**Sexual abuse victims ‘fed up’ with silence**

**BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE**

For far too long, victims have been silenced.

Finally, they have an outlet to spotlight their painful ordeals.

That’s how Jimmy Hinton characterizes the social media movements — first #MeToo and now #ChurchToo — where sexual abuse survivors are recounting their real-life nightmares.

“Quite simply, millions of abuse survivors are fed up with the church protecting abusers while shaming the victims,” said Hinton, minister for the Somerset Church of Christ in Pennsylvania, who reported his own father to police when he learned the longtime preacher was a child molester.

Hinton is a certification specialist with the advocacy organization GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment). He cites frequent private messages he receives “from survivors who were either not believed by their church leaders or, worse, were humiliated, shamed and blamed for the abuse.”

**What is a Church of Christ?**

**AS NUMBERS DECLINE** in the U.S., Christians ponder a fellowship’s identity

**BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE**

“I should be love.”

That was Jeff Cash’s answer to the question, “What would you say defines a Church of Christ?”

Cash, an American missionary serving in Fort Portal, Uganda, was one of more than 640 respondents to a *Christian Chronicle* survey titled “A closer look at Churches of Christ in the U.S.”

Most of the respondents, when asked to define the fellowship, cited the goal of restoring the church described in the New Testament book of Acts and the epistles written to first century churches. Many mentioned strict adherence to Scripture, male leadership, baptism by immersion and a cappella worship.

But in 2018, a clear definition of those who strive to be simply Christian is anything but simple.

Survey respondents noted a widening variety of practices taking place in buildings that bear the name “Church of Christ.”

Some divisions have existed for decades. Non-institutional Churches of Christ oppose support for para-church organizations and mission ministries. Some Churches of Christ hold fast to the belief that the Lord’s Supper should be shared from a single cup and an undivided loaf.

In recent years, other Churches of Christ have added instrumental worship services, ministered alongside denominational groups and changed their name, though they still identify with the fellowship of autonomous congregations.

The word “autonomy” itself eludes definition, survey respondents said. Young believers challenge the claim that Churches of Christ are non-denominational — especially as growing movements of community churches make the same claim.

So what is a Church of Christ in 2018? Bewildered, several respondents answered, “I don’t even know anymore.”
The fourth phase of our Solar distribution takes us to the Philippines. Many of those living in the Philippines live in remote areas where electricity is not always available. These solar players will enable Christians to learn more about God and His Word and to give them the information they need to share it with others.

Learn more by using the QR code or visit http://sunset.bible/solar.
After Kentucky shooting, teen’s faith amazes

Are you OK?”
“Tell me you’re safe.”
“Pamela, please text me back.”

At 7:57 a.m. on a recent Tuesday, a gunman opened fire at Marshall County High School in Benton, Ky., a rural community 130 miles northwest of Nashville, Tenn.

By the time the rampage ended, two students were dead, and 14 were riddled with bullets, police said. Seven other victims — all teens — were hurt as students ran for their lives.

As news of the nation’s latest mass shooting spread, text messages flooded 18-year-old Pamela Ross’ phone.

But for half an hour, the messages to Ross, a senior at Marshall County High and a lifelong member of the Benton Church of Christ, went unanswered. The texts became more frantic.

“I had an MRI at 8, or I would have been there,” said Ross, who faces possible neck surgery as the result of a 2016 car wreck. “I had no clue about anything until I got out and got dressed.

“My mom (Susan) looked at me with tears in her eyes and said, ‘There’s been a shooting.’ I said, ‘What?’ I couldn’t process it. … Then she handed me my phone, and I opened it, and I had like

When God wants your kidney

AN OKLAHOMA CHURCH MEMBER found himself in urgent need of a transplant. A minister’s wife answered the call — eventually.

Thirty-five years earlier, Erwin, now 66, had received a kidney from his older brother, Frank. But he desperately needed a new one. And he was having trouble finding a donor. Without a suitable match, he faced ongoing dialysis. That would mean a decreased quality of life and a shortened life expectancy.

But was Walt Erwin’s health really Shannon Wilburn’s concern?

“What is going on?” she thought as she wrestled with the voice in her head. “I barely know this guy, and I don’t need to give him my kidney.”

Wilburn, now 47, had plenty of reasons to ignore the voice.

“For one, she is extremely busy.

Blessings in the ashes

SISTERS IN CHRIST brought together by massive California wildfire.

VENTURA, Calif. — For the last few years, DeLoyce “Dee” Hathway and Crystal Rabe worshiped together each Sunday.

However, the Ventura Church of Christ members never really connected.

In a weekly assembly filled with 150 souls, Hathway — who jokes that she’ll celebrate the 50th anniversary of her 39th birthday in September — sat toward the back.

Before Edward William Hathway, Dee’s husband of 69 years, died on Feb. 16, 2017, he battled lung cancer for years.

“So I had to get him out, take care of him more,” the World War II veteran’s widow said of her quick exits after the closing prayer.

Rabe, who lost her own husband, Tom, eight years ago, occupied a pew up front, taking advantage of the church’s special technology for the hearing impaired.

That meant Rabe, who placed membership in 2014, seldom crossed paths with Hathway, a Ventura church member since Harry Truman was president.

That meant Rabe, who placed membership in 2014, seldom crossed paths with Hathway, a Ventura church member since Harry Truman was president.

Standing to sing, the women recognized each other’s faces from across the auditorium. But they had no idea they lived 10 houses apart in a neighborhood known for “its winding streets and sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean,” as the Ventura County Star described it.

Then came the Thomas Fire, the largest wildfire in California’s modern history.

Fanned by powerful Santa Ana winds, the fast-moving blaze — which ignited Dec. 4 — destroyed hundreds of homes in this city of 110,000, about 65 miles west of Los Angeles.

See KIDNEY, Page 26

See ASHES, Page 8
FROM PAGE 3

500 messages and missed calls.”

The reality of what had happened sank in, and Ross (no relation to me) broke down. “And it hasn’t been the same since,” she told me, “It won’t be the same for a very, very long time.”

In an age of 24/7 news, the Kentucky tragedy faded quickly from the national headlines. In fact, another school shooting — this one claiming at least 17 lives at a high school in Parkland, Fla. — flashed across our television screens just as we were going to press.

However, for our fellow Christians such as Ross, the Marshall County heartache remains fresh. On the morning after the shooting, Ross said it still didn’t seem real: “I talk about it to people like I know that it happened. But when I sit and think about it, I don’t believe it. Benton was voted the No. 1 place to raise your kids in Kentucky, and now we will be remembered for this.

“We always learned about Columbine High School,” she added, referring to the 1999 Colorado massacre in which 12 students and one teacher died, “but you never think it could happen to you. That’s what makes it so unreal to us. We are like Columbine now.”

I first heard about the shooting when my friend Paula Harrington, a member of the Lone Oak Church of Christ in Paducah, Ky., posted on social media about it.

“Shaken. Broken. Wishing I had words to pray,” Harrington tweeted as she waited to pick up her daughter Gracie at the school.

Minutes later, Harrington updated her status: “After standing in a school lobby with other numb parents, excellent police officers and wise, comforting school officials for what seemed like forever, we have our daughter. Pray for those who don’t and never will.”

The previous Sunday, the youth group from the Benton church — including Ross, her best friend Sydney Temple and twins Mason and Christian Cosner — had enjoyed a youth rally hosted by the Glendale Road Church of Christ in Murray, Ky.

Two days later, the 16-year-old Cosner brothers were wounded in the attack at Marshall County High.

Gunshot victim Mason Cosner was flown to Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville in critical condition. “He is now home and recovering nicely,” said Mark Ray, the Benton church’s preacher.

The bullets missed Christian Cosner, but he suffered bruised ribs when he stopped to wrap the leg of a shooting victim.

In the weeks after the shooting, the twins’ church family brought meals to their house — just one of many ways the congregation showed love and concern. The community rallied around each other and embraced the hashtag #MarshallStrong.

“There’s still a long way to go before we get anywhere close to normal, but God is good,” Ray said.

“It’s amazing to see the community come together and to see God working even in the midst of such evil and pain.”

Most amazing to me was the faith expressed by Ross: Even while stressing the necessity of seeking comfort and peace in God, she voiced concern for Gabe Parker, the 15-year-old apprehended by police.

“The shooter needs prayers,” Ross said. “What he did is absolutely awful, and you can’t justify it to make it OK at all. But he is still a child of God, and he obviously needs God very badly in his life. So, we just have to pray that he will find God.

“He will probably never be free again, so he just needs to have a heart full of God,” she added. “We all do.”

CONTACT: bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org.
GEORGIA
LITHONIA — What’s fun on Super Bowl weekend? Try the Souper Bowl. Stonecrest Church of Christ members brought socks and soups that day to donate to the Hagar’s House emergency shelter and other charities.

To give the event a football touch, members wore the jerseys of their favorite teams, from the Atlanta Falcons to the Dallas Cowboys.

“The MVPs were each member who contributed to the outreach,” minister Richard L. Barclay said.

MISSOURI
ST. LOUIS — Ed Bialon, minister for the Overland Church of Christ, first connected with Stan Carroll when the two were stationed at the now-defunct Williams Air Force Base in Arizona in 1974.

Recently, the two reconnected as Bialon found Carroll online and invited his friend — always an avid fan of the St. Louis Blues hockey team — to join him at a game.

A fellow church member who is a season ticket holder gave them seats. KSDK-TV in St. Louis did a feature on the Air Force buddies’ reunion.

NEW MEXICO
CLOVIS — Police were looking for leads after the Clovis Church of Christ building was tagged with what Sgt. Jim Monroe described as “sacrilegious, anti-religious graffiti.”

“In Clovis, this is extremely rare,” Monroe said. Church elders painted over obscene language and images on three church walls, ABC 30 reported.

TEXAS
LA GRANGE — Kyler Buzek, a member of the La Grange Church of Christ, was one of two students credited with “heroic actions” after a bus driver’s medical emergency.

Karson Vega jumped on the driver’s lap and steered the bus to safety, while Buzek called 911, the Fayette County Record reported.

Lauri Elliott, whose husband, Scott, preaches for the La Grange church, said Buzek directed children away from the side of the bus headed toward a barrier as he talked to a 911 operator.

“It was a total ‘God thing’ that Kyler was even on the bus,” Elliott said.

TENNESSEE
ATHENS — Training involvement ministers and helping congregations get all their members involved in ministry was the purpose of the second annual Church Involvement Conference.

Christians from seven states attended the conference hosted by the Athens Church of Christ. Among the sessions was a panel addressing the interests of millennials.

“The Church Involvement Conference believes that Christians are God’s workmanship created for good works and that every Christian should be zealous unto good works,” said Travis Irwin, the Athens church’s involvement minister. “They also believe that when we are serving, we are most like Christ, and that serving is a mark of true discipleship.”

TYLER — The Glenwood Church of Christ is educating parents on how to engage with their children in a digital world and keep them safe, KLTV reported.

“It’s important for parents to understand what comes with easy access to the internet, youth and family minister Steven Smith told the television station.

“We have so many kids on so many different devices, and internet is everywhere, and parents say all the time they don’t even know where to start,” Smith said. “So we thought we just need to spend some time helping parents develop the tools and the resources they need to handle this ‘monster’ that is technology.”

Christina Jontra, director of digital learning at Grace Community School, addressed the church’s parents.

Eagles’ Super Bowl win thrills N.J. church leaders

“How many verses in the Bible about Eagles & Patriots?” the sign at the Pitman Road Church of Christ in Sewell, N.J., asked before the Super Bowl. “Eagles - 33. Patriots - 0.” The actual game score turned out to be 41-33 in Philadelphia’s favor. Leaders at the congregation 30 minutes from the Eagles’ home field were thrilled. Minister Derrick Busch, elder Mike Broyles and senior minister Dan Cooper preached in their Eagles’ attire that Sunday.

RV show + Gospel

QUARTZSITE, Ariz. — An annual gospel meeting coinciding with a huge RV show in this tourist hotspot drew more than 100 attendees on a Sunday.

The Quartzsite Church of Christ set up a tent to give away free bottles of water during the show.

“The little town of Quartzsite has close to 1 million campers for a couple of weeks,” said Gerald R. Molzahn, a snowbird and member of the Worland Church of Christ in Wyoming.

“It is a great opportunity to reach out with the Gospel.”

