Despite grief, couple has hope for the holidays

PARENTS WHO LOST a daughter — and then a son — work to help others.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

EDMOND, Okla.

Twelve days before Christmas, Allen and Jeanette Wiederstein celebrated the graduation of their 22-year-old grandson, Hunter, from Oklahoma Christian University.

They thought about how proud his mother, April, would have been. The Wiedersteins lost their beloved daughter in 2003, exactly a month before Hunter’s sixth birthday.

They wished, too, that his Uncle Brent could have shared in the happy day. Before his sudden death two years ago, Brent had become “like a dad” to Hunter and his younger brother, Clay.

But above all, they praised the “God of all comfort” — as described in 2 Corinthians 1:3 — for the joyful moment.

“I hear that Scripture quoted in my family more than any other,” said Hunter, an aspiring minister who legally changed his last name to Wiederstein in 2017. “Losing two (adult) children in a family as close as ours made me question God so much. I can honestly say my anchors were my grandparents, who were unwavering in their confidence that God was with us every step of the way.”

For Allen and Jeanette, longtime members of the Edmond Church of Christ in this suburb north of Oklahoma City, burying two of their three adult children brought overwhelming grief.

Ministry serves the poor in hard-hit steel town

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

LORAIN, Ohio — This struggling Rust Belt city of 64,000 souls can use a little hope.

A ship-building company, an automotive plant and steel mills along Lake Erie — at the mouth of the Black River — once provided thousands of jobs for the community 30 miles west of Cleveland.

But then came decades of deindustrialization: Jobs disappeared. Families moved away. The poverty rate shot up.

“The people of the city of Lorain have long been noted for embracing an ethic of hard work in the factories and mills that used to populate the area,” said Matt Raines, minister for the New Beginnings Church of Christ in the nearby town of Amherst.

“But above all, they praised the ‘God of all comfort’ — as described in 2 Corinthians 1:3 — for the joyful moment.

“I hear that Scripture quoted in my family more than any other,” said Hunter, an aspiring minister who legally changed his last name to Wiederstein in 2017. “Losing two (adult) children in a family as close as ours made me question God so much. I can honestly say my anchors were my grandparents, who were unwavering in their confidence that God was with us every step of the way.”

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Two killed in second fire at burned church

BY CHELLIE ISON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

For months, the Memorial Drive Church of Christ in Tulsa, Okla., has tried to move forward after a fire destroyed much of its building.

Now, another fire at the heavily damaged facility has claimed the lives of two people. The unidentified man and woman apparently were seeking shelter in the charred remains, investigators said.

“We had done everything we could do to keep people out, but we’ve had problems with break-ins from the start,” Jason Thornton, minister for the Memorial Drive church, told The Christian Chronicle.

Memorial Drive church leaders had re-secured the burned property multiple times and even had extra patrols around the site.

Despite those additional security measures, authorities say two people were in the building when it caught fire on the morning of Dec. 6.

The exact cause of the second fire remains under investigation. Electricity to the building has been off for months. Officials said it appears the fire started in a section of the building that had not previously been damaged.

Loving a ‘lost cause’

Couple with ties to Churches of Christ plants a youth ministry in their native Slovenia, where people are ‘post-Christian, but not post-human.’

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

STARŠE, Slovenia

Ina Lovse was giving up.

“Me and Jesus ... boy, it was real, but it was just me and him,” she said. “There was no church. I was trying really hard, but slowly I went back into what I knew before, which was the party scene.”

She was reared in post-communist Slovenia, a small, Central European republic that once was part of Josip Tito’s Yugoslavia. Her parents didn’t go to church. Their comrades made fun of people who did, like her grandmother, a devout Catholic who hid Nina away as an infant to have her christened.

“I had wanted to go to church to kind of please my grandmother,” she said. “But I did not find that personal connection with God. I feared him.”

Then communism collapsed, and the rules that had defined her parents’ lives suddenly were gone. Nina found herself, like many other Slovene teens, adrift. She worried constantly and suffered headaches, even seizures.

But what I remember is when the wine glasses — and bottles of wine — came out. Bible Belt Bobby was not expecting that!

I tried not to look too uncomfortable sipping water at a dinner party full of church leaders drinking alcoholic beverages.

If I sound sheltered, I suppose I was. Actually, I suppose I am. I don’t drink.

I grew up in a household where my parents didn’t drink. People who attended my home congregation didn’t drink. Or if they did, they sure didn’t tell anybody.

“Americans who attend religious services weekly are less likely than others to drink alcohol, reflecting the centuries-old connection in American history between religion and the perceived immorality of drinking,” Frank Newport, a Gallup social scientist, noted in a recent column.

Increasingly, though, I encounter fellow Christians who do imbibe — stressing that they do so in moderation and arguing that the Bible

Erik Tryggstad
DRINKING: Some Christians do; many don’t

FROM PAGE 3

teaches against drunkenness (such as Galatians 5:21), not drinking per se.

A few years ago, country artist Thomas Rhett — an alumnus of Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn. — even had a hit single titled “Beer With Jesus” with these lyrics:

“If I could have a beer with Jesus / Heaven knows I’d sip it nice and slow / I’d try to pick a place that ain’t too crowded / Or gladly go wherever he wants to go.”

When I asked online for feedback for this article, I heard from Josh Zahn, an elder of the East Sunshine Church of Christ in Springfield, Mo.

Zahn told me he “shepherds” some of the church’s 20-somethings over beers at various establishments. (Bible Belt Bobby was less surprised by this than he would have been a few years ago.)

“To me, it is more than ‘that’s how they relate,’” Zahn explained in an email. “While I enjoy beer and wine (mixed drinks, very rarely), I see it more as a part of ordinary life.

“Sure, some people will ask why you need alcohol to relate to people or a particular generation,” he added. “I see it more as understanding what is important and what is not in relationships, and things like whether or not one drinks alcohol is secondary to the importance of relationships.”

I heard, too, from Dana Jaworski, whom I met during a 2014 reporting trip to cover the 50th Alaska State Lectureship.

Jaworski described her journey from moderate drinker in a wine-mom culture to “clean-faced preacher’s wife sitting in the pew on Sunday morning, nursing her first of many hangovers for the week.”

What the mother of three had to say is so much more compelling and nuanced than my brief summary here that I decided to publish her full story (see her Views column on Page 30).

At first, Jaworski wasn’t certain she wanted her name included. But after praying about it, she chose to be open about her own experience in hopes of helping others. I applaud her courage in doing so.

Among others who offered feedback was Jay Kelley, evangelist for the Austin Street Church of Christ in Levelland, Texas.

He told me he encourages fellow Christians not to drink, but he doesn’t make abstinence a fellowship issue.

Kelley shared that he is an alcoholic, even though he hasn’t had a drink since 1987. “In the Navy, I was the guy they’d feed a six-pack and point at the Marines to see what would happen,” he said.

Monalea Micham, a member of the Jal Church of Christ in New Mexico, said alcohol consumption causes too many problems for her to recommend it.

“I have seen child abuse, sexual abuse, spousal abuse, drunk driving that kills too many and much more come from it,” Micham said.

Cecil May, retired dean of the Bible college at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Ala., echoed that sentiment.

“I have seen too much human wreckage caused by alcohol to have even one good word to say about it,” May said. “I urge you: Be a teetotaler.”

Jim Frost, a former church elder in Wisconsin, said he occasionally drank too much as a younger person.

But Frost said he hasn’t crossed that line in 40 years, even though he occasionally enjoys a little wine.

He points to Jesus turning water into wine at a wedding feast in John 2.

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He points to Jesus turning water into wine at a wedding feast in John 2.

“Do we believe, if Jesus felt drinking wine was a sin, he still would have obeyed his mother’s wish?” Frost asked.

BOBBY ROSS JR. is editor-in-chief of The Christian Chronicle. Reach him at bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org. Follow him on Twitter at @bobbyross. Join the discussion on drinking at christianchronicle.org/drinking.
ARKANSAS
MOUNTAIN HOME — Clad in a Harding University T-shirt, Suzie Lynne hops rapidly on one foot while tears stream down her face. The 17-year-old’s therapist calls out encouragement and counts down the seconds Lynne must endure to complete the exercise.

For Lynne, a member of the Mountain Home Church of Christ, this simple movement is excruciating because of a medical condition called Amplified Musculoskeletal Pain Syndrome. In Lynne’s case, her pain was so extreme that she relied on her mother to bathe and dress her because she couldn’t stand long enough on her own.

Lynne sought intensive physical and occupational therapy for six weeks recently at a Missouri hospital and was featured on a segment of “60 Minutes Australia.” Post-treatment, Lynne hopes to pursue a nursing degree at Harding. Watch the video at christianchronicle.org/suzielynne.

OHIO
MCCONNELSVILLE — The historic Twin City Opera House was transformed into a venue for an old-fashioned gospel singing on a recent Friday evening. Twenty-one songleaders from area Churches of Christ led a cappella favorites.

Tom Butterfield, minister of the McConnelsville Church of Christ, said more than 400 attended. Many of the guests were from the community and had no previous connection with the host church, Butterfield said.

“Our event has been the talk of the town, and our elders are even now working toward the next such program,” he said, adding that the theater has been “a vital part of life in this community” since its completion in 1892.

OKLAHOMA
WOODWARD — A Woodward Church of Christ support group serves people who deal with chronic pain.

The ministry, dubbed Broken and Mended, focuses on encouraging those managing ongoing health issues, minister David Heflin said.

“One aspect of the ministry is to allow people to participate from afar or from their homes because their pain limits them,” Heflin said. “It is still a very new ministry, but others already have been blessed. I do hope one day it will bless hundreds, maybe thousands of people, not just in Woodward but around the globe.”

For more information about the group, visit www.BrokenandMended.com.

WEST VIRGINIA
BECKLEY — Most Sunday mornings, attendance at the North Beckley Church of Christ is about 55.

However, minister Jerry Stumpf worries that not many of those in the pews are younger than the average attendance figure.

So Stumpf, the church’s two elders and a handful of volunteers are on a mission to encourage young adults and families with small children. The group is planning events and activities — and providing babysitting. Ten members participated in the first of several such gatherings planned in the coming months, the preacher said, adding that the response was heartwarming.

“We want to help them spend time together away from the (church) building to form stronger bonds,” Stumpf said.

“Engaging our young people is necessary for the future. If we do not … the church will cease to exist in the near future.”

Hungry? Grab a ‘blessing box’
The Childress Church of Christ in Texas has a food pantry, but members aren’t always around when people need to take advantage of it. So the church erected a “blessing box” outside its building and invites anybody to take whatever they need. “I saw the idea on the internet … and we ran with it,” minister Trey Morgan said. “We have a lot of lower-income families in our community … and this seemed like a simple way to help.”
Even in death, Trimble beat his foe

MURRAY EVANS | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

TULSA, Okla.

Diagnosed with a debilitating, always-fatal disease, Allan Trimble had a choice — to quietly fade away and feel sorry for himself or to praise God in the midst of his personal storm.

The longtime high school football coach and church elder’s decision to do the latter will resonate long after his death, speaker after speaker said during a recent memorial service that drew more than 3,000 people to Oral Roberts University’s Mabee Center.

