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‘That embryo was
created by God’

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Trump shot: Christians
pray for peace, healing

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WHERE IS GOD IN A WAR ZONE?

By ERIK TRYGGESTAD

IRPIN, UKRAINE — More than two years after Russia began a full-scale invasion of his homeland, Alexander Kolosha is tired.

Not tired from the war or burnout, the Ukrainian minister insists.

Instead, Kolosha explains, “Being tired means not having enough resources in the moment ... and having too many moments.”

He spoke to *The Christian Chronicle* during a rare moment of tranquility, sitting at a picnic bench in a forested retreat center as his wife, Olha, translated his words from Ukrainian to English.

They joined more than 100 ministry leaders from Churches of Christ and their families in the northwestern suburb of Ukraine’s capital, Kyiv. For the second time in the past year, the Ukrainian Bible Institute sponsored a retreat to serve those who serve, providing three days of worship, meditation, resource sharing and rest.

The theme, “I Am With You,” came from Isaiah 43:2.

“How much joy, how much peace do we miss out on when we forget about the presence of God?” asked Brandon Price, director of the Bible institute, standing before a wooden, wall-mounted cross in the retreat center’s classroom. “If, for some reason, you can’t calm your heart and your mind, take comfort in the fact that he is here.”

God is here, even in the midst of war.

Reminders of the conflict, which has claimed the lives of more than 10,500 Ukrainian civilians, abounded in Irpin. Russian forces leveled buildings, torched cars and tortured residents here — and in the neighboring city of Bucha — before Ukrainians fought the invaders back across the border into Belarus in the war’s early days.

The retreat center — used by Churches of Christ for singing schools in happier times — bore scars from the fighting. Boxes of humanitarian aid filled the pavilion where church members joined their voices in Ukrainian-language a cappella hymns. Tents with the Samaritan’s Purse logo and a massive bank of humming generators stood nearby.

“It’s our war, even though we don’t have bullets here,” said Alexander Kolosha, a graduate of Ukrainian Bible Institute. He and his wife oversee Slavic World for Christ, a ministry founded by Ukrainian evangelist Epi Stephan Bilak and based in Ternopil, a city on the Seret River, far from the current front lines. Initially, the ministry focused on Ukrainian-language speakers in the country’s west.

The Ternopil Church of Christ once numbered 60 members, but now is

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AUDREY JACKSON

Children pray during the sixth Mediterranean Christian Conference in Athens, Greece.

‘Every tribe and every nation’ gather in unity despite worldly conflicts

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COVER STORY

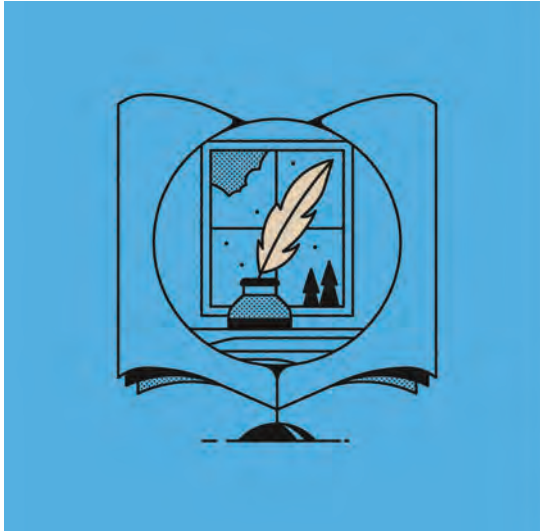
In besieged Ukraine, ministry leaders seek rest and inspiration amid ongoing grief and loss. **PAGE 1**

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Editor-in-Chief Bobby Ross Jr. talks to preaching school representatives at the inaugural Polishing the Pulpit conference in Branson, Mo. **PAGE 3**

'THAT EMBRYO WAS CREATED BY GOD'

Amid political wrangling, families, physicians and judges across the nation grapple with in vitro fertilization. **PAGE 7**



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BOBBY ROSS JR.

Polishing the Pulpit puts the focus on preaching

Inaugural conference in Branson, Mo., draws about 2,000 attendees.

BRANSON, MO. — I was 6 when my family packed a U-Haul truck and moved to Louisiana so my father, Bob, could attend the White's Ferry Road School of Preaching.

Fifty years later, my fond memories of that time remain strong.

I was reminded of that experience as I perused the booths at the inaugural Polishing the Pulpit conference in Branson, the popular vacation destination in the Ozark Mountains.

More on that in a moment. But first, a bit of background: Polishing the Pulpit began with three preachers — Allen Webster, Mark Howell and Floyd Bailey — getting together to brainstorm sermons 30 years ago.

Now, 5,500 men, women and children gather each August in Sevierville, Tenn., at the edge of the Smoky Mountains. The weeklong event has become so popular that organizers added a second Polishing the Pulpit this July in Branson, nearly 700 miles west of the East Tennessee location.

"The thought was that we would take some pressure off the Sevierville location because we're maxing it out," said minister Todd Clippard, who spoke to *The Christian Chronicle* at the request of Polishing the Pulpit's directors. "And second, the Polishing the Pulpit in Sevierville is always the third week of August, and you have a lot of parents who can't come because their kids are in school."

Clippard, who preaches for the Burleson Church of Christ in Hamilton, Ala., characterizes Polishing the Pulpit as a spiritual feast.

The Branson conference featured more than 150 speakers and 500 classes for various age groups. Special tracks were geared toward preachers, elders, women, teens and children. Worship assemblies brought together the entire crowd for singing, prayer and preaching.

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By BOBBY ROSS JR.

Left, a giant "PTP" sign — short for "Polishing the Pulpit" — greets attendees at the inaugural conference at the Chateau on the Lake Resort Spa and Convention Center in Branson, Mo.

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INSIDE STORY

“You’ve got 2,000 people who are all on the same page, all striving toward the same goal,” Clipard said of the Branson gathering.

Doug Gregory, pulpit minister for the West Side Church of Christ in Elkton, Ky., drove 420 miles to Branson with his wife, Annetta, and three sons.

He calls *Polishing the Pulpit* his “getaway.”

“The minister stands in the pulpit every week and is supposed to be a well and pour out,” Gregory said. “But if you don’t pour something in, you ain’t got nothing to pour out.”

He shared how last year’s *Polishing the Pulpit* in Sevierville galvanized his ministry.

Until then, he spent most of his workweek in his church office. But a series by Chris Donovan, evangelist for the Kensington Woods Church of Christ in Hattiesburg, Miss., changed his perspective.

“To sum it up ... Jesus went around to meet physical needs to gain an opportunity to meet spiritual needs,” said Gregory, whose church has launched an addiction recovery ministry and turned its former parsonage into a refuge for the homeless.

Preaching is, of course, a focus at *Polishing the Pulpit*. I couldn’t help but notice all the booths for preaching schools — from the Georgia School of Theology to the Bear Valley Bible Institute in Denver.

The *Chronicle* has reported extensively on the minister shortage in Churches of Christ, so I was eager to hear from the preaching school representatives.

I talked to Tom Moore, dean of students for the Texas School of Preaching, a ministry of the BCS Church of Christ in the Bryan-College Station area.

“We want to prepare people to be bold in the pulpit,” Moore said.

I talked to Ethan Tate with the Tri-Cities School of Preaching and Christian Development, which has its own building by the Stoney Creek Church of Christ in Elizabethton, Tenn.

“Our focus is not just training men to preach the Word of God,” Tate said. “We want to help equip all Christians to be able to do the work for Jesus and for God’s glory.”

I talked to David Deagle with the West Virginia School of Preaching. The school is sponsored by the Hillview Terrace Church of Christ in Moundsville.

Lately, recruiting has been a challenge.

“There are so many churches that need preachers,” Deagle said. “And we need students. But things have been kind of light the past couple of years (in terms of) men taking up that mantle to preach.”

I talked to Caleb Griffith, a graduate of the Brown Trail School of Preaching in Bedford, Texas. The 20-year-old works as a field rep for the school.

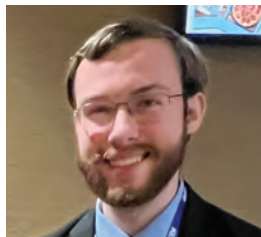
“We believe there’s a shortage of quality preachers,” Griffith said. “We’re focusing less on turning out the quantity of men so much as the quality.”

I talked to Jackie Walker with the Memphis School of Preaching in Tennessee. Walker, whose late husband, Don, taught at the school, works with admissions and the library.

“We have a preacher shortage — a sound



POLISHING THE PULPIT, VIA FACEBOOK



Caleb Griffith

preacher shortage,” Walker said, “and we get calls all the time for preachers.”

I talked to Trent Kennedy with the Southwest School of Bible Studies in Austin, Texas. The school is a ministry of the Southwest Church of Christ.

“There are more pulpits than there are men who want to preach,” Kennedy said. “In rural congregations, the salary is not real high, so a lot of those men will need to work part time and do a secular job of some sort.”

And I talked to Brian Kenyon with the Florida School of Preaching, hosted by the South Florida Avenue Church of Christ in Lakeland.

“The foundation you get at a preaching school — the Bible foundation — is something you can use no matter what you do in life,” Kenyon said. “Even if you don’t preach, it’ll make you a better husband. It’ll make you a better elder or deacon in the church. It’ll make you a better employer or employee.”

In Churches of Christ, four basic criteria help explain the appeal of preaching schools, according to Carlus Guppton, director of the Doctor of Ministry program at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn.:

- **Cost:** “Preaching schools are much less expensive.” Most charge no tuition.
- **Sense of trust:** “Preaching schools are viewed by those who attend and the churches who hire their graduates as being more in line with their understanding of what constitutes sound teaching.”

- **Curriculum:** “Preaching schools often cover the entire canon of Scripture and related topics and are focused strictly on those areas instead of requiring other subjects that may be helpful but not necessary for ministry roles.”

- **Community:** “Preaching school cohorts are often small and tight-knit, with everyone taking the same classes and living near each other.”

On my 300-mile drive home from *Polishing the Pulpit* in Branson, I called my father, who still preaches for a rural congregation in North Texas.

We reminisced about the two years Dad spent at the since-closed White’s Ferry Road School of Preaching, devoting late nights to Bible study, making lifelong friendships and going on evangelistic campaigns across the U.S. — often taking along the entire family.

Ah, the precious memories.

“It was one of the highlights of our lives,” said my father, who later earned a Bible degree from Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn.

Amen, Dad. 🙏

Above, Dan Winkler preaches during the inaugural *Polishing the Pulpit* conference in Branson, Mo.

BOBBY ROSS JR. is Editor-in-Chief of *The Christian Chronicle*. Contact bobby@christianchronicle.org.

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CONTINUED FROM THE COVER down to about 10, Olha Kolosha said. The church building, however, overflows with refugees from the predominantly Russian-speaking east. They come for food, provided by Ukrainian Bible Institute through its partnership with Texas-based Sunset International Bible Institute, and stay for worship. Some Sundays, the Ternopil church struggles to find enough chairs and communion cups for everyone.

Often, they find themselves low on relief to distribute, energy to distribute it and fortitude to help others cope, Alexander Kolosha said.

“But every time, somehow, we find ourselves full of resources,” he said. “Or we become resourceful.”

As the fighting drags on and the casualties rise, he added, “I accept that it will be like this. I understand that I will be tired, but I really believe that the Lord will prevent me from stopping.”

‘We don’t stop for sirens or explosions’

The attendees represented 25 Churches of Christ spread across Ukraine. The churches are part of a network that feeds, counsels and occasionally evacuates those in need. The Ukrainian Bible Institute coordinates and distributes the aid with funding from Sunset, which also covered transportation fees for the retreat.

Some attendees made dangerous journeys from eastern Ukraine to attend.

The encouragement he received made the trip worthwhile, said Olexiy Ladyka, a musician, songwriter and preacher for the Kramatorsk Church of Christ. His congregation meets in Donetsk oblast (a state-like division) about 30 miles northwest of the battered city of Bakhmut, which fell to Russia last year.

“It’s normal, like birds singing,” Ladyka said of the air-raid sirens that blare constantly in Kramatorsk. The church didn’t meet for about a year after the war started, but eventually, about 20 members returned and began distributing food to their community.

Initially, people came for the food.

“Now, they just come,” Ladyka said. “The people who receive, they love to be in the church.”

In recent months, members have hosted Bible studies and celebrated a baptism.

As the church serves, Russian troops inch closer and closer to Kramatorsk.

“The front line is coming,” Ladyka said.

But the church members have a plan. If the Russians reach the town of Chasiv Yar, he said, “We go together” to western Ukraine, most likely Lviv.

Vera Olefira came to the retreat with her husband, Igor. They live to the north, in Kharkiv.

“We hear explosions before we hear the sirens,” she said. Kharkiv, once Ukraine’s second-largest city, is less than 20 miles from the Russian border, the launch point for missile attacks.

Igor Olefira preaches for a Church of Christ with about 35 members, though guests and aid recipients can swell Sunday worship past 150.

“We don’t stop for sirens or explosions,” Vera Olefira said.

The couple remembered a visit by Nazar Semikoz, a young minister who lives in Kyiv and was a guest speaker for the Kharkiv Church of Christ. When explosions interrupted his sermon, Semikoz “was amazed that all the people didn’t blink,” Igor Olefira said with a chuckle. “He said, ‘The people of Kharkiv are made of steel and concrete!’”

To the south, Pavel Glinskiy worships with a Church of Christ in a small town near the city of Donetsk. About 10 to 12 Christians, plus guests, worship on Sundays, he said.

Sometimes they hear explosions.

When the war started, he took one of his daughters west to Ternopil, but he went back. Another daughter lives in Donetsk, which fell to pro-Russian separatists in 2014, the same year Russia illegally annexed Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula.

In late 2022, Russia announced that it had annexed Donetsk.

Glinskiy gave a slight smile as he showed a picture on his phone of his 3-year-old granddaughter, Polina, in Donetsk. He’s never seen her in person.

“I stay because I rely on God,” Glinskiy said. Just as the Lord protected David from Goliath, he said, “God says that, even if an entire regiment is against me, do not be afraid.”



ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Ukrainian Christians chat before breakfast at the retreat, which was sponsored by Sunset International Bible Institute. See sunset.bible/grm to contribute.



