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WORLD

"OVERNIGHT, WE RUSSIANS TURNED INTO VILLAINS AND OUTCASTS. THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE DON'T WANT WAR." —P. 50



TRANSITIONING TO FREEDOM

One woman's quest to become a man ... and then a woman again *p.38*



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What struck you about the stories of detransitioners?

"The reasons young people turn to transgenderism are deeply personal and complex. Transgenderism promises a 'salvation' it cannot deliver. I was struck with the importance of listening to detransitioners' stories to learn how to better care for and protect young people and to understand the dangers of pushing medical interventions that fail to address underlying issues."

—WORLD reporter Mary Jackson, whose story begins on p. 38

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YOUNG REPUBLICANS EMBRACE CLIMATE CARE

It is good that young people like Andrew Eisenman take an interest in important issues such as climate change. But he has chosen to abandon the political party that more closely reflects Christian values over this controversial issue. That is the problem with some young idealists.

Tom Burley/Alto, Mich.

Your article did not explain why these people are changing their minds regarding climate change. No data is presented showing that the fears commonly heard (and repeated in this article) are really happening.

Rick Day/Whitney Point, N.Y.

COMBATING DISEASE AND BRAIN DRAIN

MARCH 12, P. 56: There were times when African hospitals had the facilities, funding, and nursing staff to serve their communities but were going to close down because of a lack of a single licensed surgeon. The Pan-African Academy of Christian Surgeons has helped keep those facilities open.

Kristofer Sandlund/Zanesville, Ohio

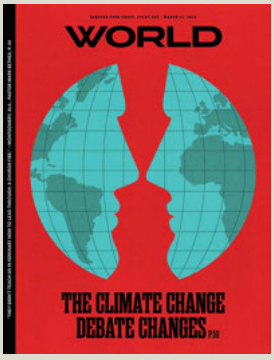
KIDS' DOLLARS

MARCH 12, P. 8: Too many children have no financial experience before they are thrust into adulthood. By making mistakes before *credit* (our "good" word for debt) blindsides them, they can learn Biblical virtues of industry, thrift, saving, conservation, and prioritization while the stakes are low.

Jim Histand/Surprise, Ariz.

I am so glad that a lot of people are realizing that a large part of our economic problems is due to a lack of individual fiscal responsibility. How important it is for all parents to see that their children learn basic accounting.

Pat Jacobs/Redmond, Wash.



YOUNG REPUBLICANS EMBRACE CLIMATE CARE

MARCH 12, P. 50:

I embrace climate care but strongly urge detailed analysis of the data because there is much misinformation out there. I doubt Andrew Eisenman did this since he thinks global warming trumps all other important issues.

Michael J. Oard/Bozeman, Mont.

LETTERS AND COMMENTS

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READING TO YOUR KIDS IS TIME WELL SPENT

MARCH 12, P. 34: When I taught preschool, I could always tell which children had parents who read to them. They had a better vocabulary and were more imaginative and patient.

Evelyn Carver/Middleboro, Mass.

Mary Jackson's interview with Meghan Cox Gurdon brought to mind the best years of my life when my children were growing up. I would come home from work, and after dinner, I would get out a book and read to the family. My wife claims I read a library to them.

Larry Borges/Stockton, Calif.

OPULENT CRIME

MARCH 12, P. 23: Poor Agatha must be turning in her grave, but I'm sure she would wholeheartedly agree with Collin Garbarino. His last sentence sums it up: "The real crime in this film is Branagh's abandonment of the characteristics that made Christie's Hercule Poirot so great."

Helen Ferguson/Ridgeland, Miss.

MURDERVILLE HAS MORE COMEDY THAN MYSTERY

MARCH 12, P. 25: I find it hard to comprehend why a Christian would be "dying for a quick hit of humor," but to even consider humor with "foul language, vulgar jokes, sexual innuendo, and fake blood" goes against what God has called us to think about. We need more discernment in our entertainment choices.

Joe McCormick/Plymouth, Ind.

CORRECTIONS

The breach of the U.S. Capitol occurred on Jan. 6, 2021 ("The president who walked a tightrope," March 12, p. 26).

Anne Lamott's story about a 2-year-old who locked himself in his room was from her book *Operating Instructions* ("The last leaf," Feb. 26, p. 70).

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SOUND JOURNALISM

WORLD's reporting is a delight both to the eye and to the ear

IF YOU ARE A REGULAR LISTENER to WORLD's daily podcast, *The World and Everything in It*, you probably already know that we have launched a new podcast called *Lawless*. If you're not a regular listener—and you should be—you may have missed it.

Lawless is a serial story in the "true crime" podcast category. The first season is a deep dive into the story of Terri Schiavo, a brain-injured woman who died in 2005 after the court-ordered removal of her feeding tube. To tell the full story, we're offering 12 weekly episodes, plus a few "bonus content" episodes we expect to toss in along the way.

Lynn Vincent, the reporter who covered the Schiavo case for WORLD back when it was happening, is the host of *Lawless*. For background, she'll use a lot of the reporting we did back then, but she and her small team have done an extraordinary amount of new digging into the story as it has unfolded in the years since.

Lynn has added the results of her team's investigations, new interviews with the people surrounding Schiavo in those days, and 17 years' worth of perspective on the case.

You can find *Lawless* wherever you get your podcasts. Once you've found it, I invite you to give WORLD's other podcasts a try:

› *The World and Everything in It* is a daily news podcast perfect for your morning commute, or morning walk, or morning coffee, or—well, you get the idea. If WORLD Magazine were a daily radio program, it'd sound just like this: It's broad and deep, serious, and entertaining.

› The *Legal Docket* podcast explores key Supreme Court cases. Our new season will examine pro-life legislation, the death penalty, Second Amendment rights, the law governing opioid prescriptions, and more. You'll come away knowing more about how our legal system works, and program hosts Mary Reichard and Jenny Rough make it fun to learn. *Legal Docket* runs after the Supreme Court adjourns for the summer and before it resumes in October.

› *Listening In*, our weekly interview podcast, is our longest-running weekly podcast. Host Warren Smith has interesting conversations with interesting people, some of whom are well known and others relatively unknown.

› Our *Effective Compassion* podcast is wrapping up its third season, in which our team devotes the entire season to new approaches for prison ministry. I think it has been the best season yet of this podcast that looks at what makes compassion ministry work.

The current episode of each of those podcasts, along with archived episodes from those podcasts and others, are on every major podcast platform (and most minor ones), as well as on our website at wng.org/podcasts. ■



Kevin Martin

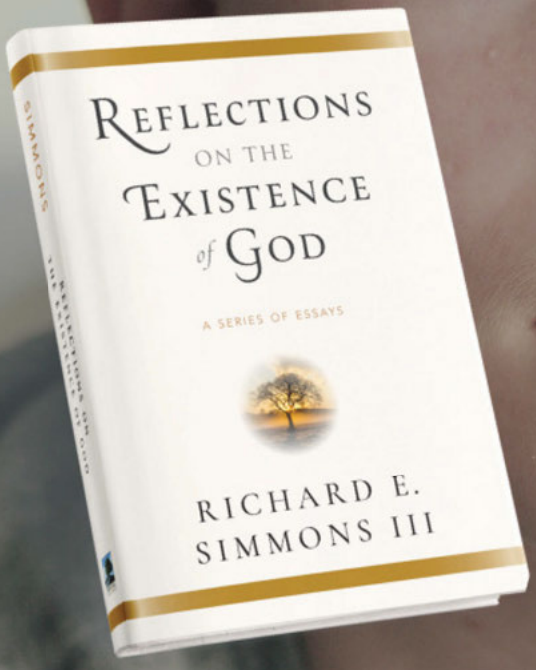
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Walk-away talk

It's easy to say "no" but not as easy to say "yes"

IT'S A WHOLE LOT EASIER saying "no" in a multitude of life's decisions and choices than it is to embrace something that works.

Certainly that is also the case with the road that leads us to the selection of a new president in November of 2024. Between now and then we will say "no" to hundreds of candidates we think are less than competent to lead the world's most important nation. Meanwhile, we'll put all kinds of energy and resources into the choice of just one of those candidates, to whom we will say "yes." More on that later.

But just to make the point:

As we aim down the path to marriage, we say "no" to dozens of good folks—many of whom might have made wonderful partners—so that we can focus on that one person who becomes the spectacular "yes" of our life.

Similarly, we pore through dozens of college and university catalogs and websites, finally saying "no" to almost all of them while latching our hopeful "yes" onto the magic few that we dream will change our lives forever. So let me ask: Are you happy right now with the changes your college choice made in your life so far?

We do the same with our homes, hoping the realtor's ratio of homes shown to homes sold might be tolerably low or tolerably high, depending on whether we're buying or selling.

Or with our automobiles. The probability of a satisfying "deal" the last time around at your car dealer is, if you stop to think about it, somewhat closely related to the number of times you said "no" and walked away from some other deal(s).

THE PROBABILITY OF A SATISFYING "DEAL" AT YOUR CAR DEALER IS SOMEWHAT RELATED TO THE NUMBER OF TIMES YOU SAID "NO."

But back to the political scene, where I hear more and more talk from voters who wish they had a chance to "walk away from the deal." That "deal" might still be Donald Trump's first nomination as Republican candidate in 2016, his election as president later that year, or more vividly these days, Joe Biden's election in 2020 and performance as president since then.

Most public and compelling of all that "walk away" talk for me has been an editorial feature in a late March issue of *The Wall Street Journal*. The feature followed the remarkably careless slipup by Biden asserting in public the need to have Russian President Vladimir Putin removed from office. Biden's advisers had to walk back the statement immediately, knowing how much more difficult it would make any future negotiations with Putin. The slipup prompted some "walk away" talk, including, apparently, "fire Biden" letters to the *WSJ*.

The *WSJ* was more practical and more sensible. Here is how they played it:

"The reality is that we have to live with Mr. Biden for three more years as President. And please stop writing letters imploring us to demand that Mr. Biden resign. Do you really want Vice President Kamala Harris in the Oval Office? She was chosen as a bow to identity politics to unite the Democratic Party in the election campaign, not for her ability to fill the President's shoes. In the last 14 months she has failed to demonstrate even the minimum knowledge or capacity for the job. We are fated to make the best of the President we have."

The *WSJ* covers its tracks pretty well by reminding its readers that not once in almost 100 years (not since 1928) has that venerable newspaper and/or its noteworthy editorial staffs endorsed a presidential candidate. That's a record of saying "no" to which all news outlets should aspire. ■

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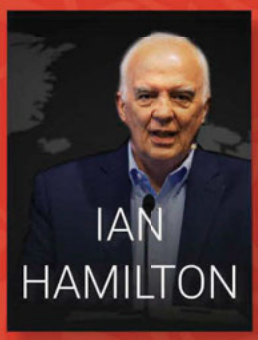














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HOPING FOR A BURIAL

Activists tell story of obtaining aborted baby remains

by Leah Savas

WHAT BEGAN AS AN EFFORT to give a proper burial to aborted babies led two pro-lifers to the discovery of possibly illegal late-term abortions and unsuccessful attempts to have the bodies examined. At an April 5 news conference run by longtime pro-life activist Randall Terry, pro-lifers from the group Progressive Anti-Abortion Uprising (PAAU) revealed the story behind the unborn babies that police removed from an apartment in Washington, D.C., on March 30.

The FBI arrest of pro-life activist Lauren Handy in Washington—along with the police discovery of aborted baby bodies in her apartment—sparked confusion as →

Lauren Handy speaks during a news conference in Washington.

MANUEL BALCE CENETA/AP





news media reported on the situation. While a grand jury in March indicted Handy and eight other pro-life activists for engaging in a 2020 Washington abortion facility sit-in, leading to her recent arrest, the discovery of the baby remains was a separate matter and was coordinated by the pro-life activists. So far, the police department has said it does not intend to perform an autopsy on the bodies.

Handy and fellow activist Terrisa Bukovinac told their side of the story in interviews with WORLD. The chain of events began two weeks ago outside the downtown Washington Surgi-Clinic abortion facility. According to Bukovinac and Handy, the pair arrived around noon on March 25, for a "pink rose rescue," in which activists enter an abortion facility and hand out roses and information about pro-life services to women in the waiting room.

As they arrived, they said, they saw a medical waste truck from Curtis Bay Energy parked outside and a driver loading boxes into the back of the truck. When Handy and Bukovinac approached him and told him there could be dead babies inside the boxes, he looked "shocked" and "disturbed," according to the pro-life activists.

They said he checked his paperwork to confirm the boxes were from the abortion facility and said they were. Handy and Bukovinac also took pictures, obtained by WORLD, that showed the name of the company on the boxes.

Bukovinac said she asked, "Would you get in trouble if we take one of these boxes?" The driver asked what they would do with it, and Handy told him they would make sure the babies had a proper burial, the activists said. They said the driver consented, so they took a box and returned to Handy's apartment.

In a statement to local news channel WUSA9, the company, also known as Curtis Bay Medical Waste Services, admitted its employee picked up three packages from the abortion facility but denied giving any of them away. It said its company policy prohibits its customers from disposing of fetal remains using its services.

According to Bukovinac, she and Handy "made several calls" to get advice from people who "had experience with this type of thing" before opening the box. They spoke with Randall Terry, founder and former leader of Operation Rescue, and Monica Migliorino Miller, a friend and mentor of Handy's who in the past has kept aborted babies' bodies in her apartment while she made funeral arrangements. Some of their advice: Use gloves, double mask, be cautious looking through it, and be aware it could be nothing.

They also tried to track down a priest "in anticipation that it might be dead babies." Bukovinac is an atheist, but Handy is Catholic. They knew "many people in our movement would be very concerned about us looking through the remains of unborn children," Bukovinac said.

They were unable to find a priest but contacted a deacon who came to witness them opening the box. A little before 2 p.m., Bukovinac filmed on a phone while Handy with gloved hands removed the contents. Inside, they said, they found about 115 unborn babies at various stages of development. Five were well-developed, late-term babies—three still intact, two "severely dismembered." Handy and Bukovinac decided that, before they buried the babies, they would show the bodies to a pathologist who could determine how they died. The pro-lifers suspected one had been a victim of an illegal partial-birth abortion and that others had been born alive. On March 28, a priest conducted a funeral Mass and naming ceremony for the babies in front of Handy's refrigerator.

Despite their attempts, Bukovinac said they were unable to find a pathologist after multiple days of searching. On Tuesday, March 29, they emailed a letter through attorney Steve Cooley to the homicide branch of the Washington Metropolitan Police Department and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, requesting to arrange a pickup of the five late-term babies so the police could examine them. Bukovinac and Handy said other activists transported the other 100-plus babies to arrange a burial that night.

During the time that the babies' bodies were in her apartment, Handy said, no one was eating or living there. She stayed at Bukovinac's apartment on the day they obtained the remains and the following nights. That Tuesday, they left Handy's door unlocked so the police could pick up the babies, and they

LEFT: MANUEL BALCE CENETA/AP; RIGHT: CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES



Terrisa Bukovinac (left); the red-brick row house where D.C. Metro Police removed five fetuses.

believed the pickup would happen that night.

But the morning of Wednesday, March 30, Bukovinac and Handy heard that FBI agents were arresting other activists who had been involved in an October 2020 sit-in at the Washington Surgi-Clinic. They knew Handy would probably be arrested soon. They drove to Handy's apartment to see if police had taken the babies yet and arrived a little after 9:30 a.m.

Before they could enter, FBI agents arrested Handy on the sidewalk for her participation in the 2020 sit-in. Terrisa said she checked inside the apartment after Handy's arrest and saw that the babies were still there. The police didn't arrive until the afternoon to pick them up.

Bukovinac said the activists wanted a forensic analysis performed on the unborn babies before releasing information. But once local reporters heard about the earlier arrests, they showed up with cameras in Handy's neighborhood to witness officials carrying biohazard bags out of the apartment. Police released Handy later that day, and when she arrived back at her apartment, reporters peppered her with questions. Her landlord told her she would have to move out, she said.

PROVIDING ABORTED BABIES A PROPER BURIAL IS ONE WAY TO EXPOSE THE INJUSTICE OF ABORTION.

The Department of Justice filed the indictment against the nine pro-life activists on March 24, the day before Handy and Bukovinac obtained the box outside of the abortion facility. (Handy and the other indicted activists each face the possibility of more than a decade in prison if convicted of conspiracy and attempting to block access to the Washington Surgi-Clinic abortion facility during the October 2020 sit-in.)

"I think Lauren has been treated very unfairly," said Handy's mentor Monica Migliorino Miller. "Keeping the bodies in her apartment was simply a temporary way to have them in her custody while they were preparing, frankly, to figure out what to do with them."

From Miller and Handy's perspective as Catholics, providing aborted babies a proper burial is one way to expose the injustice of abortion and perform an act of love and justice for the children. Miller noted that burying the dead is one of the seven corporal works of mercy in Catholic tradition. "That is the only act of charity that an aborted baby is ever going to get," she said.

Meanwhile, *The Washington Post* reported that the "city medical examiner does not plan at this time to perform autopsies on the five fetuses" obtained from Handy's house. Executive Assistant Chief of Police Ashan Benedict said the fetuses were aborted "in accordance with D.C. law [and] there doesn't seem to be anything criminal in nature about that except for how they got into this house."

In response to questions about the case, the Metropolitan Police Department told WORLD, "Due to the ongoing nature of this investigation, we are unable to discuss specifics such as this. This case remains under active investigation."

According to the Washington Surgi-Clinic website, the abortion facility performs abortions up to "27-plus weeks of pregnancy." District of Columbia law doesn't put a gestational limit on abortions, but PAAU said the babies' killings could have violated federal law if they had been born alive and left to die or if the abortionist had partially delivered them before killing them. ■



RECORD-BREAKER

Around the world in 353 days

U.S. astronaut sets record for time in space with 5,680 trips around the Earth

MARK VANDE HEI, 55, beat the U.S. record for the longest stint in space by 15 days after he and Russian astronauts Pyotr Dubrov and Anton Shkaplerov emerged from a Russian capsule in Kazakhstan on March 30. NASA doctors examined Vande Hei before taking him back to Houston. Vande Hei and Dubrov launched in April 2021 from Kazakhstan and orbited Earth 5,680 times on the International Space Station. He performed experiments on everything from muscle loss to growing chili peppers. Shkaplerov joined Vande Hei and Dubrov on the ISS in October, escorting a Russian film crew to make the first movie filmed in space. To accommodate that visit, Vande Hei and Dubrov doubled the length of their stay. He avoided talking about Russia's invasion of Ukraine, saying in space they are all one crew. NASA plans to study the effects of prolonged time in space on the body, collecting data for missions to the moon and Mars.

FREE TO SPEAK

In a unanimous ruling on March 30, the Helsinki District Court dismissed charges against politician Päivi Räsänen and Lutheran Bishop Juhana Pohjola for expressing their Biblical beliefs about homosexuality. Räsänen, a longtime member of Finnish Parliament and former interior minister, faced three criminal charges for supposed "hate speech" related to comments she made in a 2019 tweet, on a nationally syndicated radio program, and in a 23-page booklet, which she authored and Pohjola published. But the district court concluded it was not its job "to interpret Biblical concepts." The court ordered the state prosecutor to pay more than 60,000 euros in legal costs. Räsänen, who is being represented by Alliance Defending Freedom International, expressed relief but expects the prosecutor will appeal. She said she is "ready to defend freedom of speech and religion in all necessary courts, also in the European Court of Human Rights."

REQUIEM FOR HILLSONG

Australia-based Hillsong Church lost nine of its 16 American campuses in February, *The New York Times* reported, as pastors severed ties with the organization. Hillsong Atlanta lead pastor Sam Collier pulled out last week after a Discovery+ documentary investigating Hillsong scandals was released. Terry and Judith Crist, lead pastors in Phoenix and Las Vegas, announced they were also leaving and taking their congregations with them. Crist oversees six churches and plans to place non-Hillsong pastors in the pulpits. Last week, Hillsong co-founder Brian Houston resigned amid allegations of improper actions toward women and a legal case in which he's accused of hiding his father's sexual misconduct. Terry Crist told his congregation Sunday that he has lost confidence in the global board, citing demands that pastors sign nondisclosure and noncompete agreements. In recent weeks, new reports claim an internal Hillsong investigation found rape accusations against Hillsong Dallas leader Reed Bogard from when he was a Hillsong staffer in New York City. Bogard abruptly resigned last year under accusations of misappropriating church funds.

