Can Churches of Christ be saved?

IN SMALL-TOWN TEXAS, a dying church becomes the focus of a ministry to ‘revive us again.’

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

KRESS, Texas

Oh land of rest, for thee I sigh. When will the moment come, when I shall lay my armor by, and dwell in peace at home?

On a hot, dry Sunday morning in this West Texas farming town, a small Church of Christ sings that question, posed by hymn 482 in a well-worn, golden-hued copy of “Songs of the Church.” It’s a question God hasn’t yet answered for Elmo Snelling, who just turned 104. So he waits patiently to “dwell in peace at home.” Patiently, but not idly. As the church sings the chorus, the words mirror his life: We’ll work ’til Jesus comes.

After the hymn, Snelling bolts from his pew and takes his place behind a table emblazoned with the words “This do in remembrance of me.” He passes trays bearing the unleavened bread that represents Christ’s body, then leads a prayer for the fruit of the vine. “Thank you for this cup,” he prays, “which is emblematic of Christ’s shed blood on the cross.”

Snelling is one of seven remaining members who worship regularly with the Kress Church of Christ in an A-frame auditorium built to hold 400 souls. The church, planted in 1915, is a year younger than Snelling. In the late 1960s, attendance often exceeded 180.

Hymnals line the pews of the Kress Church of Christ. The church, which has seven regular worshipers, swelled to 73 during a recent Homecoming Sunday.

“There was hardly an empty pew. The singing was beautiful,” says Kechi Beavers, who grew up in the church with her sister, Kim.

So did Tracy Thomas, whose father was an elder of the Kress church. His parents raised cotton on a half-section of soil (320 acres) and managed to send four kids to college.

In the 21st century, that’s impossible, Thomas says. The farms are huge, and the workers are few. The children of Kress live 10 miles away in Plainview or an hour away in Lubbock. Or farther.

But on this Sunday, the Kress church’s attendance has swelled from seven to 73 for a homecoming service coordinated by Sunset International Bible Institute in Lubbock. Preaching students from the institute, which trains Christians for ministry at home and around the globe, are here along with senior saints from the Sunset Church of Christ, where about 1,200 believers worship on Sundays.

Churches of Christ have struggled to make the transition from a rural to an urban movement. The fellowship stopped growing in the 1990s and has been in decline since 2000, says...
An Authentically Christian University

Lubbock Christian University—our name is not one we bear lightly. Since our founding, many things about our campus have changed, but what remains constant is our focus—to be a Christ-centered university providing a transformative educational experience to its students. We seek to educate the whole student—mind, body and soul. In this community of committed Christ-followers, students seek deeper spiritual truths alongside every academic discipline to prepare them for lives of purpose and service.

Our poverty challenges us to cling to God

Thomas, Haiti

I thought I knew exactly what poverty looked like. I expected to see multitudes of hungry children running around with bald heads and large stomachs, graffiti scattered throughout abandoned buildings, animals lining unpaved streets. I expected to meet people frustrated with their quality of life and eager to find opportunities elsewhere.

But from the moment I landed in this Caribbean nation of more than 10 million people, it became obvious that I had taken something out of the picture in my expectations — God. That became more clear as we drove the streets of Port-au-Prince on our way to Thomaizeau, a village just beyond the outskirts of Haiti’s chaotic capital city.

Yes, I did see the images of poverty I had pictured in my mind: trash-lined streets, children desperate for food.

But this one-dimensional perception of Haiti does not account for the clear evidence of God working through every seemingly unfortunate situation.

I came here with members of my campus ministry. We’re on a mission to love on

Elise Miller


Duck boat tragedy claims three church members

By Erik Tryggstad | The Christian Chronicle

When they boarded a tourist “duck boat” in southwest Missouri, it’s unlikely that Steve Smith and his two children, Lance and Loren, realized they were sharing the ride with a brother in Christ, Irvin “Ray” Coleman.

The Smiths worshiped with the 40-member Osceola Church of Christ in eastern Arkansas on the banks of the Mississippi River. About 420 miles to the northeast, Coleman served as a usher for the 500-member Kingsley Terrace Church of Christ in Indianapolis.

They were together only briefly before the calm waters of Table Rock Lake turned violent in the churn of a fast-moving storm. The duck boat capsized, and 17 of its 31 passengers drowned — including Steve and Lance Smith, Coleman and eight members of Coleman’s extended family.

The tragedy came in the middle of the Smith family’s annual trip to Branson, Mo. Steve Smith’s wife, Pam, had opted to shop instead of taking the trip.

Longtime Harding theology professor Jack P. Lewis dies

By Chellie Ison | The Christian Chronicle

Jack P. Lewis, a biblical scholar and founding faculty member of Harding School of Theology in Memphis, Tenn., died July 24, 2018. He was 99.

The longtime theology professor was known for pushing his students hard.

“Those who studied under him soon learned that he had little patience for uninformed assertions, sloppy thinking or frothy sermonizing,” said John Wilson, professor emeritus of religion at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif. “He called his students to hard work, clear thinking and a healthy respect for facts.”

Bruce McLarty, president of Harding University in Searcy, Ark., remembers taking multiple classes under Lewis. The theology school is a branch of the university.

“The thing I most appreciated about him was the way that this brilliant, highly credentialed, universally respected scholar had an absolutely child-like confidence in the biblical text,” McLarty said.
POVERTY: God’s peace helps us love more, worry less

FROM PAGE 3

the orphans at a facility sponsored by Hope for Haiti’s Children, a nonprofit supported by Churches of Christ. We want to teach teenagers in the Thomazeau area about how God’s love goes above and beyond the scope of our imagination.

But it has become obvious that each soul I encounter can teach me more about the nature of God than I can possibly teach them. The people here have absolutely nothing, according to the materialistic standards we use in the United States. But they hold to their faith as their most treasured possession.

Somehow, without air conditioning, running water or even clothes on their backs, they are sustained. And they fervently praise God for their blessings.

Each time I walk outside, the mountainside scenery of Thomazeau never fails to amaze me. But what amazes me more are the people of a remote village here, Pageste.

Getting there requires us to ride on handmade wooden boats across a river. As soon as we get off the boat, two children from the village greet us with hugs while the adults take our belongings and guide us to what is, in my opinion, one of the greatest adult experiences I have ever had.

Playing with Haitian children, students on a mission trip gather at their temporary home, the meeting place of the Church of Christ in the remote village of Pageste. They lead simple lives, but lives with meaning. Like us, they go to school, they work. And they fellowship.

The church building is more than a house of worship. It functions as an elementary school, as the central hang-out spot for villagers and as our sleeping quarters during our visit.

God’s presence is clear. He moves through the women who lovingly hand their babies to strangers from Oklahoma.

He moves through hymns sung in two languages — Creole and English. He is evidenced in the incredible communication that happens between people of different nationalities and cultures.

We seem to speak to each other without using words. Americans — inside and outside the church — focus on insignificant aspects of life while God stares us in the face, waiting for us to notice him. In a place like Haiti, where materialism doesn’t even seem like a possibility, people must rely on the giver of all good things. And they receive the never-ending joy that can only come from God.

Life here is simple, and it causes us to love more, to worry less, to live one day at a time.

ELISE MILLER and her family worship with the McDermott Road Church of Christ in Plano, Texas. This fall she begins her sophomore year at Oklahoma Christian University, where she will serve as an intern for The Christian Chronicle. She traveled to Haiti with members of the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City.
HAWAII
WAHIAWA — The Pearl Harbor Church of Christ is helping a small congregation on the island of Oahu — the Wahiawa Church of Christ — make improvements to its preacher’s home.

Pearl Harbor elder John Graham praised the generosity of his congregation’s members.

“Many have helped with physical labor,” Graham wrote in a Facebook post. “Your generosity in giving at Pearl Harbor has allowed us to consider this as we continue to support Andrew and Kristen Arbuckle in their work to minister to the congregation in Wahiawa.”

As a new school year begins, Oklahoma student prays for God’s blessings

Landon Davis prays outside Altus Primary School in southwestern Oklahoma before the start of the new school year. On a recent Sunday night, members of the Tamarack Road Church of Christ in Altus, including Landon’s family, gathered at the church building for prayers and songs. Then the congregation divided into groups and went to pray at the schools the children would attend, from pre-K to high school.

IOWA
MARSHALLTOWN — The Church of Christ in Marshalltown served 350 families after a recent tornado.

Volunteers from the congregation and other Iowa churches unloaded and distributed two tractor-trailer loads full of food and emergency supplies provided by Nashville, Tenn.-based Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort.

“Two men with longtime connections to our congregation decided to be baptized after serving in the relief efforts with us — an answer to many years of prayers,” member Amy Harper said.

Volunteers came from the Cedarloo Church of Christ in Cedar Falls, the Hickman Road Church of Christ in Des Moines and the Center Point Road Church of Christ in Marion.

OREGON
PORTLAND — During the recent Agape Blitz, various religious groups helped the Agape Church of Christ build villages for the homeless, minister Ron Clark said.

Among those joining the work were teams from The Park Church of Christ in Tulsa, Okla., the Federal Way Church of Christ in Washington state and Columbia Christian Schools in Portland, which is associated with Churches of Christ.

“Portland has declared homelessness a crisis, which has opened the door for collaboration to address this ever-growing concern,” Clark said. “Agape Village is the first collaboration of multiple faith congregations, businesses, schools and individuals to partner in building a community.”

Anesha Davis

TENNESSEE
GERMANTOWN — The Germantown Church of Christ’s diaper ministry, started two years ago, has collected and distributed 272,000 diapers to inner-city Memphis.

The church gathers the diapers in a monthly drive, then repackages them so they can’t be returned for cash or exchanged, ministry leader Nicole Estes said. In a recent month, the ministry helped 150 families.
REVIVE US: Dying churches can be resources for rebirth, planters say

FROM PAGE 1
Stan Granberg, director of Kairos Church Planting, a ministry supported by members of Churches of Christ. Granberg has researched trends among religious movements in the U.S. He uses data from American Religious Data Archives and the directory “Churches of Christ in the United States,” published by 21st Century Christian.

From 2006 to 2016, about 58 congregations closed each year, and the overwhelming majority of churches that remain are small, Granberg says. Average attendance among the nation’s 11,965 Churches of Christ is 94, and 54 percent average just 34 people in the pews on Sundays.

“It’s sad to see an old heritage dwindling away,” says Kim Beavers, who worships with the Sunset church.

That heritage will continue to fade, it seems, unless something happens to — in the words of hymn No. 446 — “Revive us again, fill each heart with thy love. May each soul be rekindled with fire from above ...”

FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN DO

The uptick in dying congregations is of particular concern to Truitt Adair, who began preaching for the Kress church 50 years ago at age 23.

It was his first full-time preaching job. He and his wife, Kay, adopted one of their children here — and gave birth to another. A half-century later, Adair trains ministers as president of Sunset International Bible Institute.

As he reminisces about his time in Kress, Adair acknowledges the church’s troubling reality.

“I know the statistics, and I know the demographics, and I know how much it’s changed,” he says of the community. “And I know that even with churches, as with people, there is a life cycle. But is it possible that we can bring in more people, even in this community? I can tell you that if that’s going to happen, it’s going to take more than seven hungry souls. It’s going to take a lot of hungry people.”

Chris Swinford, an administrator and instructor for Sunset, tells the church about Mission America, the institute’s initiative to rekindle U.S. evangelism through efforts including church planting, minister renewal, online training, campus ministry and more. As part of the effort, Sunset is working with a Church of Christ in nearby Memphis, Texas, to plant a Spanish-speaking congregation.

“We spend most of our time talking about things we can’t change,” Swinford says. “All of our young people leave. ... Our old members are dying. Well, you can’t do anything about that. You need to focus on what you can do, the difference you can make.

“How can a group of seven or eight people in Kress, Texas, change the world? Look to the group of 12 — that became 11, that became 12 again — and that went out and changed their world.”