Speakers on the theme “Is Your Heart Right with God?” included Gerald Molzahn, Patrick Young, Kevin Burney, Doyle Easley, Andy Williams and Gary Buckley. Next year’s meeting is set for Jan. 20-25.
#CHURCHTOO: ‘Sexual abuse is an epidemic’

FROM PAGE 1

“These survivors are desperate to know that not all church leaders protect abusers,” Hinton told The Christian Chronicle. “Because they know my story, I think they feel safe to share their stories. Many of them are left confused because of how the church responded to their abuse, and some have a distorted view of God. #ChurchToo has empowered survivors to stand up to the churches that keep attempting to silence them.”

A woman confided to Hinton in 2011 that his father, John Hinton — who spent 27 years as the Somerset church’s preacher — had sexually abused her when she was young.

Jimmy Hinton’s report to authorities prompted an investigation that resulted in the pedophile preacher, now 69, pleading guilty to sexually assaulting and taking nude photographs of four young girls, ages 4 to 7.

While his father serves a 30- to 60-year state prison sentence, Jimmy Hinton works to create awareness far beyond his hometown of 6,000, 75 miles east of Pittsburgh.

In an interview with the Chronicle, Hinton discussed social media advocacy, the sexual abuse problem and steps churches can take to prevent abuse:

How has social media changed the overall landscape for survivor recovery, advocacy and activism?

Hinton: Social media can make survivors feel visible and validated where they are otherwise emotionally invisible and silenced. In the past two years, I’ve seen more survivor support groups cropping up, which encourages me that they are finding alternative avenues for help. Survivors care for and support one another because they feel abandoned and betrayed by the church.

They understand each other because they all know the depth of wickedness that was perpetrated on other survivors. In stark contrast, church leaders tend to minimize their pain and tell them to forgive and “move on.” It saddens me that the church has turned its back on the very people Jesus radically defended.

Is sexual abuse really a sweeping problem in churches? Or are we just more alert because of publicity such as #ChurchToo?

Hinton: Sexual abuse is an epidemic. There are an estimated 43 million survivors of childhood sexual abuse in the United States alone.

I’m blown away at the number of survivors who contact me to tell me about people in the Churches of Christ who are sexual abusers. I know of at least two

full-blown pedophile rings in the Churches of Christ where children were being trafficked among church leaders. I’m seeing a growing trend, too, with church leaders who are involved in sexting scandals with church members.

If abuse is so common, why is it so difficult to detect?

Hinton: First, sexual abusers are highly skilled at deception. I learned, after several years of studying pedophiles, that they are using a host of techniques to abuse children in broad daylight.

Much of the abuse happens while we are talking with the abuser. They use a combination of very similar techniques to those that magicians use. It’s frightening to know how much abuse is being per-}

petrated right in front of us.

Second, abusers hack our belief system, and they know exactly what they can and can’t get away with for every individual. Christians are the easiest targets because we teach people to believe the best in others. Abusers exploit this belief system to get away with the unthinkable. And it works. Anyone who has spent time with survivors knows that their abusers were incredibly brazen, and the church folk were naive.

Finally, abuse victims are either too young to describe what happened to them or they are too ashamed, embarrassed or scared to tell anyone. Most abuse survivors believe that they are the only victim of the abuser and that they bear responsibility for the abuse. A lot of victims are either threatened by the abuser or they respect him or her and think if they tell that they will be responsible for ruining their “friend’s” life.

Why do so many Christians and church leaders hesitate to believe victims?

Hinton: The short answer is that they don’t want to believe them. Abusers are not nameless, faceless people. They are our best friends, our peers, parents, preachers, elders, deacons, siblings and spiritual mentors.

To believe a victim is to admit that the person to whom we are closest has lied to and deceived us for as long as we’ve known them. That’s a horrifying truth to accept, and most of us falsely believe that the way we perceive others is who they truly are.

Many Christians report they feel abandoned after making claims of abuse. What needs to happen to change this response?

Hinton: The most important thing is to believe the victim and take immediate action to protect them.

Larry Nassar was reported by eight different victims dating as far back as 1997. His abuse continued until his arrest, and more than 260 victims have since come forward.

We can wag our fingers at Michigan State University, Penn State and others, but the reality is that when the majority of church leaders are faced with an allegation of abuse, they talk about how it was “in the past,” that
the victim “needs to move on,” that they are praying for the victim, etc. They literally come up with every excuse to not report the abuser.

Most states have laws that make clergy and other church leaders mandated reporters. It’s illegal for church leaders to not report when a victim discloses or if they have reasonable suspicion that a child is being abused.

Most church leaders have no idea that they are breaking the law when they fail to report abuse because they’ve never been taught. They also need to be trained for how to navigate a church through the aftermath of abuse.

**What steps can we take to prevent abuse in the church?**

**Hinton:** We need more training, but we need proper training. I talk a lot about the safety record of flying. It’s safe to fly because the training for everyone in aviation is top-notch. Training manuals are constantly being rewritten and updated.

Our safety record for children in the church is embarrassing. Sexual predators are not average, ordinary people. They are highly skilled, and they adapt quickly. To prevent abuse in the church, we need to train all leaders and volunteers how to think like a predator.

We need to teach them the specific techniques abusers use so they can see it in real time. We need to teach people how to intervene when boundaries are crossed. We need to develop excellent protection policies so that all the boundaries are in writing as well as the consequences for violating those boundaries.

And we need to train our children so that they know if they are being abused. They need to be trained to report abuse if it happens, whether at home, school or at church.

**What trends do you foresee for churches in response to the #ChurchToo movement?**

**Hinton:** I think the churches who don’t want to talk about abuse will be forced to. There are too many survivors who are calling out both their abusers and the churches who gave them protection. Survivors are fed up with churches who blatantly cover up abuse, and they won’t back down.

**You’ve offered predator recognition training at about 20 churches. What can you tell us about those workshops?**

**Hinton:** They are heavy on the prevention side of abuse. I use a predator recognition tool, demonstrate specific techniques child sexual abusers use, conduct a facility walk-through and assessment, meet with church leaders to review protection policies and follow up with online consultation with church leaders. I also blog regularly at JimmyHinton.org. And I offer consulting for churches who are navigating allegations of abuse.

**What else should our readers know about this issue?**

**Hinton:** That every single congregation out there has been affected by sexual abuse. There is a sea of abuse survivors already in our churches who are waiting to be asked to help protect others from ever being abused. I wish I would have been made aware of this issue years ago.

**EXPANDED STORY:** www.christianchronicle.org

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**Bravery and forgiveness**

“I pray you experience the soul-crushing weight of guilt so you may someday experience true repentance and true forgiveness from God, which you need far more than forgiveness from me — though I extend that to you as well,” says Rachael Denhollander as she speaks during the sentencing of her abuser, Larry Nassar. Denhollander, a former gymnast, was the first woman to publicly accuse Nassar, USA Gymnastics’ team doctor, of sexual abuse. More than 150 women followed. Nassar was sentenced to 40 to 175 years in prison.

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angelfirebiblesymposium

You can also email John Smith at:

john@johnwsmith.com
Matthew said, ‘No, the police should search the doors of all my neighbors, but…’

Allysa, it’s so good to hear from you,” Hathway told her.

“Dee Hathway, 88, shows a free #VenturaStrong necklace, with a diamond, that she received from Fox Fine Jewelry.

Reflecting on the Thomas Fire, Ventura church member Crystal Rabe reads handwritten words from Isaiah 61:3: “To bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.”

In the fire’s aftermath, the Ventura church congregation turned its attention to helping the victims, particularly Hathway and Rabe.

“They were the first ones we were concerned about,” said Dave Schulze, the congregation’s minister for 29 years.

The Ventura Church of Christ joined with the Red Cross, the local school district and 25 area churches of various denominations to respond to victims’ needs that were not covered by insurance.

“Just keep all of our community in prayer,” said deacon Vernon Alstot, a former longtime firefighter.

“There will be some people struggling with a lot for a long time.”

The Thomas Fire — not fully contained until Jan. 12 — burned 281,893 acres, destroyed 1,063 structures and damaged 280 other structures, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Both Hathway and Rabe were insured, so their financial concerns were not severe.

But emotionally, they needed — they still need — love and support.

A fellow church member, Joyce Waller, opened her home to Rabe until the fire victim could find temporary housing.

The congregation, meanwhile, knew how disappointed Hathway be here soon,’” she said. “He just wanted to get me out. And we took nothing, except for the insulin.”

Actually, her grandson picked up one thing on the way out the door: the case containing his grandfather’s Purple Heart, military dog tags and U.S. flag. (Edward Hathway entered the U.S. Navy at age 17 in 1944.

Stationed in the South Pacific on the USS Hoggatt Bay, he was injured in an on-deck explosion in 1945.)

Everything else would be lost.

“My grandmother’s quilts with tiny little stitches, my grandmother’s crystal, dishes that I had packed for my grandchildren, things that I had been packing up and putting names on them for my grandchildren,” Hathway said, recounting personal treasures that she can’t replace.

Before falling asleep the night of Dec. 4, Rabe took out her hearing aids and put them beside her bed.

About 3 a.m. Dec. 5, she awoke to an itching leg. She went to the bathroom and put aloe vera ointment on it.

That’s when she smelled smoke.

“I went downstairs and opened the front door,” she said. “It was just a firestorm out there.”

Her home of 30 years was not on fire — yet.

When she called 911, she learned that authorities had evacuated the area hours before. But she would not have heard banging on her door. She raced to cram her pet birds’ cages into her car before she drove away.

“They’re small, but I wanted to save them,” she said of the society finches. “You could hardly get the door open or stand out there. The ashes were falling like pancakes, and if they hit the ground, they burst into flames. So it was dangerous to be out there.”

Despite a few harrowing moments, Rabe arrived safely at a Red Cross emergency shelter.

“Every single thing is ashes,” she said of what remains of her personal possessions.

Rabe and her husband had enjoyed collecting paintings. The fire destroyed them all.

“There’s nothing that was able to survive the high heat,” she said.

In the fire’s aftermath, the Ventura
was to lose all her cherished photos. “So members of the church went through all of their photos here and made me an album,” Hathway said. “Isn’t that lovely? But you know, it’s just been a hard time for a lot of people in Ventura.”

For Rabe, words from Isaiah 61:3 — shared with her by her sister Natasha Kern — offer comfort: “And provide for those who grieve in Zion — to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.”

In a handwritten note she shared with The Christian Chronicle, Rabe said: “May we all recognize the hand of God and the love of God and the joy of serving the Lord in all circumstances wherein the Lord reveals glimpses of his divine providence. And we in the grace of that moment say ‘Amen’ to all.”

SURVIVORS ... AND SISTERS

Rabe already has begun the process of rebuilding her home. Hathway, on the other hand, will live in a small cottage across from her grandson’s place. “I can’t rebuild,” Hathway said, citing her age. “But I admire you so much,” she said to Rabe. “We’re survivors.” And now they’re more than familiar faces to each other. “The good thing about this is that now we know each other,” said Rabe, exchanging a warm hug with a sister in Christ she barely knew before the fire. “God is with us every minute. Jesus stands with us through all our troubles.”

Full-Time Faculty - Chemistry Department

York College announces an opening for a full-time faculty member in the Chemistry Department. Preference will be given to candidates with a Ph.D. All applicants should demonstrate strong communication skills and interest in the academic and spiritual development of undergraduate students. A successful candidate will be an active member of the churches of Christ / Stone-Campbell heritage and demonstrate a commitment to Christian education. York College is a private Christian institution of higher learning affiliated with the churches of Christ.

Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. Interested individuals should submit a letter of interest and curriculum vitae to: Dr. Shane Mountjoy at provost@york.edu.

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College of Arts and Sciences
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The Department of Communication and Sociology invites applications for a tenure-track position at assistant professor level beginning August 2018. Applicants must have a Ph.D. in sociology. Areas of specialization are open, but we particularly seek applicants who can teach undergraduate statistics and research methods. Our faculty is engaged in research with undergraduate students on a broad range of topics. All applicants should demonstrate a record of excellent classroom teaching, the potential for scholarly endeavors, and collegiate service. Applicants must have strong communication skills and interest in the development of students. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/sociology.

