



Fred Gray receives Medal of Freedom

'A LAWYER BY TRADE and a preacher at heart,' church elder is presented with nation's highest civilian honor.

BY HAMIL R. HARRIS | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

WASHINGTON

Fred Gray was meeting with the Alabama State Bar Association at a retreat in Destin, Fla., when his phone rang.

The famed civil rights attorney, still practicing law at age 91, answered. It was his son.

"He told me that he had somebody on the phone who wanted to talk with me," Gray said. "Believe it or not, it was the president."

Days later, Gray stood in the East Room of the White House as President Joe Biden placed a star-shaped medallion, surrounded by tiny eagles, around his neck.

Gray, a longtime minister and elder for Churches of Christ, was one of 17 recipients of the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

"When Dr. King, Rosa Parks, Claudette Colvin and John Lewis and other giants of our history needed a lawyer for their fight for freedom, you know who they called?"

They called a guy named Fred Gray. That's See **GRAY**, Page 20



PHOTO VIA FACEBOOK.COM/REPSSEWELL

President Joe Biden presents Fred Gray with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

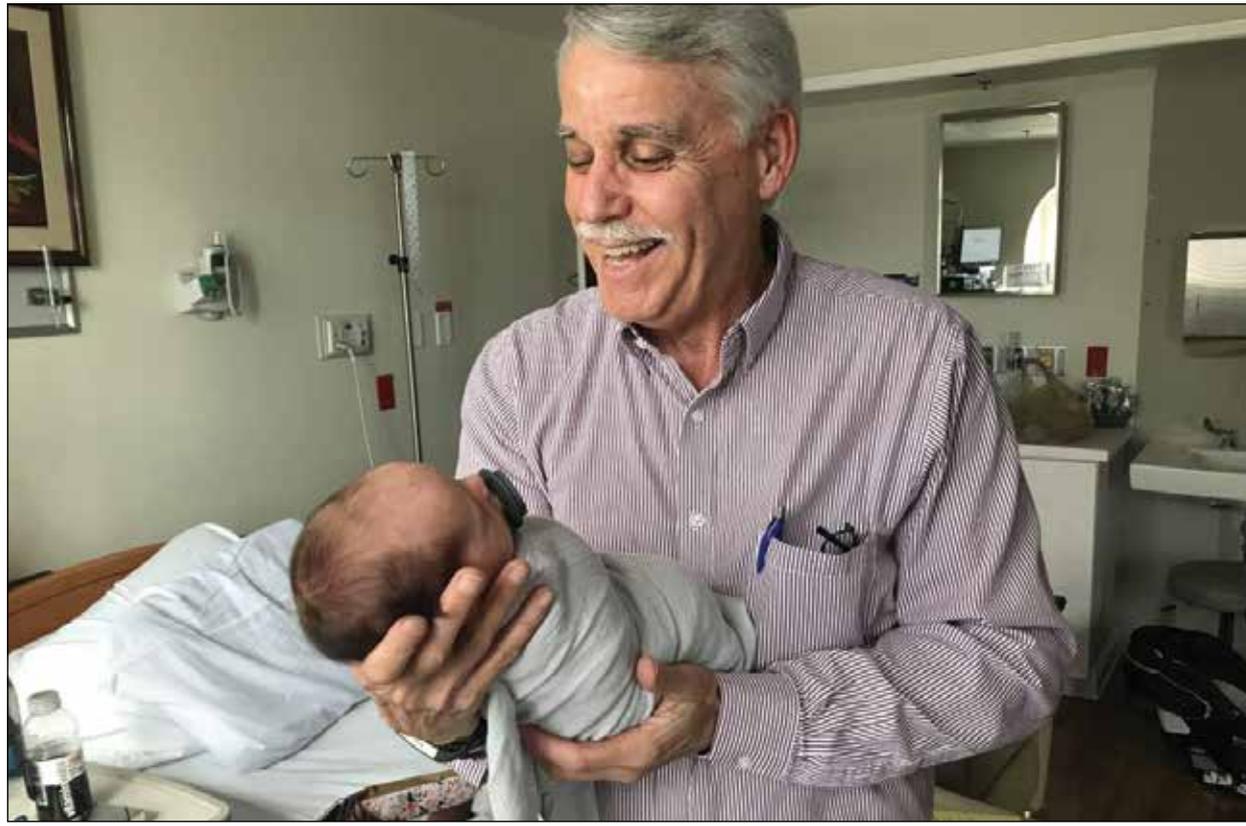


PHOTO PROVIDED BY JERRY CALLENS

Jerry Callens of Christian Family Services in Florida holds a newborn who will go to an adoptive family.

Roe overturned: Now what?

CHRISTIANS WITH ADOPTION agencies and healthcare providers offer insight on the impact of abortion bans and restrictions after the landmark Supreme Court decision.

BY AUDREY JACKSON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

It's like someone turned a faucet on."

That's how Sherri Statler, president and CEO of Christian Homes and Family Services in Abilene, Texas, describes the increase of women with unplanned pregnancies seeking help from her organization.

The numbers started rising last November, after the Texas Heartbeat Act — which bans abortions after the detection of the fetal heartbeat at around six weeks — was enacted in September 2021.

Now Statler anticipates that the

number of pregnant women in need of help will grow even more after the U.S. Supreme Court's overturn of Roe v. Wade.



Statler

The nonprofit adoption and foster care agency, which is associated with Churches of Christ, works with about 50 pregnant women per year. Currently the ministry is serving eight women, Statler said, and is

corresponding with 12 more.

"We want to help them just live through this pregnancy, and we try to help them envision life beyond the pregnancy," Statler said. "Most of the time, they're already two months pregnant before they even come to terms with it. So then there's seven months, and we say, 'OK, think about things that only last seven months. It's shorter than the school year.'"

Case workers and counselors

See **ROE**, Page 9

MORE COVERAGE

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When the editor gets COVID-19

ELGIN, Ill.

COVID-19 stinks. That's not exactly breaking news, right? For 2½ years, I somehow avoided the coronavirus. But during a recent

reporting trip to Chicago, I tested positive for the first time. So instead of doing the work I love, I isolated myself in my hotel room.

Inside Story



Bobby Ross Jr.

Apparently, the pandemic has no concern for my plans. Who knew?

Since I find myself with a bit of free time in between coughing spells, I'll start at the beginning.

Way back in February 2020, Ricardo Barrera, minister for the Elgin Church of Christ, northwest of Chicago, told me about a national gathering of Spanish-speaking young people planned that summer. He invited me to cover the event — Reunión Juvenil Nacional — for *The Christian Chronicle*.

But just a few weeks later came the COVID-19 lockdown. As a result, the 2020 conference was canceled. Then the 2021 one.

Finally, 2022's return to some semblance of normal life — thank you, vaccines and boosters! — allowed the 2022 meeting of Latino teens and adults from Churches of Christ to proceed.

I arranged to attend and write a story about

See **ISOLATION**, Page 4



ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Flags of Košice, Slovakia, nearly identical to the flag of Ukraine, fly outside St. Elisabeth's Cathedral in Košice, one of the easternmost Gothic cathedrals in Europe.

Where to next?

IT'S A DIFFICULT QUESTION for Ukrainian Christians as they find temporary shelter, and challenges, in the overstressed countries of Europe and the U.S.

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

KOŠICE, Slovakia

This central European city, it seems, was made to serve its Ukrainian neighbors.

Flags of blue and yellow — Košice's colors, just like Ukraine — fly from wires suspended above its downtown promenade and appear in the windows of shops throughout.

At a relief center set up near the central bus station, city workers push trolleys loaded with mattresses for their Ukrainian guests. U.S. First Lady Jill Biden visited and prayed with refugees in a tent chapel near the Ukrainian border, less than 60 miles to the east.

There are, however, signs of tension in this nation of 5.4 million, once part of the communist Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Commenters on social media decried images of the “foreign flags,” confusing them with Ukraine's. One

asked, “Is this Kyiv ... or Košice?” Amid rising inflation across Europe, some expressed resentment toward Ukrainians who drove across the border in BMWs and received aid while some Slovaks live on just a handful of Euros per month.



Haluštok

Haluštok, who ministers for a small Church of Christ here. Outside the city, some Slovaks fear that Ukrainians are taking their jobs.

But Haluštok doesn't focus on social media chatter. He and his fellow Christians know the needs, and they See **WHERE TO**, Page 14

A camp of a different culture

CHRISTIAN MOTHER creates opportunities for children to explore their diverse world.

BY GABRIEL GRANT HUFF | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Swimming. Hiking. Hot dogs. These words often are associated with summer camp.

Kids & Culture Camp is different. For four weeks each summer, children ages 3 to 12 gather in the nation's capital to cook Jamaican food, listen to African music, learn about Mexican history and Japanese clothing, practice Brazilian martial arts and tour the Tanzanian embassy.



Otey

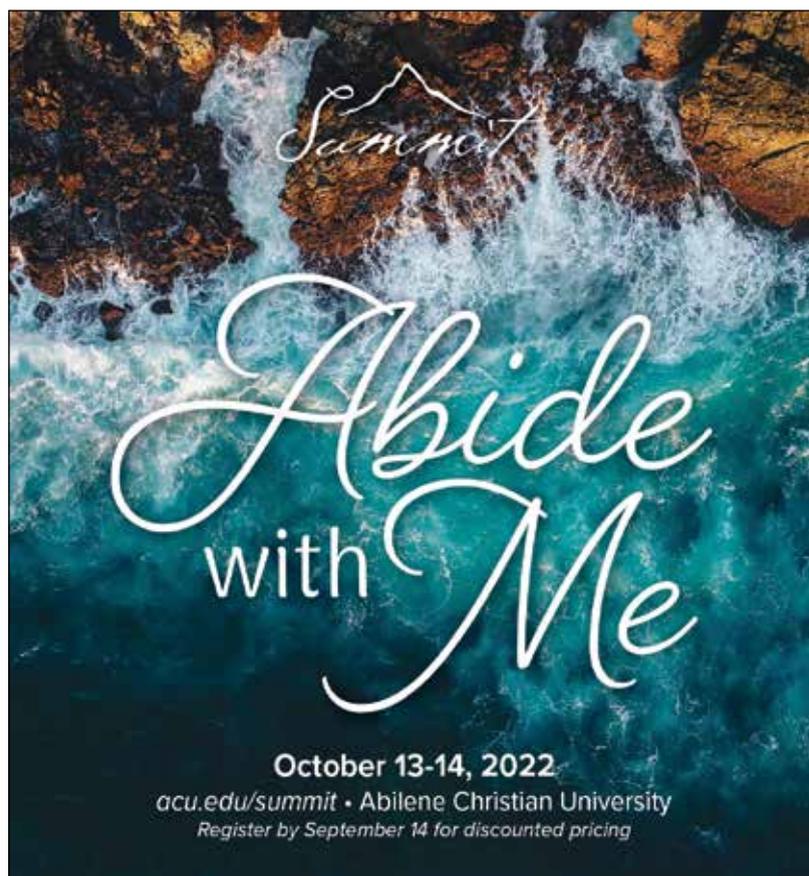
“Our mission is to inspire children to love learning, embrace culture and to live mindfully,” said Jania Otey, a member of the Perry Hill Road Church of Christ in Montgomery, Ala. She launched the camp 12 years ago while living in Washington, D.C. The home-schooling mother wanted to find a camp that would introduce her two sons — particularly her eldest, Caleb

See **CULTURE CAMP**, Page 24



PHOTO PROVIDED BY JANIA OTEY

A camper holds a flag of Tanzania, whose embassy she visited.

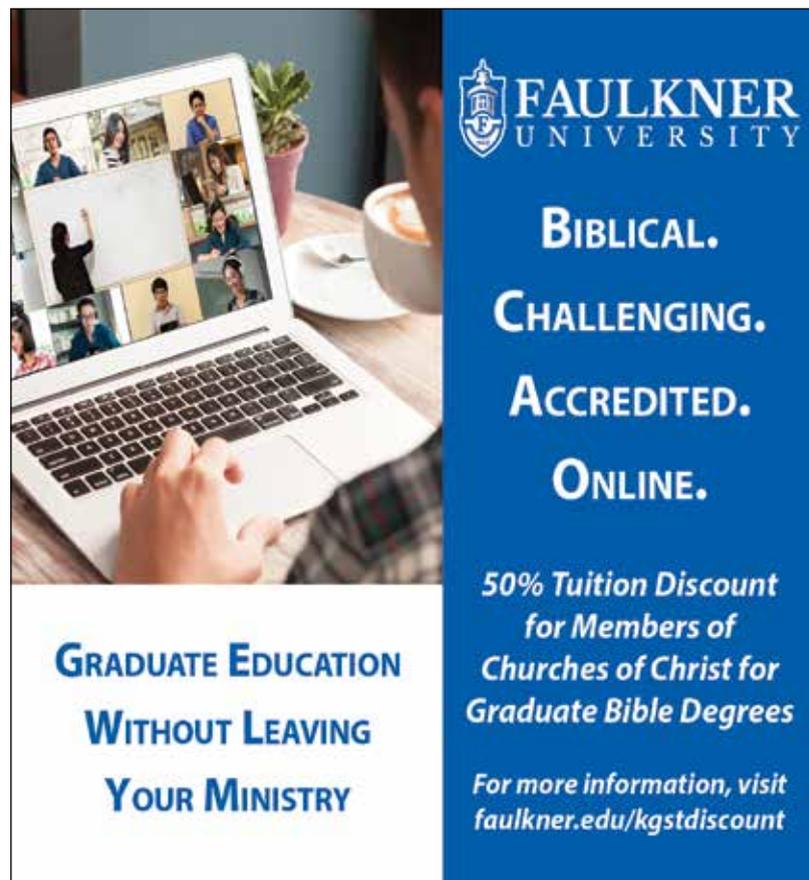


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ISOLATION: Colleagues step up in time of need

FROM PAGE 3

it. I invited Audrey Jackson, the *Chronicle's* associate editor and photographer extraordinaire, to come and bring her camera.

A few days after the Fourth of July holiday, my wife, Tamie, and I left our house at 3:30 a.m. to pick up Audrey at her apartment. Tamie dropped us off at Will Rogers World Airport in Oklahoma City in time to catch a 5:45 a.m. flight to Chicago.

Our original plans did not include a trip to Highland Park, Ill. But after a gunman opened fire and killed seven people during that Chicago-area community's Independence Day parade, we headed that direction upon our arrival in the Windy City. You can read our coverage on Page 5.

From Highland Park, we drove to Elgin, where Ricardo's congregation rented a community theater to host the hundreds of Reunión Juvenil Nacional attendees. Audrey and I spent parts of two days talking to people and taking photos there. You can

read our coverage, Lord willing, in next month's edition.

