Churches unite to feed the hungry

1,200 RACIALLY DIVERSE volunteers serve at largest food bank in U.S.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

HOUSTON — A sea of blue washed over America’s largest food bank on a recent Saturday.

That was the color of matching T-shirts worn by 1,200 Christians and their friends during “Mission Day 2019” — an effort by Houston-area Churches of Christ to display unity in Jesus and feed the hungry.

“It’s just like a wave of blue. It’s beautiful,” said Jessica Guillory, a Garden Oaks Church of Christ member who worked alongside her parents Obdulio and Dora Mendoza, her school-age nieces Lila, Zoe and Olivia and her teen nephew Raymond.

Other colors — black, white and brown — were evident in the racial diversity of the volunteers who labored side by side at the Houston Food Bank.

“This is what the Lord intended — all races working together to feed the hungry,” Guillory said. “It’s an honor to be a part of this.”

‘The blessing is ours’

A VENEZUELAN DIASPORA is spreading across South America as refugees from the troubled nation find new homes — and reinvigorate the Churches of Christ that take them in.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

SANTIAGO, Chile

Venezuela’s economic and political meltdown has a silver lining, seated around the dinner table in Raúl Fernández’s home.

The elder of Los Nogales Church of Christ in this South American capital and his wife, Susanna Vasoalto, serve as adoptive parents to Venezuelan Christians.

Fleeing their increasingly dangerous homeland, where food and medicine are scarce and robberies have become a fact of life, the Venezuelan church members live with the Chilean couple until they find jobs and apartments of their own.

On a frigid Saturday night, the couple shares plates of sopaipillas, flat Chilean pastries made from pumpkin. At the table are three of their Venezuelan daughters, as Vasoalto calls them, and a family of new arrivals. They huddle in heavy coats (they’re still adjusting to the Southern Hemisphere’s winter months: June, July and August) and sip hot tea.

“I tell all our daughters, ‘This house doesn’t belong to us; it belongs to God,’” Vasoalto says. “I can’t replace their moms, but I teach them, I get onto them, I love them all. They are my kids.”

But she insists, “The blessing is ours, the Chileans’. God is showing us the work we should do.”

Across South America, Churches of Christ report an influx of Venezuelan refugees, many of them from the troubled country’s 140 or so Iglesias de Cristo.

And they’re doing more than filling pews, church leaders say.
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In new memoir, Randy Travis goes ‘diggin’ up bones’

And it was down with the old man, up with the new. Raised to walk in the way of light and truth. I didn’t see no angels, just a few saints on the shore. But I felt like a new baby, cradled up in the arms of the Lord. — “Baptism” lyrics as sung by Randy Travis

For the longest time, I’ve heard that Randy Travis was baptized in a Church of Christ. However, I never knew the specifics of the Country Music Hall of Famer’s conversion until reading his new autobiography, “Forever and Ever, Amen: A Memoir of Music, Faith, and Braving the Storms of Life.” My friend David Duncan recommended the book, which describes the singer’s 1991 immersion by minister Dan Harless Jr. at a Church of Christ in rural Ashland City, Tenn.

“Despite making some progress at being a better person, I still felt that if I were to die, I would not go to heaven,” recalls Travis, 60, whose all-time hits include “Three Wooden Crosses,” “I Told You So” and “On the Other Hand.” “More likely, I suspected, I had a good chance of landing in hell.”

A powerful sermon by Harless one Sunday inspired the country star to respond. “I didn’t quite know how to express my decision to

Massacre hits ‘close to home’

For Monica Moreno, the first news of the El Paso, Texas, massacre came via social media. A glance at Snapchat drew her attention to a relative’s post warning of an active shooter at a Walmart in Moreno’s hometown. By the time the rampage ended that Saturday, 22 people were dead. They ranged in age from 15 to 90. Almost all had Hispanic surnames.

A single gunman, armed with an AK-47-style assault rifle and identified as an immigrant-hating white supremacist, was implicated. According to an affidavit, the suspect, 21-year-old Patrick Crusius, told a police detective he targeted Mexicans. Crusius is charged with capital murder and being held without bond.

Moreno attends the Montwood Church of Christ in El Paso, the border city where she was born and raised. She stared at her television screen in disbelief. “It hits so close to home,” the 48-year-old mother of six and grandmother of five told The Christian Chronicle. Her own mother and brother immigrated to the United States from neighboring Mexico.

As the FBI investigates the shooting as a case of domestic terrorism, Moreno grapples with the idea that the gunman chose victims

Ashes, rubble and beauty

After a fire ravaged their building, an Oklahoma church meets under a tent in its parking lot — and keeps hope alive.

Lots of destruction and loss, but this image more accurately captures our faith and hope,” said Heather Pitney Thornton after fire destroyed her congregation’s building.

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TRAVIS: ‘Jesus bought and paid for my soul’

FROM PAGE 3

trust in Jesus and to follow him, so after the service, I approached the pastor and said, ‘I’d like to get baptized,’” Travis recounts in the 304-page memoir, co-written with Ken Abraham and published earlier this year by Nelson Books.

“The church had a baptismal pool on-site, so Brother Harless wasted no time. That same evening he baptized me, and it was a special celebration of my Christian faith,” the singer explains. “For me baptism was a powerful illustration of the statement that the old Randy was dead, buried in the water and gone, and that I was a new person. Thanks to Jesus, I had been raised to a new life here and now and eternal life in heaven to come.”

Decades of spiritual highs and soul-wrenching lows followed.

Faith and redemption play a significant role in Travis’ life — and in his book — but then so do demons and the singer’s often shameful choices. To quote one of the artist’s most popular songs, his autobiography spends a fair amount of time “diggin’ up bones.”

The book title — “Forever and Ever, Amen” — pays tribute to Travis’ greatest hit. As the gritty narrative notes, the neotraditional singer was born as Randy Bruce Traywick on May 4, 1959, in the small town of Marshville, N.C. Frequently in trouble with the law as a teen, Travis clashed with his alcoholic father, Harold Traywick, but considered his mother, Bobbie Traywick, a saint.

“Even though we were not regular church attenders — she occasionally went to Hamilton Crossroads Baptist Church and later to Fountain United Methodist Church — she tried her best to instill biblical values in all of us kids, values such as kindness, truthfulness, honesty, humility, and integrity,” Travis writes. “She read the Bible to us, and she tried to show grace and mercy.”

Even after washing away his sins, Travis dealt with a messy divorce, financial woes (the book blames his first wife/manager for squandered millions), anger management issues and drinking problems that resulted in ugly tabloid headlines.

Most famously, he became intoxicated in 2012 with a mix of wine and an Ambien sleeping pill prescribed to his ex-wife. He showed up naked at a Texas convenience store asking for cigarettes. Police arrested him a short time later after he crashed his car.

“Some folks seem to think that being a Christian means nothing bad will ever happen to you,” observes the seven-time Grammy Award winner, who has sold more than 25 million country and gospel albums. “I haven’t found that to be true in my life. But I have discovered that even when difficult times come or unexplainable events occur, Jesus never leaves or forsakes us.”

Just as Travis was putting his life back together in 2013, he suffered a near-fatal stroke that left him with aphasia, a condition that limits his ability to speak or sing.

But Travis and his second wife, Mary, clung to the Lord as they worked to overcome his physical and spiritual challenges, as his memoir conveys in faith-affirming detail.

Near the end of “Forever and Ever, Amen,” Randy Travis delivers a message to the devil: Despite all his past sins, Travis has overcome the darkness “by the blood of the Lamb.”

“In the name of Jesus, Satan, take your hands off me,” the singer tells the tempter. “I don’t belong to you anymore. Jesus bought and paid for my soul, and I belong to Him.”

BOBBY ROSS JR. is editor-in-chief of The Christian Chronicle. Reach him at bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org. Follow him on Twitter at @bobbyross.
COLORADO
PUEBLO — Three members of the Southwest Church of Christ — Dagne Seegren Billings, Kim Ferris and Keetha Dickerson — sewed 80 pillowcase dresses for girls in Africa. The women presented the dresses to missionary Nkosi Mpofu and his wife, Katie, who serve in Zimbabwe.
“Sewing these dresses was rewarding,” Billings said. “Each dress had a purse with a leaflet (giving the) steps of salvation and a headband.”

MICHIGAN
WATERFORD — The 350-member Waterford Church of Christ launched Northern Michigan for Christ with a goal of reaching lost souls.
Evangelist Charles Anderson said he and his wife, Michelle, began traveling to the northern areas of Lower Michigan to evangelize about six years ago.
“We saw a hunger for members to be involved in reaching out to the lost but lack of understanding and identifying their role,” Anderson said.
For more information, see www.waterfordcoc.org/Northern-Michigan-for-Christ.

OKLAHOMA
HOBART — “I’m a new man,” Chris Highwalker said after his recent baptism.
The 47-year-old babe in Christ recalls his former life: A gang beat him with baseball bats and left him for dead. His injuries left him wheelchair bound with limited mobility.
Dee Max Corbin, an elder of the Hobart Church of Christ, takes communion every Sunday to a nursing and rehabilitation center.
There Corbin met Highwalker, and the two began a friendship.
Then one Sunday, Highwalker told Corbin that he wanted to be baptized.
“This is an example of how God can work — caring people sharing Jesus,” said Hobart member Judith Krieger, who shared the story.

Students worship at Missouri ministry event emphasizing discipleship
Attendees praise God during the recent Campus Ministry United Workshop hosted by The Crossings Church, a Church of Christ in Wentzville, Mo., near St. Louis. “Our emphasis this year was focused around the major aspects of discipleship,” said Wes Woodell, the organization’s administrative director. The three-day workshop drew about 500 participants, Woodell said.

PENNSYLVANIA
GLEN ROCK — When an international disc golf tournament recently descended on central Pennsylvania, the Glen Rock Church of Christ decided to reach out to the local volunteers as well as the players.
The congregation provided an extra water station with an abundance of fruit during the Professional Disc Golf Association’s amateur world championship.
On two days, the church prepared lunch for the local volunteers.
“It was an unusual outreach for a rural church but resulted in new connections in the local, national and international disc golf community as well as others who were visiting the multi-use local park,” minister Eric Hallett said.

VIRGINIA
RICHMOND — Joseph H. Brown has served as minister for the congregation now known as the Church of Christ at Sandy Lane for 50 years.
Brown began preaching in 1955 as a student at the now-defunct Nashville Christian Institute in Tennessee. In 1988 he established Hi-Land Christian Academy, a K-12 school in Richmond.
He and his wife, Phyllis, have three sons.
“We extend true commendations and hearty congratulations to Brother Joseph H. Brown,” the church said in a news release.
Our city has problems, big ones,” the editorial board of the Baltimore Sun wrote recently, “and we don’t shy away from them, nor do we give any politicians a pass for failing to do as much as humanly possible to fix them.”

Racial and class inequities, blight and epidemics of lead poisoning and asthma are among the problems that plague the city of 2.7 million people, the editorial board wrote.

