As the sun sets over Africa, a new man rises from the water

Jonah Simon, minister for the Esilalei Church of Christ in Tanzania, baptizes a man named Liza after a Sunday evening Bible study near Lake Manyara National Park. Liza, one of the Maasai people, began attending the small East African church with his wife, a Christian woman. He decided to give his life to Christ after studying with Simon. Oklahoma evangelist Steven Hill visited Esilalei during a recent mission trip.

SEE A REPORT from Tanzania on Page 13

A redefined ‘church’ will emerge from pandemic

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

This pandemic will end. Ben Pickett is sure of it. “It’s going to take longer than we thought,” said the executive minister for the West Houston Church of Christ in Texas, a year after the first cases of COVID-19 were detected in the U.S.

But “we will come out of this,” Pickett said, “and we’ll have stories of how God sustained us and maintained us, and how God provided resources just when they were needed. We’re going to have all kinds of stories.”

Until then, the West Houston church, which brought in about 700 worshipers on an average, pre-pandemic Sunday, is “kind of in a hybrid season,” Pickett said. Worship is socially distanced. A few classes meet in person. There are online options for both.

Churches around the world are in the same situation, often making quick adjustments as virus case numbers rise and fall.

The Christian Chronicle asked ministers and members of Churches of Christ across the U.S. to share thoughts and plans for the post-pandemic future. Some said it’s simply too soon for specifics. Others said that, regardless of what’s to come, the “hybrid season” is here to stay.

“It is essential that our strategies for engagement move toward a ‘both/and’ model,” said Nic Dunbar, worship minister for the West Houston church.
God’s Word compels us to “Preach the Word” (2 Timothy 4:2). These timeless words, spoken to a young preacher, have application in all our lives. Every Christian should feel the pull of their heart to Preach the Word, no matter their situation in life.

At Sunset, we are committed to equipping you to serve God. We offer opportunities for you to find your place to Preach the Word. Come learn how you can Preach the Word in answer to Paul’s charge.
Youth ministries learn to slow down during pandemic

A few years have passed since my time in the youth group at the old Midtown Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas. Still, I have fond memories of singing around campfires and in living rooms and at worship on Sunday and Wednesday. In the summer, we’d crowd into a church van each Tuesday and drive to the summer youth series. Along the way, we’d stop and enjoy a Coke or an ice cream cone. I’m pretty sure we had a teen devotional at somebody’s house a different night of the week.

As I think back, I’m not sure how we found time for all that. After all, most of us had part-time jobs and extra-curricular activities. Certainly, we had more free time in the summer, but I can’t imagine how the youth minister ever had a free moment.

Maybe he didn’t.

Fast-forward 35 years, and not a whole lot had changed — as far as I could tell — in how we did youth ministry in Churches of Christ.

Then came the COVID-19 lockdown. Suddenly, all of us — including always-busy youth ministries — were forced to slow down.

At first, Travis Moore, youth minister for the Conejo Valley Church of Christ in Thousand Oaks, Calif., didn’t like it.

But the details become much more complicated in a pandemic. Since 1987, Springfest has drawn California teens to the Westside Church of Christ in Bakersfield — between Los Angeles and Fresno — for a weekend of praise, fun and service projects.

AMID CONCERNS over COVID-19, minister faces challenges planning California’s Springfest.

By Bobby Ross Jr. | The Christian Chronicle

Normally, organizing a youth rally would be no big deal. Adam England would choose a theme. Pick a speaker. Invite area churches.

But the details become much more complicated in a pandemic. Since 1987, Springfest has drawn California teens to the Westside Church of Christ in Bakersfield — between Los Angeles and Fresno — for a weekend of praise, fun and service projects.

While the COVID-19 lockdown prompted the cancellation of last year’s event, England believes the 2021 gathering can proceed responsibly.

But even as he strives to make Springfest as safe as possible, fellow youth ministers voice concerns about bringing their groups.

“I’m like, ‘Surely these guys are going to be excited about this,’” said England, the Westside church’s youth and family minister since September. “And I’m literally going down the list, and all of them are like, ‘Yeah, I don’t see how I’m going to bring a group.’ Or, ‘My parents are super strict, and there’s just no way.’”

Oh, the ministers do their best to
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YOUTH MINISTRY: ‘Don’t want to go back’

FROM PAGE 3
funk,” he said, recalling how he was
forced to cancel activity after activity.

But months of reflection and
reinvention of how he interacts with
teens and their parents led him to a
different conclusion.

“I don’t want to go back to the way
things were,” Moore said. “I think
we were overprogrammed before.”

No, he’s not saying that he wants
his Los Angeles-area church’s
Sunday assembly to be on YouTube
— not in person — forever.

He’s not saying that he prefers
Zoom Bible studies to face-to-face
classes with his youth group. (Teens’
“Zoom fatigue” is real, he stresses.)

He’s not saying that service
projects and summer camps and
mission trips south of the U.S.
border are bad. In fact, he’s eager to
resume all of those things.

But he wants to give his teens and
their families — and himself — time
to breathe.

“We were giving them things to
do all the time but not neces-
sarily having quality things
come out of it,” he said.

“I was just overworked
and overscheduled.”

Drew Denman
serves as youth
minister for the
Childress Church
of Christ, a thriving
congregation in a Texas
cattle and cotton-farming
hub, halfway between
Amarillo and Wichita Falls.

“Childress is a small town,
and everyone plays all the sports,
so all the kids are used to just
going and going and going all the
time,” Denman said. “So we’ve
followed suit.”

But after COVID-19, Denman sees
a need for a different emphasis as
the congregation resumes in-person
Sunday morning Bible classes.

“We need to get back to the
basics,” he said.

Those basics include Bible study,
purposeful worship and relationship
building.

“Community is crucial for our
young people,” Denman said. “They
are already being pulled in so many
different directions. They desper-
ately need that ‘home base’ to return
to in a youth group. Something I
knew but didn’t understand like I
do now: Technology is good but will
never fully satisfy the need.”

What will he do differently
post-pandemic?

“Incorporate more leadership
opportunities for teenagers,” Denman
said. “Teenagers have a hard
time feeling like they are a part of a church
anyway, but especially when not
meeting for months on end.

“The tricky part,” he added, “is
how we involve boys and girls, inside
and outside of the church service.
After all, the church isn’t a building.”

Back in Southern California,
Moore said he intends to enlist the
help of Mom and Dad.

Before the pandemic, the Conejo
Valley youth minister had not taken
real steps to involve parents, he
said.

COVID-19 changed that.

“Lots of guys did that before,”
Moore said. “I think I’m going to
become one of those guys, really
equipping parents to do a lot
of ministry and teaching.

I don’t think things are
going to go back to
the way they were
before.”

A final note:

Many of us
have a tendency
to devalue the role
of youth ministers.

Perhaps we think of them
as “junior” ministers or teen
cruise directors.

Yet during this time of severe
anxiety for many teens — stressed
and lonely because of separation
from friends and their church family
— their youth ministers have sent
regular text messages to check in,
organized drive-by celebrations for
milestones such as graduation and
dropped off goodie bags at individual
teens’ homes.

In the wake of COVID-19, let’s
show youth ministers the support
and respect they deserve and give
them space and discretion to create
meaningful relationships rather than
fill a calendar.

BOBBY ROSS JR. is editor-in-chief of The Christian
Chronicle. Contact bobby.ross@christianchronicle.
org. Follow him on Twitter at @bobbyross.
TENNESSEE

KNOXVILLE — Last summer, the South Knoxville Church of Christ launched a weekly ministry to help the homeless and less fortunate.

The Hands and Feet program each Saturday morning “has blossomed into more than we could have dreamed,” member J.L. Steele said.

Members have provided more than 1,100 sandwiches, along with drinks, snacks, blankets, hats, gloves, socks, coats and personal hygiene products, Steele said.

“In a time when it may be difficult for many to feel involved in the Lord’s work, this has provided a real spark to our membership,” he said.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY J.L. STEELE

South Knoxville Church of Christ members help with the Hands and Feet program.

PARKWAY

SAVANNAH — The Parkway Church of Christ organized a recent virtual seminar aimed at reducing stress during the pandemic, drawing about 30 participants.

The online event offered “practical advice and spiritual encouragement to those in need,” women's ministry leader Donna B. Comeaux said.

“During a pandemic, we eventually run on empty,” Comeaux wrote. “This seminar was to refuel those who love the Lord so they, in return, could refresh others. … At the end of the seminar, our preacher’s final words (off camera) were, ‘Guys, I’m so full. That was awesome.’

“Those words confirmed that God had done exactly what he intended to do with this seminar. Encourage. Refresh. Refuel. Amen”

Photo provided by Glen and Wanda Reed

Christians pray as they celebrate the recent baptisms of four jail inmates. The souls were brought to Christ through what Glen and Wanda Reed, members of the Exchange Street Church of Christ in Union City, Tenn., view as divine providence. The Reeds were among volunteers who organized a yard sale to benefit New Pathways for Children, a Melber, Ky., ministry associated with Churches of Christ. Unloading donations, the group needed help. Inmates doing community service were enlisted, sparking the conversations that led to their conversions.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY J.L. STEELE

South Knoxville Church of Christ members help with the Hands and Feet program.

MINNEAPOLIS — The environmental services team at UAMS — University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences — has stayed busy during the pandemic, keeping patient rooms and the hospital clean.

The WindSong Church of Christ has adopted the team, providing treats such as cookies.

“There are not many organizations that can support such a large staff, but the WindSong church continues to show up and show out in the best imaginable way,” UAMS volunteer coordinator Marcia Dunbar said. “I cannot explain what this kindness has meant to our staff.”

PHOTO PROVIDED BY UAMS

Minister Keith Harris serves along with his wife, Lindsey, and daughter, Zoe.

SOUTH KNOXVILLE — Last summer, the South Knoxville Church of Christ launched a weekly ministry to help the homeless and less fortunate.

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PHOTO PROVIDED BY J.L. STEELE

South Knoxville Church of Christ members help with the Hands and Feet program.
‘Learning as you’re running’

FROM CALIFORNIA to Florida, children’s ministries called to creativity during pandemic.

BY CHERYL MANN BACON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

leave it to a children’s minister to explain the apostle Paul’s spiritual transformation by making a video about the conversion of eggs, flour, sugar and chocolate into brownies.

And don’t be surprised when that minister delivers the transformed treats to all the kids of the congregation. At their homes. In a pandemic.

That’s what Penny White did. That and a lot more.

White serves as children’s minister for the 250-member Conejo Valley Church of Christ in Thousand Oaks, Calif., about 40 miles northwest of Los Angeles.

The pandemic has upended and reinvented the form and shape of ministry as Churches of Christ have learned to be virtual, socially distant and masked. But perhaps no aspect of congregational life has been called to creativity more urgently than children’s ministry.

White calls it “learning as you’re running.”

Before COVID-19, she had never edited video.

Now she produces a 25- to 30-minute segment each week with elements similar to an in-person children’s worship — songs, prayers and a story. Occasionally, she enlists her husband, Jim, and son Jonathan, a student at Pepperdine University, to dress up as David and Goliath. Or David and Samuel. Or Peter and Andrew. Or …

Even in normal times — remember those? — ministers are always preparing for next Sunday. But now, she said, it has to be filmed on Wednesday and edited on Thursday so staff who do the main worship video can get it on YouTube.

“It’s been the most stressful time ever in ministry,” said White, who’s served the Conejo Valley church since 1999. “I’ve worked more hours and at a pace that is very different.”

Add to the stress the opinions shared by, well, everyone, about how to do things, what to do, what not to do, when to do it and when not to. It’s a lot.

‘QBS’ REPLACES VBS

On the opposite side of the country, youth minister Luke Reynolds marshaled a team from the Central Church of Christ in Winter Haven, Fla., to help bring Dak and Zak to life.

The puppet characters, created by Reynolds, were the stars of “QBS” — Quarantine Bible School.

Reynolds devised the concept in lieu of a Vacation Bible School when VBS wasn’t possible. The 15-minute videos featured a Bible story, a puppet skit, crafts and songs.

