For 13 years, retired U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. John Bradley and his wife, Jan, built schools and hospitals to improve the lives of Afghans. Then on Aug. 15, Kabul fell, the Taliban resumed power after 20 years, and the Bradleys, co-founders of the Lamia Afghan Foundation, began trying to get friends and partners out of the country — to save the lives of Afghans.

By Aug. 31, the self-imposed deadline for U.S. troop withdrawal, the Bradleys had filed 500 applications with the State Department and Department of Defense. They were assured those efforts would result in their people getting a call to come to the airport gate — and a flight to freedom.

But by mid-September, only two children — relatives of an Afghan-American friend in Virginia — and about a dozen family members of an Afghan-American physician in Houston had made it out thanks, at least in part, to the Bradleys’ efforts.

“We’re worried about our friends, about our volunteers, our partners, about women judges and journalists, and media people, interpreters,” Jan Bradley told The Christian Chronicle. “We’re concerned about all those people who are still in the country in hiding.”

Compassion at capacity

AS THE DELTA VARIANT fills a Central American hospital, medical mission Predisan bolsters patients with prayer, vaccines and ‘sincere confidence that God is with them.’

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

JUTICALPA, Honduras

Carlos Rivera didn’t seem to understand the question: “How does it feel to walk into a room full of COVID-19 patients?”

“I feel OK,” he said, looking slightly puzzled. “I pray with them.”

Perhaps it was a translation error — or the layers of personal protective equipment he was sweating under on this humid Honduran afternoon. So a Christian Chronicle reporter asked it a different way: “Why are you willingly going in there? A lot of people wouldn’t.” A bilingual physician, Javier Franco, translated the question into Spanish.

Rivera’s answer was the same: “They need prayers. Each patient in there is asking for prayers.”

That’s all the motivation Rivera needed to strap on a hooded gown, hairnet, rubber gloves, goggles, an N95 mask and a face shield outside the Hospital Regional San Francisco’s COVID-19 ward.

He’s one of a small group of chaplains who take turns visiting patients in this Central American town — beset by poverty, natural disasters and now the virus — through Predisan, a mission with roots in Churches of Christ.

Stepping across the threshold into what once was the hospital’s emergency room, Rivera and a small team of physicians and journalists were suddenly in a landscape of labored breathing. On beds lined with beeping monitors lay the unit’s most critical patients, their faces obscured under masks and tubes.

Rivera made his rounds, taking prayer requests from those able to speak. His goggles fogged with condensation as he began to petition God on their behalf. A few patients responded, raising their arms, weakly, toward heaven.

“They asked for prayers for their families back home,” said Franco, translating the patients’ requests, “for security and for freedom.”

See COMPASSION, Page 12
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**Emotions high as church floods — for second time**

**NUNNELLY, Tenn.**

A noisy, industrial-strength fan blew in the back as Pinewood Church of Christ members stepped into their makeshift worship facility on a recent Sunday.

Wooden planks — newly installed with help from 15 volunteers from the Brushy Church of Christ in nearby Centerville — framed the rural congregation’s picnic pavilion.

New, maroon “Songs of the Church” hymnals, placed in each white folding chair, replaced old songbooks lost in the historic flooding that hit Middle Tennessee on Aug. 21.

“Can everybody hear me OK?” elder Phillip Bates said as he opened the morning assembly.

“We want to welcome you here. It’s kind of different circumstances.”

Randy Deitmen said he didn’t want to be emotional, but he just couldn’t help it. The 68-year-old Christian has worshiped with the Pinewood church, which averages Sunday attendance of 60 to 70, since 1974.

More than a decade ago, the congregation — about 60 miles southwest of Nashville — had to rebuild after devastating floods swamped the Volunteer State on May 1-2, 2010.

That same storm system

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**Festival commemorates victims, heroes of 9/11**

**MOCKSVILLE, N.C.**

Carolina Bible Camp’s all-day bluegrass festival Sept. 11 was a time for pickin’, fellowship and remembrance.

Hundreds of bluegrass fans converged on the rustic camp, about 60 miles north of Charlotte, to hear artists such as Scythian, Joe Mullins & The Radio Ramblers and His & Hers.

But before the banjos, mandolins and guitars took over the wooden stage — normally the camp dining hall’s front porch — the crowd paused to reflect on the nearly 3,000 lives lost in the 2001 terrorist attacks.

“This is a very important day in our nation’s history — the 20th anniversary of 9/11,” Dennis Conner, minister for the Brooks Avenue Church of Christ in Raleigh, told attendees seated in folding chairs on the lawn. “We’re just blessed and thankful to God that we continue to enjoy our freedoms and the way of life that we have here.”

On a sunny day with high temperatures in the 70s, red, white and blue ribbons adorned hay bales and wooden planks as a group called Wilkes Seniors on Stage sang “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

Talitha Vickers, news anchor for WXII-TV in Winston-Salem, led the

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Ida strikes: Congregations gear up to help

**IN NEW ORLEANS, church members praise God that the damage wasn’t worse.**

“The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has spared us once again.”

Angela Marsalis and fellow Christians across New Orleans sent up praise on social media after Hurricane Ida, one of the most powerful storms ever to hit the U.S., blew ashore Aug. 29.

The Category 4 storm downed power lines and tore roofs from buildings, including the meeting places of at least two Churches of Christ, and caused damage across the city. But Ida, which made landfall exactly 16 years after Hurricane Katrina, did not inflict the level of destruction wrought by that storm in 2005.

Marsalis and her husband, Charles, worship with the Hollygrove Church of Christ in New Orleans. The couple took shelter at an area hotel that weekend before returning to Hollygrove Monday to inspect the damage.

“Neighbors are safe. A few roof shingles have blown off the roof,” Angela Marsalis posted to Facebook, “trees snapped and lots of cleaning up to do.”

About 55 miles northeast of Hollygrove, the hurricane’s winds ripped apart the roof of the Hollywood Road Church of Christ in Houma, La. As church members assessed damage along the storm’s path, relief ministries associated with Churches of Christ worked to help.

FOR UPDATES on the Hurricane Ida relief effort, see christianchronicle.org/hurricaneida.
PINEWOOD: Rural Tennessee church building floods — again

FROM PAGE 3
produced a tornado that damaged Deitmen’s house.
Eleven years later, the recent sudden deluge ravaged the Hickman County congregation’s meeting place once again.
“Sometimes, the older you get, the more it affects you,” Deitmen said of how hard the building’s loss — for the second time — hit him.

‘FELL IN LOVE WITH THIS CHURCH’
But Phillip James, 41, said Deitmen wasn’t the only one experiencing such feelings.
James, a plumber, became a member after helping with the post-2010 construction work.
“We fell in love with this church,” he said. “My wife and daughters were baptized here.”

Both Deitmen and James stressed that the building was a minor loss compared to the 20 lives lost in nearby Humphreys County — including 7-month-old twins torn from their father’s arms by the raging torrent.
“You hate to even feel bad about your building,” James said.
“That’s just awful,” Deitmen said of the twins. “That is worse than this. ... We are tough. We’ll come back.”

Olivia Chilton hands out sunflowers as the Pinewood Church of Christ prepares to worship in its picnic pavilion after the Tennessee flood.

NO INSURANCE TO REBUILD
This time, the church — which meets next door to a horse barn — has no insurance to cover the damages, member Drew Grimes said. Coverage was impossible to find after the last flood, he said.
The day of the flooding, Grimes said, he drove a Polaris Ranger all-terrain vehicle to check on a friend and helped rescue about a dozen people from a home near the church.
The red roof of The Ranch, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center across the two-lane blacktop from the church, washed nearly two football fields away.
“You are looking at what’s left of our medical building,” said Christi Winters, a longtime church member and housekeeper for The Ranch, pointing out the debris.
Grimes recalled seeing truck drivers with boats and life jackets, all intent on helping neighbors that Saturday.
“I’ve seen the best of people in the last week,” he said.
But every time his family drives by the church, his 4-year-old daughter, Sadie, mentions the flooding.
Grimes said she keeps asking, “When can I go back to Bible class?”

CHURCH PLANS TO RELOCATE
For now, church leaders intend to install heating and cooling units as well as a bathroom in the reconfigured picnic pavilion, said elder Bates, who is Grimes’ father-in-law.
On this Sunday, a portable restroom was available. Bug spray and hand sanitizer sat on a table beside portable communion supplies, which the church — like many — has used since the COVID-19 pandemic began.
When the coronavirus became a concern, the church previously met outdoors in the pavilion on several fall Sundays with cooler temperatures.
But on this Sunday, two coolers were filled with bottled water and soft drinks, out of concern about possible warmer weather.
As for the long-term plan, the elders will look for a new property on higher ground and relocate the church, Bates said.

“This is two times,” he said of the flooded building, explaining the thinking. “We’ve had a few close calls.”
Grimes pointed to an empty field on a hill overlooking the church and said he’d love to see the church built there. “We’d like to be where we can still see our original home,” he said.
“But as long as we’re still somewhere in the community, I believe everybody will be happy as can be.”

FOR INFORMATION on how to help the church, see christianchronicle.org/pinewood.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR
I was in Tennessee to cover the flooding on the same Sunday that Hurricane Ida made landfall in Louisiana.
I originally headed to the Southeast U.S. to attend that Saturday’s funeral for Lads to Leaders founder Jack Zorn at the University Church of Christ in Montgomery, Ala. Zorn died Aug. 12 after an extended illness, as we noted in the September issue. He was 86.
That Monday afternoon, as I was boarding a flight in Atlanta to return home to Oklahoma City, The Associated Press sent a “flash” — its designation for “a breaking story of transcendent importance” — about the chaotic end of America’s 20 years of war in Afghanistan.
The headlines just keep coming. Our small staff at The Christian Chronicle appreciates your support as we work hard to cover as much of that news as possible.

BOBBY ROSS JR. is editor-in-chief of The Christian Chronicle. Contact bobby@christianchronicle.org. Follow him on Twitter at @bobbyross.
Christians help after major flood

IN HARD-HIT TENNESSEE, donations pour in as a church provides shelter to displaced residents.

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

WAVERLY, Tenn.

The Waverly Church of Christ’s pews were packed on a recent Sunday — but not just with people.

Clothing and stuffed animals covered several rows, just one sign of the 200-member congregation’s effort to help victims after historic flooding.

Nearby, grocery items and mattresses filled the church’s activity center, where about two dozen displaced residents had slept since a record rainfall — 17 inches in one day — caused rivers and creeks to overflow Aug. 21.

“I’ve not just seen the congregation respond. I’ve seen the community respond,” said preaching minister Jeff Keele, who, with his wife, Becky, stayed up all night that Saturday working at the shelter.

In this town of 4,300, about 65 miles west of Nashville, the flooding damaged or destroyed hundreds of homes. The elementary and junior high schools were flattened.

Worst of all, 19 people died — including 7-month-old twins torn from their father’s arms by the raging torrent. (A 20th victim lived in Humphreys County, where Waverly is the county seat, but not in town limits.)

“It’s amazing how all the different groups and organizations have come into town,” church elder Ronnie Moore said. “There’s an outpouring of love everywhere.”

Volunteers with the Churches of Christ Disaster Response Team work in Waverly, Tenn., after historic flooding damaged hundreds of homes.

I think of all the children that were lost — the little twins — and I can’t wrap my mind around that,” said Cathy Moore, Ronnie’s wife, who was helping cook meals for survivors.

One of those who died was a member of the Waverly Church of Christ: 16-year-old Nathanal Whitsett. Several members’ homes flooded, and a handful of members lost all their possessions, church leaders said.

Whitsett, who was autistic, was “described as a Bible student who identified strongly with Moses, who was said to have a speech impediment,” relatives told The Tennessean.

“He was always dreaming big and talking about plans for big things. He was a very, very neat kid,” Kyle Mashburn, the church’s youth and associate minister, told the paper.

