A child watches as Yorbis Aurelio Mendez unloads fresh drinking water at the home of Eduardo Encarnación in southwestern Dominican Republic. The water is provided by Agua Ben, operated by minister Manuel Aquino.

Water and life

AN ENTREPRENEUR MINISTER brings both to an oft-forgotten land in the Caribbean.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

NEYBA, Dominican Republic

Manuel Aquino Castro has a hard time giving up — on people, on churches, on his country. Or on his motorbike. That’s what brought the 60-year-old church-planting entrepreneur to an open-air mechanic’s shop near his home on a steamy Monday afternoon. Under a sheet-metal awning, among a strewn assortment of oily wrenches and pistons, sat his old BUV, or Basic Utility Vehicle, a three-wheeled bike with a flatbed. Aquino used to use it to haul fresh water to the people scattered across his dusty, mountainous community.

Now it needs a new fuel intake and brakes. Parts are hard to come by, so Aquino asked the mechanic if he could rig up a workaround.

“He just can’t let it go,” said Gerson Pineda, one of Aquino’s three sons, as he took a brief pause from translating for his father. He was the same way about their old car, Pineda said, pointing to the back of the mechanic’s shop. There it sat, hood and doors ajar.

Aquino’s tenacity extends beyond vehicles, his son said. It drives his family to share Jesus as they work to make life better in an often-overlooked swath of the Dominican Republic.

Neyba, about an hour east of the Haitian border and 45 minutes north of the Caribbean Sea, is surrounded by small farms and vineyards. There are no precious metals or gemstones for export, unless you count baseball diamonds. Almost

‘Rip and sip’ cups for communion could stick around

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC brought changes to the Lord’s Supper. Some could be lasting, two surveys find.

BY CHERYL MANN BACON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

ABILENE, Texas

The practice of passing the Lord’s Supper in gold, silver or wooden trays became common among Churches of Christ and other Christian groups a little over 100 years ago.

The flu pandemic of the early 20th century led to a strong push for more hygienic practices, according to Doug Foster, scholar in residence and professor emeritus at Abilene Christian University.

Prior to the 1918 pandemic, “you had a silver pitcher and a chalice and passed that around. There’s some evidence where there were several cups but not individual cups,” the Restoration Movement scholar explained. “The tray is just a tool to hold the individual cups,” he added, “and the individual cups came primarily during the great flu pandemic.”

A century later, as COVID-19 infections and deaths surged, churches again grappled with how to partake of communion while protecting members.

There’s some evidence where there were several cups but not individual cups,” the Restoration Movement scholar explained. “The tray is just a tool to hold the individual cups,” he added, “and the individual cups came primarily during the great flu pandemic.”

“A century later, as COVID-19 infections and deaths surged, churches again grappled with how to partake of communion while protecting members.”

Many turned to the so-called “rip and sip” communion cups — a small wafer contained atop a tiny cup of grape juice.

Now, as vaccination numbers rise and coronavirus cases decline, the single-serve communion sets may become a new norm, according to two recent surveys.

CHRISTIANS PICK UP “RIP AND SIP” CUPS BEFORE A SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE IN TEXAS.

See WATER, Page 14

See COMMUNION, Page 6
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Many congregations had to cancel Vacation Bible School in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now that vaccines are being distributed and restrictions are easing, some churches are putting the summer program back on their calendars.

“People are really excited,” said Sierra Gustafson, children’s minister for the Levy Church of Christ in North Little Rock, Ark. This summer, congregations such as the Walled Lake Church of Christ in Michigan and the Metro Church of Christ in Gresham, Ore., are thrilled by the return of VBS — even if the pandemic has brought changes in approach and new safety precautions.

At the Walled Lake church, VBS —

Dear Norah Esther Ross,

Welcome to the world, my precious granddaughter. What an amazing, beautiful gift from God you are. Your Papa — that’s my name, Papa — loves you so much. Please forgive me for crying when I first met you. I couldn’t help it.

Your Nana loves you like crazy, too. She has an entire sewing room filled with new outfits for you. By the way, be prepared to change clothes every few hours. That way, you’ll get to wear all these miniature jumpsuits at least once.

Your parents adore you, too, as you no doubt have figured out during all those 2 a.m. feedings. That’s not to mention Granddad, Grammy, great-grandparents and lots of aunts, uncles, cousins and other relatives and family friends.

And your older brother, Bennett? For nine months, he kept hearing about the baby in Mommy’s tummy. But I’m not sure he fully understood.

When you were still at the hospital, Bennett enjoyed a two-night sleepover at Papa and Nana’s house. The night you came home, we brought him to meet you for the first time. He seemed a little tired and cranky by the time we got there. That happens.

What can 50 pre-kindergarteners do to their school’s president in less than 45 minutes? Will Blanchard of Oklahoma Christian Academy wears the results — a “paint the president” prize the youngsters received for their work in the school’s recent fundraising drive. Students at the Edmond, Okla., school, which is associated with Churches of Christ, recruited more than 1,000 donors to secure a matching gift of $50,000. Learn more about the school at ocacademy.org.

As the Southwest Church of Christ prepared for its upcoming 50th anniversary, the eldership developed goals to accomplish by that milestone in 2023. One of the key elements of the Portland-area church’s vision: establishing a school of discipleship.

Church leaders prayed and dreamed about the possibility, but when the time came to make a decision, the COVID-19 pandemic stalled plans.

“We actually hit the pause button for three or four months,” elder Paul Hinds said. But after more prayer, the congregation decided to step out in faith and commit.

The elders hired Darren Williamson, a history professor and preacher who most recently served the Keizer Church of Christ in Oregon for 11 years, as the Northwest School of Discipleship’s founding director.

According to Williamson, the school is “a church-based educational initiative that is focused on equipping leaders within the church” and will offer “a Bible-centered curriculum that’s aimed at equipping leaders for ministry.”

The school’s first offering will be a four-week youth discipleship class that meets once a week. The first offering will begin in the fall.

Oregon church launches discipleship school

BY MAKYRA WILLIAMSON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

TIGARD, Ore.

V

acation Bible School is back. Many congregations had to cancel VBS in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now that vaccines are being distributed and restrictions are easing, some churches are putting the summer program back on their calendars.

“People are really excited,” said Sierra Gustafson, children’s minister for the Levy Church of Christ in North Little Rock, Ark. This summer, congregations such as the Walled Lake Church of Christ in Michigan and the Metro Church of Christ in Gresham, Ore., are thrilled by the return of VBS — even if the pandemic has brought changes in approach and new safety precautions.

At the Walled Lake church, VBS —
with toddlers (your brother is almost 3) who play hard all day and take a shorter-than-normal nap. When Daddy unbuckled Bennett from his car seat, he whined and wiped his eyes.

"You want to go inside and meet baby Norah?" your dad asked.

"Yeah," your brother said, perking up.

All of Bennett’s grumpiness disappeared when he got into the house and saw you. He was as smitten with you as the rest of us.

By the way, Maggie — that’s your family’s 90-pound yellow lab mix — was staying with your other grandparents. So she wasn’t a part of the welcoming party. But you’ll have plenty of time to get to know her.

Back to Bennett: He recognized you immediately when he saw Mommy sitting on the couch and holding you.

"Hey, baby Norah," he said. He rubbed your forehead and squeezed your tiny fingers before Mommy opened up your blanket and showed him your little toes.

"Is she not in your tummy anymore?" he asked Mommy. "She came out of Mommy’s tummy," Daddy replied.

"You’re out, finally!" Bennett exclaimed. "You can run!"

We all laughed.

You can’t run yet. But if time passes as quickly with you as it did after Bennett was born, it won’t be long. You just kept sleeping as Bennett held you for the first time.

He couldn’t stop smiling or staring at you. He kept kissing the side of your face.

Finally, Daddy asked if Nana and Papa could have a turn.

"No," Bennett said. But he eventually let go.

When it came time for Papa’s turn, Nana was a little harder to persuade.

What else can I tell you? You are blessed with parents — and two sets of grandparents — who love Jesus. Our family’s biggest prayer is that you will grow up and follow him. No matter what else happens, you always can count on our Lord and Savior.

At some point soon, we will take you to a Texas Rangers baseball game. Sadly, you were born into a family of long-suffering Rangers fans. If you live to be 100, there is a slight chance you will witness a winning season, perhaps even a magical one.

Papa writes for the newspaper. So be warned: Any cute things you do or say could end up in print.

I love you, Norah Esther Ross.

Sincerely,

Papa

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

Baltimore — A Christian on the East Coast felt moved by God to help after a major winter storm ravaged Texas earlier this year.

Lamar N. Robinson, a member of the Woodlawn Park Church of Christ and owner of Kingdom Business Clothing, raised $8,000.

“I had to do something,” Robinson said. “I prayed about it and walked by faith.”

Checks were presented to the Garden Oaks Church of Christ in Houston and the North Colony Church of Christ, north of Dallas.

TENNESSEE

Nashville — More than 1,000 worshipers came together June 2-5 for the Connect Conference, hosted by the Crieve Hall Church of Christ.

Other sponsoring congregations were the Concord Road Church of Christ in Brentwood and the Mt. Juliet Church of Christ.

The conference, which organizers envisioned as a way to help churches reconnect after the COVID-19 pandemic, drew Christians from 22 states and more than 100 congregations.

“This feels like an early preview of heaven,” said Matt Wallin, a deacon of the Oak Hill Church of Christ in Rome, Ga.

The 38 speakers focused on reviving passion for sharing the Gospel and practical tips for effective evangelism. Four Christian university presidents spoke: David Shannon of Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn.; W. Kirk Brothers of Heritage Christian University in Florence, Ala.; Mike Williams of Faulkner University in Montgomery, Ala.; and Michael Ross of Ohio Valley University in Vienna, W.Va.

Nashville — Seven leaders of the Remnant Fellowship Church, some of them former members of Churches of Christ, died May 29 when their Florida-bound Cessna went down in Percy Priest Lake.

Gwen Shamblin Lara, a dietician who launched a faith-based diet program, Weigh Down Workshop, and her first husband, David Shamblin, worshiped with the Otter Creek Church of Christ in Brentwood, Tenn., before founding the Remnant church in 1999.

David and Jennifer Martin also left Otter Creek to be a part of the new church. David Martin once worked as an admissions officer for Lipscomb University in Nashville.

Lara was named Lipscomb’s Christian Business Leader of the Year in 1998. Shamblin Theatre, a performance venue on Lipscomb’s campus, is named for the family.