Trimble, 56, died Dec. 1 at a Tulsa hospital, a little more than three years after being diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. Also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease, ALS is a progressive neurogenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord.

While it slowed Trimble physically, it didn’t dim his spiritual fervor, said Mitch Wilburn, preaching minister for The Park Church of Christ in Tulsa.

“As demanding as a schedule that Allan had as a head coach, when he retired, he took it up a notch,” Wilburn said. “You couldn’t find where the guy was going to be preaching next. The guy went everywhere and did everything he could to preach up and stay up to the cause of Christ. He didn’t carry on … he turned it up. What a disciple! What an example!”

Trimble — a longtime member and elder of The Park church — coached the Jenks Trojans for 22 seasons, posting a remarkable 242-41 record with 13 state championships in Oklahoma’s highest classification.

Members of Jenks’ current team — some of whom played for Trimble before he stepped down after the 2017 season — attended the service wearing their jersey tops, just three days before they played in the Class 6A-Division I state championship game.

Dozens of Trimble’s former players and assistant coaches now are coaching at high schools in the Tulsa area and all of Oklahoma, and former Trojans have dotted National Football League rosters over the past two decades. The stadium at Jenks, and a street that runs by that stadium, are named for Trimble, who was inducted into multiple Halls of Fame, including the Oklahoma Sports Hall of Fame, perhaps the state’s highest athletic honor.

But more so than football, it was Trimble’s faith — and humor — that permeated the memorial service. Dove Award-winning singer Nicole Nordeman performed her song “Legacy,” and members of The Park’s praise team sang three a cappella songs, leading the audience in the famous hymn “Blessed Assurance,” which Trimble — who grew up in Cleveland, Okla., where he was baptized at the Cleveland Church of Christ at age 10 — chose for the service.

“He was a guy who took his holiness seriously,” said Fate Hagood, senior minister for the Metropolitan Church of Christ in Carson, Calif., who became a friend of Trimble’s after Trimble heard him speak a few years ago at the Pepperdine University Bible Lectures. “He was a warrior and used his circumstances for God’s glory.”

Wilburn spoke of receiving a phone call (while in the Dallas area) from Trimble’s doctor on Thanksgiving Day, telling the preacher he needed to return to Tulsa quickly to see Trimble.

During the four-hour drive to Tulsa, Wilburn thought of what he’d say to his friend. He thought of a scene from the Oscar-winning movie “Dances With Wolves,” in which — as the main character is departing the tribal camp — a young warrior yells from a nearby bluff, “I am Wind in His Hair. Do you see that I am your friend? Can you see that you will always be my friend?”

After watching that scene together, Trimble and Wilburn cried, then Trimble said, “Mitch, I can’t dance anymore.” Then he looked at Wilburn and said, “Mitch, you don’t have wind in your hair.”

“That was a scene from the movie ‘Dances With Wolves,’ in which the main character is departing the tribal camp. In the scene, a young warrior yells from a nearby bluff, ‘I am Wind in His Hair. Do you see that I am your friend? Can you see that you will always be my friend?’”

Allan Trimble, the longtime Jenks football coach and an elder of The Park Church of Christ in Tulsa, Okla., visits with reporters after his diagnosis in 2017.
lists that as a Holy Spirit-given gift, but Allan would beg to differ.”

Darren Melton, athletic director and former football coach at Lincoln Christian School in Tulsa, spoke about how Trimble used football to deliver life lessons to those on his staff and his players, saying, “Allan coached life on and off the field.”

In a letter read by Melton, former Jenks and NFL offensive lineman Sean Mahan said, “Loving the Lord and loving others (was) how Allan lived every day.”

Trimble’s daughter Tori Trimble, a senior at Oklahoma State University, noted how her father’s influence — already considerable as a well-known, successful football coach — was extended further as he battled ALS. She explained how he decided not to dwell on the negative but to focus on the positive and to keep living life.

She said her father compared his diagnosis to losing a game to Union High School, Jenks’ archrival in the south Tulsa metropolitan area: “You can only be sad for one day. Then you have to get on with it. ... The show must go on. You have to keep living your life.”

She noted how his thoughts were on taking care of others. Even in his final days, Trimble asked his wife, Courtney, to remember to treat the hospital nurses to a steak dinner.

The Trimble family began the Trimble Strong Foundation in 2016 as a tool “for the purpose of transforming people from their current position spiritually, emotionally, physically, professionally and financially. We simply want to bring faith, hope and love into the lives of all the people that we interact with.”

A foundation video, with Trimble speaking, was shown during the service. “I’ve been blessed to be a part of many championships throughout my career, and my list of accolades is pretty impressive. But at the end of the day, trophies are not what it’s all about,” he said. “We are called to run a different race, one where we diligently seek to help others, one where we develop spiritual champions and spiritual leaders that will make a difference for generations to come.”

Wilburn said Trimble’s faith remained strong throughout his ordeal, sharing a text he received from Trimble during his final days: “I know I won’t live one day more or less than what God has planned, but I’m feeling crazy blessed by the gift today, so pray for me to be more faithful to the great God we serve.”

An emotional Wilburn said, “To ALS ... you gave it your best shot, but you didn’t get it done. He beat you.”

Mitch Wilburn, minister
GRIEF: Parents lean on God after losing two adult children

FROM PAGE 1

But rather than turn away from God, the couple — who met and fell in love as Southwestern Oklahoma State University students a half-century ago — leaned into their faith. They even developed a GriefShare ministry at their home congregation.

“They remind me a lot of Job in the Old Testament,” said Randy Roper, the Edmond church’s preaching minister. “Like Job, their pain is unthinkable, and they have big questions for God. But at the end of the day, they submit to the sovereignty of God and trust that he is still at work in the world.”

Still, the pain lingers. Tears fall at times both expected and not.

“I don’t believe in closure,” said Allen, 71, a semi-retired life insurance agent and middle school substitute teacher. “I don’t believe you get over it. I believe you learn to live with it.”

This time of year, memories are easily stirred by images of Santa Claus, colorful wrapping paper and happy children. For those who have lost loved ones, those once-merry recollections may trigger pain or anxiety.

“You start getting that panicky feeling: ‘Oh, the holidays are coming,’” explained.

“OH, THE HOLIDAYS ARE COMING”

At age 8, April died three weeks later.

She developed a septic infection and the surgery but never recovered.

But rather than turn away from God, they had trained to serve as facilitators at The Kids’ Place, a faith-based support group for children mourning a loved one.

“We just thought that was something we could do,” Jeanette said of helping at The Kids’ Place, which grew out of counseling efforts after the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing.

“We were getting older. We thought we could help those kids.”

After April’s death, Clay Wiederstein, now an Oklahoma Christian Academy senior, was too young to benefit from The Kids’ Place. But the ministry offered solace for Hunter, who missed sitting on his mom’s lap and singing church songs.

“It was like God kind of prepared us a little bit,” Jeanette said. “The main thing is that it helped Hunter. It was like, ‘We have a resource we know.’

Now, Hunter volunteers at The Kids’ Place, a ministry of the Edmond church.

April’s death strained her parents’ marriage, even if they didn’t recognize it fully at the time. A big part of the reason: People grieve differently.

The Wiedersteins certainly did.

Jeanette is a quiet person.

“We start getting that panicky feeling: ‘Oh, the holidays are coming.’ I don’t like to go to the stores and hear the Christmas music,’” she explained.

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God can heal a broken heart

MONROE, La.

"I just want to go to sleep before Thanksgiving and wake up after Christmas."

That is what my dear elderly friend Elizabeth said to me. She lost her young daughter many years ago on Christmas Eve. She loved her family very much, but the holidays could never be the same. Her statement remains a clear memory for me years later. The reason she told me about her feelings is because I am also a bereaved parent. We understood one another.

The hectic season of parties, gifts, music and events can intensify feelings of sadness and loss for grieving people. Can the church do anything to bless those who are hurting? Yes, but there should be an understanding of what it means to help.

Quoting a few Bible verses and expecting the grieving person to get over the loss is ineffective. The truth is that there is no solution for grief. Grief is not a problem to be solved. It is the natural reaction to the permanent loss of a loved one. Churches cannot take away the grief of the hurting soul. Grief is a long and uneven experience that can only be helped by care and consistent friendship from compassionate people.

Churches can make good efforts to share the burden of grief by offering “Blue Christmas” remembrance services, grief-related reading materials and support groups. For those who are new to the grief experience, church members can make sure the day-to-day needs of the hurting are met.

A bereaved person needs space. They need to be able to come to worship without being asked a thousand questions about how they are doing. They are not doing well.

A bereaved person needs help but doesn’t always know how to ask or whom to ask. If you have a skill, offer to help a grieving friend free of charge.

A bereaved person needs acceptance. Elizabeth didn’t need me to correct her or comment on what she said. She just needed to be heard. Church members can be there for a bereaved friend, but God alone can truly heal the broken heart.

JOHN DOBBS is preaching minister for the Forsythe Avenue Church of Christ in Monroe, La. He and his wife, Margaret, have two children, one of whom died in 2008 at the age of 18. Dobbs travels and presents a Bible-based seminar, “Getting Acquainted with Grief.” Contact him via his blog, JohnDobbs.com, for more information.

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Texas candlelight vigil remembers loved ones

At a candlelight memorial service, the Legacy Church of Christ in North Richland Hills, Texas, pays tribute to members and relatives who died during 2019. The recent assembly, conducted by the congregation’s shepherds, drew a crowd of about 250. “We directly honored 50 people… who passed away this year and also lit a candle to honor all others that have passed away,” said Bob Mullen, the Legacy church’s executive minister. “There were readings, prayers and a short devotional.” Read an expanded story on churches and grief at christianchronicle.org.

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help work through their grief.

“As painful as it is losing your children, maybe more painful is watching your family hurt,” said Jeanette, who noted that Brent became close to Hunter and Clay after they lost their mother, taking them fishing and cheering on the local NBA team, the Oklahoma City Thunder.

Brent also adored his twin nieces, Cara and Makayla Cecil, daughters of Debbie’s sister Michelle Shotts Cecil, a single mother. He made sure Cara and Makayla, now Oklahoma Christian University students, had party dresses and anything else they needed.

“You can’t take away the pain,” Jeanette said, praising the resiliency of Debbie and Brent’s children, Ryan, 24, and Devan, 20. “We have six grandchildren, and four of our grandchildren have lost a parent. So we try to be strong.”

The Wiedersteins view children as gifts from God.

“They were our gifts for as long as he allowed,” Jeanette said. “And we were totally blessed by each of them.”

Said Allen: “They loved the Lord, and they’re experiencing his glory. It’s selfish to want them to come back down here.”

GRIEF AT CHRISTMAS

The first holiday season after April’s death, Allen put up the decorations as usual, despite Jeanette’s hesitancy.

“Maybe I shouldn’t have,” he said.

In the years since, they’ve approached the season in different ways, respecting how family members are feeling and talking through plans.

For 2019, instead of buying gifts and wrapping them, the extended family chose to meet at Allen and Jeanette’s house for breakfast on a Saturday before Christmas.

Since the grandchildren are older, Allen and Jeanette planned to give everyone money and stockings. Then the entire family looked forward to going shopping, eating lunch out together and watching a movie.

