Children, joined by some parents, pray on stage at the West Freeway Church of Christ in White Settlement, Texas, after placing change in a basket as part of a “Coins for Christ” ministry. Many of the children witnessed last year’s deadly shooting at the Fort Worth-area church. The recent assembly was the first in the church’s newly renovated auditorium. Pictured at right is Lincoln Jones, who is seated beside Monica Hargrove.
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How are you weathering the COVID-19 storm?

OKLAHOMA CITY

As soon as I open the garage door, I hear the sweet voice of my 2-year-old grandson. “Hey, Papa, I’m riding a bike!” he calls from our front sidewalk.

Taking a break from a Christian Chronicle deadline, I find Bennett playing outside with his Nana — my wife, Tamie — who has helped him draw a colorful chalk rainbow on the smooth concrete.

A giant smile and a few cookie crumbs cover his sweaty, slightly flushed face. His short legs are stretched out to reach the pedals of a shiny blue tricycle.

Both grandson and grandmother seem to be having the time of their lives.

For a split second, all seems right with the world.

But just as quickly, I remember the reason why I am working at home and not at the office — the pandemic.

Most of us are living through a plague unlike anything we’ve personally experienced. More than a century has passed since a virus has swept across the United States like COVID-19. (Three generations ago, my family mourned the loss of William Charles Ross, my great-grandfather, who died during the 1918 flu pandemic.)

Yet, besides noticing the pandemic.

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Bobby Ross Jr.

Christians in Minsk, Belarus, demonstrate after their country’s recent contentious presidential election. They carry Bibles produced by Eastern European Mission.

Christians in Belarus are jailed, children threatened amid protests

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

After Christians in the Eastern European nation of Belarus protested in the wake of a controversial election, they said that government authorities threatened to take away their children.

“Unfortunately, now this can become a reality and not just intimidation,” one Christian said in a message from the capital, Minsk. “Please pray that the Lord will protect our family.” That church member asked that his name be withheld for security reasons.

Several Christians were arrested — along with hundreds of others who demonstrated against President Alexander Lukashenko — and spent several days in jail, the Belarusian Christian said.

“We do not want to be silent about the lawlessness that the authorities are doing now,” he added. “But we don’t want to lose our children either. Your support is very necessary!”

Lukashenka has served as president of Belarus, a former Soviet republic of about 9.5 million people, since the office was established in 1994.

In early August he was elected to a sixth term in a landslide victory over opponent Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, though poll workers reported widespread irregularities, the Associated Press reported.

Tsikhanouskaya, ran in place of her husband, Sergei, an opposition blogger who was jailed before the election.


“Please be praying for them,” said Bart Rybinski, EEM’s vice president for European Operations, of the Belarusian Christians. “It’s challenging that, with all that is happening in the world, the situation in Belarus is getting so little attention.”

EEM, founded 58 years ago, used to smuggle pocket-size Bibles into Soviet-controlled nations, including Belarus.

Now, workers supply Bibles and faith-based literature in 20 languages to 30 countries. The ministry’s Million Dollar Sunday campaign seeks $3.2 million to continue the work.

WEBSITE: milliondollarsunday.org

Banking on Black churches

AFRICAN AMERICAN congregations can have trouble securing loans. Some nonprofit lenders are stepping in.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

From 500 miles away, Leslie Topps’ heart broke for the Lewis Street Church of Christ.

“Of all the churches, why would that happen to them?” she said after learning that the Little Rock, Ark., congregation’s building was firebombed in the midst of protests over the killing of George Floyd.

The church was in the midst of a $1.2 million refurbishment of its 100-year-old facility. Flames snaked up the walls and punched holes in the roof. The renovation was ruined.

Topps, an Atlanta-based publicist, grew up in the pews of the Lewis Street church. She still has the certificates she and her family members were given after they were baptized there.

She now worships with the Renaissance Church of Christ, which moved into a newly constructed worship facility near Atlanta’s international airport in December 2018.

Both of the predominantly Black churches — 1,400-member Renaissance and 100-member Lewis Street — had attempted to secure loans from the large banks where they have accounts. Both were declined.

“An African-American church can have all of its financials in line,” said Orpheus Heyward, minister for the Renaissance church, “and still run into issues when applying for a loan.”

Before construction of its new facility, Renaissance, formerly the West End Church of Christ,
COVID-19: Longing for a semblance of normalcy

From page 3

In 15 years with the Chronicle, I’ve traveled to all 50 states and 14 countries to report real news that honors God. I hate flying, but I love on-the-ground reporting, so I’ve spent plenty of time in the air.

After six months of pursuing stories via email, telephone and Zoom, I look forward to the day when I can get in a plane, train or automobile and once again go cover stories firsthand.

The inconveniences that I’ve experienced during the pandemic are nothing compared to the loss of life, health and livelihood that many have suffered. But I know that I am not alone in lamenting the disruption that COVID-19 has wrought.

I’d love to know how you are weathering the storm of 2020.

What do you miss most? What advice do you have for your fellow Christians? How are you allowing God — during this uncertain time — to mold you and prepare you for future service?

I look forward to the day, soon I hope, when we can sit together around a table in a crowded restaurant and reflect on what we learned in this crazy year. I’m up for Tex-Mex and reflecting on what we learned in this crazy year. I’m up for Tex-Mex and a healthy sandwich (if you insist). It’s the company that counts, and maybe we won’t ever take that for granted again.

In the meantime, Bennett is back inside our house and running around the living room.

He’s dunking shots into his toy basketball goal. He’s rolling a wooden train over tracks. He’s shuffling around the living room.

He, too, is longing for a semblance of normalcy. I look forward to the day when I can watch my team play in person once again — and in air-conditioned comfort in the 110-degree heat of the Texas summer.
Two firefighters who were members of Churches of Christ have lost their lives trying to protect others.

Diana Jones, 63, served with the Cresson Volunteer Fire Department in Texas. Sgt. Sivad Johnson, 49, was a Detroit firefighter.

Jones, a member of the Granbury Church of Christ in Texas, died in California. She had traveled to the West Coast to battle what are known as the August Complex fires in the Mendocino National Forest area.

On Aug. 31, Jones was repositioning a fire engine when it backed over an embankment and into a fire, according to the U.S. Fire Administration.

“She was a true servant,” said John Knox, minister for the Granbury church and a chaplain for first responders. “Some people talk about serving, but she actually did it.”

Johnson was a member of the Wyoming Avenue Church of Christ in Detroit. On Aug. 21, he was at the Belle Isle Beach along the Detroit River with his daughter when he jumped in to help save three children.

Johnson was able to help the struggling swimmers to shore, but he disappeared in the water. His body was recovered the next day.

Detroit City Council President Brenda Jones, who also attends the Wyoming Avenue church, said on social media, “He gave his life to save (children) and is a true American hero.” Johnson received the Medal of Valor in 2017 for saving another life while risking his own safety.

Stadium allows room for distancing

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — Four Churches of Christ that had not yet resumed in-person worship found a way to gather with plenty of room for social distancing.

The Central, Pleasant Valley, Rose City and Sylvan Hills churches rented War Memorial Stadium.

The recent service was held at the 50-yard line and livestreamed on the Jumbotron and online. Masks were required to be worn when entering and exiting the stadium. Portable communion packets were supplied.

“Anyone who has been in Arkansas long knows about War Memorial Stadium, so it is an outstanding place to gather, and there is plenty of room,” Central minister Leon Barnes said.

The approach worked so well that the churches plan to do it again.

EXPANDED STORY: christianchronicle.org
As Hurricane Laura tore through Lake Charles, La., Dr. Lauren Jacoby kept watch over her patients at the Christus Ochsner St. Patrick Hospital.

Around 2 a.m., Jacoby, chief hospitalist, felt the eye wall of the storm. “The rain was so loud and intense. It was moving the whole hospital, making me nauseous,” said Jacoby, who was on the fourth floor of the only hospital that remained open. “I could hear the crashing of debris against the windows and the crashing glass of windows breaking.”

Lake Charles, a city of 78,000 people, lies about 30 miles north of Cameron, where Laura made landfall as southwest Louisiana’s first-ever Category 4 hurricane. Sustained winds topped out at 150 miles per hour, shredding the National Weather Service Doppler radar system in the city.

Throughout the two-state region affected by the late-August storm, more than 1.5 million were under some sort of evacuation order. More than 900,000 lost power. More than two dozen deaths were attributed to the storm, at least half from improper use of generators resulting in carbon monoxide poisoning.

Jacoby and her husband, Jeremy, who also stayed at the hospital, watched the weather radar, knowing they were right in the center of the storm — and right where they knew they were supposed to be, helping their community.

Several other hospitals closed down because they didn’t have water,” said Jacoby, who grew up in the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City. “We decided this wasn’t ideal, but we had to stay open for our community. That’s why we do what we do.”

‘GOD, HELP US’

Forty minutes west in Orange, Texas, Kevin and Evie DiLeo also decided to ride out the storm.

“Kevin always stays home during a storm so he can be available to help others in the community,” said Evie, who usually leaves but stayed to care for her mom, who is 91.

“We lost power at 12:45 a.m.,” Evie said. “And at 2 a.m. it kicked into a different gear. The doors were ready to fly off — the roof, too. The house was expanding.”

“We were praying, ‘God help us. Let it pass quickly,’” said Kevin, a deacon of the Ninth and Elm Church of Christ in Orange. “We wanted it to go away.”

“The wind sounded as if trains were going up and down the street,” Evie said. “I was amazed my neighborhood was standing the next morning.”

The Ninth and Elm church sustained minor damage: Trees fell nearby, shingles flew off the roof, and electricity was lost. But the building survived to have a communion service the Sunday after the Thursday storm and a full worship service a week later. Evie said the congregation became a hub for local outreach.

‘IT’S TOTAL DARKNESS’

Back in Louisiana, Bill Bunkhardt evacuated a day before Laura was expected to reach Lake Charles.

“I got pictures from my neighbors,” said Bunkhardt, an elder of the Enterprise Boulevard Church of Christ. “My house used to be completely surrounded by trees, but the storm wiped them out, and only one is left standing.”

The Enterprise congregation was one of several in Louisiana to receive and distribute trailers full of supplies sent by Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, based in Nashville, Tenn. Other trailers went to congregations in Sulphur, Deridder, Pineville and Oakdale.

Bunkhardt, who is semiretired, said he came home to find a 100-foot tree had sliced his roof in two.

“We had to close off the side of our house and are living in the front room and kitchen with generators,” he said. “We have no electricity.”

The family’s running water was restored one week after the storm. “All the power lines are down throughout town. It’s total darkness at night,” said Bunkhardt, who lives on an acre in Moss Bluff, two miles outside of Lake Charles. “I grew up on a farm with not a lot of light. But when you get used to lights and traffic (in the city), and it totally shuts down, it’s strange.”

‘WE BANDED TOGETHER’

Days after Laura barreled through Louisiana, St. Patrick hospital still had no running water or air condi-
tion, and generators had a difficult
time powering the entire building.
“The electricity was out, and the
hospital was hot and sticky and
stinky,” said Jacoby. “All the toilets
were overflowing because we couldn’t
flush them. It was disgusting. We
could smell it through our masks —
that’s how we knew it was bad.
“But we banded together,” she
added, “and took good care of the
patients with the limitations we had.”

While Jacoby cared for her patients,
other local Christians hit the streets.
“We have been walking in rougher
neighborhoods where people don’t
have insurance, passing out ‘Need
Help?’ cards, along with water and
food,” said Jeremy Jacoby, who
attended the Enterprise church with
his wife until they recently felt led
to plant a small, home church. “We
are talking with people and giving
whatever help they need.”

