Protests and prayers

CHRISTIANS RESPOND to George Floyd’s death with outrage, rallies and calls for justice.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Warren G. Blakney Sr.’s fight for racial equality stretches back to 1961. At age 9, Blakney met civil rights icon Martin Luther King Jr. in Tuscaloosa, Ala., and passed out voter registration handbills door to door.

“I saw a lot of things,” said the 67-year-old senior minister for the North Peoria Church of Christ in Tulsa, Okla. “I’ve seen acid thrown at people. I’ve been in the crowd when dogs were turned on us. ... I’ve seen white guys jump out of cars with baseball bats to beat 12- and 13-year-old kids down and kill them.”

But nothing in the last 50 years, he said, has shaken him like the video of a white Minneapolis police officer pressing his knee against George Floyd’s neck as the handcuffed black man complained, “I can’t breathe.”

“I sat there, and I prayed, and I wished that he would get his knee off that guy’s neck so he could breathe,” said Blakney, president of the Tulsa Urban League and past president of the local NAACP. “There was no sense of humanity.”

Floyd’s May 25 death in police custody stirred Blakney to urge fellow Christians — black and white — to join the battle against racial injustice. The Minneapolis Central Church of Christ mourned Floyd’s killing up close.

“As a person, I’m outraged,” said Russell Pointer Sr., minister for the predominantly black congregation. “As a city, we’re trying to grieve.”

Nationwide, Floyd’s death galvanized weeks of protests denouncing systemic racism and police brutality. The demonstrations started in Minneapolis and spread, sometimes devolving into rioting and looting. In Richmond, Va., the windows of the West Broad Church of Christ, a predominantly black congregation, were shattered.

Protesters were still milling about as minister James Nesmith came to survey the damage. “Of course we don’t condone the violence or looting,” Nesmith said. “We wish they would take a more civilized approach, but in the same breath, we understand the frustration.”

The building of another African American church was vandalized in 1899, a black student was不容纳, and a black pastor was killed in 1911. But this time, the protests were peaceful.

“May God continue to lay a blanket of protection over all Tulsa,” he said in a tweet.

Amid protests after George Floyd’s death, Trey Elliott prays for Tulsa, Okla., Police Chief Wendell Franklin. The 7-year-old made it his mission to pray for every police officer in Oklahoma’s second-largest city. Franklin, a member of The Park Church of Christ in Tulsa, said of Elliott: “He is that mustard seed planted which yields a tree used by all.” Franklin praised his city’s peaceful protesters. “May God continue to lay a blanket of protection over all Tulsa,” he said in a tweet.

Attendees pray at unity rally at Abilene Christian University after George Floyd’s death.

TULSA POLICE DEPARTMENT, VIA TWITTER

RACE IN AMERICA

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Civil rights hero’s great-grandson shows courage, too

In 1957, the white mayor of Little Rock, Ark., showed courage by standing up for nine black students trying to integrate Central High School. Defying segregationist Gov. Orval Faubus and an angry white mob, Mayor Woodrow Wilson Mann urged President Dwight D. Eisenhower to send U.S. soldiers to quell the violence.

“Situation is out of control and police cannot disperse the mob,” Mann said in a telegram to Eisenhower. “I am pleading to you as president of the United States in the interest of humanity, law and order and because of democracy worldwide to provide the necessary federal troops within several hours.”

To enforce the school’s desegregation, Eisenhower sent 1,200 members of the U.S. Army’s 101st Airborne Division and federalized the Arkansas National Guard.

But Mann paid a steep price. He endured hate mail and death threats. White supremacists burned crosses on his family’s lawn. He lost his insurance business and any hope of a political future in Arkansas.

Sean Richardson, youth minister for the Bammel Church of Christ in Houston, recalled Mann’s experience as he preached on the Sunday after George Floyd was killed in Minneapolis police custody on May 25.

Love in the time of COVID-19: Nurse, husband reunite in NYC

In New York’s Times Square, Wendy and Eric Davenport give each other a facemasked kiss after two months apart. The Christian couple served as missionaries in Rwanda before swiftly evacuating amid the COVID-19 crisis in March. Wendy, a nurse and graduate of Harding University in Searcy, Ark., volunteered to serve COVID-19 patients in hard-hit New York while Eric and their four sons got settled in Oklahoma. When Eric arrived in New York, “I shed two months of tears in his arms,” his wife said.

The future of worship

AS CONGREGATIONS RETURN to in-person assemblies, coronavirus pandemic brings changes.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Masks or no masks? Sing and make a joyful noise — or not?
Required temperature checks at the door?
These are among the questions facing Churches of Christ nationwide as congregations move to resume in-person assemblies, a Christian Chronicle survey found.

After three months of closed doors, many churches have started returning to the building. But amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic — with 2.1 million confirmed U.S. cases and 116,000 deaths at press time — special health measures are greeting most worshipers.

“We will have shortened services, communion to pick up upon entering, temperature monitors at the door, little to no singing, planned seating and either multiple services or multiple rooms in our building for small groups to meet and stream the worship service,” said Jed Lovejoy, worship and children’s minister for the Broadway Church of Christ in Paducah, Ky.

In Virginia, the Blacksburg Church of Christ will emphasize social distancing, make hand sanitizer available and possibly use the fellowship hall for extra seating “so folks can spread out even more,” Lisa Leichner said.

“They’re suggesting but so far not requiring masks,” said Leichner, who was among more than 100 members and
HISTORY: Teen stands up for fellow Christian after classmate hurls racial slur

FROM PAGE 3

“See, typically in history when people have chosen to side with those who are oppressed, they themselves get treated as those who have been oppressed,” Richardson said in the video sermon, which came amid national outrage over Floyd’s death and coast-to-coast protests against racial injustice.

NO MERE HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE

The African American youth minister’s mention of Mann, who moved to Houston in 1961 and lived there until his 2002 death at age 85, was no mere historical footnote.

Richardson traced the late mayor’s lineage to present day — to an 18-year-old Bammel youth group member named Trevor Mann.

No doubt, Trevor’s place in American history — at least at this point in his life — pales compared with that of his great-grandfather, whom he met as a baby.

But Trevor, too, showed courage in the face of racial prejudice.

It happened after his friend Alvin “A.J.” Poole Jr., a fellow Bammel church member, played Trevor’s high school in a 2018 football playoff game.

A.J., then a senior offensive lineman for Westfield High School in Houston, recalls the intensity of the 10-6 victory over Klein High School.

“I remember my mindset was, ‘Let’s just score,’” A.J. said of the winning touchdown in the second half. “And I remember I drove him (the white player) into the dirt one play. And he got real mad. He punched me in the face. And I’m not going to lie. I punched him right back.

“But the next play was when we scored. And I drive him to the back of the end zone. … And he tries to fight me again. And I just put my hands up into the air. And I’m walking away. And he’s all in my ear, saying all these things. And then he says that word.”

A.J. Poole Jr. shows a video of the touchdown play that ended in a racially charged incident. Watch the full interview with Poole, Trevor Mann and Sean Richardson at christianchronicle.org/georgefloyd.

That would be the N-word.

“I was shocked that he said it,” said A.J., now a student-athlete at McPherson College in Kansas. “But then it was kind of like, ‘Well, that’s not the first time that I’ve heard that.’”

If A.J. had given in to his anger, he would have risked more than a potential penalty against his team, his youth minister said.

“I think A.J. putting his hands up gets me emotional every time because that’s something we have to do,” Richardson said. “We have to put our hands up and walk away because the way the story can be spun is that we are now the violent one. And so A.J. has had the conversation with his parents multiple times of how to engage in instances of injustice.”

At a Sunday night youth group function, Richardson asked Trevor if he knew the player involved.

“I actually did,” Trevor said in a Zoom conversation with The Christian Chronicle. “We played together in middle school. I was really shocked because the tough part, which I don’t think Sean or A.J. knows, is that he’s actually a Christian, too.

“And that’s pretty hard to understand. How could someone who loves Christ do that?”

That Monday morning, Trevor had a class with the player who used the racial slur.

“I went up to him, and I said, ‘Hey, you played in that Westfield game, right?’” Trevor said. “And he said, ‘Yep.’ And I said, ‘You said the N-word to one of my really close friends. One of my brothers.’

“And he felt bad. He was devastated. And he knew he was in the wrong. He tried to play it off that he was just frustrated.”

Trevor remained firm.

“I just told him, ‘You can’t do that. No matter the situation, you can’t stoop to the lowest of the lows. You just can’t,’” recalled the 2020 Klein High graduate, who plans to study finance at Texas Tech University this fall.

“I didn’t fight him,” Trevor added. “I didn’t threaten him. I just said, ‘You can’t do that.’”

Richardson at christianchronicle.org/georgefloyd.

‘THAT JUST FELT REAL GOOD’

When A.J. heard what Trevor had done, he couldn’t believe it.

“I was shocked,” A.J. said. “I had never had someone do that for me. … Most people would have just said, ‘Oh well, keep going.’ I was actually shocked but grateful.

… It made me feel like I matter to someone other than my family. That just felt real good.”

Trevor easily could have chosen not to say anything.

But his conscience — his heart — wouldn’t let him stay quiet, he said.

“I felt like Jesus was talking to me, saying, ‘You have to do something about that. You can’t just ignore this.’”

No, Trevor’s action didn’t change the course of history like his great-grandfather’s telegram did.

But the courageous teen made a difference where he could.

That’s the lesson for us all.

“Voices like Trevor’s,” Richardson said, “can bring attention to not just issues in the world but practical examples of what you can do — being a voice, standing up, embodying Jesus, walking alongside someone and not allowing oppression of any kind to impact his fellow human.

“That’s the example we want to set,” the youth minister added. “And I’m incredibly proud of A.J. and Trevor both for how they independently but collectively handled this situation. It’s a true embodiment of how Christ lived.”

BOBBY ROSS JR. is editor-in-chief of The Christian Chronicle. Reach him at bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org. Follow him on Twitter at @bobbyross. Watch the full Zoom interview at christianchronicle.org/georgefloyd.
As Kym Langford clocked out of her shift, she couldn’t help but wonder about one man: Would he still be there when she returned for her next shift? He was 35. A father. A husband. A patient with COVID-19.

“He needed a ventilator, or he was going to die,” Langford said. “But we didn’t have any at the time.”

Roughly 1,500 miles from her Oklahoma home, Langford cared for dozens of patients on the front lines of New York City’s battle against the coronavirus. Some of their faces — including that of the kind man with the uncertain fate — stick with her. (He survived.)

“I took care of a ton of patients, and I saw a lot of people die,” the 42-year-old mother of three said. “Most were elderly patients who had underlying conditions, but there were also several that were young.”

For six and a half weeks, Langford worked long, agonizing shifts at the Harlem Hospital, battling not only the virus but also the lack of adequate medical supplies.

“The first three weeks, we were really in that climbing phase,” said Langford, normally a lab coordinator at Oklahoma Christian University’s school of nursing and a nurse at a nearby hospital. “They use that terminology, ‘We don’t want hospitals to become overwhelmed,’ and that was happening.”

Langford had signed on with an agency that works with the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Within 24 hours of contacting the agency, she was on a plane headed to New York City. “I thought, ‘Well, this is a really cool opportunity to go and serve,’” she said. “So it was really spontaneous, but that’s my personality.”

Said her husband, Ben, a Bible professor at Oklahoma Christian University and a minister for the Springs Church of Christ in Edmond, Okla.: “She just said, ‘I think I could do this. I think I’m gifted for this.’”

The decision made him a little anxious. “But I thought she was right,” he said. “When we dropped her off at the airport and said goodbye, I had a moment of thinking, ‘What are we doing?’”

OKLAHOMAN KYM LANGFORD witnessed death and hope while caring for numerous coronavirus patients.

A SHOCKING SCENE

Earlier in their marriage, the Langfords had spent six years as missionaries in Jinja, Uganda. Kym’s time there inspired her to go to nursing school when they returned to the U.S.