The Department of Communication and Sociology invites applications for an instructor-level position beginning August 2018. Duties include serving as director of forensics (DOF) for a national-level forensics program and teaching a variety of communication studies courses. The successful candidate should be a communication generalist and be prepared to teach various courses, including debate and the basic communication course. The teaching load is six courses per academic year within a semester system. The DOF assignment is in addition to the teaching load. Applicants must have a master’s degree in communication, and teaching and forensics experience. Salary is commensurate with qualifications and experience. The deadline for filling the position is May 1, 2018. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/communication.

The Department of Engineering and Physics invites applications for faculty positions in engineering and physics that likely will begin in Fall 2018. The position(s) will be contingent on funding and may be at any faculty or contract level. For a tenure-track position, scholarship/research is required. A strong interest in undergraduate teaching is required, and involving undergraduates in scholarship activities is highly encouraged. ACU offers degrees in physics and engineering with various concentrations. The B.S.E. degree has recently been accredited by ABET, and the department is housed in the new $50 million science complex that includes the state-of-the-art Halbert-Walling Research Center, the Engineering and Physics Laboratories at Bennett Gymnasium, and the Robert R. and Kay Onstead Science Center. The department has a reputation of producing students who excel not only in academics, but also show strong personal characteristics of honesty and integrity. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/physics and acu.edu/engineering.

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 Morris+Mitchell, a student-run 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. Donnie Snider, Dean, ACU Box 28276, Abilene, Texas 79699-8276

The Department of Occupational Therapy invites applications for two full-time, tenure-track members to join the Master of Science in occupational therapy faculty beginning Aug. 15, 2018. We are a faith-based, innovative program incorporating spirituality and utilizing a Maker Lab, including 3-D printing, in our occupational therapy curriculum. The ideal candidate will have: three to five years teaching experience; an earned doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D., D.Sc. or Sc.D. preferred but will consider an OTD); clinical experience and expertise in mental health, pediatrics, and/or physical disabilities; and a strong interest in research and service to the university. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/occupational-therapy.

The Department of Kinesiology and Nutrition invites applications for a clinical education coordinator within our Master of Athletic Training degree program, a 12-month, full-time faculty position beginning June 1, 2018. This position is designed to assist the program director in the operation and administration of the athletic training major and all levels of athletic training students at ACU. Duties will include teaching and mentoring within the M.A.T. program, clinical oversight, and record and insurance coordination. The successful candidate must be BOC certified prior to appointment with completion of a doctoral degree preferred. Candidates with significant doctoral course work completed may be considered for appointment if the candidate does not hold a terminal degree, a terminal degree must be completed by June 2020. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/kinesiology.

The Department of Kinesiology and Nutrition invites applications for a full-time instructor with responsibilities as director of the Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD) and as an instructor for nutrition courses. The DPD is accredited through the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics. The B.S. in nutrition contains four concentrations: DPD, community, exercise science, and food service. The ideal candidate will have a master’s degree in nutrition or closely related field and experience in various areas of nutrition. An average of 40-50 students are enrolled in the nutrition degree, and the new faculty member will function as a mentor to nutrition students and as a sponsor of the ACU Student Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. The position will begin Aug. 1, 2018. Information about the degree and DPD is available at acu.edu/undergraduate/academics/nutrition.

See acu.edu/academics/provost/positions 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 applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. Nominations 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.
HAITI
PORT-AU-PRINCE — A new congregation, the LaTremblay Church of Christ, drew 517 people from 14 Churches of Christ for its inaugural worship service. The congregation meets on the property of the International School of Theology, an affiliate of Denver-based Bear Valley Bible Institute International.

Fifty-seven people attended the second Sunday service, said Larry Waymire, longtime missionary to the Caribbean and director of the theology school.

During the third service, two people were baptized.

The church has “great men and women, well-versed in the Word of God,” Waymire said. “If the church is not Christ focused, Bible teaching and God-glorifying, it is not the church taught in the Bible.”

INDIA
CHITTOOR — Baptisms can be dangerous in southern India’s Chittoor district, home of the massive Venkateswara Temple, a site of pilgrimage for many Hindus. Christians who baptize in the area’s ponds, wells and canals risk attacks by militant Hindus, said Prabhu Kumar, who works with Churches of Christ across the region.

Recently, church members in Chittoor constructed a baptismal pool beside their meeting place to reduce the risk of attack, Kumar said.

NEW ZEALAND
DUNEDIN — Leah Graefe, a missions intern working with a Church of Christ on New Zealand’s South Island, recently transitioned to full-time mission work with support from the Britton Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City.

“The most significant work I do, and the majority of my time here, is in one-on-one and small-group activities,” she said. “Two other significant aspects of what I do in Dunedin are working with women and children.

“In all this, building firm relationships is crucial.”

SOUTH AFRICA
EAST LONDON — While Christians shovel snow in the Northern Hemisphere, Churches of Christ south of the equator host summer camps, including the Little Meadow Christian Youth Camp.

About 20 youths attended, including five from a children’s home, said minister Chris du Preez. After lots of games, team-building activities and Bible lessons, four of the youths were baptized, he added.

TOGO
PAGALA — Planted two years ago, a Church of Christ in this West African village had experienced little growth, said Willie Gley, a missionary from neighboring Ghana.

Then the Gospel Chariot rolled into town. The “Church of Christ on wheels” ministry, in partnership with a congregation in Togo’s capital, Lome, conducted a Bible camp and gospel campaign.

“The congregation was edified,” Gley said, and three souls were baptized.

In India, ‘where Jesus is preached, they gather’

More than 1,000 souls worship God during a recent Gospel meeting in the Choolaimedu district of the southern Indian city of Chennai. In addition to preaching, members of Churches of Christ in the region distributed 10,000 pounds of rice packets to the poor, said minister Paul Renganathan. “The hungry, sick, hurting and burdened with sin are looking for a way out of their problems,” the minister said. “Where Jesus is preached, they gather in big numbers. It is the precious moment when they find Jesus — the way, the truth and the life.”

SPOTLIGHT

Serving an island church as it grieves

CASCAVELLE, Mauritius — More than 1.2 million people live in this island nation in the Indian Ocean, 700 miles east of Madagascar.

Among them are several small Churches of Christ. Mauritius native Canden Subarayadu and his wife, Stephanie, have worked with one of the congregations for about 10 years after training for ministry in France.

Another congregation, the Cascavelle Church of Christ, recently lost its minister, who stopped preaching and left the church. As a result, “the church there was hurt, feeling lost, disappointed and confused,” Canden Subarayadu said.

So he and the congregation he serves began making weekly visits to the Cascavelle church for Bible studies, though the transportation stretched their funds.

“After praying and waiting on the Lord, he showed us that it is the best thing to do,” the minister said. “There are many youngsters there in that church. Please pray for them.”

Graefe

Canden and Stephanie Subarayadu serve with their children in Mauritius.
Igarra, Nigeria — "I am a rural-born Nigerian and have lived most of my life in the villages, struggling to survive," said minister Sylvester Imogoh. "I am always looking out for any means to affect the lives of our rural brethren — in very small, local ways."

But when Imogoh suggested a "goats for widows" program to his U.S. supporters, he was amazed at the response. He hoped for a few hundred dollars to purchase goats, which produce milk, manure and more goats — all of which can bring much-needed profit for rural widows who have no other sources of income. Imogoh received more than $3,400 for the project. The funds, provided by churches including the 41st Street Church of Christ in Sioux Falls, S.D., were enough to buy 160 goats (and a few sheep) for 80 widows in the north of Nigeria’s Edo state. There was enough money left over, Imogoh added, to establish a fund for the animals’ medical care. As the goats produce offspring, Imogoh hopes to expand the project to other villages.

"More and more people are talking about the church, in good ways, relating the care for the needy among us," Imogoh said. "So many homes now have ‘Church of Christ goats’ in our rural areas. That alone is evangelism!"

Pray for Taiwan: After deadly earthquake, Christians mourn losses, endure aftershocks

Hualien, Taiwan — Christians in this city on Taiwan’s eastern coast asked for prayers after an earthquake, 6.4 in magnitude, killed six people and trapped dozens more in toppled buildings.

“So far as we know, none of the church in Hualien are injured,” said Tracy Brzozowski, who worships with a 20-member Church of Christ in the city of 106,000 souls, in a social media message to The Christian Chronicle one day after the Feb. 6 quake. Many were without power or water after the quake, Brzozowski typed in the midst of multiple aftershocks.

Boaz Wang and Ruth Lu were without running water after the quake, but survived. The couple — who gave themselves the Old Testament names after their baptisms — serve almost daily in government-run retirement centers across Hualien. Boaz Wang conducts Bible studies and worship services for the residents. The ministry has resulted in baptisms.

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Define and count thy many members

As a data collector, Carl Royster said he and his colleagues at 21st Century Christian strive to define Churches of Christ in a way that does not take a theological or doctrinal position.

The directory Royster oversees, “Churches of Christ in the United States,” carries this description: “a compilation of current information relative to those congregations aligned with the ‘Restoration Movement’ or ‘Stone-Campbell Movement,’ which have been historically known for their a cappella worship.”

That movement, which dates back to the Second Great Awakening of the 19th century, is associated with ministers Barton W. Stone, Thomas Campbell and Campbell’s son, Alexander. Stone and the elder Campbell were former Presbyterian ministers who argued that faith in God should be based solely on the Bible instead of man-made creeds.

Two centuries later, three faith groups claim heritage in the movement — the Disciples of Christ, the instrumental Christian Churches/Churches of Christ and the predominantly a cappella Churches of Christ, which take their name from the apostle Paul’s words in Romans 16:16, “the churches of Christ salute you.”

The other two branches of the Restoration Movement collect their own data, Royster said, as do the International Churches of Christ, a group that was associated with the a cappella fellowship until the mid-1980s.

Baptists, Presbyterians and other denominations keep their own data as well, Royster said, and submit them for a national religious census. For that reason, “we strive to keep our information as accurate and independent of each other (not counting the same congregation in multiple bodies) as possible.”

IDENTITY: Legalism vs. compromise

From Page 1


The directory, updated every three years, lists 11,965 congregations nationwide with combined adherents (baptized members and their families) of 1,447,271 — a drop of more than 72,000 since the 2015 edition of the directory. Since 2012, the average known size of a Church of Christ has dropped 3.2 percent to 121 adherents, Royster said.

Instead of love, “poor hermeneutics have resulted in a rigid form of legalism in many places,” said Cash, echoing the views of many respondents when asked about possible reasons for the decline. Spirituality seems to be lacking in some congregations, he added, which turns away those seeking God.

Others pointed to a nationwide decline in church attendance, across religious groups. Still others said that Churches of Christ are declining because many are attempting to mimic denominational groups or community churches.

“Too many (churches) are compromising what is found in Scripture to get numbers,” said Sandra Pruitt, a member of the Forest Park Church of Christ in Crowley, La. “We need to follow all Scripture and not just part of it.”

Beyond numbers, an identity crisis?

When asked about their concerns for the future of the fellowship, many respondents to the Chronicle’s survey said they fear that Churches of Christ are losing their distinctiveness as a body of believers with thorough knowledge of Scripture.

“The main reason I believe the church is declining is because of an identity issue,” said Laura Shields, a member of the Oxford Church of Christ in Mississippi.

Many churches in the fellowship define themselves “by what they are not” — nondenominational and non-instrumental, for example. This leads to legalism and isolation, Shields said.

As practices and beliefs diversify in their pews, are Churches of Christ in the midst of an identity crisis?

The Chronicle shared highlights from the survey with ministers, ministry trainers and professors at universities associated with the fellowship and asked for their reflections:

We're not sure who's in, who's out

“Our mission was very simple at one time: convert the lost. And ‘the lost’ was everybody who’s not Church of Christ,” said Bobby Green, minister for the Charleston Metropolitan Church of Christ in South Carolina. “Now we’re more grace-oriented. We’re not quite sure who’s in and who’s out.”

Green, who has preached for 20 years, grew up in “a very legalistic side of the church,” he said. His views have since moderated, added Green, who studied at Harding School of Theology in Memphis, Tenn., before earning a Master of Divinity degree from Amridge University in Montgomery, Ala.

The uncertainty he senses in churches creates “good and bad fear,” he said. While Churches of Christ tend to be less legalistic than in days past, “we’re so afraid of being judgmental that we err on the side of caution, concerned about running someone off. We’re not evangelistically aggressive, and I think we should be.”

But where should church members focus their evangelism? That’s a question many Churches of Christ seem to be asking, Green said.