‘WE JUST DON'T HAVE ENOUGH VOLUNTEERS’

Across the state line in Texas, Ben
Terry, deacon and interim preacher
for the Ninth and Elm congregation,
loaded a church van with boxed
lunches and delivered food to kids
who didn’t have a way to get to the
church building.

And Kevin DiLeo went around
town, boarding up windows, moving
trees and offering whatever help
was needed.

Others came from farther away
to help. Dylan Wood, youth minister
for the Double Springs Church of
Christ in Cookeville, Tenn., made
the 12-hour drive to the Texas coast
to return a favor.

In March, an EF-4 tornado struck
his community. Twenty-five people
died across Middle Tennessee,
including a couple who had been
attending the Double Springs
church. Christians from across the
nation, including Texas, came to
to help rebuild.

“I became interested in helping
others the way they helped us,”
said Wood, 20, who brought three
church members with him for the
weekend trip. They volunteered
with Disaster Assistance CoC.

Mike Baumgartner, the ministry’s
president and CEO, found the town
of Orange on a map and decided he
would station himself there. He sent
other volunteers to Lake Charles and
Sulphur, La. Among the three loca-
tions, the disaster ministry served
about 25,000 meals in the first week
after the hurricane, he said.

Another ministry, Ohio-based
Churches of Christ Disaster
Response Team, set up its tool trailer,
mobile kitchen, shower trailer and
laundry trailer in Lake Charles.

“We are boots on the ground,” said
Laura Cremeans, who founded the
nonprofit with her husband, Mark,
after Hurricane Andrew in 1992. “We
cook meals for the volunteers and
the community, but we mainly work
on family homes and properties.”

Bunkhardt, the Enterprise
Boulevard elder, estimated that in
the first few days after the storm the
Disaster Response Team and other
volunteers from Churches of Christ
fed about 2,000 people at the church
building, which became an outreach
command center.

“We are really blessed,” said
Bunkhardt, whose church only sus-
tained loss of electricity. “Churches
came from all over, bringing tools
and water and food. They go out and
help, concentrating on members of
the church first.”

Burkhardt was ecstatic when the
Disaster Response Team went to his
home and removed the fallen trees
around his property, something he
couldn’t have done without the vol-
unteers’ help.

The leaders of both Disaster
Response and Disaster Assistance
CoC said they’d like to do more,
but they’re struggling to serve at
full capacity because of the corona-
virus pandemic.

“We are in desperate need of more
volunteers,” Cremeans said. “We have
so many people asking for help on
their homes and properties, but we
just don’t have enough volunteers.”

Baumgartner added that volun-
tees typically are housed 20-30 in a
room, “and churches won’t let us do
that now.”

A worker helps clear trees that smashed into the home of Bill Bunkhardt, an elder of the Enterprise Boulevard Church of Christ in Lake Charles, La.

Trey Linton and Bob Nailon prepare a meal for hurricane victims at the Enterprise Boulevard church in Lake Charles.

Chance Guillen and Christina Linton from the Angelina Church of Christ in Lufkin, Texas, help hurricane victims.

AFTER THE STORM, COVID-19 STRIKES

The nonprofits aren’t the only
ones hit hard by the virus. A week
after Laura demolished Lake
Charles, an exhausted Lauren
Jacoby tested positive for COVID-19.

“Thankfully, I worked the week
after the storm and felt fine,” Jacoby
said. “But then I got a headache
and thought it was stress from what
we went through. And then I got a
tickle in my throat.

“I’ve seen enough to know what
happens next,” said Jacoby, who was
thankful to be staying in an RV with
air conditioning. “I came home, and
by that afternoon, my whole body
hurt. I had a fever, started coughing
and figured it was time to test.” Her
husband, Jeremy, also tested positive.

In preparation for the storm, the
Jacobs made the tough decision to
put their sons — Parker, 5, and Jude,
7 — on a plane to stay with family in
Oklahoma, out of harm’s way. The
decision protected their children not
only from the hurricane, but also
from the virus.

Despite Hurricane Laura and a
worldwide pandemic, the Jacobys
still hope to plant a church.

“If we actually get to plant a
church in the midst of utter chaos, it
will only be from God,” Jeremy said.

And if the Jacobys, DiLeos and
Bunkhardts can rebuild their
houses and patch up their churches,
that will be because of God as well,
they believe.

Christians should remember,
Bunkhardt said, “It’s all going to
be gone someday anyway. In the
meantime, God will take care of us.
It’s going to be OK.”
You are what you tweet

BY CHELLIE ISON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Conspiracy theories, fake news, memes — sometimes it can be hard to decipher what is real and what isn’t when it comes to social media.

“I have been discouraged by how many people I see in my feed, particularly older people from the churches I’ve grown up in, who are communicating over Facebook, Twitter, what have you, via meme,” said Reda Hicks, an attorney and member of the Memorial Church of Christ in Houston. “I find it quite disturbing.”

Hicks was one of four panelists on a recent Christian Chronicle Live event, “You Are What You Tweet,” held on Facebook and YouTube.

Panelists from Churches of Christ across the U.S. discussed best and worst practices on social media in a live event hosted by The Christian Chronicle.

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Hicks was one of four panelists on a recent Christian Chronicle Live event, “You Are What You Tweet,” held on Facebook and YouTube.

Panelists from Churches of Christ across the U.S. discussed best and worst practices, examining how Christians can engage on social media in a way that reflects Christ.

“Whether it’s in person or in this social media realm of online-ness, we have a responsibility to reflect Jesus and to reflect honesty and truth,” said Taneise Perry, who attends the Kingdom Church of Christ in Charlotte, N.C.

Perry said it’s easy to feel angry and disheartened when scrolling through social media. However, she said it’s also a place she’s found inspiration.

“I’m inspired because so many people have found their voices online, a way to be influential as they seek to change the hearts of people,” Perry said.

Blake Jackson, a public relations professional and member of the Bentonville Church of Christ in Arkansas, said it’s important for Christians not to take their interactions on social media lightly.

They must remember, the former journalist said, that those who may not know Jesus or are skeptical are watching closely. “We are holding up a mirror to the way of Jesus,” Jackson said. “That way is very clearly a way of mercy, a way of grace, a way of peace. If the way we hold up that mirror is dented, cracked … filled with anger, insults, etc., then that’s the image of Christ we’re reflecting to the public square.”

John Edmerson, elder and minister for the Church of Christ at the Vineyard in Phoenix, encourages Christians to be careful and mindful when posting. “I often spend a lot of time doing some self-analysis along the lines of what I’m posting, what I want to post,” Edmerson said.

Ensuring that what you are posting isn’t a rumor, conspiracy theory or half-truth is important, the panelists said. “We are human. We are susceptible to lies and conspiracy theories,” Perry said. “But like we tell little children in Bible school: ‘Be careful little eyes what you see. Be careful little ears what you hear.’

Telling the difference can, in some cases, be challenging. That’s why the panelists encourage Christians to be careful sharing things they haven’t researched for themselves.

“One hallmark of a conspiracy theory is it tries to take things that aren’t related to one another and tie them together through a logical leap,” Hicks said. “We shouldn’t assume that something bigger or behind the curtain is at play unless there’s actual evidence to suggest that.”

Perry said it takes work to decipher what is true and what isn’t on social media.

“If you’re not willing to do the work, then it might be time for you to step away from these mediums that are consuming all of us,” she said.

Vet your sources, the panelists agreed, to make sure what you’re sharing isn’t fake or misleading. “You can go to a newspaper’s website and see what their journalistic code of ethics is,” Hicks said. “You can read it, and you can decide for yourself (that) these are people who do their homework or these are people who do not do their homework.”

Said Jackson: “There are clearly some journalists and some journalistic outlets that have rigor in their reporting, in their fact-checking, in everything they do.”

Hicks and Jackson also agreed that the 24-hour “news” cycle exacerbates the problem by disguising opinion shows as news.

Hicks said to ask yourself, “Am I reading, watching or listening to news or someone’s opinion of the news of the day?”

Distinguishing between the two is an important part of engaging responsibly on social media.

“It’s about finding several sources I know don’t share a viewpoint but have that rigor in common to read across,” Hicks said. “And where you find the commonalities is where you can trust the facts.”

And, Perry said, question everything. Pray for discernment. Seek truth. And, ultimately, remember to let the Bible guide you.

“No source of media, no politician, no political party is ever going to align perfectly with God,” she said, “so stop trying to make it so.”

When it comes to disagreements online, first try to understand what the other person is saying and where that person may be coming from — and then respond, the panelists urged.

“For me, I have to pump the brakes,” Edmerson said. “If you’re able to manage your thoughts, manage your emotions and say, I’m going to respond, but before I respond, let me understand” — I think that’s really what’s missing out.”

Too often people respond by trying to shut the other person down or tune them out, Jackson said, rather than trying to understand their point of view.

“Be aware of your impulse,” he said. “The tool in the toolbox for Christians is a pause, a contemplation, a reflection, that will allow you to stay your emotions and receive what somebody
is saying. It doesn’t mean you have to believe everything they’re saying. It doesn’t mean you have to agree with everything they’re saying."

His point: Be willing to listen. Reacting only on impulse could harm a relationship, but listening can build a way toward reconciliation.

If it’s apparent that you and another person just cannot agree, do what is necessary to love the other person while protecting your mind and your salvation, Perry advised.

“Respect people. Believe people. Learn about them. Love them. But at the end of the day, we don’t have to be Facebook friends.”

When it comes to disagreements, Hicks reminds herself of the words of author Brene Brown: “I’d rather do right than be right.”

Don’t forget you’re talking to a person, Hicks suggested. Ask yourself if you would say the same words to someone you care about, someone in the same room.

And, Perry added, when you get something wrong or post something you later learn was not true, don’t be offended if someone calls you out.

“If it’s shown to be offensive, inaccurate, slightly inaccurate or just a flat-out lie, then you have a responsibility to correct it or just delete the post,” she said.

Your efforts to make things right, to learn the truth, are worthwhile.

“We all say the wrong things, and we all do the wrong things,” Hicks said. “It’s important to give people room to grow and say the wrong thing with the right intention.”

Grace and forgiveness are keys, she said.

Perry encourages those on social media to remember, no matter what your position, you will ultimately be held accountable for the words you say ... and post.

“In the last days, the Bible doesn’t say that God is going to ask us, ‘Did you put your country first?’” Perry said. “He’s not going to ask you if you upheld the Constitution.

“What Matthew 12:36 says, ‘I tell you, on the day of judgement, people will give an account for every careless word they speak,’” she said. “Whether you realize it or not, when you’re on social media, you’re speaking.”

So be kind and careful.

WATCH THE PANEL discussion at christianchronicle.org/social-media-panel.
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SURVEY: How to keep election from dividing Christians

FROM PAGE 1

church. “I vote based on my faith, not necessarily a candidate’s faith.”

But Sims said he has family and friends who “believe supporting President Trump is supporting racism and hate.” Other family and friends “believe supporting Biden is un-American and un-Christian.”

“Social media has become an easy way to spew hate for the other side without having to talk face to face,” Sims said. “My advice … is to talk.”

“Talk on the phone or in person,” he suggested. “Listen to each other. Embrace common ground. Be willing to change. Stay away from social media and text messaging. Be kind. Be a Christian.”

Howard, who used to vote primarily Republican, now considers herself a moderate Democrat.

The Texan cites morality, anti-racism, accountability in office and helping the marginalized as reasons why she will vote for Biden. She cast her ballot for Hillary Clinton four years ago.

“It’s important to try to approach conversations in a respectful and loving manner,” said Howard, 48, “but that is becoming more difficult every day.”

In her view, “Christianity should be separate from politics.”

‘UNDERSTAND JESUS AS LORD’

Randall, an independent who did not vote in the 2016 election, said he looks at the moral character of the candidates. The New England minister voices concerns about both Trump and Biden.