Lara, her second husband, Joe, and the Martins died in the crash. So did Jonathan and Jessica Walters and Lara’s son-in-law, Brandon Hannah. The Martins, Jessica Walters and Hannah were Lipscomb graduates.

TEXAS

Austin — Texas House Bill 929 — also known as Bo’s Law — was recently passed by the Texas Senate, sending the measure to the governor’s desk for final approval.

The Botham Jean Act would require police officers’ body cameras to remain on throughout the course of an investigation. It would also clarify exceptions to the state’s body camera requirements.

Rep. Carl Sherman, the author of the bill, serves as the senior minister for the Hutchins Church of Christ, south of Dallas.

Sherman said the law is about “more systemic accountability in policing. We want to make sure all the evidence is there to uphold the integrity of policing as a profession and not redact or edit out footage.”

Jean, 26, was a member of the Dallas West Church of Christ.

A drone captured this image as it did a parking lot passover of the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City. About 1,500 worshipers brought lawn chairs and Lord’s Supper supplies for the “Beyond the Building” service. “The church is not a destination; it is a movement,” preaching minister Phil Brookman said in his sermon.

The church has resumed in-person worship in its building but gathered in the parking lot — as members did during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic — to remember “the trials of 2020” and celebrate “how far God has brought us the past year,” said Andy Lashley, involvement and communications minister.

Oklahoma church returns to parking lot to remember trials of pandemic
COMMUNION: Pandemic brings changes

From Page 1

It wouldn’t be the first time a pandemic changed things.

A century ago, trays became the norm — though a few Churches of Christ, representing less than 1/100 of 1 percent of adherents, remain one cup by conviction.

Mac Ice, director of special collections and archives at ACU’s Brown Library, sees a certain irony in the shift away from individual cups.

“One hundred and ten years ago, individual cups were not the problem but rather the solution to our awareness of germ theory,” Ice said. “There were germs, we discovered, and so we stopped using the common cup and went to individual cups. Now there are germs, we discover, and we are going from individual cups to individual sealed cups and crackers in plastic bags.”

WHEN COVID-19 CAME

Indeed, prior to the coronavirus pandemic, few congregations made regular use of single-serve cups. Before COVID-19, 21st Century Christian — a major source of communion supplies to Churches of Christ — sold the “rip and sip” communion cups to only two congregations that used them weekly. Others would order small boxes for hospital visitation or homebound members, said Matthew McInteer, CEO of the company, based in Nashville, Tenn.

“Come March 2020, we sold more in two weeks than the entire previous year — a 16-fold year-over-year increase,” McInteer recalled. “We couldn’t get them from suppliers fast enough.”

Demand slowed slightly by April 2021, but McInteer attributed part of that to churches being stocked up. Other congregations have switched to a Chiclet-style bread square placed in a plastic communion cup stacked beneath a second cup filled with juice.

“We’ve definitely talked to a lot of customers who have said, ‘We may end up using these forever,’ but they are more expensive, and they don’t taste very good,” McInteer said.

No one seems to like the Styrofoam-textured wafers in the single-serve sets. That’s pretty much where agreement ends.

A one-question survey by The Jenkins Institute, a ministry based in Nashville, asked, “When do you expect to return to using regular Lord’s Supper emblems?”

Among 351 respondents, 62 percent had no plans to change the prepackaged emblems any time soon. Another 17 percent did not expect to ever go back to trays, said Dale Jenkins, institute co-founder and minister for the Spring Meadows Church of Christ in Spring Hill, Tenn.

An online Christian Chronicle survey posed five open-ended questions to email subscribers and social media followers.

About a quarter of those who responded said they would characterize their personal experience of communion and/or the offering during the pandemic as “better.” Only about 1 in 10 thought it was “worse.”

Most respondents said it was just different: They liked online giving but not single-serve communion. Or they liked single-serve communion but not online giving. Some thought it was efficient or more hygienic. Others said the changes make it easier to focus, but some said it feels more rushed.

The Chronicle survey also highlighted the many different solutions congregations sought to address the concerns presented by COVID-19.

The use of single-serve cups was most common. Others referenced having masked ushers with gloves pass trays containing the single-serve cups or double stacking the cups with a Chiclet-style cracker in the bottom cup.

Some passed communion but not the collection plate. Others passed the collection plate but not communion.

“We did not change anything,” wrote Craig S. Young, a member of the Crescent Ridge Church of Christ in Ironton, Ala. Young said he attends a “one-cup” congregation.

About a third of respondents said they believe their congregation will
return to the former way of doing things at some point. Many were unsure what the future of communion may look like, while others hoped for some hybrid version.

James Waggoner, an elder of the Sanger Church of Christ in Texas, said he doesn’t want to go back to trays at all. He added that his perspective as a retired firefighter and paramedic is different from some.

Sarah Stirman, a member of the Greenville Oaks Church of Christ in Allen, Texas, north of Dallas, said she found the changes distracting.

“Fighting with the cellophane to partake. Fighting with my mask to partake,” she wrote. “My mind is not on the cross but the minor distractions.”

However, she said she’s not sure what the best solution would be.

“I do not enjoy the single-serve communion cups, but I don’t think I want to have communion from a tray that has passed under dozens of mouths and noses,” she wrote.

GERMS AND TRAYS

John Dobbs, minister for the Forsythe Church of Christ in Monroe, La., wrote that he thinks the changes have made communion more meaningful and less rushed.

“I would be happy not to pick up some bread everyone in the whole church has touched,” Dobbs said. “I do not consider myself a germaphobe, but at the same time there is no necessity to pass along germs with trays.”

At least a few acknowledged they didn’t like the changes because they don’t like change. Period.

But some found it more meaningful to all be partaking at the same moment.

Ice said the roots of such a response are found in the earliest days of the Restoration Movement, modeled in the Reformed tradition from which Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone had come.

Fourth in a series

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Wearing a mask and gloves, Les McSwain passes communion to members of the Church of Christ at Lewis Street in Little Rock, Ark., where he serves as church education director.

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VBS: After pandemic year, summer event returns

FROM PAGE 3

with the theme “Boot Camp” — will be a one-day event instead of multiple days. The Detroit-area congregation also is asking attendees to preregister and planning to offer prepackaged snacks.

“This year’s VBS, to me, has a different flavor to it, not just because it’s one day but because we’re coming out of this COVID slowdown,” minister and elder Roger Woods said.

“We didn’t stop being the church, but we slowed down, and it’s giving us the opportunity to reassess why we’re doing what we do?”

Churches that have hosted VBS in the past seem eager to offer it again this summer because children have missed out on so much in the past year, said Shannon Rains, an associate professor of children’s ministry at Lubbock Christian University in Texas.

But she said congregations should make sure they have a plan in place before diving back in.

“VBS is expensive and time-consuming,” Rains said. “I’ve encouraged church leaders to continue to think about their vision for children’s ministry.” They should “not do an activity for the sake of an activity but select programs that best guide the ministry into the future.”

In the Portland area, the Metro church’s goal is to “encourage families to worship together at home,” deacon’s wife Summer Blachly said.

The Oregon congregation is inviting the whole family to attend — mom, dad and grandparents.

To help prevent virus spread, Metro is asking family groups to refrain from mixing with the other families, Blachly said. Also, no snacks will be provided and, unless state guidelines change, masks will be required.

Still, she said, “Everybody’s been really excited and positive about this year’s family-style VBS.”

‘KINGDOMS’ COME TOGETHER

Even before the pandemic, recruiting volunteers for VBS had become more difficult for some congregations. Now, coming out of the pandemic, it was proving even tougher for the Levy church.

“We just have a lot of families who — they’ve either been with their kids for a long time, and they feel like they need to be fed by being in adult Bible classes,” Gustafson said. “Or we’ve had a lot of teachers who are just not comfortable with returning back to the building, which is understandable.”

Nearby, the Pleasant Valley Church of Christ in Little Rock was also struggling to find volunteers. So the congregation suggested that area churches partner and host a combined VBS.

Several churches will have a weekend event — with the theme “Jesus Lights the Way” — at an area park. Masks won’t be required, and snacks will be prepackaged.

A play will be performed, food will be provided, and there will be several different “kingdoms” for families to visit.

“We have different churches hosting different areas, and they’re in charge of three activities in those areas,” Gustafson said. “We’re all kind of spread out, and as families arrive, they do each of these activities together.”

Gustafson said the planning and preparation have been exciting, peaceful and less daunting as a result of the combined efforts.

The partnership will continue in the future, she said.

“We’re just excited about this opportunity to partner with local churches in this area,” Gustafson said. “This is the greater Little Rock community coming together and being involved in something.”

‘SOFT OPENING’

In the northeastern U.S., the Manchester Church of Christ in Connecticut is hosting VBS for the first time in more than a decade.

The church typically hosts a summer camp each year, but due to the pandemic, the camp was canceled.

Edward Main, a Manchester deacon and director of group life, is glad to see VBS return. He and his wife helped lead VBS for several years before they became parents.

After the birth of their son, they took a step back, hoping someone would fill the gap and keep the program running.

Instead, the kids only attended summer camp.

The theme “camp vbs” will maintain the camp culture for the kids this summer, Main said.

Manchester’s VBS will have limited participation. It will be four hours instead of four days and take place mostly outdoors. There will also be prepackaged snacks and multiple sanitizing and cleaning stations.

“Since we haven’t done it for 11 years, this is kind of our soft opening,” Main said. “And then next year, we’ll use everything we learned … and hopefully be able to bring it to the community.”

About 1,800 miles southwest of Manchester, VBS at the Childress Church of Christ in Texas will look similar to how it did pre-pandemic, senior minister Trey Morgan said.

The four-night VBS at the congregation halfway between Amarillo and Wichita Falls includes classes for all ages, refreshments and puppet skits, Morgan said.

Masks won’t be required.

Attendance won’t be limited.

The only possible change: Cookies might be distributed instead of self-served.

“We’re just excited about things getting somewhat back to normal,” Morgan said.
The Northwest School of Discipleship is an intergenerational experience. Students will take classes alongside other disciples, learning from the wisdom of older Christians. Each student will have a mentor for the program’s duration and live with a host family.

The nine-month program will kick off in September with a five-day trek in the Cascade Mountains. The rest of the year, students will take a full load of classes, meet weekly with mentors, participate in Service Fridays and go on several excursions around the Northwest. The year will conclude with a three-week mission trip to Ecuador.