A PAINFUL, HOPEFUL DECISION

To the west, 699 miles, members of the Mountain View Church of Christ in Tucson, Ariz., faced a similar quandary to that of their brethren in Kress.

Decades ago, the church had 450 members and a thriving bus ministry that brought 200 inner-city kids to its building. The church was active on the campus of the University of Arizona. Even in recent years, the church maintained a robust benevolence ministry and food pantry.

But membership declined dramatically in the past decade, says Herb Fauth, one of the church’s three elders. The church had to rely on its reserve finances to meet its budget.

“We decided that the best use of the existing resources that God has given us at Mountain Avenue would be to sell the building and use the proceeds to plant new churches,” Fauth says, “and appeal to people in a different way than we have in the past.”

The church worked with Heritage 21, a foundation established by members of Churches of Christ to help the nation’s dying congregations achieve renewal or secure a legacy.

“While it is our hope that declining churches can be infused with new life and a viable future, that is unfortunately not the most typical outcome,” says Mike O’Neal, chairman of the foundation’s board of trustees and former president of Oklahoma Christian University.

When it comes to end-of-life issues, too many churches don’t prepare adequately, O’Neal says. Some believe they can sell the church’s property and simply divide the profits among the remaining members. That’s illegal.

Heritage 21 seeks to help closing churches sell their property, celebrate their history and counsel their members through the emotional loss while helping them find other congregations to call home. The foundation also helps churches use their funds to benefit the fellowship through programs including church planting.

Such efforts are vital to the future of Churches of Christ, says Granberg, vice chairman of Heritage 21. He cites research by David T. Olsen, author of “The American Church in Crisis.” For a church movement to be considered healthy, at least half of its congregations should be below 40 years of age, “the age when reproductive capacity and initiative are at their highest.” Only about 21 percent of Churches of Christ are in that age range, Granberg says.

Other researchers say that a healthy movement must plant 1 percent of its total number of congregations per year just to maintain its size — and double that number to experience growth. Among Churches of Christ in the U.S., “the new church-planting rate is so low ... that it does not register a significant percentage,” Granberg says.

“While seeing churches close has deep sadness to it,” he says, “for the health of the movement more declining and dying churches need to close. These closing churches are a tremendous, untapped resource for funding new churches.”

That’s the legacy members of the former Mountain Avenue church hope to build. From the sale of their building and other assets, the dying church designated funds to be used by Kairos for church-planting efforts in Tucson, a city of more than 1 million souls that includes a large homeless population.

The city routinely ranks near the top of America’s “unchurched” metropolitan areas, says Andrew Hill, Mountain Avenue’s former minister. In religious surveys, more than 90 percent of Tucson residents say they don’t regularly attend church.

Kairos currently seeks church planters for the city.

“This place needs God,” Hill says. “It needs Jesus.”
ACROSS THE NATION

Buddy Ham | preaching intern

“What do you preach? They’ve heard everything!” says Ham, a student at Sunset International Bible Institute who spent the summer ministering for the Kress Church of Christ.

To encourage the small, struggling church, he crafted sermons about passing the baton, using wisdom from the book of Hebrews and 2 Corinthians 4: “Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”

Ham and his family are no strangers to small-church ministry. He preached for a Church of Christ of about eight families in Fairbanks, Alaska, before making the 10-day drive south to Lubbock, Texas, to enroll at SIBI. On his cellphone, he shows a wintertime selfie from his former home, where temperatures once dropped to 60 degrees below zero Fahrenheit.

Mike Talley | former minister

Mike Talley preached for the Kress church from 2004 to 2011. The church averaged about 40 people most Sundays. It had a small youth group and tried to launch a singles ministry. Despite efforts to reach out to its community (the church had a computer with internet for public use), many members moved away to bigger towns, he says.

His wife, Clovia, adds, “It’s great to see folks here. But it’s the people who aren’t here, who’ve passed away ... that’s the hard part.”

Healthy church movement

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Stan Granberg of the Heritage 21 Foundation compared the ages of Churches of Christ in the U.S. in 2016 to benchmarks David T. Olsen suggests for a “healthy” church movement based on research of a national database of 200,000-plus churches.

SURVIVE, REVIVE, RESURRECT?

Back in Kress, the Beaver sisters talk about the days when Truitt Adair gathered them and the other children on the front row and quizzed them on the books of the Bible.

“This morning, when we drove up here from Lubbock and we saw all the cars in the parking lot, it brought tears to our eyes,” Kechi Beavers says. “We are blessed to be here.”

The Kress church feels equally blessed, says Ralph Skelton, one of the congregation’s seven regulars.

“Maybe next week they’ll be back?” he asks, a touch of sorrow in his smile.

The 83-year-old widower has thought about moving to another congregation, including a Church of Christ 13 miles north in Tulia, which has about 35 members. But he’s needed here. He’s the song leader.

“I can’t afford to leave,” he says. After worship, church members gather in the fellowship hall for a catered lunch of barbecue brisket and smoked sausage. They celebrate Snelling’s 104th birthday and listen as he recites his favorite verse, Isaiah 40:31: “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

Jerry Bevill, another of the seven Kress members, has written a history of the congregation. He says he appreciates his Lubbock brethren’s desire to reinvigorate the church. But he’s not sure it will be enough. “The people just aren’t here,” he says of his community.

When asked about the small church’s legacy, he says he hopes it is remembered “as a God-fearing church that held true to the gospel of Christ.”

For Sunset International Bible Institute, Adair says, “the question is: Do we help this church die gracefully and transition this marvelous facility to something else? Or do we help them to survive, revive, maybe even resurrect? And it probably would mean that the church would have to start over to match the demographics in this town.”

Regardless of the outcome, Adair says he is committed to giving back to the church family that welcomed his own family 50 years ago, nurturing and preparing them for lives of ministry — including missionary work in India and Nigeria, church planting in Phoenix and ministry training around the globe.

“Everything that we’ve done,” Adair says, “has been very, very positive, I think, because we got our feet firmly planted in a positive ministry here in Kress.”

Corine Street remembers when Adair came to Kress. The 83-year-old worshipped with the church when her health allows. She’s been here since 1954. A former Baptist, she waited until her two sons said they were ready to be baptized for the remission of sins. Then she decided to join them. Adair baptized all three.

Her daughter, Kendra, also grew up among the pews of the Kress church before moving to Lubbock.

Visits here can be a bit depressing, she says, so she’s encouraged by the show of support by Adair and the Christians from Sunset.

Can this church be revived again? “I don’t know,” she says. “Anything’s possible.”

After all, she just watched a 104-year-old serve communion.
“Today, we find ourselves as a congregation in the midst of a big transition,” said Wilburn, pausing to express his discomfort at seeing his face flashed on two big screens behind him.

NOT LOOKING TO MOVE
The church — formerly known as the Park Plaza Church of Christ — began meeting in an elementary school in 1963 and later constructed its own building in the heart of Tulsa.

In recent years, even as the landlocked church outgrew its 850-seat auditorium, the congregation eschewed investing millions in a new, larger building and moving to the suburbs.

Instead, the church — one of the 10 largest Churches of Christ in the U.S. — expanded to two services. In 2014, it opened branch locations in two other parts of the metro area.

Most recently, Wilburn was preaching five times each Sunday morning — two times at the original location, two times at the Brookside branch campus and once at the Jenks branch campus. Each week, the original facility drew about 1,000 worshippers, with roughly 250 each at the other branches — for a total average Sunday attendance of 1,500 or so.

“I never got a ticket,” Wilburn said of racing from site to site each Sunday. Asked by The Christian Chronicle if he deserved one, he responded with a chuckle, “No comment.”

Content with the multi-site arrangement, church leaders were not looking for real estate when approached earlier this year about buying a 50-acre complex formerly owned by Grace Church, elder Allan Trimble said.

Grace, originally known as Grace Fellowship, was one of Tulsa’s largest churches in the 1980s and 1990s but decided to sell its property because of a declining membership in recent years, the Tulsa World reported.

“This opportunity truly took us by surprise,” said Trimble, a retired football coach who won 13 state championships with Jenks High School. “We were happy where we were, and we weren’t looking (to move). So when the idea surfaced, we tiptoed cautiously.”

But after months of prayer and consideration, the elders decided the move was the right one. The $7.5 million purchase in southeast Tulsa was finalized this summer.

The complex has 175,000 square feet of buildings — including a worship center built in 1983, a children’s facility built in 2000 and a youth area built in 2001.

The move allowed The Park Church of Christ to consolidate all its branches back into one, easily accessible location, leaders said.

The new property will house services, too, for Spanish speakers and the hearing impaired.

With donations from members and the expected sales of the original and Brookside buildings, the church will maintain no building debt, Wilburn said. The Jenks branch met in a school.

“So many doors opened,” Trimble said of the move. “We ultimately couldn’t deny that this was not only a smart move — it had to be what God must want for us.

“The new facility will provide us with a launching pad to offer every ministry and event we could ever imagine,” he added. “We see it as a tremendous blessing from God and a responsibility to the community.”

A NEW BEGINNING
On the first Sunday at the new site, church member Lyndsey Perez stood by the road, waving a sign that said, “SO GLAD YOU’RE HERE!”

Perez said she, her husband, Charles, and their children, Delia, 10, and Donovan, 8, previously wor-
drew the Perezes to the congregation, she said.
The entire family has traveled with other young families from the church to work with the Agape Church of Christ in Portland, Ore., where domestic missionary Ron Clark serves.
“We worked with the homeless outreach down there,” Perez said.
While many Churches of Christ nationally struggle numerically, The Park church thrives.
One reason, Grady King believes, is that the congregation’s leaders are “compelled by a Christ-centered vision that fosters a ministry culture blessing people to use their gifts.
“The elders are not afraid of taking risks, trying new things and challenging their people to give of themselves,” said King, director of church resources at Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City.
“People want leadership — to be a part of something that depends on God’s strength and power,” he added. “Mitch’s long-term relationship with Park Plaza’s elders and the church as a visionary teacher and encourager of everyone doing ministry is significant. Being the presence of Christ in the world is a constant theme at Park Plaza.”
In his first sermon in the unfamiliar surroundings, Wilburn focused on love.
He described, in a choking voice, how church members Steve and Hannah Craver had lost their 3-year-old son, Eli, in a recent crash and then donated his organs to save others.
Just a few weeks before he died, the smiling boy had helped his grandparents Jerry and Sarah Taylor welcome worshipers to the Sunday assembly at the original location.
“I began to think to myself: Here is a small one that spent his days inviting, preparing and setting the tone for others to enter worship,” Wilburn said. “And now, his loving parents have made the decision to give their child, literally, so that others may live. You don’t have to look that far to see Jesus in that example.”
Use the new building, the preacher urged, to invite more people to meet the Savior.
“We want everyone to know they can encounter the love and forgiveness of Christ in this place,” he said. They can “come join this imperfect group of people who follow after a perfect God.”
DUCK BOAT: ‘This is a 21st century Job situation,’ minister says

FROM PAGE 3
Lake trip, operated by tour company Ride the Ducks. When she received an alert about a sudden burst of inclement weather, she called her husband to make sure he and their children were OK.

“He says, ‘It’s not good, Pam,’” she said in an interview with CBS reporter Dana Jacobson. “And I told him I loved him, he told me he loved me. And I asked him to take care of the kids. That was our last words.”

Loren Smith, 14, survived the ordeal and was reunited with her mother at a nearby hospital. In the days since the tragedy, she said she has struggled with survivor’s guilt.

“I’m thinking, ‘Why me? Why do I have to live?’” she told Jacobson.

The reporter replied, “You got to live to share your brother’s memory, and your father’s.”

Her mother added, “And you have purpose. You have a purpose, Loren. You’ve got big things ahead of you. And God knows, I needed you.”

‘THE WORLD ... HAS GONE INSANE’

Coleman, 76, had traveled from Indianapolis to Branson with his brother and sister-in-law, Butch and Toni Coleman, and six other members of their family, including children ages 9, 7, 2 and 1.