His advice to fellow Christians?

“Understand Jesus as Lord of the universe and the church as his intended means of demonstrating his love and grace,” said Randall, 26. “The U.S. and its government are greatly secondary to this means and goal.”

“Therefore, we can embrace our global church family tightly and hold our political commitments more loosely,” he added. “This gives room for grace and understanding in our divisive climate.”

Christians must first consider Jesus — not politics, said Valerie Cao, a member of the Grace Place Church of Christ in Duncanville, Texas.

“Are we more loyal to a political party than Jesus?” asked Cao, 37, an undecided voter whose husband, Hai, serves on the Grace Place ministry staff. “Are we adhering to his design and his rule (the Golden Rule) first? Does the Gospel shape your politics, your desires for this country and your words?”

“Consider and share not only your stance on abortion, but your stance on love and mercy for the life of a grown man, broken and lost,” she advised. “Does Jesus love the immigrant? Does he still love the poor? Does he love the single mother, the addict?”

“We live in a broken and sinful world. Are we arguing over laws while sitting at home keeping the Gospel safely tucked away from the broken?”

DIVIDED ALONG PARTISAN LINES

David Schwartz, an elder of the Herrin Church of Christ in Illinois, said it pains him to see Christians divide along partisan lines.

“We live in an era of shared posts and memes. Few bother to actually educate themselves on issues,” said Schwartz, a Trump supporter who lists religious freedom, individual liberty, sanctity of human life and national defense as important.

“I have strong political beliefs,” he added the 56-year-old father, who has two adult children serving in the military, “but my love for my brothers and sisters in Christ transcends them. We should apply an Ephesians 4:29 test to all our communications, especially those that are exposed to a broader audience through social media.”

In that verse, the apostle Paul urges, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

Chris Dunning, minister for the Newberg Church of Christ in Oregon, describes himself as an independent. He chose a third-party candidate in 2016 but plans to vote for Biden this time.

Issues important to the 36-year-old preacher include health care, student debt reform and humane treatment of immigrants and children.

“I’ve encouraged our congregation to remember that our faith and hope are not in a political system or candidate,” Dunning said. “If our test of commitment to one another is based on a political party, then we’ve substituted civil religion for faith in Christ.”

JuanRaymon Rubio, a member of the Nixon Bilingual Church of Christ in Texas, points to health care, taxes, COVID-19 and immigration reform as crucial issues. The 27-year-old Democrat plans to vote for Biden.

“I don’t think it’s ever been this divisive,” Rubio said of the 2020 campaign. “I would suggest finding a common ground and always reminding the other that Jesus is King.”

“Politics is, by its nature, divisive, said Wallace Stott, an undecided voter and member of the Highland Church of Christ in Cordova, Tenn.

“If we all thought alike, we would be North Koreans,” said Stott, 68. “Have compassion and patience with people you disagree with. Unless they are firmly in Satan’s camp, there is no reason to completely turn your back on them. Pray for the ignorant, which also may include yourself at times.”

Trump may not be perfect, but Holli Potts-Boedeker, a member of the Memorial Church of Christ in Houston, believes God has used him for good.

“Her approach to Biden supporters and anti-Trumpers? She refuses to let politics damage her relationships with those she loves. “Family lasts forever, and friends are hopefully for a lifetime,” said Potts-Boedeker, 54. “I just laugh and remind them that this is why we live in the greatest place on Earth, and my vote will cancel out their vote.”

“It makes them laugh, and we agree to disagree.”

READ MORE COVERAGE of the survey findings at christianchronicle.org/2020-voter-survey.
LOANS: ‘The last thing a bank wants to do is foreclose on a church’

From Page 3

owned its $2.2 million property with no mortgage, Heyward said. The church had used the same bank for 87 years and had ample funds in its account.

Similarly, the Lewis Street church had maintained accounts with a large banking chain for more than 40 years, said minister Jameel Robinson. But the church couldn’t secure a $50,000 loan to fix its plumbing.

The church’s leaders were told, Robinson said, that it was “high risk” and that the bank was “just not rendering loans to churches with small memberships.”

“That just wasn’t a legitimate answer for me,” the preacher said.

It didn’t make sense to Doug Crozier either. He is chief executive officer of The Solomon Foundation, a nonprofit church extension fund.

“I’ve funded probably over 1,400 churches,” Crozier said. Especially in the case of the Renaissance church, “Every bank should fund that project. It opened my eyes.”

The foundation, which serves congregations identified as part of the Restoration or Stone-Campbell Movement, provided loans for Renaissance’s construction and Lewis Street’s renovation. Since the firebombing of the Lewis Street building, the foundation has launched an initiative to help the church rebuild.

The Legacy of Redlining

Since the 1930s, Black families in the U.S. have suffered from discriminatory policies in mortgage lending.

The practice of redlining — denying financial services and insurance in a particular neighborhood based on its ethnic composition — was outlawed by legislation including the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and the 1977 Community Reinvestment Act.

However, housing advocates say the practice continues in more subtle ways. Black families were victims of the sub-prime loan crisis that precipitated the 2008 financial meltdown. A November 2019 analysis of mortgages by professors of law and business at the University of California at Berkeley found that Black and Latino applicants were charged higher interest and heavier refinance fees when compared with White borrowers.

The trend affects predominantly Black churches, according to a 2017 study by Indiana University. Black congregations are disproportionately represented in bankruptcy filings, have fewer options to refinance and are more likely to fall victim to predatory lenders.

Earlier this year, pastors of predominantly Black churches said they had trouble accessing COVID-19 relief funds issued through the Paycheck Protection Program administered by the Small Business Administration, according to a report by National Public Radio.

Steve Mack, a banker with 38 years of experience making loans, said he hasn’t seen direct evidence of discrimination against predominantly Black churches, but he suspects it happens.

“And I’m sorry to say that,” said Mack, chief executive officer of San Antonio-based Texas Heritage Bank. In the financial industry, “I know we’ve got some history that’s not particularly positive.”

Banks make and price loans based on risk, said Mack, an elder of the Oak Hills Church in San Antonio. Among the considerations for churches are the size of the congregation, the number of “giving units” (families or individuals), their history of giving and debt service — the proportion of the church’s annual giving that is used to pay existing debts.

Public relations is another consideration, said Ed White, a commercial lender who works for Texas Heritage Bank.

“The last thing a bank wants to do is foreclose on a church,” White said. “I truly believe that large banks look at church lending as unsecured lending.”

The Christian Chronicle reached out to representatives of two large banking chains, Bank of America and Regent Bank, and did not receive a response by press time.

Making Churches ‘More Bankable’

White has approved loans to churches but said he’s also had to decline loans because “I couldn’t get comfortable with the financials.”

He advises churches on what they can do to make themselves “more bankable,” he said. That includes capital campaigns for building or renovation projects that have widespread support and financial commitments from church members.

A financing project may be more attractive to lenders, White said, if the church designs its facilities in such a way that they could be used for some other purpose — retail or office space, for example — should the congregation later sell the property.

White, who is African American, serves on the trustee board of a Church of God congregation. When his church underwent renovations, it secured a loan through a lending entity associated with the denomination. Other faith groups have similar entities that provide loans for churches within their fellowships, such as the Baptist Church Loan Corp.

Such entities are regulated differently from banks, Mack said, so churches considering such loans should be aware of the lender’s funding sources, management practices and whether or not they undergo internal or external audits.

White also advised churches to compare the lender’s interest rates to current market rates. A discrepancy far above or below that rate could be a warning sign of mismanagement, he said.

Loans for African American Churches

The Solomon Foundation undergoes annual audits and follows specific guidelines similar to those followed by banks, Crozier said, including minimum capital ratio (a borrower’s assets divided by its liabilities) and minimum liquidity ratio (a measure of the debt-paying ability of the borrower).

The nonprofit also is regulated by entities in each state where it does business, usually by a state’s securities commission but sometimes by its banking or insurance regulators, Crozier said.

Solomon has committed 20 percent of its assets to help predominantly...
Black, a cappella Churches of Christ, Crozier said. So far the nonprofit has funded 55 such loans, worth more than $84 million. “They’ve got tremendous ministries, and they’re doing a great job,” Crozier said of the preachers for these congregations. “A lot of them are bivocational, which tells me of a higher commitment.”

Heyward, the minister for the Renaissance church, said that representatives of Solomon took a detailed assessment of the church’s financial health and made helpful suggestions. “They don’t dictate how to do ministry,” he said, “but they help you manifest the vision.”

‘A FELLOWSHIP PARTNERSHIP’

In mid-July, Crozier and other representatives of Solomon gathered alongside members of the Lewis Street church in the congregation’s gym, where the church has met since the firebombing. They donned T-shirts for Project Hope, a fundraising initiative to help the church rebuild, and made an online appeal for contributions. The foundation committed some matching funds toward the initiative, which has netted about $400,000 so far, Crozier said.

Robinson, Lewis Street’s minister, said he was impressed that a lender’s CEO would make the long journey to visit the church. “We talk business, of course,” Robinson said, “but it’s more of a fellowship partnership.”

Since the firebombing — a racially charged incident that echoes the tribulations of the civil rights era — Robinson said he’s received “an outpouring of compassion and concern” from the community.

“I wanted to show that same type of love that was shown to me,” Robinson said, “so we made it to the Mile High City.”

After the firebombing and the frustration his congregation endured trying to secure funds for its future, he hopes that the “fellowship partnership” between predominantly Black church and predominantly White lender will be a “city on a hill” for Americans of all races to see.

“‘You’ve got to overcome evil with good,” Robinson said. “This has been a great journey, a learning experience. We’re making history.”

WEBSITE: projecthope2020.com
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?

Urgent Request
“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.

Register Today at orphanslifeline.org/orphan-sunday
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233
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15,000+
CHRISTIANS

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Quarantine gives ‘a conduit of blessing’ to African church

In the southern African nation of Angola, members of the Renovo Church of Christ celebrate one of six recent baptisms. The church resumed congregational worship after months in quarantine, during which members divided into cell groups. “God has blessed that decision immensely,” said Katie Reese, who serves on the Angola Mission Team with her husband, Danny. “The cells were a conduit for blessing those in the neighborhood who had needs. It was a time of growth for the Renovo church, as new neighbors joined, and existing members stepped up to be active leaders.” For more information, see angolateam.org.

ARGENTINA
BUENOS AIRES — “Meeting for church services has been illegal here for 23 Sundays now,” said missionary Joel Banks in a recent newsletter.

But the Caballito Church of Christ has experienced blessings through its online worship, coordinated by tech-savvy church members including Jhon Aguirre and Andrés González.

“Attendance has continued to grow as more screens connect on Sunday mornings,” Banks said. “Since our congregation has a large percentage of immigrants, they have been able to connect friends and family from home to be with us.”

ITALY
MILAN — As the pandemic drags on, Europeans have a new opportunity to hear the Gospel by radio.

“The Voice of Truth with Larry Murdock” recently made its debut on Milan-based European Gospel Radio. The station broadcasts on AM, shortwave and online. Murdock, who preaches for the Gandy Church of Christ in Lawrenceburg, Tenn., produces the program, which also is broadcast in Europe from Riga, Latvia.

The program broadcasts from additional locales in Sri Lanka and Taiwan and reaches parts of Africa, Central and South America and Southeast Asia. The Pulaski Street Church of Christ in Lawrenceburg oversees the work. See voiceoftruth.us.

UNITED KINGDOM
CORBY — “You will have noticed, I’m sure, that Jesus didn’t send his representatives into the world in order to get people to come to church or to make them church members,” said Patrick Boyns. “No, he sent them out to make disciples.”