He welcomed the food, the clothing — and the prayers.

“If God didn’t have a plan for me, I wouldn’t be here right now,” he said.

One of the people Erwin helped rescue was Annette Dombrowski, 52, who said an avalanche of water rushed into her duplex.

The water rose up to her nose as her 32-year-old son was washed away, she said. Her son eventually climbed onto a roof and sent help for her, she said.

“It was scary,” Dombrowski said.

“I thought I was going to die.”

Like Erwin, she voiced appreciation for the church.

“They ask almost constantly if I need anything,” she said. “I say, ‘I’m good.’”

‘LITTLE DID WE KNOW’

Like the Waverly church, another Humphreys County congregation — the McEwen Church of Christ, 11 miles away — was serving as a disaster relief hub.

“The Heart of a Servant” was McEwen minister Hoby Grace’s planned sermon title on this Sunday, coinciding with the congregation’s installation of new deacons.

“Little did we know. God’s providence. God’s timing,” Grace said, referring to the emergency food boxes and piles of clothing seen throughout the church building.

“We probably won’t be having Bible class here for a while,” he said of the fellowship hall, crowded with disaster relief items.

Almost every classroom was turned into a supply room, except for the newly painted and decorated room where Amy Tester teaches first- and second-graders. Tester and her husband, Dennis, lost their home.

See WAVERLY, Page 6
in the flooding, and Grace didn’t want to disrupt her classroom, too.

“Free Meals,” said a sign outside the building, where Mike Baumgartner, president and CEO of Disaster Assistance CoC, parked his RV — his mobile headquarters.

The minister’s wife, Bonniegene Grace, helped organize the relief effort and insisted on keeping it open on Sunday, in case someone in need showed up.

“I don’t know a word to describe it,” Bonniegene Grace said of the deluge of donations. “It’s amazing to see people give, even if they’re just dropping off a bag of clothes.”

As for the flooding victims, she said, “People come in. They don’t know what to do. They’ve lost everything. Some people come in with the clothes they’ve had on since last Saturday.”

Hoby Grace said the disaster relief effort has provided a reminder that church is not about “coming to a building three times a week.”

“It’s about allowing Jesus to be seen,” Grace said.

‘WHAT DO WE NEED? JESUS’

At the Waverly church, Mashburn offered a similar message.


After the service, Mashburn said he was proud of the congregation’s response — handing out food and supplies, organizing crews to clean up damaged homes, welcoming state mental health teams and inviting residents to sign up for FEMA assistance at the church building.

“There’s more work to be done, so we’re trying to keep everyone uplifted and encouraged,” he told The Christian Chronicle.

“The adrenaline has kind of worn off at this point.”

While Mashburn preached in the main assembly, Keele took the opportunity to present a biblical message to the shelter residents.

Keele told the Chronicle about praying with one woman who has had nightmares about the flooding.

“She needs the prayers to help her through the night,” he said, describing prayers as Waverly’s biggest need — even more important than financial assistance.

The lessons the flooding response taught Keele?

“In all of this, what I’ve seen is … a disaster doesn’t keep office hours,” the preacher said. “And the other thing is, I have seen people reach out to other people regardless of who they are or where they came from because they recognize another human soul who just needs to be cared for.”
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Church volunteers hard to come by

CONGREGATIONS STRUGGLE to restart programs after months of hibernation.

BY ALLISON BROWN EAST | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

ROUND ROCK, Texas

At the Round Rock Church of Christ, longtime member Kay Whitehead was eager to return to serving in the children’s ministry.

This summer, Whitehead jumped back into coordinating the toddler class. She is a kindergarten teacher in Round Rock, north of Austin, and has participated in her church’s children’s ministry for 33 years.

“It’s been harder to find all the people we need, but for me, there was no question,” she said. “I told our ministers that I’m there. I’m ready when you’re ready.”

The Round Rock church is like many Churches of Christ across the nation that have been gearing up for a return to normal, resuming ministries that were paused for months on end when the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Some congregations have seen decreased participation as they have urged members to return to volunteer roles, forcing church leaders to rethink ministries across the board. From children’s ministries to community engagement, ministry teams are wondering if members will reengage at previous levels.

According to a Barna report, 84 percent of parents are concerned about the pandemic’s long-term impact on their children. Parents of young children especially, often isolated from other families and their church family, have grappled with many complex decisions.

As an educator, Whitehead said she knows the value of the socialization church environments can provide for kids growing up and the detriment of taking away their Bible classes.

“It’s important for kids to be taught about Jesus and the word of God,” Whitehead said. “Hopefully, our kids are being taught that in their homes, but it’s so important that they see other people in their life who love God, too.”

Robin Marrs, Round Rock children’s minister, has ramped up recruiting efforts for volunteers and hopes more, like Whitehead, will see the value of serving children.

So far, Marrs has seen decreased participation and commitment for a church that typically has seen active engagement.

The church, which has just under 400 adult members, previously had 100 volunteers across its children’s ministry.

“One hundred adult volunteers is a huge percentage of our church, much higher than other churches our size,” Marrs said. “And even with that many, it’s still usually not enough.”

By the end of July, half that many — 48, to be exact — had committed to the new school year. But amid concerns over the delta variant, another handful of those volunteers withdrew their commitments.

In years past, Marrs set up a table in the foyer for people to sign up for positions. This year, she opted for personal conversations, phone calls, emails, announcements from the front and posts on social media, blanketing any connection she had to members with her request for volunteers.

“As I feared, we’ve had so few people commit that we are meeting with the elders to try and figure out how we can still offer as much for our families with fewer people,” Marrs said. “And it will probably require a change in our worship structure.”

She has diagnosed a few reasons people aren’t returning to their old positions. “There are older members who have served for years, and this was their first break,” Marrs said. “Anyone looking for an out, COVID gave them an exit. And we’ve had people form habits of either not coming in person or now acclimating to the ‘get in, get out’ mentality of not volunteering on a Sunday.”

Marrs also noted that a tremendous amount of apathy seems to have settled in, and some members have cited a fear of working with kids again given the risks of the coronavirus, particularly the delta variant.

In all, this has posed a problem for the ministers on staff and the elders as they have sought potential solutions to bridge the widening gap between wanting to return to normal and not having enough workers to do everything that was done before.

Marrs said she feels like the leadership and the families at church are at a crossroads and need to stop and reevaluate what needs to be done and what can be done.

“People really don’t want to commit to anything,” Marrs said. “It’s going to take time, and I mean years, a few more annual life cycles, for people to reacclimate.”

Before March 2020, Round Rock had a first and second worship service with Bible class in between, along with children’s worship environments and a nursery during both services. But the church suspended all in-person gatherings from mid-March to mid-June last year, closing for around 12 weeks total.

In the months that followed, the church had stripped-down Sunday offerings that have gradually expanded over the past year. Now, the church has resumed two services, both mask-optional. Children’s environments, minus the nursery, are only offered in the second service. Adult Bible classes have yet to return.

But even for a church that maintained a steady stream of in-person gatherings, Round Rock has faced the difficult task of rebuilding its new normal, which has caused rippling effects across the congregation.

“When we can’t offer a full kids’ environment, it’s obvious, and the demographics in our services shift,” Marrs said.

“First service becomes noticeably more older members, and families come to second service when there’s somewhere for their children to go. So now we are asking the leadership, ‘Are we willing to change to ease the burden?’”

THE BROADER PICTURE

The problem facing the Round Rock Church of Christ is not an isolated one.

It encapsulates bigger questions of involvement churches face after a tumultuous year where children’s ministry and other volunteer hubs often suffered.

Travis Irwin spent 12 years as an involvement minister for the Athens Church of Christ in Tennessee. Since retiring at the end of 2020, he has been consulting with Churches of Christ on issues related to involvement and volunteering and has seen several dynamics at play.

One challenge in seeking volunteers that Irwin has observed: the abrupt end to so many ministries last year. Many churches cleared their
schedules of everything but a worship service — offered only online, in many cases — for an extended time. And as they have weathered the virus surges, they have found it increasingly difficult to work back toward all that was offered before.

Some churches seem to be hibernating, Irwin said, likening the lack of volunteers returning to groundhogs hiding out the winter in their holes. Others have ramped up community-focused efforts and managed to keep members connected in creative ways. He said small groups and active elders checking on members are key for maintaining involvement.

“When it comes to volunteers, you can’t just put something in the bulletin anymore and expect people to come flocking to volunteer for you,” Irwin said. “People haven’t had to volunteer in over a year, and they’ve got into another groove.”

Despite an overall desire to return to normal, Irwin urged churches to take time to reevaluate the future of every ministry to see if they were functioning, effective and fulfilling their mission statements.

REMEMBERING CHURCH DNA

Matt DeLano, Round Rock discipleship minister, has worked alongside Marrs to connect with members and draw them back into pre-pandemic levels of volunteering. DeLano voiced hope that the fall will mean greater participation in the life of the church.

“We have already built a culture at our church where serving our community is something that we do in our DNA,” DeLano said. “We have to understand that in order to be a Jesus follower, we have to be active in the life of a community.”

Although they can’t go back in time, Marrs and DeLano said they wish the conversations about reimagining the future of volunteering at Round Rock had begun much earlier.

Both agreed: The fallout of the pandemic has given the church space to reflect and re-imagine the future.

“Everyone has been asking these questions of what is important after this last year,” Marrs said. “The church is not exempt. But I want to ask, ‘Is the old normal what we want?’ We have the opportunity to reevaluate everything. And I’m all for thinking, let’s start from scratch; let’s do it differently, and let’s do it better.”

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A mission of menus: Meals promote unity

A GOAL TO WELCOME brothers and sisters in Christ and to witness to ‘a Christianity that is divided.’

BY CHLOÉ FRANKLIN | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

ANDERSON, S.C.

After the Sunday morning service at the Upstate Church of Christ, everyone pours into the fellowship hall to share a meal.

The menu is a mix of Ukrainian-style foods such as vvarenky and holubtsi — boiled and stuffed dumplings and stuffed cabbage — and American dishes like fried chicken, green beans and mac and cheese.

The hall is filled to capacity — 82 souls — with people at every table talking, laughing and fellowshiping together.

This is the scene after a recent joint assembly between the Upstate church and a Slavic evangelical congregation — the Church of Anderson — that shares its facility.

“It is an excellent example of what Christian unity looks like in actual practice,” Andrew Hicks, Upstate minister since Easter of 2020, said of the partnership.

The front doors of the Upstate church, 30 miles south of Greenville, open into the fellowship hall.

The room is filled with several rows of long white tables, and before the joint worship, coffee and snacks are served. Many of the Upstate members and special guests greet each other with smiles and hugs.

In the auditorium, four sections with rows of red-cushioned chairs fill the room. Two projectors hang from the ceiling above the stage with a baptistery behind it. By the time worship begins, almost every chair is full.

The service opens with prayer, singing and announcements followed by the Lord’s Supper. Afterward, the congregants take three minutes to meet and greet each other while those ages 10 and under exit for a special children’s program.

Once everyone sits down, the believers sing, and the preacher starts his lesson.

A month before, the congregations held their first joint worship service, and the ministers from both churches taught together. But on this recent Sunday — their second time gathering together — the Church of Anderson’s Yuri Sushchik, who ministers and also runs a small trucking company, preaches alone.

Sushchik, who immigrated to the U.S. at age 2 as his family fled communism, teaches about recognizing God’s blessings and showing proper gratitude. He also stresses the importance of getting to know Christ, referencing 2 Corinthians 4 in its entirety.

“When you get to know him … you start to realize that you want that heart of God,” Sushchik says.

Usually, the Church of Anderson meets at 2 p.m. Sunday, and the service integrates both languages. But the congregation is trying to fully transition to English.

