

Troublesome times

AS A GLOBAL PANDEMIC rages, Churches of Christ adapt to what has changed
... and cling to what hasn't.



BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

The virus changed everything.
And nothing.

As the African nation of Tanzania recorded its first death from COVID-19, a Church of Christ in a tiny village of the Maasai people stopped its practice of every member shaking every other member's hand after worship.

Instead, they stood in a circle, nodded and waved. Missionary Ralph Williams said, "The young guys

thought it was hilarious to touch ankles instead of shaking hands."

In Italy, as the coronavirus death toll approached 14,000, conversations in the home of Scott and Rebecca Shanahan went like this:

"OK, I'm going to the store. Can you print a form for me?"

"Yes. Do you have your passport?"

The whole country is on lockdown, and the Church of Christ they serve in Florence can meet only online.

So they organize worship through WhatsApp, each man sending his

assigned prayer or Scripture reading through video or text message. "Also, nobody can stop our church jokester, Giovanni, from sending us a joke every day," Rebecca Shanahan said.

And in Ocala, Fla., as U.S. deaths from COVID-19 mount, "Work has slowed, businesses and restaurants are closed, and our church has chosen to shut its physical doors," said John "Beef" Branard, youth minister for the Maricamp Road Church of Christ.

The church posts sermons online, and leaders have split up the roster

"so that we can reach out to every single person on a regular basis," Branard said. "I've found that our members are using this time to dive into the Word, pray more intentionally

See **PANDEMIC**, Page 12

THE CHURCH AND COVID-19

CHRISTIANS SHARE COVID SURVIVAL STORIES	13
CURRENTS: WHAT CHURCHES NEED TO KNOW	17
VOICES: EVERY BELIEVER CAN BE A FIRST RESPONDER	21
EDITORIAL: MINISTRIES NEED OUR SUPPORT	28
VIEWS: A THEOLOGY FOR NOT 'ASSEMBLING'	29
HISTORY: CHURCHES AND A PREVIOUS PANDEMIC	30



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Trusting in Jesus during COVID-19 crisis

I'm not the best daily Bible reader.

I become distracted and neglect to open God's word for a few days.

Or after my eyes move over an entire passage, I

realize I allowed my mind to wander. And I fail to grasp what the Lord was trying to tell me.

One way that I reflect and

learn is to write things on paper. Since I was a young boy, I've loved to jot down thoughts and ideas. Even in the computer age, I prefer a handwritten to-do list.

As 2020 neared, I decided to try a new approach to my Bible reading. I resolved to write down the Scriptures. I ordered a stack of black hardback journals with lined paper from Amazon. I made sure I had plenty of my favorite black, felt-tip pens.

Then I opened the YouVersion app on my iPhone to the Gospel of John.

Over a quarter of the way through the year, I've filled up three journals and started a fourth. When I finished John, I moved to Luke. I figure I'll do the other two gospels — Matthew and Mark — next.

I'm in no big hurry.

I want to take time to listen to Jesus and get to know him better.

Stuck at home amid the coronavirus outbreak, I've found myself stressed and

See JESUS, Page 4

Inside Story



Bobby Ross Jr.

Twenty-five years ago, a Harding University junior was raped and murdered. Her parents found peace by sharing Jesus with the men responsible.



Forgiving Carla's killers

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Easter Sunday 1995 was a beautiful day for Roy and Jeanie Willmon. Blue sky. Temperatures in the 70s. Their daughter, Carla, home for the weekend.

The 20-year-old junior at Harding University in Searcy, Ark., had made the 250-mile drive to East Texas to celebrate the holiday with her family.

Her parents bought her a new pink outfit, which she wore to worship with the North Ridge Church of Christ in Mount Pleasant. The town of 16,000 is just off Interstate 30, about 65 miles west of the Arkansas state line.

Laughs were plentiful that weekend, as they tended to be when Carla was around.

"Her older brother, Curtis, came up. We were all together, and it was a very sweet weekend," Jeanie said. "She was just always a joy to be around. She said funny things without even meaning to."

Before returning to Harding that



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY FAMILY AND ARKANSAS CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT

Roy and Jeanie Willmon are shown in a recent photo. Above, the father and mother pose with daughter Carla on Easter Sunday 1995. Also pictured are Carla's killers: Mitchell W. Skinner and Patric D. Patterson.

afternoon, Carla hugged her mother. Then she hugged her again. And again and again.

Finally, she got into her white 1988 Chevrolet Cavalier and pulled out of the driveway.

As she turned toward the highway, the junior education major glanced at her parents through the side mirror and smiled.

It was the last time they'd see her alive.

"I don't know," Roy said. "It's just — it's a picture frozen in my mind."

THE VICTIM

That Monday night — April 17, 1995 — Carla left her books open, a lamp on and a drink out in her Harding dormitory.

She apparently decided she needed something from Walmart.

She was last seen at the store about 8:30 that night. The next afternoon, authorities discovered her lifeless body several miles away in the trunk of her abandoned car.

According to court records, Carla was abducted, taken to a trailer house and raped. She had tape placed over

See FORGIVING, Page 8

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JESUS: Our Savior has conquered death

FROM PAGE 3

worried. I know I'm not alone.

I've wondered: What if I were to get the virus and die? What if I were to infect my immunocompromised wife?

What if my children or even my grandson were to get the virus? What about my parents? Or my brother and sister? Or my nieces and nephews?

As the death toll from COVID-19 has risen globally and in America these past few weeks, I've kept progressing through Luke.

Jesus' approach to the sick and dying brings me hope.

Luke 4 tells us that Simon's mother-in-law had a high fever, but Jesus rebuked the fever and healed her. As the sun set, Jesus laid hands on all those who were sick with various diseases and healed them.

In the fifth and sixth chapters, Jesus cleanses a leper, makes a paralytic walk and restores a man's withered hand.

Then comes this truly amazing scene in Luke 7:

11 Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him.

12 As he drew near the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her.

Can you imagine that woman's grief? Already, she had lost her husband. And now her only son had died, too.

How will Jesus respond to her?

That was my question as I finished scribbling those words in my journal.

Here's how:

13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said,

"Do not weep."

In my journal, I put three exclamation points and three stars under that verse.

We serve a Savior who understands our hurts and — this is remarkable — has compassion for us.

Let's read more:

14 Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still, and he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!"

15 And the dead man got up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.

Think about that: Jesus raised the young man from the dead.

For those who believe what the Bible teaches, this world is not the end. The coronavirus has no control over my ultimate destiny. Jesus has promised me an eternity with him.

Does that mean I have total peace over the reports that the U.S. could experience 240,000 deaths and millions of infections from the pandemic?

Of course not! If I could find that peace, I wouldn't be wide awake and

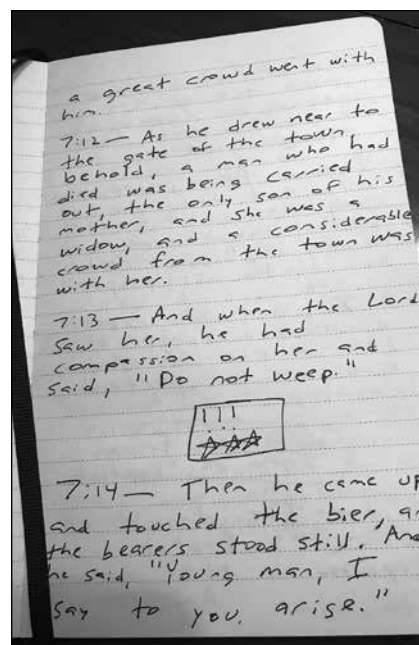
typing this at 3:30 in the morning.

But I know that even Jesus was "sorrowful and troubled" as he went to Gethsemane to pray before his crucifixion (Matthew 26:36-44).

We serve a Savior who has conquered death.

Yet we serve one who couldn't bear to see a grieving mother cry. I have no doubt Jesus hears our prayers and sympathizes with our despair.

Dear God, please give us the strength to put our hope and trust in Jesus.



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Luke 7 tells how Jesus responded to the death of a widow's only son.

BOBBY ROSS JR. is editor-in-chief of *The Christian Chronicle*. Contact bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org. Follow him on Twitter at [@bobbyross](https://twitter.com/bobbyross).



Martin and Mary Ann Smith arrived in Bandera, Texas, in 1970. The family reunited when the Bandera Church of Christ celebrated the Smiths' half-century of ministry.

50 years of sermons and not a single repeat

MINISTER AND HIS WIFE *honored for a half-century of service to congregation in the Texas Hill Country.*

BY ERIN FLOYD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Martin Smith has preached nearly 2,500 Sundays behind the same pulpit — and he's never repeated a sermon.

That's because he starts from scratch every time.

"I'll make detailed notes, but I'll throw them away (after) every service," said Smith, 78, who has spent the past half-century preaching for the Bandera Church of Christ in Central Texas, about an hour northwest of San Antonio.

The system has its drawbacks, the preacher said.

"Sometimes I get mad at myself for that because I think, 'You know, where did I find that information?' But then I disposed of it," Smith said. "So I don't know where it is, but that's part of how I study, so I can start all over again. So you don't ever hear the same sermon twice."

Multiple generations have passed through the pews of the Bandera congregation, which now has about 70 members, since Smith was named minister in February 1970.

The church isn't slowing down, said Charles Wilson, retired minister for the nearby Bandina Church of Christ and a friend of Smith's for the past 60 years.

"The church is doing better than it ever has in its entire history," Wilson said of the Bandera congregation,

which experiences baptisms routinely. Its members have a spirit of service to each other and to their community, Wilson said.

That's partly because Smith has led by example, serving as everything from emergency medical services technician to school bus driver.

Smith, for his part, credits the church's success to the strength of its members' faith.

"If I were to disappear, I think it would go right on," he said. "I think we're that stable."

"I'm glad that I'm here, but I don't think they have to have me."

'IT HAS HAD ITS UPS AND DOWNS'

Smith grew up attending the East Side Church of Christ in Stephenville, Texas, about 200 miles north of Bandera. The church's leaders encouraged its young men to develop their speaking and preaching skills. The congregation no longer exists, Smith said, but its legacy lives on in him.

He preached for several churches

in the Stephenville area before the Bandera church hired him. He and his wife of almost 60 years, Mary Ann, had two young daughters at the time, Debbie and Joy. A third, Penny, was born in Bandera in 1972.

The family grew alongside the town and the church — and witnessed many milestones.

"It has had its ups and downs, but we've survived all of them," Smith said. One of the more difficult times came in 1978 when a catastrophic flood engulfed central Texas. More than 40 inches of rain fell over several days, and 15 people died, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. Smith said the church lost some members in the flooding.

More encouraging memories from Smith's time include many marriages and baptisms.

One of those was a young girl who started attending the Bandera church youth group. A former Catholic, she didn't have any connection to the congregation or other Churches of Christ, but because of the youth ministry, she converted and married a young man who is now a youth minister at another congregation.

"I think we've been a pretty solid congregation," Smith said, "and we can help missionaries, and we can help children's homes and things like that." The church supports missionaries in the Philippines and New Zealand, the Cherokee



PHOTOS PROVIDED

Martin and Mary Ann Smith are presented with a letter of thanks from the Bandera Church of Christ for their 50 years of service to the congregation.

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SMITHS: Couple marks 50 years with church

FROM PAGE 5
Home for Children, Southern Africa Bible College and students at the Memphis School of Preaching and Southwest School of Bible Studies.

Ministry involves more than preaching, Smith said. It means being a part of the community and connecting with people outside of the church.

"That's how you relate to people," he said. "That's how you make them not afraid of the Church of Christ, you know? Because some people are."

Smith "has been everything in the community that a man could be," Wilson said. He's been a chef for the Parent Teacher Association, an emergency medical services coordinator, a livestock show judge, a Boy Scouts volunteer and a cemetery manager.

One of his favorite jobs was school bus driver — something he did for 41 years.

"You relate to a lot of children, you know. Therefore, you relate to a lot of parents, and that puts you in the community," Smith said.

The Bandera church recently honored Smith and his wife with a celebration for their 50 years of service. More than 150 locals, longtime friends and people from surrounding areas attended. Bandera County Judge Richard Evans gave a proclamation to the couple for their contributions to the community.

"We had people from all walks of life, actually, that came to the event," Smith said.

Looking forward, Smith doesn't plan to step away from the pulpit anytime soon, but he said he'll prayerfully consider what's in the best interest of the congregation.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Bandera County Judge Richard Evans presents a proclamation to the Smiths for their service.

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FORGIVING: Texas parents found peace by sharing Jesus

FROM PAGE 3

her mouth and nose. She died from asphyxiation and strangulation.

Her parents were devastated.

"It was a really dark time for us, a hard time," Jeanie said.

That Wednesday, the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City delivered a gut punch to America. The blast claimed 168 lives, including 19 children, and dominated headlines for weeks.

But the national tragedy failed even to register with the Willmons. Their own indescribable grief engulfed them. And it would for years.

That Friday, more than 600 people — many of them Harding classmates — crowded into the North Ridge church to remember Carla.

The Christian university's chorus came and sang hymns such as "Where The Roses Never Fade."

In the church bulletin a few weeks after Carla's death, the Willmons thanked their home congregation for its outpouring of love and comfort.

"We do not understand why Carla was taken away so soon and in such a tragic way," Roy wrote. "We miss her so very much and wonder how we can cope with our broken hearts. But God has given Jeanie and me such a wonderful church family."

At the end of the letter, Roy added, "Please pray that our hearts will not be filled with anger or hate but that we can some day, in some way, find the strength and peace of God to forgive."

THE KILLERS

Two men were implicated in the kidnapping and murder: Patric Dean Patterson and Mitchell Wade Skinner.

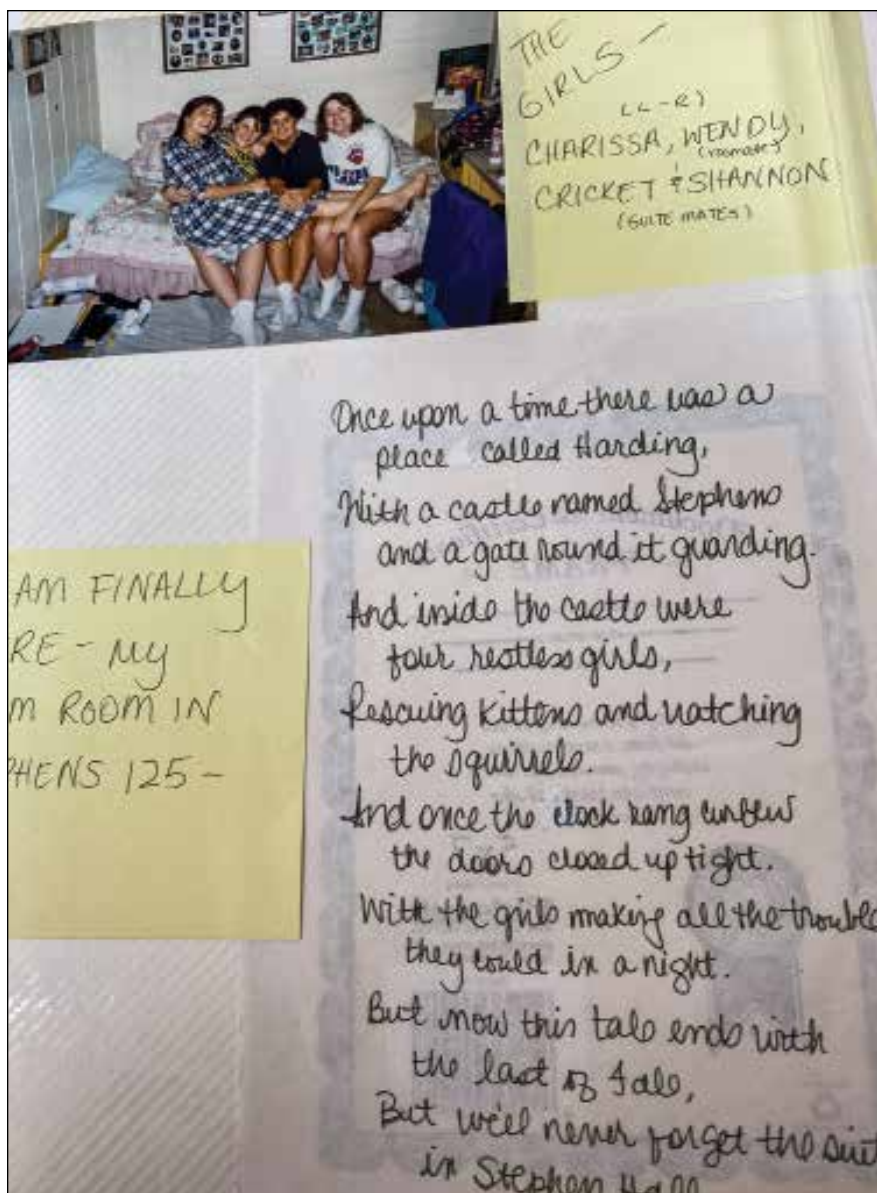
When Jeanie saw the suspects' pictures in the newspaper, their faces surprised her.