And violence. More than 150 people were killed in Maryland’s largest city through the end of June — a 17 percent increase in homicides over the same period last year, the Sun reported.

Add to that the recent war of words between President Donald Trump and U.S. Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., after Trump declared the city “a disgusting, rat-and-rodent-infested mess.”

Amid the grim statistics and angry words, members of Baltimore’s Central Church of Christ presented a different view of the city during their 18th annual Community Outreach Day.

Members of the Central Church of Christ in Baltimore host the congregation’s annual Community Outreach Day.

Serving amid the storms

‘IF YOU CALL YOURSELF A CHRISTIAN ...’

Other Maryland congregations have hosted similar events in recent weeks for their communities.

In Camp Springs, members of the Beltway Church of Christ volunteered alongside health professionals to screen visitors at a health fair.

Meanwhile, members of the Suitland Road Church of Christ paused in cleanup efforts at their building, which sustained heavy damage during a recent storm, to host a monthly food pantry and a back-to-school event for children.

The congregation provided book bags stuffed with supplies for area students, and Suitland members spent time talking to the children as they grilled hamburgers and hot dogs and passed out snow cones.

Elder Bill Davis said the congregation didn’t dream of canceling the outreach effort just because their building was assailed by the storm.

“If you call yourself a Christian, you have to do things that God has established,” Davis. The elder and his wife are no strangers to adversity, both having survived cancer.

“The Bible says that it is more blessed to give than receive,” Davis said. “We are a community-based church, and how can you call yourself a Christian and don’t help somebody else?”

Taking note of the church’s service was Angela Alsobrooks, Prince George county executive.

“I am amazed,” Alsobrooks said. “Despite the devastation to their building, they held this event to support children.”
Churches honor memory of sisters killed in Texas car wreck

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Just hours before she was to begin a missions apprenticeship program, an 18-year-old church member and her 16-year-old sister were killed in a car wreck in rural West Texas.

Now the students who would have been her classmates, along with believers around the world, are honoring the sisters for their servant hearts. They're also raising funds for a third sister, who survived the wreck, and her family.

Elle “Ella” Payne was driving on Texas Highway 84 near Anton around 11 p.m. Aug. 7 when an SUV driving in the wrong lane struck her head-on. Another car then rear-ended Payne’s, according to news reports. Payne and her sister, Aranza, died in the collision. Their younger sister, Sarah, was taken to a hospital with multiple injuries. Five additional people were injured.

The Payne family worships with the Amherst Church of Christ, about 50 miles northwest of Lubbock. The morning after the tragedy, Six of the new class of AIMers are from the Sunset youth group, said Cory Burns, the program’s director.

“It is a beautiful thing to see so many people gathered to provide comfort for the hurting,” Burns told The Christian Chronicle in a message from the vigil. “In this tragic event, I am impressed at how the body of Christ is being a light within itself in this dark time.”

Sarah Payne suffered multiple injuries to her wrist, back and ankles. She’s in good spirits as she recovers, participating in wheelchair races and encouraging those who come to visit her, said her mother, Christy Payne.

“Sarah (continues) to comfort everyone else, making us all laugh and making everyone feel special,” her mother said in a social media post. “When the girls were young I started telling them at bed, ‘Out of all the little girls in the world, how did I get the very best ones?’”

“I have truly been blessed that God let me have them for these last 18 years.”

A GoFundMe account to help with the family’s medical and funeral expenses has collected more than $32,000 of its $50,000 goal.

FIND A LINK to the GoFundMe page and more information at christianchronicle.org.

The Payne sisters, Sarah, Ella and Aranza, sang as part of a recording for ReGen Harmony, a project of Acappella Ministries to “rekindle the passion for harmony in students,” said project director Anthony Lancaster.
based on their ethnicity — “with no remorse, like they didn’t mean anything.”

“It’s heartbreaking … so hard to believe,” she said. “I can’t imagine what the families are going through.”

′SO MUCH LIFE AHEAD OF HIM′

Loved ones remember the youngest victim, Javier Amir Rodriguez, as a passionate high school soccer player.

“That young man had so much life ahead of him,” Moreno said of the 15-year-old. “His life was cut short by a selfish killer that had something to prove, I guess, to fit in with Donald Trump. It’s a hard subject.”

Trump made opposition to illegal immigration a major part of his successful 2016 campaign.

In a statement to the nation two days after the Aug. 3 shooting, the president condemned hatred and white supremacy.

“The shooter in El Paso posted a manifesto online consumed by racist hate,” Trump said. “In one voice, our nation must condemn racism, bigotry and white supremacy. These sinister ideologies must be defeated. Hate has no place in America. Hatred warps the mind, ravages the heart and devours the soul.”

On Facebook, Charles Clodfelter, minister for the Eastwood Church of Christ in El Paso, urged friends to “pray for those who lost family and for our country.” He voiced support for Trump and frustration with the politicization of the massacre.

The minister and his wife, Theresa, were at a Costco a few miles from the Walmart when shoppers’ phones beeped with active shooter warnings.

In the church bulletin the next week, Clodfelter wrote, “The past several days have been hard for our city, state and nation. But it is especially difficult for those who were directly touched by death, injury or terror of trying to escape a mad gunman. How could anyone think the murder of scores of innocent people would be the solution of any problem?”

A full-time preacher since 1962, he pointed to Jesus as the solution.

“Unfortunately, our society has left the teaching of morality to others,” Clodfelter wrote. “Parents have treated Jesus as not relevant to life or eternity. As a result, their children struggle to even believe in God. We are a mission field.”

ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER MASS SHOOTING

Just hours after the El Paso shooting, the inexplicable happened again — 1,600 miles away.

In the wee hours of Sunday, Aug. 4, a different gunman murdered nine people in a nightlife district in Dayton, Ohio.

Connor Betts, 24, used a .223 caliber high-capacity rifle with 100-round drum magazines to fire 41 shots. Just 32 seconds elapsed before police killed him.

Still reeling from Memorial Day tornadoes, many in Dayton were left “feeling depression, anger and emptiness,” said Andrew Brewster, elder and minister for the Church of Christ, North Dayton.

As in El Paso — where the hashtag #ElPasoStrong seems to be everywhere — the Ohio community has embraced the slogan “Dayton Strong.”

“People have worked together … helped each other,” Brewster said. “In the midst of suffering and loss have been many Christians serving and helping those harmed.

“Many prayer vigils have been held,” he added. “Many have cried together. The giving of love and support to others has been so remarkable. It is almost unbelievable the acts of kindness and love that have been demonstrated.”

Between them, El Paso and Dayton count about two dozen Churches of Christ with roughly 2,400 men, women and children in the pews on a typical Sunday, according to a national directory published by 21st Century Christian.

In El Paso, Army Capt. Cynthia Turner, a chaplain stationed at Fort Bliss, said the shooting has had a ripple effect.

“The city overall took a blow,” said Turner, who graduated from Harding School of Theology in Memphis, Tenn., in 2012.

The Walmart where the massacre occurred is next to the popular Cielo Vista Mall, so everybody in El Paso
is familiar with it, she said. “It rocks your world in that sense,” said Turner, who still considers the Raleigh Community Church of Christ in Memphis her home congregation. “So it affected all of us.”

The chaplain voiced hope that the tragedy might open opportunities to share the Gospel with those touched by the senselessness of evil. Already, she’s seeing signs that the shooting changed people in small ways, such as how they interact with fellow drivers. “Before, there was this rush, this blowing and cutting you off. I would say that’s to a minimum now,” she said. “People are a little more polite and understanding, watching out for one another and just being a little more vigilant.”

JOINING HANDS IN PRAYER

At Moreno’s home congregation the Sunday morning after the shooting, minister Donnie Martin put aside his previously planned sermon and focused on the tragedy. Opening his Bible to 1 Samuel 30:1-10, he talked about responding by “weeping for our loss” (verses 4 and 5), “waiting on the Lord” (verses 6 and 7) and “working for change” (verses 8 to 10).

“We really just wanted to encourage people to keep trusting in the Lord even in these hard times,” Martin said.

After the service, Moreno approached Martin and the church’s elders with the idea of organizing a prayer vigil at the massacre site. They quickly agreed.

That Monday, more than 30 Christians — including members of the Montwood and Eastwood congregations and the Northside Bilingual Church of Christ — joined hands and prayed at the makeshift memorial. The circle grew as other mourners joined in.

“We would have 60 people holding hands at one time,” Moreno said. “Even if we didn’t ask them to join us, they would just cut in and hold hands with us. It was so beautiful.”

Moreno brought 22 white balloons to the scene — one for each victim. She recited the names. Fellow Christians and even strangers released the balloons into the sky. The group sang “Amazing Grace.” Moreno felt a little hope. “At the end of the day,” she said, “if we’re right with God, I feel like he’ll get us through anything.”
A July 24 fire destroyed much of the Memorial Drive Church of Christ’s 50,000-square-foot building, but members are determined to channel one of life’s unknowns into intentional service. They are determined to count it all joy for the Lord.

“If there were a group of people I was going to walk into an unknown with, this would be it, these people right here,” said Heather Thornton, wife of minister Jason Thornton. “These aren’t people who walk away. They know God tells bigger stories than tragedy does.”

For the first time since the blaze, the congregation gathered for an early service to beat the summer heat. With a large tent, industrial-sized fans and faithful spirits, they kept on doing as they have every Sunday morning for decades.

They greeted each other with happy hearts. They praised God. They thanked God. And this time, their community joined hands with them.

People who live in the surrounding neighborhood were in attendance, as were those who have benefited from the church’s various outreach ministries. Christians from other Tulsa congregations also filled the tent.

“I have no idea who some of these people are this morning,” retired minister Terry Rush said about the crowd of several hundred gathered for coffee, doughnuts and conversation ahead of worship. “They want to be here to support us, and it’s beautiful.”

Most all Churches of Christ in the Tulsa area have offered support and prayers as well as boots on the ground for the cleanup effort, Heather Thompson said. But the outpouring of love and encouragement has not been limited to the congregation’s own fellowship: Nearby Methodist, Baptist and Christian churches — to name a few — have volunteered their buildings for use.

“You don’t have to believe alike to love alike,” Evan Taylor from Tulsa Metropolitan Ministries said as he took the stage and offered the now-empty East Side Christian Church to serve as a Church of Christ meeting space while recovery takes place.

Steve Heinen, an elder at Memorial Drive, said the compassionate response has brought him back to what he experienced after the tragic death of his father about 10 years ago.

“It was the worst day and best day of my life at the same time,” Heinen said. “The outpouring of love and support from friends just blew my mind. You don’t forget that sort of thing. You don’t forget how much love people show.”

Love appears to be the language spoken fluently and taught frequently at Memorial Drive. With the church’s multiple ministries serving Tulsa, there’s always something happening, members say.