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‘This can break you’

During the retreat, participants broke into small groups of men and women, delving into Scripture and sharing stories of times when they felt most disconnected from God — and times when they felt closest to him.

They sang, using lyrics shared through the Telegram messaging app on their phones rather than relying on PowerPoint and a projector amid frequent power outages.

Glinskiy said that he came to the retreat because his church’s preacher could not.

“His paperwork hasn’t come through,” the church member said, echoing a common refrain at the conference.

Earlier this year, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a controversial conscription law in an effort to procure desperately needed troops. Ministers with exemptions — three or more children, a family member killed in combat, medical issues — must have government documentation to avoid forcible recruitment at military checkpoints or by roving patrols.

Stas Kuropiatnykov, a preacher in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, led worship during the retreat — 14 days after he was released from military service to care for his newborn third child. He served for two years, sometimes on the front lines and sometimes in Lviv, where he also ministered to hundreds of internally displaced refugees alongside his brothers and sisters in Christ.

He encouraged Ukrainians to serve in the military if they can, and he urged all Christians to support those serving in the field and those who have returned, often injured and traumatized.

“I can’t express completely what I faced and what our brothers and sisters are facing,” Kuropiatnykov said, adding that his time in the service reminded him of a motto used by U.S. Navy SEALs: “The only easy day was yesterday.”

He remembers watching a fellow soldier drive a van — one used for carrying dead bodies from the battlefield — into a self-service car wash. Dutifully, the soldier opened the back and sprayed out the viscera and blood that had collected on the floor.

Facing such a scene, “you’re not going to grow up to your expectations,” Kuropiatnykov said, quoting an ancient Greek truism. Instead, “you’re going to fall down to the level of your readiness and preparation.”

Kuropiatnykov, who grew up in the church, said he’s thankful for his firm foundation of faith and the support of fellow Christians. They helped carry him “through the valley of the shadow of death,” he said, quoting Psalm 23.

“This can break you,” Kuropiatnykov said. “This can break you for sure.”

‘Every war is spiritual’

Despite his abiding faith, Kuropiatnykov sometimes finds himself asking God, “Why? Why did you let this happen to my church, to my country?”

Many times in the past two years, he hasn’t felt



ERIK TRYGGESTAD

“Every story about war in the Bible ... feels different. Every war is spiritual, between people and God.”

Above, Mary Lee Rogers, left, greets Larysa Dekhlarova during the retreat. Rogers and her husband, Jay Don, served in Ukraine for 19 years.

the Lord’s presence, he told his brothers during the small-group session.

“But I *know* that God is here,” he said.

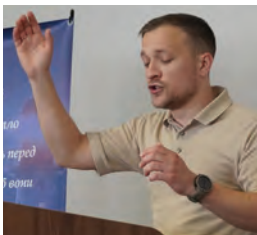
The war has given Ukrainians a new sense of clarity as they approach Scripture, said Alexander Kolosha, the minister in Ternopil.

“Every story about war in the Bible ... every story feels different,” he said. Through his studies, he’s come to realize that, despite the combatants, “every war is spiritual, between people and God.”

He’s found strength in an unlikely place — Lamentations. The Old Testament book is a collection of poems mourning the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and the decades of exile that followed.

Amid its many laments are words of steadfast devotion to God: “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22-23).

“Every morning, for me, is Sunday — and resurrection,” he said. “Because tomorrow ... who knows?”



Stas Kuropiatnykov

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'That embryo was created by God'

By CHERYL MANN BACON



The Buchholtz family

When 7-year-old Rosie Buchholtz asks where she came from, her mother answers simply.

"I just tell her, 'A very nice family gave us you, and you were soooooo tiny. And they put you inside me so you could grow. When it was time to come out, you did. ... I have brown hair, and you have blond,'" said Chelsea Buchholtz, an Austin, Texas, attorney. "'But I'm your only mommy.'"

Neither Chelsea nor her husband, Scott, was able to have biological children. After exploring fostering and traditional adoption, she learned about embryo adoption.

The Buchholtzes attend Providence Church, a church plant that partners with the University Avenue Church of Christ, where Chelsea grew up and her father served many years as an elder. Her youth minister from those years and his wife were the first of several to mention in vitro fertilization by donation.

"It's the most clear time in my life in which the Holy Spirit has spoken to me," Chelsea said. "It allowed us to have a family in kind of a traditional way."

So she tells Rosie what she believes to be true: "That embryo was created by God, and I'm so glad he created you for us."

Chelsea's fertility doctor explained that IVF by adoption could be facilitated through traditional adoption or a contractual agreement.

"I'm a lawyer. I said, 'Let's do a contract.'" They met the donor parents and their children previously conceived through IVF. The family gave the Buchholtzes five embryos, one of which was implanted and became Rosie.

Chelsea, 45, serves as executive director of the Texas Real Estate Commission but said her favorite title is Mom. Scott, 52, works as operations director for the Texas Economic Development Corporation. Though Rosie wishes for a sibling, they don't plan to have more children.

"We have a dog named Sister!" Chelsea said, laughing.

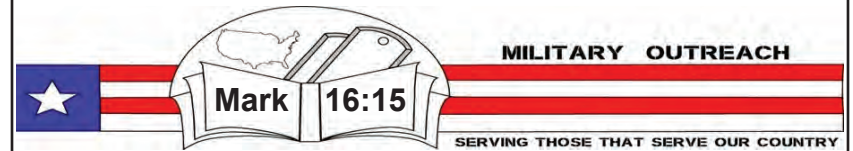
They would like to give the other embryos to the next family.

How it works — and doesn't work

The Buchholtz story is typical. And not at all typical. Which is the case for all families who choose IVF.

Their story is nothing like that of Brent and DeShonna Taylor,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



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a Dallas couple whose 27-year-old quintuplets were born through IVF. And theirs, in turn, is nothing like Jessica Hemenway Knapp's and her husband, David's.

The Arizona Christians endured three failed IVF attempts and a 14-year sojourn with infertility that included four miscarriages. Their four children were all conceived naturally over that same span of time.

Jessica, who serves as minister of The Seed Gathering, a church plant associated with Churches of Christ on the University of Arizona campus, described the expensive, last resort infertility treatment as physically and emotionally brutal.

"Nobody does IVF without a passion for having babies," she said.

About 5 percent of couples with infertility will try IVF, according to the Cleveland Clinic. The total cost can range from \$20,000 to \$40,000, with insurance coverage varying

Spontaneous abortion, or miscarriage, happens in 10 to 20 percent of known, naturally occurring pregnancies. Clinically unrecognized loss is likely even higher.

Doctors tailor the process to each couple's needs. But typically it begins with a regimen of hormones and injections to stimulate the woman's ovaries to overproduce eggs that are harvested through the first of two surgical procedures.

Eggs are fertilized in a lab using the father's sperm.

In IVF, as in the womb, some eggs die. Some embryos die. In Knapp's case, all of them died in the first two attempts before any could be transferred to her womb. A third attempt ended in miscarriage.

Embryos develop to six to 10 cells each within two to three days of fertilization. They are tested for genetic anomalies and graded to assess viability. One or more of the most viable are implanted in a second surgical procedure.

Chelsea Buchholtz only underwent the second procedure because she was using a donated embryo. And only one was transferred. That one became Rosie.

Today, doctors typically transfer one or two or three embryos to avoid multiple births beyond twins.

But when the Taylors did IVF 27 years ago, doctors commonly transferred multiple embryos, assuming some would not survive.

Remaining embryos are frozen. Parents may choose to use them later, donate them to other couples, donate them for medical research or allow them to be discarded.

Moral complexity

IVF was invented in 1978 by British physiologist Sir Robert Edwards. Since then, more than 8 million IVF babies have been born.

People of faith have sometimes felt conflicted regarding the process or its consequences for unused embryos.

Yet, IVF has found widespread support for what many call a pro-life practice. IVF allows



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY TAYLOR FAMILY

babies to be born who would not have life without it. Studies this year by Pew Research and Gallup indicate that substantial majorities of American Catholics, Protestants and evangelicals believe IVF is a good thing.

But among those reporting weekly church attendance, 54 percent believe destroying frozen human embryos is morally wrong.

In the political sphere, despite genuine moral complexity and protracted partisan wrangling, support for IVF remains surprisingly bipartisan — even in states such as Alabama and Texas, which have two of the largest concentrations of Churches of Christ.

In February, a conservative Supreme Court in Alabama ruled that "extrauterine unborn children" created through IVF must be considered exactly the same as in utero embryos. Thus parents could sue clinics or physicians for the embryos' demise under Alabama's Wrongful Death of a Minor Act, passed in 1872.

Michael DeBoer, associate dean for academic affairs at Faulkner University's Jones School of Law in Alabama, said authors of the 1872 bill "didn't know anything about what is termed 'extra uterine children.' But a minor child would have been known."

By March, the Alabama Legislature passed a bill sponsored by GOP Sen. Bill Melson, a member of the Wood Avenue Church of Christ in Florence,

"If society wants to prohibit technology, then prohibit the misuse of it. But not those aspects that reveal the Creator's mercy, grace and redemption ..."



Jessica Hemenway Knapp



Michael DeBoer

Above, the Taylor quintuplets at ages 1 and 18: Kenedy, Jonah, Jacob, Aleksi and Zachary. The five, now age 27, are the IVF babies of Brent and DeShonna Taylor of Dallas.

MATTER OF FACT

protecting IVF providers and patients from prosecution in the event embryos die before they are implanted.

Three states westward, Texas' Supreme Court declined in June to hear an appeal challenging a divorce settlement. The lower court held that a contract between both parents and a fertility clinic several years earlier was enforceable. The mother had argued that unused embryos should be the subject of child custody proceedings.

Property vs. personhood is not an abstract legal construct to Jessica Knapp. She and her husband still have two frozen embryos.

"We know they are not viable, but I'm not quite ready to have them destroyed," she said. "I don't have an adjective for how it feels."

'Blessings we don't have all the answers for'

Bill Chambers of Tyler, Texas, is retired now, but for 40 years he was an OB-GYN specializing in high-risk pregnancies and a life fellow in the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Chambers, a former elder of the Glenwood Church of Christ, said he "had no apprehension in referring couples, for whom we had done every other reasonable thing, for IVF."

"Man has forgotten to be humble. Man has forgotten that there are many blessings that we don't have all the answers for," the physician said. One of those is "the gift of unbelievable technological medicine."

Brent Taylor told his own mom something similar — but in West Texas vernacular — when she raised concerns almost three decades ago.

Both Taylors are nurses and attend Highland Oaks Church of Christ in Dallas. DeShonna is director of heart, lung and vascular at UT Southwestern Medical Center. In 1997, they were living in Snyder, Texas, a rural community midway between Abilene and Lubbock.

"Mom was old, staunch C of C," Brent said, "but I told her one day, 'Mom, God gave these doctors and scientists the ability to figure this out, so what's the problem?'"

Ultimately, he added, "She doesn't have any problem. She added five grandkids in three minutes!"

The 37th Avenue Church of Christ in Snyder marshaled volunteers to work four-hour shifts helping care for the five little ones and their older brother.

"Even though we love all our kids unconditionally, I wouldn't wish five kids on anybody ever," Brent said.

When the fertility clinic called to ask what the couple wanted done with two remaining embryos, embryo adoption wasn't yet a thing, DeShonna recalled.

"I'm not sure what I would have chosen — research or adoption," she said. "Maybe my decision was made rashly — at the time I just remember having all those toddlers who were 2 or 3 years old. We knew we weren't going to have any more kids. We just told them to let them thaw."

Grace and redemption

Judges, politicians and ethicists debate whether an eight-celled organism is a human being to be protected or a collection of cells that lacks viability outside the womb.

Knapp believes the church should be part of the discussion but must be aware of the legal and medical implications. Because the church has denied science in a lot of places, "we aren't getting to have a voice about ethical matters like this," she said.

Meanwhile, physicians sit with patients who arrived in their exam rooms after months or years of pain and prayer in pursuit of a positive stripe on a pregnancy test — years praying to have a baby.

"If society wants to prohibit technology, then prohibit the misuse of it," Chambers said, "but not those aspects that reveal the Creator's mercy, grace and redemption of one of the most deeply embedded evidences, which is motherhood and fatherhood."

Perhaps 40 years spent delivering babies informs the physician's conviction that grace and redemption can be found in IVF. In those 40 years he has seen several IVF babies grow to adulthood and lead Christian families of their own.

Babies like Rosie. 🌍

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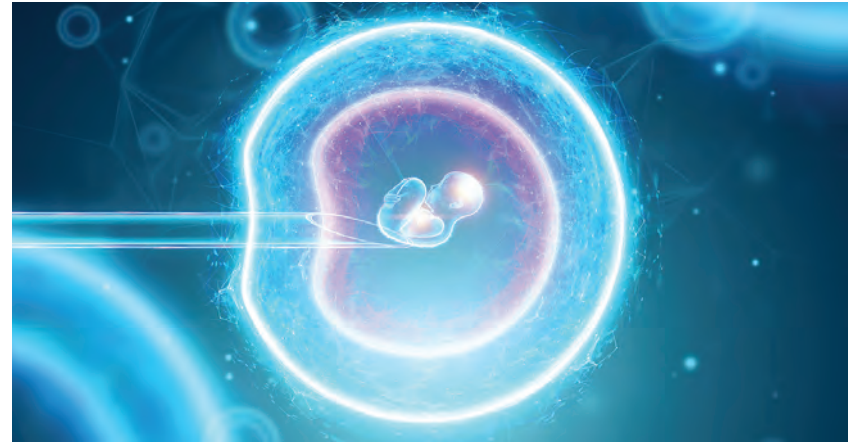
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SHUTTERSTOCK ILLUSTRATION

Bioethics students wrestle with complicated questions about embryonic life.

CHRISTIAN BIOETHICISTS HELP STUDENTS CONSIDER THE MORAL COMPLEXITIES OF IVF

By CHERYL MANN BACON

ABILENE, TEXAS — As the number of U.S. frozen embryos has grown to estimates beyond a million, their moral status has become the crux of discussion among bioethicists.