“It just took off, and by the time things began opening back up, the elders wanted us to continue. The kids have absolutely loved it,” said Reynolds, who was surprised by the project’s popularity. “I thought kids would kind of watch it while playing or whatever.”

But kids watch the same episodes over and over, Reynolds said, and two Christian schools in the community 50 miles east of Tampa play “The Dak and Zak Show” during chapel.

CONNECTION OVER CONTENT

Not every children’s minister can write and produce a video series. And Marian Parker, who serves the Campbell Church of Christ, 50 miles south of San Francisco, thinks that’s OK.

Parker readily acknowledges the pandemic “completely forced me into reinventing children’s ministry. Everything I’ve done in the past had to be thrown out when it wasn’t something we felt we could do or wasn’t safe.”

“I’ve realized that what’s most important is connection over content,” Parker said.

While the Campbell congregation, with 500 members and about 70 children, has more resources than some others, she encourages fellow children’s ministers to resist feeling like they have to reinvent the reel.

“There are so many resources out there — it’s just a matter of knowing where to look and in what capacity you can use them,” Parker said.

For example, YouTube is a great source of kids’ worship songs with motions, and many curriculum companies have made free materials available for children.

The harder part — and the more important one, she said — is maintaining relationships with and among the children.

“For some of them, when they do see me or their friends, they don’t remember,” she said, noting how long the pandemic has disrupted their young lives.

“They’re so little — you almost have to lay that groundwork again and form those connections from scratch, which is so incredibly sad. You have to go back further than you expected.”

Taly Barrera doesn’t have an official title at the Elgin Church of Christ, where her husband, Ricardo, is the minister. But she’s passionate about ministry to the children of the Spanish-speaking congregation of about 180 in the northwest Chicago suburb.

The Elgin church has managed to do some things in person, including a Vacation Bible School, by respecting the wishes of some parents who wanted strict precautions in place.

“We all knew which kids needed to be a little more distanced because of parents’ preferences,” Barrera said, “and we all agreed to wear...
Children enjoy a socially distanced Vacation Bible School hosted by the Elgin Church of Christ in suburban Chicago. Masks were required for children and their parents.

masks the whole time.”

Women of the church prepared meals, and children participated in many traditional VBS activities.

“Thank God our numbers in the area were really low then,” Barrera said, referring to COVID-19 infections. “No one got sick.”

She calls it a leap of faith: “To be honest with you, it could have gone the other way. We prayed and said, ‘We’re going to be extra careful, and if we feel it’s not safe, we’ll make changes.’”

After the VBS success, Barrera prepared live Zoom lessons for a different age group three or four nights a week. Participation fell off over time, so she learned how to download Zoom sessions to YouTube so families could watch at their convenience. She said young families needed flexibility amid all the responsibilities the pandemic has wrought.

Jennifer Schroeder, children’s minister at North Atlanta Church of Christ, a multicultural congregation of about 1,000 members, said pandemic isolation has left kids “clamoring for connections.”

“My own kids are struggling emotionally because they don’t feel any sense of normalcy,” she said. “Where could we find moments of normalcy?”

Determined to find ways for kids to get to see each other, even though the church was still meeting virtually, Schroeder used a big field and undercover parking at the suburban Atlanta church to re-envision some annual children’s activities.

She and her team spray-painted circles for socially distanced games and fellowship activities. And when falling temperatures brought some pushback, she reminded objectors how often they sat outside at football games. The church borrowed some space heaters and moved ahead.

Similarly, the Conejo Valley church reinvented its annual back-to-school backpack blessing as a drive-through event in the parking lot.

“We had goodie bags and encouragement for kids and parents,” White said. “We surrounded each car and prayed for each family.”

Later, a harvest festival was converted to a drive-through Trunk or Treat, and an annual event remembering the birth of Jesus became an outdoor journey through an adjacent field. Children hiked to see shepherds, then Mary, the wise men and Luke telling about God’s gift of Jesus to the world. Each child left with a wrapped gift box.

Ultimately, children’s ministers create new things out of old ideas, doing what they can to minister to children during a difficult time.

“Be yourself,” White said. “That’s what the children need: the person they’re used to being with — that familiar face.”

And brownies. All kids need brownies.

Tips from children’s ministers

What suggestions do you have for other congregations trying to stay connected to children during this time, especially smaller congregations?

Jennifer Schroeder | children’s minister, North Atlanta Church of Christ
CHURCH SIZE: 1,000
NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CONGREGATION: about 150-175

“Everyone has a parking lot. Get some spray chalk, mark out circles, and figure out a way to do things outside. If they’re in their circles, they can take off their mask. If they get closer to each other, they have to put masks on. Set up pretty strict guidelines so parents feel comfortable.”

CHURCH SIZE: 180
NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CONGREGATION: 40

“Don’t forget about the kids. So many things are out there for adults, but the kids are just as important as every other member of the congregation.”

Penny White | children’s minister, Conejo Valley Church of Christ, Thousand Oaks, Calif.
CHURCH SIZE: 250
NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CONGREGATION: 40

“If you’re doing worship online, invite the kids to be part of that. Have people send in videos of their children reading Scripture and leading prayers, even very young children. ... That’s huge in the life of a child, being included.”

Marian Parker | children’s minister, Campbell Church of Christ, Campbell, Calif.
CHURCH SIZE: 500 members
NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CONGREGATION: about 70

“The best connections, if yours is a small church, is making phone calls and sending mail to the kids. When they get something in the mail, it’s exciting. Make phone calls to parents. In a smaller church, the number is manageable.

“Don’t feel guilty if you can’t produce a video or provide Zoom calls. They’re Zoomed out. They’re videoed out. They’re craving the connection a small church can easily provide.

“Ask, ‘What can I pray for you this week?’ That’s huge and so appreciated.”

Taly Barrera | minister’s wife, children’s teacher, Elgin Church of Christ, Illinois
CHURCH SIZE: 180
NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CONGREGATION: 40

“The first thing is to pray. God will lead the way. Keep in mind that we have to provide the opportunities for children because they cannot do it on their own.

“Little hearts love God, and when you plant the seed, they will grow. We cannot forget that. It could be one child in a class, but you provide what that child needs. Do not give up.”
POST-PANDEMIC: ‘I want things to be better’

FROM PAGE 1

Churches that focus solely on in-person services may be “missing out on engaging community members that are actually looking for them online,” he said. But online-only churches may be “missing out on being salt and light in their current context.”

‘GOING BACK’ IS NOT ENOUGH

Even before the pandemic, Churches of Christ in the United States were declining numerically. In the past decade, the number of adherents — baptized believers and their children — in the pews of Churches of Christ dropped nearly 10 percent to 1,425,836 nationwide, according to data released by Carl Royster of 21st Century Christian in June 2020.

A month later, the Barna Group, an evangelical research firm, released the results of a survey conducted in first two months of the pandemic. One-third of respondents who identified as practicing Christians said they had neither livestreamed their home church nor another church during that time.

A few of those respondents may have attended the minority of churches still meeting in person at the time, the researchers wrote, but “we can, for the most part, confidently interpret this group as those who have dropped out of church for the time being.”

The uncertainty of those church members returning, combined with the preexisting decline in adherents, has some ministers expressing sentiments like those of Randy Roper, preaching minister for the Edmond Churches of Christ in Oklahoma.

“I don’t want things to go back like they were,” Roper told the Chronicle. “I want things to be better.”

A REDEFINED ‘CHURCH’

Perhaps one benefit of the pandemic is that it’s forced Christians to rethink what the word “church” means, said Jessica Knapp.

“I don’t think we will ‘go back’ to church the way it was any time soon — and I think that is potentially a good thing,” said Knapp, associate campus minister for Ambassadors 4 Christ, a campus ministry of Churches of Christ in Tucson, Ariz. Students who took part in church “out of habit” may not return, she said, but those “who need Jesus and know it will be in the group, stronger and more connected than before.”

Knapp added, “I see the need to redefine what it means to be a church. Are we a family who see each other for a quick bite on Sundays, or are we a community that shares life together, sees one another and communicates in multiple modalities across platforms, regularly and often?”

Even as increasing numbers of Christians return for in-person worship and Bible classes, leaders of the Clear Creek Church of Christ in Hixson, Tenn., want to “invest more in getting people out of the building” and mobilized for ministry, said teaching minister Joshua Diggs.

“We want to avoid the mindset that church is a destination,” Diggs said, “and that church happens only on certain days of the week.”

REDEFINING ‘SUCCESS’

Back in Houston, Pickett remembers the days when churches measured the success of a ministry event primarily by the number of people who showed up. Now, “if the event happens, it’s a win,” he said.

“In many ways, we’re like Israel in the wilderness,” he said. Questions about the long-term effects of vaccines on church life and the emerging new normal are hard to fathom.

“We don’t know where this thing is going to end,” he said, “but we know that God is leading us.”

The celebration of COVID-19’s defeat “will come with mourning; it will come with sadness,” Pickett said. “And yet, God is the God of new beginnings. There’s reason to believe that God will lead us right where we need to go.”

HELP US REMEMBER members of Churches of Christ who have died from COVID-19. Fill out our survey at christianchronicle.org/covid19deaths/. Look for more stories on “The Post-Pandemic Church” in future issues and find related opinion pieces on Pages 28 and 34.
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For more information, contact Devin Swindle, associate professor of Bible and preaching, by emailing kerusso@harding.edu or calling 501-279-5290.
Students attend Bible class outside with plenty of spaces between chairs at the Mission Viejo Church of Christ, about 50 miles southeast of Los Angeles.

YOUTH RALLY: COVID-19 puts focus on safety

FROM PAGE 3
encourage him.
Don’t give up, they tell him.
“Like I love the idea of what he’s trying
to do, and I think it’s important,” said
Aaron Stevens, youth and involve-
ment minister for the Mission Viejo
Church of Christ, about 50 miles
southeast of Los Angeles.

But Bakersfield is a four-hour
drive from Mission Viejo, factoring in
restroom stops and L.A. traffic, Stevens
said. That’s an easy
trip in an ordinary
time. This isn’t one.

Because of COVID-
19, the teens couldn’t
ride together in a
church van, he said. Individual par-
ents would need to drive them.
Moreover, local host families
couldn’t keep groups of visiting teens
like they typically do. Each student
would require a separate hotel room.
“It just wasn’t realistic for us to do
that,” Stevens said.

A TWO-PRONGED CHALLENGE
For more than 40 years, Jeff
Walling has traveled all over the
U.S., preaching and teaching at
youth conferences.
But amid the pandemic, his usu-
ally busy travel schedule has come
to a standstill.
“I’ve had TSA withdrawal,”
he joked, referring to the often
invasive passenger screening done
by the Transportation Security
Administration.
Walling serves as director of
the Youth Leadership Initiative at
Pepperdine University in Malibu,
Calif. On one of his few speaking trips
during the pandemic, he survived a
COVID-19 near miss.

A person who
handed him the
microphone at an
outdoor assembly
of socially distanced
teens tested positive
for the virus.
“There’s a two-
pronged challenge
here,” Walling said
of organizing youth events while
COVID-19 remains a concern. “On
the one hand, teens are the least
likely, it seems, to have major prob-
lems with COVID.
“But teens are also the ones who
will take it home to Grandma and
Grandpa,” he added. “Youth ministries
have wrestled not only with student
safety but with the safety of families.”

A DETAILED PLAN
Until a U.S. Supreme Court rul-
ing, California had prohibited indoor
church services during the pandemic.
In a recent 6-3 decision, justices
overturned that ban but said the
state may limit attendance to 25
percent of a building’s capacity and
restrict singing. Singing releases tiny
droplets that can carry the disease.
“Walking the line between those
who have severe concerns about
the virus and will do anything and
everything to avoid it and those who
believe it is media fear tactics and
political manipulation is exhausting,”
England said. “Factor in that many
young people are worn out with their
parents’ ideologies and just want to
be together, and it’s a sad time for
youth ministries in a lot of ways.”

