



ADAM METZ

Flags cover the snowy ground outside the Alum Creek Church of Christ in Lewis Center, Ohio, in memory of the millions who have died from COVID-19.

# An unfathomable toll

**AFTER A YEAR** of pandemic, Christians reflect on loved ones lost to a virus that has claimed millions of lives.

BY CHELLIE ISON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

**G**race. That's the word that Lynn Jones, a Christian in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, said she keeps at the forefront as her family navigates incredible loss due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Jones' father-in-law, Casey Jones, 88; brother-in-law James Jones, 65; and cousin Jake MacLeod, 68, all died as a result of COVID-19.

"I don't know how people do this

without God," said Lynn Jones, a member of The Branch Church, a Church of Christ in Farmers Branch, north of Dallas.



Jones

Worldwide, more than 2.6 million deaths have been attributed to COVID-19, according to data from Johns Hopkins University. More than 531,000 of those have occurred in the U.S., as of press time.

"I don't know that anyone can understand the impact it has unless they have lost a loved one," Jones said.

The human toll from the year-old pandemic is unfathomable for most.

"We all eventually just become numb to numbers," said Adam Metz, minister for the Alum Creek Church of Christ in Lewis Center, Ohio.

To help people understand the magnitude, the church north of Columbus installed a flag garden honoring each of the lives lost due to COVID-19. The number of deaths

globally stood at 2.5 million when the Ohio Christians planted the flags in the snowy ground outside their building.

The 2,500 flags — red for those who died in Ohio, yellow for those who died in the United States and blue for

See **UNFATHOMABLE**, Page 11

## THE CHURCH AND COVID-19

A SIMPLER CHURCH: WHY HAVE A BUILDING?.....	3
PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHURCHES FORGE AHEAD.....	8
AFTER RECOVERY, MINISTER BACK IN THE PULPIT.....	9
FAITH ON THE MOVE DURING PANDEMIC .....	17
REQUIEM FOR A PASSPORT: LAMENTING LOST TRAVEL .....	34



COMMISSION



ADVENTURES IN MISSIONS



COMPASSION



COMMITMENT



## After difficult year, COVID-19 vaccines bring joy and hope

“Celebrate. People need hope.”

My friend David Duncan texted me that advice when I told him

I was struggling to write this column.

A year into the COVID-19 pandemic, I want to make sure I acknowledge the

### Inside Story



Bobby Ross Jr.

heartache and grief that so many have endured.

As my colleague Chellie Ison reports on the front page, the sheer magnitude of loss — 2.6 million dead around the world, including 531,000 in the U.S., as of press time — is difficult to comprehend.

At the same time, after 12 months of disrupted lives, I want to praise God for the vaccines developed by companies such as Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson.

The vaccines offer hope for ending the pandemic. They offer hope for a brighter tomorrow. They offer hope, in a very real sense, for my own family and friends.

My wife, Tamie, has autoimmune diseases that could very well cost her her life if she contracted COVID-19.

Because of Tamie’s health concerns, we’ve adhered strictly to masking, distancing and other safety precautions. For over a year, we’ve not attended an in-person worship assembly or eaten inside a restaurant.

But on a recent Thursday afternoon, my wife rolled up

See **VACCINES**, Page 4



# A simpler church

**IT’S ABUNDANTLY CLEAR, thanks to COVID-19, that the church is not a building. In a post-pandemic world, some ask: Why have a building at all?**

PHOTO VIA FACEBOOK.COM/BACKYARDCHURCHOFABAURN

Despite a chance of rain, Backyard Church meets for an evening service. “We prayed and prayed and ... no rain!” a member said.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

**E**arly in the pandemic, Matt Dabbs found himself preaching a message he never thought he’d preach: It’s OK not to go to church.

Well, not the church *building* anyway. The congregation for which he ministered, the Auburn Church of Christ in eastern Alabama, had moved its in-person worship services online, just like countless other churches across the U.S.

In the months that followed, COVID-19 flipped the conventional wisdom of church growth on its head. The 2,000-member megachurches that so many congregations yearned to be now were super-spreaders of the virus, too dangerous to attend.

And struggling rural congregations — with large buildings and declining memberships — suddenly had ideal locales for socially distanced worship.

As Dabbs recorded sermons for the Auburn church, he had a thought: If the 400-member congregation couldn’t meet in a building, “what about 10 to 15 in our yard?”

Backyard Church was born. It began as an outdoor gathering of a few families from the minister’s subdivision, spaced apart and masked. A few were members of the Auburn church. Most weren’t.

Among the visitors was Daniel Tulibagenyi, who had worshiped with one of the city’s large community churches before COVID-19 and was in a ministry training program.

He had visited the Dabbs family’s home before — to inspect it for termites as part of his day job with a pest control company. Dabbs and his wife, Missy, learned about his faith and invited him back for dinner, pre-pandemic.

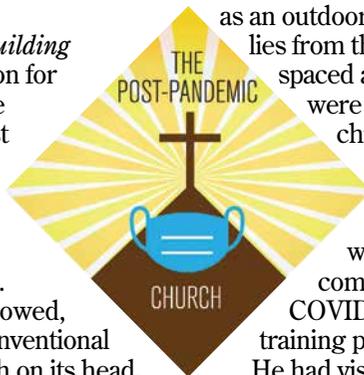
As the world began shutting down, Tulibagenyi, a native of Uganda, said that he had a dream, a vision, of himself

bowing before God in an outdoor space. “And when I looked up I saw all these people, worshipping,” he said.

Days later, Dabbs invited him to Backyard Church. Nearly a year after that invitation, Tulibagenyi serves as prayer team leader for the small congregation, which Dabbs now serves full time. It has grown to about 40 members and focuses on discipleship and “the priesthood of all believers,” Dabbs said.

Whether they meet in person or online — as house churches or as Bible classes within a larger church — small gatherings have become a big deal in the lives of many Christians during the pandemic, serving as vital sources of connection as houses of worship have closed their doors.

See **SIMPLER**, Page 12



### Second in a series



Dabbs



Tulibagenyi



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## VACCINES: Moving a little closer to normal

FROM PAGE 3

her sleeve and received the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine. That was the one recommended by Tamie's rheumatologist because of her life-threatening reactions to medications last year.

"As I waited for my vaccine, I experienced several competing emotions," Tamie said. "Gratitude was the first. I was so thankful to be getting a shot, aware that so many still await their turn.

"I also thought about the God-given intellect and ability that infused the science behind this medicine," she added. "I thanked him for that and for those who worked so hard this past year to make this possible."

Like my wife, Chellie — *The Christian Chronicle's* digital news editor and the mother of two precious young children — has an impaired immune system.

She, too, expressed her gratefulness for the scientists who worked hard to develop the vaccines.

Chellie flashed a wide smile as she held up her vaccine card in a recent Facebook picture.

"This card feels like a ticket to freedom, a chance (soon) to go to the grocery store, or church, or the hair salon (I haven't had a haircut since 2019) without fear of my body failing to fight for me once again," Chellie wrote. "I felt on the verge of tears many times leading up to and during this appointment.

"I never thought I would be happy to have a needle stabbed in my arm, but here I am," she added. "I'm not trying to be dramatic or political. I'm just saying the last year has been hard."

It has been incredibly hard for a lot of people. My heart aches for those who have faced isolation, battled severe illness or lost loved ones.

"It's a great relief to see so many friends and family becoming more

protected," said my friend Christy Watson, who has made it her mission to help vulnerable people make vaccine appointments. "We've had enough sickness and loss."

Here's some good news: A growing share of Americans — 69 percent — intend to get vaccinated or already have, according to the Pew Research Center. That's up from 60 percent who said in November they planned to be vaccinated.

I pray that Christians will lead the way in taking this simple step to show love and concern for our neighbors.

After so many months of prayer requests for those stricken with COVID-19, I love that pictures of friends and relatives receiving doses of hope now flood my Facebook page.

No, the pandemic isn't over. It won't be for a long time.

But we're moving, shot by shot, a little closer to normal things.

After receiving her final dose, my friend Cheryl Mann Bacon, a *Chronicle* correspondent, put on her mask and



KENDALL ROSS

Tamie Ross, with daughter Kendall, waits for her COVID-19 vaccine.

met friends for lunch.

"That was a balm for my soul," Cheryl told me, "just to sit and talk and laugh with really important people in my life."

I was so excited about receiving the first of my two Moderna shots that I shaved, showered and put on my best Texas Rangers T-shirt. I don't normally don my fancy duds for a medical visit, but I did this time.

I'll roll up my sleeve a second time soon and have the vaccine's full protection by Easter. For the first time in a long time, I'll be able to join fellow Christians for worship in person.

"After Easter, I'm heading back into the land of the living," I said in a text message to David.

"Well," he replied, "Easter is about resurrection."

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

# Big storm brings out big hearts

**AFTER DISASTER STRIKES** *Texas, Christians work to keep neighbors warm and quench their thirst.*

BY LAURA AKINS | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

**W**ater. The Southside Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas, has been a victim and a source of it in recent weeks.

First came the winter storms, which stretched across the Lone Star State — even covering the beaches of Galveston — and dumped at least 5 inches of snow on the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Then came the big freeze, as unprecedented low temperatures burst pipes.

Houses of worship weren't spared. Nearly 1,500 gallons of water flowed through the auditorium, foyer, library, parlor and nursery of the Southside church's facility.

It could have been much worse, said preaching minister Steve Cloer. A slew of deacons showed up immediately with shop vacuums.

That evening Cloer got a call from Amanda Brown, a member of the East Independence Church of Christ in Missouri, who wanted to drive an 18-wheeler full of bottled water to Texas to distribute to those in need.

"In all, we passed out water to around 200 families," said Cloer, who eagerly accepted Brown's help. "The neat thing is that the shipment of water that Amanda brought was about 250 cases of 45 water bottles each.

"That's 1,500 gallons out of our auditorium and 1,500 gallons into the neighborhood. That Lord gives, and the Lord takes away."



PHOTO PROVIDED BY JEFF HUBBARD

**Jeff Hubbard, lead minister for the North Davis Church of Christ in Arlington, Texas, talks about the flood damage in the Dallas-area church's auditorium.**

## 'I'M JUST TIRED OF BEING TIRED'

The single-digit temperatures overtaxed electrical grids and resulted in rolling blackouts across Texas, which was declared a major disaster area by the federal government on Feb. 20.

"Before this week, there were two blessings I hadn't thanked God for in a long time: water and power," said David Duncan, preaching minister for the Memorial Church of Christ in Houston. Thankfully, "everyone in the church and city is helping each other."

Texans are no strangers to dire weather predictions during winter months. But few

come to fruition.

Houston resident Ife Gbosi, a graduate of Abilene Christian University in West Texas, went to bed just before the first round of storms thinking nothing exceptional would happen.

She woke up to no electricity and no running water in her kitchen.

With the temperature drastically dropping during the day, the Gbosi family slept on the floor in their son's nursery. They wore hats and gloves and still woke up freezing, said Gbosi, who said she felt like a horrible mom because her two young children's faces were cold and she couldn't warm them.

That same morning, Gbosi tried to call hotels but didn't have cell service. So she messaged her sister in Washington, D.C., and had her make a reservation for them in downtown Houston. After waiting in a long line to check in, they were told the hotel didn't have water.



**Gbosi**

They checked in anyway.

"My story isn't sad. I'm just tired of being tired," Gbosi said. "I work from home because of the pandemic, so I'm texting my boss in the hotel about our situation, and he's asking, 'Will you work from the hotel tomorrow?' He's in North Carolina where it snows. He doesn't get it.

"I'm acutely aware that in all of this, I am on the better side. I have resources and can go to a hotel. But I am tired. Trying to explain to a 5-year old, 'I know I said it wasn't safe to go anywhere, but trust me, it's OK now.'

"Up until now," Gbosi said, "I wouldn't have gone to a hotel. But we had to prioritize to stay warm."

## A WATER SHORTAGE IN ABILENE

In Abilene, three water treatment stations lost electricity within 48 hours after the winter storm hit, cutting off the city's water supply. The Abilene Christian University campus facilities crew quickly made a plan.

"We have water in a pond on campus and two large swimming pools," said Tamara Long, ACU's vice president of student life and enrollment, "so in the middle of the night, we were pumping water out of the pond and into trash cans."

ACU dorms are on a tankless system with industrial toilets, so it's not as simple as melting snow and putting it in the back of a tank at home, said Long, who helped teach residents how to pour two gallons of pond water into a tankless toilet.

"We emptied as many trash cans as we could, marked them at the two-gallon point and put them in dorm lobbies," she added. "When we didn't think it could get more crazy, we lost power to three halls that

See **TEXAS**, Page 6



PHOTO PROVIDED BY STEVE CLOER

**Amanda Brown delivers bottled water to the Southside church.**

# TEXAS: 'There is no shortage of people looking out for us'

## FROM PAGE 5

house sophomores. And then a pipe burst into eight rooms, affecting 16 women. I was heartbroken."

The university, which is associated with Churches of Christ, eventually opened its Hunter Welcome Center as a warming shelter. Students brought pets, bedding and games.

Many spent two nights there. The school also opened its cafeteria, The Bean, to anyone with an ACU ID, whether they had a meal plan or not.

Off campus, Lance Parrish felt fortunate his church community



Parrish

helped his family during the extreme winter weather, but he was exhausted.

"We are putting on a happy face for the kids. We talk about how cool it is that we will have a family campout by the fire. Then my wife and I lay down and text each other about how scared we are so they don't hear us talking," said Parrish, youth minister for the Hillcrest Church of Christ in Abilene who acknowledged he reached his breaking point.

"But we've been very fortunate," he added. "We posted on social media about sleeping on the floor by a fire, and my phone started



PHOTO PROVIDED BY TAMARA LONG

**Students walk through the snow on the campus of Abilene Christian University after the winter storm struck Texas.**

blowing up with people wanting to help. There is no shortage of people looking out for us. But my heart goes out to our neighbors. I don't know how connected they are. How do you do this without a community around you?"

And how do you survive if you are already worn down from the pandemic?

"I feel bad for those who were already mentally struggling," said Marna Wewe, a member of the Westover Church of Christ in Austin. "My friends don't have heat or electricity. They said they were fine, just mentally exhausted. I hadn't thought about trying to build a fire every day if you are already struggling."

## CONNECTION OVER CONTENT

Across the state, power outages forced countless Texans into hotels or homes of friends and family for the first time in almost a year, given the separation required by COVID-19 concerns.

"We were without power for a day, so (family) opened their warm home to us," Melody Shaw, member of The Hills Church of Christ in North Richland Hills, northeast of Fort Worth, wrote on Facebook. "It was the first time we've been in a house with people in a very long time."

Others said the catastrophic storm made life feel almost normal for the

first time in a long time.

"This took my mind off of COVID for a minute," said Sandy Felker, a minister's wife at the Lakeside Church of Christ in Mansfield, south of Fort Worth. In a state of emergency "we got to minister to people and not worry about masks."

The Felkers opened the church building to anyone in need of a warm place to stay, but most church members didn't want to leave their homes for fear that a pipe would burst and they wouldn't be home to clean it up. For the 36 hours the Felkers were without power, they warmed up at their church with a small group, calling it the tamest lock-in ever.

Across the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, things were more lively.

"We had a 76-year-old woman who had been without power since early Monday come into our family

life center and shoot baskets," said David Meyer, executive minister at The Hills church, which partnered with the city of North Richland Hills and the police department to open as a warming station. "She said she hadn't played in years and wanted to try. She even got some in."

The Hills church initially took the posture of turning down thermostats and turning off lights from a conservation standpoint, but leaders quickly realized there was a community need, Meyer said. Around 100 non-church members came to their building to warm up.

Other churches didn't fare as well. "We were inspecting the building to make sure we were good to open as a warming station, and it was raining in the north foyer," said Jeff Hubbard, lead minister for the North Davis Church of Christ in Arlington.

In a Facebook video, Hubbard stood in the auditorium — knee deep

in water — as he shared the devastating news with church members.

"But a cool thing happened," said Hubbard. "I've gotten calls from Churches of Christ around the metroplex, even Baptist and community churches, all offering for us to use their buildings or to help with cleanup. And we aren't the only church in Arlington in bad shape."

Many Texans have a lot of damage to repair. It would be so

easy, and perfectly acceptable, to focus on personal ruin right now.

