. “I thought that growing up meant giving up on the dream I’d had as far back as I could remember. I thought that it wasn’t where I was supposed to be anymore. This experience gave that all back to me. Thank you, Blake Shelton, for taking a chance on me and believing in me enough to turn your chair and let me live my dream.”

The Christian Chronicle featured DeHart last year when she donated proceeds from her “Waiting On the Sun to Rise” video to Children’s Homes Inc. of Paragould, Ark. DeHart said then she hoped to encourage more people to become foster parents or volunteer time to help abused and neglected children.
EDITORIAL

Bless the teachers when no one else will

Children — not oil, not coal, not solar or wind power — are our greatest natural resource. You’d hardly know it from the way we treat teachers. In Oklahoma, a state budget shortfall has resulted in cuts to education. Teacher pay is low; so is morale. Some educators use their own money for classroom supplies. Nearly 100 districts have moved to a four-day school week.

In many of the states where our fellowship is strongest — Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee — schools in low-income neighborhoods are struggling to give kids the education they need to succeed.

Should we help? Many of us send our children to private schools. Some of us homeschool. After all, public schools routinely push aside our beliefs and teach viewpoints contradictory to our faith.

We must stand up for what’s right, but non-engagement isn’t the answer. When we give generously of our time and resources to help educators and schools in need, our help leads to that all-important question: “Why are you doing this?”

Many of our congregations have adopted inner-city schools. Countless church members assist in reading initiatives and after-school programs.

Let’s continue and expand that good work. Let’s constantly be hunting for those in our communities who need encouragement for the work they do.

Serving those under-appreciated by society helps the church grow — in spirit and numbers.

Our resources aren’t ours. They’re on loan from the giver of all good things. Let’s use them to fund the underfunded and bless the overlooked.

FROM OUR READERS

Column was a Boone for feedback

I love Pat Boone, but he did stray heavily from the Scriptures. (See “Pat Boone insists he ‘never left’ Churches of Christ, Page 3, November.) If he still believes in the charismatic false teachings, then I’m truly sad for him. Is this how far The Christian Chronicle has strayed from the Scriptures? We’re praising an ex-member as if he did nothing wrong just because he’s a nice star?

PENNIE BIEDIGER | San Antonio

Your column about Pat and his view of the church was theologically thoughtful and really quite remarkable. Thank you for writing it and kudos to the Chronicle for printing it.

ROBERT M. RANDOLPH | Rockport, Mass.

IN THE WORD

African poet shares hardship and hope

But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” Then he said, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” So the two of them went together.

— Genesis 22:7-8, New King James Version

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

TUBUNGU, Swaziland.

Before we can heal Africa, we have to understand Africa.”

That’s what Sibusiso Adontsi told an audience of church members from across southern Africa and the U.S. recently.

On the campus of African Christian College, he shared three original poems — words of hardship and hope, born out of his experiences living on the continent of nearly 1 billion souls.

Adontsi is a native of Lesotho, a landlocked kingdom surrounded by South Africa. His parents are pioneers among Churches of Christ in Lesotho. His mother is a native of Swaziland. All three are graduates of the college, once known as Manzini Bible School.

Scripture is filled with poetry from noble men, including David and Solomon, and writers of which we know little, such as Asaph and the Sons of Korah. Their work teaches us about God’s relationship with people across the ages. We incorporate their words into contemporary psalms, hymns and spiritual songs as we make music in our hearts to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:19)

Sibusiso Adontsi’s rhythmic poetry raised some intriguing, thought-provoking questions, including, “What would happen if the devil said ‘I am sorry’ to God? I am not claiming it’s gonna happen, but just give it a thought.”

The second of his three poems personified a facet of the African experience with imagery that’s both beautiful and terrible. Here are the words:

The curse of being black with no direction, lost with no resurrection, hopes of a future blurry, lost and it’s looking scary.

I wanna change the world, give birth to a star like Virgin Mary, be a star that shines brighter in life’s darkest alley. But how can you be early, when some can barely sleep, and hope they never keep because miseries are always deep?

They always weep.

Dead like Isaac without the holy sheep.