Her Uganda experience, she said, may even have helped her handle the stress of working without basic resources in New York. “I’m talking about something as simple as those little oxygen sensors you put on your finger, and you can watch and see how someone’s oxygen level is,” Langford said. “We didn’t have those. … This is a respiratory disease, and I had no idea how my patients were doing, most of the time, when it came to their breathing.”

Communication with the patients’ families also was limited. The hospital didn’t have staff to answer the phones on each floor. Most rooms didn’t have private phones. Many patients had lost their phones getting to the hospital. “Families were desperate to find out what’s going on,” she said. “Some patients were unsure if they would ever see their families again.”
again. She prayed with those who were especially anxious and willing. One night she made it a point to allow each of her patients to use her phone to send a text message or make a quick call to a loved one.

“You’re in a crisis,” she said, “and these family members needed to know what was going on and if their loved one was doing OK.”

It was exhausting. And the fear of getting the virus herself was real.

“You know there’s the risk of getting sick,” she said, “and I thought, ‘I don’t want my time here to come to an end,’ and I also didn’t want to end up in a hospital in New York City.”

SHE’D DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN

Knowing her family was safe back home helped her to stay focused. She was diligent about taking care of herself, sleeping as much as she could, taking supplements, drinking a lot of water and eating healthy.

Langford worked all but a few nights. But after her first 12-day stretch, she and a couple of other nurses were given a night off. They stayed up so they wouldn’t mess up their sleep schedule. They walked around the city for hours. The typically bustling metropolis was eerily silent, empty almost.

They saw a few homeless people. A bunch of police.

“It was so crazy,” Langford said.

During her last three weeks, more nurses arrived. That helped reduce the stress. During those weeks, the measures New York City had implemented in hopes of flattening the curve also seemed to be reducing, slowly, the number of patients coming into the hospital.

In early May, she was released to go home. Before returning she was tested for the virus and the antibodies. She tested negative for COVID-19, which meant she could go home without needing to quarantine from her family. She was, however, positive for the antibodies, which means she had been infected at some point.

Even with the antibodies, she said she will keep wearing a mask and social-distancing herself from others. After seeing firsthand the damage the virus can cause, she wants to do what she can to protect her family and others.

Langford knows of some who have questioned the reality of the virus, despite knowing her.

“There are a lot of people out there that think it’s not real,” she said.

As unbelievable as Langford’s experience turned out to be, she said there’s no doubt that she would do it all over again.

“I wouldn’t hesitate. I do feel like I made a big difference,” she said. “I do feel like all of these nurses coming in from all over the United States helped a ton and that there’s a lot less death in these hospitals because we were there.”
Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Churches of Christ across the nation have had to get creative in finding ways to serve their communities.

The economic shutdown left many families struggling to put food on the table, which provided some churches an opportunity to step in and help.

From Texas to Ohio, food drives and meal services helped fill the gaps for families in need.

“It is so encouraging to see the church come together to serve those in need,” said Caroline Morales, a children’s minister and volunteer coordinator with Houston’s Impact Church of Christ. “We have been able to serve more families in a much more efficient manner because of their help. We are so thankful that Jesus brings us all together to love others.”

The Impact church has served the community through its resource and food distribution centers since 1986. Before the coronavirus outbreak, the church would serve an average of 225 families a week. Since mid-March, that number has grown to as many as 800.

Jeanine Devine and her husband, Frank, who is an elder of the Memorial Church of Christ, about 10 miles west of the Impact church, have been volunteering at the food drive once a week.

“I love coming to Impact because it’s seeing God in action,” Jeanine said. “It gives you the goosebumps.”

About 35 miles north of Houston, Grace Crossing, a Community Church of Christ in Conroe, Texas, has also changed the way its food distribution ministry operates.

Before the pandemic, the congregation held a food distribution every month from its pavilion. Volunteers were able to meet, converse with, pray with and minister to the people they were serving.

But due to COVID-19 safety protocols in the county, the National Guard was called in to assist in the distribution.

Grace Crossing minister Doug Peters said the number of church volunteers was limited, and instead of meeting and ministering to people face to face, food recipients were required to stay in their cars.

“We look forward to the time we can have more interpersonal relationships and have a close conversation and (take) prayer requests with the people,” Peters said. “But, for now, the important thing is that we’re serving the people by distributing food, and we continue to do that in the name of Jesus and are prayerful for them in this ministry.”

Two hundred miles north, Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson called his friend Sammie L. Berry, minister for the Dallas West Church of Christ, asking if he would help organize an event to provide milk for families in need.

“Of course I said, ‘Absolutely! I would be happy to do it,’” Berry said. Berry’s congregation partnered with Borden Dairy, the Dallas Independent School District and local faith leaders to give out 1,000 gallons of milk — in the pouring rain — to families in need. Volunteers were sporting rain jackets, ponchos, umbrellas, and of course, masks.

“My fear was, we have these thousand gallons of milk, and people wouldn’t show up in the rain. But they came,” Berry said. “We were supposed to be there from 3 until 6. Well, at about 5, we were back in our cars going home because we were turning people away.”

The Gray Road Church of Christ, north of Cincinnati, hosted a contactless grocery drive for its community. About 40 mask-wearing church volunteers helped provide produce, chicken, fish and laundry detergent to 1,100 families in need.

“We entitled it ‘Caring in a Crisis’ because we believe that the church ought to be able to care at all times, especially this time,” minister Jeremy Flowers said.

“It means a lot to me because coming up as a child my family depended on getting subsidized food from various community resources,” he said. “I’m just glad because now I’m in a position personally, spiritually and financially where I can give back to the community where we reside.”

The Newburg Church of Christ near Louisville, Ky., provided a meal to its community in another form: a drive-thru cookout.

Minister Bryan C. Jones brought the idea to the congregation as a way to let the community know that the church was there to help them.

The church served hot dogs, hamburgers and chips. Members also passed out hand sanitizer and toys to the kids. In all, 177 families were fed.

“It just felt good to let people know that we’re here for them, to help them out,” said Shannon Pearson, a member of the Newburg church.
Socially distanced summer camp?

PRECAUTIONS AND CANCELLATIONS are an unfortunate reality for church groups in 2020.

By Laura Akins | The Christian Chronicle

Nothing about the year 2020 has been easy.

From a worldwide pandemic to racial tensions, many Christians wish they could step away and recharge at their beloved Bible camps.

But many church camps won’t host traditional sessions this summer. Others are canceling altogether. “I’m very sad because it was finally my turn to go, and all of the sudden it was canceled,” said Reese Rivera, a fifth grader who has watched her siblings go to Camp Blue Haven in New Mexico since she was 3. “I was looking forward to the campout and swing my siblings told me about.”

Directors and board members of camps associated with Churches of Christ told The Christian Chronicle that they’re heartbroken for Rivera and countless other kids. “I’m sure there will be moments throughout the summer that will be tough,” said David Moses, associate dean of students for Abilene Christian University and director of the West Texas school’s Leadership Camps.

“Yet, I am at complete peace with the decision,” he said. “It was the right decision, plain and simple.”

Other colleges and universities associated with Churches of Christ have canceled their summer camps, including Encounter at Lubbock Christian University in Texas and Uplift at Harding University in Searcy, Ark. Both are providing virtual experiences for youth groups. Oklahoma Christian University’s Zenith and Camp Cornerstone are selling camp shirts to keep morale up.

A previous session at Sooner Youth Camp in Ardmore, Okla., demonstrates the difficulty of social distancing during a camp. This summer’s sessions were canceled.

Taking a Financial Hit

Charles Grinnell, president of the National Association of Christian Camps, said he and his board of directors are not making recommendations to Bible camps as to whether they should open or close this summer.

But the organization is able to provide resources and updates on how COVID-19 is affecting Christian camping and what to expect moving forward.

“Many camps are not opening at all due to state regulations forbidding overnight camps or because of cautious boards,” Grinnell said. “while some camps are opening with a shortened season.”

Camp Wyldewood in Searcy is one of many Christian camps whose directors made the heartbreaking decision to cancel summer sessions. “It’s hard to imagine this place being empty all summer,” said executive director Chad Hudelson. Without those sessions, Wyldewood will take a hit financially. About two-thirds of its revenue comes from its summer camp program and only one-third comes from rentals for retreats throughout the year.

“We will make it through this difficult time,” added Hudelson, who was a Wyldewood counselor in the 1990s. “We believe God will continue to find a way to use camps like ours to share his message.”

To Camp or Not to Camp?

Sooner Youth Camp in Ardmore, Okla., was planning to hold both of its July sessions, capping the number of campers well below capacity, having them eat meals in small groups and socially distancing them as much as possible.

But just before press time, the camp’s board decided to cancel. Some members said they were 80 percent sure camp could go on, but if there were any doubt, the camps should be called off.

“So many summer camps (church, sports, art) have already canceled their summer plans, making this an even tougher decision for our board of directors,” said Lisa Johnson, who has attended Sooner Youth Camp since the summer of 1974 as a camper and then counselor.

Temperature Checks and Waivers

Thirty miles east of Ardmore, Pettijohn Springs Christian Camp is still planning to host campers this summer.

“As time passed and we learned more, we felt the risks were lower and we had a better grasp of what needed to be done to make a safe camp environment,” said John Curtis, a member of the Pettijohn board of directors. “Plus, camps were given the go-ahead to reopen under the next phase of the state guidelines. So we gave the July session directors the opportunity to hold their sessions if they felt comfortable doing so.”

Session leaders will be required to take campers’ temperatures before the youths exit their vehicles, followed by daily temperature checks.

Extra cleaning procedures will be taken for the bathhouses, dining hall, kitchen, sports equipment, along with extra hand washing stations around campgrounds. And all camp staff — cooks, managers, maintenance personnel — will wear masks to minimize outside contamination.

Camp Deer Run in east Texas also will open its gates to eager campers beginning June 21, with many of the same COVID-19 precautions.

The camp’s website asks campers to practice physical distancing for 14 days prior to camp. They must wash their hands often and are not allowed if they’ve come into contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within 14 days of camp. They also must sign waivers. Despite the new requirements, many youths are still signing up and joining wait lists.

“This year seems special because all other youth events have been canceled,” said Casey Duty, a Pettijohn camper from Arlington, Texas. “I’m sure (camp) will have a different feeling but will bring a new appreciation ... because it’s the only big thing to look forward to.”

Information on Camps

In this report is subject to change. Find this story at christianchronicle.org/2020camps for updates.
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Thank you!
Dave Board, President
Orphan’s Lifeline

A ministry of the Churches of Christ for over 20 years
WORSHIP: Amid coronavirus threat, churches take precautions

FROM PAGE 3

leaders surveyed by the Chronicle.

“This is the biggest concern for me is members who are more at risk returning because they miss their church family,” she added, “and then having others also present who didn’t take precautions to avoid the virus or aren’t taking it seriously.”

At the Forsythe Church of Christ in Monroe, La., members will find assigned seating, at least 6 feet between families and bathroom use for emergencies only.

Missing from the Louisiana church’s meeting plan: any guilt for those who choose to stay home, because of age or a compromised immune system.

“There are multiple examples of church gatherings being superspreader events,” noted a letter by the Forsythe elders, “and we are working hard to avoid such a result.”

The Elgin Church of Christ, a Spanish-speaking congregation northwest of Chicago, is inviting one-third of members to participate in each Sunday assembly.

“The other two-thirds stay home and watch online,” minister Ricardo Barrera said of the church’s means of creating space in a normally crowded auditorium.

Steve Beall, elder of the CrossPoint Church of Christ in Grand Prairie, Texas, said: “We can’t or won’t force our senior members to stay home, but we want them to know we encourage them to stay home for a while longer, and it is OK. The new normal will be missing many of our treasured traditions, such as children’s classes, hospitality table (snacks), coffee and the most difficult of all — hugs, kisses and handshakes.”

REOPENING PLANS VARY

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued interim guidance “to help communities of faith discern how best to practice their beliefs while keeping their staff and congregations safe.”

Original CDC guidance was changed at the White House’s request.

Some leaders who responded to the Chronicle’s survey voiced frustration with members politicizing the question of when to reopen.