Juggling the competing demands,
England has developed a detailed
plan for Springfest, which is sched-
uled for March 20-21.
He’ll rent an outdoor stage. He’ll
set up chairs 6 feet apart. He’ll place
directional arrows on the ground to
keep groups from crisscrossing.
He’ll require everyone to wear a
mask, even though some people —
especially in Bakersfield, a conser-
ervative stronghold in predominantly
liberal California — object to them.
“I’ve already talked to the security
team and said, ‘If we have people
that just flat-out refuse to wear a
mask, we’re going to kindly ask
them to leave,’” he said.
Because COVID-19 likely will mean
that family cars — not church vans
— bring teens, he’s invited separate
speakers just for parents.
“Since I have been in ministry,
I have heard about and seen the
struggle to get parents more
involved,” said England, a 2013
Oklahoma Christian University gradu-
ate who previously served congrega-
tions in Texas and Colorado. “And
now, that is the only way there will
be any attendance at the event.”
For those who can’t — or won’t
— attend in person, Springfest will
livestream and record the sessions.
Perhaps, England suggests, youth
groups could show Springfest on a
big screen at their own church.
But Stevens isn’t so sure.
“The key to those events is the
live aspect and the energy and the
environment,” the Mission Viejo
youth minister said. “It’s really about
being there, being in the moment,
worshiping together.”

‘NOTHING BUT STARING AT A SCREEN’
Madalyn Riess, 15, won’t need to
travel far to attend Springfest.
She’s a part of the youth group at
Westside, where she has grown up.
Riess has attended school online
for the past year and endured long
stretches of not seeing church friends.
“It was hard because we’re all
just stuck at home, and we’re doing
exactly nothing but staring at a
screen,” she said.
When the youth group came back
together and began meeting in an
outdoor courtyard, she was relieved.
“It was really great to know that
I could go see my church family
and just hang out and have fun and be OK, even though we’re going through something crazy,” she said. “We don’t know exactly when it’s going to end, but at least we can rely on each other and praise the Lord.”

Gali Castro, 16, another Westside member, echoes her friend. “I’m actually very grateful and blessed that Adam is letting us see our friends and just hear God’s word because there’s times in the pandemic where we go into a deep hole,” Castro said. “And by going to youth (group), we can at least get some praise and faith that everything is going to be fine.”

Despite challenges, Riess said the pandemic has strengthened her faith. “God brought the reality down to me and was like, ‘Hey, you need to start focusing on family more,’” she said. “I’m really happy he did. It has helped me to know that my family is always there for me and ... truly one of God’s biggest blessings in my life.”

But Castro has struggled with her faith. Amid COVID-19 fears, a heart attack claimed her father’s life. Grieving has brought ups and downs. “I just keep on hearing — playing memories of him,” Castro said. “He would say, ‘Hey, don’t give up because God’s going to bless you in so many ways.’”

Both teens said they’re excited about Springfest, which they’ve enjoyed in the past.

“It’s just a ton of fun,” Riess said. “Last time, we went to houses near the church, and we would just go and ask for canned goods so we could donate it to the homeless shelter or those in need.”

This time, organizers won’t send teens door to door.

But Cory Burns, director of the Adventures in Mission program at Sunset International Bible Institute in Lubbock, Texas, plans to bring a group. He’s helping develop pandemic-friendly service projects for Springfest.

Dusty Breeding, campus and youth minister for the University Church of Christ in Malibu, will keynote the teen event. Walling and Dudley Chancey, a youth ministry professor at Oklahoma Christian, will speak to the parents.

How many teens outside of England’s own youth group might show up? He has no idea. “On the West Coast, events are dropping off the calendar constantly,” he said. “It was one of those scary things, you know: Am I really going to do this? Is it worth it? Does it make sense?”

“But of course, you hear voices on every side. But I was like, if there’s a way I can be COVID-appropriate and put everything I have into this event — if only two people show up, I’ll praise God because he’s brought us these people.”

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WORLD BIBLE SCHOOL
Anon, the conspiracy theory followed by millions of social media users in the U.S., has crossed the Atlantic. Fueled by the global pandemic, QAnon has found fertile soil among “yellow vest” populists in France, and backers have surfaced in Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom, Politico reports. Christians in Europe are fielding questions about the movement. Jordan Arnold, who recently returned to the U.S. after serving Churches of Christ in Slovakia for seven years, said he receives texts and messages from Slovak friends about QAnon “with increasing frequency. Most involve George Soros, mask mandates and coronavirus conspiracy theories.”

Members of Churches of Christ across the continent gathered online recently to discuss QAnon as part of “Faith Talks,” a program launched last July by Arnold and Jaro Marcin, regional director for Eastern European Mission and member of the Church of Christ in Prague, Czech Republic. Participants heard a presentation by Chris Rosser, theological librarian at Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City, about the movement and its dangers. QAnon adherents vary in their beliefs, Rosser said, but “at the heart of the QAnon conspiracy is a mythos, a story, about a powerful cabal.” This secret society of political leaders and celebrities kidnaps, kills and consumes children, according to the conspiracy theory.

That “diabolical story,” as Rosser called it, seems outlandish, “but such stories, though monstrous, are not new. In fact, the trope spills out of medieval stories of Jewish blood libel — anti-Semitic tales of Jews stealing Christian children.” Elements of this can be seen in “The Prioress’ Tale” in Chaucer’s “Canterbury Tales” from the 14th century, Rosser said. “These tropes just keep returning,” he said. “There’s nothing new under the sun, and there’s nothing very creative about them either.”

Marcin said that the presentation demonstrated that “we, as Christians, need to pay attention to media literacy, especially at times when there’s a lot of conspiracy theories making the rounds.” People of faith should ask if such theories “breed any fruit of the Spirit,” Marcin said, “and use this as a criterion when we come across internet nonsense.” While the pandemic and information technology may have facilitated QAnon’s rise, Rosser said he was encouraged that European Christians have taken the opportunity to provide “Faith Talks” to inform and encourage each other.

Coffeehouse ministry serves ‘Love Potion No. 9’

Two forlorn souls find love in a Southeast Asian coffee shop. That’s the plot of a video, released just in time for Valentine’s Day, by La Mesa Coffee Co. in Bangkok, Thailand, featuring a cover of The Clovers’ 1959 hit “Love Potion No. 9” performed by Jazziam. Gary Ford (left, on guitar) produced the video. He and his wife, Michelle, are missional entrepreneurs who launched La Mesa in 2018 and use it as a hub for their Replicate Bangkok ministry, supported by Churches of Christ. La Mesa has hosted events featuring Christians in visual and performance arts — people who “often fall between the cracks within churches,” Gary Ford said. “Artists hold huge amounts of talent and innovation to use for the Kingdom that often go overlooked.” Learn more at facebook.com/ReplicateBKK/.
Canada: After a year, many believers are ‘Zoomed out’

FROM PAGE 3

Provincial mandate against churches meeting.

Across Canada, Christians are dealing with various regulations as the coronavirus continues to spread among the 37 million souls living north of the U.S. border.

Sacrificing for ‘Long-term Good’

“We all thought, a couple of months, we’ll hunker down,” said Darrell Buchanan, minister for the Gravelbourg Church of Christ in Saskatchewan. “Here we are a year later.”

The Gravelbourg church — a rural congregation in western Canada — stopped meeting in person after the government restricted gatherings to 10 people or less. The local health authority allowed in-person meetings to resume in June, but attendance had to be kept below 30 percent of seating capacity. For the Gravelbourg church, which averages 50 to 60 worshipers, that was no problem. “They were Zoomed out,” Buchanan said of the congregation. “It was just good to see people’s faces, even from 6 feet away.” Others chose to remain home and keep worshipping online. “Nobody is expecting things to resume to whatever the new normal is quickly,” Buchanan said.

Ray and Laurie Fisher serve two churches in Nova Scotia, in eastern Canada.

They, too, have done what they can to make worship accessible, even through government restrictions. “We all look forward to the day when restrictions are lifted, but we are willing to make the sacrifice of following them for the long-term good,” Ray Fisher said.

Can’t Stay ‘Confined in a Computer’

Back in New Brunswick, Maillet said the Riverview church believes the government is taking things too far. “We have deep concern and compassion for all affected by COVID,” Maillet said. “We don’t take this loss of life as something to be dismissed.”

The small group of believers, less than 20 people, knew their meeting was in violation of the government mandates.

In that area of Canada, those orders do not allow for religious groups to meet indoors. Outdoor meetings are allowed, with drive-in services, according to the New Brunswick government website.

But Maillet said, “We’re not meant to be forever confined in a computer screen.”

New Brunswick, a province of about 780,000, was reporting 267 active coronavirus cases at the time Maillet spoke to The Christian Chronicle.

In most provinces, the cases are far below the numbers seen in the United States. According to the Canadian government’s website, the country has seen just over 800,000 total infections since January 2020, with 20,702 deaths reported at press time.

In the western province of Alberta, where the active case count is much higher than the national average, churches are meeting at about 15 percent capacity.

“We are doing what we can to follow the guidelines,” said Stan Helton, president of Alberta Bible College, which is associated with the Stone-Campbell Movement.

Among the biggest challenges facing churches in Canada, Helton said, are these:

- How to bring back members who seem to have disappeared as the pandemic has dragged on.
- How to bring back members enabled to use technology to connect.
- How to engage with Christians unable to use technology to connect.

“This has pushed us to think more holistically about what the church would look like if we were to care about families in their everyday lives,” said Helton, who formerly served as a minister for Churches of Christ in the U.S.

Buchanan said the Gravelbourg church has done what it can to stay connected. The congregation typically offers a Vacation Bible School that draws in many from the community. Last summer, leaders had to make the tough decision to cancel VBS. Since the congregation couldn’t be together, leaders instead filled VBS boxes with Bibles and sidewalk chalk and offered activities for the kids to do with their families.

Later in the year, the church had flower arrangements delivered to the community long-term care facility. Then, in December, members sent “Cups of Encouragement” — mugs filled with hot chocolate, tea and candy canes — to seniors in the French Catholic prairie town.

The Gravelbourg church looks forward to the future, even knowing that it’s unclear what that will hold. “We’re hoping. We’re dreaming,” Buchanan said. “We’re like explorers, pressing forward to new land and not knowing what’s over the next rise, but knowing God is with us.”

‘A Line in the Sand’

Back in New Brunswick, the Riverview church dispersed and moved its service online after Maillet’s interaction with police. The minister prefers not to disclose if his congregation will keep meeting in person, and he hopes that the government will reconsider its restrictions and allow churches in the province to meet indoors.

“For us here, we’ve entered territory in which a line in the sand is quickly forming,” Maillet said. “We need not die on every hill, but there’s coming a hill that we must die on for Christ.”

“This is love,” he said of the desire to gather and worship God. “This is compassion. This is understanding. This is a balanced and reasonable position.”
Keep Calm and Carry Online

**AS A COVID-19 VARIANT** sweeps across the United Kingdom, churches respond with virtual tours of the British Museum and Bible quizzes.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

These dark times, there is no denying, said members of Churches of Christ in the United Kingdom. A hyper-contagious variant of COVID-19 has sequestered people across the British Isles in their homes, closed schools and canceled activities in the cold winter months.

“There is a weariness in people,” said Trevor Williams. “People are tired. No one can go on holiday. No one can go out for the day. We're seeing everything in monochrome. There is no color in life right now.”

So Williams, who worships with the Ilkeston Church of Christ in the East Midlands of England, and his fellow believers are “doing an awful lot of trying to keep each other up,” he said.

A few souls who had drifted away from church have returned for online services, Williams said. That’s also encouraging. And encouragement is what’s needed now — even in a country that adopted the mantra “Keep Calm and Carry On” as it prepared for the Blitz attacks of World War II.

As a result of the pandemic, “I hope that we’re able to see ourselves differently,” Boyns said. “I hope we’re able to understand the concept of what people call ‘church’ differently as we move forward and to recognize that we’re not dependent upon buildings. Our faith is not centered around a particular location, but centered around a person — Jesus.”