Ray Coleman was the only member of the group who worshiped with the Kingsley Terrace church, where he served as an usher.

“Every Sunday he would stand back there and open the doors and invite folks in, just a quiet man,” said Stanley J. Hubbard, ministering evangelist for the Kingsley Terrace church.

For two decades, Ray Coleman worshiped with the congregation. He wasn’t married and didn’t have any children, but he was a beloved part of his church family, Hubbard told The Christian Chronicle. He served on a team of about 15 ushers and always made sure church members knew where Bible classes met.

Only two of Ray Coleman’s relatives who went to Branson — Tia Coleman and her 13-year-old nephew — survived. The Eastern Star Church, where other members of the family attended, hosted a memorial service for five of the family members, including Ray Coleman.

“This is a 21st century Job situation,” Eastern Star minister Jeffery Johnson Jr. told the family during the service, the Indianapolis Star reported. “Job, like you guys, had to deal with the death of multiple family members in the same day.”

But, added Johnson, “If you can push your way through the devastation, you’re going to find restoration. God has the final say.”

The Kingsley Terrace Church of Christ hosted a gathering for the Coleman family, who have been bombarded by media in the wake of the disaster, Hubbard said.

“The congregation mourns for them, he added, and for the families of the other victims.

“We want to pray for them,” Hubbard told the congregation on the Sunday after the tragedy, “and let me say something before I pray, because I’m always bothered when people say stuff like, ‘Well, the Lord knows what he’s doing. He knows who to take, when to take them.’”

The previous Sunday, the church “identified that death is not a part of God’s plan,” the minister said. “God doesn’t decide to bring trauma into people’s lives. He doesn’t stop every possible situation from happening, but it’s not because God does not love us or care for us …

“You’re living in a world where sin has infected the world, and people die. Things go wrong because the world is in turmoil, not because God’s picking and choosing who to take out at a certain time. It’s because the world you’re living in has gone insane.”

‘THANK GOD SHE HAS THAT CHURCH’

The Sunday before the tragedy, Lance Smith, 15, had preached his first sermon for the Osceola Church of Christ — a short devotional on the importance of being a good example.

“I finally was able to get Lance to do a devotional and break out of his shell,” said Will Hester, the church’s minister. “He was the perfect example of humility and compassion. He cared about everyone.”

Baptized late last year, Lance Smith was about to start ninth grade at Osceola High School. He had recently completed a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) program and was on the robotics team. He played soccer.

Steve Smith, 53, was a retired elementary school teacher and “a man of humility who always put everyone else ahead of himself,” Hester said. “He was always thinking of how he could help others. He was a wonderful man to be around. He had a compassionate heart.”

Steve and Pam Smith were married for 28 years. She told CBS that her husband and son will be remembered “for their Christian walk.”

“We’re going to have to lean on people,” Pam Smith said as she sat next to her daughter. “She’s all I’ve got now. So, we’ve got to take care of each other.”

After the segment aired on “CBS This Morning,” reporter Dana Jacobson told the show’s hosts, “They have their church at home that’s really embraced them as well, which I know, she told me, has helped them tremendously so far.”

Host John Dickerson added, “When she talks about needing to lean on people, thank God she has that church and that they have each other.”

Lance Smith preaches for the Osceola Church of Christ, days before the tragedy.
In Indianapolis, Hubbard urged members of the Kingsley Terrace church to “take advantage of every second we have,” because life is uncertain. A bad decision — even one made by someone else — could cost them their lives.

“This may be your last second,” he said. “Whatever you go through, thank God you’re alive to go through it.”

The congregation’s sorrow was magnified when they learned that two more of the lives lost were their brothers in Christ, Hubbard told the Chronicle.

The incident made international headlines and brought condolences from church members overseas.

“This dreadful, heartbreaking disaster was in our British TV news and newspapers,” said Trevor Williams, a longtime minister from Birmingham, England. “As a church leader among Churches of Christ in Britain, we send our love to all who have lost loved ones, but especially to those of the household of faith.

May God bring you comfort through the love of the brethren.”

In addition to the support, Hubbard sees God working through the tragedy.

The Smiths, members of the Osceola Church of Christ in Arkansas who perished in the duck boat tragedy. The scholarship benefits incoming students “who possess a servant’s attitude and demonstrate excellent Christian character by participating in missions and community service,” university officials said. Duck boat survivor Loren Smith, her mother, Pam, and Osceola church minister Will Hester and his wife, Sarah, initiated the fund. Find links to contribute to this and other memorial funds at christianchronicle.org.
Over my lifetime of eight to ten years,
an average of 100 people in remote parts of the world will hear the Word of the Lord.
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ARGENTINA
BUENOS AIRES — Abortion is illegal in Argentina except for victims of rape or to save the life of the mother. Recently, however, the country’s Chamber of Deputies approved a bill that would legalize the procedure through the first 14 weeks of pregnancy — a sign of Catholicism’s declining influence in the South American nation, commentators said.

Dr. Andy Luque, a physician from Ecuador and a member of the Caballito Church of Christ in Buenos Aires, spoke to youths recently about the physical effects of abortion. A Christian psychologist who worships with the church also planned to provide information on the psychological effects of abortion.

“We are fortunate to have Christian professionals,” said missionary Joel Banks, “who can provide insight that young people need and are asking for.”

KENYA
LIMuru — Church leaders in this East African nation recently participated in a week-long training seminar sponsored by the Restore Small Groups ministry.

Charles Cheruiyot, a longtime minister in Eldoret, Kenya, took small-group facilitators from his congregation and from the towns of Makuenei and Nakuru to Limuru, northwest of Kenya’s capital, Nairobi, for the training.

The churches use small-group ministry as part of Celebrate Recovery, a program offered by Churches of Christ around the globe that helps people struggling with hurt, pain and addiction.

SINGAPORE
In this island nation, the Moulmein Church of Christ meets in a newly rebuilt building in a growing medical hub. Administrators at a nearby hospital recently asked if church members could meet and pray for their patients. The church sent two teams to sing for, chat with and pray for patients and their families.

“One of the most touching encounters had to be a Muslim mother who was weeping away while we prayed for her very sick son,” church members wrote in a recent report. “Christ’s love breaks down racial, cultural and even religious barriers.”

TOGO
KPAlIme — “Piggery is now operational,” reads the headline of the latest Ghana-Togo Mission newsletter from evangelist Willie Gley.

The mission purchased four pigs to teach preaching students in the West African nation and “to sustain the work in the Kloto region and other parts of Togo,” Gley said.

Micronesia meets Ant-onio and Bob — and learns of Christ’s love

Children on the Pacific island of Pohnpei are introduced to two friendly puppets, Ant-onio and Bob, brought to life by brothers Spencer and Connor Parker during a vacation Bible school hosted by the Madolenihmw Church of Christ.

“Most had never even seen puppets,” said the boys’ mother, Kristi. “We thought we’d have some who were afraid, but nope — not a one!” (Find links to videos of the children singing “Jesus Loves the Little Children” and “I’m Happy Today” along with the puppets in the Pohnpeian language at christianchronicle.org.)

Kristi Parker serves with her husband, Wayne, in the Federated States of Micronesia. The nation of 105,000 souls, spread across 600-plus islands, has small Churches of Christ in the states of Pohnpei, Chuuk and Kosrae, plus a few baptisms on the island of Yap. See www.parkersinthePacific.com.
Prayers — and food — for Venezuela

AN ECONOMIC CRISIS in the South American nation creates a flood of refugees — and opportunities to serve.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

WE CAN’T SAVE THE WHOLE COUNTRY, BUT WE CAN HELP.”

Michael Hursey and Russ Garner believe that fervently when they speak about Venezuela, a place with a special connection to the congregation they serve as elders, the West Broward Church of Christ in Plantation, Fla.

The 400-member church launched an effort to raise $1 million for Venezuela aid by the end of the year and plans to use the funds to help members of Churches of Christ in the South American nation to survive — and to share food and Jesus with their neighbors.

Venezuela is in the midst of an ever-deepening economic crisis. Shortages of food and medicine beset the country’s population of 32.8 million souls — a number that’s declining rapidly.

An estimated 2.3 million Venezuelans have fled the country since the crisis began about five years ago, the United Nations reports.

“The exodus of Venezuelans from the country is one of Latin America’s largest mass-population movements in history,” said William Spindler, spokesman for the U.N.’s High Commissioner for Refugees.

Most flee to other South American countries, including Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador, where more than 4,000 Venezuelans per day entered the country during the first week of August, Spindler said.

Some come to the U.S.

On a recent Tuesday evening, several of the West Broward church’s Venezuelan members took time from their weekly Bible study to speak with The Christian Chronicle about the economic crisis in their homeland.

A few of the Venezuelans have worshiped with the south Florida congregation for decades. Others, including Christians in their 70s, moved to the U.S. only months ago because of the harsh environment back home.

One by one, the Venezuelans shared heartbreaking stories of rolling blackouts, waiting all day in line for bread and leaving with nothing, grandmothers in their 90s who need medicine and disposable undergarments and can’t find either.

And there are protests, intimidation — even death.

The Venezuelan Christians are angry and ashamed by their once-prosperous country’s man-made crisis. They’re also afraid for their relatives still in Venezuela, and they pray daily — sometimes hourly — for their safety.

The church plans to use its contacts in Venezuela to ship packages of vitamins, medicine and a non-perishable, high-nutrition, yogurt-like food to members of Churches of Christ there. The Florida congregation also plans to send Spanish-language gospel tracts.

Far from home, the Venezuelans have found a new family in their small group, one of four Spanish-speaking small groups sponsored by the West Broward church. The congregation also has 13 English-speaking groups that meet in homes from Miami to Coral Springs and Fort Lauderdale, said coordinator Anthony Fischetto. A few of the Venezuelan immigrants have been baptized at West Broward, he added.

WE STUDIED, WE ATE, AND GOD PROVIDED

About 900 miles north of the West Broward church, the Brentwood Hills Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn., also shares close ties to Venezuela. For nearly a quarter-century the 1,500-member church has supported the work of Leo Rojas, minister for the Barquisimeto Church of Christ, which meets about 200 miles west of Venezuela’s capital, Caracas.

Earlier this year, while visiting Nashville, Rojas spoke to the church about his congregation’s history and current challenges.

“Inflation’s been 36 thousand percent so far this year,” said Enoch Rinks, a former missionary to Paraguay, as he translated for Rojas. “His wife is a nurse. Her salary each month is enough to buy two kilos of rice. ... There was a little baby at the church who developed cancer. They couldn’t get medicine. She died.”

Despite the hardships, the Barquisimeto church stays true to its mission, sharing its food and its Savior with the community, Rojas said. A small group of women launched the congregation, which had 17 worshipers meeting in a public square when they invited Rojas to become their minister.

About 350 people worship with the church now, though many families have left, Rojas said. The church has helped establish 35 other Churches of Christ in Venezuela and experienced 410 baptisms last year.

“We work together as a team,” Rojas said. We have about 100 preachers in all different parts of the country. We meet together two or three times a year, we talk about how we can start more and more churches.”

In March and April the church sponsored gatherings for about 130 preachers.

“People had to bring their own sleeping bags and plates,” Rojas said. Nonetheless, “we studied, we ate, and God provided everything.”

The church sponsored a recent youth conference at a school where a church member serves as principal. The Christians shared what little they had.

“If there was a family that had two bags of rice, they gave one of those bags of rice for the youth retreat,” Rojas said. “So, little by little, we got all the food together because this is the future of the church. If we don’t work with the young people, the world is offering a lot of things that will ruin their lives.”
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The “Macedonian Call”

A small group of Christians are sending out the “Macedonian Call” to come to warm and dry Quartzsite, Ariz., and help spread the Good News. Each year during the 2nd and 3rd week of January, approximately one million Rock and RV enthusiasts come to Quartzsite for annual events. If you are retired or can schedule your vacation for the third week of January, we pray you will join us in what is truly a unique and exciting ministry opportunity.