Vic McCracken, professor of ethics and theology at Abilene Christian University, co-teaches the medical bioethics course with Cynthia Powell, who directs ACU's Center for Pre-Health Professions.

Every year the class includes students who were born through IVF.

"It's not uncommon in our fold," Powell said.

The professors tell students up front that technological advancements spurred many questions to be explored.

"It was harder to argue about embryonic life when people didn't know what's happening in the womb," McCracken said. But now they must ask, "What is the moral status of embryonic life? Do they have the status of undeniable persons, no status at all or some lesser status?"

Powell wants future health professionals to understand the viewpoint of the patient when they consider medical interventions to treat infertility.

"It's easy to say, 'I don't think IVF is morally permissible' if you aren't a person suffering with infertility," Powell said.

Jim Nichols, now retired, is past chair of ACU's biology department and has served as a chaplain at Hendrick Health in Abilene for 16 years.

He says those experiences — and approaching 80 — have impacted his views.

"At the stage I am in my life right now, I don't like to make decisions for other people on much of anything, especially something as private and personal as this," he said.

"Part of me says this is something where a couple is not accepting nature and the boundaries nature has put on the world."

But, he added, "The other part of me says that's judgmental of people, and they should have the right to exercise whatever science options they have, and this is a science option that works. I would not apprise people not to do it."

He is concerned about the growing throng of unused embryos cryogenically preserved in labs.

So is McCracken, who would prefer to minimize the number of embryos created, though that would make the process more invasive and more expensive.

"I'm supportive of IVF, but I have moral reservations about a practice that entails creation of embryos for research. And yet it's hard to argue we should choose to discard embryos rather than use them."

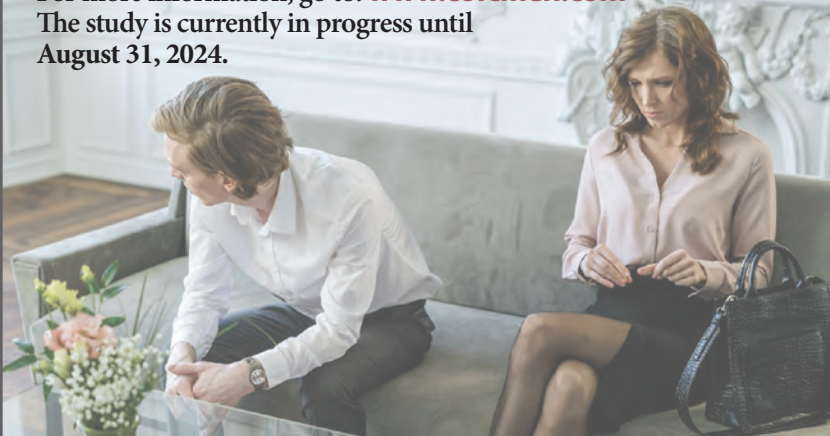
"I don't think they're a person," Nichols said, "but they have some value morally." 🌱

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TOP STORY

A once-dwindling Texas church gives away bread and Bibles to meet its neighbors' needs. In response to changing demographics, the congregation added a Spanish language assembly.

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'TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER'

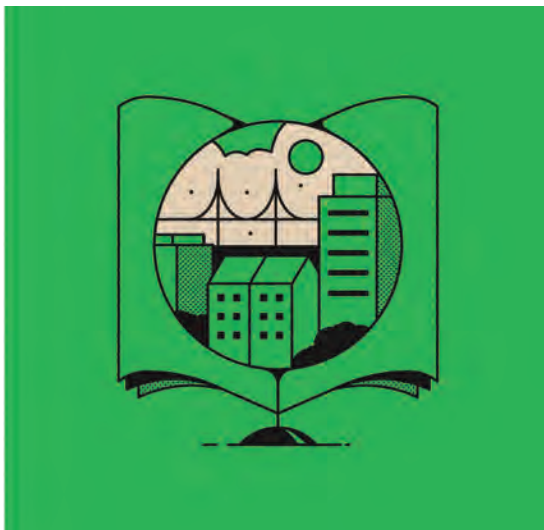
An Oklahoma church celebrates its city's 50th year in deaf ministry while hosting the National Deaf Christian Workshop.

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CHRISTIANS PRAY FOR TRUMP AND THE NATION

In the aftermath of an attempted assassination, believers seek peace and healing.

PAGE 18



ACROSS THE NATION

A Missouri church hosts a tent revival, an Ohio church relocates from a rural cornfield to a historic downtown building, two South Carolina congregations join together in racial unity and fellowship, and a Church of Christ member plays for the national champion Tennessee Volunteers baseball team.

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TRUMP SHOOTING

Bobby Ross Jr., Cheryl Mann Bacon, Calvin Cockrell, Jeremie Beller and Nic Fraraccio discuss the attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump on *The Christian Chronicle* Podcast with host B.T. Irwin. Find the podcast at christianchronicle.org/episode.

EPISODE 73

Bread and Bibles lead souls to Jesus

Twice a week, Texas church meets neighbors in its parking lot.

By BOBBY ROSS JR.

FORT WORTH, TEXAS — “Free Bread.”
“Free Bibles.”

The simple messages catch the attention of motorists passing the Bridgewood Church of Christ — at a busy corner just off the East Loop 820 thoroughfare.

“Is it *really* free?” people ask.

“It’s free,” church member Booker Williams assures them. “It’s like salvation. You’ve just got to come and get it.”

The North Texas church started giving away physical — and spiritual — food in its parking lot nearly three years ago. The outreach began as a one-time pop-up. It transformed into a twice-weekly benevolence program that connects the congregation with neighbors and leads souls to Jesus.

“A food pantry that I volunteer with ... used to give us like two or three of these banana boxes of bread,” minister Jon McKenzie said. “Our members would just kind of grab the bread from the kitchen ... and they could give it to a friend or a neighbor who needed it.”

But one day, the charity called and offered McKenzie extra bread — 24 cases in all.

He gulped and took it.

Contemplating how to distribute it, he thought, “We’re on a busy road, so why don’t we just try and give it away?”



CAMILO DIAZ JR.

Federico Sandatte, right, and his wife, Amalia Sandatte, look through a box of bread during the Bridgewood Church of Christ’s regular Saturday giveaway.

He rounded up Bibles to hand out with the bread, but he feared the impromptu pop-up might just go ... *pop*.

“I was worried it was going to flop, so I didn’t call anybody for help. It was just me,” McKenzie recalled. “And the people came. ... I guess the rest is history.”

Doing good in Jesus’ name

Built in 1969 in an affluent area, the Bridgewood church grew to more than 500 members in the 1970s.

Ensuing decades brought increased poverty and crime to east Fort Worth. As many moved away or chose to worship elsewhere, Sunday attendance fell to about 80.

“Crime has leveled out and decreased,” McKenzie said, “but crime and the working poor remain a key issue.”

Several years ago, Bridgewood became known mainly as “the church across the street from Whataburger.” While the fast-food restaurant is a nice neighbor, the minister said, the church “wanted to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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be known for the things we actually do in the community — in the name of Christ.”

Members started volunteering at nearby schools.

They planted a community garden.

And — whether the result of happenstance or providence — they began organizing the bread-and-Bible pop-ups each Wednesday and Saturday.

Pam Griffin became a Christian after McKenzie and his wife, Brianne, mentored her granddaughter Alexis Giffen, now 13, at a public elementary school.

Griffin’s husband, Robert, and other friends and relatives were baptized as well.

“The one thing that got me was that they were very loving, very caring,” Pam Griffin said of the Bridgewood church. “They don’t look at what you’re wearing. ... They care more about the person that you are.”

Longtime member Catie Mckee, 35, is a licensed barber and cosmetologist.

She offered free haircuts during a recent pop-up.

“I do remember when Bridgewood was 500-plus strong,” Mckee said. “I have seen many families come and go, but I love seeing the new faces who become familiar faces.”

A growing Spanish ministry

Those faces used to be predominantly White.

Now the flock reflects the area’s multicultural mix — with sizable numbers of Black and Hispanic members.

Average attendance tops 120 a week, including about 20 Spanish speakers, many reached through the pop-ups.

One of Bridgewood’s key volunteers, 80-year-old Carrol Harris Sr., grew up on a South Texas farm.

“All my friends were Mexican,” Harris said of how he became bilingual.

Federico Sandatte and his wife, Amalia, lead the church’s Spanish ministry.

Federico previously served as an elder for a different congregation. The Sandattes connected with Bridgewood when they noticed the pop-up and stopped to say hello.

Harris recalls that first conversation.

“Hey brother, how are you doing?” Federico said to Harris in English.

Harris drew a chuckle when he responded in Spanish.

As the two men talked, Harris explained to Federico “that we were praying and trying to get the Spanish work started in this congregation.”

“That’s really good,” Federico replied. “Keep praying.”

Two months later, the Sandattes decided to join the work at Bridgewood.

As Harris sees it, Bridgewood had no choice but to adapt to the area’s demographic changes.

“If we don’t change, we might as well go ahead and shut the door,” he said. “Because guess what? You don’t have to fly on a plane or ride on a bus to be on the mission field. It’s right here.”



‘A fantastic thing’

“*Pan, alimentos y biblias gratis*,” reads a sign by the road.

In English, that means, “Free bread, food and Bibles.”

Bridgewood’s Spanish services draw attendees from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and other countries.

On a recent Sunday, the group sang hymns such as “*Tuyo Soy Jesús*” (“I Am Thine, O Lord”), “*Canten del Amor de Cristo*” (“When We All Get to Heaven”) and “*En la Viña del Señor*” (“In the Vineyard of the Lord”).

Juan Noriega and his wife, Nuerys Malavè, visited the assembly.

They came to the U.S. from Venezuela about a year ago. The free bread and Bibles led Noriega’s brother to accept Jesus in baptism.

“This is a fantastic thing for new immigrants,” Malavè said of the pop-ups, “to have some help and be able to get their feet on the ground.”

What accounts for the Spanish ministry’s growth?

“I think part of the reason,” Brianne McKenzie said, “is because (the immigrants) are coming from hard places, and they’re finding a sense of community.”

A prime location

For a smaller congregation, maintaining a facility built to serve hundreds presents a major challenge, as does paying for the upkeep and utilities, leaders said.

“But we’ve got such a good spot,” Jon McKenzie said of the location. “We hate to give it up.”

He quoted a neighbor who told him: “We need your church on that corner. We need someone to share good into the community on that corner.”

Church member Marsha Fry, a 74-year-old retired schoolteacher, volunteers at the pop-ups.

She began helping when key ministry leaders were out of town on mission trips to El Salvador and the Caribbean island of Dominica.

And she liked it.

“These men work very hard ... lifting heavy boxes and everything,” Fry said. “I was blown away with admiration for them and respect. I may not be as strong as they are, but I come up here, and I do my best.”

Above, Bridgewood Church of Christ member Booker Williams, center, greets neighbors during the congregation’s regular Saturday food giveaway. Upper right, Carrol Harris Sr. chats with Juan Noriega and his wife, Nuerys Malavè, who visited the church on a recent Sunday.

NATIONAL



CAMILO DIAZ JR.



BOBBY ROSS JR.

“I have seen many families come and go, but I love seeing the new faces who become familiar faces.”

Rose Batiste, a 63-year-old grandmother, characterizes herself as a French-speaking Louisiana Cajun.

A regular at the pop-ups, the transplanted Texan welcomes the free bread. The home health care worker said she makes about \$10.50 an hour and struggles to make ends meet.

Through partnerships with the Midwest Food Bank of Texas and N.E.E.D. DFW, Bridgewood distributes thousands of pounds of bread and other grocery items each month.

“It helps people like me that don’t have anything,” Batiste said.

Getting too comfortable

Church member Williams often prays with those helped.

“A lot of times in the churches, we tell people, ‘Just come to see us on Sunday,’” said the 52-year-old information technology professional, who teaches Bridgewood’s Wednesday night adult Bible class.

“But it’s like going to the mall,” he added. “Have you ever done any window shopping? You see something that you like, and you make the choice to go in there.”

Through the pop-ups, Williams said, hurting people meet Christians who care and then decide to visit. On a recent Saturday, a woman receiving help asked for prayers. She meant prayers in a general sense. But Williams bowed his head and lifted her up to God right then and there.

Members sometimes lament what Bridgewood has lost — in terms of numbers.

Williams takes a different view.

He tells fellow Christians: “Y’all are so focused on what we lost that you don’t look at what we’ve gained. If you just invite one person every week, we can rebuild.”

Christians have become “so comfortable in these benches that we stopped inviting people,” he said.

The pop-ups cultivate conversations that lead to such invitations. And it starts with simple messages.

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PHOTO PROVIDED BY ZETH PANKHURST

‘Together we are stronger’

Oklahoma church celebrates its city’s 50th year in deaf ministry while hosting National Deaf Christian Workshop.

By NIC FRARACCIO

TULSA, OKLA. — As Lewis Parry strolled to the pulpit, his eyes widened with excitement in front of smiling faces at the 61st National Deaf Christian Workshop.

Behind him, the projector read: “With God, you can do it.”

As soon as the final stragglers took their seats, Parry, a member of The Park Church of Christ in Tulsa, began signing to his fellow brothers and sisters.

“You never know what happens in your life, whether it is good or bad,” Parry said. “But I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

As The Park’s lead deaf minister, Zeth Pankhurst, translated Parry’s signs for hearing attendees, the crowd waved its hands in the air rapidly — a sign of applause in American Sign Language.

The northeast Oklahoma church hosted the National Deaf Christian Workshop for the second time in its history. Formerly known as the Park Plaza Church of Christ, the congregation first welcomed the workshop in 2012.

The annual event — offering classes, lectures and opportunities for Christians to share their experiences — coincided with the 50th anniversary of deaf ministry in Tulsa.

The ministry began at the Memorial Drive Church of Christ and transitioned two decades later to the congregation that became The Park. Carl Moore, a member of the Cedar Crest Church of Christ in Dallas, returned to Tulsa — where he served as The Park’s first deaf minister — for the workshop.

Moore offered his testimony during Parry’s lecture.

“I am so glad to be back here,” Moore signed to the crowd. “It is always a blessing being able to share my experience of how I received Christ.”

Workshop speakers, including Moore, Pankhurst and Parry, focused on topics such as facing fears and spreading the Gospel within the deaf community.