But not for church members.

"I felt very honored and blessed that so many churches reached out," Hubbard said. "That's what Christianity is all about."



PHOTO PROVIDED BY DAVID MEYER

**The Hills church invites people with no power to warm up at its building.**



PHOTO PROVIDED BY TAMARA LONG

**Abilene Christian uses water pumped from a pond into trash cans after the storm cut off the city's water supply.**

# Hotel rooms and hope for the homeless

**OKLAHOMA CHURCH MEMBER** helps get more than 60 people off the street during winter storm.

BY CHERYL MANN BACON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

## OKLAHOMA CITY

When the weather forecast called for two major snowstorms and multiple nights with below-zero temperatures, Delisa Herbert knew she couldn't just stay inside.

Herbert, a member of the Memorial Road Church of Christ and owner of Second Chances Thrift store, set out to make sure those in need would have a place to stay warm.

"When the weather started changing, I was like, 'There is no way they are going to make it,'" she said.

"They" are the homeless who live around downtown Oklahoma City.

Helping others is the focus of Herbert's life. Every day at Second Chances, she provides food and clothing to homeless people, recovering addicts and those who have just gotten out of prison.

She's overcome her own trials.

Before she was a Christian, she experienced many of the same life circumstances as those she now helps. The hope she's found through Christ radiates throughout her life and drives her to help others, she said. It's what drove her to step out into the cold determined to help others find warmth.



Herbert

It started with a plan to buy tents for those sleeping outdoors.

"When I went to work, I said, 'Hey, y'all, it's going to be extremely cold. It will take \$84 to get a tent, a sleeping bag, socks, gloves and hand warmers,'" Herbert said. Members of her church and other organizations stepped up to help.

That help quickly escalated from tents and sleeping bags to hotel rooms.

Herbert worked out a deal with three nearby hotels. For \$300, she could house two people for one week and keep them out of the



A homeless man lives under an overpass near downtown Oklahoma City.

record-breaking cold.

She and her fiancé drove around, picking up some members of the homeless community.

"A lot of them are people we've been helping," Herbert said. "Some of them were found at camps."

One had been living under an overpass. Another man told them he had spent the previous night in a box. They saw him walking across a parking lot and asked if he wanted help.

"We said, 'Hey, can we help you?'" Herbert said. "He got in the van and kept saying, 'Thank you for warm stuff. Thank you, Jesus, for the box that kept me warm last night. And thank you, Jesus, for putting me here so I could meet you.'"

Herbert's fiancé knelt at the man's feet, removing his old, dirty socks and putting on new, warm ones.

In all, Herbert got more than 60 people, and a few pets, off the streets. She checked on them daily, brought food and made sure other immediate needs were met.

Luke and Kate Hartman have seen the work Herbert has done for the last several years. So when the Memorial Road church members saw her request for aid on social media, they reached out and asked what they could do to help.

"She said dinner would be helpful," Kate Hartman said. The family got what Herbert requested — 14

pizzas, plus a few packages of Oreos and 2-liter sodas — and delivered them. Herbert stayed busy, letting everyone know food had arrived.

"The neat thing was to see the way she interacted with the people she was helping," Luke Hartman said of Herbert. She knew them all by name. She prays with them and shares her faith.

"She's doing what people of faith should be doing," he said. "For her to help as many as she has is just remarkable."

"She's amazing," his wife added.

For more than a week, Oklahomans battled freezing temperatures. Multiple waves of snow covered parts of the state. Some areas received nearly a foot. According to the National Weather Service, Oklahoma City hit minus-14 degrees Fahrenheit one morning, nearly breaking a more than 100-year-old record.

Following the winter storm, President Joe Biden approved an emergency declaration for the state.

"The combination of nearly two weeks of record-breaking low temperatures, heavy snow and freezing rain has had significant impacts on communities across the state," said Mark Gower, director of the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security.

Some of those for whom Herbert found housing were able to stay for two weeks. Her efforts, along with shelters at the local Homeless Alliance and those organized by other groups, likely saved many lives.

Unfortunately, not everyone could be saved. In Oklahoma City, officials say a homeless man died after staying outside in the brutal cold.

Herbert said she knew the man and had even tried to get him into a hotel.

"They wouldn't leave their stuff to shelter," Herbert said. "This is all they have, and they don't want to leave their stuff."

She knows that homelessness is a complex issue that isn't easily solved. Herbert looks ahead, hoping to get sleeping bags, tents and other items to help these individuals after they check out of the hotels.

"I'm working with lots of other people who have followed my journey to get the \$84 sets because, when the cold ends, they will go back to the street," Herbert said.

While she's grateful for the attention her recent work has received, she points out that it's really nothing new.

"It's absolutely what we do every day at Second Chances," she said.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY DELISA HERBERT

Delisa Herbert, left, meets Luke Hartman and his sons, Isaac and George, as they deliver pizzas to the homeless during the winter storm.

# In Pacific Northwest, churches create community

BY MAKYRA WILLIAMSON | FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

## SALEM, Ore.

Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Churches of Christ in the Pacific Northwest forge ahead to create meaningful connections.

Regional events are a key part of developing community, and Leadership Training for Christ Northwest is no exception.

Every April, congregations from Washington, Oregon and Idaho gather for the convention. In 2020, it was canceled due to the pandemic.

“A virtual convention would take a lot of planning and promotion and resources that we just didn’t have the ability to do,” said LTC Northwest board member Millissa Macomber, who attends the Skagit Valley Church of Christ in Burlington, Wash. “This year, we’re still really pushing to have an in-person convention.”

Normally, the Richland Church of Christ in Washington hosts the convention at its building and a local high school. But this year details will depend on state regulations. The board is exploring options and considering moving some events outdoors.

Even though LTC Northwest might look different, people want to be involved.

“We’re very excited that the registration numbers look really strong, especially after taking a year off,” Macomber said. “It’s good to see that people value LTC and are still interested in participating.”

## ‘CAMPS ARE REALLY IMPORTANT’

LTC wasn’t the only regional event canceled by the pandemic.

Under normal circumstances, Camp Yamhill, which is associated with Churches of Christ, hosts about 75 events per year. Those include youth camps, weekend retreats and rentals by outside groups.

But in 2020, Yamhill hosted only 30 events, losing 87 percent of its annual revenue, according to camp manager Scott King.

Thanks to a forgivable federal loan and donors, the camp is staying afloat financially and, depending on government regulations, plans to resume normal activities this



PHOTO PROVIDED BY MIKE LEWIS

Madeline Lewis cuts lumber during “Mission Stay” by the Southwest Church of Christ in Tigard, Ore. The youth group worked on projects close to home.

summer, King said. Yamhill benefited from the Payroll Protection Program, part of the federal government’s Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act.

Another camp associated with Churches of Christ — Delano Bay Christian Camp in Lakebay, Wash., southwest of Seattle — faced similar challenges.

All five summer camp sessions for seventh- through 12th-graders were canceled. Also, the camp couldn’t rent space to other nonprofits, which is a main source of revenue.

“We were worried that we’d be scraping the bottom of the barrel to just make it to the next summer, but thankfully, we had some generous donors,” said Thomas Morse,



Morse

the camp’s board chairman and minister at the Springbrook Church of Christ in Renton, Wash.

For Morse, the goal is about more than just keeping the doors open — it’s about providing opportunities for teens to build relationships with mature Christians.

“I grew up in this area, and the camps are really important for the growth and the culture of the youth,” Morse said. “It’s when they get to see their friends that they only get to see two or three times a year.”

## ‘IT’S A JOURNEY THAT WE’RE ON’

In an area where churches and youth groups tend to be smaller, those friendships are invaluable, he said.

While camps look ahead to the summer, families are navigating an untraditional year as Oregon and Washington schools reopen.

At Columbia Christian School in Portland — a K-12 school associated with Churches of Christ — students are happy to be back in the classroom.

Starting in September, Columbia took advantage of state regulations that allowed up to two hours a day of in-person instruction.

Columbia Christian President Ami Vensel, who attends the Metro Church of Christ in Gresham, Ore., said the school used this time to focus on students’ social, emotional and spiritual needs.

After Christmas, as state regulations allowed, Columbia gradually brought all grades back to the classroom, using a hybrid model to accommodate staff and families.

Despite the challenges of the year, Vensel encourages students and families to focus on the positive.

“This isn’t a time that we’re surviving,” she said. “It’s a journey that we’re on.”



Vensel

As schools and camps navigate questions of social distancing, churches settle into new rhythms.

At the Keizer Church of Christ in Oregon, the eldership has adapted its approach over the months.

“From the onset, the question always before us was to what extent do we comply with a public external order, and what are we called to do as Christians?” said Don Boderman, a Keizer elder.

“We wanted people to determine what their risk tolerance was for themselves and for their families,” Boderman added. “For elders to lay down other restrictions on top of what the counties and other authorities were doing just felt like it was overly burdensome.”

The Southwest Church of Christ in Tigard, Ore., is the region’s largest Church of Christ. Pre-pandemic attendance hovered around 500.

“The goal for 2020 was that every member would be a minister, a minister to each other, a minister to the community,” said Mike Lewis, Southwest’s young adult and worship minister.

Initially, church leaders wondered how this would work during a pandemic, but members rose to the challenge, Lewis said. They delivered food, visited people on their porches, sent cards and made phone calls, and it didn’t stop there.

The church served the community, too, providing food baskets and holiday meals for locals.

“They really wanted to help people,” Lewis said.



Lewis

By necessity, Christians in the Pacific Northwest are a tight-knit group, he said. Every event, whether it’s at summer camp or a local congregation, is a valuable opportunity for fellowship.

And in an area where churches are usually small, those opportunities aren’t taken for granted.

“We’re all in the same kind of community, and we try to get along with each other, and we invite each other to things,” Lewis said. “We work together here.”

# Back in the pulpit

**AFTER A LENGTHY** battle with COVID-19, Oklahoma minister Mitch Wilburn returns to preaching.

BY CHELLIE ISON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

A small table and stool sat on the stage at The Park Church of Christ in Tulsa, Okla., as Mitch Wilburn got up to preach for the first time in nearly five months.

"I was not nervous for him to deliver a sermon," said Shannon Wilburn, Mitch's wife. "I was nervous if his dizziness would kick in."

In October, Wilburn was hospitalized with COVID-19. The roller coaster of his 48 days in the hospital was intense. He was intubated, then extubated, only to be intubated a second time.

At one point, a nurse called code blue as his heart rate dropped to zero. Then — miraculously, his family said — his heart began to beat again. Within days, he regained some strength and the ability to breathe on his own. Just before Christmas, he was sent home.

His journey with COVID-19 was not over, though.

"I don't know if I'm what they call a COVID long-hauler yet, but I still have to listen to my body and be careful," Wilburn said.

In fact, just one week before he stepped back on the stage at the church building, he was back in the hospital.

Doctors are still trying to figure out if it's COVID-19 or his myasthenia gravis, an autoimmune disease, causing him to have heaviness in his body and dizzy spells.

Despite the lingering issues, Wilburn was ready to be back preaching.

"I started teaching during my freshman year of college," he said. "Other than a vacation, I've taught for the past 35 years, every Sunday."

In his first sermon back, which was streamed on YouTube, Wilburn took a moment to thank everyone

for their prayers and to applaud fellow Christians who had preached in his place for the last few months.

While his sermon focused on the Lord's Supper, Wilburn did mention his journey back to health.

"If your house caught on fire today, what would you go in and get?" he asked the congregation.

He then showed what he would grab — a Bible that his mother had given him and a prayer journal that he began on Oct. 15, 2020, as he entered the COVID-19 unit at a Tulsa hospital.

He shared how it documented his journey day by day.

"There's a break in there where I didn't know if I was going to see another day," he shared.

The journal, he said, also contained precious letters to his wife and children, letters he wrote when he wasn't sure if he would ever see them again.

When asked about that journal, Wilburn said, "It's interesting to know not only what I was writing but the way I was writing. It's enlightening. Some of those things I had forgotten."

For church members, having Wilburn back in the pulpit felt "normal," in a good way, considering so many things in the last year have felt "abnormal."

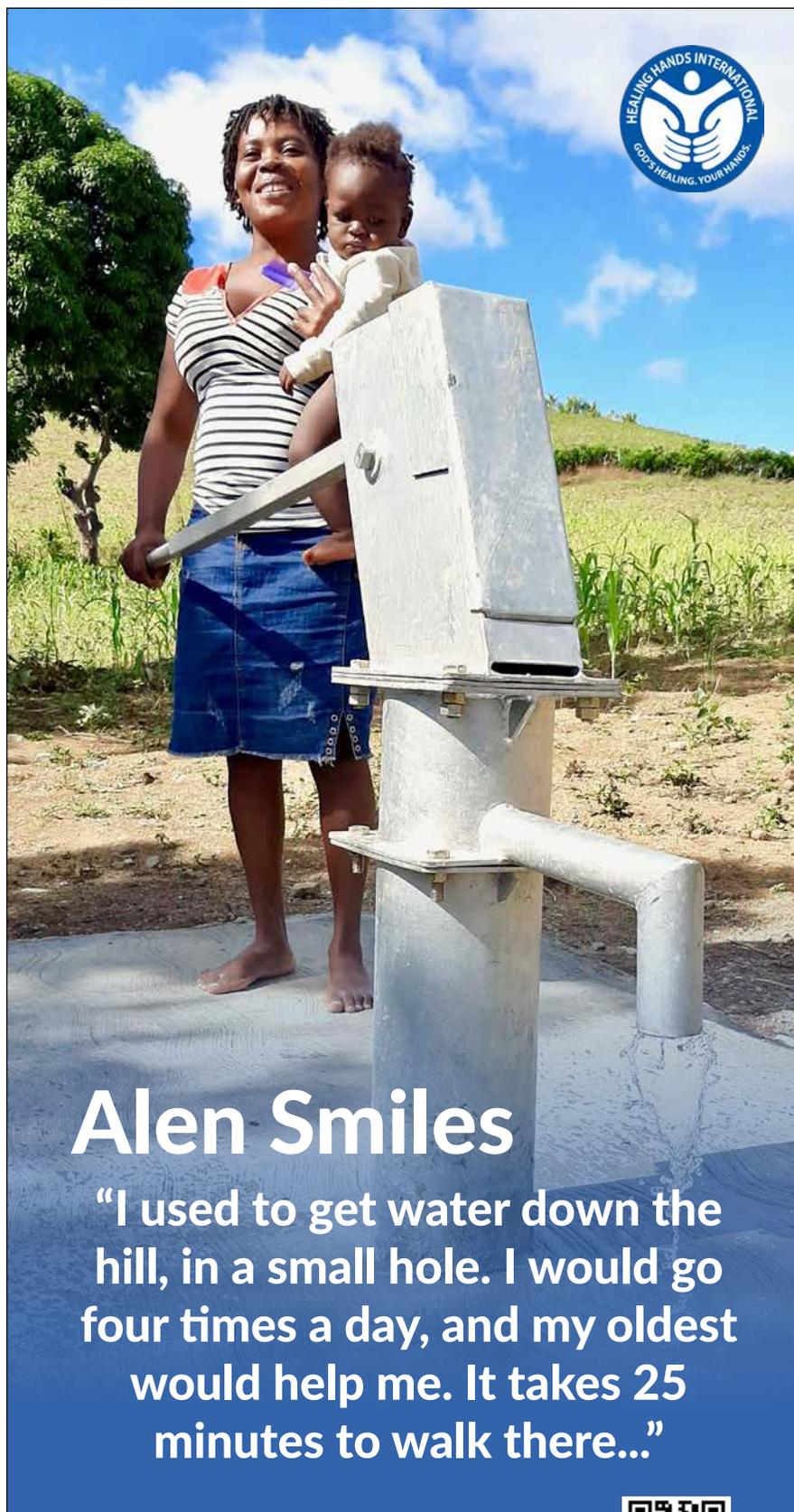
"Seeing your preacher (and I do think of him as 'mine') almost die but then return to the pulpit was a sermon before he even started talking," said Brute Wolf, an elder of The Park church.

In his sermon, Wilburn challenged those listening to not only pray *for* others but to pray *over* others.

"There is something ultimately powerful when you stop what you are doing ... and you decide, like Christ, you will not only pray for them but you will stop right there, lay hands on them and pray over them," he said before referencing Jesus praying over those he loved in John 17.