George House, a graduating high school senior and member of the Circle Church of Christ in Corvallis, Ore., was the first student to sign up for Project Antioch. House enrolled in Project Antioch because he wants to stand strong in his faith.

“I saw an opportunity to grow in my faith and an opportunity to talk to people about facing the trials of the world and how I can improve myself and prepare myself,” he said.

Mitchell Rohrback, who attends the Southwest church, is another incoming student.

“I just felt called to do it,” he said, “and I also felt that it’s an opportunity that I don’t really want to miss out on.”

The congregation at Southwest is excited about the program, and people are eager to get involved. Elder Hinds said that families are especially interested in hosting students, whether it’s for the internship program or Project Antioch.

“There’s definitely an upbeat dynamic,” he said, “and we are looking forward to what the Lord is going to do with this. We’re thankful for how the school seems to be impacting the congregation at Southwest but also others in the area.”

EDITOR’S NOTE: Christian Chronicle intern Makyra Williamson is the daughter of Darren Williamson.
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Cell: 406-220-2143
Canada mourns stolen children

EMPTY SHOE MEMORIALS pay tribute after discovery of mass grave with remains of 215 Indigenous kids.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

At age 6, Brenda Cyr was taken from her family and forced to live at a church-run residential school — part of a 120-year Canadian government effort to assimilate Indigenous children.

In seven years at two such schools, Cyr, now 60, recalls that she was yelled at, beaten and sexually assaulted by a priest.

As an adult, her life spiraled out of control.

"I was into drugs, alcohol. I tried killing myself six times, and I just lived this horrible life," the Saulteau First Nation tribal member told The Christian Chronicle.

Eventually, Cyr — who attends the Gentle Road Church of Christ in Regina, Saskatchewan — found peace and the willingness to forgive through Jesus.

But the haunting memories linger, for Cyr and many in Canada.

On May 27, the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation announced that it had found the remains of 215 children buried near the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia.

The mass grave’s discovery, found with the help of a “ground penetrating radar specialist,” has brought a national reckoning to the United States’ northern neighbor.

"This is something that we have to deal with," said Vance, 56, whose inner-city church, planted in 2010, helps Indigenous families overcome poverty and addiction. "We can't keep shoving this under the carpet. We have to deal with this."

U.S. boarding schools established after the Civil War provided the blueprint for Indigenous family separation in Canada, as noted by NPR.

From 1876 to 1996, Canada removed 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children from their homes and forced them to attend residential schools, according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

The Canadian government’s religious partners included the Anglican Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Roman Catholic Church, the United Church of Canada and the Jesuits of English Canada.

"Notwithstanding the good intent and care of many who worked in the schools, it is clear that Indian Residential Schools, in policy and in practice, were an assault on Indigenous families, culture, language and spiritual traditions, and that great harm was done," those churches said in a 2015 joint statement. "We continue to acknowledge and regret our part in that legacy."

"Those harmed were children, vulnerable, far from their families..."
FROM PAGE 11

and communities,” the statement added. “The sexual, physical and emotional abuse they suffered is well documented.”

One of 139 such schools was the MacKay Residential School in Dauphin, Manitoba, a small town 200 miles northwest of the provincial capital of Winnipeg. The school remained open until the late 1980s.

Since 2003, the Dauphin Church of Christ — often partnering with other churches and community groups — has worked to redeem the former residential school’s building and show a different view of Christianity to aboriginal Canadians.

At the old school site, the Church of Christ operates a housing, food and clothing ministry called Parkland Crossing — a name tied to the Parkland region of Manitoba and a Scripture in Jeremiah where the Lord says, “Stand at the crossroads.”

After the remains were located in Kamloops, flags were flown at half-mast throughout Canada, and make-shift memorials featuring children’s shoes or moccasins popped up at former residential schools and the Parliament building in Ottawa.

More than 250 pairs of shoes were left on the front steps at Parkland Crossing.

“The symbolism of that display and that tribute to those stolen children is that those shoes are empty, and they shouldn’t be,” said Jamie Harvey, the ministry’s full-time administrator.

Kelly Carter, lead minister for the Calgary Church of Christ in Alberta, said Parkland Crossing’s effort at redemption makes him proud.

“I can’t hold back the tears, actually,” said Carter, whose own church helps Indigenous homeless people, “because it’s so wonderful that our churches are doing something so positive in light of all the horrible things that have happened.”

A smaller memorial with shoes and teddy bears sprouted at Alberta Bible College in Calgary.

That Restoration Movement institution has two students who are Stoney Nakoda tribal members.

“I have not seen this outpouring of care for the Indigenous people in Canada since I moved here,” Stanley Helton, the Bible college’s president and a 12-year resident of Canada, said of the coast-to-coast response.

THEY DESERVE A PROPER GRAVE

Deanna Moar, a 28-year-old Dauphin resident, organized the memorial at Parkland Crossing.

The Métis tribal member said her grandfather Clifford Sanderson, now 78, ran away from a residential school when he was 13. For years, he hid in a wooded area with his family, relying on fishing, hunting and trapping to survive, she said.

“It was a hard life,” Moar told the Chronicle, “but he said he’d rather live like that than go back to a church where he’d be beaten every day.”

Moar said she is Roman Catholic and does not blame God for what happened. She has received food from Parkland Crossing’s pantry and said she appreciates the Church of Christ ministry’s service to the community. The memorial shoes will become a part of the ministry’s clothing giveaway program and benefit needy families.

An estimated 6,000 children died amid abuse and neglect at the residential schools, according to the truth and reconciliation report. But the exact number of deaths is unknown. Many in Canada — including Moar — are demanding that the government examine all the former school grounds for mass graves.

“These children don’t deserve to just be laid in the ground and forgotten,” Moar said. “They deserve a proper grave with a proper headstone — every single one of them.”

THE WAY TO HEALING

Back in Regina, a city of 230,000 that is the provincial capital of Saskatchewan, neither Cyr nor fellow Gentle Road church member Kenilee Pelletier was shocked by the Kamloops discovery.

Even as a girl, Cyr said, she heard about graveyards at the residential schools.

“It was very sad, mind you, that they found this graveyard with these kids,” she said. “But for myself, I’ve learned to forgive. I’ve learned to forgive the government, all the priests and all that. … And that’s why I say I’m at peace.”

In recent years, Cyr, now a grandmother, finally finished high school and started taking college classes.

Pelletier, 22, is a Plains Cree tribal member. She’s part of the first generation of her family not forced into a residential school.

“I was very heartbroken,” she said of the remains found in British Columbia. “But I also knew it wasn’t an isolated incident.”

Pelletier said the news evoked images of her own relatives who died in residential schools — relatives she never got to meet — and made her mentally numb.

Two of her uncles took their own lives at the schools, she said.

A third uncle was dragged to his death by a horse, she said. Just a few years ago, the family received a letter apologizing for 11-year-old Allan’s death and blaming it on neglect.

Pelletier is a University of Regina student majoring in English with a minor in Indigenous studies. She wrote a poem in which she reflected on the cold nature of the letter.

“A little boy dragged, partly dismembered?” says one verse, which she read aloud through tears. “He was a boy with a conscience, who felt pain. But Your loved one will be remembered.”

Vance, the Gentle Road minister, fought back his own tears after listening to Cyr and Pelletier tell their stories in a Zoom interview.

“I’m ashamed as a White Christian. I’m ashamed of what we did,” said Vance, a former president of the now-defunct Western Christian College and High School in Regina.

“I’m ashamed of all the racism and genocide that we concocted and that we did it in the name of Jesus. That’s just unbelievable to me,” he added.

“I’m thankful that these ladies know a lot about forgiveness.”

He’s unsure, he said, why they pay him the slightest attention, much less listen to him talk about Jesus.

“But it also does propel me,” said Vance, who focuses on doing what he can to correct the injustices.

While many Indigenous people view Jesus as part of the White man’s religion, Cyr and Pelletier said they look to the Lord to bring healing to their people and their land.

Pelletier traces her faith in God to her mother and grandmother.

“They just always told me, ‘You have to forgive. You have to pray. You have to understand that you’re more than what your past will ever define you as.’”
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At radio station UVA FM 97.3, Manuel Aquino reads Scripture during the “Buena nueva por todos” (“Good News for Everyone”) program. One Kingdom (formerly World Radio) provides funding for the radio ministry.

WATER: Ministry conducted taste tests for those it serves

FROM PAGE 1
every village has one. Windows of the tiny roadside tiendas bear hand-painted logos of the New York Yankees, St. Louis Cardinals and Boston Red Sox. The Dominican Republic is second only to the U.S. in the number of players it produces for Major League Baseball. Children dream of moving north and becoming the next Sammy Sosa, Albert Pujols or “Big Papi” David Ortiz, who nearly lost his life in a 2019 shooting in the capital, Santo Domingo.

“You leave with the idea of not coming back,” said Esteban Valle-García, who has worked with Aquino through two humanitarian ministries — Texas-based Christian Relief Fund and Louisiana-based One Kingdom.

Aquino, who studied ministry at the Baxter Institute in Honduras, was part of a small and rare group of Dominicans with “a deep sense of responsibility to come back to the D.R.,” Valle-García said. And to Neyba, no less — not bustling Santo Domingo or the beach-lined resort city of Punta Cana.

“There’s a saying: If you’re good, you go to heaven. If you’re bad, you go to Neyba,” said Ben Adkins, who also worked with Aquino through the One Kingdom ministry.

Neyba is hot, and life is hard. Adkins has traveled with Aquino to rural villages on the outskirts of Neyba. He’s seen children with bones bent by rickets and malnutrition. There is “intense, severe need in that community,” Adkins said. That’s why Aquino and his family won’t give up on them.

“Sheer determination, that’s him,” Adkins said of his friend. “He’s good at seeing a problem, finding a solution and meeting the need through the local church, giving God the glory.”

DUCTS, WATER AND A GUY NAMED BEN

With the BUV grounded indefinitely, Aquino made his water deliveries in a Daihatsu mini flatbed truck. There were problems with its fuel line, too, so he has converted it to run on natural gas.

His first stop: the bright blue home of Eduardo Encarnación and his wife, Nania. A worker loaded a rack on their front porch with large, full botellones (bottles) and took their empty ones. The home is a source of clean water for their kids, grandkids and neighbors, the couple said.