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(864) 439-0259 or rkimberly@sech.org, PO Box 339, Duncan, SC 29334
Mr. & Mrs. Carl Dean.”

The black-and-white picture of the newlywed couple appeared in a 1966 directory of the Radnor Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn.

Still happily married to the pretty blond nearly 55 years later, Carl Thomas Dean has eschewed the media spotlight for decades.

Mrs. Dean, who met her future husband on the day she moved to Music City after her 1964 high school graduation, is better known as country music superstar Dolly Parton.

The 75-year-old entertainment icon talked about her little-known — and apparently brief — connection to Churches of Christ in her 2020 book “Dolly Parton, Songteller: My Life in Lyrics.”

“I loved my husband’s mother. She was very sweet, and we were like best friends. Her name was Virginia, but everybody called her Ginny,” Parton wrote concerning her mother-in-law, who died from cancer at age 71 in 1991. “Carl's mother was very religious. She was in church every Wednesday and every Sunday morning.

“The Deans were Church of Christ people. They don’t believe in having any instruments in their church; they just use their voices,” added Parton, who wrote her 1971 song “Lord Hold My Hand” with Ginny Dean. “Ginny had this big, beautiful,
for whom Elvis Presley opened in the 1950s, grew up in a church and graduated from David Lipscomb High School in Nashville, Tenn.

Pat Boones, who became a star in the 1950s, grew up in a church and graduated from David Lipscomb High School in Nashville, Tenn.

The late Sonny James, a Church of Christ member, was among the top names in the world of country music.

Loretta Lynn discusses her decision to be baptized in her 1976 autobiography "Coal Miner's Daughter," which became the basis for an Oscar-winning film.

Porto, and his two family members, were members of Country Music's 2020 Hall of Fame inductee known as "The Southern Gentleman."
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Youth Minister Search -- Panama City, Florida

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Bay County, FL., is a wonderful place to do ministry and raise a family. It boasts some of the world’s most beautiful beaches, a state college, lots of outdoor activities and a friendly southern culture.

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If interested, please contact: Todd Thompson (toddtjenks.64@gmail.com) and Chris Donlan (cdonlan@gmail.com)

The Canyon View Church of Christ in San Diego, Calif., is seeking an energized man to join our ministry team. The ideal candidate will be both an enthusiastic youth minister and a confident worship leader. His ministry will emphasize developing Jr. High through High School students into mature, saved, and spiritually strong Christian young adults. He will work with the families to equip them to share the Good News, to be engaged in service, and to be involved in missions. His ministry will also include being involved in the life of our congregation as a minister and a member. He is expected to work in partnership with the preaching minister in visitations, as well as attending weddings, funerals, church functions and events. In addition to youth ministry responsibilities, the applicant we seek will be our regular worship leader. He will lead the congregation in an energetic singing service, organize scripture readings, and work with the preaching minister to have a positive and uplifting worship service. The ideal candidate will have a college degree and/or prior ministry experience. The Canyon View Church of Christ is a loving, welcoming congregation of 200 members located in the Clairemont area of San Diego. We have an involved congregation and are active in service to our community. We offer a competitive salary and benefits package that includes relocation expenses.

Please send your resume to: cvoffice@canyonview.org

Full-time Youth and Family Minister - Canyon View Church of Christ - San Diego, Calif.

Youth and Children’s Minister - Brenham, Texas

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Job Description (Youth and Children’s Minister): We are seeking a gifted individual to lead our Youth and Children’s Ministry. The Youth and Children’s Minister position will involve creating and implementing Bible study programs, coordination of Bible class curriculum, teaching Bible classes, coordinating events/activities for youth and children of the congregation and in the community, service projects, youth trips, Bible bowls, and many other rewarding opportunities to lead young people and spread God’s love throughout the community. We are also looking for someone to lead singing, so if that is something you are interested in just let us know (although it certainly is not a requirement). Any interested ministers or future ministers are welcome to email us or send their resume to brenhamchurchtx@gmail.com We look forward to hearing from you!!

Youth Minister Search – Panama City, Florida

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Lipscomb president Lowry will transition to chancellor role

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — After 16 years as president, Randy Lowry will move into a new role at Lipscomb University this summer.

“There is no greater privilege and honor than having served as president of this institution and witnessing the transformative power of Christian education in the lives of thousands of students over the last 16 years,” Lowry said in a statement. “We look forward to continuing our service to this institution in the future as we step into this new chapter of our work.”

Lowry plans to take a yearlong sabbatical and then return to the university, which is associated with Churches of Christ, as chancellor.

“Randy Lowry is certainly a visionary, and I have been honored to experience his vision, innovation and tireless energy over and over again through my role on the board,” said David Solomon, chairman of Lipscomb’s board. “We are grateful for his extraordinary commitment as president and look forward to him continuing on in his new role.”

Lowry began work as the 17th president of Lipscomb in September 2005. The institution, which includes the university and Lipscomb Academy, has a combined enrollment of nearly 7,000 students and employs more than 1,000 full-time faculty and staff.

Lipscomb’s board has begun a national search for Lowry’s successor, the university said. Search details will be announced later.

Harding University in Searcy, Ark., also has formed a presidential search committee.

David Burks, Harding’s former longtime president, is filling that role on a temporary basis after Harding parted ways with Bruce McClarty, effective Nov. 30.

Several members of Harding’s board of trustees and CarterBaldwin, an executive search firm, will lead the process.

“We are searching for a mature member of the Church of Christ who is led by the word of God and the Holy Spirit, committed to the spread of the gospel of Christ and focused on strengthening the university in its pursuit of excellence in higher education,” said Robert C. Walker, chairman of Harding’s board.

At Harding, in-person chapel resumes with modifications

Terry Davis leads worship as students at Harding University in Searcy, Ark., return to in-person chapel for the first time since last March. Starting Feb. 8, chapel resumed four days a week in eight smaller than normal sessions in Benson Auditorium or Rhodes-Reaves Fieldhouse, The Bison newspaper reported. Students wear masks and socially distance. “Chapel provides an avenue for all of us to mature in our faith and have exposure to challenging ideas and discussions,” President David Burks said. “While we have maintained a daily virtual chapel, we have longed ... to again meet face to face.”

HIGHER EDUCATION

FREED-HARDEMAN UNIVERSITY

HENDERSON, Tenn. — A new endowed scholarship program has been established to help Black students attend Freed-Hardeman University.

Aided by a major gift from alumni John and Rosemary Kopel Brown, the Pursuit of Excellence Diversity Awards will be granted for the first time this fall.

The Browns recently pledged $15 million over five years. The diversity program is a part of that.

“We are grateful for the generosity of the Browns in enabling FHU to begin this scholarship program,” President David Shannon said. “These awards are geared toward recruiting additional students of color who have leadership qualities and are dedicated to maximizing their potential and academic ability.”

Four students will be selected to receive the renewable grants for the 2021-2022 school year. Applications, available from Freed-Hardeman’s admissions officer, must be submitted by April 15.

Additional funds are being solicited for the scholarship program. Potential donors can contact the university’s advancement office at klamb@fhu.edu.

YORK COLLEGE

YORK, Neb. — York College recently celebrated the dedication of the Sue Roush Memorial Business Resource Collection.

After battling cancer, Roush died Jan. 27, 2020, at age 59. Before becoming deputy communications director for then-Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman in 2011, she worked in a variety of roles at York, including director of alumni and community relations.

“She was a fierce advocate for the underdog, and she lived a life passionately devoted to creativity,” said Clark Roush, Sue’s husband and longtime professor and concert choir director at York.

Roush left a lasting legacy of building others up, especially young women, in both their personal and professional journeys, the college said in a news release. Her knowledge of marketing and communications was always available as a resource to anyone, the release said, and now will live on in York’s Levitt School of Business.
The Christian Chronicle began the new year with new faces, new roles and a few transitions. Alan Phillips joined the staff of the international newspaper for Churches of Christ in a part-time role as stewardship officer. He will work alongside Chronicle staffers Lynda Sheehan and Melinda Wilson and president Erik Tryggestad to make sure the voices of readers and contributors are heard. “The Chronicle is an incredibly important instrument for hope, unity and connectedness,” said Phillips, who grew up on the mission field in Perth, Australia. The newspaper, he added, “is especially needed in our world and for our fellowship in this landscape of uncertainty and change.”

The son of renowned preacher and missionary Marvin Phillips, Alan Phillips worked for Oklahoma Christian University for a total of 26 years, most recently as chief advancement and alumni relations officer, retiring in January. He established Phillips Consulting in 1994 to help faith-based nonprofit organizations. He led the venture for 15 years and served more than 30 nonprofits across the nation. Alan Phillips also served as vice president for Missions Resource Network, a Texas-based nonprofit that serves Churches of Christ. He helped equip church-planting teams for the South Pacific and led other global missions initiatives.

He was an elder of the Lake Cities Church of Christ in the Dallas-Fort Worth area before returning to Oklahoma in 2017. He and his wife, Donna, worship with the New Hope Church of Christ in Edmond, Okla. Married for 44 years, they have three children and one grandson.

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Alan Phillips joins Chronicle staff; new trustee and board chair named

A graduate of Oklahoma Christian, Reynolds served on the staff of the Chronicle in the early 1980s, shortly after the newspaper was gifted to the university by former editor John Beckloff. She worked for then-editor Howard Norton.

Reynolds is a graduate of Leadership Oklahoma and serves as chair of the organization’s statewide board of directors. She also serves on Oklahoma Christian’s board of trustees. She worships with the Church of Christ at Little in Oklahoma.

Mike O’Neal is the new chair of the Chronicle’s board of trustees, succeeding Deon Fair, who held the position for nearly a decade. “My parents subscribed to the Chronicle shortly after its founding, and I have been reading it since I was a teenager,” said O’Neal, president emeritus of Oklahoma Christian. “It has helped me know, love and stay connected with my brothers and sisters all over the world. I wish all members of the Churches of Christ were so blessed.”

O’Neal was instrumental in establishing the Chronicle’s board during his presidency and has served as a trustee since 2003. A graduate of Harding University in Arkansas, he served for 26 years at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif., in roles including general counsel, vice president for finance and administration and vice chancellor.

O’Neal and his wife, Nancy, are members of the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City. They have two children and six grandchildren.

The Chronicle also bade farewell recently to three longtime trustees: Alfred Branch, Dwain Chaffin and Robert Oglesby Sr. “We thank them wholeheartedly for their years of service,” Tryggestad said.
Milestones

**Anniversary**

**James and Mickie French**
(78 years)

James Leonard and Mary Frances “Mickie” were married in Weatherford, Texas, on Feb. 20, 1943. James will be 100 years old on Feb. 12, and Mickie turned 97 on Jan. 3.

The War was going strong at that time, but Leonard was working at an ammunition factory, which allowed him deferments from the military. After a few months, as his deferment was due to renew, he decided to join the Air Force instead of accepting the next deferment. He spent most of the next two years in North Carolina training glider pilots. Mickie was able to spend most of that time with him.

They were blessed with four children — two boys and two girls. They have seven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren, with number seven on the way.

They were also very blessed by Leonard’s aunt who introduced them to a young preacher named Andrew Connally. After three months of Monday night Bible studies, he baptized them into the Lord’s church at the Hurst Church of Christ in Texas in 1954.

They have spent many years in the ministry serving the Lord. They raised support and supplies for the Chimala Mission and Hospital in Tanzania, which was founded by Andrew Connally.

James was called “Leonard” until he retired from the Arlington Post Office in 1976. Then he decided he wanted to be called James — and it has been James ever since. Mary Frances has been Mickie since her softball days after high school.

Over the years they have lived in many communities around the Dallas-Fort Worth area and have many friends, brothers and sisters. They are now living in Waxahachie, Texas, and are members of the Northside Church of Christ.

They have had a wonderfully blessed life and they know who to give the credit for that.

We love you, Mom and Dad, Grandmother and Granddad!

