So far, COVID-19 has spared children from the worst of its physical effects. Most reported cases in kids appear to be asymptomatic or mild, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But the numbers don't tell the whole story, workers with relief ministries told The Christian Chronicle.

In Managua, Nicaragua, families are out of work because of the pandemic and can't pay their children's school fees. Children are missing out on lunches provided by the schools, said Freddy Noel Gonzalez, a program director for Christian Relief Fund.

"There are ample reasons to believe that the malnutrition rate—which was already significant, especially among children from poor families—is increasing at an alarming rate," Gonzalez said.

In Mount Elgon, Kenya, kids are homeless and hungry, said another Christian Relief Fund program director, Peter Marangach.

"Across the mountain, people are feeling the pain of hunger," Marangach said. "With the majority of our people still struggling with the effects of a long tribal war, suddenly coronavirus surfaced and worsened our problems."

Even before the pandemic, hunger worldwide was on the rise. Two billion people, more than one-quarter of the world's population, experienced hunger or did not have regular meals.

As pandemic drags on, suffer the little children
The Solar Player produced and distributed by SIBI is making waves around the world. Two men who were not Christians were baptized after listening to the WBS lessons and ‘How to become a Christian’ on the Solar Player I gave out to them. I am so happy that despite not being able to go out and speak (because of COVID-19) the Solar Player is able to bring men to Christ. ” - Emmanuel Essien, Director of C.A.O. Essien Bible College, Ikot Usen, Nigeria.
The Bible in 3D

M ost Sundays, W. Mark Lanier teaches Bible class for a Baptist congregation in Houston. Once, while he was guest-speaking for a Church of Christ, Lanier got pulled aside.

“What are you doing at a Baptist church?” someone asked him.

“Mission work,” he answered with a chuckle.

The well-known attorney and author of “Christianity on Trial: A Lawyer Examines the Christian Faith” grew up in the pews of the Broadway Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas.

Lanier, who founded one of the nation’s largest private theological libraries, writes, blogs and records videos about issues of faith — in addition to his 700-student Sunday Bible class.


Now he’s helping a prominent biblical archaeology program move from a Baptist seminary in Texas to his alma mater, Lipscomb University.

In January the Nashville, Tenn., university, which is associated with Churches of Christ, will start classes through its new Lanier Center for Archaeology, named for Lanier and his wife, Becky. The program will offer master’s and doctoral degrees. It will house a research library and biblical artifacts and engage in research and excavation projects in Israel, Cyprus and Egypt.

“I didn’t choose Lipscomb. Lipscomb chose us,” said Steven Ortiz, who cofounded the center with fellow archaeology professor Tom Davis.

See BIBLE IN 3D, Page 26

Anti-abortion legislator fights to keep his job

DEMOCRATS OUST Tennessee incumbent over his conservative positions.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

As a teen, longtime Tennessee state Rep. John DeBerry Jr. integrated an all-White high school and witnessed civil rights icon Martin Luther King Jr.’s final speech before his 1968 assassination.

To supporters, DeBerry — a 69-year-old Black preacher from Memphis — is a man of high integrity and strong moral convictions based on his Christian faith.

But to opponents, including Planned Parenthood, the LGBTQ Victory Fund and the Tennessee Democratic Party’s executive committee, the 13-term incumbent is an out-of-touch relic. In their view, DeBerry’s conservative positions on issues such as abortion, gay rights and school choice make him unfit to remain in office.

“I tell people all the time when they talk to me: It’s not about the elephant. It’s not about the donkey. It’s about the Lamb,” said DeBerry, who has preached nearly every Sunday since 1968 and served as the minister for the Coleman Avenue Church of Christ in Memphis for the last 20 years.

The widowed father and grandfather makes no secret that he believes life begins at conception.

“That, he contends, is not a Republican stand.

“It is a biblical stand,” he told The Christian Chronicle in a lengthy, wide-ranging interview. “It is a moral stand. It is an ethical stand.”

See LEGISLATOR, Page 16
ATTENDANCE: Long-term concerns raised

have turned to streaming church online or skipping worship altogether, as noted by the Barna Group.

The question that some concerned church leaders are asking: When the crisis is over — when, Lord willing, a vaccine has been developed and proven successful — will attendance return to pre-pandemic levels?

“I expect that some people will discover that life goes on without assembling each Sunday morning and choose to avoid the stress of going somewhere on Sunday morning,” said Peter Horne, minister for the Lawson Road Church of Christ in Rochester, N.Y.

Already, John Dobbs, minister for the Forsythe Church of Christ in Monroe, La., said he has noticed some people who feel comfortable traveling or eating in restaurants “but then are using COVID-19 as a reason not to come to church.”

“Some people will never come back to church. They’ll just watch online,” Dobbs said. “Our message now is, ‘Don’t feel guilty for worshiping at home,’ and I believe this is right. But that message will change if the pandemic does not present as a health threat in the future.”

Richard Akins, minister and elder of the Bono Church of Christ in Arkansas, said: “I know many of our non-attendees are out and about all over everywhere — working, shopping, eating out. But attending worship is too dangerous.”

Among Americans overall, the number who belong to a church, synagogue or mosque has dropped to about half, according to Gallup. That’s a 20-percentage-point decline just since 1999.

“We live in a cultural environment that assumes spirituality is located in the individual,” said Jay Hawkins, minister for the Caldwell Church of Christ in Idaho. “Before COVID, there were many Christians in America battling — whether they knew it or not — against the question of why they need a church for spiritual flourishing.

“During the pandemic,” Hawkins added, “some will have inevitably found that while they didn’t go to Sunday worship, life was survivable, and they have even decided they are thriving.”

But some voice reason for hope. Lisa Brewer, a member of the Wilkesboro Church of Christ in North Carolina, said the pandemic has afforded blessings such as an opportunity to spend time visiting other congregations’ online services and Bible studies.

“This has been an enriching experience and helped me draw closer to several friends who are members in other parts of the state,” said Brewer, whose husband, Greg, serves as a deacon. “My husband and I have been able to spend more time in Bible study, in research and in meaningful conversation with each other and close friends.”

For Lisa Brewer, the coronavirus scenario prompts reminders of the spiritual renewal seen after the 9/11 attacks in 2001.

“I think in the long run it will be good for the Lord’s church,” she said. “Without being the ‘church police,’ we need to encourage folks not to forsake the assembly unless for genuinely legitimate reasons. We need to encourage folks, period.”

Others said the pandemic, far from inspiring Christians to stay away from worship, has sparked a renewed longing for spiritual intimacy — for simple gifts like hugs, handshakes and holy kisses that the threat of disease spread has put on hold.

“I think the isolation that people have been experiencing is drawing them into community, realizing now more than ever that they need God and God’s family’s to get them through this,” said Mike Miles, preaching minister for the Livonia Church of Christ in Michigan.

Deanna Haynes, a member of the Goose Creek Church of Christ in South Carolina, said she doesn’t worry about post-pandemic attendance figures.

“If a person truly has an appetite for God,” said Haynes, whose congregation is still meeting via Zoom, “they’ll be with us when it’s safe to return to regular church services.”

BOBBY ROSS JR. is editor-in-chief of The Christian Chronicle. Contact bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org. Follow him on Twitter at @bobbyross. Read more on the opportunities and challenges brought by the pandemic at christianchronicle.org/attendance.
Cutting through COVID-19 confusion

CHRISTIANS IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH offer insight into the ever-changing, often-frustrating process of discovery.

BY CHELLIE ISON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

When it comes to COVID-19, it’s easy to feel uncertain, confused, even angry. Information from the news, social media and family and friends doesn’t always match up.

“I can understand how someone who isn’t in a science background can be overwhelmed,” said Talibah Metcalf, a member of the Springhill Road Church of Christ in Tallahassee, Fla.

Metcalf is a scientist who works in the Division of HIV Medicine and Infectious Diseases at Drexel University in Philadelphia. She and her colleagues are studying how and why COVID-19 affects patients so differently.

It can be confusing when information seems to change quickly and frequently, she said. However, change is part of research and guaranteed to happen when investigating a “novel virus.”

“We can adapt to technology, so we should be able to adapt to changes in science and medicine,” Metcalf said. Most important, she said, is to pay attention to the recommendations that are consistent.


As for the idea of masks, she said while experts early on may have publicly disagreed about the use of masks, scientists have long seen them as a necessary preventative measure.

OUR MOST IMPORTANT TOOL IN FIGHT

Alex Huffman, an associate professor of chemistry at the University of Denver, emphasized the same message concerning masks.

“They’re critical,” said Huffman, a member of the Littleton Church of Christ. “They’re the single most important tool that we have as a nation, as an individual community and as an individual to help stop the spread, or the rate of the spread.”

Huffman said it’s unfortunate how politicized issues surrounding the virus and the public safety measures have become.

“This really should not be a partisan conversation,” he said. “The virus and the disease associated with it do not care about your political leanings, your opinions on anything.”

The message has been “muddled,” he said, but the science is quite clear.

“If we, as a national community, would commit to wearing our masks as much as possible, the rates of this disease would drop quickly and dramatically. So that’s basically what we need to do.”

No, he said, masks will not make the virus disappear, but they can help to reduce the number of cases.

“If we treat it seriously, even as annoying as it is to do the things we need to do, those rates will come down such that people will not be sick and dying at the rate they are,” Huffman said.

THE DANGER OF SINGING

Huffman’s expertise is as an aerosol scientist. His knowledge has been helpful for his home congregation as they’ve tried to make informed decisions about meeting. One factor he said is important to consider — the fact that singing has been proven to be a “dangerous” activity.

“It’s when you’re singing that the risk to the community is so much greater when we’re singing indoors that we have to treat that very, very carefully at this point.”

When it comes to what churches should do, he said, the answer is simple: meet outside, stay socially distant, wear masks (especially during singing) and wash your hands. Each congregation has to be handled individually, looking at its size and demographics, and considering how widespread the virus is in its area.

For those already meeting indoors, he encourages church leaders to consider extra precautions, like opening doors and windows for extra ventilation, social distancing even more than 6 feet while singing and wearing a mask while singing.

“It’s when you’re singing that you are expelling by far the most,” Huffman said. “That is by far the most important time to keep your mask sealed well over your mouth and nose.”

ACTS OF LOVE NEEDED

Metcalf knows it’s hard to see restrictions placed on worship services, but she believes the extra precautions are necessary because of the close, personal interactions that people are used to when it comes to their church family.

“Church is hands on,” she said. “It’s hugging. It’s kissing.”

Both Huffman and Metcalf hope that by sharing, not just as scientists but as brothers and sisters in Christ, they can help to clear up some of the confusion that has caused many to wonder whom they can trust.

“This is a collaboration between science and really every person in the country,” Huffman, said.

“We have to think about the bigger picture and care for one another, even people you don’t know,” Metcalf said. “You have to care and love these people.”

FIND A LIST of resources recommended by Huffman and see video interviews with both researchers at christianchronicle.org/covidconfusion.
As Christians, let’s end ‘corona culture’

EDMOND, Okla.

I thought a disease on the other side of the world would never reach me. Or if it did, it wouldn’t be a big deal because I’m young and healthy.

But it did reach me.

And it was a big deal.

The week my family was exposed to COVID-19, some photos were posted on Facebook of my children at a waterpark. A commenter wrote, “Praying none of you get the virus.”

Later, when my husband announced that we did, in fact, get the virus, we got text messages from people asking if we’d been wearing masks or if we’d exposed them. We were shocked.

Our society has created a “corona culture” full of judgment, opinions, shame, fear and finger pointing. We are isolating each other during this already socially distant time.

As Christians, our first response shouldn’t be political or selfish. We should be passing out grace, kindness, love and casseroles like a vaccine. And trust me, we got a lot of casseroles that helped balance out the negative.

CHEST PAIN, SHAME AND GUILT

My children — ages 5, 6, 10 and 13 — experienced mild cold and flu-like symptoms, lasting for almost a week.

Any other summer, I would have thought they were worn down from swimming, staying up late and eating junk food. We only tested them because we had planned to see immunocompromised family members the next week.

When their results came back, my doctor told my husband and me to assume we had it or would get it very soon. We went home and quarantined from June 29 to July 22 — from my birthday to my son’s.

My two younger children asked if this was the virus everyone had been hiding from since March. It was hard to explain to them that, yes, the mild cold they were experiencing is what shut the world down.

But when the virus invaded my lungs a week later, and eventually my husband’s the week after that, they understood better.

My mother, who suffers from arthritis, was also positive for COVID-19. She experienced it along with strep throat and only felt run down for a few days. I, on the other hand — a healthy, 30-something-year-old — was a few breaths away from going to the hospital.

Day after day, I woke up with chest pain and struggled to breathe. I couldn’t get out of bed and was in tears as I realized I had to suffer another lonely day at home. The minutes stretched into eternity. Eventually, I got well (without any medicine), and my husband got sick. I thought the virus would never leave our home.

I felt shame and guilt — like I’d done something wrong and deserved to be sick. Satan repeatedly told me, “You chose to be in that place. You put your kids at risk. You did this to them, to your husband, to yourself.”

And then to receive unsolicited comments from strangers — it was all too much, but it was far from the end.

THE HARDEST PART OF THE PANDEMIC

While I’m technically over the virus, I’m still suffering. Recently I experienced new chest pain and shortness of breath. I felt like I was hiking up a mountain.

My doctor did an X-ray and found air trapped in my lungs. As I write this I’m back in bed, asking Jesus if I’m ever going to breathe easily again.

It hurts to hear flippant comments about this being a hoax or an easy fix with the right combination of pills. I don’t think it’s that simple.

The hardest part of this worldwide pandemic is not the disease itself, but the opinions and arguments that are tearing us apart.

Do we take the medicine people talk about on social media? Do we trust our doctors? Do we send our kids back to school? Do we wear a mask? Do we judge others’ choices? Do we assume they are making the best decisions they can?

Dear reader, you and I can change the course of 2020. Try this today: Don’t judge anyone on social media (speaking to myself here), but lift them up in prayer. Don’t shame or blame, but give each other grace. Let’s stop pushing each other away during this already difficult time.

This will be hard — to think and act like Jesus and continually humble ourselves for the sake of our community. But I believe we should try.

I can only speak to my experience. You can only speak to yours. And we are both entitled to opinions based on our knowledge and experience. All I ask is that we listen to each other with compassion, find ways to meet in the middle and work together to end this “corona culture.”

