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AUDREY JACKSON

Above, children who live near the construction site for a girls' boarding school in New Debiso, Ghana, stand under a shelter.

Christians establish a boarding school for girls in Ghana

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MATTER OF FACT

INSIDE STORY

Editor-in-Chief Bobby Ross Jr. reflects on Christians striving to fulfill the Great Commission by using AI to translate sermons — and more.

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CHURCHES RESPOND TO FOOD NEEDS AMID MIGRANT SURGE

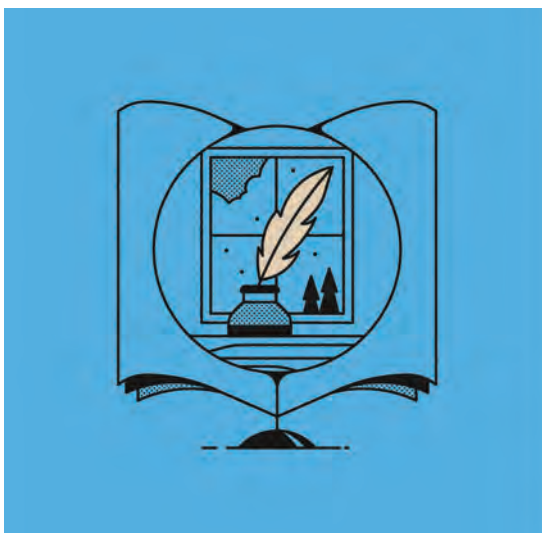
Churches of Christ in Chicago look past the politics and focus on serving new arrivals from Latin America, Ukraine and beyond.

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DEMAND FOR FOOD MINISTRIES RISES WITH GROCERY PRICES

Churches across the U.S. are serving more hungry neighbors, leaders report.

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Christians use AI to share Jesus

High-tech tools aid ministers — and ministries — in translating sermons and Bible lessons.

Missionary Leslie Taylor preaches in English and Japanese each Sunday at the bilingual Matsudo Church of Christ in the Tokyo area.

A military brat who spent time as a child in Japan as well as Florida and Tennessee, the father of three prepares his lesson in English.

INSIDE STORY Then he goes through his manuscript — sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph — to translate it into Japanese.

“That translation aspect can obviously be very difficult at times,” said Taylor, who earned a master’s degree in ministry from Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn.

ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence chatbot made by the company OpenAI, has helped improve the missionary’s process.

“I do as much as I can by myself, but sometimes it helps with particularly complicated sentence structures,” Taylor said of the AI program, “or I may ask it to explain a nuance, etc.”

“It’s still necessary to know Japanese because sometimes it gives mistaken translations — or just slightly off my meaning — so I need to discern,” he added. “But it is a helpful tool in the process to be sure. I would never even consider it as a source for any actual content, however.”

Roughly 6,500 miles away, Dion Frasier, senior minister for the Reynoldsburg Church of Christ in a



PHOTO PROVIDED BY LESLIE TAYLOR



By BOBBY ROSS JR.

Above, missionary Leslie Taylor takes a selfie with his wife and children in Japan.

suburb of Columbus, Ohio, relies on ChatGPT to translate his sermon into Creole.

“We have a growing Haitian population in our area, and they are starting to attend church regularly,” Frasier explained. “We translate and hand out copies to families each week.”

Translating the Bible at a faster rate

The number of languages with full Bible translations tops 700 — accounting for the native tongues of 80 percent of the world’s population, the American Bible Society notes.

About 3,750 vernaculars lack full translations, but AI could help speed the process of taking the Bible from its original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek into more languages, according to *ReligionLink.com*.

A team at the University of Southern California’s Information Sciences Institute “is using natural language processing, which enables machines to understand and respond to text or voice data, to help increase the efficiency of Bible translation and allow for more languages to be reached at a faster rate,” reports Ken Chitwood, *ReligionLink.com’s* editor.

Christians in the U.S. express complicated feelings

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INSIDE STORY

about AI, with 30 percent believing it is exciting but 34 percent seeing it as scary, according to a survey by the Barna Group in partnership with Gloom. (A Catholic advocacy group in California recently dismissed a robot priest who advised its followers to “baptize children in Gatorade.”)

Mary Nelson, a missionary with her husband, David, in Tauranga, New Zealand, identifies with both the enthusiasm and wariness toward AI.

“Myself, it makes me nervous — the whole AI arena,” Nelson said. “Automatically, our mind goes to all the different problems that can come about from AI and still may. But if there’s a tool that means we can get Bible lessons out quicker ... I can’t think of why we should just say no.

“I think we put all the precautions in place and use the tool but use it intelligently,” she stressed. “If we use our own human intelligence to use this artificial intelligence, then I think it’s really good.”

A decade ago, Nelson developed an online ministry called Mission Bible Class.

Now sponsored by the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, the ministry provides free resources to teach children around the world.

Nelson’s collection of more than 170 Bible stories — all in English — draws about 8,000 pageviews a day. For years, she has dreamed of making the materials available to the world’s roughly 500 million Spanish speakers.

To pursue that goal, she and a team worked with translator Tae Perkins — a former missionary to Chile who lives in Lubbock, Texas — to develop a plan estimated to cost \$100,000 and take two years.

But then ministry supporters asked if they’d considered enlisting AI.

They had — and rejected it.

Still, they tried it again, unaware how quickly — and how much — the technology had advanced.

“We were basically just testing it out,” said Gina Nored, who works with Nelson in New Zealand through Memorial Road’s Helpers in Missions program. “The logic kind of was: Let’s give some reason to why we’re not using AI. And then we realized: Maybe we *should* be using AI.”

They discovered ChatGPT could translate the English lessons into Spanish in an easily editable format.

Suddenly, the expected overall project cost dropped 75 percent to about \$25,000. The anticipated timeline split in half to one year.

“By using AI, it allows us to be more efficient in projects that we feel passionate about,” said Nored, who earned degrees in ministry and elementary education at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn. “But then it allows us to have more time and energy and resources spent on other things that we would otherwise have to put on the back burner or just not be able to do.”

Better technology, lower costs

Experienced minister James Nored, Gina’s father, speaks just one language: English.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY JAMES NORED



Nelson

“I took Greek and Hebrew and all that, but I’m not all that fluent in another language,” said Nored, who holds degrees from Oklahoma Christian University, Harding School of Theology and Fuller Theological Seminary.

But through the magic of AI, his voice can be adapted to numerous languages — from Arabic to Portuguese.

Nored serves as executive director of Next Generation for Christ, a Virginia-based ministry focused on evangelism, discipleship and missions. He wrote and produced the Story of Redemption Film Series, filmed in Israel and other countries. It’s available in more than 60 languages.

“Most of our languages for our Story of Redemption series have been done by humans and professional translators, who are often assisted by AI tools,” Nored said. “And we have found some really great, talented people to do voiceovers.”

But AI advancements allow the ministry to “quickly produce” computer-generated voiceovers for videos and subtitles, he said. That’s especially helpful, he noted, when faced with scarce funding, voice talent or time.

He cited a ministry to the blind in Albania as an example.

“We had the video series with subtitles, but that obviously would not be very helpful for this people group,” Nored said. “We were able to quickly produce an AI-generated Albanian voiceover, and it worked great.”

A sacred task

Back in Japan, Taylor stresses that his sermon represents more than words on a piece of paper.

When he stands before his multicultural congregation, which includes American, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Lithuanian members, he’s not just conveying information.

He’s sharing the Gospel.

“It’s sharing the heart of the text, obviously,” he said. “But I mean, if I really think about it, it’s very humbling because you’re really representing God to people. ... And so I think it’s a sacred task that needs to be taken seriously.”

AI, he believes, can help with that task.

But it can’t replace the value — and necessity — of humans interacting intelligently with the Holy Bible. 🙏

Above, James Nored shoots a video in Israel for the Story of Redemption Film Series.

BOBBY ROSS JR. is Editor-in-Chief of *The Christian Chronicle*. He writes the Weekend Plug-in column for *ReligionUnplugged.com*, where this piece originally appeared. Contact bobby@christianchronicle.org.

MATTER OF FACT

Church food pantries respond to increased need amid migrant surge

By ERIK TRYGGESTAD

CHICAGO — He traveled more than 5,000 miles, dodging human traffickers and drug cartels for six months, to reach the United States, all while caring for his disabled brother.

Then, someone put him on a bus and sent him 1,400 miles farther north, to America's third-largest city.

"We didn't know anyone here," said Daviel, speaking through a translator, as he stood in the small foyer of the Northwest Church of Christ in Chicago. A church member, Barbara Foucher, helped the Venezuela native fill out paperwork to receive help through the congregation's food program.

Daviel's brother, Albert, stood nearby, silent. Albert suffers from "a kind of paralysis" and is nonverbal, his brother said. Bringing Albert on the journey was dangerous, Daviel said, but their parents could no longer care for him. And the gang warfare and medicine shortages that plague Venezuela gave him few alternatives.

The brothers were among 70 families who made a pilgrimage through Chicago's Albany Park neighborhood on a sunny Saturday afternoon, past dog walkers and Little Leaguers, to the church's food pantry. Christians and volunteers from a nearby high school loaded sacks of fresh vegetables, canned goods and loaves of bread into their cars, vans or backpacks as airplanes soared overhead, landing at O'Hare International.

Some of those in need came here from distances even greater than Venezuela. For Ukrainian Anastasia Sokolova, Chicago was her third move in less than a decade. Her parents died when she was 7, and she grew up in an orphanage in the eastern city of Donetsk. In 2014, pro-Russian separatists took over the region, sparking a long, bloody conflict. She went for nearly two years "without money, without food," she said, before she fled west to Kyiv. Then, in 2022, Russia rained missiles on Ukraine's capital as it launched a full-scale invasion.

She evacuated through Russia — "I hate Russia," she stressed — and eventually settled in Germany. Her godfather, who lives in Chicago, invited her here. She arrived three weeks ago. Another Ukrainian refugee, Ivan Shutenko, drove her to the Northwest church. The food she received will help her as she waits for permission to work.

The conflicts she's endured ("my two wars," as she called them) have strengthened her resolve to carry on, Sokolova said. "I never, never give up."

'The weirdest and worst-possible time'

Even as the COVID-19 pandemic subsided, sending Chicagoans back to work, Churches of Christ experienced a spike in need, representatives of two churches with food pantries told *The Christian Chronicle*.

Since 2022, the Windy City has welcomed more than 30,000 Ukrainian refugees, including Sokolova and Shutenko. Most have integrated into the city's preexisting Ukrainian communities, where blue and yellow flags still fly from balconies two years after the invasion. Meanwhile, U.S. politicians argue over continued spending for Ukraine.

More problematic for Chicago, however, is the influx of more than 19,000 Venezuelans, including Daviel and Albert. Few have families here, and many arrive on buses sent from Republican-controlled border states. Under Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, the Lone Star State has bused more than 100,000 migrants to cities run by Democrats, including Chicago.

Although J.P. Grosser certainly has his opinions

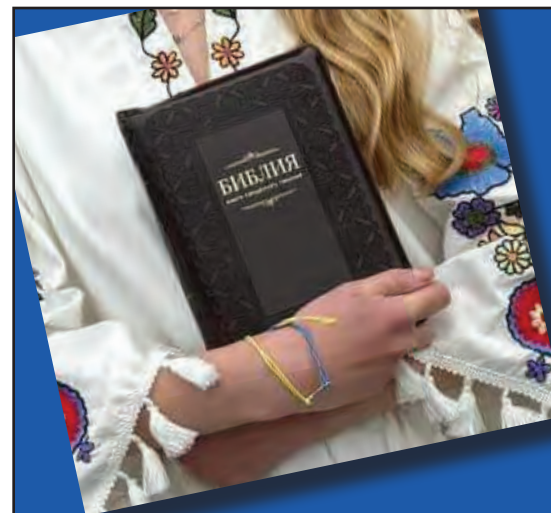
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Sokolova



ERIK TRYGGESTAD



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Above, on a Wednesday morning, J.P. Grosser, right, takes inventory of Brussels sprouts, milk and vegan pizzas as volunteers stock the pantry of the Lakeview Church of Christ in Chicago.

MEN'S INTIMACY STUDY

Christian men can experience spiritual and emotional concern in response to decreased physical intimacy with their wives at different points in life. Men can interpret this experience and these feelings in many different ways, leading to troubling emotions, marital conflict, and sometimes divorce.

A national research study is currently in progress to learn how men from the Church of Christ cope with these feelings. If you have felt these feelings in the past or are currently experiencing them, please prayerfully consider participating in a confidential online study that will help pastoral counselors better understand this experience and learn how to more effectively support men struggling with these confusing emotions.

For more information, go to: www.cofcmen.com
The study is currently in progress until August 31, 2024.



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about the politics of the surge, he said he does his best simply to serve the souls at his doorstep. He coordinates the food program for the Lakeview Church of Christ in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood, about 5 miles east of the Northwest church.

The influx of migrants "caught us at the weirdest and worst possible time," Grosser said on a recent Wednesday as he supervised the unloading of a large shipment from an area food bank. The city already had a housing crunch and a homeless problem, he said, and has struggled to find places for the new arrivals.

Uptown once had a reputation for gang activity and violence, second only to Chicago's South Side, said Grosser, who moved here from southern Illinois in 2019. He remembers hearing gunshots down the street from his home.

Since the pandemic, the neighborhood has gentrified and prospered. The local ward also has become the temporary home for one of the largest groups of Latin American immigrants in the city, said Christa Pierce, wife of Lakeview minister Walter Pierce and Grosser's sister. The student body of the local school district doubled. Uptown residents routinely see immigrant families asking for help outside Costco Wholesale and Starbucks.

The church brought in translators to help with its program, Krista Pierce said, and contributed coats to help the migrants weather the winter months. She and her husband attend community meetings for updates on the migrants. At a recent meeting, city officials reported a decrease in buses sent from the border states. One alderman said, cynically, that he expects another surge in August just as the city hosts the Democratic National Convention.

A development grant helped the Lakeview church expand its basement food pantry. As Grosser took inventory, church members sweated through their shirts as they unloaded large crates of milk, Brussels sprouts and an unexpected gift — multiple boxes of frozen vegan pepperoni pizzas. Volunteer Audrey Bowen worked to stuff the pizzas into freezers already packed with sausages.

On Saturdays, those in need line up and make quick shopping trips to the church basement. The brief interactions, plus the language barrier, make it tough to share Jesus with the migrants, Grosser acknowledged.