Sushchik ends his message with a prayer. He speaks in English, while several Church of Anderson members whisper their requests to God aloud in Russian.

Before coming to America, the Church of Anderson members felt displaced. In the 1980s and early 1990s, Christianity was not accepted in the Soviet Union.

Todd Collins, an Upstate member, said the Ukrainians immigrated to the U.S. for religious freedom.

Several of the Church of Anderson members recently moved to Anderson from other states, and some have been there for longer. Sushchik said that the congregation has a purpose and vision.

“We have a vision/purpose of our existence as a body to build a bridge of transition, aiming to take people out of religiosity and bring them into a personal relationship with Christ,” he said.

Before the partnership, the Church of Anderson held worship services in several houses. The journey to find a church facility to rent involved lots of door knocking and many prayers, Sushchik said.

The Ukrainian Christians prayed for God to open doors, he said. They were praying, “God, open the doors that are from you, and close the ones that are not.”

On a Saturday this spring, a couple who are in charge of fellowship for the Upstate church were preparing the building for that Sunday’s service. They forgot to lock the door, and two men entered and asked about the church’s worship assembly.

The next day, the two men — Sushchik and another Church of Anderson member — and their families attended the Upstate church’s service. Afterward, the men approached the elders and inquired about renting the facility.

At the time, Hicks, the Upstate minister, was out of town. A church elder called him and explained what happened. Upstate church leaders took time to talk, think and meet with the leadership from the Church of Anderson.

As the elders met with the Church of Anderson, they realized that the congregations’ beliefs — Christ crucified, baptism as necessary for salvation and only using the Bible — largely lined up.

Finally, Upstate leaders brought the idea to their congregation’s attention. Upstate member Katie Burleson was excited by the opportunity for the building to be used by other Christians — and for the fellowship.

“I’ve really respected our elders in being open to this group of Christians who just needed a physical home,” Burleson said.

Ultimately, the Upstate church decided to go ahead with the partnership. “We are a congregation that has to be an example to each other,” elder Jeff Cutler said, “and we have to be an example to our Ukrainian brothers and sisters and to our community.”

Thus far, the monthly joint service has opened the minds of more traditional Upstate members, Hicks said. And the fellowship, he said, has shown the members that what unites the two congregations is more important than any cultural differences.
Relief for a shaken Haiti

A MASSIVE EARTHQUAKE claims lives and destroys thousands of homes in the Caribbean nation. Ministries send aid.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Despite an approaching tropical storm, Marie François slept outside. She was concerned that her house would collapse in the aftershocks of a 7.2-magnitude earthquake that shook her homeland, Haiti, claiming more than 2,200 lives and toppling more than 60,000 homes, according to government figures.

The Aug. 14 earthquake was two times stronger than the 7.0 quake that devastated Haiti’s capital, Port-au-Prince, 11 years ago. The latest quake struck along the same fault line, 60 miles west of the 2010 quake, on Haiti’s southern Tiburon Peninsula.

François, who lives in Les Cayes on the southern coast of the peninsula, is a former volunteer for Hope for Haiti’s Children, a Cincinnati-based ministry associated with Churches of Christ that operates orphanages and Christian schools in Haiti. Just days after the quake, the Caribbean nation endured Tropical Storm Grace, which pelted the quake-stricken area with rain and hampered rescue efforts.

After the storm passed, Hope for Haiti’s Children sent a team of doctors, nurses, physical therapists, construction engineers and workers to the Rousseau area in the quake zone to distribute “survival bags” filled with bottled water, rice, beans, cooking oil, flashlights, tarps and rope.

Haitian police escorted a flatbed truck filled with relief supplies from Healing Hands International through gang-controlled areas to reach earthquake victims, workers with the Nashville, Tenn.-based ministry said. Team members set up solar panels to power a staging area for ongoing relief efforts.

“They will construct temporary shelters using supplies that can later be reused to build permanent homes for the residents there,” workers with Healing Hands said.

The ministry also provided transportation and supplies for a group of 20 Haitian doctors stationed in the hardest-hit region.

Other ministries associated with Churches of Christ, including LiveBeyond, One Kingdom and Christian Relief Fund, are providing for earthquake victims, as are congregations including the Flint Church of Christ in Decatur, Ala., and the West Broward Church of Christ in Plantation, Fla.

Jean Claubert Belton, minister for a Church of Christ in Ganthier, Haiti, traveled to the affected areas soon after the quake to assess needs there.

“We beg you, please, to remember those people constantly in your prayer,” he told The Christian Chronicle. “I truly believe that it’s not about us but it’s up to God. He knows our heart. He has power to do everything. ... He knows our needs must better than we do.”

FIND LINKS to contribute to relief efforts at christianchronicle.org/haitiquake2021.

INDIA

KOLKATA — Agape Asia provided emergency aid to people in India’s West Bengal state impacted by a recent cyclone and the COVID-19 pandemic.

These efforts include feeding fishermen — both literally and figuratively.

The ministry associated with the Churches of Christ worked with local partners to supply workers, the majority of them fishermen, with food packages for adults and children. Many are unemployed due to pandemic restrictions that closed markets.

“I have heard that Christians are kind people, and today I witnessed it,” one fisherman said. “Your God is good. Thank you so much for caring for my family.”

PHILIPPINES

CEBU — Following the pandemic restrictions of 2020, Cebu Bible College celebrated a larger-than-usual class of 12 new ministers. Despite ongoing restrictions, many of the graduates find new ways to evangelize and strengthen churches, said director Mark VanDyke.

“This pandemic has taught our students and alumni the need to be flexible and persevere in ministry,” VanDyke said, “and their passion to be godly young servants and to preach the Gospel clearly shines through wherever they are serving.”

SOUTH AFRICA

JOHANNESBURG — William Jackson, a members of the San Jose Church of Christ in Jacksonville, Fla., spoke virtually at the One Africa Forum: Global Youth Virtual Conference hosted in South Africa.

“Africa cannot meet its future potential without its young people,” said Jackson, a longtime educator who conducts workshops on STEM, a discipline focused on science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and STEAM, which also incorporates the arts. He urged participants, who watched from locales across Africa, to use the power and influence of their voices as they form professional networks in person and online. He also spoke about the potential benefits and dangers of social media.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY HOPE FOR HAITI’S CHILDREN

A Haitian family sleeps outside on a night following the 7.2-magnitude earthquake.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY HOPE FOR HAITI’S CHILDREN

A quake survivor receives a “survival bag” from Hope for Haiti’s Children.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY HOPE FOR HAITI’S CHILDREN

A Haitian family sleeps outside on a night following the 7.2-magnitude earthquake.
Franco of Predisan, which provides regular visits by chaplains to the ward. “They are inside alone, they are dying alone, or they are in recovery alone,” said Dr. Javier Franco of Predisan, which provides regular visits by chaplains to the ward.

A mass of tubes obscures the face of a COVID-19 patient in Juticalpa. “They are inside alone, they are dying alone, or they are in recovery alone,” said Dr. Javier Franco of Predisan, which provides regular visits by chaplains to the ward.

Santos Ramón, a chaplain for Predisan, says a prayer for expectant mothers at a birthing center in the mountain village of Culmí. Regardless when or if they take the COVID-19 jab, “The best vaccine is to wear your mask,” he told them.

FROM PAGE 1
sincere confidence that God is with them here in this hospital.”

DELTA, BORDER CRISIS, HURRICANES
Hope is in short supply here. So are vaccines.
“If our healthcare system had been frail before, it is worse now,” said Dr. Amanda Madrid, chief executive officer of Predisan, to a surgical team from the U.S. — the first to serve with the ministry in more than a year.

Honduras, like most of the world, is riding a wave of COVID-19’s highly infectious delta variant. At press time, the nation of 9.7 million people had reported nearly 345,000 infections and 9,050 deaths since the pandemic began. Many here believe the actual figures are higher. About 4 million doses of vaccine had been administered, according to Reuters’ COVID-19 Tracker, enough for about 20 percent of the population.

Lockdowns have shuttered businesses and schools. Mission teams have vanished, and nonprofits can’t employ the translators and drivers who serve them. Some, without income and fearing rising gang violence, have attempted the treacherous trek north through Mexico, contributing to a crisis on the U.S. border.

Making matters worse, Honduras endured two powerful hurricanes within two weeks in late 2020.

PREACHING, HEALING, DIGNITY
Health care was a challenge, even pre-pandemic, in rural locales such as Olancho, the largest of Honduras’ 18 departments, or states. Among its people are indigenous groups such as the Pech, who often lack resources to pay for adequate medical care.

That’s why Doris Clark, a member of the Northlake Church of Christ in Atlanta, and her husband, the late Dr. Robert Clark, moved to Catacamas — a town surrounded by Olancho’s rugged mountains — 35 years ago to launch Predisan, which takes its name from the Spanish words for “preach” and “heal.” Along with Madrid, Predisan’s founding medical director, they planted ministries for addiction recovery, medical care and community development.

In 2003, Predisan opened the Good Samaritan Medical Center, a 20,000-square-foot facility that offers primary and specialty care and training for medical workers. For nearly two decades, visiting teams of U.S. physicians have worked alongside Predisan’s Honduran staff to provide surgical and dental services.

In the midst of the pandemic, the ministry has adapted its services. With most schools meeting only online, Predisan set up tents behind the small chapel at the Good Samaritan facility and created outdoor classrooms and a tutoring program for students who don’t have reliable internet access.

Predisan established a pastoral network of preachers who serve in the mountain villages. The group offers financial training and pools its resources to provide microloans for ministers to plant coffee and supplement their income.

“Predisan, through the Gospel, has brought dignity to a people, has brought hope to a people,” said Julio Benitez, a ministry chaplain and psychologist.

“We cannot say no’
Nowhere is that sense of hopelessness more acutely felt than the San Francisco hospital in Juticalpa, about an hour west of Catacamas. It’s the only facility in Olancho with a COVID-19 ward, serving a region of more than half-a-million souls.

During the Chronicle’s visit, several patients convalesced in hallways between rooms. When asked about the ward’s capacity, coordinator Dr. Vilma Bendeck said, “We are living this right now. The limit here is 50. We have 56. We cannot say no.”

Dr. Franco, Predisan’s medical director, said that many Hondurans “feel that if they have COVID, that’s the end; they don’t have tomorrow.”

Their families suffer, too. Franco’s mother, Paulina, the namesake of his daughter, was hospitalized with the virus for 15 days in the city of Santa Rosa de Copán.

“I think that was one of my hardest moments,” the physician said. “I couldn’t stay with her in the room.”

‘AND all of this has given new lenses to the people of this community.”

WE CANNOT SAY NO’
Before the surgical team began its work, Benitez preached to socially distanced, masked Hondurans waiting for their procedures. He quoted Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” The verse follows 28 chapters of misery, suffering and hopelessness that the children of Israel endured at the hands of their enemies.

“As you can see,” Benitez said, “in the history of the children of God, it has always been that way.”

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“I think that was one of my hardest moments,” the physician said. “I couldn’t stay with her in the room.”
Thankfully, a fellow doctor helped him set up a visit with her via mobile devices using WhatsApp. He tried to convince her that the hospital was the best place for her to be.

In the Juticalpa ward, Franco talked with 56-year-old Rosa Ramirez as she recuperated in the unit’s recovery area, a room once used for pediatrics. She said she was thankful for the visit and that she’s praying for all Hondurans to keep taking precautions against COVID-19.

“It’s a real illness,” she said, “not just a game.” Before leaving her bedside, Franco spoke a few words to her, softly, in Spanish.

“I was encouraging her to be patient,” the doctor said. “She wants to go home.”

**VACCINES FOR MOTHERS**

In homes across Olancho, a new pandemic challenge may be on the horizon — a baby boom. Two hours from Juticalpa, in the mountain town of Culmi, workers at a rural clinic overseen by Predisan are performing 16 to 18 ultrasounds per day, said Dr. Cruz Barahona. Access to contraception has been limited during the pandemic, he said.