Don’t be naive like I was, but don’t live in fear either. Act as if you could get the virus. Take safety precautions like hand washing and social distancing when possible. Show mercy and kindness, and unfollow those who don’t bring you closer to Jesus.

Take a deep breath (if you are able), and trust that we will get past this.

And freeze a few casseroles, just in case.

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

Scout Akins gets ready to enjoy some Blue Bell ice cream sent in a care package after her bout of COVID-19.
CHILDREN: Serving requires ‘a different kind of generosity’

FROM PAGE 1
access to nutritious and sufficient food in 2019, according to a report by multinational agencies including UNICEF and the World Health Organization.

Now, according to projections, “the COVID-19 pandemic may add an additional 83 to 132 million people to the ranks of the undernourished in 2020,” said the report, “The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World.” Food supply disruptions and loss of livelihoods put children at higher risk of malnutrition and “stunting,” impaired growth and development.

As churches and ministries that serve children address the growing needs, they must navigate ever-changing regulations and provide safe environments for their workers — all while staying focused on Jesus’ call in Matthew 19 to “suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me.”

‘ALL EQUAL IN THE EYES OF GOD’

White flags, a universal sign of surrender, are going up across Guatemala, said Rick Harper, U.S. missions director for Health Talents International, a medical ministry supported by Churches of Christ.

Families in need of food assistance place the flags outside their homes, and Health Talents workers find local churches or ministries that can help.

With their usual summer mission trips canceled, “most ministries in Guatemala and Latin America have transitioned to serving humanitarian needs,” Harper said, “especially those who receive U.S. teams to supplement their ministry efforts.”

Health Talents uses telemedicine, when possible, for checkups of kids in its ABC program, a child-sponsorship effort that provides children with nutritious food and resources for their education.

“The thing that is striking is how everyone around the world, regardless of social status, is facing the same situation right now:” said Kemmel Dunham, the ministry’s Central America missions director. He cited “health concerns, financial crises, delays in plans, relationship strain, political unrest, uncertainty about the future and on and on.”

“It brings to mind how we are all equal in the eyes of God,” Dunham said. “He is no respecter of persons and gives us all the freedom to choose to obey him or not. But he expects us all to answer to him ultimately.”

RELIEF EFFORTS UNDERWAY

Following is a summary of additional reports sent to the Chronicle from ministries with ties to Churches of Christ that serve children and families:

• In Nicaragua, “members of the church and their family members are leaving this world in the anonymity of nightly, express burials,” said Dr. Xiomara Amador, who works with Medical Care Ministry, sponsored by the Baldwin Park Church of Christ in California. The ministry seeks assistance to feed more than 100 families who have lost their primary breadwinners to the virus, Amador said.

• Healing Hands International has sent assistance to 14 countries, “and churches on the ground have been able to help numerous children and families,” said Jana Owen, vice president of operations.

• Workers with Orphan’s Lifeline International set a goal to purchase three months of food for the children’s homes the ministry supports, especially those in hard-hit Africa and India, said Larry Bertram, who serves on the nonprofit’s staff. “One of the biggest problems with so much shut down in African countries is finding adequate food supplies and getting it transported to local markets where we can purchase it for the children,” Bertram said. “Plus, some countries are experiencing famine on top of the pandemic.”

• International Health Care Foundation has distributed food to communities in Nigeria and Tanzania, said executive director Kevin Linderman. “Also, our clinics provide nutritional counseling to mothers of small children, and we do growth charting to identify malnourished kids or kids at risk of malnourishment,” Linderman said, noting that children in Tanzania are at particular risk of stunting due to protein deficiency.

• In Haiti, Hope for Haiti’s Children sponsors 10 schools associated with Churches of Christ. Before the pandemic, at least 70 percent of the schools’ students were coming to school hungry, said Ken Bever, the ministry’s president. When schools shut down, the ministry organized food distributions for students. As the ministry prepares to restart schools, Bever said, “even the teens in our most ‘affluent’ downtown Port-au-Prince schools are pleading for us to provide them with a lunch. Last year, they did not need or desire to eat the free school lunch, but now it seems that hunger is impacting all our students.”

• Great Cities Missions has sent food aid to churches in Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico and Venezuela, said Chris Fry, director of Latin mission teams. “We’ve sent funds to the missionaries, and the missionaries have bought food for church members who have lost incomes,” Fry said. Members of more than 100 Churches of Christ have received aid.

PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS

“There is enough food to go around in this world,” said Milton Jones, president of Christian Relief Fund. But getting it to those in need “will require a different kind of thinking, a different kind of economy and a different kind of generosity.”

During the pandemic, the ministry “has had to become a food distributor more than ever before,” Jones said, but workers are committed to the goal that “none of the thousands of children CRF supports will go hungry.”

In Luhare, Kenya, Churches of Christ have opened dispensarys to provide for the needs of women and children, said Samson Wangila, a CRF program director. “These medical facilities advise the locals on the need for balanced diets, especially for the children and the elderly.”

Beyond the physical needs, families need spiritual support, said Ebenezer Udofia, African director of agriculture for Healing Hands International.

“Most people around us that we serve are feeling as if they have been swallowed up by life,” Udofia said. “Our encouragement to them is to think about what Jonah did. From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God.”

FIND LINKS to ministries providing aid to children and families at christianchronicle.org/childrenaid.
PREACHER: For 16 minutes, hospital staff tried to revive him

FROM PAGE 1

“I had to be as close as I could be,” the wife said, “and so that was the parking lot at the hospital.”

Lisa hadn’t seen her husband in more than two weeks, since she drove him to the ER back on June 5. “I told them he tested positive for COVID and wasn’t breathing well,” she said.

A hospital employee helped get Marty out of the car and into a wheelchair. The worker “just started wheeling him off,” his wife said, “and I said, ‘Um, do you not need any information? Do you not need anything from me?’”

The man asked if Marty had a cell phone. “Yes,” she said.

He said they’d call to get any information.

THE HOSPITAL ROLLER COASTER RIDE

Lisa had no idea what the next weeks would hold. A roller coaster of emotions and events quickly unfolded. Marty texted that he would need to stay a couple of hours. Then it became overnight. And then, as his condition worsened, he was moved to the ICU.

By the next morning, he was on a ventilator. The family had asked the doctor about Remdesivir, one of the medications some believe can help patients with COVID-19.

“We knew we needed to get it as soon as we could to get it in his system,” McCullough said.

That night, doctors gave him the drug. Then, just hours later, at 1:30 a.m., McCullough’s phone rang. It was her father’s nurse. She said Marty was awake and wanted to talk. The ventilator kept him from talking, but he made gestures to say, “I love you.” The family has shared that video on a Facebook page where they posted updates about his condition.

“That was a sign for us that maybe this stuff is working,” McCullough said.

Marty’s condition kept improving over the next few days. He was taken off the ventilator and able to talk with his family via video calls. Then, 12 days after his admittance to the hospital, something changed. “I don’t even know how to describe what happened,” McCullough said. “His blood pressure just hit rock bottom; heart rate went sky high. The roller-coaster ride started all over again.”

He was put back on a ventilator. McCullough was invited into the hospital to sit with her dad.

The family posted more updates on Facebook. Believers around the world prayed for Marty.

The next day was when the call came that led Beth to run toward the hospital. “That was a sign for us that maybe this stuff is working,” McCullough said.

Marty had died.

‘GOD WANTED ME HERE TODAY’

For 16 minutes, hospital staff tried to save him. And it worked, his vital signs returned. He was alive.

“To lose somebody that long, I don’t want to say they didn’t have hope, but it was just a scary few days,” McCullough said.

Doctors were worried about his brain function, his kidneys and whether he would actually wake up.

McCullough was allowed back into the hospital. As she talked to her dad, he raised his eyebrows. She knew it might just be a reflex, but it quickly became apparent that it was something more.

Five days after he had been revived, Marty opened his eyes. A man was standing in his room.

“I looked at him funny, and he said, ‘We’re going to do dialysis,’” McCullough said. “I told him, ‘I don’t do dialysis.’”

He ended up having two rounds of dialysis to help his kidneys resume function. He was again taken off the ventilator. A nurse moved him so he could see out the window, and so his family could see where he was. With help, he held up a sign that said, “I love you more.” His wife had made it for him for their 41st anniversary, which passed while he was hospitalized.

It was an emotional moment for the family. “I’ve had some people say, ‘Well, you just got lucky; the nurses were right there with you when you coded,’” Marty said. “They can call it luck if they want to, but these people were there when I coded because God had them there. I’m here today because God wanted me here today.”

After weeks in the hospital, Marty had lost a lot of strength.

He recalled that a doctor came in and said, “You’re not in the hospital anymore because you’re positive (for COVID-19). You’re in the hospital because you don’t have the strength to go home.”

“They lit a fire under him,” Beth said. The next day, Marty was up walking. Two days later, he left the hospital.

‘IT DID TAKE MY LIFE’

Marty said he’s grateful to be home and looks forward to preaching again soon.

He acknowledges that he didn’t always wear a mask when he went out before. That’s changed now. He hopes his story will encourage others to be more careful.

“I’m not going to say it almost took my life because it did take my life for a few minutes,” Marty said. “If I can do something to keep myself from getting it or keep someone else from getting it, I’m going to do it now.”

Most of all, he wants to thank those who prayed for him. In fact, talking about the prayers and support others provided brings him to tears.

“I know I’ve had prayers going up in Scotland, in Germany,” he said. “I’ve had prayers everywhere, and I’m never going to be able to thank everybody.”
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COLORADO
COLORADO SPRINGS — What would Jesus say about the coronavirus?
Eddie White, minister for the Eastside Church of Christ, believes the Lord and his early followers have much to say to Christians experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020.
White’s sermon series on the topic was the focus of a recent feature by the Colorado Springs Gazette’s David Ramsey, an alumnus of Abilene Christian University in Texas.

MINNESOTA
MINNEAPOLIS — Mayor Jacob Frey proclaimed Aug. 9 as “Dr. Russell A. Pointer Sr. Day” in the state’s largest city, recognizing the senior minister for the Minneapolis Central Church of Christ.
The mayor’s proclamation cited Pointer’s 44 years of preaching the Gospel, the last 10 years in Minneapolis. Pointer’s service with the Harrison neighborhood, the Hennepin County sheriff’s African American/Social Religious Leadership Council, the Minnesota Council of Churches and The Bridge of Reconciliation also were cited.
“Pointer and the Minneapolis Central Church collaborates with the Food Group of Minnesota providing 7,500 pounds of food to families twice a week on Tuesdays and Saturdays,” Frey noted. “This ‘Man of God,’ Dr. Russell A. Pointer Sr., has taken the Church and Community beyond the realm by providing a vision to evangelize, embrace, encourage, equip, empower and exalt the people of God.”

TENNESSEE
CLAY COUNTY — The Hermitage Springs Church of Christ, which started in 1840, celebrated “180 Years Together” on a recent Sunday.
The anniversary gathering featured worship, a fellowship lunch, the rededication of the original church bell and the dedication of a new electronic carillon bell system that plays throughout the day. A little log church house was first built on the current grounds.

MINISTER’S PAINTINGS

TEXARKANA, Ark. — Danny Helms aims to help people understand that the people of the Old Testament were real.
To do that, he produced 39 oil paintings, each inspired by the books from Genesis through Malachi. His exhibit, titled “Led by the Spirit,” is on display through Sept. 30 at the 1894 Gallery in Texarkana.
“It has taken a little over a year, about 1,500 hours,” Helms, associate minister for the Arkansas Boulevard Church of Christ, told the Texarkana Gazette. “I can paint when I want to, so sometimes I would paint 10 hours a day; sometimes I might do a little one and get it done fast. There are several large paintings. They’re all oil paintings ... on canvas.
“Some of the subjects are very familiar that people grew up with as kids, like Daniel and the Lion’s Den,” he added. “But other things are unusual ... like the Siege of Nineveh is a big battle scene.”

WEBSITE: dannyhelmsart.com
Portland Christians seek peaceful path amid protests

BY CHERYL MANN BACON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

G reat photographers know the secret to a great picture: Get closer. Focus on the faces, the emotion, the destruction. Fill the frame with impact.

When a tornado hits, the video of debris-strewn lots where homes or schools once stood can make it appear the storm wiped out an entire community. When the camera pulls back for the wide shot, everything changes.

The storm tearing through Portland, Ore., is like that. Widely photographed confrontations between protesters and police have centered in a roughly 12-square-block area downtown where protests broke out after the May 25 police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. They have persisted for almost three months.

The close-up does tell the truth. But so does the wide shot.

Zoom out, and head across the river, 10 minutes north of the downtown protests. Frederick Berry is beginning his ninth year as senior minister for Portland’s Piedmont Church of Christ. The Black congregation is small, just 85 members, but active. The modest, white frame building is just a block from Jefferson High School, where protesters removed the statue of Thomas Jefferson.

Berry and a few other members have attended some peaceful rallies at Peninsula Park a few blocks north.

“Things weren’t as out of hand as they are now in Portland,” he said. Some of the younger members attended rallies downtown, but at 60, he no longer has the energy for that.

Berry’s wife, Tresa, who works as a personal service worker with developmentally disabled adults, said she has tried to teach her children and grandchildren “to remember what the purpose is. It’s not violence. It’s not disobedience. It is protesting to be heard — for us to be heard — for our issues to come to the table and for us to be able to do that respectfully.”

“I’m trying to remind them to stay in the character of Christ at all times no matter what,” she said. “And if it comes to a point you feel you’re coming out of that character, we must walk away, turn and go the other way, or we’ll get lost in something that has nothing to do with the meaning of why we’re here.”

Frederick would like to have seen the protests, but he’s hopeful about the momentum he sees among the larger faith-based community and is willing to use the Piedmont congregation “as a hub for things that may need to happen.”

Margaret Carter, a retired community college professor who spent 27 years in the Oregon legislature and is the past president of the Oregon Democratic Party, also wishes Churches of Christ were more involved in pursuing solutions. She is a member of the East County Church of Christ, which planned a mid-August Zoom panel on racism, protests, police and the justice system featuring Carter, a White police officer and a White minister.

“I have talked diligently with leaders in the city about what is going on, but as a church movement, there has been no organized thrust toward what was going on even though there have been ministers of other faiths there,” she said.

VIOLENCE AFTER DARK

Carter, who has been on the protest line three times this summer, said the protest’s focus and its participants change after the sun goes down. She described one of the nights she went to the protests to hear a speaker:

“From about 6-10 p.m., there (were) peaceful protesters, and the theme was about Black Lives Matter and George Floyd,” she said. “It just became violent as the sun set and you found people tearing down windows. Contrary to what you hear on national news, the early part of evening is a very peaceful protest time.”