That’s what works for the Wiedersteins. To other grieving families wondering how to approach the holidays, “whatever fits your family” is the Wiedersteins’ advice.

“Some people choose to go on a ski trip or do something different than what they’ve done before,” Jeanette said. “And they might have to do that for a year or two and then, as they feel like it, go back into the other.

“Or, they may think, ‘This is what works for us. This is what we’re going to do now.’ You’ve got to feel your way through that maze to see what’s going to work best for you.”

On Dec. 25, the entire Wiederstein family planned to gather at a relative’s Missouri cabin, 400 miles from Edmond.

On the agenda: hunting and riding four-wheelers.

“We’re not running from it,” Allen said of the memories at home. “We’re just spending time together.”

The Wiedersteins say they realize how fleeting life can be. Time together, then, is the most precious gift of all.
Sam was raised in the Lord’s church by a father who was an elder and a true American hero in WWII. Sam Sr. served our nation in the Pacific and had the experience of spending days floating in the ocean, having three ships shot out from under him. Little Sam’s mother received three separate telegrams from the government informing her that she was a widow. Sam’s father lived, came home and became a leader in the church’s growth in eastern North Carolina until his death. Sam loves the Lord and the family of God; his hopes for life may depend upon you …

Today, Sam remains a pillar in the New Bern Church of Christ in New Bern, North Carolina (1340 South Glenburnie Road). He has remained active in door-knocking, home bible studies and the nursing home ministry next door to the building. He is faithful in his attendance, teaches a bible class, and has remained active in the distribution of disaster aid when his health allows him to do so. He loves fishing, is a devoted and loving husband, father and grandfather.

Sam and Jan have lived sacrificial lives and are truly good, godly Christian people who are in need of your help. The elders of the New Bern Church of Christ sincerely ask you to volunteer for this worthy effort. Contact information to help Sam is listed below.

1) All expenses for the donor are covered by insurance and Vidant Medical Center.
2) Sam is blood type A+ (though organ exchange is available for different types).
3) Sam is already fitted with a fistula. (He needs a donor as soon as possible.)
4) To get started or for more information call Linda Ipock (transplant coordinator).

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FIRE: Church still waiting on insurance claim

FROM PAGE 3

Thornton said the man and woman who died in the fire were not members of the church.

“We are in a neighborhood that (even before the fire) we would regularly have homeless people who would find ways in and sleep in our building,” Thornton said.

The male victim died at the scene. A female was taken to a Tulsa hospital, where she later died.

Thornton said church members’ hearts go out to the victims’ families. The congregation has been grateful, he said, for all of the support they received following the first fire.

“I can’t say enough how much we appreciate prayers,” Thornton said. “It’s not a small thing, and it has really sustained our spirit.”

Since the original July 24 blaze, the congregation has been meeting at a nearby Christian church. That building was left empty when the Christian church combined with another area congregation last year.

After nearly five months, the church’s insurance company is still working to decide what will happen on its claim.

An outside view of the Memorial Drive Church of Christ after the second fire.

Seventy-Fifth Anniversary

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by Leroy Brownlow

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Young believers in India follow Paul’s footsteps

With open Bibles, young Christians in southern India trace the missionary journeys of the apostle Paul as they take part in Ignite 2019, an annual youth camp for Churches of Christ. More than 75 participants came from across the nation of 1.3 billion souls, said minister Thomas Jacob. After studying Paul’s journeys, the students mapped out their own proposed missionary journeys across their subcontinent. The event also included zip-lining, sports and devotionals.

AUSTRALIA

TOOWOOMBA — More than 120 people learned about “The Big Picture” during the recent Toowoomba Lectureship, sponsored by the Gipps Street Church of Christ.

“The lessons traced the history of time, reminding the audience what God was doing to bring about redemption,” said church member Daniel Smith. Speakers included Albert Gyanfi, Ian Coker, Brett Rutherford, Daniel McDonald, Trevor Major and Smith.

Lessons and manuscripts are available at www.gippschurch.com.

PERU

AREQUIPA — Church planters in this South American city recently hosted a fall festival for their neighborhood, despite the fact that it wasn’t fall.

“Technically, it’s spring,” said Katie Daggett, a U.S. native who has lived in Peru with her family for five years.

Regardless, the Daggetts set up 10 different games and entertained about 30 children from their neighborhood. Peruvians don’t always know their neighbors well, Katie Daggett said.

“It was so fun for us to see different neighbors making connections with each other and spending the evening just hanging out on our street,” she said. The Daggetts work with the Christian Urban Development Association in Arequipa. Learn more at www.teamarequipa.net.

TOGO

ASSAHOUN — Church members in this West African town led a recent outreach campaign that resulted in more than 446 new church members and six new Churches of Christ, said minister Atsu Markin.

Leading the evangelism team were John Mokli of Ghana and U.S. church members Doc Turk and Rodney Britt.

CHURCHES REQUEST AID after devastating earthquake in Europe.

DURRES, Albania — Christians made homeless by a 6.4-magnitude earthquake in this Central European nation are nonetheless reaching out to help their neighbors recover.

More than 50 people died, and about 1,000 more were injured as the Nov. 26 quake shook the northwestern coast of Albania, near the city of Durres. It follows a Sept. 21 earthquake that also struck Durres.

“Thank the Lord, the churches in Albania do not have any lives lost, but we had severe damage,” said Alfred Zike, minister for the Adriatic Church of Christ, which meets just a few blocks from the Adriatic Sea.

Cracks formed in the walls of the church’s facility, which also houses the Adriatic Christian Academy.

The quake also damaged the home of Cimi Kafexhiu, minister for the Downtown Church of Christ in Durres. The minister and his family have been living in the church’s building.

“Cimi has also been using the church as a relief point for Durres citizens — church members or not — proving food and shelter there,” said Johnny Vaughan, chairman of the missions committee of the Adams Boulevard Church of Christ in Bartlesville, Okla., which supports the work.

About 15 church families are among the displaced, said Bledi Valca, minister for the Tirana Church of Christ in Albania’s capital. Most of the victims’ physical needs, including shelter and clothing, have been met, Valca told The Christian Chronicle.

However, many Albanians — especially children — will have long-term, counseling needs, the minister said.

The church in Tirana was among the first to respond, sponsoring a special collection for earthquake relief. The congregation collected triple its usual offering.

“That’s still not a lot,” Valca said, “but it’s three times the widow’s mite.”

Other Churches of Christ in Europe, including an Italian congregation, have sent funds to help with relief.

The Adams Boulevard church and Valca’s supporting congregation, the Maryville Church of Christ in Tennessee, are collecting funds to help in long-term recovery efforts.

“The whole scene is tragic,” Vaughan said. “The cost of getting the churches back to some state of normalcy is as yet unknown but will be in the tens of thousands of dollars.”

FIND LINKS TO CONTRIBUTE to relief efforts at christianchronicle.org or call the Chronicle at (405) 425-5070.
Maribor is the second-largest city in Slovenia, a Central European nation that became independent on June 25, 1991. Slovenia has a long, Catholic tradition. Only about 1,500 of its citizens claim to be evangelical Christians, says Andrej Lovse, who serves a church of about 30 young people in Maribor with his wife, Nina.

**Republic of Slovenia**

**POPULATION:** 2.1 million. **LANGUAGES:** Slovenian, Serbo-Croatian, some Italian, Hungarian. **RELIGION:** 57.8 percent claim Catholicism as their faith, 2.4 percent Muslim, 2.3 percent Orthodox Christian, 0.9 percent other Christian groups, 36.6 percent claim other religions, are unspecified or claim no religion.

**HISTORY:** Once part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Slovenes joined the Serbs and Croats after World War I and formed Yugoslavia in 1929. Occupied by Germany and Italy during World War II, Slovenia fought in resistance movements. After the war Yugoslavia became communist under former resistance leader Josip Broz Tito, who took steps to distance the nation from the Soviet Union and become chief leader of the Non-Aligned Movement. Slovenia became independent in 1991 after a 10-day war. The country joined NATO and the European Union in 2004. U.S. First Lady Melania Trump was born Melanija Knavs in the Slovene town of Novo Mesto in 1970.

**CHURCHES OF CHRIST:** No known Churches of Christ meet in Slovenia. Monty Lynn, a professor at Abilene Christian University in Texas, lived in Maribor during the mid-1990s and taught through a grant at a university there. He and his family moved to a church in neighboring Croatia made occasional visits to check in. Nina started to believe it, too. She took up with a boyfriend, a non-believer named Andrej. They were in love, but she told him, “The girl that you fell in love with is not actually me. What you fell in love with was Jesus in me.”

**YOU FELL IN LOVE WITH JESUS, NOT ME**

Nina started to believe it, too. She took up with a boyfriend, a non-believer named Andrej. They were in love, but she told him, “The girl that you fell in love with is not actually me. What you fell in love with was Jesus in me.”

And Jesus was fading from her life. After two years of guilt-tinted romance, she decided to break up with Andrej. After that, she said, “I was going to go back to drugs to numb what I had done.”

She traveled to Croatia’s capital, Zagreb, where Andrej was studying in medical school, to give him the news. She never got the words out. “Nina!” her boyfriend said, excitedly. “I’ve been reading that Bible you gave me. And I’ve been praying for us!”


**LOST CAUSE: God was working, ‘but they didn’t see it’**

FROM PAGE 3

The church in neighboring Croatia made occasional visits to check in. Nina and maybe one or two others would show up. The missionaries asked how they were doing, and they’d happily tell them about going to parties and getting drunk.

“God was working in me, but they didn’t see it,” she said. “They thought I was a lost cause.”

**COFFEE MUGS LINE A WALL IN THE MEETING PLACE OF THE CHURCH THE LOVESSES SERVE.**

“OK,” she said, bracing herself.

**EVERY CHURCH HAS REAL FOLLOWERS**

Eighteen years later, Nina and Andrej Lovse are church planters in Maribor, a town of about 95,000 souls in northeastern Slovenia, just south of Austria. They live in a farmhouse a few miles out of town. On a Saturday morning, the couple hovered over their kitchen counter preparing a heaping plate of cevapcici, Balkan sausage links, for the grill to feed their guests. Their two sons played noisily in the den.

Outside, their daughter groomed their horse, named Charlie Brown, as a sheep named Lenny meandered through the back yard. Most Slovenes keep their animals penned up, Nina said, but they like theirs to live “free range” (although, she noted, Lenny did eat her flower bed recently).

The Lovses work with Josiah Venture, a ministry launched in 1993 by three couples that now has 300 staff working in 15 European nations. Workers host camps for teens and plant churches through disciple-making movements, training believers to plant churches and spread the Gospel.

The Lovses have interacted with a variety of faith-based groups, Andrej said.

“One thing that God showed us through that is that he has his people in all churches,” he said. “Every church has people who go there who are not really followers, and every church has people that are followers.”

Some of the Christ-followers who have blessed them the most, he added, are from Churches of Christ.

**CHURCH OF CHRIST ‘EMBRACED US’**

The Lovses were baptized and married in the town of Cakovec, Croatia, where they worshiped with Calvary Chapel. In Zagreb, nearly 90 minutes away, they struggled to find a church family.