In addition to deaf translation during regular assemblies, the Park church hosts a monthly special worship service for its deaf ministry.

The services offer a great opportunity “to reach lost souls” within the deaf community, Pankhurst said.

“When the people see that encouragement, their eyes are wide open,” he said. “That’s why we have deaf ministry.”

Fewer than 2 percent of the world’s 70 million deaf people know God, according to Pioneer Bible Translators.

“They are not getting the message,” said Fred Bogan, a member of The Park. “They are probably the most isolated demographic in the country.”

Workshop attendee Steven Russell, a member of the Franklin Road Church of Christ in Indianapolis, said the need for deaf ministry is crucial.

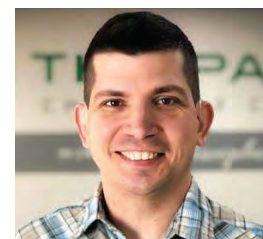
The Franklin Road congregation offers the only deaf ministry in Indiana among Churches of Christ, according to Russell.

“They are all around us,” he said. “You don’t realize how many deaf people are around you, and every large city has many.”

When asked about encouraging churches to begin their own deaf ministries, Pankhurst provided a simple, yet powerful answer: “Just do it.”

After 50 years, the deaf ministry remains as important as when it started, said Brenda Rumsey, a former Memorial Drive member who now attends The Park.

“What we like to say around here is that we are family and together we are stronger,” Rumsey said. “God has given each of us certain talents that we can use to teach others. That is what we are here for.”



Zeth Pankhurst

Above, National Deaf Christian Workshop attendees pose for a group picture.

NATIONAL



EVAN VUCCI/AP

Christians pray for Trump after assassination attempt

By **BOBBY ROSS JR.**

The Sunday morning after a gunman perched atop a roof narrowly missed killing former President Donald Trump, Christians across the U.S. came together — as always — to worship God and pray.

About 270 miles southeast of the Pennsylvania farm show grounds where shots rang out at Trump's July 13 campaign rally — and about 20 miles west of the nation's capital — minister Robin Gough stepped to the pulpit at the Fairfax Church of Christ in Virginia.

The preacher immediately focused the congregation's attention on the assassination attempt.

"In times like these, it's important for us to come together and pray for our nation," Gough said. "Pray for the families of those who were killed, for healing and comfort. We should pray for former President Trump and President Biden, asking God to protect and guide them."

"We need to stand against divisiveness and violence," the minister emphasized to the Washington, D.C.-area church. "What happens in an eye-for-an-eye world? Everyone ends up blind."

The attack left the Republican presidential candidate bloodied — after a bullet grazed his ear — and claimed the life of a retired fire chief, Corey Comperatore. Two other spectators were wounded, while a U.S. Secret Service sniper gunned down the shooter, identified as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks.

At the Newark Church of Christ in Delaware — Biden's home state, where the Democratic president was attending a Catholic Mass at the time of the Trump shooting — minister K. Rex Butts voiced his alarm and sadness at the political violence.

"I reminded the church that we are blessed to be peacemakers and then read 1 Timothy 2:1-4, *'I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people — for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness,'*" Butts said. *"This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth."*

A Newark elder then "offered a prayer for peace in our nation as well as around the world," the minister said, "and for the safety of both President Biden and former President Trump."

For months, leaders of the Reidland Church of Christ in Paducah, Ky., had planned a special service centered on praying for the nation's leaders, minister Brian Brophy said.

The schedule called for a left-leaning member to pray for Trump and a right-leaning member to pray for Biden.

The idea was to "demonstrate that we can stand together praying for people we don't necessarily agree with," Brophy said. "We wanted to follow Paul's command to Timothy to pray for our leaders regardless of how we feel about them."

The shooting caused the Kentucky church to reassess those plans.

"It was quite a shock to see the news," Brophy said. "Needless to say, those involved in planning

Above, former President Donald Trump is surrounded by U.S. Secret Service agents at a July 13 campaign rally, in Butler, Pa.

NATIONAL

our service were texting back and forth about how this impacted what we would do. In the end, we decided it was more important than ever for us to pray for our leaders.

“We can sometimes forget that these political caricatures we see on TV are real people with real fears, real traumas and real families who care about them,” he added. “We need to pray for their safety and for their families and, most of all, that God would capture their hearts in such a way that they would lead our country in wisdom and peace, that the Gospel may spread.”

At the McDermott Road Church of Christ in Plano, Texas, minister Wes McAdams already planned to talk about “things going on in the world.” But after the attack on Trump, he decided to acknowledge specifically the “events in Pennsylvania.”

“I talked about violence, division and unrest but didn’t speak of anyone by name,” McAdams said. “I spoke briefly about the fear and anger many might be feeling.”

However, he intentionally kept his remarks within the context of his planned sermon, hoping to “acknowledge the tragedy and the emotions” without distracting from the Gospel or inflaming political passions on either side.

“I’m not sure whether I walked that tightrope in the best way or not,” McAdams said. “At least one member did not care for the way I handled it. He wished I had taken more time to talk explicitly about what happened and asked people to pray. However, shortly after that man spoke to me, another member admitted that he had been very angry, and the words this morning were helpful.”

In his communion remarks at the Pitman Road Church of Christ in Sewell, N.J., elder Dan Cooper said he “reminded the audience that we are in a world very much like the first century world” with “great political turmoil then as now.”

“Even as Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper in the upper room, he did so in a land that was occupied by the hated Romans,” Cooper said. “He reminded his disciples of the importance of his spiritual kingdom before any physical kingdom.”

During Bible class time at the Como Church of Christ in Mississippi, minister and elder Taylor Francis prayed for peace, asking that “God would heal the divisions in our nation and give us the willingness and ability to talk and discuss instead of lash out.”

The Alma School Road Church of Christ in Chandler, Ariz., “prayed for peace for our country and good health for Trump,” said Ryan Bitikofer, one of the ministers.

Dean Kelly, minister for the Highland Home Church of Christ in Alabama, took his sermon from Isaiah and focused on the hope in Christ.

“A mention of what happened to Trump fit naturally in talking about not finding hope in this world but only in Jesus,” Kelly said.

“I mentioned where I was when both Kennedys were killed and stated that this is evil no matter what party is involved,” he added, referring to the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy and the 1968 assassination of U.S. Sen. and Democratic presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy.

A leader of the Brunswick Church of Christ in Maine “denounced the act of violence, and prayers were offered for all involved and all in government,” minister Charlie Harrison said.

Bobby Valentine, minister for the Eastside Church of Christ in Antioch, Calif., spent about 10 minutes talking about the shooting in the introduction of his sermon.

“Then we prayed for President Trump, the family of the shooter, the other victims,” Valentine said, and “for leaders of the various political parties to sow seeds of peace.”

Adam Davis, minister for the Wheeler Road Church of Christ in Midland, Mich., announced a special prayer service for the following Sunday.

“This service will invite us to lament the violence in our country, confess any role we have played in exacerbating it and listen to God’s voice through Scripture,” Davis said. “We will also allow the Holy Spirit to guide and challenge us in how to practice our faith during times of violent tragedy.”

Back in Fairfax, Gough said Christians can either escalate political polarization or struggle to embody a better way.

He prayed for the latter, which he called “the Jesus way.” 🌍

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.

We are seeking someone who can join our staff as a team member and our congregation as a beloved, new family member. The ideal candidate will have a deep love for people, be full of life and energy, and be dedicated to inspiring our youth to follow Jesus and aspire to Heaven. Our successful candidate will be a servant-hearted man who is a true student of God’s Word, has the personality to connect with a diverse group of youth and parents, and who enjoys discipling new Christians.

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www.borgercoc.com



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
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westolive.com



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NATIONAL



PHOTO PROVIDED BY TIM HALL



PHOTO PROVIDED BY UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE ATHLETICS



PHOTO PROVIDED BY TIM SPEIGHT

Far left, the leadership team for the tent revival at the Cabool Church of Christ. Above, Hunter High plays for the national champion Tennessee Volunteers. Left, the Crosspointe church celebrates its move to a new location.

MISSOURI

CABOOL — More than 80 residents of this small Midwestern town gathered under a large canopy on a recent Sunday night to hear the gospel message, eat and fellowship together.

The Cabool Church of Christ hosted the tent revival with visiting preacher W. Tom Hall, minister for the Mt. Pleasant Church of Christ in Bowling Green, Ky.

It was a significant turnout for a congregation that had averaged around 20 at Sunday worship — thanks in part to members knocking on hundreds of doors.

Hall said that the event connected the Cabool congregation to its neighbors.

“We met so many people,” Hall said. “We could see their interest and realized maybe this would make a difference in this community.”

“And I believe it did. God can use old ways and new ones to remind us to share the Gospel.”

For Cabool minister Jerry Tackitt, the meeting reminded him of a time of “evangelistic fervor.”

“Tent meetings were common,” he said. “There is something about being close to God’s creation that inspired worship without air-conditioned buildings and padded pews.”

OHIO

MIDDLETOWN — The Crosspointe Church of Christ recently moved from its rural cornfield location to a historic downtown building that formerly belonged to the Bethlehem Lutheran Church. It’s the fourth move in the church’s 75-year history.

Though the 115-member congregation is downsizing its facilities, it has baptized an increasing number of new believers — some in a horse trough, since the new building doesn’t yet have a baptistery — and hopes to continue that trend.

“We are moving back to the center of our city, which is a mission field, where we can help more people,” said elder Jim Cornwell.

The sale of the previous building to Grace Point Fellowship has also provided the Crosspointe church with resources for additional Kingdom work, including a \$5,000 check to Shalom Homeless Ministries given at the new location’s inaugural worship service.

Middletown Mayor Elizabeth Slamka, who attended the June 9 service, proclaimed the day “Crosspointe Church of Christ Day.”

Middletown is the hometown of U.S. Sen. JD Vance, the first-term Republican recently named as former President Donald Trump’s running mate.

SOUTH CAROLINA

ANDERSON — Two Churches of Christ in this community about 30 miles southwest of Greenville recently joined in fellowship and racial unity.

The predominantly White Upstate congregation and predominantly Black Graceview congregation worshipped together in Graceview’s building.

Members of both churches shared a meal with a goal of getting to know unfamiliar faces.

“As a White Christian, I realize how I and my other White brothers and sisters in the faith are missing out on the blessings of worship, teaching, singing and fellowshiping with our Black brothers and sisters in the faith,” Upstate member Connie Burth said. “Jesus prayed for unity — I’m sure this sort of unity was included.”

TENNESSEE

KNOXVILLE — Hunter High, a member of the Tennessee Volunteers’ national championship baseball team, prays for God’s will before every game.

High, a member of the Brentwood Hills Church of Christ in Nashville, starred in baseball and football at Lipscomb Academy.

Read a profile of the freshman infielder at christianchronicle.org/hunterhigh.



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INTERNATIONAL

UNITY IN GREECE

Christians attend a Mediterranean conference with the theme “Christ for the Nations.” **PAGE 23**

U.S., JAPAN COOPERATION

Oklahoma Christian and Ibaraki Christian universities mark a half-century milestone. **PAGE 25**

HURRICANE BERYL RELIEF

As storms intensify, Christians must respond rapidly, build back stronger, say Christians in the Caribbean. **PAGE 26**

AROUND THE WORLD

Amid persecution, preachers train in Pakistan, women find refuge in Scotland, African Christians take the Gospel to a Chicken Soup Factory. **PAGE 27**



MORE FROM UKRAINE

Despite a power outage — a frequent occurrence as Russia targets Ukraine’s infrastructure — The Ukrainian Bible Institute graduated five of its students during a recent ministry retreat in Irpin. Read our online exclusive “Sending the light, even when it’s dark” at christianchronicle.org/ubi.

LIVE FROM ISRAEL

Audrey Jackson reports from the hometown of Jesus about the ongoing conflict in Israel and its impact on the Nazareth Church of Christ. Joining her are Maurice and Sandro Jadon, Arab Israeli Christians of Palestinian heritage, who discuss faith under fire. christianchronicle.org/episode.

EPISODE 72

‘Every nation’ gathers in unity

Christians attend a Mediterranean conference with the theme ‘Christ for the Nations.’

By AUDREY JACKSON

MARATHON, GREECE — *“There is a habitation, Built by the living God, For all of every nation, Who seek that grand abode.”*

About 200 Christians of multiple nationalities — Russian, Ukrainian, Iranian and Israeli, to name a few — sang that verse of unity together, their citizenship on Earth far less important than a shared home in heaven.

Some attendees drove 45 minutes. Others spent more than a day on planes and buses.

They gathered in a city known for a particular distance — 26.2 miles.

That’s how far the legendary messenger Pheidippides ran from here to Athens to announce the defeat of the Persians in the Battle of Marathon in 490 B.C. After the run, he collapsed and died.

More than 2,500 years later, Christians gathered in Marathon, on the coast of the Aegean Sea, for the sixth Mediterranean Christian Conference sponsored by the Glyfada Church of Christ in Athens.

Tim Burow, president of Sunset International Bible Institute in Lubbock, Texas, studied the multinational crowd.

“Every tribe and every nation, every tongue and every people, they are the ones that Jesus died for,” Burow said, referencing Revelation 5:9-10. “And what did Jesus make them into? Kings



AUDREY JACKSON

Above, Ibrahim Fatahi, an Iranian Christian, opens a door with the words, “Christ for the nations,” translated into 29 languages.

and priests. And they reign upon the Earth. They are not a defeated church.” He talked about “all of the barriers that seem to exist in our world and might seem to get in the way.”

Christians are a diverse people who speak different languages, he added, and come from different cultures “where sometimes our national governments may not get along with one another.”

“In spite of all those things and in spite of the religious backgrounds that may exist where we come from,” Burow stressed, “when we are in Christ, you and I are one people.

“There is nothing that keeps me from loving you. And there is nothing that keeps you from loving me.”

A multipurpose, multicultural conference

Conference director Dino Roussos has a history of multicultural ministry. He is the senior minister of the Glyfada church, which hosts services in five languages —

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

INTERNATIONAL

Greek, English, Russian, Farsi and Albanian — every Sunday.

Some have come to Athens fleeing conflicts in their homelands, Roussos said, but all share in spiritual unity.