In late July, over objections of Oregon’s governor and Portland’s mayor, President Donald Trump sent in federal officers to protect the federal courthouse that had been targeted and set afire by protesters. Ensuing political volleys matched the projectiles hurled by late night protesters and the rubber bullets and gas canisters returned by law enforcement.

Many believed if the federal officers left, the violence would die down. Yet, days after the Oregon governor announced an agreement for withdrawal of federal police, late-night violence raged around the Penumbra Kelley Building where the Multnomah County Sheriff’s Office is located. Meanwhile, peaceful protests continued in other parts of the city.

Portland has seen many protests over the years, said Ron Clark, executive director of Kairos Church Planting, which is associated with Churches of Christ. He’s even been a part of them.

“What people have a hard time believing,” the minister said, “is Portland is a very racist city. We’re not as progressive as everybody thinks they are.”

The overwhelmingly White Pacific Northwest city has a reputation for being outspoken and social-minded, Clark said. The social-mindedness of the city challenges congregations that embrace that spirit, but often
they struggle to address a history of racism within Churches of Christ.

Many members of the mostly White Westside Church of Christ in Beaverton, a southwest suburb, support the Black Lives Matter movement, preaching minister Aaron Metcalf said. Some even wanted to put BLM signs at the church building, though church leadership did not come to agreement about that, he said.

Kevin Woods, senior minister for the Renovatus Church of Christ in Vancouver, Wash., less than 10 miles from downtown Portland, said, “It’s not impacted us any more than if it were to have happened in Seattle or Chicago.”

Clark said the violence has distracted from the peaceful protests and left church members in law enforcement exhausted.

Wilson Parrish, a police chaplain with the nonprofit Public Safety Chaplaincy that serves outlying counties, has seen the impact of the protests on police.

Parrish finds hope in small gestures. After a recent ride-along with an officer, they went for coffee only to learn another customer, an African American woman, had paid for their drinks.

“We thanked her profusely,” Parrish said, “and she said her dad was in law enforcement, and she wanted to thank us.”

As they drove away, he told the officer, “You do realize what just happened: A Black life that matters, who is fully convinced that blue lives matter, just bought our coffee,” Parrish said. “It almost brought me to tears.”

FINDING HOPE

Tresa Berry vacillates between discouragement and hope.

She said systemic racism has damaged Blacks as a culture of people. “We don’t know ourselves, who we are, where we come from, what was stripped from us. We lost a whole generation in us not knowing who we are. I see that in our young people today.”

Yet, for the first time in her life, she said, White suburban kids are telling their parents, “No more. These people are my friends, and I’m not going to sit back and allow them to take this kind of discrimination and violence from police on Black and Brown community.”

Berry remains hopeful about the future.

“I believe all things are possible with the Lord and that we are in a generation now where people have come up together. Many of us know one another. Even the gentrification has pushed us into trying to know one another, and that’s a good thing, and we need to because we’re all human.”

“That’s the change to come about,” Berry said, “more White people putting themselves on the line.”
Seeking justice, mercy with God’s love

"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God"

— Micah 6:8, New International Version

HYATTSVILLE, Md.

Over the past three months, I’ve covered protests in Lafayette Square in front of the White House. I’ve prayed with family by the gurney of a loved one who died of COVID-19.

I’ve served water to police officers through my work as Baltimore Police Department chaplain. I’ve prayed with my fellow chaplains during protests.

And I cried when I stood outside the U.S. Capitol as they took Rep. John Lewis’ flag-draped casket up the steps. Lewis had been to my house. He met my mother, and he called me — I was then a Washington Post reporter — after seeing a photo of me on her piano in Pensacola, Fla. “Young man, I am at your mother’s house,” said Lewis, who signed a copy of his book and left it there for me.

Lewis’ note to me said, “Thank you for all of your good work. Stay the course, keep the faith.”

AN EVENT POLICE RARELY SEE

I’ve tried to do that, even though life is hard right now, and I’m frustrated. I can’t visit my mother without 14 days of self-isolation. I can’t coach football. Activities like going to the movies or swimming in a pool are banned. Church picnics are prohibited.

And while families are self-isolating at home, protesters are marching across the nation after the deaths of George Floyd and so many others. Civil War monuments are coming down. We’re divided. We’re angry.

But there have been a few moments of inspiration. Recently, I reported on a march and prayer rally in Baltimore coordinated by several Churches of Christ. Florida evangelist Samuel Pounds preached at Frederick Douglass-Isaac Myers Maritime Park as young couples, Black and White, sat on the concrete and listened.

Uniformed police officers in cruisers and in a helicopter observed this gathering that was different from the other street events they had seen.

Pounds quoted John 8:36: “So, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” Young adults from a number of Baltimore congregations spoke, sang a cappella hymns and prayed.

For me, that was a Micah 6:8 moment. I watched a group of Christians acting justly on the same streets where others had thrown rocks and acted unjustly. But that moment would not have been possible had people not ventured beyond their comfort zone.

A number of Whites joined us. One person asked me what church they had come from. None that I know of, I replied. They just saw the peaceful event and decided to follow.

FOLLOWING ‘THE GOSPEL OF OPINION’

We can’t allow spiritual peer pressure to determine what we will do in the name of Jesus or what we will not do in the name of the Church of Christ.

For too long, too many people have followed the gospel of opinion instead of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. My guide has to be the word of God. Micah 6:8 tells us to love mercy. This is one of the most challenging passages of Scripture during a time we feel so overwhelmed.

But before we can love the George Floyds of the world or the protesters in the streets, we have to love each other as equals in the body of Christ.

Few members of Churches of Christ were part of the Civil Rights Movement. In his book, Rosa Parks’ lawyer Fred Gray talks about facing criticism from other brethren for his involvement in the movement.

For too long, Black church members have been shackled by spiritual legalism, tradition and a culture that is akin to racism by Whites. We are great at code switching on Sunday morning, but do we really love and embrace each other when we get home?

When I moved to College Park, Md., in 1984, I roomed with David Dillard and other members of the church there. My brother Tom Leibrand picked me up and gave me a ride to my first job interview.

Today, Dillard is one of the elders at the University Park Church of Christ here in Hyattsville. Leibrand is a deacon, and I am part of a telephone chat group of church brothers including Blacks, Whites, Democrats and Republicans. The hottest topics are sports, food and our children.

I like the way Greg Presbury, who is African American, described our group: “God has given us a way to see each other outside of the labels and categories man has placed and to see and relate to each other as brothers in Christ.

“Nothing is going to change my color and my history and the baggage that goes along with it ... nor will it change the other brothers’ color and history and baggage that goes with their quest.”

“Young men, I am at your mother’s house,” said Lewis, who signed a copy of his biography for me on her piano in Pensacola, Fla. “Thank you for all of your good work. Stay the course, keep the faith.”

HAMIL R. HARRIS is a Christian Chronicle correspondent and a veteran journalist. He preaches regularly for the Glenarden Church of Christ in Maryland.
Kidney Donor Search
Type A or O blood

Could you be a kidney donor for Maebelle Hudson?
Are you 18 or older?
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If you answered yes to these questions, you could be her donor.

Maebelle Hudson is a very special person. She was an educator in the public school system for over 30 years. She loves teaching Bible class at Raleigh Church of Christ in Raleigh, NC. Even after having to go on dialysis several months ago, she has continued to teach and serve in every way she can. She is a wife, mother and grandmother. She has been a great support for her husband Adam who has served as an elder and minister. They are a great team and an inspiration to many.

If you would like more information about becoming a donor for Maebelle, please contact Amy Woodard, living donor coordinator at UNC Hospital, at (984) 974-7568.

To find out more about Maebelle, please visit the National Foundation for Transplants at www.transplants.org. If you have any questions, please contact Fran Holland at N4837Z@aol.com.

Please consider donating a kidney for Maebelle Hudson, and please keep her in your prayers.

Thank you!

Churches of Christ 20th Annual Orphan Sunday Nov. 8, 2020

“FEED MY SHEEP.”
John 21:17

Will you help us Save the Orphans & Widows during COVID 19 in Haiti, India, Kenya, Liberia, Mexico, Pakistan, Philippines, Russia and Uganda?

“If we stop now they will surely starve.” That’s why this year’s Orphan Sunday is dedicated to the continued effort to feed and share the Gospel with hundreds of fatherless families of widows with children as well as the thousands of orphans we provide for. Please join us and add your church to the list of participating congregations. Call Tim at 406-257-0868 or email him at timm@orphanslifeline.org with questions or for more information and a participation pack.

Orphan’s Lifeline Int’l. 135 Kelly Rd. Kalispell, MT 59901 406-257-0868  
A ministry of the Churches of Christ for over 20 years
Tennessee minister seeks 14th term — as an independent

FROM PAGE 3

After 26 years in the Tennessee General Assembly, DeBerry faces the fight of his political life in the November general election.

That’s because the Democratic executive committee voted 41-18 in April to remove him from the party’s primary ballot. The decision — reaffirmed 40-21 the next week — came after the filing deadline to run as a Republican or independent.

At first, it seemed as if DeBerry would have no choice but to give up his seat or wage a longshot write-in campaign.

But then his fellow legislators stepped in and amended state election rules, allowing him to file as an independent candidate after the original deadline.

The Volunteer State is a hotbed of a cappella Churches of Christ, with roughly 1,400 congregations and 200,000 men, women and children in the pews, according to a national directory published by Nashville-based 21st Century Christian.

Until 2006, Democrats controlled a majority of the Tennessee House of Representatives. However, Republicans gained a slight majority (50-49) in 2008 and kept adding to their seats. They now control nearly three-quarters of the House (73-27).

“I don’t think it is difficult for a religious person to be a Democrat in Tennessee, but it means different things to be religious and Democratic now,” said Marc Schwerdt, a political scientist at Lipscomb University in Nashville. “If you are religious and Democratic, you have a leftist/progressive lean to both your faith and politics.

“Social justice is extremely important to both the progressive faithful and progressive Democrats, which dominate the party now,” he added. “Just as the Republicans have become more red, the Democrats have become more blue.”

But while the Democratic Party has become more progressive, DeBerry has not.

The executive committee had a responsibility to “confirm the legitimacy of an individual representing themselves to be a Democrat,” said Kendra Lee, a 32-year-old Black Democratic activist and committee member from Memphis.

DeBerry failed the test, she said.

“There was never a question of morals or character,” Lee told The Chronicle. “This is very much straight down the line as to your responsibilities as a Democratic elected official.”

According to The Tennessean newspaper, the committee’s concerns included the incumbent accepting contributions from Republican-aligned political action committees, voting for school vouchers and voting for a Republican as House speaker in 2019.

However, some leading Democrats voiced disappointment with the executive committee’s action, including House Minority Leader Karen Camper, a fellow Memphis representative who called DeBerry an “honorable man.”

“Our caucus shares core values on many issues, and one of those core values is that we are the voice of the people we represent,” Camper, the first African American to lead Tennessee’s House Democrats, said in a statement quoted by The Tennessean.

“Attempting to nullify the choice of the people of the 90th District is not the way to do it.”

State Rep. Mike Sparks, a White Republican, also supported DeBerry’s right to seek re-election.

“When John speaks, the subject matter has conviction,” Sparks said. “Whatever the issue, whether it’s talking about broken homes, broken lives, those battling addictions or those who are incarcerated, you can tell it’s coming from the heart.”

LETTER CHALLENGES PARTY PLATFORM

DeBerry made national news in July as a lead signatory on a letter organized by the anti-abortion group Democrats for Life.

The letter, signed by a coalition of 115 religious leaders, clergy members and theologians, urged the Democratic National Committee to adopt a party platform friendlier to abortion opponents, as noted by The Associated Press.

“The abortion issue has become such a problem for the party when you look at the number of pro-life Democrats who are told not to run, told they can’t be in the party, pressured to change their position,” said Kristen Day, executive director of Democrats for Life.

“So, I’m super proud of Rep. DeBerry just standing firm,” Day added. “We need more people like him willing to stand up for the unborn, not bending to the abortion lobby.”

But last year, DeBerry drew the ire of the political arm of Planned Parenthood in Tennessee for supporting a bill banning abortions after detection of a heartbeat at about six weeks, the Commercial Appeal newspaper in Memphis reported. The group announced an ad campaign targeting DeBerry.

“Rep. DeBerry has shown a pattern of disregard for access to essential health care, and protecting that access is essential to our mission,” Francie Hunt, executive director of Tennessee Advocates for Planned Parenthood, said in a statement emailed to the Chronicle. “If DeBerry actually wanted to reduce abortion in Tennessee, he would work with us to ensure that women have everything they need to have healthy pregnancies when they’re ready.”

A REMATCH OF 2018 PRIMARY

With DeBerry off the party ballot, Torrey Harris, 29, won the Democratic primary in House District 90 on Aug. 6. Harris got 57 percent of the vote in a three-candidate race.

Since no Republican filed for the seat, the general election will feature a rematch of Harris vs. DeBerry.

The two previously met in the 2018 Democratic primary in which DeBerry received 60 percent of the vote, while Harris collected 40 percent.

However, Harris — who describes himself as a community leader who believes in human rights and equal opportunity for all — said he has
improved his name recognition in the district. If elected, Harris would be one of the first openly LGBTQ members of the Tennessee General Assembly. The candidate characterizes himself as bisexual.

“Harris is in a safe Democratic district and is likely to beat the incumbent who was removed from the Democratic party earlier this year, in part because of his anti-LGBTQ and anti-choice votes,” the LGBTQ Victory Fund, a gay-rights group, said in a news release touting Harris' primary victory.

Harris, who is Black and attends Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church, a Disciples of Christ congregation in Memphis, said he was ill with the coronavirus when the executive committee removed DeBerry from the primary ballot. Harris said he did not support DeBerry’s ouster from the primary.

“I think he had the best intentions personally,” Harris said of DeBerry’s legislative record. “I do believe he is more than likely a great guy and that maybe he just made some decisions that didn’t necessarily represent his district, and this is because of his own personal beliefs, obviously.”

But DeBerry maintains that his positions reflect those of his constituents. “If I’m on the ballot, I’m going to win. It’s that simple,” he said, reflecting on past efforts to unseat him. “Because the people they wanted to claim are liberal are not. The average Black person is conservative when it comes to those particular social issues of gay marriage and abortion.”