See, this is a story of a little girl trapped in a pain cell. She wanted to be something when she grows up, says her pen pal. She wanted to be a star, the female version of Denzel, Angel that fell from heaven straight to African hell.

She had a cute smile but her clothes had a terrible smell, ‘cause she was left to rot in the street like a leftover meal.

The story is real. It even made the devil crush to tears. Now she fantasizes about going beyond hemispheres, where people can live together without sharpening their spears. Because her dad was lost in war, her mama was lost in tears. Her sister wants more; her brother was ruled over by the beers. Yet she had the dream of being Lesotho’s first Britney Spears.

Now the future is blurry, left without the Son like Virgin Mary. The burden is heavy like, “Why did I have to leave the belly?” Like, “Why did I have to be the sperm to reach the ovum early?”

She contemplates about her date with fate in the grave, with no shackles and chains on her feet — but she feels like a slave.

They call her an Ave, a shortcut meaning to street life. Divorced her home, she became an ex — never a housewife.

Blood, tears and sweat — that defines her life. If she was still alive I would make her my wife.

The final poem is more upbeat. The poet spoke of a man who stopped fighting God, who finally became willing to lose himself and let go.

“Now my life is good, because I lost everything. I was overlooking the fact that I’ve got everything, oblivious to the fact that I am a king only fit for queens. And I never settle for little things.”

We need more poets in our fellowship.

It was an honor to hear this young believer’s powerful perspective.
A response to ‘White Lives Matter’

TENNESSEE CHURCH SHOOTING should never be ‘a pretense for hatred’

A number of white nationalist groups gathered in middle Tennessee recently under the moniker “White Lives Matter.” Some members of one of the groups, the League of the South, put on a Christian veneer and employ Christian language. The League of the South has indicated that the shooting at the Burnette Chapel Church of Christ in Antioch, Tenn. — by a Sudanese immigrant — is one of the factors solidifying its decision to assemble in middle Tennessee.

There’s a biblical precedent set by the apostle Paul in which he recounts his pedigree to one-up his opponents. On the basis of such precedent, let me be, in Paul’s words, a fool myself, reciting my pedigree. I’m white, a man and a life-long member of Churches of Christ. More, I’m a theology professor at a university associated with Churches of Christ.

I’m an Alabamian by birth, weaned on NASCAR and Merle Haggard, and I have a mini-lecture on the linguistic superiority of “y’all,” given that it makes explicit the second person plural. I’m so Tennessean now, having lived here for two decades, that I have an upright bass in the corner of my dining room, frequently dine on hot chicken and get all warm inside at the mere prospect of another visit to the Ryman Auditorium.

I will not be out-Southerned, out-Church-of-Christed, out-Christianed or out-white-maled by these outside agitators. I will not be out-Bible-quoted or out-pseudo-theologized.

So let me be clear: I don’t want the tragedy that occurred at the Burnette Chapel Church of Christ being used as a pretense for hatred and hostility.

First, it’s just tacky. True Southern sensibilities don’t use other people’s tragedies for one’s own self-centered agendas.

Second, like most Christian denominations in the United States, we Church of Christ folks have had our historic sins of racism and prejudice. But many of us have been working hard at racial equity and social justice, confessing our historic wrongs, truth-telling and reconciliation.

We don’t want such racist rhetoric setting us back as a Christian community.

But beyond this more narrow concern is the rising tide of hostile ethnocentrism and xenophobia in American culture at large.

It is deeply troubling, and deeply troubling for numerous reasons, only one of which is this — that it often co-opts Christian speech. The League of the South is reported to want a return to a “Christian nation.”

As a Christian first, and not an American first, I maintain that the whole project of a “Christian nation” is deeply problematic. But that does not mean Christians cannot bring all sorts of good news to bear upon our communities.

And yet the Good News of Christian practice is not some naive “ethnocentrism” and a return to some foolish hierarchy of the white man or some intellectually ill-conceived construct about Southern culture. The whole move of the New Testament, the fundamental meaning of baptism, the practice of communion — all of these teach us to welcome strangers, practice hospitality and cast down all foolish notions of superiority.

The likes of the League of the South couch their ethnocentrism in noble concerns: critiques of globalization, the loss of traditional mores, the over-reach of federal power. All these are quite legitimate questions. But let the unwary be wary: heresy is always admixed with truth, and the wolf comes dressed in sheep’s clothing.