Of course, the congregation is widely known for its role for many years with the Tulsa Workshop (formerly the International Soul-Winning Workshop), which at its peak brought together 12,000 to 15,000 believers from Churches of Christ across the U.S. and around the globe. As attendance kept declining, the event came to an end in 2017 after a 40-year run.

Among its ministries, the Memorial Drive church operates a large food pantry and a clothing room. It hosts marriage classes and an outreach for children with special needs. It also is a meeting spot three times a week for a chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous. This past week, a reception was scheduled for the church to recognize new cadets with the Tulsa Police Department.

It’s not a building only for members; it’s a place for everyone, Lisa Combs said. Or at least it was. “So many have been touched by our ministries,” Combs said. “That’s the biggest concern, not what the church is going to do without a building, but how are we going to continue to serve people? And we will.”

You make beautiful things out of dust; you make beautiful things out of us.

Minister Jason Thornton says the church’s calendar of events, classes and community service are all going forward “fullsteam ahead” while waiting for insurance assessments so leaders can develop a long-term plan.

The fire’s cause is undetermined.
God is not afraid of fire,
Jason Thornton preached.
“This vicious, destructive force that we experience only as pain, he uses it in so many ways,” Thornton said. “The things that scare us do not scare God. So do you trust him? Do you trust that he loves you?”

So far, you could say they are making good use of the wait, showcasing God’s love even through their own heartbreaking.

Members have made it a priority to extend gratitude to firefighters and first responders who spent nearly all day fighting flames and monitoring hotspots, ensuring no more loss than necessary. Members took the weekend to cook and bake for each of those emergency groups.

They brought their homemade goodness to the Sunday assembly, where tables were organized with dozens of grocery sacks to be delivered to each fire station after the service. Children from the congregation also drew hundreds of thank-you cards for their community heroes.

The deliberate choice of songs for Sunday’s service and the overall tone set by the leadership showed the healing already has begun.

“May we be fueled by the energy of a spirit he placed not in this building but in each one of us,” Heather Thornton said.

With voices lifted in praise, there is strength in faith. Hope still lives at Seventh and Memorial.

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BRAZIL
RIO DE JANEIRO — “Overcoming Worry” was the theme of a ladies’ tea hosted by the Jacarepaguá Church of Christ. Sixty Christian women attended.

“In addition to the main speech, the ladies divided up into groups to discuss how to put this into practice,” said Connie Zinck, who has served in Brazil with her husband, Larry, for 39 years.

FRANCE
LYON — The people of Europe, including missionaries from Churches of Christ, endured a record-breaking heat wave, with temperatures in France cresting above 100 degrees Fahrenheit for at least seven days.

“Like most French, we don’t have air-conditioning, so it got up to about 86 degrees inside our house,” said missionary Arlin Hendrix. “Luckily, we didn’t have overnight guests those days.”

Hendrix and his wife, Pamela, did host multiple visitors this summer. One of them was Barbara Kee, who made her first trip back to Europe after her husband, Doyle, died in January. The Kee’s served for 47 years in Geneva, Switzerland. Barbara Kee visited along with her daughter, Bonnie, son David and daughter-in-law Paige. It was “warm fellowship on a hot day,” Pamela Hendrix said.

PHILIPPINES
BORANGAN — Evangelism in this city of 70,000 souls, the capital of the Philippines’ Eastern Samar province, has resulted in 34 baptisms, said missionary Daniel Hamm.

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Hendrix and his wife, Pamela, did host multiple visitors this summer. One of them was Barbara Kee, who made her first trip back to Europe after her husband, Doyle, died in January. The Kees served for 47 years in Geneva, Switzerland. Barbara Kee visited along with her daughter, Bonnie, son David and daughter-in-law Paige. It was “warm fellowship on a hot day,” Pamela Hendrix said.

PHILIPPINES
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TANZANIA
MBEYA — Minister Samuel A. Mwakasungula studies the Bible with spiritual seekers in person and online through an email correspondence ministry. However, many Africans don’t have reliable access to computers or email, he said.

“ать they have cell phones. So the minister started preaching the Gospel through the text messaging program WhatsApp. One of his first students was from Kisorarawe, a predominantly Muslim district of Tanzania’s biggest city, Dar es Salaam. More students followed, including some in the Democratic Republic of Congo, so Mwakasungula set up an “International Bible School” group within the app.

As the ministry grew and text questions from students multiplied, Mwakasungula recruited a fellow minister in Zambia to help manage the group.

‘Time’ for Vacation Bible School in India
Kids in the south Indian city of Chennai had a great “Time” at a Vacation Bible School sponsored by the Kilpauk YMCA Church of Christ. Lessons — and arts and crafts, displayed above — focused on biblical examples of time, including the 40 days and 40 nights of rain in Genesis 7 and God’s stopping of the sun in Joshua 10, said evangelist David Martin. The six-day VBS included trips to a children’s park and a planetarium. Church members fed lunch to the 86 children who participated. And, of course, “snacks were provided,” Martin said.

SINGAPORE — Christians in this Southeast Asian city-state and around the world mourn the death of Brandi Kendall, a long-time missionary and missions teacher for Churches of Christ.

Kendall, 61, died Aug. 3 from complications after open-heart bypass surgery.

He was dean of ministry training, Southeast Asia, for Texas-based Sunset International Bible Institute and was traveling in Asia when he began suffering from severe bronchitis.

Coronary episodes followed, so he returned to the U.S. for surgery.

The Oklahoma City native began his career as a draftsman but soon found his calling in ministry. He earned a bachelor’s and master’s in theology and ministry and a master’s in spiritual formation.

He graduated from the White’s Ferry Road School of Preaching in Louisiana in 1984. He and his wife, Penny, attended the Sunset School of Missions. For 37 years, the couple taught, encouraged and mentored believers in the U.S., Russia, Estonia and Singapore, where Brandi Kendall served as director and academic dean of Sunset’s associate school.

“Theyir warmth and love left none untouched,” wrote Grace Marinaraj of Singapore in a legacy post. “Brandi always made everyone feel special.’”

“His going has torn many hearts, but the joy that awaits him, comforts me.”
Republic of Chile

**Population:** 17.9 million. **Languages:** Spanish, English, indigenous (Mapudungun, Aymara, Quechua, Rapa Nui). **Religion:** 66.7 percent Roman Catholic, 16.4 percent Protestant, 1 percent Jehovah’s Witness, 3.4 percent other, 12.5 percent none or unspecified.

**History:** The Incas and Mapuche ruled the lands of modern-day Chile until the Spanish arrived in the 16th century. Chileans overthrew Spanish rule in 1818. In 1973, a military coup installed a regime led by Gen. Augusto Pinochet. The junta jailed, tortured and executed thousands of Chileans. The regime ended, and a president was elected in 1990. Economic reforms and prosperity followed.

**Churches of Christ:** Evert Pickartz, a missionary from the U.S., traveled to Santiago in 1958 and helped establish the Domeyko Church of Christ. One of the first converts was Atilo Pinto. Gary Lutes and Jack Speer began work in Chile in 1967. Today there are congregations across the country and 13 in Santiago.

**Venezuelans and Chile:** There are an estimated 4 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela worldwide, up from 0.4 million in 2015, the Council on Foreign Relations reports. About 288,000 live in Chile — fewer than live in Peru (768,000) and Colombia (1.3 million) and about the same as the number in the U.S. (290,000).

**In Response to the Crisis,** Chile’s foreign ministry recently announced “democratic responsibility visas” for Venezuelans, available at any Chilean consulate in the world, Reuters reports. The visa allows Venezuelans to stay in Chile for one year and can be extended for an additional year. Chilean Foreign Minister Teodoro Ribera said, however, that the “real solution” would be for “the rule of law be restored” in Venezuela.

**Additional Sources:** CIA World Factbook, “Churches of Christ Around the World” by Mac Lynn. Maps via Wikimedia Commons.

**Blessing:** ‘We’re here, and we thank God’

The Venezuelans’ energy and zeal have revitalized once-stagnant congregations.

“I think evangelism is in the DNA of the Venezuelan church,” says Jonathan Hanegan, a former missionary to Venezuela who now is part of a church-planting team in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Hanegan traveled to Chile with *The Christian Chronicle* and translated interviews.

Pioneering missionaries from Churches of Christ, including Bob Brown, instilled a desire to spread the Gospel. Venezuelan evangelists worked tirelessly — often with little or no financial support — to help churches grow, Hanegan says. Venezuelans also have an open and gregarious nature, he adds, much like other peoples who live along the rim of the Caribbean Sea.

In Venezuela, “I would meet people at the bakery and have them over for dinner the next night,” Hanegan says. That’s much less likely to happen in Argentina or Chile. Building trust takes time.

The Venezuelans have encouraged their Chilean brethren to be more outgoing, Fernández says. They’ve also given Chilean Christians the chance to practice hospitality.

“They have been a big blessing for the church here in Los Nogales,” he says. “In the middle of this crisis, there’s something very beautiful.”

**How Did It Get This Bad?**

“How can a country so beautiful end up like this? Perhaps it’s a lesson. Maybe we’ll learn to value things better.”

Cece García asks the question to her fellow Venezuelans seated around the dinner table. She and her husband now live in Peru, but she has traveled to Santiago to visit her sister, Nila, who has made Los Nogales her adopted family.

Their oil-rich homeland, with a population of close to 32 million, once was the wealthiest nation in South America.

Nearly two decades ago, then-president Hugo Chávez launched a Bolivarian Revolution, named after the 19th century revolutionary Simón Bolívar, lauded across Latin America. Chávez strengthened government control of Venezuela’s oil industry and implemented social programs to expand access to healthcare and education. He formed partnerships with Cuba and socialist-leaning governments. Then oil revenues declined, and scarcity increased.

Chávez died from cancer in 2013, and Nicolás Maduro became president. Since then, the crisis has deepened. Power outages are common. Unemployment and gang violence are on the rise.

Earlier this year, amid protests against Maduro and his United Socialist Party, Juan Guaidó, leader of Venezuela’s opposition-controlled national assembly, appointed himself president. He cited the country’s constitution, which mandates that the assembly leader step in if the president is unfit to serve.

Violent clashes followed as the country’s economic woes, including runaway inflation, continued.
‘GOD SENT HIS ANGELS’

Now, “your monthly salary can’t even buy a carton of eggs,” says Gabriella de Castellano, one of the new arrivals from Venezuela. “People are dying. There’s no gas, no electricity. If your baby is sick and you cannot afford medicine, the baby will die.”

About two months ago, de Castellano and her family gather for Sunday worship with Los Nogales Church of Christ. Before the service, the Garcia sisters and other Venezuelans join their Chilean brethren for singing practice, reviewing PowerPoint slides of new hymns including “Exaltado” (“Highly Exalted”). Later, as the sermon begins, children of both nationalities pack into a back room to sing Bible songs and color pictures of scenes from Jesus’ life.

The church averages attendance of about 200 each week, Fernández says. As many as 50 of them are Venezuelans. The church has appointed some of them to ministry positions.