BILL INGALL/NASA VIA AP

GASOLINE PRICES GO UP IN A PUFF OF SMOKE



-$37.63

The futures price for a barrel of West Texas Intermediate oil on April 20, 2020, early in the pandemic, meaning investors had to pay for people to take their oil contracts.

11.2

The average number, in millions, of barrels per day of oil produced in the United States in 2021, down from 11.3 million barrels per day in 2020 and 12.2 million in 2019, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

$6.02

The average cost of a gallon of gasoline in San Luis Obispo, Calif., in March 2022, the highest in the nation and two-thirds higher than an average gallon in Lawton, Okla., according to AAA.

7%

The share of oil imports into the United States provided by Russia in 2021, according to *Forbes*.

$4.33

THE NATIONAL AVERAGE gasoline price per gallon on March 11, according to the American Automobile Association. That figure was the highest ever recorded by the AAA and represented a 54 percent increase in the price of gasoline from March 2021. The run-up in prices of both oil and gasoline comes less than two years after petrol values cratered in the beginning months of the coronavirus pandemic when nations around the world began imposing tight restrictions. Oil producers that shut down capacity in 2020 could only slowly ramp up production when demand roared back. Domestic economic relief packages in 2020 and 2021 and Federal Reserve policy provoked a generalized inflation that led to further increases. To make matters worse, Russia's February invasion of Ukraine, and the resulting economic sanctions, threaten to sideline one of the world's major oil exporters.

ILLUSTRATION BY KRIEG BARRIE

"The problem with conflicts like this is that at the end of the day, people follow a winner. So Putin's final cards are very far from played."

New York Times columnist **BRET STEPHENS** on Russia's war against Ukraine.

"While I support the pro-life policy in this legislation, I fear the novel civil enforcement mechanism will in short order be proven both unconstitutional and unwise. [It] undermines our constitutional form of government and weakens our collective liberties."

Idaho Gov. **BRAD LITTLE** when signing the state bill modeled after the Texas Heartbeat Act.

"I want to apologize to the Academy, I want to apologize to all my fellow nominees. … I'm hoping the Academy invites me back."

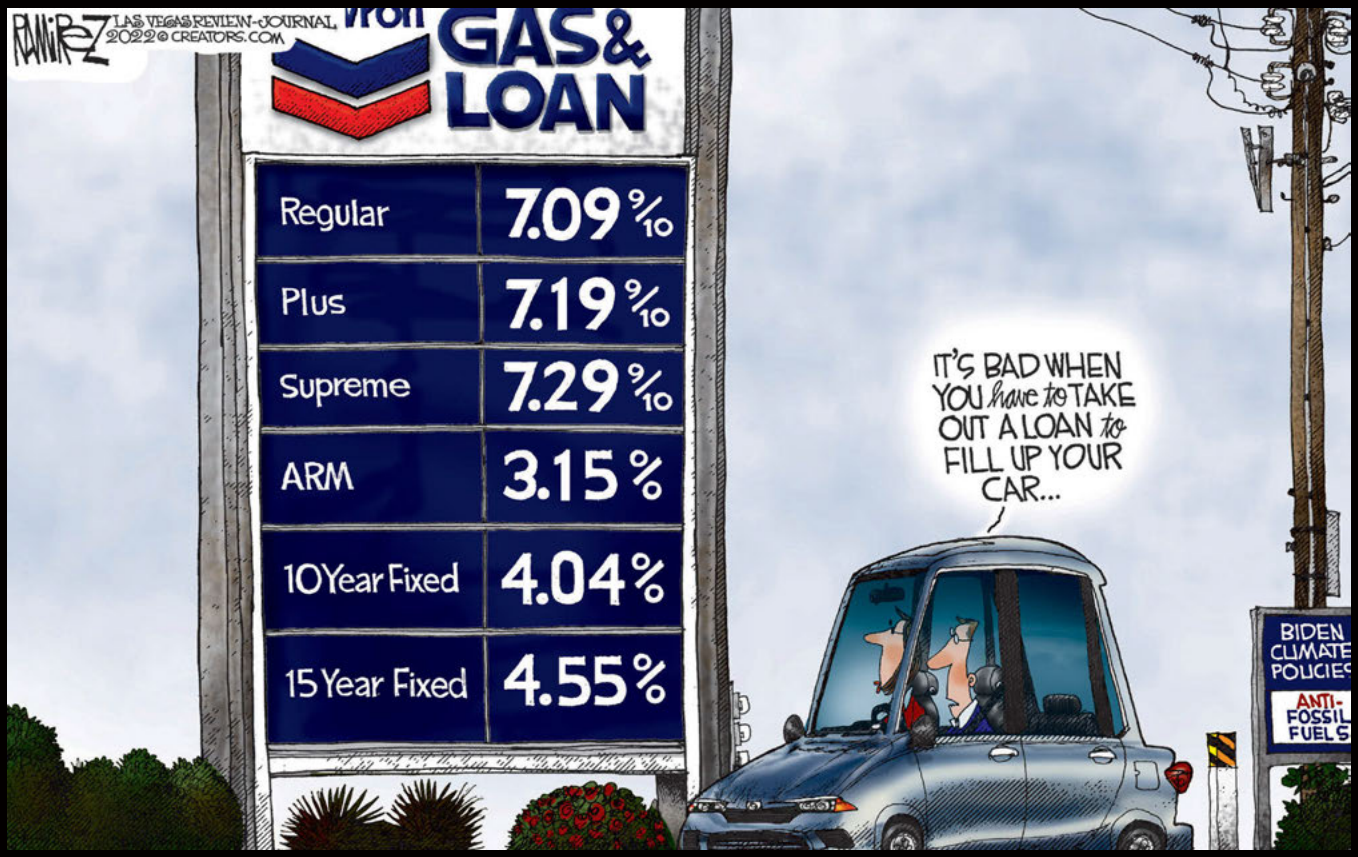
Academy Award–winner **WILL SMITH** in his acceptance speech for Best Actor at the 94th Oscars after slapping comedian and presenter Chris Rock.

"I hate Russia. The girl who lost her leg [Masha] was so traumatized she wouldn't eat or drink for days. She couldn't mentally handle what had happened. We had to feed her intravenously. Another boy, a 6-year-old, with shrapnel in his skull described—without any tears or emotion—watching his mother burn to death in their car after it was hit."

Dr. **YURI BORZENKO**, head of the Children's Hospital in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine.

"I am living through my third war. I never thought there would be another one."

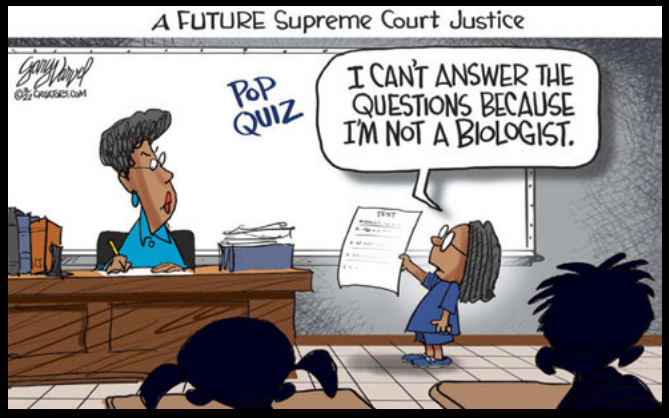
MARIA STASENKO, 102, who was born just after World War I and lives in Dnipro, Ukraine, where Russia's invasion brings painful memories to survivors of World War II.


RAMIREZ
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL
2022 © CREATORS.COM
GAS & LOAN
Regular 7.09 9/10
Plus 7.19 9/10
Supreme 7.29 9/10
ARM 3.15 %
10 Year Fixed 4.04%
15 Year Fixed 4.55%
IT'S BAD WHEN YOU have to TAKE OUT A LOAN to FILL UP YOUR CAR...
BIDEN CLIMATE POLICIES
ANTI-FOSSIL FUELS


WOKE DISNEY
LOST and FOUND
FIGHT PARENTAL RIGHTS IN EDUCATION
ASK ABOUT OUR QUEER AGENDA
I LOST MY INNOCENCE.
Garry Manvel


Ye Olde Diplomat's Club
JOE
CHEMICAL W
NUKES
CAUTION FRAGILE ITEMS INSIDE
COUNTERPOINT
Garry Manvel


PRESIDENT ZELENSKY, I WILL DO FOR UKRAINE WHAT I'VE DONE FOR AMERICA.
THAT'S WHAT I'M AFRAID OF.
COUNTERPOINT
Garry Manvel


A FUTURE Supreme Court Justice
POP QUIZ
I CAN'T ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BECAUSE I'M NOT A BIOLOGIST.
Garry Manvel



Cock tempts fast-food fate

Slidell, La., Popeyes' marketing mascot has something to crow about

by John Dawson

A brave bird has made a fast-food chicken joint in Slidell, La., its new roost. Employees at a Slidell Popeyes Chicken have been harboring a stray rooster for months after the bird became lost after Hurricane Ida slammed into the Gulf Coast in 2021. After failing to find the bird's owner, employees built the animal a coop and named it Rocco. In March, store general manager Muhassin Shepherd told WWL-TV the chicken keeps busy around the property entertaining customers in the drive-thru lane. "It's like he knows we're watching him. It's like he wants everybody to come see him, look at my feathers, listen to me crow," Shepherd told WWL-TV. "We've been actually increasing sales and business so, you know, meeting a lot of new friends just to come in and see Rocco," said Shepherd.

FISHING SLIDERS

Three men were blown nearly a mile across a frozen lake when gusts approaching 50 mph unmoored their ice fishing shanty in Huron County, Mich. First responders were alerted to the imperiled shanty by an onlooker watching from the shore of Saginaw Bay. By the time firefighters reached the men, they had already made it to shore. According to the firefighters, the men said they had underestimated the winds and overestimated the friction of their homemade fishing shack.

ISLAND LOST

In March, a Royal Navy patrol vessel discovered a small island in the South Pacific wasn't where the Royal Navy left it. Sailors aboard the HMS *Sprey* had been tasked with updating the United Kingdom's cartographical records and set sail for **Henderson Island**—a small, uninhabited landmass in the Pitcairn Islands. On March 10, the crew of the *Sprey* arrived at the British Overseas Territory 3,600 miles west of Chile and began satellite measurements. They discovered that previous records misplaced the island by about a mile. The previous official cartography of the island dated back to aerial photography in 1937.



ILLUSTRATION BY RACHEL BEATTY; HENDERSON ISLAND: RON VAN OERS/UNESCO



GAS TOO CHEAP

A pair of gas stations in a Milwaukee, Wis., suburb have filed a lawsuit against a third station, alleging it's selling gas too cheaply. WISN-TV reported in March that companies operating a BP station and a Shell station made their complaints under the state's Unfair Sales Act. The law prohibits businesses from selling goods for less than cost—which the stations accuse Waukesha Woodman's Market of doing. In its own lawsuit, the Woodman's Market says it has to keep its prices low to compete with the closest Costco.



STAR DIY-ER

Complaining that local authorities weren't doing their jobs, 77-year-old rock icon **Rod Stewart** led a small crew to fill potholes near his Harlow, U.K., home. Stewart's March 11 Instagram post showed him and a small group of men shoveling filler into large potholes in a country lane. "My Ferrari can't go through here at all," Stewart explained, adding that recently an ambulance burst a tire on one of the potholes. "I'm repairing the street where I live as no one else can be bothered to do it." A local transportation authority spokesman said it appreciated his efforts but would prefer the legendary rocker not attempt to do the work of professional street crews.

SHRINKFLATION

Inflation doesn't just nibble away at the value of money. Sometimes it devours chips straight from the bag. Frito-Lay admitted it reduced the size of some chip bags rather than raise prices in order to account for inflation. The snack maker confirmed it reduced the contents of its Doritos bags from 9.75 ounces to 9.25 ounces—a difference of about five chips. "Inflation is hitting everyone ... we took just a little bit out of the bag so we can give you the same price and you can keep enjoying your chips," a company spokesman said. And shrinkflation might be spreading. The makers of Bounty, Wheat Thins, Gatorade, and Crest have all announced the downsizing of their offerings in order to save money.



> **I'M REPAIRING THE STREET WHERE I LIVE AS NO ONE ELSE CAN BE BOTHERED TO DO IT.**

DITCHED CRANE

An Alabama tow truck driver foiled a man's plan to steal a truck containing a 70-ton crane. According to Chilton County sheriff's deputies, 26-year-old Johnny Kent Mims hired the unnamed wrecker driver to haul the massive vehicle out from a wooded area and deliver it to a scrap yard for salvage. But the driver remembered moving the same crane a few years back and decided to place a call to the owner to double check. When the crane's owner said he hadn't sold the vehicle and didn't want it moved, the tow truck driver called police. Deputies say Mims tried to move the vehicle himself but ended up stuck in a ditch. Authorities arrested Mims and charged him with first-degree theft.



WOODMAN'S MARKET, DORITOS: HANDOUT; STEWART: SCREEN CAPTURE FROM INSTAGRAM VIDEO; CRANE: CHILTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE/FACEBOOK



Freedom not to speak

Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slower to shout back

"I FOUGHT THE WILD BEASTS AT EPHESUS."

That was Paul's vivid memory of church planting in west Asia Minor, which he recalled while writing to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15:32). He had seen a promising start in Ephesus, gathering a small body of believers and arguing daily for Jesus as Messiah in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. Miracles were happening, people were listening, and some were even hearing.

But "around that time," as Luke records it, "there arose no small disturbance." A protest among the local silversmiths, who believed Paul was slandering their patron goddess and hurting their business, became a citywide riot. Hundreds of people poured into the open-air theater to shout, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" They carried on for two hours, even though, as Luke wryly observes, most of them didn't exactly know what they were yelling about.

The hysteria of crowds hasn't changed much. I'm reminded of the Ephesian dustup after every widely reported campus disruption, like the one at Yale Law School on March 10. Once again, screaming, wall-pounding, and chanting students shut down a scheduled speaker—but two ironies make this one notable. First, the event was a seminar on the First Amendment and free speech. Second, the disrupters were not drama or sociology majors, but law students—presumably headed for a career in law, where they will be expected to win cases by persuasive argument, not screaming at the judge.

This kind of behavior at an elite institution doesn't bode well for the future of the legal profession, or any kind of profession where clear communication is key. Maybe the youth were ill-trained in their younger youth, like the fifth graders in my Awana group who keep interrupting me when I'm speaking. Am I just a pushover, or is unrestrained blurting typical of kids these days? (As opposed to my day, when we all listened quietly with our hands folded.)

FOR AMERICANS, THE FREEDOM TO SAY ANYTHING IS VITAL TO A FUNCTIONING REPUBLIC.

Just as likely, the Yale students, like the Middlebury College students who shut down Charles Murray in 2017, felt entitled to say what they wanted as freely, loudly, and persistently as lung-and-throat capacity allowed because their cause was just. But their cause had nothing to do with the event sponsored by the college Federalist Society.

It was supposed to be a conversation between two political opposites about a particular Supreme Court case: *Uzuegbunam v. Preczewski*, in which the court upheld the right of a Christian college student to share his faith on campus. The invited speakers were Kristen Waggoner, general counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom, and Monica Miller, of the American Humanist Association. They intended to model how to have a civil discussion from different perspectives.

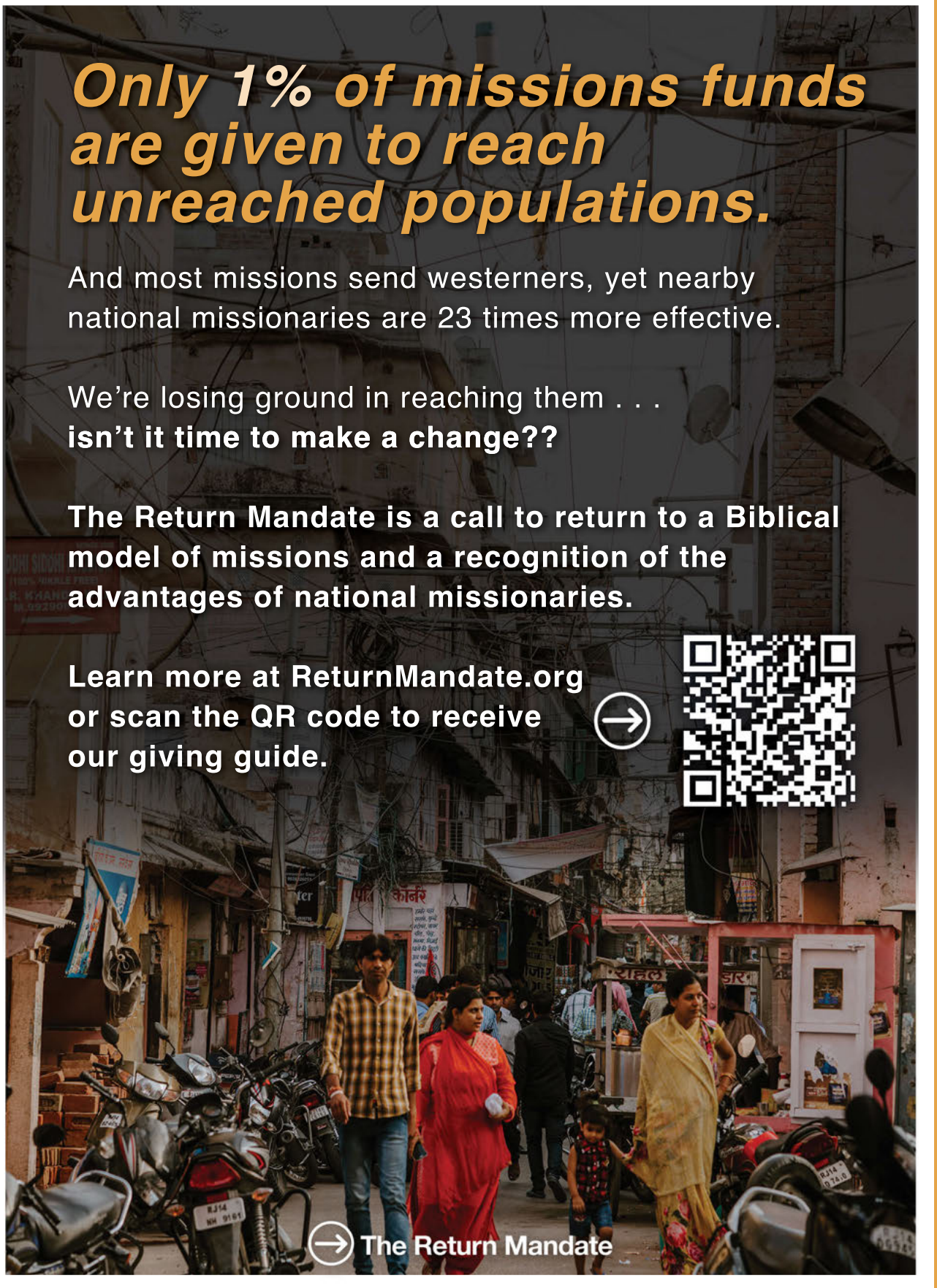
Because the infamy of the ADF preceded Ms. Waggoner, a civil discussion was doomed from the start. The first indication was students holding up signs reading "Shame," "Be Less Mean," and "ADF is a hate group"—not in relation to *Uzuegbunam*, but to the organization's supposed persecution of trans people. Did the audience understand the case under discussion? Or were they, like the Ephesians, mindlessly shouting about what they did not know?

Free speech is not a virtue, because much of it is not virtuous. But free speech is necessary to a pluralistic society. Without it, preferred speech will strangle unpreferred speech and may even, in extreme cases, strangle unpreferred speakers. "But speech is violence!" they say. By that logic (to use a notorious example), Chris Rock was practicing violence at this year's Oscar ceremony while Will Smith was merely exercising his right to speak.

For Americans, the freedom to say anything is vital to a functioning republic.