But perhaps the best way to feed people spiritually, he said, "is to lead by example and to let them see how we are toward them."

"We do feel the urgency, the desire and the importance of serving God," he added. "God has blessed our family so much, it's ridiculous. So we know we have a lot to give back. And we're honored to do it."

Scenes from a giveaway

At the Northwest church, interactions may be even shorter than those at Lakeview.

The congregation doesn't yet have the facilities to accommodate indoor shoppers, so it still follows protocols used during the pandemic. Nonetheless,



ERIK TRYGGESTAD

"We do feel the urgency, the desire and the importance of serving God. ... We have a lot to give back."

Above, Abdiel Estrada loads food into the car of a client at the Northwest Church of Christ's food pantry.

a few of the church's clients have attended worship services, and some have helped out with the pantry, minister Patrick Odum said.

During the Northwest church's Saturday distribution, Odum met recipients as they stood by their cars or on the church's freshly mowed lawn. He entered their information on his phone and did his best to remember — and pronounce — the names of repeat customers, who came to Chicago from Latin America, Vietnam, the Philippines and elsewhere. Then volunteers brought out the food, presorted into individual crates.

A few of those who came to receive food spoke with the *Chronicle*. Some declined to give their last names.

Barbara, who moved here from a small town near Krakow, Poland, more than two decades ago, said she has come to the Northwest pantry for at least seven years. "The food service is amazing," she said, adding that she always shares what she's given.

She doesn't think she'll ever return home, especially since her town is less than three hours from the Ukrainian border. She's worried that, should Ukraine fall, Poland may be next.

Laticia Soto, originally from Mexico, works at a textile factory. Lately the company has cut back her shifts, and the food from the church helps her make ends meet. Two other Mexicans, Luis and Jorge, said they've had the same problem at the plant where they work. The food allows them to save money to send back home.

Daviel, the Venezuelan, preferred that the *Chronicle* not use his last name nor take his photo, said his interpreter, Abdiel Estrada, whose father preaches for the church's Spanish service.

Instead, a *Chronicle* reporter and Estrada prayed with Daviel and his brother before Estrada invited them to visit the church's clothes closet. As they browsed, volunteers retrieved a box of food for the Venezuelans.

During their 5,000-mile journey to the U.S., the danger often seemed too much, Daviel said as he loaded the produce into his backpack. But each time, before he turned back, he remembered the political Armageddon and economic desperation that he and Albert had left behind in their homeland.

Going north, he said, at least there is hope. 🌍



Walter Pierce



Odum

MATTER OF FACT

Demand for food ministries rises with grocery prices

By BOBBY ROSS JR.

MINNEAPOLIS — As volunteers prepared to hand out milk, produce, canned goods and meat, cars lined up outside the Minneapolis Central Church of Christ.

More than an hour before the church's weekly food distribution, vehicles stretched down a neighborhood street — an indication of the extreme need the congregation serves.

"My fellowship hall is a Walmart now," said Russell A. Pointer Sr., senior minister and elder.

Minneapolis Central launched its food ministry during the COVID-19 pandemic and fed hungry neighbors after violence following George Floyd's May 2020 murder destroyed nearby stores.

Four years later, the number of needy families relying on the ministry has more than doubled, averaging between 325 and 375 per week, church leaders said.

"People now have to choose between paying rent or getting something to eat," said Mariea Overton, a social worker and the food ministry's deputy director. "So I think that the growth ... of the need for food has a lot to do with the economy."

With grocery prices high and pandemic-era benefit programs ended, many Churches of Christ across the nation report increased demand for food benevolence.

"With inflation and the cost of living here in Hawaii, it's still expensive," said Ruth Byrne, who started the food bank at the Pearl Harbor Church of Christ in Honolulu about 15 years ago. "When they have children, they'll choose between rent and electric or water bills, and there's nothing left. So that's where the food pantry comes in."

Jay Plank, elder and administrative minister for the RiverWalk Church of Christ in Wichita, Kan., said, "We've seen a huge increase in both the number of clients served as well as the cost of food."

Becky Almanza, food pantry director for the Highland Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, has noticed a similar trend.

"We are seeing and serving more of the working poor versus the no-income to low-income clients we served prior to COVID," Almanza said. "Most clients are being affected by a crisis — loss of job, hospital stay, big car repair — and have to decide which bills to pay."



Nothing profound — just helping

Here in Minnesota, charities including Second Harvest Heartland and The Food Group help supply the food Pointer's church gives away.

Other area Churches of Christ as well as denominational churches provide support as well.

Minneapolis Central member Lenard Johnson helps with the food distribution from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. each Saturday. As needy families kept arriving, he rolled crates full of milk to the church's lawn.

Nearby, other volunteers sorted sackfuls of carrots, cabbage and apples and organized a table covered with diapers and baby supplies.

The ministry keeps pork separate from beef, chicken and fish to accommodate clients who abide by halal dietary restrictions.

"I can't think of anything profound to say," Johnson said. "We're just here to help the community — to help those who are in need."

Minneapolis Central is the state's only predominantly Black Church of Christ. Its food ministry serves a diverse clientele: 60 percent Hispanic, 20 percent African American, 11 percent Somali, 6 percent Hmong and 3 percent White, according to church leaders.

A dozen freezers — and an equal number of refrigerators — in Minneapolis Central's basement attest to its commitment to the ministry, led by director Bettie Crowe, who is away battling cancer.

"It's unbelievable how devoted they are and how willing they are to give up their time and how consistent the volunteers are," said Anne Selvig, an Edina Community Lutheran Church member who helps each Saturday. "It's really inspirational."

Allison Roorda, a volunteer who attends the City Hill Church in Eden Prairie, southwest of Minneapolis, echoed Selvig: "All of the people connected

Above, volunteer Anne Selvig helps organize food bags for distribution at the Minneapolis Central Church of Christ. Upper right, diapers and other baby supplies cover a table outside the church.

MATTER OF FACT



PHOTOS BY BOBBY ROSS JR.

“When they have children, they’ll choose between rent and electric or water bills, and there’s nothing left. So that’s where the food pantry comes in.”

to (the Minneapolis Central church) and to this program have such a passion for their community. They really want to help out, they love serving, and I found myself wanting to get into that spirit.”

Still, the rising needs coupled with higher costs stretch the ability of the congregation — with post-COVID attendance of about 100 — to meet them.

The total monthly food bill — even at the non-profit suppliers’ discounted rates — has jumped to \$11,000, up from \$7,000 just recently, Pointer said.

“We usually do three meats a week (per family),” the minister said, “but because of the price of everything lately ... we’re having to cut back to maybe one meat and maybe a tuna fish or something like that.

“The last month or two at our church, we now have a separate offering just for the food,” he added. “We stopped some of our other programs just so we could keep this one going.”

Sometimes, the ministry’s organizers worry they won’t be able to serve everyone who shows up, said Overton, whose 5-year-old twins, Cornell and Ca Mariea, played as she organized about two dozen volunteers. But as when Jesus fed 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two fish, she stressed, God never fails to deliver.

“There’s never been a car that hasn’t been fed,”

Overton said, referring to the families who line up for help. “So it’s pretty cool.”

Food for the body and soul

Mary Coleman, a 60-year-old disabled former machine operator, lives a few blocks from the Minneapolis Central church.

Making just over the income limit to qualify for food stamps, she stumbled upon the ministry about a year and a half ago.

“I was walking my dog, and they were handing out food,” she recalled.

Coleman became a beneficiary of the church’s generosity — and then joined the volunteer effort.

Since the ministry accepts food from government-funded entities, it’s not supposed to proselytize. But helpers can talk about their faith if someone asks, and Coleman did.

She’s one of a handful of neighbors baptized as a result of Minneapolis Central’s food distribution.

“I got food for my mouth,” Coleman said. “And I got food for my heart — through God — from the people in the church.”

HOW TO HELP: Send donations to Minneapolis Central Church of Christ, 1922 4th Ave N., P.O. Box 50603, Minneapolis, MN 55405

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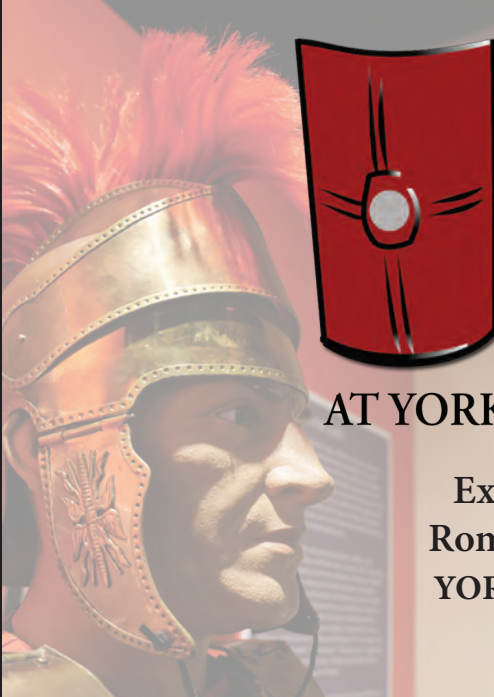
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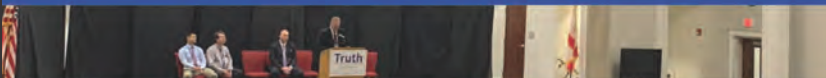
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TOP STORY

Despite severe burns, a Nigerian native preacher is devoted to fulfilling God's purpose — in Minnesota and his home country. **PAGE 11**

RETIRING MINISTERS STRUGGLE

Why preachers, after lifelong careers in ministry, often struggle financially — and what they can do to prevent it. **PAGE 13**

ARKANSAS DISASTER RELIEF

After a 1.7 mile-wide EF2 tornado hit Rogers, Ark., a Church of Christ “stepped up” for its community of 73,000. **PAGE 17**



ACROSS THE NATION

A Montana church welcomes its first new lead minister in 30 years, a Michigan congregation changes its approach to sharing the Gospel in Arab-majority Dearborn, a Tennessee church works to provide a safe haven for foster children, and two Spokane, Wash., congregations decide to merge. **PAGE 19**

HEAR US OUT

What happens when artificial intelligence comes to church? Minister Josh Kingcade of the Preston Road Church of Christ in Dallas helps explore the dimensions of this question on *The Christian Chronicle* Podcast. Find the podcast at christianchronicle.org/episode. **EPISODE 66**

‘Divine power’ saves minister

Despite severe burns, Minnesota preacher is devoted to fulfilling God's purpose for his life.

By **BOBBY ROSS JR.**

ROSEVILLE, MINN. — A grease fire that severely burned Richard Inyang on his stomach, arms, hands and upper thighs could have killed him.

But it didn't.

As the Minnesota preacher sees it, the Lord still has a purpose for him.

After his brush with death, the longtime missionary from Nigeria has no doubt about that.

“I know that the hands of God are involved in this,” said Inyang, 49, who has served the Roseville Church of Christ for 15 years. “Even the doctor said, ‘With the nature of your injuries, you were really saved by a divine power.’”

Inyang wore special gloves — with just the tips of his fingers sticking out — as he shared his story. Underneath his clothes, a custom-made compression garment covered his fire-ravaged body.

Inyang first came to America nearly two decades ago to further his Bible education. He decided to stay and share the Gospel with Minneapolis-St. Paul's fast-growing African immigrant population.

“This is where God called me to come,” he told *The Christian Chronicle*.

Since the kitchen fire four months ago, Churches of Christ in the Twin Cities area have rallied around Inyang and his family: wife Emem, 17-year-old son Joseph, 12-year-old twin sons Ikoobong and Itembong and infant Edikan.



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Above, the Inyang family poses for a photo by the Roseville Church of Christ sign. Richard Inyang has served as the congregation's minister for 15 years.

“What a blessing to see our congregation and other Churches of Christ in Minnesota praying for Richard and his family, bringing meals and making significant financial contributions to help offset medical costs,” said Ethan Bilbrey, who preaches for the Richfield Church of Christ, south of Minneapolis.

Said Russell Pointer, senior minister for the Minneapolis Central Church of Christ: “It was only by the grace of God that Richard is still here. I'm telling you, it's a great story.”

Risking his life to do God's work

A flashing marquee sign outside the Roseville church invites passersby to help care for Nigerian orphans.

The message reflects the deep commitment of the predominantly African immigrant congregation — with members from Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo — to serve children at the Solace Orphanage International Center, roughly 6,500 miles away.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

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Inyang and the 50-member Roseville church started the orphanage in Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria's coastal south in 2020.

Inyang still returns to his native Nigeria and neighboring Cameroon each year and takes his survival from the fire as a sign God wants him to keep doing so.

"That is why God brought me back to life ... because I still have a lot to accomplish," he said.

It's not the first time, Inyang said, that God has surprised him by keeping him alive. On a 2018 mission trip, he ignored the pleas of French soldiers and his own father and entered a war zone in Cameroon to deliver medical and educational supplies.

"Should I stay back?" Inyang remembered asking his wife.

"No," he said she told him. "If anything happens, I will take care of the children. But God will not allow anything to happen."

Later, as guerrilla fighters shouted and aimed assault rifles at him, Inyang put his head on the dashboard of his rented truck, which blared Christian music from a loudspeaker.

"Jesus, take my soul," he recalled saying as he prepared to die.

But the combatants let him and his driver pass safely through the checkpoint. Not long after that, he said he learned, they killed a Catholic priest.

During his monthlong mission trips, he visits the numerous African churches he has planted, distributing medicine, glasses, clothes and Bibles and baptizing hundreds of new converts.

And he checks on the children and the orphanage's facilities, including a three-story school for which he and his wife took out a second mortgage on their Minnesota home.

Inyang's willingness to risk his life in a war zone — and tap into his family's meager finances to help orphans — exemplifies his commitment to his Christian calling, Roseville member Stacy Sikes said.

"That was no fluke," Sikes, a retired minister and chaplain, said of Inyang's fraught Cameroon experience. "It's his life. He's a man that says, 'I believe God will be with us, and let's go for it.'"

'The fire exploded all over me'

Inyang's latest opportunity to put his life in God's hands came Feb. 19.

Flames erupted that night after one of Inyang's sons put oil in a pan to cook on the stove and then left to play a video game, according to church leaders.

In the living room, the father of four talked on the phone with a person from the orphanage.

"Daddy! Daddy! Daddy!" Inyang heard one of his children yell.

The shirtless minister ran to the kitchen and jerked the pan off the burner.

"The fire exploded all over me," he recalled.