“Our focus point is now Jesus Christ, which it should have been all along, so why am I trying to convert my Baptist friend? It’s our mission to focus on the unchurched.”

Churches of Christ may be divided on whether or not to evangelize those in denominational churches, he said, but when it comes to reaching the growing number of Americans who identify as “none” when it comes to religion, “we’re unanimous.”

Growth and decline among Churches of Christ, 1906-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Congregations</th>
<th>Adherents</th>
<th>Average annual change</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Congregations</th>
<th>Adherents</th>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Congregations</th>
<th>Adherents</th>
<th>Average annual change</th>
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<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>2,649</td>
<td>207,555</td>
<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>13,174</td>
<td>1,684,872</td>
<td>+0.51 %</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>12,963</td>
<td>1,639,495</td>
<td>-0.35 %</td>
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<tr>
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<td>414,974</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>13,013</td>
<td>1,651,103</td>
<td>-0.5 %</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>12,629</td>
<td>1,578,281</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>6,226</td>
<td>563,828</td>
<td>+3.11 %</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>13,080</td>
<td>1,647,078</td>
<td>-0.8 %</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>12,447</td>
<td>1,554,231</td>
<td>-0.51 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>10,089</td>
<td>886,824</td>
<td>+2.08 %</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>13,032</td>
<td>1,656,717</td>
<td>-0.3 %</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>12,300</td>
<td>1,519,695</td>
<td>-0.75 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>12,762</td>
<td>1,601,661</td>
<td>-1.86 %</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>13,155</td>
<td>1,639,495</td>
<td>+0.22 %</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>11,965</td>
<td>1,447,271</td>
<td>-1.61 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from 1980 to 2018 was compiled by Carl Royster and Mac Lynn 21st Century Christian. Earlier data comes from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Religious Census of 1906 to 1926 and M. Norvel Young’s 1948 estimate. This chart appears in the 2018 edition of the directory “Churches of Christ in the United States,” compiled by Royster.
SPEAKING DENOMINATIONALLY

"Establishing a corporate identity is a difficult thing. I preach to multiple audiences each Sunday — they just happen to be sitting in the same auditorium at the time!" said Mark Blackwelder, director of the Graduate School of Theology at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn.

“The diversity of perspectives among the members of almost any congregation of any size is difficult to fathom,” he added. “Having said that, it is certainly true that many Christians are not sure where they are in relation to the rest of the religious world.”

Postmodern thought that rejects labels and categories plays a role in the confusion, Blackwelder said. At the same time, “as members of Churches of Christ have sought to position themselves non-denominationally, we have sometimes done exactly the opposite. By our own definitions, we have argued that we are not a denomination (no headquarters, no creeds but the Bible, no humanly devised name, no super-congregational leadership organization). However, we often speak of ourselves denominationally (‘I’m Church of Christ’) or define ourselves in terms of what we are or are not (lists of the things that ‘we’ do or don’t practice).”

To be truly non-denominationally, “there must be a devotion to pure New Testament Christianity, unencumbered by an apparatus that defines us based on our preferences.”

WHICH DISTINCTIVES DO WE CLING TO?

“Given the apparent decline in the number of congregations and in total membership, I can certainly understand why some would characterize what’s happening as an identity crisis,” said Monte Cox, dean of the College of Bible and Ministry at Harding University in Searcy, Ark.

“I prefer to see it more positively as a reorientation” in which we are learning to focus on Jesus as the center of our faith rather than on the boundaries that separated us from other Christians,” Cox said. “What reorientation can be disorienting. If ‘we’ were defined by the boundaries in the past but want to be defined by our allegiance to Christ above all else, how do we see the boundaries now? Which distinctive do we cling to as biblical imperatives and which ones do we attribute to tradition? In some quarters, even raising the question smacks of unfaithfulness.

“But my sense is that addressing that question is in our spiritual DNA; it is part of our heritage as a renewal movement. We should not be afraid to ask it.”

THIS IS THE NEW NORMAL

“There has been a culture shift in our nation, and it affects the church,” said Dottie Schulz, missionary care specialist for Missions Resource Network, a ministry based in Bedford, Texas. “This shift has taken place with those who are around 40 years old and younger — the children of those who became dissatisfied with the direction of our movement and who wrote and read articles and books stating their dissatisfaction.

“I think that an older generation pointed out problems; their children acted upon them and tried to change the talk. Now their grandchildren, who are most affected by the culture shift, are tired of talk and are dissatisfied with the fruit produced. They are uncomfortable with statements that we alone have the truth and are more comfortable with sharing personal experiences and feelings. They eschew what they perceive as arrogance.

“I know there are those among us who express that they wish things would get back to normal. My reply is, ‘This is the new normal.’ The younger generations do not care what the name is on the church building. They want to be with a church that is making a difference in their neighborhoods and in the world, who will mentor them and hold them personally accountable.”

A DECADES-LONG SEARCH FOR WHO WE ARE

“While not all Christian bodies in the United States are declining, we are one of many that are,” said Doug Foster, professor of church history and director of the Center for Restoration Studies at Abilene Christian University in Texas. “The ones that are growing significantly tend to be non-denominational charismatic groups.

“In my opinion, we may be experiencing an identity crisis in Churches of Christ, but it has been going on for as long as 50 years and is part of an identity crisis that much of western Christianity is undergoing.

“Churches of Christ have been self-assured, mostly white and often exclusive. When certainty has been replaced by humility, when irreversible racial diversity has pressured our majority white constituency to become less culturally white, and when exclusive attitudes have begun to dissipate, many members of Churches of Christ find themselves uncertain of who they are or should be. I think our task is to be Jesus to the world, to speak and act out the good news of Jesus to those in need.”

THE FELLOWSHIP’S TRUE FOUNDER

Regardless of where they stand on the issues that divide congregations, the survey respondents and reviewers agreed that Churches of Christ should be defined not by practices or stances, but by the divine.

“The Church of Christ is the best institution that has ever been established — because it was established by Jesus Christ,” said Luaoa Soli Jr., a second-generation preacher from American Samoa, currently training for ministry at the Memphis School of Preaching in Tennessee.

“I remember my late father preached one of his sermons about the true church,” Soli said. “He mentioned that, ‘the church is not the problem; it’s the people in the church.’

“People want the church to follow their way, have the ways of the church fit theirs. Instead of following what Christ wants for his church, we follow man.”

Churches of Christ share a dedication to God’s Word, said Bill Park, a member of the Woodburn Church of Christ in Oregon.

“It is the only place were I am confident that I can open the text and have discussion solely based upon the revelation of God himself.”

Many survey respondents — including Cash, the missionary in Uganda — grew up in the fellowship and said they have chosen to make it their own.

“I found Jesus through my family and church,” Cash said, and, despite its flaws “I was raised in this culture and feel loyal to my tribe.”
Emily Lemley beautifully represents Lubbock Christian University, her Lord, and the kingdom in the way she lives her life, pours herself into the lives of others, and endeavors to share God’s word. As an educator, she sets the standard in academic settings, small groups, Bible classes, women’s retreats, seminars, and conferences. Since 1982, she has been a highly sought-after speaker at women’s retreats and seminars across Europe and the United States. She served as the teaching director of the Community Bible Study (CBS) program in Malibu, CA for thirteen years and for the Lubbock chapter since 2015. An accomplished author, Emily has written articles for notable Christian magazines and also served as board member for the Christian Chronicle from 1997–2017. Most notably, since 1971, she has faithfully served as the lead editor of Power for Today, a daily devotional publication with a circulation of around 40,000.

Stephen Lemons has had a long and distinguished career in family practice since opening his own medical clinic in Andover, KS in 1985. Through the years, Steve has received numerous awards and accolades for the medical work he performs in his community as well as his humanitarian efforts in Africa. After a medical mission trip to Zimbabwe, he saw the depth of need and led the effort to open the Nhowe Mission Brian Lemons Memorial Hospital in 2000. Named in honor of Steve and Loretta’s son who died in a car accident, Steve has served as medical director of the 70-bed regional hospital that provides surgical obstetrics, pediatrics, and general men’s and women’s medical care, as well as specialized AIDS and tuberculosis clinics. The primary focus of his work is to procure medications, supplies, equipment, and raise funds for salaries and operating costs. The hospital currently serves between 3,000 and 4,000 patients per month and supports four outpatient clinics.

Gary Skidmore started his career in 1976 as vice president of marketing for Sweet Publishing and built the business while achieving a Master of Business Administration degree. In 1981, Gary founded Select Marketing, which was the first demand generation services company to serve the tech industry. When Harte-Hanks acquired the company in 1994, Gary served as president and chief operations officer for over 6,000 employees in 12 countries. In 2013, he began a consulting practice providing corporate development, product recreation, and go-to-market advice to private equity and venture capital-backed adtech software and information services companies. Since 2015, Gary has served as chairman of Aberdeen, a company that delivers data and content via the industry-leading platform, Lead Essentials. Gary currently serves on the ACU College of Business Dean’s Advisory Board and James Avery Jewelry Company Board of Directors. He shares his business knowledge with university students as an adjunct professor and guest lecturer.

Dan Williams graduated Summa Cum Laude from LCU with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree, and since then, has worked in both residential and commercial real estate. Dan has consistently performed as one of Lubbock’s top-10 agents, and in 2016 alone, completed over 100 transactions for over $23 million in total sales. In 2017, he opened Williams & Company Real Estate specializing in residential, commercial, and investment brokerage. Dan is a member of the LCU School of Business Advisory Board, Foundation Board, and the University Advisory Board. He was on the Lubbock Association of Realtors Board of Directors for four years and currently serves as the head of the committee for the Downtown Lubbock Gateway Memorial project to honor those who lost their lives and served the community after the 1970 tornado.
The words we use to define our faith

UNDER 30: Young believers question the fellowship’s nondenominational claim

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

The New Testament took precedence when Christians under age 30 — the smallest demographic of respondents to The Christian Chronicle’s survey — defined Churches of Christ. A Church of Christ “finds its identity purely in the teachings and authority of Jesus and his New Testament,” said Ben Giselbach, minister for the Edgewood Church of Christ in Columbus, Ga. The congregation’s love and dedication to the Bible are what excite him most, he said, and his greatest concerns are “denominationalism, apathy, ignorance, divisive attitudes, worldly materialism and a desire to be like the rest of evangelical Christendom.”

Compared to older survey respondents, however, few in the under-30 group identified Churches of Christ as nondenominational. One even called the fellowship “a denomination that denies it’s a denomination.” Several respondents said that Churches of Christ can seem isolated and uninviting to their friends. As a result, the call to restore the first century church “isn’t one that outsiders know,” said Alyssa Johnson, a member of the Cisco Church of Christ in Texas. “Instead, outsiders frequently think the Church of Christ is ‘the ones who think only they are going to heaven’ or ‘the a cappella music guys.’”

Respondents also expressed frustration with debates in their churches about the use of instruments in worship or the practices of various denominations. The problem, they said, isn’t that these issues are divisive; it’s that young people don’t care about them. “We are answering questions few are asking,” said Brad Schrum, preaching minister for the St. Clairsville Church of Christ in Ohio. “We have trained ourselves to convert people to our brand of religion, not to Jesus. “We can have a bright future, and we can do it still maintaining traditions like a cappella music. But we need humility to say that maybe we haven’t figured it all out.”

Although some respondents insisted that Churches of Christ have become a denomination, several acknowledged the difficulty of defining a core set of characteristics in the ever-diversifying fellowship. “Churches of Christ differ so very greatly,” Johnson said. While that makes them hard to define, “it is also a good thing” because it means believers are studying on their own to determine “what exactly it means to bear Christ’s name.”

Above: Chronicle readers under 30 years old respond to the question, “What would you say defines a Church of Christ?” See other age groups on Pages 18-20.
Ages 31-40: Millennials stress worship, not labels

Millenials, more than the other age groups, focused on worship as they responded to the Chronicle’s survey.

A Church of Christ has “a desire to be true to God’s Word and worship in the way he has ‘beefed’ it,” said David Rollert, preacher for the Lakes Region Church of Christ in Tilton, NH. But the types of churches that are worshiping in different ways, respondents acknowledged. A few attended churches that had added entertainment services while others, including Jessica Solonka, said that Churches of Christ should focus on teaching “why we use the Bible” instead of learning “brand” of church or label.