**FROM CITY SLICKER TO COUNTRY BOY**

DeBerry traces many of the values that he holds dear to his late father, John DeBerry Sr., who — like his son — preached the Gospel for more than 50 years.

The younger DeBerry was born in Memphis, but his father later moved the family to the small town of Alamo in Crockett County, Tenn., about 80 miles northeast of Memphis.

There, DeBerry and his siblings enrolled as the first Black students at an all-White school.

As the oldest of a half-dozen siblings, the duty fell to DeBerry to ask his father — who established the NAACP in Crockett County — how to handle the integration experience.

“‘What do we do, Daddy?’ DeBerry remembers asking at the dinner table. His father kept chewing his food but finally responded: ‘You go to school. You don’t scratch your head when it ain’t itching. You don’t grin when it ain’t funny. You be a man. You give respect, and you expect respect, and you’ll get respect.’

And that’s what happened, DeBerry said. “We’re 100 miles from Memphis, where they’re burning the city down,” he said, “and at a little school in Alamo, where people are supposed to be getting off John Deeres and being prejudiced, we had a wonderful experience.

“And a lot of it had to do with the way children were raised in that area,” he added. “Everybody worked. Everybody sacrificed. Everybody understood nothing was free. I chopped cotton, picked cotton right beside White children, picked strawberries, picked peas, picked corn, picked okra.

“I was a city slicker turned into a country boy. It was the best thing that ever happened to me.”

DeBerry’s father started an African American newspaper in Crockett County and traveled to Memphis to cover King’s “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” speech at the Mason Temple the night of April 3, 1968.

He took his son, then 17, with him to take pictures for The Informer.

In the packed room, the younger DeBerry stood against the wall.

“Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place,” the 39-year-old King said near the end of the speech. “But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And he’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over. And I’ve seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to that promised land.”

To the teen with the camera, the famous Baptist pastor looked troubled that stormy night.

“I think the man was trembling,” DeBerry said. “I don’t think anything could have made him leave that stage, but I think that he knew something was impending. I could hear it in his voice.”

The next evening — April 4, 1968 — King was shot to death on the balcony outside his second-floor motel room in Memphis.

A half-century later, DeBerry believes America needs more men like King and his father.

“Because when the world saw Dr. King, my daddy and others, what they saw was integrity and courage,” DeBerry said. “They saw men and women of character. Men and women who had values.

“So, the world changed because they saw Black men and White men, Black women and White women, standing together and being civil, being peaceful, using their constitutional rights to change.”

The protests that have followed the May 25 police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis are not the same, he said.

“People are pulling down statues and burning buildings, and they want to call that a peaceful protest?” DeBerry said. “How in the world are you having a peaceful protest when you’re putting graffiti on a federal building? Or you’re breaking out windows?”

Decades after King’s death, his political affiliation remains a mystery, but the civil rights leader — as DeBerry sees it — wouldn’t recognize the modern Democratic Party.

“Dr. King didn’t approve of abortion,” DeBerry said. “Dr. King wasn’t marching for gay rights. Dr. King wasn’t marching for a lot of this stuff that we see today.”

After high school, DeBerry majored in Bible at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn. Since the mid-1990s, he has served as a trustee of that Christian university.

“He is a highly influential board member, a statesman of statesmen, eloquent of speech and a powerful preacher of the Gospel,” Freed-Hardeman President David Shannon said. “You haven’t heard a presentation on citizens’ responsibilities, young or old, until you have been informed and challenged by him.

“The disgraceful tension toward him is an attack on high morals and virtuous living. We pray he prospers in this season, not just for his sake but for our state and nation’s sake. To stand with Rep. John DeBerry is to stand with a man of God.”

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John DeBerry Jr. says America needs more men like Martin Luther King Jr. and his minister father, the late John DeBerry Sr.
**CHINA**

**HONG KONG** — Tension is high in this city of 7.5 million souls, a former British territory that, since 1997, has been a Special Administrative Region of China. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, a new national security law has raised concerns about freedom of expression and sovereignty in Hong Kong.

In the midst of the tension and lockdowns, the Wanchai Church of Christ continues to worship. A small, Chinese-speaking congregation meets via Zoom. An English-speaking congregation of about 120, comprised mostly of Filipino domestic workers, met in limited numbers for a few weeks before a new wave of the virus forced the church to rely entirely on livestreaming, minister Felix Olidan told *The Christian Chronicle*.

Many domestic workers live in close quarters and are at high risk for the virus. Even when church meetings were permitted, some of the workers’ employers did not allow them to attend.

“I am in contact with our brethren — especially our sisters — about their status and so far they are doing great,” Olidan said. “Some members have an online Bible study with me. May God’s blessing be upon us all as we endeavor to give glory to God even in the midst of pandemic.”

**JAMAICA**

**PORTMORE** — He was the youngest of 13 children, and as a child he was often ill. At one point a doctor said there was nothing more he could do, and he refused to take payment for the boy’s treatment.

Algan Augustus Walker told that story many times during his long career as a pioneering preacher for Churches of Christ in Jamaica.

The minister for the Elletson Road congregation and planter of the Independence City Church of Christ lived to the age of 93 and died March 17, just as Jamaica’s government issued work-from-home orders due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Several cases of the disease were reported after funerals.

Church members recently announced that a memorial service for Walker is delayed until 2021 in Jamaica’s capital, Kingston.

“He related to people from all walks of life and made everyone feel special and important,” church members wrote in his obituary. “You never left his presence feeling the same. He encouraged, he counseled, he consoled.”

**After Beirut blast, International Church of Christ urges believers to ‘rise up and build’**

*By Erik Tryggstad | The Christian Chronicle*

They’ve endured decades of wars and countless bombs, but Christ-followers in Lebanon said they have never experienced anything like the explosion that devastated their capital city, Beirut.

“Honesty, this is something we see in movies,” said Moufid Tohme, comparing the aftermath of the Aug. 4 blast to cinematic depictions of a nuclear war.

The detonation of 2,750 metric tons of ammonium nitrate, stored unsafely in a warehouse in the Middle Eastern port city, claimed more than 150 lives, left more than 300,000 people homeless and caused some $15 billion in damage.

The blast damaged the meeting place of the International Church of Christ in Beirut, where Tohme ministers. He and his wife, Jessy, are leaders of the Middle East Regional Family of Churches for the fellowship, which has roots in mainstream Churches of Christ.

About 60 percent of Lebanon’s 6.8 million people identify as Muslim and 30 percent as Christian, mostly Catholic.

There are no known mainstream Churches of Christ in the nation.

The International Church of Christ in Beirut, launched in 1994, has about 100 members, said Roger Lamb, founder of *Disciples Today*, a news service for the ICOC. At least one member was injured and taken to the hospital, Lamb said. Many more lost their homes.

In a video recorded Aug. 8, Jessy Tohme described the days after the blast as “the hardest days in my life.”

“I was grieving my childhood, her said. “I was grieving my past. I was grieving my present, my dreams, my plans. I was grieving the future of my kids. ... I was grieving, and honestly, I couldn’t pray.”

She clung to God’s words in scriptures including Psalm 23: “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me.”

“I begged him to comfort me,” she said. Then, through the outpouring of support of the church received from around the world, “God showed me that he still cares about us and God showed me that he loves us even though we’re passing through hard times.”

The Lebanese people are survivors, her husband said.

“We want to continue. So we decided, just like in the days of Nehemiah, we want to rise up, we want to build.”

HOPE Worldwide, a nonprofit associated with the ICOC, had been providing aid to Lebanon since last October. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, an economic crisis has pushed tens of thousands people into poverty and triggered large anti-government protests, the BBC reports.

“Already a revolution is starting,” Moufid Tohme said. “Keep praying that we stay strong.”

In addition to food relief, HOPE’s Lebanon branch plans to help renovate and rebuild homes damaged in the blast.

On social media, church members urge people to “rise up and rebuild.”

Jessy Tohme also asked for prayers that the people they serve will be receptive to the gospel.

“This is the time when they don’t only need food and shelter,” she said. “They need to hear the word of God.”

**SEE RELATED VIDEOS** and links at christianchronicle.org.
AFTER A DEVASTATING ACCIDENT, teen Christian inspires a global audience as she works to walk again.

‘The challenge is a blessing’

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Since the accident that put her in a wheelchair, Brooklyn Boyer has seen God at work every single day — through the tiniest of hand movements in rehab, through messages of support she’s received from believers around the globe and through countless serendipities that can’t be explained away as coincidence, said her brother, Tyler.

Now, “we’re waiting on, ‘Pick up your mat and walk,’” said Tyler, referencing Jesus’ words to the paralytic in John 5.

Tyler described his 17-year-old sister as “a total, bubbly little firecracker.” She’s a pole vaulter, track runner and volleyball player for her high school in Lubbock, Texas, where the family worships with the Sunset Church of Christ. Both parents, David and Tonia, teach in the School of Education at Lubbock Christian University, where Tyler, 22, just began his fifth year.

On June 10 Brooklyn was swimming at a friend’s house and went headfirst down a pool slide. She’s not sure what happened, but suddenly she was lying at the bottom, unable to move.

“The first thing I thought of was that I could feel God on the bottom of the pool with me,” she later told her family. “I’m going to be OK.” Her boyfriend was there and had just completed lifeguard training. He would know what to do.

He did. He and Brooklyn’s friends calmly pulled her to the surface and made sure she could breathe. They kept her in the water until paramedics arrived.

At the hospital the family learned that Brooklyn’s c5 vertebrae, at the base of her skull, was shattered. She had lost all feeling from her mid-chest down and had difficulty moving her arms and shoulders. She spent about two weeks in the Intensive Care Unit. Surgeons repaired the damage as best they could, her brother said.

On June 25 a line of surgical-masked hospital workers clapped and cheered as Brooklyn left Lubbock for Craig Hospital in Denver, which specializes in rehab for people with spinal cord and brain injuries.

The family posts updates on a Facebook page, BrooklynsWalk, which has been viewed by people in 43 countries, Tyler said. Each post has a list of requests for “BPWs,” Brooklyn’s Prayer Warriors.

They met one of their Prayer Warriors early on, in the ICU in Lubbock. A nurse there had been asked by her mom to pray for a girl she’d heard about who was injured in a swimming accident. The nurse did, and when she got to work she discovered that the girl she’d just prayed for was Brooklyn.

“That’s just one example, I kid you not,” Tyler said of the providence his family has experienced since the injury. At least 50 such incidents have followed, Tyler said, adding, “God has been showing himself.”

In Denver, Brooklyn recently began water therapy. It was her first time in a pool since the accident.

Her mother feared it would be traumatic. But as she listened to songs by Harry Styles (Brooklyn’s choice) she did stretches, moved her arms and even used a snorkel. She was calm, relaxed. She laughed.

“My momma heart was bursting with relief and thankfulness,” Tonia Boyer said. “Brooklyn is brave — not by her own might, but because she is confident that the Lord is good and that he is working in her.”

She’s received messages of support from churches in South Korea and Uganda, from Texas Gov. Greg Abbott (who is himself paralyzed) and from former Dallas Cowboys quarterback Troy Aikman.

She’s also inspired others.

Tyler said that one of his longtime friends, who had struggled with his faith, recently told him that seeing Brooklyn’s example had convinced him to reconnect with his church.

“The journey “is not without tears, some days, and frustration,” her brother said.

Brooklyn doesn’t know if she’ll walk again, but “she knows that, regardless, God is going to use her, and he already has used her.”

In a recent video post, Brooklyn spoke to her teammates at school, encouraging them to obey their coaches, to “yap and clap” and to glorify God in everything they do.

“Be ready for the challenge,” she said, “because the challenge is a blessing.”

TO CONTRIBUTE to a fund for the Boyers’ medical expenses, see christianchronicle.org/brooklynswalk or call the Sunset Church of Christ at (806) 792-5191.

Brooklyn Boyer enjoys a visit with her family at Craig Hospital in Denver. Due to COVID-19 she’s usually able to see only one family member at a time. Group visits must be scheduled and are much appreciated, said her brother, Tyler.
Churches of Christ, provides the men it serves with a calm, serene recovery center with a dining room, offices, a dormitory, three buildings with two- and three-bedroom apartments and an activities center with a dining room, offices and an area for classes. The facilities can accommodate 20 men.

In 2019 Project Rescue accepted 48 men into its programs. During the first half of 2020, 38 men have entered.

**EACH REWARD IS A TEST**

Crockett and others who work with Project Rescue anchor recovery in a multifaceted relationship with God. Breaking addiction involves coming to terms with the past and making healthy decisions in the present — facing “life on life’s terms,” as Crockett’s words key. A loving church community, one that offers accountability, not judgment.

To begin the recovery process, Project Rescue gives residents a chance to focus on their lives. The program initially restricts personal choices, then slowly restores them, “because the program is about personal choices,” Crockett said. “You’re going to get rewarded, but each step of the way you earn it.”

After 30 days, residents earn the “freedom of working and driving. ‘We’ll help them get a car.’ Crockett said. If they use those opportunities responsibly, at 90 days they get a debit card loaded with $500 of their earnings.

“It is common for men to arrive at Project Rescue still suffering the physical consequences of addiction — said Kim Johnson, a nurse practitioner who volunteering at the ministry. “The men have created additional medical needs that we assess and monitor any medications they are consuming.”

“The men have to be detoxed before they come to us, but sometimes there’s a little left over,” Johnson said. “They may still be very shaky … They can be very weak, malnourished.”

**FROM CONVICT TO EVANGELIST**

Crockett is no stranger to the perils of addiction. He knows the spiritual void that can fill it and the battles required to overcome it.

Born in New York, Crockett grew up in Florida with “a hard-working father and devoted mother,” according to a bio by the church. But with the family “virtually unchurched,” a spiritual foundation was lacking. Crockett hit a midlife crisis during the 1990s, Crockett began drinking and experimenting with drugs, getting caught up in an endless loop. He cycled in and out of jail and rehab.

In 2011, the program moved to Alabama, where Crocker found generous support. “They were some hands that I shook that let me see how love was,” Crockett said. “They’re able now to love these men,” Crockett said. “They’re able now to love these men.”

“With the way God designed the church, it’s perfect for a recovery program,” Crockett said. “The men have to do is ask, and the Holy Spirit's presence answers.”

The men have to be detoxed before they come to us, but sometimes there’s a little left over,” Johnson said. “They may still be very shaky … They can be very weak, malnourished.”