Boyns, principal of the British Bible School, discussed discipleship during the European Christian Workshop, hosted online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

For Christians, “discipleship isn’t some optional extra, if you like,” said Boyns, who has trained men and women to serve Churches of Christ around the world. “Discipleship is the fundamental response to the call of God in Christ, and it is primarily a call to learning, a call to grow in knowledge and understanding of God.”

“Awaken” was the theme of the three-night event. Luk Brazle, missionary in Ghent, Belgium, spoke about confession, and Earl Lavender, director of missional studies at Lipscomb University, spoke on living intentionally, based on the book of Colossians.

MORE INFORMATION: nationsu.edu

A Righteous Army for the Caribbean

BASSE-TERRE, Guadeloupe — On the far-flung islands of the Lesser Antilles, Leon Peters is raising up a Righteous Army.

That’s the name of an informal group of Christ-followers that Peters launched after earning a Master of Religious Studies degree from NationsUniversity, an online, nonprofit university associated with Churches of Christ.

In less than two years, Peters has trained more than 30 young men to be Christian leaders. The Righteous Army also provides administrative and legal assistance for those in need. Parents, elderly and the community benefit from English classes, financial assistance, food and water distribution — all provided by the ministry, Peters said.

Peters is a native of Guadeloupe, an overseas territory of France. He had no formal ministry training when he began his studies with NationsUniversity. Now he is bishop-elect for the province of the Caribbean in the Anglican Free Communion International.

That may surprise — and concern — some members of Churches of Christ, said David Srygley, NationsUniversity’s chief academic officer.

The online university, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, seeks to train individuals of diverse faith backgrounds in the simple truth of the gospel, Srygley said, adding that founders Mac Lynn and Dick Ady sought “to make the Bible accessible to as many people as possible.”

“To these two educators, accessible meant more than just available,” Srygley said. “It meant unobstructed — by language, by culture, by religion or by tradition. NationsUniversity’s curriculum is focused on the word of God, which brings about salvation and spiritual maturity. No more. No less.”

Peters added, “Above all, NU’s syllabus is purely Christocentric. That says it all. Confessions from all walks of life, including Anglicans, can find more than the basis of a strong foundation in theological studies.”

MORE INFORMATION: nationsu.edu
While shopping in a supermarket, Ezra Mentore has had to explain to his 8-year-old daughter why a security guard was following them. When paying, he has had cashiers double- and triple-check the money given, something they don’t do for other customers.

“When he is wearing his postman’s uniform, police officers greet him with a ‘Good morning,’” said his wife, Bethan. “When he’s out of uniform he is greeted with suspicious looks.

“He is a kind, polite and honest, God-fearing man. ... It is these qualities in Ezra which make it astounding to think of the adjustments he makes in order to be accepted by the society of a country in which he was born.”

That country is the United Kingdom, where Ezra, who is Black, and Bethan, who is White, worship with the Wembley Church of Christ, one of about 20 congregations in the fellowship in the London metro. Most are comprised largely of “people of colour,” as the British spell it, immigrants and descendants of people from Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America.

Bethan Mentore wrote about her family’s experiences — including the teasing her daughter has endured because of her hair’s texture — in a recent issue of Christian Worker, a publication for Churches of Christ in the U.K. The issue also included testimonials from Olivia Aarons, a Jamaican immigrant, and Sydney Lewis, a Black businessman who trained at the British Bible School and occasionally preaches for the Lewisham Church of Christ.

Bethan Mentore wrote about her family’s experiences — including the teasing her daughter has endured because of her hair’s texture — in a recent issue of Christian Worker, a publication for Churches of Christ in the U.K. The issue also included testimonials from Olivia Aarons, a Jamaican immigrant, and Sydney Lewis, a Black businessman who trained at the British Bible School and occasionally preaches for the Lewisham Church of Christ.

Lewis was one of 50 members from eight British Churches of Christ who signed a statement sent to The Christian Chronicle expressing sadness and shock at the killing of George Floyd during a May 25 arrest by police in Minneapolis.

“As people everywhere use their voices to speak up against injustices and racism meted out against people of colour, we do not believe it is right that we remain silent,” the statement read.

“During his earthly ministry Jesus Christ of Nazareth continually spoke and stood against injustice and division. He taught men the fundamentals of equality in these simple words: Love thy neighbour as thyself.”

Lewis said he appreciated the Chronicle “for your willingness to speak out on the subject of racial injustice when many have remained silent.” Many of the signers marched in a recent protest against racism and injustice in London. Churches also have spent time discussing the issue.

“In the past, these areas of ministry have been neglected because we have turned a blind eye or crossed on the other side of the street and ignored the issue,” Lewis said, “hoping that by doing so it would disappear.”

In her piece for Christian Worker, Aarons said she was thankful that the incidents of “racial microaggression” and other forms of prejudice she’s endured have not been a part of her experience growing up in the Bedminster Church of Christ in Bristol, west of London.

The church is “such a diverse group of people,” she said, and members are celebrated regardless of their ethnicity. The church “always made me feel like I belonged.

“I remember countless sermons which mentioned our diversity, and it was something of which to be proud.”

READ THE LETTER: christianchronicle.org/colour
Visible scars were gone — the bullet holes, the bloodstained carpet — as the West Freeway Church of Christ in White Settlement, Texas, made an emotional return to its worship center on a recent Sunday.

Eight months after a gunman opened fire during the Lord’s Supper, new blue-cushioned pews, reconfigured walls and a lowered ceiling greeted the close-knit congregation west of Fort Worth.

“When you first walk in, it’s almost overwhelming,” Glenda White said. “It’s not the same place. It is very beautiful,” she added. “But in my heart, it hurts because it had to be changed.”

It had to be changed because of the Dec. 29 shooting that claimed the lives of her husband, Richard White, 67, and deacon Anton “Tony” Wallace, 64.

The church’s security team leader, Jack Wilson, returned fire and killed the gunman, identified as Keith Thomas Kinnunen, 43. Authorities and fellow Christians said Wilson’s immediate response saved countless lives in the crowd of 240.

Ron Rutledge kneeled over his wounded friends that traumatic Lord’s Day and tried to help.

He couldn’t bring himself to go into the renovated auditorium for the recent assembly.

“He just not ready to go back in there yet,” said Rutledge, a longtime West Freeway member who stood in the foyer throughout the service. “I thought I would be, but I just don’t think I am.”

For weeks after the shooting, West Freeway members crowded into the fellowship hall next door to the locked auditorium to sing and pray.

But some people — including Wallace’s family — never came back.

Hugh Galyean hugs Glenda White, whose husband, Richard White, 67, died in last year’s church shooting.
Minister Britt Farmer and his wife, Lisa, sing during the first service of the West Freeway Church of Christ in its newly renovated worship center.

Carlton Hooten and Ron Palmer bump arms rather than shake hands.

Glenda White, far right, and other Christians enjoy fellowship at the West Freeway church. Ryan Rutledge hugs Ollye Young. Also at the table is Ron Rutledge.

Glenda White said, “there’s times when I get so nervous that it’s almost unbearable.”

“I was so busy making sure everybody was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK. I was putting on a good front because I didn’t want body else was OK.

They just couldn’t do it.

“We are back, and evil did not win, and evil will not win,” the minister told the congregation.

When you tell people you can’t be there anymore, it’s a lot of emotional trauma,” said Leslie Rutledge, Ron’s sister. "It’s just — it’s a lot of emotional trauma.”

The boys and girls, most wearing masks, placed change in a basket as part of a “Coins for Christ” ministry.

"I pray over this more than I do anything else really. I’m up at the fact that I’m not an outcast like I used to be,” she said. “It’s really, really tough — after you go through something like that — to embrace that again.”

But while the armed volunteers focused attention on him, they did not prevent him from taking a seat. When Kinnunen stood up with a shotgun during the Lord’s Supper, Richard White, standing at the back, reached for his pistol and yelled, “Drop it!” He laid down his life for a lot of people that day, Glenda White said of her husband. “I don’t want people to forget that.”
Seeking Full-Time Minister - Cortez, Colorado

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

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Minister Search

The Church of Christ on West Olive in the west valley of Phoenix, Arizona, is seeking a full-time pulpit minister to serve alongside our two ministers and an eldership of five. We are a congregation of 450 members in a growing community west of Phoenix. (www.WestOlive.com)

The ideal candidate should be a married man with at least ten years of experience. He should be of strong personal faith and be doctrinally sound and well grounded in the Scriptures.

How to Apply:

Those interested in applying should mail/e-mail and include a copy of their resume with picture and links to recent sermons.

West Olive Church of Christ
Attn: Elders
10935 W Olive Ave
Peoria, AZ 85345
WOElders@westolive.com

Preparing Now, for an uncertain future

NationsUniversity, along with The Christian Chronicle and Mission Alive, is hosting a webinar to discuss how churches have successfully responded to the pandemic.

Webinar — October 13
at 7:00pm (CDT)

Church leaders from all over the country will present ideas and recommendations on topics such as evangelism, leadership, youth and children, & worship.

In addition, results of a worldwide survey will be presented offering more insights to help plan for the future.

To participate in this survey or to sign up for the webinar, go to nationsu.edu/pandemic_response
Park Linscomb returns to his Texas roots

BY LYNN Mc MILLON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

park Linscomb, a Texas native who became one of New England’s longest-tenured ministers, recently returned to his roots.

After serving the Manchester Church of Christ in New Hampshire for 46 years, Linscomb and his wife, Linda, moved back to the Lone Star State.

“We wanted to be nearer to grandchildren as an original motivator, but we found a wonderful congregation with which to work,” said Linscomb, now preaching for the Rock Hill Church of Christ in Frisco, north of Dallas. “God has blessed us tremendously.”

A 1974 Bible graduate of Lubbock Christian University, Linscomb first traveled to New England to serve as an assistant director for Gander Brook Christian Camp, a camp in Maine that is associated with Churches of Christ. Over five decades, he served in a variety of roles for the camp, including as president.

From 2011 to 2014, he directed the Gander Brook Center for Christian Leadership, a school to train men for service as preachers, elders, deacons or leaders in small New England congregations.

At age 22, what attracted you to New Hampshire?

I was very interested in mission work through the influence of Lubbock’s Green Lawn church bus ministry, the Sunset World Mission Forum and LCU teacher Jim Massey. I fell in love with the church in New England through my experience at Gander Brook in the summer of 1974.

Both Linda and I were deeply attracted to the love, fellowship, dedication and need of the churches in New England. Far from being the cold people that the Southern culture told me to expect, I found the brotherhood and commitment of the small New England churches to be warm, genuine and fervent.

Plus, mission work in New Hampshire and New England didn’t require a passport, a new language or adjusting to a radically new culture.

Describe the Manchester church when you first arrived.

It was a mission church, being supported by the West 34th Street church in Houston. One of its former preachers, George Baker, was still there and served as a strong support and mentor for me as a young preacher.

The church had recently (1970) built a DIY parsonage, and along with such housing, we had about $500 monthly support from the West 34th Street church and the Windsor Park church in Corpus Christi.

What is the New England and New Hampshire culture’s attitude toward religion like?

The New England states, according to Gallup, are among the least religious states in the union, but that doesn’t mean they are anti-religious. There are three dominant views in New England toward religion: Catholic, liberal Protestant and “none.” The Catholic (either religious or nominal) is the most friendly toward conservative Christianity like Churches of Christ.

The Restoration plea has been very effective in appealing to Catholics, since they believe you need to be the original church to be the right church. The liberal Protestant church is difficult to share the Gospel or Restoration plea with because inspiration of the Bible is not usually believed.

The “none” category is a fairly large one — mostly agnostic and blank slates, having never gone to a church service nor been taught even the fundamentals of the Bible. This “none” category can be open to religion, especially when things are going wrong — marriage troubles, trouble with children, financial woes, funerals, etc.