Specific reopening plans vary from congregation to congregation, depending on leaders’ attitudes concerning COVID-19’s threat and wide-ranging state restrictions on large-group meetings.

“When we closed our doors, the staff asked the question, ‘How can we take everything we do and translate it to an online format?’” said Chris McCurley, preaching minister for the Oldham Lane Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas. “Through online content, daily Facebook devotionals, Zoom meetings, drive-by fellowships, etc., we have been able to stay connected.”

But McCurley said he’s excited to see his “Oldham Lane peeps” back in the church building, albeit with social distancing and the most vulnerable members encouraged to stay home.

At the Downtown Church of Christ in Midland, Texas, members will pick up individual communion wafer/cup sets at entrances and see hymns and Scripture readings displayed on a screen. To lessen germ exposure, no pew Bibles or songbooks will be available.

In developing guidelines for resumption of services, the West Texas church grappled with whether to allow singing. “Given how long the virus remains airborne … we may end up reviving the ancient practice of chanting,” minister Greg Fleming joked in May.

Gary Kirkendall, minister for the 120-member Hilton Head Church of Christ in South Carolina, echoed Fleming: “There is concern that projecting singing voices will increase the opportunity for spreading the virus.”

TOGETHER AGAIN AFTER MONTHS APART

Some churches, including the Decatur Church of Christ in Texas, began meeting weeks ago.

Beverly Ross, whose husband, Rick, preaches for the North Texas church, said it “took an army of volunteers” to pull off the first Sunday back.

“We had volunteers to sanitize between services, people to remind us of social distancing and people to pass out communion in baggies,” she wrote on Facebook. “I faced the front door where I could see every set of eyes coming in our north entrance.

“I found myself drawn to the eyes of the people I hadn’t seen in over 10 weeks,” she added. “Many of us wore masks to protect the vulnerable among us. But those eyes spoke it all. Some were exhausted, some were a bit confused looking around to take in the changes, some were totally excited to be back!”

The Hentown Church of Christ in rural Blakely, Ga., has no room in its small building for members to separate themselves.

Instead, the Georgia congregation has turned to “drive-in” services.

“People sit on the tailgate of their trucks or in the hatchback of their cars,” church treasurer June Winkler said. “Each family brings their communion emblems. There is no...
handshaking or Southern hugging, but it is wonderful to see each other, and even though we are 6 feet apart, we can still communicate.”

Other churches remain undecided on when to resume in-person gatherings.

The Oakland Church of Christ in Southfield, Mich., has had multiple members suffer from the virus, minister Edward Cribbs said. Other members have lost children, siblings, parents, in-laws, cousins and friends to COVID-19.

The Michigan church’s tentative goal is to return to the building in July. Work is ongoing to prepare the building for that time.

“We are installing hands-free fixtures in bathrooms. We are expanding monitors in classrooms and offices to allow for viewing of services outside of the auditorium,” Cribbs said. “We are installing hand sanitizer stations throughout the building. We are purchasing masks and gloves for use by members.”

‘RED, YELLOW, GREEN’ APPROACH

In Alabama, the Madison Church of Christ has developed a “red, yellow, green” approach for meeting.

The red group worships at home. The yellow group meets at the building but wears masks. The green group gathers in a different area of the church with social distancing but no masks.

To promote unity, each group watches the same prerecorded service.

“We want to be together in our worship, and to do that, we want to be singing together all the same songs,” shepherd Mark Kelly said in a church video. “We’ll be hearing the same message from God’s word, spoken to us by the same person. The same prayers.”

The Rochester Church of Christ in Indiana is coming together for worship but not Bible classes.

“We think we have figured out how to do it responsibly,” minister Jim Dillinger said. “The whole mask vs. no mask argument is going to be an issue, in my opinion.”

The church is encouraging but not requiring members to wear masks, Dillinger said.

“We also have a separate room for those not feeling safe to mingle,” he said. “Our county is rural, so it’s had very few positive cases, and that has lessened fears considerably.”

After months of virtual services, some changes may be more subtle than others.

“Even though people have missed greatly getting to see each other … they have loved the whole casual pace,” said Danny Holman, minister for the South Main Church of Christ in Greenville, Miss. “Sunday mornings are much less stressful.

“When I was a youth minister, we always worried about being detrimental to families by over-programming,” Holman added. “Now I am having to ask that about the church in general.”
ACROSS THE NATION

ARIZONA

SURPRISE — The coronavirus pandemic forced the Surprise Church of Christ to stop meeting in person, but it didn’t keep the congregation from serving its community.

“Behind the scenes, a group of ladies have set up calling each member to check for needs, whether it be physical or spiritual,” church secretary Vicki Fausett said.

Other ladies formed a sewing circle to provide masks when there was a shortage. They made hundreds of masks for the Navajo Nation, a local rehab center and a food bank. “At a time when so many feel lost because of a pandemic, the Lord’s church sees a need to be met,” Fausett said.

INDIANA

BROWNSBURG — Forced to cancel its Vacation Bible School because of the COVID-19 shutdown, the Brownsburg Church of Christ tried a creative approach.

Instead of its regular four-day, in-person VBS, the elders asked member Ron Milliner to develop a four-week online study on Noah and the flood. Milliner is a retired instructional technologist.

Families will be “looking at videos, reading and discussing materials... as well as engaging in various outside projects,” Milliner said. “Good can come out of adversity.”

TENNESSEE

ENGLEWOOD — The Liberty Hill Church of Christ in McMinn County is celebrating its bicentennial.

One of the nation’s oldest Churches of Christ, the congregation had a special service recently to mark the milestone, although the coronavirus pandemic kept attendance down.

Church member Joe Guy, McMinn County historian and sheriff, gave a presentation on the church’s history. Dwane Casteel, associate director of Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, was among those present.

His great-great-great grandfather, Barney Casteel, was the first preacher for the congregation, which traces its roots to 1820. His father, Hayse Casteel, did fill-in preaching there in the 1950s.

“... as well as engaging in various outside projects,” Milliner said. “Good can come out of adversity.”

Stuck at home? Join the Chronicle for a ‘virtual visit’

Doyle Corder, worship minister for the Southwest Church of Christ in Amarillo, Texas, and his family sing during a broadcast of the congregation’s worship service. The church is featured in The Christian Chronicle’s “virtual visit” series.

Other congregations in the series include the Kent County Church of Christ in Rhode Island, the Corona Church of Christ in California, the Thomaston Road Church of Christ in Macon, Ga., and the Fiske Boulevard Church of Christ in Rockledge, Fla. (Make sure to watch minister Randy Cole Sims Sr.’s radio sermon “A Frog in the Master Bathroom.”) See christianchronicle.org/virtualvisit.

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**Center Peace**
GEORGE FLOYD: Ministers’ letter targets violence against unarmed blacks

FROM PAGE 1

American congregation — the Lewis Street Church of Christ in Little Rock, Ark. — was torched.

“The senseless act of violence and indignation bestowed upon our place of worship has brought much sorrow, dismay and confusion,” the church said on its Facebook page.

“However, Satan may have destroyed the house of God, but he will not destroy the people of God who remain faithful in his son Jesus Christ.”

‘RESULTS OF RACIAL HATRED’

On Memorial Day, police were called after Floyd was accused of trying to pass a fake $20 bill at a convenience store.

Officer Derek Chauvin, who pinned Floyd’s neck with his knee and ignored the suspect’s cries, is charged with second-degree murder, third-degree murder and manslaughter. Three other officers who were at the scene are charged with aiding and abetting.

After the killing, a group of black ministers, including Blakney, penned a letter calling for justice in the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Dreajson Reed, Breonna Taylor and Floyd.

“We, the undersigned ministers and leaders of local congregations of churches of Christ across our nation, are deeply disturbed by multiple reported acts of violence that have been perpetrated recently against unarmed African American men and women,” said the letter signed by a diverse group of more than 300 Christians. “These incidents have forced us to come face-to-face with the ever-increasing numbers and the results of racial hatred.”

Richard Price, minister for the North Green Street Church of Christ in Tupelo, Miss., was the letter’s chief architect. Price said the message seems to be resonating with many church leaders.

“Something about speaking and saying something is wrong is so powerful,” he said.

Among other developments:

• As fires, tear gas and violence reigned on the streets of many American cities, 169 members of Churches of Christ gathered online to pray for justice, compassion and peace.

• “In a time of civic unrest, when our country is torn apart because of racial injustices and systemic oppression ... it is our Christian duty to exercise our faith through prayer,” said Orlander Thomas, minister for the Southside Church of Christ in Durham, N.C.

• In Memphis, Tenn., where King was assassinated in 1968, white minister Josh Ross and black minister Jimmy L. Stokes II convened an honest discussion ... on racial injustice, the Holy Spirit, unity and why #blacklivesmatter.

• “There’s a lot of good officers in our country. In fact, my son is a sheriff’s deputy,” said Stokes, who serves the Northeast Side Church of Christ. “I support the blue, but what I also support is righteousness.”

• Social injustice isn’t new, he said, pointing to the crucifixion of Jesus.

• “You see Jesus being taken by the hands of Jewish leaders, and Pilate says, ‘I have no fault,’ and Herod says, ‘I have no fault,’” Stokes said. “It was the religious who said, ‘Crucify him,’ to the point where they let a murderer free.”

• Said Ross, who preaches for the Sycamore View Church of Christ: “White supremacy, abuse of power, forms of oppression — there are a lot of things we have to name so we can move to a place of racial reconciliation.”

• In Atlanta, a diverse group of ministers stood on the steps of the Simpson Street Church of Christ — two blocks from King’s home — at a prayer vigil attended by 300 people.

Organizer Richard L. Barclay, senior minister for the Stonecrest Church of Christ in McDonough, Ga., said the peaceful gathering’s purpose was “to raise awareness of the critical need for a dramatic change in the manner in which our cities are policed” and “to breathe into our communities a breath of Christian love and care as the best antidote for this pandemic of hate and disregard.”

• Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson, a Church of Christ member, touted prayer as the cure for the strife that gripped his city, as noted by the Dallas Morning News.

At the Dallas West Church of Christ, Johnson invited four ministers to pray: Sammie Berry of the host congregation, John Mark Davidson of the Skillman Church of Christ, J.K. Hamilton of the Mountain View Church of Christ and Jonathan Morrison of the Cedar Crest Church of Christ. Each prayed for a symbolic eight minutes and 46 seconds.

That’s the length of time that “a human being with a heart and soul had a knee pressed onto his neck on the rough pavement of a city street,” Davidson said.

• Just off Interstate 10 in the heart of Houston, members of the Fifth Ward Church of Christ staged a
peaceful sit-in, flashing signs such as “Love,” “Dream,” “Peace,” “Honor” and “Mercy” at passing motorists.

“At this critical time in the United States and the world ... we’re issuing a call to justice, peace and love,” minister Gary Smith said, “but in a manner that’s pleasing to God.”

• **In West Texas**, the Carl Spain Center on Race Studies and Spiritual Action at Abilene Christian University organized a community rally promoting national unity.

“In this hour of boiling hostility, the clouds of hatred are pouring down the acid rain of chaos upon the uncovered head of a dis-United States of America,” said Jerry Taylor, the center’s founding director. “We call all Americans to be receptive to prophetic truth that can deliver the nation from its current state of spiritual disorientation and social disintegration.”

• **Two Benton, Ark.**, congregations — the white Northside Church of Christ and the black Johnson Street Church of Christ — held a special joint assembly with the theme “Unity and Harmony in Christ.”

“How do we get unity in a world where people say color doesn’t matter, but they say, ‘I’ve got this black friend,’ or, ‘I’ve got this white friend?’” he added. “The very adjective that you place in front of the name says that there is an issue.”

Real progress will require more than familiarity between black and white Christians, Threatt said.

Rather, children of God — such as the Northside and Johnson Street members — must become family, he said.

Those two congregations worship together at least twice a year and partner on Vacation Bible School.

“But folks, we can do more,” Northside minister Jim Gardner said. “And we must do more as a living illustration and testimony to a divided world of what unity and harmony in Christ can be.”