Inyang spent more than a month in the hospital and has undergone a half-dozen surgeries. Still fighting pain and battling to recover, he hopes to return to the pulpit soon. Men in the church have stepped up to preach and teach Bible classes.

"It's been really stressful for the congregation. Richard has a good heart for the Lord," said Isaac Karmue, a 50-year-old Liberian refugee. "We all are just trying to support him in the best way possible."

The Roseville church formed in 1963, but decades later, declining membership and rising maintenance needs prompted some Christian leaders to advise selling the building and donating the proceeds to mission work, Sikes said.

Inyang refused.

"He really looked at this location as being a place for God's people, and it is," Sikes said. "And so he and his wife both worked for Walmart in order to have an income."

Their resoluteness and trust in God led to the multicultural influx.

"We see no race line or culture line," Karmue said of the Roseville congregation. "Christ is first. Everybody here — I can't say a single bad thing about anyone. I see the presence of God."

'Unity among the brethren'

Charlene May, a former American missionary to Haiti with her husband, David, organized meal deliveries for the Inyangs.



Above, minister Richard Inyang recovers from grease burns in a hospital. Upper right, Inyang speaks at the Roseville Church of Christ after his accident.

She relied first on Roseville members and later enlisted other area Christians.

"I have decided it's one of my gifts to model how we take care of each other," said May, who has attended Roseville since 2020. "I knew that family was going to need long-term help. And the mom, you know, she had that baby a month before this accident."

Inyang praises God for all the support his family has received.

He enjoyed a hearty laugh as he reflected on a noninstitutional Church of Christ that helped.

"The congregation that they don't believe you can eat in the building, they brought food to my house," Inyang said with a thankful chuckle.

"Really, I can see the unity among the brethren," he added. "I can see their support, so we really, truly appreciate it and thank God."

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PHOTO PROVIDED BY STACY SIKES



BOBBY ROSS JR.

“We see no race line or culture line. Christ is first. Everybody here — I can’t say a single bad thing about anyone. I see the presence of God.”

Confident in his calling

On a recent Sunday, Inyang stood at the front of the Roseville church and updated members on his progress.

“God is improving my health,” he reported.

“Amen!” members responded.

“Every day I see the power of God,” he added.

“Amen!”

He voiced hope that he could start driving again soon — and resume preaching in the not-so-distant future. Even Inyang’s return to worship has made the church more joyful, said Ikoobong, one of his sons.

“Everyone misses him,” the 12-year-old said.

After the assembly, the minister greeted fellow Christians at a multicultural fellowship meal that featured Nigerian-style coconut rice, Asian egg rolls, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Domino’s Pizza.

“Spiritually, I’m very, very strong,” Inyang told the *Chronicle*. “Physically, I’m still under recovery.”

But he’s pleased with his progress — and eager to fulfill God’s purpose for his life. 🌍

Little money, few benefits: Retiring ministers struggle

By CHERYL MANN BACON

A faithful minister of the Gospel spends a lifetime serving the church.

Bad advice decades ago led him to opt out of Social Security.

His congregations paid poorly, in part because they provided a parsonage. They offered no retirement benefit.

Age 65 or 70 rolls around, and the minister finds himself with little savings, no equity in a home, no source of income and no health insurance. Opting out of Social Security also means no Medicare.

If he quits, he’ll have no income, no home. If he can, he keeps preaching. If he can’t, he lives on the edge of poverty or relies on his children.

That could have become Paul Clark’s story. After 23 years preaching for the Nashua Church of Christ in New Hampshire, the 58-year-old recently went part time so he could work full time in the golf industry for Titleist. The change will allow him to get enough quarters in Social Security to be eligible for Medicare in retirement.

Reality hit two years ago when his wife, Leanne, was diagnosed with breast cancer. She had insurance through her teaching job.

“The good news is she’s now cancer free and doing well,” Clark said. “But thank goodness for insurance.”

Clark, however, faced a future without health coverage. His first church paid him when contributions were enough to cover his salary. Otherwise he had to wait. A previous minister there had opted out of Social Security, so he did, too.

“It was more about being uninformed and financially asking, ‘How do we make enough to put food on the table?’” Clark recalled. He’d like a do-over, he said, but that’s not an option.



Clark



Lanciloti

No retirement benefit and no Social Security

The IRS has long allowed ministers to opt out of paying into Social Security for reasons of conscience or religious objection but not for financial exigency.

Once a minister makes that choice, he or she cannot opt back in without leaving the profession.

Brandon Lanciloti teaches accounting and serves as assistant dean of Freed-Hardeman University’s College of Business in Henderson, Tenn. He works with about 300 ministers through his multistate

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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tax consulting firm. He explained that opting out involves more than just forfeiting future Social Security payments.

“You opt out of survivors benefits, disability coverage, Medicare — you’re opting out of all of that,” Lanciloti said. “That’s a very big risk.”

To cover all of that as an individual, the tax expert said, would require about 20 percent of one’s income. Because the IRS requires that the exemption be sought within two years after entering ministry, most make the decision around age 23.

“They think someday they’ll get around to dealing with all of it, but someday never comes,” he said.

The 2024 Ministers Salary Survey conducted by the Siburt Institute at Abilene Christian University in Texas indicates that about 37 percent of respondents have opted out of Social Security. And 59 percent of full-time respondents receive no retirement benefit.

That’s somewhat less bleak than the 2019 survey when 68 percent received none.

But among solo ministers — typically in smaller, poorer churches — the number with no retirement benefit rises above 80 percent.

Many ministers now approaching retirement were advised in the 1980s and 1990s to opt out. Many are embarrassed to tell their stories or don’t want to speak badly about churches they served that left them wanting.

DIY retirement in a DIY fellowship

Jordan Coss knows their stories. The former California minister began doctoral studies at Fuller Theological Seminary while preaching for the Campbell Church of Christ and living in its parsonage in the most expensive housing region in the country. Now a single dad of three, he teaches at a Christian high school in Santa Cruz.

For many years, financial planners talked about the three-legged stool of retirement planning: pension, Social Security and personal savings. The pension leg is largely gone in the U.S. Thus ministers lack one or two and sometimes all three legs of that stool.

Coss’ doctoral project, “Almost Essential Evangelists: Improving Retirement Asset Accumulation for Mainstream Church of Christ Pastors,” tells that story through a podcast series and proposes action steps.

Coss said Churches of Christ are a microcosm of “a do-it-yourself (DIY) retirement system which is breeding an American retirement, economic and moral crisis.”

The problem is exacerbated for Church of Christ ministers because “they also serve a DIY fellowship,” where autonomy often works against the best interest of ministers.

Andrew Cooper knows the stories, too. The founder and president of Cooper Eagle, a Pennsylvania financial services company, is a preacher’s kid and deacon at the King of Prussia Church of Christ, about 30 miles west of Philadelphia.

Form 4361 (Rev. January 2011) Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service		Application for Exemption From Self-Employment Tax for Use by Ministers, Members of Religious Orders and Christian Science Practitioners		OMB No. 1545-0074
				File Original and Two Copies
File original and two copies and attach supporting documents. This exemption is granted only if the IRS returns a copy to you marked “approved.”				
Please type or print	1 Name of taxpayer applying for exemption (as shown on Form 1040)			Social security number
	Number and street (including apt. no.)			Telephone number (optional)
	City or town, state, and ZIP code			
2 Check one box: <input type="checkbox"/> Christian Science practitioner <input type="checkbox"/> Ordained minister, priest, rabbi <input type="checkbox"/> Member of religious order not under a vow of poverty <input type="checkbox"/> Commissioned or licensed minister (see line 6)			3 Date ordained, licensed, etc. (Attach supporting document. See instructions.)	
4 Legal name of ordaining, licensing, or commissioning body or religious order				Employer identification number
Number, street, and room or suite no.				
City or town, state, and ZIP code				
5 Enter the first 2 years after the date shown on line 3 that you had net self-employment earnings of \$400 or more, any of which came from services as a minister, priest, rabbi, etc.; member of a religious order; or Christian Science practitioner				
6 If you apply for the exemption as a licensed or commissioned minister and your denomination also ordains ministers, please indicate how your ecclesiastical powers differ from those of an ordained minister of your denomination. Attach a copy of your denomination’s bylaws relating to the powers of ordained, commissioned, and licensed ministers.				
7 I certify that I am conscientiously opposed to, or because of my religious principles I am opposed to, the acceptance (for services I perform as a minister, member of a religious order not under a vow of poverty, or Christian Science practitioner) of any public insurance that makes payments in the event of death, disability, old age, or retirement; or that makes payments toward the cost of, or provides services for, medical care. (Public insurance includes insurance systems established by the Social Security Act.)				
I certify that as a duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed minister of a church or a member of a religious order not under a vow of poverty, I have informed the ordaining, commissioning, or licensing body of my church or order that I am conscientiously opposed to, or because of religious principles I am opposed to, the acceptance (for services I perform as a minister or as a member of a religious order) of any public insurance that makes payments in the event of death, disability, old age, or retirement; or that makes payments toward the cost of, or provides services for, medical care, including the benefits of any insurance system established by the Social Security Act.				
I certify that I have never filed Form 2031 to revoke a previous exemption from social security coverage on earnings as a minister, member of a religious order not under a vow of poverty, or Christian Science practitioner.				
I request to be exempted from paying self-employment tax on my earnings from services as a minister, member of a religious order not under a vow of poverty, or Christian Science practitioner, under section 1402(e) of the Internal Revenue Code. I understand that the exemption, if granted, will apply only to these earnings. Under penalties of perjury, I declare that I have examined this application and to the best of my knowledge and belief, it is true and correct.				
Signature ▶				Date ▶
Caution: Form 4361 is not proof of the right to an exemption from federal income tax withholding or social security tax, the right to a parsonage allowance exclusion (section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code), assignment by your religious superiors to a particular job, or the exemption or church status of the ordaining, licensing, or commissioning body, or religious order.				

SCREENSHOT

“I’m in this business because when I was 13 or 14 years old my dad pulled me into his office and showed me some paperwork” for a small individual retirement account, Cooper recalled. “Because he was a minister, he had to do it all himself.”

Through his firm Cooper wanted to provide a plan for small- and medium-sized churches “who don’t have expertise or bandwidth to start something on behalf of their ministers.”

Cooper Eagle offers a 403(b)-9 plan just for ministers and staff in Churches of Christ. The 403(b) was created by the IRS for nonprofits and operates basically like a 401(k). The 403(b)-9 provides an advantage specifically for churches.

Lanciloti is a fan of 403(b)-9 plans, though he says few churches take the time to set them up.

“They’re really, really nice. The minister’s contribution is pre-tax, and if the church matches it, that’s pre-tax. And the really cool thing is when you retire, any distributions you take out, your church can elect to call them housing distributions. And as long as you use it to cover housing costs, it’s not taxable income at all.”

Caleb Sams, also a preacher’s kid, grew up in a parsonage. Today he’s a financial adviser with Brentwood Financial Partners in suburban Nashville, Tenn. His dad spent 35 of his 40 years in ministry at one North Carolina congregation.

“I grew up very attached to ministry,” Sams said, “and you get to see all the good that can come of a minister who’s been at one church for that long. But



Cooper

Above, the IRS allows ministers to opt out of self-employment tax using Form 4361. But doing so is an irrevocable decision that means no Social Security income, Medicare, disability or survivors benefits.

NATIONAL

there are also things that fall through the cracks.”

For his dad, one of those things was a retirement plan.

“Dad opted out of Social Security, lived in a parsonage, had inadequate savings,” Sams said. “They’re the perfect storm.”

So Sams also had “a soft spot for ministers and churches.”

While Brentwood offers a wide range of services, Sams focuses much of his energy on educating churches and ministers about what’s possible. He’s spoken at several preacher training schools and the National Children’s and Youth Ministries Conference, where often young ministers’ “eyes glaze over” at the topic.

And elders typically just don’t know they have options.

“It’s not that they’re opposed to it,” Sams said, but elders navigate the constant tension of leading the body and overseeing a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that has employees with needs. “Those are very different spaces to operate in.”

Other similar firms exist. Assist Inc. in Lubbock, Texas, for example, works exclusively with ministers and churches.

One of the oldest and largest organizations that exclusively serves ministers and churches within the Restoration Movement is little known among Churches of Christ.

Pension Fund of the Christian Church, based in Indianapolis, was founded in 1895, prior to the split of the Stone-Campbell Movement. But Todd Adams, president, said the company has had limited participation from Churches of Christ despite efforts to make inroads. “We would love to serve them more fully,” he said.

The fund serves 15,000 individuals and manages \$3.5 billion in retirement assets, Adams said, making it “one of the most well-funded, defined benefit, true pension plans in the country.” Only one person interviewed for this story had ever heard of it.

Educating ministers, educating churches

Logically, education about financial planning should begin early. Universities and preacher schools associated with Churches of Christ often include a lecture or unit on personal finance in a ministry class, but of the dozen institutions contacted by *The Christian Chronicle*, none that replied includes a course on the subject.

Like Sams and Cooper, Robert Oglesby is a preacher’s kid. His father pushed him when he entered ministry to make a plan and start saving.

Today he’s director of the Center for Youth and Family Ministry at ACU. He also spent more than 40 years working full- or part-time with congregations in Abilene and Temple, Texas. In his youth ministry course, Oglesby shares data from Fidelity and Merrill about how much ministers should have in savings as they age.

Several years ago he met with the oldest group at the national youth ministry conference.

“I said, ‘I’m approaching retirement, and I have a game plan together. I want to be sure you’re OK.’ When I started showing them how much they need to have in savings to live at about the \$50,000 to \$60,000 level, I saw a room full of people who looked like a deer in the headlights. They had a lot of questions — they said, ‘I wish you had come and talked to us when we first started.’”

He’s since worked his way through older attendees down to those who have just three to five years in ministry. Working backwards from retirement age, he helps them see how much they should already have in savings or investments.

“When I asked how many were on target, it might be three or four out of a room of 40,” Oglesby said.

He emphasizes that if they have gotten behind, they may need to pick up a side hustle to fund retirement — a third leg for their stool.

Oglesby owns rent houses. He knows guys who flip houses or have other side jobs. “But the best idea is to start early and start quickly, even though you think there’s no way.”

Churches have to help educate ministers as well, Oglesby said, and “matching funds for retirement, whether 2, 3 or 10 percent, is so good to train people that this is important. It helps them do what they want to do anyway.

“It’s the church being like my dad. ‘You’ll thank me later,’ he said. And I do.”