Wilburn



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PHOTO PROVIDED BY LYNN JONES

Casey Jones, center, with sons James, left, and Kirby. Casey and James, also known as Jay, died after being hospitalized with COVID-19.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY SUE WINN

Sue Winn, center in gray, with her sister and parents, Margie and Russell Slasor. Russell died after being diagnosed with COVID-19 in January 2021.

# UNFATHOMABLE: 'Every single life lost deserves our lament'

## FROM PAGE 1

those who died around the world — each represented 1,000 lives.

"We wanted to provide some visual representation to help us appreciate the magnitude of lives affected by this pandemic and help remind us that every single life lost deserves our lament," Metz said.



Metz

## LOSSES FELT DEEPLY

Unfortunately, for families like Lynn Jones', the toll of the pandemic is still being felt deeply.

"It's been a process," she said. "My biggest fear is for my husband. If he got it, is he going to react like his father and his brother did?"

They aren't alone. In a recent *Christian Chronicle* survey, members of Churches of Christ across the nation reflected on their loved ones who had died from COVID-19.

Amy Barbee, a member of the Lake Houston Church of Christ in Humble, Texas, fondly recalled her father, Eddie Stegall, 61, who died in December.

"He was a servant of God who lived his life to love others and teach of God's love," Barbee said. "He was our rock."

Sue Winn, a member of the Mount Comfort Church of Christ in Fayetteville, Ark., shared about her

father, Russell Slasor, 92.

"All through his life he was strong in evangelism, trying to teach people about the Lord," Winn said.

Slasor contracted the virus in the nursing home where he and his wife lived. His illness was discovered during routine testing at the facility. At first, he had no symptoms, but days later his condition worsened, and he was put on hospice care.

"I've been a nurse for 33 years-plus, and I've never seen anything like this," Winn said. "Do all you can to stay healthy and strong in your faith, but prepare that you or someone you love could be gone from it very, very quickly."

## 'A LOT OF PEOPLE MOURNING'

Casey and James Jones were diagnosed around the same time. The family doesn't know how they contracted the virus.

Casey died in September. James, known as Jay to his colleagues at Oklahoma Christian University, where he once served as vice president of finance, was hospitalized and then put on a ventilator. He fought for weeks, but in November he, too, passed away. Just weeks later, in January, MacLeod died.

"I totally understand it not seeming real or as dire when you haven't been impacted like that," Jones said of losing three family members.

Metz encourages Christians, especially those who have not lost a

loved one to the virus, to reflect on the pandemic's global impact.

"It may be the one thing in our lifetime that the entire world has experienced at the same time," Metz said. "This is an opportunity for the church to mourn with those who mourn. And there are a lot of people mourning."

Winn encourages those who still have doubts about the virus — or who struggle to understand the magnitude of the lives lost — to take precautions and be careful.

"Do all you can to protect your family and protect everyone else," Winn said. "Get the vaccine."

After experiencing such loss, Lynn Jones said it's hard to go out and see others disregard rules and guidelines that health experts recommend. But she reminds herself that all need to show grace and compassion.

"It's a fine line of handling that part of it gracefully, the way God would want us to handle it, and also dealing with the losses we've had," she said.

Her husband, Kirby, also a member of The Branch church, recently told her he prayed for a miracle for all three of the family members before they died. While he didn't get the answer he hoped for, his faith is carrying him through.

"I came to the realization that they are rid of these earthly bodies, and they have gained their reward, which is a greater miracle," he told his wife. "I have to praise God for that."

## We remember

The Christian Chronicle *asked readers to share memories of friends and loved ones lost to COVID-19. See additional tributes at [christianchronicle.org/covidmemorials](http://christianchronicle.org/covidmemorials).*

### Donna Graham

5/30/47 — 12/20/20  
Riverside Church of Christ,  
Burlington, Okla.

"Mom dedicated her life to teaching young people and especially young women," said her son Douglas Graham.

### William Ronald Horsley

11/15/35 — 7/27/20  
Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio  
"Ron is deeply missed by all family and friends," said his sister, Phyllis Horsley.

### Doug Johnson

3/7/64 — 2/1/21  
La Grange Church  
of Christ, Texas

"Doug was a beloved high school coach and history professor who influenced many students over the years. He also taught church history classes for our congregation," said Scott Elliott, minister for the La Grange Church of Christ.

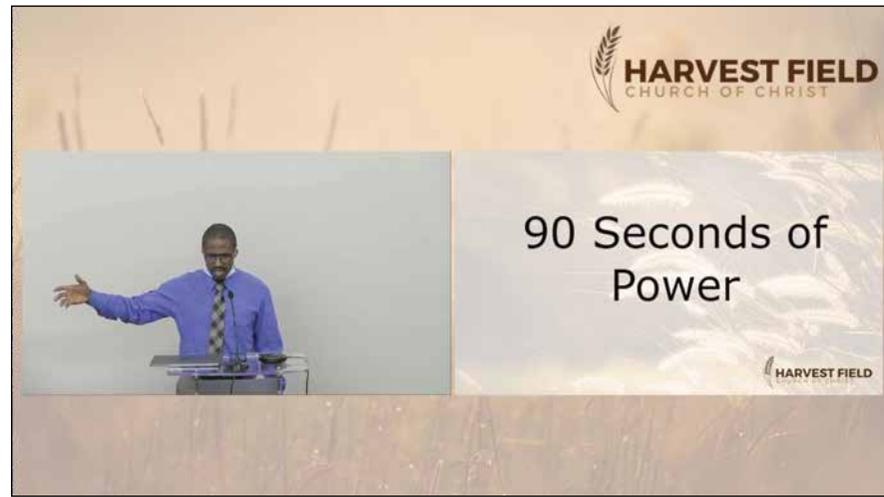


Johnson



PHOTO PROVIDED BY TRAVIS HEPPNER

The Harvest Field Church of Christ's first meeting place was a garage in Omaha, Neb. "We realized the need to get a spiritually strong congregation in the heart of West Omaha," minister Travis Heppner said.



VIDEO STILL VIA FACEBOOK.COM/HARVESTFIELDCHURCHOFCHRIST

Now meeting in a leased building, the Harvest Field Church of Christ has in-person worship with masks and social distancing and livestreams its worship services on social media.

## SIMPLER: 'Small groups are having an interesting resurgence'

FROM PAGE 3

Now, as vaccination rates rise and infections begin to dip, some Christians envision a stripped-down, simpler church post-pandemic, with fewer formalized programs and less structured worship.

"Small groups are having an interesting resurgence," said Jeff Walling, a longtime minister who directs the Youth Leadership Initiative at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif. "More and more people are asking the question: 'Is this more what God intended than 1,000 of us all standing in an auditorium, all staring in the same direction?'"

### MICROCHURCH: NEW NAME, OLD IDEA

The idea of small, simple churches meeting in (or outside of) homes predates the pandemic by some 2,000 years.

"I think that the first century church often followed the home model," said Kenneth Fatula, an elder of the 50-member Berwick Church of Christ in Pennsylvania. "It seems that larger congregations must be careful to identify members by name as individuals, not just as numbers and revenue sources.

"It think it's time to evaluate what constitutes assembly and why we do it," Fatula said. Churches do not "gather to worship," he added, but are instructed to "live lives of worship," as the apostle Paul urges in Romans 12:1.

Two millennia after Paul's exhortation, movements of "microchurches" have sprung up across the U.S.



Wegner

Rob Wegner is the founding leader of KC Underground, a decentralized network of small groups in Kansas City. In the first months of the pandemic, he wrote a piece for Exponential, a ministry that provides resources, training and seminars to help churches multiply.

"This pandemic demonstrates the absolute (necessity) and power of the microchurch," Wegner wrote, "which provides an adaptability, an embodiment of community and invulnerability that larger, more organized expressions will struggle to realize."

### A 'CHURCH WITHIN A CHURCH'

Yet many established churches that met in buildings pre-pandemic have adapted well, often through the use of small groups, church members told *The Christian Chronicle*.

"The small group became our church within a church," said Lisa Leichner, a member of the Blacksburg Church of Christ in Virginia. Even when the 150-member congregation resumed in-person worship with social distancing and masks, the services "felt less impactful to my spiritual growth than did

the small group's service together."

Going forward, churches need to find new ways to engage people of all ages outside the formal worship setting, Leichner said. She's inspired by the innovative ways her fellow Christians have reached out to each other, online and otherwise, in tough circumstances.



Leichner

Such efforts "helped me develop tighter relationships with the people who stretched and grew in order to stick together.

"Let your creatives lead and shine. Let all of God's gifts among your church members show the way. I think that's probably true whether we're in a pandemic or not."

### AN ELBOWS-ONLY CHURCH

If the church is one body with many parts, as Paul writes a bit later in Romans 12, Jordon Brown is pretty sure he's an elbow.

"As an introvert, I've never been part of a successful home church, small group Sunday night life group," he said. "It seems I always get placed with other elbows, so the body doesn't function properly."



Brown

Brown now worships with the largest congregation he's ever been part of — the 600-member West-Ark Church of Christ in Fort Smith, Ark. He describes his role there as "third-string sound guy" and said he's happy to be "serving with my God-given talents to the best of my ability." He understands that others may feel unseen in larger congregations and opt for small home churches.

"I believe different Christians need both," he said, "and God is OK with that."

### 'THINK BIG BUT ACT SMALL'

Many churches that meet in brick-and-mortar facilities started as house churches, including the Harvest Field Church of Christ in Omaha, Neb., which launched in spring 2018 in what Travis Heppner described as "a nice garage."

As the church grew, "we had some decisions to make," said Heppner,

one of the founding members. "Do we continue staying in a house, divide and plant other house churches or move forward together?"

"The clear answer was 'move forward together.'" The church leased its first building in late 2020.

"Numerous times people would tell us they were not comfortable coming



Heppner



PHOTO VIA FACEBOOK.COM/BACKYARDCHURCHOFAUBURN

Members of Backyard Church wrote cards with messages of inspiration for more than 300 people in Auburn's assisted and independent living facilities. To learn more about the congregation and about church planting, see [backyardchurch.org](http://backyardchurch.org) or contact Matt Dabbs at [matt@backyardchurch.org](mailto:matt@backyardchurch.org).

because it met in someone's house," Heppner said. "We struggled to get visitors to attend."

That doesn't mean the church has given up on home-based meetings.

As the pandemic subsides, members plan to launch a small-group program called Wednesday Night Connect. Groups of five to 15 members and one teacher will meet in spaces where it's easy to be seen and to invite others to join — coffee shops, public places or, perhaps, homes.

"We've perfected how to do this through the pandemic," Heppner said, "as some families meet at home and join remotely and others meet in the building. ... We seem to be on our way to figuring out how to think big but act small — and stay connected as we grow."

#### SMALL CHURCHES, BIG IMPACT

About one week before the pandemic lockdowns began, Matt and Missy Dabbs attended a conference in Orlando, Fla., hosted by the Exponential church planting and multiplication ministry.

"We went away from it thinking, 'That's not for us,'" Matt Dabbs said.

Soon, they were planting a church in their own backyard.

After the initial lockdowns lifted in summer 2020, members of the Auburn Church of Christ who had been worshiping with Backyard Church returned to their home congregation. But the new church kept growing, and in October Matt Dabbs talked with the Auburn church's elders and made the prayerful decision to step away from the pulpit. He

now focuses on Backyard Church full time in addition to his duties as editor of *Wineskins*, a faith-based publication.

He's not sure what will happen next. The congregation is determined to not buy a building, he said. Perhaps they'll plant new churches that multiply across the backyards of east Alabama. The pandemic has taught them to not cling too tightly to future plans, Dabbs said, and to be open to the opportunities God provides.

The church already has an international mission. Tulibagenyi, the prayer team leader, makes regular trips to his native Uganda to serve children with special needs — many of whom are neglected and treated as outcasts, he said. Now he sees more and more children finding acceptance in Uganda's churches, he said.

On his most recent trip, Tulibagenyi took notes of encouragement for the children he serves, written by members of Backyard Church.

When the church asked him to join, "my answer was 'yes' because God had already prepared me," he said. "This is a community, and I believe God wants us to be a community. It's not about big churches; it's about our commitment. Small churches can make a big impact all over the world."

He's seen that through what he called his "little experience" with Backyard Church. "I can't wait to see what is going to happen next."

**READ THE SERIES:** Go to [christianchronicle.org/post-pandemic-church/](http://christianchronicle.org/post-pandemic-church/) to find links to all of the articles on "The Post-Pandemic Church."

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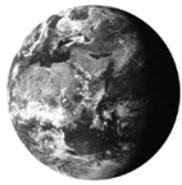
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# The Christian Chronicle®

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**ALABAMA:** Church of Christ, Aliceville; Cedar Grove Church of Christ, Andalusia; Bay Minette Church of Christ, Bay Minette; Berry Church of Christ, Berry; Petersville Church of Christ, Florence; Henry Street Church of Christ, Gadsden; Church of Christ, Gurley; N. Hanceville Church of Christ, Hanceville; Davenport Church of Christ, Hope Hull; Madison Church of Christ, Madison; Swancott Church of Christ, Madison; Fairfield Church of Christ, Moulton; River Road Church of Christ, Muscle Shoals; North Pickens Church of Christ, Reform. **ALASKA:** Anchor Point Church of Christ, Anchor Point; Spring Brook Church of Christ, Eagle River. **ARIZONA:** Church of Christ, Benson; West Valley Church of Christ, Buckeye; Duncan Church of Christ, Duncan; Desert Church of Christ, Kingman; Kingman Church of Christ, Kingman; Mesa Church of Christ, Mesa; Salt River Church of Christ, Mesa. **ARKANSAS:** Church of Christ, Ashdown; Beedeville Church of Christ, Beedeville; Church of Christ, Bentonville; Woodrow Church of Christ, Conway; Mt. Comfort Church of Christ, Fayetteville; Central Church of Christ, Genoa; Greenway Church of Christ, Greenway; Hatfield Church of Christ, Hatfield; Hiwasse Church of Christ, Hiwasse; Emerson Street Church of Christ, Magnolia; Maynard Church of Christ, Maynard; Melbourne Church of Christ, Melbourne; New View Church of Christ, Nashville; Levy Church of Christ, North Little Rock; Oak Grove Church of Christ, North Little Rock; Wheeling Church of Christ, Salem; Cloverdale Church of Christ, Searcy; West Pleasure Church of Christ, Searcy; Success Church of Christ, Success; Free Street Church of Christ, Walnut Ridge. **CALIFORNIA:** Central Church of Christ, Anaheim; North Oaks Church of Christ, Canyon Country; Dos Palos Church of Christ, Dos Palos; Church of Christ, Healdsburg; Imperial Beach Church of Christ, Imperial Beach; La Puente Church of Christ, La Puente; La Verne Church of Christ, La Verne; Los Altos Church of Christ, Long Beach; South Lynwood Church of Christ, Lynwood; McKinleyville Church of Christ, McKinleyville; Morro Bay Church of Christ, Morro Bay; Murrieta Church of Christ, Murrieta; Rialto Church of Christ, Rialto; Riverdale Church of Christ, Riverdale; Temple Church of Christ Korean, San Gabriel; Santa Cruz Church of Christ, Santa Cruz; Simi Valley Church of Christ, Simi Valley; Victor Valley Church of Christ, Victorville; Woodlake Church of Christ, Woodlake. **COLORADO:** Columbine Church of Christ, Greeley; Highlands Ranch Church of Christ, Highlands Ranch; Church of Christ, Holyoke; Rye Church of Christ, Rye. **DELAWARE:** Seaford Church of Christ, Seaford. **FLORIDA:** 53rd Avenue Church of Christ, Bradenton; Fifth Street Church of Christ, Crystal River; Westside Church of Christ, Daytona Beach; Fort Walton Beach Church of Christ, Fort Walton Beach; Holly Hill Church of Christ, Holly Hill; Arlington Church of Christ, Jacksonville; Normandy Church of Christ, Jacksonville; South 14th Street Church of Christ, Leesburg; Bay Area Church of Christ, Mango; Okeechobee Church of Christ, Okeechobee; Church of Christ, Oxford; North River Church of Christ, Parrish; West Broward Church of Christ, Plantation; South Hillsborough Church of Christ, Ruskin; Osprey Avenue Church of Christ, Sarasota; Gifford Church of Christ, Vero Beach. **GEORGIA:** US 19 Church of Christ, Albany; Hentown Church of Christ, Blakely; McCartha Drive Church of Christ, Columbus; Habersham Church of Christ, Cornelia; Church of Christ on Hillbridge, Dublin; Edison Church of Christ, Edison; Folkston Church of Christ, Folkston; Newsome St. Church of Christ, Hahira; Church of Christ Twiggs County, Jeffersonville; Lake Park Church of Christ, Lake Park; North Macon Church of Christ, Macon; Courtland Avenue Church of Christ, Quitman; Quitman Church of Christ, Quitman; Oak Hill Church of Christ, Rome; Mountain View Church of Christ, Rossville; Liberty City Church of Christ, Savannah; Middleground Church of Christ, Savannah. **HAWAII:** Church of Christ at Pearl Harbor, Honolulu. **IDAHO:** Linder Road Church of Christ, Meridian; Pocatello Church of Christ, Pocatello. **ILLINOIS:** Browning Church of Christ, Browning; Wall Street Church of Christ, Carbondale; East Park Church of Christ, Danville; Macomb Church of Christ, Macomb; Park Forest Church of Christ, Matteson; Lake Land Church of Christ, Mattoon; Moline Church of Christ, Moline. **INDIANA:** Northlake Church of Christ, Gary; Huntington Church of Christ, Huntington; Church of Christ, Indianapolis; Fountain Square Church of Christ, Indianapolis; Main Street Church of Christ, Lynn; Church of Christ, Mount Vernon; Oaktown Church of Christ, Oaktown. **IOWA:** Sac City Church of Christ, Sac City; West Side Church of Christ, West Union. **KANSAS:** Basehor Church of Christ, Basehor; Colby Church of Christ, Colby; Eureka Church of Christ, Eureka; Hoxie Church of Christ, Hoxie; Eastwood Church of Christ, Hutchinson; Norwich Church of Christ, Norwich; Oberlin Church of Christ, Oberlin; 15th Street Church of Christ, Ottawa; Russell Church of Christ, Russell; Chisholm Trail Church of Christ, Wichita. **KENTUCKY:** Bardstown Church of Christ, Bardstown; Penns Chapel Church of Christ, Bowling Green; Asphalt Church of Christ, Brownsville; Main Street Church of Christ, Calhoun; Eddyville Church of Christ, Eddyville; Bethel Church of Christ, Franklin; Midwest Church of Christ, Louisville; Rolling Hills Church of Christ, Mt. 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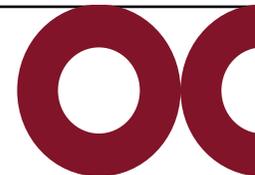
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PHOTO PROVIDED BY JAMES WISER