For the past 8 years we have had a Gospel Meeting the 3rd week of January. In 2019 the Gospel Meeting is set for Jan. 20-25 and the theme is: “Any Plans for Eternity?” We hope and pray you will consider spending time in this mission field. Contact Gerald Molzahn: geraldm67@gmail.com

www.quartzsitechurchofchrist.com

Gene and Karel Muehring have devoted their lives to faith, service and mission work. That’s why they’re longtime supporters of The Christian Chronicle.

“It’s important to stay connected to the congregations throughout the world,” Gene Muehring says. And the Chronicle recognizes how important it is to share the stories Churches of Christ — in the U.S. and abroad. Gene Muehring began supporting the Chronicle regularly when his son served for 27 months with a missionary in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, through the Adventures in Missions (AIM) program of Sunset International Bible Institute in Lubbock, Texas.

“I found out that (the Chronicle) was the best place to get information on what was happening to churches worldwide,” Gene Muehring said. “Once in a while, they would mention some of the efforts that the AIM program was doing.”

The Muehrings, who recently celebrated their 20th anniversary, worship with the Church of Christ Northwest in Peoria, Ill. They have four children and three grandchildren spread across the country.

Karel Muehring has served as a missionary in Zambia, Honduras, Peru and Tennessee. Gene Muehring, who served 23 years in the U.S. Air Force, was a church deacon in California and Illinois for more than 25 years. The couple volunteered with a church-supported disaster relief team after the 2013 tornado in Washington, Ill.

Gene Muehring has supported the Chronicle for 31 years and encourages other readers to stay faithful — and to stay connected.

“It’s so hard, particularly for our kids, to remain faithful,” he said.

For that reason, “it’s awful important,” he said, to maintain a sense of connection to a broader fellowship.

To find out more about the mission work at the Central Texas Children’s Home or to send your resume contact: Ray Crowder Executive Director Jon O’Keefe Residential Svc. Dir.
jon@ctch.org (512) 243-1386

Central Texas Children’s Home

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11 tips for successful missions

**SHORT-TERM WORKS** require planning, flexibility and coordination with host churches, leaders say.

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

Short-term mission trips have taken Paula Harrington and her family to disaster zones in the U.S. and struggling communities in Third World countries.

“We have cleaned up after tornadoes, done Vacation Bible Schools on the streets, fed others, cleaned yards and homes and played with kids,” said Harrington, a member of the Lone Oak Church of Christ in Paducah, Ky. “Every time the result was learning to serve and bless our neighbors. God allows us to see the big picture on mission trips.”

Trey Morgan, minister for the Childress Church of Christ in Texas, has organized numerous trips to help at a hilltop dump in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

The image that sticks with him: “I spent the day working with a lady in the dump, helping her dig through trash, sort trash and carry things she could recycle to sell for money for her family. I was so glad when the day was over, and I could get out of those nasty clothes and take a shower. It hit me while I was cleaning up that the lady would rise early in the morning, put back on her filthy clothes and have to do it again.”

Jana Miller, a missionary in Zambia, said short-term mission trips to Mexico helped nurture her love for mission work.

“My levels of agreement with short-term missions vary based on the type of trip,” said Miller, who is sponsored by the Edmond Church of Christ in Oklahoma. “Are you going to encourage a missionary? Sharing medical or other special-ized skills? Learning from a missionary about what it means to live and serve in a different place?

“I think all of those are worthy reasons for shorter-term missions,” she added. “I also think there are times when the money could be used more beneficially to create local, short-term jobs surrounding the projects and special programs outside groups traditionally lead.”

Harrington, Morgan and Miller were among 75 trip coordinators and church leaders who responded to a survey by The Christian Chronicle.

Based on all the responses, here are 11 tips for making short-term mission work successful:

1. **Know your purpose.**
   “Clearly define the task, both in terms of process and expected outcome, in such a way that someone unfamiliar with the task/mission would know exactly what was to be done. Recruit team members who are capable of accomplishing the task. Train team members sufficiently to make effectiveness a probability and not only a remote possibility. Go where you are invited, not where you have asked to go.” — Roger McCown, Brentwood Oaks Church of Christ in Austin, Texas

“The focus should not be on us as the trip participants. God didn’t call us into his mission for me to learn and grow and have my worldview shaped. Those are definitely positive by-products but should not be the primary focus of discussion, both before and after. The focus is on supporting what God is already doing.”

Missionary Jana Miller reads with Reuben at The Haven, which provides temporary care for orphans in Zambia. Miller recalls how short-term work in Mexico opened her eyes to “the global community worshiping the same God ... and how powerful that was. It doesn't look the same or sound the same, but we're all serving and praising the same God.”

**PHOTO PROVIDED BY JANA MILLER**
‘Go with an attitude of servitude’

Wendle Kee hands out invitations to a medical clinic and Bible study in Belize.

Student volunteers clean a neighborhood in Houston after Hurricane Harvey.

Students from Southwest Christian School in Fort Worth, Texas, sing songs with children in Talisay City on the island of Cebu in the Philippines during a mission trip.

In Antwerp, Belgium, teens on a mission walk to a basketball court with immigrants.

In a village near Siem Reap, Cambodia, local church members perform a skit about the life of Joseph as children and campers from across Southeast Asia watch. Coordinators of the mission, called Angkor of Faith, worked with the Cambodian congregation to arrange the event.

Wendle Kee and the students he leads go to Belize with a spirit of giving and service. They believe in the power of positive dynamics and strive to make a lasting impact in the communities they serve.

**What are some key takeaways from this story?**

1. **Prepare as much as possible.** Make sure the trip is needed, and empower the leadership in the local church by working through them instead of at cross purposes.

2. **Coordinate details with the mission location.** Doing this in place of service, hopefully with a long-term host ministry when you are simply there to support and partner.

3. **Involving your whole congregation.** All details and what ifs should be made by the group going to ensure communication stays open. Make them invest in the trip in such a way that they have ownership in the mission.

4. **Plan carefully.** Have a specific goal to be achieved. Focus on who you are serving, and have a definite program of activities for you as you go. Give them an overview of your sending congregation. Let them know. Make friends. If you are planning a trip and want a project for people to do, then ask the locals what is really needed. Empower the leadership in the local church by working through them instead of at cross purposes.

5. **Be flexible.** Have a specific goal to be achieved. Focus on who you are serving, and have a definite program of activities for you as you go. Give them an overview of your sending congregation. Let them know. Make friends. If you are planning a trip and want a project for people to do, then ask the locals what is really needed. Empower the leadership in the local church by working through them instead of at cross purposes.

6. **Be a blessing, not a burden.** Remember, you are a guest. Do not assume your way is the right way. Be humble.

7. **Go to serve, not to take a vacation.** Be ready to work — you are not a ‘vacationary’. Be willing to serve the long-term missionaries. Plan a full and busy schedule. Inactivity is frustrating to the campaigners.

8. **Respect the people and the culture.** Absolutely do not go to change the culture or the way the local culture does church. Let the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit do that. Do not flaunt American wealth or patriotism; we are not there to show them how much better we are. Do not ignore the counsel of the local leadership regarding practices the team should not do or places they should not go.

9. **Learn some of their language.** They will appreciate your effort and respect. — Morris Sumners, Lee R. Jamieson, Llewellyn Church of Christ in Tallahassee, Fla.

10. **Prepare those who are going to be culturally aware and sensitive.** I was embarrassed more than once by group members who said or did insensitive, culturally aware and sensitive. I was embarrassed more than once by group members who said or did insensitive, culturally aware and sensitive. I was embarrassed more than once by group members who said or did insensitive, culturally aware and sensitive.

Erik Tryggstad, Abilene Christian University in Texas.

There needs to be a clear purpose and schedule for the short-term mission group. ‘Winging it’ is not a good idea for either the short-term group or the host church. The short-term group should organize and prepare as much as they can for the host church. It is a lot of work for a host church, and whatever the group can do to ease that burden is very helpful. — Tristan Block, Northside Church of Christ in Wichita, Kan.

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“You must not ignore the local missionaries. They live and work with the people you are serving and have a better understanding of how to reach them.” — Linda Griekspoor, RiverWalk Church of Christ in Wichita, Kan.

“Try to learn as much about the place you are going before you go. Take the time to ask local people about life there. Go with a spirit of learning rather than a spirit of knowing what’s best for another people group.” — Miller

“Don’t carry in suitcases full of shoes, socks, clothes, etc., when those things can be purchased or made locally. You may actually be robbing a local Christian of their livelihood. A corollary: Don’t bring clothing that is offensive in the local culture, even if it is stylish in America.” — Ralph Williams, Monduli Juu Church of Christ in Tanzania

“Be humble. Be a servant. Realize that no job is ‘beneath you.’ Be adaptable — I mean, really adaptable.” — Rick Odell, West Ark Church of Christ in Fort Smith, Ark.

“Ask the question, ‘What would Jesus do in this culture?’” — Gailyn Van Rheezen, North Atlanta Church of Christ in Georgia


“Go with an open heart. Be yourself, but take it seriously. The people you meet will touch you, and the experience will shape you.” — Halee Ring, Belle Church of Christ in West Virginia

“Spend time with the local members. Share meals, play games, and give of yourself to make their lives better.” — Angela Ward, Southgate Church of Christ in San Angelo, Texas

“Never turn your nose up to something offered to you in love — a shirt, food, anything. Be gracious, say thank you and accept their love.” — Morgan

“Go with the intent to form relationships.” — Donna Griffith, Mount Hope Church of Christ in Joplin, Mo.

“Do not reject anything offered to you, especially food. Accept it with gratitude, and eat joyfully without asking questions.

“Be gracious in all things. Saturate the whole mission with prayer from beginning to end.” — Terrell Lee, Reidland Church of Christ in Paducah, Ky.

“In the Central American nation of Panama, Larry Brady from the Davenport Church of Christ in Alabama leads a mission team through tall grass to reach a remote village.

“Prepare to be friendly and outgoing and talk about Jesus and his salvation.” — Roger Dennington, Snellville Church of Christ in Georgia

“Love is a universal language. A hug goes a long way when you don’t speak the language.” — Stachia Washington, Childress Church of Christ in Texas

“Go with the intent to form relationships.” — Donna Griffith, Mount Hope Church of Christ in Joplin, Mo.

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“Look for God while you’re there ... don’t be surprised when you see him” — Clint Brumit, Brentwood Hills Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn.

“When churches send groups to locales where they already are financially committed, then the group tends to be more encouraging and mission aligned than if not. If you’re sending people on a short-term trip without being a financial partner otherwise, then just send the check. Short-term teams without long-term relationships are taking more than giving. And something is askew if the only missions spending you do is for your people to travel.” — Caleb Borchers, The Feast: A Church of Christ in Providence, R.I.

“Missionaries want sponsoring congregations to be involved in their ministry. Sending money is important, but visiting to encourage missionaries and see them in their community is very important and meaningful to them. It’s also difficult to assess what needs people have without physically visiting with them.” — Jimmy Hinton, Somerset Church of Christ in Pennsylvania

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“Look for God while you’re there ... don’t be surprised when you see him” — Clint Brumit, Brentwood Hills Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn. 
For father and son, mission trips made a big difference

In 1977, my father, mother, brother, sister and I lived in Roanoke Rapids, N.C., near the Virginia state line. I was 9 years old.

Dad had finished his studies the previous year at White’s Ferry Road School of Preaching in West Monroe, La. After graduation, our family and two others had loaded our belongings onto U-Haul trucks and moved to North Carolina to plant a new Church of Christ.

Four-plus decades have dulled my memories of that time. However, I still recall when a church youth group came that summer from Arnold, Mo. — more than 900 miles away — to spend a week with us.

I remember that the teens and adults helped distribute pamphlets for a gospel meeting at the old nightclub — painted all black when we arrived — that my parents’ mission team had transformed into a church building.