**DECADES OF SYSTEMIC RACISM**

David Watkins III, minister for the Twin City Church of Christ in Texarkana, Texas, stressed that the letter penned by the black ministers concerns more than Floyd’s case.

“This is about decades of systemic racism and oppression against black people,” Watkins said.

The letter states: “Collectively, we call for every American of every ethnicity to use their voice to decry the systemic racism that hunts down black and brown men and women. We agree that no longer will we accept the hollow words of our caucasian counterparts without the investment of their actions concerning our fracturing. We expect for every believer and American, regardless of race, to recognize the value of black lives and advocate for our fair and equitable treatment.”

In an interview, Watkins described a police officer stopping him for speeding last year. The minister’s son, then 7 years old, was in the car.

“The speed limit changed on me. I was speeding. The cop pulled me over,” Watkins said. “The first thing my son said to me is, ‘Daddy, is he going to shoot you?’”

For a child to ask such a question, Watkins said, “is all that I need to know about what he knows about being black in America.”

Among the hundreds who signed the letter was Sara Cawood, a Sunday school teacher at the Kingston Church of Christ in Tennessee.

“I feel guilty for being silent for too long and being a part of churches where no one speaks up about injustice,” said Cawood, a 72-year-old white woman. “Too often silence is taken to be agreement, so I’ve decided to own my responsibility to make my views clear and stand for justice.”

Said Adam Metz, minister for the Alum Creek Church of Christ in Lewis Center, Ohio: “What especially drew my interest is that this letter was crafted by fellow ministers who happen to be black. The racial divide is acutely complex in our fellowship, and I feel that African Americans get far too little voice. ... I have striven to just be quiet through this process and listen to the voices who know and understand this so much better than me.”

In the outcry over Floyd’s death, Blakney sees reason for hope.

“That’s in-your-face kind of stuff,” the civil rights activist said of the video. “And if God is in you, that did something to you as an individual to say, ‘Something needs to be done.’”

“And so I think the young whites — I think many of them are now getting involved in this process,” he added. “Hope does spring eternal in my soul because (the world) can be different.”
Even in lockdown, Asian church doesn’t let its building sit empty

SINGAPORE — In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Moulmein Church of Christ found a way to put its big, new building to good use.

Five years ago, the congregation tore down and rebuilt its 55-year-old facility, sandwiched between a massive Buddhist temple and a Hindu center in this tightly packed Southeast Asian city-state.

Once dwarfed by its neighbors, the church now worships in a modern, four-story facility — or at least it did until the pandemic.

As its members met online, the church volunteered its two-bedroom apartment to international students returning from abroad.

Charmaine Neo, who was studying in London, and her sister, Sarah, an exchange student in Warsaw, Poland, quarantined in the apartment.

After enduring a stressful return to her homeland — along with rude comments and micro-aggressions due to her Chinese ethnicity — Charmaine Neo was “a little annoyed” by the idea of serving her quarantine in the church building, she said. “I missed home, and I was quite done with feeling unwelcome.”

But “we received so much help and support from everybody — particularly uncle Sung Kok,” she said. “Every morning he would take our lunch orders and personally deliver the food to our doorstep. He even went the extra mile and bought us extra snacks and desserts.”

(Sung Kok Wong is a caretaker for the church building, and “uncle” is a term of affection used across Southeast Asia.)

Many of Singapore’s COVID-19 cases are among its 1.4 million foreign workers who live in conditions that put them at high risk for the virus, said Kim Kai Chan, Moulmein’s administration minister.

As the government stepped up its efforts to test foreign workers for the virus, the church housed healthcare workers Yu Han Wong and Huey Ting, who volunteered to help conduct the tests in the high-density dormitories where the workers live.

“I was saying yes to an invitation to participate in what God was doing in the neglected and abandoned spaces of society,” said Wong, a member of the Moulmein church. “My hope is that this newfound momentum of national interest in the welfare of foreign workers will continue even after COVID-19.”

The church also joined an effort by Singapore’s churches to house the city’s homeless during the lockdown. Moulmein converted a floor of its classrooms for the effort.

Mit Vikraman, the church’s youth minister, coordinated the project, working alongside Singaporean authorities and other church groups.

“It was powerful to see so many people who do not know each other, nor have ever met, work together,” Vikraman said. “When Christians follow Christ in doing good deeds, we shine like a city on a hill that cannot be hidden.”

The church supports mission work across Southeast Asia and beyond, Chan said. But the pandemic has emphasized to church members that “we have a great mission field right here.”

CORRECTION: A story on Page 14 of the June issue contained an error. A Church of Christ in Prague, Czech Republic, not Slovakia, hosts online services via Zoom. Church members from locales including Slovakia participate.
A church like a bus

IN EUROPE’S WESTERNMOST capital, a small Church of Christ experiences lots of goodbyes but has ‘a spiritual footprint that spans continents.’

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

LISBON, Portugal

‘C’hurch is like a bus,” Diana Neves said. “People come in; people go out. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve had to say goodbye.”

She was describing the small Church of Christ she serves, the Igreja de Cristo Lisboa, in continental Europe’s westernmost capital.

The goodbyes are happy ones, for the most part. The congregation averages 40 to 60 souls most Sundays, perhaps 100 or more on Easter and Christmas, but it’s a transient fellowship.

Immigrants from Africa find a home here briefly before moving to other parts of the European Union for jobs. U.S. students on summer missions are here for just a few weeks. Missionaries worship here and learn the language before heading to Portuguese-speaking nations like Angola and Mozambique. Plus tourists.

“We have a lot of people coming through our doors,” said Neves, who helps coordinate the church’s youth ministry while raising five children — four of them teenagers — and finishing a psychology degree. Her husband, Ricardo, is a vocational minister for the church.

When a visitor comes to church, “we don’t want that person to leave the church without a contact,” Neves said, “without planning something.” This, of course, was before COVID-19. As the pandemic swept across Europe, hitting especially hard in neighboring Spain, Portugal locked down. Suddenly, there were no somethings to plan. The church “like a bus” was in a mass transit halt.

That’s beginning to change — more quickly in Portugal than elsewhere. The nation of 10.3 million people reported fewer cases of the disease than other European destinations. It is one of the few countries reopening to U.S. tourists without requiring a two-week quarantine.

And that could be good news for the church, which has served as a short-term home for business executives, international students and hip-hop artists and has a network of alumni around the world.

“They meet on the ground floor of an obscure building on a side street of Portugal’s capital,” said Nathan Holland, a missionary in Portuguese-speaking Angola, “but they have a spiritual footprint that spans continents.”

McDONALD’S VS. THE CHURCH

Before the lockdown, Neves spoke to The Christian Chronicle in Lisbon’s iconic, 183-year-old bakery, Pastéis de Belém.

The blue-and-white-tiled pastry shop was birthed in another government shutdown — after the Liberal Revolution of 1820. Religious orders like the Jesuits were expelled, and the government seized their convents and monasteries. To survive, a former worker at one of the monasteries sold baked goods from a shop in western Lisbon’s Belém district.

Two centuries later, over tiny cups of powerful coffee and a plate
Ana Isabel Carvalho, grew up in the projects in Lisbon’s low-income neighborhoods. "We were a great adjustment, but lots of great victories," Neves said. "We were chasing our dreams, praying, struggling and working together on a group program. I have had many opportunities to share the Word with people I knew."

Her daughters have been studying the Bible with Jennifer Neves. "They are more open to receiving the Good News," Neves said. "Every member welcomed us and suffered our pitiful Portuguese. They encouraged us to preach and teach, even when we were wrong to our notes and mispronouncing every word.

The church recently resumed in-person meetings. "We arrived at the airport on Friday, speaking a word of Portuguese, knowing no one, no place to stay, just a backpacking tent in our bags," Reese said. "We found the address of the church and were able to connect with Courtney Marques, an alumna of the Texas-based Adventures in Missions. We were in need of the church and were able to connect with them."

They encouraged us to preach and teach, even when we were wrong to our notes and mispronouncing every word.

The church extended its hospitality to members of Lisbon’s International Church of Christ as that fellowship, known for its controversial discipling practices, went through a leadership crisis in the mid-2000s. The Iglesia de Cristo provided a place to heal for many of the young members who had been part of that movement," Meyer said. "It was especially important to them to have a ministry to reach out to youth in that busy city."

They were in need of a home themselves, in 2005, when a survey trip to Angola fell apart, and the missionaries decided — at the last minute — on a shoestring budget — to travel to Portugal for a few weeks of language training. "We were in need of a home, and we had no other options," Neves said. "We found the church and were able to connect with them."

Church members found a Portuguese man and worshiped with him. "We're just absolutely passionate about reaching the local population," Neves said. "We're trying to make them feel welcome and to show them that God has blessed us in so many ways to see transformation."

The Portuguese, after all, are a mission field, she said. Although they tend to be more religiously observant than other Europeans, most do not attend worship regularly, according to the Pew Research Center. "Reaching the native Portuguese and all who dwell in Lisbon, a city of 1.1 million souls, can be overwhelming," Diana Neves said. She and her husband have experienced burnout. They began participating in an international ministry that provides counseling and support for caregivers in need. Settling in the lives of those they nurtured reintegrated them. Before the lockdown, they took overnight of the church’s youth group. "Our passion is transformation," she said. "To see a life being transformed, we're just absolutely passionate about that, and God has blessed us in so many ways to see transformation."

Regardless of how the church “like a boss” changes as its doors reopen, she said, its members will continue to support hospital and若是有更多关于非洲葡萄牙的陈述，请随时转发。
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FOUR LESSONS for members of Churches of Christ – black and white – outraged by George Floyd’s death.

‘We are not screaming when God is screaming’

BY CHERYL MANN BACON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

We lose connection with the heart of God, and we stop screaming at the stuff God screams at, and that’s a problem,” said Rigel J. Dawson, minister for the Family of Faith Church of Christ in Flint, Mich. “We are not screaming when God is screaming.”

Amid national outrage over the killing of George Floyd, The Christian Chronicle convened an 80-minute panel via Zoom with five African American ministers and two Christian journalists — one black, one white — who have covered civil rights stories for more than 30 years.

Bobby Ross Jr., the Chronicle’s editor-in-chief, gave the panelists ample time to talk between questions. “I just wanted to listen,” he said. The panelists spoke from experience and from the heart, their answers focused on a few themes: History. Power. Outrage. Leadership.

1. We don’t know our history.

For Jerry Mitchell, award-winning journalist and author of “Race Against Time,” which tells the story of four civil rights era cold cases that ultimately led to convictions because of Mitchell’s investigative reporting, history both tells and teaches about race in America.

“The thing that strikes me is we in America don’t know our history, because so many of these things are echoes of the past,” said Mitchell, a member of the Skyway Hills Church of Christ in Pearl, Miss.

Another recent case, involving Ahmad Arbery, who was jogging when he was shot and killed in Brunswick, Ga., on Feb. 23, reminded Mitchell of 19th Century slavery patrols.

“Basically, if you’re an African American and you’re walking, they would stop you, any white man. Not just the people that were the law, but any white man had the authority to pull over anyone black and question them,” Mitchell said. “You had to produce a pass that showed what plantation you were from and where you were going.”

Russell Pointer Sr., senior minister for the Minneapolis Central Church of Christ, is watching history play out in his own city.

“Now I don’t know what to tell my boys. I don’t know what to tell my church,” Pointer said. “I used to tell them, ‘Put your hands on the steering wheel. Put your hands up.’ You still get shot. ‘Don’t say nothing.’ You still get shot.”

“You talk. You still get shot. You get out of the car. You still get shot. So I don’t know what to tell my boys and my men. I say, ‘Look, try to live to see another day. If they say it, do it. Fight to see another day.’”

Fellow ministers who are white don’t share the same experience.

“I was talking to some of my white colleague preachers, and they laughed when I told them I have to have lessons and tell my boys what to do when they get pulled over,” he said.

John Edmerson was a youth minister for the 137th and Avalon Church of Christ in Los Angeles in 1992 when riots began after the beating of Rodney King. Edmerson remembers when it began.