The challenge in teaching them is that you cannot assume any knowledge or worship background. You’re mostly working with a blank slate: Does God exist? Is the Bible really God’s word? What things are sins, and what things are not? Who is Jesus, and why is belief in him necessary? How do I find the right church? What they will know will often have been heavily influenced by the Catholic culture of the area and religious hearsay.

How has the Manchester church changed over the years?

In 1974 the demographics of the city and the church were mostly blue-collar and White with few cultural differences. These days the city and church are more diverse economically, culturally and racially.

From about 1980 through 2000, the church ran a successful bus ministry, which gave the church a younger character. We still have a youth ministry, but the average age is not quite as young as it was.

When we arrived in Manchester there were 30 to 40 people in attendance. The number peaked in the early 1990s at about 220. We’ve declined in recent times largely due to economic downturns.

Between 1974 and 1982, we transitioned from being a supported mission church to being a self-supported church supporting foreign and domestic works. We went from being without elders in the mid-1970s to appointing elders and deacons by the mid-1980s.

What are some of the challenges faced by the Manchester church?

1. Find a way to get the young people, who grew up in Manchester but went to a Christian college in the South, to move back with their education, skills, families, leadership, maturity and financial resources.

2. Find a way to evangelize the very different cultures and languages of the west African immigrant communities that have settled in Manchester in the last 10 years or so.

3. Find a way to keep converts from moving away with economic tides.
### Associate Minister for Family Spiritual Life - N.C.

The Hendersonville Church of Christ is seeking a full-time Associate Minister for Family Spiritual Life to help us in our goal of encouraging faith development and spiritual growth in our young families and families with children/teens. We have several young families and would like to attract more. We are a church with an average attendance of 125 members just south of the city of Asheville. A successful candidate will possess a bachelor's degree, although commensurate experience would also be considered. Please visit our website for job description: hvlcoc.org. Please email resume and references to:

hvlcoc@bellsouth.net

### Preaching Minister Search

The 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.

Position Open until filled.

### 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:

centralministerssearch@gmail.com

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

shawneecentralcoc.org/media/Preacher_Job_Description.PDF

If more information is needed contact:

Bob Stephens: (405) 388-6218

### 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.

We have a nice, four-bedroom parsonage. Salary is negotiable along with benefits and shall be commensurate with experience and education.

If you would like to be considered for this ministry, please submit your resume, a current video 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.gccchurchofchrist.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)
gccchurchofchrist.com gccchurchofchrist@cox.net

### 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 spiritually 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: Littleenton Chatham
200 Roundtree Drive, Enterprise, AL 36330

### 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 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:

csymministersearch@gmail.com

For job qualifications, description and application process please visit:

centerstreet.org

### Full-time or Part-time Minister Search - Forsyth, Missouri

The Forsyth Church of Christ is seeking a minister who feels his ministry is preaching, teaching and equipping others to serve with heart-felt enthusiasm. We are a congregation of 40+ members who seek to be like Jesus by loving and serving each other and our community. Our spiritual family has many of the most loving and giving saints in the Lord’s church, and we are seeking a man of God to preach, teach, and work beside us.

The applicant must be solidly grounded and schooled in the scriptures, show passion and enthusiasm for the Lord’s work, have at least five years of pulpit experience within the Churches of Christ, and have evidence of a successful ministry. If you would like to be considered for this ministry, please submit your resume, current video media of two sermons (a link is acceptable) and a concise one-page statement that characterizes your current ministry efforts, style, and goals. Please include a current photo and three contactable references. Pay is negotiable.

To be considered for this position, email info to Brent: bzlake@mediacombb.net or mail to:

Church of Christ, 137 Spring St, Forsyth, MO 65653

### LINSCOMB: Minister reflects on serving in New England

**FROM PAGE 21**

What would you say to other young men and their wives to encourage them to serve in New Hampshire or New England?

1. Far from being cold and unfriendly, New Englanders are warm and genuine folks who make warm and genuine Christians.

2. Take your talents and energies someplace where they’re really needed. Better-paying ministry jobs may be in the South, but some of the most rewarding ministry jobs are in mission spots like New England.

3. The simple Gospel and the Restoration Plea are far more appealing and effective than you may believe, especially in New England.

4. New Englanders invest heavily in their friendships. Consequently, if you arrive in New England telling people that you’ll be gone in a couple of years, don’t expect them to get all that friendly — they believe it will hurt too much when you leave. If they believe that you’ll be around for a while, they’ll become friends that will feel like family.

5. You’re going to find that you love the snow.

6. New England Christians will be less diplomatic than you may be used to, but you’ll never be in doubt about how they really feel about something.

Have you and your wife prepared yourself for the culture shock of moving from New England to Texas?

We think we have, but having done both long-term and short-term mission works over the years, I’m sure we’ll have to make some unexpected adjustments.

I already know that my ear for Southern accents is not as sharp as it used to be. But it is helpful that we make a trip to Dallas a couple of times a year to visit grandchildren.

I’m fairly sure that we’ll have to make some adjustments from a New England church culture to a Southern church culture — from everybody knows everybody to being able to hide in the numbers, if you want to.
Candlelight vigil honors Botham Jean

Students at Harding University in Searcy, Ark., gather to remember alumnus Botham Shem Jean on the two-year anniversary of his death. Jean, 26, was a 2016 graduate of Harding. On Sept. 6, 2018, he was shot to death in his Dallas apartment by off-duty police officer Amber Guyger, who was convicted of murder.

HIGHER EDUCATION

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

ABILENE, Texas — Abilene Christian University opened the new school year with a groundbreaking ceremony for a new residence hall. The facility is scheduled to open in fall 2021 and will replace McDonald Hall, which was demolished this summer.

“A comprehensive renovation and construction campaign for residence halls will enhance the intentional, life-changing community students experience at ACU,” President Phil Schubert said. “By modernizing our residence halls ... we can better meet the living and learning needs of today’s students.”

AUSTIN GRADUATE SCHOOL

AUSTIN, Texas — Austin Graduate School of Theology will merge with Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn., becoming a wholly owned subsidiary of Lipscomb.

Both institutions have been in existence for more than a century. They share a heritage in Churches of Christ and are accredited.

Though financially solvent, Austin Grad School had found it increasingly difficult to operate as an independent seminary, leaders said in announcing the merger.

“I have a deep appreciation for Austin Graduate School of Theology,” Lipscomb President Randy Lowry said. “I look forward to the impact that together we will have on the lives of students.”

Stan Reid, the seminary’s president, said: “We all see the hand of God in this undertaking. I am confident that Austin Grad, in the new arrangement with Lipscomb, can anticipate a brighter future.”

TELEVISION

IN SEARCH OF THE LORD’S WAY

EDMOND, Okla. — The “In Search of the Lord’s Way” television ministry, sponsored by the Edmond Church of Christ, celebrates its 40th anniversary this fall.

The ministry began in 1980 with the late Mack Lyon preaching on a single station in Ada, Okla. It has grown to regular broadcasts on more than 200 local TV stations, a national network and 60-plus radio stations.

“We are grateful for all the people who have loved, prayed and supported this ministry over the last 40 years,” speaker Phil Sanders said. “And we are deeply grateful to our Father in heaven for opening the doors and permitting us to serve.”

Memorials

Mary McHam

1915-2020

Mary Frances McHam went to her heavenly home on July 26, 2020. She was born in Wichita Falls, Texas, to W.E. Wright and Mary Sweeney Wright. She married her childhood sweetheart and Navy man, Donald E. McHam, who was one of the founding elders of the North Richland Hills Church of Christ, now called The Hills Church in North Richland Hills, Texas. They were very hospitable and housed many, including college presidents and traveling preachers. They also sponsored kids from Christ Haven Children’s Home. She worked tirelessly in her church and community, taking dinners to the sick and needy and volunteering at the Red Cross, hospitals, and schools.

Mary Frances lost her life’s partner in the ministry of John Simpson. She is survived by: three daughters, and one son Bill (Judy) McHam; eight grandchildren, 20 great-grandchildren, and two great-great-grandsons.

Memorials may be made either to The Lord’s Way television ministry, All The World Mission Network, or the Lord’s work in the Philippines at the Lord’s Way.

Mary McHam

Anniversary

64th: Finis and Marilyn Caldwell, August 23, Kennett, Mo. Congratulations, Finis and Marilyn!

Milestones

Birthday

100th: Eva Doyle, August 26, Gail, Texas. Happy birthday, Eva!

Dr. John Simpson

1925-2020

Dr. John Simpson was born on April 26, 1925, and passed from this life on April 14, 2020, at nearly 95 years of age. In his time on earth, John always followed the principle found in Ecclesiastes 9:10: “Whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might.”

From growing up during the Great Depression in El Dorado, Ark., to serving his country honorably in World War II, to achieving a doctorate in ministry, to appearing on the television program “What Is Your Faith?” for nearly two decades, to preaching the Gospel far and wide which led to the salvation of thousands, to raising three wonderful daughters, and marrying the love of his life, sweet Mrs. Dorothy, this was a life well lived.

John Simpson did everything with all his might. He was truly one of a kind. John cannot be replaced, and he cannot be replicated.

The word “encourage” means “to put heart back in.” We live in a world that is seeking to discourage us daily, and yet the Lord gave us John Simpson to encourage multitudes. He counseled, comforted, taught, and baptized into Christ thousands of people. Only eternity will reveal how many souls are in heaven because of the ministry of John Simpson.

At the end of his life, the Apostle Paul gave a statement that serves as a perfect epitaph for the life of Dr. John Simpson: “For I have been poured out like a drink offering and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, has given to me and not only to me, but also to all who long for His appearing.” 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

And, in John’s own famous words, “You take it from here.”

(More tributes on page 26)
Susan Johnston tells the story of Central Furniture Rescue with passion and a catch in her voice.

Johnston is the founder, president and executive director of the Cedar Rapids, Iowa, nonprofit. It began almost 30 years ago as an annual clothing giveaway ministry of the Central Church of Christ.

In the two years since Johnston re-envisioned its potential, CFR has served about 250 households, providing beds, bedding, basic kitchen items and furniture.

She retired in 2016 from a career in project management, most recently with Trapeze, a Cedar Rapids-based company that provides transit management software for public transportation enterprises. She told a friend when she retired, “I’m going to see what God wants me to do.”

A woman named Dereisha helped her figure that out.

“She has no idea this is all her fault,” Johnston said of the mother of two little girls, whom she met at a clothing giveaway in early November 2018. “We were talking, and I said, ‘Is there something we can be praying for?’”

Dereisha had come out of a domestic violence situation. She had just started a job at a discount store and moved into an apartment but had no furniture.

“We had everything but what she needed,” Johnston recalled. “I asked her, ‘Do you mind if we pray about this right now?’ She looked at me like I was a little crazy, but I told her, ‘This is a church. It’s what we do.’”

Johnston prayed for her right there, got her contact information and said, “I have no idea what God will do with what we just asked for, but he’ll do something.”

### ‘GOD WON’T LET ME LET THIS GO’

Within two weeks, Johnston had located beds and other furniture for the family. By Thanksgiving, with help from other Christians at the Central congregation, they had furnished the entire apartment, put up a Christmas tree with gifts and provided a Thanksgiving dinner.

“So now God won’t let me let this go,” Johnston said.

She contacted several nonprofits working with people experiencing homelessness or victims of domestic violence. Each time, she told them about her conversation with Dereisha and asked, “Is this a thing?”

From January through May 2019, she ran a pilot program and outfitted 27 families. By August, Johnston knew the need was greater than one small church could meet, so she incorporated as a nonprofit, expecting the 81-page application to take six months to receive IRS approval. It was approved in a week.

Today CFR collaborates with about 20 other nonprofits, primarily in Linn County, where Cedar Rapids is the largest city. As Johnston looks for a permanent home for the ministry, CRST, a trucking company based in Cedar Rapids, has provided a trailer to help with moves between the nonprofit’s temporary facilities.

