WORLD

EARNING YOUR TRUST, EVERY DAY / FEBRUARY 11, 2023

California dreamin'

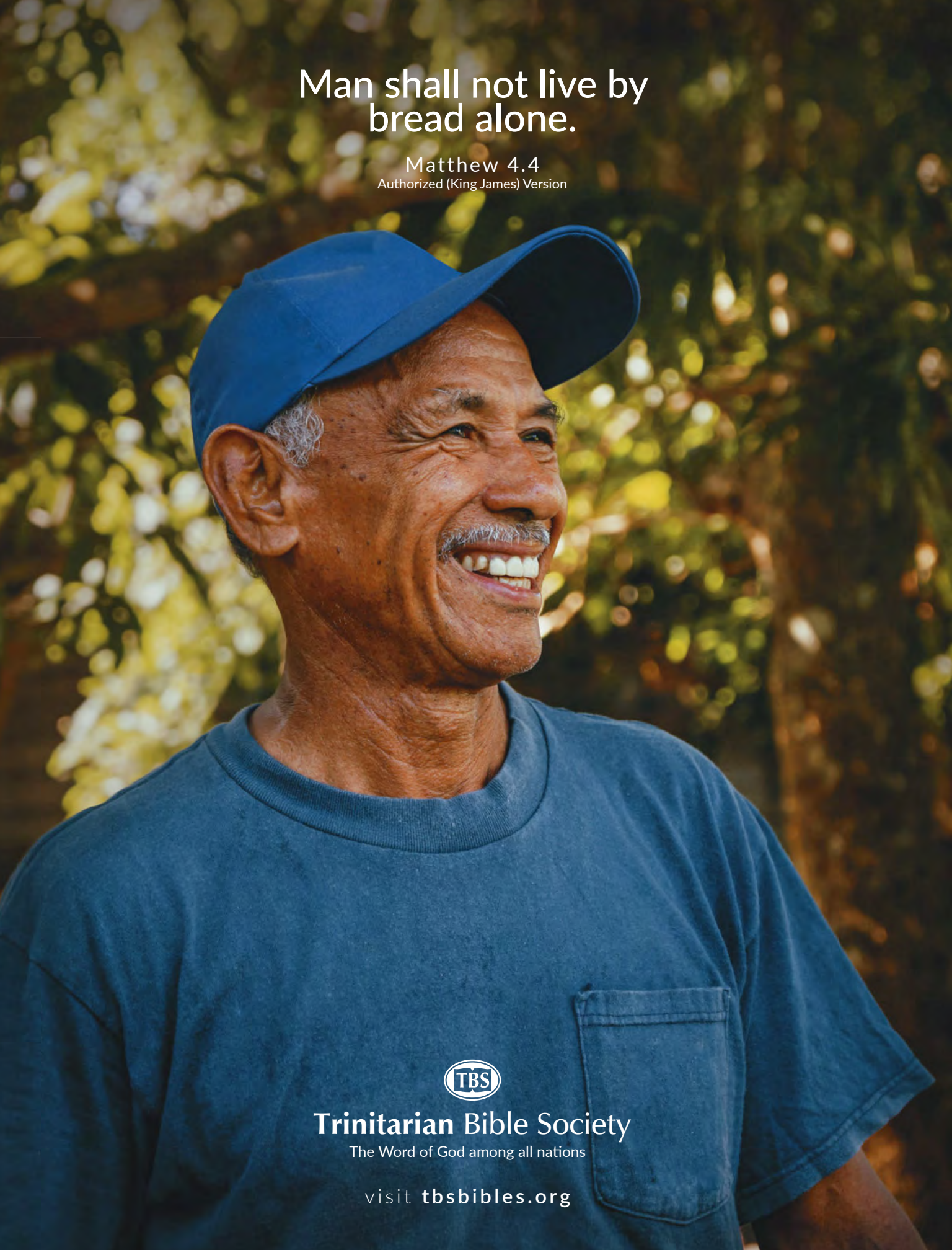
A conservative mayor takes on the state over homelessness *p. 42*

by BILL WELLS

BABY BOXES OFFER SAFE HAVEN—AND CONTROVERSY *by Grace Snell*

MILITARY VETS FIND HEALING IN ARCHAEOLOGY *by Todd Vician*

WHAT IS *WOKE*? AN ETYMOLOGY *by Mary Jackson*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FEBRUARY 11, 2023 / VOLUME 38, NUMBER 3

ON THE COVER: *A homeless man in California; Xinhua/Alamy*

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"The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein." —Psalm 24:1

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Donor relations Debra Meissner: dmeissner@wng.org
Advertising inquiries John Almaguer: jalmaguer@wng.org, Kyle Crimi: kcrimi@wng.org
Letters to the editor editor@wng.org
Mail PO Box 20002, Asheville, NC 28802
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CEO NOTES

I'VE WRITTEN BEFORE of the work of our news coach, a position we created to help parents disciple their students through the news. Our goal is to better serve the families in our audience by enabling parents to help their kids *understand* the news and make sense of it, as well as help parents *use* the news to teach Biblical principles.

Parents have told us that there's so much news, and it's coming at us so fast. And if we think it's coming at *us* fast, I have more news for you: It's coming at our *kids* much faster.

One temptation is to avoid engaging with the news, or with students regarding the news. Another temptation is to become "news junkies," absorbing as much of the rushing river of content as we can, and dwelling with it mentally for most of our waking hours. Both extremes are bad, and if we're parents, the negative effects trickle down to our children.

One goal of our news coach—and, actually, a goal of the entire WORLD organization—is to keep the news in a proper perspective. It's not just that we want to view each news story from a Biblical viewpoint. It's that we want to view the entire news enterprise Biblically. We shouldn't ignore news, but it shouldn't be the most important thing in our lives.

With all that in mind, our God's World News team has launched *Concurrently*, a weekly podcast designed to help parents disciple their kids through the news by "establishing a non-anxious learning environment, developing news literacy, and cultivating Biblical discernment" (from the program description).

Concurrently is targeted at parents of school-aged students. However, I suspect those of us who are no longer in that demographic (or not in it yet) will find it helpful as well. There's nothing wrong with creating for ourselves a non-anxious approach to news, building our own news literacy, and cultivating our own Biblical discernment, regardless of whether we're passing that along to someone younger.

KEVIN MARTIN
kevin@wng.org

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ILLUMINATE

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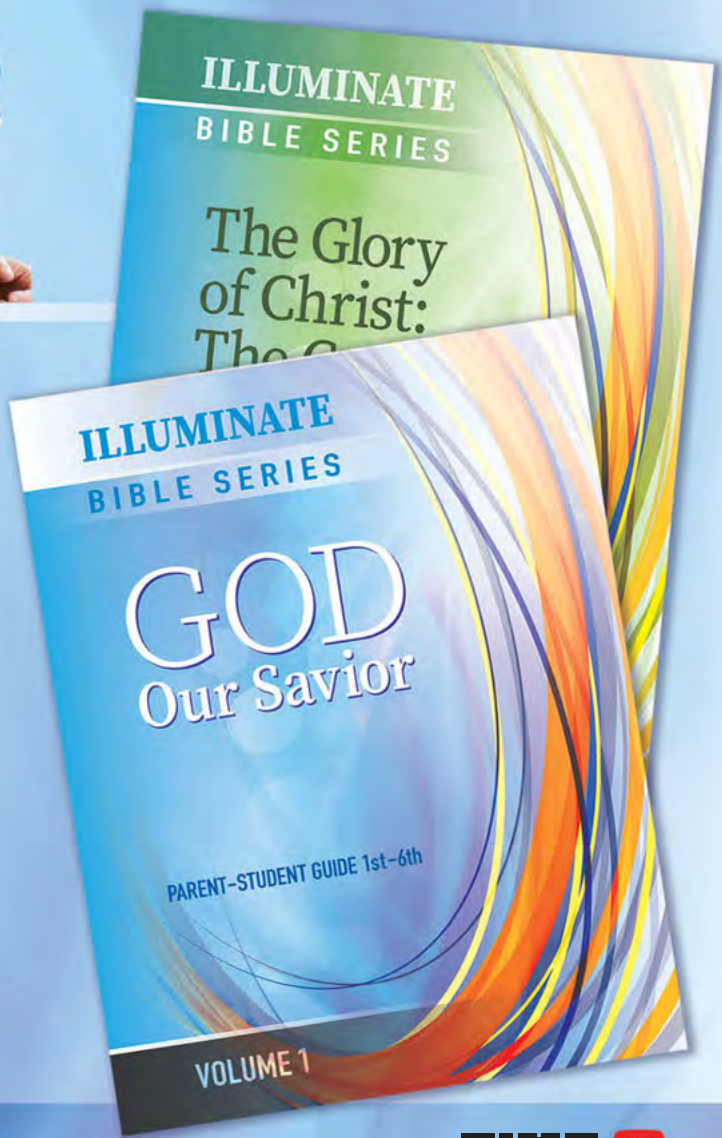

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MAILBAG

DECEMBER 24, 2022

Charlie Brown's Christmas miracle *p44*

Charlie Brown, Snoopy, and the whole *Peanuts* gang have been my favorites since childhood. But it should be noted that Charles M. Schulz in later years called himself a "secular humanist," which is a concern to many.