SCREENSHOT VIA YOUTUBE.COM/@ALMOSTESSENTIAL



Coss

RETIREMENT STRATEGY FOR MINISTRY LEADERS: DON'T DELAY

By CHERYL MANN BACON

Jordan Coss’ doctoral project at Fuller Theological Seminary included a podcast series titled “**Almost Essential**,” available on Apple, Amazon, Spotify and elsewhere.

His research led him to recommend six action steps for ministers who don’t want to find themselves working forever or living dependent on family in retirement.

1. Read “How to Retire with Enough Money and How to Know What Enough Money Is” by Teresa Ghilarducci, whom he interviews in episode three of the podcast.

2. Don’t opt out of Social Security, but delay benefits until age 70 if at all possible.

3. Seek out a vehicle that provides pension-style income. You need Social Security/Medicare and a pension. Maybe your spouse will have a pension. Also consider the Pension Fund of the Christian Church or an indexed universal life policy. Not everyone agrees on what’s best, but do something.

4. If offered a defined contribution plan, i.e. a 401(k) or 403(b), do it. While the shift from pensions to 401(k)s has created the problem we now face, it’s the best we’ve got. So if your employer provides a match, use it.

5. If possible, own a home instead of living in a parsonage.

6. Mainstream Churches of Christ need to begin with the end in mind — and help provide the new third leg of the traditional retirement stool — pension, Social Security/Medicare and personal savings. Ghilarducci says the new third leg is having to work longer, so think about what your retirement job will be. Double major while in college. Be thinking about it from the beginning.

Above, Jordan Coss, upper right, talks about pension strategies for ministers on Episode 17 of his podcast, “Almost Essential,” with Lars Coburn, bottom right; Jonathan Beckham-Brink, bottom left; and Matt Shears, upper left.



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PHOTO PROVIDED BY JARED MAYES

Arkansas church 'stepped up' after EF2 tornado

By NIC FRARACCIO

ROGERS, ARK. — In front of a torn projector screen, the worship leader led singing at the Southside Church of Christ on a recent Sunday morning.

The northwest Arkansas congregation leaned on the words from the hymn “Be Still, My Soul.” Broken stained glass littered the baptistery.

The church — which averages attendance of about 220 — had canceled its assembly the previous Lord’s day after this growing community of 73,000 took a direct hit from an EF2 tornado.

The 1.7-mile wide tornado that struck Rogers came as powerful storms moved across Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas.

The first Sunday service since the twister focused on the theme “For Such a Time as This.”

As lead minister Jared Mayes spoke to the congregation, his attitude demonstrated a sense of gratefulness.

“I don’t quite think it’s the worst church day ever,” said Mayes, alluding to his 6-year-old daughter’s disappointment that Bible classes and children’s worship were canceled. “In fact, I find it to be a tremendous blessing.”

A week earlier, the church doors flew open during the tornado, filling parts of the building with debris.

Above the lobby entrance, the awning barely withstood the storm.

The congregation came together to repair the damages before the Sunday service.

Members smiled, shared hugs and affirmed Mayes’ sermon with frequent amens, despite the difficulties.

“When you yourselves were shaken, you stepped up,” Mayes said. “When your homes were damaged, and you were without power, you stepped up.”

Green Valley Bible Camp in Rogers — which is associated with Churches of Christ — reported “many trees down with damage to some buildings.”

It’s “extremely fortunate” that children were not on the property, said David Cherry, the camp board’s vice president.

As people rose from closets and cellars, it did not take long for Southside members to start serving the community.

Brothers and sisters teamed together to send chainsaw groups to homes and neighborhoods. From one tree to another, the groups showed love to one another as they explored the destruction.

In the church’s family life center, names of those seeking help filled a whiteboard.

Ocean Craig, the church media director, oversaw the groups sent into the battered community.

“It was a whole church effort,” Craig said.

As Southside provided aid, relief poured in from fellow Christians across the U.S., including faith-based disaster relief organizations.

Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort sent four truckloads of supplies to the Arkansas church building.

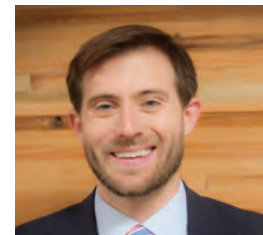
Elsewhere, the Nashville, Tenn.-based ministry recently rushed food and emergency items to help after tornadoes in Valley View, Texas, and Greenfield, Iowa.

Here in Rogers, Southside’s family life center transformed into a relief hub overnight.

“If you came through those doors, we were going to love on you and find out what you needed,” member Amy Dotson said.

As Mayes wrapped up his sermon, the faces of those in the pews reflected elation and satisfaction.

“In all my years of ministry,” the preacher said, “I have never seen anything that can compare to the beauty of what this church has done.”



Mayes

Above, Ocean Craig stands in front of a whiteboard with the names of Southside Church of Christ members affected by the recent storm in Rogers, Ark.

NATIONAL



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CREATING A SAFE HAVEN FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

Memphis church collaborates with faith-based nonprofit Isaiah 117.

By NIC FRARACCIO

Under the shade of a few trees, a house is under construction beside the White Station Church of Christ in Memphis, Tenn.

It's no ordinary residence.

The building will provide a safe haven for foster children awaiting placement, minister Bob Turner said. One year ago, the church sold the half acre to Isaiah 117 — a faith-based nonprofit that has grown to nearly 60 locations in 13 states.

"This is how God does it," Ronda Paulson, the organization's founder and executive director, said of the expansion. "He moves his people, and he unites them. If people just give a little bit of what they have, you have a home that can lavishly love on children."

Based out of Elizabethton, Tenn., the organization seeks to reduce trauma for children, lighten the load for child welfare services and ease the transition for foster families, according to its website.

Ava Conley serves as Isaiah 117's location director for Shelby County, where Memphis is located. She said the new house will allow children to spend "one of the hardest days of their lives" with loving people.

White Station started its own ministry to provide for foster children in 2014, member Anna Barber said.

"Our ministry is called Threads of Hope," said Barber, who leads the effort. "We collect clothing, diapers and all sorts of things to just meet the child's needs."

Threads of Hope's work eventually connected the church with Isaiah 117.

"I feel like God was preparing White Station to be a part of Isaiah 117 for many years," Barber said. "It's really opened their eyes to that need, and it has really become heavy on their heart."

The location next to the church will be the organization's first in Memphis, a metro area of 1.3 million people.

"Any city church needs to have partnerships," Turner said. "You can't do all the work on your own. But if you are going to care for orphans, this is one way to do it."

The idea for Isaiah 117 originated in 2014 when the Paulson family went to pick up a foster child at the Department of Children's Services in Johnson City, Tenn.

"It led us to foster care classes, and that's when you learn about children who enter the foster care system and what they are going through," Ronda Paulson said.

Before that class, the Paulsons had never thought about how difficult foster care could be for a child during placement.

"You don't stop and think, 'What does that day feel like?'" Ronda Paulson said. "As that all started to unfold, it truly devastated me that it's not a day to celebrate for that child." 🌍



BOBBY ROSS JR.

Left, the White Station Church of Christ sign overlooks construction of the Isaiah 117 house in Memphis, Tenn.

NATIONAL



PHOTO PROVIDED BY SCOTT LAIRD



BOBBY ROSS JR.



SHUTTERSTOCK

Far left, Scott and Patty Laird accept a plaque recognizing their three decades of service in Great Falls, Mont. Above, the late Oklahoma State University campus minister Monty Daffern “just being Monty.” Left, a view of Spokane, Wash., where two Churches of Christ are merging.

MONTANA

GREAT FALLS — After nearly 30 years, the Great Falls Church of Christ is welcoming a new lead minister: Matt Burlson.

Burlson succeeds Scott Laird, the congregation’s longest-serving lead minister, who had preached for Great Falls since 1994.

Laird watched it become the largest Church of Christ in the state. The Montana native and his wife, Patty, have also served churches in Canada and New England.

But Burlson and his wife, Hannah, are not new faces for the church — he’s served as an evangelist for Great Falls since 2019.

Previously, the graduate of three universities associated with Churches of Christ — Heritage Christian, Harding School of Theology and Lipscomb — served churches in Arkansas and his home state of Alabama.

After a six-month sabbatical, Laird will return as a part-time administrative minister.

“We have been blessed by this great body of Christians and look forward to a continued partnership even though it will look a bit different,” Laird, who serves on *The Christian Chronicle’s* national board of trustees, said in a Facebook post.

MICHIGAN

DEARBORN — The 40-member Parkside Church of Christ serves this city of about 110,000, which is home to the nation’s most Muslim residents per capita and the largest mosque in North America.

That demographic shift in the seven decades since Parkside’s founding has forced members to reevaluate the way they share the Gospel, minister Wayne Beason said.

That change has meant serving halal food at the church’s summer block party, helping sell goods made by immigrants and refugees at the farmer’s market and starting a conversation group for members to help English language learners. Learn more on Episode 66 of *The Christian Chronicle* Podcast.

OKLAHOMA

STILLWATER — “Worship where you are.”

It’s just one of the famous, or maybe infamous, one-liners for which Monty Daffern was known.

Over nearly 30 years, thousands of students who passed through the Oklahoma State University campus ministry at the Stillwater Church of Christ heard him share those words.

Read Chellie Ison’s tribute to Daffern, who died May 13 at 54, at christianchronicle.org/monty.

WASHINGTON

SPOKANE — Two Spokane Churches of Christ less than a mile from each other — the Northside and Sunrise congregations — will soon merge.

The churches had been in close fellowship since 2021, holding joint gatherings and events — even preacher swaps — before the elders of Northside and Sunrise decided to “bring the complementary strengths of the two congregations together.”

In addition to helping staff Bible classes and providing more volunteers for existing ministries, the merger will allow the group of Christians — about 130 from Northside and 100 from Sunrise — to expand outreach efforts toward their neighbors.

“It is apparent to us that God will accomplish much more through us together, rather than separate, when it comes to reaching new people for Jesus, serving our neighborhood and schools, shining a light in our community, and increasing the effectiveness of our ministries,” the churches said in an announcement.

The united membership will keep all existing elders, deacons and staff from Northside and Sunrise — which have both existed since the 1940s — as well as both buildings and take on a new name, yet to be announced.



Teach a Man to Fish...

An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge. - Proverbs 18:15



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INTERNATIONAL

GHANA

Construction for a girls' boarding school begins in rural New Debiso, bringing hope to future generations of women.

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ISRAEL

Black Christians in the U.S. call for permanent ceasefire in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The petitioners request Churches of Christ participate in an 'international reconciliation conversation.'

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AROUND THE WORLD

Missionaries serve Churches of Christ in Rome, a flood threatens a congregation in Nairobi, Kenya, and more briefs from Churches of Christ around the world.

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ON THE GROUND

Follow *Christian Chronicle* reporter Audrey Jackson as she covers a multinational gathering of Christians in Marathon, Greece, and a Church of Christ in Nazareth, Israel. See the latest updates on the *Chronicle's* social media pages, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and X.

FAITH DESPITE WAR

The Christian Chronicle's Erik Tryggstad reports live from the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv. Joined by Inna Kuzmenko and Richard Baggett, Tryggstad details how the 2-year-old war to repel Russia's invasion is testing the faith, hope and love of Churches of Christ in Ukraine and beyond. christianchronicle.org/episode.

EPISODE 67



AUDREY JACKSON

'If you educate a woman, you educate a whole nation'

Christians establish a girls' boarding school in the northwestern region of Ghana.

By AUDREY JACKSON

NEW DEBISO, GHANA — A girl knelt to show her 4-year-old sister how to boil sand and water in two discarded Costa sardine tins over a small charcoal fire.

Another girl nearby mashed plantain with a stick, practicing how to make fufu — a Ghanaian culinary staple of pounded cassava, yam and plantain.

Across the dirt road, volunteers from the village and the Bia Lamplighter College of Education — which is associated with Churches of Christ — mixed bags of cement with water.

The material would

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

A 4-year-old girl practices cooking by boiling water and sand in a discarded Costa sardine tin in New Debiso, Ghana.

INTERNATIONAL

form the foundation for the first girls' boarding school for primary education in a region known as the Bia West District, according to Lamplighter founder Augustine Tawiah.

The nearest alternative is 11 hours away in the capital city of Accra.

Tawiah, who is also a Ghanaian parliamentary member for Bia West, is acutely aware of the educational challenges girls face in the rural regions.

He grew up just a few miles down the road in Sefwi Asuopiri, a village so small that it can barely be located on a map. His parents, both farmers, never sent his sister to school.

"I've been through these villages, trying to start churches, trying to campaign to be elected, and I've come across these young ladies," said Tawiah, who attends Lamplighter's campus Church of Christ in Sefwi Debiso and the Knutsford University Church of Christ when in Accra.

"They don't have any future," he added. "They have sixth grade educations, ninth grade educations. They are going to be farmers condemned to this life to have many children. And what is the future of these children?"

To address these concerns, he and his wife, Anita Lynn, founded the Lamplighter Community Academy, a Christian school for K-6 students, in 2006. The couple established the college 10 years later to allow students — who may pursue secondary education elsewhere — a seamless transition into higher education.

Yet the challenges with girls' education persisted.

In rural households with multiple children, most parents can only financially support the education of one or two of their children. Often, they choose boys.

"Girls are basically the ones who do the chores around the house," said Lynn Tawiah, an American who has a doctorate in education from Regent University in Virginia and a master's in education from the University of Memphis. "And boys generally go to school."

Disparities in education

The main determining factors that create educational disparities in this West African nation are poverty, gender and distance to school, according to UNICEF.

Faustine Delely knows all three intimately.

Delely, a recent education graduate who completed her teaching practicum at the Lamplighter college, sacrificed for her education.

Waking up at 5 a.m. to make sure she arrived on time, the Debiso Church of Christ member walked two hours to school every morning.

She was determined to complete school for one simple reason.

"I saw my parents suffer," Delely said.

Education was her opportunity to avoid a life of poverty. But like many in rural areas, she faced financial difficulties.

To convince her parents to fund her education, Delely carried goods — usually cured fish — with her every morning to sell on the streets after school.



Above, foreman Koo Redd, right, discusses the construction of a new girls' boarding school in New Debiso with men from the surrounding area.

"I knew I had to help my mother to get to where I wanted to go," she said. "There are some parents who, if you don't help, there is no way they will waste resources on you."

While gender disparities in education have improved since the 1990s, retention rates often decrease among female junior high and high school students, UNICEF reported in 2020.

This is, in part, due to the expectation that girls should take on more responsibilities around the home with their siblings — or their own children.