“They want to hear the word of God in their own language and with their own people,” he said. “And that’s what we’re doing.”

The conference is simply one outreach to bring diverse Christians together.

“This conference has many purposes,” Russos said. “The first purpose is to evangelize those who never heard the Gospel of Christ. That’s why we also invited about 50 Ukrainian refugees who recently came to Greece that come to our church.

“Another great purpose is for preachers and elders and church leaders who are many times isolated in the mission field to come here and find here a spiritual oasis in the desert of their lives and to be strengthened, built up.”

The last purpose, Roussos said, is to minister to children — some of whom have lost homes to war or persecution.

What the church will be — and what it already is

Tim Yaeger, chief information officer for World Bible School, leads the conference’s children’s ministry.

About half of the children each year are refugees, he said. The two largest displaced nationalities are Iranian and Ukrainian.

He and his wife, Katie, take trauma into careful consideration when organizing activities.

“In their life circumstances, they’re fleeing different types of persecution or war,” Tim Yaeger said. “Some of the kids from Ukraine were near where the bombings were happening.”

“We have to be careful with loud noises,” Katie Yaeger added. “If a balloon pops, they get very jittery.”

But the children’s fraught experiences did not seem to dampen the joy of coloring and crafts.

Across language barriers and different backgrounds, they made friendships through shared art supplies.

They saw potential playmates.

The Yaegers saw Christ’s love.

“I think it’s a representation of what the church will be like, what the church is,” Katie Yaeger said. “I love it. We see how Christ has worked in all these different people and all these different cultures.”

‘God is on his throne’

While the children played, the adults gathered upstairs to pray — in between speakers — for the world’s conflicts.

“We pray for salvation,” Burow said. “We pray for protection. We pray for deliverance from the current situation, and we pray for peace within our land.

“We ask you, O Lord, that you would work through this conference in the hearts and the



PHOTOS BY AUDREY JACKSON



Tim Burow



Above, Tim Yaeger leads the children’s program at the sixth Mediterranean Christian Conference. Right, Yevhen Marushko translates an English lecture into Russian for non-English speaking refugees attending the conference.

minds of those who have been displaced from their homes,” he added, “who have seen the tragedy of war and the difficulties of seeing the loss of their homes and family members.”

Afterward, multiple nationalities took turns singing hymns in their native languages before concluding with a shared fellowship song in English.

Russians and Ukrainians exchanged hugs. Iranians shook hands with Americans.

“No matter what happens in this world, no matter what the barriers may be, God is on his throne,” Burow reminded the attendees. “In the midst of our diversity, God is still on the throne. Even when evil kings and rulers are in power on the Earth, God is on his throne. When wars take place on this Earth, God is on his throne.”

INTERNATIONAL

OPINION

Life-changing exchanges

Christian universities in Oklahoma and Japan mark a half-century milestone.

By CONNIE PENICK

HITACHI, JAPAN — I was 12 years old when I met Mariko, a beautiful young woman and exchange student from Ibaraki Christian University. She stood out because, like this awkward junior high student, Mariko was tall.

It was 1977, and Mariko was part of an exchange program that had started three years earlier between Ibaraki Christian and Oklahoma Christian University. We toured the Philbrook Museum of Art and the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Okla.

Nine years later, I was the exchange student, spending my summer living with a Japanese family and taking classes at Ibaraki Christian. I became good friends with Tomoko, a close friend of my host family's daughter.

Forty-seven years after that first meeting with Mariko and 38 years after hanging out with Tomoko, I reunited with both of these wonderful women in Japan as we celebrated a half-century of cultural exchanges between Ibaraki Christian and Oklahoma Christian. It's the longest continuous mutual exchange program between any two schools in the U.S. and Japan, said John deSteiguer, Oklahoma Christian's chancellor, who traveled to Japan for the commemoration.

My father, Joe McCormack, was on faculty at Oklahoma Christian when the schools became sister campuses in 1974. He sponsored some of the first groups who made the journey from Oklahoma to Japan. It's because of my father that I was in Tulsa that day in 1977 — and he's why, while I was a student at Oklahoma Christian, I spent the summers after my freshman and junior years in Japan. My dad's love for the program played a role in my decision to spend a year in Japan in 1992, teaching English at a junior high school.

The relationship with Ibaraki Christian has changed lives for eternity in both countries. In 1980, I witnessed my friend Emiko give her life to Christ on a frigid day in Japan. The baptism was built into the stage floor of an unheated auditorium on Ibaraki's campus. Emiko went into that ice-cold water so that she could be united with Christ and become my sister.

Mariko, whom I met back in 1977, met her husband, Larry Weatherford, through the exchange program. So did Tomoko, who spent a year at Oklahoma Christian. There she met Mike McLain. Now



PHOTO PROVIDED BY CONNIE PENICK



Connie Penick

Above, Oklahoma Christian University professor Joe McCormack teaches students from Ibaraki Christian University as part of the two institutions' exchange program.

they run an English school in Japan.

Although Ibaraki Christian has roots in Churches of Christ, most of its 2,500 students do not come from a Christian background. Christianity is a minority faith among the 125 million souls in Japan, and the country has fewer than 1,200 Church of Christ members.

That's why the partnership between Ibaraki Christian and Oklahoma Christian is so important. It has helped missionaries strengthen congregations across Japan. Short-term mission teams study the Bible with Japanese English students, many of whom would never hear the Gospel otherwise. In Oklahoma, OC students invite visiting Ibaraki students to church.

Earlier this year, OC hosted a visiting group of administrators, faculty and staff from Ibaraki Christian, including outgoing president Naomi Ueno. Oklahoma Christian unveiled a carved stone on campus that commemorates the 50-year partnership.

On Ibaraki's campus, the university hosted a standing-room-only reception for those of us visiting from Oklahoma. Yoshiya Noguchi, Ibaraki Christian's chaplain, led "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" in Japanese and English. Jim Batten, an Oklahoma Christian alum, was there with his wife, Michiyo. The Battens dedicated their lives to Ibaraki Christian, where Jim served as a professor and chancellor. Also present was Randy Voss, who was part of the first exchange program in 1976. He now serves as principal for Ibaraki Christian's junior high and high schools.

The celebration was an example of a Japanese concept of *ichi-go ichi-e*, "one time, one meeting." My brother, Dr. Jeff McCormack, discovered the term while reading our father's journals, which spanned three decades of travels to Japan. Jeff recently retired after serving as Oklahoma Christian's chief academic officer. He loved the exchange program, just like our dad, who passed away in 2022. The 50-year celebration was an *ichi-go ichi-e* gathering that occurs once and never again, Jeff said.

But the partnership between the two universities is far from over, said Ibaraki Christian's new president, Hiroshi Shoji.

"It feels like there is still so much ahead," he said.

John deSteiguer agreed, adding, "Mark your calendars for May 17, 2074. We'll be back for the 100th."

CONNIE PENICK is an administrative assistant for *The Christian Chronicle*. She and her husband, Jay, worship with the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma City.

INTERNATIONAL

Serving victims of the new normal

As hurricanes intensify, Christians must respond rapidly, say those in the Caribbean.

By ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Christopher Fong was 12 years old when Hurricane Gilbert made landfall in his native Jamaica in 1988. The Category 3 storm claimed 49 lives and devastated the nation's capital, Kingston.

"I remember I felt hopeless," Fong told *The Christian Chronicle*. "I didn't know what to do until someone came and lent us a helping hand."

Now Fong, a preacher earning his master's in education at Harding University, wants to provide victims of another Category 5 storm, Beryl, with the same hope he received 36 years ago.

Before Beryl plowed into Texas, the hurricane devastated the island of Carriacou, population 9,600, which is part of the nation of Grenada.

"In half an hour, Carriacou was flattened," Grenadian Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell said in a news briefing.

Chrispin Hosten ministers for a Church of Christ on Carriacou that has about 30 in attendance. He sent the *Chronicle* images from the island that show near-total devastation. Islanders are in need of food, water and clothing, Hosten said. Church members on Grenada's main island are housing some of the displaced, said Ossaifa Gordon, minister for the Grand Anse Church of Christ, who is helping to coordinate relief efforts.

North of Carriacou, Beryl severely damaged homes on Union Island, population 3,000, part of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Reuben Badenock, preacher for the Union Island Church of Christ, lost his home and was living in the church's building, which sustained damage to its windows and roof. Christians in St. Vincent are housing storm victims, Gordon said.

From there, Beryl swept across the southern coast of Jamaica, flooding the island's southern parishes.

"We have never seen winds of 165 mph in our history in this time of year — never," said Gladwyn Kiddoe, director of the Jamaica School of Preaching and Biblical Studies International in Kingston. "We have to be ready. It's the new normal."

In the past, Jamaicans have disregarded hurricane warnings, joking that "God is a Jamaican, so he will allow the storm to pass," said Francis Yorke, deputy director of the preaching school, who has worked with Kiddoe in disaster recovery since Hurricane Gilbert. This time, people took the warnings seriously, Yorke said. As the storm approached,



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY GLADWYN KIDDOE AND CHRISPIN HOSTEN



Ossaifa Gordon



Gladwyn Kiddoe

Top, members of the Bull Savanna Church of Christ in Jamaica stand outside the ruins of their home. Middle, a seaside building welcoming visitors to the island of Carriacou in Grenada shows signs of damage from Hurricane Beryl. A United Nations official said that the storm severely impacted 100 percent of the island's population.

members of the Braeton Church of Christ, where Yorke serves as a minister, assembled food bags in anticipation of the coming need.

Beryl hit the Bull Savanna Church of Christ in Saint Elizabeth parish particularly hard, Kiddoe said. Several church members lost their homes. At press time, Fong was en route from Harding to the area to work alongside Robert Darby and other church members in recovery efforts.

"We see this effort as benevolent and evangelistic," Fong said. "We want to show the world that the church believes what the apostle Paul said (in Galatians 6:10): 'As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.'"

The trip is a homecoming for Fong, who graduated from the school of preaching in 2000. He served on a mission team that planted the Bull Savanna church in 1996. The first member was a blind man, Delgado Francis.

"Although he was blind, he could see he needed Christ," Kiddoe said. Francis' home was among those damaged by Hurricane Beryl. The relief team plans to repair it.

The church met in a small, wooden building until 2004, when Hurricane Ivan flattened it. In its place, members built a three-story cement building, which sustained only minor damage from Hurricane Beryl.

As hurricanes intensify and become more frequent, Churches of Christ should be ready to respond rapidly, to build back stronger and to show "the church at its best," Fong said.

"We should be there," he said. "The first thing they should see is us." 🌍

MINISTRIES COLLECTING funds for hurricane relief in the Caribbean including Healing Hands International (hhi.org) and One Kingdom (onekingdom.org).

INTERNATIONAL



PHOTO PROVIDED BY EDMUND BORFAY



CHRISTIAN WORKER MAGAZINE

Above, a new believer is baptized during the Back to the Bible campaign in Liberia. Left, Participants in the Field of Refuge Women's Retreat share their original artwork.

LIBERIA

MONROVIA — In a place called Chicken Soup Factory, they provided chicken soup for the soul.

A team of Liberian, Nigerian and American church members recently completed a Back to the Bible evangelism workshop and door-knocking campaign in the Gardnersville Township of Monrovia, the capital of this West African nation.

The Gulf Church of Christ in Chicken Soup Factory hosted the event. The community of about 25,000 people gets its unusual name from a now-defunct chicken bouillon cube factory once operated by the Maggi spice company.

Prince Ugbe, director of the Darrell Memorial Bible Institute in Nigeria, and his wife, Regina, worked with Liberian missionary Edmund Borfay and Phil Taylor and Ray Hawkins of Manassas, Va. The team gave away more than 100 Bibles, spoke with nearly 200 Liberians and baptized five people during the first week of the campaign.

"A door of faith is open," Prince Ugbe said, "within the Chicken Soup Factory."

PAKISTAN

LAHORE — In this predominantly Muslim nation of 236 million people, about a dozen preachers from Churches of Christ gathered to train and encourage each other at a recent seminar. The preachers, who face persecution and alienation for their faith, also honored the legacy of two Christians who committed much of their lives to gospel work in Pakistan. Native evangelist Eric Masih died in 2021 from COVID-19. Bruce Antsey, missions liaison to Pakistan for the Woodmont Hills Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn., died in 2022.

Seminar organizers presented certificates to the participants and gave special recognition to a 17-year-old Christian who coordinates online services for the church in Lahore in addition to song leading and youth outreach.

UNITED KINGDOM

KINCARDINE — About 30 Christian women gathered at Tulliallan Castle in Scotland for the recent Field of Refuge Women's Renewal — the first since the COVID-19 pandemic.

FOOTSTEPS OF PAUL

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The candidate is to be a graduate with a Bible degree from a Church of Christ affiliated college, university or school of preaching, be sound in his sermons, Bible classes and doctrine.

Responsibilities will include teaching Sunday morning Bible class, preaching Sunday morning and afternoon sermons, teaching Wednesday evening Bible class and devotional, visiting members and shut-ins, conducting or attending Bible studies, and outreach programs. The ideal candidate would be a married man with children, energetic and completely dedicated to serving the Lord and spreading God's word under the oversight of the men's leadership.

Benefits include a competitive salary and a modern 4-bedroom, 2-bath parsonage. Contact or send resumes to:

Curtis Odom at cmotors1010@qwestoffice.net or (520)483-3183

Perry Page at ppage99615@gmail.com or (907)539-5609

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The Christian Chronicle

Pulpit Minister - Temple Hills, Md.

The **Oxon Hill Church of Christ** is searching for a pulpit minister. Our congregation of 50+ members is located in Temple Hills, Md., just minutes outside of Washington, D.C.

The new minister will serve under the eldership. We are seeking someone with Church of Christ preaching experience who is sound in doctrine and has excellent writing skills. We offer a full housing allowance plus a negotiable salary based on experience and living requirements.