The clinic is a part of a network of facilities overseen by Predisan since 2014, when Honduran health authorities launched a decentralization initiative and offered the ministry the chance to step in. The government provides some funds, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Predisan trains staff and uses its own funds to provide chaplains for the rural clinics and maternity centers, where expectant mothers from remote villages can wait, under a physician’s supervision, for their babies to be born.

In recent months, as COVID-19 vaccines have become more widely available, workers in the clinics have prioritized getting pregnant women immunized. Hesitancy is a problem, said Dr. Oscar Guifarro, a coordinator for Health Center Emmanuel, a clinic in Catacamas that Predisan began supervising in 2016.

“Unfortunately, a pregnant woman died a month ago from COVID-19,” Guifarro said. As news spread, demand for the vaccine among pregnant women increased.

At a maternity center in Catacamas, the Chronicle spoke to two pregnant women. One, waiting for her first dose of the Pfizer vaccine, said she was doing it for her unborn child and her three children at home. Another woman said she didn’t yet want to receive the vaccine “porque no,” a Spanish phrase similar to “just because.”

**STRESSFUL, UNCOMFORTABLE, LOVE**

In addition to administering vaccines, workers with Predisan helped set up the San Francisco hospital’s COVID-19 ward and managed it for a year. The ministry continues to provide chaplains for the unit.

Madrid, Predisan’s CEO, has visited several times. She remembered an early visit when a female patient, struggling to breathe, grabbed her arm.

“Do you want me to pray for you?” Madrid asked. The woman nodded. “She couldn’t even get the words out,” said Madrid, who clasped her hand and prayed. She read to her from the Bible, one of the Psalms, and noticed other patients listening — plus some of the staff.

Inside the ward, one of the attending physicians, Dr. Noel Olivera, said the chaplains’ visits help remind him why he straps on layers of hot protective gear for shifts of 12 hours at a time.

“It’s stressful and uncomfortable,” Olivera said, “but I’m doing this for love.” Thanks in part to the spiritual inspiration, “most of these people will return to their families,” he said, motioning toward the recovery room.

Dennis Rojas, a lab tech, agreed. He cleans and comforts the patients, and the chaplains help remind him that he’s “proud to be a soldier in the war against the pandemic,” he said.

Rivera, at the end of his latest rotation as chaplain, stood outside the ward as a hospital worker sprayed him with a mist of water and bleach. Then he stripped off his gloves and gowns and placed them in a barrel. It’s a procedure he’s done before — and plans to keep doing as long as he’s needed.

“Feel most fortunate for the opportunity to pray and preach the Gospel,” he said. “I feel really proud to have the opportunity to come and be with these patients.”
It seems like an unnecessary risk,” one of the doctors told me the night before Erik Tryggestad and I headed to the COVID-19 unit at Hospital Regional San Francisco.

Driving to the hospital, these words echoed in my head and joined a chorus of my own doubts: Was this necessary? Were we motivated by some misplaced sense of duty? Did we actually need to go inside?

Erik shared my hesitancy. “We can decide at the hospital how close we actually need to be,” he said.

Why exactly I was nervous, I’m still unsure. I’m young and fully vaccinated. The worst fate that could have awaited me was an isolated room for two weeks. And yet, as the van pulled into the parking lot, it felt like we were on the cusp of death.

Indeed we were, just not our own.

A doctor and chaplain guided us through the hospital to another parking lot, where we were provided personal protective equipment, or PPE, and instructions on how to don it properly. Fastening our face shields, we met a doctor outside an open doorway and followed her inside.

I’d rehearsed this scene in my head based on my knowledge of U.S. hospitals: We’d enter the building, where there would be a series of doors cordonning off different sectors, giving me the option to stop before we reached a point of no return. Perhaps I’d watched too much TV.

Instead, Erik and I walked through the doorway directly into the middle of the ICU.

The room was small and crowded, lined by 10 beds sharing too little space, monitored by frantic doctors with too little equipment. Patients wore the bare minimum: hospital underwear and sheets. The air-conditioning, like the ward, was overwhelmed by the fevered bodies. The doctors told us hundreds had died.

Oxygen masks hissed, machines beeped, and doctors — wearing two masks and a face shield — yelled to be heard. The patients couldn’t breathe. And neither could I.

I was not prepared for the sudden confrontation with such a concentrated amount of human suffering. I had reported on coronavirus testing and spoken with relatives of people who had died. But I hadn’t seen COVID-19 until I looked into a patient’s eyes and saw no one looking back.

As I struggled to comprehend what I was seeing, I reminded myself to do my job. “Find the shots that show the story. Respect the patients’ privacy,” I thought at least a dozen times.

The 30 minutes inside felt both like an instant and an eternity. Every wheezing cough and ragged breath slowed time. Every monitor alarm and oxygen mask hiss accelerated it.

When we left, we were welcomed back outside by diluted bleach spray, trash cans for PPE and a plastic bag to quarantine my camera. The goal was to leave with nothing more than the knowledge and imagery of what was inside.

I spent my evening trying to understand what I had experienced and why it mattered. Not until later that evening, when we were reunited with a Predisan Health Ministries team, did I find the answer.

“What was it like?” one person asked. “How was the hospital equipped?” another wondered. “How many patients did they have?”

With the outflow of questions, I found I had answers. The COVID unit for this region’s 500,000 people had 50 beds — 10 of those designated for critical patients — with zero ventilators. Overflow patients were being put in the hall.

I knew what the inside looked like, and I had the skills to express it. That is why we had to take the risk — it was a story that needed to be known.

AUDREY JACKSON is associate editor of The Christian Chronicle. Contact audrey@christianchronicle.org.
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Thank you, Dave Board, President

Each month we will report on projects underway and in planning when you become a part of this work.

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A ministry of the Churches of Christ for over 21 years
Metallic clanging echoed through the surgical ward as Dr. Chad Eustis hammered the arm of the operating table against the floor to loosen a stuck mechanism. The first step to practicing surgery in a developing nation is to operate on the equipment.

Eustis, who started leading surgical trips to this Central American city in 2007, was unfazed. Within an hour, his team would be treating patients in both operating rooms at the Good Samaritan Medical Center, owned by Predisan Health Ministries, which is associated with Churches of Christ.

This surgical team from Atlanta-based Jackson Healthcare was the last to visit before the COVID-19 pandemic and the first to return in a year and a half.

Arriving as the delta variant surged across the U.S. and Honduras, the 11 team members had to show proof of vaccination as they entered the country. Before leaving for home, they would have to get a nasal swab test for COVID-19. A positive result could confine them to Honduras for two weeks or more.

Dr. Amanda Madrid, CEO of Predisan, thanked them for taking the risk. Many patients had been anticipating the team’s return, she said. Others had died awaiting treatment.

Alejandrina Castillo had waited 15 years. Her home in the mountains of Honduras made access to health care difficult, and a failed surgery made her wary. A doctor at a private clinic told her the surgery would cost 50,000 lempira, or around $2,100 U.S. — money that she did not have, Castillo said.

“Money here is very scarce,” said Castillo, who required treatment for...
Health care professionals listen with patients to a devotional led by Julio Benitez, Spanish at the Good Samaritan Medical Center owned by Predisan Health Ministries. After the prayer, the Jackson Healthcare team changed into surgical gowns and prepped the operating rooms for surgery.

Dr. Chad Eustis, right, prays in English with patients while Carlos Ponce, right, translates the prayer into Spanish. The surgical team gathered for a devotional at the beginning of the day. Despite living five hours from the center in Catacamas by car — or nine hours if she had to travel part of the journey by horseback due to road conditions — Castillo resolved to be treated by the surgical team at the Good Samaritan Medical Center.

Though the rod is the golden standard for stabilizing closed femur fractures, it is only recommended for open fractures if the wound is cleaned within eight hours of injury. Eustis said, “Bonilla’s open fracture was not. While the team from Jackson Healthcare in 2008 was able to treat the infection, Bonilla needed to see an orthopedic surgeon. Since Eustis lacked the specialization to correct the prior procedure, Madril had one request: Take Bonilla to the U.S. where there are surgeons to do the work you need.”

He doesn’t need help from anybody else. “There is not one single patient who could have had the surgeries they had without your presence here,” Madrid said to the surgical team on the final day at the center. “Those were people who were really waiting for you.”

Health care professionals listen with patients to a devotional led by Julio Benitez, a chaplain and staff psychologist at the Good Samaritan Medical Center.
AFGHANISTAN: Family members killed, stranded in airport attack

FROM PAGE 1

John said he worries, too. “I’ve been a lot of bad places,” said the Distinguished Flying Cross recipient. He spent 41 years in the Air Force before retiring with his wife to the Nashville, Tenn., area, where the couple attends the College Hills Church of Christ in Lebanon when COVID-19 allows.

“I’ve been to Somalia — Mogadishu in 1993 when the Blackhawk Down episode happened,” added John, who flew the first of his 337 combat missions in Vietnam. “I’ve been to Haiti, to Cambodia. ... There is horrible devastation in all those places.”

But nowhere is like Afghanistan.

“I think Afghanistan is worse because they’ve endured generations of war,” he said. “A 40-year-old in Afghanistan has known nothing but war.”

The Bradleys’ faith — which they’ve shared since they first met at an Air Force base in Louisiana and married at the Blanchard Church of Christ in Shreveport in 1975 — motivates them.

“Top Gun meets Jesus” is how longtime minister Ken Durham, a former Bible faculty member at Lipscomb University in Nashville, describes John.

“He’s a man with a passion that comes right out of the heart of Jesus when it comes to helping people,” Durham said.

Retired Major Gen. Eric Overturf of Arlington, Va., who flew with John, echoed that sentiment.

“He’s a selfless servant leader who has dedicated himself to taking care of people,” Overturf said of John. “He lives the way he thinks — what would Jesus do? He never says it out loud, but he’s dedicated first and foremost to trying to do the right thing, whether it’s a wingman trying to get through bad weather or in Afghanistan.”

BOOTS FOR LAMIA

John Bradley’s first five trips to Afghanistan were to visit airmen under his command. The three-star general oversaw 75,000 reservists worldwide. On one of those trips, he joined a group of airmen and soldiers distributing humanitarian aid near the Bagram air base north of Kabul.

That’s where he met a 9-year-old girl who pushed through a crowd of boys to beg for boots, like the ones Bradley was wearing, to protect her feet during the cold Afghan winter. Her name was Lamia.

When he returned home and told Jan about the encounter, she began gathering blankets, clothing and other materials — 40,000 pounds of supplies — for the Afghans Lamia came to personify.

But before gathering the materials for that first shipment from thrift stores, discount stores and church members and before washing, folding and stacking everything in the Bradleys’ basement, the couple readied four boxes of basic provisions for Lamia and her family. They got boots in three sizes to be sure she’d have a pair that fit and Aveeno lotion for her wind-ravaged face. Those boxes were sent to Bagram with instructions to find Lamia. Then, on his next trip, the general took Lamia a bicycle.

With John’s retirement imminent in 2008, the Bradleys decided, in what John describes as a five-minute conversation, to spend the rest of their lives helping the people of Afghanistan. They created the Lamia Afghan Foundation.

In the years since, the foundation has collected more than 3.5 million pounds of humanitarian aid and ferried it to Afghanistan on a space-available basis through the Denton Program, which allows any U.S. nonprofit to send aid abroad. The foundation also built seven schools and clinics, sent an ambulance and an ultrasound machine, provided prosthetics for war-scarred children and built relationships with other organizations and Afghans who became the Bradleys’ partners and dear friends.

The foundation’s seventh school was completed on the Friday before Kabul fell on a recent Sunday. On the Monday of its scheduled opening for 1,100 girls, the school sat empty.