Before, tanker trucks delivered drinking water to homes by hose — into whatever containers the people of Neyba had. Impurities and sickness resulted, Pineda said. His father launched a business that filters water using ultraviolet light and an elaborate storage system. The botellones are washed and sanitized before delivery. Caps are soaked in bleach.

Aquino got start-up funds for the work from One Kingdom and members of the White’s Ferry Road Church of Christ in West Monroe, La., including the Robertson family of “Duck Dynasty” fame.

Al Robertson, a former minister and current elder of the church, met Aquino on a mission trip nearly two decades ago and was impressed by the family’s concern for the suffering.

“We loved his commitment, his entrepreneurship,” Robertson told The Christian Chronicle. Church members including Korie and Missy Robertson worked with Aquino and his family on mission trips.

“What stood out was not only his commitment to helping us but his commitment to the community,” Al Robertson said. “He’s not just planting churches; he’s building infrastructure.”

That commitment includes customer satisfaction, said Adkins, who helped Aquino launch the water ministry. They conducted taste tests of bottled water brands and fine-tuned their purification process to mimic the winner, Dasani.

Adkins, who now lives in North Carolina and works for another nonprofit, Equip International, remembers the day that Aquino gleefully showed him the business’ name, emblazoned in block letters on the side of the purification plant: AGUA BEN, S.R.L.

“I’ve never been honored and embarrassed at the same time,” Adkins said. Then Aquino explained that the name was as much a pun as it was a tribute. In Dominican Spanish, a phrase that means “it’s here” or “come and get it” sounds a bit like “Ben.”

Customers pay 50 Dominican pesos (about 88 cents U.S.) for two gallons, Aquino said, with volume discounts for various businesses. He also supplies water to area schools and at no cost to the families of children sponsored through Christian Relief Fund.
CHANGED LIVES AND COFFEE
The purification plant backs up to Aquino’s home, which serves as a community hub for the people of Neyba. He and his wife, Ondina, ran an internet cafe on the front porch, but COVID-19 put that on hold.

Still, people came and went from the family’s open-air kitchen on a recent Saturday, taking off their masks for steaming bowls of sancocho (broth with chicken and vegetables) served with tostones (flattened cakes of plantain).

Ondina, a native of Honduras, met her husband during his time at Baxter Institute. Married for 35 years, they moved to Neyba in the late 1980s to plant Churches of Christ. They did their best to help the aspiring preachers and hungry children they encountered along the way.

Linda Purdy met the couple when she served as executive director for Christian Relief Fund, or CRF, a 50-year-old ministry that offers child sponsorship programs and assists with well-drilling and development projects around the world.

“They took me to several small communities where they had started house churches,” Purdy said. “In most locales, there would be a man who served as minister. I knew that Manuel received modest financial support from a congregation in the U.S., so I asked him who supported these men.

“He said, ‘We help them.’ They were using a portion of their own salary to help get these churches started.”

For nearly three decades, Ondina managed a child sponsorship program in Neyba for CRF. She recently turned that work over to her daughter-in-law, Nairobi Batista. They feed, tutor and mentor children in the program, some of whom now work with the ministry.

“Manuel and Ondina have literally touched the lives of thousands of children and their families,” Purdy said.

After lunch, Ondina offered her guests a round of strong, dark Dominican coffee. She talked about the changes she sees in children after they join the sponsorship program. They finish school, and some go on to university. Many are baptized and active in their churches.

“Sometimes when they become adults, they come to visit,” Ondina said. “I love hearing them say, ‘Because of you, I am who I am now.’”

CHURCH PLANTS AND COVID-19
On Sunday, Aquino exchanged his heavy work jacket for a necktie and a Bible, preaching for the Vista Largo Church of Christ.

It’s one of nine congregations the minister has helped plant in the region. Five are Spanish-speaking, and six are Creole-speaking churches of immigrants from Haiti.

On this Sunday, the two-story, white-columned church building was full of children sponsored through CRF. Aquino and workers with the ministry led kid-friendly songs including “Alabaré a Mi Señor” (“I Will Praise My Lord”).

Eduardo Encarnación sat on the front row, a throng of youngsters wiggling around him. He didn’t mind, he said. He’s surrounded by grandchildren at home. This felt right.

It was a shorter-than-usual service. Adults handed out masks to the children, although social distancing was something of a lost cause. Instead of a robust fellowship meal, they served simple cookies and juice, plus more strong coffee for the adults.

The pandemic has hurt the economy. Day laborers have lost jobs and income. The country’s vaccination rate is rising, but so are infections.

No one is certain of the future, but Aquino said that, regardless, he’ll keep working to make lives better in his homeland.

And he’s not giving up on that motorbike, either.
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AT 100TH ANNIVERSARY of Tulsa Race Massacre, joint assembly brings together two congregations.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Broken Arrow, Okla.

At the 100th anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre, two preachers — one Black, one White — stood on stage at a suburban church. They faced each other, held hands and bowed their heads.

"Help us, Father, to learn to erase the past and live for the future … as one in Christ," prayed Tim Luster, the Black minister.

After the final amen, Luster leaned forward, hugged Tim Pyles, the White minister, and said softly, “God bless you, man.”

The interaction came at the end of a 45-minute dialogue on racism that emphasized the massacre’s recent centennial.

On May 31–June 1, 1921, White mob violence destroyed Tulsa’s Greenwood District — an affluent African American community known as “Black Wall Street” — and claimed as many as 300 lives.

The Bible class discussion resulted from a five-year racial unity effort between the Broken Arrow Church of Christ, about 15 miles southeast of Tulsa, and the North Sheridan Church of Christ in Tulsa.

The 500-member Broken Arrow church, where Pyles preaches, is predominantly White.

The 100-member North Sheridan church, which Luster serves, is about 60 percent Black and 40 percent White.

The two churches started gathering together in 2016 — in the spring at Broken Arrow and in the fall at North Sheridan — after a White police officer shot an unarmed Black man in Tulsa. They couldn’t meet last year because of the pandemic. But the success of the COVID-19 vaccinations in slowing the virus’ spread allowed the congregations to reassemble. Some attendees wore masks. Others did not.

At the massacre’s centennial, Pyles said, the ministers hoped “to address the ongoing challenge and evil of...
Prejudice exists on both sides of the fence’

Raising awareness of 1921

Faith drives two leading advocates of Tulsa Race Massacre justice. One is a lawmaker whose relatives survived the mob violence. The other chairs the Centennial Commission.

THE SPIRIT TO FIGHT
Two of the leading voices raising awareness about the massacre both attend the North Pointe Church of Christ, a predominantly Black congregation in Broken Arrow. Kevin Matthews, a fellow Democrat who is the founder and chairman of the 1921 Centennial Commission, said that commission spearheaded events to commemorate the massacre’s centennial and raised about $30 million for projects such as the Greenwood Rising history center that was unveiled in June 2, (Those projects are not without controversy. Some survivors, including Fletcher, would prefer to see funds go to a Reparations and Equity Act that was approved by Congress last year.)

In interviews with The Christian Chronicle, both Goodwin, 56, and Matthews, 61, discussed the role of faith in their advocacy.

“I feel the pleasure of knowing those folks and knowing that they are alive, that they are not dead,’ Luster said. ‘And I feel that Black people are led to the Convention Hall during the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre.

Black people are led to the Convention Hall during the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre.

African American community known as the Greenwood district. ‘I still see Black people being burned. I still hear airplanes flying overhead. I still see smoke and smell fire. I still see Black businesses being burned. I still hear airplanes flying overhead. I still see smoke and smell fire.’

The spirit to fight the battles here on earth, so God says, ‘Do right by me, and I will fight your battles for you, but I need you to be on the field.’”

For his part, Matthews said that raising money for the centennial was “a task that only God could make happen.”

“One of the things that I believe as a man of faith is that we should sit down, brother to brother, sister to sister, talk about our personal stories, tough stories, and pray about them as we come up with a resolution,” he said.

Sadly enough, over the last few years, we have had so much division, social division, spiritual division, political division,” he added. “So we’re hoping that building this history center and people going through it, will provide a place to reflect, pray, discuss and talk about our problems better.”

Goodwin, a devout Christian, said that she too feels a similar sense of responsibility to speak out. “I feel the pleasure of knowing those folks and knowing that they are alive, that they are not dead,’ Goodwin said. “And I feel that God ultimately is going to deal with that elephant in the room.”

At the same time, she said, “God gives us the spirit that we need to fight the battles here on earth, so much so that he says, ‘Do right by me, and I’ll fight your battles for you, but I need you to be on the field.’”

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MASSACRE: ‘This is a time for reconciliation,’ Tulsa minister says

The Greenwood District burns during the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921.

FROM PAGE 19

Warren G. Blakney Sr., the 500-member North Peoria church’s senior minister, has fought for racial equality since 1961. At age 9, he met civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Blakney said he had heard about the massacre before moving to Tulsa in 1996, but he did not know much about it.

“I think this is a time for reconciliation,” said Blakney, who has served as president of both the Tulsa Urban League and the local NAACP. “I don’t just mean as African Americans, but as people in general, we need to realize we’re standing on common ground. And we really need … to treat each other as God would have us to treat each other.”

A CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE

The events of May 31-June 1, 1921, remain a mystery to many Americans.

For decades, Tulsa — and the nation — acted as if the massacre never occurred. But growing up on historic Greenwood Avenue, Goodwin learned the details from an early age.

Her grandmother Edward Goodwin Sr. was a high school senior in 1921. He survived along with his parents, James Henri and Carlie Marie Goodwin, and his sister, Anna.

The lawmaker’s grandmother Jeanne Goodwin did not experience the massacre, but she had a book about it locked in her chest.

She let Regina read it.

“What I’ve been told is that there was a conspiracy of silence and that many White people who had committed these crimes did not want it to be discussed,” Rep. Goodwin told the Chronicle.

“And understand this: If you were a Black person in that day who witnessed the massacre, if you had watched people burned to death and bombed, and you survived and saw that no one was being charged, who were you going to turn to? Who were you going to tell?

“So I think for Black folks in particular, being quiet was a matter of survival, and White folks who knew folks who perhaps had committed murder, they weren’t talking about it either.”

But Goodwin stressed that not all White people endorsed the violence.

“When one wicked White man would set a house on fire, there might be a good White man who would go and put out that fire for his Black neighbor,” she said. “I know of those stories, too.”

REPARATIONS DEBATE

For a long time, the massacre was known as the Tulsa Race Riot. Few insurance claims were paid because most policies excluded riot damage from coverage, according to the Tulsa World.