“We know how to move stuff,” Johnston said. “That’s what we do.”

### EVERYONE IS A VOLUNTEER

Johnston is a full-time staff member at CFR. Marlene Miller, donations coordinator, is a half-time helper who also attends the Central congregation, which was founded by Miller’s parents and grandparents more than 85 years ago. Like the other 50 or so regulars who pick up, sort, repair and deliver, Johnston and Miller are both volunteers.

A core group works in the warehouse receiving donations that have been arranged by Miller, who works from home, scheduling deliveries on 15-minute intervals for all day Friday and Saturday mornings. Warehouse workers do a quick sort and inspection to determine if something needs to be cleaned or fixed. Another group takes items home to repair.

Often donations come from families who are grateful to have a way to give their belongings to someone who needs them rather than haul them to the dump.

“Those are the kind of people I’m encountering.”

### PARTNERS

Young volunteers from several Cedar Rapids, Iowa, churches load up and deliver furniture for two families wiped out by the Aug. 27 derecho.

One woman who was clearing out a lot of furniture because her invalid husband’s hospital bed now occupied their living room gave her $100.

“I just could not believe she could be that generous,” Miller said.

### EVERYONE IS A VOLUNTEER

Six churches from six denominations provide volunteers. The Central congregation, with a Sunday attendance of 150 to 200, is the only Church of Christ in Cedar Rapids.
Tom Olbricht, a ‘Renaissance man’ for Churches of Christ, dies at 90

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Tom Olbricht, whose academic work shaped generations of Christian scholars, ministers and church leaders, died Aug. 21. He was 90.

Olbricht significantly contributed to theological education in Churches of Christ and to the broader academic world of scholarship in theological studies, church history and congregational life,” said David Fleer, director of the Christian Scholars’ Conference, which Olbricht founded in 1981. The annual conference, hosted by universities associated with Churches of Christ, now bears Olbricht’s name.

He taught at universities including Harding in Searcy, Ark., Abilene Christian in Texas and Pepperdine in Malibu, Calif.

Olbricht was a contributor to The Christian Chronicle. He reviewed scholarly works, biographies and memoirs. He authored and edited several scholarly volumes and personal reflections including, “Hearing God’s Voice: My Life with Scripture in the Churches of Christ.”

Rick Marrs, provost and chief academic officer at Pepperdine, was a student of Olbricht at ACU.

Marrs described his former teacher as “a Renaissance man in our movement.”

Survivors include his wife of 69 years, Dorothy, five children and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Missionary Isaac Adotey ‘called home’

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

How are you this morning?”

Once, when Steven Moore asked that question to his friend Isaac Adotey, the African missionary replied, “Better than yesterday.”

“Why’s that?” Moore asked. Adotey replied: “I’m one day closer to heaven!”

Adotey helped plant more than 1,000 Churches of Christ and baptize nearly 50,000 souls, said Josiah Tilton, his longtime coworker and friend. The native of the West African nation of Ghana died Aug. 13 at age 63.

He and his wife, Janet, moved to Yendi, a city in Ghana’s predominantly Muslim Northern Region, in 1987.

“At the time there were only about four congregations,” said Tilton, director of Ghana West Africa Missions. “Isaac had no money and no prospects to get any. He was, as he always did, going on faith, trusting the Lord to provide.”

The support came, and Adotey ministered in Yendi for 17 years.

He moved to South Sudan just before the country’s independence in 2011. The church he planted in the capital, Juba, grew to 100 members before civil war forced him to leave. He spent his final years in the nation of Guinea-Bissau, nurturing a small church there.

Moore served as missions committee chair for the West Side Church of Christ in Searcy, Ark., which oversaw Adotey’s work in South Sudan and Guinea-Bissau.

“Prayer was such a major part of his Christian walk,” Moore said. “He gave many prayer seminars throughout Africa. He routinely woke at 3 or 4 in the morning for a time of prayer.

“Isaac eagerly awaited the day that he would be called home. ... After being diagnosed with typhoid fever and shortly before his passing, he told me, ‘Don’t worry, God is more to me.’”

OCTOBER 2020

PARTNERS

The ministry uses cash donations to purchase bed frames, box fans and other items.

COVID-19 delayed those.

“Four per day times 100 days, that’s 400 households. Then add those that lost jobs because of COVID,” she explained. A fellow nonprofit manager told her that when the moratorium is lifted, Cedar Rapids could expect about 8 percent of the county population, roughly 27,000 people, would represent about $6 million in back rent.

“And I thought, I need to prepare,” Johnston said. Then the derecho hit.

National support organizations converged to help, but Johnston is keenly aware that those support services and the linemen who have swarmed the city to repair power lines and remove downed trees are all going to leave. People whose belongings were lost in the storm will need furniture.

But she promises this: “We’re still going to be here.”

HOW TO HELP: Needed donations cover operating expenses and help buy bed frames, box fans, bedding and household items. To support the work of Central Furniture Rescue, go to centralfurniturerecuse.com.

The pandemic and the derecho

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, volunteers would deliver the furniture, set up beds, make them up, and unpack and arrange everything so recipients were completely set up, many for the first time in years. Since COVID-19, volunteers just leave things on the porch or inside the door.

On Aug. 10, a mammoth storm called a derecho — with straight-line, hurricane-force winds — struck Linn County, downing power lines and destroying homes.

Both the pandemic and the storm present challenges for CFR, Johnston said, but perhaps an even bigger challenge is on the horizon — a storm of evictions. Her colleagues at Willis Dady Homeless Services and Waypoint Services that serve Cedar Rapids’ homeless have told her that 60 percent of Linn County residents are two to three paychecks from eviction because of a low-income housing shortage.

Prior to COVID-19, the county had about four evictions filed per day, according to a report by Willis Dady Homeless Services and Linn County. A nationwide eviction moratorium during

On Aug. 10, a mammoth storm called a derecho — with straight-line, hurricane-force winds —
Melvin W. Brown  
1925-2020

Melvin Wayne Brown was born in Star, Texas, on Dec. 4, 1925, to James “Jimmie” Saline and Vera Mae Brown, née Arnold. He spent his early childhood in Evant, Texas, before moving to Dallas. Melvin graduated from Crozier Tech High School and joined the U.S. Army in April 1944 serving with the Bravo Company, 80th Chemical Mortar Battalion as a communications chief in the Southern Philippines. He was wounded in action on Leyte Island on April 17, 1945, and was awarded a purple heart and a bronze star.

Melvin married the love of his life, Pearlie May Williams, in Dallas, Texas, on Nov. 6, 1948. They had three children: Melvin, Jr. “Mack,” Diane, and Kimberly, who was stillborn. Mel and Pearl’s lifelong love affair lasted 61 years, and they were an inspiration to all that knew them as an example of a wonderful Christian marriage.

Mel worked as a packaging engineer for 47 years with Vought Corporation. However, his “real” job was running his and Pearl’s Hickory Tree Ranch in Eustace, Texas, where they raised cattle and hay.

Melvin was a faithful member of the Church of Christ, attending several Texas congregations including: Saner Avenue, Duncanville, Cedar Hill, and, most recently, Clark Road, serving several times as an elder. He and Pearl were active in many church related activities, and Melvin participated in several mission trips to Ukraine.

He was the proud patriarch of his family, and his children and grandchildren are very blessed to have had such a wonderful Christian example to follow. He also instilled a patriot spirit in his grandsons, all of whom serve their country in the U.S. Air Force.

Mel is survived by his son, Mack; daughter, Diane; three grandsons; and six great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by his parents; brothers, Glynn and Bernard; and wife, Pearl.

Jess Hall Jr.  
1936-2020

Jess Hall, Jr. left this world to be with Christ on August 9 at the age of 83 following a long illness. He was born in 1936 to Jess, Sr. and Frances Hall. He is survived by his wife, Millie Brown Hall, the love of his life for 64 years, and by his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

He was a gospel preacher for many years, serving congregations in Texas, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri. He also served as a deacon, an elder and a song leader. Many of his sermons and classes are available online at ThyWordIsTruth.com.

Jess graduated from David Lipscomb in 1957 and became the minister at Riverside Church of Christ in Ft. Worth. Later he became the minister at Green Lawn Church of Christ on the campus of Lubbock Christian University, where he also served on the board.

In 1971, Jess received a law degree from Texas Tech, graduating second in his class. He joined a law firm in Houston and handled many high-profile cases, often appearing in the newspaper and on television.

In 1990, Jess was elected to the board of Faulkner University and served as its chairman for five terms. In 2008, Faulkner awarded him an honorary doctorate.

Please consider donating in Jess’s memory to the Cherokee Home for Children at: PO Box 295, Cherokee, TX 76832 or www.chc4kids.org.

Alan Henderson  
1943-2020

Alan R. Henderson passed from this life into eternity on Aug. 26, 2020, at the age of 76. He left behind his loving wife Sharon of 52 years, his son Wyatt, daughter Carrie, and grandson Kai.

Al was known throughout the Churches of Christ as the China expert. With an advanced knowledge of the Chinese language and culture, Al served, taught, and encouraged Chinese people all of his adult life.

In 1973, Al, Sharon, Wyatt and Carrie moved to Taiwan to serve as missionaries for a period of seven years. In Taipei, he wrote Christian literature and worked closely with the youth group of the Unity Village congregation. He assisted other congregations and helped with Bible camps and other activities. Al also spent time in Singapore with the Pasir Panjang church where he went specifically to learn more about evangelism among the Chinese.

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

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. 5 Virtual Lecture: Andre E. Johnson. Lipscomb University. (Participation link TBD) Kim at (615) 966-6494 Ext. 6494. See lipscomb.edu/events/.
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
In 1980 Al and his family returned to the U.S. to work with the Sunset International Bible Institute. Al created the Chinese Studies Department to train Christian workers to take the gospel to the Chinese world. Students under Al were taught all aspects of Chinese language, culture, religion, and ministry. Some of those Al trained are still working in full-time Chinese ministry today.

In addition to training workers to serve among the Chinese, in 1983 Al helped start the Chinese language programming for World Christian Broadcasting.

In the later years of Al’s ministry, he traveled extensively throughout the U.S., encouraging and equipping churches to reach out to international students in their own communities. In a world where one out of every five people is Chinese and so few workers are sharing the message of Jesus, Al will be sorely missed.

Rest well, brother Al. You have fought the fight, and finished the race. There is a crown of righteousness waiting for you in heaven.

Larry Stafford
1949-2020

Larry Eugene Stafford, faith and community leader, died Aug. 5, 2020, following a short illness. He was 70.

Born in Sacramento on Aug. 30, 1949, Larry led a life filled with family, building projects, and faith in God. Known for his sharp wit and engaging sense of humor, Larry loved a good glass of wine, world travel, and cooking. He was a hardcore Raiders fan and a respected Rancho Cordova community leader.

As chairman of the Cordova Community Council Foundation for more than a decade, Larry presided over massive growth of the organization. He accompanied the Rancho Cordova All America City team into competition, bringing home national honors, and led the community Christmas tree lighting for 20 years, pairing his love of the community with celebration of the birth of Christ.

As outreach minister at Cordova Church of Christ for 25 years, he led projects which refreshed parks and ballfields. Cordova Christian Camp, Father’s day BBQ, Winter Shelter for Homeless, Shasta Men’s Retreat, Harvest Celebration, Bible Times Marketplace, Pancakes for Students, Home Repair for Disabled, and Cookies for Cops — all occurred because Larry led the way. He mentored new ministers, taught Bible studies, and counseled couples. He excelled at evangelism and baptized over 100 individuals.

Larry is survived by his beloved wife of 35 years, Cynthia, three daughters, one son, four grandchildren, and 2 great-grandchildren.