“I’m hopeful things will be settled and the girls can go to school,” John told the Chronicle that Sunday. “I’m an optimistic person, but I’m not real optimistic about things there. I’m trying to be realistic.”

BROKEN PROMISES

The Bradleys’ frustration with promises made by the State Department and Department of Defense to evacuate partners and volunteers is palpable.

“I’m deeply disappointed that the airlift ended,” John said. “A lot of people will review what’s happened in the last few months, the last few years. People say we should have started the evacuation before we pulled troops out — that’s my opinion.”

Leigh Ann Kosmas, the Bradleys’ daughter, took more than a week off work from her job as senior communications director for Kutak Rock LLP, a nationwide law firm based in Minneapolis, to help file the requested paperwork.

“One of the hardest parts for me,” Kosmas said, “was putting together the documents. I have their names, dates, date of birth, photos and what they’ll wear to the airport. And there are so many children, and I see their faces. And now, in hindsight, I know they don’t have a shot because it didn’t work.”

Two children did get a shot, not because of paperwork but because of an explosion that killed 13 U.S. service members and scores of Afghan civilians.

The children are the niece and nephew of an Afghan-American woman in Alexandria, Va. — Ferishta, whose last name is being withheld.
A 14-year-old could not get over the nephew and their mother. The girl over the wall, then the younger ing and shoving. Someone lifted her sion, he told her, crowds began push-

happened. Even before the explo-

learned from the neighbor what had

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Jan, sobbing. She had spoken with

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suicide bombing at Hamid Karzai

neighbor went with them.

A 19-year-old neighbor from Kabul, left, found them and traveled with them to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md.

Tens of thousands of girls have gone to schools built by Lamia Afghan Foundation, John Bradley said. Two of the girls, twin sisters Husnia and Zuhall, came to the U.S. and went to college. Bradley helped their father, an interpreter for the U.S. Army, and the rest of the family get visas to live in the U.S.

because of security concerns. She came to the U.S. in 2013, taking advantage of the Special Immigrant Visa program that helps people whose lives are in danger because of their employment, usually with a U.S. company or the U.S. government.

Ferishta and Jan Bradley became good friends through charitable projects benefiting Afghanistan.

The Bradleys had tried to help Ferishta get her brother's family out of Afghanistan because she believed they were in danger. When the promised phone calls never came, the family took the papers they had and a letter from Bradley on his letterhead and went to the airport. A 19-year-old neighbor went with them.

After news broke Aug. 26 of a suicide bombing at Hamid Karzai international Airport, Ferishta called Jan, sobbing. She had spoken with her 14-year-old nephew. He believed his parents were dead. He couldn't find his younger brother and sister.

Days passed before Ferishta learned from the neighbor what had happened. Even before the explo-

sion, he told her, crowds began push-

ing and shoving. Someone lifted her niece to Marines, who brought the girl over the wall, then the younger nephew and their mother. The 14-year-old could not get over the wall before the bomb went off.

The neighbor climbed the wall and began searching for the two young children. He found them in the medical facility with the injured service members. By morning, he and the children were on a plane to Ramstein air base in Germany. A few days later, they flew to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. The mother had died. The father and oldest son spent the night in a safe house, calling hospitals — trying to locate the two young children.

“At least my niece and nephew are in this country — they are in safe hands,” Ferishta told the Chronicle.

Tom Bradley, John’s brother, takes Ferishta each day from Alexandria to Bethesda — a 25-mile trip — for the allowed one-hour visit with her niece and nephew.

“I don't know when the family will be united,” she said. “Even yesterday it was so hard for me, and I carried a strong face to hide the pain of knowing that their mother is no longer with them. ... The kids still don’t even know.”

HELPING A FRIEND’S FAMILY

The other group the Bradleys helped get out was the family of a Houston doctor the couple met in 2008 when they took a woman to the hospital in Afghanistan where he worked.

The doctor was on call when they brought her in with a rare condition that required extensive tests and surgery. John Bradley told the doctor, whose name is being withheld because of security concerns, he would pay for it.

Afterward, they stayed in touch. The doctor moved to the U.S. in 2012, and the retired general wrote a letter of recommendation that helped him get a residency in New York.

Then in June, the doctor’s wife and five children, all U.S. citizens, went back to Afghanistan for a brother’s wedding. Their scheduled return flight on Aug. 15, the day the Taliban took over, never happened.

The doctor needed to get his wife and children home but also his brothers’ families, who were in jeopardy because of their work for American nonprofits — 18 people in all, 12 of them children.

A variety of circumstances, including efforts by the Bradleys, led to the 18 family members getting through.

When he heard about the explo-

sion at the airport, the doctor said he knew his family had been there just 12 hours earlier. A friend told him, “This is exactly the spot. They had to cross the sewage canal — had to pass the kids from one side to the other in the middle of the night.”

“If my family was delayed by 12 hours,” the doctor said, “I would have no one by now.”

He worries about his three sisters and their families still in Afghanistan.

“The Taliban are very smart this time,” he said. “They can use smartphones. They can track people. It’s very dangerous.”

‘THE BEST PERSON I’VE EVER Known’

The danger is not new. The Bradleys have lost close friends and volunteers to Taliban retribu-

tion before. They quit traveling to Afghanistan themselves several years ago, not only for their own safety but because it endangered their Afghan partners to be seen with them.

A school, a job training facility for men and women and a medical clinic in western Afghanistan were built by Abdul Fatah Haidari, who
THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

OCTOBER 21

Seeking Full-Time Minister - Cortez, Colorado

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

If interested, send a detailed resume including references and information about yourself and your family to: cortezcofc@live.com.

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

Preacher Search - Boone, North Carolina

Boone is home to Appalachian State University and is located in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains with wonderful weather and great people. The church has about 70 members, three elders, and three deacons. We contribute to missions in Scotland and India, send a group to work in Mexico each year, and have an active work with students from ASU. Due to retirement of current preacher after 18 years, we need a replacement. We prefer a Christian university graduate, since most in the congregation are college graduates with a few having doctorates. We need a man who believes, lives, and teaches the Bible, preferably with at least 5-10 years of experience.

Please send resume to:
Boone Church of Christ, Attn: Elders
130 Cool Woods Drive, Boone, NC 28607
boonechurch@bellsouth.net

DANGER: ‘If we can, we’ll help them’

FROM PAGE 21
was slain in his office.

The man who built the foundation’s first school and renovated the second, Sherwali Wardak, was a member of the Afghan Parliament. He died when an explosive detonated in the box that opened gates to his home.

A third man, the Bradleys’ closest friend in Afghanistan, was an American physician named Jerry Umanos.

Umanos and his wife relocated to Kabul after practicing for 25 years in an inner-city Christian health clinic in Chicago. He spent eight years at an Afghan hospital run by CURE, a nonprofit that builds hospitals in developing countries, and was killed by a security guard in 2014.

“He was the very best person I have ever known in my life,” John said.

“He saved more lives in Afghanistan than any American ever has, teaching other doctors in five hospitals how to save the lives of women in childbirth.”

‘YOU CAN’T WIN A WAR BY FIGHTING’

So much has gone badly, and not just in the summer of 2021.

Jan said she wishes that back in 2001 there had been a Marshall Plan for Afghanistan, a plan to rebuild a devastated country like the program that rebuilt Europe after World War II.

“You can’t win a war by fighting,” she said. “In order to beat extremism, you have to eliminate the desperation of poverty and illiteracy.”

John said he agrees. And because he was working in the Pentagon in 2001, he saw the focus shift from Afghanistan to Iraq. He saw the history before it was history. Generals understand such things.

“We should have not tried to set up a Jeffersonian democracy,” he said emphatically. “Everyone has tried to conquer Afghanistan. No one has been successful. No one ever will be.”

In 2011, the Bradleys made their case in Washington, encouraging lawmakers to provide funds for food, education and clean water.

“All the people at the top — it went in one ear and out the other,” Jan said. “Most had never been to Afghanistan, and if they had, they had not been outside the wire.”

Still, in 2016, the Bradleys were hopeful.

“Five years ago, there was great hope and promise in Afghanistan,” Jan recalled. “For women and girls, the country was moving forward. We were building schools, putting prosthetics on children.”

How the end came so quickly is difficult for them to understand. But it did. The work, however, has not.

“When we started out, we had to ask ourselves, ‘Why are we doing this work? Why do we care so much?’ Jan said. “People have no jobs,” Jan said. “They’re hungry. They’re starving. So the funds we’re receiving we’re trying to get to Afghanistan to feed people.”

She’s been assured by the State Department that U.S. officials are working on a way to get money into the country. Meanwhile, John refuses to give up hope.

“I’m disappointed in a lot of things,” he said, “but you ask if we’re hopeful — I’m hopeful.”

John plans to use resources to help in Afghanistan if they can, and if they can’t, to use them to help Afghan refugees in the U.S. He knows not all will be welcoming. But many Christians have reached out, offering their homes and other support for refugees.

“There are good-hearted Americans who want to help,” the retired general said. “And if we can, we’ll help them.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact the Lamia Afghan Foundation at lamia.org.
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The firehouse of Engine 54, Ladder 4, Battalion 9 in Midtown Manhattan lost 15 of its own on Sept. 11, 2001.

9/11: Christians pause to remember the thousands of lives lost

FROM PAGE 3
reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.
Retired Gen. Roger A. Brady, who at one time commanded all U.S. Air Forces in Europe, told the crowd that every generation experiences a defining moment — be it the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor for his parents’ generation or the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy for his own generation. “We talk about my parents’ generation … as perhaps the Greatest Generation, and I don’t dispute that at all,” said Brady, a member of the Brooks Avenue church. “We’re beholden to them, and we stand on their shoulders.”

But he praised the “9/11 generation” and the hundreds of thousands of men and women who volunteered for service in an era with no draft.

Brady recalled a husband and wife — both C-17 pilots — who had left active duty before Sept. 11. After the attacks, they decided not to retire. “They said, ‘Can we stay? We’ve trained our whole lives for this, and we can’t leave now,’” Brady said. “We said, ‘Sure. Come on back. We need you.’”

“And there were many who did that. They were like the firefighters who ran back into the tower. They were like the nurses who showed up. They were like all the people who said, ‘It’s time for us to serve.’”

LESSONS AT GROUND ZERO
About 600 miles away in New York, 11 students from Harding University in Searcy, Ark. — all too young to remember 9/11 — visited the Sept. 11 memorial.

The students’ educational trip also included meeting the firefighters of Engine 54, Ladder 9 in Midtown Manhattan. That firehouse lost 15 of its own on 9/11, the biggest loss in the New York City Fire Department.

“One of the most impactful experiences for me in the museum was hearing the voices of the friends and family members of those that died that day,” said Everett Kirkman, 21, a member of the Downtown Church of Christ in Searcy. “Reading a story about someone is one thing — and can be moving in itself — but hearing the tone, and the love in each person’s voice that spoke, was powerful.”

Sara McClaran, 20, whose home congregation is the A&M Church of Christ in College Station, Texas, said: “One of the most powerful things to me was hearing the messages of the passengers on the plane that went down (in Pennsylvania) — Flight 93. I have no doubt that each one knew they were going to die, and yet in their calls, there was no panic or terror or really much fear.

“There was just a calm certainty — a peace, if you will — as they made sure their family knew they were loved. Those passengers knew their fate, they accepted it, and they worked to make sure no one else died with them. Peace and courage like that is extraordinary.”

Like the students, millions across the U.S. — and around the world — solemnly marked the anniversary.

“Af ter 20 years let’s not forget,” said Lisa Brewer, a member of the Wilkesboro Church of Christ, welcomed the return of the bluegrass festival, which she directs. The COVID-19 pandemic forced its cancellation last year.

Ticket sales for the outdoor festival raise thousands of dollars a year to support the Carolina Bible Camp and Retreat Center, which is associated with Churches of Christ.