“Keeping the men on track to God’s plan is a daily battle,” Guinn said. “For these men, I hope and pray that they take the way of escape and pray that they continue to make the choices.”

Project Rescue offers a refuge, a place for residents to reconnect to themselves spiritually. “You didn’t plant this in the middle of a city,” he said. For Guinn, Project Rescue’s setting affords residents the chance to “remove themselves from whatever environments they were in before and get better tuned to spiritual things.”

**Recovering in quarantine:** Ronnie Crocker leads a Bible study in Project Rescue’s members activity center before the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the ministry set aside its dormitory rooms to quarantine residents under COVID-19 isolation or exhibit symptoms. At press time, no residents or staff were known to have contracted the virus, Crocker said, adding that the ministry has taken all precautions to facilitate addiction recovery. “We have had more time to minister to our Word to our 26 program members,” Crockett said. Four residents have been baptized since lockdowns began.

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Buddy Parks, managing editor at the Decatur church, sees the program as “a second-chance ministry.”

Guinn looked to the story of the Prodigal Son to explain the program at Project Rescue. “We make choices that put us in a situation, we can make choices to get out,” Guinn said. “For these men, I hope and pray that they take the way of escape and that they continue to make the choices.”

Guinn believes Project Rescue offers a refuge, a place for residents to reconnect to themselves spiritually. “You didn’t plant this in the middle of a city,” he said. For Guinn, Project Rescue’s setting affords residents the chance to “remove themselves from whatever environments they were in before and get better tuned to spiritual things.”

Ronnie Crocker is available to help churches launch addiction recovery ministries. Contact Ronnie Crocker at (256) 616-1522.

**A place of quiet Rescue**

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Full-Time Youth/Family Minister Wanted

The Center Street Church of Christ in Fayetteville, Ark., is seeking a mature family man with excellent preaching and biblical skills and a passion for youth and their families. We have approximately 290 members including about 40 teens in one of the fastest growing communities in the county. Inquiries and resumes should be sent to:

csyministersearch@gmail.com

For job qualifications, description and application process please visit:

centerstreet.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)

Full-time Pulpit Minister Search

The Central congregation in Shawnee, Okla., is seeking a mature family man, solid in the Truth, who has excellent speaking and teaching skills and who ministers with the heart of a servant. Inquiries and resumes should be sent to:

centralministersearch@gmail.com

To download a detailed job announcement and job description, go to our website:

shawneecentralcofc.org/media/Preacher_Job_Description.PDF

If more information is needed contact:

Bob Stephens: (405) 388-6218

Minister Need - Ottawa, Kansas

Must be married, and wife must support her husband in his ministry. Must teach from the Bible and only the Bible. We are a small and loving congregation of 45-50 that loves to study God's word.

Please send resume to:

In care of Richard Ecord
Church of Christ
1207 W 15th
Ottawa, KS 66067

Full-time Evangelist - Enterprise, Alabama

College Avenue Church of Christ is seeking a full-time evangelist. We are a congregation of approx. 170 members, with an established team of five elders and 12 deacons. Enterprise is a very diverse military community right outside Fort Rucker, the US Army Aviation Center. We will consider applicants who are scripturally sound, socially engaged, and committed to expanding the borders of the Kingdom. Applicants must be experienced, focused, self-directed, and have a passion for evangelism. Duties include: community outreach, preaching, teaching, and other traditional ministerial roles as required. Additional opportunities to serve abound, including with Wiregrass Christian Academy [pre-K-6] and Wiregrass Christian Youth Camp.

Please submit a current resume, references, and recent sermon multi-media file or streaming links to:
EnterpriseEvangelistSearch2020@gmail.com. Alternatively, these materials may be mailed to:

College Avenue Church of Christ
Attention: Littleton Chatham
200 Roundtree Drive, Enterprise, AL 36331

Minister Search - Garden City, Kansas

The Church of Christ located in the southwest corner of Kansas is seeking a minister who defines his ministry as preaching, teaching and equipping others to serve. We are a congregation of 80+ members who seek to be Jesus by loving and serving each other and our community. We’re seeking a preacher who wants to work and minister alongside us.

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If you would like to be considered for this ministry, please submit your résumé, a current video media of two sermons (a link is acceptable), and a concise one-page statement that characterizes your current ministry efforts and style. Also, please include a current photo and three references. You may also submit your information via our church website by going to: http://www.gcchurchofchrist.com/ministerssearch

Church of Christ, 1715 Pioneer Rd, Garden City, KS 67846
(620) 272-7645 (Pete Cedra, elder) or (620) 640-9142 (Jarrod Spencer, deacon)
gcchurchofchrist.com gcchurchofchrist@cox.net

CALENDAR

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schedules are subject to change. Please contact event organizers for updates.

Sept. 6, 27 Senior Singles Event. Bayview Church of Christ. San Francisco. Email Allen at: lln.mcfrlnd@yahoo.com.


Sept. 17 Eastern European Mission Benefit Event. Franklin, Tenn. info@eem.org. See eem.org/events.

Sept. 20 Centennial Anniversary. Central Church of Christ. Moore, Okla. info@moorecentral.org. See moorecentral.org.

Sept. 22 Eastern European Mission Benefit Event. Houston, Texas. info@eem.org. See eem.org/events.

Oct. 15 Eastern European Mission Benefit Event. Tyler, Texas. info@eem.org. See eem.org/events.

Oct. 22-24 CenterPeace (e3) Conference. Highland Oaks Church of Christ. Dallas, Texas. info@centerpeace.net. See centerpeace.net.

Nov. 7 25th Anniversary Celebration. The Children's Home Foundation. Lubbock, Texas. info@chfinc.org. See chfinc.org.

Nov. 8 Orphan Sunday. Orphan's Lifeline International. timm@orphans-lifeline.org.

FULL CALENDAR: www.christianchronicle.org

Preaching Minister Search

University Park Church of Christ is searching for a Preaching Minister (Senior Minister) to serve a highly diverse congregation in Hyattsville, Maryland.

Please download our vacancy announcement (PDF) from our website:

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

BY LYNN Mc MILLON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

For 14 years, Scott and Holly Emery served on a church-planting mission team in Santiago, Chile.

They returned to the United States in 2013 and now live in Irving, Texas, where they participate in the Hispanic outreach and marrieds’ ministries at their local church. Both work for nonprofits: Scott as director of U.S. Hispanic teams for Great Cities Missions and Holly as executive assistant for Come Before Winter, which promotes spiritual renewal of Christian leaders around the world.

The couple established Misión: Matrimonio last year as a resource to help Hispanic churches serve marriages in their congregations and communities through events such as Marriage Encounter.

They have been married almost 25 years and have two children, Savannah, 19, a freshman at Texas A&M University; and Haydn, 17, a high school junior.

Scott and Holly responded to emailed questions from The Christian Chronicle.

Describe the demographics of the primary population that you serve with these retreats.

We serve Spanish-speaking and bilingual married couples, both those within churches and those who are not members of any church. More to the point, we seek to be a resource to help Hispanic churches reach out to couples in their communities. We target “normal” marriages — couples who experience ups and downs and have areas that need work.

We often say that no marriage is perfect, and every marriage has room for improvement! That said, every Marriage Encounter in which we have served has included at least one or two couples in crisis. Every time, we see God work miracles and restore hope to marriages on the verge of separation.

Describe a typical retreat experience.

A Marriage Encounter begins Friday night and ends Sunday night. During these 48 hours, participating couples listen to stories of real-life experiences shared by a team of four testimony couples, interspersed with teaching on a variety of topics centered around healthy communication. After each group session, couples reflect on the topics covered and practice communication techniques. We do not ask participating couples to share their personal issues with other couples. Rather, all work is done between husband and wife to protect privacy.

Throughout the weekend, gifts and romantic surprises are planned to help participating couples feel loved, nurtured and blessed as they work hard on their marriages. These details are covered by a team of seven couples who stay onsite but are largely unseen by our participants. A prayer chain organized prior to the weekend ensures that each of the 48 hours of the encounter is covered in prayer by believers not attending the retreat.

What special topics do your attendees need?

We have identified healthy communication as a primary need for most couples. Using the communication tools we teach at the retreat, couples delve into issues presented by our testimony couples, including:

• How our modern world tends to separate husband and wife — and how to approach life as a team;
• The masks we wear to hide our insecurities — and how to be our true selves in marriage;
• And forgiveness — how to seek it and how to accept it from God, from ourselves and from our spouses.

We provide training on how to express authentic feelings in loving ways in order to approach even the most difficult subjects, such as intimacy or past hurts. Woven throughout the weekend is the foundational principle that God is the source of hope and power to restore or improve any marriage.

Do you have any special method to get people to attend who really need to?

We rely on participating couples to tap into their spheres of influence after their own encounters and invite other couples they know who could benefit from the retreat.

In fact, during the weekend itself, we invite participants to write down names of such couples and discuss them with their spouses. As we fill spaces for each retreat, we give preference to couples in crisis.

Are professional counseling services offered for those who might need such?

We specify at the orientation meeting prior to each retreat...
that Marriage Encounter is not designed for couples who have already separated or who are dealing with serious issues such as abuse, addiction or an ongoing affair. We are not professional counselors, nor is our weekend retreat the time or place to deal with issues of this magnitude. However, any time we become aware that a couple is struggling with an issue that requires professional counseling, we work with our local church partners to connect these couples with the resources they need.

What are your plans for this ministry for the future?
In partnership with the eight DFW-area Hispanic churches that participated in our inaugural encounter in February 2020, we plan to continue hosting encounters twice a year, our next one being in October. We predict that as churches grow as a result of this outreach effort, as our church in Chile did, they will want more spaces to invite more couples, making it increasingly difficult to share one encounter among multiple churches. We also hope to host other events (couples’ nights, seminars, etc.) as a complement to our weekend retreats, to help churches strengthen marriages and build community among couples.

How has the Hispanic community you serve responded to the COVID-19 crisis?
We have seen our friends in the Hispanic community affected in many ways by the pandemic. Many lost their jobs and have had to find other ways to make ends meet, but by and large we have witnessed these brothers and sisters seek the Lord more fervently and reach out in creative ways to care for one another during this crisis.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, search for “Mision: Matrimonio” on Facebook. Email the ministry mision.matrimonio@gmail.com. Plans for the October event could change depending on what happens with the COVID-19 pandemic.
**MID-SOUTH YOUTH CAMP**

**HENDERSON, Tenn.** — Mid-South Youth Camp held a groundbreaking ceremony in August to celebrate the building of a new dining hall.

The 77-acre camp outside of Henderson plans to build the new dining hall and an outdoor game room for future campers to enjoy.

“The new outdoor game room, Grandma Fern’s Porch, will serve as an additional space for campers to make lifelong friends and memories,” said Gayle McDonald, camp codirector. “Grandma Fern was my mom, and she loved children and would’ve loved seeing them laugh and enjoy this wonderful place.”

Due to COVID-19, the traditional camp experience this summer had to be reshaped into events that could connect with campers in a safe way. The camp’s annual fish fry fundraiser also had to be canceled.

Despite those changes, the camp was able to host a virtual bonfire and a “Finger lickin’ BBQ Chicken” drive-through fundraiser.

**EVANGELISM**

**HOME MISSION**

**WHITE SETTLEMENT, Texas** — Home Mission, a ministry focused on helping Churches of Christ grow, hopes to expand their reach.

Leaders are looking to recruit more volunteer evangelists and support staff to visit and work with churches throughout the United States.

The ministry, directed by John Orr, focuses on finding ways to “encourage, equip and evangelize” congregations that are struggling.

Overseen by the elders of the West Freeway Church of Christ in the Fort Worth area, Home Mission has worked with more than 250 churches across the country.

It trains congregations in outreach and evangelism and helps them plan for the future, minister Britt Farmer said.

The program offers the assistance at no cost. Home Mission hopes to continue the work and invites others who are willing to work with them.

For more information, see www.homemission.org.

**EVANGELISM**

**MINISTRY LEAGUE**

**BIRMINGHAM, Ala.** — Adventures in Ministry, a nonprofit created for members of Churches of Christ to share Bible study content, has a new name: Ministry League.

The program, which produces a yearly video series used by youth ministers and puts on the Exposure Youth Camp in Alabama, has been around for more than 10 years.

Ministry League will include new podcasts, a video series and a revamped songbook, available through an updated app, network director Caleb Sampson said.

An outreach initiative will emphasize mission work and set up smaller versions of the Exposure Youth Camp, in hopes of strengthening youths.

For more information, see www.ministryleague.com.

**LIFELINE CHAPLAINCY**

**HOUSTON** — Despite challenges from COVID-19, Lifeline Chaplaincy has found new ways to connect with those in the hospitals it serves.

Because of the coronavirus, the ministry — which is associated with Churches of Christ — is no longer allowed to enter rooms and visit patients, executive director Virgil Fry said.

But Lifeline is connecting with patients in other ways, Fry said. Chaplains can call patient rooms and listen, sing, pray and offer spiritual and emotional support. A prayer request link has been added to Lifeline’s website. The requests are monitored and prayed for daily.

Lifeline’s Soft Touch Ministry, which usually creates pillows and robes for hospital patients, transitioned to making masks when there was a shortage. Lifeline was able to create and donate almost 3,000 masks for those working on the front lines.

**RESOURCES**

**NEW MEXICO CHRISTIAN CHILDREN’S HOME**

The New Mexico Christian Children’s Home is currently seeking married couples for House Parents. NMCH is a private, not-for-profit, Christian organization serving children in need since 1954 and is supported by the generous donations of churches and individuals. House Parents work a one week on/one week off schedule with 8-12 children (with their own children included in the count.)

Some of the benefits include:

- Competitive salary
- Housing and utilities provided
- Medical, Dental, Vision and Life Insurance
- 401(k) company match
- Satisfaction of making a difference in the lives of children and families

Requirements:

- Be at least 21 years of age or older
- High School diploma or equivalent is required
- A valid driver’s license with a good driving record
- Ability and desire to work and live with youth
- Ability to pass a thorough background check and reference verification procedure in order to determine one’s fitness to satisfactorily and safely care for youth
- Must be married at least two years

For inquiries, contact Allen Mann, Director of Public Relations. For more information and to fill out our online application, please visit our website at: http://nmcch.org

**CONTACT**

contact@nmcch.org or call 575-356-5372

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BIBLE IN 3D: ‘My faith is tied to history,’ professor says

FROM PAGE 3

Lanier “was just that instrument that God used,” Ortiz added.