In a year of ups and downs, James and Candice Wisers watch the Los Angeles Dodgers play in the World Series at the new Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas.

# Faith on the move

**THESE CHRISTIANS** *relocated during the pandemic. Finding a new church home is a challenge.*

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

James and Candice Wisers's church family in Southern California shed tears this past summer as the couple and their two young daughters prepared to move to West Texas.

The Camarillo Church of Christ, about 50 miles west of Los Angeles, organized a socially distanced going-away party in its tree-shaded parking lot just off the Ventura Freeway.

"It was really emotionally gutting," James Wisers said of the hug-free send-off. "They gave us gifts. They prayed over us."

Then — even as the couple settled into new jobs 1,300 miles away at Abilene Christian University — the Wisers kept showing up for the Camarillo church's Sunday service.

Via Zoom.

At 10 a.m. West Coast time, between Bible study and worship,



VIDEO SCREENSHOT PROVIDED BY JAMES WISER

**Members of the Camarillo Church of Christ in Southern California visit online.**

the 100-member congregation enjoys 30 minutes of virtual fellowship.

"We have a Zoom free-for-all where there are 40 squares on the screen,

and we all talk to each other, and that's from noon to 12:30 p.m. our time," said James Wisers, who joined ACU as dean of library information

services and educational technology.

Candice Ortals-Wiser, an ACU political science professor who taught previously at Pepperdine University, said, "So, during coffee and doughnuts, everyone watches us eat lunch and talk to them, and then we have service after our lunch."

In some ways, it's as if the husband, wife and their daughters — 5-year-old Etta and 3-year-old Marian — never left.

"I feel like we need to apologize to them because they were thinking they were getting rid of us," James joked. "But sure enough, every Sunday we're still logging on."

## A NEW WAY OF CONNECTING

During the pandemic, many Churches of Christ have — by choice or government order — curtailed in-person activities and relied on online worship.

CONTINUED



Kevin and Taneise Perry moved from Richmond, Va., to Charlotte, N.C., with their three sons, from left, K.J., 13; Keston, 6; and Kent, 11.



At far right, Taneise Perry and her husband, Kevin, sing with the praise team of the Kingdom Church of Christ in Charlotte, N.C. The group records songs on Saturday morning to be included on the church's Sunday worship video. "That's really been a lifesaver for my husband and me," Taneise said of singing with the group.



Tim and Peggi Kern found a new church home in Walled Lake, Mich.



Before leaving Southern California, James and Candice Wisner pose at the beach with their daughters, from left, Marian, 3, and Etta, 5.

#### CONTINUED

For Christians such as the Wisers, the COVID-19 era has brought both blessings and challenges to the normal process of seeking a new church home.

When the coronavirus is no longer an active threat to people's health, 91 percent of Protestant churchgoers plan to attend in-person services at least as often as they did before the pandemic, according to a recent survey by Nashville, Tenn.-based Lifeway Research.

But some changes could be lasting.

Since the early days of radio and television, Churches of Christ have been quick to adopt new technologies, most often for evangelism, said John Young, a theology professor at Amridge University in Montgomery, Ala.

Likewise, congregations' early use of the World Wide Web was geared toward reaching outsiders.

But the last year has demonstrated the internet's huge potential for "sustaining intra-congregational connectivity," said Young, whose Ph.D. dissertation included research on online faith communities.

"I expect that churches, having already developed the capacity to effectively stream their services and provide other content online, will continue to do so," the professor said. "And I think there will be both greater attention paid to congregations' internet presences and a greater appreciation of the reality that the 'body' still exists even when its members are not physically together."

#### 'ARE WE DOING ENOUGH?'

Just before America's COVID-19 lockdown began in March 2020, Kevin and Taneise Perry moved from Richmond, Va., to Charlotte, N.C.

Their three sons — K.J., 13; Kent, 11; and Keston, 6 — barely had time to meet their new classmates before all instruction moved online.

Meanwhile, Taneise's first day with her new advertising agency came just as the company shifted to remote work.

"To this day, I haven't met my boss or any of my team," she said. "It's the oddest thing."

The Perrys attended the Three Chopt Church of Christ in Richmond. In previous trips to Charlotte, they had visited the Kingdom Church of Christ, where Taneise's sister Michelle Threath and her family are active members.

"Had we not moved somewhere where we at least knew someone, we would have been lost when it came to selecting a congregation," Taneise said.

"But at the same time, we could've easily abandoned trying to get a feel of a local congregation and just watched virtually churches we were familiar with in the Texas area," she said, noting that her husband previously served as a youth minister for the Mountain View Church of Christ in Dallas.

When the Kingdom church needed singers for its praise team, worship leader Mario McKennon recruited the Perrys.

So, Kevin and Taneise began joining a socially distanced group to record songs each Saturday morning for the congregation's

Sunday video service.

"That's really been a lifesaver for my husband and me," Taneise said. "Not only are we getting somewhat of a worship experience, but we've also been able to meet a few people this way. We're obviously in a different predicament than the average person having to stay home 100 percent for worship."

Still, she worries about her sons' lack of connection with people from church, except via a screen.

"That's something we've had to face: Are we doing enough?" she said. "Now that we don't have the backup of Bible class on Sunday, Bible class on Wednesdays, youth events — are we doing enough at home to ensure we're instilling Christ in our kids?"

#### 'WE NEED THAT CONNECTION'

Tim and Peggi Kern didn't make a cross-country move.

They relocated to a different part of the Detroit metro area to be closer to Tim's new engineering job.

The February 2020 move put the couple an hour away from the Lake Orion Church of Christ, their home congregation for

nearly two decades.

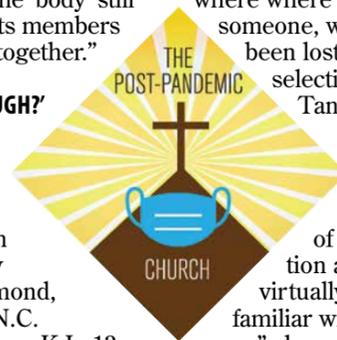
The Kerns paid one visit to the Walled Lake Church of Christ, a mile and a half from their new home, before the pandemic.

After the Walled Lake church began offering Bible classes via Zoom, the couple — who have three adult children and three grandsons — welcomed the opportunity to interact with fellow Christians face to face.

"For me, the positive was being able to see the way the leadership acted and kept community together in a time of crisis," Peggi said. "That was very impressive to me."

"The disadvantage was that you're not going out to lunch or going to someone's house at this time, so even though we're committed members to Walled Lake, there's still a lot of relationship building that we need to make up for," she added. "I don't feel like we know the members as well as we did in the past before COVID."

The Walled Lake church has resumed in-person assemblies but with masks, no singing and certain pews taped off. Members at high risk of a severe case of COVID-19, if infected, still attend virtually.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY JAMES WISER, TANEISE PERRY AND TIM KERN



James and Candice Wisner hang out with Willie the Wildcat, the mascot at Abilene Christian University in West Texas.

Even after the pandemic, the Kerns would love to see the church maintain a hybrid approach to in-person and online connections.

"Certainly, the face-to-face, the physical ability to be together, is critical in my opinion," Tim said. "People in general — God designed us to be communal people. We need that connection."

But the online option allows shut-ins and members who must travel frequently — such as truck drivers — to remain tied into the

body, he said.

"It's amazing the potential for outreach as well as the need to minister to those who are not physically able to attend live," he said. "I think that will be something we will see forever, or hopefully so."

#### ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

Back in Texas, the Wisers have made spiritual connections with colleagues at ACU.

They've experienced the online services of a few local congregations.

They even attended a Friday night small-group meeting of Abilene's Minter Lane Church of Christ — with proper distancing in a church member's back yard.

"I would note that people here have been the church to us," Candice said. "They've brought us food and cookies. It was almost like they were ready to receive us into their ranks and for us to start visiting their church, but there was no way for us to do that."

"So, it's kind of weird because you don't want to lose what you have in Camarillo, but everyone here has done all the actions you do when you see a new person and get them to start being your friend and going to your church," she added. "It's just a weird feeling, being stuck in between."

James and Candice met as students at Harding University in Searcy, Ark., in the 1990s. They reconnected at the North Central Church of Christ in Bloomington, Ind., when both were pursuing graduate studies at Indiana University. Their careers later took them to Michigan, where they attended the Troy Church of Christ.

Now, on any given Sunday, they check out a variety of worship services — all online — at past congregations as well as potential new ones.

"We go to more church now than we ever did before, just all virtually," James said with a chuckle.

In their first year in Texas, the Wisers have endured the death of their dog, Fanny J. Crosby, a 12-year-old Alaskan Malamute named after the famous hymn writer; costly damages to their home from burst water pipes during Texas' record-breaking winter storm; and, of course, the trials caused by the pandemic.

"I try to look on the bright side," said Candice, who, like her husband, recently received COVID-19 vaccinations. "We've all been healthy. None of us has gotten COVID-19. We have insurance."

Also, she loves Texas boots. Wait, what? As she explained, the flooding ruined her boots. Now she has an excuse to go shopping for more.

And very soon, the time might be right, too, to go looking for a new church — one much closer to home.

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## GHANA

**ACCRA** — After a long break due to COVID-19, Churches of Christ in this West African capital hosted a gospel campaign in the Doryumu community. Christians conducted open-air preaching, taught Bible studies and baptized two people, said minister Willie Gley. Organizers included Ghana Gospel Chariot, Bear Valley Bible Institute International and a campaign team from World Bible School.

## HONDURAS

**TEGUCIGALPA** — This Central American nation endured devastating, back-to-back hurricanes in late 2020. The storms, Eta and Iota, affected some 4.5 million people.

The Baxter Institute, a ministry training school associated with Churches of Christ, conducted two relief trips in 2020 and recently completed a third. Churches and

individual Christians from multiple nations contributed to make the trips possible.

In the latest relief trip, workers with Baxter delivered 1,420 bags filled with food, hygiene supplies and medicine to people in need. The team also treated about



VIDEO STILL VIA YOUTUBE

**“God bless all the people of Christ, the church,” says an aid recipient in Baxter Institute’s video.**

250 patients. See a video report on Baxter Institute’s YouTube channel.

## SOUTH AFRICA

**CAPE TOWN** — It’s hard to find any silver lining in South Africa’s rapidly spreading variant of COVID-19, which has claimed lives and shuttered businesses across the nation.

But at least the restrictions meant that no one was in Portlands Church of Christ’s building when the 35-year-old facility’s roof collapsed recently, said minister Malvin Kivedo. Inspectors said that a truss supporting the roof failed.

The building was more than a meeting space for the 40-member



PHOTO PROVIDED BY DAVID MARUBE

## A new generation puts on Christ

Four teenagers (one off-camera) prepare to give their lives to Christ in the village of Bonyancha, Kenya. Minister David Marube, right, baptized the teens after conducting Bible class for a new Church of Christ in the village. Marube, a minister in Kisii, Kenya, invited Simeon Ongiri, minister for the Mogesa Church of Christ, to be the guest preacher.

One of the teens is the child of a man who was converted after studying the Bible through correspondence with the Grove Church of Christ in Oklahoma. “Studying the Bible with someone online, even from several miles away, can result in his baptism and cause others to be saved and the Lord’s church started,” Marube said.

church, now worshipping online.

“We are situated in the heart of gang land,” Kivedo said, and karate classes in the building kept kids off the street. “We fed the community through a soup kitchen,” he added. The church used the building to reach out to Cape Town’s Muslim community.

Post-pandemic, a church member who is a retired teacher hopes to use the building as a tutoring center. The church welcomes donations toward the repairs, Kivedo said.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY MALVIN KIVEDO

**Pews are covered with debris after the Portlands church roof collapse.**

## SPOTLIGHT

### Pandemic brings an ‘awakening’

**DAKAR, Senegal** — There’s bad news and good news for Churches of Christ in this West African, predominantly Muslim nation of 16.3 million souls.

The bad news: Christians did not meet their goal of 20 congregations in Senegal by 2020. Circumstances — including a global pandemic — intervened, said missionary Arnold Dzah.

The good news: “The COVID-19 pandemic brought along some kind of awakening,” Dzah said, “where people have face-to-face encounters with death.”

Even as churches have implemented social distancing and met partially online, visitors have come, and the 12 Churches of Christ in Senegal have experienced numerous baptisms in the past year, Dzah said, adding that many congregations are badly in need of funds for meeting places.

Several church members lost their jobs in the midst of the pandemic. Congregations in Churches of Christ in Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas and individual Christians in the U.S. provided funds to help.

Dzah thanked the White’s Ferry Road Church of Christ in West Monroe, La., for financing a radio program through the One Kingdom ministry.

Senegalese Christians produce gospel programs in Dioula, a language popular in the southern



**Dzah**



PHOTO PROVIDED BY ARNOLD DZAH

**A baptism in Senegal.**

Despite the challenges, “we can say that God never abandoned his church,” Dzah said, “since ... more souls were added to the congregations.”

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## Youth and Children's Minister - Brenham, Texas

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# Brazilian churches online again in wake of aggressive virus strain

## RECIFE, Brazil

Two dozen people per day are dying in this South American city of 1.6 million souls, said missionary Mike Pruitt.

An aggressive strain of COVID-19 has flooded intensive care units across Brazil, which has instituted a new round of lockdowns. Recife instituted a 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew on weekdays and all day on weekends.

"This new curfew means that we'll have to temporarily cancel church assemblies at the building just as they were beginning to return to normal," Pruitt said.

All services are now online. So are courses at the School of the Bible, a ministry directed by Pruitt's son, Josh. As part of its online focus, the school has partnered with Let's Start Talking, a ministry that helps non-native speakers improve their English using the Bible. The LST Connect program allows Christians to conduct online, one-on-one lessons with Brazilians.