Nila García serves as a secretary for the church and works with the congregation’s burgeoning youth group. She helped the church host a recent international women’s conference.

“God brought us here for a reason,” she says. “Churches have been revitalized because of the Venezuelans, challenged to love more, to relate to one another.”

Her sister agrees, adding that the horrors they’ve endured have made them witnesses of God’s providence. “When you’ve been through what we’ve been through, you see him, you feel him,” Cece García says. “We’re still being put through trials, but we’re stronger.”

Believers sing during the Providencia Church of Christ’s Sunday service.

FOR A MIDDLE-CLASS CHILEAN CHURCH, Venezuelans’ arrival is ‘Providencia’

BY ERIK TRYGGSTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

SANTIAGO, Chile — “Can we talk over here?” asks Alejandra Huezo, moving from a grove of shade trees to a park bench bathed in sunlight.

After three years in Santiago, the El Salvador native is still getting used to the chilly Chilean winters.

Her new church seemed a little cold, too — at first, says Huezo, who worships with the Iglesia de Cristo congregación Providencia, the Providencia Church of Christ.

“Chilean culture is different, not as accepting,” says Huezo, who grew up in the Miramonte Church of Christ in San Salvador. “But step by step, they trust in you. Now we’re working with the youth, and we feel like we’re family.”

The middle-class congregation meets near the neatly manicured park in a neighborhood whose name means “providence.” A team of U.S. missionaries planted the church, and the last member returned to the States only weeks ago. Now the church is self-supporting and has members from nations including Chile, Colombia, Haiti and Venezuela.

Huezo moved here with her husband, Nico Rodriguez, who was offered a job with a financial firm.

As Sunday worship concluded, a Venezuelan woman addressed the congregation, thanking them for helping her find a job.

Chile enjoys a level of prosperity greater than that of its South American neighbors, and the United Nations consistently ranks it as having the highest standard of living on the continent.

The country also has unusually high rates of depression, particularly in Santiago, according to the World Health Organization.

“The Providencia church has benefited from the Venezuelans’ presence, Huezo says. “They have impacted the church with the way they confront difficulties.”

Often, “Chilean people cannot see how many blessings they have,” she says. “We, as foreign people, can see it.”

Chileans and Venezuelans worship side by side at Los Nogales Church of Christ.

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Luke 1:78

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Rachel Howell • Marico Early • Abby Stone
FOR BIATRIZ LAREZ, times were tough. Then she heard about a program that helps women like her. Along the way, she has pursued a degree, improved her credit score — and given her life to Jesus.

Hope for a single-mother family

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

PORTALES, N.M.

Biatriz Larez knows what it’s like to struggle to feed her family.
A few years ago, the single mother and her three young children made do in a crumbling, two-bedroom mobile home.
She worked an hourly, low-wage job as a custodian.
“It was paycheck-to-paycheck living,” said Larez, who was born and raised in this eastern New Mexico town best known for its peanut and dairy farms. “It wasn’t great.”
But her economic — and spiritual — outlook changed when a friend introduced her to Hope Haven, a faith-based duplex community built by New Mexico Christian Children’s Home.
For up to four years while single parents go to college or develop careers, the ministry associated with Churches of Christ offers free rent, utilities and internet.
The families receive canned goods, nonperishables and meat through the children’s home’s commissary. They have access to a clothing closet.
Donors shower the children with birthday and Christmas gifts.
“Who doesn’t like that?” said Bill Marshall, the program’s director. “It relieves them of financial pressure to the tune of $18,000 to $22,000 a year.”
But with those benefits come expectations: No smoking or drinking. No physical relationships. No guests of the opposite sex, except for relatives.
And for many, this is the big one: The entire family must attend church services three times per week.
That includes Sunday morning and Wednesday night assemblies at the Southside Church of Christ, within walking distance of Hope Haven.
Plus, New Mexico Christian hosts a Sunday night gathering specifically for the 39 single mothers and their 73 children. The program is at capacity and has a months-long waiting list.
“We don’t judge these ladies. We take them as they are,” said Marshall, a minister for 30 years and a former group home houseparent with his wife, Judy. “However, they sign an agreement that they are going to live a different standard here.”
Since the ministry accepts zero government funding, no regulations preclude that mandate.

“You can’t force anyone to believe in Jesus and be baptized,” Marshall said. “But we can ask them to come to church where they’re going to hear about that.”
Since 1954, New Mexico Christian has specialized in residential group care on its rural campus eight miles west of Portales.
The single-parent program’s roots stretch back to 1983. However, the major expansion did not occur until the construction — completed last year — of 30 duplex residences at Hope Haven.
In addition, the children’s home maintains nine single-parent apartments split between Portales and the main campus outside town.
Donors gave $6 million in three years to build Hope Haven on seven acres behind the church, which has a playground that the children enjoy all week.
That fund-raising timeline amazed executive director Rod Self, whose office is in a long building where — decades ago — New Mexico Christian housed 24 boys and 24 girls at opposite ends.
“It just sounds to our donors like what the New Testament church did,” Self said of the single-parent program.
The original Greek wording of James 1:27, Self noted, refers to pure religion as caring for widows and “the fatherless” in their distress.
“We waited for the Lord to provide the money first,” he said of building Hope Haven. “I’m not sure how much faith that is. But we were just amazed to see what God wanted to do through his people.”
The program allows single fathers as well as mothers, but all but one participant so far have been women.
They only refer to them as the ladies that we serve and the families that we serve," said Mann, whose wife, Reva, serves alongside him at the home. "I just think that’s beautiful. That’s the way Jesus would look at it."

"1 WASTING ANY HELP"

Larez — mother of Alexander, 11; Lexie, 8; and Zacarias, 5 — has no contact with her daughter’s father, who was deported to Mexico. She split up with her son’s father. "I was pretty much on my own," she said. "I wasn’t getting any help." After the family moved into a new duplex at Hope Haven in 2017, her sister suffered a stroke. So Larez took in nephew Dametrio, 15, who helps care for his cousins.

"MUCH CLOSER TO GOD"

Sandra Caldera, 35, lived in one of the single-parent apartments for four years before finishing her master’s degree at Eastern New Mexico University, where she’s majoring in psychology. After earning her bachelor’s degree, she hopes to attend graduate school and become a counselor’s counselor. Along with all that, she satisfies the requirement to attend the three weekly church services. "I’m not going to lie," Larez said. "It’s hard to get into that routine when I first started." Now the home’s director of adoptions and counseling, she said her experience helps her relate to single mothers. "It’s easier for me to help them and encourage them to keep going," Caldera said. "I tell them to keep trying and to keep their faith and go to church and do what they’re supposed to do, and things will get better."

"THAT’S the way Jesus would look at it"

"That’s the way Jesus would look at it," Sandra Caldera said. "I just think that’s beautiful. That’s the way Jesus would look at it."

"MUCH CLOSER TO GOD"

"Of course, we encourage the other way. ‘Come to Jesus, and he can help you get your life together.’" Cox said. "We love Bianca and her family." Larez has taken full advantage of the program to improve her family’s life, Marshall said. "I have just watched her blossom into a really fine lady," he said. "And now she’s been baptized and is a part of God’s family. She’s just been a blessing. She’s a great example to others."

"MUCH CLOSER TO GOD"

"I have just watched her blossom into a really fine lady," he said. "And now she’s been baptized and is a part of God’s family. She’s just been a blessing. She’s a great example to others."

"MUCH CLOSER TO GOD"

"And like nowadays, we have conversations where we’ll go back and forth on theological. And I feel like I’ve grown a lot." But then they realized people are the same. "At first they’re going to be mad," he said. "But then they realized people are the same. They want to see you grow spiritually," he said. "And like nowadays, we have conversations where we’ll go back and forth on theological. And I feel like I’ve grown a lot." Now the home’s director of adoptions and counseling, she said her experience helps her relate to single mothers. "It’s easier for me to help them and encourage them to keep going," Caldera said. "I tell them to keep trying and to keep their faith and go to church and do what they’re supposed to do, and things will get better."
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IN A SOUTH AMERICAN METROPOLIS, a missionary couple serves souls who have slipped through the cracks.

They lost faith in church, not salvation

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

LIMA, Peru

As a country boy from north Mississippi, I love peace and quiet,” says Jonathan Cooper. “Lima is everything but peace and quiet.”

The bustling South American capital, known for highrise condos, ceviche and traffic congestion, is home to more than 10 million souls. It’s the second-most-populated city on the continent behind Sao Paulo, Brazil. Since 2012 it also has been the mission field for Cooper and his wife, Peruvian native Bani González.

The couple, both graduates of Bear Valley Bible Institute in Denver, has served as evangelists, outreach coordinators and counselors for Churches of Christ — of which there are fewer than 20 in Lima, including house churches. They currently serve the 80-member Salamanca Iglesia de Cristo, where Cooper is pulpit minister. This year one member is moving to the city of Huancayo to help start a new church.

“This is an example of the level of commitment members have made to fulfilling the Great Commission,” says Cooper, who also studied at Freed-Hardeman University in Tennessee and Heritage Christian University in Alabama.

The couple also focuses on reaching church members who have fallen away and reuniting them with their former congregations.

The elders of their previous supporting church in Alabama recently resigned, so now they are “in dire need of an eldership committed to evangelism abroad,” Cooper says. They pray for a sponsoring church that will send not only funds but also church members to see and participate in the work.

The couple sat down with The Christian Chronicle at a restaurant in one of Lima’s massive shopping malls (a 90-minute drive from the airport, through bumper-to-bumper traffic) to talk about how they met and how they serve in Peru. Adding occasional commentary was their 8-year-old son, Andrew.

Jonathan Cooper and his wife, Bani González, with their son, Andrew, in Lima.

Tell me how you guys met.

Bani: I’m from Lima originally. I was worshipping with the Miraflores Church of Christ, and a group of missionaries from the U.S. came there. I’m a special ed teacher, and they liked the way I worked with kids. They asked me to work with the Sterling Boulevard Church of Christ in Sheffield, Ala., which was starting a Hispanic ministry.

After four years living with this awesome family, doctors with two children, I met Jonathan. He came to visit the church during a special black history program. They asked me to talk about black history in Peru.

Jonathan: I was at the Southside Church of Christ in Rogersville, Ala. I had just gotten back from a long trip to Georgia, on the Florida border, at 3 a.m. It was a three-day ladies event, and my sister asked me to drive a van. I was sleepy and didn’t want to go (to Sterling Boulevard), but my little brother convinced me. I met Bani, and she convinced me to go to a Mexican restaurant.

Bani: I was just being a nice person! I didn’t have anything in mind! Then, when we started to get serious, he needed to come to my country. He came for Christmas 2008. We got engaged in May 2009, married in August, drove to Bear Valley and started school. We stayed there for three years.

Andrew: Then in 2010, I was born!

Unlike mission teams that go into a city and plant a new church, you decided to focus on lapsed members. Why?