‘Many of us have been working hard at racial equity ... confessing our historic wrongs. We don’t want such racist rhetoric setting us back.’

LEE C. CAMP is a professor of theology and ethics at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn., and host of Nashville's Tokens Show (www.tokensshow.com).
Job Listings

Looking for an Energetic Minister
The Broken Bow Church of Christ is a small church in the mission field of beautiful central Nebraska that is looking for an energetic minister. Our previous minister left on good terms and relocated to Tennessee to be near family. We have a teen center across the street from the church that was converted from a home and can be used as a home for a young couple or older couple as it has two bedrooms. The ideal candidate would be able to be partially vocational as we cannot afford to pay a large salary at this time. Please send your resume to: randypam@yahoo.com

Contact Dean Fenske (308) 215-0108 or Randy Schweitzer (308) 872-1321 for any questions.

Only members of the Churches of Christ will be considered and we are an a cappella Church of Christ.

Looking for a Youth Minister/Worship Leader
The Fairview Heights Church of Christ is seeking a youth minister/worship leader to serve our congregation located in the metropolitan St. Louis area. We desire an experienced man to work with our youth, lead worship, occasionally preach and be involved in congregational ministry efforts to reach our community for Christ. If you are interested, please send us your resume, references and a brief philosophy of ministry to: Fairview Heights Church of Christ Attn: Youth Minister/Worship Leader 9955 Bunkum Road Fairview Heights, IL 62208 joe@fairviewheightschurch.org

Looking for an Energetic Evangelist
The Bell Fork Road Church of Christ is searching for an energetic evangelist minister to serve full time. Our desire is for a family man with a love of GOD’s word and people and also able to work well with a versatile congregation of all races and ages.

Church of Christ Attn: Chris Kelsey, chairman 321 Bell Fork Rd Jacksonville, NC 28540 sylvialeatherwood@gmail.com (910) 346-6107

Minister Needed
Is there a congregation ready to send a minister to work in south-central PA?
Small church needs a sponsored worker for a growing community.

See on-line ad for more info.
Chambersburg Church of Christ P.O. Box 221, Chambersburg, PA 17201 (717) 261-0835 (lv msg)
e-mail: cofc@innernet.net
www.christianchronicle.org/classifieds

Lakeview Christian Hospice Care, Carlsbad, N.M.
has a unique opportunity for ministry. We are seeking a full-time chaplain to work with our dying patients and their families. This position allows you to minister to people at a sometimes difficult time, listen to family life reviews and hear incredible stories, and support patients and families. Must be willing to work in patient’s home, work comfortably in a multi-denominational environment, have knowledge of the grief process and an understanding of hospice philosophy.

Cindy Defer (575) 887-0933 humanresources@lakeviewchristian.com

Full-Time Minister
The Gateway Church of Christ in Homestead, Fla., is seeking a full-time minister for a growing church of 50 plus. Applicant must have strong communication skills and a heart to help grow the congregation. Please send resume with contact information along with a video or attachment of two recent sermons.

Jim Harris Preacher Selection Committee harriscontractor@aol.com (786) 255-4999

Bilingual Minister
The Church of Christ in Pecos, Texas, is seeking a bilingual minister for our Spanish-speaking congregation. Graduate from preaching school or Christian university associated with Churches of Christ preferred. Experience a plus, but will consider a recent graduate. Candidate must be fluent in English.

Church of Christ PO Box 1332 Pecos, TX 79772 pecoscofcoffice02@windstream.net

Garden Ridge Church of Christ is looking for a full-time worship minister to lead our congregation of about 400 in worship. Garden Ridge is located in Lewisville, Texas, a suburb of Dallas. Interested applicants may send resumes to: grworship@gardenridge.org
For a full job description, visit the church website at: www.gardenridge.org

Minister Wanted
Worship Minister Wanted

Garden Ridge Church of Christ is looking for a full-time worship minister to lead our congregation of about 400 in worship. Garden Ridge is located in Lewisville, Texas, a suburb of Dallas. Interested applicants may send resumes to: grworship@gardenridge.org
For a full job description, visit the church website at: www.gardenridge.org