“I was up in my office, and on that day the first thing you started smelling was smoke,” said Edmerson, now senior minister for the Church of Christ at the Vineyard in Phoenix. “I went around the whole church. I was like, ‘Man, is the church on fire?’ Nope, the church wasn’t on fire, L.A. was on fire.

“There was such a visceral reaction, and it touched people so deep. I think in the first few days of the affair, we could have gotten on top of it if we were more action-oriented around listening, empathy, allowing people to talk, to cry, and in those moments steering the conversation about being more constructive in ways to respond.”

2. The dynamics of power and racism are inextricable — and systemic.

Pointer believes racism and the debris left in its path are systemic.

“It took years to build this systemic machine, and it’s going to take another systemic machine to break, to dismantle the systemic system of racism,” he said.

“It has to be dealt with, and I hate to say it, but some folks are going to die before it gets better. It can get better, but we have to start somewhere. Let this begin with me; let’s make a difference. I at least want to know I tried to make a difference, even if it’s just one man.”

Mitchell, founder of the Mississippi Center for Investigative Reporting, said the first thing required for justice is truth. “We need the truth, the full amount of truth.” He said if he were reporting the story he’d begin with Chauvin’s history of mistreating people over time.

“And the thing they ought to look at is how was this guy punished in the past and at all? And if he wasn’t punished, why not? And if he wasn’t
SCREAMING: Can we ‘empower a community and still keep our theology sound?’

FROM PAGE 21
punished, you can almost bet there were others who weren’t punished, so therefore it’s a part of their culture.”

B. Chris Simpson, minister for the Holmes Road Church of Christ in Memphis, Tenn., said the racism he sees is not just between individuals.

“It’s understandable for one person to say, ‘I have friends of all ethnicities, and I personally am not racist or prejudiced,’” Simpson said.

“But when we say racist, when we say prejudiced, we are talking about a system. In this system, there is one group vying for power, even if it be subconsciously. When you get power, and enough of it, power sort of makes you drunk.”

“I think as the church, if we are to be serious about making these things right, we have to first check that hunger for power,” Simpson added.

“We’re supposed to find the comfort and the self-esteem and safety in Jesus, which actually gives up power, especially for the smaller, more at risk group.”

Simpson said being equal requires surrendering power.

“You cannot simultaneously be equal to the person and maintain your same amount of power,” he said. “You have to search yourselves, especially my white brothers and sisters have to search themselves to make certain that they’re willing to do that.”

3. White people need to be outraged.

Pointer said addressing systemic racism must begin with white Christians.

“At first, they wanted to just put (the police officer) on administrative leave. But because of the outrage of so many white people in this city who saw that dude and have some morals, some character about themselves, they had to react.”

“Because the white man, if I can say that, is outraged now. They couldn’t even believe they saw that,” Pointer said of the video footage. “If I saw it, they’d say, ‘Oh, that’s just Pointer. Oh, he’s black. He’s mad.”

He’s angry. He thinks he knows all that. ‘If you say it, if a white man says it, I think it carries more weight.’

Sammie Berry is senior minister and an elder of Dallas West Church of Christ, where Botham Jean was a member before he was shot and killed in September 2018 by off-duty Dallas police officer Amber Guyger, who was later convicted of murder.

Berry has been meeting with Dallas-area white ministers to discuss racial relations there.

“I think it’s going to take white people, if I can say it that way, being honest with themselves that we really and truly have a problem,” Berry said.

“We have to sit down and have some honest conversations in order to deal with it.” But he said his white colleagues get a lot of pushback when they raise racial issues from the pulpit. “There’s a lot of work that needs to be done with people in the pews.”

Dawson called it a deeply rooted spiritual problem for believers of every race.

“It goes back to being connected to the heart of God. That’s where a lot of our disconnect comes.

That’s why we don’t see the needed, the very, very necessary outrage,” he said. “Again, it doesn’t have to be out of control, but from our white brethren, we need that outrage. We need you all to be just as upset as we are.”

He recalled the Old Testament prophet Amos. “He literally shows us that the heart of God screams. In the very first chapter, he says the Lord roars from Zion. That’s a powerful image of God’s heart and his outrage and his reaction to the cruelty and injustice and oppression that the book of Amos goes on to detail.

“I think as Christians, as members and as leaders, we become at ease in Zion.”

4. The black church must lead.

Hamil R. Harris reported for the Washington Post for 25 years. He is a minister for the Glenarden Church of Christ in Maryland and a correspondent for The Christian Chronicle. Representing the Post, Harris covered the graveside service for Freddie Gray, whose 2015 death in police custody prompted rioting in Baltimore.

He led a prayer when no ministers were found among attendees.

“I had to stop being a journalist to do a memorial service at the cemetery,” said Harris, who wrote a 2016 Chronicle column about his experience. He sees the preachers’ absence as symptomatic of a different problem in black churches and among black ministers.

“Unfortunately, in our own communities, we don’t see us (in) those demonstrations for Freddie Gray. Sometimes we still struggle as black ministers to not fellowship with people who are not in the Church of Christ,” Harris said.

“Look at Dr. King. Look at Freddie Gray. How do we deal with being part of a coalition, and not also being yoked, and people saying, ‘You’re going with nonbelievers and gays and whatever?’ So what do we do to empower a community and still keep our theology sound and not get kicked out by the elders?”

Berry sees it, too.

The Dallas minister tells congregants, “There are Baptists. There are Methodists. There are Episcopalians. There are Catholics. Those are the people in the community. This is not just a Church of Christ problem, and we cannot solve it only in the Church of Christ.”

Dawson believes reluctance to get involved in activism and protest affects the white church and the black church.

“We’ve cultured ourselves to think, ‘Well, that’s not really a spiritual thing.’ But it is because it goes right to the heart of God.”

Dawson said some church members resist getting involved because they don’t know who is organizing.

“There might be some folks we don’t agree with theologically or politically and all of that, but at some point you have to step out of your comfort zone and take a stand for what is right.”

Edmerson and Simpson both said the black churches need to be a safe place where black Christians can express their anger.

“Burning up your neighborhood is not the way to go,” Edmerson said. “But I understand that, and I’m mad, too. If I’m mad, let’s be mad together. How can we channel this anger and this frustration into some type of vehicle that has a greater outcome than just a few items being destroyed that will probably get repaired in a couple of weeks, and we’ll be right back to square one?”

“Let’s sit down and figure out some strategies of how we can take this unbridled anger and do something with it constructively.”

Anger is appropriate, Simpson said. “We should be angry because we should like what God likes and hate what he hates.”

“But as the church, I think what we need to do is give black people a forum in the church to be angry. Over 40 percent of songs are called lament songs, which are designed to be angry, to be upset and to lay it bare before the Lord. We are not good at that in our church.”

“I think what our black church needs to do is open up forums and teach where we can be angry, we can be scared.”

He said black Christians need to help white Christians learn about racism.

“It takes a certain amount of bravery to be this humble, this scared, this put out. My son is a black boy. I am a 33-year-old black man. My brother is black,” the minister added. “So it’s hard to be that angry and then turn right around to be humble to teach, to not fly off the handle and to not burn the neighborhood.”

“So it’s the church that should counsel us, that should love us and teach us that God is big enough to handle your anger because he’s angry, too.”

SEE A VIDEO of this Dialogue and an expanded story at christianchronicle.org/georgefloyd.
The 40-year-old AMEN Ministry connects Christians in the United States Military with local churches of Christ both overseas and in the U.S.

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THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE
JULY 2020

The Christian Chronicle Crossword

By Myles Mellor | www.ilovecrosswords.com

ACROSS
1. Holy messenger.
3. Abstain from food.
5. “Man of God, there is death in the ___!” (2 Kings 4:40)
12. Final month, abbr.
14. “You shall not ___.” (Exodus 20:15)
15. “You shall ___ the Lord your God, and him only you shall serve.” (Matthew 4:10)
19. A before a vowel.
20. Third book of the OT.
22. Arts degree.
25. Eventual name of 11 across.
27. False gods.
30. “These are men who split communities, for they are led by human ___s and never by the Spirit of God.” (Jude 17-19)
31. Used for mortar in the Tower of Babel.
33. Large pot.
34. Former.
35. “Get up, pick up your ___ and go home.” (Matthew 3:8)
37. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall ______ the earth.” (Matthew 5:5)
39. “Then the devil left him alone, and the angels came to him and took ___ of him” (Matthew 4:11)
41. “He must not be ___-tempered or over-fond of wine ...” (Titus 1:5-9)
42. Have as a possession.
43. “Have done then, with all evil and ___ ...” 1 Peter 2:1

DOWN
1. Prayer ending.
2. “… and can reassure ourselves in the sight of God, even if our hearts make us feel ___.” (1 John 3:19-20).
3. “Search and you will ____” (Matthew 7:7).
4. Street, abbr.
5. Preacher’s podium.
6. The Pharisees tried to ___ Jesus with trick questions.
10. Tree used to make bows.
13. Two letters written by Paul.
14. Jesus is the ___ of God.
17. “Thy ___ come ...” (Proverbs 6:6)
18. “Then give to ___,” he replied “what belongs to ___ and to God what belongs to God.” (Matthew 22:21)
23. He betrayed Jesus.
24. Repentant.
28. He denied Jesus.
32. “Go to the ___, O sluggard ...” (Proverbs 6:6)
33. ___ of the Chaldees, where Abraham was born.
35. Nocturnal flier.
36. ___ gratias.
38. Lady sheep.
39. Word before operate and conspirator.
40. ___ Sinai, abbr.

BIBLE BOWLING
Kingly kindness

Questions from 2 Samuel 9:
1. Who was a servant in Saul’s household? A. Zadok, B. Ziba, C. Anmasa, D. Rogel.
2. What was the name of Jonathan’s son? A. Micah, B. Paltiel, C. Ish-bosheth, D. Mephiboseth.
3. Where was this son staying? A. House of Makir, son of Ammiel, B. House of Obed-Edom, C. With Joeb, son of Zeruiah, D. With Howard, son of Johnson.
4. What did David give this son? A. Gold and silver, B. The land that had been Saul’s, C. 100 horses, D. 1,000 camels and bulls.
5. What did this son call himself as he paid homage to David? A. A mighty man, B. A servant of Saul, C. A worthless flea, D. A dead dog.
6. David told this son that he was to always ___. A. Live in Lo Debar, B. Work the land of his father, C. Eat at his table, D. Oversee his palace.
7. What was the name of this son’s son? A. Michal, B. Makir, C. Mica, D. Ish-bosheth.

CROSSWORD SOLUTION and Bible Bowling answers on Page 34. Questions by Cindy Smethers. To sponsor this page, contact tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org.

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Petition to rename Harding auditorium gains support

AFTER GEORGE FLOYD’S DEATH, an alumnus calls the chapel venue’s namesake ‘a vocal racist and supporter of segregation.’ A name change to honor slain graduate Botham Jean is proposed.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

After the videoed killing of George Floyd, Jackson House couldn’t stay silent any longer.

The 2014 graduate of Harding University in Searcy, Ark., first learned during his student days of claims of racism against the late George S. Benson, whose name adorns the Christian university’s main auditorium.

But after Floyd’s death, House, a 28-year-old white Christian, took action.

He launched a petition on change.org calling for Harding, which is associated with Churches of Christ, to remove Benson’s name from the building where students gather for daily chapel.

“What really motivated me to do this now is just the overwhelming silence of many white Churches of Christ in response to the killing of George Floyd,” said House, referring to the black man whose May 25 death in Minneapolis police custody sparked national outrage and protests against racial injustice.

By press time, nearly 18,000 signatures had endorsed House’s proposal to rename Benson Auditorium in honor of Botham Jean. The 2016 Harding graduate, who was black, was shot to death in his Dallas apartment by a white police officer on Sept. 6, 2018. Harding President Bruce McLarty knew Jean well and delivered the closing prayer at the beloved Dallas West Church of Christ member’s funeral.