Jonathan: I grew up in the Church of Christ. I witnessed the efforts, sacrifices and tears that my father and mother put into their ministry. I fell in love with many of the hundreds of people they reached out to daily.

I remember watching my parents wrestle with the disappointment of members they’d baptized leaving the church for other religions or fads. “What did we do wrong?” they would ask. “Why would they turn their backs on sound doctrine? If I had one more chance to talk with them I would say…”

On my first visit to Peru with Bani, I witnessed something so familiar while sitting around the table with her family and fellow members of the Lord’s body. They were worried about members who no longer worshipped with them. “What happened to so-and-so and his family? Why aren’t they coming to church anymore?”

Jesus is very clear about how a shepherd will leave the 99 sheep to find the one lamb that was lost. But today we aren’t worried about our lost brothers; rather, we’ve become eager to keep up with denomination X and Y.

We’ve been here for seven and a half years and have helped close to two dozen people come back to Christ. They’re faithful, strong, determined individuals and families who never lost hope in their salvation. But they had lost confidence in their fellow brothers in Christ.

Bani: The idea is to get them back to their churches. We don’t want to be seen as sheep stealers. Transparency is the biggest thing.

You said there are 15 or so Iglesias de Cristo in Lima, but many are mired in division. Why do you think that is?

Jonathan: I have worked with three congregations in different...
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LOST FAITH: Being ‘a non-biased bridge’

FROM PAGE 21

parts of Lima with people from very different cultures and social backgrounds. I have visited at least five other congregations in Lima.

The division problem has roots in the following issues:

• Leaders can be, at times, quick to defend, deflect and diverge when issues arise instead of facing them head-on.

• Peru is a diverse country because members come from all over the world to Lima, and trying to worship together isn’t easy when cultures collide.

• Past missionaries have done great things for the churches, but I feel that we’ve failed to differentiate American Christian culture from Bible-based commands and first century culture. Many new Christians in Peru and around the world feel like they have to imitate missionary X and not Christ. I think we sometimes sell ourselves rather than Christ to the communities we are reaching out to.

• I believe strongly that money, intent and expectations don’t always lead to desired results, especially when there isn’t transparency and discussion among everyone involved.

What will it take to restore unity to the churches in Lima?

Jonathan: I think that we have to sit everyone down, confront some of the major issues and build community with the leaders. I say “leaders” because not all preachers lead the churches in Lima. Some individuals lead the churches from the front pew. Others lead from across the ocean via Internet. I think that those who want the churches to work together have to be invested in building a Christian community in Peru.

How do you see God using you to help?

Jonathan: My primary desire in Peru, aside from reaching the wandering sheep, is to build a safe haven for Christian youths through a network within the brotherhood. My first attempt at this was back in 2012 when I brought Montrell Greene down to do a few programs with the youth in Chosica, Los Pinos and churches in the surrounding area.

In 2014 we worked with Jonathan Hanegan, missionary in Argentina, to gather all of the known churches together for an afternoon in the park. Almost every church in Lima was represented. We also have participated in Bible bowls, spoken at joint evangelism activities and attended national youth retreats.

I have great expectations for the present and next generation of Christians in Lima. Many of them already have expressed a desire to become evangelists, preachers, teachers and, most importantly, lights in their communities.

I believe God has used me to be a non-biased bridge within the Christian community. I’ve gotten to know most of the churches and several of their members for close to 12 years now. I keep in contact with members and leaders alike, and we rarely turn down an opportunity to assist them in their programs, whether evangelistic or celebratory.

What do you wish Christians in the U.S. understood about ministry in Peru?

Jonathan: I wish that people in the States knew that Peruvians are a lot like them. The difference is that for the thousands of preachers trained throughout the U.S. every year, Peruvian Christians only train about 20 to 30 a year. We don’t have enough schools, preachers, teachers and evangelists to secure the success of the Churches of Christ here for the future.

For that main reason, we at Salamanca are putting much effort into preparing our youth and older members for the preaching of the Gospel. Our average Bible study on Sundays is two hours long. We have begun to prepare a few of our men to teach in our own preaching institute. The only thing we lack is financial support for the administration and to pay for a location — and time. Next year one of our former elders will be retiring from his 9 to 5 job and will be serving full time in the Bible institute that we’re hoping to open in the coming years.

FIND THIS DIALOGUE online at christianchronicle.org or contact us (info on Page 30) to learn more about supporting the Coopers and other missionaries.
Congratulations to Tim Burow, the Third President of the Sunset International Bible Institute.

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Minister

We are seeking a minister to work with our pulpit minister with the intention of transitioning to our full-time pulpit minister position. He will work with our ministerial staff and elders to serve the West Olive Church of Christ by providing a balanced ministry of preaching, teaching and assisting the elders in implementing our vision to help the congregation grow to its full potential in membership and spiritual growth in Christ. We are a congregation of 450 members in a growing community west of Phoenix, Ariz. (www.WestOlive.com)

General Requirements: The ideal candidate should be a married, middle-aged man with at least 10 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, participation in the life of our church family and other duties requested by the elders.

How to Apply: Those interested in applying should mail/ email a copy of their resume with picture, links to recent sermons, and at least three references to:

West Olive Church of Christ
Attn: Elders
10935 W Olive Ave
Peoria, AZ 85345

Send emails to:

WOElders@westolive.com

Youth Minister

The Plymouth Church of Christ in Plymouth, Michigan, is looking for a full-time Youth Minister. The Youth Minister will work to coordinate spiritual and social activities that encourage, empower and equip the students (K-12) as they strive to live as people of God. If interested, please send cover letter, resume, references and any questions to:

Search Committee
bulletin9301@plymouthcoc.net

Full Job Posting:
plymouthcoc.net/ymsearch

Preacher Search

We are a small congregation who desire to grow both spiritually and numerically. Currently, our resources are limited, and while we can offer some salary, we also can offer a modest four-bedroom home. For full description, please visit our website:

warwickrichurchofchrist.org

If interested, send your resume and cover letter, including a brief description of the strengths you would bring to our congregation to:

warwickrichoc@gmail.com

Warwick Church of Christ
PO Box 7095, Warwick, RI 02887-7095

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Global Reunion campers carry flags of the countries where they’ve lived.

Third Culture Kids find a sense of ‘home’ at annual Global Reunion

BY CHELLIE ISON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

OKLAHOMA CITY

"The Lord bless you and keep you …" The words of the farewell song rang out as the 2019 Global Reunion came to a close.

Campers young and old gathered in a huddle, arms around each other, singing the hymn as a closing prayer for the week-long camp held on the campus of Oklahoma Christian University.

“It’s a real community,” said Nancy Hartman, who directs the camp along with her husband, Kent. This was the 14th year for the Reunion. Its 150 participants represented 40 countries.

Missionary and military families who have lived overseas come together at the camp to learn cross-cultural transition skills to help them adapt to life in the U.S. The camp also helps them to acknowledge the grief many feel and provides healthy ways to work through the grief.

Camper Ameleah Brauer says she looks forward to Global Reunion every summer.

“I love them all so much,” she said of the friends she’s made.

She first came with her family three years ago, after they returned from serving as missionaries in Italy. She keeps coming because she says it’s easier to connect with the teens here than it is at “home” in Arkansas.

That’s a common thread among Third Culture Kids — children who are raised in a culture other than their parents’, Nancy Hartman said.

When they return to their parents’ culture, “churches and families are always so happy to see them,” she said. “Grandmas and aunts are all hugging them and saying, ‘Welcome home,’ but they’ve just left home.”

Third Culture Kids, or TCKs, “don’t have a way to say, ‘I don’t feel at home,’” said Nancy Hartman, a former missionary to Australia and the mother of three TCKs.

Brauer spent 11 years of her life in Italy. Now, her family lives in Arkansas. While she is a U.S. citizen, it’s hard for her to call Arkansas home. Coming to Global Reunion isn’t just about connecting with friends, she said. It’s helped her adjust and learn to live in the country she now calls home.

“It helps me to understand myself better every time,” she said. “The sessions are really relatable to me and the things I’m going through.”

WEBSITE: intermissionministry.org

Bible-based Minister Needed - Burbank, California

Seeking a sound and mature minister to work with our current minister and 50-member congregation. Transition to full-time pulpit minister as our current minister retires. Must be solid in Scriptures, passionate for evangelism, a capable preacher and Bible class teacher. Opportunity to help a close-knit and loving congregation grow. Self-motivated person with heart of a servant who demonstrates love for people. Own building/classroom facilities in major metro/mission area. Flexible on salary and benefits; parsonage available. Willingness to do secular part-time work encouraged. To apply, email resume, audio/visual recordings of 2 sermons to:

Burbank Church of Christ, Attn: Nathan Scott, 3020 W Burbank Blvd, Burbank, CA
Or by email: burbankchurchofchrist@gmail.com

FACULTY POSITIONS AVAILABLE

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

Initial application should include a letter of interest and curriculum vitae. To complete the application, three church references, three professional references, and a transcript of the highest degree are required.

Salary and rank are determined based on credentials and experience.

COLLEGE OF ALLIED HEALTH • COMMUNICATION SCIENCES & DISORDERS. Seeking a full-time, nine-month faculty member. Candidates holding a Ph.D. (or willingness to immediately pursue a Ph.D.) are preferred. Qualified individuals must hold CCC from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Experience with adult neurogenic disorders (including TBI) and voice disorders is highly desirable. Teaching opportunities at both the undergraduate and graduate level and opportunities for clinical education are available.

Submit application materials to Dr. Melanie Meeker, chair, department of communication sciences & disorders, at mmeeker@harding.edu or HU Box 10872, Searcy, AR 72149.

PAUL R. CARTER COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION • MARKETING. Seeking a full-time faculty member with appointment beginning fall 2020. Preference will be given to a Ph.D. in a business field with at least 18 graduate hours in marketing. Preference will also be given to those with professional experience in marketing analytics and/or electronic marketing. The Paul R. Carter College of Business Administration is committed to the promotion of free markets and economic freedom.

Submit application materials to Dr. Allen Frazier, dean, at afrazier@harding.edu or HU Box 10774, Searcy, AR 72149.

These additional openings are available at harding.edu/jobsfaculty:

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS • ONLINE ADJUNCT

Please visit harding.edu/jobs for further information on these positions and to learn more about open staff positions.

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of us working together as one body,” said Janice Johnson, a member of Tomball’s Hufsmith Church of Christ.

Cruz Hernández, minister for the Hidden Valley Church of Christ, agreed: “This is what happens when we work together in unity and come together to glorify God.”

Applause greeted volunteers — representing more than 20 congregations — as they entered the food bank. Inside the 300,000-square-foot facility, giant signs touted inspirational messages such as “Because of you, a child will eat today.”

“This is kind of awe-inspiring to see this many Christians in a group come together,” said Matthew Toomes, the food bank’s chief operating officer.