But more than that, I remember the encouragement that the out-of-town Christians provided for our small church. Their laughter and friendly spirits made the fellowship meals a joy. Their voices provided a boost as we sang familiar hymns.

That, I suppose, was my first exposure to what today we call short-term mission trips.

In 2002, my oldest son, Brady, was 9 years old when he joined me on our Oklahoma church’s annual spring break trip to the tiny mountain village of Aquiles, Mexico.

At that age, Brady wasn’t a whole lot of help with the various construction projects and Vacation Bible School skits that our group organized. But tossing a Frisbee with boys who spoke a different language and walking from our tent to an outhouse in the dark made an impression on him.

“I feel like going to Mexico is a big part of my faith story,” said my son, now 25 and the youth minister for the Crestview Church of Christ in Waco, Texas.

“Just going, seeing how the Gospel works in a different culture, seeing how people lived who had so much less than me, it was really formational and was something I looked forward to every year,” he added. “Now I get so excited to continue to go on trips and to help lead them. It’s especially fun to get to watch groups come together and bond over work and to see people on their first mission trip figuring out what it’s all about.”

What is it all about? Yes, distributing fliers, hammering nails and painting walls are often a part of it. But mostly, it’s all about the relationships.

CONTACT: bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org

Road notes

Evan Barker, Andrew King and Brady Ross, youth minister for the Crestview Church of Christ in Waco, Texas, work on building a house during a mission trip to Honduras.
Full-time Youth Ministry Opportunity

Southwest Church of Christ in Pueblo, Colo., is seeking a full-time youth minister with a loving and supportive wife to minister to a youth group of 25+/- . Qualified individuals should possess a Bible degree (youth ministry preferred). Applicants with a degree in another area of study will be considered if they have significant field-related work experience. The candidate should possess strong communication skills, interpersonal skills, and organizational skills. Our ideal candidate will demonstrate Biblical soundness, spiritual maturity, and an obvious love for children/youth. Email resumes to: gdwyer339@aol.com southwestcofc1@gmail.com

Associate Minister - Denver, Colo.

We are seeking an associate minister to work with the senior minister and elders, with the intention of transitioning to our full-time minister. Responsibilities include preaching and other ministerial work in support of the church mission. Bachelor degree in theology, graduate of a Bible school or training work, or the equivalent preaching experience. If interested, mail resume to: South Fulton Street Church of Christ Attention: Elders 1035 S Fulton St, Denver, CO 80247

Assistant Director

Camp Wyldwood, a Christian summer camp and retreat facility, is seeking a full-time assistant director. The assistant director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the summer camp, marketing the summer camp and retreat facility, and helping the executive director fundraise. Applicants should send a resume to: chad@campwyldwood.org

Family & Youth Minister

The Liberty, Mo., Church of Christ, a congregation that averaged 258 in 2017, is seeking a Family & Youth Minister. For a detailed description of the position and instructions on how to apply, please follow the link to our website:

FULL TIME PULPIT MINISTER

Experienced, full-time minister needed for a congregation of 120+. The candidate we are seeking will be a strong communicator, have two years Biblical studies, a Bachelor’s degree in Bible or Ministry (preferred), and married. Salary is negotiable. Send resume and CD or link to sermon to:
Lapeer Church of Christ
1680 N Lapeer Rd, Lapeer, MI 48446
Church office: (810) 664-1611
www.lapeercoc.com
lapeercoc@lapeerch.com

Camp Wyldwood, a Christian summer camp and retreat facility, is seeking a full-time assistant director. The assistant director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the summer camp, marketing the summer camp and retreat facility, and helping the executive director fundraise. Applicants should send a resume to: chad@campwyldwood.org

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MINISTER NEEDED FOR LOVING CHURCH

The Briarwood Church of Christ in Natchez, Miss., is searching for a minister to preach, teach and serve in the community. This is church family of about 60 members, averages about the same in worship. The emphasis is on involvement in the lives of the members and the community. This unique congregation has much to offer and will be an encouragement to anyone who will love them. If interested, please email: ntzcoc@cableone.net. Give us your contact information, and someone will follow-up with the desired qualifications and expectations, a request for a resume and further exchange of thoughts and attitudes.

minister.search@cabotchurch.com
500 N Second St, Cabot, AR 72023

Youth and Family Minister

The Fairview Road Church of Christ in Columbia, Mo., is seeking a Youth and Family Minister. The primary focus of this minister’s work will be with teenagers (6th – 12th grade) and their families. The overall goal is to grow teens individually and as a group toward the likeness of Christ with a family-based youth ministry perspective in conjunction with overall goals of the congregation. Salary is commensurate with education and experience. For more information, please contact:
Dee Vanderburg
Vandy649@sbcglobal.net

Oregon Youth Minister

The Southwest Church of Christ in Tigard, Ore., is seeking a man with ministry experience. We are a congregation of 500, in a suburb of Portland. We have an active youth group of around 50 teens (grades 7-12). Deep faith in the Lord and ability to communicate the Savior’s love for all is a must, as well as proven skills in organization of classes, camps, activities, and mission travel. Beautiful Pacific Northwest, 90 minutes from the ocean and 90 minutes from the mountains! Salary will be commensurate with experience. Please email a resume to:
office@swest.org
Attention: Youth Minister Search

FULL CALENDAR

Sept. 13 Eastern European Mission’s Tyler Event. Bushman’s Celebration Center, Bullard, Texas. See eem.org/events.
Sept. 30-Oct. 3 Harding University Bible Lectureship. Searcy, Ark. See www.harding.edu/events/lectureship.
Oct. 4-7 CenterPeace (e3) Conference. Highland Oaks Church, Dallas. See centerpeace.net.
Nov. 5-11 Pan American Lectureship. Majesty of the Seas Cruise, Havana, Cuba. See lectureship.org.

FULL CALENDAR: www.christianchronicle.org. To include your event for $25, contact tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org.
AFTER A YEAR AT THE HELM of Freed-Hardeman, David Shannon reflects on his move from pulpit to presidency

Keeping Christian education on mission

BY LYNN McMILLON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

David R. Shannon remembers the day when E. Claude Gardner walked into the sawmill near Centerville, Tenn., where Shannon was working and asked him to attend Freed-Hardeman College.

“It changed my life,” Shannon recalled.

But he never dreamed he would one day fill Gardner’s shoes as president of the Henderson, Tenn., school, now a 2,000 student university that prepares students to serve Churches of Christ — from the pulpit and in the pews.

Since age 14, Shannon had preached for small Churches of Christ in Middle Tennessee. After graduating from Freed-Hardeman in 1989, he and his new bride, Tracie, moved to New York to work with the Timothy Hill Children’s Ranch.

A long preaching career followed, including eight years with the East Gadsden Church of Christ in Gadsden, Ala., and 18 with the Mt. Juliet Church of Christ in Tennessee.

He has served on the board of Heritage University in Florence, Ala., and has participated in mission work in El Salvador. John Law, chairman of FHU’s board of trustees, described him as “an expert communicator, collaborator, team builder, motivator and encourager.”

This year, Shannon and his wife celebrate their 30th anniversary along with their four children and two grandchildren.

What motivated you to leave a long preaching career to become a college president?

One of the hardest decisions Tracie and I have ever had to make was whether or not to leave the Mt. Juliet church to accept another opportunity to serve in the Lord’s kingdom as president of FHU.

As we worked through this decision-making process, we continually considered the powerful influence FHU has had on the Lord’s church and upon Christian families for over a century. Perhaps we all have observed how difficult it is for Christian institutions of higher education to stay on mission. If I could have an impact on FHU’s future in helping students love the Lord and his church even more when they graduated than when they enrolled, I was willing to serve.

After a year in the presidency, how do you find the challenges to be different from ministry?

First, the university’s almost 2,000 students and more than 400 full- and part-time employees cannot wait for the new president to catch on. The university needs decisions today.

Second, the difference in the ministry and the presidency is the simple reality that the buck stops here. As a preacher, it stopped with the elders; as a president, it stops in this office.

Third, the present culture of higher education is volatile. The student demographic is changing. The marketplace demands more from universities — as do the students. Perhaps there has never been a time when education is more competitive.

How does FHU maintain its high percentage of students from Churches of Christ?

Our board mandates that we keep enrollment at 75 percent members of the Church of Christ. We place a concentrated effort on going to where these high school students live, worship and learn.

We know where the majority of high school students who will enroll in FHU are on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights. Church visits are important for this reason. Reaching out and showing up at youth retreats, church camps and youth rallies also gives us contact with these youth.

We want youths who already are investing their lives in the Lord to know of a place where they will be given the opportunity to grow deeper in their faith and expand their abilities to serve while preparing academically for the career of their dreams. All of this will be strengthened as they are surrounded by friends who will become as close as family and who also love the Lord and his church.

Is Christian higher education worth the cost?

Most definitely! Our mission is for our students to grow in their faith and expand their love for God and others while receiving an excellent education and having fun along the way.

Here it is possible for a student to begin their young adult life away from home in a godly environment. They have the opportunity to enjoy and to grow by gaining an education that will serve them well, to form Christian friendships that will last for a lifetime.

We also value Christian spouses. I was 18 years old and thought Freed-Hardeman was expensive. But even at 18, I knew that if I found a Christian wife here, it would be a good investment.

We are often a student’s first home away from home. It is here students will begin to form adult habits. Consider habits and choices many of our 19- to 22-year-olds develop who are not attending a Christian university.

In a survey of graduates of one year out (most of them 23 years old), we asked them several spiritual questions. One of them was a multiple-choice question: “How often do you go to church?” Of about 80 percent who came to us as members of Churches of Christ, 98 percent said they attend most of the time while 90 percent attend every time the doors are open.

I could give many examples of daily, weekly and semester-long experiences that add to the value of Christian education. The cost of Christian education at a university that will grow the student closer to Christ and his church is an excellent value.

Why should people support Christian higher education?

If I am concerned about the future of the church, I should be concerned about whether or not she can retain and attract young people in their 20s. FHU is a successful option.

See SHANNON, Page 24
College of Arts and Sciences  
Dr. Gregory Straughn, Dean, ACU Box 29210, Abilene, Texas 79699-9210

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication invites applications for a full-time, tenure-track faculty member to join six colleagues 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. Jennifer Shewmaker, Dean, ACU Box 28276, Abilene, Texas 79699-8276

The Department of Teacher Education invites applications for a tenure track faculty position as assistant or associate professor. An earned doctorate in the field of education with an emphasis in one or more of the following areas is required: special education, reading and/or ESL. Must provide evidence of exemplary practice in K-12 settings. Applicants should demonstrate a strong background in effective teaching strategies for diverse populations; ability to create and enhance collaborative partnerships with public school personnel; and strong potential for continued professional service and scholarship. Commitment to the mission of preparing Christian teachers to serve in diverse settings is fundamental. Information about the department can be found at acu.edu/education.

School of Information Technology and Computing  
Dr. John Homer, Director, ACU Box 29304, Abilene, Texas 79699-9304

The School of Information Technology and Computing (SITC) invites applications for an open-rank position in any of the following fields: computer science, information technology and information systems. Start date is Spring 2019, or when the best candidate is available. Preferred applicants will have a Ph.D. and ability to teach in one of the foregoing fields, or a master’s degree with significant industry and teaching experience. Primary responsibilities will include teaching undergraduate students in the SITC, mentoring students, service assignments, and research. Rank, tenure eligibility and salary will be determined based upon qualifications and experience. Information about the SITC can be found at blogs.acu.edu/sitc.

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 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.
AGAPE CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES
MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Youth groups from three Churches of Christ were among volunteers who helped Agape Child & Family Services this summer.
Teams from the Highland Church of Christ in Cordova, Tenn., the Harpeth Hills Church of Christ in Brentwood, Tenn., and the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City painted, cleaned up and beautified areas in which Agape provides services to needy children and families.