JEFF MARTIN
Bellefonte, Pa.

A lot has been written about Schulz's religious beliefs, but we'll never truly know until heaven. I am grateful for *A Charlie Brown Christmas* and its effect on our world and society—even all these years later.

SCOTT ALAN BLANCHARD
Washington, Mich.

With *A Charlie Brown Christmas* no longer available on network TV, Linus may never again have the national spotlight he held for 50-some years to share the Good News with a nation that needs it more than ever.

ROBERT TRUE
Sedalia, Colo.

My favorite part of the *Peanuts* special is when Linus drops his security blanket just as he recites the angel's declaration, "Fear not."

KRISTOFER SANDLUND
Zanesville, Ohio

Kudos to Mark Fredrickson for his cover illustration capturing the sheer joy and wonder on Linus' face as he proclaims the meaning of Christmas to Charlie Brown—and to the world.

DON BARBER
Newfields, N.H.

Shad White is watching *p52*

We hear so much about pork and wasting taxpayer money, so it was a joy to read Kim Henderson's article about someone doing something about it.

KELLEY BURGESS
Anna, Texas

We pray that more state and county auditors will follow Shad White's example in bringing justice to our government. We also pray for more Christians to step forward and be brave enough to engage in government.

DANIEL & CHERI O'DONNELL
Grants Pass, Ore.

Poinsettias and Christmas trees *p33*

I believe WORLD can do better on its Children's Books page. I can go to the local library for "holiday books," but we need more, rather than fewer, recommendations for books that sing of the Savior.

JANIE-SUE WERTHEIM
Walnut Creek, Calif.

Cold dark days *p58*

I was shocked that there was no mention of European energy policies in this article. Most European governments have embraced their new religion of green energy and are now paying the consequences.

KATHY CONNORS
Medina, Wash.

Folding our tent *p42*

I, too, am at the age where I am over the pride of youth, the pursuit of earthly pleasures and wealth, and looking to the time when I'll fold my "tent." The memories of friends and what we've done with our lives for the Lord, not what we've accomplished, will be the treasures.

TRENT LANDENBERGER
Apex, N.C.

The Lord moved my wife and me from our home of 28 years back in 2016. Seven years on, it is abundantly clear it was the Lord who choreographed it all.

ROY J. JAEGER
Bainbridge, Ga.

Well, I hope you're happy, Janie B. Cheaney. You just made a grown man cry.

JOE MARTIN
Asheville, N.C.

Corrections

In *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, Chief Justice of the United States Roger Taney ruled descendants of imported African slaves, such as Dred Scott of Missouri, could not sue in federal court. ("U.S. Briefs," Jan. 14, p. 18).

The population of New York state is 19.68 million ("U.S. Briefs," Jan. 28, p. 18).

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VOICES **JOEL BELZ**

A fair fight?

The Great Deceiver doesn't want honest debates

This is the 11th in a series of classic columns (edited for space) by Joel Belz. In this Aug. 27, 2005, column, Joel wrote about whether public debates were taking place on a level playing field.

STILL ANOTHER LETTER last week from a friend I know to be a solid evangelical believer took us to task for what the writer thinks is a negative tone in WORLD Magazine. I say "still another," because ever since we started the magazine in 1986, we've heard folks ask: "Why can't WORLD admit that for the most part America is simply engaged in a debate over legitimate issues? We're not at war, for goodness' sake."

Oh yes, we are. We're in a knock-down, drag-out battle for the heart and soul of our culture and society. And we didn't start it.

In a sense, as I've suggested here before, the present war started in the Garden of Eden, when Satan first tried to foist the big lie on Adam and Eve. The lie from the beginning was that human wisdom is smarter than God's wisdom. The lie has always been that we could reject God's standards with impunity.

The war is between a God who says, "Defy me and die," on the one hand, and the Great Deceiver who argues back on the other hand, "You shall not surely die." To me, that sounds like a life-and-death disagreement.

To be sure, God has been gracious to provide extended periods in human history—especially in North America—when Christians' message about this life-and-death choice could be propagated in a civil and even-handed manner. Even when we knew that we were the carriers of a minority gospel, we've had the freedom to spell it out vigorously in the public square.

But the Great Deceiver has never liked a level playing field. He knows he is a liar, and that the only way he can win his argument is to rig the game so perversely that God's truth-tellers find themselves at a serious disadvantage just to carry on the discussion. So he works overtime to force us to play defense. He wants us in a battle where instead of reaching out winsomely to those who have never heard or understood Christ's gospel, we find ourselves fighting just to preserve the platform from which we reach out. He wants the whole platform—the whole public square—all for himself.

In the current public dust-up over so-called "intelligent design," for example, the evolutionists are stonewalling on every front in terms of a good discussion about the issues themselves. Instead, they insist that those who challenge Darwinism don't even belong in the discussion. Essayist Roger Rosenblatt, a regular on PBS' *NewsHour With Jim Lehrer*, put it this way: "Scientists would do better never to enter debate with creationists because the world of thought they represent lies in a wholly different galaxy. To say that, however, is not to say that God need remain out of the picture in such discussions. The fact that Darwin's study removed God from the evolution of nature only freed people to think of God in another and far more interesting way."

Then, in a breathtakingly sweeping manner, Rosenblatt presumes to take God out of the picture—at least in any significant role. "If God is not involved with the production of birds and plants," he says, "one might wonder how God is involved with us." And you guessed it right: God's involvement with us, if He has nothing to do with creation, is considerably smaller and less important. For now, God is only a concept; His involvement with everything that's real has been minimized and removed from any really important discussion.

But evolutionists should be ashamed of themselves. For most of a century now, they've controlled the media, the schools, the colleges and universities, the publishing world, the entertainment world, and even the mainline churches. And still, fewer than half of all Americans have bought their idea that God was extraneous to the process of where everything came from.

Makes you wonder what would happen with a level playing field or a game table that wasn't rigged. ■

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DISPATCHES

BILL HUDSON/AP

IN THE NEWS

Weighing reparations

Some policymakers hope to compensate black Americans for past wrongs. Will such proposals help or hurt?

by MARY JACKSON & ELIZABETH RUSSELL

TWO YEARS AGO, Lakita Garth, 54, of Montgomery, Ala., was emptying her mother's garage after her death when she found an old, folded-up sign: "No blacks, no Mexicans, no dogs." Garth's late father saved the sign to remember the harsh realities of growing up black in the segregated South.

The effects of slavery and racism still linger in Garth's family. She says her father and uncles were denied housing, business, and education provisions under the GI Bill after serving in various wars, including World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

In recent years, efforts to compensate or otherwise assist black Americans suffering from the economic effects of Jim Crow laws and other racist policies have gained traction. But they are not always gaining agreement.

In December, a reparations advisory committee formed by San Francisco officials released a 60-page draft proposal. One recommendation calls for $5 million individual payouts to eligible longtime residents who are black. Meanwhile, California's first-in-the-nation statewide reparations task force will present recommendations to the state Legislature in June on compensating black Californians who can prove direct lineage to enslaved ancestors.

Last year, Evanston, Ill., became the first U.S. city to create and fund its own reparations program. In the program's first round, 16 longtime black residents were awarded $25,000 each in housing funds. The initiative aims to address housing disparities due to discriminatory mid-20th-century zoning policies. City officials plan to disburse $10 million in tax revenue through the program. Other cities with reparations plans include Asheville, N.C.; Amherst, Mass.; and Providence, R.I.

The idea of reparations is not new. Congress has proposed various reparations bills since 1894. The federal government paid reparations to Japanese Americans interned during World War II, to Native Americans who submitted treaty violation claims, and to a coalition of black farmers who sued the Department of Agriculture over discriminatory farm loans—to name a few instances.

Conservatives and Christians are increasingly debating the most effective way to redress historical oppression of black →

Walter Gadsden, 15, is attacked by a police dog during a civil rights demonstration in Birmingham, Ala., in 1963.

Americans. Some see reparations as part of a broader Biblical call toward restitution and repair. Others worry that direct payouts from taxpayer-funded coffers could hinder efforts toward racial reconciliation.

Garth grew up hearing discussions about reparations. In 1963, her great-grandfather was teaching Sunday school at 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., when it was bombed by four Ku Klux Klan members. She also recounted how white neighbors shot her great-uncle dead and seized the deed to his Birmingham land from his widow. "We aren't ever going to get that land back," she said.