Organizers hoped to assemble 100,000 pounds of meals between 7:30 a.m. and noon and break a single-day record. Final numbers were not available at press time.

Besides the unity emphasis, Mission Day had an evangelistic thrust, said Benton Baugh, a Memorial member and one of the organizers. Church members were encouraged to invite friends and neighbors to join them in serving.

“We have a number of visitors here,” Baugh said.

After working, volunteers enjoyed a fellowship meal and devotional at the nearby Fifth Ward Church of Christ.

“It seems like there are a lot of issues that divide us as a brotherhood today,” said David Duncan, minister for the Memorial Church of Christ. “But working together to distribute food to hungry people is something we can all agree on. It can be a starting place for unity.”

Said Gary Smith, Fifth Ward minister: “The Churches of Christ from all over Houston are coming together. ... We didn’t know if we’d get the numbers, but they’re here from literally all over Houston. So we’re hoping to display unity in Christ, unity among all races — all shapes, all colors, all sizes — and, of course, to show the love of Christ.”

Yeakley was a church growth expert known for books such as “Why Churches Grow” and “Why They Left.” His work as a church consultant took him to hundreds of churches across the United States and abroad.

Yeakley was quoted often in The Christian Chronicle on growth and decline trends in Churches of Christ.

He began preaching at age 16 and did so for 25 years, completing degrees in psychology and communications and a doctorate in speech communication during that time.

Yeakley later chaired the speech department at the University of Tulsa and then directed the Church Growth Institute at Abilene Christian University. In 1990, Yeakley and his wife moved to Searcy, where he became a professor of Bible and religion and director of the Harding Center for Church Growth Studies.

He won numerous awards for his research and was given the Distinguished Christian Service Award by both Harding University and Oklahoma Christian University.

He retired from Harding in 2011 but continued teaching and consulting at churches across the U.S.

In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to the Flavil and Maydell Yeakley Endowed Scholarship Fund at Harding University, P.O. Box 12238, Searcy, AR 72149.
Mary Jo Garner
103 years

Mary Jo Garner of El Paso, Texas, turned 103 on August 20, 2019. She was born and reared in Baird, Texas, and graduated Abilene Christian College in 1937. She and her husband, Howard, along with children Don, Lynn, and Gwynel attended Broadway Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas; Church of Christ in Lamesa, Texas; Church of Christ in Roswell, N.M.; and 6th and Jackson Church of Christ in Odessa, Texas. Mary Jo now lives in El Paso, Texas, and attends Eastwood Church of Christ when she is able. She taught 4th grade elementary school for 34 years and still has many friends who love to come visit with her.

Happy Birthday, Mary Jo!
Cards are welcome at 7949 Sunmount Dr., Apt. 6, El Paso, Texas 79925.

Adath Hudson
100 years

Adath Hudson was born in the lovely and rural Ozark mountain community of Mt. Judea, Ark., on June 2, 1919, and she has lived there all her life. She was baptized in July 1933 at the end of a revival meeting and has worshiped with the Mt. Judea Church of Christ for 100 years. This congregation was established in 1870 by her great-grandfather, and her father was an elder in the congregation for many years.

She celebrated her birthday by attending worship at the Mt. Judea Church of Christ followed by a potluck meal and reception. Among the nearly 200 visitors she received that day were her two sons, five grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren, her 96-year-old sister, as well as many of her nieces and nephews.

Adath has been a homemaker and farmer most of her life and a wonderful example of a faithful Christian. Her tip for longevity is eating pinto beans and cornbread every day.

Happy Birthday, Adath!

Mary Avella Bruce, 99 years
August 18, Union City, Tenn. Happy Birthday, Mary!

Anniversaries

50th: Jim and Donna Hannah, August 9, Temple, Texas. Congratulations, Jim and Donna!

Memorials

Virginia Rae Niles
1926 – 1993

Virginia Rae Jenkins Niles was born July 29, 1926, and passed peacefully with beauty and grace into the arms of Jesus on June 9, 2019. She was born on the family farm in Beaver County, Okla., and had five brothers and sisters. In 1946 she married Harold Dean Niles, her high school sweetheart, and they were married 72½ years. Together they had four children, eleven grandchildren, and twenty-six great-grandchildren.

Virginia worked for Oklahoma Christian College as secretary to the dean of students until her retirement in 1992. She was also the sponsor for Women of Gamma Rho social service club and continued that role for many years after retirement. Virginia had a passion for mission work in Sibiu, Romania, and she taught youngsters and ladies about Jesus. She cared for and served her family, friends, and others with a special spirit.

Robert Dempsey Simpson
1929 – 2019

Dempsey Simpson, 90, passed into eternal glory with his Lord and Savior on Monday, July 15, at his home in Fair Oaks Ranch, Texas, with his loving wife and family at his bedside. Dempsey lived a life of love and service to God and others, particularly to vulnerable mothers and children.

Dempsey was born on March 23, 1929, near Sulphur Springs, Texas. He earned his bachelor of science from Sam Houston State College and a master’s degree in education from East Texas State Teachers College.

He began his teaching career in vocational agriculture at Boles Home High School in 1949. He married the love of his life, Jean Davies of Quinlan, Texas, on June 2, 1951. They celebrated 68 years of marriage this year. Dempsey taught at Boles for 15 years, managed their agriculture program, preached on Sunday, and with Jean served 8 years as house parents for teenage girls. During this time, they were blessed with four children: Robbie, Diana, Pamela and Randy.

Dempsey’s hard work, dedication and energy led to his selection as the superintendent of Medina Children’s Home beginning in March, 1964.

Under his careful and diligent leadership and hard work, bills were paid, and MCH began growing rapidly. He had a desire to make it possible for families to stay together and was instrumental in adding more group care cottages and a planned program for single parents with children. During his time he also served as an elder at the College Avenue Church of Christ.

When Dempsey retired from MCH in 1984, he left a strong organization that was blessed with a solid financial foundation for the future. In 1992 he was named Administrator of the Year by 85 Christian Child Care agencies at their yearly conference. He moved to Abilene, Texas, and continued to serve as executive director of development and public relations, faithfully continuing to tell the story of Medina Children’s Home to individuals and churches for five years. He was a member of the University Church of Christ for 30 years. As his health declined, he and Jean moved to Fair Oaks Ranch to be near their children. All of his career he exemplified James 1:27: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress….”

Dempsey leaves a legacy of love and Christian faith to his family. He is survived by his wife, Kathryn Jean; their two sons, Robbie (Bethany) Simpson and Randy (Teddi) Simpson; two daughters, Diana (Joe) Harrell and Pam (Randy) Ferrell; eight grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Nancy Ann Lewis Ferguson, 85, July 16, Abilene, Texas.

With Appreciation

The Christian Chronicle appreciates and acknowledges generous gifts received in honor of the Lynn and Joy McMillon Endowment fund and in memory of Marge McGinley and Jim Vercelli.

Submit your wedding announcements, birth announcements, memorials or tributes to milestones@christianchronicle.org. Submissions start at $25.
Crowley’s Ridge names Johnson as next president

PARAGOULD, Ark. — Crowley’s Ridge College has named Richard Johnson, as its next president, effective Jan. 1. Johnson, the college’s current vice president for advancement, will succeed Ken Hoppe, who is retiring Dec. 31 after 16 years.

“We were blessed to have exceptional internal candidates from which to choose,” said Jimmy C. Smith, chairman of Crowley’s Ridge’s board of trustees.

The four-year college is associated with Churches of Christ. Johnson earned an associate’s degree from Crowley’s Ridge in 1984 during its time as a junior college. In 1986, he received his bachelor’s in business administration from Harding University in Searcy, Ark.

He has a master of nonprofit management degree from Regis University in Denver and expects to receive his doctorate in higher education organization from Abilene Christian University in Texas in December.

Johnson and his wife, Andrea have been married for 34 years. They are members of the Seventh and Mueller Church of Christ, where he has served as a shepherd since October 2015.

NEWSMAKERS

NEW MINISTERS:
Christine Fox Parker, associate minister, West End Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn.
Terry Norris, pulpit minister, Graham Street Church of Christ in Waxahachie, Texas. Kelsey Aldrich, elementary children’s minister, Littleton Church of Christ in Colorado.

NAMED: Wendell Avisado, acting budget secretary for the nation of the Philippines. He attends the Metro Manila Church of Christ.

The University Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, is prayerfully seeking a full-time youth minister: a man to mentor, teach and guide our middle and high school students as they grow in Christ.

For more information, see uccabilene.org/ym2020

Or email us at: ym2020@uccabilene.org

STATESIDE MISSIONARY NEEDED IN NEW ENGLAND

You don’t have to go to Antarctica to be a missionary!

Consider America’s greatest mission field: the northeastern states. One out of five Americans live in the northeast United States, but the Lord’s church is numerically weaker there than anywhere else in the nation.

Evangelist needed to plant a church in beautiful Massachusetts. This is a “start from scratch” opportunity. It will not be an easy task: most people are multi-generational Catholics or have no religious affiliation at all. Agnostics are everywhere, but so are seekers for truth. This field is ripe for harvest!

Must be experienced at conducting home Bible studies, defending faith in God, and establishing friendships. Looking for someone who will stay a few years and not be easily discouraged. Must have convictions on a cappella music and male spiritual leadership.

May need to help raise part of his financial support.

Contact: Outreach Minister, Church of Christ
PO Box 755, New Milford, Connecticut 06776
E-mail: dtarbet@swbell.net
http://berkshirecountycoc.org
Cell: 214-926-2747

Full-Time Minister - Otisville, Michigan

The Otisville Church of Christ (OCC) is seeking a full-time minister. We are a mostly rural congregation located approximately 25 minutes northeast of Flint, Michigan. We have been in existence for over 50 years and have an average attendance of 125 members. We are looking for a self-starter with good people skills and a strong desire to study and preach God’s word. Responsibilities include preaching sermons on Sunday morning and night, teaching Bible classes, engaging and encouraging young families, mentoring, visitation, and evangelism, all in collaboration with our four elders.

Strong Bible background and preaching skills are essential. The ability to work with members of all ages is very important. A bachelor’s degree in Bible is preferred but not necessary if the candidate has excellent qualifications and the right experience.

OCC provides the minister with a home and a competitive salary package. If interested, please send a resume, cover letter and sample sermons to Otisville Church of Christ, 13471 North State Road, Otisville, MI 48463, or via email to tedjuly@gmail.com.
A heart attack and a homeless soul convinced minister, journalist to labor toward weight loss with God’s help.

I thought it was heat exhaustion.

One day last summer, I had been at a football practice with a group of high school players. It was extremely hot.

As I left the practice, I experienced chest pains. I passed them off as gas. But as I got in my car and drank a Gatorade, I knew it wasn’t gas.

I knew I was in trouble.

I started to drive myself to the hospital. The pains increased, and I quickly decided instead to pull into the McDonald’s drive-thru, where I was well-known, asking them to call 911.