For Christians, the freedom not to say anything is just as crucial: to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slower to shout back. Kristen Waggoner, like Paul, was unable to address the mob, but she lives to speak another day. To speak, as she wrote in WORLD Opinions, "Truthfully, forthrightly—and with love in our hearts." Love wins—eventually. Lord willing, we will eventually see it. ■

EMAIL jcheaney@wng.org TWITTER @jbcheaney


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isn't it time to make a change??
The Return Mandate is a call to return to a Biblical model of missions and a recognition of the advantages of national missionaries.
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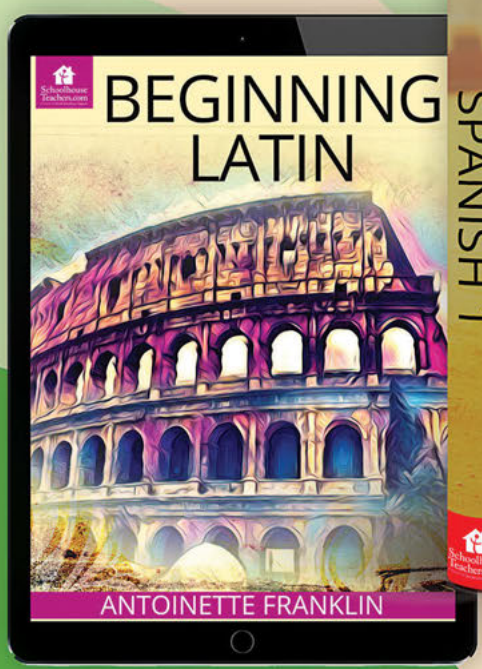
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BARKING UP THE RIGHT TREE

More than just a dog story, this one changed lives

by Sharon Dierberger

RESCUED BY RUBY is a winner parents can feel comfortable gathering the whole family to watch. It's a Netflix original, and ... it's rated G. Netflix plugging a G-rated movie? That's a happy surprise—not one seen on many streaming platforms lately.

It's the true story of a rescued shelter dog that, in turn, does her own rescuing. Although this film has the good-vibes feel common to other pet stories, it's not sappy or overly sentimental. Its surprising twist near the end may have you checking Google to make sure it's true. It is. And nope, it's not like the ending in *Old Yeller* or *My Dog Skip*. Thank goodness! →

RICARDO HUBBS/NETFLIX

Ruby, who's part border collie, part Australian shepherd, definitely needed rescuing. Multiple families tried to adopt her, always returning her because of seemingly incorrigible behavior. She's hard to control, loves to dig holes, and keeps running away. But the shelter trainer loves her. She's desperately trying to find Ruby a home before she has to be put down.

The film is every bit as much about Rhode Island State Trooper Dan O'Neil as it is about Ruby. We meet O'Neil as he's polishing his shoes, adjusting his uniform, and donning his tall trooper hat. He's constantly moving: doing laps around his patrol car instead of sitting in it, fidgeting with a widget, or tapping his foot.

With a restless passion to prove himself, he works extra hard and has already specialized in hostage negotiating, honor guard, boat team, and dive team. None of that satisfies him.

His dream is to be an officer on the K9 rescue team. But he's failed seven times. With one opportunity left, he must convince his commanding officer to give him another chance. He tells his boss: "You do this because you care about people, sir. The same as me. You want justice. You want endings to stories. Sometimes happy endings. Sometimes just closure."

O'Neil's commanding officer says the department can't afford another $10,000 German shepherd. O'Neil is not deterred. He's determined to find a dog—forget an expensive German shepherd—so he heads to the shelter. Guess which dog interests him?

When O'Neil brings Ruby home, we see these two have much in common. They're both just a wee bit … hyperactive! O'Neil's wife makes the same observation after he can't bring himself to return Ruby to the pound, despite his unsuccessful attempts to harness the dog's energy.

The movie portrays a wonderful picture of a supportive family. O'Neil has a loving, patient wife, Melissa—a third grade teacher—and a precocious young son. When Mel learns she's pregnant again, the couple celebrates the new life.

The film also gives a nod to homeschooling. After Ruby fails canine class, Mel reminds O'Neil he didn't do so well in a structured classroom environment either: "Homeschooling would have appreciated your differences, your energy, your passions. Encouraging your strengths instead of always focusing on your weaknesses, with lessons tailored to you." They decide to homeschool Ruby.

Training kids and training dogs *do* have similarities—although, unlike Ruby, raw hot dogs may not be your kids' reward of choice.

Good casting helps make this already authentic story feel real and engaging. Grant Gustin has just the right amount of earnestness to be believable—and likable—as Dan O'Neil. Kaylah Zander is a great match as his wife, Melissa. Scott Wolf, as O'Neil's commanding officer, is quite convincing.



GOOD CASTING HELPS MAKE THIS STORY FEEL REAL AND ENGAGING.

Ruby is played by a real-life shelter dog almost euthanized for bad behavior. The casting crew rescued her in the nick of time and trained her in just six weeks. She even had an understudy, rescued from the pound with her.

It's satisfying to watch a movie you hope will be good, that keeps being good—rather than taking an R-rated turn—or conversely, serves cheese with those hot dogs. No cheese here, just a rewarding way to spend your evening. ■

GRANT GUSTIN His first screen role came in the film *Rain* (2004), directed by Regent University student Neil Grochmal.

RICARDO HUBBS/NETFLIX



Public school kids save the world

by Marty VanDriel

The last survivors of a worldwide catastrophic event just want to get through a boring field trip, but end up saving the world in Netflix's new kids' series *The Last Bus*. Improbable?—yes. Predictable and full of clichés?—yes to that too.

Egocentric inventor billionaire Dalton Monkhouse hatches a plan to save the world from all the humans who are destroying it, by destroying all the humans (all except himself, of course!).

Our heroes are students at a British public school, and they check off most of the boxes on the required list of characters for a kids' drama—a bully who turns out to be a coward, a sassy teen girl with a heart of gold, a geeky technophile whose inventions might save the day, a kid caught up in the wrong crowd who has to make tough choices.

Thankfully, the British producers and writers spared us the more complex intersectional characters that have become the norm in many American series aimed at this same audience.

Although the series is rated TV-PG for fear and fantasy violence, most viewers will not find the show frightening. Writer Paul Neafcy portrays the annihilation of most of the world's population without any guts or gore, and the cartoonish character of the villains renders them mildly amusing instead of scary.



MAKING WAVES

Film documents the life of Hawaiian superhero

by Bob Brown

THE LIST OF DUKE PAOA KAHANAMOKU'S achievements is unequaled by flesh-and-blood rivals. Born in Hawaii in 1890, the four-time U.S. Olympian won three swimming gold medals. He popularized surfing on the world stage, acted in films, and served as sheriff of Honolulu.

A real-life superhero, right? Wait, there's more. Duke once saved the lives of eight men whose boat had capsized in 25-foot swells.

Using only his surfboard.

The limited-release documentary *Waterman* (unrated with one expletive) details Duke's accomplishments in an era when sports competitions regularly excluded minorities. The film interweaves testimonials from present-day surfers and other admirers, dramatizations of Duke's aquatic feats, and clips from a 1959 episode of *This Is Your Life*. One of the surprise guests on that show was Tarzan actor Johnny Weissmuller, Duke's friend who won gold to Duke's silver at the 1924 Olympics.

The film notes that while Weissmuller found leading Hollywood roles, the dark-complected Duke landed only bit parts. Humble and quiet, he apparently never complained. Instead, he practiced "aloha"—defined by interviewees as love, hospitality, and care for nature—until the end of his life in 1968.

While "aloha" seemingly summed up Duke's spirituality, his biological niece Sonia Lien, described abandonment and abuse then conversion to Christ in the book *From Alone to Aloha*.

Jesus: He's the Aloha and the Omega.



TOP TARZAN MOVIES*

7 Tarzan the Magnificent (1960)
6 Tarzan of the Apes (1918)
5 Tarzan the Ape Man (1932)
4 Tarzan's Greatest Adventure (1959)
3 Tarzan (1999)
2 Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan (1984)
1 Tarzan and His Mate (1934)

*RANKED BY CBR.COM

THE LAST BUS: JAMES PARDON/NETFLIX; WATERMAN: SIDEWINDER FILMS; TARZAN: PARAMOUNT PICTURES/SUNSET BOULEVARD/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

MORIBUND SUPERHERO FRANCHISE

With its lifeless plot and dearth of inspiring characters, *Morbius* will leave viewers disappointed

by Collin Garbarino



MORBIUS, in theaters, is the latest installment in Sony's quixotic attempt to create a shared cinematic universe of Spider-Man-adjacent characters without Spider-Man. But this movie's so awful, everyone's favorite webslinger might not have been able to save it.

Jared Leto plays Michael Morbius, a brilliant doctor who's saved millions of lives and achieved wealth and fame with his invention of artificial blood. But all his accomplishments are just a byproduct of his real goal: He's spent his life trying to cure himself of a debilitating blood disorder. Time is running out for Michael and his friend Milo (Matt Smith), who suffers from the same rare genetic condition.

Michael, with the help of his love interest, Dr. Martine Bancroft (Adria Arjona), fuses his DNA with the DNA of a vampire bat, turning himself into a chimera. Things go terribly wrong—and by "things" I mostly mean the script.

Morbius—rated PG-13 for frightening scenes and brief language—begins as a classic tale of a doctor playing God and violating ethical standards in the name of science. Michael turns himself into a vampire who must consume human blood to survive—no one ever explains why it must be human blood, just one of many plot holes. These kinds of movies are supposed to be morality tales in which the protagonist comes to a tragic end. But a tragic end can't become a franchise, so *Morbius* flinches from its necessary conclusion, leaving an already confused movie without a payoff.

In the comics, Spider-Man is the hero, and Morbius is the villain. Without Spider-Man, this movie tries to make Michael the hero, even though he kills a bunch of people after becoming a vampire. There's an unsuccessful attempt to make these casualties of the scientific method seem like they might have deserved it. Michael's heroism never rings true, and Leto's portrayal of Michael is understated to the point of being lifeless. When he's not voicing hackneyed dialogue in dull tones, he stares impassively.

Michael is a genius who creates DNA splicing equipment from junk—that scene might be more ridiculous than the fact that his teeth change shape—but he's also egotistical and unlikable. To make Michael seem remotely heroic, Morbius turns Milo into a vampire who plans to eat everyone. There isn't any narrative explanation for Milo's bloodthirstiness other than the film desperately needed someone more wicked than its hero.

Sometimes special effects and action sequences can make up for a bad script, but that's not the case with *Morbius*. The movie contains a couple of well-executed sequences that pay homage to the suspense genre, but most of the effects are lackluster and incoherent. Action sequences are so full of echolocation visualizations that the audience can barely see what's happening. That might be for the best. The finale is both nonsensical and anticlimactic.

In a couple of mid-credit scenes, Sony promises a follow-up movie. If this franchise is ever going to be successful, it's definitely going to need a revamp. ■

JAY MAIDMENT/COLUMBIA PICTURES/SONY PICTURES

MOVIE MASTERMIND Michael Morbius is a fictional biochemist who won the Nobel Prize for discoveries in biochemistry.

BOX OFFICE TOP 10

WEEKEND OF APRIL 1-3, ACCORDING TO BOX OFFICE MOJO. QUANTITY OF SEXUAL (S), VIOLENT (V), AND FOUL-LANGUAGE (L) CONTENT ON A 0-10 SCALE, WITH 10 HIGH, FROM KIDS-IN-MIND.COM

		S	V	L
1	**Morbius*** PG-13	2	7	5
2	**The Lost City*** PG-13	4	5	5
3	**The Batman*** PG-13	2	7	5
4	**Uncharted*** PG-13	2	6	5
5	**Jujutsu Kaisen 0: The Movie** PG-13	not rated		
6	**RRR** PG-13	not rated		
7	**Spider-Man: No Way Home*** PG-13	2	6	4
8	**Dog*** PG-13	2	4	5
9	**Everything Everywhere All at Once** R	not rated		
10	**X** R	9	8	6

*REVIEWED BY WORLD



TOP 10 FOCUS

The message of *Turning Red*: You can do whatever you want as long as you stay true to who you are. And the good news—according to Pixar—is you're free to decide who that's going to be. The rest of us? It's our job to affirm you and your decisions. —from Collin Garbarino's review of *Turning Red*



LESS THAN FANTASTIC

No amount of magic can save this nonsensical story about wizards and WWII

by Collin Garbarino

FANTASTIC BEASTS: The Secrets of Dumbledore, in theaters April 15, is the latest film in J.K. Rowling's Wizarding World franchise. The Harry Potter books and movies appealed to children, but the Fantastic Beasts movies explore adult themes—but as with previous Fantastic Beasts movies, this third installment is less than enchanting.

The Secrets of Dumbledore moves most of the action to Berlin in the years leading up to World War II. Gellert Grindelwald (Mads Mikkelsen) is the most dangerous wizard in the world, and he's scheming how he can take control of the global wizarding government. He wants to purify the world and plans to wage war on the "muggles"—people who don't do magic. To stop Grindelwald, Albus Dumbledore (Jude Law) must rely on a motley crew led by magizoologist Newt Scamander (Eddie Redmayne). Dumbledore is more powerful than Grindelwald, but he can't move against him directly because the movie needs a complication to support its contrived plot.

Part of that complication involves Dumbledore's sexuality. In 2007, Rowling shocked fans when she announced Dumbledore was gay, a detail not hinted at in her bestselling series. This film doubles down on Dumbledore's homosexuality, repeatedly reminding us that when he was a young man he fell in love with Grindelwald. Grindelwald has become a vicious murderer who tries to destroy the world, but Dumbledore still gives him wistful looks. These scenes feel designed to suit contemporary fads, and they undermine both Dumbledore's character and the film's plot.

The immersive special effects can't save this two-hour-and-20-minute slog with its nonsensical story. The script tries to hide its lack of logic by giving Grindelwald the ability to see the future and anticipate Dumbledore's plans.

To thwart Grindelwald, Dumbledore sends Newt's team on a series of missions designed to sow confusion. This could have been clever, but it doesn't go anywhere. In each instance, the mission was either pointless or could have been accomplished with a lot less effort by simply waving a wand. And how does Grindelwald benefit from his glimpses of the future? Everything he sees happens. Presumably the outcome is fixed, meaning he has knowledge of the future without the ability to change it.

Rowling intends her wizarding story about Grindelwald to mirror Hitler's rise to power in Germany and to offer a word of caution to our contemporary world about the dangers of bigotry and the fragility of democracy. *The Secrets of Dumbledore* flinches from the darkness leading up to World War II, opting for a neat and tidy ending. It leaves open the possibility of a fourth movie, but it seems the filmmakers were afraid this preachy mess of a movie might be the last one.

TURNING RED: DISNEY+; FANTASTIC BEASTS: WARNER BROS. ENTERTAINMENT INC.

Eating well on a budget

Authors offer ways to think about food during a time of increasing prices

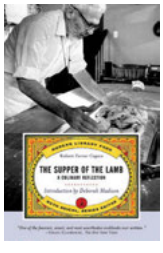
by Emily Whitten

MOST GROCERY SHOPPERS KNOW the U.S. dollar is shrinking. Still, two headlines from March 5 bring that home. First, the *New York Post*'s announcement, "Food prices reach record highs, skyrocket by 20.7 percent across globe." Second, cbsnews.com's report, "Inflation hits new 40-year high, surging 7.9%." And these aren't just abstract percentage points; they're changing shoppers' behaviors. A month later on April 4, *The Wall Street Journal* pointed out, "With Inflation Not Letting Up, Shoppers Cut Back on Staples."

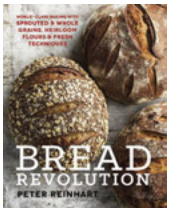


A better response? Craft a new and smarter budget with Christian author Jessi Fearon's book, ***Getting Good With Money***. In her journey out of debt, wife and mom Fearon made many common financial mistakes, including "owning" a vehicle she couldn't afford and assuming debt was just part of life. Here, she equips others to rise above similar misconceptions with a comprehensive plan to organize one's financial life, from ditching credit cards to saving for retirement.

Granted, it's a familiar approach, but Fearon gives it her own spin. For instance, she outlines stumbling blocks based on personality types and addresses marriage problems caused by money stress, with tips to improve spousal communication. Busy moms may especially appreciate her chapter on how to stick to a grocery budget, complete with stocking a pantry and creating a meal plan. She also points to websites that can help readers earn cash back (without incurring credit card debt) such as Rakuten.com and FetchRewards.com.



Cash-strapped shoppers willing to change their eating habits might consider Robert Farrar Capon's 1969 book, ***The Supper of the Lamb***. Be warned; this isn't a step-by-step guide to cheap eats. True, readers who spend a few hours in the kitchen with the Episcopal priest will gain a repertoire of inexpensive meals. But they'll also learn to eat like older generations, feasting, fasting, and eating "ferially" (economically, or frugally but with joy) in between. Capon writes, "Lamb for Eight Persons Four Times is not simply a recipe. It is a way of life." And his way focuses, above all, on savoring God and His creation, pointing to the final Supper of the Lamb above. A final warning—Capon isn't the typical liberal priest, but he does stray theologically at times (e.g., accepting Darwinism).



While Capon offers centuries-old bread recipes, some readers might appreciate Peter Reinhart's newer ***Bread Revolution***. In that 2014 book, Reinhart explores how sprouted ancient grains (like spelt and Khorasan) and seeds (like flax and chia) can make homemade bread healthier and easier to make. His recipes—including muffins, pancakes, and sourdough loaves—include tips to help anyone get more from their grains, but they offer the most savings compared to store-bought alternative-flour breads.

Of course, man lives not by bread alone, and the new book ***Sheltering Mercy: Prayers Inspired by the Psalms*** by Ryan Whitaker Smith and Dan Wilt will encourage readers to dig deeper into the first 75 psalms. Wisely, Smith and Wilt don't attempt to replace or rewrite the Psalms. Rather, they complement the original texts with conversational, poetic prayers that grew out of their own prayer times with the Psalms. Smith and Wilt also bring in images and language from other parts of the Bible—especially the New Testament—giving the book a Christocentric focus.



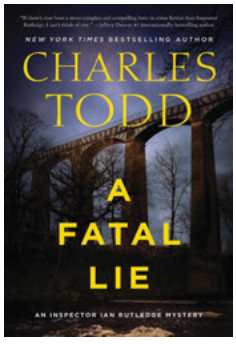
As 2022 rolls on, inflation may continue to pick Americans' pocketbooks—and headlines continue to mourn that fact. But Christians can rest in the "sheltering mercy" of our Great Shepherd, praying along with Smith and Wilt,

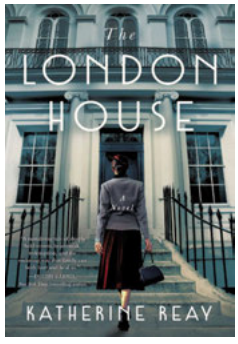
> Christ,
> in Your presence I lack no good thing.
> You are the shepherd of my soul,
> guiding me to places of rest,
> far from noise and clamor,
> a meadow of the heart—
> tall grass against an azure sky;
> cooling waters at my side.
> Lead me, Lord.
> Further up.
> Further in. ■

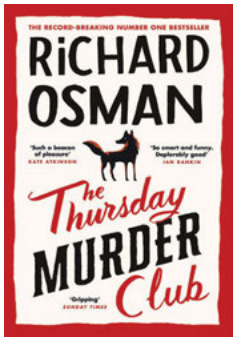
Whodunits from across the pond

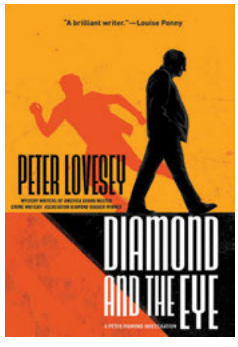
Brit mysteries make for engaging reading

by Maryrose Delahunty









A FATAL LIE **Charles Todd**

When 6-year-old Roddy MacNabb steals away to go fishing in the river, instead of a fish, he reels in the body of an unknown man. Scotland Yard dispatches war-veteran Inspector Ian Rutledge to uncover the man's identity and cause of death. Crisscrossing the Welsh countryside, Rutledge must investigate a child's disappearance and wring out the truth from a fatal lie told years earlier to expose the murderer and the motive. Penned by the mother-son duo, Charles and Caroline Todd, this is Book 23 in the duo's enjoyable Inspector Rutledge series—set in the years following WWI. Haunted by his time in the Great War, his inner voice is portrayed as the ghost of a Scottish soldier who served with him. Caroline Todd died in August 2021.

THE LONDON HOUSE **Katherine Reay**

Caroline Payne is blindsided by a revelation from her old college friend and historian, Mat Hammond: Her British great-aunt and namesake was a WWII traitor who fled with her German lover. When Caroline goes to her father for answers, he refuses to discuss the shameful family scandal. Determined to uncover the real story, she rushes to the family's London home, inviting Mat along. The letters and diaries of her grandmother and great-aunt reveal identical twins whose secrets created a legacy of pain that only the truth can heal. Katherine Reay weaves a compelling story, part mystery and part historical fiction with a captivating and unique view of one of the great Paris fashion houses during a time of war.