Blame the delay on COVID-19. When I got to Chicago, I found temperatures in the mid-70s. That felt really nice as we had left grueling, triple-digit heat in Oklahoma. But I started coughing a lot. My throat felt sore. I initially blamed these symptoms on allergies.

But by the third day — a Saturday — I felt really fatigued. Audrey and I were scheduled to be at the Northwest Church of Christ in Chicago that Sunday for a feature on multicultural congregations (they have services in English, Korean and Spanish).

I decided, just to be safe, to take a COVID-19 test. To my surprise, it came back positive.

By that point, Audrey had started experiencing a mild headache and

sore throat. I had bought an extra test just in case mine came back positive and left it by her door. But her test came back negative. That didn't last long. Audrey flew home and tested positive the next day.

Meanwhile, I remained in Chicago after my positive test.

Complicating matters from a work perspective, all of this happened as we were working on the August print edition of the *Chronicle* — the one you're holding in your hands.

Initially, I thought I could do my normal work remotely. However, I soon learned that I did not have the brainpower or energy to complete my usual tasks. I am so grateful that Erik Tryggestad, our president and



CHRISTI ROMEO

Gabriel Huff and Erik Tryggestad work on the latest edition.

CEO, and Gabriel Grant Huff, our intern, stepped up to fill the void.

Others on the news team were a big help, too, including Cheryl Mann Bacon and Calvin Cockrell — both of whom do such an excellent job from their home bases, Cheryl in Abilene, Texas, and Calvin in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

In 17 years with the *Chronicle*, I

don't think I've ever had to dump all my responsibilities on other folks like I have this time. I know it's out of my control, but I still hate it. At the same time, I count my blessings to work with such talented and devoted people.

I hope this month's column makes some sense.

My brain is still mushy as I type this. I asked Audrey for an update on her condition. "Slowly descending into madness as the days blur together," she texted back. She hasn't lost her sense of humor.

Alas, I think I have reached the requisite word count to fill this space and allow me to take a nap.

COVID-19 stinks.

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

Another mass shooting, close to home

CHRISTIANS ON CHICAGO'S *North Shore are somber, not shocked, after Fourth of July attack.*

BY BOBBY ROSS JR. | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

HIGHLAND PARK, III.

On a lazy Fourth of July morning, Nicole Estes and her husband, Steve, decided to make a quick trip to Home Depot.

Before they could pull out of their subdivision on Chicago's North Shore, they heard the sirens.

"Police were just flying by, and it was police from different communities," said Nicole Estes, whose family attends the Northwest Church of Christ in Chicago.

The couple knew something major had happened. Perhaps a drowning at nearby Lake Michigan, one of them speculated.

"I hope it's not a mass shooter," Steve Estes, an executive with Reynolds Consumer Products, told his wife.

Unfortunately, his fear proved true.

Yet another American community — this time an affluent suburb about 25 miles north of Chicago — fell victim to a mass shooting.

A gunman with a semi-automatic rifle unleashed more than 80 rounds from a rooftop perch, killing seven people and wounding dozens more at Highland Park's Fourth of July parade. Authorities have charged 21-year-old Robert "Bobby" Crimo III with seven counts of first-degree murder.

"We're in Highland Park often to eat," said Nicole Estes, who lives a few miles away in Lake Forest, the community where Crimo was arrested hours after the July 4 shooting. "The little downtown area has the quaintest little shops, and it's a sweet little town."

But on the heels of recent shootings at a Taiwanese Presbyterian church in California, a supermarket



Nicole Estes



AUDREY JACKSON

At a veterans' memorial in Highland Park, mourners placed flowers in memory of the Fourth of July shooting victims.

in Buffalo, N.Y., and an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas — among other attacks nationwide — gunfire shattered the patriotic celebration by Illinois children and parents carrying tiny U.S. flags.

"It's just a somber place to be right now," Nicole Estes said of the Highland Park area. "Everybody is very sad. I mean, I go to the grocery store, and it's just a little quieter than usual."

In the leafy suburb of 18,000 people, yellow crime scene tape now surrounds the downtown area. Makeshift memorials feature messages such as "HP Strong" and "Prayers for HP." Police from numerous departments patrol the restricted area, while investigators with FBI jackets work inside the tape.

According to a national directory published by 21st Century Christian, there is no Church of Christ in Highland Park or nearby communities.

Maria Moore, who grew up in the McKnight Road Church of Christ (now known as McKnight Crossings) in St. Louis and later met her hus-

band, Marc, at the Preston Road Church of Christ in Dallas, attends a nondenominational congregation in the North Shore area.

Moore and her family were swimming in a neighbor's pool that night when law enforcement helicopters started fluttering overhead.

"We were like, 'Do we need to go in our houses?'" said Moore, a 2000 graduate of Abilene Christian University in Texas. "But before we could even make that decision, we heard that the suspect had been captured — right at an intersection I am at multiple times a day."

"You never think it's going to happen in your neighborhood," she said. "These communities here on the North Shore are very affluent — lots of famous people and athletes and that sort of thing have lived here. It's very Mayberry type."

The mother of a 14-year-old son and 9-year-old daughter, Moore said "it's getting harder to really be able to say that we're safe because you just don't know anymore."

As a person of faith, she is curious to see how her church will respond.

"Like I said, until you have it in your neighborhood, you don't know how it's going to affect you and how you're going to react," she said. "So it's just kind of checking in on neighbors ... letting them know that you're here if they want to talk and stuff."

Even before the Highland Park shooting, Nicole Estes — a person of deep faith whose daughters both have attended Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn., which is associated with Churches of Christ — had been praying for a solution.

"I personally have been praying about the mass shootings and about the gun issues because I don't know what the answer is," she told *The Christian Chronicle*. "It's a comfort because I know that our God is more powerful than Satan."

"It's just sad, I think," she said. "And I hate that our country looks like this to the rest of the world. We've always been this nation that's under God, that everyone's admired for the good that's in America and the safety that's in America. And now we have this happening. ... It's terrorizing to everyone."

‘Whether guns kill people or people kill people, something must change’ Christians ponder firearms and faith

BY CALVIN COCKRELL | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

His views didn't change overnight, but Justin Bell has come to believe that gun ownership in the U.S. should be tightly controlled.

That's understandable, considering that Bell, a member of the Lakewood Church of Christ in Colorado, is a graduate of Columbine High School. Just a few years after he walked across the stage to get his diploma, two gunmen — students themselves — entered the Littleton, Colo., school and killed 12 students and one teacher before taking their own lives.

Bell also has been in two active shooter situations himself, one at the high school where he teaches and another at a movie theater. He said these events have had a “huge impact” on his life.

“I have slowly changed my views on guns from believing that everyone should own a gun — so that criminals were not the only ones with guns — to my current belief, which is that guns should be heavily regulated,” Bell told *The Christian Chronicle*.

He was one of 294 respondents to an online survey about Christianity and guns in the wake of high-profile shootings in locales from Buffalo, N.Y., to Uvalde, Texas.

While he prays for the victims, Bell said he tries to avoid being consumed by the news.

“It's just too much,” he said. “It's overwhelming. It's just like here we go again.”

Bell and 115 other respondents to the *Chronicle* survey said they personally know one or more victims of gun violence — some from accidental discharges or suicides, others from robberies or homicides.

“If you're not affected by it yet, it's just a matter of time,” Bell added. “And that shouldn't be. ... It should



AUDREY JACKSON

In Uvalde, Texas, a sign left by survivors of the 1999 Columbine High School massacre voices solidarity with victims of the Robb Elementary shooting.

be an anomaly, not the norm.”

Other survey respondents shared a wide range of strong opinions on the subject of guns. For some, the recent shootings were a critical juncture that made them reevaluate their position.

“For years I have defended gun rights,” said Rod Dollins, a member of the East Grand Church of Christ in Springfield, Mo. “With the daily reports of shootings of innocent people and especially children, I have changed my views.

There is no reason to own an AR-15 or other automatic firearms other than to hurt others.”

But for many others, these tragedies did not lessen the importance of gun rights.

“These attacks have been horrific,”

said Tim Tripp, senior minister for the West Side Church of Christ in Russellville, Ark. “My heart breaks for the families of the victims and all who are impacted by them. Yet, I also believe in the Second Amendment and that responsible people should retain the right to own guns.”

GUN PROBLEM OR MORALITY PROBLEM?

For supporters of gun rights, the current spate of gun violence is a problem of morality. They said that America's values have eroded over the years as more and more Americans have turned away from God.

“It's not about guns,” said George Taylor, a member of the Clear Creek Church of Christ in Hixson, Tenn. “It's about people who are not guided by any kind of morality other than what they develop on their own. ... The issue is not the gun. It's the person holding the gun. Has that person even been exposed to the teachings of Jesus? Do they understand how he

(calls) us to live? Are they aware of the basic commands of God?”

Ralph Brewer, an elder of the Alvaton Church of Christ in Kentucky, echoed that sentiment.

“It is a moral and spiritual problem,” he said. “Why is it that thousands of teens in previous years took a gun to school because they were going hunting after school, and we didn't have these kinds of problems? ... Guns are not the problem any more than anything else that can kill a person. Even if it were possible to take away everyone's gun, people would still use poison, knives, rocks, bombs, cars and other things to kill others.”

Other Christians said that guns themselves are the issue. They believe Americans have come to idolize guns and worship them — to the point of caring more about gun rights than peoples' lives.

“When I was a child, I saw guns every day, but no one really talked about them,” said Brandon Britton, minister for the Pleasant Valley Church of Christ in Killen, Ala. “They weren't a focus of our lives, just a part of it. As a nearly 50-year-old man, that has changed radically. There is a gun culture that has fetishized guns and defends any criticism of them with a religious zeal that seems idolatrous.”

Hunter Wiederstein, youth and family minister for the Alameda Church of Christ in Norman, Okla., said the reasons given to “excuse” guns — hunting, personal protection, freedom — are all based in idolatry or fear.

“None of these reasons are worth (more) in comparison to the unbelievable number of lives that have ended by them,” Wiederstein said. “Mass murders have revealed the true idols and priorities in our country. Are we clinging to our weapons or (to) the lives of the ones we love who have survived, unlike others, due to those weapons?”

CHRISTIANITY: COMPATIBLE WITH GUNS?

The question is raised, then: Is Christianity compatible with gun

‘My heart breaks for the families of the victims ... Yet, I also believe in the Second Amendment and that responsible people should retain the right to own guns.’

Tim Tripp, senior minister, West Side Church of Christ, Russellville, Ark.

ownership and support for gun rights? Most Christians, even those who have been close to gun violence, seem to believe so — to an extent, at least.

More than half of respondents to the *Chronicle* survey said they or someone in their household owned one or more guns. And most of those mentioned owning more than one.

The reasons ranged from sport — hunting or target shooting, for example — to collecting to personal defense.

Some Christians, like CeCe Stover, said that guns are necessary to protect the innocent — even that the Bible calls for Christians to do so.

“If you’re faced in a situation where you have to either kill someone who is killing children or do nothing, you need to kill the other person,” said Stover, a member of the White House Church of Christ in Tennessee. “I believe God wants us to be willing to lay down our life for our faith and our loved ones, but I also think he wants us to protect those who can’t protect themselves.”

Others, like Scott Self, said Christians are called to peace, not violence — no matter the reason. Self, a member of the East Brainerd Church of Christ in Chattanooga, Tenn., noted Jesus’ words to Peter in Matthew 26:52 as Peter drew his sword to defend Jesus: “*Put your sword back in its place ... for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.*”

“Jesus called us to be people of peace, not people who carry weapons to impose peace,” Self said. “I know that most of my brothers and sisters disagree with me, but I believe that Jesus called us to radical forms of agape and that weapons are not compatible with that radical form of love.”

For Debbie Christian, though, it’s less a question of whether Christians can have guns and more a question of if they should.

“I believe many things can be compatible with Christian life that may not be wise for the good of the whole,” said Christian, a member of the Highland Oaks Church of Christ in Dallas. “Apostle Paul talked about eating meat sacrificed to idols. He didn’t personally have a problem with it, but he did recognize it could cause problems for others.”



AUDREY JACKSON

In Uvalde, Texas, flowers and hearts sit next to an expression of frustration.

CHRISTIAN SOLUTIONS TO GUN VIOLENCE

What is the answer, then, to continued gun violence?

Surprisingly, there may be some room for agreement — despite Christians’ polarization on the issue.

Only a handful of those surveyed by the *Chronicle* expressed an interest in loosening restrictions on guns in the U.S., and even supporters of gun rights largely favored stronger background checks and restricting access to “assault-style” rifles.

Only one respondent was in favor of a complete repeal of the Second Amendment, and most of those opposed to gun rights seemed to accept that guns in the U.S. are here to stay, to a degree.

In between, many other suggestions were offered — higher age limits, “red flag” laws, mandatory licensing and training, waiting

periods, quantity limits per household, registration, reference requirements, mental health checks, banning of high-capacity magazines.

Support for strengthening mental health, the family, morality and spirituality also seem to be popular among most Christians.

Some of these answers were part of the bipar-

tisan gun violence bill signed by President Joe Biden in late June.

Regardless, for John Moore, a Christian from East Hampton, N.Y., “whether guns kill people or people kill people, something must change ... before we begin to believe this is normal, and acceptable, and an issue we can simply do nothing about.”

‘Jesus called us to be people of peace, not people who carry weapons to impose peace.’

Scott Self, member, East Brainerd Church of Christ, Chattanooga, Tenn.

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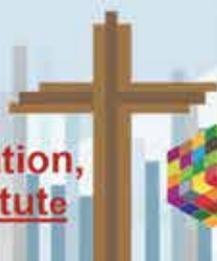
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New Jersey street named in honor of longtime minister Eugene Lawton

BY HAMIL R. HARRIS | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

The Newark Church of Christ hasn't changed locations since the 1960s. But on July 11, the New Jersey church's stately brick building had a new address — South 14th and Dr. Eugene Lawton Way.

Family of the Newark Church of Christ's longtime minister, who died March 12, gathered with church members and city officials to unveil a street sign in honor of Lawton. The evangelist was known for his extensive bowtie collection, sharp suits and Scripture-packed sermons.

"With all of the things that have been going on on this corner, we can now say, 'Wait a minute! Dr. Lawton is watching,'" said Newark City Council member Louise Roundtree.

Mikki Taylor, an editor for *Essence* magazine and a longtime member of the Newark congregation, said that the road renaming was "a tribute to a man that God had on the front lines. Brother Lawton was a hurricane for the gospel of Christ (and) was a force for souls."

"Here in the City of Newark, he was not only in the church for 60-plus years, but he served the community, he linked arms with politicians. As the Bible says, he didn't bury his talent, he multiplied it. He multiplied everything that God put at his door for the cause of Christ."

Those assembled for the ceremony sang "I am a hard-fighting soldier on the battlefield" and other hymns. For members of Lawton's family, it was a bittersweet experience.