"I thought they'd be monsters, and they were men," she said. "And that was kind of a revelation for me."

Patterson, then 26, and Skinner, 31, admitted using crystal methamphetamine the night of Carla's slaying.

Facing the death penalty if convicted, each pleaded guilty in exchange for a sentence of life in prison without parole.

The months leading up to the



Above are a poem Carla Willmon wrote and a picture of her Harding suitemates.

pleas — Patterson in October 1995 and Skinner in January 1996 — were difficult for the Willmons.

Carla's parents supported sparing the killers' lives, but forgiving Patterson and Skinner was a different story.

"I knew I needed to forgive them," Jeanie said. "And I had in a way because I wasn't seeking revenge on them."

Said Roy: "I think we thought in our hearts that maybe we had forgiven them. But the way that I dealt with it was just to try to put them out of my mind and stuff them into

some dark corner of my heart and pretend that they didn't exist."

THE LETTERS

By the start of 2015, nearly 20 years had passed since Carla's death.

Roy, by then a North Ridge church elder and grandfather of three, had forgotten about his long-ago prayer request for "the strength and peace of God to forgive."

But after two decades, he and Jeanie, a retired teacher, said they felt the Holy Spirit leading them to "officially tell" Patterson and Skinner they forgave them.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY FAMILY

Carla Willmon smiles in her high school senior picture from Mount Pleasant.

Surrendering to what the couple considered God's will, Roy penned letters dated Feb. 12, 2015, to both killers.

"To forgive someone is not to say that what that person did is OK; it simply means (at least to me it means) abandoning the desire for retaliation and revenge, and granting forgiveness along with concern for that person's future welfare," Roy said in the letters.

"So in your case, although justice must be served and your fate in this life is set," he added, "Jeanie and I have a true concern and desire for you to have a better life beyond the grave."

The letters met with immediate skepticism.

"He told me he and his wife had forgiven me, but I didn't believe it," said Patterson, incarcerated at the Ouachita River prison in Malvern, Ark. "I thought they wanted to cause me more pain or something."

Skinner said his first thought was of the old saying that "if it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is."

"I mean, how could they forgive me when I couldn't even forgive myself?" said Skinner, who is serving his sentence at the Cummins prison in Gould, Ark. "I believe that's how I worded it in my response to their letter."



Seventy percent of proceeds from the sale of inmate Mitchell Skinner's artwork go to a Harding University scholarship fund established in memory of Carla Willmon.

THE CONVERSIONS

Letter by letter, though, the prisoners came to recognize that the Willmons were sincere.

Roy offered to study the Bible with both inmates via regular written correspondence, and each accepted.

Since that February, Carla's father has written each of his daughter's killers every two weeks.

They send him letters in the in-between weeks.

"You can't fathom it," said Roy, now 76. "That's what's so amazing about this whole thing that has transpired is the change from darkness to light of the two men."

Behind prison walls, both men decided to be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins.

"Thank you for all the love you have shown me and for all the spiritual guidance you give," Patterson wrote in a letter to the Willmons. "You've shown me how alive the Lord is in the life we live. How His love is showing by his life and the lives of those who love Him."

"Thank you for saving my life by showing me my worth in Christ Jesus. What a gift!"

Roy praises prison ministers associated with Churches of Christ — including Randy Hughes and Brad Frost — for helping develop the inmates' faith.

Both Patterson, now 51, and Skinner, 56, have become leaders in their prison congregations.

'Thank you for saving my life by showing me my worth in Christ Jesus. What a gift!'

Patric D. Patterson

Patterson has converted and baptized more than a dozen inmates. Skinner leads singing every Sunday. Both teach the Gospel to fellow prisoners and ask what Roy describes as "serious biblical questions" in their letters.

As a result of the love and example shown to him by the Willmons, Skinner said he was able to forgive the man who killed his brother.

"Forgiveness is a gift of the Holy Spirit," Skinner said in a testimony shared by Hughes. "It all started on the cross when Jesus asked our father to forgive us because we didn't know what we were doing."

"Allowing the love of Christ to shine through our self-centered flesh is the key," he added. "I know firsthand how life-changing God's grace is."

A talented artist, Skinner asked after a lesson on giving if he could establish a scholarship in Carla's honor at Harding and donate 70 percent of his proceeds from pencil-and-ink drawings to it.

"I can give through my artwork," Skinner said.

As a result, the Carla J. Willmon Memorial Endowed Scholarship was created. Her parents urge donations to the scholarship fund as a way to remember Carla.

THE ANNIVERSARY

A year ago, Harding President Bruce McLarty invited Roy to speak in the university's two daily chapel assemblies about "the transforming



PHOTOS, ARTWORK PROVIDED BY FAMILY

Carla, Jeanie, Curtis and Roy Willmon at Curtis' graduation from Harding University.

power of forgiveness."

Roy had never preached a sermon, but he welcomed the opportunity to share his family's story at a place that meant so much to his daughter.

"I don't know how much impact it had on others — hopefully a lot — but it had an enormous impact on me," he said of recounting his journey in such a public forum, with his wife in the audience.

To McLarty, the silence when Roy finished talking spoke volumes.

"The most impressive response to his words," the Harding president said, "was the many times I heard students and faculty say, 'I need to forgive someone in my life because of the example of Roy and Jeanie's forgiveness.'"

The Willmons have no special plans for the 25th anniversary of Carla's death.

They'll thank God for their church family, which has supported them through all the tears.

They'll read the cards that loved ones send year after year. They'll smell the flowers that a Harding suitemate of Carla's had delivered.

They'll reflect on the peace that forgiveness has brought them and their daughter's killers.

And they'll remember a time before their lives changed forever — that beautiful Easter Sunday 1995.

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JIM TAYLOR

'She has fallen in love with the church'

In Villa Unión, a Mexican town just west of the Texas border, a young woman named Claudia beams brightly as she emerges from the waters of baptism. Her family, part of Mexico's indigenous community, makes a living picking chiles and moved from city to city until Claudia convinced them to stay in Villa Unión because "she has fallen in love with the church," said missionary Jim Taylor. Claudia, who is blind, "never misses a service, Sunday or Wednesday," with the Church of Christ, Taylor said. Her baptism happened a few weeks before churches stopped in-person services due to COVID-19.

CROATIA

ZAGREB — A 5.3-magnitude earthquake woke people in this Central European capital on a Sunday morning — in the midst of the nation's coronavirus lockdown.

The quake damaged older buildings in Zagreb and toppled bookshelves in the libraries of The Biblical Institute of Zagreb, a ministry-training school associated with Churches of Christ. No deaths were reported.

"The saddest picture (from just after the earthquake) is of all the women with newborn babies on the street in the front of the hospital," said Mladen Dominic, minister for the Church of Christ in Varazdin, Croatia. The morning of the quake was frigid, he said.

"All of it (the quake and the pandemic) has turned us even closer to the Lord," Dominic said. "We are praying for those people who are now contacting us and who are seeking the Lord."



Dominic

JAMAICA

KINGSTON — Churches of Christ in Jamaica's capital were set to host the 50th Carribean Lectureship this summer, but COVID-19 has pushed the dates to July 11-14, 2021, said Ken Dye, the lectureship's founder.

"It will only take 51 years to celebrate our year of Jubilee," Dye told *The Christian Chronicle*.

UKRAINE

KIEV — For Churches of Christ in Ukraine, the pandemic brings back memories of 2014, said minister Dmitry Grischuk. That's when a violent conflict with pro-Russian separatists began in eastern Ukraine, displacing 1.5 million people. Nearly six years later, the conflict continues.

Grischuk oversees a ministry, Let's Love Good News, that supplies food and necessities to Ukrainians who live near the front lines.

Grischuk said he's unsure if those deliveries will continue during the pandemic, but the flexibility and creativity Christians have learned from the conflict will help them redirect resources to best serve the vulnerable.

Boko Haram kills Christian teens in northern Nigeria bus attack

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram has killed four members of Churches of Christ who were training to become preachers.

The church members — Shedrack Simon, Josiah Amos, Ayuba Hamman and Markus Bitrus — were traveling by bus from the southern Nigerian state of Akwa Ibom, where they were studying at Truegate Bible College in the town of Oron, to Maiduguri, a city in northeast Nigeria, on March 28.

The terrorists forced the bus to stop and separated its Christian and Muslim passengers, said a Nigerian minister who requested that his name be withheld for security reasons.

Those who identified themselves as Christians, including the four preaching students, "were hacked down by the terrorists using machetes," the minister told *The Christian Chronicle*.

The bodies of the four students were buried under the supervision of the Wulari-Jerusalem Church of Christ, a 200-member congregation in Maiduguri.

The students, all under age 20, grew up in the northern Nigerian state of Borno, which has endured multiple attacks by Boko Haram in the past decade, including the abduction of 276 schoolgirls in 2014 from the town of Chibok.

Hamman worshiped with a Church of Christ in a small village before he decided to train to become a preacher.

Simon was the son of a minister for a Church of Christ in another village. That village "was sacked and now is desolate" because of Boko Haram, the Nigerian minister said, so the family relocated to Chibok.

Before enrolling in the Bible

college, Amos and Bitrus had left their homes in Borno state to attend a secondary school operated by Elkanah Madaki in a neighboring state.

Most schools in Borno are unable to operate because of the violence, so Madaki, a Christian

who grew up in Borno, and his wife launched the school and enrolled children from Borno.

Bitrus became the school's "head boy," a title used in British schools for an elected class

Amos

representative and role model. Bitrus "was one of the best science students of 2018 class," Madaki said. Bitrus had planned to study medicine but decided to switch to preaching after last year's death of his father, minister Bitrus Bwala.

Amos excelled at mathematics, Madaki said. He served as a church treasurer and worked as an electrician.

In a social media post, Madaki wrote to his former students.

"We are encouraged by your zeal and bravery as soldiers of the Lord," he wrote. "At the point of death, you did not deny Christ. May the souls of the martyrs rest with the Lord."



Madaki

Madaki praised Churches of Christ in Chibok and Maiduguri for the support they've shown to the students' families.

He also asked for prayers for the community and the Nigerian government as it seeks to protect the country from terrorists and the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We also pray (for) God to forgive the perpetrators of this wicked act," he wrote, "that they may see the light of Christ and shun evil."



Bitrus

PANDEMIC: 'God has created a way for us to be the church'

FROM PAGE 1
and practice some of the other spiritual disciplines that were so easily forgotten when life was 'normal' a few weeks ago."

Nearly every person on planet earth, it seems, has been impacted in some way by the pandemic.

At press time, COVID-19 had infected more than 1 million people in 180 countries and territories and claimed more than 54,000 lives. Lockdowns and shutdowns are expected to last for months to come.

Health officials and political leaders equate the battle against the pandemic to a war, bringing to mind the gospel standard "Jesus is Coming Soon," written by R.E. Winsett in the midst of World War II.

"Troublesome times are here, filling men's hearts with fear; Freedom we all hold dear, now is at stake ..."

Worship has changed. Health care has changed. Daily life has changed.

The *Christian Chronicle* spoke with preachers adapting to new technology, Christians in medicine on the front lines of the pandemic and church members sequestered in their homes as they navigate the new normal. They shared stories of the changes they've endured — some small and humorous, others huge and heartbreaking — in the past month.

They also talked about the underlying truth that will never change.

"Every single day is full of reminders that God is there for us," said Dawnna Hale, a member of the Pitman Road Church of Christ in Sewell, N.J. Sometimes those reminders are as simple as the fragrance from a cup of blueberry tea, she said.

When she's still, "Suddenly, I'm not as afraid of this virus. I feel peace."

THE CORONA CHURCH OF CHRIST

"Why do we have to call it coronavirus?"

Terri Mays has heard the question a few times since the pandemic began. The minister's wife and a cappella recording artist is, after all, a member of the Corona Church of Christ, which meets in

California's Riverside County, about 30 minutes east of Los Angeles.

The newly infamous name caused a few *Chronicle* readers to do a double take when they saw the church listed among congregations livestreaming their worship services.

"It's a badly, poorly named disease," said Scott Mazo, one of five elders who serve a diverse mix of 120 members — white, black and Latino. The church has services in English and Spanish.

They were relative neophytes in the world of live webcasting but had little choice after California discouraged gatherings of 10 or more in mid-March, Mazo said. By the end of the month, 93 percent of Protestant churches in the U.S. had closed their doors, according to a poll conducted by Nashville, Tenn.-based LifeWay Research. At the same time, the percentage of churches that livestream jumped from 22 percent to 65 percent.

The transition wasn't easy, said minister Willie Mays, who went from preaching to an auditorium full of churchgoers to talking into a screen, with a small image of himself looking back.

"It was definitely very humbling," he said. Although he's preached for more than two decades, "this is just a brand new, unprecedented territory."

The church was studying the prophetic book of Revelation as the words "social distancing" came

into the vernacular. The book demonstrates that "if you stay ready with God, you're always ready no matter what happens," Willie Mays said. "This life is not the end."

The church continues to operate the Corona Bible Institute, offering online courses through Texas-based Sunset International Bible Institute, where Willie Mays earned a ministry degree. The church's elders do their best to stay in touch with members, especially elderly ones who aren't up on the latest technology, Mazo said.

"This isn't ideal. This isn't a new paradigm for worship, God meant for us to be together," Mazo said. But in



PHOTO PROVIDED

Kym Langford shows some of the gear she uses to treat COVID patients in NYC.

troublesome times, "God has created a way for us to be the church."

Terri Mays has been on conference calls with the church's women, discussing books, including one on overcoming anxiety. Although much has changed in the past month, "what has not changed is the power of God," she said. "He still is in control. God is working, whatever the plague."

A PRAYER AFTER 'EVERY LITTLE COUGH'

"I had my first patient die tonight because of COVID," said Kym Langford, a nurse from Oklahoma who volunteered to work for three weeks at Harlem Hospital Center in New York. "Three days ago, they were going to discharge him. He was getting better. ... It just turned so fast."

That's the nature of the disease, said Langford, a mother of three who worships with The Springs Church of Christ in Edmond, Okla., and teaches in the nursing program at Oklahoma Christian University. She was four days into her stint in New York, where coronavirus cases were nearing 50,000.

"I knew it was going be hard. I didn't think it was going be this hard," she said. Two days earlier, the hospital had opened a new unit with 50 beds. It was already full.

Some patients didn't even have beds. They were on stretchers.

Langford had to improvise, drawing from her six years of experience as

a missionary in Uganda, where she coordinated medical campaigns. In New York, she rigged a coat hanger to serve as a makeshift IV pole.

Across the U.S., supplies are running low, especially the coveted N95 medical masks.

In Atlanta, paramedic Krystal Willis worked seven 12-hour shifts with the same mask, during which she treated four known cases of COVID-19.

"Everyone is checked for symptoms and temps before we can get on an ambulance," said Willis, a member of the North Macon Church of Christ who works for Grady Memorial Hospital. "It's hard to find food during shift. Everyone is on edge."

"The way we treat people has changed," she said. "We are no longer allowed to intubate cardiac arrest patients. We can no longer give nebulized breathing treatments. ... This is really hard for us."