But Garth said her family learned to work around systems that often felt stacked against them. She is now a vice president of Urban Ministries Inc., the largest African American–owned Christian publishing and media company. Garth believes recent reparations initiatives, especially in California, are "jumping the gun." "America is not ready to have this conversation. The church isn't ready."

"If we show that we can even have this sort of conversation in our churches, that will be a powerful witness."

Scholars like New York University law professor Richard Epstein argue that setting parameters for who gets compensated for historical wrongs could prove sticky. "In today's case, the reparations would be paid for harms resulting from many federal, state, local, and private actions that occurred over a period of several hundred years," Epstein wrote in a 2020 article for the Hoover Institution.

Still, Rachel Ferguson, a professor at Concordia University Chicago and an affiliate scholar at the Acton Institute, argues reparations could be limited to harms "committed in living memory," which would exclude slavery. Instead of cash handouts, she proposes incentivized low-interest loans for black-owned businesses. The money would come from federal assets—such as liquidating government-owned lands—instead of taxing current citizens.

She notes that laws from the Jim Crow era harmed the ability of black Americans to build wealth, and today the black poverty rate hovers around 20 percent, about twice the rate for whites.

"Conservatives need to get in on this conversation and have an alternative, because it's not slowing down. It is speeding up," she said.

Fifteen years ago, Baylor University sociologist George Yancey rejected reparations as a bad idea that would only breed resentment. Today, he disagrees with imposed reparations, such as those San Francisco is considering. But Yancey sees room for groups to make collaborative decisions and mutually agree that compensation "may be appropriate to remedy what has happened historically."

"In a post-Christian world, if we show that we can even have this sort of conversation in our churches, that will be a powerful witness," Yancey said. ■

A segregated drinking fountain during the Jim Crow era in the South

BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES

BY THE NUMBERS

Cashing out

Society's shift away from cash includes at least one surprising consequence

by JOHN DAWSON

0

The number of bank robberies in Denmark in 2022, down from 221 robberies in 2000, according to a bank employees' union. Few Danish banks carry cash today, and fewer people in the Western world are doing so, choosing instead to make payments with cards, smartphones, and online platforms.

13%

The share of Americans who told Gallup in 2022 they still make most or all of their purchases with cash, down from 28 percent five years ago.

71%

The percentage of Americans over the age of 50 who told Pew Research they try always to have cash on hand.

76%

The share of Americans who reported to Pew Research they have used a digital payment service like Venmo or PayPal.

ILLUSTRATION BY KRIEG BARRIE; CROSBY: DIANE BONDAREFF/AP; BANDO: LOUIS REQUENA/MLB VIA GETTY IMAGES

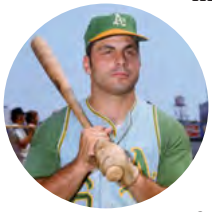
David Crosby

Crosby, whose musicianship and vocal harmonies helped propel two bands to superstardom, died Jan. 18 at age 81.

After growing up in California, Crosby co-founded the folk-rock group the Byrds in the early 1960s. In 1965, the band's rendition of Bob Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man" featuring Crosby's tenor harmonies became arguably folk rock's first No. 1 hit. Rancor with bandmates led Crosby to depart and join with Stephen Stills and Graham Nash to form the eponymous Crosby, Stills, and Nash (Neil Young later joined). While Crosby's silky harmonies helped lead the band to commercial success, his cantankerous personality contributed to its breakup. Crosby later recorded solo efforts.

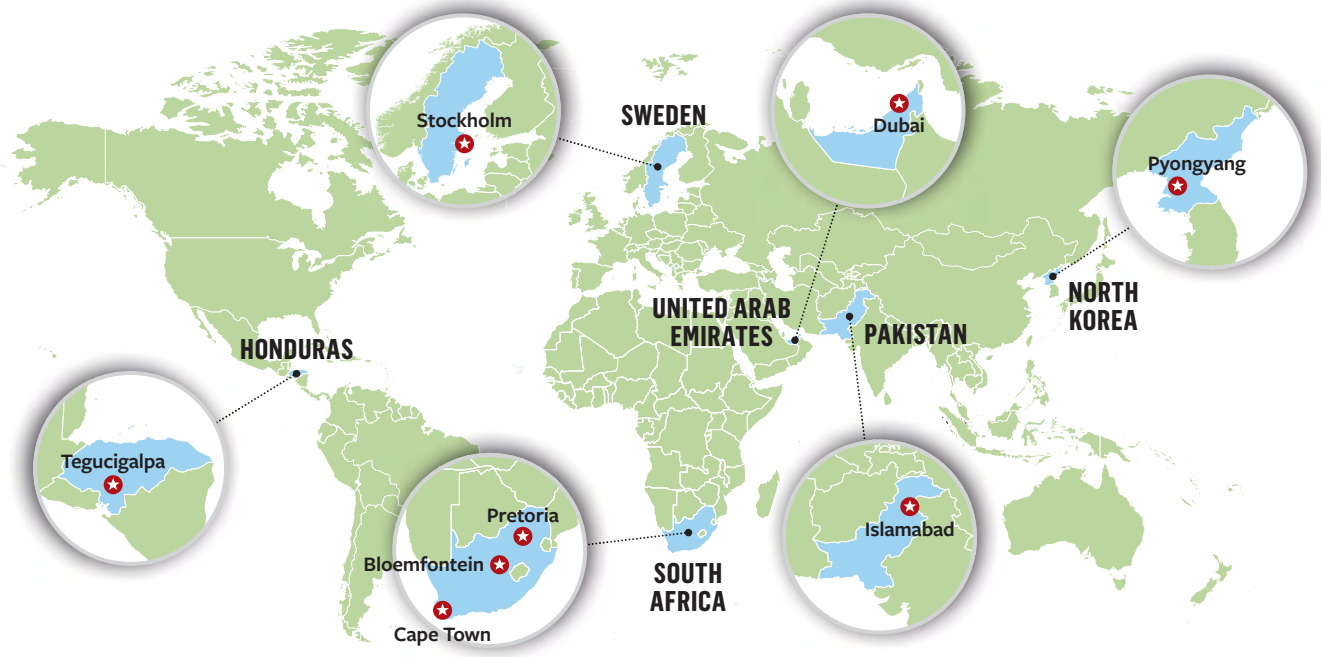
Sal Bando

Bando, a baseball lifer who parlayed a 16-year major league baseball career into a front office position with the Milwaukee Brewers, died Jan. 20 after a five-year struggle with cancer. He was 78. Bando broke into the big leagues in 1966 with the Kansas City Athletics, playing 11 seasons with the club, mostly after its move to Oakland, Calif. As team captain, the third baseman anchored a squad that won three straight World Series from 1972 to 1974.



Bando made the All-Star team four times while racking up 242 career home runs. After a stint with the Milwaukee Brewers, Bando joined the team's management, eventually becoming the Brewers general manager until he resigned in 1999.

North Korea tops list of worst persecutors



North Korea The Hermit Kingdom is once again the world's worst persecutor of Christians, according to Open Doors' 2023 World Watch List. The Christian nonprofit compiles the list using input from teams of researchers and lawyers. North Korea has topped the list for many years, only displaced last year by Afghanistan due to the Taliban takeover. North Korean Christians routinely lose jobs and face imprisonment, torture, or death if discovered. A new "anti-reactionary thought law" has increased already severe punishments. *—Elizabeth Russell*

POPULATION
26 million

LANGUAGE
Korean

RELIGION
Mostly atheist or agnostic, with some Christian, Buddhist, and syncretic Chondogyo (estimates vary)

GOVERNANCE
Dictatorship

GDP
$40 billion

MAJOR EXPORTS
Watch components, fake hair, iron alloys, tungsten

Sweden Over 1 million tons of rare earth metals have been discovered in the far north of Sweden. European ministers hailed the find, announced on Jan. 12, as a breakthrough for Europe's energy independence and transition to renewables. The term *rare earth* refers to 17 minerals used in multiple technologies, including mobile phones, hard drives, trains, and electric vehicles. Experts say demand for rare earths will increase fivefold by 2030. The European Union currently imports 98 percent of its supply from China. It will likely take at least 10 years for Sweden's minerals to come to market due to environmental impact studies, according to mine CEO **Jan Moström**. But he urged the government to speed up the permitting process. *—Jenny Lind Schmitt*

NORTH KOREA: KIM WON JIN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; SWEDEN:JONAS EKSTROMER/TT NEWS AGENCY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

South Africa Russian and Chinese warships will hold joint drills with the South African navy in February. Operation Mosi, which means smoke, is set to run Feb. 17-26 off the eastern coast, near Durban. South Africa hosted a similar drill in 2019, but this year it coincides with the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. South Africa has taken a "neutral" stance, abstaining from a United Nations vote last year that condemned the invasion. Foreign minister Naledi Pandor rejected criticism of the drills, saying such exercises are a "natural course of relations" among friends. *—Onize Ohikere*