**Memorials**

**Evelyn Ruth (Caldwell Blount) Anderson**
1924-2020

Evelyn Anderson, 96, beloved mother, sister and grandmother, passed away Dec. 22, 2020. A servant of the Lord, her extended family and, indeed, all who crossed her path, she shared herself with them with diligence and joy throughout her life.

Born in 1924 in Wirt, Okla., to Frank and Thelma Ruth Caldwell, she was reared in Oklahoma, Texas and New Mexico as the eldest of six children, including Anna Lee, Jack, Mary Ellen, John and Jerry. Both Ann Overmier and Jerry Dear survive her.

She married A. W. (Bill) Blount (now deceased) in June 1944. They were blessed by the birth of three sons and one daughter: William Douglas, Kerry Andrew, Brian Paul and Christina Evelyn Blount, all of whom survive her. She later married Alfred B. Anderson (now deceased). Seven grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren, along with many cousins, nieces, nephews, great-nieces and nephews have been blessed by her love.

Evelyn and Bill raised their children in the Golden, Arvada and Lakewood Churches of Christ in Colorado. Evelyn’s love of God was always evident. She was a faithful member of the church. She joyfully served in many capacities, including as a devoted Christian wife and mother, church secretary and Sunday school teacher. She was a World Bible School correspondence course teacher, guide and evangelist for students in Kenya and Nigeria and for prison inmates in the U.S. She was a missionary assistant in Mount Hagen, Papua New Guinea for six years. Returning to the U.S., she made her home in, Montgomery, Ala., and Albuquerque, N.M., where she was a member of and secretary for the University Church of Christ. Later she was a longtime member of the Riverside Church of Christ family.

Throughout her life, Evelyn’s steadfast demonstration of her love of Jesus through her kindness and empathy for others was the hallmark of her character. She also had a beautiful voice and loved to sing hymns! She took to heart and put into action the words, “This little light of mine, I’m going to let it shine!”

Her life was an inspiration and a blessing to so many. When complimented, she would point to heaven and say, with a twinkle in her eyes, “Look up!”

A graveside service was Jan. 4 at French Sunset Memorial Park in Albuquerque.

**Thomas ‘Tom’ Brister**
1938-2020

Thomas “Tom” D. Brister, 82, of Beebe, Ark., went to be with the Lord on Nov. 14, 2020. He was born in Mississippi. He graduated with a Bible degree from Harding University in Arkansas and later obtained a master’s degree from Harding School of Theology in Memphis, Tenn.

He was the first person on record from the Thyatira Church of Christ, the oldest congregation in Mississippi, to become a full-time minister. He served as a minister for several congregations in Pennsylvania, Missouri, Mississippi and Arkansas. He retired from preaching at Austin Church of Christ in Arkansas after being there for 18 years. While he was preaching at Austin, he also worked for the Arkansas Department of Human Services as a social worker at Arkansas Children’s Hospital.

He was active in Lads to Leaders, an organization that trains young people to be leaders and to do what is right. He loved to raise vegetables in his garden. He spent his life serving God and others with all his heart. He is survived by his wife Juanez, three sons, five grandchildren and one brother.


More Milestones on Page 24
**Clemens**

Buster Clemens, one of the nation’s longest-serving youth ministers, is now executive minister for the Highland Church of Christ in Cordova, Tenn., just outside Memphis. Clemens will work with the youth group through the end of the school year. He has been the congregation’s youth minister since 1987.

**APPOINTED:** Christine Merideth, as senior gifts officer at Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City. She is the first female major gifts fundraiser in the university’s history. In eight years with the advancement department, she has been heavily involved in fundraising and individual donor strategy, working on efforts that have raised more than $1 million. Donald Walker, to the Farmington School Board in Michigan. Walker is a deacon of the Oakland Church of Christ in Southfield, north of Detroit. Keith Coble, as vice president for Mississippi State University’s Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine. Coble is an elder of the Starkville Church of Christ.

**PROMOTED:** La Shonda Coleman, to associate vice president and Title IX coordinator at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif., as reported by The Graphic student newspaper. She previously served as Title IX coordinator for students and will continue to oversee Pepperdine’s response to student issues related to Title IX and ensure the university complies with the federal program’s guidelines. In her new role, she also will oversee Pepperdine’s response to all Title IX complaints involving students or employees. Under Title IX, sex discrimination involves sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking.

**Milestones**

**Richard David Dean Sr. 1942-2020**

Richard David Dean Sr. was born in New Albany, Miss., on March 19, 1942, to Eugene and Mary Virginia Dean. Richard accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior at Vance Avenue Church of Christ in Memphis under the ministry of Nakomis Yedell (now deceased). Later he served the East Capitol Street Church of Christ in Washington, D.C. and the Norris Road Church of Christ in Memphis. At the time of his passing he was an active member of East End Church of Christ in Memphis.

He earned degrees from Southwestern Christian College in Terrell, Texas, Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, (where he was honored as the university’s first African-American graduate) and the University of the District of Columbia.


He was preceded in death by brothers Carl, Therman, Clifton, and Summer Dean; sister Elise; and his parents.

Survivors include his former wife, Vallie Dean; sons Richard II, Clifton and Mensah Dean; sisters Helen (Lonnie) of Tampa, Fla., Juanita, Katie and Carolyn, all of California; and cousins Charles and Minnie Bowling of Tennessee.

**Nancy Joan Johnson 1931-2020**

Nancy Joan Johnson, 89, of Broken Arrow, Okla., died peacefully Dec. 14, 2020. She was born to Maude and Harry Lavender in Stamford, Texas. Nancy married Herman Johnson in Stamford, Texas, on Aug. 26, 1954. They were married for 59 years.

Nancy graduated from Stamford High in 1949 and Abilene Christian College in 1953 with a bachelor’s in business. Nancy taught at Great Lakes Christian College in Beamsville, Ontario, Canada, where she and Herman met. She also taught at high schools in Ropesville, Texas, and Broken Arrow until she retired in 1993.

She was instrumental in starting a Ladies Bible Class project known as the “Piggybank Shower,” which raised funds to be given to the Westview Boys Home in Hollis, Okla., for the boys to purchase and raise a pig for their yearly project. In addition to her volunteer work, she found time to do some writing and had an article published in Christian Woman magazine.

Nancy is survived by children Caren Mims and husband Scott of Midland, Texas, and Brant Johnson of Collinsville, Okla.; brother Ted Lavender of Chattanooga, Tenn.; and grandchildren Leah Johnson, Sarah Johnson, Brent Mims and Carri Mims. Nancy was proceeded in death by her husband Herman and her parents.

The family suggests donations be made to the “Piggybank Shower” in care of the Broken Arrow Church of Christ, 505 E. Kenosha St., Broken Arrow, OK 74012.

**Susan Rosenbaum 1945-2020**

Susan Williams Paine Rosenbaum, 75, of Live Oak, Fla., passed away from COVID-19 and pneumonia on Dec. 8, 2020.

Susan was born in Atlanta on Oct. 13, 1945, to Charles H. Paine III and Mary Halbrook Paine. She was the great-granddaughter of James A. Harding. She was a member of the Live Oak Church of Christ where she assisted and encouraged her husband in his ministerial work.

Susan is survived by her husband Dennis Rosenbaum of Live Oak, three daughters and sons-in-law and two sons and daughters-in-law: rell, Sarah Finson (Conner) of Smyrna, Ga.; Mary Atkins (Michael) of Tifton, Ga.; James Rosenbaum (Dena) of Lake Park, Ga.; Rachel Penick (Scott) of Summerville, S.C.; and Chip Rosenbaum (Samantha) of Summerville; 10 grandchildren: Gabrielle Pinson, Hannah York (Kegan) and one great-grandchild due in early 2021, Mackenzie Atkins, Philip Rosenbaum, Abigail Penick, Anna Penick, Luke Penick, Jack Penick, Kenley Rosenbaum, and Christian Rosenbaum. Also surviving is one sister, Victoria Harding Paine, and a brother and sister-in-law, Charles Carter and Herman Paine IV (Ruth).

Funeral services were held Dec. 12, 2020, at the mausoleum at Westview Cemetery in Atlanta. To the family, Dennis Rosenbaum and Bill Irby officiated.

The family requests donations be made to www.gofundme.com/... susan-rosenbaum-memorial-fund. We hope donors may also be sent to Live Oak Church of Christ, PO Box 281, Live Oak, FL 32064.
Kathy Wilson 1921-2020

Mary Kathleen “Kathy” Wilson was born on Feb. 5, 1921, in Holland, Mo., the second of four children of William Henry and Mattie Mae Northern. She graduated from Holland High School in 1939, where she was a softball and basketball star.

Kathy worked in Blytheville at a local radio station for a short time and then moved to Long Beach, Calif. It was there that she met a young, handsome soldier and later married Calvert Wallace Wilson on June 28, 1945, in Yarbro, Ark. They were blessed with two beautiful daughters, Jan and June. The family moved several times due to Calvert’s being in the Air Force (Washington D.C.; Lubbock, Texas; Japan; Altus, Okla., Oklahoma City and, after retirement, to Table Rock Lake in Shell Knob, Mo.

While living in Lubbock, Kathy was baptized at Sunset Church of Christ in 1955. Kathy was the consummate wife and mother during all of these assignments. After Calvert’s military retirement, the family settled in south Oklahoma City. The girls were in high school, Kathy worked as a school secretary at Hillcrest Elementary school, and Calvert worked in Civil Service at Tinker AFB.

They were also able to make several trips to Europe, Japan and Hawaii. Calvert’s health deteriorated, and Kathy was again the ultimate caregiver and devoted wife. Her prayers were answered when Calvert was baptized in 1994 by her brother, Fenter Northern. Calvert departed this life on Aug. 23, 1996.

Kathy was devoted to her Lord and to her local church, the Shell Knob Church of Christ. She later attended the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City where she made many friends who loved and welcomed her!

She was surrounded by special neighbors and friends for almost 50 years in Shell Knob. At 90 years old, she bought a new Ford Escape to try to have a reliable car to drive to Oklahoma! Finally, at the age of 95 she was convinced that she needed to quit driving and move to Oklahoma City to live with her daughter, June Cromling.

She never sacrificed her independent spirit. She was very content and satisfied with her new home, and finally she was able to be cared for rather than being the caregiver. She loved basketball and became a devoted Thunder fan and especially cherished the times that she could attend in person.

Kathy received the ultimate reward early in the morning of Dec. 26, 2020, in her bed in the arms of her loving daughter and made that final move to join the family of believers with Jesus in Heaven.

Kathy was preceded in death by her daughter, Jan DeLucia, on Dec. 5, 2011, which was a tragic loss for a loving mother.

She is survived by her loving brother, Fenter Northern, whom she always loved, respected and relied upon. She is also survived by her daughter June and husband John Cromling of Edmond, Okla., five grandchildren Yvette Connor, Natalie Renn, Johnny Cromling, Josh Cromling, and Julie Mesa. She was also blessed with 11 great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to the Shell Knob Church of Christ, PO Box 202, Shell Knob, MO, 65747, in her name due to her love for that church family for 50 years.

Tribute Remembering the life and legacy of Stan Stout

Stan Stout, founder of Baja Missions, died Nov. 29, 2020. Lee Milam, a member of the ministry’s board, wrote the following tribute. For more information or to make a memorial gift, see bajamissions.us/in-memory-of-stan-stout.

Hearts are heavy as we witness a 21st century saint enter heaven’s gates. Stan Stout was so many things to the untold numbers who were touched by his loving hands. His remarkable life-map is a compelling study of what happens when following the steps of Jesus becomes more important than chasing the rainbows of earthly gain. His story is one that needs to be told.

As a young man, Stan rose through the ranks of corporate success in Southern California. As an investment and financial management consultant, he worked daily with millionaires, and at the age of 40, was at the top of his game. Yet something was missing. He made time to serve the church as an elder, but still there was something incomplete. He kept hearing the voice of God calling him to do more.

One holiday weekend, some church friends invited Stan and his wife, Carole, to drive south to Mexico on a weekend trip to help the poor in the area around Ensenada.