Youth and Family Minister
The Weber Road Church of Christ, Corpus Christi, Texas, is seeking a Youth and Family Minister. Sunday attendance of 280 includes 60 children in an active youth program. Seeking a man with degree in Bible or Ministry and three to five years experience.
To apply, contact the church office: (361) 853-7701, office@webercofc.com

Classifieds start at $325, discounts offered to smaller congregations.
Contact Tonya Patton at: tonya.paton@christianchronicle.org.
Deadline for next two issues: December 8 and January 12.
How do we stop decline in the church? ‘Open the door and see all the people’

I’ll never forget my grandmother teaching me how to interlock my fingers while she would say, “Here’s the church. Here’s the steeple. Open the door and see all the people.”

Tim Archer mentions that rhyme at the beginning of “Church Inside Out” and then explains why it is imperative that the church take what we learn inside the building out to our communities. In a time when church attendance is dwindling nationwide, we need a reminder to take the mission of Christ to our neighbors.

Archer, a bilingual minister for the University Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, and coordinator of Spanish-speaking ministries for Hope for Life, a Herald of Truth ministry, suggests we treat his book as we would an annual physical. He boldly, yet gracefully, calls us out on our inward-focused attitudes and myopic vision. He offers practical-yet-prolific advice on how the church can be more attentive to the needs of not only each other, but also the communities we’re a part of.

Inward-centered churches end in downfall, he writes. We can’t just be about survival. Our churches must have purpose — and get out of our comfort zones, get to know our neighbors. Complete, holistic worship reaches up to God, in to the church and out to the nonbeliever. If those three aspects don’t work together, Archer writes, the church will not last.

“It isn’t about defending or condemning your local congregation,” he writes. “It’s about finding ways to love God and love your neighbor.”

We’re reminded not to “speak past” the visitors in our assemblies — talking to them without understanding them and learning about them. Archer also invites us to assess our worship services. Are they visitor-friendly? Is our building? What would a visitor notice? Will they return?

Throughout the book, he carefully lays out the mission of the church: sharing the Good News of Jesus. He includes simple, biblical ideas for getting to know ourselves and our neighborhood.

Archer encourages us to make ourselves vulnerable to our neighbors, giving them every chance to get to know us as we love and serve them. One particularly profound statement should be taken to heart by every Christian:

“It is our job to make the initial move in getting to know our neighbors. We must make that first step. He offers several suggestions for doing so.

At the end of each chapter, Archer provides a study guide for small groups or families. He suggests additional readings. I admired the heart behind this gesture and felt the importance. Archer cares deeply for the church.

We’re also reminded that the path Jesus marked for us is a path of service.

For anyone who feels inadequate to teach the Gospel, this book provides numerous teaching tools and suggestions used by the author during his many years on the mission field. He offers suggestions on how to begin the conversation, explaining that it’s a process, not an event. He encourages the reader to ask questions as they teach Jesus to friends and family. With each question, he offers guidance and encouragement.

An accompanying workbook offers students a handy guide to learn about themselves, their congregations and their communities.

The book and workbook should be read and discussed in every congregation. The material is powerful, but the book is not one bit intimidating. They are straightforward and easy to read, yet hold a great deal of worth for every Christian.

PAULA HARRINGTON is a Christian writer and member of the Lone Oak Church of Christ in Paducah, Ky. She is the compiler and editor of the books “Once Upon a Bible Class,” “A Common Bond” and “A Sunday Afternoon with the Preachers’ Wives.”

In post-Christian America, author calls for ancient Christian way of life

Post-modernity. Post-Christianity. Post-truth. How should the church respond?

That’s the question Rod Dreher explores in “The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation.” Dreher, senior editor and blogger for The American Conservative, tells us that “we have to return to the roots of our faith, both in thought and in practice. We are going to have to learn habits of the heart forgotten by believers in the West. ... In short, we are going to have to be the church, without compromise, no matter what it costs.”

The good news is that we’ve been here before. Joseph saw it, as did Daniel, Esther and Peter. And after Rome fell, Benedict of Nursia demonstrated what a small group of believers can accomplish by embodying God’s grace in a distinct way.