Given the 9/11 anniversary, the festival offered free admission this year to active-duty military, law enforcement and first responders.

“It’s too important a day to let go without recognition,” said Lisa, whose husband, Greg, a Wilkesboro deacon, serves on the Carolina Bible Camp board.

When the hijacked planes crashed into the World Trade Center, Vickers, the Winston-Salem news anchor, was working as a journalist across the Hudson River in New Jersey. “I could see the flames,” said Vickers, a nondenominational Christian.

Her older brother, retired Army Spc. Ripton Vickers, served in Afghanistan and South Korea. She wrote a children’s book, “Why My Hero Had To Go,” inspired by her nephew Jared’s dismay over his father leaving to serve overseas. She read that book to children at the festival.

Gary Scruggs, a member of the Kannapolis Church of Christ and a bluegrass festival volunteer, worked as a contractor in Afghanistan for two years. His son, retired Army Capt. Ben Scruggs, served nine months in Afghanistan as part of the war launched in response to the attacks.

The older Scruggs said he appreciated the recognition given to the military at the festival. “I know we can sometimes overdo it,” he said. “But I think we need to keep showing our respect for the military and keep that instilled in our young people. This is an all-volunteer group, and we may need volunteers again.”

Journalist April Fatula in New York City contributed to this report.
Full-time Minister Search

Small congregation looking for a minister to teach the Bible and minister to the needs of the congregation. We are a group of individuals who love God and love to study His Word.

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

Evangelist / Gospel Preacher Needed - St. Cloud, Minn.

The St. Cloud Church of Christ is seeking a sound married couple to help us evangelize the area of about 150,000+. The closest church is about 60 miles away. Duties would include some pulpit preaching and Bible-class teaching but would focus on community-minded evangelism. We are looking for a man who believes, lives and possesses Biblically-sound teaching.

We are a small, loving congregation of 40-50 people searching for the right couple.
Please send resume (with references) and video of recent sermons to:

Don Jerabek
3831 Country Road 74, St. Cloud, MN 56301
akwarzecha@gmail.com

All-Purpose Minister - Seminole, Texas

Looking for an All-Purpose Minister who can relate across the generational spectrum of our congregation. The elders are looking for assistance to reinvigorate the congregation as we come out of the pandemic and are coming back together. The successful candidate will be well grounded in Biblical doctrine and have the ability to share that doctrine in a loving and practical way with the unchurched and also with those who confess Christ but have an understanding that is critically different.

Westside Church of Christ, Attn: Tom Keyes
905 SW 10th St, Seminole, Texas 79360
tomkeyes@sbcglobal.net

Family and Youth Minister

Seeking a full-time Family and Youth Minister (FYM). This immediately available position provides an opportunity to join a healthy, active, rooted church family and “hit the ground running” with a united eldership, deacons, ministry leaders and involved parents who are interested in sharing the gospel.
Please email resumes to:

Mark Littleton
marklittleton1@icloud.com
acocrn.org/5007-2/
Athens Church of Christ - Athens, Tenn.

Full-time Minister-Monroe, Ga.

The Monroe Church of Christ seeks to hire a full-time minister. Our church is a friendly, outgoing and working church. We are a congregation of 100 members in a growing community east of Atlanta and west of Athens. Our requirements of a new minister are that he should be of strong personal faith and be doctrinally-sound and well grounded in the Scriptures. Our church website is: churchofchristmonroega.org.
Please send resume to:
Monroe Church of Christ
PO Box 851 (813 Broad St)
Monroe, Georgia 30655

Full-time Pulpit Minister

The Covington Church of Christ is seeking a full-time pulpit minister. We have two elders, two deacons and approximately 40 members. The ideal candidate must hold fast to Biblical truths, preach and teach from God’s Word only. He must also be willing to visit and assist in church growth. Retirement or other source of income may be needed. If you are interested in the position, please send resume with references to:

Covington Church of Christ
1643 S Carpenter Dr
Covington, VA 24426
540-962-1865

Full-time Minister Search - Medford, Oregon

The West Main Church of Christ is actively seeking a leader who does as Jesus did by talking to the people in their homes and communities. Our church family is seeking a visionary to lead the saved and the lost to the kingdom of God by guiding us and being involved with us.
Our lead minister will appreciate the rich heritage within the Churches of Christ. He will also envision a future not bound by tradition but open to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. With a firm commitment to the Bible and a desire to apply its truth to the 21st Century, our new minister will provide leadership, instruction, and be a role model for a church that is looking to glorify Christ. He will be first and foremost a man of integrity in all aspects of his life. He will be respected in his home, church, and community.
The ideal candidate will be at the forefront of designing and preparing the Sunday worship while being open to sharing the preaching duties in order to focus on being: A Biblical Teacher, A People Person, A Relationship Builder, A Caring Disciple, An Active Collaborator.
For further information and to apply, visit our website: churchofchristmedford.org

ALL-PURPOSE MINISTER

The Monroe Church of Christ seeks to hire a full-time minister. Our church is a friendly, outgoing and working church. We are a congregation of 100 members in a growing community east of Atlanta and west of Athens. Our requirements of a new minister are that he should be of strong personal faith and be doctrinally-sound and well grounded in the Scriptures. Our church website is: churchofchristmonroega.org.
Please send resume to:
Monroe Church of Christ
PO Box 851 (813 Broad St)
Monroe, Georgia 30655

Preaching Minister Search

University Park Church of Christ is seeking 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.

Seeking Full-time Minister – Decatur, Illinois

The North Jasper Street Church of Christ is seeking a full-time minister who desires to grow with the congregation. Jasper Street is conservative congregation, primarily African American, seeking an individual dedicated to the cause of Christ. Applicant should possess sound biblical knowledge, have a few years of preaching experience, good interpersonal people skills (with the ability to motivate and inspire), and a loving supportive wife. All interested persons need to submit a resume, references, and a video of a recent sermon(s) to the attention of the leadership:

North Jasper Street Church of Christ
950 N Jasper St, Decatur, IL 62521
(217) 423-2823 Jaspococ950@yahoo.com

Minister Search - Monroe, Ga.

The Monroe Church of Christ is located in Southeast Kansas. We are a loving congregation of 80+ members who want to grow. We are involved in community service, mission work, Leadership Training for Christ and a local youth camp. We provide a competitive salary including a parsonage. We are an established congregation with three elders and three deacons.

For more information or to submit a resume, call or email Clinton Kastler at:
(620) 515-8858 cekastler@gmail.com

For more information or to apply, visit our website:
churchofchristmedford.org

Position open until filled.

Full-time Minister - Medford, Oregon

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

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

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

Position open until filled.

Full-time Minister - Stafford, Kan.

Congregation in rural Kansas is seeking a full-time minister. Our congregation is blessed with members from multiple generations. We have several young families as well as golden agers. We are seeking an energetic individual / family dedicated to evangelism who desires to be involved in our community and will also instruct and challenge us spiritually. Parsonage provided plus salary.

Stafford Church of Christ
staffordcoc316@gmail.com
620-549-6625 or 620-546-5052

Seeking Full-Time Minister

The Coffeyville Church of Christ is located in Southeast Kansas. We are a loving congregation of 80+ members who want to grow. We are involved in community service, mission work, Leadership Training for Christ and a local youth camp. We provide a competitive salary including a parsonage. We are an established congregation with three elders and three deacons.

For more information or to submit a resume, call or email Clinton Kastler at:
(620) 515-8858 cekastler@gmail.com

For more information or to apply, visit our website:
churchofchristmedford.org

Position open until filled.

Full-time Minister Search

University Park Church of Christ is seeking 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.
Milestones

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

Anniversary

Bill and Caren Black celebrated their 60th anniversary recently. They are members of the Park Hills Church of Christ in Missouri.

Memorials

Carl Agee 1941-2021

Carl Edward Agee was born in Nashville, Tenn., on Oct. 12, 1941, and passed into eternity on Aug. 31, 2021. His life and memory will be treasured by his wife of almost 58 years, Marie, his beloved children, David and Joanna, and their spouses Tracy and Beth. He loved his grandchildren Matthew, Christopher, Zanna, Esme and Oliver beyond measure and his two sisters, Judy Hoover and Jan Sarhan.

Carl graduated from Tennessee Tech and became an early pioneer in computer programming. After years at IBM, he launched his own company, System 3/X, in 1982.

He sang with the barbershop chorus Voices of the South and with the Hoover Songbirds. He created with stained glass and woodwork and loved best giving his creations away as gifts.

Carl’s life was dedicated to and lived in service to his Lord. A Celebration of Life was held at the Homewood Church of Christ in Birmingham, Ala. In lieu of flowers, Carl requested that memorial donations be made to Health Talents International at P.O. Box 8303, Searcy, AR 72145 or through www.healthtalents.org.

Jimmie Joe Jones 1938-2021

Jimmie Joe Jones passed into the loving arms of God on April 6, 2021. Born in Portales, N.M., on April 23, 1938, to Frank and Lorene Jones, the family lived many places before Frank came to work on Mare Island Naval Shipyard in Vallejo, Calif. Jimmie met the love of his life, Thelma McDowell (daughter of Skip Neoma McDowell of Vallejo) at Vallejo High School, from where son, Victor, and daughter, Deborah, also graduated. The high school sweethearts celebrated their 64th anniversary last year.

Jimmie graduated from California State University, Sacramento, in 1960, continuing a career with the Vallejo Times Herald. Starting as a copyboy and retiring as publisher in 1994, his favorite position was entertainment editor, interviewing numerous celebrities. Jimmie’s involvement in Vallejo was extensive, serving on many boards and establishing TJ’s Designs custom embroidery business, providing personalized clothing and letterman jackets to the area from 1995 to 2015.

The role most dear to his heart was serving as a shepherd of the Lassen Street Church of Christ for 27-plus years before moving with extended family to Ward, Ark., in 2015 and worshipping with the Cabot Church of Christ.

Jimmie was preceded in death by his parents, parents-in-law and daughter-in-law, Alicia (Jimenez) Jones. He is survived by wife, Thelma (Arkansas); sister, Toni (Mike) Rehms (California); children Victor (Kim) Jones (California) and Deborah (Mitch) Turner (Arkansas); grandchildren Jeremy (Rebecca) Turner (Colorado); Stacie (Jeff) Coburn (Arkansas); Rachel (Saul) Avalos, Alyssa (Bryan) Luchini, Ryan (Alexis) Jones and Austin Jones (California); great-grandchildren Wyatt, Raelyn Coburn and Kayla (Tanner); and great-great-grandson Koe Booker, born the day before his passing, all of Arkansas.

Blessing New Mexico Christian Children’s Home in his name would be a great honor. Funds may be sent to 1356 NM 236, Portales, NM 88130 or see nmch.org.

Ned McMillan 1933-2021

Ned Darrel McMillan, 88, of Melbourne, Florida, passed away on Aug. 9, 2021. Ned was preceded in death by his parents, George W. McMillan and Edna R. McMillan and his brothers, Donald and David McMillan. He is survived by his wife, Lavella Hicks McMillan; children Mark McMillan, John McMillan and Todd Reel; and grandchildren Lauren McMillan, Clay Reel and Ryan Reel.

Born in Fairview Community, Virginia, Ned was called to serve in the United States Army during the Korean War, rising to the rank of Master Sergeant. On returning home, he attended and graduated from East Tennessee State University with a degree in math and industrial arts. He relocated to Melbourne, Fla., to pursue a career with the Brevard County School System in 1969, and he retired from Central Junior High School in 1995.

Continued on Page 27
Kira Perry, center, receives a first-place medal at the Illinois State Long Course Championship Swim Meet.