Most of the respondents in the 41-50 age group cited the Bible and immersion and a cappella worship as the fellowship’s solo authority. Some refer-enced the restoration Movement of the 1800s in their response. Others said. Others added that some Churches of Christ have become “too much like the world” in their stances on issues such as the Second Amendment. Respondents in this age group.

Ages 41-50: Gen X seeks compassion, not politics

It is a museum, or is it a hospital?” Amy Whitaker asked — displaying the tongue-in-cheek cynicism of Generation X — as she responded to the Chronicle’s question on what defines a Church of Christ. Many of the respondents in the 41-50 age group focused the Bible, their forefathers that they were under- standing back to her grandparents. “They taught my grandma, who was a great-grandmother, to see the church as one of the last true churches, and certainly not better, than our true church, and growth trends to come from conversions of those in various Christian denominations, several respondents said.

Ages 51-60: Boomers see fading sense of family

Many delayed marriage. Churches of Christ have struggled to be the church that many Churches of Christ — “Bible,” “God,” “Jesus,” “baptism” and “New Testament” bringing the most prominent. Like Generation X, most respondents in this demo- graphic said that the fellowship offers the best possible version of Bible-based Christianity. “I am more comfortable in one church, and I want to be a part of the church that more closely follows the teachings of Scripture,” said Paul Smith, a member of the Gulf Coast Church of Christ in Belen, N.M. “While being an advocate for compassion in many congregations … I can show me they are more scrip- tural,” said Lara Jester, a member of the Green Lawn Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas. "I'm concerned about thinking and traditions are going to hell in a handbasket," Gilbert said. “Many Churches of Christ aren’t perfect, said many of the respondents in this age group. But we want our fellowship because it is the best option.

“Have not found one yet that can do all the things that the Church of Christ in Virginia, said that the fellow- ship doesn’t stress enough a domestic church planting, “and we continue to debate over minu- tes while the world becomes increasingly secular. While we argue over sentences and women’s rights, the role of the church body that belongs to Christ.”

“Are you concerned about the Script- ure,” said Lara Jester, a member of the Green Lawn Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas. "I don’t believe that we (groups of Christians with 'Church of Christ' over our doors) are the only ones going to heaven, but I believe that the Church of Christ is one of the last true churches, and certainly not better, than our true church, and growth trends to come from conversions of those in various Christian denominations, several respondents said.

Now, as many churches have embraced non-instrumental worship, "and used the word "autonomy" — largely absent in the younger group’s responses — when discussing congregations. The fellowship has “a sense of connection to our roots in doctrine and worship,” said Brian Bowes, a member of the Chesapeake Church of Christ in Virginia. “We are the only ones going to heaven, but I believe that the Church of Christ is one of the last true churches, and certainly not better, than our true church, and growth trends to come from conversions of those in various Christian denominations, several respondents said.

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peak where the Bible speaks; be silent where the Bible is silent"

That mantra, credited to 19th century Restoration Movement preacher Thomas Campbell, appeared most often in responses from Chronicle readers above age 60 when asked to define a Church of Christ. It was, perhaps, apropos for a group sometimes called the Silent Generation, plus the first half of the baby boomers.

Most respondents pointed to the Bible as the inerrant Word of God and stressed the nondenominational nature of the fellowship, which emulates the first century church “as closely as possible” (a recurring phrase in the responses) and does not “add to or take away from” Scripture. A few respondents took issue with the question itself.

“I don’t like the wording, ‘a Church of Christ,’ to begin with,” said Linda Sneed, a member of the Church of Christ at Borger in Texas. “It is the Church of Christ ... a body of faithful, immersed believers who not only believe the teachings of the New Testament, as modeled and commanded by Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, but also live it out in their daily lives. …When we say ‘Church’ erroneously, we only promote the world’s belief that there is more than one church.”

Sneed

Defining Churches of Christ outside the parameters of the New Testament is “tantamount to acknowledging that the name ... is being used to differentiate one denomination from another, rather than referring to the church Christ built,” said Bob Taylor, who worships with the Clear Creek Church of Christ in Hixson, Tenn.

More so than the other age groups, respondents over 60 saw the decline in the fellowship’s numbers as part of a country-wide trend in church attendance — and as a consequence of a decades-long decline in the nation’s morality.

Some expressed concerns about Churches of Christ adopting denominational practices, but more lamented a lack of Bible training for children — in church buildings and at home — compared to years past. Several said they’ve been members of Churches of Christ that were forced to close their doors due to dropping attendance. Many cited infighting, legalism and a desire to be “right” in everything as contributing to the decline.

Now, the question, “What is a Church of Christ?” is nearly impossible to answer definitively, said Don Campbell, a member of the Puryear Church of Christ in Tennessee, “because many are breaking out of molds of their past. Some see this as apostasy; some see this as progress.”

Today, a Church of Christ “is a body of like-minded believers who recognize one another as children of God,” he said, “free to define itself however it understands the word of God to lead it.

“If the question were: ‘How does the New Testament define the church?’ the answer, of course, would be different.”

Above 60: God defines what a Church of Christ is; we don’t
What would you say defines a Church of Christ?
A commitment to Scripture, an emphasis on replicating the New Testament church in our congregations and an appreciation for the simplicity of Christianity — without ignoring the complexity of living a life for Christ.

What are some of the significant strengths of Churches of Christ?
By allowing each congregation to have autonomy, the Churches of Christ can have great diversity and yet still be connected to one another. Unfortunately, we sometimes exile those who have too little in common with our congregations and fail to appreciate the beauty that comes from this unique lack of entry requirements.

In recent years, Churches of Christ in the U.S. have declined numerically. Why do you think that is happening?
Unfortunately, we sometimes exile those who have too little in common with our congregations and fail to appreciate the beauty that comes from this unique lack of entry requirements.

What excites you about your congregation?
My church is very multicultural, which is rare. We also do a lot for our local community and the larger global community. We give a lot for a congregation of our size and socio-economic status. It brings me joy to be a part of a church that puts their money where their mouth is.

What are your greatest concerns about our fellowship in the United States?
That we would fail to see our chance to unify Christians and would instead continue to divide internally and deceive ourselves into acting as if we are gatekeepers of salvation, when God alone is the one who judges the souls of man. Additionally, many are leaving Churches of Christ because of a perceived hypocrisy and a lack of grace when it comes to interpreting difficult passages or ideas. This is occurring in many denominations, but it should certainly be addressed without simply bowing to public opinion for the sake of keeping people in pews.

The Churches of Christ should consider the complaints as valid without dismissing those who raise the complaints as faithless. That’s how we can care for those who are doubting and leaving.

Why are you a member of the Church of Christ?
I believe that the Christian culture in America needs work, and because I was born into this context I am better suited to help them grow here than if I were to leave this faith community and go to another. I see great commitment to Scripture, which I value, in Churches of Christ. There’s also a desire to seek out God’s will as completely as can be known. I also know these people, and because of that, I want to continue to be a part of this family, no matter how broken we may be.

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That we would fail to see our chance to unify Christians and would instead continue to divide internally and deceive ourselves into acting as if we are gatekeepers of salvation, when God alone is the one who judges the souls of man.

If we cannot leave room for alternate interpretations, we miss so much of the richness of the Gospel, which is meant to be applied in an infinite number of situations and contexts.
The 40-year-old AMEN Ministry connects Christians in the United States Military with local churches of Christ both overseas and in the U.S. Please send name, email, and other contact info to: AMEN Ministry amen.ministry@comcast.net P.O. Box 353 Hebron, CT 06248 (860) 372-7051

Full-time Minister
Established Niagara Falls, New York, congregation without elders, is seeking a full-time pulpit minister. We are an older congregation of 50+ members striving to serve the Lord and our community. The congregation prefers a married man with a minimum of eight years' experience and a four-year Bible degree who will help us focus on reaching our community. Please send resume, video/audio CD, or link along with a personal philosophy of ministry to:

LaSalle church of Christ, Minister Search Committee, c/o Dailey 4704 Stacey Dr. Lewiston NY 14092

Apply no later than June 1, 2018.

FOR SCHEDULE, REGISTRATION, AND OTHER INFORMATION VISIT
www.sermonseminar.com

37th Annual
Sermon Seminar
May 21-24, 2018

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ONE MILLION
MINUTES OF BIBLE CLASS VIDEOS STREAMED EVERY MONTH
THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTING CONGREGATIONS:

AND TO OUR MANY INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS.
Night to Shine, Tim Tebow likes to say, is all about the kings and queens.

Each of the special-needs teens and adults who participate in the “unforgettable prom night experience, centered on God’s love” receives a crown or tiara.

Greeting honored guests in Oklahoma, the 2007 Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback explained the royal treatment: “It’s because we believe that’s how God looks at you every single day.”

On the Friday night before Valentine’s Day, Tebow’s nonprofit foundation sponsored Night to Shine events at 537 churches in all 50 states and 16 countries. In all, about 90,000 people with autism, Down syndrome and other special needs reveled in the fourth annual festivities.

Host churches included the West-Ark Church of Christ in Fort Smith, Ark., the Crestview Church of Christ in Waco, Texas, and the NorthField Church in Gallatin, Tenn., which has roots in Churches of Christ. Country star Thomas Rhett made a surprise appearance at the NorthField event.

“All of the hard work was blessed beyond measure,” Crestview member Donnis Smith said. “All the photos and smiles say it all.”
HIGHER EDUCATION

OKLAHOMA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
OKLAHOMA CITY — Ron Bever, a historian of the Restoration Movement and former professor, recently donated more than 20 rare books from the movement to the Christian Connection Movement Collection at Oklahoma Christian's library.

The rare works, by Elias Smith and Abner Jones, cover Restoration history from 1800 to 1900 and add to an already extensive collection of Restoration holdings at the university, administrators said.

MINISTRY TRAINING

THE SUDAN PROJECT

CORINTH, Miss. — Conflict in the world’s newest nation, South Sudan, could have dealt a death blow to The Sudan Project, a ministry of the Mt. Juliet Church of Christ in Tennessee.

As rebel militias and government forces clashed near the village of Parajok, students in The Sudan Project’s preacher-training school there were forced to flee to refugee camps in neighboring Uganda.

The school recently merged with Uganda Christian Bible College, which has a campus near the camps. South Sudanese Christians will train on the campus for ministry in the camps — and someday, prayerfully, back in their homeland.

“It is our hope that brethren from all over East Africa will consider sending their preacher students to our well-established school in Uganda,” said Barry C. Smith, the college’s director and a deacon of the Madison Church of Christ in Alabama. Smith takes over the duties of retiring Sudan Project director Don Humphrey.

The Foote Street Church of Christ in Corinth oversees the work.

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

Birthdays


Memorials

E. Claude Gardner
1925-2017

E. Claude Gardner, 13th president of Freed-Hardeman University, died Dec. 31, 2017, in Jackson, Tenn. “Dr. Gardner left an indelible mark on this institution,” said current FHU President David Shannon. “He led with strong authority while embodying compassion. His wisdom and success were bathed in godliness and faithfulness. For many of us, his blessings were not only institutional, but also personal. He knew our names and followed us beyond graduation.”

A mainstay of the university and of Henderson and Chester County for a half-century, Gardner joined the faculty as chairman of the Department of Education and Psychology and as a Bible teacher. He served as registrar, dean, vice president, president, chancellor and president emeritus, retiring in 1992.

Milton Sewell, who followed Gardner as president, called Gardner “an outstanding Christian gentlemen and a visionary. He was committed to God and His church, his family, Freed-Hardeman and the Henderson community. As president, he was committed to excellence and what was best for students. He will be missed by so many of us who loved and appreciated him.”

Gardner preached his first sermon at age 15. Throughout his life, he preached for congregations in the U.S. and abroad. He conducted more than 375 gospel meetings.

Gardner was preceded in death by his wife Delorese Tatum Gardner, who died in 2001 after more than 50 years of marriage, and by his second wife Glenda Jacobs Gardner, who died in 2016.

Vernon Mercer
1941-2018

Vernon was a member of the Church of Christ from his early youth, teaching Bible classes, leading singing, overseeing building maintenance and upkeep, and supporting missions of congregations in the Oklahoma and Texas Panhandles.

He attended Oklahoma Christian College from 1961-1963, until he was drafted into the Army Medical Corps.

Vernon followed the family tradition as a farmer and cattle-man recognized for outstanding soil conservation practices and serving on agricultural committees.