One day, they saw two men handing out flyers in downtown Zagreb. One of them, a minister named Vlado Psenko, gave them an invitation to a poetry night hosted by members of his congregation, the Kušlanova Church of Christ. One of the artists performing was from Calvary Chapel.

Eager to connect, the Lovses attended the poetry night — and visited the congregation for worship.
“We just went, stepped through the doors, looked around and said, ‘Oh, we’re never coming back here,’” Nina said. The church didn’t use instruments. It was different.

“But then the people embraced us like never ever before anywhere,” she said. Church members invited them to lunch and back to worship.

They also introduced the couple to the Zagreb Bible Institute, housed in the church’s building. Nina started taking classes. So did Andrej, who began skipping his medical school classes to attend. Soon, he gave up medicine to focus on ministry.

The institute’s founder and then-director, Tom Sibley, and his wife, Sandra, adopted the couple. Over the next six years, the Lovses coordinated the church’s youth group and helped with summer camps. The church encouraged them to try new approaches to reaching the young.

“My dream was happening,” Nina said. “I was exploding! I found a home! We just came into this environment of amazing possibilities of growth.”

FINDING PURPOSE IN ZAGREB, ABILENE

Steve Taliaferro, a Church of Christ member from Texas who has worked in Central and Eastern Europe since the 1990s, said that the Lovses were part of his motivation to move to Zagreb and work with the Bible institute.

“They are what you might call poster children,” he said, “for what the institute hopes to produce: men and women prepared with practical tools for ministry to reach their own people for Christ.”

After graduation, the couple traveled to Texas to study at Abilene Christian University. They lived with Jack and Jeannene Reese, who both taught in the Bible department.

The Reeses treated them like family, Nina said. So did the folks who worked at the grocery store.

“Even there people are saying, ‘Hi, honey. How are you doing?’” Nina said. “When we came to Abilene, there was an old, beat-up car waiting for us. ‘Here, you can use this.’ In our culture, you hold your belongings tight. Through moments like these, God was taking us and shaping us.”

They both earned master’s degrees in Christian ministry. (Nina outperformed the guys, including her husband, in Bible professor Curt Niccum’s class.)

Before returning to Europe, the Lovses traveled with a group of ACU students to Waco, Texas, to attend a ministry conference. They gathered in groups to pray for their home nations.

“I was crying,” Andrej said.

“Really, God was just breaking me for missions.”

And he knew the task ahead.

SNOWBOARDING AND SOWING SEEDS

Back home, the Lovses minister to a generation that grew up entirely in a post-communist world.

Their parents and grandparents “were raised with all these rules,” Andrej said, “but they weren’t able to get anything. So they said, ‘I’ll raise my kids with no rules and I’ll give them everything I can.’ And it’s not working.”

Although researchers and demographers call Europe “post-Christian,” statistics don’t tell the true story, said Trisha Wynn, an American who works with the Josiah Venture in Slovenia’s capital city, Ljubljana.

“I think it may be post-Christian, but it’s not post-human,” she said of Europe. “All young people are asking the same questions: Who am I? What is my life about? Is there something bigger going on than just me?”

The ministry seeks to show young Europeans that, “Hey, there’s more than just all these beautiful churches around that are empty,” Wynn said.

Having the Lovses — two authentic, committed Slovenes Christians — as part of Josiah Venture lends credibility to the work, she added.

In Maribor, the Lovses operate youth camps for everything from English learning to snowboarding. They also teach CrossFit exercise classes and guitar lessons as entry-point ministries to build relationships.

But they don’t keep those relationships on the surface. The couple hosts small-group, in-depth Bible studies that focus on what it means to obey the Gospel and make disciples.

They continue to work with Churches of Christ, assisting with summer camps in Croatia, said Taliaferro, who recently left the Zagreb institute to focus full time on youth ministry initiatives.

The Lovses “take time to invest with us in the lives of youth in Croatia,” Taliaferro said. “They have also agreed to serve as a resource and advisers to us in new, similar ministries to youth that we are launching in Croatia.”

The couple has befriended American Christians including Don and Donna Millican from Tulsa, Okla., who have become supporters of their ministry.

“‘This is hard work. It is farming. It is sowing seeds,’” said Don Millican, an elder of The Park Church of Christ in Tulsa. “‘It will be years before the full impact of their work will be known. But it is already paying dividends as young people are turning to Jesus.’”

MINISTERING WITH ‘A LOAD OF MERCY’

“‘Why do I need to go to church if I’m OK with Jesus?’”

That’s one of the questions young people in Slovenia ask, Nina said. After two decades as Christ followers, they try to see “the question behind the question” and answer “not just with information and a bunch of laws.”

“You were made for fellowship,” Nina tells the young believers. “You gain, and you give. We need each other to fight through hard times.”

It’s a lesson she’s lived.

Although she and her husband get discouraged sometimes, she refuses to give up or see her country’s youths the way missionaries once saw her — as a lost cause.

“That’s why I have a load, a load of mercy for the youth,” she says. “When they’re going out and doing the stuff that they’re doing, I don’t despair. I’m like, ‘Yeah, that’s a season. It will pass.’”

“That does not mean that God is not doing a work in them. Because he was doing such a work in me.”
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Lera Doederlein, a member of the North County Church of Christ in Escondido, Calif., takes the ice to start a National Hockey League game between the Anaheim Ducks and the Arizona Coyotes.
Lera Doederlein was adopted from Russia in 2005 when she was about 2 years old. Born with arthrogryposis, which affected multiple joints in her legs, Lera spent most of her life in leg braces and braces until she received a double, above-knee amputation in 2016. The inspiring faith of Lera

"We actually received an old VHS video of a bunch of kids in a special needs orphanage in Russia," David Doederlein said. "The person who sent us the video said, ‘There’s a child that you need to see on this videotape.’ So we popped it into our VHS, and before we actually saw the child that we were intended to see, we saw Lera.”

David remembers that Lera appeared to be bright and inquisitive, and at that moment the family knew that she was to be their child. Although adopting from Eastern Europe was difficult, lengthy and expensive, God kept opening the doors.

"Adoption just doesn’t happen overnight, but it really happened for us," Fami said. "Everything just happened so smoothly, as if it were meant expediently, but it really happened for us.”

When she was 2 years old in 2005, Lera officially became a Doederlein. Lera was born with a condition called arthrogryposis, which affects the muscles and joints in her legs. During her younger years, she used braces and leg braces, which didn’t seem to work for her.

"It was difficult. I could get around, but it wasn’t what I wanted to get through life,” Lera said. In 2016, when Lera was in seventh grade, the Doederleins met with an orthopedic surgeon who predicted that Lera would eventually have little-to-no mobility because her legs wouldn’t support her. This was the first time the family began considering an amputation surgery.

Fami and Lera quickly supported the idea of the surgery, and while David was hesitant, through prayer and God’s guidance, he eventually agreed. "At the end of the day, I knew I’d have to do that for the rest of my life,” Lera said. In addition to sled hockey, Lera also became involved in handcycling.

"I believe her faith is what drives her to want to have excellence and accomplish what she sets out to achieve,…(5) she gives glory to God for those things," Kevin Witthem, minister and elder of North Church in Escondido, California.

Lera said she tried sports before but didn’t really feel like she had the right tools. "I try a sport, and it didn’t really feel like anything," she said. "I never knew about adaptive sports in the first place, so having that amputation was a life changer.”

After receiving a grant to purchase her sled hockey equipment, Lera has exceeded all expectations.

"As a church member, we tend to do great networkers but not necessarily great networkers outside of the church,” Fami said. "I think those [organizations] are a great service to our church communities — it doesn’t matter who you are, you are supported.”

In 2018, the Doederleins moved to San Diego, where David works as director of enterprise analytics for Petco. "Lera’s parents hope her journey and heart for others will continue to inspire many,” Fami said. "She has a really huge heart for serving others, and I believe she’s doing that through bringing adaptive sports awareness and encouraging others through mentorship and support.”

Lera’s parents hope her journey and heart for others will continue to inspire many. "She has a really huge heart for serving others, and I believe she’s doing that through bringing adaptive sports awareness and encouraging others through mentorship and support.”

"She’s able. We don’t believe in the word ‘able.’ You may be different, just slightly different — differently able.”

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In 2018, the Doederleins moved to San Diego, where David works as director of enterprise analytics for Petco, and Fami is a nurse at Rady Children’s Hospital. The family are members of North County Church of Christ in Escondido, California.

David said he only knew one person in San Diego. Kevin Witthem, senior minister and elder of North County Church of Christ. The two baseball fans bonded at Harding while watching the 1984 World Series. "We were the only people sitting in the student center watching the World Series,” David said. "We were connected through that. He’s just a great person.”

Witthem said Lera’s story will inspire others to go beyond any limits. “I believe her faith is what drives her to want to live with excellence and accomplish what she sets out to achieve,” Witthem said. "Her life is lived in such a way that you give glory to God for those things, so she’s always pointing people to the source of her strength.”

Lera takes the ice as the 21st Duck, an honor that is given to someone who embodies perseverance, character, courage and inspiration.

"Regardles of how much she strives in adaptive sports, it shows her faithfulness to God and makes sure that that guides her every decision, then we’ll be happy,” David said. "That’s more important than reaching the pinnacle of success in any career. That’s No. 1.”

Lera also has a goal to make it to the Paralympics. While sled hockey is not yet a Paralympic sport, handcycling is.

"Her goals are to make the Paralympics. I mean probably not next year in Tokyo, but beyond that, that’s a big goal,” David said.

Lera’s parents hope her journey and heart for others will continue to inspire many. "She has a really huge heart for serving others, and I believe she’s doing that through bringing adaptive sports awareness and encouraging others through mentorship and support.”

Lera said she reaches out and shows others what her legs are like and displays how capable she is. "She’s able. We don’t believe in the word ‘able.’ You may be different, just slightly different — differently able.”

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Assistant Professor of Digital Media
Seeking a highly qualified educator/scholar to teach undergraduate courses in the Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in Digital Media Arts and Applications beginning Fall 2020. An earned doctorate or a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in digital media or graphic design, including 18 graduate hours in information systems or equivalent, and extensive industry experience in graphic design or digital media is expected. This unique program includes graphic design, multimedia, motion graphics, photography, video, web design, and game design offerings.

A master’s degree in a related field plus 5-7 years of professional experience in graphic design, digital media, or interactive technology may also be considered. In this instance, a strong design portfolio and teaching history is required for consideration.

Interested applicants contact C. Tracy Mack
Dean, School of Business
Tracy.Mack@LCU.edu • 806-720-7380

Dean, School of Business
An earned doctorate in a discipline within the School is required. An exceptional record of teaching, scholarly activity, and professional service is required. Previous leadership in the academy or in a business organization is expected. An applicant with a master’s degree and extensive executive experience leading business organizations may be considered. Applicants must have a commitment to undergraduate and graduate education, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Interested applicants contact Dr. Toby Rogers
Dean, B. Ward Lane College of Professional Studies
Toby.Rogers@LCU.edu • 806-720-7627

For a full list of duties, qualifications and components for the application packet, visit: LCU.edu/OpenPositions

Lubbock Christian University is an equal opportunity employer.
BIBLE CAMPS

CAROLINA BIBLE CAMPGOSSVILLE, N.C. — The Carolina Bible Camp Bluegrass Festival was honored recently as one of the state’s finest such events in a survey conducted by Carolina Country magazine.