She's lost a family member to the virus, and she's seen coworkers sent home because they've shown symptoms. She showers immediately after each shift and tries to limit contact with her children, ages 13 and 15. So does her husband, a police officer who serves at a hospital.

"This is *real*," Willis said. "I miss church. At a time like this, I really need church."

On Sundays the family watches videos from previous Polishing the Pulpit workshops, sings and takes the Lord's Supper.

"My prayers are different now," Willis said. "I am praying for each of my patients more. I am silently begging God for this to be over."

"And ... I am praying we don't bring this home. Every little cough is followed by a prayer. Every sneeze is followed by a prayer."

In Rome, Italy, "at the end of the day in an intensive care unit, the only thing you need is to be on your knees, praying to God," said Dr. Vittorio Vitalone, a physician and an elder of the Viale Jonio Church of Christ.

He specializes in cancer therapy and hasn't yet seen any COVID-19 patients. Many Italian doctors have



Hale



Terri Mays



Willis

died from the disease — some he knew personally. But he noted that as the pandemic multiplies, so does the number of people who have recovered from it — some 200,000 and growing exponentially.

“I receive many questions: ‘Doctor, what will happen? What will be the end?’” he said. “My answer is always the same: ‘I don’t know, but I know that there is someone wiser than me that could offer you the answer.’ God is in control.”

Vitalone

Back in New York, “I’ve been praying a lot, more than I ever had,” Langford said. She tries to share the peace she receives with her patients.

During the same shift when she lost a patient, she had to tell another that he had tested positive for the virus. He was terrified.

Then he told the nurse, “Thank you for being so kind. Will you be back tomorrow?”

“I told him, ‘I will,’” Langford said.

SAYING ‘I DO’ IN THE MIDST OF A PANDEMIC

“Troubles will soon be o’er, happy forevermore, when we meet on that shore, free from all care ...”

Members of the Long Island Church of Christ in New York got a foretaste of heaven, alluded to in Winsett’s hymn, as they watched church members Ryan Paul and Vern Ferdinand get married.

The couple had to postpone their formal ceremony for 170 guests, canceling the venue, flights and hotels. They decided to wed in the home of minister Pedro Gelabert in front of 25 family members and friends. By then even a gathering of that size was deemed unsafe.

So they took their vows standing 6 feet from Gelabert, who wore a big, protective face shield. The matron of honor — the sole, in-person witness — sent a link on the Zoom videoconferencing program to the guests. Nearly 100 watched online.

“It was incredible!” said church member Rebecca Young. Ferdinand “has been waiting patiently for years to be blessed with a God-fearing man. It was exciting, and it brought a moment of hope for us New Yorkers. We said that we will never forget this wedding, ever!”

The virus changed everything. And nothing.



Ryan and Vern Paul were married by minister Pedro Gelabert, who stood 6 feet away in protective gear.



PHOTOS PROVIDED



Teens from the Broken Arrow Church of Christ — Avery Edison, Olivia Smith, Emily Turner, Kendall Ferguson and Ragan Edison — wrote encouraging messages in chalk on the Pyles family’s driveway.

Survivors of COVID-19 urge fellow Christians to take virus seriously

BY CHELLIE ISON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

It was the worst, Tim Pyles said, he has ever felt.

After at least two weeks of misery, the 57-year-old minister for the Broken Arrow Church of Christ in Oklahoma is enjoying feeling like himself again.

“It feels good to feel good,” he said.

Diagnosed with COVID-19 in March, Pyles spent several days on the verge of needing to be hospitalized.

“He was sicker than he’d been in 33 years of marriage,” Kim Pyles said about her husband.

It all started around March 13. Fatigue, body aches, persistent headache — symptoms he didn’t think much of, at first.

Three days later, more symptoms hit: a fever, chills, sweats and a loss of taste.

“Everything tastes like metal,” Tim told his wife.

By March 18, he was getting worse. The couple contacted their doctor and were told to come in

for testing. A flu test quickly came back negative. They swabbed him for the coronavirus, but because his test had to be sent out of state, it would be 12 days before the results were known.

He was told to go home and isolate, just in case.

Within a day, the couple’s 27-year-old son, Coleman, began showing symptoms as well. Coleman is nonverbal and is diagnosed with autism and other health issues.

Just a few days later, Coleman was also tested for COVID-19.

By that point, Oklahoma had more testing available, which meant Coleman’s results were processed more quickly. Within 24 hours, it was confirmed he had tested positive for the coronavirus.

This was extremely concerning to the family because Coleman has a history of respiratory issues.

“I was frightened,” Kim said. “It has nothing to do with faith. You’re sleepy. You start thinking things you shouldn’t, and you just pray and have a constant dialogue with God about the situation.”



Oklahoma minister Tim Pyles and his son, Coleman, survived coronavirus.

PHOTOS BY KIM PYLES



HEALING ADDICTION THROUGH GOD'S LOVE

The Church of Christ in Hot Springs Village, Arkansas, is supporting a God-centered treatment program for men at **SOZO Addiction Recovery Center**, where, in the last four years, 49 men have chosen to become baptized into Christ as part of their recovery experience. *This is particularly significant because the program only treats 10-12 men at a time.*

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SURVIVING: 'It was like something out of a movie'

FROM PAGE 13

During the same time, Lawrence Fuggett, 42, a member of the Wilshire Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, found himself fighting the virus.

Fuggett's symptoms started the same weekend as Pyle's — fatigue, a cough "that wouldn't go away."

"It was a weird cough," he said.

Within days, he began vomiting. He was sleeping a lot. When he was awake, he could barely hold himself up. It progressed to the point where his wife, Joy, knew she had to call 911.

"It was very obvious that he couldn't make it on his own," Joy said.

Fuggett is diabetic and has high blood pressure. When he got to the hospital, those were the main concerns of the doctors.

He was admitted into intensive care.

Lawrence was in ICU for two days before doctors realized he had pneumonia. It was then that they tested him for COVID-19 and moved him to an isolation room, despite not having the results.

He was never put on a ventilator, but he was incredibly ill.

"This was the longest I've ever been sick like that," he said. "It was like something out of a movie. I'd never seen anything like that. It was pretty bad."

Joy wasn't allowed to go with him. Hospital visitation rules were strictly enforced. So she was forced to stay at home, with their two children, waiting for updates via text or phone call.

Just talking about it brings tears.

"It was a rough few days," she said. "We're just all so thankful that we have the outcome we have. We are hyper aware that not everyone is so lucky."

Just two days after doctors tested for the coronavirus, Lawrence was sent home. It wasn't until the next day that he received a call from health officials confirming that he had tested positive for COVID-19.

His family has no idea where he would have contracted the virus. He had been working from home since the beginning of the month, and they had made very few trips out of the house.

It's the same for the Pyles family. They have no idea where or how Tim contracted the virus.

"Obviously, community spread was going on," he said. "I don't know anyone else that has tested positive other than Coleman."

Tim was never hospitalized, although Kim said he likely should have been. Church members filled the family's porch with meals and Gatorade, to help Tim and Coleman stay hydrated. A group of young ladies drew pictures and wrote encouraging comments with chalk on the family's driveway, hoping to lift their spirits.

"I appreciate the way people come through in a crisis," Kim said. "It was a crisis for our family."

Both families say they hope that others will take COVID-19 seriously and realize that the virus is not just the flu or something like it. They also urge others to take the advice of government officials and stay home.

"The best outcome is we do all this, and we end up saying, 'Wow, we avoided what could have been really bad,'" Lawrence said.

"I've never been that sick for that long in my adult life," Tim said.

"While I'm grateful for a full recovery, we will continue to follow the regulations on distancing."

Coleman has also made a full recovery. Interestingly, Tim's COVID-19 test results came back March 30, confirming he did have the coronavirus. However, at that point, he said he was "back at 100 percent."

Tim said he is grateful that neither he nor Coleman had to be hospitalized.

As for their wives, Kim has so far managed to stay well, despite being exposed to the virus. Joy believes it's possible that her whole family had it, due to various symptoms they all had during that time. However, no other family members were tested.

Tim said he is grateful for the prayers that were said on behalf of his family. Now he asks that everyone pray for others touched by this pandemic.

"Pray for those on the front lines of treatment," he said. "Observe the regulations and restrictions. They are all there for a reason."



Fuggett

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York College has opened a nationwide search for a president to succeed Dr. Steve Eckman, who has announced plans to retire. Under Dr. Eckman's leadership, York has expanded its academic offerings, enhanced faculty strength, and enjoyed a decade of financial stability and endowment growth.

The board of trustees welcomes applicants with lives of deep spiritual maturity and a genuine heart for students. Applicants should have a solid record of success in demanding leadership roles and proven skills in financial management. A terminal degree and experience in fundraising are preferred.

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For additional information, visit www.york.edu/presidential-search. Please submit nominations, inquiries or expressions of interest by email to presidential-search@york.edu. The deadline for application is May 1, 2020. All aspects of the search are conducted with the utmost regard for confidentiality.

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COVID-19: Numbers and beyond, what Churches of Christ need to know

1. The pandemic could deal a calamitous financial blow to many congregations. What can churches do right now?

BY CHERYL MANN BACON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

'Don't waste time. Do it now." That's Jason Thompson's advice to Churches of Christ contemplating online giving amid the COVID-19 quarantines that have driven congregations to virtual worship assemblies. Thompson serves as executive minister for the Harpeth Hills Church of Christ in Brentwood, Tenn., which had a Sunday morning attendance of about 1,200 prior to the pandemic.



Thompson

The Nashville-area church has encouraged online giving for almost 10 years, Thompson said. About 60 percent of its contributions are made via the Realm platform that allows gifts from debit or credit cards or by ACH (Automatic Clearing House) transactions.

After three weeks of sharing pre-recorded sermons via its website and using Facebook Live for two devotionals per day, the congregation had seen no drop in online gifts, he said. Some traditional givers had mailed checks to the building, but Harpeth Hills' elders encouraged those members to make the switch.

It was too early, Thompson said, to know the full impact of the coronavirus crisis on the church's finances.

Many large congregations with a history of online giving have had

similar experiences using Realm or other church database software with online giving options.

Others use apps like tithe.ly or Pushpay that may allow text-to-give options or permit scheduled giving via credit or debit card or ACH bank transactions. And many began years ago by simply asking members to set up bank drafts or make payments using PayPal.

Most apps have a percentage fee, and some have transaction fees of a few cents per gift. However, the fees are typically covered by the increased consistency, and some apps allow the members to voluntarily pay the transaction fee themselves, experts say.

About 1,400 gather on Sunday mornings at the Highland Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, where Ben Siburt is the executive minister. Online giving has been an option for Highland members for at least eight or nine years, originally via the Kindred app, which Siburt believes is still a good option for smaller churches. They have since shifted to Realm.

"After the first week of online-only worship services, we saw a big drop," Siburt said, "but the second week was above what normal giving would be." After three weeks, they were on budget.

Some smaller congregations have been hit harder.



Siburt



MORRISA SUMMERS

The Lord's Supper: fruit of the vine and unleavened bread in Leavenworth, Kan.

Jim Oliver is a deacon and the church treasurer for the Ventura Church of Christ, a 100-member Southern California congregation where tithe.ly was instituted four months ago and had increased to about 20 percent of contributions.

After the first week of online services, Oliver described the 25 percent drop in giving as "pretty stark."

"But we have had a lot of people who have mailed in contributions,"

Oliver said. "Typically, it's our seniors that are doing that. Most of them accepted the online streaming, but not the (giving) apps."

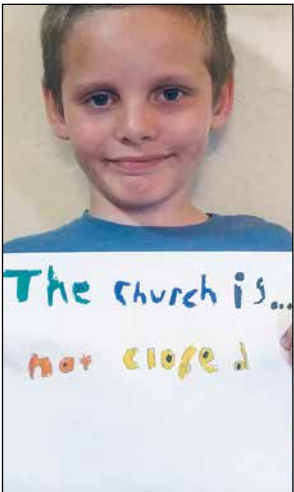
And then there are the tiny Churches of Christ with no online giving.

Tory Watson Johnson is the bookkeeper and social media manager for the 50-member Gonzales Church of Christ, a Texas congregation about 75 miles east of San Antonio.

CONTINUED



FORT COLLINS, COLO., PROVIDED BY MIRANDA HERBERGER



BLANCHARD, OKLA., PROVIDED BY KESHIA SWAIM



ALTUS, OKLA., PROVIDED BY ANESHA DAVIS



MANILA, PHILIPPINES, PROVIDED BY GIGIE CARRANZA



JACKSBORO, TEXAS, PROVIDED BY MANDY LEWIS

‘THE CHURCH IS ...’ “COVID-19 has made one thing clear, if it was not already: The church is not a building.” Bobby Ross Jr. wrote those words in *The Christian Chronicle’s* first online story after the nationwide social distancing policies took effect. So what *is* the church? The *Chronicle* asked readers to complete the sentence “The church is ...” on a sheet of paper and send us a photo. Above are a few submissions received from around the globe. Look for more, and find web-exclusive stories at christianchronicle.org.

Grappling with the uncertain future of church finances

CONTINUED

Johnson has priced online giving options for the congregation in the past, but for now the leadership “is not wanting to pull that trigger.” They have posted two weeks of sermons via YouTube and are beginning a Facebook Live watch party for Wednesday night Bible study. Still, giving was down about 85 percent.

Among the nine church leaders interviewed by *The Christian Chronicle* for this story and the more than 50 who responded to an unscientific survey shared over social media, declines of 25 percent to 50 percent during March were common.

Some with declines in the 20-25 percent range saw that as highly concerning while others viewed a contribution at 75-80 percent of budget under the circumstances as encouraging. The most common threads were a high level of consistency in online gifts and a desire to keep serving church members.

Of course, more is involved in the decline than just preference or predominance of online vs. traditional tithing. In a Pew Research Center survey, a third of Americans said “someone in their household has lost a job or taken a pay



Johnson

cut or both because of the outbreak.”

Even congregations such as the Bammel Church of Christ in Houston — where giving actually has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic — may be negatively affected as members face economic consequences of the virus outbreak.

“Given where we are with COVID-19 and the oil industry, particularly in Houston, and churches not gathering as we have, my concern is it will play out in a negative way,” said Bob Stephen, interim executive minister and a shepherd at Bammel.

“We are trying to reinforce that, ‘We are here, we are active, we have community, and your offerings to the Lord are being utilized — they’re needed,’” he added. “I’m concerned that as we don’t meet, that can suffer.”

Indeed, almost 10 million Americans filed for jobless benefits during the weeks of March 15 and March 22. Those numbers are expected to rise and the types of industries affected increase as shelter-in-place requirements tighten. The reality of lost income and other complications brought on by a stay-at-home life have affected how church finances should be directed, according to numerous church leaders.

Harpeth Hills’ Thompson said that while the long-term impact remains unknown, he believes church leaders

should be planning now to be conservative for the rest of the year.

“We need to be sure we’re also meeting the needs of our members,” he said. “Don’t be afraid to ask people what their needs are at the same time we ask people to give. Remember that the church Jesus died for was a church that sold their possessions in order to provide for each other.”

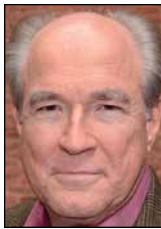
Doug Peters is the senior minister for the Grace Crossing church, a Church of Christ in the Houston suburb of Conroe.

Amid the coronavirus crisis, the number of online givers at Grace Crossing have increased to more than 50 percent. However, overall contributions had dropped by about half in the congregation of 300.

Peters suggests that church leaders have a spiritual obligation, not just a financial one, to move people to online giving as a means of involving a group he calls “a checkless, Venmo generation.”

Venmo, Cash App and PayPal Mobile Cash all allow users to send or receive money using a phone app, commonly called P2P cash transaction apps.

“This issue is crucial for the culture of churches — what does it say about a church that does not offer online giv-



Robinson

ing in 2020?” Peters said. “What does that communicate to young people growing up in a Venmo society? It denotes a certain amount of irrelevance.”