He served on the local school board and boards of numerous other community service organizations.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Shirley, and is survived by their son, John.

Memorial Gifts

The Christian Chronicle appreciates generous gifts received in memory of Anthony Lee “Tony” Ash, Batsell Barrett Baxter, Ernest Clevenger, Jr., Dwain Crabtree, Bob Harp, Peggy Hinton, Paula Mashburn, Bert and Sue Monsey, Sarah Helen Oswald and Margaret Tryggestad.

Submit announcements for births, weddings, honors, retirements, memorials and tributes to milestones@christianchronicle.org or call (405) 425-5071. Submissions start at $25.

Minister Search - Nebraska

Broken Bow Church of Christ is seeking a minister who would also teach the adult Bible class for our congregation, which fluctuates between 35-55 people. We have a small home available across from the building. Broken Bow is a thriving small town of about 4,000 people, which also draws from numerous surrounding communities. Please contact:
jjfoster@neb-sandhills.net
RandyPam83@yahoo.com
Lynn4JP@gmail.com

FAITH-BASED ADDICTION RECOVERY

Located near Hot Springs Village, Ark., SOZO Recovery Center is achieving amazing results in curing addiction by having their clients attend the Village Church of Christ as part of their Bible-based curriculum. “Over 30 men have been baptized and joined the church in the last four years,” says SOZO Director, Bob O’Dowd. Based on merging Christian principles and church attendance” with the time-tested 12 step model of recovery, our success at achieving and sustaining sobriety far exceeds the national average.

Bob O’Dowd, (501) 226-9575
www.sozorecoverycenters.com
She is the CEO and co-founder of Just Between Friends Franchise System Inc., a children’s and maternity consignment business with more than 150 franchises in the United States and Canada. Her full-time job keeps her in the air frequently. She also serves on the board of trustees of Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City.

Another argument against paying attention to the voice: Her husband had battled cancer the previous year. He had undergone surgery in early 2015 and been declared cancer-free later that year. She, too, had been hospitalized after a scalp infection had caused her to start losing hair.

Lying down on another gurney wasn’t on her wish list.

“I had been studying about hearing from the Lord,” she said. “Like, what does it mean to sit and be open to hearing from the Lord and trying to decipher your own thoughts from stuff you feel like comes from the Lord? I still don’t have that down.”

COINCIDENCE OR PROVIDENCE?
Wilburn decided that the voice in her head had to be her own, not God’s. She’d simply ignore it.

“Of course he is,” Shannon Wilburn said she thought to herself. “It was like every month,” she recalled, “there would be a reminder, ‘Hey Shannon, don’t forget it’s you.’”

In July 2017, on a flight with one of her company’s executive team members, the colleague mentioned, “One of my friends just donated her kidney to a perfect stranger.”

“I looked at her and was like, ‘Why did you just say that?’” Wilburn said. “That’s the moment when I felt like the Lord turned up the heat and just made me think about it every week.”

‘PROBLEM SOLVED!’
In September 2017 — about a year after she first learned of Walt Erwin’s need for a kidney — Wilburn accepted an invitation to a brunch with women from church.

When Kathy Erwin showed up, Wilburn shook her head. The voice just wouldn’t leave her alone.

At the end of the brunch, Kathy Erwin asked the group for prayers that her husband would find a donor.

“As soon as the prayer time was over, Shannon started asking me all these questions,” Kathy Erwin said. “Not the normal kind of questions like, ‘How’s Walt doing?’ She asked me about being a donor, like, ‘What do you have to do?’

“I was thinking to myself, ‘Is Shannon thinking about being a donor?’ And I came home, and I told him, ‘Shannon was there, and she was asking all these questions.’”

Even if Wilburn decided to be tested, the odds were against her kidney being a match for Walt Erwin.

“Every so often, though, a reminder about Erwin’s dire need for a kidney would catch her attention. And she’d wonder.

In March 2017, Mitch and Shannon Wilburn bought a patch of land. The land happened to be near property owned by Walt and Kathy Erwin.

About three months later — in June 2017 — Mitch Wilburn came home and casually remarked to his wife, “Walt is spraying poison ivy killer on our land.”

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“‘I need to pray about it,’” he said.

TOUGH MATCH? NOT FOR GOD
Over the next few weeks, Mitch and Shannon Wilburn discussed the possibility. After praying, he became more open to it.

One night, the television news featured a woman who donated a kidney.

“I was like, ‘The Lord orchestrated that,’” Shannon Wilburn said. “So I looked at him and said, ‘Babe, what do you think?’ Because I was like, ‘If there’s any time he’s going to say yes, it’s going to be right now.’”

She was right.

In October 2017, she arranged tests
to see if she was a match.

At church one Sunday, Walt Erwin hugged Mitch Wilburn and thanked him for his part in Shannon Wilburn’s decision.

“I said, ‘Mitch, it’s going to be a tough one on the match,’” Walt Erwin recalled. “And he looked at me and said, ‘Walt, if Shannon has heard from the Lord, it’s going to be a match.’ And I said, ‘Praise the Lord.’”

When the test results confirmed that Shannon Wilburn was a match, she called Kathy Erwin with the news.

“I was by myself when she called and told me, because he was at dialysis,” Kathy Erwin said. “But after I talked to her, I jumped up and down first, and I said, ‘Hallelujah!’ and ‘Praise you, God.’ And then I laid on the floor, and I rolled around, and I cried because I was like, ‘God, this is just so awesome.’”

MODERN-DAY HEZEKIAH

The surgery at St. John Medical Center was scheduled for December 2017, just before Christmas.

Before the procedure, the Wilburns and the Erwins got together to get to know each other better and pray.

“They are such a Godly, spirit filled couple!” Shannon Wilburn wrote on Facebook.

At Shannon Wilburn’s request, hospital staff rolled their beds side by side just before the transplant so she and Erwin could hold hands and take a picture.

Doctors described the transplant as a total success.

Shannon Wilburn enjoyed a quick recovery, taking just one pain pill stronger than a Tylenol.

Immediately, Walt Erwin said, “I noticed my energy level was probably twice what it was … like a shot of energy had been given back to me.”

All along, Wilburn had one question: Why did God want her to donate a kidney to a man in his 60s? Wouldn’t it make more sense to bless a younger person, someone with more years ahead of him?

But after the surgery, Wilburn heard Erwin — a father of three adult children, all Oklahoma Christian graduates, and a grandfather of seven — liken himself to Hezekiah. Isaiah 38:5 notes that God heard Hezekiah’s prayers and added 15 years to his life.

“I want to be around to watch my grandkids come to know and love the Lord,” Erwin said.

Suddenly, Wilburn felt like she understood God’s reasoning.

For his part, Erwin said he can’t ever thank Wilburn enough. But she insists she doesn’t need thanks.

“It wasn’t me who did it anyway,” she said. “It was the Lord in me.”
A call for civil disagreement

TOO MANY MEMBERS of Churches of Christ devour rather than debate, but far too many avoid confrontation altogether. There’s a better way.

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; — Ephesians 4:1-5, New King James Version

TEMPLE TERRACE, Fla.

Given our history of biting and devouring one another, we in many wings of the Churches of Christ tend to avoid controversy. We’ve seen our brothers and sisters ascribe false character traits to those who hold views we perceive as extreme — simply because of their stances, not because of who they are as people. But as many of us have attempted to divorce ourselves from the divisive spirit of past generations, we’ve slipped off the other side of the horse. We’re fearful of voicing any solid convictions that might lead to uncomfortable discussions.

I recently attended my first lectureship at Florida College. Although I am the wife of a preacher for a non-institutional Church of Christ, I was nonetheless skeptical of the theme: “Inquiring of Past Generations: Lessons from Church History.”

To my surprise, each presenter I heard was humble, yet educated; sometimes controversial, yet consistently reasonable; thought-provoking, yet nuanced.

Hearing these speakers, shaking their hands and asking them questions all made me realize that we can be people with real convictions and a willingness to discuss them with civility. And, as missionary Bob Buchanon said, we can still go out and grab a Coke together, whether we agree or not.

‘We can be people with real convictions and a willingness to discuss them with civility. And, as missionary Bob Buchanon said, we can still go out and grab a Coke together, whether we agree or not.’

During the week, I heard gratitude expressed for various aspects of Reformation thought and unflinching critiques of Restoration thought. I was impressed with the leisurely and thoughtful lesson against instrumental music in worship. My head bobbed in agreement when speakers discussed our gross exclusion of the majority of Scripture in our lessons and the way we tend to overuse topical and New Testament-based sermons at the expense of other parts of God’s Word.

I noted the warnings about the limits of apologetics and the danger of misusing poetic Scripture as basis for scientific claims. I witnessed the respect shown for our fellow travelers in church history, regardless of church affiliation, and I equally respected the critiques against Reformation theology.

I scribbled the quote “traditionalism is what gives tradition a bad name.” My mind was overloaded with the lessons of history and the importance of knowing our past.

To think that my preconceived ideas could have starved me of the joy and learning I received from these lectures!

I’m afraid, however, that it’s more than premature judgments that keep us from soul-nourishing opportunities. Laziness can also play a role. “I don’t have the energy to discuss this” is a phrase I have said regularly.

Discerning Scripture, embracing conviction, speaking with integrity and lovingly disagreeing with others is all very exhausting. But let’s say yes to the mental effort it takes to discuss our respective weirdo beliefs and have fun with it.

Can we stop mocking, using sarcasm, memes on social media and strategically pulling the “I don’t have the energy for this” card when someone engages?

Breaks are needed, yes. But let’s muster the energy to discuss issues that require more than a moment of consideration. It’s far easier to categorize, demonize and never face one another than it is to hash out ideas as human beings.

And I’d really like us all to be up for that.

AMBER JIMERSON is a homeschooling mom of three children. Her husband, Thailer Jimerson, preaches at the Brownsburg Church of Christ in central Indiana. Find the church at www.bburgchurchofchrist.org.

Helping that helps

CHRIST-Followers who give of their own resources to help the poor may be doing more harm than good.

Jonathan Holmes, a former benevolence minister for a Church of Christ in Chicago, explored the topic in our February “In the Word” devotional (“The dark side of giving,” Page 29).

“The problem often is not the heart behind the giving,” Holmes said, “but rather the unintended consequences of the charity in which Christians partake — both inside and outside of the church.”

Several Christians Chronicle readers requested more information on the topic.

“I’d like examples of your premise that we can be exploiting and marginalizing those in need,” one reader commented. “How, exactly, is that being done?” The Chronicle reached out to Holmes for a reply. Here is his response:

“One of the biggest examples of the dark side of giving is what Brian Fikkert and Steve Corbet, authors of the book ‘When Helping Hurts: Alleviating Poverty Without Hurting the Poor ... and Yourself,’” refer to as resource paternalism. Resource paternalism is the belief that the core solution to problems in low-income communities is the donation of money or material resources, regardless of the impact.

“For example, donating clothes to help children in Haiti can have a detrimental impact on local clothing businesses that struggle because of the influx of free clothes from American churches. Churches should, instead, build connections with Haitian congregations and businesses to help them launch sustainable development programs that will improve lives and help the local churches reach out to their communities.

“Giving can reinforce poverty. Many churches participate in toy or food drives, which may serve as reminders for poor parents of their inability to afford or choose gifts for their own children. Churches could instead adopt a client-choice model that allows those in need to choose the items they would like to own as if they were in a grocery or thrift store.

“I am always encouraged by the great work that Christians do in following Christ through their giving and serving of others. Yet it is important that in our giving we do not harm those that Jesus has called us to serve.”

FIND JONATHAN HOLMES on Twitter @jdholmes1990.
The faith that moves a Mountie

**CHURCH ELDER** from Canada shares the quest that led him to Churches of Christ.

*But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,...*  
— 1 Peter 3:15, New International Version

I don’t think you will like it there because they have some weird ideas.”

That’s what a preacher told me right after he recommended I try the Church of Christ.

I was in my 20s and serving with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, stationed in Bengough, Saskatchewan, a small town about 40 miles from the Montana border. I was searching for a simple assembly of Christians similar to where my parents had taken my brothers and me every Sunday back home.

I was taught to have a respect for the Scriptures. In my pre-teens, my brothers and I memorized verses in order to go to Bible camp. Because my parents could not afford to send us, another person said they would pay if we memorized 200 Bible verses and could quote them 50 at a time with 90 percent accuracy. I memorized my 200 verses and went to camp.