The hardest part of the Benedict Option is that these changes have to start with us. Some might not seem that radical: a daily rhythm of work and prayer, a more local and neighborly form of politics and a rejection of lust and greed.

But other aspects strike closer to our modern roots, presenting challenges even for the faithful: living intentionally near our church family, taking back our children’s education and leaving lucrative careers for a humber living in the trades.

The goal, however, is not simply to survive, but to embody the grace of God. As Dreher reminds us, “The first Christians gained converts not because their arguments were better than those of the pagans, but because people saw in them and their communities something good and beautiful — and they wanted it. This led them to the Truth.”

The same is true for the church today. Just as Jesus embodied grace and truth (John 1:17), he calls us to be his church. As John wrote, “By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world” (1 John 4:17).

To be for the world, we cannot be of the world. We have to be the church.

JON BURNETT teaches Bible class and leads singing for the Warner Robins Church of Christ in Georgia. He blogs at ineartennvessels.com.

What are we reading? Send submissions to erik@christianchronicle.org.
Calling all Gander Brookers
(and anyone else interested in New England evangelism…!)

There’s no place quite like Gander Brook in New England. If you’ve camped or counseled there, you know. The faith, the fun, the friends, and the memories. It has been a major New England hub for ministry to our youth and fellowship among the churches of Christ for over 50 years, and the Gander Brook dorm has served the camp that entire time.

Now after so many years, the dorm is in desperate need of renovation. The old dorm has seen much better days, and the board has determined that we have to renovate very soon before it decays beyond salvaging.

Would you please partner with us to replace an important part of our facilities and extend Gander Brook’s seasons of service to the youth and churches of New England? Would you be willing to make a one time contribution? Or make a monthly pledge from now through December 2018? GB needs your help!

Contact…
info@ganderbrook.org • (603)540-0287

ganderbrook.org

Stop Feeling Guilty, Divorced Christian: God May Want You Remarried!

THE TRUTH ABOUT DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE
A Politically Incorrect View of Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in Today’s Church

Weldon Langfield

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

“Reading this work was refreshing and I again experienced the joy of liberation from false and binding restraints put on divorced Christians…”
- 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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Nov. 18-23 Southwestern Christian College Lectureship. Terrell, Texas. Richard L. Barclay, (404) 805-8795, rlbarclay1@aol.com.

Nov. 26 National Racial Unity Day. Houston Area Churches of Christ. David Duncan, (713) 464-0271, dduncan@mcoc.org or Gary Smith, gsmith@fwcoc.org.

Nov. 28 Giving Tuesday. The Christian Chronicle. Call (405) 425-5070 or donate online at christianchronicle.org/donate.

Nov. 30 Festival of Trees Gala. Christian Care Senior Living Communities, Dallas, Texas. Donna Taylor, (972) 686-2401, christiancarecenters.org/events.

Dec. 4 Lipscomb University College of Business 100th Anniversary. Nashville, Tenn. beth.mangrum@lipscomb.edu.


Jan. 2-5 National Conference on Youth Ministries. Atlanta. ncymboard@googlegroups.com, ncym.org.


Jan. 19-20 Church Involvement Conference and Involvement Ministry Training. Church of Christ, Athens, Tenn. travisirwin@att.net, churchinvolvement.com.

Feb. 9-11 Lubbock Christian University Homecoming. Lubbock, Texas, lcu.edu.

Feb. 16-18 Winterfest 2018. Gatlinburg, Tenn. Gatlinburg Convention Center, dudley.chancey@oc.edu, winterfest.org.


FULL CALENDAR: www.christianchronicle.org
Contact tonya.patton@christianchronicle to include your event on the calendar for a nominal fee.
Lipscomb University in Nashville invites nominations and applications for Dean of the Raymond B. Jones College of Engineering to begin Fall 2018. A doctorate in an engineering discipline as well as academic experience is required; industrial and administrative experience preferred. The candidate should be an active member of the churches of Christ.