Even before the coronavirus, the Manhattan Church of Christ — at the U.S. epicenter of the COVID-19 crisis — had been encouraging members to make contributions using bill-paying systems.

“We had been in the process of adding an online payment system that was just starting up when we ceased to have our regular worship time,” said Tom Robinson, senior minister for the Manhattan church. “People have picked it up pretty well.”

Giving took an immediate substantial decline, Robinson said, but then began an upswing.

The Manhattan congregation took a leadership role among Churches of Christ after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

In that circumstance, churches began calling the New York church’s office, asking how they could help and where they should send contributions.

The coronavirus crisis is different, Robinson said: “Everyone is in this boat. There’s no outpouring of funds. Everyone’s funds are cut off. And we’re figuring out what our resources are going to be and how we can help each other and carry on as many ministries as we can.”

2. Churches *can* offer meaningful, spirit-filled services online.

BY LAURA AKINS | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

The rules are simple: Work from home. Eat at home. Stay at home. The reality is harder: Is it time to change out of pajamas? Is it trash day?

Right now, a lot of people are struggling. That includes ministers.

“We all need prayers and grace,” said Doug Crum, preaching minister for the Taylor Street Church of Christ in Hobbs, N.M. “Rather than judging each other for how we are handling the situation, just encourage and pray for us.”

The situation to which Crum is referring? Online church.

Because people can now virtually attend any worship service — or all of them — ministers are feeling pressure to produce high quality and engaging worship.

“Never has church been so accessible,” said Travis Akins, husband of this writer and minister for the Heritage Church of Christ in Edmond, Okla. “I enjoy looking around, but I try not to be hard on myself when my livestream fails or a Zoom class doesn’t succeed.”

It’s a slippery slope — for church leaders and attendees — to compare the successes and failures of one church to another.

“Stay-at-home participants now have thousands of options, not just the ones within driving distance,” Crum said. “Therefore, churches that produce a more polished worship will likely get more online visitors.”

Most Sundays, about 175 members worship with the Taylor Street congregation in the southeast corner of New Mexico. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Crum’s church only offered a physical service and an audio podcast. He and his staff now provide livestream worship on Facebook and YouTube during the nationwide shutdown.

“There is definitely a learning curve for me, but our efforts have been well received,” said Crum, who is confident he will reach his church members but acknowledges he could benefit from a seasoned online church’s advice.

Ministers at megachurches shared



Crum



CHRIS WOODROW

Vince Nieves, children and family minister for the Belton Church of Christ in Texas, speaks on livestream. Find a list of Churches of Christ livestreaming at christianchronicle.org.

what has worked for them in the past decade of streaming online.

Rusty Peterman, online campus minister at The Hills Church of Christ in North Richland Hills, Texas, recommends checking out JayKrand.com for quick, free introductions to online streaming. “The videos, courses, wisdom and experience will save you tons of time and effort,” Peterman said.

With a quick scan of the website, choose between “3 Free Video Trainings for Dialing in your Churches Online Experience” and “11 Steps to Embrace Facebook & YouTube Streaming” or watch a webinar on “Simple Steps to Providing an Engaging Online Church Service.”

Krand, online campus pastor at Baptist megachurch Saddleback in Lake Forest, Calif., is speaking from a place of experience. He oversees a weekly crowd of 20,000 people and sees church online as a new frontier with limitless opportunities.

But Googling isn’t always the answer. Ministers should look around and reach out to each other during this digital transition, experts said.

After gleaning advice, churches will need to pick a streaming service. Facebook, YouTube and Life.Church

seem to be the top contenders, with churchonlineplatform.com, developed by Life.Church in Oklahoma City, being the best choice in Peterman’s opinion.

This free platform boasts more than just a video player: It offers chat, live prayer and synced video streaming. Ministers and worship leaders can pre-record and broadcast as “simulated live,” allowing people to watch a service at a synced starting time. Viewers can discuss the message or ask questions as the sermon is happening, according to the website. Churches that use this platform will choose a third-party provider, such as YouTube, to stream their content.

Many ministers sing the praise of this service, but Akins, who preaches to 140 on a good Sunday, is content with Facebook.

While he acknowledges he hasn’t used Life.Church’s service, he feels his small church enjoys the accessibility and option to easily share with friends on Facebook. The beauty is, each church can assess options and decide what works best for it.

Outside of choosing a platform, Taylor Walling, teaching minister at The Hills, says his biggest advice is to start simple, find ways to make it

personal, choose engagement over excellence and be consistent.

“Figure out whatever is essential for your stream,” Walling said. “If you’re jumping into livestream for the very first time, it’s wise to have a pre-recorded sermon ready just in case the stream fails. Then you can send that link to your church, and they can still hear the sermon.”

And online doesn’t have to mean “live,” he insists. For some, it’s more feasible to pre-record songs and a sermon and post it to YouTube and share a link at 8 a.m. on Sunday than it is to try to livestream when the congregation has never done it before.

Another key piece is making it personal during this socially distant time. “We are including several moments when we invite the church to read out loud or turn and answer a question or pray together,” said Walling, an Oklahoma Christian University graduate who has worked at The Hills for five years. “This can help worship still feel physical and personal.

“And, of course, be consistent,” he added. “Pick a broadcast schedule, and stick with it. This helps give people a sense of normalcy. Consistent presence makes a big difference right now.”

While some churches only provide online worship, others offer children’s class, adult classes, small groups and other personalized group meetings.

The most popular class option is Zoom Video Communications, a remote conferencing service that combines video and chatting. This service is currently free and will allow organizers to host up to 100 participants, with a 40-minute limit on group meetings. Church leaders can purchase other packages that allow for longer meetings.

Walling and Akins say using Zoom is a no-brainer, allowing families to connect face to face during this isolating time.

“Social distancing is the scariest phrase to a small church right now, so the greatest thing we can do is stay connected face to face,” Akins said.



Walling

3. Loneliness is a COVID side effect, especially for youths.

BY ERIN FLOYD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Schools and restaurants closed. Sporting events canceled. Play dates with friends curtailed. And for weeks or months to come, the church youth group can't gather.

As social-distancing policies caused by the COVID-19 pandemic force Churches of Christ to close their physical doors, teens find themselves with little to no social interactions outside of their homes.

Although 17-year-old Alisha Allred knew it was coming, she was heart-

broken when the West Ark Church of Christ in Fort Smith, Ark., moved to online worship.

"I was so frustrated," said Allred, a high school junior who has attended the congregation for three years and is present every time the doors are open.

For spring break, she was supposed to go on a youth mission trip to Guatemala. But because of the virus outbreak, the trip was canceled.

"Oh, I literally cried," Allred said.

DISRUPTION TO ROUTINES

Many youth ministries have turned to video streaming and social media to maintain their connection with students. But without the routines of school and church, how will the lack of face-to-face interactions affect young people's mental health?

The impact of this period of isolation will vary from child to child, said Chris Barclay, a Connecticut school psychologist. But the disruption to routines could be difficult, said Barclay, a member of Manchester Church of Christ, east of the state capital of Hartford.

"Both school and church are two of the biggest social connections that young children or young people have," he explained. "And so with that being disrupted ... that can be really difficult."

This uncertain time can be especially hard for those who didn't already have a strong connection with others or don't have someone who



DIANA DOSS BENSON

A "life group," small-group ministry of the Green Hills Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn., meets online via the Zoom videoconferencing program.

is routinely checking up on them, Barclay said. That could include those who were already on the margins of youth groups and schools.

"As much as we like to say our kids are so technology-driven these days, I think we're starting to see that face-to-face interactions are much more valuable than we realize," Barclay said.

"There's something to be said about knowing every Wednesday, every Sunday, you're going to ... kind of catch up with whoever and spend some time together and have some meaningful discussion about your faith and how your life is going and all of that."

Christians, he said, should be reaching out to those who may be outside their social sphere and struggle with loneliness.

"That's a Christ-like thing to think about: Who is that?" he said. "(Those are) the people that Jesus regularly sought out, people who were 'outside the camp,' so to speak."

Barclay created a YouTube video, "13 C's for Coping with the Coronavirus," for his home congregation with advice for adults and children during this time. In the video, he discusses 13 things that people can do to help with uncertainty, stress and disruption the COVID-19 crisis may have caused.

One of the tips he shares is recognizing what is in one's control and what is not.

"A lot of it is, ultimately, things that

are outside of our control and things that we are actually told in Scripture to take to God. (We) put that out to him and kind of recognize there's not much I can do about those things," Barclay said. "But there are things that I can do ... take care of myself, reach out to people I know, do deep breathing exercises."

As many parents balance working from home with managing their children, Barclay suggests that communication is critical during this time for all family members.

"A good tool that I think about for communicating is checklists," said Barclay, who was working at home alongside his wife, Caitlin, and their 15-month-old son, Griffin.

That list might include items that Dad is going to complete that day and that Mom is going to do — and assignments for the children, too.

"Everyone has that checklist ... so I can understand what I need to do but also can respect what my other family members need to do," he said.

This method can also help students feel a sense of accomplishment throughout the day, he noted, similar to the bell ringing at the end of a class period in school.

TECHNOLOGY: FRIEND OR FOE?

Technology offers many benefits in this time of social distancing, such as social media used by many youth ministries to engage students while they're apart.

But the lack of human interaction with unrestricted access to the internet can also be a dangerous combination for young children, said Eric Tooley, a sex addiction therapist and member of CARE Church of Christ in Richardson, Texas. CARE stands for "Christians At Richardson East."

"I think the dangers of our young people in a digital world and online world didn't go away because of this crisis," said Tooley, who leads the nonprofit Noble Choices. "By any stretch of the imagination, I think they're going to be worse. And because of the isolation, the things we worried about with our kids online will be even a bigger draw for them." That includes the "allure of intimacy" offered by pornography, he said.

"When we're in isolation, we're going to desire intimacy more than we ever have before," Tooley said. "And so the lure of being pulled into false intimacy is going to be great. So parents need to do extra to maintain the safety of our young people online."

Parents need to be aware of what their children are doing while online, he stressed. Monitoring softwares, household rules and open discussions with children are among the ways to provide such oversight.

Tooley urged youth ministers to explore ways for young people to do things while complying to social-distancing, such as a drive-in devotional or a scavenger hunt that could be done while staying in their cars.

Even with church doors closed, the mission of the body of Christ remains.

"I think it really gives us an opportunity to live out the truth that we say, that the church is not the building, the church is the people," Barclay said. "At the same time, it's a challenge because the comfort of the building is an easy access point to see everybody that I want to speak to and minister to and be encouraged by."

Allred, the Arkansas teen, calls her church family "her people."

More than anything, she just misses seeing those people face to face.

"I know you can do that (through) like FaceTime," she said, "but it's such a different feeling to be with your people, in person, face to face."

Christian Chronicle correspondents share experiences serving – and shopping for – their communities.

All believers can be first responders

HYATTSVILLE, Md.

To me, Terrance Burke was more than a basketball coach. He was more than a guidance counselor and school

administrator who at times announced football games.

The 54-year-old educator was my friend and brother.

Now, he's another victim — one of thousands nationwide — of the invisible killer known as COVID-19.

I just can't believe it.

For nearly two decades, the University Park Church of Christ here in Hyattsville has been feeding local high school football players spiritual food — through its annual Friday night cookout and a Saturday breakfast and Bible study. I first got to know Coach Burke through my volunteer work with that outreach ministry when his son, Sydney, played for the team.

Long after Sydney graduated, Coach Burke and I maintained our camaraderie and had deep talks about life issues. He was one of the last people I talked to during the school's final football game this past season.

But just a few days ago, the head football coach called me with the devastating news that Burke had died as a result of the coronavirus.

Sadly, this was the second such call I had received in two days.

STRENGTH IN 'DAYS OF DEATH'

My brother in Christ looked like he was sleeping under white linen and a beautiful quilt in the viewing room of a local mortuary.

In my role as a minister, I was there to offer support to the family. This brother, too, was taken too soon from this world because of the virus outbreak.

COVID-19 has taken too many lives across our nation. And because of social distancing, fami-

lies can't hold funerals or meet together in sanctuaries for love, support and consolation.

But social distancing does not mean spiritual distancing.

Every aspect of our lives has been turned upside down. Even worshiping on Sunday and the family meal afterward have been replaced by Facebook Live, YouTube and Zoom.

The book of Ecclesiastes teaches us to remember the Creator in the days of our youth before the dreaded days of death come.

Most of us have never experienced this much sickness and death before. This moment is even more troubling because the coronavirus has been a silent, invisible plague that moves about in those who appear to be well.

CALLED TO SERVE — AS BEST WE CAN

In the same way police, paramedics, nurses and doctors are working hard to treat the sick, we as Christians are also first responders: We must minister as best we can. This is what some of our brothers and sisters are doing to deal with the crisis.

As a minister, I believe that it's important to be with grieving families. In addition, I have volunteered as a police chaplain to hand out fruit, snacks and other items at roll call in the Baltimore Police Department.

At a time like this, we need to focus on the goodness and love of the Lord. We see now — more than ever — that the church is more than bricks and mortar and that God's will does not change despite what is going on in the world.

It is a call that we will answer for Jesus.

The work we do as Christians can be trying, but we don't have a choice. We have a calling.

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

Voices



Hamil R. Harris



Burke

EDMOND, Okla.

I use the last bit of energy I have to get out of my car, walk into my house and strip off my uniform. My hands are dirty despite being slathered in hand sanitizer every hour. I shower, put on clean clothes and eat something for the first time in almost eight hours.

I am not a nurse. Or a doctor.

I am a shopper.

While most people stay home, I shop for the elderly couple whose grown children have forced them to stay home, the frightened widow who hasn't seen another person in days, the mom of a small immunocompromised child and others who are just plain scared.

When COVID-19 came to town, I suddenly became a first responder.

I work for Shipt, an online grocery service that offers customers the safety of staying home while someone else shops for them. Shipt shoppers are independent contractors. During non-pandemic times, we typically see a few metro orders (maybe 20) during the weekend, but they are quickly picked up and shopped.

In Oklahoma City this past week, there have been roughly 200 open metro orders at all times.

Every day I try to pick up seven to nine orders, with each order taking an hour of my time. My work doesn't make a dent in the total number of orders, but I do as much as I can to help.

Prior to this pandemic, I shopped and delivered groceries to customers who mainly used Shipt out of convenience, sometimes laziness. My work was mostly uneventful and typically viewed as a

side gig by others.

But for me, I have always viewed it as a ministry.

During the last year, I've built real relationships with my regulars. I've given out my personal cell number to customers who seemed to need someone to talk to. I've had customers text me late at night telling me their child is throwing up, asking if I can I run to the store for Lysol and Pedialyte. I've built relationships with cashiers and invited them to my house for Christmas dinner.

Now my work is not only a ministry. It's essential to my community.

Until this ends, I'll keep slathering on the hand sanitizer as I fill as many orders as I can while holding onto the hope that I'll get to hug my favorite Target employees and high-five my Shipt friends in the bread aisle again. I can't wait to bump into people,

shake hands and see unmasked smiles.

That day will be glorious.

Hold onto that hope, dear reader. Find a way to help however you can. And please, wash your hands.

I've met neighbors who needed someone to do their shopping. I've picked up the last can of baby formula and the last package of diapers for moms who can't get out. I've delivered bread, eggs and milk hour after hour after hour.

Am I saving lives? No. But am I helping as many people as I can in the way I can? Yes.

Voices



Laura Akins



LAURA AKINS

Laura Akins is ready for duty in her Shipt uniform.

LAURA AKINS is Reviews Editor for *The Christian Chronicle*. She is youth ministry director for the Heritage Church of Christ in Edmond, where her husband, Travis, serves as minister. Contact laura.akers@christianchronicle.org.

In Uncertain Times, No Matter What Tomorrow Holds, Fear Not, God Reigns!

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- + Pray for wisdom and guidance for the leaders of our country and around the world.**
- + Pray for physical, emotional, spiritual, and financial support for those in need.**
- + Pray for the health and safety of medical personnel and our first responders.**
- + Pray for the Lord's church in your community and throughout the world.**
- + Pray for those who have become victims of the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- + Pray for opportunities to share the good news of Jesus with others.**
- + Pray that during this crisis, we immerse ourselves in God's Word.**

He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust. Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.