HIGHER EDUCATION

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
ABILENE, Texas — Megeste Pierre plans to use his ACU education to help in his homeland of Haiti.
Pierre, 31, recently completed his master of divinity degree to go along with his bachelor’s degree in biblical studies and minors in political science and business administration.
After the 2010 earthquake that devastated Haiti, Pierre’s family established The Goodness of God Orphanage. He’ll use the knowledge gained in his ACU studies to run the school and minister to those he serves.
His mother died when he was young, and he lived in an orphanage for a while.

MINISTRY TRAINING

BEAR VALLEY BIBLE INSTITUTE INTERNATIONAL
DENVER — Bear Valley Bible Institute’s 19 incoming freshmen this fall include students from Argentina, China, Ghana and Uganda as well as Arkansas, California, Colorado, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, West Virginia and Wyoming.
In all, the school has 58 students this semester, 35 enrolled full time, Bear Valley Church of Christ minister Neal Pollard said. Since 1965, the institute has trained “preachers of the gospel, evangelists with a precious message to share with a lost and dying world,” according to its website.
WAMAVA: Despite its appeal, ‘this camp is not a church’

FROM PAGE 3

only about two-thirds come from church-going homes, he said, “and that trend will continue as millennial parents send their children to camp (even though) they are not in the church anymore.”

For example, the camp’s fourth week included at least five campers whose parents had once been campers themselves and had grown up in Churches of Christ. Joe Dunlap said. But they no longer worship with a congregation in the fellowship.

“That is something that I am praying about,” he said. “What is camp doing that connects well with them, and how can we take that back to our churches?”

He’s happy that campers come from diverse backgrounds — including the kids of Lamica Hembry, his neighbor in Herndon, Va. Hembry, a bartender, worships with a Baptist church. She said she likes bringing her kids to camp because “it’s just good wholesome fun. People come from all over.”

Despite its appeal and spiritual focus, “this camp is not a church,” Joe Dunlap said. “We need to work better with the churches so that this is not a ‘one week on, 51 weeks off’ kind of thing.”

‘IT’S ALL FAMILY’

To understand the connections made at camps associated with Churches of Christ, The Christian Chronicle spoke to students, counselors and parents at WaMaVa, which takes its name from the nearby locales it was designed to serve — Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia.

• Let them know they’re loved: “I grew up here,” said Manny Furman, who has served as a counselor at WaMaVa for eight years.

“Over the course of the year I prepare to come,” said Furman, who graduated from Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn., in the spring and came back to the camp for the summer.

“I make friends that I will have for the rest of my life here,” he said. “Our goal is to try to make every kid feel like they are appreciated and they are loved.”

He remembers the advice he received from his former counselor: “If you want to yell at a kid, they are probably getting yelled at at home. You want to give them something different.”

• No racial barriers: On the final day of week four, Furman shared breakfast with Sonny Simpson, 44, of Laurel, Md. Simpson has been coming to WaMaVa since he was a child. He has been an instructor at camp for years, but on this day he came just for the fellowship.

“It’s all family,” he said. “I drove up here this morning just to have breakfast with Manny.”

He met Furman years ago — as he fished the future counselor’s glasses out of the lake, Simpson recalled with a laugh. Immediately, the two were like family. “It didn’t register to me that he was black and I was white,” Simpson said.

As the friends ate breakfast, they fist-bumped nearly every kid that walked by. They knew them all by name.

• A place of reunion and salvation: Wayne Wold, 43, lives in West Virginia and grew up in the Church of Christ where his dad preached. He now attends a Catholic church, but brings his two daughters to WaMaVa.

“It’s more than a camp; it’s part of my soul,” he said from the back of a tractor as he deposited gravel in front of the dining hall.

He loves the openness about faith he sees here, he said. “If that can save one kid’s life and bring them back to Christ, the whole summer is worth it.”

The camp also allows kids “to mingle with other cultures,” Wold said. “We are out in West Virginia, and I don’t see anybody. People from Deanwood (a neighborhood in northeast Washington) come down here. They don’t ever see trees!”

“This is an awesome place.”

• Learning to live by the light: The camp’s assistant director, Joshua Decker, wants children to experience spirituality in a way that goes beyond sitting and listening to adults preach.

Even walking to hear a sermon can be a learning opportunity, as demonstrated by a recent “blindfold devotional.” With covered eyes, campers had to listen for the speaker’s voice to find the location of the devotional.

“Meanwhile, there were other voices intended to distract and throw the campers off the trail,” Decker said. “The point is that there are many voices telling us what to do, but we have to choose whether we listen to God’s voice or man’s voice.”

At another devotional, each camper received a glow stick but wasn’t allowed to “snap” the sticks, causing the chemicals inside to glow, until someone performed an act of kindness for them.

Decker urged the campers to hold onto to their faith and continue to let their light shine — even after they return home.

“Let your light shine. Don’t hide it under a bushel,” Decker told the campers, quoting the lyrics to a popular kids’ song.

“And don’t let Satan blow it out.”

WEBSITE: www.wamava.com
‘This is heaven on earth, the way it should be’

A CAMP FOR SPECIAL-NEEDS KIDS, once featured on ‘Extreme Makeover: Home Edition,’ helps volunteers from Churches of Christ grow – perhaps in a more lasting way than other missions, one youth minister says.

BY KELLY WALDEN | FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE
Purdy, Mo.

Youths from four Churches of Christ committed to a week of dying to self as they served at Camp Barnabas, which provides summer adventures for special-needs children and young adults.

“I’m so thankful to see how these kids are treated and celebrated,” said Abbey Cartwright, a youth minister for the Southwest Church of Christ in Jonesboro, Ark. “This is heaven on earth, the way it should be.”

Volunteers called Barnstormers, ages 13 to 15, spent long hours serving meals, washing dishes and cleaning bathhouses at the campsite, called Teas Trail.

The work was hard, they said, but the music was loud and the spirited singing was energizing.

Volunteers ages 16 to 29, called Missionaries, worked one-on-one with campers, pushing wheelchairs or helping them walk, participating in whatever the campers wanted to do and helping them with eating and bathing if necessary.

Deep bonds developed between missionaries and campers.

The Southwest church brought 15 students to volunteer at the camp, including a male and a female intern. The same week, additional workers came from the Southern Hills Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas; The Hills Church of Christ in North Richland Hills, Texas; and the Reidland Church of Christ in Paducah, Ky.

At least three other Churches of Christ brought groups to serve at Camp Barnabas on different weeks.

The camp, which is not associated with Churches of Christ, gained national recognition a decade ago when the reality show “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition,” featuring carpenter and philanthropist Ty Pennington, rebuilt the camp founders’ home.

Seeing the joyous enthusiasm of the campers and volunteers, Pennington and his squad added a 40-bed bunkhouse to the project to house volunteers. They also created a media room to be used on rainy days and adapted a ropes course and zip line so they could be used by special-needs campers.

The national exposure led to more donations and more camper applications. In addition to the Teas Trail location, Camp Barnabas now operates a facility on a peninsula of Table Rock Lake in southwest Missouri that offers water sports.

This year, Barnabas served a record 2,000 campers.

“Each of the mission trips is really great in different ways,” he said, “but the life transformation I have seen at Camp Barnabas seems to be more lasting. They learn sacrifice and selflessness on a completely different level. ... I think they truly see God in a more visible way when they are encouraged to love the campers to such an extreme.”

His co-youth minister, Elizabeth Eckstein, added that the volunteers at Barnabas “are learning a lifestyle of service. They learn to put themselves second in a real way. It is more than a service project; it is a week that teaches them to love.”

Elizabeth Eckstein, right, spends time with friends at Camp Barnabas.

Christian campers celebrate a Baltic baptism

In the European nation of Lithuania, Christians congratulate their new sister in Christ, Arina, during the annual Baltic Family Camp. The camp, in its seventh year, brought together 110 members of Churches of Christ and friends from across Europe, including Arina’s homeland, Estonia, plus believers from the U.S., Russia and India.

The camp’s goal is to help European ministers, missionaries and their families get to know their counterparts in other nations, said Ilia Amosov, who ministers for a Church of Christ in Klaipeda, Lithuania.

“It has become a great tradition now,” added Danny Dodd, a former missionary to Lithuania who helped launch the camp and baptized Arina. Dodd ministers for the Levy Church of Christ in North Little Rock, Ark., which sponsors the camp.

Speakers included Curt Niccum, a Bible professor at Abilene Christian University in Texas, who spoke on the book of Ephesians. His wife, Deborah, taught classes for women. Alan and Sherry Pogue, licensed professional counselors from Sherwood, Ark., worked with the families.

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The camp’s goal is to help European ministers, missionaries and their families get to know their counterparts in other nations, said Ilia Amosov, who ministers for a Church of Christ in Klaipeda, Lithuania.

“We know the need for cooperation in our mission efforts,” Amosov said. “This is heaven on earth, the way it should be.”

Pennington, rebuilt the camp found- ers’ home.
Births

Bennett Tyler Ross
August 2, 2018

Bobby and Tamie Ross are the proud grandparents of Bennett Tyler Ross. Bennett was born at 9:42 a.m. Aug. 2. He weighed 6 pounds and 9 ounces and was 19 inches long. Bennett and his parents, Brady and Mary Ross, live in the Waco, Texas, area, where Brady is the youth minister for the Crestview Church of Christ.

Congratulations to the Ross family!

Birthdays

92nd: Richard Taylor Sr., Sept. 11, Florence, Ala.

Anniversaries

Hercel and Diane McKamey — 60 years

On Sept. 13, 1958, Hercel and Diane McKamey were wed in matrimony in the Cloverdale Church of Christ in Indiana. They began their joyous lives together in the church and they continued serving the members of the Church of Christ in many ways. They loved being with many of you during worship and developing friendships during all of those pot luck dinners. They still enjoy worshipping with other Christians and continue to do so in Phoenix, Ariz., where they do not have to worry about a snow storm keeping them from service.

At their wedding 60 years ago, Hercel and Diane could scarcely have imagined how the Lord would bless them. They have three children, 10 grandchildren, and the number of grandchildren just keeps growing.

Many of you reading this will certainly recognize them from a specific congregation, college lectureship, or Sunday night singing service. Let’s all congratulate them on their anniversary and all the years of service they have given and continue to give to the Lord and His people!

60th: Wayne and Glenna Bailey, Aug. 23, Urbana, Ill.

Memorial

Al Stathopulo
1922 — 2018

Elbert “Al” Almon Stathopulo was born in Oklahoma City on Jan. 16, 1922, to Christ and Iona Stathopulo. He fell asleep in the Lord on June 18, 2018, after a series of falls and complications. Al was a devoted husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather and a friend to all who knew him. His lovely wife June passed away 14 years earlier. Al is survived by his two sons, David (Sandi) of North Richland Hills, Texas, and Chris (Linda) of Dallas; four grandchildren, Michael, John, James, and Kathyrn; and four great-grandchildren, Jesse, Rhema, Theo, and Jerry.

Al joined the Marine Corps at the age of 18 in 1940, after graduating from high school. In June 1942, he survived the decisive naval battle of Midway. He served with honor for 20 years, retiring from the Marines with the rank of First Sergeant (E8). His last duty stations were in Jacksonville, N.C.; Falls Church, Va. (The Pentagon), and Key West, Fla. After retiring he and his family moved to Kailua, Hawaii, for 12 years. In Hawaii he worked as a credit manager at Honolulu Electrical Supply Company and later as corporate credit manager for Lewers & Cooke, Ltd.

In January 1972, Al and June moved from Hawaii to Dallas, where he has been a resident for 46 years. He worked five years as the credit manager at Miller Bros. Industries (Adam Hats) and then ended his career after 20 years as credit manager with Dallas Handbag Co., retiring in 1995.

Al turned 96 years of age this January and was still self-sufficient in his Dallas home.

He took a great interest in politics and governmental affairs and frequently wrote letters to the editor sharing his daily observations and research. Al was a committed Christian and a longtime member of the Waterview Church of Christ in Richardson, Texas, where he served as an elder, a Bible class teacher, a song leader, and an ESL English teacher to Chinese students.