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

Oxon Hill Church of Christ
4201 Brinkley Rd • Temple Hills, MD 20748

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 rmclure1958@gmail.com

Full-time Minister - Pataskala, Ohio

The **Pataskala Church of Christ** is searching for a full-time minister due to the retirement of its present minister of 23 years. Starting date for the position is negotiable. Pataskala is a town of 18,000 located 20 miles east of Columbus, Ohio. The congregation has a Sunday morning attendance of 60-70. It is served by four elders and five deacons. The candidate must be a citizen and resident of the United States, holding a Bible degree from a Church of Christ affiliated college/university or school of preaching, with at least five years of experience in full-time local ministry. He is to be a man of doctrinal integrity and loyalty to scripture. His duties would be evangelizing, preaching, teaching classes, and ministering to the membership and community. Compensation is negotiable. Congregational information is available at www.pataskalachurchofchrist.com. Interested individuals are to submit a resume, recent photo, and a video recording or a link to a recent sermon to:

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

Full-time Minister - North Augusta, S.C.

The **Riverside Church of Christ** in North Augusta, S.C., is seeking a younger visionary Minister/Evangelist. Our church family has three elders who serve a diverse body of around 55 members. We are located in a community that is growing rapidly. If you are looking to work with a congregation and a dedicated core of workers who value life together outside the building and to grow and connect with a wider age range in the community, we want to hear from you! Interested? Submit a resume and any digital recordings of sermons. We want to grow the church for the future!

Riverside Church of Christ
401 Murrah Rd • North Augusta, SC 29860
Tim McFalls, Elder • Email: tmcfalls7@outlook.com • Cell: 706- 833-0624

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

Full-time Evangelist/Pulpit Minister - Richlands, N.C.

The **Richlands Church of Christ**, in Richlands, N.C., is looking for a full-time, energetic and enthusiastic evangelistic pulpit minister who preaches, teaches, and follows truth from God's word. The minister will be responsible for conducting Sunday morning Bible study and church services and Wednesday evening services. Other primary responsibilities include, but are not limited to congregation member outreach, illness and bereavement visits, and strong evangelical efforts in the community. Qualifications include the ability to deliver dynamic and inspiring sermons that effectively communicate biblical truth and the ability to teach classes providing rich, in-depth knowledge of the revealed Word of God. Strong interpersonal skills and empathy to administer to the spiritual needs of seniors, young adults, and children are essential. Dedicated commitment of time and effort to evangelical outreach are keys to success. We are looking for someone with 6-10+ years of preaching experience but will consider any applicant. Please submit resume if you are interested to:

Briane Ward at brianesworld@yahoo.com, (407) 697-2278 or
Leon Cobb at lcobb2@ec.rr.com, (910) 320-1082

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, 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 successful minister experience is mandatory of applicants (must be a resident and citizen of the United States). Salary is negotiable; compensation includes: 403b, retirement, health insurance subsidy, moving expenses and 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 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

LIFE MATTERS

INSIGHT

Erik Tryggestad finds beauty, pain and resilience during a worship service in the war-torn city of Irpin, Ukraine. See christianchronicle.org/irpin for an expanded version of this column.

PAGE 29

NEW ENDOWMENT

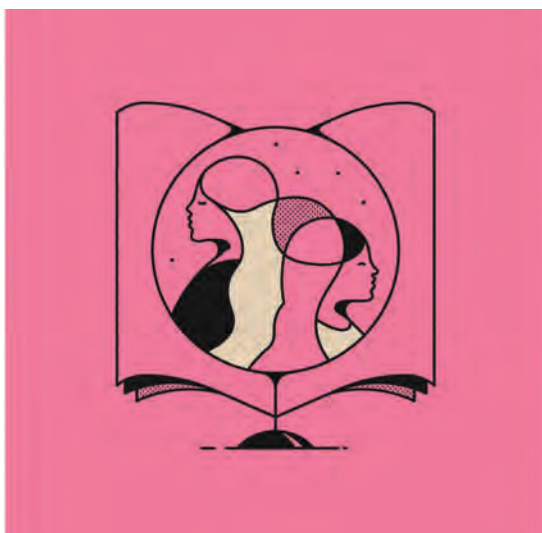
The Howard Norton Endowment will help *The Christian Chronicle* tell important stories and foster important discussions.

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BOOK REVIEW

Carley H. Dodd calls “Tombstones to Cornerstones” a “must read addressing an imminent need.”

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MILESTONES

This month's anniversaries, birthdays, celebrations and memorials. PAGE 32

EDITORIAL

What do we do now? Cheryl Mann Bacon offers suggestions for Christians after the attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump. PAGE 38

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Sunday in Ukraine

Worshippers in the battle-damaged city of Irpin share faith and sorrow as they celebrate new life.

IRPIN, UKRAINE — Walls of pure white, adorned with a single, thin wooden cross, surround a group of 35 worshippers on Sunday morning.

Most of the congregants are older ladies. From the back of the room, a young woman leads singing, waving her arms as she follows the lyrics projected on the front wall. It's a Ukrainian-language translation of “10,000 Reasons,” a song that challenges us to bless the Lord, even when our strength is failing. “Let me be singing when the evening comes.”

Soon, it's time for me to offer prayers for the Lord's Supper. I tell my fellow Christians how proud I am of what God has done through them. When the bombs drop, when the lights go out, they keep praising the Lord.

Then Richard Baggett, whom I've accompanied to Ukraine multiple times in the past two decades, delivers the sermon. He shares about post-traumatic stress disorder and the impact it's had on his family. He reads from Job, about a man who endured unimaginable suffering but held fast to his faith.

“I'm going to live like God is good because I believe he is good, even when I can't see it,” Richard says. “God is just, and there will be justice. He will not allow any evil to go unpunished.”

A woman in the audience responds, “Hope it's gonna happen soon!”

After the sermon, we celebrate with Tamara Petrina, who was baptized a few days ago. She was in Kyiv when Russian soldiers invaded Irpin. After Ukrainian forces repelled the invaders, the church here gave bread to people as they returned home.

“I had never been to church in my lifetime,”



ERIK TRYGGESTAD



By ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Above, Richard Baggett preaches while Inna Kuzmenko translates during the Irpin Church of Christ's Sunday worship.

Petrina says. She simply had to know about these people. Now, they're family.

Another woman, Rimma Bukova, pulls Richard aside to tell him she appreciated his sermon. Her son is in the military. Weeks pass between messages from him. There's a brace on her right arm. Recently, she got a call that her son was missing, she explains. She got so distraught that she fell and fractured it.

Eventually, she heard from her son. He's OK, but he's changed. He told her, “I pray every day for forgiveness from God for the things I'm doing.”

Sergey Shupishov, the church's minister, also got a call from the Ukrainian government. The squad his brother, Dima, was serving in is missing in action. That call came more than four months ago. He doesn't know if he'll see his brother again on this earth, Sergey says. But he *will* see him again.

I ask Oleksandr Sikorskii, one of the church's elders, if he knew Dima.

“Yes, I know him,” he replies. “He is a person who loves people very much. ... And you'll notice that I'm speaking about him in the present tense because I don't want to believe that he's not here.”

ERIK TRYGGESTAD is President and CEO of *The Christian Chronicle*. Contact erik@christianchronicle.org, and follow him on X at [@eriktryggestad](https://twitter.com/eriktryggestad).

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Announcing the publication by **Robert L. Hurley** of:
**‘RESTORING THE RESTORATION:
The Christian Church, what went wrong?’**



Available now on Amazon:
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Author's website:
robertleehurley.com

Author's blog:
robertleehurley.blogspot.com

Reforming the Christian Church started as early as 600 AD, and since Christ's Apostles passed the church on to the second and third generation of believers, the tinkering and changing has never stopped. Because the author has believed for years that Christ's Church is a fractured mess, he has written this book to take a fresh look at what has happened and what can be a proper "FIX." The writer's interest in Church History began with academic studies when attending Abilene Christian University and has been a lifelong passion.

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The Christian Chronicle

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LIFE MATTERS

**ANTONIO CARDONA JOINS
CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE'S BOARD**

By NIC FRARACCIO and ERIK TRYGGESTAD

While walking through a cow pasture in Puerto Rico, a teenager named Antonio Cardona came across a piece of paper advertising a free Bible course by mail.

Curious, he took it home and signed up.

A few months later, a missionary from Texas showed up at his family's doorstep to present him with a certificate of completion — and to invite him to worship with a Church of Christ.

"All churches are churches of Christ," Cardona's dad replied. But he allowed Antonio to attend.

A few decades later, Antonio Cardona became the newest member of *The Christian Chronicle's* board of trustees, a group of Christian men and women who provide governance and guidance for



Cardona

the nonprofit, international newspaper for Churches of Christ.

"I am really excited to be a part of the board," said Cardona, a member of the Princeton Church of Christ in New Jersey. "I will provide some good advisory information, contacts and inroads into the church."

A New York native with Puerto Rican roots, Cardona recently retired from the New Jersey state government, where he served in a variety of training and human resource roles.

He has worked as an adjunct instructor at universities including Rutgers and Ohio Valley University. He also has served as a part-time minister for Churches of Christ in Sebring, Ohio, and Puerto Rico. He serves as a Spanish interpreter for the Princeton church.

Cardona and his wife, Rosa, have three children.

"I am looking to expand my horizons and help other people expand their horizons as well," Cardona said. "I am trying to influence the world in a positive way within the communities I touch base with."

Whether it is advising or writing for the paper, Cardona's goal is to "expand the kingdom" with his input and guidance.

"I think that *The Christian Chronicle* is doing a fantastic job across the board," Cardona said. "I see this as a place where I can expand the influence of the *Chronicle*." 🌱

**NEW ENDOWMENT HONORS
LEGACY OF HOWARD NORTON**

By ERIK TRYGGESTAD

"The church is not a political party, a civic club nor a country club. It is to be the body of Jesus."

Those words are every bit as relevant in 2024 as they were in 1981 when Howard Norton wrote them in his first editorial for *The Christian Chronicle*.

Brother Norton climbed many mountains during his 88 years on earth. He and his wife, Jane, were members of a pioneering mission team to Brazil. He was a preacher, a Bible professor, a school administrator and a gifted storyteller.

He helped to bring this publication back from near-death, serving as its first editor after missionary John Beckloff gifted *The Christian Chronicle* to

Oklahoma Christian University. Howard **APPEAL** was part of a team of dedicated Christians who revived the newspaper and expanded its reach — including Bailey McBride, Joy McMillon, Scott LaMascus, Lindy Adams, Glover Shipp and many more.

After a long battle with cancer, Howard Norton died Oct. 22, 2023, just 17 days after Jane Norton passed away. About a month earlier, I spoke to Howard about establishing an endowment to honor his service to the *Chronicle*, and he graciously agreed.

The Howard Norton Endowment, which already has \$250,000 in commitments, will help the *Chronicle* keep telling the stories that meant so much to the Nortons. We will use income from the endowment for these purposes:

- **Covering Latin America:** The Nortons dedicated 16 years to the people of Brazil as part of a mission team. Later in life, they moved to Honduras, where Howard served as president of Baxter Institute, which trains Spanish speakers for missions. They were instrumental in the founding of Great Cities Missions.



ERIK TRYGGESTAD

Above, Howard Norton speaks to a student at the Baxter Institute in 2011 during Norton's tenure as president of the Tegucigalpa, Honduras school.

We plan to expand our coverage of Latin America, highlighting new generations of believers. One exciting development we plan to cover is Harvest Brazil, a Brazilian-led effort to plant churches in the six remaining Brazilian states with no Churches of Christ. Efforts in the capitals of three of these states already are underway.

- **The Norton Colloquium:** We want to follow Howard's example by facilitating robust discussions of issues facing our fellowship. The *Chronicle* will partner with lectureships, Christian universities and nonprofits to provide guest speakers, panel discussions and special events throughout the year.

The first Norton Colloquium is scheduled for **Sept. 30 to Oct. 2** as part of "**Inspire: The 101st Lectureship**" at Harding University in Searcy, Ark. We plan to present classes on "The Present and Future of Churches of Christ," "How Should We Talk About Politics?" and "Modern-Day Josephs (and Josephines)."

- **The *Chronicle* en Español:** We will pursue opportunities to offer high-quality Spanish translations of our coverage online and in print.

Generous donors have stepped up to help us honor Howard Norton's legacy. We would love to see this endowment grow to \$1 million or more, allowing us to expand on the initiatives you see here.

Please consider a one-time or recurring gift to The Norton Endowment. See christianchronicle.org/norton or mail checks to *The Christian Chronicle*, P.O. Box 11000, Oklahoma City, OK 73136-1100 (note "Norton Endowment"). 🌱

LIFE MATTERS

MILESTONES

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

REMEMBERING

LEAH BURKS (1943-2024) — Leah Ann Gentry Burks received her eternal reward on July 10, 2024. She was born in St. Louis, Mo.

In 1961, Leah boarded a train for Harding College in Searcy, Ark. There she met her husband, David Burks. She graduated and was married in 1965. Two years later, David began teaching for Harding. Leah taught at Bradford and White County Central and Harding Academy.

When David became president of Harding University in 1987, Leah served graciously as first lady for almost 28 years. She hosted guests in her home, including world leaders and dignitaries. She and David traveled to 81 countries as they represented Harding. She served as president of Associated Women for Harding, and the Power of Ten Scholarship was created in her honor. Leah loved God and was a devoted member of the College Church of Christ for 61 years.

Leah was preceded in death by her parents, Milburn and Walsie Gentry, and her brother and sister-in-law, Lloyd and Donna Gentry. She is survived by her husband of nearly 59 years, David; sister-in-law, Karen Horton of Searcy; son Bryan (Laura) Burks of Searcy; son Stephen (Jeanne) Burks of Searcy; daughter Marleah Teeter of Kensett, Ark.; grandchildren, Emily (Chris) Meyer of Little Rock, Ark., and their two children Lincoln and Mallie; Madison Burks of Little Rock; Carter (Kelsey) Burks of Memphis, Tenn.; Weston (Holly) Burks of Rogers, Ark.; Kaley (Ryan) Simpson of Memphis; and Caden Burks of Searcy.

Memorial gifts may be made to the David and Leah Burks Endowed Scholarship for Architecture at Harding University.

HAROLD BURNETT JR. (1948-2024) — Harold Burnett Jr., 75, of Dallas, passed away on June 15, 2024. He graduated from Southwestern Christian College in Terrell, Texas, in 1969. He met Willie Eva Rufus at Southwestern. They married Aug. 1, 1969, had five children and enjoyed 54 years of marriage.