"I went from planning his birthday party to planning his funeral in two months," said Kathy Lawton, the youngest of his three children. Dr. Lawton had turned 85 in January.

When Eugene Lawton began working with the Newark congregation in the early 1960s, it had nine members. About 350 Christians worship with the congregation now.

One of them is Iris Polk-KuKu, a self-described "transplant" who moved from Houston to New Jersey to work in the insurance industry.

The Newark Church of Christ "was



VIDEO STILL VIA FACEBOOK.COM/NEWARKCCCNJ

Friends and family cheer as the sign for Dr. Eugene Lawton Way is unveiled.

well-fitting, like a glove, for me," she said. "It gave me a purpose ... to utilize my talents."

In addition to his work in Newark, Lawton spoke from pulpits and at conferences around the globe. He influenced countless lives through works including the Northeastern Youth Conference, which he founded.

Following the street-naming ceremony, the Newark church hosted a fellowship meal and afternoon service featuring evangelists David Lane, longtime minister for the Marsalis Avenue Church of Christ in Dallas, and James Michael Crusoe of the Arlington Road Church of Christ in Hopewell, Va. Attendees shared their favorite stories and memories of brother Lawton.

For grandson Dymil Betts, it was a lot to digest.

"The stories about my grandfather are amazing, but it's kind of in the past tense," Betts said. "But he is not gone."

"There is a quote that says people don't die unless you stop speaking of their memory. Amazingly, my grandfather is not just known throughout my family but through all of you."



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY JERRY CALLENS

At a Florida hospital, Jerry Callens of Christian Family Services finalizes paperwork with a mother who agreed to terminate her parental rights and allow her baby to be adopted. The nonprofit worked with the mother and her family for months, Callens said, and prayed with them during the process.

ROE: Be pro-life, not just pro-birth, church member says

FROM PAGE 1

encourage the women they encounter to set future goals they can work toward while pregnant: getting their GED diploma, continuing higher education or pursuing a more stable career path.

Free job training is available through FaithWorks, a mentoring organization started by Churches of Christ in Abilene. Christian Homes and Family Services also works with colleges to advocate for the needs of pregnant students.

But student and teenage pregnancies are not their main demographic.

The nonprofit usually works with women between the ages of 20 and 28, who “meet every definition of poverty that you can imagine,” Statler said. Many already have children or prior pregnancies ended by abortion and are unable to financially support having another pregnancy.

“Some of them are already parenting. They have a child or maybe two, and they end up pregnant again,” Statler explained. “And they realize that they have kind of cobbled a life together for themselves and one child, or maybe even ... two children, but this third child is going to sink their boat. They just won’t be able to do it with three.”

That’s when her organization steps in. Pregnant women build an adoption plan with the help of case workers,

selecting couples that the Christian organization has already vetted and working out the details of an open, semi-open or closed adoption.

“Our vision is a Christian home for every child,” Statler said. “And whether that Christian home is with an adoptive family, a foster family or maybe even a birth mother whose life was transformed and came to know Christ because of the work that we do — that’s our mission, a Christian home for every child.”

MAKING ADOPTION AFFORDABLE

Three states away in Gainesville, Fla., another nonprofit associated with Churches of Christ has a similar goal.

“Our mission is to come alongside as many moms as possible, to help them decide what’s going to be best for their baby and for them and any other children they may have,” said Jerry Callens, executive director of Christian Family Services.

In 2021, the nonprofit worked with about 135 women facing unintended pregnancies. Most are in similar circumstances of poverty to those described by Statler in Texas. Christian Family Services has placed over 500 children with adoptive families since its founding in 1978.

Callens, an adoptive father of two, understands just how expensive it can be for couples seeking to adopt. That’s why the Florida nonprofit

charges couples on a sliding scale.

With a minimum adoption fee of \$7,500 and a maximum of \$18,000, the agency asks couples to pay 14 percent of their gross annual income.

Some agencies also require adoptive parents to pay for the birth mother’s expenses — even if the birth mother later changes her mind, Callens said. That happens rarely, he added. Nonetheless, Christian Family Services covers those costs.

“The last thing we want is for the family to leave the hospital with empty arms, but also empty pockets saying, ‘We can’t afford to do this anymore,’” Callens said. “So we pay all of mom’s expenses. We don’t ask to be reimbursed; we don’t even tell the family what they are. We simply rely on our donations and contributions and fundraisers to pay her expenses.”

Families from anywhere in the U.S. with an approved home study are eligible to adopt from Christian Family Services. The waitlist is one to two years, with times varying due to specifications from both the prospective parents and the birth mothers.

“The waitlist that fills up the quickest, obviously, is the Caucasian-only baby,” Callens said. “We tend to get more families (on that list). Sometimes we will have to cap that one.” Waitlists for non-White or biracial babies often remain open, he added.

MORE FUNERALS

With a lower adoption demand for babies of color, healthcare experts worry that impoverished and minority communities will be disproportionately affected by abortion restrictions or bans that lawmakers will likely enact over the next few months.

In the most recent data available (from 2019), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that Black women have, on average, 23.8 abortions per 1,000 women of the same ethnicity nationally. For Hispanic women, that number is 11.7 per 1,000. For White women, it’s 6.6.

The U.S. also has the highest rates of maternal deaths among developed nations, with 23.8 deaths per 100,000 births, according to The Century Foundation, a public policy research institute. Black women were three times more likely to experience maternal mortality than White women.

Verlon Johnson, a member of the Park Forest Church of Christ in Matteson, Ill., is an expert on health care policy and an advocate for health care equity. She worries that abortion bans and restrictions will have unintended implications on maternal health.



Johnson

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

“It is possible that a total abortion ban could actually result in increased maternal deaths, particularly among women of color, women from low-income backgrounds and women living in rural areas,” said Johnson, who worked for 25 years overseeing Medicaid and Medicare programs on a national level. “I think what people don’t understand is that when we’re restricting access to abortion, it doesn’t really decrease the rates of abortion. It actually just increases the rate of unsafe abortions.”

“What you might see, I’m sorry to say, is more funerals. You may see an increase in maternal deaths. Unsafe abortions may result in complications such as hemorrhaging and infections.”

The church member has worked at multiple Planned Parenthood clinics — first as an intern during graduate school and later as a volunteer when she moved to Chicago.

While she supports a woman’s right to make decisions about her own health care, none of the clinics where she worked performed abortions, Johnson said. Instead, they offered women access to health care services including contraception, mammograms, testing for sexually transmitted diseases and sex education.

Education, Johnson said, is vital to reducing the number of women in need of an abortion.

“I helped a young mother get free birth control because her family has no insurance, and they couldn’t afford additional children,” Johnson said. “I held a 40-year-old woman’s hand when she had her first mammogram.”

“Abstinence isn’t realistic for most, unfortunately, and leaves our teens especially without the information and skills that they need. Let’s prevent unwanted pregnancies by educating both genders.”

Johnson describes herself as “truly pro-life.” In her opinion, some politicians who support abortion bans are unwilling to enact or to support policies such as access to health care and basic necessities like affordable housing, food and child care.

“Once birth occurs, they are no longer pro-life; they’re only pro-birth,” she said.

“I believe that once birth occurs, it is up to us as a society to ensure that these children and their parents have what they need to be successful.”

Court expands religious freedom

BEYOND THE OVERTURN of *Roe v. Wade*, a Christian attorney analyzes four cases involving expressions of faith that came before the U.S. Supreme Court in its most recent term.

While much of media attention on the 2021-22 Supreme Court term has focused on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, which in June overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the court decided several cases during the year that impacted — and in some ways expanded — the jurisprudence of religious freedom.

The high court has struggled for a century or more to clearly define the limits of religious freedom and ways in which federal and state governments can intersect with religion. The result has been a collection of confusing and apparently contradicting jurisprudence.

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution limits government “establishment of religion” and, at the same time, protects the right of “free exercise” of religion — the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause. It also safeguards the right to freedom of speech and, by extension, freedom of expression, including religious expression. In recent decades, it has been areas in which these freedoms clash that have found their ways to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Four cases during the most recent term addressed the right of free exercise of religion and the protection against establishment of religion.

RAMIREZ V. COLLIER: *A minister can be present at an execution and lay hands on the prisoner being executed.*

John Ramirez was convicted in Texas of a brutal 2004 murder and sentenced to death by lethal injection. After years of delays, Ramirez’s execution was finally set for September 2021, and he filed suit because the state of Texas denied his request that his longtime pastor be present in the execution chamber, pray audibly and be allowed to lay hands on Ramirez.

Perspective



Kenneth Pybus

In the early 1990s, the Supreme Court had overturned previous rulings and decided that laws that incidentally restricted the free exercise of religion need only be “generally applicable” to be valid. Congress responded by passing the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000, which set a higher bar for restricting the religious practices of those incarcerated. RLUIPA was similar to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, interpreted eight years ago in *Hobby Lobby v. Burwell*, which held the federal government could not require companies to provide employees with certain types of birth control.

In applying the RLUIPA in *Ramirez v. Collier*, the court held 8-1 in March that Texas’ restrictions on religious touch and audible prayer in the execution chamber were indeed a “substantial burden” on religious exercise and were not the “least restrictive means” of advancing the government’s interest in preventing interference with or disruption of an execution.

SHURTLIFF V. BOSTON: *A Christian flag can be flown on government property in the same way other commemorative flags are flown.*

For more than a decade, the city of Boston had a practice of allowing groups to replace the city flag on the third pole in front of city hall with their own flag, particularly when the groups were conducting ceremonies or gathering in the adjacent plaza. The city approved the raising of about 50 unique flags for nearly 300 such gatherings, from flags of various countries to

the rainbow pride flag to the flag of a local community bank.

The city had never refused a request to fly a flag until Harold Shurtleff, the director of an organization called Camp Constitution, sought to fly a blue flag bearing a white cross as part of a ceremony “to commemorate the civic and social contributions of the Christian community.” Boston approved the event but denied the request because the flag was called “a Christian flag” and allowing it to fly would violate the Constitution’s Establishment Clause.

The Supreme Court held unanimously in May that, based on Boston’s past practice, flying a third-party flag on the government’s flagpole does not constitute “govern-



SHUTTERSTOCK PHOTO

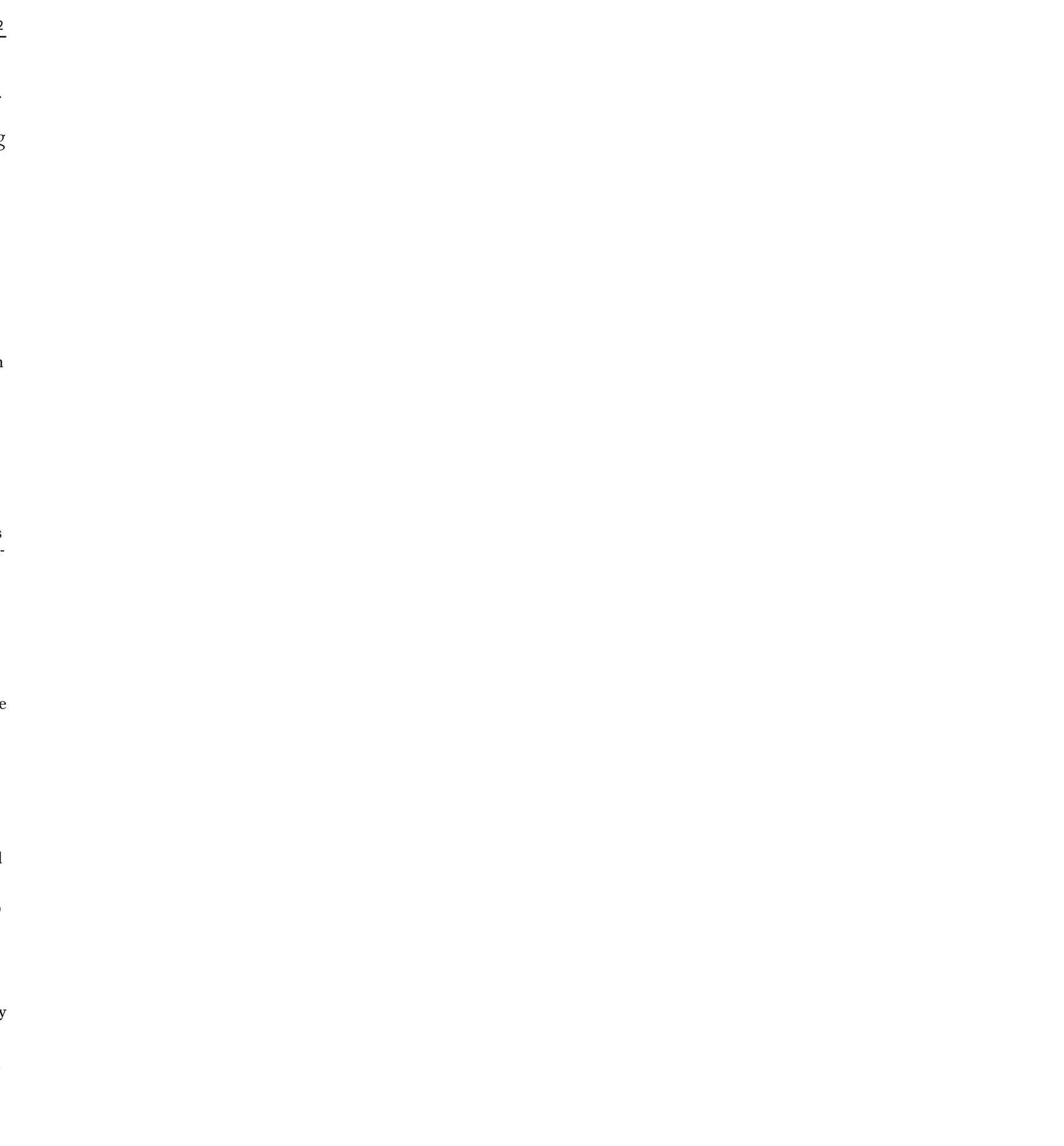
A flag similar to the one at issue in the Shurtleff v. Boston case.

ment speech” and allowing others to use the flagpole made it a public forum. For that reason, denying the group’s request constituted a violation of its right to free speech. Just as the government cannot prevent religious groups from using public property for religious purposes if the property is open to others’ use, it may not exclude private speech on the flagpole based on “religious viewpoint.”

CARSON V. MAKIN: *In cases where access to education is limited, public funds may be used to help pay for tuition at faith-based schools.*

The state of Maine created a program that provides tuition for students who live in remote school districts that don’t have a secondary school or have an agreement with a nearby school district that offers secondary education. The program provided tuition that can be used at private schools but required that these schools be “nonsectarian.”