“We are thrilled and grateful for this honor,” board Chairman David Allgood said. “Every year, our goal is to hold a festival that is successful as God defines success and to raise money and keep kids going to camp. It’s very exciting to hear that Carolina Country readers are pleased with that.”

Now in its ninth year, the festival is held on the first Saturday of September at the camp’s 68-acre complex in Mocksville, 25 miles southwest of Winston-Salem.

Seven weeks of summer camps are offered, as are a weekend encampment and a special summer weekend for campers with special needs. For more information, contact Executive Director Randal Burton at jburton001@triad.rr.com.

HIGHER EDUCATION

FREED-HARDEMAN UNIVERSITYHENDERSON, Tenn. — NASCAR legend Dale Earnhardt Jr. was the guest of honor at the university’s annual scholarship benefit dinner in December. More than $1.3 million was raised, topping last year’s total by more than $100,000, President David Shannon said.

As part of the night’s entertainment, Shannon and Earnhardt conversed at length about No. 88’s career — including stories about his first driving experience, reacting to losses on the racetrack and the death of his father, Dale Sr. The son retired in 2017 and provides race commentary for NBC.

Shannon praised Earnhardt for his honesty in “Racing to the Finish: My Story.” The driver wrote in his memoir that he had suffered in silence through racing-related concussions and rehabilitation but is now focused on being “a great husband and father” as well as promoting the sport and worthy causes.

“I always had a Scripture in my car, and without it I was very concerned,” Earnhardt said, noting that the strips of paper were posted on his dashboard and had always been a gift from Stevie Waltrip, wife of NASCAR Hall of Famer Darrell Waltrip, before each race.

At the end of the event, Earnhardt was presented with a Bible by Student Government Association President Samantha McMillan.

Alabama school celebrates new complex opening

MOBILE, Ala. — Mayor Sandy Stimpson was on hand recently to help celebrate the first new construction on Mobile Christian School’s campus in more than 15 years.

“This looks like Disney!” one young student exclaimed upon touring the new, 23,000-square-foot elementary complex.

Sixteen classrooms have been outfitted inside with updated technology that “wows the kids and parents when they enter the hallways,” said David Pahman, head of the school.

“This building provides an amazing atmosphere for students to grow and learn,” Pahman said. “In the hallways we have honored our police and firemen, built a courthouse and so many more buildings.”

Mobile Christian opened in 1962 with the Pleasant Valley Church of Christ serving as the location until 1972. The school has 700 students in pre-K through 12th grade and employs more than 50 teachers and staff members.

Sandy Stimpson, mayor of Mobile, Ala., joins students in one of the new elementary classrooms at Mobile Christian School.
**Chronicle names Editorial Advisory Council**

**OKLAHOMA CITY**

Fourteen distinguished journalists and communicators from across the U.S. will serve on *The Christian Chronicle’s* newly created Editorial Advisory Council.

Council members will offer input on journalistic and ethical matters and contribute occasional op-ed pieces to the newspaper’s editorial pages, Editor-in-Chief Bobby Ross Jr. announced.

“T’im thrilled that these devoted Christians have accepted our invitation to join in the *Chronicle’s* mission of informing, inspiring and uniting Churches of Christ,” Ross said.

The *Chronicle*, owned by Oklahoma Christian University and governed by a national Board of Trustees, is an independent newspaper committed to the highest standards of quality journalism. The new council will play a different role from that of the *Chronicle’s* board, said Erik Tryggestad, president and CEO.

“Our trustees are invaluable members of our team who support us as we navigate an increasingly complicated media landscape,” Tryggestad said. “The Editorial Advisory Council will be, as we so like to say, separate and apart, focused on the journalistic side of this ministry.”

The 76-year-old publication serves 135,000 U.S. print subscribers and thousands of readers online, with a new app initiated by Tryggestad and overseen by Digital News Editor Chellie Ison under development.

The *Chronicle* has received frequent journalistic honors from the Associated Church Press, the Evangelical Press Association, the Religion News Association and the Society of Professional Journalists.

“For the Editorial Advisory Council, we wanted to bring in folks who have hearts for real journalism that honors God,” Tryggestad said. “We wanted dedicated professionals who will help us on the journalistic side of the operation. And I’m thrilled with the group Bobby has put together.”

The newly appointed council members are:

**Cheryl Mann Bacon**
Bacon is retired chair of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Abilene Christian University in Texas.

In retirement, she enjoys freelance writing and consulting, especially with churches. A regular contributor to *The Christian Chronicle*, she is a member of the University Church of Christ.

“The *Chronicle* does excellent journalism,” she said. “It provides thorough coverage of important and sometimes difficult topics and events. In an era when many religious publications have resorted to preaching, the *Chronicle* provides solid news and commentary.”

**Dawn Bramblett**
Bramblett is owner of the Bramblett Group, a public relations and marketing firm in Henderson, Tenn., whose clients include Freed-Hardeman University.

She is a member of the Jacks Creek Church of Christ, where her husband, Jason, serves as an elder.

“The *Christian Chronicle* provides a timely, reliable and valuable communication tool for those who are seeking to follow Christ and glorify God around the country and the world,” she said.

**Lisa D. Brewer**
Brewer is a legal assistant for Brewer & Brewer Attorneys at Law in Wilkesboro, N.C.

A member of the Wilkesboro Church of Christ, she earned a master’s in English from Wake Forest University. She organizes the annual Carolina Bible Camp Bluegrass Festival to raise money for the camp.

“As its mission indicates, *The Christian Chronicle* has a dynamic role to play in bringing Christianity to future generations,” she said. “If there is anything I can do to help, I want to do so.”

**Kimberly E. Chaudoin**
Chaudoin is assistant vice president of public relations and communications at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn.

She is a member of the Otter Creek Church of Christ in Brentwood, Tenn.

“It is an honor to be a part of this advisory council,” she said. “I’ve read *The Christian Chronicle* since I was a child. I clearly recall my parents getting it in the mail and reading it all the way through. The paper has continued to grow in quality through the years and is a great source of information about the Churches of Christ and the work that is being done around the world through these congregations and people.”

**Hamil R. Harris**
Harris is director of the Innovation and Collaboration Center and an adjunct professor of journalism at Morgan State University in Baltimore.

**Paula Harrington**
Harrington is children’s ministry coordinator for the Lone Oak Church of Christ in Paducah, Ky.

She often discusses her faith in a column she writes for a local newspaper, the *Marshall County Daily*.

“I have respected the integrity of *The Christian Chronicle* and its desire to unite the Churches of Christ for many years,” she said. “My grandfather, who was a minister for over 60 years, passed down his love of the *Chronicle* and was a devout reader. I am honored to serve on this council to encourage and advance the cause of Christ.”
The Christian Chronicle
SPECIAL ENDOWMENT
Honoring Lynn and Joy McMillon

The Christian Chronicle Board of Trustees is pleased to announce the creation of a special endowment to secure operation of the Chronicle until the Lord returns. Named the Lynn and Joy McMillon Endowment, the Board seeks to honor Dr. McMillon for 23 years of distinguished, visionary leadership and service.

To contribute to this special endowment online, look for the “Lynn and Joy McMillon Endowment” form at christianchronicle.org/donate. Or, mail a check to The Christian Chronicle, P.O. Box 11000, Oklahoma City, OK 73136-1100 earmarked for the McMillon Endowment. You may also call Lynda Sheehan in our office at (405) 425-5070.

Thank you,
Trustees of the Christian Chronicle Board

He worked for 24 years as a reporter for *The Washington Post* and serves as a freelance correspondent for *The Christian Chronicle*. He preaches for the Glenarden Church of Christ in Maryland.

“I am excited about how the Chronicle writes about what Christians are doing around the world,” he said.

**E. Blake Jackson**
Jackson is senior director of global communications at Walmart Inc. in Bentonville, Ark.

A graduate of Oklahoma Christian University, he is a member of the Bentonville Church of Christ.

“During a time of deep fracturing among institutions around the world, there is life-giving hope in the church’s simple call to unity, liberty and love,” he said. “I couldn’t be more proud to support the work of *The Christian Chronicle* as the paper of record for an endlessly diverse body of believers who aim to practice these profound virtues every day.”

**Kenneth Pybus**
Pybus is chair of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Abilene Christian University in Texas.

He is a member of the Highland Church of Christ in Abilene.

“Every community needs strong and thorough news coverage,” he said. “*The Christian Chronicle* has always provided that and continues to play an important role in covering our branch of the Restoration Movement.”

**Jana Rucker**
Rucker is vice president for university communications and enrollment at Harding University in Searcy, Ark.

She is a member of the College Church of Christ in Searcy.

“*The Christian Chronicle* plays a vital role in sharing news and trends in the Churches of Christ,” she said, “and it is my hope to add value in supporting this important work.”

**Brian Simmons**
Simmons is professor and chair of the Department of Communication at Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City.

A former longtime minister in Portland, Ore., he is a member of the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City. He also is a member of *The Christian Chronicle*’s national board of trustees.

“I desire to make my small contribution to *The Christian Chronicle* because it is one of the few ways to give the Churches of Christ a wider view of our fellowship,” he said.

**Elizabeth Smith**
Smith is assistant professor of communication and director of Pepperdine Graphic Media at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif.

She is the children’s ministry leader for the Culver Palms Church of Christ in Los Angeles.

“I am excited to help support a publication that I have read my entire life,” she said. “I am also excited to support this publication as it faces the challenges of technology and media consumption. I believe it fills a unique and important role in the media and Christian landscape.”

**David P. Swearingen**
Swearingen is retired vice president of corporate communications for Johnson & Johnson in New York.

He is an elder of the University Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas.

“We so appreciate and support *The Christian Chronicle*’s ongoing legacy of publishing fair, balanced global news coverage and its commitment to our foundation of steadfast faith in God,” he said.
More than 260 Christian senior adults came together for the recent annual Abundant Living Retreat.

Ranging in age from 55 to 95, the participants share the belief, rooted in their faith, that while it may be OK to retire from one’s job, a person never can retire from serving God and helping others.

Teresa Castleman, the new director of Abundant Living, a ministry sponsored by Harding University in Searcy, Ark., said Christians have a unique perspective about retirement. “The world says, ‘You’ve done your part ... and now you can just kick back and play golf,’” she said. “Not that there’s anything wrong with golf, but we live in an upside-down kingdom, and our kingdom says, ‘No, we’re going to push right through to the end; this is not a coasting time of life.”

READ MORE: thisretirementlife.com

Mount Dora Christian Academy and Children’s Home is hiring!

We have an immediate opening for a

Director of Marketing, Events and Publications
Development Officer / Director of Church Relations
Information Technology Specialist


About the Organization: Mount Dora Christian Academy and 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, 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
thousands of residents a year with food, clothing and services ranging from health fairs to job training.

The faith-based nonprofit aims to be a “one-stop shop” for those in need, said Bill Hurley, a New Beginnings member who co-founded We Care We Share in 2007.