AWARDED: Kira Perry, 10, won first place in the 50 Freestyle, the 50 Butterfly and the 50 Backstroke and placed second in the 100 Freestyle, making her a three-time champion in the Illinois State Long Course Championship Swim Meet. Perry, the daughter of minister Douglas Perry and his wife, Barbara, attends the Pembroke Church of Christ.

NEW MINISTERS:
Gipson Baicum, pulpit minister for the Heritage Place Church of Christ in Irondale, Ala. Chance Herron, Bible chair associate for Buffs for Christ, a ministry that serves students at West Texas A&M University in Canyon, Texas.

APPPOINTED: Mike Steelman as the inaugural director for the accelerated Master of Architecture program at Harding University in Searcy, Ark. Todd M. Brenneman as dean of Faulkner University’s V.P. Black College of Biblical Studies in Montgomery, Ala. Anthony Williams as the chief diversity officer at Abilene Christian University in Texas. Williams also is mayor of Abilene. Shay Gonzalez as director of stewardship and community partners at Lubbock Christian University in Texas.

James ‘Jim’ Nicks
1953-2021

James Lawrence Nicks, age 68, of Franklin, Tenn., went home to be with the Lord on Sept. 2, 2021.

Jim was born in Bowling Green, Ky., on April 17, 1953, son of the late Lyle and Lucille Nicks. He graduated as a pharmacist from the University of Kentucky. He owned the Medicine Shoppe Pharmacy in Franklin for 20 years, and he worked at Vanderbilt Hospital pharmacy for 13 years. Jim served as an elder of the Heritage Church of Christ in Franklin and was in the first set of elders when Heritage was established in 2004.

His grandchildren were the light of his life. He enjoyed gardening, traveling and collecting flow blue china.

Jim is survived by his loving wife of 44 years, Betty (Billingsley) Nicks; daughters Sarah (Daniel) Dubois and Rachel (Charlie) Nix; siblings Sarah Nicks, Harold Nicks, Sally Tanaro, Frank Nicks, and Phillip Nicks; grandchildren Madeline, Benjamin, Amelia, Abigail, Caroline and Griffin; and numerous nieces and nephews.

A funeral service was held Sept. 5, at the Heritage church’s meeting place. Expressions of sympathy may take the form of donations to World Christian Broadcasting, Church of Christ Disaster Relief Effort Inc., Nashville Inner-city Ministry or Heritage Church of Christ, in loving memory of James Lawrence Nicks.

Henry ‘Ken’ Rhodes
1931-2021

Dr. Henry Kenneth Rhodes, longtime preacher and pioneering faculty member at Lubbock Christian University in Texas, passed from this life on July 2, 2021.

He was born in Frederick, Okla., to Bertis and Lalla Rhodes. The family moved to Roswell, N.M., as a teenager, he was invited to travel weekly to a Church of Christ near Ruidoso, N.M., to lead singing. Before long, he had assumed weekly pulpit preaching responsibilities there until he left for Searcy, Ark., and Harding College in 1949.

At Harding, Ken excelled in academics, church and photography. He worked in the college laundry to put himself through school. On weekends he was an itinerant preacher at numerous country churches. He graduated in 1952 from Harding, where he met his wife, Carolyn Poston. Dedicated to Christian education, the couple was called by Billy Mattox to join Lubbock Christian College in 1959 where Ken taught Bible and history and served as dean of students before a horse-riding accident disabled his academic career.

Ken is survived by his wife of almost 69 years, Carolyn, their four sons and their families. Memorials can be made to Lubbock Christian University, 5601 19th St, Lubbock, TX 79407 or lcu.edu/giving.

WITH APPRECIATION: The Christian Chronicle acknowledges gifts received in honor of Glenda Mitchell and Bob and Judy Ross and in memory of Leona Carpenter, Elizabeth Davidson Bolding, Irene Gray Jason, Delia Leddy and Roberta Woodard.

Full-time Pulpit Minister Search - Puyallup, Washington

The Puyallup Church of Christ is announcing an open pulpit minister position. The Puyallup church, located in the south Pigeon Sound region of western Washington, is a growing, diverse group of believers and children of around 250. It is served by four elders, eight deacons, and an associate minister.

We are seeking a married man with a minimum experience of 5-10 years of full-time ministry, demonstrating excellent interpersonal and communication skills (both verbal and written). He should have a Bible degree from a brotherhood preaching school, college or university — Bachelor’s required; Master’s preferred. More importantly, his lessons should accurately reflect and convey biblical truths, the gospel of Christ, and the nature of God.

Responsibilities include: weekly preaching; teaching of Bible classes; supporting the Bible class ministry; encouraging the body through counseling opportunities (evangelism, premarital, etc.); reaching out and visiting members (who are shut-in, sick, or discouraged); and actively welcoming and engaging with visitors.

Salary commensurate with experience. Please send resume with references, and CD/DVDs of or links to two sermons to:

Puyallup Church of Christ, Search Committee
402 5th Street SW, Puyallup, WA 98371 or via email: office@puyallupcofc.org
Tensions between Kingdom and country

A t times, the tensions between Kingdom and country are more obvious than others. Recent events in Afghanistan have provided one clear moment of tension. Seeing desperate people cling to planes as others rushed for the airport offered searing images of hopelessness and fear.

The United States entered Afghanistan 20 years ago to hold accountable the terrorists responsible for killing 2,977 innocent American citizens on 9/11. The U.S. was joined by multiple nations who likewise deplore acts of terrorism. It was, for many Christians, the very thing governments are tasked by God to do: bear the sword and punish evildoers.

After two decades of fighting, officials of previous and present administrations determined it was best to leave. From a national interest perspective, it makes sense: trillions of dollars spent, thousands of lives lost — civilian and military — and little hope for improvement.

Our national interest appeared to no longer be served by staying. It was time to leave. And while the final evacuation was far from seamless, officials insist it had to be done in the name of national security. Perhaps they are right.

After all, we have our own concerns within our own borders. U.S. taxpayers prefer their tax money be spent on their own country’s schools, infrastructure and social programs. The money spent overseas should be spent here at home on the people filling the U.S. treasury with their tax dollars. The U.S. cannot be the world’s police force. Such is the logical concern of nations that seems valid through the lens of country.

But national interests too often conflict with the interests of the Kingdom of God. This month’s edition of the *The Christian Chronicle* reminds us that among the crowd of frightened people racing toward the gates of the airport were friends and colleagues of our own brothers and sisters in Christ. Efforts to provide education, clothing and health care have now become far more challenging and dangerous. The U.S. departure reverberates far beyond the national security of one nation.

We do not pretend to have easy answers for these complex questions. But we do worry that our concern for country too often blinds us to the greater concerns of God’s Kingdom.

Our commitment to Christ must change the way we watch these scenes unfold. The concern for the “least of these” must apply beyond our own borders. God’s call to “love justice, seek mercy” means even far-off countries, refugees and immigrants. If we truly “seek first the Kingdom of God,” then our actions and rhetoric must follow suit.

Thankfully, God’s purpose has never been dependent on governments of men. It is true that sometimes God works through governments — even evil empires — and sometimes he works around them.

Reports from Christians still in Afghanistan indicate that the name of Jesus is still spreading, and many people are putting Christ in baptism, even during the chaos. Whether or not the situation in Afghanistan is in our national interest, it is unquestionably in the interest of the Kingdom of God. Our prayers are with our Afghan brothers and sisters now hiding across the country. Our prayers are also with their friends and neighbors in need of the hope found only in Christ. — Jeremie Beller, for the Editorial Board
13 reflections after visiting 13 churches

A
fter 15 years of full-time preaching, I accepted a new role with the Harding School of Theology and found myself in the awkward position of searching for a new church home. I do not like the idea of the church being a marketplace. I do not want to be a consumer. I want to be a disciple.

And yet, somehow, our family needed to find a new church family. How was I supposed to do that? I wondered if it is possible that this could be a spiritually formative experience rather than a consumeristic experience.

Our family came together and prayed about the decision. We focused on three key attributes we wanted in a church: community, mission and Scripture.

We wanted to find a church where we could have spiritual friendships. We wanted a church where we could participate in the mission of God. We wanted a place where we could grow in God's word. With this focus, we set out on our journey and began to visit 13 different churches.

Here is what we experienced:

1. We noticed that church auditoriums are often very cold, so bring a sweater with you.
2. We learned that meeting new people weekly is tiring.
3. We observed that COVID-19 has taken the wind out of many churches’ sails, yet they continue to keep going in hope.
4. We found friendliness regularly as we entered church buildings, with people often smiling and offering a welcome when they did not recognize us.
5. We remembered the impact of someone taking us out to lunch after worship and how special that is.
6. We discovered the joy of receiving mail as handwritten notes were sent to us to thank us for coming to worship.
7. We felt important as we were asked to stand and introduce ourselves or were mentioned from the pulpit.
8. We recalled how confusing it can be for a guest to know which door to enter, where to go and what to do.
9. We underwent a little embarrassment as one lady suggested that my wife and I should attend the college/young adults’ class (actually, that made me feel good).
10. We identified with the feeling of being “new” and how awkward, frustrating and challenging that can be.
11. We were encouraged when we were invited to attend Bible studies and small groups outside of the assembly. It’s nice to be invited!
12. We appreciated churches that had food — dinner for the youth group, ice cream social after worship or a small group potluck. Something about food just makes you feel welcome.
13. We experienced sadness when we realized that we cannot go to all of the churches we visited, but we must pick one.

Finding a church home is not for the faint of heart. But as I told my children, this is a moment where we get to see many churches and meet many different brothers and sisters.

So instead of viewing this as a chore, maybe this can be a practice of drawing closer to God through the church. We are nearing the end of our search. While it has been challenging (and I am ready for it to be over), I am thankful for this season where we could step back and see the church as guests and be thankful for the universal body of Christ of which we are a part.

STEVE CLOER is assistant professor of ministry at Harding School of Theology in Memphis, Tenn. He teaches courses in congregational ministry, mission and leadership and directs the Doctor of Ministry program. Previously, he was the preacher for the Southside Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas.
The Christian Chronicle Crossword

By Myles Mellor | www.ilovecrosswords.com

ACROSS
2. “Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose _____” (2 Corinthians 4:1, ESV).
3. Compass direction, abbr.
4. Searches for the truth.
5. “Only the wise know what things really mean. Wisdom makes them ___ and makes their frowns disappear” (Ecclesiastes 8:1, Good News Translation).
7. Acted.
8. God ____ Abraham by telling him to sacrifice his son.
9. “To honor the Lord is to hate evil: I hate pride and ____, evil ways and false words” (Proverbs 8:13, GNT).
10. Quiet!
11. “... the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be ____?” (Psalm 27:1, KJV).
12. “... they shall mount up with wings like ____” (Isaiah 40:31, ESV).
13. Short sleep.
14. “... they shall mount up with wings like ____” (Isaiah 40:31, ESV).
15. “... casting all your anxieties on him, because he ____ for you” (1 Peter 5:7, ESV).
17. “... casting all your anxieties on him, because he ____ for you” (1 Peter 5:7, ESV).
18. Green fruit.
19. “Be of good ____ and he shall strengthen your heart” (Psalm 31:24, KJV).
20. College email address ending.
21. “To honor the Lord is to hate evil: I hate pride and ____, evil ways and false words” (Proverbs 8:13, GNT).
22. Large tree.
23. Include.
24. “Be of good _____, and he shall strengthen your heart” (Psalm 31:24, KJV).
25. Short time period, for short.
26. “The official ordered the ____ to stop, and both Philip and the official went down into the water and Philip baptized him” (Acts 8:38, GNT).
27. “... casting all your anxieties on him, because he ____ for you” (1 Peter 5:7, ESV).
28. Or best offer, for short.
29. “Be ye therefore ____ even as your Father which is in heaven is ____” (Matthew 5:48, KJV).
31. Approve.
32. “The Kingdom of heaven is like this. A woman takes some yeast and mixes it with a bushel of flour until the whole batch of ____ rises” (Matthew 13:33, GNT).
33. Every river has one.
34. Apostle who preached in Greece, Syria and Phrygia.
35. Sweet fruit.
36. One who tempted Eve.
37. Transport.
40. Goal.
41. “____ hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13, King James Version, two words).
42. “A donde ___?” (Spanish).
43. Land of the brave and free
44. Scale note.
45. “... the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be ____?” (Psalm 27:1, KJV).
46. “... the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be ____?” (Psalm 27:1, KJV).