"In the rural communities, they need to be at home," Lynn Tawiah said. "And they're, of course, dealing with puberty, the interest in young men. Maybe they get pregnant."

A girl's place

Augustine Tawiah's great niece is one such example.

Sarah Mensah was 17 when she got pregnant with her son, Flavio, now 12.

"It was not easy," said Mensah, now a licensed nurse. "At first, I had no hope. But my mom encouraged me and said that when I gave birth, she would take care of my child, so I could go back to school."

Her mother, who worked as a teacher, dreamed of being a nurse. Her grandmother, who never attended school, dreamed of receiving an education. Mensah had the opportunity to fulfill both dreams.

But her son's birth strained the household's finances.

The man who impregnated her refused to provide any monetary support. Rumors that Mensah's father attempted to sell her spread between the neighbors.

"People said, 'Even though you went to school, you still came back and gave birth. Look at your case. There is no need for even going to school,'" Mensah recalled.

Eventually, her family raised the cost of tuition — 500 cedis or about \$33 — necessary for Mensah to return to school.

But not all girls are so fortunate.

Adam Kusi, a chaplain at J.A. Kufuor Senior High School in Kumasi, has

INTERNATIONAL



PHOTOS BY AUDREY JACKSON

worked with multiple pregnant students since joining the school's staff in 2021.

"In places like Kumasi, because it is more of a metropolitan area, we don't have those cultural issues affecting education," said Kusi, who attends the Oforikrom Church of Christ. "But when you travel up north, in some areas people still hold on to their belief that the place of girls in society is in the kitchen. And most of the people who even have the resources to sponsor education would rather it be one of their male children than a girl child."

The full image of Christ

Yet in this rural village, people packed into the Church of Pentecost building for a meeting formally introducing the girls' boarding school project.

Elders, dressed in their traditional regalia, sat in front of the community, listening to Augustine Tawiah's proposal. Customs agents in the pews warned the contractors of prosecution if they stole materials or funds. Women standing in the back tended to fussy children.

The entire project could be built in five months if funded by private donors, Augustine Tawiah said.

But with limited government funds available for private school partnerships with the state, construction often grinds to a halt — sometimes for years.

The total project will cost about 11,911,640 cedi or \$800,000. The construction of the dormitory and school facilities will cost a total of \$380,000, and the remaining \$420,000 will cover utilities, transportation and a medical clinic that will serve both the school and community.

The school will specialize in STEM, which comprises fields where girls historically have been underrepresented in Ghana. Classes and school clubs will focus on science, technology, engineering and math.

Addressing the village, Augustine Tawiah spoke on the importance of girls' education.

"We need to really let them grow into the full image of Christ without being hindered," he said. "We are not in a Muslim country, where girls are forced not to go to school. If they want to go to school, we want to create an atmosphere

that is very open, that is conducive for them to go without any hindrance."

When complete, the school will house 315 students.

Augustine Tawiah has a master's and doctoral degree in educational leadership and policy from the University of Memphis, as well as degrees from Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn., and the Harding School of Theology in Memphis, Tenn.

He intends to hire teachers and staff who are members of Churches of Christ, some who — like Delely — may have graduated from the Lamplighter college only four miles down the road.

The boarding school will not just be a place of education — it will also offer safety.

"I envision girls from all over ... really learning — actually reaching their potential," Lynn Tawiah said. "Not worried about anything around them, not being at risk of molestation, or even at risk of their education being halted because they have to run home and do chores every other day."

But Augustine Tawiah imagines more than the positive short-term outcomes. He hopes for future generations of women serving in government, scientific research and law.

"We are given the opportunity to have dominion over the world," Augustine Tawiah said, referencing Genesis 1:26. "And women, as I continuously say, have a big say in the shape and twist of our worlds.

"If you educate a man, you educate one person," he added, citing an African proverb. "If you educate a woman, you educate a whole nation." 🌍

Above, a mother balances her baby on her back during a village meeting introducing a girls' boarding school to New Debiso, Ghana. Upper left, Augustine Tawiah, center, discusses the layout of New Debiso girls' boarding school with foreman Koo Redd. Lower left, children of a rural farmer stand beside drying cocoa beans harvested by their parents in New Debiso.

INTERNATIONAL

Black Christians call for permanent ceasefire

By AUDREY JACKSON

Thirteen leaders from predominantly Black Churches of Christ have signed a formal letter calling for a permanent ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war.

The initiative — led by James Michael Crusoe, Edward Keyton and Quintessa Hathaway — began in February during Black History Month after the Somebody Must Come Preaching podcast featured the trio on an episode titled “Their struggle is our struggle.”

“We didn’t take a position, per se, to say one group is right and the other group is wrong,” Crusoe said. “This is more about peace. How do you bring two parties together?”

The minister for the Arlington Road Church of Christ in Hopewell, Va., said 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 specifically spoke to him:

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”

“Through Christ there is forgiveness,” Crusoe said. “Christ is redemption. That was our objective — not to point the finger at the Israelis or the Palestinians, not even to point the finger at the United States’ involvement in it, but to ask: What can the church do to bring peace and reconciliation?”

Hathaway, a member of the Jackson Street Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn., and a former Democratic congressional candidate in Arkansas, acknowledged the controversy around the Israel-Hamas war.

“We have to be willing to even touch upon issues that are controversial,” said Hathaway, whose preacher, Christopher Jackson, is among the signatories. “Jesus tells us to address matters such as these things. Jesus was a revolutionary. Jesus was an activist. He stood up against the Roman government. As true followers of the gospels, the Holy Bible, we have this same charge.”

The letter states that the “life and legacy of Christ requires followers to go into all the world teaching and preaching the Gospel and that the Great Commission is not limited to the



AUDREY JACKSON

Israeli soldiers stand outside the Muslim quarter in Jerusalem in 2022.

church house. The Church of Christ is participating in an international reconciliation conversation.”

Hathaway hopes the document will motivate Christians to speak up about social issues — and perhaps even influence the president.

“Our goal and objective is that the Biden administration hears that the Church of Christ is concerned about this matter, that we have our finger on the pulse of the problem,” she said. “We also seek for our fellowship, for members of the body and for ministers to go out and be about the business of spreading the word when it comes to what’s happening on domestic and international issues.”

The Israel-Hamas war began on Oct. 7 when Hamas militants killed about 1,200 Israeli citizens and abducted about 250 civilians. Nearly eight months later, more than 130 still remain in captivity, though a quarter are believed to be deceased, according to Israeli officials.

Israel’s offensive actions — which have included the bombing of hospitals, a refugee camp and an aid caravan — have killed at least 35,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry, which doesn’t distinguish between combatants and civilians. Palestinian children represent 37 percent of the reported deaths.

The deaths of innocents are what motivated Warren Blakney Sr., minister for the North Peoria Church of Christ in Tulsa, Okla., and former president of the Tulsa chapter of the NAACP, to sign.

“I think one thing we probably would all agree on for the most part is that the killing of children and babies and the bombing of hospitals in this kind of culture and time is not what we would accept as Christians,” Blakney said.

The document states, “What is happening in the Holy Land is genocide, inhumane, and is not reflective of Christian values.”

Other signatories include Dwight Brownlee of Memphis, Tenn.; Perry Johnson of Tampa, Fla.; John Marshall of Anderson, S.C.; Roosevelt Johnson of Savannah, Ga.; Loyd Harris of Little Rock, Ark.; Joe Woodley of Hopewell, Va.; Marvin Bailey of Emporia, Va.; and Ruben Pillay of Durban, South Africa.

The death toll also disturbs Keyton, minister emeritus for the Bouldercrest Church of Christ in Atlanta. He denounced Israel’s military response and said he believes most people want the nation “to cease and desist from this level of brutality.”

“I’m thinking about human lives — not so much Israeli lives or Palestinian lives — but people’s lives in general, because we all bleed,” Keyton said. “I just want to see it come to a stop.

“Jesus said, ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,’” he added. “And I would not want any entity blowing up my children, blowing up my infrastructure and killing people that had nothing to do with the conflict.”



Crusoe



Hathaway



Keyton

INTERNATIONAL



PHOTO PROVIDED BY HEALING HANDS INTERNATIONAL



PHOTO PROVIDED BY DAYBREAK BIBLE COLLEGE



PHOTO PROVIDED BY SOUTH PACIFIC BIBLE COLLEGE

Far left, a woman in rural Kenya receives food aid from Healing Hands International. Above, Christians gather outside the meeting place of the Chikupi Church of Christ in Zambia. Left, students and faculty at South Pacific Bible College take a class photo.

ITALY

ROME — Nearly two millennia after the apostle Paul came to the capital of the Roman empire in chains, Dr. Vittorio Vitalone and his wife, Tonia, serve Churches of Christ in this city of 3 million souls and congregations across Italy.

The couple recently traveled to Anzio, the site of one of World War II's bloodiest battles, to encourage a Church of Christ there.

"This small congregation, 10 to 12 members, is doing their best to keep the flame of the faith burning," the Vitalones said in a recent newsletter.

The Vitalones also visited congregations in the northern Italian cities of Pistoia, Prato, Vicenza and Bologna and spent time with members of their supporting congregation, the Lake Cities Church of Christ in Trophy Club, Texas.

In early summer, the Vitalones and Italian minister Franco Verardi hosted the National Retreat for Families in Italy.

"Compassion, Consolation and Comfort" was the theme, taken from 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

"Each year is a great opportunity to catch up, strengthen each other's spirits and study the Lord's Word," the Vitalones said.

KENYA

NAIROBI — Minister Patrick Wanyama went to sleep amid pounding rains and was awakened about midnight by kitchen utensils clinking against each other — as they floated. Wanyama discovered knee-deep water in his home and took shelter on the third floor of a nearby building.

"When he went down in the morning, some of his household items had been washed away," said Nyabuto Marube, a fellow minister in Nairobi.

Nairobi's poor communities have experienced a double dose of misery amid recent torrential rains and flash floods. In the Mukuru kwa Reuben slum, where Wanyama preaches, two people died in a recent demolition. The church's building survived the flooding and the demolitions, Marube said, but several church members lost their businesses.

Marube's daughter, Abigail, and her friends collected clothing and blankets to take to those affected by the flooding and demolitions.

Flooding across Kenya has claimed more than 200 lives, according to news reports. Healing Hands International, a nonprofit associated with Churches of Christ, is providing relief.

See hhi.org/disaster/kenya-flooding-response/ to contribute.

NEW ZEALAND

TAURANGA — This South Pacific nation, which had some of the toughest pandemic restrictions on the globe, has reopened its borders.

The easing of restrictions allowed four new students from South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand and India to move to New Zealand to attend the South Pacific Bible College, which is associated with Churches of Christ.

The college also has two in-person visiting instructors from Abilene Christian University in Texas, Richard Wright and Kilnam Cha.

See spbc.org.nz.

ZAMBIA

KABWEZA — The 38-year-old Chikupi Church of Christ meets in a rural community in this southern African nation.

But nearly four decades after its establishment by missionaries, the church struggles with low attendance and other issues, said Dennis Sabelo, director of Daybreak Bible College, a ministry training school near Zambia's capital, Lusaka.

Recently three instructors and 10 students from the school visited the Chikupi church and pledged to help the congregation.

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2023-2024

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Pulpit Minister - Urbana, Ill.

The **Dublin Street Church of Christ** is seeking a pulpit minister who is capable of preaching, teaching, and defending the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Bible college interns as well as those desiring to re-enter the ministry are welcome to apply. All interested candidates must send a cover letter, resume, detailed page of references or three letters of reference (including current congregation) and a video or digital copy of one sermon presentation to:

dublinsearch23@gmail.com

Dublin Street Church of Christ • 1402 W Dublin St • Urbana, IL 61801

Part-Time/Full-Time Pulpit Minister - West Chester, Pa.

The **Church of Christ of West Chester** seeks an experienced minister to preach, teach and evangelize. Established in 1954 in the desirable suburbs of East Goshen Township, 45 miles west of Philadelphia, we are a congregation of 25-35 baptized souls. Our servants include one elder and three deacons. We are located near notable public schools and West Chester University. Advanced education in Bible study and highly successful minister experience is mandatory of applicants (must be a resident and citizen of the United States). Salary is negotiable; compensation includes a rent-free single-family home. Please send your typed resume and a video of your two most recent sermons to our email address: **westchestercofc11@verizon.net**

**Church of Christ at West Chester
1326 Park Ave • West Chester, PA 19380
www.westchestercofc.com**

Pulpit Preacher - Salisbury, Md.

The **Salisbury Church of Christ**, a small acapella congregation located in Salisbury, Md., is seeking a full-time pulpit preacher/evangelist. The successful 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
Salisbury Church of Christ
3322 Old Ocean City Rd
Salisbury, MD 21804**

Full-time Minister - Danbury, Conn.

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock and it will be open unto you."

The **Danbury Church of Christ** in Danbury, Conn., is seeking a qualified minister who will be a light within the community with the ability to shepherd our friendly, family-oriented congregation. The candidate should be knowledgeable with Scriptures and gifted to preach, teach, evangelize, and equip the church for discipleship and service. Danbury is a mission field, and the minister should be mission minded.

Responsibilities to include, but are not limited to:

- Preach and teach Bible class on Sunday A.M. and teach class/devotional on Wednesday P.M.
- Visit members, shut-ins, nursing homes, prisons, hospitals regularly, with members.
- Establish prison and campus ministries, with members.
- Establish an outreach program & equip members, i.e. print articles, social media, public speaking.
- Conduct and/or attend home Bible studies.

The minister will be a devoted follower/disciple of Jesus, passionate about helping others live and grow as disciples, and make other disciples of Jesus. The minister, under the oversight of the men's leadership, will work and support the vision of Danbury Church of Christ. Interested candidates should send a cover letter and resume to: **info1danburycoc.org@gmail.com**

Pulpit Minister - Temple Hills, Md.

The **Oxon Hill Church of Christ**, located minutes from the nation's capital in Temple Hills, Md., is searching for a full-time minister. We have 50+ members. The position requires someone who is sound in Biblical knowledge and has excellent communication and writing skills. Applicant will serve under the oversight of the elders. Bilingual (English/Spanish) is a plus but not required.

Applicants should send resume, biography, three current references, video of or link to two sermons, and salary requirements to: **1oxonhillcoc@gmail.com**, or mail to:

**Oxon Hill Church of Christ
4201 Brinkley Road
Temple Hills, MD 20748**

Full-time Minister – Quartzsite, Ariz.

"Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Cor 1:2

Quartzsite Church of Christ is seeking a full-time minister to help spread the Word in this unique community made-up of full-time residents, snowbirds, and winter visitors/vendors. Our summer attendance is about 20, and our winter attendance swells to nearly 50, with members seasoned in the Scriptures. Quartzsite is a great mission field, as close to one million souls arrive in the winter months, especially in the month of January, when the town hosts the famous Rock, Gem and Mineral shows and the RV show. Our Gospel meeting also is held the third week of January. Quartzsite is about halfway between Phoenix and Los Angeles, Calif. The congregation is looking for a good man with a sound education in biblical studies and knowledge of the Scriptures. He needs to have the ability to minister from the pulpit, to evangelize (thus being sound in his sermons), and to facilitate Bible classes to help spread God's word. Candidate needs to have most of his own means of support. Please contact **Dave Fiddament** at **(530) 260-3332**.

Full-time or Part-time Minister – Lake Orion, Mich.

The **Lake Orion Church of Christ** is seeking a full-time or part-time minister. We are looking for an enthusiastic, spirit-filled, evangelistic-minded preacher of the good news. The congregation is located in a growing suburban community 14 miles from Rochester Christian University and 30 miles from Michigan Christian Youth Camp. Members are welcoming and sensitive to the needs of others with a desire to increase their impact in the community.

**Lake Orion Church of Christ
1080 Lake Hemingway Road
Lake Orion, MI 48360**

Contact: Randy McClure at (248) 310-4456 or rmcclure1958@gmail.com

Full-time Minister - Pataskala, Ohio

The **Pataskala Church of Christ** is currently searching for a full-time minister due to the retirement of its present minister of 23 years. Starting date for the position is negotiable. Located 20 miles east of Columbus, Ohio, in Licking County, Pataskala is a town with a population of 18,000. Our congregation was established in 1966, has a Sunday morning attendance of between 60-70, and is served by four elders and six deacons.

The candidate is to be a graduate with a Bible degree from a Church of Christ affiliated college/university or school of preaching. He is to have at least five years of experience in full-time local ministry. He is to be a man of moral, ethical, and doctrinal integrity with an intense loyalty to the scriptures. His duties would be evangelizing, preaching, teaching classes, and ministering to the membership and the community. Compensation is negotiable. Specific information about the congregation is available at **www.pataskalachurchofchrist.com**. Interested individuals are asked to submit a resume, recent photo, and an audio or video recording of a recent sermon to:

**Elders: Pataskala Church of Christ
9132 Blacks Road SW, P.O. Box 15, Pataskala, OH 43062
Email address: pataskalacofc@aol.com**

LIFE MATTERS

INSIGHT

Erik Tryggestad shares how Ukrainian Christians are remaining faithful to God despite two years of war.

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OPINION

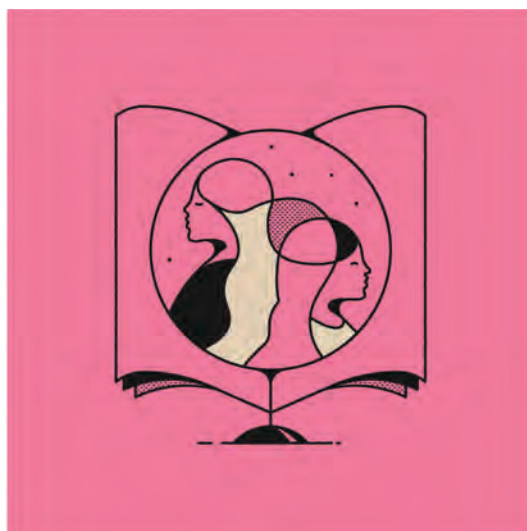
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ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Why Ukraine still matters

After two years of war, we can't forget our brothers and sisters in this war-torn nation.

ZOSIN, POLAND — “Can I ask you a stupid question?” the border guard said. “Where are you going?”

He had just asked me if I was a farmer since I live in Oklahoma. So this question seemed much less stupid.

“Kyiv,” I said.

“Why?” the guard asked, with a hint of snark in his voice.

“Preacher training school graduation,” I said. He waved us through.

Crossing the border into Ukraine felt different than it did two years ago, when Audrey Jackson and I accompanied a small group from Sunset International Bible Institute and the Program

INSIGHT for Humanitarian Aid. Back then, as we approached the border near Siret, Romania, no fewer than seven uniformed men surrounded our van. Our driver, Adi Voicu, talked to them as I feared the worst. They'd spend hours looking through our bags of relief supplies, I thought.

But no. “These guys want to help us carry our bags to the border,” Adi said. They were volunteer firefighters and emergency workers. Along the path to the checkpoint, we saw tents manned by priests and aid workers offering coffee and sandwiches. When we returned to Romania the next day, they asked us if we were OK, if we had a place to stay.

Two years later, in Poland, we chose to cross at a small checkpoint in Zosin. Days earlier, Polish farmers had blocked a bigger checkpoint that leads to Lviv, Ukraine, in protest of the European Union lifting import duties on Ukrainian grain after the war with Russia began. “Ukrainian grain is flooding Poland,” one farmer told Al Jazeera, “and we're getting poorer and poorer.”

I came here to attend a workshop and graduation ceremony sponsored by the Ukrainian Bible Institute. I accompanied

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30



By ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Left, Ukrainian flags line Kyiv's Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square), each honoring a Ukrainian who lost their life in the war with Russia.

LIFE MATTERS

INSIGHT

Richard Baggett of Sunset; Jay Don Rogers, who directed the Bible institute for 19 years; and Rogers' wife, Mary Lee. Inna Kuzmenko, a Christian from the hard-hit town of Kharkiv, was our translator. Our drivers, Oleksander Sikorski and Philip Mock-nuk, serve with Volunteer Brothers. For two years, workers with this ministry have driven shipments of relief supplies to churches and community centers near the front lines.

In the early days of the war, we were united in purpose. I didn't know what to expect now. My Ukrainian brothers and sisters must be exhausted, I thought. And they have to know that support has wavered in the U.S. — that some politicians have called for my country to drop its financial support for Ukraine.

Would I find tired, resentful faces this time?

I underestimated my Ukrainian friends. More than anything else, they were grateful that we made the 15-hour journey from Warsaw to Irpin, a suburb of Kyiv that bears terrible scars from the early days of the war. The burned shells of cars form a makeshift memorial on the side of the road. The city's cultural center is in ruins, festooned with promises that it will be rebuilt.

During the three-day conference, I talked to church members who made the dangerous journey from Kharkiv, Kramatorsk and the Donetsk region, just miles from the frontlines. Air raid sirens and explosions have become common, "like birds singing," one woman told me.

But they keep on praying. They keep on helping those in need. They keep studying their Bibles and baptizing. When the power goes out, they worship in the dark.

Prayers seem to mean more now. So do goodbyes.

On the first day of the war, I put together a piece titled "Why Ukraine matters to Churches of Christ," drawing on the 20-plus years I've covered the fellowship in Ukraine. I wrote about how the free-thinking coal miners of eastern Ukraine provided a white field for harvest when the Iron Curtain fell. Ukrainian Christians have taken their zeal for the Kingdom across their country and, now, across Europe.

I don't know when or how this war will end, but I'm so encouraged, so proud, to see God working through our Ukrainian brothers and sisters. Truly, this is faith under fire.

I said as much on this most recent trip when I presided over the Lord's Supper for the Irpin Church of Christ. There were about 35 of us there. Several women had sons serving on the front lines. They shared photos and shed tears as they told us their stories.

The church's minister, Sergey Shupishov, told me about his brother, Dima, who's also a minister. Dima was called into military service, and his unit went missing about four months ago. I'll share that story — and many more — in future issues.

Before we left Ukraine, Sergey gave me a



PHOTOS BY ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Top, cars abandoned by residents of Irpin, Ukraine, and later destroyed by Russian soldiers have become a makeshift memorial. Bottom, Ukrainians — some from cities near the front lines of the war — attend a graduation sponsored by the Ukrainian Bible Institute.

military patch from one of Dima's uniforms. It reads "Simul ad Victorium" — "Together to Victory" in Latin. Sergey said it was a way to honor his brother and thank us for our visit, for remembering them.

I find myself stunned and speechless by this act.

Remembering is important. There are plenty of verses in the Bible about how important it is for us to remember what God has done for us. God also remembers us. When the children of Israel were enslaved in Egypt, God "heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob" (Exodus 2:24).

I remember the words Ukrainian minister Yura Taran told me two years ago: "This is our Exodus. Soon, we will find the promised land."

I will continue to remember. I will continue to pray. Ukraine still matters. 🌍

ERIK TRYGGESTAD is President and CEO of *The Christian Chronicle*. Contact erik@christianchronicle.org, and follow him on Twitter @eriktryggestad.

LIFE MATTERS



AUDREY JACKSON

OPINION

Meet Nic Fraraccio, our summer news intern

OKLAHOMA CITY — We never know where we will end up in life. However, if we trust in the Lord, we can use our calling to glorify him. I never expected to serve as the summer news intern for *The Christian Chronicle*.

I grew up in Brandon, Fla., with my parents, Lisa and Lenny, and my sister, Isabella. Our family has attended the Creekside Church of Christ in Valrico, Fla., formerly known as the Bell Shoals Church of Christ, since 2004.

I loved being a part of the youth group. Guided by former youth minister Logan Butler, my faith grew abundantly. At age 16, I put on the Lord in baptism. I will cherish that moment for the rest of my life.

Following my baptism, I preached to the congregation during youth-led worship services. I always count it an honor to speak in front of my brothers and sisters in Christ.

When I attended Foundation Christian Academy in Valrico — about 15 miles east of Tampa — I excelled in most of my classes. I loved history with Mrs. Margaret Reeves and flourished in math with Coach J.P. Smith.

However, I struggled in English. Writing was not my forte, and I did not enjoy reading except for a sports magazine. I did not see storytelling as my strength.

During high school, I leaned on my own understanding of what the future held for me. I dreamed of becoming an analyst for a sports network in America. Little did I know my time at Harding University in Searcy, Ark., would flip my aspirations upside down.

Before my sophomore year at Harding, I discovered my multimedia journalism major — with a concentration in sports — included a class called Newspaper Practicum. The course required a weekly 400-word story about an event within the Harding or Searcy community. I was not thrilled.

But I loved talking with new people.

The interviews and phone calls inspired me to connect with others at Harding.

Surprisingly, my creativity flourished with the pen and paper. My sports coverage hit the press strong, and my peers loved reading my work.

Following my semester as a student writer, I joined *The Bison*, the Harding student newspaper, as the sports editor. The editor-in-chief, Tiane Davis, last year's *Christian Chronicle* summer intern, constantly encouraged me to explore my growing passion for writing.

Tiane was the first person to tell me about the *Chronicle's* summer internship. The first thing she mentioned to me was Editor-in-Chief Bobby Ross Jr.'s fandom for the Texas Rangers.

At first, I was hesitant to apply considering my Tampa Bay Rays have lost three straight play-off matchups against the defending World Series champions — but after much consideration, I decided to put aside my baseball “grudges.” (I’m joking. Kind of.)

My hard work and dedication to *The Bison* eventually led to my appointment as the editor-in-chief for next school year. I am excited to take on the challenge. I am blessed with the opportunity to integrate my passion for writing with my love for God. I will always strive to glorify his name when writing for the *Chronicle*.

Although I never thought I would end up in Oklahoma City, my passion for God and storytelling is at an all-time high. I am blessed to work with an amazing group of people at the *Chronicle* this summer. 🌎

NIC FRARACCIO, a senior journalism major at Harding University, is *The Christian Chronicle's* intern. Contact nic@christianchronicle.org.



By NIC FRARACCIO

Above, Nic Fraraccio works on a story at his desk in *The Christian Chronicle* office.

LIFE MATTERS

MILESTONES

Showcase the lives of your loved ones. Contact milestones@christianchronicle.org for rates and more information.

CELEBRATING

J.C. AND DOROTHY NEWLAND, 76 YEARS — J.C. and Dorothy Newland of Fort Worth, Texas, celebrated their 76th wedding anniversary on May 29, 2024. We're so thankful for you, and we pray your celebration was glorious!

ALICE THIBEDEAU, 100 YEARS — Alice Thibedeau was born on July 24, 1924, in a farmhouse in Shell Lake, Wis. She was the 11th of 12 children and second in her graduating class of 1942. Alice has lived in Illinois, California, Idaho, Oregon and Arizona.

In 1970 she married Donald Sternberg, who passed away in 1976. In 1977, she married Bernard Sauer. For 28 years, they shared good times together hunting, fishing and riding motorcycles. After Bernard's death, Alice moved to Golden Valley, Ariz., to be near her children.

Alice has been a faithful member of the Church of Christ and is dearly loved by her church family. She enjoys a mean game of cards and bingo as well as watching the sunsets, birds, wildlife and mountains around her. Happy 100th Birthday, Alice!

REMEMBERING

ALVIN RAY JENNINGS (1930-2024) — Alvin Ray Jennings, 94, of Fort Worth, Texas, passed away June 3, 2024, surrounded by his family. He joined his beloved Ellen, who passed 18 days prior.

He graduated in 1946 from West Texas High, where he was "Personality King," student body president and — at 120 pounds — quarterback and captain of the football team.

He went to Abilene Christian, planning to become a dentist until a Canadian friend, Roy Merritt, challenged him to become a preacher. Alvin soon changed his focus and his major and began preaching in 1948 near Loraine, Texas. Awards and activities included Student Council vice president, freshman and senior Class favorite, Alpha Chi and Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities.

Alvin earned his master's degree in church history at Butler University in 1951. Upon graduation, the Canyon church sent him to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, to begin a new congregation at the invitation of J.C. Bailey. This is where he met and married Ellen Kristianson, his wife of 69 years.

In Saskatoon, Alvin conducted a weekly radio broadcast and oversaw the construction of the church's first building. He also began a publication, *The Saskatoon Star*, "leading wise men to their Savior." This is also where Lynn Anderson claims that Alvin first planted the seed in him to become a preacher.



The Newlands



Thibedeau



Jennings



Kell

The family moved to Montreal in 1956, and the church in Tulia, Texas, took on his support as he began a new church. They continued the support when the family moved to Burlington, Vt., in 1959 to start a church there.

Alvin developed a Bible slides library in 1958. Publishing rights for the slides were later sold to Jule Miller in Houston. In 1963, Alvin formed a non-profit, Star Bible Publications Inc., and in 1965, moved to Fort Worth at the request of the Brown Trail church to lead a direct mail evangelism effort. Over the next 40 years, *The Star Magazine* was sent to over 50 million U.S. homes, along with millions of tracts, books, films, videos, and cassettes.