We Remember

Arnelious Crenshaw Jr.

“Oh, Don Vito Corleone, godfather, it’s so hard to believe a whole year has passed since your departure. We’ve never known this present world without you, but are thankful for the memories. Mom and Dad were our first and best teachers about right and wrong, love, and having joy and peace always in Christ Jesus, but, dear brother, as your faith and knowledge of God’s Word grew, ours did too! You were always eager to share your revelations from God’s Word, and we were excited to learn them. Thank you for being the greatest storyteller of all time. As you made so vivid the Godfather trilogy, you did even greater with the Holy Scriptures, lifting them right off the page and implanting them directly on our hearts — Proverbs 3:1-8.

We love you always, Bud, always!”

sisters Gwen, Rosalind, Lutricia, Valerie and Ruthie

Submit your wedding announcements, birth announcements, memorials or tributes to milestones@christianchronicle.org or call (405) 425-5071. Submissions start at $25.
LEWIS: ‘A scholar for the Churches of Christ’

FROM PAGE 3

“I carry in my heart to this day the blessing of having had such a teacher.”

Lewis was born in Midlothian, Texas, and grew up in a farm family during the Great Depression. Those who knew him say the lessons he learned in that era served him well in his professional life. A lifelong student of the Bible, Lewis was known to say, “The best translation of the Bible is the one that you’ll read and live by.”

In 1953, Lewis completed a Ph.D. in New Testament from Harvard University. In 1962, he added a Ph.D. in Old Testament from Hebrew Union College to his credentials.

In 1958, Lewis was a part of the founding faculty of Harding Graduate School of Religion, now Harding School of Theology, and was eventually named professor emeritus of that institution.

“As we look back over his long career, we can see that he was more than a scholar in the Churches of Christ; he was a scholar for the Churches of Christ,” Wilson said.

“He raised the bar for all those thousands of his students who wanted to be preachers or teachers of the Word. He wanted them to jump higher and further than they had ever thought they could.”

Lewis served as a Bible class teacher and elder of the Church of Christ at White Station in Memphis. He attended Sunday morning services with the assistance of caregivers until the last months of his life.

Beloved professor Harvey Floyd dies at 87

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — He was a man of humble stature and a quiet nature, but Harvey Floyd had a powerful impact on generations of Lipscomb University students. The renowned Bible professor died Aug. 7 at age 87.

A native of Grenada, Miss., Floyd was legendary for his Greek, Holy Spirit and Romans classes among others. He earned a bachelor’s from Lipscomb, a master’s in Bible at Harding School of Theology and a doctorate from Vanderbilt University in classical Greek.

Meanwhile, a student at Lipscomb, he was named Bachelor of Ugliness and his future wife, Virginia Austin, was crowned Miss Lipscomb during the same year. They both graduated on June 1, 1953. They were married four days later.

From 1955 to 2010, Harvey Floyd taught at Lipscomb. He also taught Japanese students at Harpeth Hills Church of Christ for 40 years. He is the author of “Is the Holy Spirit for Me?”

“It is a time when we generally lacked the language and the willingness to talk about the Spirit. Dr. Floyd’s book and classes on the Holy Spirit began to help us break through that narrow silence,” said Leonard Allen, dean of Lipscomb’s College of Bible and Ministry.

Former Crossroads minister Lucas dies

THOMASVILLE, Ga. — Longtime minister Charles Howard “Chuck” Lucas died Aug. 9 at age 79.

Born in Mobile, Ala., he earned a bachelor’s in Bible from Harding University in Searcy, Ark. and graduate degrees in history and mental health counseling from Mississippi College and Florida State University, respectively. He was best known for his work with the Crossroads Church of Christ in Gainesville, Fla., from 1967 to 1985, where he was involved in campus ministry. The discipling methods he helped develop became part of the Crossroads Movement, later called the Boston Movement, now the International Churches of Christ.

In the early 1990s, the ICOC formally split from the mainline Churches of Christ as the movement’s top-down hierarchy and discipling techniques drew criticism. In 2002, leaders of the movement apologized for past behaviors.

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Minister

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General Requirements: The ideal candidate should be a married, middle-aged man with at least ten years of experience. He should be of strong personal faith and be doctrinally sound and well grounded in the Scriptures. He should have an evangelistic heart to share the Gospel with those who are lost.

Principal Responsibilities: Responsibilities of this position include preaching, teaching and participation in the life of our church family.

How to Apply:

Those interested in applying should mail a copy of their resume with picture and at least three references to the attention of:

West Olive Church of Christ
Attn: Elders
10935 W Olive Ave
Peoria, AZ 85345
A rare show of love and unity

A SERIOUS INJURY at a youth rally brings out the best in African believers.

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act.
— Proverbs 3:27, New International Version

NAIROBI, Kenya

When she saw that her son, Maximillian, was calling at 2 a.m., the boy’s mother was tempted not to answer. He probably only wanted to say that the youth conference he was attending in Eldoret was going well, and cell time in Kenya costs by the minute.

Max was persistent, dialing again when she didn’t pick up. So his mother received the call, intending to scold him. But her son was frantic. His sister, Margie, her daughter, had fallen in the school compound and badly fractured her leg during the Church of Christ youth conference. The coordinators had rushed her to the hospital.

Though her parents immediately longed to be with their daughter, the cost of traveling to see her in Eldoret was prohibitive high — and there would be other trips necessary, including one to bring Margie back to Nairobi after she was released from the hospital.

What could they do?

Our God provided. What followed was a rare show of love and unity amongst Christians from all parts of Kenya. The teachers at the conference (preachers and elders of Churches of Christ) appointed one of the youths as treasurer and began a collection. Though not wealthy, the believers raised enough to help with the initial expenses for Margie and her caretaker at the hospital.

She was taken into the surgical theater and doctors fixed her fractured femur for healing. Thankfully, her father’s insurance covered the bill. She was discharged four days after the operation but could not leave the hospital. Her parents were working to find a way to bring her to Nairobi without causing her more pain on the rough roads through public transport.

Church members set up a group on the smartphone program WhatsApp to help mobilize funds to airlift Margie from Eldoret to Nairobi. Within three days, the group had raised enough money for two air tickets — one for Margie and the other for her brother. Christians in Eldoret helped her to move from the hospital to the airport.

From there, the siblings took their first-ever air flight to Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. Margie said she forgot her pain for a moment when she boarded the Kenya Airways JamboJet flight. Her parents waited with a taxi to take their children to their home in Kibera district.

“Thank you for the sacrifice you made to ensure that I came back to Nairobi comfortably,” Margie said in a message to all who helped her, relayed through Christopher Opondo, minister for the Kibera Church of Christ. “Many of you have never boarded an aircraft, but you generously gave to help me. We sat right behind a cabinet minister who was traveling to the city.”

Margie missed one term of schooling (the second term of what we call Form 3) because of the injury. We prayed that she would recover quickly so she wouldn’t have to repeat. The youths from the conference planned to meet with her for a thanks-giving service with the Kibera church.

Let us keep the fire burning and share our success stories.

NYABUTO MARUBE is a longtime minister and ministry leader among Churches of Christ in Nairobi, Kenya.
We can and should remain together

CHURCHES OF CHRIST don’t need more division but vision focused on Christ’s call for unity

As a lad, I remember Churches of Christ having nearly identical orders of worship. We sang from hymnals and studied from the quarterly of but a few publishers. Women wore hats on Sunday mornings (never slacks), and men were always in suits and ties. Truth was defended in debates with “the denominations” and among ourselves when threats to our harmony arose.

I have witnessed the passing of this uniformity over the last two decades in our fellowship. The current diversity is clear to readers of this newspaper’s recent articles that ask: “In 2018, what is a Church of Christ?” (Page 1, March)

Though an admitted oversimplification, “conservative” folks among us remain very close in beliefs and worship practices to the churches of my youth, while “progressives” have reexamined our traditional understandings and have adopted some of our new worship practices and attitudes toward other faith groups.

Many believe that progressives have abandoned the authority of the Scriptures and are no longer members of the church.

Progressives, meanwhile, may see their conservative brethren as short-sighted, unwilling to study. Many have decided that they can’t let such brethren hold them back from making changes.

Some editors, preachers and writers seem bent on division. Sadly, this development stands in stark contrast to the ideals of our shared heritage — the Stone-Campbell American Restoration Movement of the early 1800s.

The movement’s followers sought to foster the mission of spreading the Gospel. They wanted Christian denominations to join together in evangelistic efforts based on their shared core beliefs. And they refused to allow divisive issues to interfere with fellowship.

Alas, this cooperation was never achieved. The mission was hindered then — as it is now — by the lack of unity for which Jesus prayed in John 17.

Churches of Christ have inherited the divisive tendencies that developed later in the 19th century from the desire to restore detailed traits perceived in the epistles. This resulted in split after split — Disciples of Christ, Independent Christian Churches, non-institutional churches, one-cup congregations, the International Churches of Christ and so many more.

Our fellowship grew for more than a century, but mostly from persuading believers in denominations to accept our inferences and deductions and less from building faith in non-believers. We’re caught in constant controversy as to what God requires of us, what is permissible. When you’re sure you are right, it’s not easy to seek unity. We need to recognize our differences and live with each other — or else. Or else we will fragment further, becoming merely sects or splinter groups that once were part of a vibrant, noble movement.

When you’re sure you are right, it’s not easy to seek unity. We need to recognize our differences and live with each other or else. Or else we will fragment further, becoming merely sects or splinter groups that once were part of a vibrant, noble movement. I believe we can and should remain together.

Conservatives in our fellowship may consider this view heretical. Progressives may consider it naive. Maybe they’re both right. Or neither.

Some ideas for fostering unity:

- We can agree that Churches of Christ, even with this broad spectrum among us, are worth preserving as a great brotherhood.
- We can stand strong for the principle of autonomy.
- We can reexamine the principles of our Restoration heritage.
- We can avoid being harsh with our brethren who have kept the old paths or who have reached new understandings. We need not tarnish each other with hurtful language.
- We can study the long-held positions that others have reexamined so that we may better understand those who have reached different understandings of the Word.
- We can refocus on soul-winning, disciple-making and building faith in non-believers. It’s hard, but possible.
- We can join with our brethren in service projects. In 2005, I spent 10 days in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina along with many wonderful brothers and sisters from all over the country — and from across the brotherhood spectrum. We worked together in Jesus’ name, focusing on the work to be done.
- We can agree on fundamentals of the Gospel and not allow perfect and complete agreement on all issues to be the enemy of unity and fellowship.
- We can remember that not one of us deserves salvation. We are reckoned righteous by grace through faith. Wherever God has children, we have brothers and sisters.
- A long-departed hero of mine used to say that we may consider those who disagree with us as “erring brethren.” Then he would ask, “Is there any other kind?”
- Are we not all erring? So, let us love and accept one another or the “or else” will surely come true.

WAYNE NEWLAND is a writer, a retired educator and a member of the Greater Portland Church of Christ in South Portland, Maine.

I imagine that your article regarding illegal immigrants (“At the border, a prayer for ‘forgotten people,’” Page 1, August) has garnered some different sorts of responses.

Certainly, you caused me to think about what is the duty that a Christian has to his country (following its laws as Jesus did and as the apostles taught us to in the New Testament) and how it affects his concern about helping others in need — even if they are illegally present in this country.

I asked myself what I would do if a Christian brother and a citizen of this country who had broken the law asked me to help him evade arrest. Without question, I would tell him to turn himself over to authorities, even if he protested that he was innocent. I would trust that the system works and that he would be acquitted.

Then I thought about the many black defendants convicted erroneously in years past in Texas. When DNA evidence was presented, many of them were released. Would I have hidden these men from the authorities if I knew they were being put in prison because of their race?

The issue of millions of non-citizens here illegally, earning a living and at least paying sales tax, is not simple. Nor can it be compared to racism against U.S. citizens.