Engineering has 200 undergraduates in three ABET-accredited degrees – civil, mechanical, and electrical and computer engineering. The college has 11 full-time faculty with six staff, and is home to the Peugeot Center for Engineering Service in Developing Communities. Housed in the new Fields Engineering Center, the college has collaborative learning spaces, teaching laboratories, faculty offices, conference rooms, an Innovation Lab, and a machine shop. Engineering is one of ten colleges at Lipscomb University, a private Christian R3 Research University located in the Green Hills area of Nashville. Established in 1891, Lipscomb is a thriving academic community offering 175 fields of undergraduate study, master’s and doctorate programs to 4,600 full-time and part-time students. See posting for more information:

https://lipscomb.peopleadmin.com/postings/2037

Greg Nordstrom, Ph.D., Chair of Search Committee
Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering
One University Park Drive, Nashville, TN 37204
greg.nordstrom@lipscomb.edu

LCU School of Business invites applications for a tenure-track faculty position to serve as Program Coordinator and to teach in the Information Systems and Technology program. The successful candidate will have strong leadership abilities and a clear strategic vision for the fast-changing technological environment and the academic requirements for the field. Responsibilities will include program leadership and assessment, teaching lower and upper division courses, advising and mentoring students, and serving on university committees.

This position requires proven leadership experience and excellent verbal and written communication skills. A terminal degree in Information Technology, Management Information Systems, Computer Science, or a closely related field is preferred. Candidates having an M.S. and currently pursuing, or willing to pursue a doctoral degree will be considered. LCU is a Christ-centered, academic community of learners, transforming the hearts, minds, and hands of students for lives of purpose and service. The university is affiliated with the Churches of Christ fellowship and the candidate will be a committed follower of Jesus Christ and an active member of a congregation of the Churches of Christ.

Interested Individuals Should Contact:
C. Tracy Mack, Dean • 806.720.7380 • Tracy.Mack@LCU.edu.
Lubbock Christian University is an equal opportunity employer.

Every Child Should Have a Christmas That is “Merry & Bright”

“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father, is this; to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep one-self unstained from the world.”
James 1:27

Please begin the season of giving with a donation to Hope for Haiti’s Children.

Any donation, large or small, will be used to bless the children in Haiti.

Hope for Haiti’s Children
P.O. Box 62328
Cincinnati, OH 45262

www.HopeForHaitisChildren.org
Joy to the world, the Lord is come.”

I love Christmas and all the traditions — especially the sweets and the meals. I have special delight in watching children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren enjoying the season and the gifts.

But I have always felt conflicted about Christmas — with thoughts of Santa Claus bringing presents and the tradition of celebrating Christ’s birth.

This time of the year makes me aware of man’s lost condition — and the horrific, heart-wrenching reports from Tennessee, Las Vegas and Texas only reinforce how lost we all are. Despite the tears we shed and the prayers we offer, we still find ourselves so lulled into complacency by our pleasant, comfortable lives that we hardly ever consider our own sins and their consequences without our Savior. As we celebrate the coming of Jesus, we have a chance to consider how hopeless we would be without God’s gift of his Son to redeem us.

I have been inspired as I have looked again at the events connected with the birth of Jesus.

- Luke gives us the fullest account of the events.
- Matthew gives us the genealogy of Joseph.
- Mark recounts the story of the angel telling Joseph to take Mary for his wife when he was considering not marrying her.
- John’s focus is on the divinity of Jesus. He tells us that “the Word became flesh.”

Angels have a major role in reporting the Messiah’s birth. An angel appears to Zechariah as he is performing his temple duties and tells him that his barren wife Elizabeth will bear a son who will be great in God’s sight. The son is to be named John, and he will bring many back to God as he acts as a forerunner for the Messiah.

Six months after Elizabeth conceives, the angel Gabriel is sent by God to Nazareth to a virgin named Mary. He reports that Mary had found great favor with God. He tells her she will conceive a child and bear a son she will name Jesus. He describes the role this son will have on the throne of David. He will be called Son of the Most High.

When Mary questions how all this is possible, the angel describes the work of the Holy Spirit. Gabriel also told her of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. Mary immediately went to Elizabeth. Both are moved by the Holy Spirit to tell of God’s work through the babies they are carrying.

When Jesus is born in Bethlehem, an angel appears to shepherds to announce the birth of the Savior. The angel gives them instructions where to find Jesus, and then a host of angels appear and praise God. Meanwhile, a star appears and encourages wise men to follow in the belief it’s leading to a special person. The star eventually leads them to Jesus.