SAVING BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

While other future lawyers were buried in criminal justice and political science textbooks, Lanier was poring over Greek and Hebrew manuscripts in Lipscomb’s Bible department. Among his mentors were scholars of ancient language Clyde Miller, Rodney Cloud and Harvey Floyd.

“I wanted to either preach or be a lawyer,” Lanier said.

Law school, he decided, would allow him to do both.

After graduating from Lipscomb in 1981 with a degree in Bible, he returned to Lubbock and earned his juris doctorate from Texas Tech.

As a trial attorney, he built a reputation as a zealous advocate for clients in personal injury and product liability cases. In 1990 he founded the Lanier Law Firm, which has offices in Houston, New York and Los Angeles. He also founded the Christian Trial Lawyers Association.

Earlier this year he learned that Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, was shutting down its 37-year-old Tandy Institute for Archeology.

The financial hardships brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic factored into the decision, but the move also was part of “institutional reset,” according to a statement from the seminary’s administrators. Degrees

Students excavate at Ilibalyk in the Central Asian nation of Kazakhstan.

Steven Ortiz, Mark Lanier and Tom Davis celebrate the launch of Lipscomb University’s new Lanier Center for Archaeology. Classes begin in January.

...in archaeology no longer fit into the seminary’s mission to train ministers for churches of the Southern Baptist Convention, the statement read.

About two dozen students were enrolled in the institute’s master’s and doctoral programs. Five professors, including Davis and Ortiz, lost their jobs.

For Ortiz, the dismissal led to prayer and soul searching.

“God, are you asking me to leave archaeology?” he asked.

He didn’t have to wait long for an answer. A former president of the seminary connected him with Lanier, who serves on the boards of two academic societies dedicated to archaeology in the ancient Near East.

The professor hoped Lanier could find the program a new home at another school, perhaps Houston Baptist University. Instead, Lanier suggested Lipscomb, where he serves on the board of trustees.

Lanier quickly contacted Lipscomb President Randy Lowry and his fellow trustees. The attorney and his wife provided funds for the program for five years, after which it will be evaluated. Students who were enrolled in the Tandy Institute will be able to finish their degrees in Nashville.

Moving from a seminary to a Christian university may be a better fit for biblical archaeology, Ortiz said.

The program can offer courses and resources to students in a variety of academic fields, not just future preachers.

Lipscomb’s provost, W. Craig Bledsoe, said that the program also “adds a new dimension to the university’s academic offerings with its first Ph.D. program.” In addition, “the field research opportunities that are part of this program greatly expand the scope of what we do.”

UNITED IN ‘THE INTEGRITY OF SCRIPTURE’

For Ortiz, biblical archaeology isn’t about searching for evidence of the Bible’s authenticity so much as it is “using archaeology to help illuminate the biblical text,” he told the Chronicle from his new home in Spring Hill, Tenn., south of Nashville.

Ortiz has lived in Israel and conducted tours of historic sites like the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

He is the principal investigator and co-director of the Tel Gezer Excavation Project in the foothills of the Judaean Mountains. He is a co-director of another project in Ilibalyk, a medieval, Silk Road city in modern-day Kazakhstan.

“You’re studying the Bible in 3D,” he said of his profession. “Christianity is a historical faith. It’s not a bunch of presuppositions.

“Jesus knocked at the door, and I opened it. My faith is tied to history, a moment in time when I decided to follow Jesus. For us to interpret God’s word within the context of its revelation, we have to study its history.”

While Baptists and members of Churches of Christ may disagree on what the Bible teaches on some issues — including the role of baptism itself — Lanier said that both faith groups share “complete confidence in the integrity of Scripture.”

That belief “is no longer held firmly by many people,” Lanier said. “There is a world of cynics and skeptics who want to disprove the Bible” and seek to use archaeology “as a weapon against the integrity of Scripture.”

When people of faith, even those who disagree on how to interpret the Bible, stand nonetheless united behind its authenticity, “that, in and of itself, will speak loudly to this world,” Lanier said.

Ortiz described himself as a biblicalist.

“I study the biblical text at face value, within its cultural and historical context,” he said. “I do not come to the Bible from my modern-day cultural or historical perspective.”

He’s alarmed by the trend he sees in many Christian circles toward relying more and more on modern-day theologians than the author of God’s word.

“I want to study the Bible,” he said, “and the Church of Christ has that tradition. As I’m learning more about the Church of Christ, boy, it’s just refreshing. There’s a solid emphasis on the Bible itself.”

ARCHAEOLOGY HAS NEW Digs

A virtual reception and Q&A with professors Tom Davis and Steven Ortiz and Mark and Becky Lanier is scheduled for 7 to 8:30 p.m. Sept. 9 (Central time). Details: christianchronicle.org/newdigs.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY STEVEN ORTIZ
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Stafford North is ‘there’ at last

TIRELESS PREACHER, PROFESSOR and promoter of Oklahoma Christian University dies at age 90.

On July 5, in the parking lot of the Memorial Road Church of Christ, Stafford North gave what would be his final public prayer to the congregation he served as an elder for 48 years. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the 2,400-member church to move its worship outside with an online simulcast. North, under hospice care, sat in a parked sport utility vehicle and delivered the closing prayer through a microphone.

“Father, we are so thankful that we can meet in this way, even though these difficulties are upon us,” said North, his usually strong voice cracking with fatigue and emotion. “I pray that you will bless our country right now, and help all those things that are plaguing us to go away.

“We thank you for the church, the bride of Christ.”

North, a longtime preacher, educator and tireless promoter of Oklahoma Christian University, died July 25 at age 90. During his career he taught Bible to thousands of students and was teaching a course on personal evangelism up until his death.

He was a friend, supporter, adviser and occasional critic of The Christian Chronicle for multiple generations of the newspaper’s staff.

“Stafford loved the Bible and God’s people with a fervor and looked for every opportunity to teach Scripture to others,” said Lynn McMillon, who served alongside North in the Bible department at Oklahoma Christian and is a former editor and president of the Chronicle.

“His signature phrase, “Be There,” showed his burning desire to go to heaven,” McMillon said, “and his hope for everybody else to go as well.”

Born Ross Stafford North in Abilene, Texas, on March 12, 1930, he earned a bachelor’s from Abilene Christian University in 1950, a master’s from Louisiana State University in 1952 and a doctorate from the University of Florida in 1957.

In Florida he met and married JoAnne Boswell, who for 65 years was “his lifelong best friend, mission partner, Boggle-playing buddy and world-traveling sidekick with whom he would build a home, a family, a congregation and a university,” family members wrote in North’s obituary.

He began teaching at Oklahoma Christian’s predecessor, Central Christian College in Bartlesville, Okla., in 1952. There he met a student named Bailey McBride, who became North’s coworker for more than a half-century.

“We became friends with the distance required between teacher and student,” McBride recalled. “That friendship lasted the rest of his life. In 1954 I was employed to teach English at Central Christian. We were colleagues, but in a sense Stafford North was always my teacher.”

The college moved to Oklahoma City in 1958. North taught Bible and for 38 years served in the school’s administration. He was executive vice president for 20 years. McBride went on to teach at the University of New Mexico and was recruited by North to return to OC in 1966.

“He was a friend, supporter, adviser and occasional critic of The Christian Chronicle for multiple generations of the newspaper’s staff.

“His training in rhetoric and oration prepared him to be a great speaker and an outstanding spokesman for the church and for Christian education,” said McBride, who taught English and served in a variety of administrative roles for OC, retiring in 2014. McBride served for 10 years as editor of the Chronicle.

McMillon, a former dean of the College of Biblical Studies at Oklahoma Christian, and his wife, Joy, knew North for 61 years, since they were freshmen at the college.

“He has been a powerful example of many good qualities,” McMillon said. “His commitment to the Lord and his church are undeniable.

“On a personal level, Stafford had a great sense of humor and loved to have fun doing skits and performing, and he had a way of making all of us have fun with him. His influence will be felt on us and countless others for a long time.”

North was the driving force behind Enterprise Square USA, a museum on Oklahoma Christian’s campus dedicated to entrepreneurship, innovation and the free-market system. More than 600,000 visitors passed through Enterprise Square during its 17-year run.

North’s love for Oklahoma Christian was rivaled only by his love for his church family at the Memorial Road congregation.

In his 80s he launched Good News, an email newsletter that shared inspiring stories from Churches of Christ and believers around the globe.

“I always made sure to look at Good News, and I often got ideas from it for our international pages,” said Erik Tryggestad, a former editor and now president and CEO of the Chronicle.

“Brother North was a kind-hearted, compassionate conservative for our fellowship,” Tryggestad said. “He didn’t always agree with what we put in the Chronicle, and he let me know. But his criticism was respectful, instructive and constructive. He so valued unity — not at the expense of truth, mind you. He wanted us all to be together.

“If he weren’t preaching somewhere else, he’d be at the church building every time the doors were open,” said Tryggestad, a deacon of the Memorial Road church. “I know this pandemic had to be especially hard for him. That’s why it meant so much to hear him lead that closing prayer in the parking lot. And now he can worship with no mask, no SUV. He’s in heaven. He’s there.”

CONTRIBUTIONS may be made to the Stafford North Memorial Fund for Faculty/Staff Development at Oklahoma Christian University. Find a link at christianchronicle.org/staffordnorth or call (405) 425-5070.
Jimmy Allen dies at 90

SEARCY, Ark.

Jimmy Allen, a nationally known gospel preacher and Bible professor at Harding University for a half-century, died Aug. 5 at Christian Care Center in Mesquite, Texas. He was 90.

“Please keep his family in your prayers,” the College Church of Christ in Searcy said on its Facebook page.

In a 2010 interview with The Christian Chronicle, Allen, then 79, estimated he had conducted about 1,400 gospel meetings, resulting in 40,000 to 50,000 responses and at least 10,000 baptisms.

Allen, a 1952 Harding graduate, was perhaps best known for his 50 citywide preaching campaigns to tens of thousands in civic centers, coliseums and sports stadiums across the nation during the 1960s and 70s. During one 10-day meeting in Memphis, Tenn., in 1965, Allen said, 270 people were baptized.

“When the day I became a Christian at Harding, I knew (the Gospel) was too good for me to keep my mouth shut,” Allen told the Chronicle. “I’ve shared the Gospel wherever I go — with hitchhikers, in a restaurant, on an airplane. Seems to me like this is what Christians are supposed to be doing.”

PREACHING CAREER SPANNED 60 YEARS

Allen was born on April 16, 1930, in Little Rock, Ark., to J.O. Goff and Gertrude Tucker.

He preached for more than 60 years, taught Bible and church history at Harding University for 50 years (1959-2009), authored 13 books and preached in 42 states and seven countries around the world.

In 1948, he was discharged from the Army with the rank of staff sergeant. He graduated from Harding College with a degree in Bible in 1952 and received a master’s degree in Bible in 1959 from Harding’s graduate school in Memphis, Tenn. He received honorary doctorates from Oklahoma Christian University and Harding.

INFLUENCED THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS

Friends say Allen’s influence will live on through the lives of thousands of Harding students who took his classes. Among those students was Monte Cox, who later served as a missionary to the African nation of Kenya and now is dean of Harding’s College of Bible and Ministry. Cox took classes on Romans and the history of the Restoration Movement from Allen in the late 1970s.

“We learned about salvation through grace from him,” Cox said. “He was convicted that we are saved by grace through faith, and that was revolutionary for a whole generation of us.”

Cox called Allen “a man of courage and conviction” and a “bold spokesman for non-sectarian Christianity.” The professor also was outspoken about civil rights and racial discrimination. In 1968, he was one of more than 40 prominent Black and White ministers who gathered in Atlanta to discuss ways to improve race relations in Churches of Christ.

When the Chronicle reported on the 50th anniversary of that meeting in 2018, Allen’s son-in-law Jeff Payne, senior minister for the Saturn Road Church of Christ in Garland, Texas, said that Allen had dementia and was living in Dallas.

“I do remember talking with him about the meeting in Atlanta,” Payne said. “It was a bold effort that attempted to plant much-needed seeds of racial equality. … He would have loved talking with you about this historical event.”

Allen was preceded in death by his wife, Marilyn, of 63 years. He is survived by his three children: Cindy Payne (Jeff) of Garland; Jimmy H. Allen (Anita) of North Smithfield, R.I.; and Mike Allen (Cheryl) of Vienna, Va. He had seven grandchildren, four great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren soon to be born.
Milestones

50th: Dwight and Josephine Albright
Albright, 80, was born on Sept. 7, 1940, in Des Moines, Iowa. He retired as a teacher and administrator. He married Josephine on Oct. 1, 1960. Their life together has included ministry in Texas, Nebraska, Colorado, and South Carolina with twelve congregations of the Church of Christ. Dwight served congregations as a minister, administrator, and counselor. He also served in the capacities of administrator and development officer for Cornhusker Christian Children’s Home, Rocky Mountain Christian Schools, Children’s Home of Lubbock and Southeastern Children’s Home. Lesley served as PR and Development Director for Colorado Christian Services in Denver and Ministry Assistant for the campus ministry of the Broadway Church of Christ in Lubbock. She was also engaged in catering and home window treatment businesses. Teaching sewing to young girls and quilting has been one of her passions. They have three children: Holley Campbell of Tulsa, Okla., Bill Mize of Deshler, Neb., and Laurie Snyder of Manchester, Tenn.; and six grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. Both attended Abilene Christian College classes of 1957 and 1959. They retired in Broken Arrow, Okla., in 2011. Billy and Lesley will have an online anniversary celebration Sunday afternoon, September 6. You may contact them at lesmize@gmail.com for login information to the Zoom meeting.

Congratulations, Billy Joe and Lesley!

Memorials

Maynard “Bud” Hammans 1931 – 2020

Maynard “Bud” Hammans, 89, was called home on April 12, 2020. He was born Feb. 28, 1931, near Callaway, Neb., to Forrest andRuby (McDee) Hammans. Reared during the Great Depression, he learned initiative and hard work at a young age as a shoeshine boy and a meat cutter. Bud enlisted in the Air Force as a jet mechanic during the Korean War. He then obtained a degree in Bible from Harding University (where he met the love of his life) and a master's degree (Bible) from Eastern New Mexico University. Bud and his wife Sue became missionaries to Japan and Australia and later ministered to Churches of Christ in Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Minnesota. He also served as a hospital chaplain at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. In each location, he sowed kingdom seeds and led many souls to the Lord by sharing the faith and hope he had found in Jesus. In his later years, Bud (and Sue) served in prison ministry and helped Chinese-Americans improve their English using Friendspeak and the Bible. “Even in old age they will still produce fruit.” (Ps. 92:14) “He who is wise wins souls.” (Prov. 11:30)

Bud was innovative and could fix anything. However, he was known for his encouragement. He could be found praying before a surgery, teasing, winsome personality left their mark on many lives. As a man of God, he is survived by his bride of 64 years, Sue (Billingsley), his children Felicia, Mark (Lori), and Cindy (Wayne) Yeats. He was a treasured grandfather to Kenny and Tyler Hammans, Hunter Yeats, and Hannah Yeats-de-Hernandez.