United Arab Emirates The Islamic kingdom is on track to become one of the first Arab nations to teach school children about the Holocaust. The country's embassy in the United States announced that primary and secondary schools would use the new curriculum. The Education Ministry is working with the Israel- and London-based Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education to develop the material. Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial museum in Jerusalem, is also advising the UAE Culture and Youth Ministry on content sharing and development. The UAE and Israel normalized relations and signed the Abraham Accords in 2020. One year later, the UAE opened the region's first Holocaust memorial exhibition in Dubai. *—Onize Ohikere*

POPULATION
9.9 million

LANGUAGE
Arabic

RELIGION
76% Muslim, 9% Christian, 15% Hindu and Buddhist

GOVERNANCE
Federation of monarchies

GDP
$653.06 billion

MAJOR EXPORTS
Petroleum, gold, jewelry

Honduras The United Nations called for an investigation into the murder of two water rights defenders shot on Jan. 7. Family members said the killings of Aly Dominguez and Jairo Bonilla came after years of threats connected to their activism. The two men belonged to the Guapinol water defenders, a group organizing local communities to protest an open-pit iron oxide mine that threatens the local water supply. The mine is co-owned by Lenir Pérez, one of the country's wealthiest businessmen. Local police say the activists were killed in a mugging. Critics reject that story, noting the men faced previous government attempts to intimidate them. President Xiomara Castro promised during her campaign to end violence against land and water activists. *—Jenny Lind Schmitt*

POPULATION
9.5 million

LANGUAGE
Spanish

RELIGION
48% Protestant, 34% Roman Catholic, 17% none

GOVERNANCE
Presidential republic

GDP
$57.27 billion

MAJOR EXPORTS
Clothes, coffee, bananas

Pakistan Insulting Muhammad, his family, or companions now carries a 1 million rupee fine ($4,350) and a 10-year prison sentence. Pakistan's National Assembly recently passed a more stringent amendment to the already controversial Criminal Laws Bill, causing alarm for Christians and members of other minority religions. Groups that monitor global persecution say the laws are loosely defined and can be invoked out of revenge in disputes with Christians. That's what happened to **Asia Bibi**, a Christian mother of five. Pakistan's supreme court acquitted her in 2018, sparking street protests and death threats against the justices responsible for her release. The law carries no punishment for false accusations. *—Amy Lewis*

SOUTH AFRICA: MIKHAIL GOLENKOV/SPUTNIK VIA AP; PAKISTAN: PHILIPPE LOPEZ/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

U.S. BRIEFS

Mass killings shake the Golden State

California A gunman on Jan. 23 killed seven workers at two agricultural businesses in Half Moon Bay, a rural, seaside town about 25 miles south of San Francisco. The massacre came as the state was still reeling from a mass shooting less than 48 hours earlier at a Lunar New Year celebration at a dance studio in Monterey Park that killed 11 people and rattled the Asian American community. The suspect in the latter case, Huu Can Tran, 72, shot himself before police could reach him. In Half Moon Bay, police arrested suspect Chunli Zhao, 67, a current or former employee at the two businesses where the shootings occurred. One week prior, a suspected gang-related mass shooting in Tulare County left six dead (see page 21). Between Jan. 1 and Jan. 24, at least 40 mass shootings have occurred nationwide, accounting for 73 deaths, according to the Gun Violence Archive. The nonprofit research group labels mass shootings as attacks where at least four people are injured or killed. *—Mary Jackson*

POPULATION
39.2 million

GOVERNOR
Gavin Newsom*

U.S. SENATORS
Dianne Feinstein*, Alex Padilla*

INDUSTRY
Agriculture, film & TV, energy, tech, manufacturing

Washington, D.C. A landmark case over the odor of marijuana went to trial in the District of Columbia on Jan. 9. Josefa Ippolito-Shepherd, 76, claims the pot smoked by a man living in the house adjoining hers is a public nuisance. "I have the right to breathe fresh air in my home," Ippolito-Shepherd told *The Washington Post*. The district legalized recreational marijuana in 2015, but Ippolito-Shepherd says her aim is not to reverse legalization but to restrict the drug's use in multiunit buildings. This is the first lawsuit over the distinctive smell of cannabis to make it so far in the legal system, and others are likely to follow. Recreational marijuana is now legal in 21 states. A Gallup poll last year found more Americans smoke marijuana than cigarettes. *—Emma Freire*

Minnesota Former Hamline University adjunct art professor Erika López Prater is suing the private St. Paul school in a battle over academic freedom and Islamic images. A Muslim student at Hamline complained about depictions of Muhammad, Islam's founder, used in López Prater's course on global art. The teacher claims she warned students on the syllabus and before the actual class on Oct. 6 that the images would be shown. In response to the complaint, university leaders sent a campuswide email labeling the instructor's actions "Islamophobic." Administrators also did not offer López Prater renewed employment for the spring semester. The university later called its response and use of the word "Islamophobic" a "misstep." *—Kim Henderson*

Maryland Is the state's foster care system putting children who take psychiatric medications in danger? A federal class-action lawsuit filed Jan. 17 alleges the state did not properly oversee drugs given without a documented diagnosis or a complete medical history. The plaintiffs, a group of state and national nonprofits, including the American Civil Liberties Union, accuse the state of using the drugs to chemically restrain behavior. About one-third of Maryland's foster children are prescribed psychotropic drugs—anything from sleep aids to antipsychotics—according to the lawsuit. The complaint states that nearly 75 percent of the children on medication do not have an official diagnosis, and more than half take more than one drug despite the possibility of dangerous side effects. In many cases, the state Department of Human Services and Social Services Administration failed to keep thorough medical records, the suit says. One physician recalled trying to piece together the prescription history of a child who had lived in 12 different places by examining his pill bottles. *—Addie Offereins*

Texas Students at some of the state's top universities began the spring semester with one less technology distraction. The University of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M University have blocked access to the popular video sharing app TikTok on campus Wi-Fi networks. School administrators said they made the decision after Gov. Greg Abbott issued a Dec. 7 ban on state employees downloading or using the app on government-owned devices. Texas universities aren't the only ones hitting pause on TikTok. More than half of U.S. states have issued similar bans. Those directives have spread to colleges and, in some cases, K-12 schools. President Joe Biden signed a bill ordering federal employees to stop using the app in late December. Security officials have warned for years that the Chinese developer ByteDance could use the app to spy on Americans, a claim the company denies. *—Leigh Jones*

POPULATION
29.5 million

GOVERNOR
Greg Abbott*

U.S. SENATORS
John Cornyn*, Ted Cruz*

INDUSTRY
Agriculture, oil & gas, finance & real estate

Kansas A University of Kansas researcher accused of hiding his Chinese academic connections will serve no additional prison time after a federal judge concluded he didn't benefit financially from those links. Feng "Franklin" Tao was arrested in 2019, spent a week in prison, and was convicted last year of three counts of wire fraud and one count of making false statements. A judge later dismissed the wire fraud convictions and on Jan. 18 gave him the lightest sentence possible—time already served. University of Kansas representatives said Tao had not disclosed that he set up a lab for China's Fuzhou University. Federal prosecutors added that Tao hid his Chinese contacts on federal funding applications. The chemical engineer was arrested under the China Initiative, a controversial Trump-era program intended to stop economic espionage. But U.S. District Judge Julie Robinson concluded, "This is not an espionage case. ... If it was, they presented absolutely no evidence that was going on." *—Juliana Chan Erikson*

BACKGROUNDER

What does *woke* really mean?

by MARY JACKSON

THE TERM *WOKE* gets thrown around a lot these days. It appears in various forms, from *wokeness*, *woke-o-meters*, and *woketopia* to calls to "stay woke." Have you avoided using it in part because you're not quite sure what it means?

Let's start with the obvious: The word comes from the past participle of the verb *wake*, defined by Merriam-Webster as "to rouse from sleeping."

When did *woke* become an adjective? In 1938, blues singer Huddie Ledbetter, aka Lead Belly, advised that black people "best stay woke, keep their eyes open," referring to racist violence. Black novelist William Melvin Kelley wrote a piece for *The New York Times* in 1962 titled, "If You're Woke You Dig It," on beatniks and slang within the Harlem jazz scene. Black nationalists and civil rights activists in the 20th century used the word to promote social and political consciousness.

How has the word evolved? It remained within the African American vernacular, sometimes used as slang for staying awake or being suspicious of a cheating partner. But in 2014, the phrase "stay woke" took off on social media following the police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo. Black Lives Matter proponents adopted the phrase as a blanket call to social activism against racism, injustice, and police brutality. But as protests grew louder, *woke* took on a new meaning.