DOWN
1. “Be ___ and courageous” (Deuteronomy 31:6, ESV).
2. “… they shall mount up with wings like ____” (Isaiah 40:31, ESV).
3. Fruits in the Bible.
4. “O come let us ___ him!”
5. Duties.
6. Cab drivers.
7. God ____ Abraham by telling him to sacrifice his son.
8. “... the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be ____?” (Psalm 27:1, KJV).
9. “... the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be ____?” (Psalm 27:1, KJV).
10. No man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13, King James Version, two words).
11. “... the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be ____?” (Psalm 27:1, KJV).
12. “... the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be ____?” (Psalm 27:1, KJV).
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14. “... the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be ____?” (Psalm 27:1, KJV).
15. “... the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be ____?” (Psalm 27:1, KJV).
16. “... the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be ____?” (Psalm 27:1, KJV).
17. “... the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be ____?” (Psalm 27:1, KJV).
18. Green fruit.
19. Powder ____.
20. Large tree.
21. “... the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be ____?” (Psalm 27:1, KJV).
22. Large tree.
23. “... the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be ____?” (Psalm 27:1, KJV).
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BIBLE BOWLING

Mountain, River, Lake or Sea? Identify each of the following:

5. Carmel. 10. Olympus.

Answers to the following all begin with E:

12. Found before Nehemiah.
13. Father of the Edomites.
14. Met Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.
15. Mother of Seth.


Answers, crossword solution on Page 34.
Word Find: The gospel of Luke
By Betty Hollister | The Christian Chronicle

Find the following words from the Gospel of Luke. The unused 32 letters form a statement about the purpose of the book. (Find the answer on Page 34.)

ABRAHAM • COLLECTORS • HEAVENLY • PRAISING
ANGELIC • DISEASES • HUMILITY • REJECTED
ANNAS • EDGES • INJURY • REALIZED
APPEARED • ELIZABETH • ISAIAH • REVEALED
ATTENDANT • ENEMIES • LAUGHED • SABBATH
AUTHORITY • ENTER • LAWFUL • SCRIPTURES
BAPTIZING • EYESIGHT • LISTENING • SYNAGOGUE
BARREN • FREEDOM • LYING • TEMPLE
BELIEF • FULLY • MANKIND • TETRARCH
BLAMELESS • GABRIEL • MARY • THEOPHILUS
BLESSED • GALILEE • MESSAGE • TIBERIUS
BRIDEGROOM • GENERATIONS • NAZARETH • VIRGIN
CAPERNAUM • GENTILES • MESSAGE • WORSHIPS
CATCH • GRAPES • PARABLE • WRITTEN

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Science vs. scripture? It doesn’t have to be that way, biology prof writes

What do you do with a biology professor who doesn’t “believe in science?”

Just ask Janet Kellogg Ray, an adjunct biology professor at the University of North Texas, a graduate of Abilene Christian University and a member of The Branch, a Church of Christ in the Dallas suburb of Carrollton.

“There are many things I believe, but science is not one of them,” Ray says. “Instead, I accept science evidence. After all, a fact is true whether I believe it or not.”

Her book, “Baby Dinosaurs on the Ark?” is not a theological treatise. It is written from the perspective of a Christian educator who wants to ensure that the next generation of our youth will be able to avoid the unnecessary polarization of science and Christianity.

Ray discusses the nature of science, what it can and cannot do, and how it works. She discusses the 19th century work of Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis as he laid the foundations for what we call germ theory.

She contrasts science with advocacy of the law by attorneys in the courtroom and shows that the goal of science is not winning, but rather truth-seeking. And she discusses why trying to use Darwin’s original writings to answer questions totally beyond the scope of knowledge in his day — think DNA — is laughable.

If you have never considered the existence of positions other than the polar extremes of atheistic naturalism and young earth creationism, Ray provides a brief introduction to positions that search for common ground where science and Scripture can work together.

The sad reality is that we often push our young people into the belief that only the polarized extremes exist, without ever suggesting that one can be both a scientist and a Christian.

The last half of the book is where the author really gets humming. She describes the evidence and explains the simplicity of a scientific narrative versus the contortions of fitting the facts into the young earth creationist narrative. She addresses the age of the earth, flood geology and the Grand Canyon, the fossil record, the “missing link,” intelligent design and human evolution in light of our understanding of DNA.

In each of these areas, she provides balanced research, citing materials from Answers in Genesis as well as a variety of other Christian perspectives. She demonstrates clearly that she, as well as many others, believes the Bible and also accepts the findings of modern science.

As a science educator, Ray is unwilling to dismiss or ignore the ever-growing evidence of science. As a Christian, she is committed to her faith in Jesus Christ. She briefly shares her life story, tells of the struggle to find a position that is true to both her faith and her vocation, and seeks to share with young people the possibility of being a true Christian scientist.

If you have teen children in your home, you should read this with an open mind, looking for ways to help them be faithful in adulthood.

LEN FEUERHELM is a professor emeritus of physics at Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City and deacon of missions for the Wilshire Church of Christ.
COVID-19 Checklist
What is your congregation doing to protect your members?

- Follow mandated restrictions
- Wear masks
- Social distance
- Use prefilled communion sets
- Encourage use of hand sanitzers
- Leadership set examples
- Clean touched surfaces
- Use The Paperless Hymnal

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www.PaperlessHymnal.com

JOB OPENINGS

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Hi-Desert Church of Christ, 13460 Apple Valley Rd, Apple Valley, CA 92308, (760) 221-9727, ramrrodrig@yahoo.com.

Northside Church of Christ, 4435 E WT Harris Blvd, Charlotte, NC 28215, northsidesearchcomm@gmail.com.

Fenton Church of Christ, 212 Main St, PO Box 191, Fenton, MO, (636) 326-1440, letscook3232@sbcglobal.net.

Whitehall Church of Christ, 215 Streets Run Rd, Pittsburgh, PA 15236, (412) 427-5675, contact@whitehallchurchofchrist.com.

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- Tony Keesee

ATTENTION FRIENDS AND FORMER MEMBERS: We are inviting you to a fun-filled day including coffee and donuts at 9am, Bible class at 9:30am, Worship at 10:30am, followed by a Catered BBQ lunch (Stagecoach). We will have the Knappier Family Quartet as well as many exhibits. Please RSVP soon to reserve your spot and to order your T-shirt to remember the day. Call Lanny Jobe (580) 363-1874, email blackwellcoc@yahoo.com, or visit blackwellcoc.com for more information.

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Christianity —Why I Believe What I Believe by Ed Nill

What did Martin Luther really say about baptism and faith? Ed Nill, who speaks German, has researched “Luther’s Works” and tells us how Luther actually defined baptism and its relationship to faith. The German word for baptism is “Taufe” and means – immersion. Also, did you know that for hundreds of years the idea of inheriting sin did not exist? When and why did infant baptism become popular? And when did the sinner’s prayer concept begin, and what did the prayer supposedly replace in regard to Christian doctrine? The author’s writing style does not accuse or abuse the reader! When ordering the book, if you want additional information on Luther’s view on baptism, use comment section on the order form. We’ll email a PDF copy at no charge.
See www.bosspublishing.org for table of contents and narrative description of the book. Single copy cost with shipping is $20.00. With multiple copies 15% discount is available.
My work here began with 9/11; it taught me to seek out the light

Twenty years ago I was driving to work on the Tuesday before my first Friday deadline as a reporter for The Christian Chronicle.

The song on K-LOVE had something to do with prayer. As it ended, the deejay said, “And prayer is what we need right now because we’re being told that a second plane has hit the World Trade Center.”

Our offices were in the Bible building at Oklahoma Christian University back then. I still had a bunch of files on my desk from my predecessor, Glover Shipp, who had just retired.

Our editors — Bailey McBride, Scott LaMascus and Lindy Adams — and I tried to get a handle on what was happening and how it would change our plans for the October 2001 issue. Virginia Ware, our administrative assistant, worried about her daughter, who was in Austria on OC’s study abroad program.

“I can’t believe I’m saying this,” I told Virginia, “but she may be safer than we are now.” Then Vicki Wallace, the Bible department secretary, rushed in and said, “They hit the Pentagon!”

I didn’t know who “they” were. My immediate concern was our fellowship. I called the Manhattan Church of Christ in New York and talked to minister Tom Robinson about the congregation’s response.

I talked to Joe Dudney of Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort in Tennessee, which sent trucks of supplies to the Springfield Gardens Church of Christ in Jamaica, N.Y. I got reaction from our brothers and sisters around the world, including Croatian minister Mladen Jovanovic.

“Are we the limits of human hatred?” Jovanovic asked. “We pray for all who are suffering in your beautiful country.”

I learned that members of the Stony Creek Church of Christ in Shanksville, Pa., made sandwiches for the crews investigating the crash of United Flight 93. One of the passengers, 38-year-old Thomas Burnett Jr., was a 1992 graduate of Pepperdine University in California. He called his wife from the plane and said he and other passengers were going to try to stop the hijackers. They did.

A lifetime, it seems, has passed since I wrote that story. I got involved in singles ministry at the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City. There I met a beautiful young woman from Altus, Okla. We got married, and she became a doctor. We had two babies, both girls. The oldest is a teenager now.

I traveled to some 75 countries and territories around the world to report about what God’s doing among us. I wrote about water wells, World Bible School, mission hospitals and refugees. I wrote about dedicated Christ followers who went on to their reward — including Glover Shipp, Joe Dudney and Mladen Jovanovic.

I’m so thankful to Oklahoma Christian for adopting the Chronicle 40 years ago. Thank you for making me a part of your family … our family.

This newspaper, this ministry, has shaped my life in so many ways. It has opened my eyes to see that our Father is at work, even on dark days.

Two decades after that darkest of days, I know who “they” are, the terrorists who changed our world.

On a recent Sunday, as I sat at our usual spot in the church pew, I got a notification on my phone. The Taliban had retaken Afghanistan.

My heart sank. I thought about all the brave men and women in our military I’d talked to through the years and the sacrifices they made.

Was it all for nothing?

Then I thought about a man named Muhammad, an Afghan refugee I met in Athens, Greece, about three years ago. He’s a Christian now and a gifted preacher.

“I have many friends who are believers,” he told me. And each is a miracle. “I believe God can do more.”

So do I. My work here began with 9/11. Living in its shadow has shaped my life in so many ways. It has opened my eyes to see that our Father is at work, even on dark days.

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Erik Tryggestad is president and CEO of The Christian Chronicle. Contact erik@christianchronicle.org, and follow him on Twitter @eriktryggestad.
Going Deeper with God: Addressing Challenging Issues in Our Relationship with God

A New Book By Douglas L. Mead

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TUE 9/28

The Christian Chronicle Live

THE POST-PANDEMIC CHURCH
Assessing the situation post-pandemic and looking for solutions

In the BENSON AUDITORIUM at INVINCIBLE
Harding University’s 2021 Lectureship, Searcy, Ark.

Moderator: Bobby Ross Jr.
Panelists: Carl Royster, Matt Dabbs, Andy Miller, Roslyn Miller and Glenn Newton

10 a.m. Part 1: What is the Landscape for Reaching the Lost After a Once-In-A-Century Upheaval?
11 a.m. Part 2: What Creative Approaches Can Help Spur Kingdom Growth in a Difficult Time?

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