Jean’s sister, Allisa Charles-Findley, told The Christian Chronicle she hopes the petition drive succeeds.

“I think it is fitting that Botham is remembered with such a symbol since Harding University played a part in the outstanding person he was,” said Charles-Findley, president of the Botham Jean Foundation, a charity formed in her brother’s memory. “I deeply hope this petition goes a long way and materializes into the Botham Jean Auditorium.”

On social media, though, the petition has stirred heated debate.

Benson “has been gone almost 30 years,” Bobby Wright, a 1997 Harding graduate, wrote on Facebook. “Young people have no clue who he was. One person can bring up something he said during a small window of his life and have 10,000 people wondering why Harding would honor such scum. Of course this is untrue. He was definitely worthy of the honor bestowed to him.”

Wright lamented that the petition “demonizes” a man credited with raising money that kept Harding alive.

“Without him, Harding would probably not be here today,” Wright said. “This is why his name is on the auditorium.”

BLACK STUDENT GROUP SUPPORTS CHANGE

In a Zoom meeting with Harding leaders organized after Floyd’s death, the university’s Black Student Association voiced support for the petition.

Harding posted on Facebook that it’s “working on ways to address the feedback, suggestions and actions,” including considering the request to rename the auditorium.

“We want to do our part to end racism,” Harding’s statement said. “We will strive to better reinforce our position on racism year-round through words and actions. We will continue to listen and learn from conversations and dialogue from our Harding community on social media while we continue to prayerfully work toward change. We believe and affirm that black lives matter, because they do.”

Minority students comprise about 15 percent of Harding’s total enrollment of 4,900.

Namon Pope, secretary and public relations officer of the Black Student Association, said he came across the petition through social media, like most everyone else who has signed it.

“Harding is a good university, but like all of us, it’s made mistakes. Being able to confront those mistakes and own up to them is an important part of the process to move forward and become better,” said Pope, a senior whose home congregation is the Hartsville Pike Church of Christ in Gallatin, Tenn. “It’s hard for black students to attend chapel every morning in an auditorium named after a man who didn’t even want us there.”

DEVOPT CHRISTIAN VS. VOCAL RACIST?

Gospel Advocate described Benson this way in a January 1992 obituary: “He was known for his devotion to Christian education, particularly in the development of Harding University, Oklahoma Christian University and George Benson Junior College in Zambia. He also worked to promote Namwianga Christian School in Zambia. He was an elder at the College Church of Christ and president emeritus of Harding. He was a member of the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.”

But House’s petition paints a far less flattering portrait of Benson, characterizing him as “a vocal racist and supporter of segregation.”

“In particular, he fought to keep the Harding community segregated,” the petition states. “Honoring his legacy by keeping his name on the George S. Benson Auditorium is implicitly honoring his legacy of racism and segregation.”

Barclay Key is an associate professor of history at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and author of the new book “Race and Restoration: Churches of Christ and the Black Freedom Struggle.”

Key referenced Benson in his 2007 doctoral dissertation at the University of Florida, writing that the longtime Harding president “maintained that segregation was providential, a natural order of creation.”

“In lectures to students, he would observe that the ‘redbirds, the bluebirds, the blackbirds, they don’t mix and mingle together, young people!’” Key reported. “In addition, he believed that black people were under the biblical curse of Ham.”

Key also wrote: “Benson’s global humanitarian and evangelistic interests also suggest that he did not harbor racial animosities. Indeed, Benson provides an example of how theology continued to inform the positions of some people whose racism and faith
Benson served as president of Harding, about 50 miles northeast of Little Rock, from 1936 to 1965.

Kevin Redd, who is black and a 2004 Harding graduate, noted that someone proposed renaming the chapel venue as Benson-Jean Auditorium.

“It would be symbolic of progress, embracing change and embracing redemption,” said Redd, one of the preachers for the Millington Church of Christ in Tennessee.

“Apparently, Dr. Benson, at some point, recognized the wrong in his belief and repented, so it’s not really for us to throw stones,” the minister said. “At the same time, we want to be mindful of our black alumni, the challenges they had (even at Harding) and their contributions to our community.”

NAME REMOVED AT OKLAHOMA CHRISTIAN

The Oklahoma native had ties, too, to Oklahoma Christian University, where Benson held the chancellor title from 1957 to 1967.

That university, also associated with Churches of Christ, recently removed Benson’s name from its administration building after a half-century. Risa Forrester, Oklahoma Christian’s chief communications officer, declined to comment on the Harding petition or say whether it influenced the timing of her university’s decision.

“Removing the Benson name was proactive on the part of leadership as the next right step in the work we’ve been doing over the last several years to make sure our campus reflects our values,” Oklahoma Christian President John deSteiguer said in an email to the university staff. “This is the right thing for OC.”

DeSteiguer noted that Benson Hall “was the site of a dark moment in OC’s history, when 18 students courageously took a stand for equal rights and were subsequently arrested and expelled.”

Fifty years after the arrests, Oklahoma Christian invited those students back to campus last year and apologized. The apology came weeks after Oklahoma Christian renamed its auditorium after some students, faculty members and alumni raised questions about whether the former namesake, N.B. Hardeman, was a racist — a charge denied by his great-grandson.

“In matters of racial diversity, inclusion and equity, OC must do better,” deSteiguer, who attended a recent Black Lives Matter rally in Oklahoma City, said in his email. “Must be better. And we will.”

But Andy Hutchison, a 1993 Oklahoma Christian graduate and father of a nursing student at the university, voiced frustration with his alma mater’s actions.

“Guys, this attempt at rewriting history today to make people feel better about something that happened before they were born is getting old,” Hutchison, a member of the Green Lawn Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas, said in a friendly Twitter discussion. “We need to educate about the past to not repeat it. But you can NEVER fix history. Recognize it, learn, move on.”

ORGANIZER WANTS TO ‘SHINE A LIGHT’

House, who started the Harding petition, earned his Master of Divinity degree from Harding School of Theology in Memphis, Tenn., in 2018. He then served two years as a Christian volunteer in Athens, Greece, working with Muslim refugees.

As a Harding undergraduate, House wrote his senior seminar paper on the 1955 lynching of Emmett Till, a black teen murdered after allegedly flirting with a white woman. Later, while attending theology school and worshiping with the Holmes Road Church of Christ in Memphis, he further developed his interest in civil rights and justice.

House said he loves Harding and has no desire to create a public relations problem for it.

But after what happened to Floyd, House decided he had to speak up.

“George Benson is one of the most centrally honored figures at Harding today because of the Benson Auditorium,” House said. “The heartbeat of campus, in a lot of ways, is chapel. And that takes place every day in Benson Auditorium.

“And he was a man who promoted segregation and institutionalized racism,” the petition organizer added. “So I just want to shine a light on that.”


card with a heart
Dee Martin's oldest grandson wrote, “This warrior who served in World War II in the Coast Guard, survived the Great Depression, outlasted the Soviet Union, saw 17 presidents and counting, turns 100 on June 5.” Dee Martin, who was born in 1920 to John and Elana Martin, grew up on a farm in Tip- ton, Okla., with brother Perry and sister June. After attending Oklahoma University, he enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard in 1942 and served on the destroyer-escort USS Lowe which survived near-misses by German U-boats.

Dee married Audra Dunn, his high school sweetheart, in 1945 in the home of Burton Coffman in Houston. In 1951 they moved to Plainview, Texas, to farm with his dad. Dee was an elder, Bible teacher, and friend.

I Thessalonians 1:4: “God not only loves you very much but also put His hand on you for something special.”

Happy 100th Birthday, Dee!

**Anniversary**

**72nd: J.C. and Dorothy Newland,** May 29, Fort Worth, Texas. Happy Anniversary, J.C. and Dorothy!

**Memorials**

**Wanita White 1922 – 2020**

Wanita Irene White, age 98, died on May 10, 2020, at Cumberland Pointe Health Campus in West Lafayette, Ind. She was born in Oiltont, Okla., the daughter of Miles and Bessie (Jewett) Robertson. She grew up in a unique oil field community called Carter Nine. She received both her B.S. and M.S. degrees in mathematics at Oklahoma State University. She taught math at Oklahoma State University as well as the University of Wisconsin.

Joe Lloyd White and she were married on May 29, 1945, and celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary before his death in 2005. Together they raised five children, experienced living in five other countries, traveled internationally, and were active in mission work throughout the world.

Wanita devoted her life to Christian education, mission work, and writing. She developed a self-paced, programmed study of the Bible, which has been used by Christians of all ages. She taught thousands of international Bible correspondence course students through the World Bible School organization, contributed articles to Christian periodicals, and taught Bible classes for women and children. She shared her faith by word, example, and involvement for more than 70 years. She was a longtime active member of the Elmwood Avenue Church of Christ in Lafayette, Ind. For many years, Wanita, along with her husband, Joe, taught classes and provided outreach services to those in the hospital, families in need, and widows.

As a mother, she was an example of a lifelong learner and an adventuresome traveler. She showed us the importance of hospitality and service to others and shared her love of games with a competitive spirit.

Wanita is survived by two sons: Lerrill (Deby), Benbrook, Texas; and Bren (Cheryl), New Market, Md.; three daughters: Darla Letourneau, Sanibel, Fla.; Ronna (Walter) Griffiths, McKinney, Texas; and Janeil (Steve) Lester, Allen, Texas. She is also survived by eleven grandchildren: KRister White, Kourtney Hennen, Stresa Callaway, Trieste Christenson, Bjorn White, Justin Letourneau, Joe Letourneau, Blake Albritton, Chelssea Wagoner, Ryan Neilan, Andrew Neilan; and twenty-two great-grandchildren. She is survived by one sister, Darmel (Jim) Barker, Garfield, Ark.; and four half-brothers and sisters: Mylene Sayers, Loyal (Marge) Robertson, Arleta Moorman, and Miles (Becky) Robertson. There will be a private burial service at Tippecanoe Memory Gardens, West Lafayette, Ind., with a memorial service to be announced at a later date. Memorials may be directed to: World Bible School, Inc., P.O. Box 2169, Cedar Park, Texas 78630, in memory of Wanita White; or to Purdue Foundation, Dr. Joe L. White Memorial Graduate Scholarship in Agronomy Endowment, 403 West Wood St., West Lafayette, IN 47907.

The family would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for special friends Iris Masterson and Patty Wenning, whose love and care made it possible for Mom to stay in West Lafayette, as she wished, for the past fifteen years. We have been blessed by their devotion. We also extend special thanks to the staff at Cumberland Pointe Health Campus and Franciscan Hospice Care for their excellent caregiving, compassion, and support.

**With Appreciation**

The Christian Chronicle appreciates and acknowledges generous gifts received in memory of Marlin Connelly, Gary Cox, and Jimmy Davy.

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- **Tyrone Harris**, (469) 408-8518
- Blessingfamilies@att.net
- Godlyfathersministry.com
NEWSMAKERS

HONORED: Joe Chesser, with the Distinguished Alumnus Award at Crowley’s Ridge Academy in Paragould, Ark. Chesser, who attended Crowley’s Ridge in the late 1960s, is the preacher for the Fruitland Church of Christ in Jackson, Mo., and serves as an elder. A graduate of Harding University in Searcy, Ark., he has preached full time for 50 years and served congregations in Missouri, Minnesota, Arkansas and Louisiana.

APPOINTED: Eddie Woodhouse, as state executive director for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency in North Carolina. Woodhouse, who will serve as an appointee of President Donald Trump, is a member of the Outer Banks Church of Christ.

Dirk O’Donnell, as executive director of Hope Harbor in Claremore, Okla. Hope Harbor, which is supported by Churches of Christ, is a family reconciliation program and accredited Christian school academy.

RETIRING: Junior High, after a 50-year career in education (where his name did not go unnoticed). High served as a teacher and principal in Nashville, Tenn., schools for 31 years and 19 years as a professor and director of undergraduate education at Lipscomb University, which is associated with Churches of Christ. He is an elder of the Brentwood Hills Church of Christ in Nashville.