A lawsuit filed last year calls for the city of Tulsa and other defendants to pay reparations to relatives of victims and survivors of the massacre. The plaintiffs include the three survivors who spoke at the congressional hearing.

In her testimony, Goodwin said her relatives, who owned 14 destroyed rental properties, went to the courthouse seeking damages in 1921.

“The statute of limitations had not expired,” Goodwin said at the hearing. “My great-grandmother talked of silverware and her linen, and she talked about her feather mattresses, and she talked about the piano — destroyed. She talked about the books in her library — gone.

“And she had the courage when murderers were still walking the streets of Greenwood … to say, ‘You took from me what was mine.’”

But she was rejected outright.

“Reparations are due. The harm is ongoing,” Goodwin said, citing lingering discrepancies in housing, employment and criminal justice.

In her Chronicle interview, the Christian lawmaker urged fellow believers to contemplate a question: “If this had happened to your family, how long would you wait for your justice?”

‘AMAZED AND SHOCKED’

Unlike Goodwin, Matthews — a fellow native Tulsan — said he never learned about the massacre at home or school.

The future state senator was in his 30s when a great-uncle from California came to Oklahoma for a class reunion.

“He gave me a VHS tape that told the story, and I thought it was like a fictional television show,” said Matthews, who retired as a Tulsa administrative fire chief before seeking public office. “I couldn’t believe it really happened in Tulsa. I was amazed and shocked.”

Five and a half years ago, concerned that the massacre story was not being told effectively, Matthews launched the Centennial Commission.

He has worked closely with U.S. Sen. James Lankford, a Republican from Oklahoma.

In 2018, the two unveiled a new curriculum designed to make sure students receive proper instruction about the massacre.

“Our political perspectives are very different, but we agree on the need to teach the accurate history of the massacre across our state and around the nation so our country can learn from our past,” Lankford told the Chronicle in a written statement.

“Kevin is strong in his faith and his commitment to reconciliation to God and to each other,” added the U.S. senator, who is an ordained Southern Baptist pastor. “We should continue to lift up the Greenwood community in north Tulsa and all of Oklahoma’s rising historically Black towns. Let’s pray and get to work on reconciliation together.”

While Matthews praises God for the progress made, he still sees challenges ahead.

He hopes to locate the remains of massacre victims believed to have been hastily buried in mass graves. According to The Associated Press, researchers are preparing to resume a search for those graves.

“It’s a shame that we still have not found tombstones or graves of every one of them,” Matthews told the Chronicle. “We ask for people of faith to pray that we find those remains and give them a proper burial.”
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Ministers, wives focus on spiritual health

Silvia and Chris Crooks, left, of the Belgrade Church of Christ in Montana and Mike and Annette Christensen of the Cody Church of Christ in Wyoming participate in a discussion during The Rising, a retreat for preachers and their wives in the Northern Plains. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Canadian church members weren't able to cross the border for the annual event, which had 16 participants. For the past decade, the retreat has helped ministry couples "remain spiritually healthy" and has provided "a safe place of encouragement," said Scott Laird, minister for the Great Falls Church of Christ in Montana.

HIGHIER EDUCATION

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

ABILENE, Texas. — ACU’s newest residence hall, scheduled for completion in August, will be named in honor of JoLynn and the late Joe Bullock, parents of ACU Board of Trustees chair April Anthony. Both were active teachers, mentors and leaders in Churches of Christ. Joe Bullock served as a deacon and elder for more than two decades.

"They made sacrifices to provide their children the opportunity to attend this university,” Anthony said, “and the naming of this residence hall honors that sacrifice and those of so many parents on behalf of their children.”

FAULKNER UNIVERSITY

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Fewer and fewer students are entering ministry degree programs, according to recent studies by Barna Group and other research firms.

Faulkner plans to identify its "most pressing needs and potential innovations” in ministry education, said public relations and social media manager Rebecca Burylo, with a $50,000 grant from the Lilly Endowment’s Pathways for Tomorrow initiative.

The grant from the Indianapolis-based foundation will “help provide a foundation for improving our programs” and increase student recruitment, said Todd Brenneman, chair of Faulkner’s Bible department.

HARDING UNIVERSITY

SEARCY, Ark. — Harding’s international programs, closed in spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, are reopening. Study abroad programs available this summer include Greece, Italy and England. Harding’s Australia/Asia, Latin America and Zambia programs will resume this fall.

“We have spent months planning, hoping and praying together and are overjoyed to celebrate the return of study abroad,” said Audra Pleasant, executive director of international programs for Harding, adding that students will follow local regulations and COVID-19 protocols throughout the semester.
Full-time Associate Minister Search - Enterprise, Alabama

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Additional information about this position may be obtained by calling James Baker at: (334) 400-3304. Please submit a current resume, references, and recent sermon multi-media file or streaming link to: jamesebaker365@gmail.com. Or send by mail to: College Avenue Church of Christ, Attention:Littleton Chatham, P.O. Box 311470, Enterprise, AL 36331.

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Full-time Pulpit Minister - Los Angeles

The Redondo Beach Church of Christ is looking for a full-time minister to preach, teach and make disciples for Christ. We are a loving congregation located in the beautiful South Bay Area of Los Angeles with three elders and an average Sunday attendance of 75 members. Our building has pews, a pulpit, a projector and hymn books. We are involved in community service and mission work. If interested, send a current resume along with references, information about yourself and your family, and links to two sermons to:
elders@redondochurchofchrist.com

Pulpit Minister Search - Kalispell Church of Christ - Kalispell, Montana

The elders of the Kalispell Church of Christ are looking for a minister to come work with our congregation. Responsibilities include: preaching, teaching and being part of our church family. The ideal candidate would be able to minister to our members regardless of age. Our congregation is located in northwest Montana approximately 70 miles from the Canadian border and 40 miles west of Glacier National Park. Our attendance is approximately 125 on Sunday. We currently have three elders. We have a three-bedroom parsonage on the church property. The compensation package would include a salary of $50K a year depending on experience.

Kalispell Church of Christ Elders
241 Stillwater Rd, Kalispell, Montana 59901
elders@kalispellchurchofchrist.org

Preaching Minister Search

University Park Church of Christ is searching for a Preaching Minister to serve a highly diverse congregation in Hyattsville, Maryland. Please download our vacancy announcement (PDF) from our website: http://www.upcoc.com; or call our church office (301-927-7277) for a copy. Applicants should respond to the requirements stated in the vacancy announcement.

Position open until filled.

Full-time Evanglist - Laurel, Delaware

The Church of Christ in Laurel, Delaware, is searching for a full-time evangelist with a passion for the lost who can help us use our talents and gifts to share the Good News. We are led by two elders and three deacons in our mission to know Christ and make Christ known. Duties would include some pulpit preaching and Bible classes but with a focus on community-minded evangelism. We desire a man that is Biblically sound, prayerful, evangelistic, humble, loving and caring, outgoing and friendly, Christlike in his walk and talk, possessing people-skills to work with all ages and types of people. Facilities include church building, large Family Life Center, brand new four-bedroom house with large yard.

Please contact David Hudson (elder) if interested in applying or have any questions.
(302) 846-9830 or send an email to: dlh12751@gmail.com

Belleview Church of Christ (Belleview, Fla.), 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 Evangelist - Laurel, Delaware

The Church of Christ in Laurel, Delaware, is searching for a full-time evangelist with a passion for the lost who can help us use our talents and gifts to share the Good News. We are led by two elders and three deacons in our mission to know Christ and make Christ known. Duties would include some pulpit preaching and Bible classes but with a focus on community-minded evangelism. We desire a man that is Biblically sound, prayerful, evangelistic, humble, loving and caring, outgoing and friendly, Christlike in his walk and talk, possessing people-skills to work with all ages and types of people. Facilities include church building, large Family Life Center, brand new four-bedroom house with large yard.

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Gospel Preacher-Haltom City, Texas

The elders of the Church of Christ at Birdville are seeking a sound, full or part-time, gospel preacher. We have three elders, two deacons and 70 attending members. The right candidate should possess biblically sound teaching. All interested persons need to submit a resume (with references) and video of a recent sermon(s): Birdville Church of Christ
3208 Carson St, Haltom City, TX 76117
(817) 938-9031
secretary@birdville.org
Scheduling interviews now.
She blessed the lives of thousands

**FREED-HARDEMAN PRESIDENT** remembers Fern Hill’s love for abused, neglected children.

**FERN HILL, who co-founded Timothy Hill Ranch with her husband, Jerry, died May 17. She was 86.**

The ministry, supported by Churches of Christ, serves abused and neglected children and is named after one of the Hills’ children, Timothy, who died after a tragic accident at age 13.

Fern Hill was “a mentor and friend to thousands and a beacon of love and kindness,” her obituary reads. One of those thousands is David Shannon, president of Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn. Here, Shannon shares his memories of “Aunt Fern.”

Everyone who knew Fern has stories about her that sound fictional unless you knew her.

She was Aunt Fern to me and my sister, Rebecca. I was born in Riverhead. We lived on Wildwood Trail a few houses down from her and Uncle Jerry. I have been held and nurtured by this woman longer than any — other than my mother and sister. I have lived in their home.

I remember asking my mother to explain how the Hills were my uncle and aunt. Boy, was I surprised to learn that we weren’t related.

But Fern would be the first to say we are both family of the King.

The combination of the names Jerry and Fern impacts our world like Aquila and Priscilla or even Paul and Barnabas. They powerfully impacted the Lord’s church — even from their college days when they taught a Sunday school class in their car because the church building didn’t have a classroom.

They served the Graymere Church of Christ in Columbia, Tenn., where my parents first met them and decided to move to Long Island and serve as vocational missionaries.

Their son Timothy passed at 13 years of age. I remember my mother answering the phone and being interrupted by a stranger asking if they had a house. They said yes. The stranger walked into Uncle Jerry’s office, laid the paperwork for the house on his desk, and asked if he would accept this house as a gift. It was the first time they had talked.

This home became the hospitality house where the Hills lived and hosted thousands of guests. There is no way to count the number of times Fern has washed sheets, folded towels, prepared breakfast.

But her guests experienced so much more. They enjoyed a chapter out of the living Word, a home-cooked breakfast, a few of Jerry’s jokes and a song. It might be “Welcome to the Family.” “Bless Be the Tie” or “Til We Meet Again.” And they could sing.