My heart attack was followed a few days later by a surgery to place a stent in one of my arteries.

A podiatrist sent me to the hospital where I had to be admitted for IV antibiotics and other treatments. I thought I would lose my toes.

It reminded me of a homeless man I had once seen on the street. He had no shoes, and the image of his seemingly dead, charcoal-colored toes were stamped in my memory. I wondered if I would become like him in that I might lose my toe because I couldn’t bring myself to say no to sugar.

It was enough to motivate me to change. It motivated me to take my medication, drink more water and start walking.

After some tests, the doctors determined my toe likely would heal. It wouldn’t have to be amputated. I was ready to dance like David.

I’m still working to fully embrace low-carb dieting and exercise. I am eating salads with lean meat and drinking lots of water. There are no fancy before-and-after photos yet. The victories come one meal at a time.

I have read many commentaries on this passage, but I like what Joseph Benson writes — that while Solomon urges men to “labour with all their might,” the reality is “they must not be confident of their own strength … but must look up to God for his blessing,” otherwise their efforts are futile.

In the last year, I have buried several healthy church members and friends who encouraged me in my battle against this weight. Sherry Condee. Geneva Mays. Walter, an Army veteran who loved to kayak. And Daisy Morgan, the first African American female stationed aboard the USS Lexington in Pensacola, Fla. I miss them dearly.

While they are gone, I cannot use their death as an excuse to fall back into my old habits.

I know that despite my ups and downs, my battle with weight is nothing to be ashamed of. At one time, I weighed more than 410 pounds. While I made it to 359 pounds for a while, today I am around 380. I call this my Battle of the Bulge.

My goal in this battle is to get down to 299. It’s a big goal, but I know if I turn to the Lord and focus on the gift of the Spirit, which I received when I put on Christ in baptism, then I have what I need to transform this 59-year-old body into the likeness of Christ.

I believe it’s simply a decision I have to make at every meal, every snack, every step.

I have to ask myself, “Did I do what I needed to do today to be more like Christ? It’s time to sweat!”

HAMIL R. HARRIS is a Christian Chronicle correspondent and veteran journalist. He preaches for the Glenarden Church of Christ in Maryland.

CHRONICLE
SEPTEMBER 2019
Bless this house

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts … Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

— Deuteronomy 6:5-9, New International Version

Building a home is no easy task, as my husband and I have learned over the last year.

We’ve remodeled a couple of homes in our 15 years of marriage, but Nate’s dream always has been to design and direct the building of a home for our family. Two years ago, we found a lot we couldn’t pass up, and so began our journey.

I have prayed a lot along this road. I pray we use this home as a blessing not only to our family but also to others. A place to pray together, to fellowship and to grow.

As the house began to take shape in the spring, I got excited for the day our friends could come bless our home.

Years ago, I had pinned an idea on Pinterest that suggested writing Scripture on the framing of a home as it’s being built. Since that time, I have kept a running list in my phone of verses that have touched my heart and that I could see as blessings on the walls of the different rooms of the home.

Then, in early July, at the end of the framing process and just before the walls were to be covered with insulation, we invited some close friends and their children over to fill our walls with the words of the Lord.

They all brought verses that were special to them, that they wanted to share with us. Some wrote prayers for our individual family members. Another shared a song about the Lord blessing a home. And a few of the youngest participants drew pictures of houses and puppy dogs.

On our way to the house that day, my 9-year-old son, Brixton, told me he wanted to write the words of Matthew 18:21 on the wall, but he wasn’t sure where. I said it could go anywhere, but maybe somewhere near his room and his sister Ila’s room would be fitting.

Later, as I walked through the house, my heart warmed as I saw the verse, “Peter asked, ‘Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘Not seven times but 77 times,’” written on a wall between their rooms.

Not long after, the walls were covered with spray foam insulation and then drywall. The verses and prayers are no longer visible to our eyes, but they are there nonetheless.

I consider it a blessing to have friends who see the value in sharing their favorite Scriptures with us.

“I pray that someday soon, after we move in, that the words of those prayers and verses will reign in our family’s hearts throughout the years to come. And I pray that God will truly bless this house.”

Chellie Ison is digital news editor for The Christian Chronicle. Reach her at chellie@christianchronicle.org.

I have to admit that I’m a little afraid.”

That note came from a Christian Chronicle reader, a Hispanic woman, after the mass shooting at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, that claimed 22 lives.

“I walk through this world with this brown skin that the dear Lord gave me,” she said. “I see people who claim to be Christian — and even Church of Christ — line up with the anti-Hispanic rhetoric. How do you not internalize it, even a little bit?”

The suspect in the shooting went to the store intent on killing people with brown skin. He stated that his target was “Mexicans,” El Paso police Detective Adrian Garcia reported in an arrest affidavit.

Immediately after the shooting, a political firestorm erupted. Critics charged that President Donald Trump’s rhetoric fuels white supremacist madmen such as the El Paso shooter. Trump’s supporters pointed out that plenty of mass shootings occurred during past presidencies.

A slew of social media memes followed, delivering hateful half-truths in snarky language, critical of people on both sides of the issue. Sadly, we’ve seen several of our brothers and sisters in Christ sharing these messages on their Facebook pages.

Can you imagine Jesus doing that? If you can’t, then you shouldn’t either.

Let’s leave the partisan politics to those preoccupied with the Caesars and kingdoms of this world.

We urge Chronicle readers to consider the real feelings of our dear Hispanic sister — and all of our Latino brethren — when they engage in social media. May the fruit of our lips openly profess the name of our Lord.

It’s fine to support immigration reform. Or, if you prefer, fight for efforts to tighten the nation’s border. But don’t become so consumed with the affairs of 21st century Washington that you lose sight of first century Jerusalem and the sacrifice made on the cross.

Scripture was written on the walls and the stairs. Ila Ison, 3, can’t spell yet but was happy to draw a picture of her family.
Evans’ final book raises hard questions

CHURCH MEMBERS MAY NOT AGREE with the progressive author’s conclusions but will appreciate her challenge to study for themselves.

Rachel Held Evans was brought up in the Bible Belt and received a Christian higher education. She knew the stories from the Old and New Testaments backward and forward.

In “Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water, and Loving the Bible Again,” she tells how she became cynical and jaded in her post-graduate years as she struggled with contradictions she saw in the Scriptures — violence in the Old Testament, unjust patriarchal rulings and an unwillingness of leadership to delve deep into the hard questions she had to ask.

A bestselling author and blogger, Evans challenged conservative Christian beliefs and became known as the “voice of the wandering evangelical,” according to the New York Times. This is her fourth and, sadly, final book, written before her untimely May 4 death at age 37 due to complications from an infection.

Instead of completely turning away from her faith, Evans used the tumultuous period of her life to model the Old Testament patriarch Jacob, who wrestled with God. She had once looked at her Bible as a manual to provide black-and-white answers to any problem. She came to see the Scriptures as an “inspired library of diverse writings, rooted in a variety of contexts, that have stood the test of time, precisely because, together, they avoid simplistic solutions to complex problems.”

In “Inspired,” she leans in to those difficult passages that theologians throughout time have toiled with and really asks what God is trying to teach us through each one of these tales. She also reminds us that, in contrast to the modern day, the inspired stories were seen by ancient Jews as conversation starters, not conversation enders.

Throughout the book she alternates through seven types of stories — Origin, Deliverance, War, Wisdom, Resistance, Gospel, Fish and Church — and intermingles her own modern-day parables, poetry and even choose-your-own-adventure tales. (I especially enjoyed these creative pieces and saw the Bible stories in new light through them.)

Evans provides lots of historical and cultural context surrounding the time periods of the passages she studies and includes theological commentary as well. She challenges us that “if you’re curious, you will never leave the text without learning something new. If you’re persistent, you just might leave inspired.”

As someone of her age group and similar upbringing, I related to many of Evans’ sentiments. While I did thoroughly enjoy the book and found encouragement to embrace the stories in God’s inspired Word with new eyes — even the difficult ones — I do not think I would recommend it for a new Christian just beginning their walk of faith.

I would recommend it to those who already have lots of knowledge of Scripture. Evans is a progressive thinker from a different faith from me, and I realize many members of Churches of Christ will not agree with some of her interpretations or conclusions.

But I welcome these conclusions as a chance to re-examine the passages, study for myself and continue to ask hard questions as I engage in the community around me.

I realize, like Evans, “there are parts of the Bible that inspire, parts that perplex and parts that leave you with an open wound.”

I’m still wrestling, and like Jacob, I will wrestle until I am blessed. God hasn’t let go of me yet.”

KATIE ISENBERG and her family worship with the Keizer Church of Christ in Oregon.

Resolving church conflicts requires quality confessions and real repentance

Many church leaders find themselves in the middle of squabbles. Sometimes they must try to promote healing after there has beengrave damage done to one or more members. Leaders are often at a loss for what actions to take. Let me suggest that a good place to begin is Alfred Poirier’s The Peacemaking Pastor: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict.

(1) I know the word “pastor” gives many of us pause, yet we can assign biblical meaning to the word and read “elder” in its place.)

Poirier, a minister and mediator, spends many pages describing the causes, dynamics, theology, doctrine and resolving of conflict. In my view, all these pages could be condensed.

An abridged version would be more attractive.

Some of Poirier’s theological points seem to contradict, but they neither enhance nor detract from the helpfulness of the book.

Poirier includes a helpful graphic called “The Slippery Slope.” It categorizes the many ways people deal with conflict. It is Poirier’s conviction that conflict starts with somebody sinning, although the kinds of sins that lead to conflict often are sins that people brush off as “little” sins or “that’s just my personality” sins — being impatient or getting angry too easily. Sometimes the root sin is a big whopper, too.

Poirier believes it is the duty of a counselor to figure out where people in conflict have sinned and hold them accountable to make amends in a biblical way. Those who sin should recognize the pain they cause and truly repent.

Repentance involves more than saying “I repent” or “I am sorry.” Poirier carefully describes the features of a quality confession. For example, address everyone involved. Avoid “if, but and maybe” statements. Accept the consequences. Alter your behavior. Allow time. I have to say, the biblical method of conflict resolution (Luke 17:3-4) will not sit well with many church members. The emphasis has, for too long, been on forgiveness and not confession. We need to extend comfort, protection and sympathy to those who have suffered, and we need to hold people accountable when they have caused damage.

This book will function like a toolkit for any church leader who wants to promote peace in the face of circumstances that work to divide the fellowship.

NEIL SHORT worships with a house church in Safford, Ariz.

In Print

Katie Isenberg
LEVITICUS ALIVE!

How do you live in the presence of the holy God? Give Leviticus another chance. Read it with fresh eyes, and gain a refreshing view of God. The third book of the Bible does not have to bore you and kill your desire to read through the Bible. Take a journey of discovery, and learn more about your call into holiness than you have likely understood.