Joe Chesser with Crowley’s Ridge Academy President Richard Johnson, Chesser’s son Joe Jr., wife Areva, son Andy, daughter Jenny Newman and son-in-law Todd Newman.
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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

Seeking Full-Time Minister - Cortez, Colorado

The Cortez church of Christ is located in the beautiful Four Corners area of Colorado. We are a loving congregation of 80+ members who want to grow. We are involved in community service, mission work, Leadership Training for Christ, and a local youth camp. We provide a competitive salary and a nice, four-bedroom home.

If interested, send a detailed resume including references and information about yourself and your family to: cortezcofc@live.com.

The Cortez area is home to scenic mountains, deserts, mesas, rivers, lakes, farmland and Mesa Verde National Park. Locals enjoy skiing, hiking, fishing, hunting, camping, boating, mountain biking and golfing.
Camp is canceled, but 2020 isn’t

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: ... a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing.”

— Ecclesiastes 3:1, 5, New International Version

When I was in second or third grade, I attended Iron Springs Christian Camp in Whitney, Texas.

I missed my mom so much, I made myself sick. My parents came to pick me up early, and as soon as I got home, I was miraculously better.

Despite my separation anxiety, my mom sent me back the next year and the next year and the next.

When I turned 13, she sent me to Sooner Youth Camp in Ardmore, Okla. I camped there every year until I was 19. And at 21, I came back as a counselor and fell in love with Travis, a fellow staff person who is now my husband. Here I am 24 years and four kids later, still camping at SYC.

Thanks for sending me to camp, Mom! Because of her desire for me to grow in Christ (or her desire to have a week to herself), I have many special camp memories. I made lifelong friends at camp, had my first kiss as a teenager at camp, told my husband I was pregnant with our first child at camp and fell deeper in love with Jesus at camp.

To say Christian camping is a huge part of my year would be an understatement. But due to the pandemic, I and thousands of others may not have these camp experiences this summer.

Don’t get me wrong, I believe COVID-19 is real and scary, and many are suffering and dying from it. Staying home as a safety precaution is not the worst that could happen to me or you.

But what if it’s the best that could happen to us?

In the Word

Laura Akins

“Let’s, as Christians, take advantage of this pause in the middle of our busy lives — is exactly what we need. Maybe it’s time to stop waiting for summer camp to refuel and refresh us for another year. Maybe it’s time to do some growing on our own:
• Instead of family-style meals with friends, let’s reintroduce family-style meals at home.
• Instead of midnight devotionals with people we just met, let’s engage in Bible study with family members.
• Instead of team sports, let’s get off Netflix and play with our kids. Instead of living for one week of fun, let’s spend our summer growing relationships with those closest to us.

“The year we’ve been waiting for? A year so uncomfortable, so painful, so scary, so raw that it finally forces us to grow.”

— Dwight

“2020 isn’t cancelled,” Dwight concluded. It is, rather, “the most important year of all.”

Sure, I’ll miss everything about church camp (and I’ll be one of the first in the camp gates next year), but I’m not going to waste this time at home. Besides, my husband would pass out if I made another pregnancy announcement this summer.

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

IN THE MIDST OF UNREST, we need to choose to love our neighbor.

PHOENIX

One by one they passed him by. He had been beaten and battered. He needed help. A priest and a Levite crossed the street to avoid the man. But when the Samaritan saw him hurting, he came to his side. He cared.

It’s the story Jesus tells in Luke 10 when he asked, “Who is my neighbor?”

Jesus uses the Good Samaritan parable to demonstrate the way he expects us to respond to the pain and trauma of others. The power of this parable is seen in the fact that the Samaritan was able to reach across ethnic lines, despite his lifetime of being mistreated. He responded to this man’s misfortune with generosity, care and benevolence. He was empathetic. He was genuine. He chose to love his neighbor.

In our current climate of civil and moral unrest, this attitude is what we need.

The recent, horrific murders of Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd have gripped the nation.

As a black man, I identify with these slain men. In the eyes of many, I am no different than they are. When I look at their photos, I can’t help but think this could have been me. It could have been one of my sons, my father, my brothers or any other black man in my life. This reality frightens and enrages me.

Without rightful authority, a segment of our population presupposes the protection of their community and their way of life at the expense of the lives of black men (and black women, like Breonna Taylor). Amy Cooper used her cell phone to call in a fake personal attack against Christian Cooper, a black man. She showed brazen disregard for his life. Two Georgia men, Gregory and Travis McMichael, took the life of Mr. Arbery for jogging while black. They teamed up on him and shot him twice in the chest. Acting as his judge and jury, they declared him guilty and put him to death, yet he was convicted of no crime. Officer Derek Chauvin planted his knee on Mr. Floyd’s neck, cutting off his oxygen and ultimately killing him. This is where we are as a society. We need help. We need it badly.

Arbery and Floyd were killed based on accusations of misdemeanor offenses — theft and forgery. Let that sink in. They are dead due to matters that would more than likely have been addressed through minor jail time, a fine or probation. This has grown to be a common problem, and it is one of the many reasons that Minneapolis is exploding with protests and riots.

People are upset, angry, frustrated, bitterly exhausted and tired of the injustice.

Martin Luther King Jr. said, “A riot is the language of the unheard.” I understand King’s position, but I believe there has to be a better way.

First, I would say that we must stop denying the obvious. The truth is, in our society, we see excessive and unwarranted violence against black men. Say it with me: We have a problem.

Until we admit this crisis, deliverance and healing cannot begin.

Second, we must work toward stripping and cleansing ourselves of thinking violence is the best way to respond to what we perceive as defiance or a lack of compliance. We must seek more peaceful and safer remedies.

Third, we need to rethink the concept of our being “policed.” I believe that most of our men and women in blue are good people. A national best practices search reveals that in many parts of our country, police brutality is rare. However, a minority percentage of our police force is problematic.

We need to scrap our present model and call out the officers who embody poor professional behavior.

Finally, we must look at these victims as though they are our own children. We cannot let them die in vain. Shed a tear. Host a vigil. Send a card. Go to a protest. Reach out to your local officials and police departments, and ask them what you can do to protect our children from future violence. Show kindness.

Let’s not be like the society around us and pick and choose when we want to behave like Jesus. Perhaps the greatest crime we as Christians have committed is that we’ve acted like the other men in the Good Samaritan story. Don’t be the priest or the Levite. Don’t pass by on the other side of the street. Don’t glance at the suffering and silently move away. Don’t hide behind your own privilege or your own safe havens. That will only intensify the injury.

Instead, be the Good Samaritan. See the hurt your “neighbor” is experiencing, and help find a way to heal it. Pledge to be united as one voice and in one hope. Let’s become an army of Good Samaritans.

JOHN EDMERSON is an elder and the senior minister for the Church of Christ at the Vineyard in Phoenix, Ariz. He is also a well-known song writer among Churches of Christ.

ASHLEY MONEET WILLIAMS is a registered nurse and a member of the Kleinwood Church of Christ in Spring, Texas. Read the full version of this piece at f3ashley.com.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY ASHLEY MONEET WILLIAMS

Ashley Moneet Williams stands on the steps of the Cape Coast Castle in the African nation of Ghana.

I am allowed to be angry, but ...

I remember this exact photo. My emotions are almost palpable as I stare at this photo again. The immense grief that was within me as I stood on these steps could not be put into words.

Cape Coast Castle was built on by European traders. It was one of the largest commercial forts for the trans-Atlantic slave trade. It was used to hold Africans who were captured from their homelands and then made slaves. They were loaded onto ships, completely naked, beaten, cuffed in chains, and then sold in the Americas.

The deep historical and far-existing pain for my ancestors flowed through every vein of my body. Immense anger, confusion, despair, and anguish plagued my heart this day. I didn’t crack one smile. I couldn’t.

When I witnessed the murder of George Floyd, I remember feeling just like I felt when I first stepped foot on the grounds of Cape Coast Castle.

I was angry, confused and numbed by such a sinful act. I was so angry I couldn’t speak. But in the midst of my anger I was met through the seams of a new day. Then my cheeks like waterfalls. The truth was this: I am allowed to be angry, but ...

“Be angry and sin not, let not the sun go down on your wrath” (Ephesians 4:26). My anger should not be fleshly, carnal, or sinful in nature. Unrighteous anger justifies sinful behavior. Unrighteous anger produces bitterness and leads to a heart that seeks revenge.

‘Martin Luther King Jr. said, “A riot is the language of the unheard.” I understand King’s position, but I believe there has to be a better way.’

John Edmerson

Views

PHOTO PROVIDED BY ASHLEY MONEET WILLIAMS

PHOENIX

I am allowed to be angry, but ...
CALENDAR

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

July 31-Aug. 1 Widow/Widower Retreat. LaVernge Church of Christ, LaVernge, Tenn. See widowhoodworkshop.com.
Aug. 2 & 30 Senior Singles Event. Bayview Church of Christ. San Francisco. Email Allen at: lln_mcfrlnd@yahoo.com.
Aug. 15 Harding University Graduation Reschedule. Searcy, Ark. See harding.edu/graduation#.
Aug. 29 Oklahoma Christian University Spring Graduation Rescheduled. Oklahoma City, Okla. See oc.edu/events.
Sept. 17 Eastern European Mission Benefit Event. Franklin, Tenn. See eem.org/events.
Sept. 20 Centennial Anniversary, Central Church of Christ. Moore, Okla. See moorecentral.org.
Sept. 25 Global Leadership Summit 2020. Harding University, Searcy, Ark. Email: glsworldclassleaders@gmail.com.

FULL CALENDAR: www.christianchronicle.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. We are a congregation of 60 - 70 members, without an eldership, with a desire 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)

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Minister Search - California
The elders of the Buena Park Church of Christ and overseers of the Southern California School of Evangelism are seeking to fill a full-time minister’s position for an English/Spanish bilingual congregation. For consideration, please respond to:
office@buenaparkchurchofchrist.org

Associate Minister-Tolar, Texas
The Church of Christ is looking for an associate minister to work with the youth, teach Bible class and preach from time to time until our current minister retires at the end of 2021 at which time the associate minister would become the full-time preacher if he is deemed a good fit by the elders. Tolar is a small, rural community, less than an hour from Fort Worth. Our average Sunday morning attendance is about 130. Tolar ISD is a 2A school. For more information, contact one of our elders:
Wesley Ives, (817) 559-0376
iveswc911@gmail.com

The FAKER and The FINDER
by Haley Davis Schmidt
Have you experienced loss, betrayal, abandonment, or sacrificed your self-worth? “The Faker and The Finder” is a powerful story of renewal and redemption. This book will make the reader laugh and cry with its real-life, relatable experiences. “I don’t remember asking God if this was His plan, but I remember being so destroyed that even if it was His plan, it didn’t matter.” An unveiling of the impact of tragedy and trauma on the mind and body, the author takes the hand of the reader and walks him or her step-by-step through their journey of trying to fake their way back into feeling alive.
Order or learn more about “The Faker and The Finder” at: www.haleydavisschmidt.com or on Amazon.

DO THE DIVORCED AND REMARRIED HAVE A PLACE IN GOD’S KINGDOM? YOUR CHURCH MAY SAY NO, BUT JESUS SAYS YES!

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“Hopefully, this book will serve as a guide... hopefully [to] stop teaching the ‘sacred cow’ philosophy that many have adopted out of fear of being branded a liberal or false teacher. Thank you, brother!”
- J. Wiggins

“This is the best book ever written on the issue…”
- Charles Hodge, author,
On the Banks of Onion Creek

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The divided legacy of Alexander Campbell

CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY examines the ‘gifted but flawed’ leader of the American Restoration Movement.

When Alexander Campbell died in 1866, he left his legacy in a divided condition. His six living grandchildren from his first wife, Margaret, challenged Alexander’s will, which left the estate to his second wife, Selina, and her children. He also left his spiritual descendents on the precipice of theological and sectional division.

In 1866, David Lipscomb and Tolbert Fanning restarted the Gospel Advocate in Tennessee, and Isaac Errett and James A. Garfield (who was Selina’s legal counsel in the suit) started the Christian Standard in Ohio. They represented two different trajectories that would result in Churches of Christ listed as a distinct body in the 1906 religious census. Campbell bequeathed his spiritual heirs his agenda, piety and flaws.