"This provides an opportunity for students to practice their English," Josh Pruitt said, "and for teachers to



PHOTO VIA REDEEMINGRECIFE.ORG

## Brazilian Christians record a virtual Bible course on the book of Proverbs.

share their faith using lessons with biblical texts."

A few weeks before the new lockdowns, church members gathered for worship during Carnival, the nationwide celebration that precedes Lent. Many church members usually leave the city to avoid the often-risky celebrations, Mike Pruitt said.

"However, this year there were none," he added, "and we had good numbers attend. God can bring some good out of the worst situations."

## Training goes virtual, crosses continents

**GEMUNDEN WEILROD, Germany** — A church-owned campsite in this forested German village sat empty for this year's Advanced Bible Study Series, which began in 1968 and brought believers together for an intensive dive into Scripture.

Instead, members of Churches of Christ from across Europe, Canada and the U.S. gathered online for the series.

Jaro Marcin, regional director for Eastern European Mission and member of the Church of Christ in Prague, Czech Republic, spoke on "Lessons learned from the Teacher (Qoheleth)" in Ecclesiastes.

Patrick Boyns, principal of the British Bible School in England taught from Ezekiel. Craig Young,



Wieb

a missionary in Marseille, France, spoke on "Ephesians: A Unity Beyond All We Could Ask Or Imagine." Todd Olsen of Oklahoma City presented lessons on "Two Tools and a Ready Answer" that focused on how Christianity answers the questions of origin, purpose and destiny that all world religions attempt to answer.

A guest speaker for the series was 94-year-old Dan Wieb, who logged into the seminar from Dauphin, Manitoba, where he once served as president of Western Christian College, a former ministry training school in Canada associated with Churches of Christ.

"Some might see it as the highlight of the week," said coordinator Paul Brazle, a missionary in Belgium, of Wieb's participation of the event from a continent away.

# Milestones

Showcase the lives of your loved ones — birth and wedding announcements, anniversaries, memorials, honors for longtime ministers and workers and more. Contact [tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org](mailto:tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org) for rates and more information.

## Anniversaries



### Robert and Loretta Hamm (65 years)

Robert and Loretta (Maltbie) Hamm are celebrating 65 years of marriage! They were married in Cherokee, Okla., on March 10, 1956. They met while attending Central Christian College in Bartlesville, Okla. (now Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City).

Robert has served as a pulpit minister in Norwich, Conn., Fort Dodge, Iowa, Alva, Okla., and Dewey, Okla. In addition to serving the local communities, he has participated in multiple mission endeavors throughout the world and has sung with gospel quartets. His gift and legacy have been to provide never-ending encouragement to others.

Loretta has been a wonderful wife and mother to three children, Bible class teacher extraordinaire, and church camp cook and has entertained thousands of guests in their home with her fabulous hospitality and culinary skills. Now retired, they live in Edmond, Okla., and are grandma and grandpa to two boys whom they adore. Robert works part time for a funeral home where he serves families who are grieving.

Thank you, Robert and Loretta, for your extraordinary example of Christian love and service!

**Herman and Shirley Pope**, 67 years, members of the Nampa Church of Christ in Idaho. Congratulations, Herman and Shirley!

## Memorials

### Sidney Dwayne Ellis 1930-2020

A memorial service for brother Ellis is planned for 3 p.m. Friday, April 9, at the meeting place of the Owasso Church of Christ in Oklahoma.

Sidney was born to Jewel (J.W.) and Irene Goodson Ellis on Oct. 21, 1930, in Foss, Okla. He departed this life on Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020, at 90 years and 17 days old. His high school sweetheart, Maxine Whinery, was by his side for their 71 years of love-filled married life.

Sidney was valedictorian for the 1949 graduation class of Dill City High School in Oklahoma. The next year he began studies at Abilene Christian College (now University) in Texas. He was a dedicated student and condensed a four-year education degree into three years. Following his college graduation in 1953, he began his preaching career that spanned six decades. He started in a small church at Ames, Okla., which is near Enid. He ended his full-time career in Owasso in 1994. At Owasso he filled the pulpit position for nine years, served as an elder for 15 years, and led the Owasso School of Biblical Studies as director for 10 years.

Family and friends know Sidney as a teller of jokes. His motto was "Everyone needs humor." He would never tire of retelling his stories to one and all. He would rehearse and learn new ones inside the Owasso McDonald's. This is where the ROMEO (Retired Old Men Eating Out) club met daily.

Sidney shared his love of the Lord and His Word with many, many people. As a respected gospel preacher, he became an encourager to others in the preaching profession.



His children, Max Dwayne, Ken and Janice, seven grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren are all blessed with the memory and influence of this godly, encouraging man.

### Van Tate 1935-2021

Van Tate, age 85, of Searcy, Ark., passed away on Jan. 24, 2021. He is

survived by his wife, Jean Tate, and four daughters and sons-in-law: Susan Harrington (Larry); Lori Shelton (Jim); Ann Neal (Eddie); and Jill Wood (Michael), all of Searcy. He is also survived by two sisters and their husbands: Janice McCoy (Glenn) of Yorba Linda, California, and Jo Lynn Wilson (Wayne) of Searcy. In addition, he is survived by nine grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

Van attended and graduated from Florida Christian College, Abilene Christian College, Fuller Theological Seminary (where he received an M.A.) and the University of Nairobi in Kenya (where he received a Ph.D. in anthropology).

In 1965, Van and Jean moved to Kenya with their children where they served as pioneer missionaries, planting the seed of the gospel and starting many churches. In 1976, he began a career at Harding University, where he remained until his retirement. He taught sociology, cultural anthropology, missions, and Bible. Van influenced another generation of missionaries who went not only to Kenya but also to other nations around the world. He and his family were founding members of the Cloverdale Church of Christ where he served as an elder until his health no longer allowed.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions,

a private family ceremony was held at the Cloverdale Church of Christ building on Jan. 27. A video of the funeral is available to view at Cloverdale Church of Christ YouTube channel. Funeral arrangements were with Roller Daniel Funeral Home, Searcy.

### Lucia Vanderpool 1936-2021

Lucia Worth DuBois Vanderpool, Ed.D., left this earth on Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021, at age 84. She was born in Jackson, Miss., on Dec. 6, 1936. A graduate of Harding Academy in Searcy, Ark., Lucia also earned her B.B.A degree in office administration from the University of Memphis in Tennessee, an M.S. degree in operations management from the University of Arkansas, and, at age 72, an Ed.D. in higher education leadership from Union University in Tennessee.

Lucia was preceded in death by her daughter, Melanie Denise Vanderpool Jerden, her grandson, James Gilbert Hodge, her sister, Claudette DuBois Jones, and her parents, Gilbert Eldredge and Georgia Elvira Hamby DuBois.

She is survived, and will be deeply missed, by her loving husband of 64 years, Dr. Kenneth Gene Vanderpool; her children, Suzanne Vanderpool Hodge (Wally), Kenneth Gene Vanderpool, Jr. (Jo Ann), and Nancy Kathleen Vanderpool Manning. Lucia is also survived by seven grandchildren and a large number of nieces and nephews.

Family and friends gathered Saturday, Jan. 30, for a memorial service at Memphis Funeral Home and Memorial Gardens.

More Milestones on Page 26



## NEWSMAKERS



PHOTO PROVIDED BY RHONDA FERNANDEZ

**Rhonda Fernandez, daughter of Jack Zorn, and Roy Johnson, Zorn's brother-in-law, accept the award on his behalf.**

**HONORED:** Jack Zorn, founder of the Lads to Leaders program, as Alumnus of the Year by Faulkner University in Montgomery, Ala. Zorn, who was unable to attend because of health issues, was recognized for his lifetime of Christian service. **Josh Byrd**, youth minister for the Church of Christ in Falls Church, Va., with the Faithful Servant Award from Members of Churches of Christ for Scouting.



Byrd

**APPOINTED:** Steve Cloer, as an assistant professor of ministry and director of the Doctor of Ministry program at Harding School of Theology in Memphis, Tenn. Cloer will teach courses in congregational ministry, leadership and mission. He had served for the past 15 years as the preacher for the Southside Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas.

Cloer



Smith

**J. Goosby Smith**, as vice president for community belonging and chief diversity officer, and **April Harris Akinloye** as assistant vice president for community belonging, at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif.

**NEW TRUSTEES:** Shelton Gibbs IV, Berto Guerra and Leslie Hutchins, named to the board of Abilene Christian University in Texas.

## Sue Wiley 1931-2021

Sue S. Wiley ("MeeMaw") was born on Aug. 8, 1931, in Kingsville, Texas, to Walter and Velma Schreiber and met her Savior face-to-face on Feb. 4, 2021.

She was married 58 years to the love of her life, Bill Wiley. She was always active in serving her various church families in Fort Worth, Texas; Waco, Texas; Hampton, Va.; New Braunfels, Texas; Georgetown, Texas; Midland, Texas; and Edmond, Okla.

Sue worked as a realtor in New Braunfels and helped take the census in 1970. Her sewing skills were legendary as was her hospitality to friends and strangers alike. Always an avid reader, she could work daily crossword puzzles in ink. Her Christmas cookie recipe and tradition lives on through her great-grandchildren, who bake hundreds of the cookies each year.

She was preceded in death by her parents, husband, and sons Larry and Mark Wiley. She is survived by her son Mike and wife Julie Ann Wiley; grandchildren Mark and wife Teresa Wiley and Brook and husband Jerred Engand; great-grandchildren James, Lydia, Evelyn, Adlee, Jacee, Adriana, Constance and Draven; many nieces, nephews and extended family.

The family wishes to thank Teal Creek Assisted Living Center and Lifespring Hospice for their care and love for MeeMaw and for always treating her like royalty.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to *The Christian Chronicle*, to the Valerie England Youth Ministry Endowment at Oklahoma Christian University Office of Advancement or to a charity of your choice.



## Milestones

### David Kent Williams, MD 1961-2020

David Kent Williams went to his heavenly home on Nov. 28, 2020, at age 58.

Kent was born to David and Sandra Williams on Nov. 29, 1961, in Amarillo, Texas.

Kent met his wife, Micky, in 1985 at the San Leandro Church of Christ in California. They married on March 8, 1986, and went on to have three children: Jenna, Benjamin and Leanna.

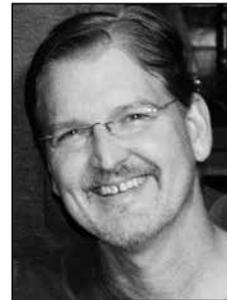
Kent lived in Amarillo until age 5 then moved to the Boston area where he lived until age 11. His family then moved to Fresno, Calif., where he stayed through his high school graduation. After graduation, Kent went to Oklahoma Christian College and graduated with a pre-med degree. He then moved to San Lorenzo, Calif., to attend chiropractic school. After practicing as a chiropractor for seven years, Kent went to Ross University School of Medicine. After graduation, Kent relocated his family to Edmond, Okla., to complete his residency. After practicing medicine for several years there, he and Micky moved their family back to Dublin, Calif., to be closer to extended family.

In addition to being a dedicated and loving husband and father, Kent also loved playing guitar, golfing, scuba diving, camping, singing hymns and, possibly most of all, tinkering!

Throughout his entire life, Kent had faith in God and a dedication to loving his family and extended family. Kent joins his father David in heaven.

He is survived by his wife, Micky, his children Jenna, Ben and Leanna, his mother Sandra, his brother and sisters Grant, Sarah and Sharon, and many aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins, and great nieces and nephews.

View full obituary at [everloved.com/life-of/david-williams-md/](http://everloved.com/life-of/david-williams-md/).



### Virgil Yocham 1933-2021

Virgil Almous Yocham of Lubbock passed away on Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2021, at the age of 88. He was born Feb. 23, 1933, in Claremore, Okla. to Amos and Susie (Smith) Yocham.

At a young age, the family moved to Buckeye, Ariz., where he grew up. Virgil was a servant and entered the ministry in 1972. Two years later he helped establish the External Studies Department of Sunset International Bible Institute (SIBI) in Lubbock, Texas, and was involved in leading the ministry until his passing.

"SIBI has lost a great builder of the Kingdom who has joined his Savior in paradise," the institute's leaders posted on social media.

Virgil also served as minister for various churches in need.

Those left to cherish his memory are his wife, Rilda Yocham; children

Stephen Yocham and wife Debra, Kimberly Johnson, Paige Baldrige and husband Randy, and Tracy Coffman and husband Steve, all of Lubbock; 12 grandchildren; and 13 great-grandchildren.

Virgil was preceded in death by his parents; his first wife, Joy in 2019; sons Gary Ray and David Len Yocham; and granddaughter, Cyndee Payne.

Burial was March 3 at Resthaven Memorial Park with memorial services at Sunset Church of Christ. In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to Sunset International Bible Institute.

**WITH APPRECIATION:** *The Christian Chronicle* appreciates gifts received in memory of Bob Nix, Thelma and Grover Ross, Imogene Sardis, Mr. O. A. Savage, Mary Smith, Matthew Smith, Mildred "Mickey" Turney, Duard Wade, Emma Walker and Joyce Williams.



# Milestones

## Tribute

### Remembering Dorothea Czczotka, 1934-2021

The life and journey of Dorothea Rae Czczotka was extensive and well lived.

She was born in Denison, Texas, on Aug. 30, 1934. The 86 years of her life began with an early childhood faith influenced by her maternal grandmother. This influence stayed with her until her passing on Jan. 26, 2021.

She met her future husband, Murray, through mutual friends when he was stationed at Perrin Air Force Base near Denison. Her dedication was so strong, she wouldn't consider marriage to her husband in 1955 unless he was a part of her faith in Christianity. Ten months after discharge they married and lived in Hurst where Murray worked for Bell Helicopter as an air traffic controller.

The preacher there, Ed Wharton, would influence their move, 27 years later, to Vienna, Austria, where they joined the missionary staff at Eastern European Mission. EEM printed Bibles, New Testaments and literature in the languages of the nations behind the so-called "Iron Curtain." Now the ministry prints and distributes Bibles and faith-based materials in formerly communist nations.

Her dedication to Jesus fulfilled her desire to be involved in missions. She learned a new language in her 50s and traveled extensively to most of the European countries in need of God's Word.

During her 21 years living in Vienna, she hosted more than 100 people in her home, as is noted in her guestbook. She loved to cook and was a delightful host, loving on those who visited her and sharing her

funny wit, making all feel at home.

She participated in Bible study correspondence courses, leading many to find Jesus Christ. There are countless stories of their journeys behind the iron curtain, including detentions for being in places where they shouldn't have been.

She wrote many letters and also befriended an imprisoned man in Africa, sharing the gospel of Jesus through writing to him and paying for a lawyer who got him freed from a false charge.

She was a gifted teacher. She taught marriage classes through a biblical foundation. She stayed connected to family by her writing and the annual trips at Christmas.

She traveled back to the U.S. for the births of her grandchildren, and six of her seven grandchildren visited her in Austria during summer

breaks from school. She taught the ladies class for the Church of Christ in Groton, Conn.

Dorothea leaves her husband of 65 years, Murray Michael Czczotka; three daughters: Karen Shaver and husband Guy, Sheri Gray and husband David and Lori Jackson; seven grandchildren: Cori Ruiz and husband

Edgar, Rusty Long and wife Brittany, Erin Starkey and husband Seth, Joni Dorothea Long, Michael Gray, Matthew Gray and wife Katie and Tiffany Harris and husband Matt; nine great-grandchildren: Evan and Zeke Ruiz; Arelli, Ezri, Becker and Neri Long; Lincoln and Margo Starkey; Asher Gray and baby Harris due in April. She leaves her sister, Judith Waldene Nevil.

Dorothea's celebration of life will be held in her birthplace of Denison, Texas. In lieu of flowers, memorials can be sent to:

Eastern European Mission  
777 Lonesome Dove Trail.  
Hurst, TX 76054



## Kidney Donor Search Type A or O blood

Could you be a kidney donor for Maebelle Hudson?

Are you 18 or older?

Do you have blood type A or O?

Are you in good health?

If you answered yes to these questions,  
you could be her donor.

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

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

To find out more about Maebelle, please visit the National Foundation for Transplants at [www.transplants.org](http://www.transplants.org). If you have any questions, please contact **Fran Holland** at [N4837Z@aol.com](mailto:N4837Z@aol.com).