**FOCUSED, SPORADIC, FUN AND SERIOUS**

Aunt Fern had a way of bringing the Lord into situations without it seeming like it was her idea. She could pick up hitchhikers and, within a few miles, all would be singing “Amazing Grace.”

She connected with those who were 80 and lived their whole life as faithful Christians, and the next hour she could comfortably talk to an addict who had no place to stay.

Aunt Fern was dignified and beautiful. She was focused and sporadic. She was fun and serious. She had faith that moved mountains. To be loved by her was one of the great gifts from above.

Once, while at a conference, our toddler fell in a large hotel pool in the courtyard. Fern, fully clothed for the conference, jumped in to rescue him. She exited with grace as if it were no big deal to save a baby or swim in a long skirt. (How many hundreds of miles did she swim across the lake at Wildwood?)

She and Uncle Jerry lived a healthy life. For decades she ate Cambridge bars and shakes. In a kidding way I said to her one morning, “Aunt Fern, you know it doesn’t matter how many Cambridge bars you eat, you are still going to die one day.”

She smiled that confident smile she would flash when she knew she had checkmate.

“No, I am going to live forever,” she said. “I’m the daughter of the King.”

**WEBSITE:** timothyhill.org

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**NEWMAKERS**

**HIRED:** Josh Willingham as head baseball coach at his alma mater, Mars Hill Bible School in Florence, Ala. Willingham enjoyed an 11-year major-league career, including a 2014 trip to the World Series with the Kansas City Royals.

**Laura Akins** as director of communications at Oklahoma Christian Academy in Edmond, Okla. Akins is the former features editor for The Christian Chronicle. 

**David Pahman** as president of Foundation Christian Academy in Bowling Green, Ky. Pahman is the former head of school for Mobile Christian School in Alabama. 

**James Gurchiek** as superintendent and **Bradley Francis** as principal of Harding Academy in Searcy, Ark.

**Nan Camp** as director of children’s ministry for the Grapevine Church of Christ in Texas.

**HONORED:** Mark and Cindy Coleman for nearly a half century of service to the Edmond Church of Christ in Oklahoma. Mark Coleman had served as an elder since 1992. They are moving to Ada, Okla.

**With Appreciation:** The Christian Chronicle appreciates gifts received in memory of Brother Golden Hildreth, Carol Kelsey and Cecil Bruce White.

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**Children enjoy Lads to Leaders’ first-ever convention in the Mid-Atlantic region. The Indiana Church of Christ in Pennsylvania served as the host for the inaugural leadership training event.**
It’s OK to not be OK, but don’t suffer alone

When 23-year-old tennis superstar Naomi Osaka decided to forgo a postgame press conference mandated by the French Open, controversy quickly followed. Osaka cited depression and anxiety as the reason for her absence. French Open officials responded with a $15,000 fine. Osaka withdrew from the tournament, forfeiting her chance at a championship.

The furor surrounding Osaka’s decision highlights an issue with which many faithful Christians have long wrestled: mental health. The global pandemic of 2020 and its resulting fallout have pushed 2020 and its resulting mental stress, anxiety and depression.

The inability to worship in person, isolation from friends, family and co-workers and immense grief experienced from the loss of loved ones have only added to the already difficult struggle.

Kids and young teens have endured isolation from friends and activities, all while adapting to virtual school and wearing masks.

Is it even possible that our mental state has not been impacted? Unfortunately, far too many Christians needlessly feel guilt, shame and embarrassment for experiencing mental stress, anxiety and depression. The moment they need their brothers and sisters most, Christians often face criticism and judgment instead. Their illness is dismissed by others — perhaps even themselves — as a “lack of faith.” As a result, Christians needing loving support choose to refrain from seeking help and are left suffering in silence.


The same apostle who taught others “to be anxious about nothing” and to “make your requests known to God” (Philippians 4:6) described a time when he and his missionary companions felt “so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself” (2 Corinthians 1:8).

Even Jesus experienced deep emotional turmoil and anguish. Three times he pleaded for God to remove the cup of suffering he was destined to drink. But Jesus was not alone as he struggled.

As he talked to the Father, his inner circle of Peter, James and John sat nearby (Matthew 26:36-46). Though they slept, Jesus kept his closest friends within reach at this most critical moment. If Jesus wanted them close, how much more do we need a support system in our anguish?

In our own moments of despair, we must take our cares and worries to God (1 Peter 5:7). The book of Psalms is filled with hymns and prayers spoken to God, in faith, out of deep despair.

“Why have you forsaken me?” (Psalm 22), and “Why do you hide your face?” (Psalm 44:24) are just two examples reflecting the despair and anxiety felt by people of faith. They also echo the sense of confusion felt by many Christians today.

These words were not an abandonment of faith but a tenacious attempt by believers at holding on to faith. In his own moment of despair, Jesus repeated these words as he cast his cares on God.

We must not allow anyone to suffer alone. God expects his body to “love one another” (John 13:34-35) and “bear one another’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2). This takes time and patience with each other. It also requires us to pray for, support and encourage each other.

Asking for help or seeking professional counseling is a sign of strength, not weakness. It is the faithful thing to do.

Instead of questioning our fellow brother or sister’s commitment to faith, let us be mindful that each of us has been stretched and challenged during this exceedingly difficult year and beyond.

Extend grace to someone. Be compassionate toward their hurt. Look for ways to help. When all else fails, ask, “How may I help?”

Remember, we are all in this together. You are not alone in your pain. — Trindi Mitchell and John Edmerson, for the Editorial Board
Coverage of racial issues draws mixed response from readers

Your June issue was excellent. It was so good that I have given it to people outside of Churches of Christ to read about what loving churches can do to heal the division that is tearing our country and our churches apart (“A tragic death, a tough dialogue,” Page 1).

Please keep doing this valuable work to tell about what Christians can and must do to show God’s love to all. Our country has suffered the terrible stain of slavery and must face the facts of its aftermath honestly and as dedicated Christians.

The world is overwhelmingly nonwhite. We can never preach God’s love to all people if we cannot practice our love at home.

JAN C. SWENSEN | Pittsburgh, Pa.

Your latest issue has infuriated me concerning your making a martyr out of George Floyd. Yes, it was terrible it happened, but to put a criminal like him on a pedestal is, quite frankly, nauseating. His crimes read like a CVS receipt!

I am on the verge of quitting this paper. You have become too liberal and care more about the world than you do what the Bible teaches.

Secondly, when a White police officer arrests a Black man, quit making it sound like the police officer is racist! That just isn’t true, and you need to quit feeding that narrative to the public.

The Christian Chronicle used to be a great publication, but you have gone off your rocker.

AIMEE PING | Lexington, S.C.

Please keep talking about racial justice! As a 65-year-old White woman, I am learning for the first time the real history of our country and our churches.

We need to stand with our black brothers and sisters and seek racial justice in every arena!

SUSAN RICHARDSON | Marietta, Ga.

I am not a naysayer. Although I grew up in Canada, I am not unfamiliar with our past history on race. I have read everything the Chronicle has written on the subject, and I honestly sense you have tried to strike a proper balance. However, I also believe you are failing in your efforts to achieve it.

PETER MACINNES | Abilene, Texas

Amen to you!

The things happening in our country regarding race relations are painful to this 73-year-old retired campus minister and college professor. I really thought we had moved on from all the racial unrest. It is particularly painful when we see it in the body of Christ.

Thank you for your editorial (“Laws have changed, but have our hearts?” Page 26, June). Thank you to The Christian Chronicle. We are supposed to be instruments of both God’s peace and love. Everyone is my neighbor.

JERRY KLEIN | Amarillo, Texas

Please cancel my subscription. I’m tired of your racially divisive articles. Get back to the TRUTH. There is only one race, human.

Your publication has become too racist for me and my family.

NAME WITHHELD

I was saddened to hear of readers canceling a subscription due to the assertion that The Christian Chronicle has become too racist, yet encouraged that others are stepping forward in support of these stories that may lead us to better attitudes and behavior toward one another.

The “racist” stories presented in the Chronicle are based on personal accounts from Christians who have experienced great injustice, both in years past and just yesterday.

In light of Psalm 139, could our merciful Father be pointing out anything to us via the articles in The Christian Chronicle?

I say yes, as the Holy Spirit is active and working through the staff at The Christian Chronicle. I pray that we will all continue to both listen and examine our thoughts and actions for things that would offend our heavenly Father.

STEVE BEALL | Grand Prairie, Texas

I am so happy to see brother Russell A. Pointer Sr. get this recognition in The Christian Chronicle (“In city where George Floyd died, influential preacher fights for justice,” Page 1, June).

As a member of the body for nearly 36 years, I, too, am tired of the church, as a whole, not addressing the issues of racism and social injustice. If you read Amos, and if you analyze the works of Christ as he walked this earth, you can see how social injustice in society is a stumbling block God wants and expects his family to address.

Thank you for keeping this on the front burner of the Chronicle.

DAVID ALAN BRANTFORD | Matteson, Ill.

Let me join with many others to say I am grateful for the coverage on race in church. We are so divided as a country in pretty much every imaginable way, and it is critical the we bridge that gap in the way that truly matters — sharing in the life of the church. It is driving conversations both in the pew and, for me at least, with friends from church.

JAY WILES | Austin, Texas

The latest issue dealt a lot with the death of George Floyd and race relations. The race issue is nothing new among Churches of Christ because for quite a bit of its history there have been White congregations and Black congregations. The path to more diverse congregations has been slow and unsteady.

It will take more than that death to bring people together because there was someone who already died 2,000 years ago, and believers are mostly just as separated now as Jew and Gentile were back then.

Clearly, the church has a lot of work to do to bind up the wounds of racial hatred and bigotry. Only Truth can set a person free, and as the modern vernacular says, you have to keep it real.

ROBERT RANDLE | Houston, Texas

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JAY WILES | Austin, Texas
Ready to tell stories that matter

TIGARD, Ore.
The Christian Chronicle has been part of my life and my reading material for as long as I can remember. As a child, I fell in love with stories, both factual and fictional. I loved diving into books. I loved creating my own narratives. Eventually, I channeled these interests into academic paths, earning a degree in English from Harding University in Searcy, Ark. There, I learned more about reading and writing through the lens of faith.

Now, I’m pursuing a master’s degree in rhetoric and composition at Boise State University in Idaho. I’ve spent much of the last year — as a student in a worldly environment — grappling with how the church engages with culture.