As a Christian, I should tell someone here illegally that he is wrong to disobey our laws. I should not abet his disobedience. If he is in danger in his country of origin, we have asylum regulations that can protect him. Otherwise, he should go home. After all, Christians who are U.S. citizens pour billions into other countries — feeding and clothing, digging wells, inoculating, providing medical and dental care, providing shelter, teaching.

See READERS, Page 32
NOT EVERY HILL IS CALVARY!

This 40 page analysis of PATTERN/CENI/SILENCE offers an alternative hermeneutic.

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"Newland offers a number of challenging observations regarding the interpretation of Scriptures among Restorationists.”
— Tom Olbricht

Pulpit Minister

The Church of Christ in Champions located in Houston, Texas, seeks to hire a full-time minister who will provide a balanced ministry of preaching, teaching, visiting, and assisting the elders in implementing our vision of the church as we grow to full potential in membership and spiritual growth in Christ. We are a congregation of 465 members with new facilities and significant room to grow. The ideal candidate should be a married, middle-aged man with at least 10 years experience as a minister. A Biblical education equivalent of a bachelor’s degree or a graduate of a Biblical college or institute is required. He should be of strong personal faith and be doctrinally sound and well grounded in the Scriptures. We seek an applicant with an evangelistic heart to share the gospel with the lost. Responsibilities include preaching, teaching recent sermons, and examples of recent classes taught. Go to annapolischurch.org/preacher for full job description.

John Lewis, (443) 977-6124
jlewis@annapolischurch.org

Evangelist Search

Church of Christ in Meadville, Pa., is looking for an evangelist to work with us. We are a small congregation of about 35, located in Northwest Pennsylvania with an eldership in place and looking to grow the Lord’s body in this rural community. We are committed to sound doctrine. If you are interested in being a part of this great work, please send a resume with a cover letter explaining your interest and needs to:

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READERS: Thoughts on borders south and north

FROM PAGE 31
and training people to be able to support themselves. We are not unsympathetic or selfish. But we shouldn’t be abetting lawbreakers, especially if we call it “ministry.”

NORA B. VINCENT | Quitman, Texas

I keep thinking back to Leviticus 19:33-34 while reading this article: “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

Caesar didn’t allow people to worship God or even call themselves Christians. His advisers would tell him it was OK to kill the Christians because they were breaking the law. The laws of God tell us to love one another and to care for those who are strangers in our land.

TIA DUGAN | New York

Canada coverage was great on details — not so much on geography

I just received the latest Christian Chronicle. The caption under the large picture of Montreal’s Olympic Stadium (Page 17, August), unfortunately, states that Montreal is Quebec’s capital. Of course, it’s Quebec City. (Editor’s note: We have corrected this in our online edition and apologize for the error.)

I’m a Montrealer, emigrating to the U.S. In 1975. V.P. Black, who baptized my wife, and I led a gospel meeting at the now-closed Lachine Church of Christ in 1989. Lachine and the Verdun congregations were the only active congregations at the time.

Brother Gary Hampton, now the pulpit minister at Siwell Roac Church of Christ in Jackson, Miss., and I went back to lead another meeting at Lachine in 1991. His wife and mine conducted an evening Vacation Bible School during the week.

Then, like now, immigrants formed the majority of the faithful in both congregations.

I so appreciate your wonderful articles. You have an ability to make a reader feel like he is where you are, listening in to your conversations and interviews.

NEIL CAPPER | Mobile, Ala.

Don’t pass up chance to learn from other faiths

I see you were in Utah recently at a conference at Brigham Young University (Inside Story, Page 3, August). I so appreciate your acceptance of that invitation and your interactions with those of other faiths.

We tend to close off any contact like that, I suppose in some kind of fear that we might become contaminated somehow. Or we don’t want to hear other viewpoints. However, these people are human beings, made in the image of God and loved by God.

We visited Salt Lake City this summer on vacation and toured Temple Square. We even got the “grand tour” with the help of a couple of missionaries. At the end, we got an invitation to become Mormons. While we did not accept the invitation, I had to wonder when the last time was that I offered an invitation to come to Christ.

JAY PLANCK | Wichita, Kan.

Story on race meeting gave a clear, pictorial view

This letter is to commend you for the publication of the July Christian Chronicle article “We still have two brotherhoods” (Page 3).

I am impressed with the effort to just present the story factually, historically and correctly. You left readers with the clear pictorial view of how the church sought to address the race issue 50 years ago in that meeting of willing church leaders while allowing the reader to compare history with the present.

Thanks for the publication, and let us continue to watch and work together in development of our future.

ANDREW J. HAIRSTON | Atlanta

CORRECTION: A story on Page 3 of the August issue misidentified Randy Lowry, president of Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn. We regret the error.
Novelization of Hannah’s life reveals a real, relatable soul

indulge in all kinds of books, but I especially love Christian fiction based on Scripture.

One of my favorite authors is Jill Eileen Smith, who has written many books on women in the Bible. She takes the stories we grew up reading in God’s Word and makes them an emotional experience. As a result, I feel like I can relate to these women and what God wants me to learn from their lives.

Smith does extensive research on how women lived in Old Testament times and presents it in line with Scripture.

The latest in her Daughters of the Promised Land series, “A Passionate Hope: Hannah’s Story” does not disappoint.

Smith retells the story found in the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel about a childless couple’s struggle.

“All we really know about Hannah is that she was married to a man of Ephraim from the tribe of Levi, who had two wives,” Smith said in an interview. “One, Peninnah, bore him many children, while Hannah had none. Whenever we see women asking God for a child, it shows us that God cares about this cry of their heart. Hannah’s story is also one of heartache in the midst of her hope. She is bitterly opposed by her sister-wife, who makes it her mission to keep Hannah’s life miserable. The amazing thing about Hannah is that she continually takes her struggles to God. Though years pass with no answers to her prayers, she never gives up. And God rewards her for her faithfulness.”

In reading this book, I learned that God can restore the most broken relationships. Like Hannah, God wants me to be a woman who prays and doesn’t give up. At times in my life I’ve prayed about something until I’ve felt like I just can’t pray about it any more. Maybe, during those times, I can go to God with Hannah’s prayer: “God, this is my heart’s desire, but help me be accepting of your will above all.”

If you enjoy Christian fiction based on biblical characters, you will enjoy this book.

What we’re reading

Melinda Wilson


Minister uses down-to-earth, ‘aha!’ moments as he ponders a deeper understanding of God

Thin Place: Glimpses Up There from Down Here” is an engaging book written as stand-alone vignettes loosely tied together. It appears to be designed as an anam cara, or “spiritual friend” to help the reader navigate the deeper questions of life.

Author Duncan Campbell, student life minister for the New Braunfels Church of Christ in Texas, uses the old Celtic concept of thin places — places where the veil separating heaven and earth was so thin one could experience a deeper spiritual mystery — to describe events and experiences in one’s life where a deeper understanding of God and his will could be discovered. (Someone unfamiliar with the concept might call it a spiritual “aha!” moment.)

“Thin Place” represents Campbell’s desire to embrace the mystery found in big questions about “design, purpose, and destiny.”

He begins this task well. His descriptions of Waffle House short-order cooks, popular movies and childhood memories quickly pull you in, inviting you to sit for a spell and visit. His style is rather homey — almost as if these are not words on a page but a conversation over a cup of coffee.

Admirably, Duncan avoids glib answers and platitudes. He attempts to lead readers to discover their own answers. He points to the importance of meaningful presence in the journey, writing, “Is an answer what we really need? A fact? A statistic? A truth? No. We need someone to be with us. Someone who knows, Who’s been there.”

I enjoyed his down-to-earth humor. Although there is an undercurrent of the heartbeat and sadness of growing up between divorced parents, I couldn’t help but smile at Duncan’s childlike reasoning when contrasting households.

There are a few weaknesses to the book. In some places he goes too long. Chapter 14 addresses the important issue of contemporary idolatry, but he could have gotten to his point in half the time. It was as if he wanted to list all the possibilities available. (His treatment of Al Gore and the “god of the environment” just felt like one illustration too many.)

I also was uncomfortable with Duncan’s treatment of the “name of Jesus.” This seems to be a throwback to 1990’s deliverance theology. He places emphasis upon saying the name “Jesus” as a means by which one can overcome “aggressive spiritual attack.” He references Philippians 2:10-11, calling the name of Jesus the name above every name.

There are two problems with this view of the Philippians text. First, “the name of Jesus” is better understood as “the name that belongs to Jesus.” That name is “Lord.” In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word “Lord” was used as a euphemism for the covenant name of God (YHWH).

The second problem is an apparent magical view of Jesus’ name. Duncan attempts to avoid the problem with a disclaimer, but it falls flat. One wonders if the seven sons of Sceva (Acts 19) would agree with him.

Spiritual warfare is not about verbalizing names. I suggest God defeats satanic power through unfilshed lives devoted to loving him and loving people, whether the name “Jesus” is ever said out loud in an effort to ward off what we perceive as a satanic attack.

As with most books, “Thin Place” demonstrates strengths and weaknesses. The strength of the book is its narrative approach. Rather than a dry lecture on spiritual disciplines and mystery, Campbell engages us with storytelling. His voice is not stilted and theoretical; it is fresh and inviting. It should be popular among young adults who enjoy reading devotional-style literature. On a scale of 1 to 10, I give it a 7.

Darryl Willis is education director for Eastern European Mission, a nonprofit associated with Churches of Christ. Find links to more of his writing at darrylwillis.wordpress.com.

What are you reading? Send submissions to erik@christianchronicle.org.
The Christian Chronicle is searching for a new Chief Executive Officer.

After 22 years of exceptional service, Dr. Lynn McMillon has announced that he will be stepping down as the President and CEO of The Christian Chronicle by May 31, 2019.

The Board of Trustees seeks a highly qualified candidate for the role of President and CEO to oversee and manage the day-to-day operations of the newspaper and work in harmony with its award-winning staff.

For full details of the role and job description, visit:

www.christianchronicle.org

If you know of someone qualified for and potentially interested in this important role, please forward this information to him or her and send your nomination to us at the address below.

Individuals interested in the role are strongly encouraged to submit a resume and cover letter by Dec. 15, 2018, to:

info@christianchronicle.org

or

The Christian Chronicle
c/o CEO Search Committee
PO Box 11000
Oklahoma City, OK 73136-1100

The Trustees and staff appreciate your prayers for this search process and for the mission of the Chronicle to inform, inspire and unite.
Pepperdine University is seeking its eighth president and CEO to succeed Andrew K. Benton, who announced he will conclude his service as President at the end of the 2018 - 2019 academic year. The Board of Regents of Pepperdine University invites nominations and applications for the position. Confidential review of nominations, applications and expressions of interest will begin immediately and continue until an appointment is made, effective in July 2019.

Pepperdine University is a Christian university committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and Christian values, where students are strengthened for lives of purpose, service and leadership. The successful candidate will possess the leadership skills, vision and enthusiasm to build upon the University's recent successes and move the institution forward. The next President must chart a course that allows Pepperdine to continue a role of rising national academic leadership while serving the Churches of Christ as both an anchor and a guide. The ideal candidate will have, among other qualities: the academic or related background sufficient to lead a private, Christian institution; the experience and skills to manage and guide a dynamic, premier University; the ability to lead fiscally responsible budgeting and make tough financial and resource decisions; demonstrated experience and proven leadership in fundraising; the ability to build and strengthen alumni support for the University; a record of commitment to strengthening all manners of diversity and open communication; experience overseeing an organization with multiple sites; and the ability to advocate for Pepperdine University.

Additional information, including a detailed position description, may be found on Pepperdine's website at: https://www.pepperdine.edu/about/administration/presidential-search/

Please send a CV to Korn Ferry at PepperdinePresident@kornferry.com by October 12, 2018 to be ensured full consideration. Confidential inquiries and nominations should also be directed to Korn Ferry c/o PepperdinePresident@kornferry.com.

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