Alvin and Ellen were also deeply involved at Fort Worth Christian School, where Alvin served on the Board in the 1970s. Alvin had a passion for teaching people about Christ and led weekly in-home Bible classes for over 35 years. He'd set up shop at area flea markets with his "Gospel Chariot," selling Bible literature and engaging with people. He was not ashamed of the gospel, and later led Bible classes in area nursing homes until about age 90.

In 1991, he oversaw the development of the 5-acre Garden of Prayer, a place of solitude adjacent to The Hills church and Iron Horse golf course near Fort Worth.

Alvin went on many mission trips abroad and actively supported several foreign missionaries. Upon moving to Texas, he continued to preach part time and held regular preaching roles in the D/FW area. He edited and managed a paid column in the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* called the Paper Pulpit for many years and volunteered countless hours at Mission Printing, helping send free Bible study literature around the world. Alvin's library is housed at the High Plains Children's Home and Family Services in Amarillo, just 10 miles from his hometown of Canyon, where it all began.

Alvin is predeceased by his parents, Herschel and Thelma Jennings; brothers Neal and Carl; wife, Ellen; son Stephen; and grandson Daniel Jennings. Mr. Jennings is survived by his sons Mark (Cheryl) of Lubbock and James (Lisa) of Fort Worth; daughters Bonnie (Norman) Bell of Middletown, Ohio, and Beth (John) Cope of Fort Worth; sister Donna (David) Bolton of Keller, Texas; brother Dr. Duke (Sanet) Jennings of Jonesboro, Ark.; 15 grandchildren; and 23 great-grandchildren.

Friends who would like to honor Alvin's memory may consider a gift to Mission Printing, 2707 Medlin Dr, Arlington, TX 76015 or Garden of Prayer, The Hills church, 6300 NE Loop 820, North Richland Hills, TX 76180.

TED KELL (1933-2024) — Frank Ted Kell, 91, entered eternal glory on May 6, 2024. He was born and raised in Little Rock, Ark., before attending David Lipscomb College in Tennessee, where he met the love of his life for 65 years, Evelyn Cole. Their partnership in life and ministry gave birth to both children and churches, as he served as a church planter and an evangelist for congregations in Tennessee (Manchester: 1954-1957), Wisconsin (Janesville: 1958-1970) and Texas (Brownwood: 1983-1998). Ted also was an instructor for the Sunset School of Preaching (now Sunset Bible Institute) from 1970-1983, training, maturing, and sending out preachers of the Gospel throughout the United States and the world with a special focus on Wisconsin.

For over 70 years, his passionate calling to share the Gospel took him across most of the U.S. and several foreign countries. A lifetime of ministry involved preaching in hundreds of gospel meetings, writing Bible curriculum for Christian camps, speaking at college lectureships, developing spiritual leadership, teaching song-leading and congregational singing, penning numerous encouragement cards/letters, keynoting Biblical enrichment seminars for churches, serving as a police chaplain, and conducting countless weddings and funerals. His integrity was unquestioned, and his joy was infectious. He loved preaching and nurturing people of all ages in the church. His later years were marked by a kind and sweet gentleness of spirit.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Evelyn, and his son, Mark. He is survived by four children: Steve (and wife Maria — Richardson, Texas), Karla (and husband Randy Gerdes — Garland, Texas), Jina (and husband Gerald Hinson — Snohomish, Wash.) and Shawn (and wife Cindy — Tomball, Texas); 16 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren; and one nephew, Larry Cook (Dallas).

Memorial gifts can be sent to Sunset International Bible Institute (www.sunset.bible/give-now) or to Wisconsin Christian Youth Camp (www.wcyc.org).

LIFE MATTERS



PHOTO VIA FACEBOOK.COM/MCOCHOUSTON

A group from the Memorial Church of Christ in Houston poses for a photo inside an airport. The 42 Christians — ranging in age from 14 to 63 — spent time at the Southern Africa Bible College and several Churches of Christ in South Africa as a part of the Memorial church's short-term missions initiative.

NEWSMAKERS

APPOINTED

CLAIRE DAVIDSON FREDERICK as the inaugural director and **RICHARD BECK** as senior fellow for the Landon Saunders Center for Joy and Human Flourishing, which will launch in the fall of 2024 at Abilene Christian University in Texas. **MIKE COPE** to the board of directors for Kairos Church Planting in Portland, Ore. **STEVE SHANER** and **ALBERT COLEY** as elders of the Clear Creek Church of Christ in Hixson, Tenn.

BAPTIZED

ALEIGHA CONWAY at Uplift, a summer camp hosted by Harding University in Searcy, Ark. **ALLY NOLEN** at the Bargerton Church of Christ in Lexington, Tenn. **BETTY SCULLEY** at the Airport Church of Christ in Valdosta, Ga. **JOHN** and **JULIA MITCHELL** at the Prattville Church of Christ in Alabama. **JORDAN BURT** at the Germantown Church of Christ in Tennessee. **MARK MANN** at the Booneville Church of Christ in Mississippi.

HIRED

JAKE PERKINS as minister for the Grace Crossings Church of Christ in Conroe, Texas. **MARK POWELL** as lead minister for the Donelson Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn. **ZACK MARTIN** as instructor of historical theology and dean of students at Heritage Christian University, which is associated with Churches of Christ, in Florence, Ala.

HONORED

LUKE HALL as 2024 Madison Firefighter of the Year in Madison, Ala. Hall is a member of the Twickenham Church of Christ in Huntsville, Ala., and serves as a paramedic. His department previously honored him with two Lifesaving awards this year. **AMY BOWMAN** for 20 years of service to the Brentwood Hills Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn. Bowman serves as the Brentwood church's children's minister.



Frederick



Cope



Sculley



The Mitchells



Martin



Hall



Bowman



Associate Minister - Peoria, Ariz.

The **Church of Christ on West Olive** is searching for a full-time **Associate Minister** to help grow the young-adults and families-with-children portion of our generationally diverse congregation of approximately 300 people. The associate minister's role is to facilitate growing disciples within the young adults and to equip families to raise their children in the faith. Primary responsibilities include coordinating fellowship activities among our young adults and families and directing the education ministry. Other responsibilities include teaching, preaching, and working alongside the pulpit minister and elders to equip the congregation for works of service and proclamation of the Gospel. The ideal candidate will be married with children, have a bachelor's degree from a school within the brotherhood, have at least 5 years' experience working with young adults and families with children, be self-motivated, and enjoy working with families. Interested applicants should email a resume and links to Bible class teaching and sermon videos to: Tucker.Westolive@cox.net

Church of Christ on West Olive
10935 West Olive Ave • Peoria, AZ 85345
westolive.com

Youth & Family Minister - Borger, Texas

We are excited to announce that we are searching for a **Youth & Family Minister** to work alongside our church family, maturing in faith together. We are a growing congregation and have many young families with an abundance of children who transition into our youth group every year. Our mission is to "Live Our Purpose with Passion," and we are very serious about living out this mission, equipping our young families and youth to develop a deep faith.

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LIFE MATTERS

THE JULY CROSSWORD

By MYLES MELLOR
ILOVECROSSWORDS.COM

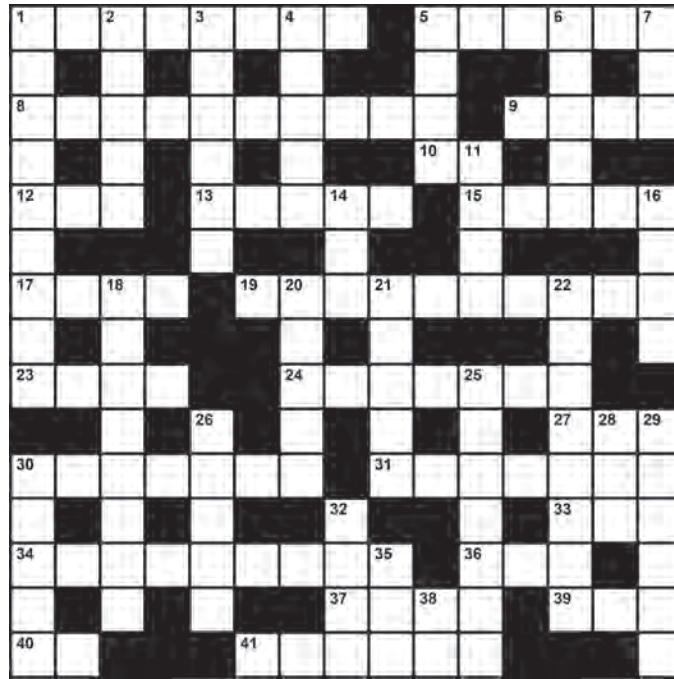
ACROSS

- 1. Example: Simon Peter and Bartholomew.
- 5. Separate grain from chaff.
- 8. Make sacred.
- 9. Consider, with "on."
- 10. Loudspeaker system, abbr.
- 12. Assist.
- 13. Book, chapter and _____.
- 15. *"When evening came, many who were _____-possessed were brought to him"* (Matthew 8:16, NIV).
- 17. *"They made curtains of _____ hair for the tent over the tabernacle — 11 altogether"* (Exodus 36:14, NIV).
- 19. Member of a tribe that fought against the Israelites (1 Samuel).
- 23. *"Do not _____ in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes"* (Proverbs 6:25, NIV).
- 24. One of Jesus' disciples.

- 27. Cry of discovery.
- 30. Bible named for two censuses of the people of Israel.
- 31. *"Like a fluttering _____ or a darting swallow, an undeserved curse does not come to rest"* (Proverbs 26:2, NIV).
- 33. Geneticist's concern, abbr.
- 34. A letter from Paul to a Christian community in Anatolia.
- 36. Long, sinuous fish.
- 37. Indian bread.
- 39. Even so.
- 40. Trademark, for short.
- 41. Book describing the Israelites' escape from Egypt.

DOWN

- 1. _____ Michael disputed with the devil (Jude 9).
- 2. Abraham gave everything he _____ to Isaac.
- 3. Number of disciples.
- 4. *"If it is true that I have gone astray, my _____ remains my concern alone"* (Job 19:4, NIV).
- 5. *"The plague will bury those who survive him, and their widows will not _____ for*



- them"* (Job 27:15, NIV).
- 6. Prophet who wrote about the Assyrian Empire and Nineveh.
- 7. Amaze.
- 11. Uproars.
- 14. Snow travel equipment.
- 16. Season to be jolly.
- 18. *"Then Moses and Aaron fell face-down in front of the whole Israelite _____ gathered there"* (Numbers 14:5, NIV).
- 20. Psalms, _____ and spiritual songs.
- 21. Stringed instruments.
- 22. *"Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet _____ we are being renewed day by day"* (2 Corinthians 4:16, NIV).
- 25. *"To the Lord your God belong the*

- _____ , even the highest _____ , the earth and everything in it"* (Deuteronomy 10:14, NIV).
- 26. *"After Abraham's _____ , God blessed his son Isaac"* (Genesis 25:11, NIV).
- 28. Word of endearment.
- 29. *"Praise _____ you, our God, in Zion; to you our vows will be fulfilled"* (Psalms 65:1, NIV).
- 30. *"So he got up, took the child and his mother during the _____ and left for Egypt"* (Matthew 2:14, NIV).
- 32. The A in AD.
- 35. *"Frustration is better than laughter, because a _____ face is good for the heart"* (Ecclesiastes 7:3, NIV).
- 38. Gold symbol.

S AND YE SHALL RECIEVE

By STEVE WHITEHEAD
BRITISHBIBLESCHOOL.COM

- 1. Adam and Eve's "granted" son:
S _____
- 2. Eli's apprentice:
S _____
- 3. Isaac's mother:
S _____
- 4. Originally named Hananiah:
S _____
- 5. The accuser:
S _____
- 6. The day of rest:
S _____
- 7. First Christian martyr:
S _____
- 8. Place of the dead:
S _____
- 9. King before Rehoboam:
S _____
- 10. Two Benjaminites, a king and a rabbi:
S _____

ANSWERS, crossword solution on Page 37.

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 NJLCOMMENDSGDEFENSERUDNE

PSALMS - GOD'S MERCY

By CHRISTI ROMÉO

- | | |
|-------------|----------------|
| ANOINT | LIGHT |
| ASCENTS | MERCIFUL |
| COMFORT | MERCY |
| COMMENDS | MIRACLES |
| COMPASSION | NEED |
| COUNSEL | OPPRESSED |
| COVER | OVERFLOWS |
| DEEDS | PASTURES |
| DEFENSE | PATHS |
| DELIVERANCE | PERSON |
| DESTROYED | PLACE |
| DISASTER | PRESENCE |
| DOMINION | PREPARES |
| ENDURES | PROTECT |
| FAINT | PURE |
| FIERCE | QUIET |
| FOLLOW | REFRESHES |
| FOREVER | REFUGE |
| FORGAVE | REJOICING |
| FORGOTTEN | REMEMBER |
| FOUND | RESTORE |
| FUTURE | REVIVE |
| GAIN | RICH |
| GENEROUS | RIGHT |
| GENERATIONS | SHAKEN |
| GLORIFY | SHEPHERD |
| GOODNESS | SING |
| GREAT | STEADFAST |
| GROANING | STRONG |
| GUIDES | SURELY |
| HELP | SURROUND |
| HIDING | THANKS |
| HOUSE | TRANSGRESSIONS |
| IMAGE | TREMbles |
| INIQUITY | UNDIVIDED |
| INSTRUCT | UNFAILING |
| JUSTICE | WATERS |

Find the words about God's mercy from Psalms. The unused 32 letters form a sentence. Answer on Page 37.

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LIFE MATTERS

BOOK REVIEW

TRAVEL GUIDE OFFERS TOOLS FOR VISITING BIBLE LANDS

By MARK A. BLACKWELDER

It has become much more popular in recent years for church leaders to take groups of people to the Bible lands.

Of course, most who lead those groups have significant background in the study of Scriptures. Many, however, are much less familiar with the geography and history of most of the sites.

W. Scott Sager, who serves as vice president for spiritual development at Lipscomb University, has over 30 years of experience traveling to those biblical sites and has produced a resource that will be of significant value to tour leaders and travelers to the Bible lands.

“Bible Land Adventures: The Essential Travel Guide for Serious Disciples” is composed of one-page descriptions of 85 different sites in Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Sinai. These are arranged in alphabetical order for easy reference.