This is why it is important to read “A Life of Alexander Campbell” by Douglas A. Foster. Just as an awareness of our family of origins sheds light on our own personal stories, understanding the life and thought of the key leader of the American Restoration Movement has the potential to illuminate our own experience, develop tools for discernment and humble us before the past gifts God has given to the church.

Foster, director of the Center for Restoration Studies at Abilene Christian University in Texas, presents a biography that is not so much a narrative — though the details of Campbell’s life both frame and carry the storyline — as it is a critical assessment of the significance of Campbell’s relationship to his reform movement.

From the time of his own immersion in 1812, Alexander assumed the leadership of what his father, Thomas Campbell, began in 1809. His debates gave the reform movement prominence. His journals (Christian Baptist and Millennial Harbinger) gave it a voice. His preaching tours popularized it. And his institutions (Bethany College and American Christian Missionary Press, 2019.)


Society) propagated it.

After describing Campbell’s own family of origins as a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian immigrant, Foster identifies the creative energies that gave birth to Campbell's primary agenda: the restoration of the ancient gospel and the ancient order of things for the sake of Christian union in order to prepare for the coming millennium.

Campbell’s understanding and practice of baptism lies at the heart of this interest, Foster argues, and it was framed by a commitment to Scripture alone exclusive of any human traditions or creeds.

Advocating for and defending that agenda consumed most of his energies and shaped everything he did. Yet, as Foster notes, there is a tension in his own thought. While he called Christians to visible unity based upon the ancient gospel and order, he recognized a prior unity in a common confession of the facts of God’s redemptive story among 19th century “evangelicals.”

The friction between this “evangelical” unity and a union upon the ancient order plagued Campbell throughout his life. He bequeathed it to his heirs as well.

One of the important aspects of Foster’s work is its critical nature. While recognizing Campbell’s brilliance and gifts, he does not...
While recognizing Campbell's brilliance and gifts, (Foster) does not sugarcoat his flaws, including his arrogance and racism.

of the American Restoration Movement. Foster has provided us with a weighty resource for both.

For anyone who wants to understand our gifts as well as our flaws, “A Life of Alexander Campbell” is a wonderful place to start.

JOHN MARK HICKS is a professor of theology at the Hazelip School of Theology at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn. He has taught for 38 years in schools associated with the Churches of Christ. His most recent book is “Searching for the Pattern.”

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

INFLUENCING GENERATIONS


TRUE STORY


Missionary models in prison how we should live in quarantine

I read “God’s Hostage: A True Story of Persecution, Imprisonment and Perseverance” during a unique time in our history. As a pandemic looms and we shelter in our homes for weeks upon weeks, avoiding contact with others, a sense of isolation and loneliness creeps in.

I do hope that in a time like this we Christians can learn, much as Brunson did, to take our burdens to Jesus, to look to our Creator and to be faithful in times of trial. Brunson’s trials involved two years in various Turkish jails and prisons after he was wrongfully accused of political crimes. The missionary and his wife, Norine, moved from North Carolina to Turkey in the 1990s. There, they devoted their lives to training believers, helping refugees and leading a small congregation that met faithfully in their town of Izmir (ancient Smyrna).

In 2016 they were arrested during a tense political coup. Norine was released after 13 days, but Andrew was held for more than two years. The Turkish government leveled charges against him including espionage and attempting to overthrow the Turkish government.

Brunson does not hide the fact that he faced great anxiety and mental breakdowns within the prison cells. He regularly was taunted by guards and other prisoners and quickly lost 50 pounds. He struggled to find strength and meaning in his trials and needed the help of medication from the prison doctors to withstand the worry and anguish in his mind.

Although he felt like a broken man, he said, “I realized I could not do much to fight for my freedom, but I could fight for my faith. … I had no illusion that I could make it without God’s help. But insofar as it was up to me, I determined to persevere. … I will look to Jesus, not away from him. I will run to Jesus or, if necessary, crawl to Jesus.”

Brunson learned to allow the hard questions and doubts to come. Then he locked them in an imaginary box. He did not let the unanswered questions keep him from a relationship with God.

He let the prayers and letters of faithful followers all over the world sustain him. He read about other Christians who were imprisoned and drew from their wisdom and practices to help him feel the joy of the Lord.

As he sat in a court with no jury — only judges — his soul must have taken a beating as he heard false witnesses speak lies about him. Yet he preached the gospel out loud in court and forgave by name all of those who spoke ill against him in the name of Jesus.

Through God’s grace and the course of political action, sanctions and the pleas of many worldwide politicians, including our president, Andrew Brunson finally was released in 2018 after 735 days in captivity.

No matter our hardships, we can take them to the Lord. In the mission field, in a Turkish prison, in a world pandemic, God is the same yesterday and today and forevermore.

KATIE ISENBERG and her family live in Salem, Ore., where they worship with the Keizer Church of Christ.
In this dismal year, hope can be found in an unlikely place: Israel’s ‘Hotel Corona’

In 2020, the last place I expected to find any kind of model for “how should we then live” was the Middle East, the modern state of Israel. I visited there four years ago as the guest of Israel’s tourism ministry. Standing on the banks of the Jordan, at the Sea of Galilee or the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, the experiences were amazing.

But the conversations often were disheartening. The conflict there is real, and the sides are entrenched. It’s not just Israelis and Palestinians, Jews and Muslims. There are deep gulfs separating the secular, the religious and the ultra-Orthodox.

Add COVID-19 to that mix. The country locked itself down and the Israel Defense Forces used a dozen hotels to quarantine patients with the disease as they recovered. One was the Dan Hotel in Tel Aviv, dubbed “Hotel Corona” by its 180 guests, who came from a plethora of backgrounds.

At first, each pretty much kept to his or her own kind. One patient, Aysha Abu Shhab, was a 19-year-old Arab Muslim from a nomadic Bedouin tribe. She was a janitor at a hospital before she got sick. In an interview with National Public Radio, she talked about approaching an elderly Jewish couple at dinner, something she’d probably never do outside the hotel.

They talked about how they got the virus. They coughed together. And by the end of meal, they were singing together. Aysha captured it on her phone and posted it online.


The world watched in disbelief.

Aysha later witnessed a young Orthodox Jew having an asthma attack. She didn’t know if she was even supposed to touch him. But she helped. Later a Jewish woman told her that she had done a wonderful thing. She should consider medicine. Aysha has since enrolled in nursing school.

When Passover rolled around, the hotel set up a party in the banquet hall so that the ultra-Orthodox Jews could have their Seder feast away from the other Jews’ cameras and technology, which the ultra-Orthodox forbid.

But before they celebrated the Exodus from Egypt, a group of hotel guests, including the ultra-Orthodox, pushed the barrier aside. They celebrated together. Even Aysha, a Muslim, was there.

The guests could check out Hotel Corona only after testing negative for COVID-19 twice. Some said they didn’t want to leave. (After all, the hotel has a pool.) Outside there was disease and division. Inside, the guests were in recovery ... together.

You see it, right? That should be us. That should be the church.

The plagues of society can’t harm a cleansed people. Division, disease, even death will not overcome the church, for we serve one who has overcome the world.

There are myriad ways we can promote unity, diversity and justice in our pews. We discuss some of them in these pages. But whatever we do must come from the realization of our shared affliction. We’re all victims of the pandemic of sin. Racism, malice and distrust are its symptoms.

Christ’s blood is the vaccine.

I pray that our churches will emerge from this earthly pandemic as true houses of healing, where people of all ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds can live together, laugh together and heal together.

May our buildings, like the Dan Hotel, be waiting rooms of redemption. May they be warm places of standing invitation, places people long to visit, places where people want to stay.

Luckily, most of our buildings have pools.

ERIK TRYGGESTAD is president and CEO of The Christian Chronicle. Contact erik@christianchronicle.org and follow him on Twitter @eriktryggstad.
The simplest answer is it 
**enhances my faith** and has done so for a number of years. Your stories of faith, all over the world, play to my belief in the power of our God to impact mankind on an in-depth basis, in a positive way. “I vicariously love seeing that happen and reading about it. I remain confident in the truth being the source of mission.”

**BILL BONIFAY | Denton, Texas**

“The Chronicle has **biblically sound content presented without bias**. Perhaps one of the most valuable services that *The Christian Chronicle* provides is presenting articles about issues that face Churches of Christ with a factual approach — presenting all sides of an issue in a journalistic way without taking sides or being judgmental.

“Were it not for the *Chronicle*, we would not know about much of the wonderful mission work going on around the world or learn about how Christians have handled tragedies that we have only seen briefly on the news.”

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“I have been reading the *Chronicle* for 50 years, ever since my days at Abilene Christian College as a student. I received one of the first journalism degrees in 1958.

“It is with sadness that I now see what I consider the demise of journalism as I knew it.

“News’ stories these days are often biased, and all the instant access to Facebook, Twitter and anywhere else you can express an opinion just makes it worse.

“That is why I so enjoy reading the *Chronicle*. You’re first to stay abreast of what is happening in the Lord’s Kingdom. But you also just get the facts and only the facts, ‘accurately and honestly,’ as you so truly put it. Keep up the good work.

**ALICE HENRY | Dallas**

“This ministry has ties that are global. I can read about what is going on in our other churches. It is good and interesting to read about so many great things going on in the brotherhood — some of which I’ve never known about.”

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“The *Chronicle* is not just a paper that illustrates excellence in ‘Christian’ journalism, but in journalism.

“The *Chronicle* is the single source currently available to every Christian, anywhere in the world, that informs us how our brothers and sisters are acting on God’s Word.

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“I never read the *Chronicle* without stepping away with a new or renewed excitement about why I profess to be a Christian.”

**JIM WILLIS | Spring Hill, Tenn.**

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COVID-19 hit us hard, but you can help

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, revenues are down while costs keep rising. The Chronicle is at risk. If you haven’t contributed, please consider a $36 voluntary subscription gift. Or join the ranks of our Keepers of the Chronicle with a monthly gift of $10 or more.

All gifts are tax-deductible. Check one:

- I’m enclosing my voluntary subscription gift of $36.
- I’m enclosing my first monthly gift of $10 or more as a Keeper of the Chronicle.
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To donate by credit or debit card, go to christianchronicle.org/covid19 and fill out the form. Checks may be mailed to The Christian Chronicle, PO Box 11000, Oklahoma City, OK 73136-1100. To donate by phone or for more information, call us at (405) 425-5070.

YOUR SUPPORT IS VITAL, now more than ever. If you value real news that honors God, please join the ranks of our loyal donors. You can keep the Chronicle going through these troublesome times.

The pandemic hit the Chronicle hard. Here’s what’s happening:

The Christian universities and ministries that advertise in these pages have been forced to cancel fundraising events — and their ads for those events. That’s lost revenue.

We believe in the importance of these ministries, so we’ve offered them deeply discounted advertising rates to help them get their message out when there’s no other way. That’s more lost revenue.

What’s at risk is real news that honors God — the unbiased, inspiring news of our brotherhood that you get only in the Chronicle.

What is real news worth to you? For our loyal donors, it’s worth a lot. They’ve stepped up and blessed us tremendously. I am overwhelmed and humbled.

Will you join them? If you haven’t contributed to the Chronicle, I ask that you prayerfully consider a $36 voluntary subscription gift.

If you can do more, please consider becoming a Keeper of the Chronicle by committing to make a monthly gift of $10 or more.

To reduce costs, we may have to reduce our print mailing list in the future. But we want to honor the lifetime subscriptions of our loyal readers. If you’re not able to contribute right now but you want to keep receiving the Chronicle, please commit to pray for this ministry and we’ll keep sending you the print edition. Your prayers are blessings.

Please go to christianchronicle.org/covid19 or fill out the above form. I deeply appreciate you.

— Erik Tryggestad, president and CEO

In the African village of Dona Manga, Chad, Erik Tryggestad interviews ministers.