Psalm 91:2-3



The Bible. We Want Everyone To Get It.SM

BY CHERYL MANN BACON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Scott McDowell began his new job as president of Lubbock Christian University on April 1.

His first day with the Texas university wasn't exactly what he — or anyone else — envisioned when his selection was announced a month earlier. The coronavirus crisis that prompted LCU and other universities to move classes online made sure of that.

"There are only a few students, and many of the faculty and staff are working from home, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, but this campus is not empty," McDowell, 56, wrote on Facebook. "God is alive and well here!"

LCU's new leader had served since August 2018 as vice president for student life at another Texas school: Abilene Christian University.

Previously, he spent two-plus decades with Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn. Before joining Lipscomb, he preached for the Sycamore View Church of Christ in Memphis, Tenn.

The Pennsylvania native and all four of his sisters graduated from Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn. He earned a master's degree in religion from Lipscomb and a doctorate in higher education from Azusa Pacific University in California.

McDowell and his wife, Kay, have three sons: Alec, 24; Cade, 20; and Cole, 18. Cade is an LCU sophomore and member of the basketball team.

With COVID-19, all of higher education faces an unprecedented situation, McDowell said in an interview with *The Christian Chronicle*.

The student recruiting cycle has been reinvented as campus visits become virtual — an experience with which students are probably more comfortable than administrators, he said.

Still, McDowell believes Christian higher ed is built for this.

"What people need more than anything are personal touches," he said. "All the Church of Christ schools are positioned well because it will take a lot of high-touch to navigate this well."

In the meantime, of course, touching isn't an option.

Christian higher education is facing complex, long-term challenges — rising costs, declining enrollments, cultural dissonance, pedagogical shifts. Why in the world do you want to be a university president?



Scott McDowell

NEW PRESIDENT of Lubbock Christian University steps into his new role at an unprecedented time.

DAVID PATTON

Scott McDowell shares his vision with students after his introduction as president of Lubbock Christian University on Feb. 27.

When I was in my doctoral program, I was influenced by several men. Russell Tuck had been president of California Baptist University.

He said the whole genesis of Azusa Pacific starting the doctoral program was "because someone is going to be training leaders, and we want them to be Christians." He saw something in me and challenged me to take my leadership to another level.

The same thing from Chip Anderson. Chip was really the father of the strengths-based movement. He wrote the book with Don Clifton from Gallup about strengths-based leadership in the academy.

The other person was Dallas Willard, who had a line that stuck in my head: "It matters who's on the end of the lever." Presidential leadership matters. These are hard times, and it matters very much that you have Christ-centered leadership. That's something I'm very committed to.

Climbing student debt is probably nowhere a bigger issue than in Christian universities, especially among graduates who entered fields such as ministry, education and public service,

with low earning capacity and high debt. How do you believe Christian higher ed should respond to this problem, and how do you believe LCU specifically should respond?

I tell people all the time, "The investment you're going to make in a Christian education is a worthwhile investment."

I tell people, "Borrow a car. Don't borrow a house. Be wise in how much you do borrow."

The whole point is doing everything we can to make sure students graduate, because the investment in college really is a good investment as long as you graduate. It's horrible if you drop out, and then you have debt without the inherent boost in income.

As a result of declining membership in Churches of Christ and declining overall enrollment in higher ed, almost all

our universities have broadened their enrollment focus beyond our fellowship. That has helped stem the decline, but enrollment continues to be a challenge. What are your goals for building enrollment at LCU, and what lessons have you learned at Lipscomb and ACU that you'll take with you?

'You've got to stay true to who you are, focused on your mission, and yet invite others into that mission. There is a market for genuinely Christ-centered education, being very clear about who you are and that we really believe it.'

Scott McDowell, on his vision for building enrollment at Lubbock Christian University.

You've got to stay true to who you are, focused on your mission, and yet invite others into that mission. There is a market for genuinely Christ-centered higher education, being very clear about who we are and that we really believe it. We invite you to be a part of it, but we're not going to force it on you.

Lubbock has enough population to do some other creative things, playing in the graduate markets. One way we were very successful in Nashville was veteran education.

See McDOWELL, Page 24

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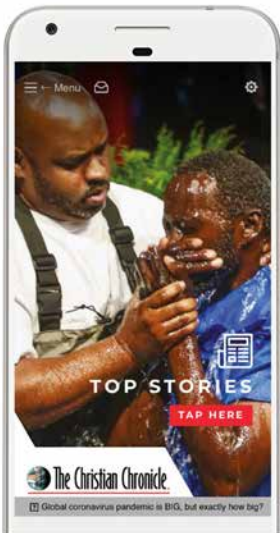
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McDOWELL: The destiny of demographics

FROM PAGE 21

We grew that from about 12 to 15 to over 200 veterans. You've got to have a population base to do that — you have to have job opportunities for family members, etc.

Texas and Florida are two of the states where demographics are in your favor, but the demographics are changing. So how are we going to reach out to underrepresented and underserved communities?

That's a strategy ACU has done an incredibly good job with, and the same thing at Lipscomb. We reached out to underserved populations and grew those enrollment numbers. That's got to be part of the future, because that's where the students are.

Students are more diverse today than in the past — racially, ethnically and ideologically. How can our Christian universities improve the way they show hospitality to students from different faith traditions and with different cultural or ideological perspectives?

The better question (drawing on the Good Samaritan story) is, "What does it mean to be neighborly?" I think it's putting into practice hospitality, a focus on other people, treating others as better than yourselves. The customer service orientation of just living into the teachings of Jesus can seriously differentiate you.

We ought to be really good at hospitality as Christ followers. Again, there's something awfully compelling about not just the words but the ways of Jesus — the way he was able to cross all kinds of barriers and make everyone feel comfortable. That's what we would aspire to be and what we would aspire to do.

Most of our universities are now engaged in remote campuses offering specialized programs and/or with online education. What is LCU's role in those areas, and what are the challenges and opportunities they provide?

The fundamental opportunity for transformation is the undergraduate on-campus experience. That's also the most expensive. So you've got to find alternate revenue streams to be able to feed that. But I think that's still our lifeblood.

That's what I look back on and know was transformational in my life. It's what we want to replicate, but we have, overall, an unsustainable model. ... What are the opportunities where we can build?

Are there opportunities for more doctoral programs, for more master's programs? Those are the kind of questions we're asking.

MORE ABOUT McDOWELL

- **Dissertation topic:** Spiritual Development Outcomes at Select Church of Christ Universities.
- **Title of sermon you could preach on a moment's notice:** "Tale of Two Brothers: the Story of Joseph and Judah."
- **Currently reading:** "Excellence Wins" by Horace Schulze, "The Advantage" by Patrick Lencioni and "The One Thing" by Gary Keller and Jay Papasan.
- **Favorite sport and team:** Football and the Pittsburgh Steelers.
- **Hobbies:** Deer hunting. Watching my sons participate in sports. Lifting weights. Playing racquetball.
- **Place you'd like to travel:** World War II tour — Normandy.
- **Three words friends would use to describe you:** Creative. Loyal. Fun-loving.
- **Three words your children would use to describe you:** Reliable. Fun. Cheap.
- **Your motto:** "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit." Zechariah 4:6

What are the biggest challenges ahead for LCU, and what is your vision for addressing them?

The usual suspects: Enrollment. Fundraising. Retention. Everything we've been talking about. Dealing with demography is going to be one of the biggest things that every institution deals with.

Ten years from now, what would you like to say was your greatest accomplishment at LCU?

My personal mission is equipping students to discover their creative purpose and embrace their place in God's story, and to fully leverage LCU because I think it's their mission to do that same thing: You're going to touch individual lives. You're going to bless the church. You're going to bless Lubbock and beyond.

The Christian Chronicle Crossword

By Myles Mellor | www.ilovecrosswords.com

- ACROSS
1. "Be on your guard and stand firm in _____: be courageous and strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

4. Wife of Uriah the Hittite and later of David.

9. Daily Bible _____ are good for the soul.

10. Strikes sharply.

13. God parted it through Moses.

14. Made from dust.

15. "Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four _____ from the stern and prayed for daylight" (Acts 27:29).

18. Former.

19. "... my soul is full of joy in God my _____" (Luke 1:47-55).

20. A son of Noah.

22. Beast of burden.

23. "... even Solomon in all his _____ was not arrayed like one of these." (Matthew 6:25-30)

24. "How I long that you may be encouraged, and find out more and more how strong are the _____ of Christian love" (Colossians 2:2)

26. Assyrian city built by Ashur (at one time it was the largest city in the world).

29. Offshoot from a tree.

32. "O death, where is thy _____? O grave where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55-57).

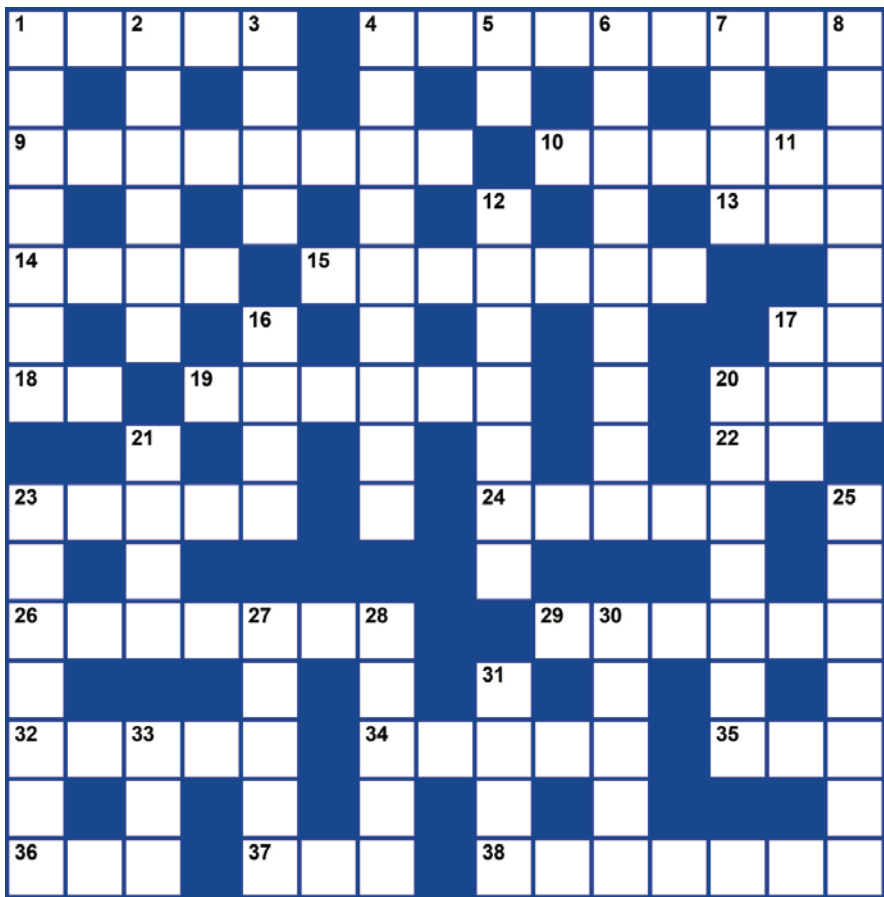
34. Sacred song of David.

35. "Then he took the children in his _____s and laid his hands on them and blessed them" (Mark 10:13-16)

36. One part of the Trinity.

37. Stretched out.

38. "My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was _____ in my hand" (Job 29:20).



- DOWN
1. Abandon.

2. Book of prophesies.

3. Acclaim

4. One of Bible's first words.

5. Gift tag word.

6. The Good _____.

7. Consumes.

8. One of the sons of David.

11. Wide shoe fitting.

12. Angels.

16. Mother of Jesus.

17. It was levied by the Romans.

20. "_____": blessed is the one

21. Gospel writer.

23. The story of the flood is described in it.

25. "For I am not _____ of the gospel of Christ" (Romans 1:16).

27. "Blessed is the man that hears me, keeping _____ at my gates, waiting at the threshold of my doors" (Proverbs 8:34).

28. Ecstatic.

30. _____s, book written by Paul.

31. Delilah cut it.

33. No room here.

BIBLE BOWLING

To build or not to build?

Yes, the Lads to Leaders and Leadership Training for Christ conferences are canceled, but many of the events will go on in "mini-conventions" across the country. With that in mind, here are some questions from **2 Samuel 7**, the focus of this year's LTC conventions:

1. In Jerusalem, the king was settled in his palace, and the Lord granted him peace. What was David's palace made of? **A.** Pine, **B.** Palm wood, **C.** Stone and mud, **D.** Cedar wood.

2. To whom did David lament about the Ark being in a tent? **A.** Joab, **B.** Michal, **C.** Ahimaaz, **D.** Nathan.

3. What did the prophet say to David about the plan to build a temple? **A.** Don't do it, **B.** Go ahead and do it, **C.** Build an altar, **D.** Let me ask of the Lord.

4. God told the prophet that the temple would be built by whom? **A.** David, **B.** Nathan, **C.** David's son, **D.** Abinadab.

5. What did God say he would do for David? **A.** Give him vast riches, **B.** Give him more wives, **C.** Make other kings serve him, **D.** Make his name great.

6. What did God say he would do for the offspring of David? **A.** Give him vast riches, **B.** Give him lots of sons, **C.** Establish the throne of his kingdom forever, **D.** Give him wisdom.

CROSSWORD SOLUTION and Bible Bowling answers on Page 34. Questions by Cindy Smethers.

Be still and KNOW THAT I AM GOD. — PSALM 46:10

During this worldwide health challenge, let us not be fearful. In our stillness, let us remember **who the Lord is** so that we see Him more clearly as our rock, redeemer, refuge, and strength. Let us have confidence in Him to bring comfort in the chaos and peace in the struggle.



Milestones

Memorials

Jerry Tallman
1944 – 2020



Virtually any member of the Churches of Christ in Michigan knows the name Jerry Tallman. Jerry began his working career as a draftsman, but after becoming a Christian and getting encouragement from the teens he taught at the Rochester Church of Christ in Rochester Hills, Mich., he decided to enroll at Sunset International Bible Institute.

After graduation, Jerry and his wife, Connie, ministered for several years growing the church in Plainwell, Mich., before being asked by the Rochester Church of Christ to be their preacher/evangelist. Jerry would spend the next 29 years preaching Christ and sharing the gospel message in thousands of personal Bible studies. He developed an effective method of sharing the good news of Jesus for those who are searching for the truth about Christianity.

Jerry retired from full-time congregational preaching in Rochester, sold his home, and hit the road with his longtime spouse of 56 years and ministry partner, Connie, in their motorhome, bringing “His Eternal Plan” to many across North America by conducting evangelism workshops. Jerry enjoyed teaching classes on evangelism at Sunset International Bible Institute. He was also an accomplished artist and produced hundreds of art pieces.

Jerry’s love for the smaller churches of northern Michigan did not go unnoticed. During the summer months and in between conducting workshops, Jerry would travel to many churches to preach, teach, and give lots of encouragement and love. Jerry’s book, “His Eternal Plan,” is a great tool and legacy he has left behind to share

the good news with anyone. You can order this book and watch Jerry’s teaching videos at HisEternalPlan.com. Jerry taught us not only how to live for Christ, but also how to die in Christ.

Carolyn Kelsey
1947 – 2020



Carolyn Ann (Sundling) Kelsey passed away March 5, after an extended illness. Carolyn was born on Dec. 17, 1947, in Akron, Colo., to Harold and Katherine Sundling. After high school she decided to further her education by enrolling at York Christian College in York, Neb. After she graduated, Carol moved to Los Angeles, Calif., and lived with family. She met Lyle Kelsey at the Glendale Church of Christ. They were married three months later. The next few years were interrupted by Lyle’s stint in the U.S. Army at Ft. Lewis, Wash., during the Vietnam War.