How do progressive social activists use the term now? *Woke* has become a catch-all term encompassing critical race theory, left-wing political ideology, and other issues. In 2017, three University of Miami researchers defined the term as "critical consciousness to intersecting systems of oppression." In 2017, the Oxford English Dictionary added *woke* to its collection with the definition, "Alert to racial or social discrimination and injustice." Merriam-Webster identifies it as U.S. slang meaning "aware of and actively attentive to important facts and issues (especially of racial and social justice)." Some liberals still refer to activists who emphasize systemic injustice and political concerns as *woke*, but less so as conservatives have turned the word into a pejorative.

What do conservatives mean when they say *woke*? Right-wing pundits and politicians began using *woke* as a derisive term describing modern progressive ideologies, especially the belief that society is inherently oppressive toward minorities and those who identify as LGBT. "Wokeism, multiculturalism, all the -isms—they're not who America is," departing Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tweeted in 2019. Two years later, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican, described "wokeness" as a form of "cultural Marxism" that threatens to delegitimize America's history and institutions. Whether or not that prediction comes true, it appears *woke* is here to stay. ■

ILLUSTRATION BY KRIEG BARRIE

QUOTABLES

"Weapons are the way to peace."

NATO Secretary General JENS STOLTENBERG, in Jan. 18 remarks exhorting attendees of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, to boost military support for Ukraine as a deterrent to Russian aggression.

"I respect everybody and I respect everybody's choices. My choice is to stay true to myself and my religion."

Philadelphia Flyers hockey player IVAN PROVOROV, on his refusal to participate in a Jan. 17 team warmup wearing an LGBT-affirming Pride Night jersey. Provorov is Russian Orthodox.

"There is no more room in New York."

ERIC ADAMS, the Democratic mayor of New York City, speaking in El Paso, Texas, on Jan. 15 and warning that migrants bused to his city would not find the comfortable accommodations they hoped for.

"I can't wrap my head around what kind of monster would do this."

SAMUEL PINA, whose 16-year-old granddaughter Alissa Parraz and 10-month-old great-grandson were shot to death by an unknown assailant on Jan. 16 in Goshen, Calif., along with four other relatives at the family's home. Tulare County Sheriff Mike Boudreaux blamed likely gang or drug cartel activity for the targeted killings.

QUICK TAKES

Buried treasure?

Hunters hope a World War II map will help them uncover a hidden trove

by JOHN DAWSON

TREASURE HUNTERS began swarming the Dutch village of Ommeren in January after the public release of a map indicating treasure might be buried there. The Dutch National Archive released a World War II–era map, obtained from a former Nazi soldier, after a 75-year clause preventing its disclosure expired Jan. 3. The map purportedly contains information about where German soldiers buried a cache of diamonds, rubies, and precious metals in the waning days of the war. The current landowner is allowing amateur treasure hunters to search with metal detectors and digging equipment. "The institute did a lot of checks and found the story reliable," archive spokesperson Anne-Marieke Samson told Reuters. "But they never found it, and if it existed, the treasure might very well have been dug up already."

Breaking into jail

Only five hours after gaining his freedom, a Lake Charles, La., man found a creative way to return to jail. The Calcasieu Correctional Center released Kenneth Hunt, 39, on Jan. 4 after prosecutors dropped charges stemming from a November arrest. Sheriff Tony Mancuso said Hunt returned hours later and threw a rock through a glass door at the jail. Hunt told deputies he just wanted a meal and a place to stay the night, but he now faces a single count of criminal damage to property. "I guess we can now say we literally have people beating down the door to stay with us," Mancuso said.

Ssssneaky snake

Transportation Security Administration officials turned away a traveler at Tampa International Airport in December after she attempted to bring a snake on a commercial flight. TSA officials say agents spotted the 4-foot-long boa constrictor coiled in the woman's carry-on luggage during a baggage scan. When confronted, the woman said the snake, named Bartholomew, was her emotional support animal. The woman's airline nevertheless refused to allow the snake aboard.

ILLUSTRATION BY FRANK STOCKTON; SNAKE: AP

Seeing double

On Jan. 12, residents of Pembroke Pines, Fla., were treated to the grand opening of another Publix grocery store—this time in a shopping center directly across the street from a Publix that has served customers for nearly two decades.

The two stores sit on either side of Pines Boulevard. Company officials said the original Publix will remain open in an attempt to alleviate congestion at the popular stores.

Suspicious solar panels

A series of solar-powered antennas that have popped up in the remote foothills outside Salt Lake City, Utah, have local officials looking for answers. Recreational trails manager Tyler Fonarow said he began seeing small electronic devices bolted into hillsides and mountaintops about a year ago. The devices feature a solar-powered antenna and a locked box, but no one knows how they got there or who owns them. City officials have speculated they might be associated with a crypto-currency operation. Fonarow and his team have begun hiking for hours along remote ridges to remove the unauthorized devices.

Complete meltdown

A fire at a dairy manufacturer in Portage, Wis., turned a local canal into a river of melted butter. Firefighters responded to a fire at Associated Milk Producers Inc. on Jan. 2 but were unable to extinguish the fire before it began melting some of the factory's inventory. The fire reportedly started in the butter storage room. Flowing downhill, the butter swept into the Portage Canal and storm drains. Portage Fire Chief Troy Haase said his firefighters extinguished the blaze despite wading through melted butter that was knee-deep. In the days after the fire, city workers attempted to skim the now-cooled butter from the canal and unclog local storm drains.

"Flowing downhill, the melted butter swept into the Portage Canal and storm drains."

Who ya gonna call?

Having trouble hauling stolen property? It's probably not the best idea to call police for help. Officials with Florida's Polk County Sheriff's Office said a silent 911 call led them to an abandoned house Dec. 31 where they found a man and a woman trespassing. The female suspect told authorities she placed the call to get help moving some belongings and to request a ride to the airport. But officials recognized the male suspect from security footage at a Dollar General that had been burgled earlier in the day. Deputies did comply with the couple's request, however: They loaded their belongings for evidence and provided the couple a ride to jail.

PUBLIX: PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY RACHEL BEATTY; ANTENNAS: MICHAEL LOCKLEAR/TWITTER; FIREFIGHTER, BUTTER: ISTOCK; CAR: POLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

VOICES **LYNN VINCENT**

Cultivating contentment

Learning to live joyfully with what is

HERE'S A SNAPSHOT of my fickle and inconstant heart: I was at a charming little mountain coffee shop near my home the other day when I spied in the pastry case several slices of banana bread, each hand-swaddled in plastic wrap. Problem was, they were very generous slices, and I wasn't all that hungry.

"I'd love to have some of that," I thought. "I just wish the slices were smaller."

Under the circumstances, I had no business ordering it, so of course, I ordered it. After which, I took the banana bread to a table, unwrapped it, and huffed indignantly, "This is an awfully small slice!"

I laughed out loud at my malcontent self right there in the coffee shop. Hopefully, God was laughing, too, and not hovering over the SMITE button on His remote.

To be fair, part of it was economics. After I unwrapped it, I didn't feel the price was fair for such a measly portion. Still, I wanted a small slice, got it, and wasn't happy. Wretched woman that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

"Godliness with contentment is great gain," Paul wrote to Timothy, "for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content."

That got me thinking about contentment. It's different than gratitude, which is being thankful for what you have. Merriam-Webster offers some contentment synonyms: Pleased. Satisfied. Happy. Those work, sort of, but they feel temporal and fleeting. I like the definition I found on the Bible-answers website, GotQuestions.org: Contentment is "the state of being mentally or emotionally satisfied with things as they are."

As they are. Whoa. Instantly, I flashed back to 2013. By then I had struggled with undiagnosed chronic Lyme disease for three years. Among other debilitating symptoms, I suffered from severe fatigue and spent most days lying on the couch without even enough energy to hold a telephone to my ear. Worse was the cognitive decline: I actually lost my ability to read and write. I told my publisher I didn't know if I would ever work again.

I spent most of my time on that couch simmering with fear and frustration. Why is this happening? Would I ever get better? Didn't God know I had important things to do? I was powerless to change anything, but stayed whipped up inside all the same. After awhile, I noticed that my mental and emotional discontent actually made my physical symptoms worse.

Sometimes, though, I was able to give it all to God and live in a caesura of acceptance, content in His sovereign plan for me. During these times, I felt a warm, spreading peace. I also felt better physically. Being satisfied with things *as they were* helped me live joyfully in God's present—which is really all we have—instead of longing for the past or fearing the future.

After the Banana Bread Incident, it occurred to me that perhaps contentment is like a muscle you have to exercise or a vine you train to grow in a certain direction. So the other day, I was driving down my curvy mountain road behind a garbage truck, going 17 in a 35. After a few minutes, irritation took a swipe at me, but I dodged it with a *Karate Kid* wax-on/wax-off mental feint. Man's just doing his job, I thought on purpose, and relaxed. And then I noticed what a beautiful day it was after weeks of freakish California rain.