“I have fought the good fight, finished the race, (and received) a crown of righteousness”…(II Tim. 4:7).

Contributions can be made to World Bible School in his honor. For more information/tributes see: https://www.floralhaven.com/obituaries/Maynard-Hammans/Bud Hammans… a life well lived, as he was well loved!

Mary “Althea” Yeats 1934 – 2020

Mary Althea Watkins Yeats was born June 16, 1934, in DeQueen, Ark. Althea was the first child of L.V. Watkins, Sr. and Mary Watkins.

Following the Great Depression, Althea’s family moved from Arkansas to California and back three times during the next four years. Althea provided stability for her two younger brothers during their turbulent childhood. She saw the struggles her parents had with only 8th grade educations, and she resolved to escape poverty through a college education. She graduated high school in 1952 as class valedictorian and was admitted to Southeastern State College in Durant, Okla.

A family friend told Althea about a nice young man named Gene Yeats (also born June 16, but two years earlier) and suggested they should meet. She received a letter from Gene in early July 1952 and after exchanging letters all summer, Gene decided to ride his bicycle from Stillwater to Bennington, Okla., to meet Althea in person. Including a side trip to visit his aunt, Gene’s bicycle trip was over 300 miles. Gene convinced Althea to switch to Oklahoma State University, and they continued their courtship. Althea and Gene married in Stillwater, Okla., on Jan. 24, 1954. She was 19, and Gene was 21.

Gene was drafted in August 1954 and was stationed in Aberdeen, Md., for two years. Upon being discharged, they returned to Stillwater and OSU. Althea graduated in May 1957 with a bachelor’s degree – the first person on either side of her parents’ families to complete college. They moved to Tulsa in July 1957 for Gene’s first job and settled in the Berryhill community, west of Tulsa. They began attending Carbondale Church of Christ and Gene is still a member there.

Althea was a stay-at-home mom during her three sons’ early childhoods but began teaching fulltime in 1970 at Berryhill Elementary School when her youngest son began 1st grade. She taught for the next 24 years, as she loved children and watching them learn. At church, she impacted the spiritual lives of many children, as she taught Sunday and Wednesday Bible classes for decades. She also supported many church activities—including Sunday afternoon singing practices, VBS, church camp, Joy Bus ministry, puppet ministry, and innumerable devotions. One of Althea’s passions was OCWA, and she was the Tulsa chapter’s Scholarship chairman for many years.

Althea was one-of-a-kind and a genuine force of nature. She died on May 17, 2020, in Tulsa, Okla., and we will miss her deeply, but we rejoice that she has achieved the goal for which she worked the hardest: seeing the face of our Lord and sharing His embrace.

She is survived by her devoted husband of 66 years, Gene; her three sons: Mike (Lynessa), Gary (Susan), and Wayne (Cindy); eight grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; and her two brothers, L.V. and Wes Watkins.

See complete tribute at markgriffithmemorialfuneralhomes.com. Search for “Mary Althea Yeats.”
William Fredrick “Rick” Rowland, PhD
1934-2020

Campus ministries and congregations across the country are mourning the loss of William Fredrick “Rick” Rowland, PhD, who passed on June 18, 2020.

Rick Rowland was a leader in the campus ministry movement from 1966 onward when he began Campus Advance for Christ at the University of California Santa Barbara. The death of one of his students motivated him to begin a program to offer students an alternative to the typical weekend party atmosphere. The ministry at UCSB was the first by Churches of Christ on the West Coast.

Pepperdine recruited Rowland to develop Pepperdine’s first men’s aquatics programs in 1975. At UCSB and at Pepperdine he coached many All-Americans and Olympic athletes.

Rowland will be best remembered by his students for leading small group Bible studies. The Pepperdine student newspaper “The Graphic” wrote that “…Rowland began the ‘Athletes and Friends’ Bible study. It was the first official Bible study at Pepperdine with a goal to strengthen and nurture its Christian students and evangelize non-Christians.”

Rowland was an elder in Santa Barbara, Malibu, Hollywood, and Bakersfield churches. He taught campus ministry and speech classes at Pepperdine for almost 30 years before retiring in 2005.

He joins his wife, Lildra Queen Rowland, who passed 8 months ago.

Almeda Goss Norton Ogden
1925-2020

Almeda Goss Norton Ogden was born in 1925 in Hood River, Ore. Her family worked hard to feed all 11 members. Almeda graduated high school as valedictorian. That summer she met Pepperdine student Alden Norton at church. He persuaded her to go to college at Pepperdine. Two years later they married.

Alden’s father, W.O. Norton, was instrumental in creating “Christian Home & Bible School” in Mt. Dora, Florida. He welcomed the couple to help. Alden became superintendent with many other roles. Almeda provided help cooking, teaching, and more, plus birthing two girls. Alden was killed in a car accident in 1952.

In 1956 Almeda married Donald Ogden, a veterinarian from Texas with a daughter. They had two boys, but one died. In 1961 they moved to Los Angeles and joined the Inglewood Church of Christ.

Almeda worked in Don’s veterinary hospitals. She loved giving seminars throughout Southern California on how to teach preschool children. (How she lit up when she saw little ones!) She also developed curriculum for other churches for many years.

In 1972 Don was sent to jail for misdeeds. When he was released they divorced. Almeda stayed friends with him until his death in 2000.

She was known for hospitality, cooking, gardening/topiary expertise, singing, and church faithfulness. She was a dedicated member of Buena Park Church of Christ; she only missed any service if she was ill or traveling. She read her Bible daily and memorized a vast amount of Scripture.

Almeda moved to Oregon in 2010 to be near family. In July 2020 she left this world. Two daughters predeceased her. She is survived by a son and two daughters, 11 grandchildren, and currently 22 great-grandchildren. She was a worker for the Lord!

Submit tributes to milestones@christianchronicle.org. Submissions start at $25.

Remembering
Evangelist
Arnelious Crenshaw Jr.
10/27/49 – 8/28/17

Hey, Arnelious (godfather), it’s your sisters again and brother-in-law Ron, just thinking about you. It’s so hard to believe another year has passed since you left us (now three). Seems like just the other day we were gathered around your big dining room table laughing and talking about mom and dad, our childhood, and on and on. You are so missed from our family as the years go by, and ‘you’ can never be replaced. We are so thankful for all of the amazing memories and for all of the sense and understanding you brought to us through the distinct reading of the Book, in the Law of God! Nehemiah 8:8. Thoughts of you with love and admiration are etched in our memory forever. Most of all, Arnelious, we thank you for the love… always Bud, always!

Ο θανάτος ους ἐπεφέρετο τοῦ Θεοῦ

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September 4 and October 9

Contact
tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org
By Betty Hollister | For The Christian Chronicle

Find the following words from the book of Acts.
They can be forward, backward, up, down and diagonal:

- Abraham
- Aeneas
- Antioch
- Apostles
- Baptism
- Barnabas
- Barabbas
- Celebration
- Commander
- Companions
- Congregation
- Conversation
- Cornelius
- Crowd
- Damascus
- Encouragement
- Eternity
- Ethopia
- Heavely
- Ignorant
- Illness
- Israelites
- Jerusalem
- Jewish
- Levite
- Matthew
- Miraculous
- Natives
- Nazareth
- Nicolas
- Opposed
- Owned
- Philip
- Praise
- Predicts
- Prophets
- Repent
- Rephan
- Righteous
- Ruler
- Salamis
- Salvation
- Sanhedrin
- Scriptures
- Speech
- Spirit
- Stephen
- Synagogue
- Timothy
- Treacherously
- Troas
- Volition

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Stuck at home this fall?
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Reading Responsibly
Correctly Handling the Word of Truth

Find the following words from the book of Acts.
They can be forward, backward, up, down and diagonal:

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- Timothy
- Treacherously
- Troas
- Volition
The Christian Chronicle Crossword

By Myles Mellor | www.ilovecrosswords.com

ACROSS
1. Bible story with a message.
5. Where Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights.
10. “I did not come to invite the righteous but the ___” (Matthew 9:10-13).
11. One of the disciples.
13. Like Methuselah.
15. Lover of Samson who betrayed him to the Philistines.
18. Number of Commandments.
19. Where the wise man were from.
20. He was told not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
21. Dead and Red for example.
23. “Could you not add generosity to your ___?” (2 Corinthians 8:6-9).
25. Lesson in a story.
28. Add liquid to a container, two words.
29. One of the gifts brought by the wise men.
30. Dawn time.
31. Piece of soap.
33. ___ and downs.
34. A young man who returned (in 1 Across), two words.
36. Compass point, abbr.
37. Green meadow.
38. Enticing, the devil’s activity.

DOWN
1. “My time is near. I am going to keep the ___ with my disciples at your house” (Matthew 26:18-25).
2. “One man ___ off and soaked a sponge in vinegar, put it on a stick, and held it up for Jesus to drink” (Mark 15:36).
3. “Give us this day our daily ___” (Luke 11:2-4).
6. Prophet in 1-2 Kings in a time of wicked rulers.
7. Letter, from Paul for example.
8. Trademark, abbreviation.
12. Within.
14. Jesus washed their feet (John 13).
16. In Jacob’s dream it stretches from earth up to Heaven.
17. Jesus was able to make the ___ walk.
22. King who made a famous ruling between two women claiming to be the mother of a child.
24. “And he will send out his angels with a loud ___-call” (Matthew 24:29-31).
25. “How then can a ___ be righteous before God?” (Job 25:4).
27. Country Paul traveled through to strengthen churches.
28. Culpability.
29. Insane.
31. Jesus was ___ in Bethlehem.
32. Son in Genesis.

BIBLE BOWLING

King David’s sin

Questions from 2 Samuel 11:
1. In what season do kings go to war? A. Spring, B. Summer, C. Autumn, D. Winter.
3. Where was King David when this happened? A. Jerusalem, B. Gilboa, C. Rabbah, D. Ammon.
4. What did David do when he saw Bathsheba? A. He apologized for spying on her, B. He yelled at her for taking a bath in public. C. He decided to go off to war. D. He sent a messenger to get her.
7. Which of these did Uriah NOT say were in tents? A. the army of Jerusalem, B. the Ark, C. Israel, D. Judah.
8. David asked Uriah to stay how many more days? A. seven, B. four, C. one, D. three.

CROSSWORD SOLUTION and Bible Bowling answers on Page 38. Questions by Cindy Smathers. To sponsor this page, contact tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org.

35. Moses ___ the Israelites to the promised land.
36. Spanish, for short.
This school year, think #PHIL234

Back-to-school time typically brings hope and energy. We look forward to cooler weather, football, pumpkin spice (well, some of us) and holidays.

Not this year. The cloud of COVID-19 has been thick. It doesn’t seem to be lifting. The global pandemic has touched so many people we know and love. None of us has escaped totally unscathed.

You can see the moment it hit our Christian Chronicle family on the front page. When our reviews editor, Laura Akins, shared that heart-wrenching photo of her 5-year-old daughter, Scout, enduring a COVID-19 swab test, we shed tears and dropped to our knees in prayer for our colleague’s family.

That photo demonstrates just one of the ways that the pandemic is impacting the lives of children this fall as they head back to school.

Our staff includes a parent whose daughters are in class at a Christian school, a parent who opted for all-virtual learning for her son and daughter, and parents of college students (one on campus and one learning remotely).

None, absolutely none, of these decisions was easy. None of us has been in a situation like this before. (Who began 2020 expecting a global pandemic unlike anything seen since the 1918 Spanish flu?)

On so many questions, it feels there is no right decision, and everything seems to be bathed in politics and rage. No matter what we choose, we risk criticism. We’re stressed. Our teachers and administrators are stressed.

So our plea this fall is that we take every thought captive, as Paul urges (Philippians 2:3-4).

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

That’s the best advice we can summon for wearing a mask. As long as we must wear them, let’s wear them emblazoned with words of love.

Ask: Are our words helpful for encouraging and building up? Or will they cause an already struggling family to fall a little farther into isolation? Will our words show the love of Christ? Or will we give a fellow Christian one more reason to distance himself or herself from the Lord’s church?

Please, please, please choose your words carefully. Encourage one another, day after day. Pray, without ceasing, for those you know and those you don’t. Be the bright spot in someone’s day.

Masks were on the school supply list this year, so one of our donors helped the Chronicle provide some extra ones for Oklahoma Christian Academy.

We chose to emblazon these masks with #PHIL234, a reference to Paul and Timothy’s advice to the young church in Philippi. “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

That’s the best advice we can summon for wearing a mask. As long as we must wear them, let’s wear them emblazoned with words of love.

The Christian Chronicle® encourages feedback that promotes thoughtful and respectful discussion. Letters and comments should not exceed 300 words and may be edited for length and clarity.

Comments to the print or online editions are considered to be letters to the editor and may be published. Please include name, city and state of residence, as well as home congregation.

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Responses to race, funding coverage

Was George Floyd’s death a tragedy? Of course! I felt compassion for the man, and no one deserves to die with a knee on their neck. (Letter is in response to The Christian Chronicle’s in-depth coverage in recent issues.)

Is race an issue in the church as well as police? Yes, but I believe it is far less than is being hyped in mainstream media.

As Christians, we are called to a higher standard, and, in my opinion, the Chronicle has failed.

KEITH CONNELL | Orlando, Fla.

I was very disappointed to read of the number of churches that recently applied for and received government money (“Uncle Sam helped churches meet payroll,” Page 23, August).

The church is not a business, or at least it should not be. This, almost certainly, is the beginning of taking us down a path we do not want to go.

PETER MACINNES | Abilene, Texas

CORRECTION: Because of an editing error, The Christian Chronicle incorrectly reported the amount of the 2018 endowment for Freed-Hardeman University in the August issue. The correct figure is $57.9 million. The current endowment is $61.7 million. The Chronicle regrets the error.