“We've got people that do counseling services. We've got medical services where there's blood pressure screenings, where there's HIV testing, all that sort of thing,” Hurley said.

“A lot of people in Lorain have lost hope, Raines said.

“We're trying not just to supply their physical needs but also their spiritual needs,” the minister said. “We're also trying not just to be a handout but a 'hand up.'”

FROM ‘LOSER’ TO SOMEBODY

We Care We Share started in an abandoned grocery store, but five years ago, it moved into a converted three-story house furnished by the city.

The former residence originally was owned by a doctor who moved to northeastern Ohio in the early 1900s to provide medical care for steelworkers and their families.

At the original location, clients lined up in the snow or 100-degree heat and waited for assistance, Hurley said.

Now, they can come inside, grab a coffee and a bowl of soup and relax in a comfortable seat until it’s their turn.

Before Shawn Crooks came in contact with We Care We Share, nobody ever told him he could be somebody, he said.

Crooks, a self-described “three-time loser,” spent a quarter-century in and out of prison for crimes such as robbery and assault.

“I didn’t talk to nobody the first day,” said Crooks, 51. “I got my food box and left. But something kept bringing me back, even on days when they wasn’t even passing out anything.”

Hurley and his mother, Peggy Craig, who at age 85 remains a regular We Care We Share volunteer, showed love to Crooks and changed his life, he said.

“Out of nowhere, she just opened up her arms and hugged me,” Crooks said, referring to Craig. “She still hugs me today. She told me, ‘You just hang in there. Something's going to come your way, but you have to go get it.’” That was three years ago.

And now?

“I got a job. I own my own home. My family is back together,” he said. “No longer do I drink. No longer do I do drugs. I'm clean now. I mean, I could go on and on.”

‘REMEMBERING THE POOR’

Neil Franklin, 30, described a similar transformation.

“The people here, you know that they care,” said Franklin, who started working in the ministry’s greenhouse, growing tomatoes, green beans and other vegetables. “Even if you feel like you're alone, you're not.”

After years away from God, he even began worshiping with the New Beginnings church.

As Raines sees it, We Care We Share exemplifies how Christians can serve a city in distress.

“People in the Northeast feel forgotten due to the effects of deindustrialization,” he said. “But here in Lorain, the kingdom of God is remembering the poor.”

WE CARE: Faith-based nonprofit offers physical, spiritual support
House Parents

Join the exciting Childhaven ministry team! If you are seeking an avenue for making an eternal difference in the lives of others – consider the ministry of house parenting!

House Parents Are Needed! Seeking a couple of great faith and love for teens to serve Childhaven. Childhaven provides excellent salary and benefits and hires both husband and wife full time. Become a part of an outstanding and supportive team! For more information, contact Director of Social Service, Vicki Rhodes, by phone or email. To learn more, visit www.childhaven.com!

Childhaven, Inc.
PO Box 2070, Cullman, AL 35056
(256) 734-6720, vrhodes@childhaven.com

Experienced Children’s Minister - Nashville, Tenn.

Donelson Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee, is seeking an experienced children’s minister with a servant heart and a passion for Christ and His word. This position will involve partnering with parents to help children grow in favor with God and men. The person in this position will work hand in hand with parents and church leadership.

Our Vision: Love God, Love each other, Love the world

We are seeking someone who:

- loves the Lord with their whole heart and is a student of His word,
- preferably has an educational background with an emphasis in Biblical Studies,
- has a love for children, their families, and their spiritual development,
- can build and train a community of volunteers,
- has strong communication skills (written and verbal), leadership, and organizational skills,
- can build relationships with families.

If you are interested in this position, please send a resume to:

info@donelsonchurch.org
Donelson Church of Christ
2706 Old Lebanon Rd
Nashville, TN 37214
(615) 883-2566

Preacher Search - Warwick, Rhode Island

We are a small congregation that desires 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

Full-time, Hardworking, Special Type of Minister

The Church of Christ in Luling, Texas, needs a full-time hardworking, special-type minister. This congregation has existed for more than 100 years. It has about 30 members (many over 60 years old, rural, and sickly) no elders, is debt free, loving but stubborn and conservative. Salary is negotiable. Contact:

Bill Watson
PO Box 1006, Luling, Texas 78648
loiswatson@axs4u.net

YOUTH/FAMILY MINISTER - Xenia, Ohio

The Church of Christ is looking for a youth minister for a congregation of 225. Our current Youth Minister is retiring in December 2019. A successful candidate will have experience and/or training in youth ministry, exceptional interpersonal skills, and the ability to work with teens, parents, and other staff. He should desire to work with and mentor the youth of Xenia and surrounding area. Send your resume to:

office@xeniachurch.org
Learn more about us at:

xeniachurch.org

Children's Minister - Myrtle Beach, SC

The Grand Strand Church of Christ is accepting resumes for a full-time children's minister. If you follow Jesus, are trained to minister to children, and feel called to help us develop children into disciples, we would love to hear from you!

For details about the church and this position visit:

grandstrandchurchofchrist.com

For questions or to apply, please email:

jthornell321@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 ARTS & HUMANITIES • DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC.
Seeking a full-time faculty member to join the department of music with a concentration in collaborative piano. Doctorate preferred. Documented and demonstrated success at the collegiate level as piano instructor and collaborative pianist required. Established membership in the churches of Christ. Experience in teaching elementary music education is preferred.

Submit application materials to Dr. Wesley Parker, chair, Department of Music, at wparker@harding.edu or HU Box 10767, Searcy, AR 72149.

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

COLLEGE OF ALLIED HEALTH • ATHLETIC TRAINING
COLLEGE OF ALLIED HEALTH • COMMUNICATION SCIENCES & DISORDERS
PAUL R. CARTER COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION • INFORMATION SYSTEMS
PAUL R. CARTER COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION • MARKETING

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

Harding University is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not unlawfully discriminate in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, disability or prior military service.

Submit application materials to Dr. Wesley Parker, chair, Department of Music, at wparker@harding.edu or HU Box 10767, Searcy, AR 72149.
**NEWMAKERS**

Wromiah “Romeo” Gbassagee, Brandon Blidi and Philip Blidi celebrate Portales High School's state championship.

**RECOGNIZED:** Wromiah “Romeo” Gbassagee, Brandon Blidi and Philip Blidi, residents of New Mexico Christian Children’s Home, played on Portales High School’s Class 4A state championship team. Philip Blidi has made a verbal commitment to play at Texas Tech University. Virgil Yocham, honored for 45 years of service to Sunset International Bible Institute in Lubbock, Texas. Jerome Reed, piano professor at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn., inducted into Steinway & Sons Teacher Hall of Fame for committed and passionate piano educators.

**Milestones**

**Birthday**

100th: Sister Martha Stanley, Dec. 17, Ellijay, Ga. Happy Birthday, Martha!

**Anniversary**

68th: Bill E. and Sue Wilson, Jan. 26, Edmond, Okla. Congratulations, Bill & Sue!

**Memorials**

Dan Moody Whitaker 1927 – 2019

Dan Moody Whitaker was born in Seminole, Texas, on May 22, 1927. He gave his life to the Lord and was baptized into Christ at the age of 14 and has served the Lord in Churches of Christ since that time.

On August 13, 1948, Dan married Lois Bixler, of Kansas City, Kan., while they were students at Abilene Christian College. Dan is a 1949 graduate of ACC and a 1957 graduate of North Texas State Teacher’s College. He was a high school band director in four school systems in Texas. He served four years in the United States Air Force as a member of band squadrons.

Dan became a full-time minister of education in 1967 and served nine congregations with the Church of Christ in Texas and California. Dan retired from ministry in May of 2005. He and Lois attend at the Burleson, Texas Church of Christ.

Dan is survived by his wife, his daughter, Debbie Whitaker, and a very large extended family of friends and loved ones inside and outside of the Church.

Wayne Seeley 1919 – 2019

Wayne Seeley, age 100, of Charleston, Ill., passed away Nov. 5, 2019, at his Brookstone Estates home. He was preceded in death in 2003 by his wife of 63 years, Geneva. Left to survive Wayne are his daughter Carolyn Young and his son Victor, five granddaughters, and eight great-granddaughters.

Wayne was a WWII Navy veteran and a retired elementary school principal. He was a lifetime Bible scholar who studied daily in his extensive home library. Wayne was a faithful, longtime member of the Church of Christ in Charleston and Bourbonnais where he served as an elder, preacher and Bible class teacher.

Raymond Gerald “Jerry” Fulkerson 1941 – 2019

Jerry Fulkerson, 78, of Liberty, Mo., passed away Dec. 8, 2019. He was Chairman of the Communication and Literature Department at Freed-Hardeman University, where he was a professor of communication in upper-level courses. He worked for Freed-Hardeman 39 years, preparing hundreds of students for their graduate college future.

Survivors include his wife of 59 years, Joyce; sons, Todd Fulkerson (Andrea) and Brett Fulkerson (Sarah); and five grandchildren: Carter, Lily, Savannah, Jack, Audrey.

Charles Tommy Smith 1932 – 2019

Charles Tommy Smith, 87, passed on Tuesday, July 16, 2019, at home in Lubbock, Texas, following a long life of service to his Savior and Lord. He is survived by his loving wife of 59 years, Mary Ann (Swafford) Smith.

Charles was born in West Helena, Ark. to Carl and Beulah Smith. Three siblings preceded him in death. He was baptized into Christ by his preacher brother, Bill Smith.

He served his country during the Korean War in the U.S. Air Force.

He was stationed in the Philippines and fell in love with the Filipino people. After his service, he went to Abilene Christian College in 1956, where he met his wife, Mary Ann, and they were married Sept. 6, 1960. Charles graduated from ACC in 1960.

Beginning in 1961, Charles served in Cebu City and Angeles City in the Philippines. Charles always had a vision of evangelizing the Philippines. He founded the Philippine International Bible Institute in 1996. Many students from PIBI have gone on to become preachers and have started churches and led many souls to Christ.

Donations to help with the family’s final expenses should be sent to: Mary Ann Smith, 2517 78th St., Lubbock, TX 79423.

**With Appreciation**

The Christian Chronicle appreciates and acknowledges generous gifts received in honor of Bob and Judy Ross and in memory of Jack Greenwood, Mike Hale, Sarena Barbara Jordon, and Edna Jon Osborn.

Submit tributes to milestones@christianchronicle.org. Submissions start at $25.
‘One of God’s top runners in this Christian race’

It is my welcomed honor to have been called upon by the family of my honorable brother and friend to pen a tribute to Jack Evans Sr., one of God’s top runners in this Christian race (Page 1, December). He is deserving of our tribute.

Dr. Evans was, in his own rights and determination, an exemplary traveler on the rugged road of Christian faith. He traveled the rough roads and scaled the rough sides of the mountains. With indescribable ease, he negotiated the turbulent and challenging streams of life and living.

This tribute gives him praise for this determined journey for God and his church. He persisted and never recanted. With and beyond his peers, Jack pursued the projected image of the Church of Christ. He was a walking Bible and the living picture of our brotherhood. He was possessed of a living knowledge of the Word. He knew the diversified thinking of our brotherhood and pursued his journey to the summit before the sun set.