Following their time in Washington, Carol and Lyle moved to Oklahoma City, where they grew spiritually. For several years, Carol chaired the women’s ministry at the Edmond Church of Christ, where Lyle serves as an elder. She also taught Bible classes and spoke at ladies’ luncheons and prayer meetings.

Their daughter, Crystal Lynn, was born in Oklahoma. Carol Kelsey was the most wonderful wife and mother. She was a professional seamstress and taught sewing classes for years in Oklahoma City. Carol established and operated the Satin Stitch Embroidery business in Edmond for several years. She was a successful real estate agent for 25 years, serving with Edmond real estate agencies at Century 21, Prudential, and Churchill Brown.

Carolyn was loved by everyone who met her, and she will be greatly missed by so many.

(continued on page 27)



PHOTO PROVIDED BY HEALING HANDS INTERNATIONAL

At Healing Hands International’s warehouse in Nashville, Tenn., Chris Gannon packs medical supplies for distribution to hospitals during the coronavirus crisis.

Healing Hands donates thousands of masks and gloves to hospitals

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — To help equip hospitals and healthcare providers on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, Healing Hands International recently donated a surplus of medical supplies.

More than 7,200 N95 masks, 37,800 surgical loop masks, 304,000 nitrile gloves and 500 isolation gowns were delivered to Nashville-area hospitals, including Ascension Saint Thomas, TriStar Health, Vanderbilt University Medical Center and Williamson Medical Center, Healing Hands officials said. Donations of these supplies were also made to several smaller healthcare providers and assisted living facilities.

Healing Hands is a humanitarian aid organization known for projects such as building water wells.

“This incredible gift of critical resources from Healing Hands is an answer to prayer and a direct blessing to our front-line staff,” said Tim Adams, president and CEO of Ascension Saint Thomas, in a statement. The donation is “another beautiful example of the incredible generosity and support of Middle Tennesseans during times of need.”

Teresa Dail, chief supply chain officer for Vanderbilt University Medical Center, added: “The continued availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) is a concern for the Vanderbilt Health system and all other U.S. hospitals and health

systems as we prepare for an influx of COVID-19 positive patients. This gift from Healing Hands International will benefit our doctors, nurses, staff and patients in the days ahead.”

The core work of HHI is international, said its president, Art Woods. But in times of suffering, it is still central to the mission of the organization to do what is possible domestically.

At this time, many global borders are closed, and travel coordination is difficult to navigate internationally. As the days progress, Woods said, any aid in response to this global crisis will be coordinated with other nonprofit partners and contacts around the world.



Woods

“While our daily work and mission is focused on developing countries outside the borders of the U.S., this is a critical time and a unique opportunity to use the resources that our generous donors have provided to be a blessing in our own country and community,” Woods said. “Our healthcare workers and hospitals are under a great deal of pressure and in need of supplies. It is our prayer that this will equip them ... as they battle this virus and that it will bring glory to God.”

WEBSITE: hhi.org

NEWSMAKERS



PHOTO PROVIDED BY CORY SPRUIELL

Before COVID-19, more than 1,000 Christians worship together at the Arkansas Churches of Christ Joint Worship Service.

JOINT WORSHIP: In a gathering held before the coronavirus crisis, members of Churches of Christ in Central Arkansas held a combined service in downtown Little Rock, hosted by the Central Church of Christ. The event was conceived by the Central Arkansas Minister Fellowship, an informal monthly lunch gathering of ministers and elders in the area.

HONORED: Willie Hubbard Jr., with Lubbock Christian University's K.C. Moser Award for outstanding service to God's kingdom. Hubbard is an evangelist and teacher for the District Heights Church of Christ in Maryland.



Price



George

CELEBRATED: Al Price, for 60 years of full-time preaching. A potluck luncheon honored him at the Diamond Grove Church of Christ in Beech Bluff, Tenn. That Sunday also marked his official retirement.

NEW MINISTERS: Keith George, Alexandria Church of Christ in Alexandria, Va. George is a retired Army lieutenant colonel who has an extensive academic and military background. He is the congregation's first full-time African-American minister. He has preached since 1994. **Jon Hackett**, Kingston Church of Christ in Tennessee.

NEW BOARD MEMBER: Justin Speer, World English Institute. He is a member of the Katy Church of Christ in Texas.

Milestones

Memorials

(continued from page 26)

Lloyd E. Gale Jr.
1926 – 2020

Minister, Lloyd E. Gale, Jr., age 93, departed earth Jan. 29, 2020, at St. Thomas Midtown Hospital in Nashville, Tenn. He was born Feb. 8, 1926, to the late Lloyd E. Gale, Sr. and Gladys Fisher Gale. He is also preceded in death by his wife of 70 years, Marion Rutland Gale; two brothers, Stanley F. Gale and William Gale; and two sisters, Ann Elizabeth and Barbara Gale.

He attended Stokes Elementary and Hillsboro High School and volunteered in the U.S. Navy at age 17 during World War II. After ably serving in the war, with nothing more than a disciplined work ethic and good character, he returned to Nashville and served as Julia Green Middle School's first football coach. His younger brother, Stanley, played on that team and went on to become an outstanding football player at Battle Ground Academy. Lloyd then attended Bowling Green Business College, graduating



with a degree in business. He worked for Nifty Paper Company and later for Century Steps in Lebanon, Tenn. While there, he earned many salesmanship awards.

He also ably served God in several capacities throughout Tennessee. Lloyd was a Sunday school teacher and a deacon at Vultee Church of Christ in Nashville (1957-66) and served as head of benevolence and youth. He was vice president of Inner-City Ministry at the Youth Hobby Shop,

and he served several rural churches as minister in the middle Tennessee area. Lloyd served as minister for the Mt. Juliet Church of Christ in Wilson County and later as minister for Bear Wallow Church of Christ and Bethlehem Church of Christ in Cheatham County. His last ministry was at Powell Grove Church of Christ in Lebanon. His emphasis was always about feeding both body and soul.

Lloyd also served his Nashville community in many ways. He worked with the UNA PTA; he started the first PTO men's group at Glengarry Elementary School, and he served as a successful little league baseball coach in the UNA Recreational League and Babe Ruth League.

For Lloyd, it was all about

God, country, and family. The truth was the only thing that mattered to him, whether in education, politics, or religion. Lloyd's great uncle was Robert Wycliffe Comer who was a staunch defender of the Church of Christ in Nashville and a philanthropist who recently, through his Comer Trust, gave \$15,000 to each Church of Christ in Tennessee and Kentucky that follows the simple New Testament pattern. Comer's life exemplified the ideal set by Paul in the 12th chapter of Romans: "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Lloyd tried to do likewise.

He is survived by three children: Sherrie Gale Orange (Anthony), Eddie Gale, and Don Gale (Aletha); two grandchildren: Keith (Lauren) Gale and Lauren Shullaw (Ben); and two great-grandchildren.

With Appreciation

The Christian Chronicle appreciates and acknowledges very generous gifts received in honor of Louise Beyer and Stafford and JoAnne North and in memory of Candy Armstrong, Virgil Bentley, Randall & Hilda Ann Lawson Patterson, tornado victims in Tennessee, Sister Belva Martin, Doug McArthur, and Vera Bedwell.

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EDITORIAL

Help keep our ministries alive

You're reading this issue of *The Christian Chronicle* two weeks earlier than you normally would. We've reported on COVID-19 for more than two months now. But in recent weeks, as the virus became a pandemic and as social-distancing measures were implemented in the U.S., Europe and countries around the world, it became clear to us that we're living in unprecedented, uncertain times.

So we decided to move our deadlines forward to bring you stories of vital importance to our fellowship.

We also wanted to give you encouraging stories and news you can use, from health recommendations to book suggestions.

And, of course, a crossword puzzle.

In the weeks and months to come, as we work from our kitchen tables and back porches, we will continue to provide up-to-the-minute, real news that honors God through our online products.

We realize that many of you rely on and cherish print media, so we will continue to produce the "hard copy" of *The Christian Chronicle* as well.

It won't be easy. We're experiencing a drop in advertising revenue as events across our fellowship are canceled.

If it's at all possible, we strongly urge you to use your resources to support

your congregations and the nonprofits that serve our fellowship.

Churches are losing vital income every week, and many of our ministries — ministries that help orphans, dig water wells, help rebuild lives after tornadoes — have been forced to cancel the fundraising events that keep them going. We're doing what we can to help them get their message out.

We also realize that the stock market has taken a tumble. Many of our brothers and sisters have lost their jobs. Let's help them get through this.

We're blessed that much of our fundraising happens through the U.S. Postal Service. (Yes, we're talking about those letters you get from us — many, many times!) We're thrilled to announce that our recent matching campaign met its goal. Now we're looking to

finish the fiscal year strong on May 30 so that we can stay afloat during the uncertain summer months. Any funds you can commit to help us are greatly appreciated. Our mailing address is below.

We're inspired by the stories you've sent us this month as you discover new, creative ways to serve others during this pandemic. Please keep the good news coming, and keep sharing the Good News.

— Erik Tryggstad, president and CEO

'Churches are losing vital income every week, and many of our ministries have been forced to cancel the fundraising events that keep them going.'

TO OUR READERS

Praise for our devoted team

When I say that putting together this edition of *The Christian Chronicle* was a true team effort, I'm not exaggerating.

Our work on the hard-copy version of the *Chronicle* came at the same time our small staff was providing regular updates on our website at christianchronicle.org.

Between Tennessee's tornadoes and the coronavirus, we approached a half-million pageviews in March. That's a record. We appreciate that more and more readers know they don't have to wait until the *Chronicle* arrives in the mail to read our coverage.

Speaking of that, it's easier than ever to stay connected with us. Our brand-new *Chronicle* app was just released and is available in the app stores. Digital News Editor Chellie Ison worked long hours with our service provider to get the app up and running.

The app and a crossword puzzle have been longtime dreams of Erik Tryggstad, our CEO and president. Now we have both.

Speaking of Tryggstad, he not only preaches and raises money to keep the *Chronicle* afloat, but he's also a veteran journalist who wrote our Page 1 story on the troublesome times we are facing.

Others involved in our in-depth coverage include Laura Akins, a former *Chronicle* writer who returns this month as our new reviews editor; Hamil R. Harris, our East Coast correspondent; Cheryl Mann Bacon, our West Texas correspondent; Erin Floyd, a recent Harding University journalism graduate who just finished a three-month internship with us; and Ison.

Tonya Patton, our advertising manager, isn't a part of our news team, but we couldn't do what we do without her vital work. Melinda Wilson also is invaluable to our advertising department, and Louise Beyer keeps our financial records up to date.

I also must mention our lead administrative assistant, Lynda Sheehan, who delivered page proofs to my house and left them on the front doorstep so we could maintain our social isolation. Sheehan and Joy McMillon proofed these pages.

Finally, I would be remiss, dear reader, if I did not thank you for reading and supporting the *Chronicle*. I thank God for you.

— Bobby Ross Jr., editor-in-chief



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IF THE GOSPEL IS REAL and relevant, if the church is truly bigger than our buildings, the COVID-19 pandemic is the time to show it.

A theology for not ‘assembling’

OKLAHOMA CITY

Well, *this* is awkward. We are used to arguing about the importance of the church “assembling together.” We’ve debated the importance of Bible classes, Sunday nights and Wednesday nights for years. Now we are trying to justify not meeting. Who saw that coming?

Of course, the church has ignored government bans before. Rome didn’t want Christians

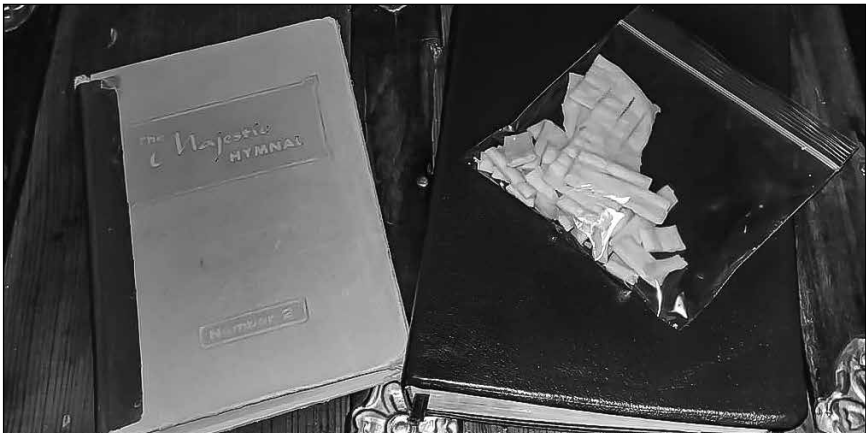
meeting and “advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice” (Acts 16:21). They still met. Courageous Christians in China and Iran have met underground in defiance of government regulation for years.

But this time is different. It’s not because of our conviction that “Jesus is Lord” that the government has asked us not to assemble. Instead, the government has requested we not meet out of concern for our neighbors. Ironically, they are calling on businesses, schools and churches to practice justice and mercy. We are being asked to love our neighbor. Government officials have even called for people of faith to pray.

The church is being asked to be the church. They want us to live out the meaning of our confession. And our confession is much bigger than our assembly.

That’s not to say being together is unimportant. In moments of fear, the church assembled to pray (Acts 4:23). In times of doubt, Christians were encouraged to continue meeting (Hebrews 10:25).

“Forsaking the assembly” has nothing to do with canceling meeting times out of love and



The Penick family in Edmond, Okla., worships with songs from an old hymnal, homemade communion bread and their church’s livestream.

concern for our neighbors, older members and others most at risk. It has nothing to do with reorganizing or repurposing times of assembly for other kinds of ministry.

“Forsaking the assembly” is a conscious effort to avoid being with other Christians, selfishly turning our back on the community of faith and refusing to live out the responsibilities of our calling. Elders and church leaders choosing to cancel or reimagine assemblies are doing anything but “forsaking the assembly.”

Being together is not the end in itself.

The church assembles because we are saved, not to be saved. Assembling is how we encourage each other, lift each other up and blend our voices in praise to the God who saves us.

Thankfully, many of us are blessed with modern technology allowing us to accomplish some of these objectives in different ways. It is not a perfect replacement, but it is helpful. (Our resident church hugger declared last Sunday that this virus is clearly of the devil.) Technology allows us to receive many blessings of community without threatening to harm our

broader community. It turns out that not assembling for a short time may be the best way to be the true church in these difficult times.

God sent Jeremiah to encourage the Babylonian exiles to “seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile” (Jeremiah 29:7). Now is our chance to do the same.

The religious police of Jesus’ day accused him of ignoring the sabbath when he chose to “do good” and restore a man’s withered hand (Matthew 12:13). Jesus reminded them how God desires “mercy, not sacrifice” (Matthew 12:7). His desire is unchanged.

If God chooses, this crisis will pass. But this crisis has created unlimited opportunities to live out our confession. Our brothers, sisters and neighbors are sick, hungry and anxious.

If the Gospel is real and relevant, if the church is truly bigger than our buildings, now is the time to show it!

JEREMIE BELLER has served as congregational minister for the Wilshire Church of Christ in Oklahoma City since 2002. He also is an adjunct professor of communication for Oklahoma Christian University.

On worship and the Lord’s Supper at home

I love assembling with brethren and feel deeply saddened over this time of loneliness and separation from those whom I love.

For many years I have preached to thousands of shut-ins via the television program “*In Search of the Lord’s Way*.” They too longed to worship in the assembly and were unable. God understands. I think of Paul in stocks in prison, singing with Silas, but winning souls. I think of Jews in isolation due to their leprosy (see Leviticus 13).

Lest anyone think I have gone soft on assembling, let me be clear: No one in America encourages people to worship with the Lord’s church more than I do. “Search” regularly helps people to find a congregation of the Lord’s people where they can worship.

My wife and I have been confined at home, quarantined, by her illness and by our state and city. “*Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution ...*” (1 Peter 2:13). This too is in Scripture.

Some have said it is wrong to partake of the Lord’s Supper at home. These are unusual and difficult times. One can and must, as an individual, remember the Lord in his supper. Examining self is an individual act. If you were sick or confined, you could still partake.