Families who wanted to use the





YOUTUBE SCREENSHOT FROM KING 5

Coach Joseph Kennedy, center, speaks to his football players. In an interview with *Religion Unplugged* after the Supreme Court decided in his favor, the coach said, "I am still a knucklehead and one of the biggest sinners out there."

funding to send their children to private Christian schools filed suit, arguing that the "nonsectarian" limitation discriminated against their right to religious exercise, and the Supreme Court ultimately agreed. In June, the court held 6-3 that preventing the use of otherwise generally available tuition assistance payments at religious private schools violates the Free Exercise Clause.

KENNEDY V. BREMERTON SCHOOL

DISTRICT: Government employees, including high school football coaches, can pray in public and practice religious expression.

Joseph Kennedy, a high school football coach in Bremerton, Wash., began quietly kneeling and praying at midfield after games and eventually was joined by players, students and parents. The school district, fearing an Establishment Clause lawsuit, ordered him to stop, and when he refused, fired him.

Kennedy sued, arguing the First Amendment does not require government employees to give up their rights of free speech and religious expression.

Schools have been a major battleground for establishing the boundaries of religious freedom since the 1940s, and that accelerated 20 years later. While the court has allowed prayer to continue at city council meetings and legislative sessions, it has held school-sponsored prayers at the beginning of the school day or before a football game are violations of the Establishment Clause. At the same time, it has held that religious groups may use school facilities after hours and that districts may schedule a "moment of silence"

during which students individually may pray as long as prayer is not the sole purpose of the period.

A complicating factor has been a 1971 case called *Lemon v. Kurtzman*. In that case, the court struck down, 8-1, a state structure that provided funds to private, sectarian schools for the secular portion of student instruction. In deciding that case, the court created a three-pronged test to evaluate compliance with the Establishment Clause. The law or government action must have a secular legislative purpose, the principal or primary effect must neither promote nor inhibit religion, and it must not foster "excessive government entanglement with religion." The court also came to consider whether the reasonable observer would infer a government endorsement of religion.

But lower courts and the Supreme Court itself have found that *Lemon Test* over the past 50 years to be difficult to apply. As the majority noted in Kennedy, that test has been considered "abstract and ahistorical," and the court explicitly repudiated it and the endorsement test offshoot.

The court in June held, 6-3, that the Establishment Clause did not bar Kennedy's private but visible prayer on school property, despite his employment by the school district. Personal religious observance is protected by both the Free Exercise and Free Speech Clauses of the First Amendment.

KENNETH PYBUS is an associate professor and chair of journalism and mass communication at Abilene Christian University in Texas and a First Amendment lawyer. He worships with the Hillcrest Church of Christ in Abilene.

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Henry Petree
(918) 816-1507
henry@henrypetree.com

Youth and Outreach Minister - Christoval, Texas

Christoval Church of Christ is seeking an evangelistic-minded minister to help us impact the community through study, outreach, and transformation. Under the supervision of our lead minister, the minister's primary responsibility is to develop, coordinate, and implement the youth and outreach ministries. In addition, the role will include responsibility in the following areas: service times, outreach, social media, and youth/family. We are seeking a man with strong Biblical knowledge, excellent communication, the gift of evangelism, and a servant heart. Call or email for further information:

(325) 315-4061 or christovalcoc@gmail.com
17917 US Highway 277 S, Christoval, Texas 76935
<http://christovalcoc.org>

CEO Position

Due to the 2023 planned retirement of the founding Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Willow Brook Christian Communities is seeking a CEO to oversee the operation of the entire not-for-profit organization. He/she has the primary responsibility for the care of all residents, the implementation of all programs, and the general welfare of the staff. The CEO is also responsible for leading the development of new programs and ventures and will play a key leadership role in strategic planning initiatives. The new CEO will be a strategic, inspirational leader with integrity who can capitalize on past successes and prepare the organization for the future.



Education requirements include a Bachelor's Degree, with a preference for Business Administration, Healthcare Administration, Gerontology or related field. Evidence of ongoing, continuous education in the field of assisted living, memory care, skilled nursing, health care, long-term care, senior living management and operations is desired. A current Ohio nursing home administrator's license is preferred.

To be considered for the CEO position, submit your resume and professional references to: CEOposition@willow-brook.org by September 1, 2022.

For more information visit: <https://willow-brook.org/> Affiliated with the Church of Christ

Full-time Minister Search - Virginia

The **Williamsburg Church of Christ, located in Williamsburg, Va.**, is seeking a full-time minister. We are a diverse, loving congregation with three elders, 14 deacons and about 100 members serving the historic Greater Williamsburg area. You can find information about the congregation on our website, williamsburgcoc.org, and on our Facebook page. Those wanting more information or to find the application can do so at:

wccministersearch.org

Full-time Minister - Detroit, Mich.

The **Wyoming Avenue Church of Christ**, located in Detroit, Mich., is searching for a dynamic, scripturally sound, and spiritually-led individual to fill the position of full-time minister. The new minister will continue the work of our present Minister of 45 years, Dallas Walker, Jr. Our new minister will work closely with our Elders and Deacons to enrich the congregation, help develop a more youth-based ministry, and spread the gospel to the surrounding community. Our congregation is approximately 400 members strong and has a wide-reaching online audience through Facebook and YouTube. For the last 60 years, we have been a "growing, peaceful congregation striving to serve God and mankind." We do provide a competitive salary plus benefits package and will help with moving costs. If you feel you are the right person to help us fulfill our mission and would like to apply, please send your resume to:

wyoyming1churchofchrist@gmail.com or

Wyoming Avenue Church of Christ • 20131 Wyoming Avenue • Detroit, MI 48221
Attention: Minister Search Group

Full-time Preacher - Hamilton, Texas

Located in a growing community in Central Texas with a population of 3,500, **Outreach Church of Christ** is anxious to hire a full-time preacher who is willing to work with young families and their children/teens. We have an average attendance of 50-60, including six young families. We have no elders now, but our men are strong in faith and maturity. Our Youth Building is three years old, and our young people want to grow. The Hamilton school system is Class 2A and is strong in athletics and agriculture. We have two members who are principals, one coach, and two teachers. Hamilton also has an excellent health system and hospital. Send letter, samples, or videos of sermons to:

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

Full-time Minister - Salem, Ind.

The **Salem Church of Christ** in Salem, Ind., is looking for a full-time minister, and the position will be available January 2023. We are a congregation of around 50 members that desires to grow spiritually and numerically. The candidate's responsibilities will be preaching, teaching class, and preaching sound doctrine with outreach potential. We currently are without elders and deacons. Please send resume and link to recent sermon, lessons, or teaching to:

air2jqw@gmail.com
or call: 812-525-2682

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 a conservative congregation, primarily African American, seeking an individual dedicated to the cause of Christ. The applicant should possess sound biblical knowledge and 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 • Jaspcoc950@yahoo.com



Foster's Home for Children in Stephenville, Texas, is looking for a Christian couple to be full-time caregivers. Foster's Home employs both husband and wife to minister to hurting children using the Sanctuary Model of Trauma-Informed Care.

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For more information, please contact: **Harriet Frazier**, Vice President of Children's Services, **254-968-2143, ext. 284** and/or complete application at www.fostershome.org.

CAMEROON

BONABÉRI — Amid rising prices and increasing economic hardship in this West African nation, ministers gathered for a time of study and encouragement at a national preachers' forum, hosted by a Church of Christ in the port city of Bonabéri.

Among the presenters was Gregory Elangwe, minister for the Wotutu Church of Christ, who spoke on "Who is your Timothy?" — a reference to the young evangelist trained by Paul.

"It was an amazing experience," Elangwe said, "as many realities about the work in Cameroon were exposed and (participants were) encouraged."

SOUTH AFRICA

KRAAIFONTEIN — "Despite it being a bitterly cold winter's evening" in South Africa (which is in the Southern Hemisphere), three men decided to give their lives to Christ in baptism, said members of the Kraaifontein Church of Christ in a recent blog post.



PHOTO PROVIDED

A baptism in Kraaifontein.

The church, which meets in a northeastern suburb of Cape Town, got to know the three men through its work with The Haven Night Shelter, a nonprofit that serves the homeless. Church members said they are grateful to the shelter "for the open door for us to preach the Gospel of Christ there every week."

See videos of the baptisms at kraaifonteinchurchofchrist.com.

THAILAND

BANGKOK — Three young women were baptized during a recent service at The Gathering, a church that meets in a coffee shop in this Southeast Asian capital.

Missional entrepreneurs Gary and Michelle Ford operate the coffee shop, La Mesa, and oversee Replicate Bangkok, a ministry that seeks to "engage, equip and empower others to create social and spiritual impacts in their communities," according to their website. See facebook.com/Replicateintl for more information.



SION KAFEXHIU

Selina Dragoti and her fellow Christians rejoice after her baptism in Berat, Albania. Her father, Teki (at left), records the celebration on his phone.

New life abounds in Albania

BERAT, Albania — "I am only few moments away from my baptism, and I'm counting the seconds as if they are long days. I'm about to become the daughter of the Most High. ... Today, I'm only a step away from his glorious throne."

That's an excerpt of the testimony Selina Dragoti, 17, shared with the Church of Christ in Berat before she was immersed. She's one of nine believers baptized since mid-April in this Central European city.

Berat is home to about 60,000 people — many of whom claim

Christianity or Islam as their faith. During World War II, both Christians and Muslims in Berat hid Jews in their homes from the Nazis.

More recently, a Church of Christ was reestablished in Berat in October and has grown rapidly, said Cimi Kafexhiu, minister for the Church of Christ in Durrës, Albania, who makes regular visits to assist the congregation.

"I have come to know the truth," Dragoti said. "I'm ready to follow Jesus. ... I'm ready to kneel down before him, and to worship my Lord."

SPOTLIGHT

A dream fulfilled

ZINVIÉ, Benin — When she was 10, Barbara England watched a missionary show pictures from his work in Japan on a slide carousel during a Church of Christ's Sunday night service. She memorized Mark 16:15 ("Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation ...") and decided that someday she would travel to a faraway place to share the Gospel.

A half-century later, England journeyed from west Tennessee to West Africa to speak at a women's conference with the theme "An intelligent woman is a gift from God," based on Proverbs 19:14.

England and her husband, retired Freed-Hardeman University professor Richard England, work with French African Christian Education (FACE), a nonprofit that supports the Benin Bible Training Center in Zinvié. Richard England is executive director of FACE.

About 150 women attended the conference. Barbara England's lessons were translated into French and Fon, two commonly spoken languages in Benin.

Her husband said, "I am completely objective when I say that she is the most qualified you'll ever find to talk about being a grandmother, mother, wife and daughter — including taking care of her mom in her later years — regardless of the audience or continent."

WEBSITE: frenchafricanmissions.com



BARBARA ENGLAND

Barbara and Richard England at the Bible Training Center in Benin.



AUDREY JACKSON

Near the central bus station in Košice, Slovakia, workers gather mattresses into a pile to deliver to a relief center set up for refugees from Ukraine.



AUDREY JACKSON

Lidia Karpenko feeds children breakfast in temporary housing provided by the city of Košice. She fled her home in Irpin, Ukraine, with her 6-year-old son.

WHERE TO? 'Ultimately, we do want to go back. Home is home.'

FROM PAGE 3

volunteer to help their hurting and traumatized neighbors, many of whom crossed the border on foot, carrying their meager possessions in shopping bags.

'PEOPLE HERE HAVE BEEN SO GOOD'

On a Tuesday morning Haluštok took a team from Sunset International Bible Institute and *The Christian Chronicle* to a makeshift village set up by the city, a small apartment building and a collection of container pods with showers and bedrooms. Sixty refugees — 25 families, mostly women and children — were living in the temporary housing.

In the apartment building's kitchen, Lidia Karpenko fixed cereal for her 6-year-old son, Sasha, and for another child whose mother was working at a laundromat. Karpenko's brother had sent her photos of their home in Irpin, a suburb of Kyiv that was devastated by Russian forces in the early days of the war. There were massive holes in the walls.

She wants to go home, even though there's not a lot to go back to, Karpenko said. Then she began to cry. "But people here have been so good to us," she said.

As she listened, Adela Liftakova

also fought back tears. The director of city facilities for Košice, she has heard countless stories like Karpenko's. She and her coworkers marshal what resources they can to help. (Right now they could use more washing machines, she said.) But she knows that the refugees' needs go far beyond the physical.

The temporary housing is overseen by the city, not a church. But Richard Baggett nonetheless sensed a "divine spark" in Liftakova and her coworkers. "You could tell that, for them, their job is more than a job," he said.



Baggett

Baggett and Brandon Price represented Sunset, a ministry training program that has campuses around the world, including Ukraine. The visit to Košice was part of a tour of European churches and agencies that are serving refugees. Texas-based Sunset, associated with Churches of Christ, has raised more than \$1 million for Ukraine relief. Baggett and Price surveyed immediate needs and collected ideas for long-term relief strategies.

"More than any other place, I

got a sense of how lonely, disconnected and vulnerable they were," Baggett said of the refugees he met in Košice. "While they were appreciative of a safe place to stay ... they were in a foreign land without their husbands, not knowing the language and not knowing what to do or where to go next."

'IT BECAME VERY PERSONAL VERY QUICKLY'

The language barrier played a role in Vitaly Samodin's decision to leave Slovakia for the U.S. But there were other factors as well.

"There is an older generation in Slovakia that sympathizes with Russia," he said. "Those few encounters ... made life really miserable."

Samodin, his wife and their four daughters, ages 7 to 14, lived in Kyiv, where he is outreach director for the Ukrainian Education Center. Before the war, the campus ministry supported by Churches of Christ hosted study sessions and Bible lessons for students and immigrants. Samodin served refugees from around the globe, including the Middle East.

As the bombs fell on Kyiv, "we experienced a lot of what they went through," said Samodin, now a refugee himself. "It became very personal very quickly."

His family stayed in Michalovce, a small town about 40 miles east of Košice. A Brethren Church hosted them, and Samodin stressed that its members and many of the Slovaks they encountered were kind, generous and hospitable.

Now the family is in the Nashville, Tenn., area, where they've struggled to find housing in the city's booming real estate market. The girls, who took some online classes while in

Slovakia, are enrolled in school for the fall.

"They are finally able to make friends that are not virtual," Samodin said. The family worships with the Hillsboro Church of Christ in Nashville, a congregation with a



Samodin

history of mission work in Ukraine.

The church has embraced them warmly. And the girls, who once were afraid to leave their home, "jumped at the opportunity to go to the church youth camp," Samodin said. "That's how starved they were for real relationships."

The family plans to stay for at least the next school year to give their girls a sense of stability.

"Ultimately, we do want to go back," he said. "Home is home."



AUDREY JACKSON

Viktoria Oshurko works as a translator in a Košice relief center. In the early days of the war, 2,000 Ukrainians per day came through the center. A native of western Ukraine, Oshurko came to Slovakia to study public administration at a university. "Mentally, it's hard," she said of the weight of the war.