Leviticus is not just a book for scholars who know the Hebrew sacrificial system and the smallest details of the Law of Moses. It is a book for all people that is relevant for all. It is a book that can come alive for you, for study groups, for Bible classes and for whole congregations. It is a book that speaks just as relevantly to the person who grew up in God’s church as well as to the person who never even thought about being in the church.

Under the pen name of Kerusso, the author, Bobby Lawson, shares the insights he gained from his journey into the book of Leviticus. What started as a personal journey became a Bible class that stretched out into five months. Imagine a Bible class on Leviticus that held interest that long and could have gone longer. Eventually, the journey led to this book.

Take your own journey into Leviticus. Take it alone, or take it with others. You may find yourself fascinated with arrow-heads. Blue may become your favorite color. Holiness may frequently enter your conversations. God may become bigger in your eyes. Leviticus may become one of your favorite books of the Bible. Discovery awaits you.

GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH THE BIBLE

Beginning Bible students can feel like they have been given the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle but not the picture on the box that shows how the finished puzzle should look. They open the Bible to find a collection of different writings and styles that talk about distant and unfamiliar people, places, and customs. Sometimes the writings seem repetitive; at other times they seem to jump randomly from one idea to another.

It is easier to understand the Bible if we already have an idea about its purpose, how its parts fit together, and the plot its story develops. *Getting Acquainted with the Bible* is a primer that starts with the most basic information about the Bible and its story and introduces its big picture, purpose, and parts. Its author believes students will more fully appreciate and learn from the details of its teaching if they see the complete picture that gives those details their meaning.

In addition to personal reading, this 152-page book can be used:

• by teachers of Introduction to the Bible courses in Christian schools or in church youth and adult classes (questions for review and discussion are included at the end of each chapter).

• in church newcomer classes or to give as a personal resource for beginning Bible students.

• in prison ministries and other settings where basic Bible knowledge may be minimal.

Print copies ($10.99) - available at Amazon and Barnes and Noble, or it can be ordered by a local bookstore. ISBN # 9780578434278.


See https://books2read.com/u/mdLVJ5 for a complete list.

David Anguish has served in various ministry roles with churches of Christ in Georgia and Tennessee and for twelve years was a teacher in the Department of Bible at Greater Atlanta Christian School. He holds degrees in Bible from Freed-Hardeman and Lipscomb Universities.

He and his late wife, Carlynn, were married for just under forty years. Their family includes two sons, a daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren.

He maintains a website featuring study outlines, articles, and additional resources at: www.davidanguish.com.

THE QUEST TO FIND MY FAMILY

The purpose of this story depends on the person who is going to read it. Parts of it may cause some to examine their history. It may cause others to feel pity for the author and the occasional mistreatment to deter the author from obtaining more information about his own personal history.

For parents or prospective parents, it can show you how not to treat your children, how much important information you may wish to divulge, or how much information you may wish to suppress, which would depend on the nature of the information and the maturity of the child.

To the children, obey your parents, and do not disappoint them, especially if your parents have displayed a genuine love for you and truly look out for your best interest, because it’s true you are being given an opportunity to live in a loving environment to help you grow into a caring, productive citizen.

Others may be able to discern a spiritual component that exists in all things and everyone because God, not always being apparent with our human eyes, is involved in every aspect of our lives.

Read, learn, enjoy, and ponder.

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY submissions are paid advertisements. For prices: tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org.

Deadline for next two issues: September 6 and October 4 tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org.
Warm hearts, warm dogs and a not-so-warm hug in Chile

SANTIAGO, Chile

Dogs in sweaters. I have never seen as many dogs wearing sweaters as I saw in this South American capital. And it wasn’t just, you know, uppy dogs. There were some distinctly blue-collar mutts adorned in bright blue getups...and matching blue collars. Even the quilitros (an indigenous Mapuche word that’s come to mean “strays”) get sweaters here. The city’s warm-hearted souls knit them so that no canine goes un-cardiganed.

I wasn’t in Chile just to admire dog sweaters. I came to report on the Venezuelan diaspora in the wake of that country’s economic crisis. Venezuela has some of the biggest and strongest Churches of Christ on the continent, and the crisis is sending many of the country’s best and brightest church members to Colombia, Argentina, Chile and beyond. The Venezuelans bring with them their zeal for the Lord, and they’re strengthening churches across the continent.

It’s a real “what you intended against me for evil, God intended for good” kind of story.

I have Kelley Grant to thank for pitching me the idea. He’s a former missionary to Santiago who now serves as executive director of Great Cities Missions, a nonprofit dedicated to establishing a “main avenue” church in every major city of the Latin world.

I’m equally grateful to Jonathan Hanegan, a former missionary to Venezuela, who now works with a mission team in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He knows just about every Church of Christ member on the continent, it seems, and he agreed to travel with me, set up interviews and translate.

We were moved by the stories we heard from our Venezuelan and Chilean brothers and sisters. We also enjoyed Sunday worship with the Providencia and Los Nogales congregations. At Providencia I struck up a conversation with Ruby Gonzales, who spoke perfect English. A native Chilean, she grew up in the Church of Christ but wasn’t baptized until she moved to Australia and studied the Bible with missionary Tony Keesee.

I grinned and told her that I had stayed with Tony’s son and daughter-in-law, Kyle and Carley Keesee, while they were missionary apprentices in Australia. Small world. Jonathan and I parted ways the next day as we headed to our respective countries. I took an Uber to the airport, and the driver insisted that I sit in the front seat. Seemed weird.

Uber “no es legal” at the airport, he told me. So, as he drove, he insisted we practice each other’s names multiple times. If anyone asked, we were just two amigos and he was a mensch by giving me a ride to the airport. (Forgive me for mixing Spanish and Yiddish there.)

I won’t mention my driver’s name, by the way, lest he run afoul of the airport police. When he dropped me off, I gave him a hug, really trying to sell the whole “amigos” thing. From his reaction, I could tell I crossed a line. There was no warmth there.

I felt like a dog in need of a sweater.

ERIK TRYGGESTAD is president and CEO of The Christian Chronicle. Contact erik@christianchronicle.org. Follow him on Twitter at @eriktryggestad.
Mount Dora Christian Academy and Children’s Home is hiring!

We have an immediate opening for a Development Officer / Director of Church Relations.

**Qualifications:** Prior experience in fundraising and/or sales and marketing. Good organizational and public speaking skills and proficiency using Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Position requires some weekend travel making presentations in churches. Must be a faithful member of the Church of Christ and pass criminal background and agency checks.

**Benefits Include:** salary, retirement plan, health insurance, life insurance, and school tuition. Company vehicle and all expenses are provided for travel.

**About the Organization:** Mount Dora Children’s Home has been serving children and families since 1945 and is affiliated with the churches of Christ. Our beautiful 70-acre campus is in the heart of central Florida. We invite qualified candidates to come join our successful ministry to help change young lives and give them hope for the future.

Send a resume and letter of interest to:

Tim Deem
Vice President for Development
tim.deem@MDCAcademy.org
(352) 729-9015
301 West 13th Avenue
Mount Dora, Florida 32757

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**Job Openings**

**Special Education Teacher: Knoxville**
*TCH-East* is seeking a full-time Special Education Teacher to work at their on-site school.

**Teachers: Knoxvill, Spring Hill**
*TCH-Middle* is seeking two full-time Teachers for their on-site school.

**Night Staff: Spring Hill and Knoxville**
*TCH-Middle, TCH-East* are seeking at least one full-time and one part-time night staff to supervise youth during sleep hours of 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.

**Residential Counselors: Pinson and Knoxville**
*TCH-East and TCH-West* are seeking full-time Residential Counselor Couples (formerly houseparents) to be responsible for the day-to-day care, guidance, and training of the youth assigned to residence, all in keeping with the program policies and procedures.

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**Director of Advancement**

*Hope for Haiti’s Children*

Nashville, Tenn.

Hope for Haiti’s Children is seeking a Director of Advancement who would work closely with the President, Vice-President, and Board of Directors to oversee and manage all aspects of HFHC’s development program. The position is based in Nashville, TN. The Director of Advancement must think strategically and practically to implement a comprehensive and results-oriented development plan that includes traditional and innovative strategies. Key components of this plan should include goals, strategies, and timetables for annual fundraising, major gifts, campaign gifts, events, endowments, and planned giving and should include a complementary focus on prospecting and tactics to build key relationships with individuals, churches, corporations, and foundations. The position will also include responsibility for development efforts in the Southeast U.S. region. This position reports to the President and is the primary staff liaison to the board’s executive committee. Candidate should be an active member of the church of Christ and have a strong commitment to missions and Christian education.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR TO APPLY, CONTACT:
Sandy Swann at sandy@solomonswann.com at SolomonSwannInternational or via LinkedIn at:
www.linkedin.com/in/sandyswann2

For full job description see christianchronicle.org/classified
Believers in Rwanda Bring About Positive Societal Transformation

Transformation. It’s a word you’re probably familiar with—especially when goal planning. Perhaps your goal has been “to get in shape.” Or maybe you made the audacious goal of reading through the Bible this year. Whether your goals are physical or spiritual—the end result should have the same outcome: positive transformation. It’s no different for what we hope to achieve through the missionaries we train. When training missionaries, the goal is never to equip them to make the cultures they serve more like Christian Americans, but more like Christ. To put it simply, disciples make disciples. When individuals are transformed by Christ, they have the power to bring about societal transformation.

For the past 10 years, MRN has had the privilege of serving in Rwanda. During that time, the missionaries focused on loving people and sharing the Good News in tangible ways. Daily, our missionaries and Rwandan partners worked with street kids, provided clean water to communities, started a technical school for genocide survivors, and discipled girls leaving prostitution. Even though illegal, prostitution is rampant due to the high poverty rate in Rwanda. Many university students supplement their income through prostitution just to survive and make ends meet. Though hard to believe, it is very much their reality.

While our team was serving in Rwanda, they encountered two such young women trapped in the prostitution industry who came through Peace House—a partnership program designed to teach life skills. These young women not only learned how to sew and start their own business, but they became believers of Jesus. As they were being transformed, God led them to men who also loved Jesus. Now they are happily married and actively discipling other girls leaving prostitution. Notice these two beautiful women on their wedding days above. The crowns on their heads remind us of Isaiah 61:1-3: The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners ... to comfort all who mourn—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.

These young women are now oaks of righteousness firmly planted by the Lord in their culture. As they grow, their impact will continue for generations to come. What a powerful display of societal transformation! And it all started with people who heard the call and were obedient to follow. But it didn’t stop there. That calling was fulfilled because of generous donors just like you! Because of the support from faithful friends, we are able to train and help launch missionaries all over the world to make the same kind of impact. Our goal this year is to train 30 more missionaries to make an even greater impact in the Mediterranean Rim. An area where faith in Christ has barely existed for over a thousand years. Will you help us proclaim the Good News to the poor, bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim freedom to the captives, and bring about positive societal transformation? To learn how you can get involved with MRN, visit mrnnet.org. We look forward to partnering with you!