Each of these includes a short summary of the geographical location, the historical significance of the site and the connections to the biblical narrative, with Scripture references if appropriate.

There is space allotted on each page for travelers’



W. Scott Sager. “Bible Land Adventures: The Essential Travel Guide for Serious Disciples.” Marshal Press. 2023. 288 pages. \$27.99.



Blackwelder

brief notations on the dates the sites were visited and other “quick facts.” The book also offers 18 maps and 70 captioned charts and illustrations, as well as a selected bibliography of other helpful resources.

The guide is organized logically and contains a wealth of information that a traveler could use to get the most out of a visit to this part of the world. The book is not designed to be read from cover to cover but to serve as a resource for the traveler.

Tour leaders or trip hosts could use it as a planning guide for developing an itinerary for a future trip to the Bible lands or as a resource for developing comments to be shared at stops along the way.

Tour participants could use this book to familiarize themselves with the sites before making the journey, as a companion volume while on the trip, or as a means of debriefing the trip after they get home.

Even those who never travel to the Bible lands would find this to be a great resource to aid in the study of Scripture due to the descriptive information about sites mentioned

in the biblical narrative.

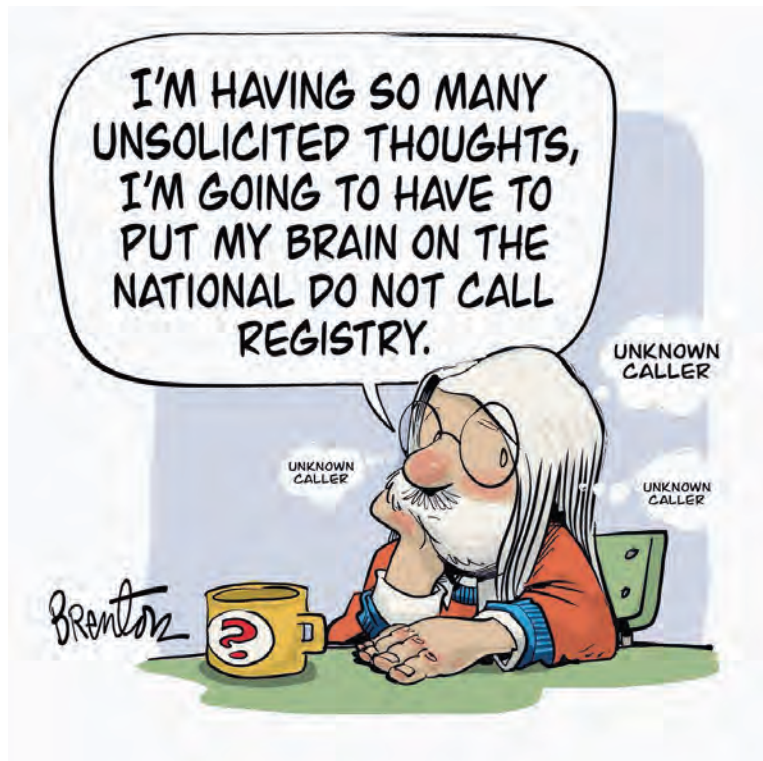
Scott Sager has produced a helpful and enjoyable resource for those who wish to maximize the impact of a visit to the lands of the Bible. The book is easy to read and understand and provides a significant amount of information without being overwhelming.

It does a great job of exploring the geographical, historical and biblical intersections that one will encounter on a journey to these significant places without being too heavy or encyclopedic.

Those who are fortunate enough to enjoy a trip to the Bible lands frequently remark that it has “made the Bible come to life.” This book is a useful guide to help prepare travelers for that journey and provide supplemental content to increase the impact of that experience on their lives. 🌍

MARK A. BLACKWELDER is a professor of Bible and missions at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn. He has led groups on more than 15 trip to the Bible lands.

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BRENTON, BY KEITH BRENTON AND RICK GIBSON

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I do not believe this election is about trust in a party and/or a candidate (“Faith, politics and the true Kingdom of God,” Page 38, June).

I think the focus for many Christians is first and foremost on the policies of the candidate that uphold freedom of religion and freedom of speech, so that we will continue to worship in freedom and witness in word and deed the message and love of Jesus

MARY HYDE DONELICK
Bernardsville, N.J.

I enjoyed your article (“What’s really going on at the Texas Rangers game,” Page 3, June). I agree about orchestrating events by which a church can serve its community.

I’m a big fan of free pancake breakfasts and free hotdog lunches.

STEVE COSCIA | Folsom, Pa.

You have addressed the shortage of preachers in several previous articles. As I was reflecting on this recently, it came to me (Holy Spirit?) that much of what some congregations pay

“ministers” to do could well be done by elders, deacons and even other members.

This would free up ministers to go to other congregations to preach the Word. It’s just a thought.

JEFREY KENT | Shadyside, Ohio

Just awesome (“A full circle journey of faith down under,” Page 18, June). Thank you for sharing your heart in writing this. So much Kingdom impact over the decades. So much to celebrate. Thank you.

JAMES KINNAIRD | Lubbock, Texas

She’s great (“Audrey Jackson appointed managing editor,” Page 31, June). We enjoyed having her join the One Kingdom team in Turkey. Very professional.

I hope she will accompany us again.

ROBERT ABLES | West Monroe, La.

WANT TO OFFER feedback on a news story or opinion piece? Email us at letters@christianchronicle.org.

LIFE MATTERS

CALENDAR

JULY

15-18 Truth Lectures. Hosted by Truth Publications and CEI Bookstore. Athens, Ala. See truthlectures.com.

21-26 Texas Normal Singing School at ACU. Abilene, Texas. See singingschool.org.

AUGUST

01 Footsteps of Paul - early bird discount registration deadline. Tour hosted by Noel & Lael Whitlock. Various Mediterranean destinations. Contact NWFootsteps@gmail.com.

SEPTEMBER

06-07 Equip Workshop. Hosted by the Brown Street Church of Christ. Waxahachie, Texas. See equipworkshop.com.

20-21 Momentum Workshop. Eugene, Ore. See newdayresources.org.

22-25 Abundant Living Seniors Fall Retreat. Branson, Mo. See abundantlivingseniors.com.

Full Calendar: christianchronicle.org

WORD SEARCH | PAGE 35 The unused 32 letters spell: *"His streams of mercy are never ceasing."*

BIBLE BOWLING | PAGE 34

- 1. Seth (Genesis 4:25)
- 2. Samuel (1 Samuel 3:1)
- 3. Sarah (Genesis 17:19)
- 4. Shadrach (Daniel 1:7)
- 5. Satan (Revelation 12:10)
- 6. Sabbath (Exodus 16:23)
- 7. Stephen (Acts 7:59)
- 8. Sheol (Psalms 16:10)
- 9. Solomon (1 Kings 11:43)
- 10. Saul (1 Samuel 10, Acts 9)

CROSSWORD | PAGE 34



CLASSIFIEDS

CHURCHES

EVANGELICAL PULPIT MINISTER — The Desert Church of Christ in Kingman, Ariz., is searching for a full-time evangelistic pulpit minister with strong Bible knowledge to preach the truth, hold Bible studies, and handle congregational spiritual needs and skilled visitations; PO Box 3673, Kingman, AZ 86402, (928) 715-7685, Contact: Byron Steward, jawbcs75@outlook.com.

EVANGELIST — Torch Hill Road Church of Christ, 2009 Torch Hill Rd, Columbus, GA 31903, torchhillchurchofchrist@gmail.com, torchhill.churchofchrist.info.

FULL-TIME MINISTER — Estes Park Church of Christ, 1470 Fish Creek Rd, Estes Park, CO 80517, (970) 577-7025, estesparkcofc@msn.com, www.estesparkchurchofchrist.com.

FULL-TIME MINISTER — The Florence Church of Christ in Florence, Ky., is looking for a full-time minister who enjoys personal work. We are a conservative, a capella singing congregation of 125 members. To apply, send resume to: churchoffice@florencecc.org; 1141 Boone Aire Rd, Florence, KY 41042, (859) 283-2355, www.florencecc.org.

FULL-TIME MINISTER — Kimberly Church of Christ, 712 Center St W, Kimberly, ID 83341, (208) 544-0300, wmcclellan037@gmail.com, www.kimberlychurchofchrist.org.

FULL-TIME MINISTER — Rawlins Church of Christ, PO Box 2098, Rawlins, WY 82301, (307) 321-2812, Contact: Chuck Reed, oldcoot1913@outlook.com.

FULL-TIME MINISTER — Seabrook Church of Christ, 867 Lafayette Rd, Seabrook, NH 03874, (603) 944-7115, Contact: David McDowell, seabrookchurchofchrist@gmail.com.

FULL-TIME MINISTER — Whitehall Church of Christ, 215 Streets Run Rd, Pittsburgh, PA 15236, (412) 884-2055, contact@whitehallchurchofchrist.com, whitehallchurchofchrist.com/apply.

FULL-TIME PULPIT MINISTER — Baker Heights Church of Christ, 5382 Texas Ave, Abilene, TX 79605, (469) 371-7323, bakersearch23@gmail.com, bakerheights.org/preacher-search-2024.

FULL-TIME YOUTH MINISTER — Naples Church of Christ is seeking a full-time youth minister. Check out this video to learn more about our church and this opportunity: bit.ly/3x5u3A8; 303 W Main St, Naples, TX 75568, (903) 897-5917, naplestexaschurchofchrist@gmail.com, naplestxchurchofchrist.com.

MINISTER — Nashua Church of Christ, 97 Farley Rd, Nashua, NH 03063, (603) 889-0979, Contact: Search Committee, NashuaCofC@gmail.com, www.nashuacofc.org.

PREACHER — Cadiz Church of Christ, 2000 Main St, Cadiz, KY 42211, (270) 963-8550, tomandreep@gmail.com, cadizchurchofchrist.com.

PULPIT MINISTER — Southside Church of Christ, a traditional a capella church with 50+ members, is seeking a full-time preacher. Salary is negotiable. Email resume to: southsidecocgr@gmail.com; 1304 36th St SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508, (719) 359-0502, southsidegr.org.

MINISTRIES

BAND DIRECTOR — Mars Hill Bible School, 698 Cox Creek Pkwy, Florence, AL 35645, (256) 767-1203, drutherford@mhbs.org, www.mhbs.org/about/employment.cfm.

CHRISTIAN CAMP CARETAKER — Copper Basin Bible Camp in Prescott, Ariz., is looking for a person with a background in Facility Maintenance and a willingness to learn new systems; 3300 W Copper Basin Rd, Prescott, AZ 86303, (253) 312-7288, be.ye.glad@reagan.com, www.cbcc.life.

WOMEN'S MINISTER — The UCatOKState Campus Ministry is searching for a Women's Minister to serve in our efforts to reach the students of Oklahoma State University; 821 N Duck St, Stillwater, OK 74075, (405) 372-5682, ucatokstate@gmail.com, www.ucatokstate.org/womensminister.

Visit christianchronicle.org/advertise to place your classified ad, or email advertising@christianchronicle.org for more information.

LIFE MATTERS

EDITORIAL

Sun and blessings: God is working

By **BOBBY ROSS JR.**, for the EDITORIAL BOARD

Ah, summertime.

For most, the rising temperatures signal a more relaxed time of year, characterized by lazy days playing in the water, road trips to see loved ones and all sorts of fun and games.

For many members of Churches of Christ, the warmer months bring beloved traditions that go back years and even decades. Teens crowd into church vans and travel to areawide youth nights. Church ladies prepare cookies and Kool-Aid to serve at Vacation Bible Schools. Preachers hit the road to speak at Wednesday night sermon series.

We do our best at *The Christian Chronicle* to report on exciting news happening in Churches of Christ across the U.S. and around the world.

But summertime reminds us just how big our God is — and just how unequipped we are to reflect the full range of blessings he bestows.

So we provide snapshots that we pray provide an inkling of the Lord's work in us and among us.

Picture the McAdams family from the McDermott Road Church of Christ in Plano, Texas. Nearly 600 miles from home, they enjoy singing, fellowship, fun, eating, Bible learning and encouragement at Camp Blue Haven in Las Vegas, N.M.

Hollee McAdams listed some of her favorite parts of the week: “(Son) Noah’s best friend putting on Christ, visiting on the porch with fellow teachers, (son) Malachi coming up and talking to



ERIC LYONS

Noah McAdams sticks out his tongue as a staff member snaps a photo at Camp Blue Haven.

us throughout the week and him praying over his dad (Wes), both boys leading prayers during devos, our class of great kids, learning a new song, ‘Gratitude,’ and being with my hubby all week.”

Picture Adam Metz, a minister for the Alum Creek Church of Christ in Lewis Center, Ohio, laboring alongside young people at the 20th annual Central Ohio Work Camp.

“We’ve painted nearly 150 houses in those years,” Metz shared. “Excited for the crew I get to work with.”

Picture sister congregations in Middle Tennessee meeting as one racially diverse body for four straight weeks — for the third summer in a row — for a special unity emphasis dubbed Greater Together.

Greater Together’s theme this year: “Broken but Beautiful.”

Picture hundreds of teens from predominantly African American congregations converging on a college campus in Louisville, Ky., for the 72nd annual National Youth Conference.

“We are grateful to be a part of this storied summer tradition,” said Lamont Ross, senior minister for the Marsalis Avenue Church of Christ in Dallas. “We are indebted to Orum Trone Sr., who established the National Youth Conference in 1952, and all of the dedicated men and women who have served ... so that generation after generation can participate in this unique experience.”

The same could be said about countless other traditions, from mission trips to preacher training camps to big gatherings like Polishing the Pulpit and the Red River Family Encampment. All help bring the faithful together this time of year, and we praise God for them.

Ah, summertime. 🌞



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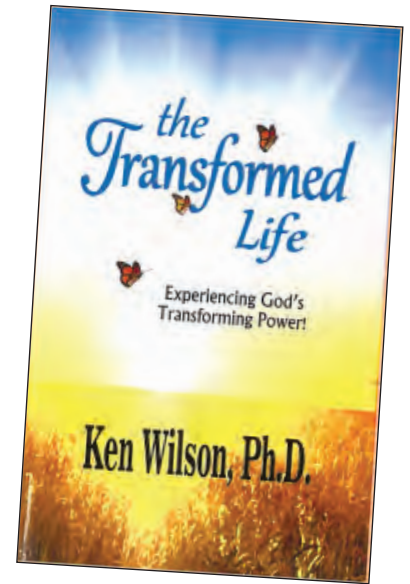
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