They were known as Mr. and Mrs. Songbird. They received countless invitations to sing at weddings, funerals, alumni events and special occasions. Raising five children did not deter them from singing. Sheryl, Harold III, twins Carol and Daryl, and Gerald proved to be the perfect combination for a Burnett ensemble. The entire family would entertain and inspire listeners. The Burnett home was like a Sunday school class and a rehearsal hall. The beautiful sound of a cappella singing combined with the reading of the Scripture and prayer resonated throughout.

They were members of the Mountain View



Leah Burks



Harold Burnett Jr.



Jan Crockett



Richard LaMascus

Church of Christ in Dallas. They worked in several ministries, especially music. One of Harold's greatest joys was directing the City-Wide Youth Chorus.

When not involved with singing, Harold enjoyed a 29-year career at Parkland Memorial Hospital. He worked in the emergency room, the clinic and in human resources. He loved the Dallas Cowboys and the Mavericks. He was also a semiprofessional joke-teller.

Harold is preceded in death by his parents, Harold Burnett Sr. and Cordelia Duncan, stepfather Charles Duncan, brother Richard Burnett, sister Joyce Ann Duncan and son Gerald Burnett Sr. He is survived by his wife; daughter Sharyl Burnett Zeno (Leon), son Harold Burnett III, Daryl Burnett (Ernieca) and Carole Burnett Hamilton (Jamell); brothers Charles James Duncan and Ben Duncan; sisters Patricia Windom Duncan, Deborah Duncan and Veronica Duncan. Harold also bids farewell to 15 grandchildren, four great-grandchildren and other relatives.

The Burnetts extend heartfelt recognition to Aaron Sayles, Harold's best friend since childhood. The two enjoyed each other's company as classmates and dear brothers in Christ.

JAN CROCKETT (1945-2024) — Jan Crockett of Lubbock, Texas, passed into the arms of Jesus on June 18, 2024.

She attended Abilene Christian College and UTEP, after which she focused her energies on raising her family and being active in her church and at her sons' school. She returned to school and graduated summa cum laude in 1987 from Texas Tech with a bachelor's in education.

She began teaching children's Bible classes at the age of 13 and taught almost continuously for the next 60 years, including 30 years at Sunset Church of Christ in Lubbock. She organized and directed preschool programs in El Paso and at Sunset. She taught at Lubbock Christian School from 1986 to 1995.

Jan was a faithful Christian, a wonderful homemaker, a loving wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. She served for years with the Lubbock Christian University Associates and the ladies' ministry at the Sunset church.

She will be greatly missed by her friends and family, especially her husband of 59 years, Bob; sons Cliff Crockett (Karen) of Sunnyvale, Texas; Kevin Crockett (Jenny) of Lubbock; and Steve Crockett (Kathy) of Lubbock; seven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

Memorial gifts may be made to the Sunset church's Just Kids Ministry (sunset.cc/just-kids) Lubbock Christian School (lubbockchristian.org) or Lubbock Christian University Associates (lcu.edu/lcu-associates).

RICHARD LAMASCUS (1937-2024) — Richard Gale LaMascus, 86, passed from this life June 25, 2024, 161 days after his diagnosis with ALS, Lou Gerhig's Disease. He was a man of God and has gone to live eternally before the face of God.

Richard was born on a farm near Wallville, Okla. He graduated from Central Christian College, later known as Oklahoma Christian University, in 1958 and from Abilene Christian University in 1960. On June 15, 1958, he married Martha Madge Lowe. He was a small-business owner and landlord in Hennessey, Okla. He constructed three homes for his family using his skills as a draftsman and carpenter.

At the center of his life were family and church. Richard was active as a leader and/or elder of the Hennessey Church of Christ; the 9th & Linwood Church of Christ in Cushing, Okla.; and the Broadway Church of Christ in Drumright, Okla. He served as president of the board for a youth camp near Geary, Okla., now known as Lariat Creek Christian Camp. He chose the camp slogan, "Happiness is LCCC" and oversaw barn-raising style construction on the site.

He is preceded in death by his parents; brother Royce Dale LaMascus and two children, Alan Haskell LaMascus and Lori LaMascus. He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Martha Lowe LaMascus; daughter Ronda Gale Faulkner, and her husband, Rory; son Richard Scott LaMascus and his wife, Alice Mankin LaMascus. Additional survivors include five grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, three sisters and four sisters-in-law.

Memorial gifts may be made to In Search of the Lord's Way (searchtv.org) Lariat Creek Christian Camp (lariatcreek.org), or the LaMascus Scholarship endowment at Oklahoma Christian University (oc.edu).

LIFE MATTERS



PHOTO PROVIDED BY CROWLEY'S RIDGE COLLEGE

Crowley's Ridge College leadership Tim Wooldridge, advancement executive; Paul McFadden, vice president for student affairs; Richard Johnson, president; Brett Carlile, vice president for enrollment and advancement; and Jeremy Pierce, vice president for academic affairs, pose with a grant from the J.E. and L.E. Mabee Foundation. The organization awarded a \$662,333 grant to the college in Paragould, Ark., which is associated with Churches of Christ. The grant will partially fund the construction of the college's new chemistry building and lift stations detailed in the college's "Mission Possible \$12 Million Capital Campaign."

NEWSMAKERS

APPOINTED

KAYLAN STEWART as associate vice president for enrollment management for Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tenn. Stewart previously spent seven years leading the university's undergraduate admissions.

BAPTIZED

TARON BARGER and **DANA GOODWIN-ROSS** at the Newburg Church of Christ in Louisville, Ky. **RICH CICILIA** of the San Nicolas Church Of Christ in Aruba. **BRIAN KEITH JOHNSON** at the Vansant Church of Christ in Virginia. **A.J. SCHWEINZGER** at the Violet Ridge Church of Christ in Crittenden, Ky. **BLAKLEY HIGHSMITH** at the Maysville Church of Christ in Oklahoma. **BREANNA DISHONGH** at the Hickory Knoll Church of Christ in Harahan, La. **GLORIA AREL** at the Owens Cross Roads Church of Christ in Alabama. **NOMAR** and **XYRUS MACARIO** at the Midtown Church of Christ in Baguio City, Philippines. **BO NEELY FOWLER** at the Ninth Avenue Church of Christ in Haleyville, Ala.

NAMED

SCOTT WYATT as the new director of chorale and an assistant professor of music at Freed-Hardeman University.

RETIRED

GREG ZIEGLER from ministry after more than 40 years. Ziegler served at the Odessa Church of Christ in Missouri for 30 years before moving to work for the Bentonville Church Of Christ in Arkansas 10 years ago.



Wally Tackett



Arnelious Crenshaw

WALLY TACKETT (1942-2024) — Wally Tackett, wife, mother, grandmother, aunt, sister-in-law and friend, passed from this life on July 7, 2024.

Born in New Braunfels, Texas, she finished school in San Marcos in 1960. She moved to Austin and worked at KOKE radio and Lanier High School in the food service department, where she perfected her baking skills.

She married James Tackett at the Delwood Church of Christ on Sept. 20, 1969. They moved to San Diego, where James was stationed with the U.S. Navy. In 1973, they moved to Austin.

Wally gained a reputation for the dishes she brought to pot-lucks and for the meals she hosted in her home after worship at the Church of Christ in Hyde Park. She engaged her guests with questions about themselves and their families. People enjoyed her company and cherished their time with her.

Wally is survived by her husband James William Tackett, son James Michael Tackett (Jeanette) of Arlington, Texas; granddaughters Michelle Bogaard (Hans) of Missouri City, Texas, and Emily Tackett of Arlington; brother-in-law Walter Fuston Tackett and wife Jane of Montgomery, Texas; and sister-in-law Mary Hallowell and husband Trace of Memphis, Tenn. Many nieces, nephews, cousins, friends, neighbors and those at the Church of Christ in Hyde Park, feel a deep loss and miss her dearly.

Memorial gifts may be made to Central Texas Children's Home (CTCH.org).

HONORING

ARNELIOUS CRENSHAW — On Aug. 28, 2017, we lost a great spiritual leader and friend, the Late Evangelist Arnelious Crenshaw Jr. As we've come full circle, this being the seventh anniversary of his physical death, his family pays tribute to this powerful, humble man of God!

"I am at peace with the legacy you left us to follow. Our story is complete." — Your loving wife, Dollie (posthumously).

"Oh, Don Vito Corleone, godfather, it's so hard to believe it's been seven years since you left us. We're thankful for the memories. Mom and Dad were our first and best teachers helping to make you the greatest storyteller of all time. As you made so vivid the 'Godfather' trilogy, you did even greater with the Holy Scriptures, lifting them right off the page and implanting them directly on our hearts — Proverbs 3:1-8. We love you always, Bud, always!" — Sisters Gwen, Rosalind, Lutricia, Valerie, Ruthie (posthumously).

"We are the daily manifestation of God's choice to use Daddy to teach us the importance of our Kingdom relationships, fear of The Lord, and bringing glory to His name as we navigate among the people. We are and will be his spiritual legacy." — Children Arlisa (Walter, posthumously), Ollie Mechelle (Kevin), Jennifer (Jeramie), Arnelious Crenshaw III

"The last seven years have brought all of us through high moments and low moments, but because of the foundation you laid in our lives and familial relationships, we hold each other up and reflect on our many memories of you often. We love you." — Grandchildren Sydni, Anthony, Kori (Alex), Londyn, Livia, Leila

"Uncle was someone we could always count on during our moments of joy, those in-between times and especially times of personal struggles. Thank you for giving guidance whenever it was needed, providing words of inspiration that are forever engraved in our hearts. We Remember." — Melody, Tommy, Lee ShaNe', Joseph, Courtney (posthumously), Nekia (Henry, posthumously), Ronnie, Josh, Sarah, Roman, Naomi, and all of your great and great-great nieces and nephews.

"We remember the many nurturing sessions filled with prayer and careful investigation into our Father's will. He simply exposed the text (Nehemiah 8:8). To Arnelious Crenshaw Jr, this was the essence of preaching!" — Family ministers Tommy Palmer, Ron Ward, Kevin Overton

Correction: A Milestone on Page 26 of the June 2024 issue contained an error. Gayle Ortner was a longtime administrative assistant for the Madison Church of Christ in Alabama.

Memorial Gifts: *The Christian Chronicle* appreciates generous gifts made in memory of Mary Bowen, Vivian Hanes, Ruth Ann McNeil, Joan Mesmer, Carl Ogar, Laverne Rylee and Joyce Singleton.



Kaylan Stewart



Taron Barger



Blakley Highsmith



Greg Ziegler

LIFE MATTERS

THE AUGUST
CROSSWORDBy MYLES MELLOR
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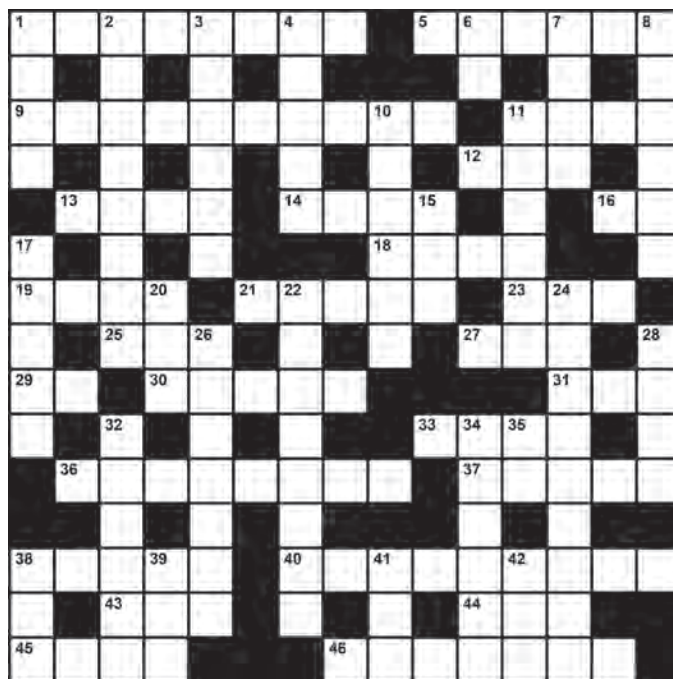
ACROSS

1. "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your _____ as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18, NIV).
5. Bible book of 150 songs of worship and praise that includes prophecies of the coming Messiah.
9. "When the army is carried off, the king of the South will be filled with pride and will slaughter many thousands, yet he will not remain _____" (Daniel 11:12, NIV).
11. "The Lord God made garments of _____ for Adam and his wife ..." (Genesis 3:21, NIV).
12. Girl referred to.
13. Throw forcefully.
14. A kind Moabitess.
16. Copper symbol.
18. "___! the herald angels sing."

19. One of two books written to Theophilus.
21. A prophet who went overboard.
23. Hen's creation.
25. ___ or nay?
27. Swine and bird are types of this.
29. Former.
30. Hymn: "_____ with me, fast falls the eventide."
31. ___ of the Covenant.
33. Cat sound.
36. Mocking.
37. "Now the people of _____ were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord" (Genesis 13:13, NIV).
38. Words to live by.
40. Paul's letter with "In him we were also chosen" (NIV).
43. Fled.
44. Amphora, e.g.
45. "Have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the account of the burning _____ ..." (Mark 12:26, NIV).
46. Hymn: "Master the _____ is Raging."

DOWN

1. James and John were mending these when Jesus saw them.



2. "Lord, forgive my _____, though it is great" (Psalm 25:11, NIV).
3. "_____ yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up" (James 4:10, NIV).
4. Different.
6. For that reason.
7. He wrote to Theophilus.
8. Peter told Jesus, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a _____ man!" (Luke 5:8, NIV).
10. A prophet to King David.
11. Monetary unit in the Bible.
15. Defiant cry.
17. Peter, Andrew, _____ and John.
20. Red, for one.
22. "The priest who is anointed and _____ to succeed his father as high priest is to make atone-ment" (Leviticus 16:32, NIV).
24. "Even if you had ten thousand _____ in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel" (1 Corinthians 4:15, NIV).
26. "because you will not _____ me to the realm of the dead" (Acts 2:27, NIV).
28. Touch the surface.
32. "Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the _____ and came toward Jesus" (Matthew 14:29).
34. Exhausts, two words.
35. Radio operator (for short).
38. Bear's young.
39. Morse code line.
41. Color.
42. Anger.