When Jesus is eight days old, he is taken to the temple to make the offering required for redemption of the firstborn. At the temple, Simeon and Anna acknowledge that the infant Jesus will be the Savior of mankind.

This December, I am going to enjoy the gift-giving and the holiday foods, but I am resolved that this year I am going to contemplate the miracle of God becoming flesh and blood.

I plan to take time for prayer and fasting to reflect on deity becoming human, experiencing temptations and experiencing death — at the hands of those who should have celebrated his life.

CONTACT: bailey.mcbride@christianchronicle.org
Meet our new trustees

We’re thrilled to announce the addition of five new members to The Christian Chronicle’s board of trustees.

These Christian professionals join 12 other dedicated trustees on our board, under the leadership of chairman Deon Fair. They provide valuable leadership, oversight and support for our mission to inform, inspire and unite Churches of Christ.

Our new trustees:

• **Monte Cox** serves as the dean of the College of Bible and Ministry at Harding University in Searcy, Ark. Since 2013 he also has served as preaching minister for the Downtown Church of Christ in Searcy. He has been as an elder there since 2002. Cox was a missionary to Kenya from 1982-92. A graduate of Harding, he earned a doctorate from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Illinois.

“I have always appreciated the Chronicle’s efforts to be a voice for unity in Churches of Christ across the theological spectrum and the racial divide,” Cox said. “I want to serve on the board because I believe in its mission.”

• **Erin Engelke** is chief external relations officer for Sunbeam Family Services in Oklahoma City. She manages the organization’s fundraising, marketing and volunteer programs.

A graduate of Oklahoma Christian University and a 2014 TEDx presenter, she previously served in fundraising and public relations roles for Feed the Children, World Neighbors and MidFirst Bank. Her work has appeared in The Huffington Post and USA Today.

“I have tremendous respect for the Chronicle and its comprehensive coverage of the church around the globe,” she said. “It’s important to support organizations that are credible and hold true to their mission. The Chronicle fits that description perfectly.”

• **David Seat** is executive vice president and regional president of BancFirst. His work involves oversight responsibilities for eight banks in southwest Oklahoma. A 1973 graduate of Oklahoma Christian University, he earned a master’s in finance from Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

“The common bond among Christians is our love for Jesus Christ, our savior. A common communication among Christians is this newspaper,” Seat said. “It’s an honor to focus on sustaining this communication vehicle.”

• **Brian Simmons** is associate dean of the College of Liberal Arts at Oklahoma Christian University. He also serves as the minister of the Metro Church of Christ in Gresham, Ore. A communication specialist, he earned a master’s from Pepperdine University in California and a doctorate from Purdue University in Indiana.

“I believe the Chronicle is particularly valuable in its ability to share news and stories that offer specific, real-world examples of what life and service in God’s Kingdom looks like today,” Simmons said.

**CONTACT:** lynn.mcmillon@christianchronicle.org

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**Why we support The Christian Chronicle**

As we enter a season of Thanksgiving, family gatherings and reflection, we want to share a few responses we’ve gotten to our latest fundraising appeal.

In addition to the generous donations we receive from hundreds of our dedicated readers, we’re also blessed to receive also many notes of encouragement — often handwritten. Following are a few snippets:

“I love reading the Chronicle from the front cover to the back. I can’t know all that goes into producing the finished product, but the love you have for the Lord shines through.”

— Lora Sanders

“My wife and I have just finished reading the latest issue and are happy to learn of so many good things happening in our fellowship all over the world.”

—I believe in the mission of the Chronicle, and it is without question one of the most positive and well-written newspapers available to us. Please keep up the work and remember that there are many, many folks like me that are silently praying for your success.”

— Ben Kemp

We would love to hear from you! Please send your notes and tax-deductible gifts to The Christian Chronicle, P.O. Box 11000, Oklahoma City, OK 73136-1100 or call (405) 425-5070.
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Our world is in desperate need of people of influence who are also people of ethics. At Lubbock Christian University, we are committed to educating the whole student—body, mind, and soul. The young adults who pass through our doors receive much more than a head-full of knowledge and a diploma; they are taught that character forms the foundation for success.

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