Stan had traveled the world in the Navy but was not prepared to see the poverty he witnessed in Mexico: The hungry, struggling to survive. The cardboard, dirt floor homes. The sickness and suffering. Nothing could prepare him for the heartbreak of holding the abandoned, fatherless children, many wandering the streets all alone, searching for relief, walking up to Stan with their hands out, begging for what Christ called “just a cup of cold water.”

Stan came home to Yorba Linda, submitted his resignation to the company, sold his home and his yacht, and moved to Ensenada to become the director of the City of Children, an orphanage caring for more than 100 children. It was here that Stan and Carole would spend more than 25 years rescuing hundreds of those abandoned little ones that would lovingly call Papa Gordo their father.

During those years, Stan would baptize over 500 children in Jesus’ name, never taking any credit for the long, endless hours he and Carole poured into the lives God placed in their care. Under his leadership, the home flourished. Yet Stan heard God’s voice calling him deeper.

In 1996, Rex Watson and I led a team of 60 teens and adults to The City of Children on a summer mission trip, when Stan approached me about a dream he had of growing the church in Baja. At the time, there were only three or four churches in the entire state. That bothered Stan. He knew when his children at the home turned 18, they would graduate and leave with no church in the communities they would return to. Stan asked Rex and me to go with him to San Quintin, an agricultural community three hours south of Ensenada, to explore the possibility of planting a church there. Reluctantly, I went — and my life was never really the same.

Twenty-five years later, God has used the seeds Stan planted to build and establish more than 20 churches and medical clinics throughout Baja. Through Stan’s hands, God used Rex Watson to establish and lead Baja Missions, an amazing nonprofit church-planting organization. And God used Stan to lead me down an unexpected missional road, for which I will always be grateful.

It’s truly an amazing story of a victorious life lived on mission. Stan and Carole never wavered from the calling they heard. The eternal impact of their lives of service will echo through American and Hispanic generations to come. Just think: God did all of this through the life of a man who thought he had it all.

HOMER PAINES IV (Ruth).

Herman Paine IV (Ruth).

a brother and sister-in-law, Charles sister, Victoria Harding Paine, and great-grandchild due in early Penick (Scott) of Summerville, (Dena) of Lake Park, Ga.; Rachel Ga.; Mary Atkins (Michael) of and two sons and daughters-in-law:

family was held in Steele, Mo., on Monday, Jan. 4, 2021, and a memorial service will be held later this year at the Shell Knob Church of Christ when it is safe to gather and celebrate her long and vibrant life.

In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to the Shell Knob Church of Christ, PO Box 202, Shell Knob, MO, 65747, in her name due to her love for that church family for 50 years.

It was there that she met a young, handsome soldier and later married Calvert Wallace Wilson on June 28, 1945, in Yarbro, Ark. They were blessed with two beautiful daughters, Jan and June. The family moved several times due to Calvert’s being in the Air Force (Washington D.C.; Lubbock, Texas; Japan; Altus, Okla., Oklahoma City and, after retirement, to Table Rock Lake in Shell Knob, Mo.

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Nationalism vs. patriotism

With the recent focus on Christian nationalism, the appropriateness of patriotism has resurfaced. Is there a difference between Christian nationalism and patriotism?

Patriotism is a sense of respect, appreciation and preference for our country that comes through personal experience and heritage. It is the same sense of pride and preference felt by citizens of other lands. Those of us born in the U.S. and blessed to travel the country have a fondness for the unique beauty within our borders.

Baseball, voting and apple pie are a way of life connecting us to fellow citizens. Patriotism is also a sense of pride for the good things in our nation: acknowledgement that “all men are created equal,” opportunities to freely worship and our relatively peaceful and quiet lives. Given a choice, patriotism makes our country our preference.

Christian nationalism makes the preference of patriotism a demand of discipleship. It sees the American system (or any worldly system) and its power as the “last best hope of the world” and is willing to preserve it at all costs. Believing the American system is divinely inspired, nationalism plays by the traditional rules of kingdoms and power, with a slightly Christian twist.

History is filled with examples of nationalistic ambitions claiming divine favor. Constantine tried making Christianity Rome’s official religion and shifted earthly power structures in the church’s favor. German Christians hung Nazi flags in their churches.

Yet the idea of a truly Christian nation is contradictory to the Gospel. Nations are defined by borders, power and self-interest. The Kingdom of God is without borders, defined by self-denial and driven by mercy and forgiveness.

Without question, America’s founding fathers were partially influenced by Christianity. Where such influence is lived out, the nation and world are blessed. But, just as all other nations of men, America’s founders also were driven by the less-than-Christian factors of power and greed.

Paul readily used his Roman credentials to advance the Gospel (Acts 16:37-38; 22:25-28). He also celebrated his Jewish heritage without judging or looking down on outsiders (Philippians 3:4; Colossians 2:16-17).

Like Jesus, Paul understood the Kingdom of God was not defined by borders or self-focused national interest. It had a bigger agenda, defined by self-denial and the righteousness of God.

As we enjoy the blessings of our country, let us not lose sight of the true Kingdom of God. — Jeremie Beller, for the Editorial Board

As we enjoy the blessings of our country, let us not lose sight of the true Kingdom of God.

Introducing the Editorial Board

The Christian Chronicle has named four new members to its Editorial Board, which collaborates on topics and stances for the newspaper’s editorials on this page:

- Jeremie Beller, congregational minister for the Wilshire Church of Christ in Oklahoma City and an adjunct professor of communication at Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City.
- John Edmerson, elder and senior minister for the Church of Christ at the Vineyard in Phoenix. He is also a well-known song writer among Churches of Christ.
- Trindi G. Mitchell, member of the Henry Street Church of Christ in Gadsden, Ala. She is a Sunday school teacher and writer.
- Tamie Ross, member of the Edmond Church of Christ in Oklahoma. She is a veteran journalist who previously served as online editor and advertising manager for the Chronicle. (Yes, she is married to the editor-in-chief, but please don’t hold that against her.)

The new appointees join Erik Tryggstad, the Chronicle’s president and CEO; Chellie Ison, the Chronicle’s digital news editor; and me on the Editorial Board.

Starting this month, the Editorial Board member serving as the lead editorial writer on a particular topic will sign his or her name. The opinions expressed represent the consensus of the Editorial Board but do not necessarily reflect the position of the entire Chronicle staff, our national board of trustees or Oklahoma Christian University.

As always, we welcome respectful dialogue on our editorials. Letters to the editor may be emailed to letters@christianchronicle.org or mailed to our postal address below. — Bobby Ross Jr., editor-in-chief
From Our Readers

Stories on U.S. politics draw criticism, praise from readers

I am disappointed with your representation of some current affairs in the February 2021 edition. I am always so pleased to have The Christian Chronicle arrive and usually read many of the articles. I was especially pleased with your recent coverage of racial issues and that you usually seem so fair-minded.

What is disturbing about this month’s issue is that you have taken the stand that is being fed the population on (1) the unrest at the Capitol and its sources, (2) the “pandemic,” (3) the vaccines and (4) “conspiracy theory” (it’s not a conspiracy if they are talking about it in the open).

I don’t put politics or a president over Jesus. In fact, I try very hard to maintain relationships with people with whom I disagree strongly. But the mainstream narrative of the above topics has holes in it at best and is outright intentionally deceptive and dangerous at worst.

MELISSA HOEHN | Corsicana, Texas

As a longtime member of the Church of Christ, I am deeply embarrassed that you chose to highlight Rep. Ronny Jackson (Page 1, February). He has promoted the lies that Donald Trump won the election. I can’t believe a true Christian would lie to advance his political career. You should be ashamed for featuring him!

MICHAEL CLIBURN | Mount Dora, Fla.

Thank you for being a voice of reason during these times of great political turmoil. I subscribed having watched the online panel discussion The Christian Chronicle organized. Such well-spoken Christians.

Personally, I believe much of our political angst can be traced back to our nation’s “original sin,” that of race-based slavery. And the modern fear of Whites feeling like they are losing their place of historical dominance.

Your publication gives me hope.

ROBERT W. GRAY | Signal Mountain, Tenn.

The editor needs to find himself a job in mass media fake news and stop pretending to be a “religious editor.” Undermining others’ faith is not too religious.

JOHN M. BROWN | Flatwoods, Ky.

This issue used a lot of ink referring to love, joy, unity and equality. All of these are Christian principles which we should strive to improve in. This was excellent.

I suppose, because of political correctness, murder was not mentioned. There were 874,000 abortions, almost twice the number of COVID-19 deaths, in the U.S.

How can Christians support politicians who actively support abortion and even want to expand it?

LARRY YOUNG | Edmond, Okla.

This most recent article on Christian nationalism is just too much. I was at the Capitol on Jan. 6 and am an ardent supporter of President Trump and the MAGA movement.

Your article doesn’t do anything to help the church or our nation. In fact, it does just the opposite. The way you have framed the movement and the events of the day is wrong.

ERIC NORDLING | Wenatchee, Wash.

Trump’s Christian enablers have created a big stumbling block to honest people searching for the Truth. I’ve voted Republican in every election since 1980 up until 2016 when I didn’t vote at all. I stopped after the 2016 Republican Party convention in which it lost reason and a sound mind and became a cult by selecting perhaps the biggest liar to ever become president.

I’ve resisted not only the destructive identity policies and abortion and homosexual acceptance of the Democratic Party but also the lies and idolatry of the Trump enablers.

They are worshiping the created and not the Creator. They are committing idolatry.

PAUL M. LESTER | Summerville, S.C.

All candidates must be active members of the church of Christ and committed to Christian education.

Initial application should include a letter of interest and curriculum vitae. To complete the application, three spiritual references, three professional references, and official transcripts for all degrees earned are required.

Salary and rank are determined based on credentials and experience.

COLLEGE OF ARTS & HUMANITIES • ARCHITECTURE. Seeking full-time architecture program director. The position will establish and develop a master’s degree program in architecture, including the steps to accredit the program with the National Architectural Accrediting Board. Successful candidates will have a terminal degree in architecture and a background in both the profession and academia. The preferred candidate will have experience in academic administration, a strong relationship with the profession, and a willingness to foster collaboration. Responsibilities include but are not limited to administration of the architecture program, teaching at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and leading a qualified, passionate faculty.

Submit application materials to Dr. J. Warren Casey, dean, at casey@harding.edu, or 915 E. Market, Box 10913, Searcy, AR, 72149, 501-279-4334.

COLLEGE OF NURSING. Seeking full-time, 9-month faculty member teaching in the undergraduate and graduate nursing programs. This appointment requires clinical and didactic teaching in pediatric nursing for the undergraduate program and graduate programs. The successful candidate should maintain an active, unencumbered nursing license; be eligible for RN or APRN licensing in the state of Arkansas; have nursing practice experience in pediatric nursing; have a minimum of a master’s degree in nursing and an earned doctorate in nursing or a related field, or be enrolled in a doctoral program currently or willing to enroll in the next two years. Teaching experience is preferred. Responsibilities include but are not limited to teaching undergraduate and graduate nursing in a variety of formats and working collaboratively in shared governance and accreditation compliance with the College of Nursing administration and faculty.

Submit application materials to Dr. Susan Kehl, dean, at skehl@harding.edu, or 915 E. Market, Box 12265, Searcy, AR, 72149, 501-279-4941.

These additional openings are available at harding.edu/facultyjobs: COLLEGE OF ARTS & HUMANITIES • DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC COLLEGE OF PHARMACY COLLEGE OF SCIENCES • DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY & BIOCHEMISTRY SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Please visit harding.edu/hr for further information on these positions and to learn more about open staff positions. Harding University is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not unlawfully discriminate in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, disability or prior military service.
The virus hit us where we ain’t

Satan used Douglas MacArthur’s strategy to divide us. After a year of COVID-19, how can we reunite?

M y father was one of the many muddy dog faces who appreciated Gen. Douglas MacArthur’s military strategy of “hit ‘em where they ain’t.”