How do I speak about faith in a secular classroom? How do I live evangelistically around my roommates and my cohort? How do I build intellectually consistent frameworks of thought? As an educator, how do I help students grow as communicators and critical thinkers without compromising my own beliefs? When to speak? When to stay silent?

I’ve watched as the Chronicle has engaged with many of these same topics. Not to sound dismal, but I believe that this is the moment when the church is being sifted and tried. The world is changing rapidly, and the cultural Christianity we’ve found so comfortable seems to be dissipating.

The longer I live, the more I long for Jesus to return, but we must live in this world until he comes. Part of that means staying connected with the larger body of Christ.

Telling stories through media like the Chronicle is one way to accomplish this. After growing up in Churches of Christ in the Pacific Northwest, I have a vested interest in keeping up with Christianity and culture.

I love the body of Christ dearly, and I’m delighted by the opportunity to help tell stories that matter in this world and the next.

MAKYRA WILLIAMSON is an intern for The Christian Chronicle. A member of the Southwest Church of Christ in Tigard, Ore., she is a 2019 graduate of Harding University in Searcy, Ark.

ROCK HILL, S.C.
I grew up in the Crawford Road Church of Christ, a South Carolina congregation where my dad is the minister. The most important part of my life is that I am a Christian. I was baptized into Christ when I was 15 years old.

From the third grade through high school, I attended Lake Pointe Academy, where I took part in a rigorous English curriculum. The grammar and writing skills I learned there gave me a solid foundation and inspired me to pursue a career in journalism at Elon University in neighboring North Carolina.

I joined Elon’s university newsroom, reporting and writing for the school newspaper, The Pendulum, the Elon News Network website and the Elon Local News live shows. Through that experience, I learned that I enjoy researching a story, interviewing people and meeting a deadline. Seeing the finished product brings me joy and a sense of accomplishment.

I’m looking forward to learning more about journalism and gaining experience as a writer through my internship with The Christian Chronicle.

CHLOÉ FRANKLIN is an intern for The Christian Chronicle. A member of the Crawford Road Church of Christ in Rock Hill, S.C., she is studying journalism at Elon University in North Carolina, with dreams of becoming a television news anchor.

So long, and thanks for all the clicks. Online editor bids farewell

It’s hard to believe how much things change in just five years. When I came to The Christian Chronicle in 2016, I was excited about the opportunity to tell stories of Christians living out their faith.

One of the first stories I shared was of a youth group member getting her head stuck in a Barney costume. That was quickly followed by a Chick-Fil-A flash mob of worship leaders. It was not the start I expected, although it was fun.

In my time here, I have interviewed many memorable people — a toy maker whose wooden truck still sits on my shelf, a preacher who went from weighing over 300 pounds to running over 300 miles, survivors of tragic accidents and, more recently, COVID-19.

And, I’ve searched for and found dozens of a cappella videos to share with you week after week.

I played an instrumental role in launching our new website. I’ve tried to improve our overall online presence through that website and social media. And, yes, I’m the one who has read each and every comment left on those sites.

It has been a pleasure to get to know brothers and sisters from around the world, to talk with them and share their stories.

But (there’s always a but, isn’t there?) the time has come for me to move on to something else. While my writing could appear in these pages again, it will not be a regular occurrence.

I am grateful God put this place on my path. I wish nothing but the best for the people here. And trust me when I say they really are good people. They love the Lord and truly seek to share his stories.

So this is farewell. Thank you for encouraging and supporting me over the last five years.

CHELLIE ISON is digital news editor for The Christian Chronicle. She and her family worship with the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, where she helps coordinate the church’s Celebrate Recovery ministry.

RELATED JOB AD: Page 35
**CALENDAR**

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<td>The Kerusso Experience</td>
<td>Harding University, Searcy, Ark. See <a href="http://www.harding.edu/kerusso">www.harding.edu/kerusso</a>.</td>
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<td>July 11-16</td>
<td>Honors Summer Academy</td>
<td>Oklahoma Christian University. See oc.edu/hsa.</td>
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<td>July 11-18</td>
<td>TITUS Camp</td>
<td>Heritage Christian University. Email <a href="mailto:thekinglives@yahoo.com">thekinglives@yahoo.com</a> or call (251) 923-8951.</td>
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<td>July 18-23</td>
<td>Texas Normal Singing School</td>
<td>Abilene, Texas. See singingschool.org or call (804) 777-8417.</td>
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<td>July 22-25</td>
<td>EQUIP Conference</td>
<td>Orlando, Fla. See equiporlando.org or email <a href="mailto:orangeavenuecc@gmail.com">orangeavenuecc@gmail.com</a>.</td>
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<td>July 29-Aug 1</td>
<td>Angel Fire Symposium</td>
<td>Eagle Nest, N.M. &quot;The Challenge of Discipleship.&quot; See angelfiresymposium.com or call (575) 377-6651.</td>
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<td>July 30-31</td>
<td>Widow/Widower Retreat</td>
<td>La Vergne Church of Christ in Tennessee. See WidowhoodWorkshop.com or call (330) 412-1456.</td>
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<td>Oct. 11-14</td>
<td>Abundant Living Retreat</td>
<td>Branson, Mo. See abundantlivingseniors.com or call (501) 279-4055.</td>
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<td>Nov. 5-7</td>
<td>24th Annual Cold Harbor Lectureship</td>
<td>Mechanicsville, Va. See coldharborroadcoc.org or call (804) 746-8224.</td>
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**FULL CALENDAR:** christianchronicle.org

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**FACULTY POSITIONS AVAILABLE**

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

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

Salary and rank are determined based on credentials and experience.

**BRACKETT LIBRARY.** Seeking a full-time, 12-month faculty member as public services librarian. The successful candidate must have an MLS or equivalent degree, preferably from an ALA-accredited program. Preference will be given to those with three or more years’ experience in an academic library environment. This position includes the management and supervision of the public services department that includes interlibrary loan services, circulation and reference services. Responsibilities include liaison activities, collection development, research assistance and conducting instructional sessions.

Submit application materials to Jean Waldrop, director, at jwaldrop@harding.edu, or 915 E. Market, Box 12267, Searcy, AR 72149.

**CARR COLLEGE OF NURSING.** Seeking two full-time, 9-month faculty members teaching in the undergraduate and graduate nursing programs. These appointments require clinical and didactic teaching in nursing of adult patients for the undergraduate program and graduate programs and the nursing of pediatric patients. The successful candidates should maintain an active, unencumbered nursing license; be eligible for RN or APRN licensing in the state of Arkansas; have nursing practice experience in adult acute, chronic or critical care of these patients; have a minimum of a master’s degree in nursing and an earned doctorate in nursing or a related field, or be enrolled in a doctoral program currently or willing to enroll in the future. Teaching experience is preferred. Responsibilities include but are not limited to teaching undergraduate and graduate nursing in a variety of formats and working collaboratively in shared governance and accreditation compliance with the College of Nursing administration and faculty.

Submit application materials to Dr. Susan Kehl, dean, at skehl@harding.edu, or 915 E. Market, Box 12267, Searcy, AR 72149, 502-279-4941.

These additional openings are available at harding.edu/facultyjobs:

- **COLLEGE OF ALLIED HEALTH** • **OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY**
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- **COLLEGE OF ARTS & HUMANITIES** • **ENGLISH DEPARTMENT**
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**Pepperdine University**

- Dean, V.P. Black College of Biblical Studies
- Institutional Research Analyst
- Faculty, Harris College of Business, Marketing
- Faculty/Department Chair, College of Arts and Sciences - Science
- Faculty, College of Arts and Sciences - Computer Science

faulkner.edu/jobs

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**Faulkner University**

Faulkner University has some exciting employment opportunities!

- Dean, V.P. Black College of Biblical Studies
- Institutional Research Analyst
- Faculty, Harris College of Business, Marketing
- Faculty/Department Chair, College of Arts and Sciences - Science
- Faculty, College of Arts and Sciences - Computer Science

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**Pepperdine University**

**Seaver College**

Visiting Asst. Professor of Cell/Molecular Biology

Pepperdine University's Seaver College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences, located in Malibu, Calif., invites applications for visiting assistant professor in cell/molecular biology. A successful candidate will join the Pepperdine faculty in August of 2021 or January of 2022. If you are seeking a faculty appointment at a premier Christian university committed to the highest standards of undergraduate education, then we encourage you to apply. Reviews of applications are underway and will continue until the position is filled. Any inquiries about this position should be sent to: Dr. Jay Brewster, Divisional Dean of Natural Sciences, Jay.Brewster@pepperdine.edu. Candidates will apply at [https://apply.interfolio.com/87083](https://apply.interfolio.com/87083).

Pepperdine University is an Equal Opportunity Employer affiliated with the Churches of Christ.
The Christian Chronicle Crossword

By Myles Mellor | www.ilovecrosswords.com

ACROSS
1. Moses’ farewell speech.
2. “And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the ___s shall overflow with wine and oil” (Joel 2:24, King James Version).
3. A high priest of Israel.
4. Book, chapter and _______.
5. Two Bible books.
6. The ___ Testament.
7. Afternoon sleep.
8. “Let no man despise thy ____; but be thou an example ...” (1 Timothy 4:12, KJV).
9. “A great ____ with great wings, longwinged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon” (Ezekiel 17:3, KJV).
10. Adam’s wife.
11. “He that believeth and is _____ shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16, KJV).
12. What Abraham sacrificed instead of his son
13. “And they shall mock him and shall ___ him, and shall spit on him, and shall kill him: and the third day he will rise again” (Mark 10:34, KJV).
14. “And David left his carriage ... and came and ___ his brethren” (1 Samuel 17:22, KJV).
15. “Can the fig tree, my brethren bear olive ___?” (James 3:12, KJV).
16. “The man who will come after me ... I am not good enough even to bend down and ____ his sandals” (Mark 1:7, GNT).
17. Possess.
18. Hebrews 13:8 “Jesus Christ is the same ____ , today and forever.”
19. “They gave him ___ to drink mingled with gall...” (Matthew 27:34, KJV).
20. “... and, lo, there were three flocks of sheep ____ by it” (Genesis 29:2, KJV).
22. Possess.
23. Possess.
24. Also called.
25. “Where is ____ then? It is excluded ...” (Romans 3:27, KJV).
26. “And David left his carriage ... and came and ____ his brethren” (1 Samuel 17:22, KJV).
27. “... and, lo, there were three flocks of sheep ____ by it” (Genesis 29:2, KJV).
28. Possess.
29. Possess.
30. Possess.
31. Possess.
32. Possess.
33. Possess.
34. Possess.
35. Possess.
36. Possess.
37. Possess.
38. Made a hole in the ground.
39. “Be alert, stand firm in the faith, be ____ , be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13, GNT).
40. It was on fire, but it wasn’t burning up.