THE THURSDAY MURDER CLUB
Richard Osman

In the English retirement community of Coopers Chase, four of the residents come together every Thursday to review cold case murder files: Elizabeth, the canny and enigmatic leader; Ron, a former famous trade union leader; Ibrahim, a retired psychiatrist; and Joyce, a retired nurse and widow who bakes. The death of a local real estate developer provides them the opportunity to investigate their first real case. This colorful and unique cast of characters brings a nuanced ensemble of amateur sleuths to the mystery genre. Joyce acts as a part-time narrator for the tale. Through her diary entries, the author moves the story forward and gives insight into each of the characters in a personal and entertaining voice.

DIAMOND AND THE EYE **Peter Lovesey**

Peter Diamond, head of the Bath Criminal Investigative Division, has his dinner interrupted by private eye Johnny Getz. Hired by an antiques dealer's daughter to locate her missing father, Getz enlists the unwilling help of Diamond. What begins as a simple missing person's case quickly turns into a murder investigation when a stranger's body is discovered in the dealer's shop. Though Diamond and Getz trade barbs and banter, the chemistry between them doesn't quite solidify. However, Getz turns out to be an enjoyable narrator. Crime fiction fans will enjoy Lovesey's numerous references to other well-known mystery writers and their fictional detectives. Unfortunately, Diamond's character seems less likable and capable than in previous books of this series. Book includes mild profanity and a nonexplicit extramarital sexual encounter.

Princely pages

Middle-grade reads to satisfy a thirst for adventure

by Katie Gaultney

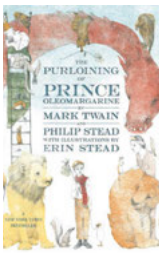


THE FALSE PRINCE **Jennifer A. Nielsen**

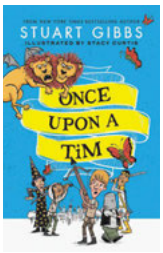
As forces disloyal to the crown work to divide the kingdom of Carthya, nobleman Conner devises a scheme to preserve power. Under Conner's tutelage, four orphans compete to play the role of Prince Jaron, presumed lost at sea. One competitor, the feisty and cunning Sage, serves as narrator throughout an audition of wits and weaponry. Despite Sage's penchant for thievery and deception, readers find themselves rooting for the unlikely hero. The latter quarter of the book reveals a web of treachery that will take more than a puppet prince to untangle. *(Ages 8 and up)*

THE PURLOINING OF PRINCE OLEOMARGARINE

Mark Twain and Philip Stead



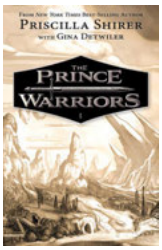
The unlikely fruition of this book is perhaps as riveting as the tale itself. Twain scholars pieced together this brief but plucky story from notes and story fragments, and husband-and-wife team Philip and Erin Stead finished it in 2017. Downtrodden young protagonist Johnny finds himself in possession of an unlikely set of skills that make him well suited to rescue the missing Prince Oleomargarine. Readers may readily forgive a fairly abrupt conclusion of a fable that is offset by charming illustrations and clever twists throughout. *(Ages 8-12)*



ONCE UPON A TIM **Stuart Gibbs**

Gibbs' Spy School series has made him a favorite among the adolescent set. His latest turns the age-old "quest" trope on its head, in the manner of *The Princess Bride*, but with a good deal more silliness. A selfish prince dupes a peasant boy, Tim, and two others into a perilous journey to rescue a beloved princess. Gibbs' intentional efforts to build young readers' vocabularies—along with Stacy Curtis' amusing illustrations—elevate this Medieval-era romp. Surprising bits of wisdom shine through, but parents should look out for a few instances of rude language and mild disrespect. *(Ages 7-10)*

THE PRINCE WARRIORS **Priscilla Shirer**



Shirer serves up a parable highlighting unseen spiritual realities. Mysterious guide Ruwach leads brothers Xavier and Evan and best friends Levi and Brianna into a parallel world where they don armor referenced in Ephesians 6. The "prince warriors" battle dangers unleashed by a malicious enemy, growing firmer in their faith as they surmount each difficulty—not always unscathed. Parents will appreciate the wholesome content and Biblical metaphors, while adventure draws in young readers. *(Ages 8-12)*

Afterword

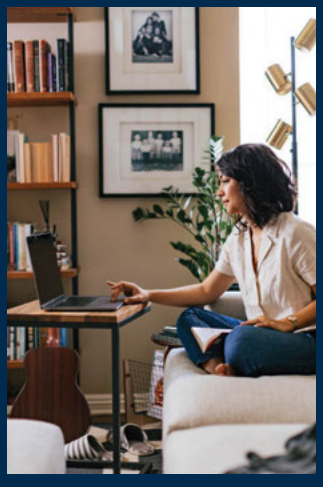


In *The Bark of the Bog Owl*, a shepherd boy with an "adventurer's heart" inspires a nation by facing a giant and leading an army against godless aggressors. Author Jonathan Rogers holds a doctorate in literature, and his prowess with the written word ably supports the rich source material of King David's early life. The author makes notable changes: Instead of David, our hero is Aidan, and instead of Israel, he hails from Corenwald, a fictional kingdom more reminiscent of the American Southeast than the Middle East.

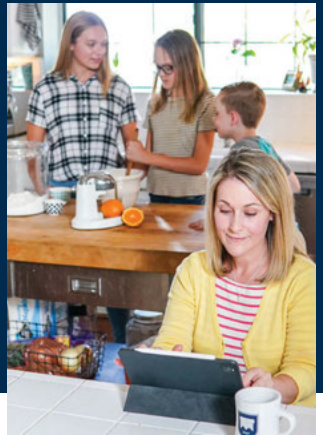
Consistent in both narratives, though, is the young shepherd-turned-soldier's fervor for "the One God." Rogers' iteration of the familiar tale holds enough new developments—including a run-in with an enormous alligator and a subterranean mission to disable enemy artillery—to keep readers wondering what comes next.

Stunningly crafted and executed, and rife with Biblical truth, this first book of The Wilderking Trilogy will enrich family libraries and grip children and parents alike. *—K.G.*









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A perfect marriage of pop and classical

Antwerp Philharmonic gives the timeless tunes of the Beach Boys a new, classical setting

by Arsenio Orteza



WHATEVER PLANS THE BEACH BOYS HAVE for celebrating their 60th anniversary this year, they'll have a hard time topping the Antwerp Philharmonic Orchestra's new album, *The Seven Symphonies: A Classical Tribute to the Beach Boys Music* (Wedgeview).

For the typical orchestral pop project, a rock band's greatest hits get transcribed for a large body of musicians who then set about turning those hits into Muzak.

This time, however, the Dutch musician Roeland Jacobs has taken 33 Beach Boys melodies, grouped them into discreet "symphonies" (several are more like overtures), hired the Belgian trombonist Dominique Vanhaegenberg to do the orchestrating, and—under titles such as "Capella," "Beach Waltz," "The Nearest Faraway Symphony," and "Pet Symphony"—transformed them into something disarmingly sublime.



Sublimity isn't a quality often associated with the Beach Boys greatest hits, rooted as so many of them are in adolescent notions of fun, fun, fun. So Jacobs has bypassed most of the band's guaranteed crowd-pleasers in favor of relatively (and, in some cases, extremely) obscure "deep cuts." (Four, e.g., 12 percent, come from the band's 2012 album *That's Why God Made the Radio.*)

In so doing, he illuminates why many consider Brian Wilson to be, at least by the standards of post-Presley pop, a genius.

Wilson didn't compose or even co-compose every *Seven Symphonies* melody. Several were written or co-written by his brothers Dennis ("Be With Me," "Forever," "Little Bird," "Baby Blue") and Carl ("Full Sail"), while "The Nearest Faraway Place" was composed by the Beach Boy Bruce Johnston, "Winds of Change" by King Harvest's Ron Altbach and Ed Tuleja, and "Their Hearts Were Full of Spring" (aka "A Young Man Is Gone") by Bobby Troup.

But Wilson composed the lion's share. And with a 60-piece orchestra replacing the Beach Boys' legendary four-part (and sometimes five- or six-part) vocal harmonies as well as the work of the studio musicians responsible for the blueprints, Wilson's uniquely American visions reach new heights.

THE CLARINETIST EVAN ZIPORYN has attempted a musical transmutation of a rather different sort with his new album, *Pop Channel* (Islandia).



Imagine if you will the soundtrack to a film about life after worldwide nuclear annihilation in which a handful of clarinetists are the only surviving musicians. To buoy the spirits of their shell-shocked neighbors, they play requests submitted to them on charred scraps of paper because the fallout has also rendered everyone mute.

Then imagine that those neighbors, representing as they would in such a film a cross-section of the human race, have tastes ranging from Paul McCartney, Blues Image, Joni Mitchell, the Association, Jimi Hendrix, and Earth, Wind & Fire to Jaco Pastorius, the B-52s, Steely Dan, the Brothers Johnson, and McFabulous. ■

WHAT'S IN A NAME Before they were the Beach Boys, Brian, Dennis, Carl, Mike, and Al called themselves the Pendletones.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

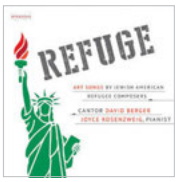
Spiritual yearnings

Music from refugees and sojourners

by Arsenio Orteza

REFUGE **David Berger & Joyce Rosenzweig**

The subtitle, *Art Songs by Jewish American Refugee Composers*, complements both the Statue of Liberty cover art and the inclusion of Irving Berlin's "Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor." But the refuge being sought in Lazar Weiner's *Three Biblical Songs* ("Isaiah," "Ezekiel," "Ruth"), Gershon Kingsley's setting of Psalm 23, Israel Alter's setting of Psalm 13, and Heinrich Schalit's *Visions of Yehuda Halevi* clearly includes more than protection from this-worldly persecution. And whether singing in Yiddish, Hebrew, English, or Spanish, David Berger, cantor of Chicago's KAM Isaiah Israel Congregation, expresses their yearnings with an articulate and earthy sincerity.



FRÄLST! A SELECTION OF SWEDISH CHRISTIAN GROOVES 1969-1979

Various artists

Unless you were a churchgoing resident of Sweden during the decade cited in this compilation's title, the world into which its 20 songs (21 on vinyl) offer glimpses is probably one you never knew existed. And, no, it doesn't mirror the Jesus rock concurrently shaping up in the U.S. Stylistically, the Swedes were even further behind the times. Wah-wah guitars were the bell bottoms of music, several songs echo the Cowsills, and Mission Possible's homage to Deep Purple's *Book of Taliesyn* ("Mission Possible") and Obadja's to Detroit rock and roll ("Testa") didn't emerge until 1971 and 1977 respectively. Still, as retro goes, they make a better-than-average first impression.



FROM THE WOMB OF THE MORNING, THE DEW OF YOUR YOUTH WILL BE YOURS **Ronnie Martin**

The Bandcamp photo of the former Joy Electric mastermind and current Evangelical Free Church of America pastor Ronnie Martin shows him literally out standing in a field. It's an apt metaphor, even if the field in which he's figuratively outstanding—faith-based, all-synthesizer music (orchestral maneuvers in the light?)—is hardly overpopulated. For his first album in a decade, he has added to his painstakingly layered, self-created sci-fi sounds an actual drum machine and based songs on Psalms 89, 110, 147, 104 (twice), Ecclesiastes 12, and Isaiah 58. All seven sparkle and swirl. Plus, they have good beats and you can dance to them.



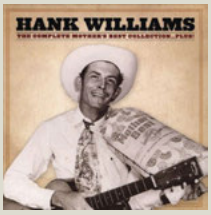
KINGDOM SENTIMENTS

Casner Psallo & Mofunk Gospel

Psallo is a South African singer-musician with a voice that blends Stevie Wonder and Michael Jackson and whose Facebook motto reads "I create music [and] content that encourages people to see, feel and hear God in/through everything." By "God," Psallo means Yahweh, and by "music" he means a rippling stream of percolating percussion with an almost complete absence of deep bass frequencies. (Apparently, "funk," let alone "mo' funk," means something different in Pretoria and Johannesburg than it ever has in the U.S.) Guest vocalists deliver some of the sentiments, which like the melodies are meant to buoy and encourage. Most encouraging of all: Psallo keeps the auto-tuning to a minimum.



Encore



Obviously, no one who invested in Time Life's 16-disc Hank Williams box ***The Complete Mother's Best Recordings ... Plus!*** 12 years ago needs BMG's new two-CD (or three-LP) excerpt, *I'm Gonna Sing: The Mother's Best Gospel Radio Recordings*, the improved sound quality courtesy of the engineer Michael Graves notwithstanding. But there's no denying the otherworldly eeriness that follows upon hearing Williams put his heart into these live-in-the-studio performances of hymns, spirituals, and gospel originals.

After all, he would be dead less than two years after these recordings were made, a period during which he reached his professional zenith only to plummet earthward as he divorced his first wife Audrey (who lends her voice to four *I'm Gonna Sing* tracks) and became addicted to painkillers and alcohol. Is it too much to hope that as he closed his eyes for the last time it was something like "Softly and Tenderly," "Where the Soul Never Dies," or "I Heard My Savior Calling Me" that was running through his head? —*A.O.*



Ode to Suburbans

Cleaning of the trough brings eternal increase

I RAISED FIVE KIDS in the second and third rows of a '97 Chevy Suburban. When we finally bid Old Faithful adieu, it had 394,000 miles on the odometer, permanent car seat indentations in the leather, and the remains of a science experiment gone bad in the cargo area. I pitied the new owner should he ever look under the seats.

The truth is, I didn't like that Suburban too much at first, which meant my husband had his work cut out for him when he backed it under our carport. Well, what he could of it. "How am I going to drive this land yacht?" I questioned, ungrateful minivan lover that I was. So what if it had nine seats?

"You're going to love it," my husband said confidently, peering under the pristine hood. When I didn't respond, he looked up to find me and a measuring tape gathering proof the carport would need an extension. "In this case, more is just ... more," came the redirect. My husband looked over at our children, who were probably hanging from some rafters. "Those legs," he said, pointing for emphasis. "You do realize they're only going to get longer, right?"

A comment like that can get a mom's attention faster than all the advantages of rear air and towing packages combined. Leg room. Elbow room. Space. Yes, my husband had pulled out all the stops and was whispering sweet nothings in my ear. I could feel myself warming to this new half-ton family addition. Maybe "land yacht" had been a bit harsh.

Before long, I could park the big rig with the best of them. We had room to change diapers and catcher's gear and bad attitudes, if needed. So what if my SUV got 15 miles to the gallon? It had a mega tank that could hold 42. In more ways than one, I was learning to let go of my penchant for compact and controlled and embracing something bigger. Something along the lines of that proverb that weighs the worth of a clean trough against the gains that come with ox ownership.

SURE, RAISING KIDS IS MESSY BUSINESS. THEY COME HERE WITH MESS CLINGING TO THEM.

The daughter who once sat second row, middle, in that Suburban grew up, got married, and happily became great with child. These days showers have themes, and hers was "Welcome to the World, Baby." Along with all the atlases and globe decorations, a map stretched out across an easel. Its sole purpose was to provide a spot for the posting of parenting advice, which is why my daughter-in-law picked up a Sharpie and wrote the words of Proverbs 14:4 on a blank spot north of Nashville.

I'm guessing most of the attendees had probably never seen a trough, but I think they got the point. You can have an ox, with its accompanying plowed field and crops, or you can have the spic-and-span scenario. Take your pick.

For moms, the temptation is always there to obsess over trough issues—keeping things perfectly tidy, avoiding stretch marks, having sufficient "me" time. The world is big on such things. What we don't hear much about is the potential for increase, the good stuff that comes from investing your life in something bigger than spotless carpets and your self-esteem.

Sure, raising kids is messy business. They come here with mess clinging to them, and it's a battle to keep them cleaned up thereafter. They have teeth to brush and mouths to wipe. They step in things they shouldn't. Their noses run. They produce approximately 104 loads of laundry per year.

And that's just exterior maintenance.

But somewhere along the way, in the midst of all that scrubbing, moms have the opportunity to wash themselves free of some of the fluff of life and find the layers that really matter. What a gift, because here's the real rub: If caring for our kids day in and day out doesn't make a dent in our selfish obsession with clean troughs, that stain just might cling to us for an entire lifetime.

So the trough gets dirty, and we clean it. And the trough gets dirty again, and we clean it again.

I have it on good authority that after years of such mother work, a woman may find herself at one of life's big moments, say her child's wedding, and it will be like a slow-motion movie. Kleenex will be involved. And the mom will realize that yes, raising kids was messy, but the increase is quite incomparable. She may even decide she has a thing for Suburbans after all. ■

EMAIL khenderson@wng.org TWITTER @kimhenderson319

WORLD Watch

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News Literacy

Biblical Discernment

Critical Thinking



by MARY JACKSON
photos by Chris Landsberger/Genesis

LAURA TO JAKE AND BACK AGAIN

AFTER TRYING TO LIVE AS A MAN FOR YEARS, LAURA PERRY FINDS CHRIST'S LOVE IN THE PROCESS OF DETRANSITIONING

This story mentions sexual abuse and transgender procedures

Nearly nine months had passed since Laura Perry last saw her parents. On a Saturday night, July 19, 2007, Paul and Francine Perry's 40th wedding anniversary, Laura joined their table at a Luby's Cafeteria in Tulsa, Okla., sporting a newly buzzed haircut and a sprouting beard.

Underneath men's clothing, she wore a chest binder and a male genital prosthesis. After minutes of awkward small talk—Laura spoke with a deepened voice—Paul excused himself to the restroom. Francine leaned in: "Laura, are you trying to look like a man?"

To her own surprise, Laura burst into tears. To everyone else in her life, she was now Jake. That night, she pushed back the unwanted tears and her parent's concerns. She convinced herself she was born in the wrong body.

For months, Laura had been injecting testosterone into her thigh muscle every two weeks. Her goal was to erase Laura: the gender dysphoria, rejection, self-loathing, and sexual brokenness. She legally changed her name to Jake, a character she came up with in fantasy stories she wrote as a child. She chose the middle name Nathan, after a brother she never met (Francine miscarried two sons in the two years leading up to Laura's birth).

When Laura announced she was Jake, a local LGBT support group in Tulsa "praised me as if I was a hero." She latched onto a new partner, a man 27 years older than her who identified as a woman. In the next three years, Laura underwent a double mastectomy and chest masculinization surgery. She had all her female organs removed. She considered a phalloplasty, a series of cosmetic surgeries to replicate male genitalia using skin from the forearm. At $100,000, the procedure was too costly. Even though it represented the completion of her transition, in Laura's mind it frightened her.

With each surgery and whenever Laura "passed" as Jake, she said, she felt a euphoric high. But the dysphoria and a deep, lingering depression always returned: "It became a vicious cycle." As time wore on, Laura grew weary of lying about her childhood, of anxiety over whether she passed as male, of injecting herself with testosterone, of a recurring infection from wearing a male prosthesis, of trying to pee standing up in the men's bathroom and leaking on herself. What promised freedom became a prison cell. "I was haunted by the fact that this wasn't real," she said.

In 2014, Laura had only heard of one person who had left the transgender lifestyle. She had once mocked him, viewing

him as weak. Seven years into her transition, she felt paralyzed by the realization that she would never be a man.

TODAY, A GROWING NUMBER of individuals who have experienced Laura's haunting realization are breaking their silence and telling heartbreaking stories of detransitioning online. Detransitioning refers to those who medically "transitioned" to the opposite sex but came to regret their decision and realigned with their biological sex. A Reddit thread for detransitioners that started in 2017 now has nearly 28,000 followers.

March 12 was the second annual Detransition Awareness Day. A support group called Genspect, founded last year by a psychotherapist in Ireland named Stella O'Malley, hosted a Zoom conference for detransitioners that lasted nearly five hours. Another recently formed group, Detrans Voices, posted a Q&A with 14 different detransitioners and desisters (a term for those who socially transitioned without medical interventions), ages 15 to 35. Throughout the day, the hashtag #DetransitionAwarenessDay was trending on Twitter.



Genspect states on its website, "there are many routes that may lead to the development of distress over an individual's gender ... there are just as many routes out of such distress."

At the start of the Zoom conference, O'Malley said, "It's become blindingly obvious over the last year that ... 'detrans' is a huge part of the trans phenomenon."