Instead of attacking well-defended positions, MacArthur selected lightly defended objectives across the long New Guinea campaign of World War II’s Pacific theater. Bypassing hard targets in favor of soft targets, MacArthur suffered relatively few casualties. As a result, “Dugout Doug” became a national hero, and my dad came home after visiting exotic places like Biak, Hollandia and Noemfour — not to mention the Lingayen Gulf.

Seventy-five years after V-J Day, Satan has proven himself even better than MacArthur at hitting us where we ain’t. COVID-19 has destabilized congregations, disrupted worship and disgruntled members in previously undreamed-of ways.

Who would have ever dreamed that Churches of Christ would become flummoxed about the default setting of “the first day of every week” (1 Corinthians 16:1)?

ANGRY — AND NOT COMING BACK

Two stories from three congregations near me illustrate how hard we have been hit.

One congregation lost four families. Two of them left because the elders did not ask enough by requesting the basic COVID-19 mitigation steps of hand-washing, mask-wearing and social distancing. Two more families left because the elders asked too much. All four said, angrily, that they will not come back.

In a second congregation, the elders implemented temperature checks, careful cleaning, advanced Lord’s Supper preparation and advising those who are in high-risk groups and those who are uncomfortable to remain home. A family left in disgust, saying that the elders were imposing on their liberty.

They moved their membership to the third congregation, which had taken a hands-off approach, and shared their complaints with all who would listen. Among their listeners were two families who felt unprotected by the congregation’s hands-off approach — so they moved their membership to the second congregation.

Incidents and accidents, hints and allegations have sprung up across our brotherhood. Perhaps the worst hit is to our confidence. Didn’t we think before COVID-19 that we knew what we were doing?

THREE TYPES OF CHURCHES EMERGE

It seems to me that our congregations have fallen into one of three broad categories:

• Motivated either by deep devotion to Hebrews 10:24-25 or to all-right politics, some of us have refused to close our doors at all or have closed our doors very little.

• Most of us have sort of opened or kind of closed as we’ve watched the dreaded graph lines go up and down. Sigh. What next?

• Some of us have closed our doors for months and months due to a myopic focus on fearful numbers, a deep-seated habit of shutting things down or by the freeing desire to liberate the church from the legalistic traditionalism of scheduled meetings. I say that last part sarcastically. There’s always a reason to do less.

TOUGH QUESTIONS AFTER COVID-19

The worst time to solve a problem is during the problem.

After this is all over, we would be wise to put ourselves through a prayerful and thorough review.

• How can we forgive ourselves and move on from whatever real or perceived wrongs have been committed during the most astonishing events of our lifetime?

• How can church leaders who might have blown a call or two regain confidence and restore trust?

• How do biblical faith, legitimate fear, social panic and spiritual maturity interact in frail hearts and confused minds?

• How can we better process vast amounts of conflicting information? Should we develop ties of trust with public health experts so we’ll know how to better handle the bad times?

• How can we train our members to trust public health experts asking a lot.

• How should we communicate among ourselves and with other churches during crises so that the ties that bind do not come unbound?

• How do biblical faith, legitimate fear, social panic and spiritual maturity interact in frail hearts and confused minds?

• How do we learn that one size doesn’t fit all and that different members of the same congregation might need to follow different solutions to the same problem? Is it possible for those who want to meet to keep meeting and for those who just can’t meet to not meet for a while? Allowing each other this much space is a bit foreign to us.

GETTING TO A BETTER PLACE, TOGETHER

Truth be told, my dad didn’t always appreciate Douglas MacArthur. I suspect that his opinion of the general was at its lowest as he fought his way across a barren and bomb-cratered airfield toward the caves and cliffs of Biak.

That haunted his dreams for years.

Only years later did my dad’s appreciation for MacArthur renew. He accepted and respected that the Old Soldier had “hit ‘em where they ain’t” and got him home.

Asking and answering the tough questions about how we have handled COVID-19 might also take us a few years. Slowly accepting that we can handle what God sent us and patiently accepting that we can learn from what God taught us, we can get to a better place on all of this.

Eventually, that’s where we need to be.

Don Prather is minister for the Buna Church of Christ in Texas. His 20-year career in Texas public schools included training and experience in counseling and administration.
CALENDAR

March 3–April 28 Listen and Make Room. Online class, taught by Harold Shank. Register at mrcc.org/listen.
March 4 Bethany College Founder’s Day Event. Bethany, W.Va. Contact (304) 829-7311 or email bethanywv.edu/campbell.
March 9 LipscombLEADS Virtual Conversation with Bob Goff. See lipscomb.edu/events.
June 9–11 Thomas H. Olbricht Christian Scholars’ Conference. Lipscomb University, Nashville, Tenn. See lipscomb.edu/events.
June 18 Legacy of Love Benefit Dinner and Auction. Lithfield, Tulsa, Okla. (405) 216-5240. See lithfield.org/auction.
July 3–10 The Kerusso Experience. Harding University, Searcy, Ark. See www.harding.edu/kerusso.
July 18–23 Texas Normal Singing School. Abilene, Texas.

FULL CALENDAR: christianchronicle.org

Evangelist Needed - Kingman, Ariz.
The Desert Church of Christ is looking for an evangelistic minister who preaches, teaches, and follows truth from God’s Word. We are a congregation of 60 - 70 members, without an eldership, with a desire to grow. The successful candidate will be a “jack of all trades.” Please send resume and salary requirements to:
Desert Church of Christ
Attn: Search Committee
PO Box 3673, Kingman, AZ 86402
(928) 279-2226 (please leave message)

Pulpit Minister - Fayetteville, Arkansas
The Center Street Church of Christ is looking for a pulpit minister with a passion for evangelism, preaching, teaching, and personal work. We are a congregation of approximately 300 members with five elders, 14 deacons, and an established youth group of about 35-40. Salary based on experience/qualifications. Located in the scenic Ozark Mountains of NW Arkansas, Fayetteville is in the fastest growing region of the state and is home to the University of Arkansas. The public schools in NWA are some of the best in the state. Interested applicants should submit a cover letter, resume, and links to sermons to: csymministersearch@gmail.com.
For more information, go to: www.centerstreet.org and click “jobs.”

Application deadline is March 10.

Minister Search - Medford, Oregon
The West Main Church of Christ is actively seeking a leader who does as Jesus did by talking to the people in their homes and communities. Our church family is seeking a visionary to lead the saved and the lost to the kingdom of God by guiding us and being involved with us.

Our lead minister will appreciate the rich heritage within the Churches of Christ. He will also envision a future not bound by tradition, but open to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. With a firm commitment to the Bible and a desire to apply its truth to the 21st Century, our new minister will provide leadership, instruction, and be a role model for a church that is looking to glorify Christ. Our Lead Minister will be first and foremost a man of integrity in all aspects of his life. He will be respected in his home, church, and community.

The ideal candidate is open to sharing the preaching duties in order to focus on being: • A Biblical Teacher • A People Person • A Relationship Builder • A Caring Disciple • An Active Collaborator

For further information and to apply visit our website: churchofchristmedford.org

Full-time Minister - Gallatin, TN
The Gallatin Church of Christ, a premillennial church, is in search of a full-time minister. The candidate must minister to the needs of the congregation and join our leadership team in glorifying God. He must possess a vision and a service to our community. We desire a minister with a heart for discipleship, local outreach and administration of church ministries. Interested candidates should send a resume to:
Gallatin Church of Christ, Attn: Elders
150 East Main Street, Gallatin, TN 37066

Full-time Pulpit Minister - Brenham, Texas
The Brenham Church of Christ is about a 200-member church with a modern building located in the small but growing central Texas town of Brenham, Texas. We have a great passion for community, outreach, children, youth, families, seniors, missions, and all of God’s people! For more information, you are welcome to visit our website at:
www.brenhamchurchofchrist.com

We look forward to hearing from you!

Full-time Pulpit Minister - Northwest Arkansas
The Dover Church of Christ seeks a full-time pulpit minister beginning on or about April 1, 2021. We are looking for someone who is solid in the Scriptures, not given to extremes of liberalism or conservatism. We prefer a married man with Christian wife who has three or more years of experience, especially in a congregation that has elders. We need someone who is willing to assist with youth work. For more information about our congregation, please see: dovercoc.org.

See our sermon/study helps collection there to get an idea of what we believe and teach. Before COVID, we had Sunday morning attendance of about 120. We are very active in a local jail ministry and have sent mission teams to Central America in four of the past six years. Please mail letters of application with references along with resume and access to a multimedia recording of a sermon to:
Dover Church of Christ
Attn: Sid Womack and search committee
PO Box 299, Dover, AR 72837

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

Please send resume:
In care of Richard Ecord
Church of Christ
1207 W 15th
Ottawa, KS 66067

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Please send resume:
In care of Richard Ecord
Church of Christ
1207 W 15th
Ottawa, KS 66067
The Christian Chronicle Crossword

ACROSS
1. One of the disciples named in Matthew 10:1-4.
5. Festival some use to celebrate how Christ was revealed to Gentiles in Matthew 2.
10. Use an oar.
11. What Adam and Eve covered themselves with.
12. "... for things that are seen are _____; but things which are not seen are eternal" (1 Corinthians 4:18, King James Version).
15. Peter’s original name.
18. Cover with raiments.
23. Birth of Jesus as described in Matthew 1:18.
26. Large tree.
27. Consecrate.
32. "... they that _____ him must worship him in spirit and in truth ..." (John 4:24, KJV).
33. "... offer him there as a _____ offering ..." (Genesis 22:2, KJV).
35. Abraham’s eldest son.
38. Foe.
40. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a ____ come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest ..." (John 3:2, KJV).
41. Men who came to visit Jesus when he was born came from the ___.
42. Musical gift.

DOWN
1. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, Matthew 21 (two words).
2. Book before Jeremiah, abbr.
3. Anger.
4. Studio stance
6. "_____ the word: be instant in season, out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort ..." (2 Timothy 4:2).
7. Baby dog.
9. Christmastime.
12. Nashville’s state.
14. Temporary dwelling.
16. Tax collector who became a disciple.
17. Central part of a church building.
19. “How exciting!”
20. Long time period.
22. Compass direction.
25. Break off sharply.
27. Master of a research discipline.
28. Moses received them, Exodus 24:12.
29. “Noah, who was a ___, was the first man to plant a vineyard” (Genesis 9:20, Good News Translation).
30. Christmas garland
31. Remained
34. Crete, for one
36. Lady sheep
37. Get older.

BIBLE BOWLING
Revelation 3: ‘I am about to spit you out of my mouth’

1. To which church was the fifth letter written? A. Laodicia. B. Smyrna. C. Sardis. D. Thyatira.
2. The one “who holds the seven spirits of God” said the church of the fifth letter was ___. A. lukewarm. B. alive despite persecution. C. dead. D. asleep.
3. In what form would God go to this church if they did not wake up? A. A thief. B. A roaring wind. C. A mighty lion. D. A warrior.
4. Why would some in this church “walk with me” (3:4)? A. They did not forsake their first love. B. They were not asleep. C. They did not soil their clothes. D. They did not eat food sacrificed to idols.
5. To which church was the sixth letter written? A. Laodicea. B. Philadelphia. C. Sardis. D. Thyatira.
7. “Hold on to what you have, so no one will take your ____” (3:12) A. possessions. B. crown. C. glory. D. lampstand.
8. To which church was the seventh letter written? A. Laodicea. B. Smyrna. C. Sardis. D. Thyatira.
9. Why was “the ruler of God’s creation” going to spit this church from his mouth? A. It was neither noble nor notable. B. It was rash, without merit. C. It was lukewarm, neither hot nor cold. D. It tasted like durian.

FIND MORE QUESTIONS at TheSeeker.org.

CROSSWORD SOLUTION and Bible Bowling answers on Page 34. To sponsor this page, contact tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org.
I heard laughter in the stairwell as I laced the belt onto my armor and grabbed the spear I had propped against the wall next to me.