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The Brotherhood Express: An encouraging experiment proves a point, saves on postage

HUNTERSVILLE, N.C.

The days of the Pony Express may be long gone, but the “Brotherhood Express” is alive and well.

I know this because of a social experiment I began on June 2, 2019. “Is it possible,” I wondered, “to send a piece of mail across America by the hands of Jesus’s disciples?”

Deciding that there was only one way to find out, I picked my target: Denver, a modest 1,300 miles from my hometown near Charlotte, N.C.

I wrote a letter to my friend Garrett and decorated the exterior of the envelope, including a short explanation of the objective: carry the letter with you as far as you are going in the direction of Colorado, then leave it with another disciple who agrees to carry it further or deliver it to someone else traveling that way.

A couple from the church was headed west that week, and they agreed to carry the letter on the first leg of its journey. More than two months of heavy silence followed.

Then on Aug. 7 I received an email from Garrett: “Hey bro! I just (got) what looks to be a chain letter from you. It made my day! Thank you so much for your encouragement, it means so much.”

It worked! A piece of mail crossed the country, brother handing it to brother, sister to sister. If only that letter could tell where it had been!

Every time we travel, we should carry the greetings of our brothers and sisters. Every time we worship with another congregation, we have the opportunity to build up the church and facilitate healthy relations among the many faithful, autonomous congregations of the Lord’s church.

The apostle Paul never missed an opportunity to send greetings to brethren in another city. “Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord,” he writes in 1 Corinthians 16:19. “Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you,” he includes in Philippians 4:21.

Paul is not finished encouraging Titus until he adds, “All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen” (Titus 3:15).

The early success of the letter spurred me on to try something more ambitious. This time, I sent off a small package on Aug. 27.

Call me a penny-pincher, but I sure didn’t miss forking over the money for shipping and handling fees.

A journey of two months and one week brought it to its destination, my friend Nathanael, in central Colorado.

Again, it came as a complete surprise to my friend. “Hey, so what is the package that was sent to me?” he wrote in an email. “I just got an email from the church saying that they got a package (for) me ... They said it also had your email on it.”

It did indeed have my email on it, but it also had the love and blessings of brothers and sisters everywhere between the Queen City and the Mile High City.

Next time you travel, be sure to carry with you the greetings of the brothers and sisters in your city. Never miss an opportunity to build harmonious relationships among the churches.

You might even wish to try the “Brotherhood Express” for yourself. I can promise you it has unbeatable rates. My hope is that someday, I, too, will have the joy of carrying a delivery toward its final destination.

THOMAS YUKICH is a freshman at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn., preparing to preach full time after college. He is a former amateur olympic-distance triathlete. Contact him at thomasyukich02@gmail.com.
Believe it or not, the Land Run of 1889, celebrated and recreated yearly by school children across Oklahoma, had a negative impact on Churches of Christ.

Many established congregations lost members who moved away to claim free land grants in Oklahoma, which became the 46th state in 1907. Depleted churches were left behind.

That’s one of the fascinating insights delivered by W. David Baird in “Churches of Christ in Oklahoma: A History.”

Baird, a native Oklahoman, is a former professor at Oklahoma State University and a dean emeritus of Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif. He is the author of 14 previous books, most of which focus on the history of the Sooner State and its Indian nations. His latest presents a readable and fascinating narrative of the complex social, political and religious factors that shaped Churches of Christ in Oklahoma.

Beginning in 1857, when Oklahoma was known as Indian Territory, Baird documents the early mission work among Indians and early settlers. He tracks the planting of churches through the early, wild years up through the present. At points the book reads almost like a suspense novel that makes you want to learn more.

Baird introduces us to unsung heroes like S.R. Cassius, a former slave who followed Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell and their Restoration plea.

Cassius, who preached in Oklahoma from 1891 to 1922, was possibly the first African-American national evangelist for Churches of Christ.

We also meet Meta Chestnutt, a tall, single woman from North Carolina who supported her ministry by teaching school. Baird describes the remarkable dedication of this missionary. She often consulted T.B. Larrimore and called on him for evangelistic preaching.

Meta set up her school and Sunday school a few miles west of Oklahoma City in Minco. Eventually this devout woman led the El Meta Christian College there for several years, starting in 1895.

We meet R.W. Officer, who preached in eastern Oklahoma along the MK&T Railroad line and ministered to many former slaves.

Baird details Officer’s struggles raising support while he faced unfair criticism for his work.

After considerable progress was made in establishing trusting relationships with the Indians, criticism of Officer and insinuation against his soundness resulted in most of the evangelistic gains being lost.

Baird explains how Churches of Christ struggled in the early 20th century to deal with doctrinal issues such as pacifism, pattern theology, millennialism, baptism, Sunday school and self-identity.

Baird also explains how the 1960 presidential election of John F. Kennedy turned Oklahoma from a progressive-thinking Democrat state to a conservative Republican state.

At the beginning of each chapter, he sets the prevailing context for the time period he’s discussing. Clear and concise conclusions to each chapter aid our comprehension.

Baird occasionally assumes knowledge of concepts not fully explained, such as “Baconian,” but such occurrences are rare. At points the work is heavy in historical details, yet these are a crucial repository of historical information. Baird also uses the now-in-vogue term “Stone-Campbell Movement” rather than Restoration Movement.

Whether you’re from Oklahoma or not, you’ll find Baird’s work to be fascinating and informative. This is a read that opens windows of insight into the movement’s early history in the state.

LYNN MCMILLON is a professor of Bible and dean emeritus of the College of Biblical Studies at Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City. He is president emeritus of The Christian Chronicle.

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

LOVE, OBEDIENCE, FAITHFULNESS


This book describes obstacles that prevent people from coming to Christ and outlines the steps to bring them to Christ. It also helps Christians struggling in their faith to renew their walk with the Lord.

COVENANT STUDY


This book challenges our thoughts as to who makes the New Covenant. There are diagrams included to illustrate it was made between God, the Father, and God, the Son (Jesus Christ), our representative in this wonderful covenant. We see how different the old and new covenants really are, shown in Jeremiah 31:31-34.

This book moves one from having to follow Jesus (law) to wanting to follow Jesus (faith). Baptism puts us in Christ where we are predestined to live with Him forever, showered with His Eternal Love. The questions at the end of each chapter can be used for a class.

SMALL GROUP STUDY


Foreword by Don McLaughlin.

“Without preaching, shaming or finger-pointing, Mike DeCamp stands before us and strips his own life bare, courageously showing us the places in his own life where he got “it” wrong....” — Dr. Patrick Mead

“There’s no doubt in my mind that this book is in the top five best books I’ve ever read, and you realize that the Bible is one of the five, so what does that tell you?” — Debbie from Indiana

It is a raw and real look at biblical love utilizing personal examples to
He made Kid President famous. Now he wants to help you be a better grownup

Each chapter is filled with great stories and beautiful illustrations reminiscent of the doodles we used to make in the margins of our school notebooks. As you read the responses from children and learn the stories of men and women who have embraced the principles Montague shares, you are caught up in a sense that it really is possible to embrace a new perspective on growth and maturity.

And couldn’t we all use a new perspective right now? Not only do we have the normal adult stresses and distractions, but we also invite disruptions with every screen, device and notification. We’ve lost touch with ourselves because we are so focused on the social lives of hundreds of others.

How can we find joy when all anyone wants to do is commiserate? How can we pause to meditate when everything is breaking news? How can we celebrate with others when too preoccupied with complaints?

This book is filled with stories of men, women and children who are discovering ways to show up and be present in their lives, which enables them to bring joy and meaning into the lives of others. Essentially, that’s what it means to become a better grownup: Show up and be present, and make intentional effort in our busy lives.

“Becoming Better Grownups” is intent on moving the needle toward growth and maturity for everyone. It is a feel-good book, but it is not your typical self-help book. It is more accurate to describe it as a help-others book because once you decide that you are going to become a better adult — that’s the moment that you decide to give yourself away.

MICHAEL FELKER is lead minister for the Lakeside Church of Christ in Mansfield, Texas. He attended Harding University and recently received his Master in Theological Studies at Austin Graduate School of Theology. He is married to Sandy and has two kids.


So Montague embarked on a listening tour to discover what it means and how to become a “real-life, wide-awake grown-up person,” he writes.

He visited elementary classrooms in every state — both in person and virtually — to ask kids their thoughts on what it means to be a grownup, what they want to be when they grow up and how grownups can do better. He picked the right age group because, as those of us who have kids know, ask a kid a question, and you’ll get an honest answer!

“Becoming Better Grownups” distills the answers Montague heard from these children and offers suggestions for how adults can make the most of growing up. The book offers lessons and insight into being present, listening, using your creativity to benefit others and how to ask better questions.

Montague is a natural and gifted storyteller. Not only does he display humility and vulnerability in sharing his own stories of frustration and failure, but he also handles the stories of others with grace and dignity.

Right around the halfway point of our world-wide extended Spring Break, I turned 40 years old.

In our culture this is still considered a milestone, but not in the same way it was for my parents’ generation. Our house wasn’t decorated in black. No “Over the Hill” cake and not one buzzard made an appearance to remind me of my impending demise.

As a society, we are more than happy to embrace youth and to ignore the truth that every single one of us, every day, is getting older. Everyone fortunate enough to stay healthy and wake up each morning is on a progressive march toward the future.

How we grow up and who we choose to become as we age are worthy questions and within our power to pursue.

Brad Montague is here to help. In his latest book, “Becoming Better Grownups: Rediscovering What Matters and Remembering How to Fly,” he shares a field guide to help adults reorient their hearts toward making the most of their time, talents and relationships.

The genesis of the book comes out of a season in Montague’s life that many of us can fully relate to. After completing a highly successful web series with his young brother-in-law, Kid President, and in the midst of receiving applause and even greater opportunities, Montague hit an emotional wall.

In this little book, the graduate of Freed-Hardeman University in Tennessee describes how the burden of adulthood had snuffed out some of his passion, joy, creativity and drive. He became convinced that the way he was living as well as the current state of adulthood in our culture keeps people from growing up well.

SALVATION


After thirty years of studying and researching the Greek NT scriptures, the author of this book discovered that the NT in the Greek is teaching Jesus’ followers to be on the journey of living out the faith that Jesus Himself taught, lived out, and exemplified.

Paul was misunderstood by the Protestant Reformers and is still being misunderstood by Protestantism, in part because our Bibles are being mistranslated to agree with the Reformers with regard to salvation. Paul was teaching that obeying God and Christ is required for salvation, only he was rabbinically placing the work of obeying Jesus inside the vehicle of faith. And his “not by works,” something Jesus was not teaching, was aimed at the Judaizers and legalistic Pharisees of his day, not at those who were striving to do what Jesus instructed and exemplified.

Some of the confusion is because many do not understand that Christianity is a covenantal-nomistic system (a covenant system with law) which requires obedience to law (cf. John 15:1-17). Paul was teaching that obeying God and Christ is required for salvation, only he was rabbinically placing the work of obeying Jesus inside the vehicle of faith. And his “not by works,” something Jesus was not teaching, was aimed at the Judaizers and legalistic Pharisees of his day, not at those who were striving to do what Jesus instructed and exemplified.

The author of this book discovered that the NT in the Greek is teaching Jesus’ followers to be on the journey of living out the faith that Jesus Himself taught, lived out, and exemplified, is the type of faith that God is looking for.

make the scriptural references practical in today’s world. A companion workbook is also available.
The pandemic’s terrible, terrible blessing: a longing for Christ’s triumphant return

Remember when the world was ending back in 2005? Yeah, me neither. But evidently it was a thing, I wrote about it.

The day after Christmas 2004 a magnitude 9.1 earthquake in the Indian Ocean set off a tsunami that killed nearly 230,000 people across Southeast Asia. Then there was another massive quake in Pakistan, then famine in Africa, flooding in India and a plague of rats in Nicaragua.

And there was the threat of a global pandemic from avian flu. Seems almost quaint now, doesn’t it?

I was covering international news at the time, and I interviewed missionaries in developing nations. Were the believers they baptized and served concerned that these disasters were signs of the end times?

Because most of these folks, living in simple circumstances, didn’t have the education or rational scientific minds we have here in the U.S.

I wish 2020 me could go back in time and smack 2005 me. My whole premise was bathed in First World exceptionalism.

I only remember the piece at all because of a boy named Moses. He was one of the kids in Nairobi, Kenya, served by a ministry called Made in the Streets, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.

I had asked the ministry’s founder, Charles Coulston, if Kenyan Christians were concerned about the end times. I guess I expected him to say something like, “Yes, they’ve seen news of the disasters, and they think the end is nigh. We try to comfort them with the gospel of Christ.”

Instead, he said that maybe the world is ending. Fingers crossed.

You see, the kids this ministry serves live hard lives. Abuse. Drugs. Homelessness. It’s a vicious cycle.

“Our kids are used to pain and loss,” Coulston told me. “They look forward to the end of the world, which will be a new beginning for us all.”

Young Moses, in fact, had recently told him that, if the Lord returned, the first thing he would do was “run and hug Jesus.”

Over the years, those words have stayed with me. As I’ve interviewed more and more African believers, I’ve grown in my own faith and my sense of awe in theirs. They truly know what it means to trust God, not to worry about tomorrow, to long for an eternal home.

I struggle to share that belief. Even though I sing “This world is not my home, I’m just a-passin’ through,” I’m not quite ready to leave. There are so many places left to see.

And I like it here. I’m comfortable. Or I was. Then came COVID-19. Now I’m grounded, restless.

Some concerns are trivial. My beloved college football season is in jeopardy. Others seem severe. I worry about my two girls going back to school. Even as I write this, one of my colleagues says she has a slight cough. I’m beset by fear.

The terrible, terrible gift of this pandemic is that it has erased my comfort. It has shown me the futility of plans. I’ve stopped saying, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city,” (James 4:13). I don’t know what will happen tomorrow. As the virus spikes, so does the urgency to spread the gospel. “What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes” (verse 14).

Young Moses is a man now. I asked Coulston about him recently. Like many of the street kids, he’s struggled. He’s been on and off drugs and in and out of hospitals. He’s doing better now.

It’s tough in Kenya, Coulston said. Made in the Streets has helped their graduates set up businesses like house-to-house salons and chapati cooking and sales. But the pandemic has shut down many of these startups. People are out of work and hungry. They’re longing for home.

Come quickly, Lord. I want to see your face. I want to run and hug you.

I hope Moses still does, too. Fingers crossed.
Seeking Full-Time Minister - Cortez, Colorado

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