'A MOVEMENT OF GOD IN OUR TIME'

The majority of refugees want to return to Ukraine, but about two-thirds expect to stay in their host countries until the fighting subsides, according to a recent survey by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

For those who return, whenever that is, "we're going to be by their side, step by step, to help them replant congregations and help the hurting," said Tim Burrow, president of Sunset International Bible Institute.

From 2000 to 2006 Burrow and his wife, Mina, served as missionaries in Mariupol, the coastal Ukrainian city that endured months of onslaught before falling to Russia in mid-May. He trained a generation of evangelists through the Ukrainian Bible Institute, now in exile in Poland.

In 2014, when pro-Russian separatists seized parts of eastern Ukraine, those evangelists spread out across the country and breathed new life into churches in central and western Ukraine, Burrow said. Now the war has pushed many Christians farther west. Ukrainians are filling the pews of once-struggling churches in Romania, Germany and France.

There's still plenty of immediate need, Burrow said. Funds from Sunset's Global Relief Ministry pay

for supplies sent across borders into Ukraine. As the war drags on, the ministry is beginning to focus on winter clothing and firewood for those still living in Ukraine, Baggett said. Sunset also is considering counselors who specialize in grief and trauma to address the refugee's emotional needs.

Beyond the immediate needs, Burrow said, "In many ways, this is a movement of God in our time. While we would prefer it not to be taking place, while we believe that there is evil behind it, God is able to use this in a way that will expand his kingdom and bring glory to him."

He noted that, across Europe, the strongest and fastest-growing Churches of Christ tend to be fueled by immigrants "who have brought their faith with them, brought their fervor with them."

Ukrainian Christians have that fervor, he said. As they begin to heal, they have the opportunity to share their faith in Jesus with an increasingly post-Christian West.

For refugees like Vitaly Samodin, the question of where he will minister — Ukraine, Europe or Nashville — is still undecided.

"We want to be where God wants us to be," he said, "and we think that's Ukraine at the moment. But then, you know, who knows?"

TO CONTRIBUTE to Sunset International Bible Institute's Ukraine relief efforts, see sibi.cc or call 800.658.9553.



ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Peter Haluštok, center, talks to Romanian minister Adi Voicu, Brandon Price of the Ukrainian Bible Institute and Adela Liftakova, a city coordinator.

The Bible means business

MINISTER TEACHES FAITH-BASED *management of money and talents — and uses those principles to serve the refugees from Ukraine at his doorstep.*

BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

KOŠICE, Slovakia — "It doesn't fulfill me to just work for money," said Peter Haluštok.

So the Christian entrepreneur and real estate investor works for the Lord — teaching about money.

Haluštok, a native Slovak who ministers for a small Church of Christ in Košice, created a program called *Biblia a Financie* (Bible and Finances) that teaches principles of faith-based money management. Years ago he left his full-time job in the financial sector and studied at Sunset International Bible Institute in Lubbock, Texas. There, instructors including Ed Wharton showed him that the Bible, among all its other teachings, means business.

"I never knew there are 2,000-plus verses about money," he said. In his part of the world, "nobody speaks about this in churches."

Returning to Slovakia, Haluštok began speaking to church groups and conducting online seminars. The latest, scheduled for September, is on the topic of eternity. "Scripture says the reality of eternal future should determine how we live our present lives," he said, "and how we use our money and possessions."

That principle has guided the minister as he and his fellow

Christians have responded to the needs of Ukrainians at their doorstep, said Jaro Marcin, a native of Košice who lives in Prague, Czech Republic, and works for Eastern European Mission. Haluštok has helped to translate material for the nonprofit.

"Peter has been — and is — a successful businessman," Marcin said. "As a brother in Christ, he's always ready to help in practical ways and thus when the crisis really hit our hometown, he was quick to step up (together with others from the congregation) and help the refugees who were coming in."

Haluštok has worked with city officials to help provide for the refugees as they flow through Košice. Recently he and Marcin helped a group of about 20 Ukrainians get from the Slovak border to Sopot, Poland, nearly 500 miles away.

"Most of us in Czech Republic and Slovakia typically have day jobs and we moonlight in our local churches — given that congregations in cities like Košice or Prague, for instance, have no full-time paid staff," Marcin said. "But we're resourceful people, and we try to make the best of the situation with the talents God has given us."

Haluštok added, "Working for God, every day is something new."

WEBSITE: facebook.com/bibliaafinancie



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- *A New Orphan & Widow Program in India
- *More Homes for Orphans & Widows in Kenya

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A week without cell service, immersed in God's word

BY J. HOLMSLEY | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

SHEFFIELD, Texas

Why would anyone want to come here?" It's a question organizers of the Pecos River encampment have heard more than once.

Since 1944, Christian families — physical and spiritual — have gathered along a paltry stretch of the Pecos River in the West Texas desert. They play softball in 103-degree heat, take cold showers and eat mesquite-grilled *cabrito* (roasted goat).

They also spend a week immersed in Scripture, united in their desire to uphold biblical truth.

"Rustic" may be the best word to describe the camp — a hodgepodge of ramshackle shacks on property just north of Interstate 10. There's no charge to attend — just a small insurance fee. Last year the Church of Christ in nearby Iraan, Texas, took oversight of the camp, which operates on donations and the sweat of members who install plumbing, repair broken benches and maintain the facility.

After a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19, the encampment resumed this summer. About 200 people spent a week rekindling old friendships, making new friends, discussing Scripture, basking in the blessing of

no cell phone service and feasting on barbecue and God's word.

Kids squared off against adults in volleyball and softball, played in the West Texas heat. All ages made use of the camp's giant slip-n-slide during "Water Day." And the campers made their traditional trek up a nearby mountain for a devotional.

Speakers from across Texas discussed the "I am" statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John.

Garrett Morado grew up in Iraan and has fond memories of attending the camp. Now a student at Sunset International Bible Institute in Lubbock, he returned to preach and to serve as a counselor.



Morado

"I think the best part of it all was just being able to get away from a chaotic world and just focus on who Jesus is and what he has done for us," Morado said. "There's no cell service out there, and it is pretty nice to be able to step away from everything. It is a huge blessing to be able to be surrounded by so many like-minded Christians.

"I know there was a lot of work that went into making it all possible, and it definitely paid off. I am definitely looking forward to next year."



PHOTO VIA FACEBOOK

Kids at the encampment learn about sheep and goats from the Good Shepherd, portrayed by James Willeford, director of church relations for Herald of Truth.

J. HOLMSLEY is a member of the Iraan Church of Christ in Texas. Additional reporting by Erik Tryggstad.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about the Pecos River Encampment, contact the church at (432) 639-2034 or see pecosriverencampment.com.



ERIK TRYGGSTAD

The Pecos River Encampment sign, seen here in 2021, endured wear during two years of pandemic. The sign has since been repainted.



PHOTO VIA FACEBOOK

Groups of campers take turns decorating the campsite's bell during the annual encampment. Here, it bears the Texas flag.



PHOTO VIA FACEBOOK

As meal time approaches, campers prepare metal cans of ice, which serve as cups during the annual Pecos River Encampment.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY J. HOLMSLEY

Campers of all ages take in the view from atop a mountain near the camp that overlooks Pecos County and the Permian Basin in West Texas.

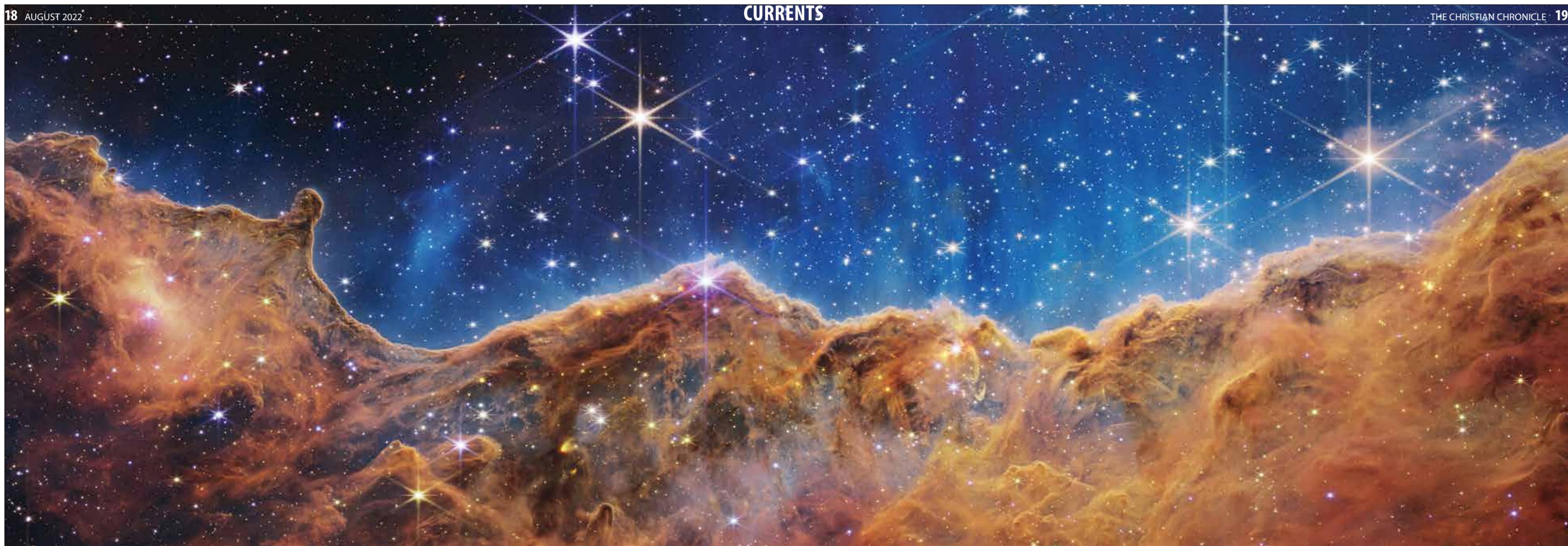


PHOTO VIA NASA.GOV

NASA's new James Webb Space Telescope captures the edge of a nearby, young star-forming region in the Carina Nebula called NGC 3324, disclosing for the first time previously unseeable areas of star birth. The tallest "peaks" in the photo are about 7 light-years high. ACU graduate Scott Acton helped develop the telescope.

For this Abilene Christian University alum, the stars are singing

BY GABRIEL GRANT HUFF | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

Gleaming stars. Swirling galaxies. Streaking lights.

The first images from NASA's James Webb Space Telescope released July 12 revealed segments of God's beautiful universe never seen before. The whole world is now seeing clearer pictures of the Carina Nebula, Stephan's Quintet, Southern Ring Nebula, and galaxy cluster SMACS 0723. And Scott Acton, a 1984 graduate of

Abilene Christian University, which is associated with Churches of Christ, helped develop the tool to make it all possible. After completing his physics degree at the West Texas university, Acton earned a Ph.D. at Texas Tech University in Lubbock before beginning his career in the aerospace industry.



Acton

Acton, 60, a scientist at Ball Aerospace & Technologies Corp. in Boulder, Colo., served as the wavefront sensing and controls scientist on the James Webb telescope project for what turned out to be an almost 24-year endeavor.

Acton's journey to participate in the project began years earlier in Hawaii when he was working for Keck Observatory on the Big Island, where his family lived for six years. On the side, he was working as a contractor for aerospace companies Lockheed Martin

and Raytheon Technologies who were among other companies submitting proposals to build a telescope for NASA.

Acton said he believed Aerospace would win the competition for the contract, and because he wanted to participate in the telescope's construction, the scientist applied to work for the company and moved to Boulder in 2001. He joined a team assigned to work on the telescope's optics.

Northrop Grumman Corp., an American multinational aerospace and

defense technology company, served as the primary contractor for NASA's mission, leading the industry team.

The telescope was launched on Dec. 25, 2021, from Kourou, French Guiana, and it is designed to have a mission lifetime that could reach two decades.

Regardless of a person's beliefs, Acton believes the images from the James Webb telescope will be a spiritual experience.

"Seeing these images will increase your faith. It will increase your faith in

whatever you have faith in, but it will absolutely increase it."

Acton said everyone has their own emotional moment when working on groundbreaking projects. He clearly remembers his own.

This past February, his team received a throwaway image from one of the telescope's fine guidance sensors and placed it on some infrared detectors, downloading the photo after about a 40-second exposure. What he saw brought him to tears.

"When you stretch the contrast in that image, I realized that single image contained probably 500 galaxies that had never been seen before," Acton said.

Any one of those galaxies could contain 100-200 billion stars, he explained, and those stars could have planets in a habitable zone, and those planets could harbor life.

Acton walked back to his apartment around midnight talking to his wife about what he had witnessed.

At the time he remembered a scripture about stars singing (Job 38:7), and when he imagined all those galaxies "I pictured them singing," the scientist recalled.

"Not in any kind of a language that people could understand, but certainly the emotion we can understand. I would call that emotion, joy," Acton said. "It's almost like the galaxies or the universe was happy that after all this time we could finally see them."

GRAY: Attorney follows 'a righteous calling,' president says

FROM PAGE 1

who they called," Biden told the room of family members, political dignitaries and reporters. Near Gray sat fellow honorees, including gymnast Simone Biles and former U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords.

Gray, the first civil rights attorney for Martin Luther King Jr., represented Colvin and Parks after they were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct for refusing to move to the back of segregated Montgomery, Ala., city buses in the 1950s.

Gray's "legal brilliance and strategy desegregated schools and secured the right to vote," Biden said. As a minister, Gray "imbued a righteous calling that touched the soul of our nation."

The award "has been a long time coming," Gray told *The Christian Chronicle* in an interview after the ceremony. "I was a little reluctant until it happened. But it did happen, and I am very appreciative — and I am appreciative that the Lord had something to do with this also."

CHRISTIANS CAMPAIGNED FOR AWARD

Members of Churches of Christ across the nation called for Gray's name to be added to the list of Presidential Medal recipients. In March 2021 the *Chronicle* published a column supporting the cause.

Gray "has made a long-lasting impact within Churches of Christ by preaching the Gospel, acting as a unifier and maintaining the humble heart of a servant," wrote Trindi G. Mitchell, a member of the *Chronicle's* editorial board.

Readers were asked to write letters to Biden and to send them to the office of U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell, D-Ala. Sewell collected the letters and nominated Gray for the award.

In a news release, Gray thanked the people and organizations who wrote letters on his behalf.

"This award means a great deal to me, an African-American civil rights lawyer who was born in the ghettos of Montgomery, Ala.," he said. "We have made substantial progress, but the struggle for the elimination of racism and for equal justice continues."



VIDEO STILL VIA WHITEHOUSE.GOV

Among fellow recipients including Gabrielle Giffords and Khizr Khan, left, Fred Gray receives the Medal of Freedom.

'CHURCH HAS PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE'

Speaking with the *Chronicle*, Gray talked about the central role faith has played in his life since childhood.