So, in my search for a new church home, I talked to eight or more denominational preachers in the area, asking them about God’s Word. One of them, in total frustration with my questions, suggested the Church of Christ, but warned about their “weird ideas.” What he meant I could only guess. I had never heard of the Church of Christ.

This particular Church of Christ building had no sign, so I had completely missed it in my search. I warily parked in the shadows on a Wednesday night to see who would come out of the building. One of the first people I recognized was the school principal, who also was the referee for most of the local hockey games. That’s not so weird, I thought.

The following Sunday I attended their Bible class. The first thing I remember hearing that upset me was when the teacher, Steve Danielson, said that baptism was a rite of passage. After some church members took down a fence, I walked into a muddy dugout on the Saskatchewan prairie — a hole bulldozed to catch runoff for cows to drink — and I was immersed into Christ.

During my search, every one of the preachers I talked to was polite to me — even hospitable. Some invited me into their homes for a meal. But not one single person even came close to opening the Bible. They just talked. And the more they talked about their church, the less I listened. Only one person, Steve, opened the Bible and let God’s Word give me the answers.

The sad part of this story was my dad’s response. When I told him of my decision, he said, “You mean to tell me that your mother and I have taught you wrong all these years?”

About a year after I was baptized, I married Shirley Thornton from Lubbock. We lived in Canada for another eight years, and our three children were born there. Eventually, we moved to Abilene, Texas, and I went into business. Now I serve as a church elder.

Looking back, I remember when Churches of Christ had the reputation of being people of the Book. However, even as we are putting more and more money into our preaching and programs, we are moving away from that reputation. But, from what I can tell, people overall want the clear teaching of God’s Word as much as they ever have.

There is some value in consumer-type programs; I don’t deny that. But, in my opinion, there are great tools of evangelism that are often overlooked. World Bible School and the Leadership Training for Christ program for children are two I can name right off.

Every year the Great Plains Leadership Training for Christ convention in northwest Arkansas is like a family reunion for us. We have seen the tremendous benefit this program has had — and is having — on our children and grandchildren. It gives us hope for today and hope for tomorrow.

And it’s not just the weekend gathering that’s great. It’s also the weeks of teaching, coaching and practical application leading up to that weekend that benefit our family and the church as a whole.

Teaching Scripture to our children is important — even if it leads others to think of us as people who “have some weird ideas.” The reason I, my wife, our children and grandchildren are members of the Church of Christ is because someone cared enough about the power of God’s Word to teach it to me.

Peter MacInnes is one of four elders of the Buffalo Gap Church of Christ in Texas. He and his wife, Shirley, celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in May. They have three children and seven grandchildren.

**EDITORIAL**

Sexual abuse is evil. Period.

Jimmy Hinton is a hero.

When a victim told him that Hinton’s father — a respected, longtime preacher — had sexually assaulted her, Hinton listened. He believed her. And he immediately reported the allegation to police. As a result, an investigation ensued that uncovered a long history of abuse.

Sadly, too many church leaders placed in similar situations hide abuse, protect perpetrators and shame victims rather than wrap them in the loving arms of Jesus.

“These survivors are desperate to know that not all church leaders protect abusers,” Hinton said in our Page 1 story about the #ChurchToo social media movement.

Let us not mince words: True followers of Christ do not hide sexual abuse, no matter what the cost to individual congregations or reputations.

“As a therapist, I did not need #ChurchToo to tell me sexual assault is rampant in our churches,” Christine Parker, a member of the Grand Central Church of Christ in Vienna, W.Va., told us. “I’ve heard story after countless story as the victims sit on my couch seeking hope for healing.

“Often, it’s been years, even decades, since the assaults,” Parker added. “If they told anyone at the time, they often weren’t believed. If they were believed, they likely were told to forgive at best. At worst, they were blamed and shamed.”

Make no mistake: Those who ignore such evil share in that evil. Dear Lord, please touch our hearts and give us the strength, the courage and the integrity to do all in our human power to ensure that no precious child of God is victimized.

But we live in a fallen world.

When such atrocities do occur, let us resolve to rally around victims and bring evildoers to justice, just as Jimmy Hinton did in his father’s case. Sexual abuse is evil. Period.
**Live-In Caretaker Position**

Join our amazing organization ministering to at-risk young people on Long Island, New York, as a Live-In Caretaker. This is a unique position that provides guidance, support, and love to our transitional age residents (aged 17 – 25 years old). Unlike many other programs, our residents are engaged in structured programming from 6am through 9pm most days of the week. As part of the role, Caretakers create a family environment in their home, including four shared meals per week with residents. This live-in position has built-in flexibility, and to supplement living costs, other positions within the organization (dependent on skills and background) can be negotiated.

This position is ideal for singles and married couples of any age, with at most two of their own children.

For more information about our ministry, visit:
www.timothyhill.org
To apply, submit a resume and cover letter to:
HRStaffing@timothyhill.org

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**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Shults-Lewis Child and Family Services is seeking to fill an opening as EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR of the agency. Those wanting to be considered for the position should have the desire to help at-risk teens reach their full potential, strong administrative skills, excellent people-to-people and networking skills and the ability to represent the agency in public and church settings.

Duties will include overseeing the complete agency, which includes in-residence homes for troubled teens; resident counseling services and an on-site accredited Jr/Sr High School. The Executive Director will also be the “public face” of the agency and will cultivate support for the agency and its programs.

Though not a requirement, a license in Clinical Social Work or other Clinical Counseling license or Masters-level Degrees that can become licensed would be highly prized.

Shults-Lewis Child and Family Services, located in Valparaiso, Indiana, is a dynamic treatment program for struggling teens and their families. At Shults-Lewis, we believe that families shouldn’t have to struggle alone, and our residential environment, staffed by Christian houseparents and counselors, offers counseling, love, acceptance and, most of all, hope to teens and their families.

Remuneration will be commensurate with education, experience, licensure, etc.

You may read more about Shults-Lewis Child and Family Services on our website at:
www.shultslewis.org
You may submit your resume or curriculum vitae on-line at:
board@shultslewis.org

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**TRANSFORMING LIVES, RESTORING HOPE, RECONCILING FAMILIES**

Seeking **RESIDENTIAL LIFE SPECIALISTS**
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The RLS are a husband and wife team with a strong marriage who provide a safe, nurturing, therapeutic home environment for trauma-exposed adolescents in our family reconciliation program. Must be passionate about continual learning/growth and active members of the church of Christ. Housing, training, 24/7 support, benefits, and competitive salaries are provided.

For more information, contact
Jennifer.Bristow@hopeharborinc.org

www.hopeharborinc.org • 918.343.0003

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**New Mexico Christian Children’s Home**

The New Mexico Christian Children’s Home is currently seeking married couples for **House Parents in Training**. NMCCH is a private, not-for-profit, Christian organization serving children in need since 1954 and is supported by the generous donations of churches and individuals.

Our **House Parents** work a week on/week off schedule.

Requirements:
- Be at least 21 years of age or older
- High School diploma or equivalent is required
- A valid driver’s license with a good driving record
- Ability and desire to work and live with youth
- Ability to pass a thorough background check and reference verification procedure
- Must be married at least two years

We are also seeking an **Assistant to the Director of Single Parent Homes**. The Assistant to the Director will work with our current Director to oversee and manage the Single Parent Ministry with a view toward eventually becoming the Director of Single Parent Homes.

Some benefits of working at the New Mexico Christian Children’s Home include:
- Housing and utilities
- Health, Vision, Dental and Life Insurance
- 401(k) retirement plan, with company match up to 5 percent

Contact Allen Mann, Director of Public Relations at:
contact@nmch.org or call (575) 356-5372.
Please visit our website at:
http://nmch.org
for more information and to fill out our online application.
Former Muslim shows Islam from the inside

Many well-written books on Islam have appeared in the years since 9/11. So have many not-so-great books, written from a fearful, unloving perspective.

Almost all of the volumes written by members of Churches of Christ on the subject give us a through-the-keyhole perspective on the faith, practiced by 1.6 billion people, 23 percent of the global population and growing.

Wissam Al-Aethawi’s work — just like his name — is different from other authors on the topic. A former Muslim, the Iraqi-born Christian serves on the ministry staff of Sunset Church of Christ in Taylor, Mich., and is a missionary to the heavily Arab community of Dearborn, west of Detroit. He explains to Christian audiences what far-off land as a follower of a religion that is mysterious to many of us.

In his first book, “Islam in Christ’s Eyes,” Al-Aethawi, who also goes by Youssif, guides us through a scriptural study of Islam’s origins. He talks about the pillars and nature of Islam and compares the Quran to the Bible. Informing this study are the countless questions from American Christians that Al-Aethawi has answered about his former faith.

The book concludes with chapters on the importance of preaching to Muslims and advice on how to reach them. This information is especially important for people interested in opening up dialogue with their Muslim neighbors.

His new book, “I Am an Arab and I Am a Christian: An Autobiography,” is hard to put down. Al-Aethawi pulls his readers in by describing daily life in Iraq before and after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Even his writing style, with syntax just slightly different from that of an English-speaking American, reminds us of his origins and gives authenticity to his voice. This is a man who actually lived in the places he describes.

He details his search to find a Bible and then his multi-year quest to find someone to baptize him. In the midst of the spiritual journey there are stories about bombings, food shortages, a nuclear plant and encounters with American soldiers.

Other details may surprise many readers. For example, there are churches in Iraq, Al-Aethawi writes. He also describes eloquently the lackadaisical attitude some Muslims have toward religion and shares his own struggles with atheism as a young man.

He details his baptism in Iraq and the fulfillment of his dream to come to the United States, a country where the only soul he knew was his Bible correspondence teacher. Her contacts, however, pointed him to other believers and, eventually, to Sunset International Bible Institute in Lubbock, Texas, where he trained for his current ministry.

Who’s afraid of prophecy? Church member pens resource for kids’ classes

It wasn’t until I was an adult that I began to understand the prophesies of the Old Testament and their importance to our faith.

Then I had the privilege to assist Sarah Fallis in her children’s Bible class a few years ago. The retired professor of mathematics and member of the Bridgewood Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas, astounded me with the level of understanding she was able to impart to children in third and fourth grade.

She showed them the shadow of Jesus in Old Testament prophecy. She effectively taught kids ages 9 and 10 the significance of words like “fulfill,” “kingdom” and “remnant” and how they were related to the church.

Fallis shares that wisdom in “The Drama of Redemption, Volume 2: Walking with Jesus Through The Prophets.” In this resource book for teachers, Fallis tears down the daunting wall we see when we consider the 30 percent of the Bible dedicated to prophecy. She understands our trepidation about teaching this material to kids, reviewing the objections (“children can’t understand or relate to those teachings”) and disproving them.

As children of God, she writes, we need to know the very nature of God. We need a clear picture of punishment and promise. Fallis not only teaches us how to teach, she also includes charts, exercises and artwork to reproduce and use. There is no guesswork or long hours of searching for the right illustration.

We, the church, need to be teaching the full Bible to our children. We cannot leave gaps in their spiritual education just because we believe a portion of God’s Word to be difficult or intimidating.

Read this book and grow. Then teach.

Sandi Smith worships with the Keller Church of Christ in Texas.

What are you reading, watching, listening to? Send submissions to erik@christianchronicle.org.
Job Listings

Deadline for next two issues: March 9 and April 13.

Full-Time Pulpit Minister
We are searching for a full-time pulpit minister who is able to relate to sinners. Jesus loves sinners. He should have the mind and heart of Christ. If you would like to be considered, please send your resume to:

Green Ridge Church of Christ
Attn: Elders
PO Box 424
Greenbrier, TN 37073

FULL-TIME PULPIT PREACHER NEEDED!!!
Oro Grande Boulevard Church of Christ
is seeking a full-time pulpit preacher. We are a congregation of 35-40 members with three elders. Retirement or other support needed. Located in beautiful Lake Havasu City, Ariz.

Ron Johnson
rjohn43611@gmail.com

Gospel Preacher
The SUNSET CHURCH OF CHRIST in Taylor, Mich., is looking for a gospel preacher who loves God and his neighbor. Your life here will be alongside 200 other Christians, one fine ministry involved with our youth, a passionate missionary to the largest Muslim population in America, four hard-working servants and three prayerful shepherds. Send resume, one or two audios or videos of you and a one-page handwritten description of your purpose in God’s Kingdom to:

Sunset Church of Christ
c/o Elders @ Sunset 24800 Ecorse Rd
Taylor, Michigan 48180

Office of the Provost
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 a complete description of this position. 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.