We are legally separated — not purposefully forsaking — and God knows that. He will not fault you for partaking any more than for singing or praying alone. Our communion is with Christ. Would Paul sin if he partook of the supper alone while confined in the rented house or prison cell?

It is true that we must not forsake assembling, but let’s be fair. No one has willfully abandoned the Lord by having to be confined at home.

Mercy triumphs over judgment.

PHIL SANDERS is the speaker for “*In Search of the Lord’s Way*,” a TV ministry supported by Churches of Christ. Find episodes at searchtv.org.



Jeremie Beller



Phil Sanders

Churches of Christ and a previous pandemic

AS THE 1918 ‘SPANISH FLU’ killed millions, churches canceled services, fed and nursed the poor.

NASHVILLE, Tenn.
Nashville saw its first case of the “Spanish flu” in late September 1918. By November, 1,300 had died — The influenza would kill almost 700,000 in the United States and 50 million globally. It was the worst pandemic in modern history. Amid the dramatic lifestyle changes brought by the worldwide coronavirus outbreak, the experience of Christians more than a century ago is worth revisiting.

Perspective
As the flu spread across the U.S. in the late fall and early winter of 1918, theaters, schools, businesses and churches closed their doors for weeks. The Tennessee Health Department advised churches to suspend their Sunday



John Mark Hicks

meetings for Oct. 20 and 27. No one protested, and 92 churches complied. However, the Russell Street Church of Christ in Nashville did not close its doors. The church approached the Red Cross with an offer of help. Their building became a temporary hospital because the city hospitals were turning away people. The Russell Street members, along with the Eleventh Street and Chapel Avenue congregations, poured their monetary and human resources into feeding and nursing the poor. The influenza epidemic, as A. B. Lipscomb wrote in the *Gospel Advocate*, had “opened up a way for the enlargement of the sympathies of Christian people.” As the influenza spread, the government recommended the cancellation of Sunday assemblies. The Christian Leader implored churches “to observe strictly all the regulations urged by our State Boards of Health and cooperate in every way.” Churches in California, Minnesota, West Virginia, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Texas and all across the country suspended their regular services.



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF HEALTH AND MEDICINE, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Emergency hospitals, including this one at Camp Funston, Kan., arose during the 1918 “Spanish flu” pandemic, which killed about 50 million people globally.

Ben West of Ennis, Texas, informed the *Gospel Advocate* that “Sunday was the first day for twelve years that I have failed to attend service,” and then added, “We had three funerals here Sunday.” Though the church was not assembling, they were “busy attending the sick.” Some died caring for others. The *Gospel Advocate* reported that J. D. Northcut, an evangelist from Tracy City, Tenn., fell ill with “influenza followed by pneumonia” and died at the age of 43. He had given “almost continual attention to sufferers near him.” M.C. Kurfees, the minister of the Campbell Street Church of Christ in Louisville, Ky., sent a letter to his members announcing the congregation’s compliance with the Kentucky State Board of Health. “It behooves us,” he wrote, “to cheerfully submit to this order and to exert all our energies in an earnest and sympathetic effort to cooperate with the benevolent purpose of our government to check the deplorable disease.” Though churches suspended

their large assemblies, they did not cease to worship. Rather, as E.D. Shelton, in Fayette City, Pa., wrote, “We worshipped God from house to house.” H. E. Winkler, of Adairville, Ky., and his wife “worshipped in our home” for three weeks. Kurfees recommended his congregants worship in their homes “as was sometimes done in the days of the apostles.” Nevertheless, some experienced this as government interference. They resented the government’s



PHOTO VIA ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The Campbell Street Church of Christ in Louisville, Ky., circa 1923.

orders to shut their doors on Sunday mornings. “We must obey God rather than man,” a few argued. J. W. Dunn of Paris, Texas, for example, applauded “one of our faithful ones” who “approached the mayor and explained to him our convictions of duty on Lord’s-day services.” The mayor consented but only if a few gathered; no large meetings were permitted. At the same time, Dunn noted, “Paris has had a heavy toll.” Other ministers accepted the quarantines and restrictions without complaint because they recognized one could obey both God and the government. E. C. Fuqua of Fort Collins, Colo., keenly felt the obligation to meet weekly on the Lord’s Day. “Carefully observing [government] restrictions, we feel free to meet a few brethren in a private home and worship according to the New Testament teaching.” In this way, “the assembly thus formed is not unlawful, and the worship rendered is lawful to God,” which demonstrates “loyalty to both.” J.C. McQuiddy, editor of the *Gospel Advocate*, also felt strongly about weekly assembly. However, this duty was superseded by mercy at times. Just as it was a matter of mercy to care for the sick at home instead of attending the weekly service, it is also merciful to forego meeting with the saints if it “would jeopardize the lives of members of not only their families, but the families also of many other people.” McQuiddy thought it unnecessary to “assemble in large crowds to break bread in the face of the proclamation of the government.” Indeed, Christians, while meeting with a few in homes, should observe the restrictions “cheerfully, seeking to lead quiet, holy, and unblameable lives.”

JOHN MARK HICKS is a professor of theology at the Hazelip School of Theology at Lipscomb University in Nashville. He has taught in higher education among Churches of Christ for over 38 years. His most recent book is “Searching for the Pattern.” Contact him at hicksjm@lipscomb.edu.

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

FORGIVENESS

Gary L. Holmes. **Erased: God’s Complete Forgiveness of Sins.** Fire Mountain Publishing. Sept. 2019. 176 pages, \$12.99. Available on Amazon.

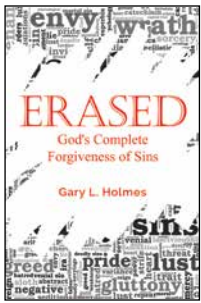
The author explores the one choice we all make between God and Not God and how that affects our concept of heaven and hell. Then there is a careful explanation of how God’s rules and principles apply to us. The question of whether those laws are necessary and eternal is raised. The answer might be surprising.

Our common view that sin is simply the breaking of a rule is challenged as the author examines a broader definition of sin that is based in our choices. Do Christians remain sinners forever? Do we all sin daily even after we have been baptized? The author shows how we have made assumptions about sin that are not always Biblical. We may not all struggle with sin as much as we struggle with continued guilt. God’s forgiveness is complete because all sins are forgiven and they are forgiven for our entire lives! Forgiveness covers awful sins, addictions, and even incorrect beliefs. We do not daily fall in and out of relationship with God. The author then discusses cheap grace, free rides, and forgiveness of self. Finally, the book answers the question: “What is in it for me?”

This book moves beyond the expected cliches found in traditional inspiration literature and dares to challenge your old ideas about what God can do for you. You need to read this book because:

- You need to stop saying you are a sinner.
- Following God’s rules doesn’t always work.
- Hell is only for those who choose to go.
- God will forgive sins you have not yet committed.
- One sin does not always make you a sinner.

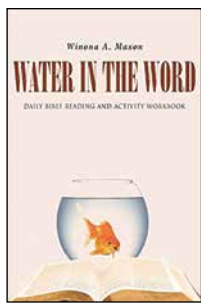
Discussion questions are included for class or study groups.



YOUTH BIBLE STUDY

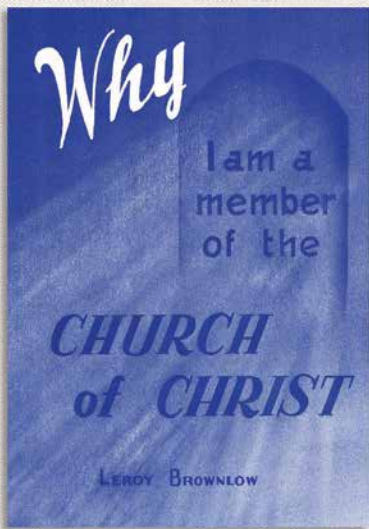
Winona A. Maxon. **Water in the Word: Daily Bible Reading and Activity Workbook.** Christian Faith Publishing, Inc., Dec. 2018. 112 pages, \$14.95. Paperback or e-book. See Amazon or Barnes & Noble.

Have you thought about the importance of water in the Bible and how often that subject is mentioned? This workbook is designed for young readers through teens to learn life lessons from the books of the Bible



(Genesis through Revelation) emphasizing the theme of “water.” There are 52 lessons (two pages each) jam-packed with Scripture and multidisciplinary activities and resources.

Each lesson includes a daily Bible reading, prayers, memory verses and three or more activities. These activities include math, art, history, archaeology, music, geography and much more. The book is well suited for use in home schools, Bible classes, family study time and one-on-one studies.



Seventy-Fifth Anniversary

Why I Am A Member of the Church of Christ

by Leroy Brownlow

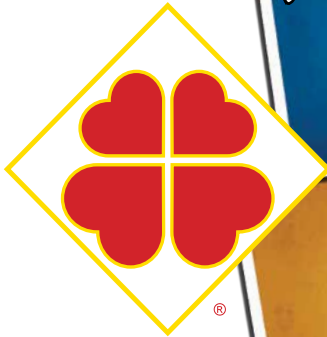
For 75 years, Why I Am A Member of the Church of Christ has attempted to explain what we believed and why we believe it.

It is Biblical and as timeless and true as ever. The church has never been perfect and never will be. But may God help us, with grace and humility, to share our Biblical understanding with a new generation.

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The best books you'll ever download

CLOSED LIBRARIES AND BOOKSTORES *don't have to keep the faithful from inspiring reads (and listens) in quarantine.*

BY LAURA AKINS | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Book club is canceled. Libraries are shut down. Perusing bookstores is out of the picture. But you finally have all the time in the world to read. How will you get your hands on a good book? The answer: digitally. There are so many instant options at your fingertips. Let's explore the world of audiobooks and eBooks.

Audiobooks

If you haven't jumped into an audiobook yet, now's the time. My favorite way to consume them is through the free library app, **OverDrive**.

Search your app store for OverDrive or **Libby** by OverDrive. They are essentially the same, just user preference. Then download the app, and sign in using your library card information.



Don't have a library card? Most libraries will allow you to apply for a card online during this pandemic.

Once you are logged in to the app, you can search genres, read book summaries and reviews, and download almost any book you want. Users will have 7-14 days to listen before the title is removed from your device and passed on the next reader.

Another option is **Audible**, Amazon's audiobook subscription service. With more than 400,000 titles, this app is the most popular in the U.S. and

after a free 30 day trial, will cost you around \$15 a month. That gets users one free credit a month for any book regardless of price and 30% off additional titles. If you want to skip the monthly fee, you can purchase books individually at a higher price. You can return any audiobook purchased



in the last 12 months and get your credit back. Audible is allowing children to listen for free while school is on pause. Live outside the states? Look into Google Play Books, which is available in 45 countries. No subscription is required, and audiobooks are purchased individually at shelf price. Once you make a purchase, these books cannot be returned. Each app has its pros and cons, but all will bring your stories to life. Busy hands make listening ears, so grab a coloring book, clean out the garage (hey, you've got the time!) or go for a walk while you listen.

eBooks

Do you prefer to sit and read but aren't able to get your hands on a physical copy of a book? While you can read eBooks on OverDrive or Google Play Books, the most popular option is probably **Amazon Kindle**.

This app is similar to Audible in that you can choose to pay \$10 a month to receive a free credit or purchase books at a discount. If you don't want to pay monthly, you can purchase books at shelf price or download library books from your library's website or your OverDrive app to be read on your Kindle device or in the Kindle app.

But why would you want to download a book from one app into another? Kindle lets you customize text size, font type, whether you turn pages from left to right or scroll continuously and even allows you to look up words, people and places as you read. This app is currently offering its subscription service free for the next two months.

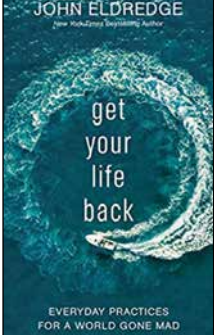
You've downloaded your chosen app, now what should you read?

Above all else, use your Bible or device to stay connected to God's word. Spend time reading or

listening to Scripture. Complete a reading plan on the YouVersion Bible app. Memorize Psalm 91 — anything to ground you during this pandemic. After you've set the tone for your day, don't waste your brain cells scrolling mindlessly on Facebook or Twitter. Virtually check out one of these books.

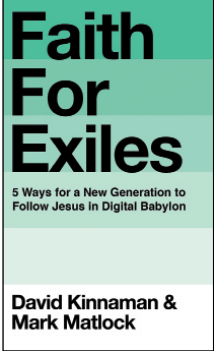
Recommendations for adults

Are you looking for inspiration or self-help? We've got something for you.



• **"Get Your Life Back: Everyday Practices for a World Gone Mad"** by John Eldredge.

The practice of building a calm interior life — not an anxious presence — is what we need now and in the days ahead, according to Lantz Howard, disciple-ship minister for the Park Avenue Church of Christ in Denison, Texas. This book offers practical ways to improve your thoughts. Howard also recommends downloading the "Pause" app as a companion to this book.



• **"Faith for Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon."** David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock.

"This takes a sobering look at where the younger generations in the church are trending," said Jay Mack, campus minister for the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City. "It doesn't

look good, yet this book offers encouragement for raising the next generation to know and love God." In a world that is completely online now, this offers helpful insight for church leaders.

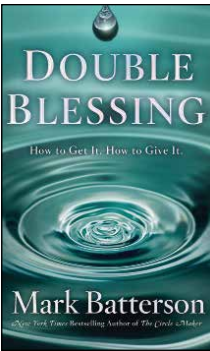
• **"The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry: How to Stay Emotionally Healthy and Spiritually Alive in the Chaos of the Modern World"** by John Mark Comer.



"This book challenges us to come up for air in a culture that operates at a chaotic pace," Mack said. "That air we are encouraged to breathe is the very breath of God that maintains and satisfies our souls."

• **"Double Blessing: How to Get It. How to Give It"** by Mark Batterson.

"This book is encouraging and allows you to see the blessings you have and turn them around to bless others," said Karlie Scharrer, children's minister for my congregation, the Heritage Church of Christ in Edmond, Okla. "The double blessing might not be immediate but could impact people many years from now."



Two books for families

Remember long ago when families would sit and listen to radio programs at night?

Let's recreate moments long lost with one of these family-friendly audiobooks.

Both of these books are written by

Christian men, so the content is for everyone.

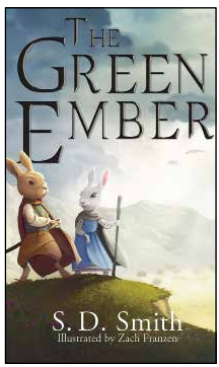
- **“The Green Ember”** by S.D. Smith.

“An adventurous story following a brother and sister rabbit through sudden adversity and watching them overcome the darkness with light,” said Cassie Henley, a friend of mine in Dallas who’s an avid reader — and a homeschooling mother of six.

There are three more books in this series, so there is plenty to listen to while we are stuck inside. This is a fun read-aloud and is good for all ages, Henley said.

- **“On the Edge of the Dark Sea of Darkness (The Wingfeather Saga)”** by Andrew Peterson.

Henley said this is a bright light among books – one of her kid’s favorite fantasy series. It is clever, funny and full of adventure. The author is offering this as a read-aloud on his Facebook channel during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are four books in this series.

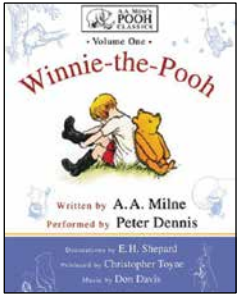


Three timeless classics for children

Are you suddenly homeschooling? Do you need some structure of just a minute of peace, but don’t want to sit your kids in front of a TV? Try one of these classic options for free on Audible.

- **“Winnie-the-Pooh: A.A. Milne’s Pooh Classics, Volume 1”** by A.A. Milne.

“If you have never heard A.A. Milne read aloud, start here,” Henley said. This is the only reading of these immortal stories authorized by A.A. Milne’s son, Christopher Robin, who wrote, “If you want to meet the real Pooh, the bear I knew, the bear my father wrote about, listen to Peter,” according to Audible’s summary.