I have known, appreciated and supported Dr. Evans since the time he entered Southwestern Christian College in Terrell, Texas, after his studies at the historic Nashville Christian Institute in Tennessee. Through his marriage and family building, I have watched and admired his ministry.

Without doubt, Dr. Evans was an unquestioned leader among our ministers and leaders. Like some others, he has, with his wife and children, walked together to a powerful and sacrificial end.

They have crossed the battle line of victory in the Lord. His is an irrefutable example of carrying the load and encouraging others while scaling the mountains, and like Christ, he has left bold footprints on the sands of time.

He was a much-admired preacher with a strong mind and a powerful memory, and he was a “man of the Book.” He pushed Southwestern Christian College through improbable challenges. He left us blessed by his labors of unbelievable victories in impossible times. He was a phenomenon beyond the sights of those he blessed.

It just may be that Dr. Evans gleaned, from the writings of the Apostle Paul, the spirit evidenced in his letter to the Philippians in Chapter 3, Verse 10: “That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, being made comfortable unto his death.”

Dr. Evans sought to “know” Christ and willed that God would work in his life as he had in the Christ of his redemption.

ANDREW HAIRSTON is minister emeritus of the Simpson Street Church of Christ in Atlanta. The attorney and former judge retired in August 2017 after nearly 56 years as the congregation’s preacher.

Jack Evans Sr. preaches for the Smythe Road Church of Christ in the West African nation of Liberia in 2005.

 atributes: Andrew Hairston
The Christian Chronicle Crossword

ACROSS
1. The man who stopped and helped (two words).
12. “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” were Jesus’ ___ ___ before death.
13. A former fisherman.
18. A medical professional, abbr.
20. A day when many celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.
22. Hebrew prophet whose name means “God’s strength.”
25. Successor of Moses (who Judges Ruth, but not really).
28. Scarcer.
29. Image worship.
32. Cries with sadness.
34. “______ the Lord! Ye Heavens Adore Him!”
37. On top of.
38. A former tax collector.
39. Sprinkle on, as oil.

DOWN
1. Christ lived there.
2. Elim was one for the Israelites fleeing from Egypt.
3. Perceived.
4. Mary’s sister, who was “worried and troubled about many things.”
5. Jesus rising from the dead.
6. Highest point.
7. Be an accessory to a crime.
8. Fisherman’s equipment.
9. The ____ of our Lord.
10. Abbreviation for the older man in the family.
11. They watched their flocks by night.
12. A former fisherman.
15. Mary’s sister, who was “worried and troubled about many things.”
16. A medical professional, abbr.
17. A day when many celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.
18. Hebrew prophet whose name means “God’s strength.”
22. Image worship.
23. Cries with sadness.
24. “______ the Lord! Ye Heavens Adore Him!”
25. On top of.
26. A former tax collector.
27. Sprinkle on, as oil.

BIBLE BOWLING

Questions from 2 Samuel 3 (the focus of the 2020 Leadership Training for Christ conventions):
1. How many sons were born to David in Hebron?
2. Which of David’s wives are mentioned only here (and in the same narrative in 1 Chronicles 3)?
3. What was the name of Saul’s concubine?
4. Who was Abner?
5. Who was Ish-Bosheth?
6. What did Ish-Bosheth accuse Abner of?
7. How did Abner react to this accusation?
8. Before David made an agreement with Abner, what did David demand?
9. Who was Joab?
10. What did Joab tell David he suspected about Abner’s motivation for changing sides?
11. Why did Joab and his brother murder Abner?

Questions from Luke 3 (the focus of the 2020 Lads to Leaders conventions):
1. What did John son of Zechariah preach?
2. Where did he preach?
3. What did John call the crowds who came to him?
4. John said that God can raise up children to Abraham from what?
5. “even now the ____ is laid to the ____ of the trees”
6. When the crowd asked “What shall we do then?” how did John reply?
7. John said that the Messiah would baptize with what?

Help our kids study for Lads/LTC

We want answers ... and questions! Help our youths study for the 2020 Lads to Leaders and Leadership Training for Christ conventions by submitting your original questions from the Gospel of Luke and 2 Samuel. Email your questions to letters@christianchronicle.org.

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How my drinking became an idol

THE HIDDEN TRUTH: Freedom in Christ isn’t about what you can moderate as a Christian.

While some Christians may drink alcohol responsibly, many may be struggling more than you could imagine. What does the face of addiction look like to you? Does it look like a scruffily dressed man sitting on the corner, brown-bagged bottle in hand? Is it a binge-drinking college girl who is failing out of school? Or could it be the clean-faced preacher’s wife sitting in the pew on Sunday morning, nursing her first of many hangovers for the week?

I am writing to say that I am that woman. Through a life that began in the shadow of the bell tower of a Christian university, only in my 40s have I found relief from an addiction that has haunted and chased me, eventually devouring a portion of my life.

Some might say that drinking alcohol of any sort is sinful and point to my story as proof. The common belief is that addicts love drugs or alcohol, but the truth is they don’t love themselves like Jesus does. Addiction has many faces: binge-watching Netflix, compulsive eating, pornography, overspending, gambling, captivations with work and success.

All addictions begin with lies that separate us from an open and honest relationship with God.

For many years, I earnestly sought a reformed life, showing those around me that living as a follower of Christ was freeing and grace-filled. It was, however, during this time that I discovered my first addiction: myself. I believed that my efforts merited my salvation. Every day was a ticker tape of highs and lows. I only hoped that, in the end, I had done more good than bad. The end result was spiritual exhaustion.

Like many moms, I often ended my days by enjoying a glass of wine, which I considered well deserved. It was my medicine, genuinely prescribed by a doctor. I was an uptight, high achiever with health issues that could be remedied by a relaxing glass of wine. It also helped assuage that unquenchable thirst for being good enough. Wine helped quiet the doubting monster of fear that lurked in the corner of my mind, waiting to seize me at the end of the day.

I was taught that Jesus’ first miracle was turning water to wine! The psalmist said that wine made the heart glad. I collected verses that discussed the benefits of drinking. However, like any sensible minister’s wife, I was sensitive to those whom I believed to be legalistic teetotalers. I would hide my wine and beer when they came to my house and only drank socially among other “enlightened” Christians.

If I had been honest with myself, I would have remembered how I had never been able to drink like a normal person. I looked at the binge-drinking and partying of my college years as a detour into rebellion that made my testimony relatable. I foolishly believed that, as long as we didn’t have liquor in the house, beer and wine were OK.

Over the years, I constructed and amended many different rules about alcohol. Looking back, I realize I was just managing my alcoholism. Mind you, I never recognized myself as an alcoholic. I didn’t think alcoholism was a disease but just a sin problem that needed proper spiritual application.

For many years, my drinking probably looked normal: two cups of coffee in the morning and two glasses of wine in the evening. Like bookends, my habit became established. Only during vacations did I allow an uptick to this routine. Slowly, my consumption increased. When kids came along, I became more aware of my habits and wanted to help my children understand that one could drink in a healthy way. I rationalized that moderation was the key.

I believed I had moved on from a legalistic view of drinking, but I was just exchanging one form of legalism for another. I had the tiger by the tail when it came to alcohol consumption, and as Cain had sin crouching at his door in Genesis 4, I, too, was trying to have mastery over something that had mastered me. In our 18th year of marriage, we faced a challenge that gave me an excuse to let my drinking take over. I became obsessed, always waiting for the next time I could numb out with a drink in hand. Day after day, my one glass of “medicine” turned into two, then three and four. What I believed to be the cure became the poison.

With each passing morning came regret, fol-
If you have a habit of drinking daily — or if there is any way that your drinking is affecting your relationships with God and those you love — I urge you to look at your relationship with alcohol.

My life was like a tragic play, with half of the audience unaware of my drinking, believing the image of a “saintly” preacher’s wife. The other half knew I occasionally drank a glass of wine and felt comradery with me as a “sinner.” Neither role was completely accurate or even genuine. The problem is the same for the sinner and the saint. Each begins their day from the same deficit. Only by taking alcohol completely out of the equation was I able to see that no matter how hard I try to live a sinless life, even on my best day, I am in need of God’s grace.

Around my 19th wedding anniversary, as my husband and I were on the cusp of losing our marriage, I decided in desperation to reach out to the helpful hands extended to me. For me, this looked like becoming part of a 12-step program.

I do not want to condemn all drinking. However, I want to encourage those Christians who are drinking to be honest with themselves and God. If you have a habit of drinking daily — even if it is only one or two drinks — or if there is any way that your drinking is affecting your relationships with God and those you love, I urge you to look at your relationship with alcohol.

I can say with certainty that the life I had before I put drinking behind me is the same life I have now, but it is certainly sweeter. Gone are my chronic struggles with anxiety and depression. I have moved from a woefully inadequate reformed life to a transformed one. Alcohol was an idol erected between me and God, and now it is with clear vision that I am finally learning to have an open and honest relationship with him.

Dana Jaworski lives on a homestead in Alaska with her husband of 20 years and three beautiful children. Her family works with several ministries, both local and international. She is a broken vessel, daily awaiting God’s mending and filling. If you are suffering as Jaworski did and need help, please reach out to a 12-step program near you, or contact her directly at alcoholicpreacherswife@gmail.com.

We reflect back on 2019, certain news stories stand out. At the top of our list: the viral hug of forgiveness offered by Brandt Jean to Amber Guyger, the fired Dallas police officer convicted of killing his brother, Botham Jean. Who can forget Brandt Jean’s words, broadcast around the world?

“If you are truly sorry, I know I can forgive you,” he told Guyger. “And I know if you go to God and ask him, he will forgive you.”

The 18-year-old Christian delivered a powerful message. May God bless this young disciple as he follows in his brother’s footsteps and enrolls at Harding University in Searcy, Ark., after the new year.

Our second-biggest story of the year? That would be the decision by Dr. Kent Brantly to return to Africa as a medical missionary, five years after he contracted the Ebola virus in Liberia and nearly died.

“It’s been five years of emotional healing and spiritual healing and growth,” Brantly told us this past summer. “I think we’ve grown and been equipped in ways during this five years that we were not before we went to Liberia.”

We have no doubt that God will use Brantly and his family in amazing ways as they serve at Mukinge Mission Hospital in Zambia.

Third on our list: news that $35 million from a trust established by the late R.W. Comer would be split among 2,000 Churches of Christ in Tennessee and Kentucky. Comer died 75 years ago, but his legacy endures.

The fourth and final story that we have space to mention is not as inspiring as the others: It’s the sad tale of Clyde Brothers Jr., a longtime volunteer youth minister in Uniontown, Pa., accused of using his church and camp positions to prey on generations of young boys. What a tragedy.

Looking ahead to 2020, we pray that God will bless us with many more inspiring headlines and keep the negative news to a minimum.

TO OUR READERS

Help a ministry that helps other ministries

We don’t dig water wells.

But we cover the people who do (in Chad, in Haiti, in Ghana, in Rwanda, in Liberia).

We travel with the ministries that serve the underserved. We’ve seen the excitement on the faces of elderly widows when clean water comes gushing out of the ground.