I hope this year to cultivate contentment, to embrace it as a biblical lifestyle, and joyfully cooperate with God. I like the way *God's World News* managing editor Rebecca Cochrane put it in an insightful response to a recent companywide devotional:

"Lately I've been feeling more 'resigned to' God's will than 'rejoicing in' God's will," Rebecca wrote. "This [devotional] helped me shift my thinking some, back toward embracing the hard and the unexpected and the divergent paths that aren't part of *my* plan, and to more than resign myself to acceptance, but to seek to boldly welcome His ways, despite my lack of understanding." ■

Email *lvincent@wng.org*

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CULTURE

ILLUSTRATION BY TAYLOR CALLERY

TRENDING

Hobbling into a new year

Will struggling theaters have enough movies in 2023?

by COLLIN GARBARINO

A YEAR AGO, things were looking up for the movie industry. *Spider-Man: No Way Home* had become something of a Christmas miracle, eventually rocketing to the No. 3 spot on the list of highest domestic grossing movies of all time. Analysts hoped the theater industry, which had been imperiled by the COVID-19 pandemic, was back on track. But it turns out Spider-Man couldn't save cinemas by himself.

Movie theaters were fully opened for the entirety of 2022, but box office receipts for the year were less than two-thirds of what they were in 2019. Some potential moviegoers remained wary of COVID exposure, but others stayed home because the local multiplex didn't have enough tempting options. In 2022, about half as many movies hit theaters as compared with the years leading up to the pandemic.

Studios had fewer films in the pipeline due to a combination of pandemic restrictions and uncertainty about the economy. A backlog of computer-generated-effects work delayed some movies planned for 2022, and others that were originally slated for theaters went straight to streaming services as media companies tried to juice subscription numbers. Weeks often passed without any major new release, leaving theater chains languishing.

In September, Cineworld Group, the world's second-largest theater operator, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, and AMC Entertainment, the world's largest operator, lost more than 80 percent of its stock value in 2022.

The year, however, did hold some bright spots. *Top Gun: Maverick* was a surprise hit and the top movie of the year, grossing $718 million domestically and almost $1.5 billion worldwide. The movie had been scheduled for release in 2020, and Paramount executives considered sending the movie straight to streaming. Tom Cruise convinced the studio to wait for a theatrical release, and the decision paid off. With lighter than usual competition, *Top Gun: Maverick* became the biggest movie of Cruise's career.

This year will be another tough one for theaters because it takes time for studios to increase the volume of projects in the pipeline. But 2023 will see an increase in the number of releases, with more of them being the big-budget tentpole films theaters crave.

For more than a decade, superheroes have dominated the box office, and for better or worse that trend isn't going to change this year. At least 10 new superhero movies are slated for release in 2023. Barring any last-minute delays, this year will tie 2019 →

for most superhero films in a year. The superhero movie is the most popular genre right now. But will 2023 be an embarrassment of riches or is Hollywood just flooding the market to make a quick buck?

In February, Marvel Studios will launch Phase 5 of the Marvel Cinematic Universe—the most profitable movie franchise in history—with the third Ant-Man movie, *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*. Two more MCU movies will follow in the spring and summer, *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3* and *The Marvels*, a follow-up to 2019's *Captain Marvel*. Previous Ant-Man and Guardians movies have been popular with critics and fans alike, and both new installments feature directors returning to the projects they made successful. Expect these two to appeal to audiences—though Ant-Man appears to be moving away from the heist genre that made his movies so much fun. Fans hated the first Captain Marvel movie, but Marvel Studios hired a new directing and writing team for the sequel.

This year will be a test for Marvel. In addition to the three new movies, the MCU has six new TV series coming to Disney+. These movies and shows need to be better than the lackluster Phase 4 to bolster the franchise's momentum. Otherwise even the most die-hard fan will start to succumb to franchise fatigue.

Marvel superheroes aren't the only ones promising big-budget cinematic events in 2023. DC Studios, home of Batman and Superman, will release four films this year as part of its DC Extended Universe: *Shazam! Fury of the Gods*, *The Flash*, *Blue Beetle*, and *Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom*. These four movies can be safely skipped. They are the flotsam and jetsam of a franchise that's dead in the water.

DC Studio's movies have lacked both a cohesive creative vision and a sense of fun. Toward the end of last year, Warner Bros. Discovery, which owns DC Studios, hired James Gunn, the creator of *Guardians of the Galaxy* for Marvel, to transform its foundering franchise into a Marvel-style juggernaut. Gunn is cleaning house, firing Henry Cavill as Superman and perhaps scrapping the entire DC Universe and starting over fresh. Maybe some of those iconic heroes will finally get the movies they deserve, but it won't happen this year.

SCREEN GRAB FROM TRAILER

"This year will be a test for Marvel. Otherwise even the most die-hard fan will start to succumb to franchise fatigue."

One of the most anticipated superhero films this year is an animated feature from Sony, *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*. It's the sequel to 2018's *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*, one of the best superhero films ever made. The original had groundbreaking animation coupled with spirited storytelling. The sequel proved to be so ambitious the studio opted to split it into two parts. The third installment arrives early next year.

Comic-book movies will generate the bulk of ticket sales in 2023, but non-super-powered action-adventure looks to leave its mark as well. Studios hope to lure people back to theaters with a slew of franchise films. A 10th Fast and Furious movie should appeal to millennials and 20-somethings, and

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3*, *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*, and *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny*

a fifth Indiana Jones movie (*Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny*), 15 years after the last installment in the series, might succeed in bringing some older viewers back to the theater. Theaters are also pinning much of their hopes on Tom Cruise's seventh Mission: Impossible movie. Will the goodwill Cruise gained with audiences who loved *Top Gun: Maverick* spill into 2023?

Also expect a third Creed movie (which could be considered a ninth Rocky movie), a third Agatha Christie film starring Kenneth Branagh, and the second installment of 2021's *Dune*.

Adults looking for something fresh might check out Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer*—a biopic of J. Robert Oppenheimer, the father of the atomic bomb.

This kind of adult drama is becoming an endangered cinematic species. *Oppenheimer*, however, might have enough scale to warrant seeing it on the big screen. Nolan (known for the Dark Knight Trilogy, *Inception*, and *Dunkirk*) claims he used real explosives rather than computer-generated effects to create his depictions of the nuclear tests.

For the kids, 2023 will offer plenty of new features, but not necessarily any surefire hits. Disney and Pixar have been in a drought, and Disney alienated many families with its LGBT agenda. But Disney films weren't the only box office disappointments in the kids' genre. In 2022 kids' films as a whole underperformed, leading many in the industry to speculate that price sensitivity has increased for parents.

The traditional dynamic between studios and theaters has been complicated by moviegoers' changing habits. The pandemic accelerated the trend toward watching at home, with many viewers opting to wait for adult dramas and kids' movies to arrive on streaming. Watching at home proved more convenient and much more affordable. Viewers now reserve their trips to the theater for "event" movies full of noisy spectacle.

But the new streaming model hasn't turned out to be as profitable as studios imagined. Without ticket sales to help offset production costs, studios will likely cut back on the number of adult dramas and comedies they make in the future. Hollywood will have to find a new model that works for fans and ensures profits for the studios. Many theater owners hope 2023 will be a good enough year to buy them some time. They'd like to still be around when that new model gets figured out. ■

TOP: SONY PICTURES; BOTTOM: SCREEN GRAB FROM TRAILER

Visitors look at an ancient copy of the Quran at the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, Egypt.

AMR NABIL/AP

BOOKS

Convincing conclusions

An effective challenge to Islam's claims about the Quran

by A.S. IBRAHIM

FOR ABOUT 1.8 BILLION Muslims worldwide, the Quran is Islam's most revered scripture—but a recent book is raising questions about its authenticity: *Creating the Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Study* (University of California Press 2022) by University of Oregon professor Stephen J. Shoemaker.

The book adds to the growing scientific debate—and controversy—over the authenticity, historicity, and canonization of the Quran. Relying on a plethora of primary Muslim sources and engaging numerous academic studies, Shoemaker masterfully questions many conventional claims about the Quran—claims even some scholars have naïvely accepted.

Most Muslims consider the Quran, as we have it today, to be divinely inspired and totally trustworthy. They say it's the exact written document of an original heavenly tablet containing the speech of Allah. Muslims insist that from 610 to 632, Allah revealed his words to Muhammad, between Mecca and Medina in Western Arabia, and that these words are exactly what we find in today's Quran.

While Muslims believe the same deity revealed the Quran and the Bible, they insist that only the Quran is perfectly preserved from error while the inspired Bible is now lost as Jews and Christians have corrupted it over time. But such claims are just that, and they shatter once one examines the available evidence—even that of the Muslim primary sources themselves.