A handful of detransitioners shared deeply personal reasons why they transitioned—from online and social influences to autism, mental health issues, childhood trauma, sexual abuse, misogyny, and homophobia. Some expressed anger over doctors, therapists, and other adults who encouraged them to transition, including hormonal and surgical interventions with lasting effects. But when they began experiencing doubt or regret, or realized their underlying problems had not gone away, those same people turned their backs on them.

Despite their increasing visibility, detransitioners are dismissed and undermined amid widespread acceptance of the "affirmative model," which pushes vulnerable youth into puberty-blocking drugs, cross-sex hormones, and invasive surgeries that permanently alter their lives.

In May 2021, a *60 Minutes* episode highlighted personal stories of detransitioners who said medical professionals rushed them into hormonal and surgical interventions at a critically vulnerable point in their lives and they now suffer lifelong effects. The LGBT advocacy group GLAAD slammed the CBS news program for airing the episode, calling it "shameful" and "fearmongering." Chase Strangio of the American Civil Liberties Union labeled it "part of the anti-trans playbook."

Nearly 2 percent of high-school students identify as the opposite sex, and an additional 1.6 percent are unsure whether they are transgender, according to a 2019 survey from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The numbers are increasing: Sweden's Board of Health and Welfare saw a 1,500 percent

increase in gender dysphoria diagnoses among 13- to 17-year-old girls between 2008 and 2018. In England, referrals to the National Health Services' gender identity development clinic rose from 72 in 2009-10 to 2,590 in 2018-19, with 12- to 18-year-olds representing 80 percent of all referrals.

In a 2021 study, published in the *Archives for Sexual Behavior*, researcher and physician Dr. Lisa Littman found that one of the leading reasons for transitioning was a desire to disassociate with one's biological sex. Among those who medically transitioned before 2015, 70 percent who changed their minds were women, according to Littman's study.

"We are the ones who have been wounded by this … we know the dark secrets," Laura said.

LAURA'S DESIRE TO ERASE her womanhood started long before she typed "girl becoming a boy" into a Google search in her mid-20s. Francine suffered two traumatic late-term miscarriages—boys they named Jeffrey and Nathan—before learning she was pregnant with Laura at an appointment to get her tubes tied. When Laura heard that story as a girl, she already felt a strained relationship with her mom. Francine said she struggled as an overworked mother to connect with Laura, a willful and hyper tomboy who preferred her dad and older brother.

When Laura was 8, her best friend's brother molested her. She knew internally it was wrong but blamed herself and kept it a secret. With little understanding of puberty, Laura spent two years thinking she could be pregnant. When the same boy later rejected her, a seed was planted in Laura, and she began to resent being a girl: "I saw boys as having the power to withhold this incredible gift."

She started dressing in her older brother's hand-me-downs and envisioning herself as a male character in video games and in stories she wrote. She became obsessed with her teddy bear, "Chris," who she imagined listened to all her secrets and knew her as a boy. Laura didn't tell her parents she was molested until age 33.

When she was age 9, a 13-year-old boy took Laura into the woods and made out with her. He inappropriately touched her on another occasion. She said the shame and secrecy caused her to distance herself from a once-close relationship with her dad.

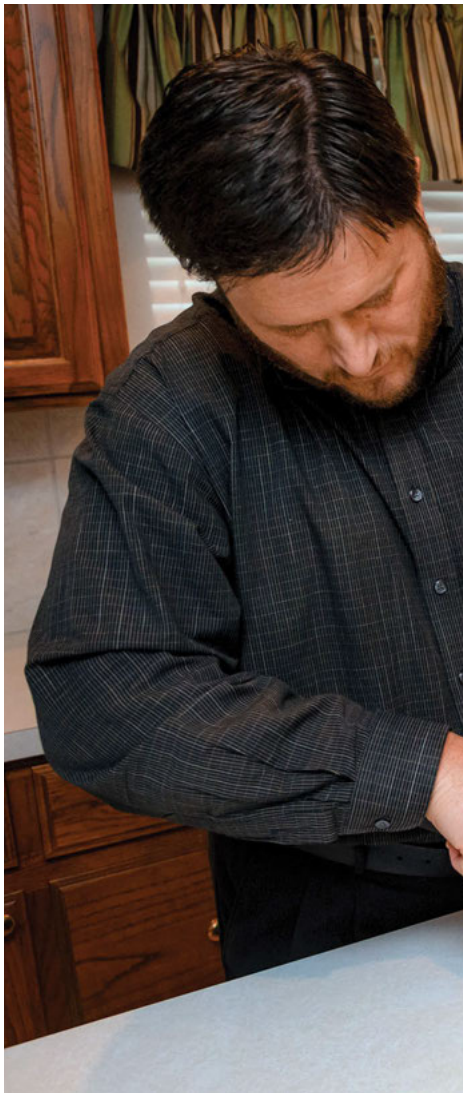
Meanwhile, Laura went through puberty at age 11. She grew to despise her female body as she gained weight and experienced sporadic but painful periods. At 14, Laura experienced a ruptured ovarian cyst and was diagnosed with polycystic ovarian syndrome. A doctor told her she would never have children.

Laura sought more attention from boys and sexual experiences. This set the stage for a series of boyfriends, including one Laura was temporarily engaged to at age 16, who later rejected her. In her late teens and early 20s, Laura became addicted to pornography, dabbled in Satanic rituals, and joined adult hook-up websites, continuing to give herself sexually to men.

During those years, Laura said, the feeling that she should have been a boy never left. In her early 20s, she learned about transgenderism on the internet, including hormonal and surgical interventions that she believed could make her a man. It felt like a dream come true. To obtain cross-sex hormones, Laura was told she had to meet with a therapist three times. At one point, the therapist suggested she had issues with her mother but still signed the papers so Laura could begin taking testosterone.

AFTER FRANCINE AND PAUL'S encounter with Laura at Luby's, they refused to call her Jake and had minimal contact with her. Francine described a "dark pit" of grief akin to losing her daughter. But over time, she said, she came to a place of deep surrender to God and an unexplainable peace. She thrust herself into Bible study and prayer. She started a Bible study with a small group of women with whom she shared openly about Laura and who prayed for her.

The women's Bible study steadily grew, and in 2014, about the time when Laura had become disillusioned with trying to live as Jake, Francine asked her daughter to help create a website in return for payment. As Laura summarized and programmed her mom's studies, her curiosity about the Bible grew. She began asking her mom questions about Scrip-



"I CAME TO THE END OF MYSELF, AND GOD REDEEMED ME."



Laura prepares dinner with her fiancé, Perry Smalts.

ture and observed how she had changed. "I learned to answer her questions and then hush, instead of wanting to tell her everything," Francine said.

One night, Laura said a prayer to surrender her life to Christ and to ask forgiveness for her sins. But abandoning her life as Jake did not happen overnight. At first, she told a friend she would become a "man of God."

The more Laura read the Bible, talked with her parents—Paul began meeting her for lunch once a week—and listened to a Christian radio teacher, the more she felt convicted about her male identity. She said her parents "allowed me grace to wrestle with it all and trusted God."

Part of the process involved letting go of the mindset that she was a man, Laura said. Other detransitioners expressed a similar struggle during the March 12 Genspect conference. One question specifically plagued Laura: What name would God call her? Jake or Laura? She realized that God created Laura, but Jake was her own creation. If God created her, she could trust Him to define her.

IN 2016, LAURA EMBRACED God's design for her as a woman. It meant leaving her partner of eight years, a high-paying tech job, her home in Tulsa, and an identity she lived for nearly a decade. She shaved her beard for the first time in five years. When she stopped taking testosterone, she experienced withdrawal symptoms, including massive headaches that left her curled in a fetal position. She recalls venturing into the women's clothing section at Kohl's and trying on a dress. The mirror reflected a flat, hairy chest, a short haircut, and a five o'clock shadow: "I was horrified by what I had done to myself."

Ladies from Francine's Bible study supported Laura with encouraging cards and money for a new wardrobe. Her parent's Baptist church in Bartlesville, Okla., welcomed her in as she moved home. For the first time, Laura developed close-knit female friendships.

Laura scoured the internet for others who had left transgenderism to follow Christ. "I was desperate to know that at least one other person on the planet understood." She eventually found three people. She connected with one of those individuals over email. Now, Laura says she's aware of thousands of stories similar to hers.

At age 39, Laura still shaves her face every morning. She will never be able to have children. She has an upcoming appointment to find out if she is a candidate for breast reconstruction surgery. She has suffered from muscle spasms and cognitive and memory loss she believes are connected to taking testosterone. She has back problems stemming from wearing a chest binder every day for years.

But Laura says she has experienced healing and wholeness in Jesus Christ. She travels and tells her story frequently at schools, churches, and women's and youth conferences. Sometimes, Francine joins her or has opportunities to talk with parents of children who wrestle with gender dysphoria or who live a transgender lifestyle.

Laura works as a women's ministry intern with First Stone Ministries, an Oklahoma City nonprofit that offers Biblical counseling and support for people experiencing unwanted same-sex attraction or sexual brokenness.

On May 14, Laura is getting married to Perry Smalts, an insurance worker and music minister she met through a church connection.

"My story is not about transgenderism. It is about the gospel," Laura said. "I didn't know how to fix myself. I didn't know how to detransition … I came to the end of myself, and God redeemed me." ■



“WE NEED

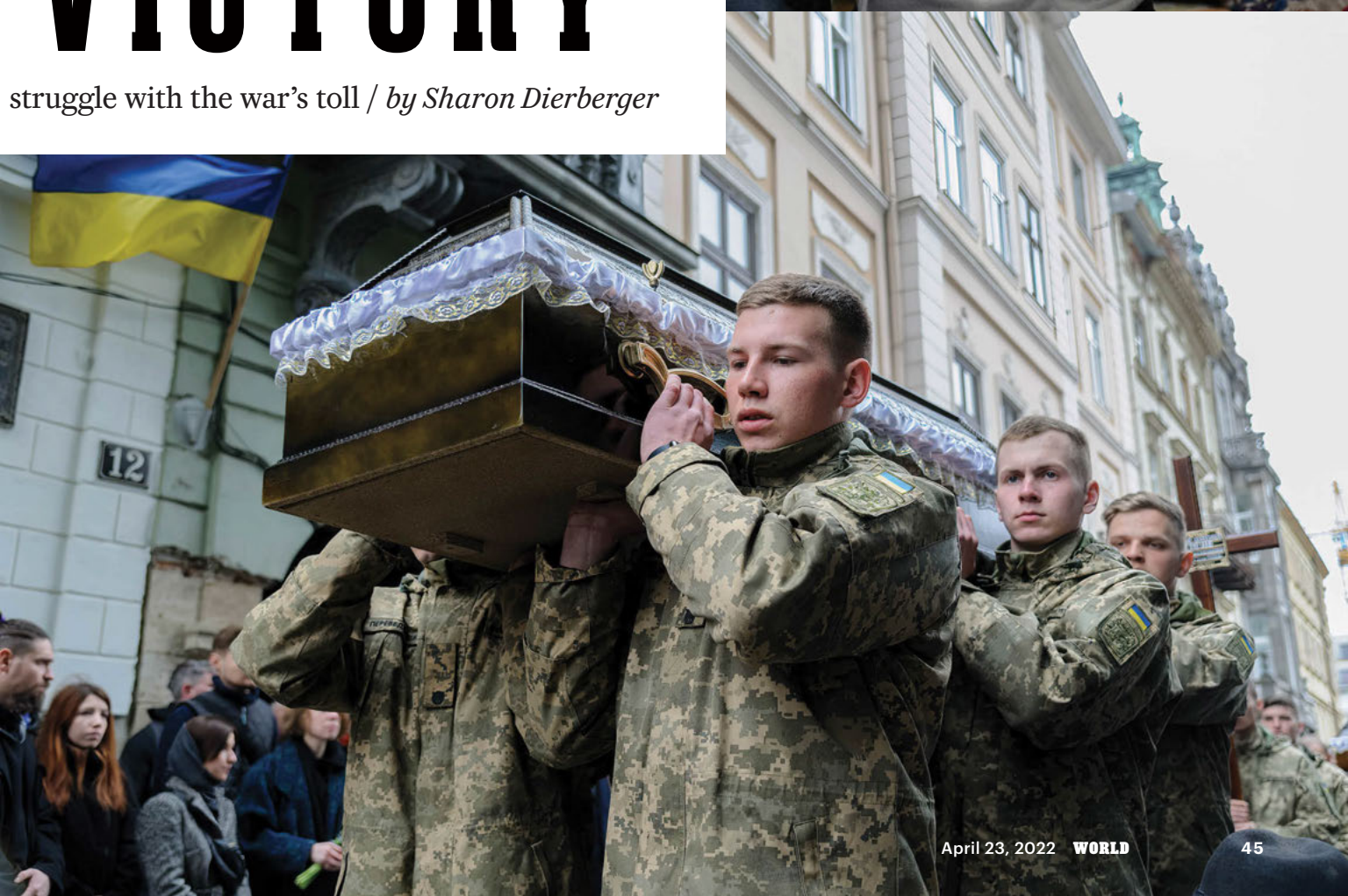
Ukrainians inside and outside their home country





VICTORY”

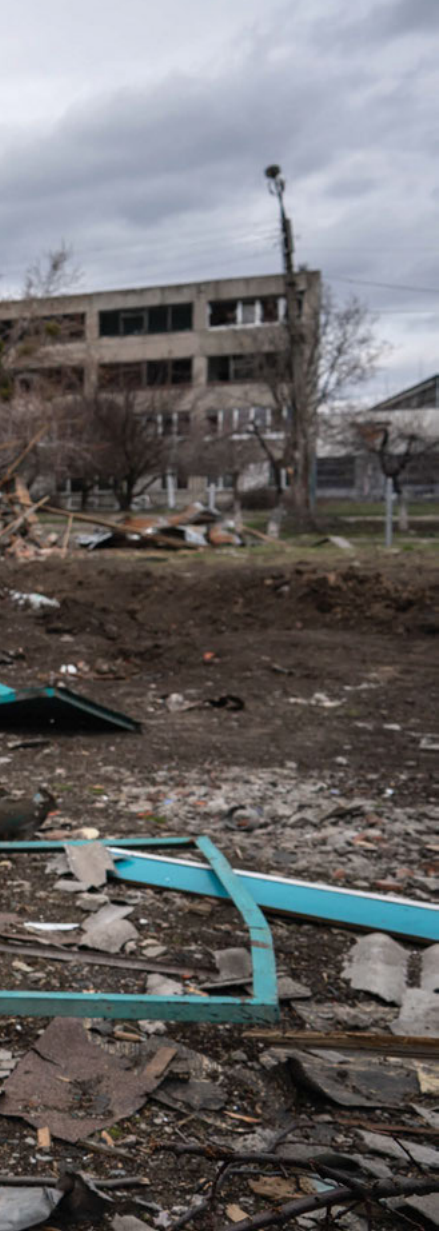
struggle with the war’s toll / *by Sharon Dierberger*





WHEN YURA AND NINA FEDORYUK GOT A PHONE CALL FROM their 11-year-old daughter screaming that she heard explosions overhead and saying, "Save me!" just before the call disconnected, they were close to panic. Fedoryuk jumped in their small SUV and raced through the crowded streets of Zolotonosha, honking and swerving, trying not to imagine the worst. ¶ He arrived home—an apartment near a military base—to a safe but distraught daughter. The Ukrainian army missile defense had shot down two incoming Russian missiles before impact. His daughter's phone battery died shortly after. ¶ Fedoryuk couldn't hold back tears as he described these moments in our video chat update recently. We had first spoken just days after Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24. (According to Fedoryuk, Ukrainians, even newscasters, no longer refer to days by the calendar, but by how long the country has been at war.)

PREVIOUS PAGE, BOTTOM RIGHT: MYKOLA TYS/SOPA IMAGES/LIGHTROCKET VIA GETTY IMAGES; ALL OTHERS: ARIS MESSINIS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Ira Mukamila shows the destruction of her home on April 3 near Kharkiv, Ukraine.

I couldn't help but notice he wore a T-shirt with "Trout Lake Camp" emblazoned on the front. It reminds him, he said, of the happy time he once traveled to Minnesota—a lifetime of peace ago.

Living in a country at war, but in a town not fully in the war's hottest zones, brings constant tension Fedoryuk can't shake. This 35-year-old Ukrainian pastor of Open Heart Church said he must daily tell himself to live in the present or else thoughts of "what if?" make him anxious and fearful. "And then I'm no good to anyone," he said, grimacing.

Living in the present has enough challenges.

He is struggling, he said, to love his enemies. As Fedoryuk watched footage of Russian troops bombing a maternity ward and targeting a theater and a school where children sheltered, and when he hears daily of more civilian killings in Mariupol, Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Kyiv, and other cities, he said he feels relentlessly unforgiving.

The United Nations reports 1,500 civilian deaths, including many children, though the number is believed to be much higher since recent confirmed videos show more bodies in streets in Kyiv and surrounding villages. The U.S. embassy in Kyiv reported Russian troops kidnapped nearly 2,400 children from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of eastern Ukraine, bringing them to Russia.

Fedoryuk talks about his friend, Alina Horobets. Pregnant, she spent 13 days with her husband and daughter living mostly in a cold, concrete bomb shelter in Bucha, the war zone northwest of Kyiv. In 2009, she'd been named the world's best female indoor soccer player. She's helped coach at Christian sports camps. Now, she and her family found themselves trapped, running out of food and water, with no electricity. Taking encouragement from Paul in Acts 27, they chose day 14 to escape and made it safely past Russian troops. Other Bucha residents have reported Russian troops wantonly torturing, raping, and shooting civilians.

Another friend, Sasha, saw a woman behind him killed by a Russian bomb, its direct impact missing him, but still critically injuring his legs. These incidents personify for Fedoryuk how close, terrifying, and brutal this war is.

He said he now understands why Jonah had such a hard time preaching repentance to Nineveh: "His despising those people and not wanting good for them is close to what I feel toward the people of Moscow. … And on top of this, the Russians don't believe they are at fault!"

Fedoryuk looked incredulous and added that his wife's relatives in Russia have unfriended her on social media because they don't believe Russians invaded Ukraine and are killing civilians.

AS WE TALKED, Fedoryuk hesitated, trying to reconcile what he knows the Bible says about loving your enemies with the way he feels. Despite that inner battle, he recounted several recent events reminding him to trust God.

A church member, Tanya, told him falling debris from incoming missiles destroyed her country house. She confessed she'd been counting on this rural home to be a safe haven while her husband Victor fights in the reserves, but after it was ruined realized anew her only true safety is in God alone. Her trust in God's sovereignty convicted Fedoryuk.

Then another member told Fedoryuk his story. Oleg, described by Fedoryuk as having a servant's heart and having adopted 14 children, regularly drives his white van to Kharkiv with food for the needy, then transports the city's refugees to safety in western Ukraine. But one frigid night, while bringing supplies, he didn't arrive at one of the last security checkpoints into Kharkiv before the 8 p.m. curfew—late by only minutes. Police wouldn't let him pass.

Oleg told Yura instead of reacting angrily and arguing as he normally would, he drove off to find somewhere to stay. Other police stopped him and took him to a nearby village to the home of a man who greeted him with, "Let peace be on you. … You are an answer to my prayer."

Turns out the man had just been on his knees, asking God how he could get 250 loaves of bread into Kharkiv without transportation, when Oleg knocked on his door.

The next morning, Oleg loaded up the loaves. As he approached a nearly mile-long line of cars also trying to enter Kharkiv, he drove onto the road's shoulder, to the indignation of other drivers. When he held a loaf of bread out the

ABOVE: WOLFGANG SCHWAN/ANADOLU AGENCY VIA GETTY IMAGES

window for others to see, indicating he was delivering food, every car moved over to let him pass quickly.

A final hurdle came at the last checkpoint: Police said a new regulation demanded a special document to enter the city—which Oleg didn't have. He told the officers about his food donations for the hungry; they looked at each other, and let him freely pass.

Fedoryuk smiled broadly as he narrated the series of events God orchestrated for Oleg.

But he grew frustrated again when he spoke of Russians who accept propaganda from Russian media and President Vladimir Putin—propaganda that portrays Russians as martyrs with the whole world against them. (A March 17 flag-waving stadium rally in Moscow, led by Putin, drew 200,000 cheering participants, according to Moscow police. Some sources, though, reported the Kremlin ordered students and state workers to attend.)

"Russia used to call Ukraine its little brother," Fedoryuk said. "But now Ukraine disowns that brother and says, 'At least we have a sister, Poland.'"