DOWN
1. Heavenly.
2. Not ready to be picked.
3. Poem of mourning.
4. “For you shall be like an ____ whose leaf withers ... “ (Isaiah 1:30, KJV).
5. Possess.
6. Possess.
7. “The man who will come after me ... I am not good enough even to bend down and ____ his sandals” (Mark 1:7, GNT).
8. Possess.
11. Possess.
12. Possess.
13. Possess.
15. Possess.
17. Possess.
18. Possess.
19. Possess.
20. Possess.
22. Possess.
**Word Find: The gospel of Matthew**

*By Betty Hollister | The Christian Chronicle*

**PREP** **ARATION** **ST** **GN** **IH** **CA** **ERP**
**HAR** **V** **EST** **TEST** **IMON** **Y** **SOR** **PE** **LA**
**AY** **RIGHT** **EOUS** **NESS**
**SURR** **NESS**
**REP** **ARA** **L** **Y** **TI** **CH** **IS**
**SNE** **O** **ED** **TES**
**I** **AN** **OBE** **TH** **LE** **HEM** **TS**
**SPW** **G** **OR** **O** **O**
**SS** **IE** **CLE** **S** **SON** **PET** **HA** **ENV** **R** **V**
**E**
**TRSMR** **EG** **IO** **ND** **E**
**DI** **ARE** **SE**
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**LO** **LED** **ET**
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**FIG**
**URE**
**D** **GD**
**ED**
**NAM**
**MOC**

Find the following words from the book of Matthew. The unused 33 letters form a statement about the purpose of the book. (Find the answer on Page 34.)

- ACQUITTED
- ADULTEROUS
- ALWAYS
- APPOINTED
- ARRESTED
- ASTONISHED
- BETHLEHEM
- CAPERNAUM
- CENTURION
- COMMANDED
- COUNTED
- CROWS
- DISCIPLE
- ENEMY
- ENTER
- HARVEST
- HERODIAS
- HOUSEHOLD
- HYPOCRITES
- ISRAEL
- LEPROSY
- LESSON
- ORDERS
- OVERFLOW
- PARABLES
- PARALYTIC
- PASSOVER
- PERSECUTE
- PHARISEES
- PLEDGED
- PREACHING
- PREPARATIONS
- PROPHECY
- PROSTITUTE
- QUARREL
- RAISED
- REGION
- REMORSE
- RENEWAL
- REQUESTED
- REWARD
- RIGHTEOUSNESS
- SERVANT
- SORROWFUL
- TEACHING
- TESTIMONY
- THOUSAND
- TRANSFIGURED
- VALUE
- WRITINGS
- YEAST

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Readers will come to “Women Serving God: My Journey in Understanding Their Story in the Bible” with questions about what women can do in church, and author John Mark Hicks asks these questions by the dozens.

There are the weird questions, such as “May a woman read a Bible text in a class from her seat?” And there are questions about 1 Corinthians 14 (“Women should remain silent in the churches”) and 1 Timothy 2 (“I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man.”)

Hicks has taught for nearly four decades at institutions associated with Churches of Christ and is currently a professor of theology at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn. He presents two interpretive options for answering these questions: blueprint and theological. Blueprint hermeneutics seeks explicit commands, approved (binding) examples and necessary inferences for things like how to conduct a worship assembly.

Theological hermeneutics — Hicks’ preference — seeks the “theological point” in the text and the point that fits the “story” of the Bible. Since commands or instructions are cultural and contain theological nuggets, find that nugget, and apply it to your cultural moment.

Hicks recounts his own move from “limited leadership” to “full participation” of women in worship. While updating an article he had written on 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, Hicks’ view “shifted from the total exclusion of the voices of women and leadership to a limited inclusion,” which views man’s headship “in terms of responsibility rather than authority,” he writes.

Full participation “opens all functions in the assembly to women according to their gifts,” Hicks writes. He moved to this viewpoint, in part, by the Spirit’s arrival at Pentecost and by interpreting Paul’s new creation language in Galatians as a return to “the partnership of the original creation.”

Hicks then catalogs the scope of women serving God throughout the Old and New Testaments, including Miriam, Deborah, Levitical singers, disciples of Jesus, resurrection witnesses, and more. He rejects the notion of man being the “head” of woman, instead interpreting Paul’s headship language for Jesus, men, and women in 1 Corinthians 11 as meaning “source.”

In the final section, Hicks deals with 1 Timothy 2:8-15, concluding (italics his) “There is no text that delimits the gifts of women in the assembly of God” because “(the) problem with some women in Ephesus was ... that they were promoting ungodliness.”

Many of Hicks’ misgivings and regrets about women’s exclusion from public prayer, testimony or Scripture reading in churches resonated with my own frustrations in Churches of Christ. It is true, whether you lean more toward “full participation” or “limited leadership,” the New Testament challenges our preconceptions about men and women, calling us all to a way of doing church that honors God and embraces revealed freedoms.

I appreciated that perspective in the book, but in the end, I was dissatisfied.

All the questions, charts and explanations may leave the average reader concluding, along with Hicks, that there is significant uncertainty about the meaning and application” of texts about women serving in the church.

But are the answers really that difficult for Christians to find?

Unfortunately, I think most readers will conclude that they are.

For most churches, interpreting 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 11 and 14 using Hicks’ “new creation hermeneutic” takes outside influence. How can Galatians 3:28 (“nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”) be a seed text to overturn male-female distinctions in the worship since Paul, who proudly co-ministered with women, writes to Timothy in a later letter affirming gender distinctions, even grounding them in creation order?

These texts become “problematic, misunderstood, and misapplied,” as Hicks writes, when we misunderstand servant leadership or seek to erase the norm of godly male leadership which spans both testaments. Hicks’ conclusion makes sense only if you start from an equality-means-interchangeability viewpoint and then go looking for it in Scripture.

The book left me with two questions of my own: What if this uncertainty about women serving in church is something that lies within each of us — whether due to the gender confusion of culture or patriarchal bias in our churches? And what would our churches look like if we submitted to God’s revealed Word, taking advantage of our freedoms, and submitting to its boundaries?

RENEE SPROLES is the author of “On Gender: What the Bible Says About Men and Women and Why it Matters.” She is the director of cultural engagement for Renew.org, former director of the School of Christian Thought at North Boulevard Church of Christ in Murfreesboro, Tenn., and co-founder of Discipleship Tutorial, a homeschool tutorial in Murfreesboro.
I am using the book of Ephesians as a backdrop to accentuate the unity the church needed in Paul’s day to face a cultic threat against Christianity. The same unity is needed today as we face the same threat to our faith in America. There is no option but to be spiritually prepared to stand against the evil that is consuming our world! (200 pages)

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**Angels get the burned rice**

“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” — Hebrews 13:2, King James Version

**NEYBA, Dominican Republic**

Burned rice is a delicacy here. Or not. I’m still a little foggy on the stuff they call concon. It’s the rice at the bottom of the pot that gets overcooked and has to be vigorously scraped out. Guests get the soft rice; cooks and hosts eat the leftover concon.

But Dominicans — guests and hosts alike — crave concon. I tried it with sancocho, which is broth, chicken and vegetables. It adds texture to the stew.

But I think there’s more to it than taste. Eating concon means you’re not just a guest here. You’re family.

That’s how I feel in Ondina Aquino’s kitchen. It’s a community hub for this Latin American city, even in a time of pandemic. Here, she and her husband, Manuel, laid the foundation for Churches of Christ they’ve planted throughout the region. From here, Ondina has fed and nurtured countless children sponsored through Christian Relief Fund.

I’m here to report on CRF’s 50th anniversary. It’s my first international trip since the pandemic began, and I’m thankful to Bobby Moore, the ministry’s vice president, for setting it up. Traveling along with us are Mike Biggers, president of New Life Behavior International (which works alongside CRF in many countries); Djounio Dorvil, who coordinates a CRF water program in neighboring Haiti; and Dorvil’s wife, Telus Jycleene.

Bobby requested the concon before he sat down at the table and smiled big when he heard the “scrape, scrape, scrape” of spoon on rice pot. After lunch, we drank strong Dominican coffee from tiny cups. Every time we entered the house, they had coffee for us. These are my people.

During coffee, Ondina shared her story. One of her sons, Samuel, translated.

Ondina once was a guest here, too. She grew up in Honduras and worshiped with Catholic and then evangelical churches.

Her mother struggled with alcoholism, and Ondina, at age 20, had asked leaders of her church to visit and encourage her. But no one came. Ondina fasted and prayed, “Please send someone to help my mother.”

One Sunday, as she prayed, two people showed up, Bibles in hand. “Are you Doña Angélica Milla?” they asked.

They knew her mother’s name. “We are looking for you because someone told us you were here.”

The visitors were from an Iglesia de Cristo (Church of Christ), which Ondina had never heard of. She rushed to get chairs and, when the visitors opened their Bibles, started teaching, she frantically took notes. Soon she had a list of questions to take to her pastor, but he had no good answers. “That’s something that was written in the past,” he told her. “Just leave it.”

She left, all right. She and her mother became active members of a Church of Christ. A few years later she met Manuel at an event for the ministry Jóvenes en Camino in La Ceiba. He was studying at Baxter Institute. They married in 1986 and moved here, to Manuel’s homeland.

Those two visitors helped put Ondina on a path that’s led to countless blessings in the lives of the children she’s served — and the guests she’s welcomed as family.

To this day, she doesn’t know who they were or how they found her.

“God has answered a lot of questions,” she said, “but not that one.”

Now that we seem finally to be emerging from the pandemic, I hope to be able to model, in some small way, the hospitality shown by this dear sister in Christ.

Who knows? Perhaps I, like Ondina, will be entertaining angels unawares.

I’ll save the concon for them.

ERIK TRYGGESTAD is president and CEO of The Christian Chronicle. Contact erik@christianchronicle.org, and follow him on Twitter @eriktryggestad.
The Christian Chronicle, an award-winning international newspaper with 134,000 U.S. print subscribers and a growing online presence, seeks an experienced journalist to join its full-time staff, based in Oklahoma City.

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