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

*Thank you.*

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The Christian Chronicle

## EDITORIAL

# Christians, it's time to 'transform and roll out!'



**MEET THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE OPINIONS:** View a live discussion by the Editorial Board at 4 p.m. Eastern/3 p.m. Central on April 5. Board members, pictured above, are Jeremie Beller, John Edmerson, Chellie Ison, Trindi G. Mitchell, Bobby Ross Jr., Tamie Ross and Erik Tryggstad. Watch at [facebook.com/christianchronicle](https://facebook.com/christianchronicle).

In 1986, moviegoers were introduced to the Transformers.

Adults and children alike were fascinated and entertained by characters like Optimus Prime, who "transformed" from an 18-wheeler truck into a robot capable of standing, fighting and talking.

In Acts 6, the apostles began transforming an exclusive club of Jewish Christians into a more bustling and robust group, by first ministering to Jewish Christians with Greek backgrounds. It was a small step but one that eventually led to "Jews Only" signs being removed in Acts 10. Unfair treatment of those not born of a "certain heritage" ended.

In Acts 6, two distinct ethnic groups of widows both felt that they were receiving unfair treatment, and their dissension was tearing the church apart. The call went out to the apostles to settle the matter.

These young church leaders assessed the problem and devised a solution. They installed spiritual men from both groups to manage

the situation. We never hear of the matter again because the apostles were successful at facilitating transformation. They were catalysts in turning an exclusive ethnic-oriented club into a movement that would now be characterized by faith, love and fellowship (John 13:34-35, Acts 2:42-47).

Every generation has transformative moments. The way those in charge handle the moment makes the difference between the group behaving like an exclusive club in which everyone looks the same versus an ethnically and culturally balanced organization that is comprised of different ethnicities and socioeconomic classes and various professions.

The church needs transformative leaders who can think introspectively and clearly weigh the pros and cons and then muster the courage to facilitate transformation. We have too many who want to cling to the status quo, keeping the signs up and the people who look different

**'The Gospel, by its very nature, is metamorphic and life-changing. If this is not our reality, perhaps we need to look at our gospel.'**

far away. These brothers and sisters fight to maintain our exclusivity and separateness versus fighting to bring in dissimilar people. God needs a common fellowship in which we cease being divisive and start being authentically joined together (1 Corinthians 11:17-30, Ephesians 4:16).

Considering all that has happened over the past year, will we rise to the occasion, as the apostles did, and think creatively about how we can better reflect our cities and communities? For far too long we have resisted challenging ourselves to reach across the aisle and bond with all men irrespective of their political ideology or physical address. Some of us work to keep things "pure" when "pure" as we are defining it has no resemblance to the Gospel that we read about in Scripture (Galatians 1:6-7).

Genuine transformation is not easy. Even Peter fumbled the ball in Galatia. Not wanting to anger the Judaizers who had come from Jerusalem, he acted like a hypocrite (Galatians 2:12). Paul therefore withstood him to his face (Galatians 2:11), demanding that he reflect the true nature of the Gospel and the tenets of the Christian movement. In

this sense, Paul was transformative, refusing to allow Peter to make the Gospel what it was not.

We need more leaders like Paul today: men and women who will seize this current tumultuous moment and look for ways that we can use the civil and societal unrest to channel a spiritual community not defined by exclusive signs but by an exclusive faith, a transformative faith.

Optimus Prime was the leader of the Transformers. He had several memorable quotes. Perhaps the most memorable is: "Autobots, transform and roll out!" It was a call to action and service. It was a call to slay the evil before the Autobots because the future of the world rested on their resolve.

Let us do the same. Let us take the transformational elements of the Gospel to a world that has lost its way.

The Gospel was not designed to keep us comfortable and stale. The Gospel, by its very nature, is metamorphic and life-changing. If this is not our reality, perhaps we need to look at our gospel. May we all have the courage and willingness to transform. — **John Edmerson, for the Editorial Board**

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Phone: (405) 425-5070; Fax (405) 425-5076

Mail: P.O. Box 11000, Oklahoma City, OK 73136-1100

Delivery: 2501 E. Memorial Road, Edmond, OK 73013

[facebook.com/ChristianChronicle](https://facebook.com/ChristianChronicle) [twitter.com/CofNews](https://twitter.com/CofNews)

President and CEO: **Erik Tryggstad**  
erik@christianchronicle.org

Editor-in-Chief: **Bobby Ross Jr.**  
bobby.ross@christianchronicle.org

Digital News Editor: **Chellie Ison**  
chellie@christianchronicle.org

Features Editor: **Laura Akins**

[laura.akins@christianchronicle.org](mailto:laura.akins@christianchronicle.org)

Advertising Manager: **Tonya Patton**

[tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org](mailto:tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org)

Lead Administrative Assistant: **Lynda Sheehan**

[lynda.sheehan@christianchronicle.org](mailto:lynda.sheehan@christianchronicle.org)

Administrative Assistant: **Joy McMillon**

[joy.mcmillon@christianchronicle.org](mailto:joy.mcmillon@christianchronicle.org)

Administrative Assistant: **Melinda Wilson**

[melinda.wilson@christianchronicle.org](mailto:melinda.wilson@christianchronicle.org)

Staff Accountant: **Louise Beyer**

President Emeritus: **Lynn McMillon**

Correspondents: **Cheryl Mann Bacon,**

**Hamil R. Harris**

Stewardship Officer: **Alan Phillips**

[alan@christianchronicle.org](mailto:alan@christianchronicle.org)

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# Gray deserves Presidential Medal of Freedom

**IT'S TIME TO BESTOW** America's highest civilian honor on the renowned civil rights attorney and preacher.

**"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."**

— 1 Peter 5:6 (New King James Version)

**M**artin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks and John Lewis are three of the most recognizable faces of the civil rights movement and have become memorable icons in American history.

A major reason why they are such distinguished figures is because a young attorney named Fred Gray, now 90 years old, was behind the scenes representing them in the court of law.

It's time — the time is way overdue, actually — to recognize Gray's vital role in matters of unity, justice and equality with the nation's highest civilian honor, the

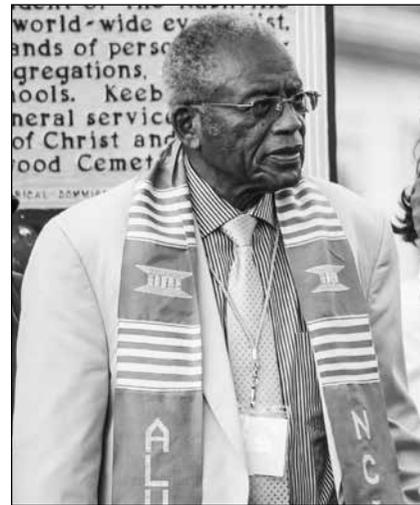
Presidential Medal of Freedom.

As a result of the year-long Montgomery bus boycott where King and Parks were in the spotlight, the U.S. Supreme Court

declared bus segregation in Alabama and Montgomery unconstitutional (*Browder v. Gayle*). Because of Gray's lawsuit, protesters including King and Lewis were allowed to finish the Selma to Montgomery march in 1965 after the horrific events of "Bloody Sunday."

Gray, a Church of Christ preacher as well as a renowned civil rights attorney, won numerous court cases involving the integration of public schools in Alabama. The 1967 verdict of *Lee v. Macon County Board of Education* ordered all Alabama public schools to comply with desegregation.

Gray also represented participants



ERIK TRYGGESTAD

In 2012, Fred Gray stands by a marker honoring Marshall Keeble during a Nashville Christian Institute reunion.

who were part of the Tuskegee syphilis experiment, a U.S. government study from 1932 to 1972 in

which African American men were purposely left untreated with syphilis to examine their symptoms and side effects. In 1975, the settlement awarded the survivors and heirs of the deceased \$10 million.

In addition to Gray's vast achievements as an attorney, he has made a long-lasting impact within Churches of Christ by preaching the Gospel, acting as a unifier and maintaining the humble heart of a servant.

Gray was one of the famous Black traveling evangelist Marshall Keeble's "boy preachers" and is an alumnus of the now-closed Nashville Christian Institute, where Keeble served as president.

Gray later served as minister for the Holt Street Church of Christ in Montgomery. In 1974, he was instrumental in merging Black and White congregations to form the Tuskegee Church of Christ, where he has

See **GRAY**, Page 28

## Views



Trindi G. Mitchell

## FROM OUR READERS

### Not impressed with 'Saints and Singers'

What's with the celebrity worship in the "Saints and Singers" article (Page 17, March)?

I'm reminded of James 2, where the author says, "How can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?"

I don't need my faith validated by a famous person being impressed with our "beautiful great voices." If that's all people get from being exposed to the Church of Christ, we are missing our mission. The article presented the church as something you "go to," something you attended. It was not presented as the body of Christ.

I'm a fan of Bobby Ross Jr.'s writing. I know this was meant to be a light human interest story, but *The Christian Chronicle* is not *People*.

Keep being the thought-provoking, encouraging newspaper that I look forward to every month.

STAN COLE | Muskogee, Okla.

The Harding University Concert Choir under the direction of Dr. Arthur Shearin provided the choral backup for Dolly Parton as she performed "Whispering Hope."

PAUL CARTWRIGHT | Farmers Branch, Texas

You may know this, but Dolly's longtime lead guitarist, Kent Wells, grew up attending the Church of Christ in Ashdown, Ark., and attended Harding University in Searcy, Ark., as did his siblings Dennis Wells and Teresa Wells Ashcraft.

KEN BISSELL | Searcy, Ark.

Now *that* is a powerful editorial. Thank you, Erik Tryggestad, for this insightful reflection ("Tape on the pews: As we return, let's not repeat a failed restoration," Page 34, March).

RON JOHNS JR. | Willow Park, Texas

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR may be emailed to [letters@christianchronicle.org](mailto:letters@christianchronicle.org).

'Brenton' by Rick Gibson



See more by following [brenton.daily](https://www.facebook.com/brenton.daily) on Facebook and Instagram.

### Full-time Preaching Minister - Keizer, Oregon

The **Keizer Church of Christ** is looking for a full-time preaching minister to serve in a family-oriented, Bible-based fellowship. Our congregation is a warm and welcoming group. Rooted in God's holy Word, you'll find a devotion to God that can be seen in our love towards one another, eagerness to serve our community, prayer life, and devotion to our children's development.

For more information about the job or to apply, please visit our website or contact us at:

website: [keizercoc.org/position-preaching-minister/](http://keizercoc.org/position-preaching-minister/)  
phone or email: (503) 393-5424, [keizercc@comcast.net](mailto:keizercc@comcast.net)

### Full-time Minister Position

The Northern Frontier Mission Field of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan is in search of a full-time minister. The **Escanaba** congregation of 50 is looking for someone to work with all ages in preaching, teaching, community involvement, and television/internet ministry. We have produced LET THE BIBLE SPEAK TV program for 44 years. Interested parties should send resume and video lessons to:

**David Grant**  
[DGR296@gmail.com](mailto:DGR296@gmail.com)  
PO Box 751, Escanaba, MI 49829

### FULL-TIME MINISTER – HOWELL, MICH.

The Church of Christ is searching for a minister passionate in his work, in his studies of God's Word for his life, in his love for bringing souls to Christ, and in his preaching and teaching of God's saving word for a dying world. We are a congregation with 50+ members where over half are 60 and above. We are looking for a person to help us bring in a more youthful population. We have two elders and one deacon to assist with the needs of our body. Housing is provided. Please submit a resume, a sermon, and salary/benefits needed to:

[belcher0804@att.net](mailto:belcher0804@att.net)

### 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](http://www.brenhamchurchofchrist.com)

and our YouTube channel which has many of our recent videos, programs, and recorded worship services!

We are seeking a full-time pulpit minister due to the retirement of our current pulpit minister who has been with us over 12 years. We hope that God will guide us through this process and lead us toward the candidate who will be the best fit to help us achieve the purposes He has in store for our future! Any interested ministers or future ministers are welcome to email us or send their resume to [brenhamchurchtx@gmail.com](mailto:brenhamchurchtx@gmail.com).

*We look forward to hearing from you!*

### Full-time Pulpit Minister - Raleigh, North Carolina

The **North Raleigh Church of Christ** is seeking a full-time pulpit minister who is a servant leader and a great encourager. He should be Christ-centered and Spirit led, with the desire and ability to lead others on a path of spiritual growth and transformation.

The ideal candidate will have a bachelor's degree in a Biblical/Theological discipline and experience with full-time ministry/church leadership and will be married, preferably with children. Strong communication, interpersonal, organizational and planning skills are required, and the candidate should be motivated and able to work with limited supervision.

We are a congregation of approximately 120, shepherded by five elders in the dynamic, rapidly growing Triangle area of the North Carolina Piedmont. Located approximately midway between the North Carolina coast and the mountains, the Raleigh area is blessed with outstanding natural, educational, medical and cultural resources.

Please visit [northraleighchurch.org](http://northraleighchurch.org) to learn more about our church and our core beliefs. Interested candidates should send cover letter, resume and any questions to [MinistrySearch@NorthRaleighChurch.org](mailto:MinistrySearch@NorthRaleighChurch.org).

### Evangelist Needed - Kingman, Ariz.

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

**Desert Church of Christ**  
Attn: Search Committee  
PO Box 3673, Kingman, AZ 86402

[bj67cv@frontiernet.net](mailto:bj67cv@frontiernet.net)  
(928) 279-2226 (please leave message)

### Minister - Lake Havasu City, Ariz.

Palo Verde Church of Christ is looking for an experienced member of the Lord's body who is able to preach sound doctrine, hold classes to help spiritually feed the flock and has the desire to reach a community in need of God's Word. Small congregation with a parsonage available. Would like to have someone semi-retired.

**Dennis Grosser**  
(928) 486-7370, [ddgrosser@gmail.com](mailto:ddgrosser@gmail.com)  
[www.lakehavasucitycoc.com](http://www.lakehavasucitycoc.com)

*Willing to fill in?*

*Great vacation spot with furnished home available. Ask for details!*

### Full-Time Pulpit Minister - El Dorado, Arkansas

**Hillsboro Street Church of Christ** is a congregation of 80+ members with two elders and seven deacons. We are located in a town of over 18,000 dedicated to re-branding into a music festival/tourism town. We have a gorgeous downtown and an excellent school system. We are seeking a full-time preacher who loves people and enjoys what he does. If interested, we desire at least three to five years' experience with BA degree or better in Bible. Please provide a current résumé with a one-page statement that characterizes your efforts, style and objectives; two DVD recordings of sermons (or links); and four references.

Email these to:

**Search Committee: [hscoc71730@gmail.com](mailto:hscoc71730@gmail.com)**

Hillsboro Street Church of Christ, Search Committee  
1322 W Hillsboro Street, El Dorado, AR 71730  
(870) 863-4714

*Our hope is to find the right applicant before 5/31/2021.*

## GRAY: Honor is overdue

FROM PAGE 27

served as minister and elder. On a personal note, Gray performed the marriage ceremony of my parents at the Tuskegee church; they just recently celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary.

The Presidential Medal of Freedom is bestowed upon an individual who has made "an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public and private endeavors."

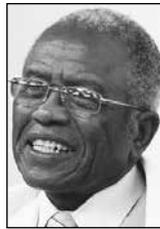
President John F. Kennedy established this prestigious award in 1963. Recipients through the years have included Colin Powell, Helen Keller, Cesar Chavez and Gray's own client, Rosa Parks.

Fred David Gray is most worthy of this esteemed honor. He has spent his life largely in the background defending the matters of justice and equality of both prominent figures in the limelight and everyday people who may feel powerless and voiceless.

Gray's track record of consistency, integrity, grace and humility reaches far beyond the recognition of the president of the United States.

It goes all the way up to God Almighty who is writing down his humble servant's good works and deeds in the Book of Life (Revelation 20:12, NKJV).

**TRINDI G. MITCHELL** is a member of *The Christian Chronicle's* Editorial Board. She attends the Henry Street Church of Christ in Gadsden, Ala., and is a Sunday school teacher, writer and mother of two children. Contact [trindimitchell@gmail.com](mailto:trindimitchell@gmail.com).