He is referring to Poland's admitting more than 2 million of the nearly 4.2 million Ukrainian refugees—mostly women and children—streaming across borders, according to the UN, which reported more than half of Ukraine's children—nearly 4.3 million of about 7.5 million—are internally displaced. A total of almost 10 million people, almost a quarter of the population, are seeking safety across borders or in western Ukraine. But Russia recently bombed a Ukrainian aircraft repair plant on the outskirts of the western city of Lviv, only 50 miles from the Polish border.

The bombs struck mere miles from a newly placed emergency field hospital by U.S. relief organization Samaritan's Purse. It is one of its four medical sites in Ukraine and Moldova. Franklin Graham, Samaritan's Purse president and CEO, earlier told me placement had been waiting on approval from Ukraine officials. The hospital has already treated more than 500 patients.

Fedoryuk is grateful many countries are helping refugees. He expressed pride in his countrymen, adding, "The ones who've escaped from war zones, whose homes are destroyed, or whose husbands are fighting for Ukraine, are deserving of much help."

BUSINESSMAN IGOR KRYKUN, his wife, Mariia, and their three children managed to safely flee Kyiv and exit Ukraine, but not without difficulty. When I first spoke with Krykun weeks ago, he was searching for petrol. He told me recently that after finally finding a tankful, they began their cross-country journey toward the border with his in-laws following in another car, as the bombing grew closer.

Because of bombed-out highways, driving west became impossible, so they turned south, away from the front. Coming to one military airport town past curfew, they found roads a confusing maze, covered with obstacles forcing drivers to make many detours. Local police guided them through, at one point yelling, "Turn off your lights!" as air raid sirens shrieked.

Krykun said he's grateful they made it to a relative's home that night so their three children did not have to sleep in a freezing car. (Two of his children chose this moment during our conversation to peer curiously into the screen and shyly smile at me.)

Continuing, Krykun said they headed southwest, crossed the Carpathian Mountains, and eventually reached the Hungarian border. There they said goodbye to Mariia's parents. Her father, 59, couldn't leave the country because Ukrainian law bans 18- to 60-year-old men from exiting. One exception allows fathers of three or more children under age 18 to leave. Krykun was able to find an internet connection to access online documents proving he is the father of his children.



LEFT: Residents of Bucha reach for food distributed after Russian troops retreated from the areas surrounding Kyiv. RIGHT: Emergency workers and volunteers carry an injured pregnant woman from the maternity hospital in Mariupol that was damaged by shelling.

After more than 1,000 miles of driving and overnight stops, including 500 miles through Hungary and Slovakia, they arrived in Prague, Czech Republic, where a friend helped them find an apartment and register for a permit to stay for 18 months. Not speaking the language has made getting children enrolled in school and navigating normal activities challenging, but Krykun is thankful to be there.

He mentioned his landlord remembers the Prague Spring of 1968, when Soviet forces invaded Czechoslovakia to crush a reform movement. She told Krykun she hates the Russians and is angry they are attacking again. "It makes my heart bleed," she said.

Krykun is not surprised by today's Ukrainian resolve to repel Russian forces. He took part in Ukraine's Maidan protest movements in 2004 and 2014. The protests took place in Independence Square (*Maidan* means "Square"), where the people revolted against Kremlin control

LEFT: DANIEL BEREHULAK/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX; RIGHT: EVGENIY MALOLETKA/AP





and called for closer ties with Europe. Subsequently, in 2014, Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula, but the same year a pro-Western president won Ukraine's election.

Like Fedoryuk, Krykun said he realizes more than ever the power of Russian propaganda. He said most Russians living outside major cities don't even have indoor toilets, and the only news they see comes from Russian-controlled television: "They continue to believe the lie that they are surrounded by enemies and still say, 'We did not attack Ukraine.'"

The global media company Krykun works for, Publicis Groupe, had been using social media to promote the truth about the invasion to internet-connected Russians, but since the Russian government blocked social media, his company now targets U.S. and European markets with messages promoting the importance of closing the skies over Ukraine.

The U.S.-led NATO alliance has not approved enforcing such a no-fly zone, despite Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's pleas, fearing this could lead to a direct confrontation with Russia. But the U.S. is sending Soviet-made missile defense systems it acquired over past decades, hoping to help Ukraine repel Russian air attacks. Some say the U.S. needs to send more effective, modern weapons systems like Patriot anti-missile missiles.

Krykun says volunteers throughout Ukraine and outside the country are engaged in "digital resistance"—constant internet postings—to boost Ukrainian morale. They show footage humiliating Russians and exposing their brutality. They watch for and report disinformation to be blocked. They remind Ukrainians not to identify geolocations where bombs land so Russians aren't aided.

Others share defensive strategies and escape routes online. Krykun himself used the Telegram website to find the best roads to travel and where to cross the border. The war has become the most internet-accessible conflict in history. Posted video footage of brutal acts by Russian soldiers may also be used after combat ends to prosecute war crimes.

Krykun's company is part of an initiative with other global media companies to prepare accurate video content for Western markets. "We want Ukraine to stay in the forefront of people's minds, reminding them this is not resolved and our country needs help," says Krykun.

As his infant son comes into view again, Krykun looks at him and then tells me, "The West needs to know, we don't need peace. We need victory." ■

A day of worldwide prayer and fasting for Ukraine

Shepherd's Foundation, established 30 years ago, supports and funds Christ-centered missions in Ukraine, including Camp Maximum, where Yura Fedoryuk became a Christian as a child and later worked. The ministry is calling upon believers for a day of worldwide prayer and fasting for Ukraine on Monday, April 25. This is the day after Ukraine celebrates Easter as a national holiday. *—S.D.*





VOICES FROM RUSSIA

In spite of repression and reprisals, many Russians are gaining confidence to speak out against President Putin and the war in Ukraine / *by Evgeny Kiz*

LARISA S. (41), BANK OFFICER

She is afraid for her psychological health. Every day she watches Russian television, where they scare her with threats of nuclear war, then with the Nazis, which they claim the Russian army is fighting in Ukraine. At the same time, she watches videos on the internet, where a completely different point of view prevails. She sees destroyed cities there, explosions in residential areas of cities, bombings of civilians, and desperate resistance by Ukrainian soldiers.

Internet sources claim that mass graves are being dug in a closed cemetery in Belarus bordering Ukraine and trucks full of dead Russian soldiers are being transported there for burial. All this plunges her into fear and despondency. She's already confused. She doesn't know whom to believe.

She is afraid that she will be stopped on the street and the police will check to see what videos she has on her phone. The other day she saw police stopping young people on the street and checking their phones.

SERGEY B. (49), STOCK TRADER

"There is a rush in the stores. Huge queues, like in Soviet times. People are buying up everything. Everyone is afraid of hunger. No one knows yet what bad times are waiting for us. I myself witnessed how people fought in the store for sugar—stores only sell a limited amount per person.

"The Moscow Currency Exchange has not been working for three weeks, and the Russian authorities are afraid to open it. They are afraid that the ruble will sharply devalue, and we will all fall into the economic abyss. Then we would face even more unprecedented price increases for goods and services.

"Until recently, we lived quietly and did not believe that all this would come down on us. How we will live I do not know. But it is already obvious that we have been thrown back 30 years. Almost everyone's business has stopped. Everything we worked on collapsed overnight because of the sanctions we received for attacking Ukraine. And we have big doubts that we will get out of this pit soon."

LYUDMILA V. (39), HOUSEWIFE

"I am a mother of three children, and now I feel fear and wonder how it is possible to bring the country to this. The cost of baby food has gone up seven to 10

FROM LEFT: DMITRI LOVETSKY/AP; GETTY IMAGES; AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



LEFT AND CENTER: Police detain anti-war protesters in Moscow. RIGHT: Ovsyannikova interrupts a live news broadcast.

times. Diapers just disappeared from stores. The prices of goods in the store are growing every day. The pharmacy does not have the necessary medicines.

"It's all a mockery of the president's statement: 'that everything is going according to plan, and we are in control of the situation.'"

ELENA L. (40), BUSINESSWOMAN

"At the airport before flying to Dubai, we were literally interrogated: 'Why were we flying? When would we return?' And so on. This has never happened before. Ticket prices were rising right before our eyes, and someone really didn't want citizens to leave the country.

"At the beginning of the war, people began fleeing Russia however they could. I had to buy a return ticket just to show it to the border guards who did not want to let me out of Russia."

MARINA OVSYANNIKOVA (43), TV JOURNALIST

She worked on the main channel of Russian television during a live news broadcast and walked behind the news anchor with an anti-war poster with the inscription: "Stop the war. Don't believe the propaganda. They're lying to you here." It was on the main channel of Russian TV.

A day later, she declared to the whole country: "What is happening in Ukraine now is aggression! And this aggression is on the conscience of one person—Vladimir Putin. Russia must immediately stop this fratricidal war."

Unfortunately, in recent years she worked on Channel One and was engaged in Kremlin propaganda. "And I am very ashamed of it now," she said. "It's a shame that I allowed myself to tell lies from the TV screen.

"Well-known journalists and announcers who have worked on TV channels for many years have started to leave Russian television en masse because they refuse to lie and misinform the population, even though since the beginning of the war on Feb. 24, many TV announcers have had their salaries increased by 150% so that they broadcast, to put it mildly, dubious information."

GLEB PIANYH (53), JOURNALIST

"As soon as I felt that the Iron Curtain was coming down and our country would be thrown back for decades due to economic sanctions, I tried to leave Russia, but it was no longer possible to do so in Europe. One of the few possible destinations is Istanbul, but when we arrived here, we found that we could not pay with our credit cards, we could not book a hotel, we could not withdraw cash. We fell into this trap, as did thousands of Russian citizens who flew here.

"Just recently, the Turkish authorities decided not to sell tickets to third countries to Russian citizens. That is, either you return to Russia, or you stay here. But in my opinion, there are few people who want to return to Russia now, because the prospects for a peaceful, prosperous, free life in Russia are still zero."

EVGENY K. (51), TAXI DRIVER

"Overnight, we Russians turned into villains and outcasts. It's as if all Russians have been involved in this military aggression. The Russian people don't want war. I live in Europe, and when people find out I am Russian, I have to immediately say that I am against the war. Don't blame the Russian people for this. I don't know a single Russian who would choose this war.

"Yes, we have a powerful government (which, however, we did not choose—the presidential elections of Russia were completely falsified). Still, we bear some of the responsibility for Russian troops fighting in Ukraine.

"Here in Poland, people sympathize with both Ukrainians and Russians because they understand this grief, this suffering of two peoples. Innocent civilians suffer from the war and its consequences, first of all, of course, in Ukraine.

"I remember another story when I was browsing internet resources banned in Russia, when an elderly man getting out of his car was asked, 'What do you think about the war that Russia started?' And he cried when he heard the question. He couldn't answer anything. He just cried and cried. And through his sobbing and crying, one could hear: 'Damn this Putin!'" ■

—Evgeny Kiz is a Russian cab driver who lives in Krakow, Poland

A better marriage narrative

As divorce rates rise in Nigeria, some in the church are finding ways to help young Christian couples stay together

BY ONIZE OHIKERE
in Abuja, Nigeria

PHOTO BY EBUN MEDESSOU

WEYINMI ERIBO HAD ONE FINAL FIGHT with her husband one evening. He flung a plate in her direction, but it didn't hit her.

The following morning, Eribo—who was 24 at the time—went to pick up their daughter from her cot. She found pieces of the broken plate from the previous night around her head. It was a defining moment.

"That was it for me," she said.

She left the next day, July 9, 2013, and finalized her divorce three years later.

While Eribo's particular experience may be unique, it fits into an ongoing and alarming rise in divorce cases in Nigeria. As with many Nigerians, she grew up in a family with long marriages. (Her parents stayed together for 47 years before her father died last year.) And as with many divorcing women, a stable career was part of what made divorce a possibility.

Unlike the United States, where a change to no-fault divorce law in the 1970s sparked a surge in divorce rates, Nigeria has not undergone any legal changes. Instead, counselors are pointing to social media, economic challenges, and rising female financial independence as some of the contributing factors.

The rising numbers have spurred efforts to help those who have gone through the process to rebuild. Meanwhile, some counselors and younger couples are working to move past glamorized, unrealistic portrayals of marriage and help people see healthy marriages still exist and work.

Nigeria does not keep an up-to-date record of national divorce numbers. The latest data from the National Bureau of Statistics in 2006 reported less than 1 percent of couples were divorced in that year, with the same figure for separated couples. But Aronke Omame, a Lagos-based lawyer and a divorce coach, says she has seen a spike in women seeking divorces in recent years. (The legal records also don't include Nigerians who carried out traditional marriages not accounted for under the law.)



Weyinmi Eribo



Eribo speaks at a seminar for women on work-life balance.

Nigerian courts require evidence that a marriage has "broken down irretrievably" to grant a divorce. The marriage must also be at least 2 years old.

Omame said Nigeria's rising divorce numbers are not surprising. She sees more women bringing forward petitions for divorce, saying that society is more accepting of men who move on to the next relationship before their divorce is finalized.

Six years ago, Omame formally began Sisi Lawyer to help women walk through concerns in their marriages. For some women, that involves preparing clients for the reality of the divorce process, such as the legal and financial responsibilities. (As a divorce coach, she has a more favorable view of divorce than most Christians.) But for other women, it means helping them to work through issues with their spouses.

In one instance, a couple accusing each other of adultery came to see her. Over several sessions, Omame helped them dig through some of their longtime trust issues and encouraged them to start having honest conversations.

"Eventually I was able to break the knot," she said. "Three months later they called and said they were reunited and working on the strategies [I gave them] from time to time."

The 64-year-old lawyer remembers divorces were an anomaly when she was younger. But women today who are not as reliant on their husbands' income are more willing to divorce. (In 2019, Eribo launched Wevvo to provide more financial training and business opportunities for divorced and single mothers.) Omame added that Nigeria's exuberant wedding industry that touts an average of two-day celebrations often pressures people to wed, often without proper preparations.

THE SITUATION should be different in the church, but Pastor David Odunayo and his wife, Elizabeth, have seen a similar gap in marriage preparations, even in Christian circles. Odunayo said some

PHOTO BY EBUN MEDESSOU

church leaders lack proper training to carry out effective premarital counseling. He worries it leaves couples unprepared to go through the first five years of marriage, which he calls the years of adjustment.

"If the pastor is not equipped and he doesn't seek help, most of the couples that pass through such a pastors' ministry may not have adequate premarital counseling," he said.

Eribo, who got married in 2011, said her church at the time did not offer any premarital counseling. "We glamorize the marriage ceremony and forget to actually teach people about marriage itself."

She and her husband still did not get much help when they started to struggle in their marriage. Instead, she said her former church leaders offered phrases like, "Don't worry, God would sort it out."

Eribo also pointed to the proliferation of church prophecies over people seeking to get married. Such revelations sometimes come with specific timelines—such as three months.

"Any man that comes to them within that three months, in their head it's, 'God has sent me my husband,'" she explained. "So people feel like if they're not married something is missing, as opposed to finding the message God has called you to this earth to live out."

The Odunayos said social media isn't helping. It mostly portrays two stark ideas about marriage: Either it idolizes lavish celebrity weddings, or it expresses despair over the gloomy reports about divorce.

"It makes people lose hope," Elizabeth said. She said Christians need to take responsibility for the information they consume, but she also pointed to the need for more bold, Christian messages about marriages online.

The Odunayos also noted that the country's economic crunch means more couples have less time to invest in their relationship. When the couple wedded back in December 1990, they stayed in a small, single-room apartment while Daniel worked as a missionary before they moved into their larger apartment.

Their affection is still evident: As I talked with them over Zoom from their home in central Plateau state, Elizabeth occasionally pulled David back in front of the camera with a smile whenever he talked and drifted from view.

In their pre–social media days, they looked to Christian couples around them as models. That included the missionary couple who worked at their campus at the University of Ibadan and their parents. They saw happy marriages firsthand, along with the tolerance and forgiveness needed to make it work.

"People focus more on marriage as an event. That's one problem with the modern perspective about marriage," David said.

David pastors a church on a university campus in Plateau state. He encourages couples within their church to be present in the lives of the students, especially those who grew up in difficult homes. "It gives them hope that marriages can work," Elizabeth said.

Counselors and younger couples are working to move past glamorized, unrealistic portrayals of marriage and help people see healthy marriages still exist and work.

ON A SUNDAY EVENING, the playful chatter of two young children filled the living room of an apartment in Abuja. Around them, four young couples chatted and had an early dinner as they ran through a weekly check-in.

One person shared about and received encouragement over a work situation. Another shared the struggles with her first-time pregnancy and received affirmation over God's plan and purpose for her child.

The conversation was much lighter as the group wrapped up its run of the Homebuilders, a marriage small group. Opeyemi Kesena and her husband, Joshua, started the Bible study in Abuja early in 2020. They had attended the study in Plateau under Opeyemi's parents, the Odunayos.

The program is modeled after the book, *Staying Close*, by American author Dennis Rainey. It guides the couple through honest, solution-focused conversations about teamwork, building intimacy, and communication—bucking the trend against such open conversations.

"It helps you to see some struggles in your marriage are not particular to you," Opeyemi said.

The program runs for about three months, after which the couples go on to start separate groups again. They started about six groups so far in Abuja. The process is not always regimented. Some couples bond so well that they extend their sessions, Opeyemi said, laughing.

That bond was visible among the group I visited. They have shared their struggles and vacationed together. One couple, David and Adeboro Rotimi, said they learned intentionality and realized some of their problems were normal and surmountable. Adeboro said it helped her get over the expectation of not speaking out about marital concerns.

The first few weeks in the group triggered what they called their "teething process." It sparked arguments



Adeboro and David Rotimi work with another couple (center) during a visit with the Odunayos.

HANDOUT PHOTOS

about issues they didn't realize they were harboring, before guiding them along ways to resolve them.

"The best part of it for us is the fact that we have a community of people that understand marriage from the same context, and if we're addressing marital issues or any issues that surround marriage, we have a reference point that everybody can resonate with," David said.

The Rotimis wed in 2019 and now have a 1-year-old son. The day I visited their home, Adeboro told me while laughing that they disagreed that morning over one of their businesses. But their experiences from the Homebuilders group and their church community guided them into fully embracing the fact that they are on the same team.

"It's not all doom and gloom because I know where his values are anchored," Adeboro explained.

While they were dating, David said, he searched online for young, Christian Nigerian couples, but came up short. So, after they married, they started their own YouTube channel and are also active on other social media platforms. It's not so much about giving advice but vulnerably sharing what works in their marriage, he said.

"I would say anchor your dream of marriage on the actual origin of marriage. If He created it, it's supposed to be a good thing."

The Kesenas, who also maintain an active social media presence, said they encourage other Christian couples within their circle also to go online. They hope to counter the negative messages online with honest, vulnerable messages about overcoming their struggles and staying true to each other.



Pastor David and Elizabeth Odunayo

It's had some impact: Some Nigerian blogs and Instagram accounts have picked up and reshared several of their posts.

"There are good marriages out there, and you can have a good marriage," Opeyemi said. "If people are pushing the bad narrative, we have to push our good narrative." ■

Fewer divorces—but fewer marriages

In 1969, California Gov. Ronald Reagan signed America's first no-fault divorce bill into law, allowing any spouse to dissolve his or her marriage without any proof of wrongdoing. The legislation caught on, with other states enacting similar laws over the next decade and a half.

The legal changes altered divorce filings: Divorce rates rose from 9.2 newly divorced people per year per 1,000 married people in 1960 to 22.6 in 1980.