"Religion and the church were the first things other than my parents that I remember," he said. "Church has played a major role in whatever I have done."

As Biden draped the medal and blue ribbon around Gray's neck, a speaker read a statement about Gray's faith-fueled accomplishments: "Risking his own safety, he helped secure voting rights, desegregate schools and win other battles for the soul of our nation."

"A patriarch of a family and a movement, Fred Gray is a lawyer by trade and a preacher at heart who follows the command to hate evil, love good and establish justice."

JUSTICE FOR TUSKEGEE

It wasn't Gray's first trip to the White House. He previously visited the East Room on May 16, 1997. That's when President Bill Clinton issued a formal apology for the Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male.

The study, conducted by the U.S.

Public Health Service at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, lasted for four decades and involved 600 Black men, 399 with syphilis. Many participants were the sons and grandsons of slaves and weren't given treatment for the disease — or even told that they had the disease.

Gray, an elder for the Tuskegee Church of Christ, represented plaintiffs in a class action lawsuit, *Pollard v. U.S. Public Health Service*, in 1972. Gray secured a \$10 million settlement and treatment for the 72 subjects still living of the original 399.

Clinton thanked Gray "for fighting this long battle all these long years" and described the attorney as "a great friend of freedom."

The apology led to the creation of the Tuskegee History Center, a dream of Gray and Herman Shaw, a survivor of the syphilis study. According to its website, the center celebrates "the three cultural groups that have contributed to the shaping and reshaping of Macon County — Native Americans, European Americans and African Americans."

"If people really want to help us," Gray told the *Chronicle*, "help us keep that museum open."



PHOTO VIA FACEBOOK.COM/REPSEWELL

In the White House, under a portrait of Abraham Lincoln, U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell and Fred Gray display Gray's Presidential Medal of Freedom.

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For more information, interested couples should contact **Paul Schandavel**, Director of Child and Family Services, at **870.239.4031, ext. 124**. Resumes can be emailed to pauls@childrenshomes.org or mailed to the address to the right.

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Dallas, TX (Saturday)
Waterview Church of Christ
15th October 7pm-9pm

Austin, TX (Sunday)
Leander Church of Christ
16th October 7pm-9pm

San Antonio, TX (Monday)
San Pedro Church of Christ
17th October 7pm-9pm

Houston, TX (Wednesday)
Watters Road Church of Christ
19th October 7pm-9pm

Little Rock, AR (Benton) Friday
Northside Church of Christ
21st October 7pm-9pm

Tulsa, OK (Saturday)
The Parks Church of Christ
22nd October 7pm-9pm

Senath, MO (Monday)
Senath Church of Christ
24th October 7pm-9pm

Nashville, TN (Wednesday)
Bellevue Church of Christ
26th October 7pm-9pm

Knoxville, TN (Friday)
Laurel Church of Christ
28th October 7pm-9pm

Chattanooga, TN (Saturday)
Redbank Church of Christ
29th October 7pm-9pm

Birmingham, AL (Sunday)
Riverchase Church of Christ
30th October 7pm-9pm

HIGHER EDUCATION

AFRICAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE TUBUNGU, ESWATINI — In 2018, after 50 years of independence, this southern African kingdom changed its name from Swaziland to Eswatini.

Four years later, the 55-year-old African Christian College is changing its name to Ukwazi International Christian University.

In Africa, the word “college” often refers to a high school, said university president Brad Carter. “This confusion makes it more difficult to recruit the quality students we want to further equip for excellent service in God’s kingdom.”

Ukwazi is a Zulu word that means “to know.” The university, which has roots in Churches of Christ, offers bachelor of theology degrees with emphasis in ministry, counseling or leadership. The university is accredited by the Association for Christian Theological Education in Africa.

CROWLEY’S RIDGE COLLEGE

PARAGOULD, Ark. — This small college in northeastern Arkansas signed an articulation agreement with Harding University, about 100 miles southwest in Searcy, Ark. Beginning this fall, students will be able to transfer seamlessly from Crowley’s Bachelor of Arts in general studies program to Harding’s Doctor of Pharmacy program, said officials at Harding. Both higher education institutions are associated with Churches of Christ.

“We are excited to enter into this agreement ... acknowledging the close relationship between our institutions,” said Dan Atchley, dean of Harding’s College of Pharmacy.

Brian Davis, vice president for academic affairs at Crowley’s Ridge, said, “We are confident this agreement will benefit both CRC and Harding while providing students with more options to attain a quality education for years to come.”

LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The exercise science program at Lipscomb became the first program in Tennessee to achieve initial accreditation by the Council on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Program. Only 72 undergraduate programs in the country are accredited by CAAHEP, Lipscomb officials said.

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Kids & Culture Camp offered two in-person sessions during the summer. Themes were “Tanzania’s Treasured Traditions” and “Belize’s Beautiful Brilliance.”

CAMP: Exposure to different cultures can combat ignorance

FROM PAGE 3

— to different cultures.

“But I also wanted him to experience things that I didn’t necessarily have expertise in,” Otey said, “like African drumming and test instruction and *capoeira*, which is a Brazilian martial art.”

The nation’s capital city offered opportunities for her sons to have all of these experiences and more, but the camps Otey researched were expensive and singularly focused.

So she started her own.

Connecting with a network of fellow homeschooling parents, she soon had 70 campers registered for the inaugural Kids & Culture Camp, or KCC. Otey took care of the camp’s legalities, having graduated from Howard University’s law school in D.C. in 2000.

“KCC for me was my answer to a problem that I saw worldwide,” Otey said, speaking particularly about the U.S. “I don’t think that we spend enough time instilling in our children the importance of learning about people who look like them and people who don’t look like them.”

Children embrace a different culture each week by delving into its visual and performing arts, language, music, math, science, technology, cooking, physical fitness and games. They also participate in yoga and weekly field trips.

“I’ve actually received comments

from parents telling me that their children have learned more in the time that they spent with Kids & Culture during the summer than they learned in an entire school year,” Otey said.

BEYOND SURFACE-LEVEL LEARNING

Amber Williams, a D.C. resident and member of the Silver Spring Church of Christ in Maryland, has been taking her 7-year-old son and 5-year-old daughter to KCC for four years now. She appreciates that the camp avoids surface-level lessons.

“I think what I love the most is the richness of the program and the level of depth that they immerse children in when it comes to different cultures,” Williams said.

She often thinks about how today’s society might be different if adults had been exposed to different traditions.

“Like, how much ignorance would that remove in our society if, at a young age, we were exposed to things and people and customs that are different from us?” she asked.

Nigel Reynolds, 19, attended KCC for years as both a camper and as a counselor. Once kids exceed the camp’s age limit, they have the option to return as counselors in training. He said the experience helped expand his mind — and his social network.

“It was a learning experience,” said Reynolds, a junior at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY JANIA OTEY

Jania Otey with sons Christian and Caleb at Kids & Culture Camp.

University in Greensboro, N.C. “As a camper I gained a lot of friends I still talk with today. And as a counselor, it taught me a few things and helped me be more patient when you’re working with people.”

Adoniyah Ben-Tsalmiel, 19, began his time with the camp in 2010.

“It was a great exposure at such a young age to learn about these different parts of the world,” said Ben-Tsalmiel, who is now a rapper, music producer and songwriter in Silver Spring. He plans to attend a digital media school in Nairobi, Kenya.

Williams encourages anyone interested in enrolling their children at the camp to embrace the occasion.

“I think that it’s worth taking the opportunity to have them learn something that they cannot and will not learn in a traditional school environment.”

PANDEMIC BRINGS INNOVATION

After a decade of Kids & Culture Camp, the COVID-19 pandemic brought challenges and changes.

Like many schools, the camp transitioned to a virtual platform in 2020 and 2021. Pre-pandemic, the camp brought in from 125 to 150 kids per year. This summer, as the camp resumes in-person gatherings, 97 children are registered.

Innovations made during the pandemic have opened doors for the camp, which recently launched an online format for homeschoolers during the spring months. There’s also a self-paced online option.

Since launching the camp, Otey has moved to Wetumpka, Ala., near Montgomery. Her husband, Melvin, is an attorney and a traveling evangelist for Churches of Christ.

Every summer Jania Otey travels to Washington with Caleb and her youngest son, Christian, to conduct the camp.

Although KCC is not a religious camp, Otey builds connections with other families through their faith.

“I’m able to pray with them and encourage them, pray with some of my teachers and also help some of the families that attend,” she said. “So I think that is a blessing, and it’s definitely an aspect that I appreciate.”

WEBSITE: kidsandculture.com

CALENDAR

Aug. 13 Woodward, OK Songfest.

Woodward Church of Christ. See acappella.org/events-calendar/.

Aug. 20 Conway, MO Songfest.

Conway Church of Christ. See acappella.org/events-calendar/.

Sept. 3-4 Bammel Church of Christ's 50th Anniversary Celebration.

Houston, Texas. See bammel.org/anniversary.

Sept. 9-10 Equip Workshop.

Waxahachie, Texas. See EquipWorkshop.org.

Sept. 11 Cullman, AL Songfest.

Cullman Church of Christ. See acappella.org/events-calendar/.

Sept. 21 Huntsville, AL Songfest.

Mayfair Church of Christ. See acappella.org/events-calendar/.

Sept. 24 South Central Regional Prison Workshop.

Fort Gibson, Okla. See ftgcc.org.

Sept. 24-25 Del City Church of Christ's 70th Anniversary Celebration.

Del City, Okla. See delcitychurch.org/70th-anniversary.

Sept. 24-29 76th Annual National Lectureship of the Churches of Christ.

Orlando, Fla. See cocnl2022.com.

Sept. 25-28 Harding's 99th Annual Bible Lectureship.

Searcy, Ark. See harding.edu/lectureship.

Oct. 4-7 Abundant Living Retreat.

Branson, Mo. See abundantlivingseniors.com.

Oct. 13-14 ACU Summit.

Abilene, Texas. See acu.edu/summit.

Oct. 14-30 Gospel Chariot Missions U.S.A. Tour.

Various cities. See gospelchariot.org.

Nov. 13 22nd Annual Churches of Christ Orphan Sunday.

See orphanslifeline.org/orphan-sunday.

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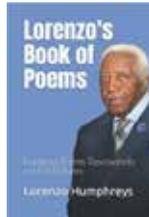
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We believe in the authority of the Word of God and its ability to transform lives. We seek a minister who is rooted in the Scriptures and who will guide us in applying Biblical truths to our daily actions and decisions. We believe that the Spirit is living and active, and we are looking for a man of prayer who thirsts to hear from God and patiently waits for answers. Northwest is a congregation eager to serve both the church and our community, and we're looking for a minister to participate in leading the way.

Preference will be given to a man with formal Biblical training and full-time experience with a congregation. Specific responsibilities include: weekly preaching; evangelism; involvement in planning and teaching adult Bible classes; active involvement in small group ministry; counsel, care and concern for members including family issues, bereavement and health; and outreach to the community.

Interested parties should send a cover letter expressing interest and a resume to the email below. Links or video or audio sermons would be helpful as well.

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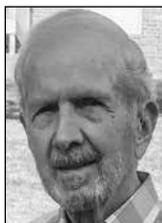
Contact christi@christianchronicle.org or (405) 425-5071 for rates and more information.

Anniversary

Finis and Marilyn Caldwell of Hendersonville, Tenn., celebrate 66 years of marriage on Aug. 23. Congratulations, Finis and Marilyn!

Birthday

Bill E. Wilson turns 90 on Aug. 30. He worships with the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City.



Memorial

Danny Clark Rich 1951-2022

Danny Clark Rich, 71, of Memphis, Tenn., passed away unexpectedly on July 3, 2022, as a result of injuries sustained from an automobile accident. He was surrounded by the sound of his loving family singing hymns until his final breath.

Danny was born on April 23, 1951, along with his twin brother, David, to Cyril and Fledda Rich of Payette, Idaho. Danny earned a bachelor's degree in physics at the University of Idaho, a master's degree in physics at Virginia Tech and a Ph.D. in color science at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Danny married the love of his life, Phyllis Phillips, on Aug. 16, 1975, in Blacksburg, Va.

Danny had a strong love for the Lord and served faithfully as an elder at the Princeton Church of Christ in New Jersey for 21 years. He impacted many through countless Bible studies and classes for all ages.

Danny is survived by his wife of 46 years, Phyllis, and his children, daughter Amanda of Marion, Ark., son Brandon (Brooke) of Ewing, N.J., son Bryan (Kelly) of Canton, Mich., and his brother, David (Anita) of Boise, Idaho.

"Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant."



Appreciation

Cindy Herring

After 23 years of service, Cindy Herring is retiring from Healing Hands International, a Nashville, Tenn., nonprofit that seeks to aid, equip and empower those in need around the world in the name of Jesus Christ. Churches of Christ support the ministry.

A registered nurse, she served as medical supplies specialist and volunteer director for Healing Hands. In a recent episode of the "It Takes A Village" podcast, coworkers, volunteers and longtime friends were asked to describe Cindy. The word that came up over and over was "passion." Cindy's passion for helping those who are hurting and connecting Christians with opportunities to serve is a priceless legacy that will have ripple effects for decades to come.

Throughout her two-plus decades at HHI, Cindy wore countless hats, including starting out as a volunteer herself. Before HHI had any full-time staff, Cindy and others spent countless hours sorting and packing medical supplies and equipment for hospitals around the world.

Cindy directed the MAGI program for more than a decade and led many trips to Honduras to aid in distributing the gifts. She was instrumental in establishing HHI's Women of Hope and Dorcas Ministries.

Many HHI staff members have come to know her as "Mum," including HHI's director of African agriculture, Ebenezer Udofia, who said, "Cindy has impacted my life by her passion and unconditional love. It has truly produced an everlasting impact on me and has changed the communities we serve for the better in so many ways."

Though Cindy is retiring, the HHI team likes to view it as simply a transition from staff back to a volunteer position. Cindy will always be a part of the HHI family.



'Cornbread' professor Paul Faulkner, who offered 'food for the soul,' dies at 92

BY CHERYL MANN BACON | THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

NORTH RICHLAND HILLS, Texas

Paul B. Faulkner, teacher, preacher, counselor, professor, author and entrepreneur, died July 5 in Grapevine, Texas. He was 92.

At a July 9 memorial service, Royce Money, president emeritus of Abilene Christian University, announced the creation of the Paul and Gladys Faulkner Center for Marriage and Family at the West Texas school, which is associated with Churches of Christ. Faulkner's "enduring legacy in marriage and family ministry" is honored in the center's mission "to promote and strengthen the formation and commitment of marriages, families, and healthy relationships."

Depending on the era, Faulkner's friends and colleagues may remember him as a teacher, minister, colleague or the much taller half of the Marriage Enrichment Seminar he began with his college roommate and lifelong friend, the late Carl Brecheen.