Memorial donations may be made to advance the remodeling of the church kitchen Larry used so effectively to minister to his church family and Rancho Cordova community: Cordova Church of Christ Kitchen Fund; 10577 Coloma Rd, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670.

JoAnne North
1935-2020

In 1955 the strong, adventurous JoAnne Eades Boswell married Stafford North, a dedicated preacher and Bible scholar. Their 65-year marriage was a pact between two servant hearts to love until the last breath. On August 21, after facing JoAnne’s Parkinson’s together for seven courageous years, they met again in heaven.

JoAnne was a magnet for the left out and a light for the lost. Her boundless energy found outlets at Memorial Road Church of Christ where she would teach your children or wrap you up in authentic Bible times costumes for the VBS play. Her legendary hospitality made her loved by all as she opened her home for many Q-Groups, showers, and Sunday dinners. Working alongside Stafford at Oklahoma Christian University, she was a leader in the women’s association, organized the women’s lectureship, and hosted the annual 4th of July picnic. Over the years, the couple traveled the world on their shared mission for Christ.

For almost 40 years JoAnne visited Oklahoma jails and prisons teaching women the simple gospel truth—Jesus died for all. She told an Edmond Sun reporter, “It tugs at my heart that I’ve had so many advantages, while most people in prison haven’t had any. It’s my responsibility to share what I have.” Many of these women could echo the sentiment spoken by one, “Everything I have is because of you.”

JoAnne gave her family extravagant care with every birthday celebrated, each holiday an occasion for fun.

Preceded in death by her husband, parents and a sister, Patricia Lanier, JoAnne is survived by her son, David (Beverly) North, daughters, Julie (Steve) Anderson all of Edmond, Okla., Linda (Mike) Parker, and Susan (Chuck) Monan all of Maumelle, Ark.; sisters, Janelle Owen, Sylvia Branch and Beverly Peddy; along with brothers-in-law and nieces and nephews. Her legacy lives on in 10 grandchildren, their spouses, and 17 great-grands who will always love their Mama Jo. Donations can be made to Oklahoma Christian University for: JoAnne’s Kitchen Fund at: 2501 E. Memorial Rd., Edmond, OK 73013.

With Appreciation

The Christian Chronicle appreciates and acknowledges generous gifts received in honor of Hilda Carlock and in memory of Stafford and JoAnne North and Barbara Bode.
Rioting is pollution, not a solution

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

— Ephesians 3:20-21, New King James Version

I believe in one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all.

We also believe and concur with the sentiments of Dr. King that “Nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time: the need for man to overcome oppression and violence. Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which will reject revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.”

We do not have all of the answers to our complex societal problems. More than that, we do not even know half the questions. But we can rest assured that God has both.

If the world is to take Christianity and the Lord’s church seriously, it becomes our calling to help solve problems and not create them.

Rioting and looting are not the solution but the pollution. The categorical imperative thus becomes embracing the answers that are provided for us in the Scriptures.

DAVID C. PENN has served as minister for the Robbins Church of Christ in Illinois for 37 years. He has preached for 53 years. A prolific author, he also is secretary and executive committee vice chairman for the Churches of Christ National Lectureship. Find his books online at outskirtspress.com/DrDavidPenn.
Worship during a pandemic is tough, but not as tough as it used to be, an ancient letter reveals

In the year 112 A.D. the governor of the Roman province of Bithynia faced a dilemma. A strange new religion had appeared in his jurisdiction. It was spreading like a contagion. He didn't know how to respond.

The governor's name was Pliny the Younger, and the followers of this new religion were called “Christians.” Some citizen of Bithynia had sent Pliny an unsigned letter complaining about these fanatics, even naming names — attaching a long list of people he accused of following a Jewish rabbi named “Christ” who had been executed by the Romans more than 70 years before.

In a report to emperor Trajan, Pliny described how, as this new religion spread, Roman temples were being deserted. That was a direct threat to the merchants who sold the meat for the sacrifices, and when their revenues began to dip, they naturally began to squawk.

Pliny's response was to round up the people on the list and demand to know, “Are you now, or have you ever been, a Christian?” Some vehemently denied it and readily called on the Roman gods, paid reverence to an image of the emperor and, as a crowning touch, cursed Christ. Others grudgingly admitted that they had once belonged to this Christian cult but insisted they were no longer part of it. They, too, went through the required rituals and cursed Christ.

Since Pliny's informants assured him that no true Christian could ever curse Christ, the governor was satisfied with the responses of these two groups and ordered them set free.

It was the third group that perplexed him: individuals who not only admitted that, yes, they were practicing Christians, but despite Pliny's threat of execution, they stubbornly refused to repeat the Roman rituals and renounce Christ. The governor gave them three chances. If they remained loyal to their Lord, he had them executed.

In his report, Pliny acknowledged that he could not uncover any actual crimes that these Christian fanatics had committed. He even arrested two humble slave girls and had them tortured, but they still would not renounce their Lord or admit to any illegal action. (Their names are known only to God, but when I get to heaven, those two steadfast sisters in the faith are high on my list of people I want to meet.) From his interrogations Pliny was able to extract this information, which he passed on to the emperor:

“They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath ... not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, nor falsify their trust.”

From that long-ago letter, I draw three conclusions:

- **Sunday has always been a sacred day to Christ-followers.** Pliny simply called it a “fixed day,” but we know from numerous Christian sources which day it was. Romans knew it as “The Day of the Sun,” and Hebrews called it “The first day of the week.” For disciples of Jesus, it was preeminently “The Lord’s Day,” because it was on a Sunday morning that the most amazing event in human history occurred: A dead man came back to life and walked out of his tomb.
- **Worship has always been the most important part of Sunday to Christ-followers.** Pliny’s letter is precious to us because it is the very first description of Christian worship by an outsider, and the central focus of Sunday for those early Christ-followers was so obvious even a clueless Roman official couldn’t miss it. It was their appointed day to worship Jesus.
- **Worship has always been worth the cost.** There is a small but revealing detail in Pliny’s report: the phrase “before dawn.” Sunday was a regular work day back then, so in order to worship, believers had to rise very early or assemble very late at night, as the church in Troas did in Acts 20. There was nothing convenient about Sunday worship in the first century, and that is even before you factor in the very real possibility that going to church could cause you to be tortured — or even have your head chopped off!

We today are once again facing hardship, not from persecution but from a pandemic. Once again Sunday worship is a dangerous activity. If we are to remain loyal to our Lord and safe in our health, it will take some effort. We may have to wear a mask or assemble in an unfamiliar configuration or at an inconvenient time. If we are at risk, we may have to meet in a smaller group, or attend a “virtual” service online and observe communion at home.

Whatever you decide, whatever approach you take, if you're going to faithfully worship Jesus in the current situation, you'll have to work at it — maybe for the first time in your life.

I can't help but feel that if some of our Bithynian brothers and sisters from 112 A.D. could speak to us — and maybe someday in eternity they will — they would say, “We were faithful to Jesus. You can be, too.”

**Dan Williams**

Dan Williams is vice president for church relations for Harding University in Searcy, Ark.

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**Four ways to encourage your young minister**

As I reflect on the many blessings, challenges and learning experiences I have had during my first several months of full-time ministry, I would be amiss to discredit the profoundly positive impact my current congregation has had on me as a young minister.

Not every young minister shares this same experience. We have all heard of those who burned out early on because of a harsh first experience in ministry. Most congregations aren't malicious but are simply unaware of some small things that contribute to a young minister's encouragement — or discouragement.

Here are four simple things churches can do to encourage young ministers:

- **Affirm their calling:** “Ministry can be such an unstable career. Shouldn’t you have something you can fall back on?” Young ministers often are told this, and many approach their first ministry job with trepidation. Paul told his young protegé Timothy to "fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6). To deeply encourage a young minister, a church should verbally recognize the gifts God has put in his younger servants and exhort them to continue nurturing these gifts.
- **Spend meaningful time with them:** Seeing church members on Sundays and Wednesdays is great, but there’s something about getting outside the walls of the church building with others that makes us feel truly integrated into the church. Some of the richest conversations I’ve had has been on the golf course with a retiree who invited me when we first arrived. Take your young minister to your favorite restaurant or a ballgame. Include them in your hobby, or let them accompany you on the job.
- **Reach out to their spouse:** Perhaps the biggest factor that contributes to a young minister’s encouragement has to do with how their family is adapting to ministry life. My wife has been invited on coffee dates, ladies retreats and home Bible studies with other women in the congregation. She truly feels welcomed, included and valued.
- **Pray for them:** Pray for their families, their ministry and personal spiritual growth. Pray that Satan will not get any foothold, whether it be in the form of temptation or negative people. Be sure to regularly tell them that they are a priority on your prayer list.

**Phillip Bates** has served as preaching minister for the Sunset Church of Christ in Springfield, Mo., since May 2019. He is a graduate of Harding University. He and his wife, Alayna, have one daughter.
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THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE
OCTOBER 2020

Word Find: The book of Psalms
By Betty Hollister | For The Christian Chronicle

Find the following words from the book of Psalms. They can be forward, backward, up, down and diagonal. The unused 31 letters form a sentence about the book. (See the answer on Page 34.)

- ACTION
- ADMIRATION
- ADVERSARY
- AISLES
- ANGER
- ANXIOUS
- ARRANGEMENT
- BETRAY
- CONSUME
- DESTROY
- ENDURANCE
- GENEROUS
- GENTLE
- GRACIOUSNESS
- HEAVENS
- LOVINGLY
- MARVELOUS
- MEMORY
- MIGHTY
- MEDITATIONS
- NATIONS
- POWERFUL
- PRAYERS
- PROCLAMATION
- REASONING
- RENEWAL
- RESCUING
- RESTORATION
- RESUME
- RUINS
- SAINTS
- SALVATION
- SANCTUARY
- SERVANTS
- SITUATION
- STANDARDS
- SUFFER
- TRANSGRESSION
- TREASURES
- TRUSTING
- UNDERSTAND
- USING
- VICTORIOUS
- VOICES
- YEARNS

First, an apology: In our September word search on the book of Acts (Page 32) we listed one of the words to find as “Barabbas.”

But the biblical character we were looking for was not the insurrectionist who was held by the Romans, released in place of Jesus. Barabbas is not mentioned in Acts. But Barsabbas is. That’s who was hiding in the word search — Joseph Barsabbas (also known as Justus), one of two candidates chosen to replace Judas in Acts 1:23. Brother Barsabbas didn’t get the job, as the disciples cast lots and selected Matthias instead. That one little “s” in Barsabbas makes a big difference.

Betty Hollister, who writes these puzzles by hand, recently told us that the leftover letters in each puzzle spell out a sentence about the subject of the puzzle. This month’s sentence is on Page 34. Email us at letters@christianchronicle.org if you’d like to know the sentences from the previous two puzzles.

I say Barabbas, you say Barsabbas

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The Christian Chronicle Crossword
By Myles Mellor | www.ilovecrosswords.com

ACROSS

1. Used to make a basket for a baby.
6. Goliath was one.
9. Roman numeral ocho.
10. Deceived.
11. “that they bring to you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, so that the ____ burn regularly” (Exodus 30).
12. “No one ___ a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment” (Matthew 9).
14. “Let us pass through your country. We will stay on the ___ road” (Deuteronomy 2).
16. They that wait upon the Lord will soar on wings like these. (Isaiah 40)
18. Adam’s companion.
19. “Go to the ___, thou sluggard: consider its ways, and be wise” (Proverbs 6).
20. Jesus turned this into wine.
22. Spreading tree.
24. Wine holders.
26. She was blessed for her kindness to Naomi.
32. “You are ___ to eat from any tree of the garden ...” (Genesis 2)
34. He saved Israel from the Midianites in Judges 6.
36. Sunrise time
38. Excavates.
40. Father of John the Baptist (Luke 1)
43. “For many nations and great kings will ___ them, and I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands” (Jeremiah 25).