This is precisely why Shoemaker's book is a remarkable addition to the scientific discussion on the Quran and its origins. He examines every significant controversy about the text and its history and provides convincing conclusions that effectively challenge traditional claims often adopted by Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

For example, Muslims say that their trusted sources are absolutely clear and unanimous concerning how the Quran came into existence as the sacred text among Muhammad's believers. Once Muhammad received Allah's revelations, Muslims say, he proclaimed them and his companions wrote down the divine words accurately and precisely on various materials, including palm tree leaves and bones from camels' shoulders.

After Muhammad's death, the conventional story goes, Caliph Uthman—Muhammad's third political successor—gathered these scattered fragments carefully and perfectly, thus compiling the Quranic text and ensuring that it is precisely as Muhammad proclaimed it.

Shoemaker challenges the core of these claims and demonstrates that

"Shoemaker masterfully questions many conventional claims about the Quran, its history, and its canonization."

even the two major Muslim sects—Sunni and Shiite—have completely different stories about the canonization process. He relies on Muslim primary sources and shows that, during Muhammad's life and after his death, there were many competing variants of the Quran.

In fact, among many of Muhammad's companions, each claimed to have his own copy of a distinct Quran. Engaging scientific research, Shoemaker argues that the canonical text of the Quran took decades to form and the final stage occurred around 700 under political influence and a highly controversial process, supervised by a ruthless governor in Iraq.

Shoemaker's book is remarkably accessible. (The publisher has in fact made the book open access to all at doi.org/js93.) It is crucial for anyone who seeks to understand the authenticity and historicity of Islam's scripture. Shoemaker's research challenges scholarly trends that tend to accept Islamic claims uncritically. This is a highly recommended read. ■

—A.S. Ibrahim is director of the Jenkins Center for the Christian Understanding of Islam at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

BOOKS

Committed to the Lord

Examples of faith in the midst of trials

by RUSS PULLIAM

THE PURITANS deserve better recognition. They get maligned as spoilsports. Puritan women seldom even get mentioned.

Jenny-Lyn de Klerk corrects these deficiencies in *5 Puritan Women: Portraits of Faith and Love* (Crossway 2023). These short biographies depict women who submitted their lives to Christ and pursued the Christian disciplines of Bible study, prayer, journal-writing, and solitude. They were Puritans by affiliation, but also in heart as they sought a closer walk with Christ.

Lady Brilliana Harley defended her husband's castle with her pen instead of a sword in the Civil War between Parliament and King Charles. With seven children, she led a defense of the Puritan side in a three-month siege against the king's forces, while her husband served on the Puritan side in Parliament.

5 Puritan Women
JENNY-LYN DE KLERK

De Klerk also highlights Agnes Beaumont, who stuck to Christian convictions yet honored her father so well that he came to faith in Christ late in life.

Lucy Hutchinson was a gifted student from youth. Her future husband saw her library and wanted to meet this book lover. She later gave her seven children the best books, and even wrote a theology book for her daughter.

Mary Rich became a countess and philanthropist. She suffered as her husband became sick and her two children died. Early in life she liked fashion and looked down on Puritans. Then she became a Christian and a Puritan, and she used her wealth to set up a rescue mission for the poor. A friend of the more famous Richard Baxter, Rich wrote an autobiography with the devotional spirit of a David Brainerd.

These Puritans are British, except for Anne Bradstreet, the New England poet. She came to America in 1630 at age 18 for religious freedom, and originally wrote journals for her own growth and her eight children. Writing was an emotional outlet, especially when their house burned down, destroying a good-sized library.

These Puritan women suffered much, leaving a written record of drawing near to the Lord in the midst of trials. They used their time, talent, and treasures to serve the Lord in turbulent times. Both men and women can learn from their faithfulness.

BOOKS

The younger prince

Young men can find lessons in Harry's difficult life story

by DANIEL R. SUHR

YOUNGER BROTHERS have rebelled against the privileges of older brothers since Biblical times. Jacob, for instance, turned to deceit. Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex and former third in line to the British throne, has settled on a memoir.

Harry has his critics, but it's hard not to sympathize with him. God created us all equal, and our parents are supposed to treat us equally. To have one brother designated "the heir" and the other "the spare," by reason of birth order, seems unfair. Yet that's how monarchy works.

The reader's sympathy only grows reading the first third of *Spare* (Random House 2023). We see his parents' ugly divorce; his mother's death, made worse by a royal approach Harry remembers as cold and uncaring for a young boy; and his mates and their mistakes, dabbling in a life of pubs and drugs. By the end of the opening, you just want to give Harry a hug.

Spare
PRINCE HARRY
THE DUKE OF SUSSEX

In young adulthood, he finds his tribe: the army. Trained first as a combat air controller, then as an Apache helicopter pilot, he did one (short) tour in Iraq and two longer tours in Afghanistan. He deployed to forward bases, living in conditions far different from Buckingham Palace, and you admire his grit, patriotism, and compassion for his brothers-in-arms. By the end of the second act, you want to give him a high five.

In the final third, we get Meghan, his American crush turned princess. As Harry tells it, no matter how hard they tried, Meghan was never accepted by the Family. Vicious leaks, double standards, and deep wounds from ages past all drove them apart. So eventually the pair quit the Family, or the Family quit them. Either way, they ended up in America.

The book has its downsides. A little more royal propriety would have been helpful, especially on the topics of sex, drug use, and a certain instance of distressingly located frostbite. The book also has its bad guys—first and foremost the hated paparazzi. Secondary villains include Camilla and Kate, who stole away his father and brother and failed to embrace Meghan in at least a figurative sense. Granny, i.e., the queen, and Pa, i.e., Charles, come in for mixed reviews; William less so. Doubtless they have their own sides of the story.

Harry has traveled some rough roads. Perhaps unintentionally, his memoir testifies to the transformative power of military service and marriage. The first gave him purpose, order, and fellowship. The second added joy and love. For young men struggling with addiction, loneliness, and a lack of meaning, Harry's story offers evidence that work and family are powerful antidotes. By the end, the reader can only hope Harry has found the peace and happiness he so desperately craves. ■

VICTORIA JONES/WPA POOL/GETTY IMAGES

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Lessons for little ones

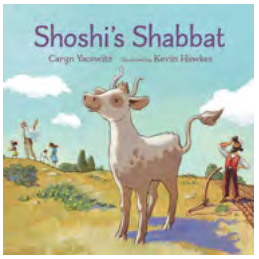
by KRISTIN CHAPMAN

Why Do We Say Thank You?
CHAMP THORNTON
(NEW GROWTH PRESS 2022)

With rhyming prose, Thornton tells the story of an ungrateful boy who is never content. He is disappointed with his breakfast, unimpressed at the zoo, and bored by the park. While other people embrace the day's fun, he mopes and complains it's "been as boring as boring can be." In his dreams that night, he replays the day, but rather than viewing things from a place of discontent, he sees everything through the lens of God. He realizes that creation is a reflection of God's goodness and glory, for which he should give thanks and praise to the Lord. The endnotes offer parents suggestions for helping their children learn to be thankful. ***Ages 4-8***

Meg Is Not Alone
MEGAN HILL
(CROSSWAY 2022)

When a miscommunication between her parents results in Meg getting left behind after church, at first she feels alone and afraid. But soon other church members learn of her predicament and come to her aid. By the time Meg reunites with her dad, she is no longer upset because her church community has surrounded her with love. "God gave us church friends to take care of us," Meg's dad says. "They love us because they love God. And God shows his love for us by sending them to help." The book offers a good springboard to discuss with children the many ways church families can care for each other. ***Ages 3-7***



Shoshi's Shabbat
CARYN YACOWITZ
(CANDLEWICK 2022)

When Yohanan buys an ox from his Jewish neighbor, he is at first pleased with how well Shoshi pulls his plow and helps him till his fields. But then on the seventh day Yohanan is perplexed when Shoshi won't work. She plants her feet, bends her head low, and refuses to budge. Yohanan assumes his ox is sick and gives up trying to coax her to toil. The next six days, though, Shoshi is ready and willing to work. But then on the subsequent seventh day, she again refuses to budge from her shed, and Yohanan finally understands why. This retelling of a Jewish midrash is a delightful story about the importance of Sabbath rest—for both man and beast. ***Ages 4-8***

God Made Babies
JUSTIN & LINDSEY HOLCOMB
(NEW GROWTH PRESS 2022)

In their latest book, the Holcombs help parents answer for their young children the age-old question of "Where do babies come from?" They caution that their book is not intended to replace parents' discussions with their children but rather to help start the conversations with a Biblical framework. The book begins by reminding children of the creation story and God's command to "be fruitful and multiply." The text then briefly explores the different ways reproduction happens in creation before discussing in age-appropriate terms how babies are made and born. At the end, the Holcombs offer additional suggestions for how parents can approach the topic with their children. ***Ages 4-8***

MOVIE

Living

by COLLIN GARBARINO

▶ *Rated PG-13*
▶ *Theaters*

AS ANY WRITER will tell you, looming deadlines tend to produce clarity and help push through the inertia that's kept the page blank. Deadlines aren't pleasant, but without them we'd never get anything done. But what about life itself? It has a deadline, and our mortality looms. The problem is no one knows the exact date when his life comes due. In *Living*, starring Bill Nighy, main character Mr. Williams gets a firm deadline for his life, which gives this otherwise complacent man clarity and a will to act.