Youth Minister - Fifty Third Avenue Church of Christ, Bradenton, Florida
Youth Minister will plan, communicate and execute programs and activities aimed at enriching the spiritual lives of about 20 youth. Minimum of a bachelor’s degree, preferred in Bible, youth ministry or related field. Equivalent experience will be considered. A complete job description is available on our website: 53avefcoc.org or by contacting the church office at: office@53avefcoc.org or (941) 753-4153. Send resume and references via email or mail to: 53rd Avenue Church of Christ, 3412 53rd Ave. East, Bradenton, FL 34203.

Closing Date: Open until filled.

Minister Search
THE ABERDEEN CHURCH OF CHRIST in Aberdeen, Md., is seeking a minister who loves the Lord, has a few years of experience and will come to love God’s family by teaching, preaching, and counseling. Our congregation is 100+ with elders, deacons, and a minister. Aberdeen has a small-town atmosphere with excellent schools. We offer a competitive salary relative to experience and education. If interested, please send your resumes and recorded sermons to:

Aberdeen Church of Christ
90 Mt. Royal Ave., Aberdeen, MD 21001
aberdeencc@verizon.net

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
pecoscocoffice02@windstream.net

Full-Time Minister
McPherson Ave. Church of Christ is seeking a minister with a heart for service, the ability to connect with a variety of ages, and a desire to boldly proclaim Jesus in our community. You will serve alongside four shepherds, a number of deacons, and a congregation of 125 with a youth group of 20. We offer a competitive salary commensurate with experience and education, a large two-bedroom parsonage, and a church family ready to grow.

Church of Christ, Search Committee
1525 McPherson Ave
Council Bluffs, IA 51503
cobluffchurch@msn.com
www.lifeinthelifebluffs.org

Send resume and references before March 31, 2018.

Full-Time Minister
Central Church of Christ in Ada, Okla., is accepting applications for a full-time minister. Salary based on qualifications/experience. Some Insurance and retirement benefits provided. Interested candidates should send cover letter and resume to:

Ronny Johns
1424 Sunrise Lane, Ada, OK 74820
RRWJ9@sbcglobal.net (email for additional information)

Full-Time Minister
Malden Church of Christ in Missouri seeks a full-time minister. Rural congregation, 50-60 faithful members, led by the Lord and two elders. Compensation commensurate with qualifications and experience. Contact:

Rod Dill at (573) 281-8625 or Jerry Reaves at (573) 276-8071
**CALCULATIONS**

**March 2-3**  **Affirming the Faith Seminar.** North MacArthur Church of Christ, Oklahoma City, Okla. affirmingthefaithok.com.

**March 2-4**  **Tri-Area Youth Rally.** Southside Church of Christ, Valdosta, Ga. southside.churchofchrist@yahoo.com.

**March 29**  **Eastern European Mission’s Dallas Event.** Addison Conference Center, Addison, Texas. eem.org/events.

**April 2-3**  **KERYGMA: A Conference for Preachers by Preachers.** Memorial Road Church of Christ, Edmond, Okla. grady.king@oc.edu.

**April 8-11**  **Ohio Valley University Lectureship.** Vienna, W.Va. gk.pennington@ovu.edu.

**April 8-12**  **74th Annual Carolina Lectureship.** Highland Acres Church of Christ, Statesville, N.C. ncstatelectureship.com.

**April 18-21**  **Evangelism and Church Growth Workshop.** HomeMission. Faith Village Church of Christ, Wichita Falls, Texas. homemission.org.

**May 21-24**  **37th Annual Sermon Seminar.** Austin Graduate School of Theology, Austin, Texas. sermonseminar.com.

**July 15-20**  **Theology Summer Academy.** Oklahoma Christian University, Edmond, Okla. oc.edu/admissions/undergraduate/visit/theology-summer-academy.com.

**FULL CALENDAR:** www.christianchronicle.org.

To include your event, and for pricing, contact tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org.

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**Therapists**

Childplace, Inc., located in Jeffersonville, Ind., has been serving children and families in the Southern Indiana area since 1967. We are currently seeking additional licensed therapists (or those working toward licensure) to work with our Counseling and In-Home programs. Our therapists work with clients from our Residential, Foster Care, and Adoption programs and with clients from the community, providing individual, family, and group sessions. Our clients are also able to utilize the medical oversight of our full-time psychiatrist.

**Requirements:**

Master’s degree with a current license issued by the Indiana Behavioral Health and Human Services Board as one of the following: 1) Social Worker, 2) Clinical Social Worker, 3) Marriage and Family Therapist, 4) Mental Health Counselor, 5) Marriage and Family Therapist Associate, or 6) Mental Health Counselor Associate. An individual with a temporary permit working towards licensure in any of the above listed categories may also apply. Following an offer of employment, expectations include: background checks, basic pre-employment physical with a TB skin test, motor vehicle report, and a signed copy of the agency values statement.

**Weekly Schedule:**

This is a full-time opportunity; however, a contracted option could be considered. A full-time schedule would include Monday thru Friday predominately first shift—however, flexible and adaptable to some degree to the clinician’s preference. Some evening hours to accommodate clients’ scheduling needs and acute circumstances are expected.

**Benefits and Compensation:**

Salary is $39,000+ annually based on education and experience. Additional benefits include access to a laptop and flexibility to work from home/off-site, as well as the opportunity to utilize agency vehicles for the majority of appointments with community-based clients. Other benefits include supportive work environment, and full-time employees are offered the following: paid time off, medical, dental, and vision insurance options; healthcare flexible spending account; and life insurance.

**To Apply:**

Email resume to: HR@childplace.org.

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**Mountain States Children’s Home**

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**Director of Social Services**

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- Candidates must have a Bachelor’s Degree in Behavioral Science/Human Services or a related field.
- Residential Child Care experience is preferred.
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**For Information Contact:**

Randy Schow, Executive Director

303-776-8841

Email: rschow@msch.org

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FACULTY POSITIONS AVAILABLE

All candidates must be active members of the church of Christ and committed to Christian education.

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES. Seeking full-time faculty member. The successful candidate will hold a Ph.D. in Spanish or experience in a closely related field along with teaching and/or professional experience in any of the following: Peninsular and/or Latin American literature, inter-cultural/global studies, translation and/or interpretation, or K-12 foreign language education. Candidates with training in ACTFL oral proficiency and methodology preferred. Responsibilities will include advising, supervision of student research, and teaching both general and advanced courses.

Submit letter of interest, curriculum vitae, and unofficial transcripts of all graduate-level courses to Dr. Kristi Bond, chair, at knbond@harding.edu or Box 12263, Searcy, AR 72149.

COLLEGE OF PHARMACY. Seeking full-time director of assessment to manage implementation of a comprehensive program of assessment for the purpose of programmatic improvements in accordance with accreditation requirements for the college. Bachelor’s degree required; master’s degree with emphasis in education, higher education, educational research or related field is highly preferred. At least three years of experience in higher education support services needed. Previous experience with assessment in higher education desired. Responsibilities include working with assessment committee, faculty, staff and administration to implement and review effective strategies for the assessment of student learning at the individual and program levels as well as assessment of college-level mission and goals.

Submit letter of interest to Harding University Human Resources at hr@harding.edu or Box 12257, Searcy, AR 72149.

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS. Seeking faculty/administrator for Harding University in Latin America (HULA). The successful candidate will possess teaching experience in humanities and Bible, fluency in the Spanish language, a background in developing missions experiences, and a minimum of a master’s degree; a Ph.D. is preferred. Responsibilities include directing the study abroad program in Latin America; coordinating site tours, classes, and accommodations; and providing meals for student and faculty groups of 40 plus. HULA is currently conducted one semester per year. Position reports directly to the dean of international programs.

Submit an introductory letter, curriculum vitae and contact information to Dr. Jeff Hopper, dean, at hopper@harding.edu or Box 10838, Searcy, AR 72149.

Additional openings are available in the following areas:
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CANNON-CLARY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF ENGINEERING AND PHYSICS
DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS
DEPARTMENT OF PHARMACY PRACTICE
PHYSICAL THERAPY PROGRAM

Please visit harding.edu/hr/jobsfaculty for further information on these positions. To learn more about open staff positions, visit harding.edu/hr/jobs. Harding is committed to hiring a diverse faculty and staff. Women, minorities, individuals with disabilities and veterans are encouraged to apply.

Farewell to Insight: In final monthly column, McBride ponders Chronicle’s role in fellowship

Thirty-eight years after my first column appeared in these pages, this will be my final monthly “Insight” for The Christian Chronicle.

I have enjoyed the long run, but it is time to focus on other projects. My children and grandchildren want an autobiography, and my wife, Linda, and I are talking about a devotional book.

I first learned of the newspaper in 1945, two years after its launch by founder and editor Alan Hicks. My mother and I were worshiping with the San Leandro Church of Christ in California. We met at a men’s lodge but were building a place for the church’s worship. One Sunday, the preacher brought copies of an issue of the Chronicle that had news about our congregation. I didn’t realize at the time the role this newspaper would come to play in my life.

In 1947, the Chronicle carried the story about a preacher named Otis Gatewood who was traveling to Germany to teach the Gospel after the devastation of World War II. I was drawn to the story because Gatewood had converted the Bendios, parents of my best friend, Ricky.

The Chronicle’s strong emphasis on mission work made me a faithful reader — even as the paper changed ownership on a regular basis.

In the late 1970s, John Beckloff, a missionary to Nigeria and alum of Oklahoma Christian College, offered the Chronicle to the school. Bible professor Howard Norton expressed interest in serving as editor and asked me to write a column for the back page.

A group of faithful church leaders met to talk about the paper and its mission, agreeing on goals for the...
In his career as a literature professor at Oklahoma Christian University, Bailey McBride was an adopted father and grandfather to hundreds of students, including Leah Sikes, left, seen here with McBride at an outdoor Christian event in Vienna, Austria, in 2016.

What Bailey McBride means to me

Bailey McBride was the first person I saw when I stepped off the plane from Atlanta at Will Rogers World Airport in 2001. He was standing at the gate with a copy of The Christian Chronicle in his hand.

It was my first time in the state of Oklahoma, and I was interviewing for a writing job with the Chronicle.

Five minutes after I met Bailey, I knew I wanted the job.

For the past 17 years, Bailey has been a second father to me. He exemplifies what it means to be a servant and a man who seeks after God’s own heart. He’s a gifted writer and teacher. He’s patient, kind.

When my wife and I married in 2003, there was no question about who we wanted to perform the ceremony. As we dedicated our lives to God and each other, Bailey’s words of blessing were simple and beautiful — even the part where he said I had “almost given up hope” of ever finding a wife. Thanks, Bailey. I’m glad the whole Thomas Street Church of Christ got to hear that.

Five years later, Bailey and his first wife, Joyce, visited us in the hospital after the birth of our first daughter. All of us were devastated when we lost Joyce McBride unexpectedly in 2015. I’ll never forget what Bailey said to me when we visited him at the funeral home. He hugged me tightly — and apologized.

“My so sorry this happened, and so soon after you lost your mom.”

My mother, Karen Tryggestad, had died from cancer 15 months earlier. In the midst of his own grief, Bailey focused on how much I was still hurting from that loss.

That is my friend, Bailey McBride. That’s the kind of man he is. And that’s the kind of man I want to be.

I’m so appreciative that he continued to write the monthly “Insight” column (renamed this month as a tribute to his legacy) even after he stepped down from the editorship of the Chronicle in 2006.

We’ll miss his wisdom on our back pages. I wish him and his newlywed bride, Linda, all the best as they explore the world together. His words will always have a home here.

Now, as we approach the Chronicle’s 75th anniversary, we invite those of you who have served this publication in years past to share your memories with us. Look for stories from past editors, writers and staffers in our “Insight” column in the coming months.

And please take a moment to send Bailey a note of thanks for his decades of dedicated service. Please send me a copy of that message so that we can assemble a collage of tributes for an upcoming edition of our “From Our Readers” feature.

Bailey, I’ll never be able to repay the debt I owe you. Thanks for picking me up at the airport — and for everything that followed.

CONTACT: erik@christianchronicle.org

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9/13/18 Tyler, TX