BIBLE BOWLING
‘You are the man!’

Questions from 2 Samuel 12:
1. After King David had arranged for Uriah to be killed and had taken Uriah’s wife, who did God send to David? A. Talmai, B. Nathan, C. Rehob, D. Haram.  
2. In the prophet’s story, what did the rich man have a lot of? A. camels and sheep, B. goats and sheep, C. sheep and cattle, D. horses and camels.
3. What did the rich man take to prepare for his visitor? A. a fatted calf, B. one of his many sheep, C. the best cow in his herd, D. the poor man’s ewe.
4. David said the rich man should pay for what he did how many times over? A. two, B. four, C. six, D. 10.
5. “You are the man!” the prophet said. And since David sinned, what would never depart from his house? A. the sword, B. suffering, C. the spear, D. death.

DOWN

2. Come together.
3. They were important for the crops to grow.
4. She demanded the head of John the Baptist.
5. Prophet who had a dream-like vision of a valley of dry bones.
6. What the Israelites built while Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments (two words).
7. Target
8. “You shall make yourself_____on the four corners of your garment” (Deuteronomy 22).
12. Man in a parable about spreading the gospel.
13. Humor.
15. Avenue (abbr.).
17. ___ ___ distance, (two words).
23. Tribute.
25. “the Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s____” (Genesis 39).
This election, can we tame our digital tongues?

Every time I open Facebook or Instagram, my stomach immediately flips, and I feel sick. Why? Because it’s an election year, and many of my friends use these platforms to argue for their chosen political leaders and against anyone who thinks differently.

And Christians are no different. Sadly, many tear down opponents with quick keyboard strokes on Saturday night and lift those same hands in worship on Sunday morning.

Daniel Darling’s “A Way With Words: Using Our Online Conversations For Good” challenges readers to look at their online activity. Are we using social media to bring people together or drive them away?

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue,” Darling writes, citing Proverbs 18:21. “And, we might say today, the power of the thumb.”

How quickly we use those thumbs to share our every thought.

“Social media often brings out our inner Pharisee,” Darling says. “Every day, it seems, we are at our digital temples crying loudly, for ‘Every day, it seems, we are at our inner Pharisee,’ Darling says. We should approach a public dispute carefully and ask ourselves: Am I the person to speak to this?”

“The truth is that we don’t have to correct every stray tweet,” he adds. “We don’t have to ‘but actually’ our aunt’s well-meaning but slightly unclear Facebook post. … We can actually sit out a few controversies and the world will be just fine.”

I generally avoid all political or controversial talk on social media because, as a preacher’s wife, I realize I’m under a microscope.

But that doesn’t mean I don’t get asked my opinion on sensitive topics in personal conversations.

Church leaders should “set an example for the believers in speech,” Darling writes, citing 1 Timothy 4:12. This was a humbling refresher on how I should speak on hot topics.

“You don’t simply speak for yourself,” he writes. “You bring people with you, giving them permission to speak in the same way as you do.”

Darling asks: Are we, as leaders, unnecessarily bringing division with our online activity? Or are we fostering unity? I would argue that while church leaders should be held to a higher standard, all Christians should set an example and tame their digital tongues.

by technology — not stressed and frustrated.

Don Allen Price, the founder of YourTechGenius and member at The Hills Church of Christ in Texas, sees technology impacting nearly every part of our lives: “Today, more than ever, technology is how we stay in touch with family and friends, but this has left many who did not grow up with technology feeling isolated and disconnected. We get it, and there is no reason for this. We have the resources, tools, and processes to remove this anxiety, and we want to share it.”

At YourTechGenius, we will donate to The Christian Chronicle 10 percent of any fees paid when you use the Promo Code: “Chronicle.”

INTERIM MINISTRY

Jerrie Barber.

Between Preachers: You Can Grow Through Interim Ministry.


“When a preacher stays a long time, usually the church doesn’t like the next preacher. I volunteer to be the next preacher they don’t like,” says the author. “During the six months I was interim, I grieved their losses and wisely select their next preacher. This book describes how we do it.”

5-STAR DEVOTIONAL READER

David Belt.

better place? There is a temptation to delete our accounts and avoid it all. I know I contemplate this idea at least once a day. But instead, Darling writes, we should rebel against the darkness and be the internet we want to see.

To do this, let’s take a page from the book’s chapter titled “Act Justly, Love Mercy, Post Humbly.” Let’s be “slow to tweet, quick to listen, quick to get the whole story.”

All 200 pages of this quick read are full of Scriptures and would be a great resource for a sermon series or small-group study.

As the election approaches, here are some additional titles on politics and a Christian response:


“American Christians are faced with a political conundrum: Our true citizenship is in the kingdom of God, but, inevitably, we also are citizens of an earthly nation,” said Brandon Monroe, a member of the A&M Church of Christ in College Station, Texas. “No system of man can ever perfectly share all the values of Christ.”

How do we participate in the political realm while remaining faithful to our true calling? The book helps provide a way forward, Monroe said.

“Rooted in Scripture, these authors present a balanced approach to help Christians on any range of the political spectrum find an appropriate voice.”


Camp, professor of theology and ethics at Lipscomb University, writes that Christianity in America has been made into a bad public joke because of our failure to rightly understand what Christianity is.

Zach McCartney, who studied under Camp, said that the professor’s ideas are not for the faint of heart.

“Through keen historical and biblical analysis, Camp skillfully builds a case that Christianity cannot be progressive or conservative because it is a politic in and of itself,” said McCartney, college minister for the Hillcrest Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas.

While he doesn’t agree with all of Camp’s answers, McCartney said he is certain that the author is asking the right questions, making this book a must-read.


“Christians should never profess blind loyalty to a party. Any party,” the book’s description reads. “But they should engage with politics, because politics inform policies, which impact people.”

The author encourages readers to remember that hope arrived not in a politician, system or great nation but in the person of Jesus Christ.


“Koyzis’ main thesis is that human ideologies are, in reality, idols,” said Micheal Felker, minister for the Lakeside Church of Christ in Mansfield, Texas. “He argues that every ideology takes a part of God’s good creation and elevates its importance to that of an ultimate thing. This is what sets this edition apart from other books on politics from a Christian perspective.

“The post-script essay ... cautions church leaders and members to discern whether or not current and urgent political issues constitute an ecclesiastical issue that needs to be addressed inside the church,” Felker said. “This is a must-read for anyone in leadership who wants to be informed on the many political and philosophical ideologies present in our churches and how to point people toward gospel solutions rather than political fixes.”


“In a defensive and divided era, how can followers of Jesus reveal a better way of living, one that loves others as God loves us?” the book’s summary asks. “How can Christians be the kind of people who are known, as Proverbs puts it, to ‘turn away wrath?’”

This book shows Christians how to become “people of a ‘gentle answer’ in a politically, relationally and culturally fractured world.”

LAURA AKINS is Reviews Editor for The Christian Chronicle. Contact laura.kins@christianchronicle.org.

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

This “devotional reader” captures 275 of the most insightful chapters in 31 of this anointed late South African minister’s acclaimed classics on the “higher life” in Christ. Longer chapters are divided in two, producing 365 substantive daily readings averaging two pages.

The readings proceed chronologically across the span of more than 55 years of Rev. Murray’s ministry and systematically capture the very best of his best spiritual insights. The resulting year with this profoundly distinctive and beloved man of God promises to powerfully help us grasp the “full salvation” that he discovered and then evangelized within the Church to such broad acclaim.

**CHILDREN’S BOOK**


This is a story about a mustard seed’s journey of growing into something big and magnificent. The little mustard seed learns that sometimes things don’t happen as fast as we would like them to. This is when God wants us to learn how to have patience, faith, and trust in Him to move mountains and bring us to where we need to be.

**HOME DISCIPLESHIP**


The Family Worship Guide is a call to rediscover and implement the old and biblical practice of family worship, a joy-producing discipline that fosters multigenerational faithfulness and strengthens Christian homes. In the past, family worship was an established routine of dedicated Christian households, attested to throughout Christian history, including the early Restoration movement. Family worship today, however, is rarely practiced, and many committed Christians do not know what it is or how to do it. This handbook inspires and equips parents to make family worship an important feature of their homes. Ideal for parenting classes or men’s classes.

**NEW AND NOTEWORTHY** Submissions are paid advertisements. Contact tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org for rate information.
Remembering a quiet man, a go-getter and two legacies of love for Africa

They were about as different as two evangelists could be — Isaya Jackson and Isaac Adotey.

I met them in Juba, the small, dusty capital of South Sudan, just months before the country’s independence in 2011. I was there as part of a survey team for The Sudan Project and Healing Hands International.

Isaya met us at Juba’s tiny airport. He watched as gloved, uniformed police rifled through our luggage, marking a giant “X” in chalk on each bag as it met with their approval. Isaya didn’t attempt to supervise the process (as some African church leaders do, with varying degrees of success). He was silent, unassuming. It was hard to imagine that this man was responsible for more than 5,000 baptisms.

I met Isaac the next morning at our hotel. A native of the West African nation of Ghana, he was working in Juba as a church-planting missionary.

Isaac talked fast and walked faster — a go-getter, I could tell. He whisked us off to meet an officer in South Sudan’s newly formed government who had graduated from Abilene Christian University.

Isaac walked into the federal compound like he owned the place, past men armed with machine guns. When a guard finally stopped us, Isaac whipped out his cell phone and called the official. “Here, talk to this boy!” he said, and he held the phone to the guard’s ear. We went right in.

The next day we left for Isaya’s hometown, Parajok, where The Sudan Project was launching a school and medical clinic. Isaac stayed in Juba and promised to find the geology data Healing Hands needed to drill water wells. We traversed bumpy dirt roads where soldiers were disposing of unexploded landmines from Sudan’s long civil war.

“We’ll, this is Parajok. This is my place,” Isaya said, nonchalantly, when we arrived. In the days that followed I learned about Isaya, who moved to Houston as a refugee and walked into the Westbury Church of Christ one day to thank Jesus for all he’d been given.

He studied with minister Bill Yasko and was baptized. He trained at Sunset International Bible Institute in Lubbock before returning to the refugee camps in Uganda, baptizing and planting churches.

Under a cramped lean-to made of old United Nations tarps and thatch, I heard Isaya preach in his native language, Acholi. He was passionate, fiery, captivating, filled with the Spirit. This wasn’t the guy I saw at the airport. I was in awe.

When we returned to Juba, Isaac had found the geology data, no problem. I crossed paths with him again the next year at the Africans Claiming Africa for Christ conference in Zambia. I brought him a glucometer to monitor his blood sugar and a camera to document his ministry.

A few years later, South Sudan plunged into ethnically charged violence. Isaya returned to the refugee camps, where he continued to preach, teach and baptize. Last year he became ill and flew to Houston, where he died from brain cancer on Oct. 14.

He was 60.

Isaac, who helped the church in Juba grow to 100 members, had to leave South Sudan, too. Undeterred, and despite health challenges, he found a small, struggling church in another African nation, Guinea-Bissau, and ministered there. Isaac died Aug. 13 from typhoid and pneumonia. He was 63.

Two brave African preachers, both compelled to share the gospel in the face of setbacks. Both gone too soon.

Erik Tryggestad is president and CEO of The Christian Chronicle. Contact erik@christianchronicle.org, and follow him on Twitter @eriktryggestad.
Change of Mind

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“This book has been needed!”

To order: jerryoloutz@gmail.com or Jerry Loutzenhiser, 214 Iowa Ave., Salina, KS 67401 ($14.00 S/H. Also may buy on eBay)

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