**Gray**

### HOW TO SHOW SUPPORT

The office of U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell of Alabama is organizing support for Fred Gray being awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Letters may be addressed to President Joe Biden and emailed to [Hillary.G.Beard@hillary.beard.house.gov](mailto:Hillary.G.Beard@hillary.beard.house.gov).

## CALENDAR

**March 28 World Bible School presentation.** Broken Arrow, Okla. (918) 640-7508. See [opendoorchurchofchrist.org](http://opendoorchurchofchrist.org).

**April 6 10 Year Virtual Anniversary Celebration for The Solomon Foundation.** Facebook LIVE event.

**April 15-17 Harding Spring Sing.** Searcy, Ark. Pay-per-view option available. See [harding.edu/events/springsing](http://harding.edu/events/springsing) or call (501) 279-4255.

**April 21 LIVE Online Youth Group Event.** New Day Resources and Lubbock Christian University. See [newdayresources.org](http://newdayresources.org).

**April 22 Mission, Vision and Strategy for Churches.** New Day Resources. See [newdayresources.org](http://newdayresources.org).

**May 2 Hope & Hilarity, a virtual play.** Stonecrest Church of Christ, McDonough, Ga. See [stonecrestcoc.org](http://stonecrestcoc.org).

**May 14-15 Lysa TerKeurst.** North Boulevard Church of Christ, Murfreesboro, Tenn. See [northboulevard.com](http://northboulevard.com).

**May 25-28 Harbor: The Pepperdine Bible Lectures.** Malibu, Calif. See [pepperdine.edu/harbor](http://pepperdine.edu/harbor) or call (310) 506-4270.

**June 3-7 Blue Ridge Family Encampment.** Smithville, Tenn. See [info.timothyhill.org/2020-blue-ridge-family-encampment-reunion](http://info.timothyhill.org/2020-blue-ridge-family-encampment-reunion) or call (615) 597-4298.

**June 9-11 Thomas H. Olbricht Christian Scholars' Conference.** Lipscomb University, Nashville, Tenn. See [lipscomb.edu/events](http://lipscomb.edu/events).

**June 18 Legacy of Love Benefit Dinner and Auction.** Lilyfield. Tulsa, Okla. See [lilyfield.org/auction](http://lilyfield.org/auction) or call (405) 216-5240.

**July 3-10 The Kerusso Experience.** Harding University. Searcy, Ark. See [www.harding.edu/kerusso](http://www.harding.edu/kerusso).

**July 11-16 Honors Summer Academy.** Oklahoma Christian University. See [oc.edu/hsa](http://oc.edu/hsa).

**FULL CALENDAR:** [christianchronicle.org](http://christianchronicle.org)

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## Pulpit Minister Search

The elders of the Park Forest Church of Christ are looking for a pulpit minister with a family to come work with us. Minister responsibilities include preaching and teaching and participating in the life of our church family. We are an established and diverse congregation. The ideal candidate would be bilingual or willing to learn Spanish and able to minister to our diverse family and large concentration of Spanish speakers in the area. The ideal minister would be able to minister to our seasoned saints as well as the younger generation. You can also visit our website for a more detailed description: [www.achurchofchrist.org](http://www.achurchofchrist.org)

**Park Forest Church of Christ, Attn: the elders**

**PO Box 130, Matteson, Illinois 60443, (708) 748-3370 Fax (708) 748-0298**

## Full-time Minister

A church of 200 with more than a 75-year heritage is looking for a full-time minister. Our friendly congregation is located in south Louisiana. Our area is ripe for the harvest.

Resumes may be emailed to:  
[office@blvdchurchofchrist.org](mailto:office@blvdchurchofchrist.org)

## Pulpit Minister Needed

**Bellevue Church of Christ** (Bellevue, Fla.), a small but loving congregation, is in need of a pulpit minister. Duties will include preaching and teaching Sunday morning and Sunday evening. Retirement or other support may be needed. If interested please contact:

**Gregg Smith at (352) 427-6131**

**Terry Whalin at (352) 209-9919**

## Full-time Minister - Roseville, Calif.

The **Roseville Church of Christ** is seeking a full-time minister who is solid in the Word, is eager to evangelize, will help reestablish our youth group and comes ready to work with our 110-member congregation to meet the challenges facing a 21st century church in California. The current minister is retiring August 31st after seven years with Roseville. For more information visit our website at: [rosevillecofc.org](http://rosevillecofc.org).

Interested candidates should submit their resume, at least three phone references and any other pertinent materials to:

**Roseville Church of Christ  
C/O Jerry Hannon**

**1799 Cirby Way, Roseville, CA 95661**

**Cell phone: (916) 580-4563 [jerry.hannon@att.net](mailto:jerry.hannon@att.net)**

*All questions should be directed to our contact person.*

## 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:

**Church of Christ  
c/o Richard Ecord  
1207 W 15th  
Ottawa, KS 66067**

## Seeking Full-Time Minister - Cortez, Colorado

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



*If interested, send a detailed resume including references and information about yourself and your family to: [cortezcofc@live.com](mailto:cortezcofc@live.com).*

The Cortez area is home to scenic mountains, deserts, mesas, rivers, lakes, farmland and Mesa Verde National Park. Locals enjoy skiing, hiking, fishing, hunting, camping, boating, mountain biking and golfing.

## PULPIT MINISTER POSITIONS

**Surprise Church of Christ**, PO Box 9175, Surprise, AZ 85374, (949) 292-3185, [office@surprisechurchofchrist.com](mailto:office@surprisechurchofchrist.com).

**Valley Church of Christ**, PO Box 2520, Los Lunas, NM, 87031, (505) 916-4601, [ldearwood@valornet.com](mailto:ldearwood@valornet.com).

**Poncha Springs Church of Christ**, PO Box 37, Poncha Springs, CO 81242, (719) 351-1088, [brian.brown@q.com](mailto:brian.brown@q.com).

**Hi-Desert Church of Christ**, 13460 Apple Valley Rd, Apple Valley, CA 92308, (760) 221-9727, [ramrodrig@yahoo.com](mailto:ramrodrig@yahoo.com).



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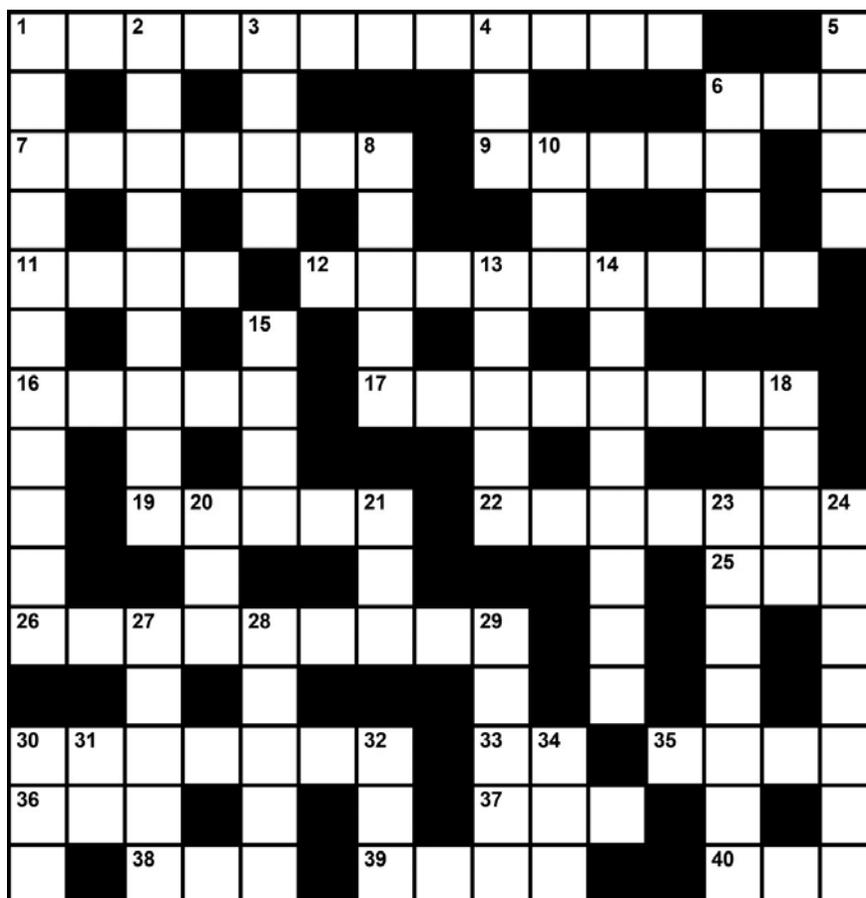


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# The Christian Chronicle Crossword

By Myles Mellor | www.ilovecrosswords.com

## ACROSS



1. "I am the \_\_\_ and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25, King James Version).
6. Heavy weight.
7. "The Lord your God is going with you, and he will give you \_\_\_\_\_" (Deuteronomy 20:4, Good News Translation).
9. "Let no man despise thy \_\_\_\_\_; but be thou an example of the believers ..." (1 Timothy 4:12, KJV).
11. "Even lions go hungry ... but those who obey the Lord \_\_\_\_\_ nothing good" (Psalm 34:10, GNT).
12. New Testament epistle.
16. "... there was given to me a \_\_\_\_\_ in the flesh ..." (2 Corinthians 12:7, KJV).
17. A cupbearer to a king.
19. A Hebrew prophet.
22. "Woe unto you, \_\_\_\_\_ and Pharisees, hypocrites!" (Matthew 23:23, KJV).
25. Trouble.
26. Jewish sect at the time of Jesus.
30. "And now abideth faith, hope, \_\_\_\_\_, these three; but the greatest of these is \_\_\_\_\_" (1 Corinthians 13:13, KJV).
33. Exist.
35. Purple fruit.
36. Large rodent.
37. Large spreading tree.
38. "The \_\_\_\_\_ appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself ..." (Proverbs 27:25, KJV).
39. Gospel writer.
40. Lady in a convent.

## DOWN

1. "But I will now talk about visions and \_\_\_\_\_ given me by the Lord" (1 Corinthians 12:1, GNT).

2. "Jacob tore his clothes in sorrow and put on \_\_\_\_\_ ..." (Genesis 37:34, GNT).
3. "There is no \_\_\_\_\_ in love for fear" (1 John 4:18, The Message).
4. Lord's Prayer pronoun.
5. "... and they bowed the \_\_\_\_\_ before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!" (Matthew 27:29, KJV).
6. Emaciated.
8. Long for.
10. No longer inside.
13. "I abhor myself and repent in dust and \_\_\_\_\_" (Job 42:6, KJV).
14. "Now unto the King eternal, \_\_\_\_\_, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory ..." (1 Timothy 1:17, KJV).
15. "... but the way of the wicked \_\_\_\_\_ in destruction" (Psalm 1:6, New English Translation).
18. "Take \_\_\_\_\_, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees ..." (Mark 8:15, KJV).
20. Ancient.
21. Took bread.
23. Nebuchadnezzar was its king.
24. Wise king in the Bible.
27. "... the Son of man shall be

## BIBLE BOWLING

**BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS:** The last letter of each answer is also the first letter of the next answer. The last letter of No. 10 is the first letter of No. 1. Quiz by Steve Whitehead of the British Bible School, [britishbibleschool.com](http://britishbibleschool.com).

1. Mentor of Samuel.
2. A Jairite and priest of David.
3. Asherite widow who lived many years in the temple.
4. A descendant of Shem.
5. Darius' nationality.
6. Mother of Seth.
7. A river flowed from this place, then divided into four.
8. A man of faith saved from the flood.
9. Son of No. 8.
10. Absalom was riding on one.

**SHORT ANSWER:** Answer the following question from Revelation, the subject of the 2021 Leadership Training for Christ conventions. Find more Revelation questions at [TheSeeker.org](http://TheSeeker.org).

11. What is the name of the song sung by "those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name?" (Revelation 15:3)

**CROSSWORD SOLUTION** and Bible Bowling answers on Page 34.

- betrayed ... and they shall condemn him to \_\_\_\_\_" (Matthew 20:18, KJV)
28. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in \_\_\_\_\_!" (Psalm 133:1, KJV).
29. "Be \_\_\_\_\_, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about ..." (1 Peter 5:8, KJV).
30. Be moved to tears.
31. Laughter sound.
32. Orange tuber.
34. Deer species.

# Word Find: The book of Proverbs

By **Betty Hollister** | For The Christian Chronicle

A C Q U I R I N G O S S I P E L B I C U R C  
 R P L E A S A N T A B L E T G N I L A E H O  
 R E P U N I S H M E N T P T I R E H N I U N  
 O R J E A L O U S Y L L O F E G D E L P M T  
 G V U O T U R N O I T C U R T S E D R O I R  
 A E D L I I P O S U O E T H G I R I T W L O  
 N R G D E C T E S T I M O N Y E G I O E I L  
 T S M E S S I E X A L T S E N H V R T R T S  
 O E E R T E A N C H H W R I T A T E S F Y D  
 R D N T O R E Y G M A S N O T H D I D U I E  
 E E T A E C C S E E K S I E B R N G E L S C  
 D K T H A A T O N G U E S R C H E N L R Y N  
 N R T R C H A T T E R I N G U A G N T U L E  
 E A B I G O V E R N I N G C T O R I T I H D  
 F M L I S T E N I N G O S T R A N G E R S U  
 E E S T E E M E D E N I C I D E M O S N A R  
 D I S C I P L I N E N S E T U T I T S O R P

Find the following words from the book of Proverbs. The unused 34 letters form a statement about the purpose of the book. (See the answer on Page 34.)

- ACQUIRING
- APPETITE
- ARROGANT
- CHATTERING
- CHILDREN
- CONTROLS
- CRUCIBLE
- DEFENDER
- DELICACY
- DESTRUCTION
- DISCIPLINE
- EMBRACE
- ESTEEMED
- EXALTS
- FATHER
- FOLLY
- GOSSIP
- GOVERNING
- GRACE
- HATRED
- HEALING
- HUMILITY
- INHERIT
- JEALOUSY
- JUDGMENT
- LISTENING
- MARKED
- MEDICINE
- MOTIVATE
- NEIGHBOR
- NOURISH
- PARTNER
- PERVERSE
- PLEASANT
- PLEDGE
- POWERFUL
- PROSTITUTES
- PRUDENCE
- PUNISHMENT
- RANSOM
- RASHLY
- REIGN
- REJOICING
- RIGHTEOUS
- RULES
- SEEKS
- SETTLED
- SIGHTS
- STRANGERS
- TABLET
- TESTIMONY
- TONGUES
- WORTH
- UPRIGHT

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**1340 AM** (Abilene, TX)  
Noon-1 pm

**1300 AM** (Nashville, TN)  
11:30 & 4 pm

**1360 AM** (Nashville, TN)  
Noon & 6:30 pm

**1600 AM** (Memphis, TN)  
4 pm

**1640 AD** (San Francisco - Oakland, CA)  
4 pm

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# Minister recalls his pedophile father's profound deception

**J**immy Hinton doesn't mince words, not in life and not in his book **"The Devil Inside: How My Minister Father Molested Kids in Our Home and Church for Decades and How I Finally Stopped Him."**

Part memoir, part training manual, "The Devil Inside" tells the story of Jimmy Hinton and his father, John, who provided his family, and especially Jimmy, with an idyllic life growing up in a small Pennsylvania town. Jimmy tells stories of his dad teaching him to shift gears in their new Toyota at the age of 3 or 4, of bringing him and his older brother three-wheelers when Jimmy was 10 and of taking the boys on vacation. He describes his father's unwavering kind and godly demeanor and his calm nature that was never rattled by the hijinks of Jimmy and his brothers.

Jimmy's admiration for his father inspired him to become a preacher himself.

"I logged hundreds of hours sitting at the feet of my dad as he preached. He was a good preacher," Jimmy writes. "He had a way of using metaphors, and he was a good storyteller. Application was very important for him. Even as a kid, I remember wanting to apply what I'd learned on Sundays as soon as church dismissed."

That idyllic childhood with the hero father came crashing down one Friday afternoon when the son learned his model preacher father had sexually abused little girls throughout the 40 years he spent as a pulpit minister.

What Hinton did next continues to astound survivors of church abuse the world over — he reported his own father to the police.

An advocate for church abuse survivors

myself, I am accustomed to stories of church leaders covering up allegations of abuse, silencing victims, minimizing deeds and damage done. Jimmy Hinton did none of that. After turning in his father, Jimmy immersed himself in learning how his father had gotten away with 40 years of such profound deception.