“‘Yeah,’ a scoffing voice said, ‘they’re just walking around the wall. Nuts they are, all of them.”

That’s the opening of “The Man with the Helmet,” penned by Dawson Sires for the Christian fiction category at this year’s Leadership Training for Christ. The 3,100-word story tells the story of the battle of Jericho from the perspective of an enemy soldier serving on the doomed walls of the ancient city.

Dawson, 16, is a member of the Ninnekah Church of Christ in Oklahoma. He is one of four men who rotate song-leading duties on Sunday mornings. This is his eighth year to participate in LTC.

Whether you’re participating in person or virtually in this year’s LTC or Lads to Leaders conventions, we want to see your stories, videos, and art projects. Send them to letters@christianchronicle.org — and you may see them featured in this space.
In a ‘Love is Love’ world, parents must teach kids right and wrong

Today’s teenagers were born immersed in technology. Thanks to social media, Google, YouTube and virtual reality games, they are constantly bombarded with gender issues, casual sex and pornography. While parents are expected to teach their children right from wrong, many aren’t totally sure where they stand on these topics. “Don’t let lack of awareness keep you from engaging in vital conversations. Learn how to talk to your teen with knowledge and confidence, guiding them toward a sexually healthy future,” urge authors Beth Robinson and Latayne C. Scott in “Talking With Teens About Sexuality: Critical Conversations about Social Media, Gender Identity, Same-Sex Attraction, Pornography, Purity, Dating, Etc.”

But in today’s “Love is Love” world, it’s often hard to push confidently against cultural pressures. Our teens read in Leviticus 20:13: “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination.” At the same time, they hear interpretations of Scripture promoting the idea that a monogamous, same-sex relationship is OK. All the while, they follow social media influencers on TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat who espouse gender fluidity and promote casual sex.

Teens often see parents as old and out of touch. Will they believe us when we teach them what the Bible says about these issues? It is possible, write Robinson, a licensed professional counselor and professor of psychology and counseling at Lubbock Christian University in Texas, and Scott, who has a doctorate in biblical studies. Both are from Churches of Christ.

“As our teens develop their identities, we need to provide support and accurate information for them rather than myths about sexuality and minimization or rejection of their struggles,” Robinson says. “We want them to seek us out for support rather than turning to peers or strangers who may provide inaccurate information.”

I have a new teenager in my house. We had an age-appropriate sex talk when she was 8. She came to me again when she was 12, and we revisited the topic. “Look at me!” I thought. I’m on top of it. Well, here I am a year later, having read this book and realizing just how little surface we have scratched and how much more we need to discuss.

“If we are uncomfortable discussing these subjects with our teens, the authors note, they will find other sources of information — often from individuals who will encourage them to pursue ungodly lifestyles. It’s also been said that teens will believe the first source that tells them about sex. Do you want your child to believe the world’s view or God’s? We need to be exploring these issues in an open and honest way with our teens.

“At the end of time, when we meet God shoulder to shoulder with our matured children, we will answer for what we did to bring them closer to him or drive them away from him,” Robinson says. “It’s time to lead them closer to God.”

In this book, the authors provide biblically based and scientifically reliable information about gender issues, types of intimacy, online dangers and setting boundaries. Chapter titles include: “God’s Plan for Sex,” “Social Media and Technology,” “This Is Your Teen’s Brain on Porn” and “Understanding Gender Issues.” There are scenarios, questions and verses at the end of each chapter to work through with your teen.

I highly recommend this book for parents to work through with teens. It would also make a great topic for a parenting class or small-group study at church.

“Talking With Teens About Sexuality” was easy to read, full of real-life stories and “what-if” scenarios. I couldn’t put it down.

LAURA AKINS is Features Editor for The Christian Chronicle. Contact laura.akins@christianchronicle.org.

Our deeply held sin can become a social disease

I have known Zach Sewell since he was a student at Abilene Christian University. In Visceral Sin: A Grace-Centered Approach to Addressing Deeply Embedded Sin, his writing flows with clarity and is packed with insightful wisdom that is suited to fit our time.

A spiritually diseased human heart often bleeds into the visceral tissue of structures and systems in which it operates. The book underscores the importance for all Christians to practice individual heart health. When this happens, Christian spiritual health will permeate society as salt and light.

Sewell surveys several characteristics of visceral sin, with practical application in each section. He explains how visceral sin can be hidden, can grow slowly, is dangerous, etc. In one chapter, he includes a brief but timely section on the deeply embedded sin of racism and explains how racism functions as a blockage to love’s expression.

Whether hate-filled words are privately held in one’s predominant thought pattern, used in personal conversations or written into public policy, they produce social disease and eventual spiritual death. Hateful words birthed by the spirit of racism also have the power to infect entire generations spiritually.

Sewell provides the remedy for patients with damaged hearts. They should cry out, “Create in me a clean heart. Renew a right spirit within me.” The eradication of racism within one’s own heart requires a broken and contrite heart. This type of heart is one that God will not despise.

Each chapter in “Visceral Sin” concludes with prompts for either personal reflection or discussion, making this book ideal for small groups.

JERRY TAYLOR is founder of the Carl Spain Center on Race Studies and Spiritual Action at Abilene Christian University in Texas and associate professor of Bible, missions and ministry.
CLIFTONGANUSAUTOBIOGRAPHY

Clifton L. Ganus, Jr. I’d Do It All Again. Xulon Press, 2021. 360 pages. $29.95 (Amazon), $24.95 (Harding Bookstore), $19.95 (paperback), $9.95 (ebook). See library.harding.edu/ganusbook

About the book: This account of Dr. Clifton Ganus’ experiences as a university president, adventurer, preacher, lecturer, educator, missionary, church leader and world traveler was made from notes he compiled before his death in 2019.

The story is informative, humorous and inspiring, involving travels to 117 countries, establishing a school in Uganda, climbing the Great Pyramid, boating down the Mississippi, and meeting world leaders. Many names familiar to Christian Chronicle readers are involved.

CHRISTIAN LIVING


About the book: The way of Jesus seems upside down in our broken world.

Listening to and making room for the vulnerable is not the way to get ahead in this life. Yet, this is the way Jesus lived, and it is exactly what our world needs. Jesus’ example shows us that children are at the core of God’s mission.

Nathan Samuel, president of Network 1:27, a Christ-centered adoption and foster care ministry, says, “On behalf of the 60 childcare agencies associated with Churches of Christ, let me say you will be inspired and engaged by reading Harold Shank’s book.”

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY submissions are paid advertisements. Contact tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org for rate information.

In every chapter, Ed Nill in his book “Christianity—Why I Believe What I Believe” challenges you to defend why you believe what you believe. You don’t accept the Sinner’s Prayer concept? Chapter 6 provides the history behind this movement along with scriptures that you can use in your discussion. If immersion is required to gain access to God’s grace, can you tell someone why without upsetting them in the process? Three chapters are devoted to gaining access to God’s grace. A skeptic tells you that “Christians are intolerant,” and were you satisfied with your response? The author uses an apologetic style of writing to cover 12 key topics in 238 pages. Historical references and definitions of original New Testament Greek words are provided.

****

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

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“This is the best book ever written on the issue...”

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His Hand and Heart: The Wit and Wisdom of Marshall Keeble

--by Willie Cato

This book shares some of the stories, speeches, pictures, and anecdotes of Marshall Keeble and his great life. All proceeds benefit Christian education in Africa through the African Christian Schools Foundation.

Price: $10 plus $5 shipping.

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615-542-6282
Tape on the pews: As we return, let’s not repeat a failed restoration

OKLAHOMA CITY

There’s tape on the pews.

It’s blue and green, and it tells us where to sit. Blue rows only.

We usually end up near the back. Our regular spot is taken when we get there.

We sing with masks. It’s not great. We can’t pass communion. We bring our own — or we use the “rip-n-sips” with the bread that I still think is really Styrofoam.

Also not great.

Until recently our Bible class met mostly online.

We’re starting to get back together in person now, but the specter of the virus hovers over our gatherings.

I walk a lot — through my neighborhood, around campus. I’ve met a few folks. I listen to God’s word on the AirPods I won at the Evangelical Press Association convention in 2019... y’know, back when I attended things.

I made it through one of those “Bible in a year” deals. The passage that’s stuck with me came from Ezra, of all places. It’s an Old Testament book that gets passed over a lot. There’s no ark, no giant fish, no crossing over a lot. There’s no ark, no giant fish, no crossing the Red Sea. It’s not a prophecy, either. Jesus never quoted from it.

Scholars think it’s the first part of a story that concludes in the book just after it, Nehemiah. (Thank you, Bibleproject.org, for that tidbit.) Ezra-Nehemiah is the story of three guys who try to restore Jerusalem in the years after the Babylonian exile.

The first guy is Zerubbabel, who rebuilds the temple. Ezra, a priest, shows up some 60 years later. (He first appears in chapter 7 of the book that bears his name.) Then Nehemiah comes to rebuild the wall.

Back in Ezra chapter 3, when Zerubbabel lays the foundation for the rebuilt temple, there’s a big ceremony to praise the Lord. Many of the Israelites shout for joy. “But many of the older priests, Levites, and other leaders who had seen the first Temple wept aloud,” we read in Ezra 3:12 (New Living Translation).

Maybe these were tears of joy, perhaps? But if you read the prophet Haggai, a contemporary of Zerubbabel, it’s pretty clear what the problem is: “Does anyone remember this house — that Temple — in its former splendor? How, in comparison, does it look to you now? It must seem like nothing at all!” (Haggai 2:3)

In other words, there’s tape on the pews.

Keep reading to the end of Nehemiah, and you’ll see that the restoration these three men seek doesn’t really happen. The people neglect the temple, violate the Sabbath and intermarry with nonbelievers. Nehemiah gets so mad he starts beating folks and pulling out their hair! His final words are basically, “Well, God, I tried.”

The restoration fails because the people’s hearts aren’t right.

And here we are in 2021, crawling back from our exile of isolation in fits and starts. I lament what I fear we’ve lost and gnash my teeth for what I can’t yet reclaim.

I need to stop looking back, lest I become a pillar of salt. I pray for a new heart, the heart that God’s people needed back in Zerubbabel’s day.

No more quarreling over nonsense. No more pulling out each other’s hair. Thankfully, Haggai also has some words of encouragement: “Be strong, all you people still left in the land. And now get to work, for I am with you.” (Haggai 2:4)

Then God declares that he will “shake all the nations” and fill the Temple with a glory far greater than its past glory. “And in this place,” he promises, “I will bring peace.”

We all know who came next.

ERIK TRYGGESTAD is president and CEO of The Christian Chronicle. Contact erik@christianchronicle.org, and follow him on Twitter @eriktryggstad.
Agribusiness or Animal Science

The Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (A&E) seeks a visionary faculty member with specialty in agribusiness or animal science. The ideal candidate will have a Ph.D. in agribusiness, animal science or closely related field or a Ph.D./D.V.M. from an AVMA-accredited institution. Individuals with appropriate master’s degrees who are working toward one of these terminal degrees will be considered. This is a nine-month, tenure-track faculty position. Information about A&E is available at acu.edu/agenv.

Mathematics (Statistics)

The Department of Mathematics invites applications for an assistant professor position in statistics beginning in Fall 2021. The successful candidate is expected to be an effective teacher and mentor to mathematics students in an undergraduate environment, to direct the department’s actuarial science program, and to have a desire to pursue professional development. The teaching load is typically 12 hours per semester. An earned doctorate (or completion prior to August 2021) in statistics (preferred) or mathematics is required. This is a nine-month, tenure-track faculty position. Information about the department is available at acu.edu/mathematics.

Apply online at acucareers.acu.edu. Review of applicants will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. ACU is committed to building a culturally diverse faculty and strongly encourages applications from women and minority candidates. The university is affiliated with the fellowship of the Churches of Christ and its mission is to educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world. All applicants must be professing Christians and be active, faithful members of a congregation of the Churches of Christ and deeply committed to service in Christian higher education. ACU does not unlawfully discriminate in employment opportunities.
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