The Christian Chronicle doesn’t operate a children’s home or an inner-city program for at-risk kids, either. But we cover the people who do (in New Mexico, in Oklahoma, in South Carolina, in Ukraine).

We connect you to those who are the hands and feet of Jesus in their communities.

The Chronicle doesn’t do disaster relief. But we know who to call whenever there’s a hurricane, tornado, earthquake or wildfire. We let you know the best ways to help.

We’re a ministry that helps other ministries.

That’s why we’re thrilled that many of our friends banded together for our recent Giving Tuesday initiative, pledging a record-breaking $12,000 in matching funds. We came close to matching that goal, raising more than $8,000 — mostly through online donations.

We believe that God is using this ministry to bring hope, to shine light into darkness. Your tax-deductible gifts help us keep producing journalism that matters, journalism that makes a difference.

If you haven’t made a year-end contribution to this ministry, we humbly ask for any support you can send our way. Visit christianchronicle.org and look for the orange “Donate” button. You can also mail contributions to The Christian Chronicle, P.O. Box 11000, Oklahoma City, OK 73136-1100.

Thank you. May 2020 draw us all closer to God’s vision.
Christians combat sexual abuse with solid advice, real-world examples

It is easy to find those who will stand against abuse. It is far more challenging to convince others of how the abuse may occur — and who we should be aware of. Most of us are not wired with that level of evil creativity.

In “Protecting Your Child From Predators,” Beth Robinson and Latayne C. Scott have created an extremely practical guide for families. The book shows parents how abuse may occur at various age levels — and what they can teach their children to help make them safer. They emphasize creating a “warrior heart” in your child that empowers them by giving them age-appropriate information and the power to speak up if anyone crosses a boundary with them or others.

Robinson is a professor of psychology and counseling at Lubbock Christian University in Texas. Scott is an award-winning author who has a doctorate in biblical studies. Both are from Churches of Christ.

One can read this book from cover to cover and gain vital knowledge about abuse and how to prevent it in varying situations. Or a parent can read the first two chapters and the conclusion along with an interior chapter that addresses a situation that may be concerning to them at a particular moment.

This book can serve as a manual for situations a family may encounter as their children grow.

The book addresses a scenario similar to one that affected my family more than 15 years ago and served as the genesis of the Ezekiel 33 Project, a nonprofit that seeks to prevent child sexual abuse and bring awareness of and support to families. Although it is a dark topic, I recommend that parents, extended families, church leaders and staff read this book to understand the many different ways that abuse occurs.

Readers will notice that there are more scenarios where the abuser is known to the family than not. The book discusses how predators abuse at different age levels and how abusers in different roles may target a child.

The book provides practical information to give to your children in the event that they are in a dangerous or abusive situation. It informs parents about behaviors that children may display at different age levels if they have been abused. At the end of each chapter there is a section that provides solid guidance on what to do if abuse is suspected. Couples expecting their first child may find this book useful.

The timing may seem odd, but the amount of marital conflict that happens as a result of abuse by someone known to both parents is significant. This book may help couples converse about what to do should abuse happen.

“Protecting Your Child From Predators” is a long-needed resource that can help us understand how to teach our children about abuse. It also provides an opportunity for those who work with children to understand what to do should they suspect abuse. It is a highly relevant and practical tool for helping address abuse in the #metoo, #churchtoo, #familytoo world that we live in.

STEVE BLACK is the founder of the Ezekiel 33 Project, www.ezekiel33project.org. He worships with the Keller Church of Christ in Texas.
Don’t condone, don’t combat
Understanding, love required to reach LGBTQ+ community.

BY LYDIA BOVERIE, MORGAN MARCUM, MALLORY PRIOR AND JIMMY JOHNS
FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

A
s college students, we’ve directly experienced the cultural shift toward tolerance and acceptance of those who are different from us. For years, we’ve seen the LGBTQ+ community strive to make their voices known in social circles, politics and, of course, religion. (The acronym stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and “plus,” which represents other sexual identities.) How do we, as Christians, respond to such an outcry?

“Love Is an Orientation: Elevating the Conversation with the Gay Community” describes the journey of Andrew Marin in pursuing a better understanding of the LGBTQ+ community. Marin sheds light on the current conversations in Christianity by taking the reader on that journey, too — showing us the disdain these individuals have felt from Christians for too long.

He never condones their lifestyle, nor does he attempt to combat anyone’s beliefs concerning homosexuality. Instead, he simply demonstrates that they, too, need to hear the Gospel, need to be shown love and need to understand that there’s a place for them in the church.

Marin began his journey when three of his friends came out to him during his freshman year of college. This led him to begin the Marin Foundation in 2005. The nonprofit helps create bridges between the LGBTQ+ community and Christians through scientific research, biblical and social education and diverse community gatherings.

Although Paul’s letter to the Corinthians lists homosexuality alongside various sins, we are also told to love our brethren despite their sins. “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).

We must show others that their sin does not determine whether or not we are friends with them or whether or not we show them God’s love. “Love Is an Orientation” seeks to confront readers with these very issues in an effort to make them aware of and better prepared for the discussions we face every day.

In order to maintain and promote a sense of unity, Christianity must recognize that all of us are sinners, only made righteous by the blood of Christ. Therefore, love is to be at the forefront of our ministry, and we are to leave the judging to God.

THE REVIEWERS are students at Harding University in Searcy, Ark.

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY (continued)


We put a lot of thought into the gifts we wrap for those we love. We choose—with great care—something their hearts desire. What if we gave a gift to Jesus?

What gift would be most meaningful to Him? The one thing He most longs to find is faith, for we read in Luke 18:8, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” Faith! That’s what He’s looking for. That is a pleasing gift that will bring Him great delight.

So, let’s wrap THAT as a gift for Him! But what does that look like?! In the days of advent leading up to Christmas, consider the multi-facets of our faith with this devotional book. In delving into the Scriptures daily, you can discover what the Bible has to say about offering a gift of faith worthy the Author of our Faith. It’s a gift He will give right back to you—wrapped up beautifully in His perfect love.

Debbra Stephens speaks frequently at a variety of women’s events, has a passion to teach Bible, and is the author of four Bible studies: “The Jesus Touch,” “Prepared,” “I’d-d - Your God-Given Identity in Christ,” and “Crowned - Adorned with Kingdom Blessings,” all published by 21st Century Christian Publishers in Nashville, Tenn. Debbra’s seasonal devotionals are published in her series, “Advent Living Books.” She also posts to her blog found at @debrastephens.com.
Reliving the coffee can incident — and the woman who put me to shame

NASHVILLE, Tenn.

S
o I got interviewed on a podcast recently — by my little sister.

“Sunday Lunch” is a podcast hosted by Katie Culberson, Kerry Stiles and Amy Bowman (my sister). They’re all members of the Brentwood Hills Church of Christ in Nashville, where Amy is a children’s ministry coordinator. But they’re quick — very quick — to point out that the podcast has no official connection to the church.

While I was in Nashville I weaseled my way onto the podcast. Some family trauma got revisited, including the time I jammed Amy’s head into a coffee can when she was a toddler. We lived in Alexandria, Va., and I was enthralled by the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The coffee can was my helmet, and I thought Amy should join in the fun. I just didn’t account for the difference in, y’know, head circumference.

We talked about The Christian Chronicle, too. Katie asked me about stories that have had an impact on me and my faith. I have lots of examples, but one always stands out.

It’s the story of Gulshan, a refugee from Pakistan I met in Bangkok. She was a nurse. Her family fled their homeland because of their Christian faith. She had been inoculating children, but their parents accused her of trying to poison Muslims.

They got tourist visas to stay in Bangkok, where they applied for refugee status and rented a one-room apartment. The visas ran out while their refugee case was still under review, so they were living in Thailand illegally.

They were middle class back in Pakistan. Gulshan told me how she would pack vegetables in her kids’ lunches but they wouldn’t get eaten.

I have two kids. I can relate.

Now, she said, they couldn’t afford vegetables. And when her kids got sick, she had to take them to the doctor, not knowing if she’d be arrested or if she’d have enough money to pay for their care.

I can’t relate to that — nor to what she said next: “God gave us this opportunity.”

God? Opportunity? What?

She explained. While sitting in the doctor’s office, a Thai man handed her some money, without her saying a thing. He knew she needed it. That kind of story had played out for her time and again.

“You know, we have not worried about anything,” she told me, “because we know God.”

Being stripped of all the comforts of life brought Gulshan to the realization of her utter dependence on her Father. So she rejoiced.

I thought about all my petty worries and told her, “You put me to shame.”

I should mention the role that the Somprasong 4 Church of Christ in Bangkok played in her family’s lives. The congregation adopted them and other Pakistani refugees. Gulshan and her husband were baptized, and the church provided money, food and even legal aid for the family. (Jailed just weeks after I left Bangkok, they later were released.)

Their story still gives me chills.

I pray that my family never has to face what hers has faced. But I know I shouldn’t pray that prayer.

I should pray for God to help us recognize our complete dependence on him, no matter the cost. And I should pray for the boldness to share what he’s given us.

Erik Tryggestad is president and CEO of The Christian Chronicle. Contact erik@christianchronicle.org. Hear the “Sunday Lunch” podcast at sundaylunch.libsyn.com or find a link at christianchronicle.org.
You are cordially invited to be a part of our 60th Anniversary Celebration of the Pipeline Road/Legacy Church of Christ.

Please join us

Jan. 26, 2020
9:40 a.m.

for classes, morning worship, catered lunch, and recognition of our rich heritage.

The Legacy Continues …

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11701 SE 171st St
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The Andover Church of Christ is seeking a minister to start immediately. Congregation membership of 30-35 saints. A four-bedroom/two-bath house is provided. If you know of any who are interested in working within His kingdom in Andover please contact us at the information below.

Ray Rowhuff, (316) 641-0254
rayrowhuff@gmail.com

Andover Church of Christ
816 N Andover Rd, Andover, KS, 67002
(316) 733-0933

Crestview Church of Christ is seeking a spiritually mature individual to lead and grow our Youth Ministry in Waco, Texas. This is a full-time position responsible for developing and implementing youth ministry programming that encourages faith formation and spiritual development in the lives of 7th - 12th grade students.

The ideal candidate will have some formal Youth Ministry training and at least three years of experience successfully leading a youth ministry. He must possess a gift and passion for working with teenagers and must be able to teach and relate to teenagers of all backgrounds and personality types. Crestview is a church with a history of outreach and service, and our teens are well known for their strong work ethic. The Youth Minister must model service and foster an environment in which Crestview Youth bring their friends to Crestview activities. The Youth Minister must be able to communicate well with parents and other adults.

For more information about Crestview please see our profile at:

www.crestview-church-waco.org/profile

For more information about this position or to apply, please contact:

Steve Sorrells, (254)855-6900
steve@sorrellsandco.com
Crestview Church of Christ YM Search
7129 Delhi Rd
Woodway, TX 76712

Please email resume prior to January 15, 2020.

Bilingual Hispanic Minister

Smyrna Church of Christ in Smyrna, Tennessee, is searching for a bilingual Hispanic minister. Formal Bible training and preaching experience required. Must be willing to work under the leadership of our elders. Please send a cover letter, three references and a resume to:

hispanicministerssearch@yahoo.com

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