"The Devil Inside" is the culmination of what Jimmy learned about the mindset of predatory child sex abusers from his jailhouse interviews with his father. From the unique perspective of the son of a perpetrator, Hinton teaches readers how to spot predators like John Hinton and how to stop them from hurting more children.

As a friend and fellow advocate, I have watched Jimmy become an influential and well-loved spokesman for the cause. He has trained and consulted with more than 100 churches

over the past decade. He has collaborated with neuroscientists Stephen Macknik and Susana Martinez-Conde, faculty members and researchers at State University of New York Downstate Health Sciences University, seeking to understand the neuroscience of deception in predatory behavior.

Jimmy also is a safeguarding specialist with Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment (GRACE), a nonprofit that equips churches to care for children and adult survivors of abuse.

In "The Devil Inside" Jimmy Hinton paints the stark portrait of life with a predatory pedophile at church. This book is a must-read for every church leader, ministry student and parent.

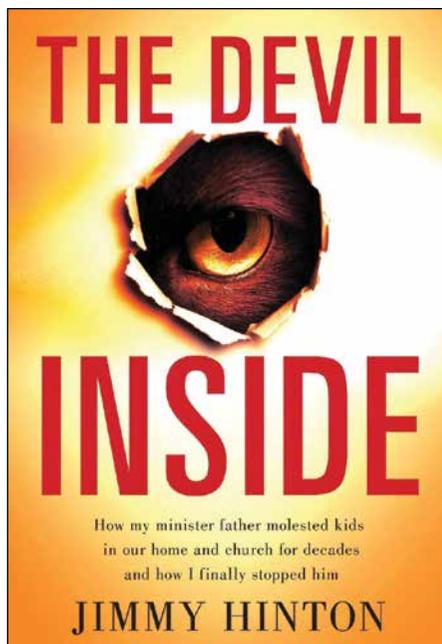
**CHRISTINE FOX PARKER** is

president and executive director of PorchSwing Ministries Inc., where she ministers to survivors of church abuse and helps churches and church leaders learn to better care for survivors and create safer spaces for all.

## In Print



Christine Fox Parker



**Jimmy Hinton. The Devil Inside: How My Minister Father Molested Kids in Our Home and Church for Decades and How I Finally Stopped Him.**

Freiling Publishing, 2021. 162 pages. \$14.99.

## Amid pandemic, a much-needed reminder that church is worth it

**J**oseph P. Conway's **"Broken but Beautiful — Why Church Is Still Worth It"** begins with sobering statistics about the decline of church attendance and church affiliation in the United States.

Then Conway, who ministers for the Acklen Avenue Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn., and teaches in the College of Bible and Ministry at Lipscomb University, methodically goes through the various reasons people leave the church.

Many have studied and written extensively about these issues. What makes Conway's perspective different is that he gives credence to people's disillusionment and discouragement with church. He weaves in real-life stories to illustrate his points and says to the reader, "If you have experienced these things, I get it, and I'm sorry."

Without judgment he says, "What if there is more than just the brokenness? Beyond the pain and difficulty, what if something beautiful endures beneath the baggage?" Throughout the book, he effectively builds the case that, indeed, the church may be broken, but it is still worth it.

A strength of this book is that it helps those who are still in church realize why many left, and it helps those who have left realize why others have stayed. The book cultivates empathy for all involved. Conway uses much of the book to describe four unique things churches offer: open weekly gatherings, intergenerational community, transnational identity and ethical accountability.

"Broken but Beautiful" is timely in an era when many feel disconnected because of COVID-19 and are wondering if going back to church is worth it.

Quoting Paul in Ephesians 5:25 ("*Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*"), Conway compels us to realize just how important church is — important enough that Jesus died for it.

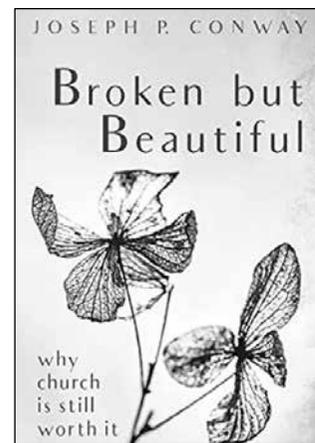
Powerful personal stories of his mother's tragic death combined with compelling arguments of why church is "worth it" will lead the reader, with the author, to conclude that "if you have a church, you always have a family, and nothing can take that family from you."

**MARY BROWN** is a member of the Manchester Church of Christ in Connecticut.

## What we're reading



Mary Brown



**Joseph P. Conway. Broken but Beautiful: Why Church Is Still Worth It.** Wipf and Stock, 2020. 184 pages. \$20.

# Church elder Don Williams was country's 'Gentle Giant'

The first time I saw legendary country musician Don Williams in person was a Sunday morning in 1977 when my wife and I visited the Ashland City Church of Christ in Tennessee.

As we settled in to an adult Sunday school class, Williams and his wife walked in and sat down. I whispered to my mate, "When class is over, let's hurry into the auditorium. Maybe we can sit close so we can hear him sing."

Alas, the couple sat in a spot with no vacant seats nearby.

The tall Texan, known as "The Gentle Giant," scored his first Top 10 hit in 1974 and finished his race with 17 No. 1 hits and 38 top five hits. In 2010, his peers voted him into the Country Music Hall of Fame. He was also the Country Music Association's Male Vocalist of the Year in 1978.

When Williams died in 2017 at age 78, he left a legacy in song — "Some Broken Hearts Never Mend," "Tulsa Time," "Miracles" and "Lord, I Hope This Day is Good" to name a few.

While an entertainment writer at *The Tennessean*, I interviewed Williams on two occasions. What I admired most about him was his God-gifted voice, a smooth bass-baritone, and his humility. His onstage demeanor was totally laid back. This mellow music man of few words allowed his songs to speak for him.

His concerts were simply him and his tight-knit band playing away with little chatter. Tunes flowed one after the other, and every now and then, after a big hand of applause, he might smile to the crowd and say, "Mercy."

Williams' music reached around the globe as he toured the United Kingdom, Europe, Oceania and Africa. In Zambia, he was received as a superstar, and locals would sing along to many of his songs in English.

I remain most partial to his tunes "I'm Just a Country Boy" and "Good Ole Boys Like Me," which boasts the line "and those Williams boys they still mean a lot to me, Hank and Tennessee."

In January 1978, about five months into my tenure at the big-city paper, I found myself boarding a plane for Los Angeles, my first time to cross the continent in the air, on an assignment to interview a batch of TV stars.

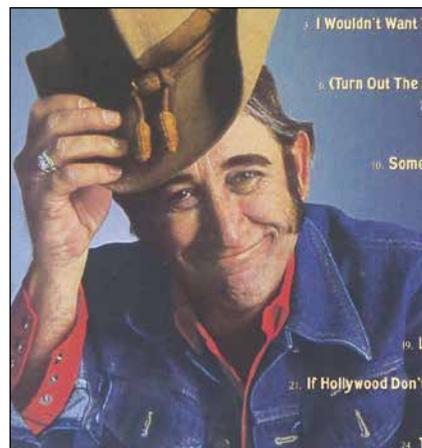
Walking past the first-class section, I spotted Dolly Parton, who practically everybody recognized. Making my way to the back of the plane, I spied my favorite singer wearing his trademark blue jean jacket and cowboy hat and surrounded by empty seats. My shyness kept me from greeting him.

At the L.A. airport, I hailed my first taxi cab ever. As the vehicle pulled away, I glanced to my right and saw another cab with Williams inside. For

## Playlist



Ken Beck



UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP NASHVILLE

## The back cover of 2006's "The Definitive Collection, Don Williams."

the next 15 minutes our cabs drove side by side all the way to downtown L.A., until mine stopped at my hotel. I was on cloud nine.

Williams was famous for his reticence and did few interviews. However, 17 years after sharing a cross-country plane ride with him and no longer as shy, I finally met Williams face to face for a sit-down interview on Music Row to discuss a new album. I treasure the memories of that hour as he proved to be a kind and gentle man.

He had served as an elder with his church family in Ashland City but had resigned after deciding he did not have the time needed to rightly fulfill the role. I asked him about his faith. He said, "There are a lot of

ways to say something to somebody without having a Bible in your hand. Maybe they'll listen and take it to heart and feel like there's a little more investigating they need to do with regard to their lives."

My second and final conversation with the singer was over the phone in 2006 in conjunction with a concert he was doing at Lipscomb University to help raise funds for a new building project for a rural Tennessee congregation. We didn't delve into anything deep. I quizzed him about what he did in his spare time. He responded, "I guess over the years, what I've enjoyed the most is just keeping everything running on the farm, and after that, fishing, just tinkering around."

Once when asked by another journalist about his reputation as a superstar, he answered, "The only way that I would be comfortable with that sort of title is when people tell me that my music has helped them through some stage in their life. ... But as far as that whole approach to special treatment and people carrying on over you, I never have been too big on that."

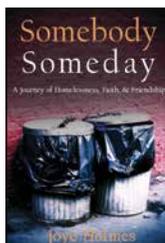
Yep, that was the way of Don Williams.

**KEN BECK** is a member of the College Hills Church of Christ in Lebanon, Tenn., and was an entertainment and feature writer with *The Tennessean* for 31 years. He has co-written several books about "The Andy Griffith Show." Contact [kbttag@aol.com](mailto:kbttag@aol.com).

## NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

### LAUGH, CRY, LEARN

Joye Holmes. **Somebody Someday: A Journey of Homelessness, Faith, and Friendship.** Fire Mountain Publishing, 2020. 147 pages. \$10.99 paperback, \$4.99 ebook (Kindle), Amazon, Barnes & Noble.



"This book will not leave you the same." "Very inspirational."

**About the book:** Deaf and homeless his entire adult life, Butch discovers a wallet in a dumpster. What he does next will lead to an

encounter with a visitor from Texas.

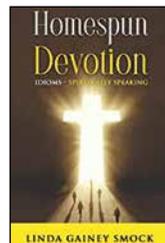
This is a true story of loneliness and survival in the streets of Atlanta. More, it is a story of an unlikely friendship that has lasted over 25 years. Share through Butch's own words his sustaining hope to be a somebody. You will cry. You will laugh. You will learn.

Rated 5 stars on Amazon!

### CHRISTIAN LIVING

Linda Gainey Smock. **Homespun Devotion and More Homespun Devotion.** Self-published, 2021. 171 pages. Paperback \$6.99, \$8.99, Kindle \$5. Available at Amazon.com.

**From the author:** "Homespun Devotion" and "More Homespun Devotion" are the first two devotional books in a series. Common idioms are the chapter titles, and biblical applications of the idioms are made through scriptures and examples from life — especially childhood in the



1950s and 1960s. Both Old and New Testament scriptures are used. Other examples also come from living with leukemia, making this a good book

to share with those you know who have cancer or who are caretakers for those with cancer.

The book lends itself to daily devotional readings, although many people have chosen to read more than one per day because of the stories.

Ron Highfield. **Rethinking Church: A Guide for the Perplexed and Disillusioned.** Keledei Publications, 2021, \$8.99. Available at Amazon.com

**NEW AND NOTEWORTHY** submissions are paid advertisements. Contact [tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org](mailto:tonya.patton@christianchronicle.org) for rate information.



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### Agribusiness or Animal Science

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### Mathematics (Statistics)

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ACU does not unlawfully discriminate in employment opportunities.



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### Crossword | From Page 30



### Bible Bowling | From Page 30

1) Eli, mentor of Samuel, 1 Samuel 1:9. 2) Ira, a Jairite who served as David's priest, 2 Samuel 20:26. 3) Anna, a prophet who gave thanks when Jesus was presented at the temple, Luke 2:36. 4) Aram, listed as a son of Shem in Genesis 10:22. 5) Mede, Daniel 5:31. 6) Eve, Genesis 4:25. 7) Eden, Genesis 2:10. 8) Noah, Genesis 6:9. 9) Ham, Genesis 5:32. 10) Mule, 2 Samuel 18:9. 11) "The song of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb."

### Word Search | From Page 31

The unused 34 letters read: "PURPOSE: TO TEACH WISDOM AND INSTRUCTION"

# Requiem for a passport and a parrot

**GOD REMINDS US** of the important trips we *did* make in the past year.

**T**his parrot is no more! "Bereft of life, he rests in peace. He's run down the curtain and joined the choir invisible. This is a late parrot!"

Perhaps you recognize those lines from Monty Python's "Dead Parrot" sketch, in which Mr. Praline (John Cleese) confronts a pet shop owner (Michael Palin) about the Norwegian Blue he bought "not half an hour ago from this very boutique" only to learn that it's stone dead. The shop owner denies this with excuse after excuse: "No, he's resting. He's stunned. He's probably pining for the fjords."

I may have been in a similar state of denial about my recently expired passport, which, as I write this, sits on the desk of some forlorn office in Washington as I await its replacement.

I had big plans for its final, stampless pages: a summer trip to Rwanda to see the work of the Africa Transformation Network. Maybe another Health Talents International mission with my wife. Perhaps I could finally get Dad to take that trip with me to our ancestral homeland, Norway.

Then came COVID-19. I kept telling myself it would end. They won't cancel my flights to Africa in June. They did.

OK, well, surely we can still go to Disneyland in August with my sister and her family. Nope. (In fact, that's *still* not open.)

Color me Norwegian Blue.

Yes, these are the slightest of slights compared to what so many have endured in the past year.

Even as I was getting my documents together to renew my passport — and daring to dream about a possible trip to the Dominican Republic with Christian Relief Fund — my wife called and said that a classmate of our teenage daughter had tested

positive. She'd have to quarantine.

I abandoned the office copier and rushed to school to get both our girls. When I got them home, I closed my bedroom door and fell to my knees in prayer. I didn't want them to see how scared I was, how frustrated I was — how tired I am.

(Both girls are fine, by the way. Yet another close call.)

When I feel overwhelmed, angry or even just wistful for the stamps my passport didn't

get, I ask God to remind me of the trips I *did* make in the past 12 months — a trip out the front door to hide eggs in our yard on Easter, a trip with Papa to Quartz Mountain State Park where our youngest caught her first fish, a perch. There were multiple trips to the field next to my office to fly kites.

And I got to participate in online Bible studies and seminars hosted by brethren in the Caribbean, South Africa and Central Europe, places I had no plans to visit. Recently I sat in on the Advanced Bible Study Series (ABSS) that usually takes place in Germany. I saw friendly faces from across Europe, Canada and the U.S.

During the seminar's talent night (which happened mid-afternoon here), Patrick Boyns and I performed a transcontinental

version of the Dead Parrot sketch. Boyns, principal of the British Bible School, was Mr. Praline. My girls picked out my costume.

Afterward, we all had ice cream in honor of the late Doyle Kee, an ABSS devotee and longtime missionary to the French-speaking

world. He loved ice cream.

So do I. Yes, I'm still pining for the fjords. But ice cream helps.

**ERIK TRYGGESTAD** is president and CEO of *The Christian Chronicle*. Contact [erik@christianchronicle.org](mailto:erik@christianchronicle.org), and follow him on Twitter @eriktryggestad.

### Insight



Erik Tryggestad



VIDEO STILLS VIA ZOOM

**Mr. Praline (Patrick Boyns) and pet shop owner (Erik Tryggestad) in the Dead Parrot sketch, transcontinental version.**

## Delano Bay Christian Camp (DBCC) is hiring full-time Caretaker(s).

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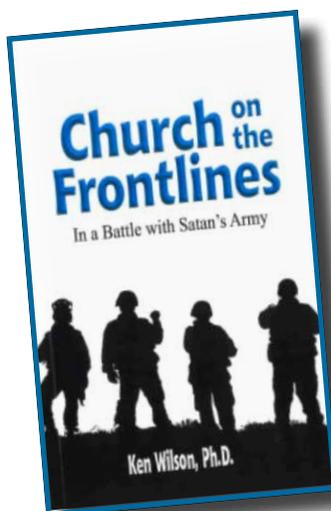
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**Westside Church of Christ**

Attn: Minister Search Committee

PO Box 1240, Alvin, TX 77512

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[westsidechurchofchrist@sbcglobal.net](mailto:westsidechurchofchrist@sbcglobal.net)

## COVID-19 Checklist

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