To many he was the freshman Bible professor who could command a full house in Abilene Christian University's Cullen Auditorium. Others knew him in his second career as founder of Resources for Living, an employee assistance counseling service for major American businesses including Walmart, McLane Trucking and Kroger Grocery Stores. His oldest friends remembered the champion javelin thrower and pole vaulter whose championships included Texas Relays three times, Kansas Relays twice and Drake Relays. He was inducted into the ACU Sports Hall of Fame in 1994.

Inevitably, they remember his voice — big, deep, slow and likely to burst into a long, head-shaking laugh at himself at any moment. Faulkner had a habit of referring to himself as "cornbread," and didn't like making a big deal of his accomplishments. But, Money said, "he could come to where

the people were to make things simple. It may have been cornbread, but it was food for the soul."

Faulkner was born Sept. 24, 1929, in Fort Worth, Texas. A high school track star at Paschal High School, he was headed to Rice University when his older sister persuaded him to go to then Abilene Christian College. He often recalled that she persisted late into the night on the subject until he finally told her, "Fine. If you'll let me go to bed, I'll go to ACC."

At ACC he began dating fellow Paschal graduate Gladys Shoemaker, and they married July 12, 1952, after completing their degrees.

Faulkner earned a master's degree from ACU in 1961, and master's and doctoral degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1966 and 1968, majoring in psychology. He preached for Churches of Christ in Kansas, North Carolina and Texas.

He was a licensed marriage and family therapist and a clinical and supervisory member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy, founding the Marriage and Family Institute at ACU in 1979. For many years, the Institute was one of only two nationally accredited marriage and family therapy programs in Texas.

In 1974, he and Brecheen conducted their first Marriage Enrichment Seminar. Over 32 years they conducted seminars in 33 states and seven countries. A video series of the seminar was seen by more than 2 million worldwide.

A passion in the last 30 years of his life was supporting minister couples through the Ministers' Renewal Workshop, a weekend retreat the Faulkners conducted with three other couples, welcoming ministers and wives whose ministry brought stress or pain that often could not be shared in the churches where they served. The Ministers' Support Network, a part of ACU's Siburt Institute, is heir to that ministry.

MEMORIAL GIFTS may be made to the Paul and Gladys Faulkner Center for Marriage and Family, ACU Box 29132, Abilene, Texas 79699-9132. Go to bit.ly/PaulFaulkner to donate online.

EXPANDED OBITUARY: christianchronicle.org



Faulkner

NEWSMAKERS

APPOINTED: Leslie Cowell, dean of Lipscomb University's College of Education in Nashville, Tenn. She formerly served as professor and dean of the College of Education at Faulkner University in Alabama. **Brandon Hackett**, head coach and director of e-sports gaming at Lubbock Christian University in Texas. He formerly served as a teaching assistant for game design and research at LCU. **Farzin Madjidi** as interim dean of the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif. He served for six years as associate dean of the school's education division. **Brooke Scott** as secondary principal, **Suzanne Heng** as secondary academic dean, **Kevynn Dunn** as secondary music director and **Chance Stevens** as head basketball coach for Oklahoma Christian Academy in Edmond, Okla. **Kristen Reames**, upper school wellness teacher for Columbia Academy in Tennessee.



Cowell



Madjidi



Dunn



Reames



Bretherick

Church of Christ in Arkansas. **Daniel Ross**, youth and family minister for the Winchester Church of Christ in Tennessee. **Jon Smith**, minister for the Eastside Church of Christ in Terre Haute, Ind. **Daniel Welker**, pulpit minister for the Stafford Road Church of Christ in Phenix City, Ala.

Part-time Evangelist - Airway Heights, Wash.

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Full-time Minister - Maryland

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Thank you. We look forward to speaking with you about your future.

Full-time Youth Minister - Ovilla, Texas

The **Ovilla Church of Christ** is seeking a full-time Youth Minister with a passion for discipling young people with the gospel. The young adult male candidate needs to have a heart for working and relating well with youth between the ages of 12 to 18, their parents and other adult volunteers in the church. We are seeking someone who has an excellent knowledge of the scriptures and is able to teach the young people God's Word and how it relates to them in their lives. A degree from a Christian university is preferred but not required. Ability to lead singing is a plus. We are a congregation of about 125 families with an active youth group of about 25 teens. We are a "bedroom" community in the DFW area, about 25 miles south of Dallas, Texas. Interested applicants should contact:

Michael Elrod, Minister • Cell: 972-515-9689 • Email: melrod55@gmail.com
or contact one of the elders: **Steven Grosshuesch, Huey Hamilton,**
or **Johnny Knight** at the church: 972-617-7447

Full-time Minister - Escanaba, Mich.

Seeking full-time minister for our 55-member congregation. Preaching, teaching, and outreach responsibilities. Also assisting in hosting Let the Bible Speak TV Ministry. www.letthebiblespeak.net. Starting salary: \$35,000/year. Moving assistance also included. Send cover letter, resume, and video samples of lessons to:

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Church of Christ
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Located on scenic Cape Cod in Marstons Mills, Mass., the **Cape Cod Church of Christ** is searching for a full-time evangelist who is called by the Lord to support our outreach in the "harvest is plentiful" and missions-outreach New England environment. We are an age and economically diverse congregation of approximately seventy and are led by two elders and three deacons. Responsibilities of the evangelist include sound Biblical preaching and teaching, evangelism, and outreach. We offer a competitive annual salary including retirement and health-care contributions, vacation, etc. If you are interested, please send your resume, a current video of a sermon, a current photograph, and three references to our elders (shown below) by September 15, 2022.

Jerry Hiatt	jerry.hiatt@gmail.com	508-477-0924
Jim Saffle	jim.saffle@ieee.org	508-364-1947

Full-time Preacher - Camp Verde, Ariz.

Verde Valley Church of Christ is looking for a full-time preacher to preach for a small congregation of 35 to 40 people. We are located in Camp Verde, in the center of Ariz., 45 minutes from Flagstaff and pine trees and 60 minutes from Phoenix and desert terrain. Four-bedroom home is included in salary package. For more information, contact:

Harold Kilby: harold.kilby@yahoo.com
or **Lonnie Ferguson:**
LFerguson@Banicki.com

The **Hot Springs Village Church of Christ** is seeking a full-time Youth and Family Minister. We are in the world's largest gated community with lots of amenities and are served by two school districts. We are a very active community and a mission-minded congregation of 200+. We are seeking someone with a strong biblical background and a desire to teach and learn. We have an active and involved youth group. Worship/song leading ability is a plus. For more information or to send resume:

Chad Knappier, 210 Balboa Rd
Hot Springs Village, Arkansas 71909
501-226-9060 • readthischad@gmail.com

Pulpit Preacher - Salisbury, Md.

Salisbury Church of Christ is a small acapella congregation. We are seeking a full-time pulpit preacher/evangelist. Candidate must be knowledgeable of the scriptures, sound in his sermons and Bible classes, and willing to help grow the church. Our city is home to Salisbury University and is located 30 miles from the ocean and Assateague Island National Seashore. For more information, contact:

Ron Rose (410) 213-0150
office@churchofchrist Salisbury.org
Salisbury Church of Christ
3322 Old Ocean City Rd
Salisbury, MD 21804

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The Christian Chronicle Crossword

By Myles Mellor | www.ilovecrosswords.com

ACROSS

1. "For I know that my _____ liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth" (Job 19:25, King James Version).
5. "And the Lord heard the voice of _____; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived" (1 Kings 17:22, KJV).
9. "And sow the fields, and plant _____, which may yield fruits of increase" (Psalm 107:37, KJV).
11. Bother.
12. "Haman suffered the _____ he had planned for the Jews" (Esther 9:25, Good News Translation).
14. "Use _____ and honest weights and measures" (Deuteronomy 25:15, GNT).
15. "And he that betrayed _____ had given them a token, saying, whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he" (Mark 14:44, KJV).
17. "And the Lord said unto Cain, why _____ thou wroth?" (Genesis 4:6, KJV).
18. Sunrise time.
19. "I have lived too long with people who _____ peace!" (Psalm 120:6, GNT).
21. Animal that said: "What have I done to you? Why have you beaten me these three times?" (Numbers 22:21-38).
25. Stray from the road of truth.
27. Reveals.
28. "I looked at this, thought about it, and learned a _____ from it" (Proverbs 24:32, GNT).
30. Garden area.
31. Blessings listed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-11).
36. Raise.
37. The account of how the world

1		2		3		4		5	6		7		8
9								10		11			
		12			13		14				15		16
17							18						
		19		20			21			22		23	
							24					25	26
27									28				
								29					
	30				31						32		33
34				35									
36			37								38		
		39											
40							41						

38. Solemn promise.
40. "In the beginning God created the _____ and the earth" (Genesis 1:1, KJV).
41. "But you must be strong and not be discouraged. The work that you do will be _____" (2 Chronicles 15:7, GNT).
3. Pharaoh's land.
4. Corn part.
6. Depart.
7. Prophet thrown overboard.
8. "The _____ appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself" (Proverbs 27:25, KJV).
10. _____ on the Mount.
13. First woman.
14. Small amount.
16. Lament.
20. "Why did you and your husband decide to put the Lord's Spirit to

DOWN

1. What God gave to John.
2. "My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have

BIBLE BOWLING

1. Also known as Belteshazzar:
D _____
 2. Also known as Tabitha:
D _____
 3. An Ephesian silversmith:
D _____
 4. A prophet, wife of Lappidoth:
D _____
 5. He liked to put himself first:
D _____
 6. Samson's tribe:
D _____
 7. Beloved king of Israel:
D _____
 8. Worshiped by the Philistines:
D _____
 9. Saul was headed there:
D _____
- ANSWERS**, crossword solution on Page 38.

- the _____? The men who buried your husband are at the door right now" (Acts 5:9, GNT).
22. "Then the man _____ down and worshiped the Lord" (Genesis 24:26, GNT).
23. Word of agreement.
24. "For David speaketh concerning him, I _____ the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand" (Acts 2:25, KJV).
26. "Cain _____ up against his brother, and slew him" (Genesis 4:8, KJV).
29. "How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your _____?" (Deuteronomy 1:12, KJV).
32. Son of Jesse.
33. Stitched.
34. Burning _____ (Exodus 3).
35. "But of the _____ of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it" (Genesis 2:17, KJV).
39. Arts degree, abbr.

Word Find: Suffering on the Job

By Betty Hollister | The Christian Chronicle

CTSSERTSIDWISDOMISERYC
 APPEALPNEEIONTEACHINGO
 LEHSURCSXSNSNTRTNAHIRL
 ARSIOITPPCKAPDEEEGMSOL
 MFTUTILEREHRUEGNSEEW
 IOTENAEENDEEATRRTLLP
 TRDYITVCSNSTRVESITOSS
 IMLNRTIHSAEURDAESTHTE
 ESBATEAEINSORIAONEOYKY
 SPDTCNTSOTSRNVMRRTITTT
 MEETUTHWNSEEEEEOTHDIH
 ORSARIAONHPPDFTLGRBAEG
 HVPCTONDTCASFSAIOAEHNI
 TEIKSNEABACOENRWHRIGYM
 ARSEEBLHEESREPSNDEKANL
 FTEDDEHSIREPUNISHMENTA

Find the following words from the book of Job. The unused 29 letters form a statement about the book. (See the answer on Page 34.)

- ALMIGHTY
- ANGELS
- ANGER
- APPEAL
- ARRIVE
- ATTACKED
- ATTENTION
- CALAMITIES
- CAMELS
- CARAVAN
- COLLAPSE
- CRUSH
- DENY
- DESCENDANTS
- DESPISE
- DESTINY
- DESTRUCT
- DETEST
- DISPUTE
- DISTRESS
- DREAD
- ESCAPES
- EXPLAIN
- EXPRESSION
- FATHOM
- GROWLS
- INCITED
- INHABIT
- INTEGRITY
- LEVIATHAN
- MISERY
- NAKED
- OFFER
- PENALTY
- PERFORMS
- PERISHED
- PERVERT
- PROSPEROUS
- PUNISHMENT
- REACH
- RESTORE
- RETURNED
- SHADOWS
- SPEECHES
- SPROUT
- STRENGTH
- SWORD
- TEACHING
- TEMA
- TRADE
- UPRIGHT
- WICKEDNESS
- WISDOM
- WONDERS

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EDITORIAL

The challenge now: Care for the children



SHUTTERSTOCK PHOTO

When *The Christian Chronicle's* Editorial Board meets each month, we bring very different perspectives to the virtual table.

We are all Christians but very different people.

Our group includes two 20-some-things and three grandparents. Women. Men. Single. Married. Divorced. Black. White. Oklahoma. Texas. California. Alabama.

Thus, when we considered what viewpoint to share with readers about the U.S. Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade*, we brought eight different voices to the conversation.

And we did not agree. No one shouted or accused others of being evil. But we each brought our own experiences, background and viewpoints. Some of those views are shared on the opposite page.

On one aspect, however, we are in complete agreement: the children.

Jesus said, *"Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."* He welcomed children and showed them more respect than the surrounding culture allowed. He also

spoke a warning: Do not hinder them.

Whether Christians celebrate the Supreme Court's decision or fearfully dread its consequences, we must hear Jesus' words about the children. Welcome them. Care for them. Protect them.

Just as Jesus broadly defined his answer to the question "Who is my neighbor?" we must think broadly when we answer the question "Who are the children?"

In a given moment, they include infants born of unplanned pregnancies. Children in foster care. Unborn children. Children who are victims of rape and incest. Children born with terminal, disabling or painful birth defects. Children who are mothers themselves. Or who are fathers themselves.

Not all children have sweet, sunny faces. Some are frightened, malnourished and abused. Some are surly or violent. Many have never heard the name of Jesus.

Christians have long done good works on behalf of children. In the first century, at a time when the Roman government didn't consider children to have agency themselves

— didn't consider them a human life worthy of defense — Christians rescued exposed and abandoned infants. That countercultural response contributed to the spread of Christianity throughout the empire.

In this century, Christians fund children's homes, homes for unwed mothers and adoption and foster care agencies. Medical missions serve children on foreign soil. Christians do a lot. But we have not yet done enough. To care for children, we must care for mothers.

In the post-Roe world many Christians prayed for, churches must consider how they will treat the pregnant 15-year-old in the youth group. Will Christians love, encourage and welcome her?

Or will she be shunned? Will they give her a baby shower?

If we can't figure out how to love the pregnant teen in our church family, how will we love the young woman who's never been in our building, or any church building, who may look, act and think very differently from us — the young woman for whom legal abortion is no longer an option? Will we give

her a baby shower?

Will we respond when called to advocate for women's health care? Will we give, volunteer and vote to make prenatal care and nutrition a reality for those who need it? Will we advocate for affordable child care so moms can work? Will we provide that childcare in our churches, in our homes?