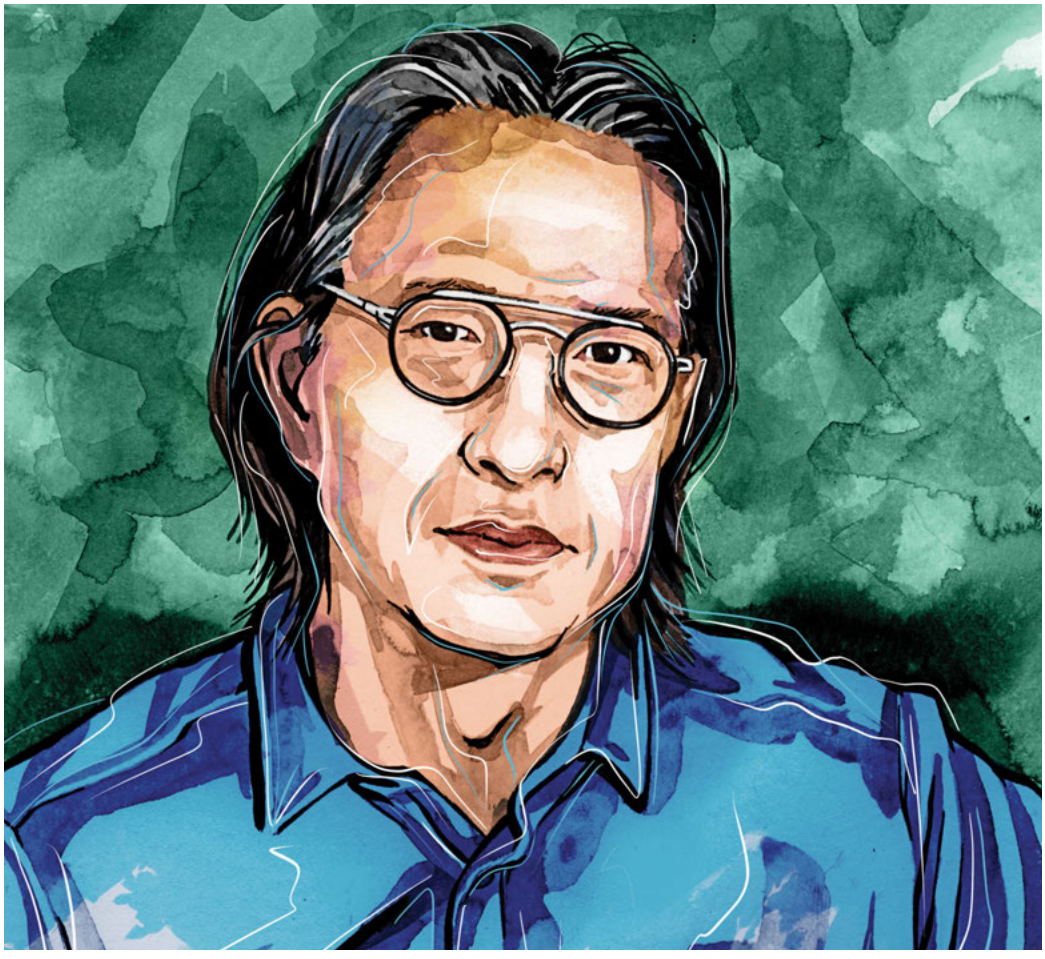
Wendy Wang, the director of research at the Institute for Family Studies, said it marked a period where more women got into the workforce. Societal perceptions of single-parent homes also started to change.

But in the latest data from 2019, America recorded a new 50-year low in divorce rates—14.9 newly divorced people per year per 1,000 married people. But one reason for the decline, Wang said, is that the number of people getting married is declining. (In 1970, there were 85.9 newly married persons per 1,000 married adults; in 2019, the number was 33.2.)

It fits into an ongoing worldwide trend that cuts across China, Japan, and now, also likely Nigeria, as fewer people view marriage as a natural part of life.

"In countries where you see the rise of women's labor force, you probably would see the decline in marriage," Wang said. "These two are closely related." —*O.O.*

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SEEING GOD AS THE TRUE ARTIST

Japanese American artist discusses art, faith, and the things in between

JOYCE WU INTERVIEWS MAKOTO FUJIMURA

WORLD'S 2005 DANIEL OF THE YEAR was Makoto Fujimura. The Japanese American artist creates prismatic paintings in the Japanese nihonga technique by combining pulverized minerals with animal-hide glue, which he applies to handmade paper. Also an author and arts advocate, he has served as a presidential appointee to the National Council on the Arts and director of Fuller Theological Seminary's Brehm Center for Worship, Theology, and the Arts. Below is our edited email exchange shortly after he returned from a February trip to India.

ILLUSTRATION BY JONATHAN BRUNS

Could you catch our readers up on what you've been doing since being selected the 2005 Daniel of the Year? I've had multiple major exhibits around the world, notably the inaugural exhibit at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., in 2018. It featured my original paintings for *The Four Holy Gospels* Bible that Crossway published to commemorate the King James Bible's 400th anniversary. I've also had major retrospectives at Israel's Tikotin Museum and Gonzaga University's Jundt Art Museum in Spokane, Wash.

I've published several major books, including *Silence and Beauty*, a journey into the "hidden faith" of Japanese culture. That book is in response to Shusaku Endo's masterpiece novel *Silence* [about the persecution of Christians in 17th-century Japan] and Martin Scorsese's film adaptation of it. My latest, *Art + Faith: A Theology of Making*, came out last year, and I look forward to seeing this conversation of art and faith expand.

Going back to your childhood, you've always had an artistic sensibility. What challenges did you encounter on the path to becoming an artist? A path to becoming an artist involves a series of crossing "impossible" thresholds. I believe the only way an artist's path can be sustained is by God's favor and is therefore miraculous. I've been able to make a living as an artist for over 30 years and feed my family, even though I've been told by many that it's impossible to do so. I am convinced that this is one of the "proofs" that God is the Artist, perhaps the only true Artist, and gives grace, much grace, to those whom He calls to be artists.

You became a Christian while completing a master of fine arts degree at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. How did you arrive at faith in Christ? I became a Christian reading Western literature, understanding the King James Bible, as well as hearing the gospel at the missionary church that I was attending in Japan at the time. I now realize that my desire to seek God was imprinted early on as my maternal grandparents were of Christian lineage, most likely [tracing back to] hidden Christians. My family line includes a great-uncle who was a Presbyterian evangelist in Okayama, Japan. Even though my mother struggled in her journey of faith, the prayers of my grandparents and generations of saints must have had an impact on my journey.



TO THE EXTENT THAT WE SEE OURSELVES AS GOD'S ARTWORK BEING REFINED, TO THAT DEGREE THE GOSPEL WILL GAIN POWER AND JOY.



How has art helped you get through the dark times, including the pandemic? My studio has always been the most sacred place to me, a place of solace and healing in dark times. During the pandemic, I have been most productive, as I was no longer traveling and was able to focus on my paintings. I had four major exhibits in 2021, the second year of the shutdown.

You were a consultant for Hollywood director Martin Scorsese's 2016 film, *Silence*. What was that experience like? I visited the set twice in Taipei and was asked by Marty to help give feedback to the script and some final decisions of the film editing. It was great to learn from some of the best set designers and editors in Hollywood, and serve in one of the most important films that Marty has made. We spoke on our personal journeys of faith and 17th-century Japanese culture, my specialty.

In *Art + Faith*, you observed that Christians tend to be utilitarian and undervalue art. What can churches do to help cultivate art that offers a fuller sense of God? First we are the *poiema*, masterpieces, of God (Ephesians 2:10), so we are the art that God takes joy in refining. That means we need to understand poetry, art, theater, design, architecture, music, dance, etc., to properly understand our existence as the Church. By doing so, the Church will regain her identity as the Bride of Christ, to see herself as beautiful and as the ultimate masterpiece of God. To the extent that we see ourselves as God's artwork being refined, to that degree the gospel will gain power and joy.

You lost over 50 works to Hurricane Sandy in 2012. Could you tell the story behind that? Many of the Chelsea galleries, including the one that represented me at the time, were severely damaged by the unprecedented storm surge that unexpectedly hit Manhattan's Midtown area. The surge was so powerful, it rushed in breaking the windows [and destroying his works]. Miraculously, my original *Four Holy Gospels* framed pages were by the window, but high up on the shelf, and they were not harmed. I was scheduled to ship my other major paintings to the gallery that day, and the truck was on its way, but had to turn back at the last minute. Had those pieces been installed, I would have lost what I now consider to be seminal works, including *Golden Sea*. →

In *Art + Faith*, you wrote that as a Christian, you "create from a vision of the world to come, and not just from the broken realities I experience today." Could you give an example of your work illustrating that? It is "by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5), and our brokenness is connected to the healing to come. The "vision of the world to come" is actually through the fractures of our ground-zero realities. [Fujimura was trapped beneath Ground Zero in a subway on 9/11.] My work and my writings have become a way to explore how this transfiguration can take place. My major work *Golden Sea* reveals the fractured earth, but the pattern is made with gold. My recent *Christmas, 3020*, dedicated to my wife Haejin, is an example of my art being a portal of the future.

You co-founded Kintsugi Academy (later rebranded as Academy Kintsugi) that trains people in the Japanese art of kintsugi. What do you hope participants learn in that craft? In kintsugi, which is connected with the venerable tea tradition of Japan, we reconnect broken ceramics with Japanese lacquer and gold. As we commemorated the 20th anniversary of 9/11, we relaunched Academy Kintsugi at High Line Nine gallery in New York. A kintsugi master and I co-founded this effort, and my wife serves as the president.

We train instructors who will facilitate the creation of Culture Care communities. These groups are designed to be an antidote to the current divisive culture-wars mentality in the church and a place for creatives to be leading advocates for healing the church and the world. They are also a winsome way to invite skeptics to join us in kintsugi experiences and realize we are all makers. When we make, God shows up. I wrote an *Art + Faith* reader's guide toward Culture Care community formation, now available for free.

As I mentioned in the kintsugi chapter of *Art + Faith*, Christ's post-resurrection reveals Jesus not only as a fully glorified human, but also a wounded human being. He is our kintsugi Savior, pouring this golden grace through His suffering and His nail marks.



DICTATORIAL FORCES ARE AFRAID OF ARTISTS AND MUSICIANS BECAUSE THEY ARE THE VOICES OF FREEDOM THAT CANNOT BE CONTROLLED.



You just returned from working with Embers International in India. What work were you doing there? Haejin [Embers International co-founder and CEO] has established a safe house and rescued or given opportunities to over 100 children living in the red-light districts of the slums. We went to India with two of our Academy Kintsugi instructors to create kintsugi experiences there as a peacemaking exercise. We brought the craft to the staff and groups that rescue and educate these children. We also invited the mothers to a new journey toward restoration and education so they do not have to go back to be victims of sex trafficking.

It felt miraculous to be there after two postponements. We also felt we were in the "eye of the storm" as many of the children literally live in the brothels. We are creating an intergenerational approach to end the multigenerational exploitation of the poor.

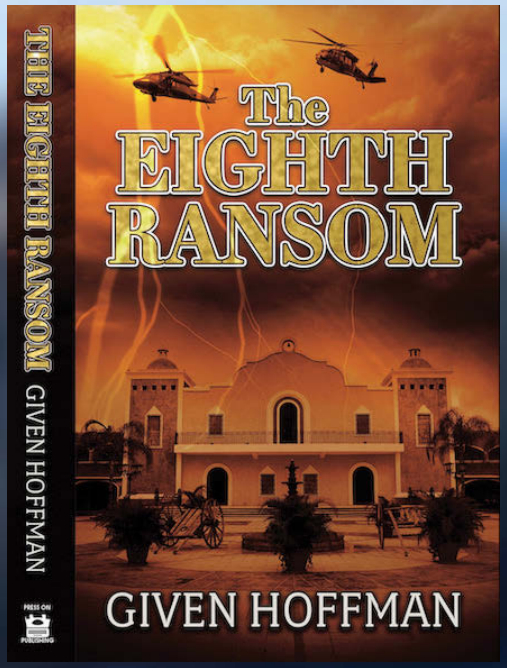
What art projects are you working on these days? I have embarked on a psalms painting project. I paint one 48" x 48" canvas per psalm, per month. It will take me more than 10 more years to finish. Dr. Ellen Davis, an Old Testament scholar at Duke University, has been translating each psalm so I may use that translation. We are also in the planning stages of building a Fujimura Chapel with the original *Four Holy Gospels* paintings, and are hoping to find a host institution.

As the war in Ukraine has unfolded, a video of a Ukrainian girl singing *Frozen*'s "Let it go" in a bomb shelter went viral. At Washington's Kennedy Center, cellist Yo-Yo Ma, pianist Emanuel Ax, and violinist Leonidas Kavakos began their March performance with the Ukrainian national anthem. What do you think about the arts in wartime? In the Babylonian exile by Nebuchadnezzar, some of the first captives among God's people were artisans (2 Kings 24:10-16). Dictatorial forces are afraid of artists and musicians because they are the voices of freedom that cannot be controlled. Conversely, where the arts thrive and new voices are birthed is where the Spirit is operating.

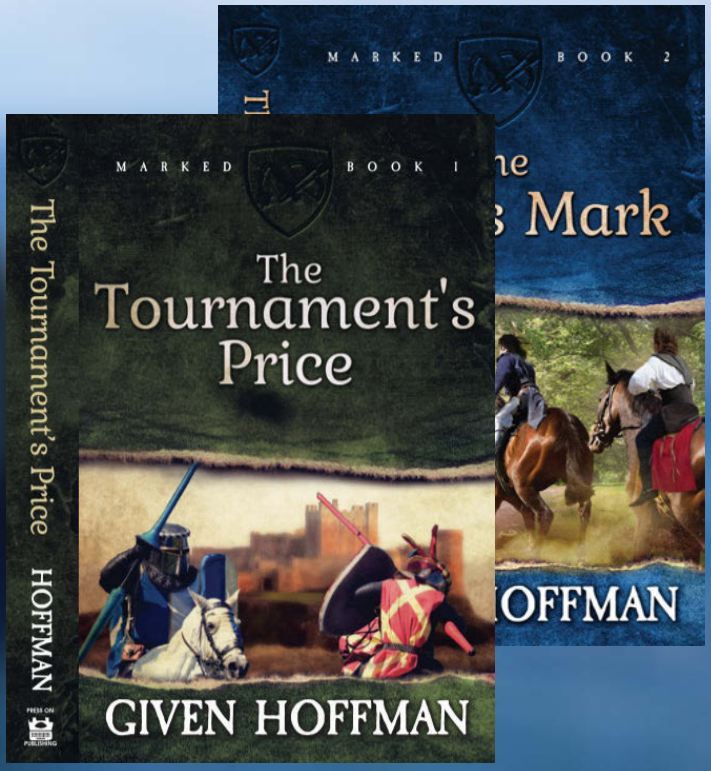
During the pandemic, I've thought more deeply about the relationship between trauma and art. I came to the conclusion that if we removed all of the arts that were not a direct result of trauma—such as the bubonic plague, invasions, and wars—we may not have 90 percent of what has endured. All art flows out of the fissures of our brokenness and trauma in some way. Think of C.S. Lewis' Narnia stories with the Pevensie children escaping the Blitz in London to find the wardrobe. J.R.R. Tolkien imagined an entire subcreation of peaceful and courageous creatures while his friends lay dying in the front lines of war. The arts are given rise in such a time of darkness. ■

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Given Hoffman is an author, a speaker on writing and communication, and an international blogger on practical Christianity and Biblical theology. Given is a homeschool graduate, a Jerry B. Jenkins Christian Writers Guild Craftsman, and an alumni of Ellerslie Leadership Training. She has a heart for teens and loves to inspire them to embrace the paths God has for them. *You can find out more about this author and her books at* ***GivenHoffman.com***



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BUYING AND SELLING CHURCHES IN AUSTRALIA

Small, rural church buildings without congregations are being sold to support growing churches

by Amy Lewis in Geelong, Australia

THE BLUE STONE CHURCH was built in 1854 but has been empty for eight years. A full-color, 6-foot-high "Auction" sign sits in front of Batesford Presbyterian Church on a dirt road leading to a vineyard. Bannockburn Presbyterian Church is selling the Batesford and Anakie Presbyterian church buildings. The three congregations used to share the same →

A 1904 Presbyterian/Uniting Church building now renovated into a home.

PHOTO BY AMY LEWIS

pastor on alternating Sundays, but the two smaller churches held their last services in 2014. The buildings go to auction with a residential real estate agent on April 9.

Bert Stasse is an elder at the Bannockburn church. "The Bannockburn church is growing quite well," he says. "The sales' proceeds will be used in the development of the Bannockburn building."

The sale of church buildings in Australia follows trends among sellers and buyers. Rural church buildings are being sold to assist growing city churches. Buyers are snatching up the buildings at record prices to renovate into homes, community halls, galleries, and sometimes churches.

Australia's unique church history and present mindset about Christianity adds a new dimension to what would otherwise be a mundane story repeated in the U.S. and elsewhere about repurposed church buildings.

In 1836, the Australian Parliament passed the Church Act, providing government subsidies for church construction and pastors' salaries, and effectively breaking the Anglican monopoly on churches. The 1851 Gold Rush in Victoria brought wealth to the region, and church buildings sprang up almost overnight. A drive through Australia's countryside today turns up blue stone, brick, or weatherboard-sided churches in nearly every small town.

"I'M SAD ABOUT ALL THE LOCAL CHURCHES CLOSING. HISTORY MATTERS, BUT IF PEOPLE AREN'T WORSHIPPING THERE, IT'S JUST A BUILDING."

In 1977, out of a desire to show church unity, many Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational churches formed the Uniting Church in Australia. The joint congregations occupied the best church building in each town and sold the others.

Now, with people moving to urban areas and cultural Christians choosing "no religion" on surveys, congregations in villages are finding it hard to maintain and insure their aging church buildings.

Since 2018, nearly 30 church buildings have been sold each year in the state of Victoria. People buy the older buildings to preserve the history or because it's well built and has acreage.

Chris Ambrose is a former Uniting pastor. He and his wife Mary found their ideal home with north-facing windows, some history, and lots of wall space for their books when they bought an 1886 Bible Christian Church/Uniting Church building in remote Irriwillipe.

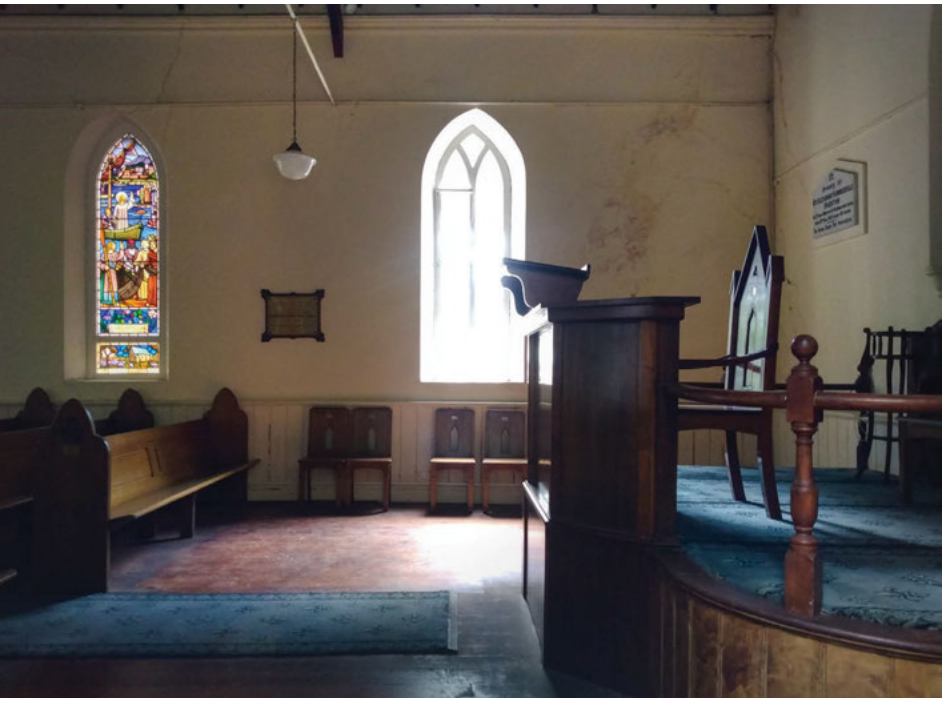
The former worship building is surrounded by fields once filled with farms of potatoes and dairy cows. Now a red bull named Trevor reigns over a large beef farm. The wooden church was also the community hub but closed soon after the congregation's 100th anniversary.

"There's no point in keeping a church open simply because it's a church," says Ambrose. "I'm sad about all the local churches closing. History matters, but if people aren't worshipping there, it's just a building."

Three miles down the road, Colin and Angela Carter live in what locals call the "Notorious Blue Church" because of its proximity to a dangerous intersection on the way to the Great Ocean Road. "It was cheap, derelict, and exactly what we needed," says Colin of the 1904 Presbyterian/Uniting Church building.

The Carters see themselves as caretakers and want to honor the "church feeling" even while they host the parody religion of the Flying Spaghetti Monster and have "pilgrims" pose with pirate hats in front of their building and sign.

Others have bought churches to hide out from COVID-19 or as a second country home.



Interior of the closed Batesford Presbyterian Church that was auctioned off April 9.

PHOTO BY AMY LEWIS

Richard Wilson hasn't bought a church building, but as church planting evangelist for the Presbyterian Church of Victoria (PCV), he has plenty of experience with them. He grew up in the bush. His family would travel almost 20 miles to a strong church with children's ministries rather than go to a closer church with only a few older congregants.