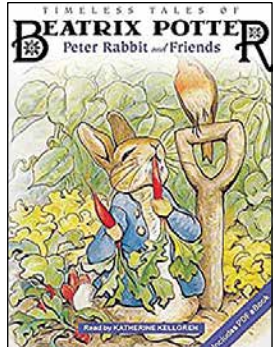


- **“Timeless Tales of Beatrix Potter: Peter Rabbit and Friends”** by Beatrix Potter.

Beatrix Potter makes the perfect bedtime stories, said Henley. From the book: “This amazing universe of animals dressed in human clothing has taught and entertained children for over a century. Although each story stands on its own, several are linked together by events and characters.”

- **“Anne of Green Gables”** by Lucy Maud Montgomery.

This timeless tale is for children who are a little older. Audible’s synopsis: “Through a series of hilarious misadventures, Anne’s uncompromising spirit makes her a striking presence in her close-knit village, bringing new friendships, first crushes, and, for her foster parents, a love and openness unimaginable before her arrival.” This title is perfect for tween girls on the verge of growing up.



Humor, in Churches of Christ?

Perry Cotham’s ‘Please Don’t Revive Us Again!’ presents a kindhearted, respectful look at the fellowship’s lighter side.

For some people, any conversation about Christian beliefs and practices should be solemn in tone and avoid any levity, lest offense be given or disrespect shown. Then there are the rest of us. Fortunately for us, Perry Cotham has tried to obey his own personal 11th Commandment throughout his life, “Thou shalt not take thyself seriously,” and his book, **“Please Don’t Revive Us Again! The Human Side of the Church of Christ,”** lives up to that commandment.

Cotham, a retired professor who taught at Lipscomb University and a longtime pulpit minister for Churches of Christ, treats the reader to a rich feast of stories and observations — a few serious or poignant, but most light-hearted, funny, even satirical — all drawn from a lifetime of Christian ministry. He wisely opens his narrative with a fundamental point that echoes throughout: he respects the people whose stories he tells and has no desire to denigrate them or their walk of faith in any way.

Having kept a diary for more than 50 years, Cotham enjoys a phenomenal recall of people, places and events that vividly color his narrative, and the delight he takes in writing about them is infectious. Cotham maintains that by unveiling our tradition’s foibles and poking fun at them with humor and satire (but never sarcasm), we remind ourselves of the messiness of human lives and the humility that should be our mindset in following Christ.

Although Cotham suggests that his book may not be of great interest to those outside the Church of Christ tradition, the first chapter provides a witty introduction to it for those unfamiliar with our “peculiar” traits.

For example, a column of “Good Words” contrasts with “Words of Ill Repute” used by our friends in other traditions (i.e., “the denominations”). Those of us who are cradle

Church of Christ members will smile in recognition at the pairings: “minister” versus “pastor,” “chorus” versus “choir,” “singing only” versus “organ/piano,” etc. Younger church members (those born in the 1990s or later) will not necessarily recognize all the situations that Cotham describes, but this book should deepen their understanding of the tradition that has been passed on to them.

Chapters on preaching, congregational singing, pastoral counseling, weddings and funerals, and other aspects of a minister’s career all feature vignettes ranging from:

- Gently satirical (advising catchy titles for sermons, such as calling a sermon on Noah “When Giggling Turned to Gargling”)
- Ruefully funny (concluding his sermon early during baseball season when an audience member pulled out his Detroit Lions game tickets and fanned them in front of his face)
- Mildly subversive (changing the words to the hymn “No Tears in Heaven” to “No Beers in Heaven ... all will be dairy products there” as a complement to a sermon on a liquor referendum).

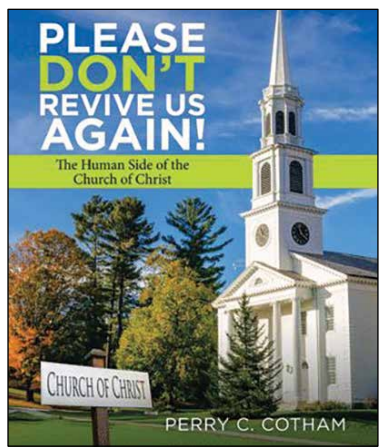
Some stories feature almost unbelievable legalism: a flat-bed truck with a piano on it outside of a church window for wedding music, or a guest song leader who refused to lead Easter hymns on Easter because that would be “denominational.” Cotham allows such stories to speak for themselves and thereby manages to keep his touch light so that the reader’s wince is mercifully brief.

The foundation that undergirds these stories is always visible: it is Cotham’s deep and abiding love for the church that nurtured him.

In Print



Kimberly Reed



Perry C. Cotham. **Please Don't Revive Us Again!: The Human Side of the Church of Christ.** New York: Archway Publishing, 2019. 412 pages. \$24.99.

KIMBERLY REED is professor of English and French and chair of the Department of English and Modern Languages at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn. She worships with the Woodmont Hills Church of Christ in Nashville.



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Advertising deadline

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Evangelist Position - Marstons Mills, Massachusetts

Located on scenic Cape Cod, the Cape Cod church of Christ is searching for a full-time evangelist due to the retirement of our minister. We are seeking an experienced, married evangelist who is called by the Lord to support our outreach in the "harvest is plentiful" New England environment. We are an age and economically diverse congregation of approximately eighty and are led by two elders. Responsibilities of the evangelist include sound Biblical preaching and teaching, evangelism and outreach. We offer a competitive annual salary including retirement contributions, health insurance, etc. If you are interested please submit your resume, a current video media of two sermons, a current photograph and three references to our elders (shown below) **by May 15, 2020.**

Jerry Hiatt
Jim Saffle

jerry.hiatt@gmail.com
jim.saffle@ieee.org

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Bible Bowling | From Page 25

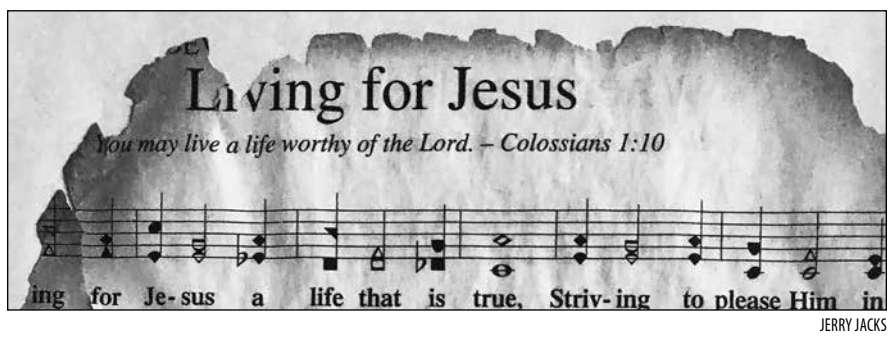
1) D. Cedar wood. 2) D. Nathan 3) B. Go ahead and do it. 4.) C. David's son. 5) D. Make his name great. 6) C. Establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

Sponsor our puzzle page

Help *The Christian Chronicle* serve our readers with Bible-themed crossword puzzles and Bible bowl questions. Contact advertising manager Tonya Patton at tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org or (405) 425-5070.

Crossword solution

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A fragment of a burned hymnal from the Thomas Street Church of Christ.

As we wait to rise from the ashes, we remember a God who sings over us

ALTUS, Okla.

Zephaniah isn't the first book that comes to mind when we think of quotable Scriptures. I only ran across the Old Testament prophet (sandwiched between Habakkuk and Haggai) because I was doing one of those "Bible in a year" read-throughs. I love his words of encouragement to "the remnant of Israel," and I find them increasingly relevant as the number of our nation's faithful falls.

So I included a passage from Zephaniah 3 in a sermon I preached for the Tamarack Road Church of Christ — just two weeks before the pandemic confined us to our homes.

My wife grew up in this church, and we were married in its former building on Thomas Street. Two years later, on Pearl Harbor Day 2005, an electrical fire burned it to the ground. Now the 200-member church meets in a beautiful building on Tamarack Road. The singed pages of hymnals, pulled from the ashes, are framed in the foyer.

After my sermon, Brenda Henry, a longtime family friend, talked to me about how much those words from Zephaniah mean to her. She thinks about them nearly every day, in fact.

Just after the Thomas Street building burned, she said, the women of the church were invited to take part in a ladies' day sponsored by the North Groesbeck Church of Christ in Quanah, Texas.

"You have to be lost to find it," Brenda said. The church, which lists an attendance of 28, meets just

across the Red River from southwest Oklahoma. The ladies from Altus probably outnumbered their hosts 2 to 1. Brenda remembered that the North Groesbeck ladies purposefully spread out so that they were well-mixed among their visitors.



The event included food (of course) and gifts of devotional books, candles, tea towels and the like for all of the Altus women. What's stuck with Brenda most, though, is a Scripture reading done by one of the hosts — those words from Zephaniah.

After the fire "we were all kind of down," Brenda said. Hearing about God's faithfulness to the remnant, how he forgives and even delights in his children, gave them a much-needed boost.

"God was singing over us," she said. "We were not forgotten." And the small kindnesses they received from their sisters were immeasurable, she added.

I spoke to Brenda on the phone a few days ago, and we agreed that Zephaniah's words are equally relevant in our current, troublesome times. I leave them with you as I pray for health, safety and even sanity for us all in the days to come.

The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.

ERIK TRYGGESTAD is president and CEO of *The Christian Chronicle*. Contact erik@christianchronicle.org and follow him on Twitter @eriktryggestad.

CALENDAR

*** In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, please check with these organizers before confirming your plans to attend. ***

April 4-5 40th Anniversary Celebration. Lehigh Valley Church of Christ. Bethlehem, Pa. See lehighvalleychurchofchrist.org.

April 5, May 7 50th Anniversary Celebrations. University Church of Christ. Malibu, Calif. Facebook: @University Church of Christ (Malibu).

April 5, 26 Senior Singles Event. Bayview Church of Christ. San Francisco. Email Allen at: lln_mcfrrnd@yahoo.com.

April 9 Eastern European Mission Benefit Event. Amarillo, Texas. See eem.org/events.

April 17-18 Women Walking With God Conference. Park City, Kan. See womenwalkingwithgod.org.

April 26-May 3 Marriage Seminar at Sea. Royal Caribbean's Harmony of the Seas. See lastinglovecruise.com.

April 27-29 A Conference for Senior Ministers and Ministry Leaders. Abundant Living. Smithville, Tenn. See abundantlivingseniors.com.

May 5 Eastern European Mission Benefit Event. Raleigh, N.C. See eem.org/events.

May 23-28 National Lectureship of Churches of Christ. Orlando, Fla. See cocnl2020.com.

June 8-19, 11-19, 18-27; July 17-24 Disciple Trips. Sunset International Bible Institute. See discipletrips.com.

June 27-July 4 The Kerusso Experience. Harding University. Searcy, Ark. Email: kerusso@harding.edu.

July 23-26 Angel Fire Symposium. Angel Fire, N.M. See angelfiresymposium.com.

July 26-31 Texas Normal Singing School. Abilene Christian University. See singingschool.org.

FULL CALENDAR: www.christianchronicle.org. To include your event for \$25, contact tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org.

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Full-Time Children's Minister

The **Walnut Church of Christ** in Texarkana, Texas, is seeking to hire a full-time Children's Minister. This person will work with our elders, staff, and families to direct our children's program and provide ministry to our children from birth through the 6th grade. We are seeking both male and female applicants who have a heart for working with young children and a desire to help nurture and develop their faith. If interested, please email a resume and cover letter to: wcoc.ministrysearch@yahoo.com or mail to this address:

Children's Ministry Search Committee
Walnut Church of Christ
2720 Moores Lane
Texarkana, TX 75503
walnutchurchofchrist.org

Pulpit Minister Search - Las Vegas, Nev.

The Bright Angel Church of Christ is in need of a pulpit minister due to the retirement of our current preacher. The church has five elders and five deacons and an attendance of about 220 on Sunday morning. We are located in the northwest part of the city about 20 miles from the Las Vegas strip.

The ideal candidate will be an experienced preacher and teacher of God's Word. He should be able to present and defend biblical Christianity and know how to interpret Scripture. Experience and training in counseling will be helpful. If you would like to apply for this position, email an electronic copy of all relevant information about yourself to: BA@BrightAngelChurch.org with a subject heading of "Attention Elders." Information should include: a link to a sermon archive where you currently preach and a file containing a work history, education, and references. Also include a list of any published articles and books. Electronic copies of any written material would be helpful.

Bright Angel Church of Christ
8570 W Bright Angel Way, Las Vegas, NV 89149
brightangelchurch.org

Evangelist Needed - Kingman, Ariz.

The **Desert Church of Christ** is looking for an evangelistic minister who preaches, teaches, and follows truth from God's Word. Being a congregation of 60 - 70 members without an eldership and desiring to grow, the successful candidate will be a "jack of all trades." Please send resume and salary requirements to:

Desert Church of Christ
Attn: Search Committee
PO Box 3673, Kingman, AZ 86402
bj67cv@frontiernet.net
(928) 279-2226 (please leave message)

Preaching Minister Search

University Park Church of Christ is searching for a Preaching Minister (Senior Minister) to serve a highly diverse congregation in Hyattsville, Md. Please download our vacancy announcement (PDF) from our website:

<http://www.upcoc.com>; or call our church office (301-927-7277) for a copy. Applicants should respond to the requirements stated in the vacancy announcement.

Applications due by April 30, 2020

Vibrant Church in Missouri Ozarks Seeking Minister

The Salem Church of Christ in Salem, Mo., is seeking a full-time minister to replace the man who served with us for 25 years. Sunday attendance is typically between 160-200. While we practice most historical "Church of Christ" traditions (weekly observance of the Lord's Supper and acapella singing in assemblies), we only regard direct commands of God expressed in the Holy Bible as salvation issues.

Successful candidates will have biblical knowledge and wisdom, ability to effectively preach and teach from God's word, evangelistic desire, and compassion while being encouraging, hospitable, and community-minded. Candidates comfortable working with a grace-centered church located in the beautiful Missouri Ozarks are welcome to submit their resumes or request information by emailing rdprugh@gmail.com. Salary and benefits are negotiable.

"Showing God's Love in All We Do"

Associate Minister for Family Spiritual Life - N.C.

The **Hendersonville Church of Christ** is seeking a full-time Associate Minister for Family Spiritual Life to help us in our goal of encouraging faith development and spiritual growth in our young families and families with children/teens. We have several young families and would like to attract more. We are a church with an average attendance of 125 members located in the mountains of western North Carolina, just south of the city of Asheville. A successful candidate will possess a bachelor's degree, though commensurate experience would also be considered. Previous ministry experience is preferred. Interested persons should contact **Fred Gore** or **Sam Williams** at:

hvlcoc@bellsouth.net



Family and Community Outreach Minister

The Dewey church located in NE Oklahoma, 50 miles north of Tulsa, is seeking a full-time family and community outreach minister. The role involves working with our families to plan youth and intergenerational activities. Additionally, the position involves planning community outreach activities. Please respond via email to:

office@deweycoc.org
(918) 534-2782
PO Box 340 Dewey, OK 74029

This edition of *The Christian Chronicle* was produced two weeks early to bring you the latest news, resources and inspiring stories in the midst of the global pandemic. Read the story behind the stories on **Page 28**.



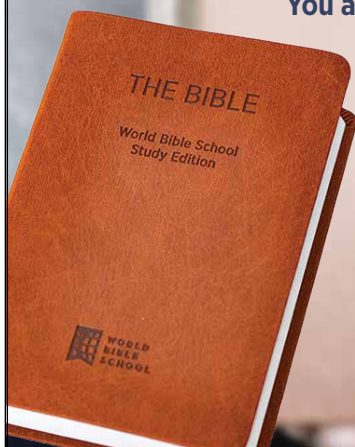
CALENDAR.....	35	INTERNATIONAL	11
CROSSWORD.....	25	NATIONAL.....	5
CURRENTS.....	17	PARTNERS	26
EDITORIAL	28	PEOPLE.....	27
INSIDE STORY	3	REVIEWS	32
INSIGHT.....	34	VIEWS	29

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