Will we "tsk tsk" in the grocery line, rolling our eyes as a young mom pays for groceries and formula with food stamps? Or will we pull cash from our own pockets to pay her bill when she runs short?

Many women who would have chosen abortion will not come to our churches for help. Perhaps they are poor or of color or still stinging from the rebuke of some Christian who shamed them. We will have to go to them, into our neighborhoods and to neighborhoods not our own. We will have to be uncomfortable, uncondemning, compassionate.

Children didn't choose their circumstances. We must choose to make their circumstances better. We all agree about that. — **Cheryl Mann Bacon, for the Editorial Board**

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Hope and concern after Roe

CHRONICLE EDITORIAL BOARD members share thoughts after overturning of landmark abortion ruling.

Members of *The Christian Chronicle's* Editorial Board responded individually to questions about the U.S. Supreme Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision that legalized abortion nationwide.

As a reminder, the Editorial Board collaborates on the newspaper's editorial each month. The group is a mix of full-time *Chronicle* staff members and volunteer contributors. Positions taken represent the Editorial Board's consensus and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the paper's Board of Trustees.

Editorial Board members are Cheryl Mann Bacon, correspondent; Jeremie Beller, opinions editor and minister; John Edmerson, minister and songwriter; Gabriel Grant Huff, intern; Audrey Jackson, associate editor; Trindi G. Mitchell, writer and avid reader; Bobby Ross Jr., editor-in-chief; and Erik Tryggestad, president and CEO.

As a Christian and church member, what gives you the most hope as you look ahead after the Supreme Court's overturn of *Roe v. Wade*?

"Some of our church-supported agencies that facilitate adoption and foster care face greater opportunities than ever before. I hope many Christians will choose to support mothers and children through financial gifts and personal decisions for adoption and foster care and by providing a safety net of health-care, nutrition and childcare."



Bacon

— **Cheryl Mann Bacon**

"Any event that moves our world toward a greater appreciation for life should be welcomed and celebrated. This decision creates opportunities to speak out for life in new ways. I am hopeful that our response will

be shaped more on the teachings of Jesus rather than political talking points." — **Jeremie Beller**

"I am hopeful that after the decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*, Christians will answer the call of compassion. Lately, we've had several moments to show concern for others. The overturn of *Roe v. Wade* provides a great opportunity to demonstrate listening and positivity. Our world needs more of both." — **John Edmerson**



Edmerson

"The ruling gives more rights to unborn infants who don't get to choose life or death. That's what gives me hope. But the decision also takes that choice away from women who disagree and are now in turmoil. Regardless of the decision, there were always going to be losers." — **Gabriel Grant Huff**

"The difficult conversations taking place between friends and families give me hope that we will challenge our understanding of what it means to truly love and support those in vulnerable circumstances."

— **Audrey Jackson**



Mitchell

"As a Christian, my greatest hope after the Supreme Court's decision regarding *Roe v. Wade* is that the churches of Christ will be the light and lead the way with humility and compassion toward 'the least of these.'" — **Trindi Mitchell**

"God is in control. God is bigger than any Supreme Court decision, whether I personally applaud the ruling or take issue with it. At the end of the Book, God wins. Specifically, I pray this case results in Christians — and our nation in

general — becoming more pro-life across the board." — **Bobby Ross Jr.**

"I've heard stories about mothers who were given the option to abort but chose to have their children instead. One such child is Zamir 'Zeus' White, who helped my Georgia Bulldogs win their first national title in football in 41 years. I pray that, as a result of this ruling, we hear more stories like his." — **Erik Tryggestad**

And what causes you the most concern as you consider the response of Christians?

"Radical lawmaking by some state legislatures, supported by many who claim to be Christian, has ignored medical advice and decades-old conservative norms. Women with life-threatening complications and women who are victims of rape and incest are now at greater risk. Christians must become pro-life for these women as well."

— **Cheryl Mann Bacon**

"I am concerned the decision could lead to more abortions and more harm to women and children as some states enact extreme measures on either side of the issue. Our calling to serve 'the least of these' has not changed with this ruling, it has been underscored."

— **Jeremie Beller**

"Life provides us with moments wherein we can live out our faith and exhibit a better side of Christianity. My concern is that we will allow the *Roe v. Wade* decision to confuse our response and make it about other concerns. May we seek to demonstrate wisdom and genuine care for all." — **John Edmerson**

"My concerns are largely linked to the response of Christians who are anti-abortion. They have an unfortunate reputation of lacking compassion toward those who disagree with them (although this certainly does

not apply to everyone). This is the time for Christians to aid women facing undesired pregnancies."

— **Gabriel Grant Huff**

"I worry the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* may result in a political fight over the country's morality rather than a tangible, compassionate response from Christians supporting systems for people in difficult circumstances with varying socioeconomic backgrounds and religious beliefs. Christians were never called to persecute or prosecute."

— **Audrey Jackson**

"While considering the response of Christians, I — as an African-American woman living in the United States — am fearful of other landmark decisions made by the Supreme Court being overturned, especially in regard to civil and voting rights legislation."

— **Trindi Mitchell**

"My heart hurts when I receive nasty messages from Christians who seem more concerned about their political leanings than loving God and their neighbors. I'm concerned some Christians might celebrate a court victory while failing to love and support babies born into desperate situations. I hope I'm wrong." — **Bobby Ross Jr.**

"Was it worth the price we paid? Maybe it was. But could it have been accomplished without the the division, the nastiness, the ill will that's resulted? Sad. Now we can't just wipe our hands and move on. Abortion is a symptom of much bigger problems. We must address these issues with Christ's love." — **Erik Tryggestad**

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FROM OUR READERS

Your views on Roe v. Wade's overturn

The Christian Chronicle asked readers for their thoughts on the U.S. Supreme Court's overturn Roe v. Wade. A few responses:

"The issue of abortion should be viewed as a human rights issue. It's important to see the humanity (the image of God) in everyone and to try to protect it. It's a matter of social justice and loving one's neighbor." — **Terry Laudett**, 54, member of Contact Mission Church of Christ in Tulsa, Okla.

"I don't want abortions to happen. But I don't know if making them

illegal is the best way to prevent abortions. It seems if we could prevent unwanted pregnancies, that is a better way to stop abortions."

— **Julie Bruton**, 57, member of The Hills Church of Christ in North Richland Hills, Texas

"Abortion is a personal health issue, not a decision that is guided by public opinion. My personal faith leads me to believe that babies should not be aborted, however it is not my right to force a woman to adhere to my beliefs."

— **JuanRaymon Rubio**, 29, member of Cameron Road Church of Christ in Austin, Texas

Responses to Skillman church's fight for its future

Such a troubling situation ("Grandmother church' of Dallas," Page 3, July). It is a cautionary tale for many other congregations. I hope there are those that will study this history. Maybe there will be insights for future reference.

Paul Pinckley Sr. | Tavira, Portugal

It seems like so many congregations that get to that size somehow lose sight of the important things — namely, what the Bible says about how we as Christians ought to organize ourselves and the doctrines we are to hold.

Cole Howell | Dickson, Tenn.

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Granberg offers tough-but-good news to dying churches

Anyone following social research in the United States has seen the bleak forecast for religion: declining attendance and diminishing adherents.

Anyone following the recent work of Stan Granberg knows Churches of Christ are not immune from these alarming developments. Though congregational exceptions to these trends undoubtedly exist, they are outliers.

Conservative and liberal. Urban and rural. The average membership of congregations is aging and declining. Young people are leaving. Churches are closing.

Discouragement and resignation to our seeming fate seems inevitable.



READ THE ONGOING SERIES.

See christianchronicle.org/churches-gone to find story links.

But there is another option.

In Print



Jeremie Beller

Granberg, a longtime professor and founding director of the Kairos Church Planting Support ministry, offers an alternative. In **“Empty Church: Why People Don’t Come and What To Do About It,”** he gives readers useful tools for evaluating their congregation’s situation, practical steps to effectively respond and even hope when congregations

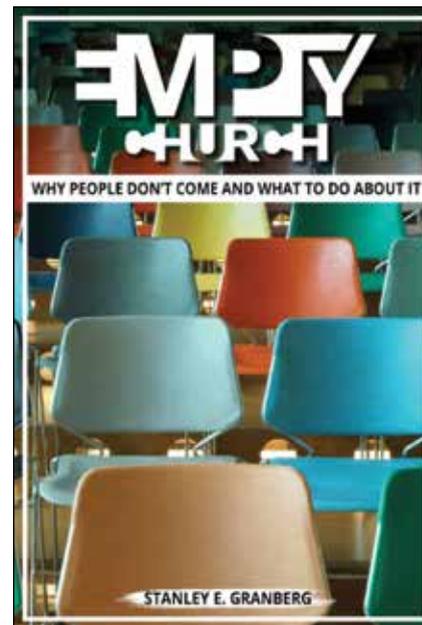
must close.

“Empty Church” begins with the belief that churches, like people, have life cycles lasting 70 to 100 years. This cycle unfolds similarly to our own life cycle: growth, vigor, reproduction, effectiveness, stability, maturity and reduced capacity.

The good news for churches is that they have the ability to reverse the cycle.

With the heart of a missionary and church planter, Granberg explains cultural and historical shifts leading to our present circumstances. He then shows how these shifts impact Churches of Christ specifically, with an understanding of our history and dynamics.

Having explained how we got here, Granberg then turns his attention to the life cycle of churches, providing helpful metrics for understanding where our own congregations are in their own lifecycle. The typical lifecycle works its way from accelerating to booming



Stanley E. Granberg. **Empty Church: Why People Don’t Come and What To Do About It.** Excel Book Writing, 2022. 150 pages. \$19.99.

before decelerating and, ultimately, tanking.

Rather than accept deceleration, Granberg suggests revision and renewal. He offers the possibility of redeveloping and repurposing. Doing so requires proper leadership, evangelistic mission, service and discipleship, each of which receive their own chapters filled with practical insights.

“Empty Church” applies to churches of all sizes but shows particular concern for churches

over 50 years old with fewer than 50 members, with most attendees over the age of 50. These churches are considered most at risk to closing.

Despite our best efforts, some congregations may need to close. Once again, Granberg offers important advice — primarily through his work with the Heritage 21 Foundation. Granberg is vice chairman of the organization, which seeks to help Churches of Christ navigate difficult choices as they consider renewal or redistribution of their assets to further Kingdom growth.

The book largely avoids traditional hot-button and often contentious issues that divide churches into “liberal” or “conservative” camps. Instead, Granberg provides workable insights and solutions across the spectrum. Although some of his suggestions may appear superficial at times (shifting from podium to stage, improving church signage and creating marketing plans), each reflects an important mindset and footing that moves past the status quo and attempts to connect to people and communities in practical ways.

The time has come for the church to move beyond our “sky-is-falling” mindset and get to work. “Empty Church” is a welcome resource to help get us moving.

JEREMIE BELLER is opinions editor for *The Christian Chronicle*. He is congregational minister for the Wilshire Church of Christ in Oklahoma City. Contact jeremie@christianchronicle.org.

Against All Odds

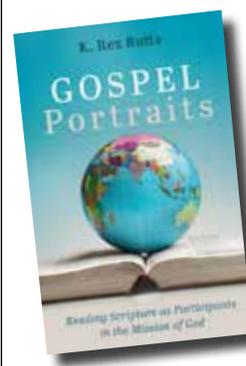
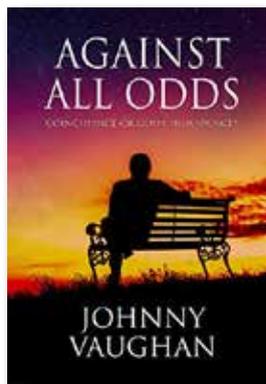
Coincidence or God’s Providence?

by Johnny Vaughan

The author’s life experiences, as viewed through the lens of his faith, have strengthened his belief that life is not simply a series of random events but rather is a series of providential interventions by God. Regardless of the circumstances, God ultimately has our best interests at heart.

The Providence of God.

Available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).



Gospel Portraits: Reading Scripture as Participants in the Mission of God

by K. Rex Butts

Gospel Portraits addresses the intersection of mission and hermeneutics for churches within their local contexts. Believing the gospel calls the church to follow Jesus and bear witness to the kingdom of God, this book proposes that churches should read the Bible as a Christ-centered and Kingdom-oriented narrative. This reading of Scripture allows churches to reimagine how they might embody the gospel within their local contexts.

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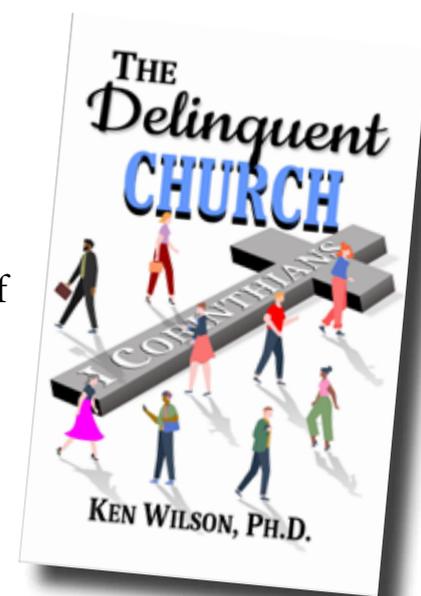
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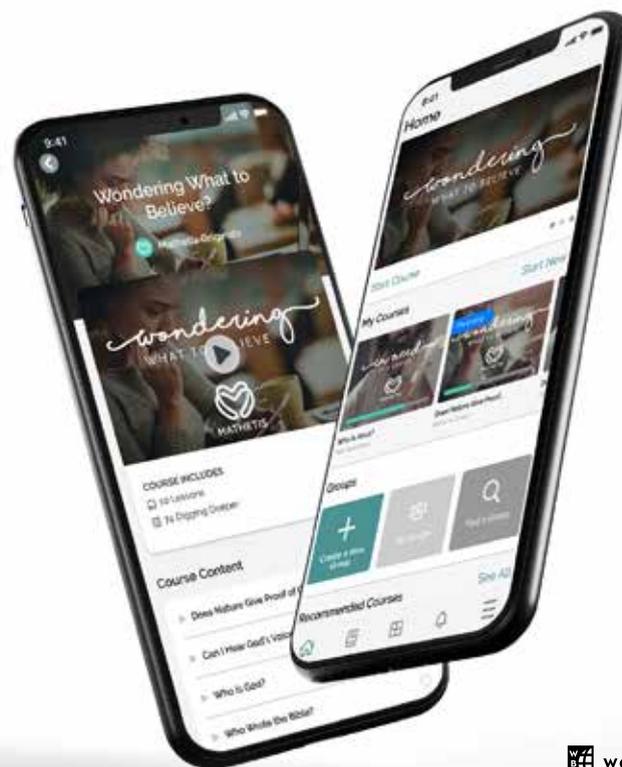


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