Those struggling churches are now closing their doors. Roy Morgan reports that the percentage of Australians describing themselves as "Christian" dropped from 68 to 44 percent between 2003 and 2020. In the same period, those who say they have no religion grew from 26 to 45.5 percent.

"It breaks my heart to see churches being used as dance halls and homes," Wilson says, "but the reality is, Jesus died for people, not buildings." Even though people have strong personal ties to church buildings, the aging buildings are becoming a liability. Meanwhile, analysts expect Australia's cities to grow exponentially. "We need to be thinking hard about getting churches to where the people are," says Wilson.

That means making the hard choice of selling less viable churches, investing the money in church planting, and supporting stronger churches in growth corridors.

While "For Sale" signs outside church buildings might seem to confirm mainstream media's message that Christianity is dying, Cameron Garrett, clerk of the Gippsland Presbytery in the PCV, says that though membership has been cut in half, actual attendance has grown. Churches today are arguably stronger.

According to McCrindle researchers, at least 64 percent of Australians say they would likely attend a church service if personally invited by a friend or family member. Wilson found that openness when he knocked on 2,000 doors in his new neighborhood. The people who opened 1,198 of the doors were encouraging and positive. Some showed up at the church plant. Only two people were negative.

There's a wooden church in a suburb Wilson thinks would be ideal for a church plant. "The building would fall over if you leaned on it," Wilson says, but he has hopes of planting a new church and rebuilding on that same plot of land. ■

PHOTO BY LAUREN DUNN



A PLACE TO GROW AND THRIVE

Kansas nonprofit provides fine arts education to foster youth

by Lauren Dunn in Wichita, Kan.

ON A MORNING in March, 13 students ages 11-18 sat in chairs on three risers in room C6 in the Riney Fine Arts Center at Friends University in Wichita, Kan. Adult volunteers called student advocates sat interspersed among the students, singing along to "Firefly" and helping students follow along with the printed music.

Executive director Lisa Paine started the tax-exempt nonprofit Juniper Arts Academy last year to provide fine arts education for youth in the local foster care and juvenile justice systems. The group kicked off its first term in September 2021 with 14 students from the Youth Horizons Kinloch Price Boys Ranch in Valley Center, Kan., a suburb of Wichita. Utilizing classrooms made available for free from a local nondenominational church and Friends University, where Paine and many of the volunteers attended school, the organization offers a choir class and ukulele lessons. →

Eileen Price teaches music at Juniper Arts Academy.

Paine said the name "Juniper" points to the juniper tree: "It can grow and thrive in spaces where you maybe wouldn't expect something to thrive."

Student advocates are matched with 1-4 students for the entire term. Paine said that a volunteer's passion for Juniper's mission is more important than their choir experience. These consistent adult relationships provide a safe space for Juniper students to participate.

"Our successes with our youth are when they make eye contact, and when they will initiate conversation, and when you can tell those little things of trust are starting," Paine said.

James Bazil, assistant director of residential programs at Kinloch Price Boys Ranch, said that of the 27 boys ages 10-18 at Kinloch Price right now, about 10 participate in Juniper Arts. Bazil never pressures any of the boys to attend the music classes, but for those who are interested, it's an opportunity they often don't have elsewhere. He said the boys especially benefit from the one-on-one model at Juniper. "Anything that we can get that encourages kids to have pro-social behavior in public settings, that's what we're all about," he said.

Eileen Price, 26, began teaching choir during Juniper's second term. A choral director at Mead Middle School in Wichita, she started volunteering during the first term after Paine invited her. In class, Price moved quickly from the piano to directly in front of the students, then back to the piano. She explained "crescendo" and "decrescendo" by demonstrating singing quietly while crouching close to the ground and raising her voice as she rose to stand.

Price said that she considered leaving education during COVID-19. "Juniper really, honestly saved my career this past year," she said. "I get to step away from the education system, but not students. ... It made me realize like, oh, no, I actually love this. I'm actually very good at this. And I can't walk away from these students."

THEY JUST DESPERATELY WANT TO BE A PART OF SOMETHING THAT MATTERS.

In February, Paine went full time with Juniper, leaving her job as assistant director at a local faith-based nonprofit that focuses on the arts and work skills preparation for at-risk youth. This summer, she said, Juniper plans to begin hiring teachers on a contract basis.

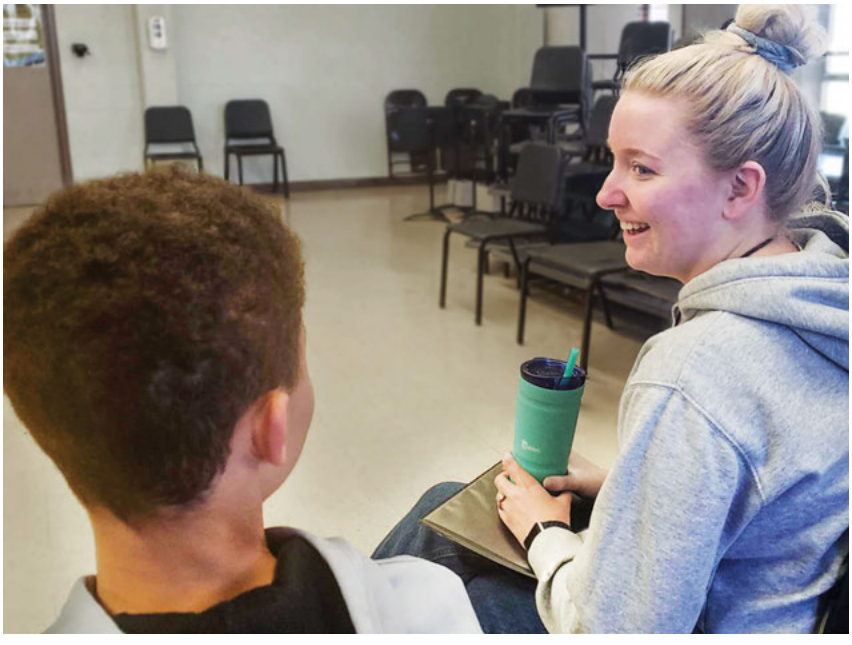
While Juniper Arts Academy is not a faith-based organization, and volunteers and staff are not required to have a religious affiliation, Paine and some volunteers say their faith impacts their decision to invest in Juniper students.

Student advocate Chris Loucks, 30, said his Christian faith is his "strong foundation." One of Loucks' assigned buddies became a "role model" in the choir, but at first wasn't very interested in participating. "Just seeing the persistence, what it can bring to those students, I think is very exciting," Loucks said.

Paine has found many people eager to give financially and volunteer. A local music store provides instruments—so far, ukuleles—at cost. She found a lawyer willing to file legal documents for the nonprofit pro bono: "I've found the most important thing is to just be vulnerable and say, 'I don't know how to do this.'"

Looking forward, Paine said the organization plans to start offering guitar, piano, and voice lessons this summer, and eventually add visual arts such as painting, crocheting, or pottery.

Paine hopes people realize these students are in many ways just like other youth. "There are some people who will assume they're just tough kids—that's who they are," she said. "But they are so ready to love and be loved, and they just desperately want to be a part of something that matters." ■



A volunteer interacts with a student at Juniper Arts Academy.

PHOTO BY LAUREN DUNN



SHOULD PASTORS PLAY DOCTOR?

Church denominations are divided on whether to dole out vaccine advice

by Liz Lykins

PASTOR ERIK REED remembers his nearly 1,500-member church, The Journey Church, was one of the first to shut down in Lebanon, Tenn., at the start of the pandemic in 2020.

When the Southern Baptist church opened up three months later, leaders needed to decide how to hold services safely. At that time, Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee did not mandate masks for houses of worship, according to the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

Leaders wanted to allow congregants to make their own decision whether to mask up or not, Reed said. To make this possible, the church gave several options for attendance. Congregants could attend either of the church's two services virtually or in-person in its 1,000-seat sanctuary.

When the vaccines started to roll out in December 2020, a similar mindset persisted. Reed and the other members of the leadership team gave no input on whether to get the shot or not.

"Our whole approach was to leave this to the consciences of the people," Reed said. "It's not our place to tell people that they should or shouldn't get a vaccine. It's not our place to say you should do this in order to be a faithful Christian. It's not our place to say, you know, faithful Christians don't do this."

But Reed's perspective on voicing →

Members of the public are vaccinated at the Roman Catholic parish church of St. Anthony of Padua in Bronx, N.Y.

TAYFUN COSKUN/ANADOLU AGENCY VIA GETTY IMAGES

vaccine views from the pulpit is just one of many.

Denominations are divided on whether they dole out advice about the vaccine, according to a recent Pew Research Center study. Thirty-nine percent of religious leaders encouraged their congregants to get it, 5 percent encouraged not to do so, and 54 percent voiced little opinion.

Evangelical churches like Reed's tend to give no advice. However, historically black, mainline, and Roman Catholic churches were the most likely to suggest their congregants get the shot.

For Reed, it was a matter of letting people make the decision for themselves. He explained that in life there is always a certain level of risk and members should be able to decide the level of risk they are willing to take.

"Churches get in trouble when we start playing doctor on these issues," Reed said. He emphasized that members should instead make their own decisions after seeking out more information and praying.

CHURCHES GET IN TROUBLE WHEN WE START PLAYING DOCTOR ON THESE ISSUES.

Complementing Reed's stance, Elevation Church in Raleigh, N.C., also wants to enable congregants to make their own choices. The nondenominational church supports "the freedom to make a personal choice," an unnamed spokesperson said through the informational email account for the church.

When churches do decide to give advice, 61 percent of U.S. congregants have at least "a fair amount" of confidence in their religious leaders to provide reliable guidance about getting a vaccine, according to the Pew study. This figure is nearly identical to the level of confidence in public health officials.

For the United Methodist Church (UMC), supporting the vaccine has been an emphasis since it first became available, said Diane Degnan, director of public relations at United Methodist Communications. While the UMC does not have an official position on vaccination, it has published articles encouraging vaccination and a multitude of Methodist churches have hosted vaccine clinics, she explained.

Global Ministries, a UMC ministry branch, has worked specifically to provide "global vaccine equity," said Kathy Griffith, team lead of the Global Health Unit. Vaccine equity could provide safety in areas where hygiene and social distancing are difficult to maintain, she explained.

"What about what's happening in Ukraine where hundreds of thousands of people are fleeing and are packed together. There is no personal protective equipment. There is no social distancing. It's not possible," Griffith said. "It just seems to me that if everybody were able to be immunized and to be that much safer from COVID, it would end the pandemic—not only within sight—but it would save multiple lives from COVID."

Historically black and Roman Catholic churches have also urged members to get the vaccine.

In 2021 the National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) launched a five-year plan to vaccinate 100 million African Americans and Latinos in the United States. NBCI plans to work with church leaders and health agencies to promote the vaccine.

While some Catholic church leaders have been hesitant to get the vaccine, many leaders, including Pope Francis, have promoted the vaccine. According to an NPR article, in January Pope Francis said that getting vaccinated is a "moral obligation." He urged that church members have a responsibility to care for themselves and those around them. ■



Chicago residents stand in a line outside Trinity United Church of Christ to receive a coronavirus vaccine.

ABEL URIBE/CHICAGO TRIBUNE/TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE VIA GETTY IMAGES

TENURE ON TRIAL

States reevaluate protection for university professors

by Lauren Dunn



Dan Patrick speaks during the Conservative Political Action Conference in Dallas.

TEXAS LT. GOV. DAN PATRICK sent a shock wave through the academic community in February when he said he wanted to end tenure at the state's public universities. His comment wasn't the only recent challenge to a long-standing practice in higher education.

South Carolina legislators proposed a bill in November that would have ended university-level tenure in state institutions by limiting new-hire contracts to no more than five years. Hawaii Sen. Donna Mercado Kim, a Democrat, proposed a bill in January to restrict who is eligible for tenure. Earlier this month, Florida lawmakers passed a bill that would allow the Florida Board of Governors to impose five-year post-tenure reviews.

Tenure, which makes faculty positions permanent except in certain extreme situations, has been considered a safeguard for academic freedom since 1940. The practice protects professors from losing their jobs even if they hold or express controversial views. But experts are divided on whether tenure is as beneficial as its supporters claim.

The American Association of University Professors said Patrick's statement made "perverse and duplicitous threats." The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) released a statement saying "academic freedom is the lifeblood of American universities."

Joe Cohn, the legislative and policy director at FIRE, said calls to end or restrict tenure have been "growing in intensity." The practice has support from both sides of the political aisle, but Republicans are more likely to question the practice, he said.

FIRE's vice president of programs, Peter Bonilla, said calls to end tenure can come from both camps, with people on the right typically more concerned about increasing liberalism and people on the left taking issue with preferred treatment for tenured faculty compared with non–tenure track employees.

"Tenure has been pretty instrumental in protecting unpopular voices," Cohn said, adding that calls to end tenure are "counterproductive" for conservatives in academia. He said government and institutional groups may need "to ensure that the system is working properly, but wholesale attacks on tenure protections do undermine the ability of faculty to speak their minds."

Jay Schalin, senior fellow at the James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal, acknowledged that tenure sometimes helps protect academic freedom for nonconforming professors. But he pointed out that the practice only protects professors who already have tenure. For up-and-coming professors with unpopular opinions, tenure may be out of reach.

According to Schalin, when tenure was first instituted, it protected faculty from encroaching government pressure. Now, he said, threats to academic freedom rarely if ever come from the government. They often come from a professor's own school.

Bonilla at FIRE said schools can institute policies giving all professors the same level of academic freedom: "You could make those expectations: not the ceiling for which all faculty aspire to one day have the protection of, but rather the floor that anyone employed as professor should reasonably expect from their institutions."

Cohn said he is concerned about any efforts to reform tenure that do not have faculty backing. "Legislatures should be hesitant to meddle with tenure," he said. "There is a role to be played here, but it should be in supporting academic freedom and not undermining it." ■

BRANDON BELL/GETTY IMAGES



Things that fall away

Our grievances will someday, suddenly, seem petty

THE PEOPLE IN MARIUPOL running for shelter clutching babes in their arms don't worry about their bank accounts.

This I thought while experiencing my own mental divestiture of formerly important things. Like the obsession of half my life to amass an inheritance for my four children for when I'm gone. A wearying business that blots out the sun with a finger.

And so it happened to me as to most people, what the olden prophets warned about idolatry: "Strangers devour his strength, and he knows it not; gray hairs are sprinkled upon him, and he knows it not" (Hosea 7:9). After all that, I ended up losing large sums, as when it rains it pours—sudden car death, botched cataract surgery, unlucky investments, unwise insurance decisions, unexpected hospitalizations, inflation.

But a funny thing happened on the other side: I felt free. There was nothing to lose now.

I remember Paul's journey from Fair Havens (Acts 27). Two hundred and seventy-six men set sail in clear weather. When the winds rose, not a sailor thought of throwing anything overboard. They took moderate measures: secured the skiff; the next day, lightened the ship; the third day, threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands; the 14th day, cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off. Then they ate what many thought would be their last meal and jettisoned the whole cargo of wheat.

Or a luxury ship five minutes after hitting an iceberg is a good enough picture of life: At first you're annoyed because the captain announces that bocce ball is canceled for the afternoon until they get the problem fixed. Then you start complaining about all the money you spent on this cruise and how you will insist on a refund as soon as you get home. A few dour intercom announcements later, you've forgotten all about the money and you will give everything you own not to die.

WHEN DEATH COMES KNOCKING, ONCE IMPORTANT THINGS BECOME BESIDE THE POINT.

When death comes knocking, once-important things become beside the point: my father's obligatory diet soda now that he's on hospice with a failing heart (he's fine with regular now); his menagerie of meds that were so fastidiously taken (when I asked his doctor if we should keep those up, he looked at me with eyes that said, "Seriously?"). All life's intense pleasures now as uninteresting as the potty training book I read and underscored, once my daughter was past the phase.

Of course, there is always the holdout, that guy clutching the past when it makes no more sense. Lot's wife, fire and brimstone falling on her head, still pining for city life in Sodom (see Revelation 18:14). In college summers I worked in a nursing home and saw people with one foot on the banana peel nursing grudges over who gets seated first in the cafeteria.

Fear of the Lord comes in like a flood, and how suddenly petty do our grievances then appear: the insistence on our own way; the thousand unforgivenesses carried over a lifetime that steal a man's best years. How small do our cherished worldly songs become. The things of earth grow strangely dim, as the hymn says. You don't even have to work at renouncing them; they simply become unappealing. "Surely the idolatrous commotion on the hills and mountains is a deception" (Jeremiah 3:23).

And so "it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart" (Ecclesiastes 7:2).

When you push off your little boat from the shore of the glittering city, you watch as little by little the lights fade away, first the weakest, until only the brightest remain visible.

I was in Aldi doing food shopping when my mechanic called with the bad news that I need a new car. Knowing I was suddenly poorer, I turned and picked up a German chocolate bar off the rack and put it in my cart, without any hesitation, and moved on. ■

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THE MADNESS ENDS

An epic second half gives Kansas the NCAA basketball title

UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS STUDENTS (above) celebrated in Lawrence, Kan., as the Kansas Jayhawks defeated the North Carolina Tar Heels in the NCAA men's basketball championship game on April 4. It was the fourth NCAA men's basketball title for Kansas, and it came after the Jayhawks erased a 16-point deficit and eventually edged out the Tar Heels 72-69. David McCormack scored the go-ahead bucket from close range with 1:21 left in the game, then another at the 22-second mark to put the Jayhawks ahead by three. North Carolina missed its final four shots. Overall, 10 players (five for each team) scored in double figures, with four players (two for each team) tallying 15 points each. The Jayhawks' victory was the biggest comeback in title game history. The night before, the South Carolina Gamecocks won the NCAA women's basketball title. Senior guard Destanni Henderson scored a career-high 26 points, leading her team to beat the Connecticut Huskies 64-49. That handed the Huskies their first loss in 12 NCAA title games.

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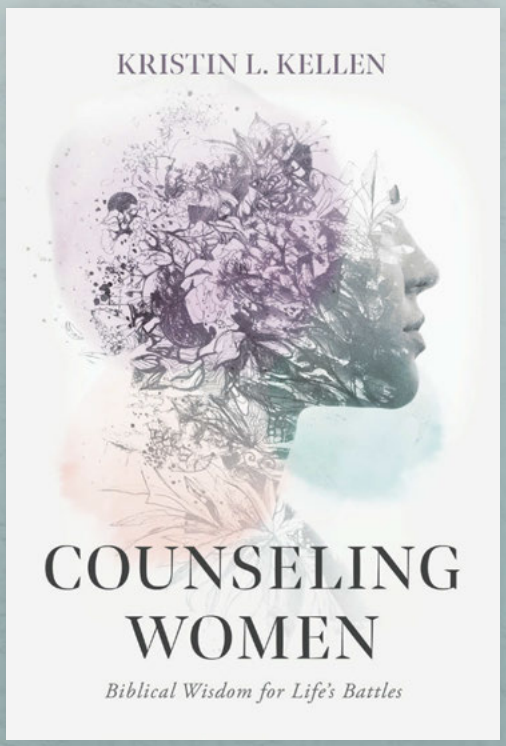
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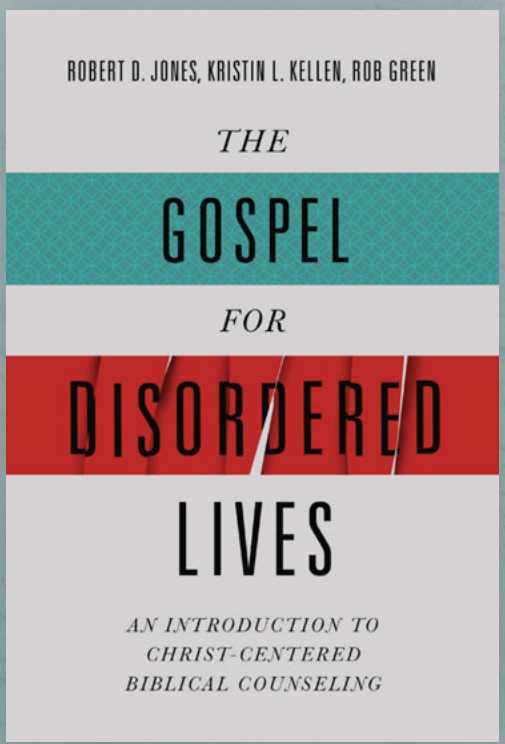
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