'S' BE THE TIE ...

By STEVE WHITEHEAD
BRITISHBIBLESCHOOL.COM

1. A useful slave:
_____ s
2. High priest at Jesus' trial:
_____ s
3. Home island of Barnabas:
_____ s
4. King of kings and Lord of lords:
_____ s
5. Son-in-law of No. 2:
_____ s
6. A traitor's first name:
_____ s
7. Thought that Paul's great learning had made him mad:
_____ s
8. Timothy's faithful grandmother:
_____ s
9. Where all was revealed to John:
_____ s

ANSWERS, crossword solution on Page 37.

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LIFE MATTERS

1 CORINTHIANS

By CHRISTI ROMÉO

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

- | | |
|---------------|------------|
| ADDRESS | LORD |
| APOLLOS | MESSAGE |
| ARENA | MIDST |
| AWAIT | MOTIVES |
| BENEFIT | MYSTERY |
| BOAST | NULLIFY |
| CARE | PATIENT |
| CEPHAS | PAUL |
| CHLOE | PLEASED |
| CHRIST | PREPARED |
| CORINTH | PROCESSION |
| CRISPUS | REASON |
| CROSS | REIGN |
| CRUCIFIED | RESOLVED |
| DECLARE | RICH |
| DEMONSTRATION | SANCTIFIED |
| DISCERNED | SAVED |
| ENRICHED | SEARCHES |
| FELLOWSHIP | SILVER |
| FIELD | SOSTHENES |
| FOLLOW | SPEAK |
| FOOLISHNESS | SPIRIT |
| FOUNDATION | STANDARDS |
| FREELY | STRAW |
| GAIUS | STRONGER |
| GENTILES | TASK |
| GIVEN | TEACHER |
| GOD | TEMPLE |
| GOLD | TESTIMONY |
| GRACE | TOGETHER |
| GREEKS | TREMBLING |
| HIDDEN | TRUTH |
| HUMAN | UNITED |
| INNOCENT | WANT |
| INSTRUCT | WARN |
| JESUS | WISDOM |
| JEWS | WISE |
| JUDGE | WOOD |
| LABOR | WRITTEN |
| LEARN | |

Find the words from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.
 The unused 44 letters form a sentence. Find the answer on Page 37.

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LIFE MATTERS

BOOK REVIEW

A GUIDE TO AVERT DEMISE FOR DECLINING CHURCHES

By CARLEY H. DODD

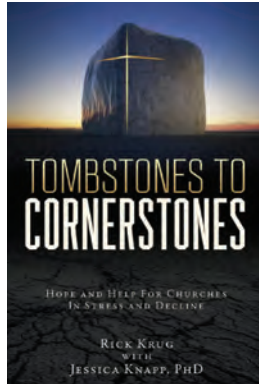
The interesting cases, Scriptures, interviews, models and analogies in “**Tombstones to Cornerstones: Hope and Help for Churches in Stress and Decline**” highlight actions needed after a congregation’s plateau.

To kindle our interest, Rick Krug and Jessica Knapp first evoke fond memories from a golden age of church growth animated by singings, frequent meetings, evangelism, fellowship and Bible studies.

After skillfully compressing many precious recollections, the book contrasts this glorious past with confusion and hopelessness among churches confronting decline.

The authors use a life cycle model based on meaningful research applicable to thousands of organizations. Their frequent theme is to recognize warning signs and make corrections prior to decline.

A pivotal point involves sustained growth, after which potential decline can be averted by applying renewal strategies through resetting goals and future vision. That is, without critically timed intervention plans and anticipating pivotal points, a shocking decline is likely.



Rick Krug and Jessica Knapp. “**Tombstones to Cornerstones: Hope and Help for Churches in Stress and Decline.**” Xulon Press. 2022. 192 pages. \$23.99



Carley H. Dodd

The authors frequently honor faithful members and leaders who struggle and are stressed when encountering loss. Sadly, however, the harsh truths of cultural change, membership decline and program defeat spool up in anger and misguided blame.

Decline reactivity occurs in identifiable patterns of attitude:

1. dumbfounded and worried (“weary and need help”)
2. optimistic, work harder, only just a cycle (“the hurt but hopeful”).

3. victimized, as in “we are under attack” (i.e., cultural shifts, social forces, etc.).

In further response, churches deny or pursue incomplete plans to forestall loss only to discover they missed the hidden causes.

Even sincere attitudes unknowingly foster platitudes blunting reality. The authors commend self-evaluation, reimagination and vision casting as grounding to avoid decline. The goal is action for congregational transition planning. It begins by reviewing successful history.

These powerful memories lead to

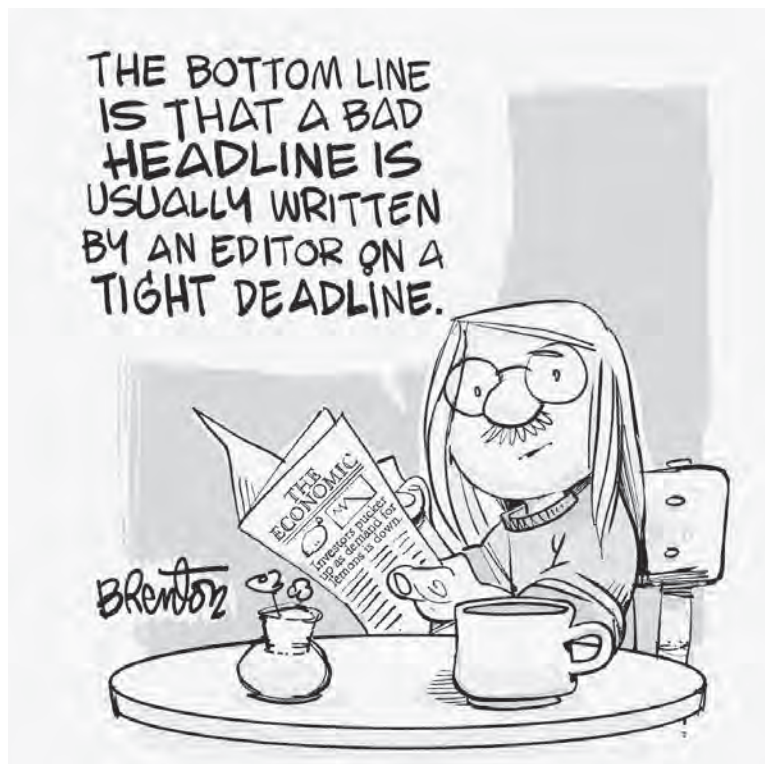
the evocative “tombstone” metaphor galvanizing prayerful principles and converting loss into a future new form — a “cornerstone,” representing past threads living on in hope and “finishing God’s work.”

The authors empathize with any negative reactions regarding decline and its conversational awkwardness. They insist the discussion is not fatalistic but realistic, merging messages of warning and encouragement, sprinkled with effective directions into a helpful pathway.

This important book stimulates thoughts about future volumes, bolstering statistical data and case studies. It is a courageous text — a must read addressing an imminent need! 🌍

CARLEY H. DODD is professor emeritus in the Department of Communication and Sociology at Abilene Christian University. He has authored numerous academic articles and books and serves as an elder of the Southern Hills Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas.

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BRENTON, BY KEITH BRENTON AND RICK GIBSON

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

This is such an important article (“Little money, few benefits: Retiring ministers struggle,” Page 13, July).

I opted out of Social Security and wish I had never done so. Ministers reading this article will be better informed and aware of other options.

SCOTT ELLIOTT | La Grange, Texas

Great article on ministers facing retirement. It will be very helpful to ministers and churches who read it and pursue additional information and education. This is another reason why I’m grateful to have been bivocational for so long.

God has been so very good to us!

ALAN HENDERSON | Newnan, Ga.

July’s article on how retiring ministers struggle financially hit the spot. As the treasurer for our little congregation, I was asking many of these questions but didn’t know where/how to start.

For me this was perfectly (divinely) timed. Thank you!

WILLIAM BARNACLE | Kasson, Minn.

I’m really grateful for the advice of a much older minister we worked with at the beginning who encouraged us against opting out of Social Security.

I genuinely believe the finances are one of the largest reasons we have such a minister shortage right now. I’d like to believe we’re going to see a lot more tentmakers in the future.

ANNA DODGEN | Midwest City, Okla.

I have been preaching for 64 years in Texas, Georgia, South Carolina and Tennessee.

Not one time in all these years has one eldership/church discussed or offered a retirement plan/help. Not one time did anyone offer support for insurance. Not one time did any eldership or church offer to pay the church’s part of my Social Security.

Not one time!

BILL WILL | Thompson’s Station, Tenn.

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LIFE MATTERS

CALENDAR

AUGUST

16 Live Podcast Recording with author Joshua Ross. Hosted by Sycamore View Church of Christ. Memphis, Tenn. See christianchronicle.org/calendar.

SEPTEMBER

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

06-08 75th Anniversary Celebration/Praise & Harmony Songfest. The Church of Christ in Falls Church. Falls Church, Va. See cocfc75.com

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

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

OCTOBER

11-12 Momentum Workshop. Melbourne, Fla. See newdayresources.org.

Full Calendar: christianchronicle.org

WORD SEARCH | PAGE 35 The unused 44 letters spell: *“Be steadfast, always abounding in the work of the Lord.”*

BIBLE BOWLING | PAGE 34

- 1. Onesimus (Philemon 10)
- 2. Annas (John 18:13)
- 3. Cyprus (Acts 4:36)
- 4. Jesus (1 Timothy 6:15)
- 5. Caiaphas (John 18:13)
- 6. Judas (Matthew 10:4)
- 7. Festus (Acts 26:24)
- 8. Lois (2 Timothy 1:5)
- 9. Patmos (Revelation 1:9)

CROSSWORD | PAGE 34



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CHILDREN'S MINISTER — Cabot Church of Christ, 500 N 2nd Street, PO Box 97, Cabot, AR 72023, (501) 843-5688, cabotkidsministryteam@gmail.com, www.cabotchurch.com/childrensministersearch.

FULL-TIME MINISTER — Bandera Church of Christ is searching for a minister to preach, serve the congregation, evangelize and be active in the community. Current membership is around 50. Recently updated 3 bedroom/2 bath parsonage provided; 1402 Sycamore St, Bandera, TX 78003, (803) 460-1373, banderacofc@gmail.com, banderachurchofchrist.org.

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

FULL-TIME 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.

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 PULPIT MINISTER — Port Lavaca Church of Christ is seeking a family man to labor with us. The preferred candidate should have a degree from a preaching school and demonstrate proven ministry. Salary is commensurate with experience; 808 State Hwy 35 S, Port Lavaca, TX 77979, (361) 552-9551, plchurchofchrist@gmail.com, plchurch.com.

FULL-TIME YOUTH MINISTER — Northeast Church of Christ, 12020 Southwick Ln, Cincinnati, OH 45241, (513) 652-0461, Contact: Eric Dickerson, theplacetobe@northeastchurch.com, northeastchurch.com/Employment.php.

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PULPIT MINISTER — Eureka Church of Christ, 107 E College Ave, Eureka, IL 61530, (309) 868-9800, Contact: Richard Hill, rhill2@gmail.com, www.eurekailchurchofchrist.com.

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LIFE MATTERS

EDITORIAL

What do we do now?

A Christian response to the attempted assassination of a former president.

By CHERYL MANN BACON, for the EDITORIAL BOARD

In the wake of the July 13 attack on former President Donald Trump, some of us remember exactly where we were when President John F. Kennedy was shot in 1963. When civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. was shot in 1968. When President Ronald Reagan was shot — but survived — in 1981.

But until now, that category of memories did not burden our children and grandchildren. Other tragedies have. Columbine. The Oklahoma City bombing. 9/11. Sandy Hook. Too many others.

But more than four decades had passed since an assassination attempt on a current or former U.S. president — at least since one that was known to the public, one that happened on live TV.

For a time, we told ourselves these events brought us closer as a people. We recall 3-year-old John F. Kennedy Jr. saluting his father's casket and President George W. Bush grabbing a bullhorn to thank first responders digging through the 9/11 rubble. We find bizarre comfort in nostalgia.

But in reality we are a flawed and cynical people, suspicious of all who see things differently. We have not mastered the lessons of history, much less the lessons of the Sermon on the Mount.

We forget that Christians with no political power whatsoever, believing in a risen Christ who never sought nor espoused any earthly power, changed the world in a generation.

They did it without a bully pulpit, without a 24/7



PHOTO BY WALT CISCO, DALLAS MORNING NEWS, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Above, President John F. Kennedy rides in the limousine in Dallas minutes before the 1963 assassination.

news cycle, without social media.

Amid war, disease and disaster, they fed the hungry, rescued abandoned babies and created hospitals to care for the sick and dying.

The Romans didn't change. Christians loved their neighbors anyway. Heed that lesson.

Your community has hungry people in it. Go feed them.

Your state has neglected, abused and unwanted children. Take care of them.

Your community has immigrants and refugees — legal and otherwise — who are frightened and lonely. Welcome them.

In the process, you'll almost certainly discover that someone working next to you votes differently than you do. Let them. Love them. Don't waste your breath berating them.

Just work together to help the hurting person in front of you. One of you will lose the election. One will win. Keep serving together anyway.

Paul told the Corinthians, "Christ's love compels us."

As we process the violence in Pennsylvania that killed a retired fire chief, Corey Comperatore, and wounded at least three others, including the former president, don't be consumed with anger.

Don't get caught up in the blame game. "It's his fault. It's their fault. It's the media's fault."

The only path back to sanity is consistently choosing to follow in the steps of the Savior — a path of sacrifice, compassion and generosity to one another.

Because Christ's love compels us. 🌍



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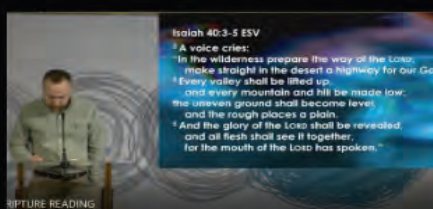
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