Director Oliver Hermanus works from a screenplay by famed British writer Kazuo Ishiguro. The movie adapts Akira Kurosawa's *Ikiru*, a 1952 film about a Japanese bureaucrat who knows he will die of cancer.

Living is set in and around 1950s London where Mr. Williams leads the Department of Public Works at the county building. It's a somber place in which workers pass file folders from desk to desk all the while casting a deferential eye on Mr. Williams. The goal—as it is with most bureaucracies—is to appear exceedingly busy while studiously avoiding actual work.

But Mr. Williams' carousel of paper pushing is interrupted when his doctor diagnoses him with cancer, giving him just six months to live. He wants to break free from his mundane existence, but he's afraid he has forgotten how to live.

He takes a holiday, hoping to have some fun before his death, and he meets a young bohemian who takes him on a hedonistic binge. (Their night of carousing earns the film its PG-13 rating.) But the film shows the emptiness of "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." After his encounter with Mr. Williams, the young bohemian seems to question his own lifestyle.

Back in London, Mr. Williams begins spending time with a much younger woman who formerly worked in the Department of Public Works. He's not interested in romance, but he's attracted to her *joie de vivre*. And thanks to his young friend, Mr. Williams has an epiphany: Living isn't about personal satisfaction but about finding one's purpose in helping others.

Hermanus has created a beautiful film filled with moments of poignancy. He doesn't rush the story, allowing the characters to inhabit long pauses that draw us into Mr. Williams' deliberations concerning the short time he has left. Ishiguro's script, for which he received an Oscar nomination, is tight, perhaps better than Kurosawa's original, and Emilie Levienaise-Farrouch's score enriches the melancholy—yet hopeful—story.

By far, the best thing about *Living* is Nighy's portrayal of Mr. Williams. He captures Mr. Williams' stern austerity with a slight hardening about the eyes. He communicates the depths of Mr. Williams' bureaucratic malaise with a laconic "That will do" or "We can keep it here"—the audience knows Mr.

ROSS FERGUSON/NUMBER 9 FILMS/SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

"It's certainly the best performance I've seen in the last year."

Williams won't let productivity get in the way of his paperwork.

When Nighy's Mr. Williams describes his death sentence as "such a bore," our hearts ache for this man who seems embarrassed by his own mortality. Of course, the cancer diagnosis changes Mr. Williams, but Nighy plays the change close. He isn't so much angry at God as he is quietly confused, trying to solve the puzzle of how to live in the face of death. Nighy brilliantly pulls off the eventual transformation from confusion to clarity. He avoids the temptation to alter Mr. Williams' personality. Mr. Williams is the same man, but he overcomes the inertia that plagued him, allowing him finally to live in a manner consistent with his position and gifts. Nighy's performance has earned him an Academy Award nomination—it's certainly the best performance I've seen in the last year.

Life is a gift, and death is our enemy. But *Living* suggests the knowledge of death becomes a gift for the protagonist, allowing him to truly live in the end, rather than continue in a living death of meaningless activity. The film acts as a *memento mori* reminding us of our ultimate looming deadline and providing some clarity so we can push through the inertia, living a life that blesses others. ■

BOB MAHONEY/NETFLIX

MOVIE

Dog Gone

by MARTY VANDRIEL

▶ *Rated TV-PG*
▶ *Netflix*

THERE'S SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL in the love between a boy and his dog, and no matter how many times the story is told, it makes one wonder that God made animals capable of that special bond. *Dog Gone,* based on true events, is the story of a young man who loses his dog and is unwilling to give up the search for his friend.

In his last year at college, Fielding Marshall (Johnny Berchtold) finds Gonker, a yellow Lab who becomes his constant companion. When Fielding moves back home after graduation, his parents John (Rob Lowe) and Ginny (Kimberly Williams-Paisley) are surprised (and not entirely delighted) by this addition to their household. In time, and not unexpectedly, Gonker wins their hearts also.

When the dog goes missing during a walk on the Appalachian Trail, Fielding and his parents begin a search that picks up volunteers as social media and newspapers highlight the story. Soon, half of Virginia is on the lookout for a lost yellow Lab.

In addition to the canine friendship theme, *Dog Gone* explores parents' expectations for their children. High-achieving John worries about his son's lack of ambition. His half-joking comments hurt Fielding, who is not interested in his dad's traditional path and would love to find a way to make a living while teaching about the great outdoors—ideally in a kayak!

Neither of these themes is particularly new, yet director Stephen Herek manages to keep our interest in the 95-minute film, and even brings a little mist to a susceptible viewer's eyes. While mostly suitable for family entertainment, some blasphemies are spoken, and in what's meant to be comedic, a prayer is uttered to a Catholic saint whose statue serves as a good luck charm.

MOVIE

80 for Brady

by COLLIN GARBARINO

▶ *Rated PG-13*
▶ *Theaters*

FOUR HOLLYWOOD icons from yesteryear hope to lure older audiences back to theaters with *80 for Brady*. Lily Tomlin, Jane Fonda, Rita Moreno, and Sally Field star in this girls'-trip-meets-sports movie. But while these legends bring their A-game, the script fumbles the ball.

80 for Brady follows the misadventures of an atypical group of football fans—four elderly ladies who love Tom Brady. There's Maura (Moreno), the queen of her retirement home; Trish (Fonda), who's looking for love; Betty (Field), a retired mathematician who reminds everyone she's still in her 70s; and Lou (Tomlin), the group's "quarterback" who started their obsession with the Patriots' star.

This Tom Brady fan club realizes they're not getting any younger, so they embark on the trip of a lifetime, traveling to Houston to watch the Patriots play the Atlanta Falcons in 2017's Super Bowl LI. But the road to victory isn't without speed bumps, and finding a way into the stadium without tickets is only one of their problems.

Like its stars, *80 for Brady* is a bit of a throwback, hearkening to the comedies of the 1970s and '80s when most of the cast members were in their prime. Each of the ladies has her own quirks, giving the film an "odd foursome" quality. And despite the actresses' advanced age, the movie contains a fair amount of slapstick. We also get a few cameos from second- and third-tier celebrities.

But these venerable stars—especially Moreno, who steals the show—deserve a much better script than this one. Instead of weaving the action into a cohesive narrative, the film offers episodic high jinks. The film has amusing bits, but the story doesn't build. The gang gets into trouble, gets out of trouble easily, and then gets into trouble again—repeat six or seven times. Many of the scenes—especially the one in which these golden girls accidentally take illegal drugs—are lazily written.

Character development follows tired clichés, too. Each elderly lady on this trip of a lifetime must learn what it means to live again. Cue the inspiring music. Trish, who writes steamy romance novels featuring tight end Rob Gronkowski, learns she needs more self-respect. Mousy Betty learns to live her own life instead of her husband's. Maura learns to overcome the loneliness she feels after her husband's death. And Lou, who lives in the shadow of a cancer scare, learns if you want something in life, you have to make it happen—a lesson taught by Tom Brady himself.

There's some fun here, but by the end of its 98 minutes, *80 for Brady* comes across as a vanity project for Tom Brady, whose production company made the film. No touchdown here. ■

PARAMOUNT PICTURES

BOX OFFICE TOP 10

For the weekend of Jan. 20-22, according to Box Office Mojo

1. ***Avatar: The Way of Water****
   PG-13 • S4 / V6 / L5
2. ***Puss in Boots: The Last Wish****
   PG • S1 / V3 / L3
3. ***M3GAN****
   PG-13 • S1 / V7 / L5
4. ***Missing***
   PG-13 • S1 / V5 / L5
5. ***A Man Called Otto****
   PG-13 • S1 / V5 / L5
6. ***Plane***
   R • S1 / V7 / L7
7. ***House Party***
   R • not rated
8. ***That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime the Movie: Scarlet Bond***
   PG-13 • not rated
9. ***Black Panther: Wakanda Forever****
   PG-13 • S2 / V5 / L4
10. ***The Whale***
    R • S6 / V4 / L7

**Reviewed by WORLD*

Ratings from kids-in-mind.com, with quantity of sexual (S), violent (V), and foul-language (L) content on a 0-10 scale, with 10 high

HIGHEST-GROSSING LILY TOMLIN MOVIES

→ ***Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*** / 2018
→ ***9 to 5*** / 1980
→ ***Disney's The Kid*** / 2000
→ ***The Beverly Hillbillies*** / 1993
→ ***Orange County*** / 2002
→ ***Big Business*** / 1988
→ ***The Pink Panther 2*** / 2009

NETFLIX

DOCUMENTARY

The Pez Outlaw

by BOB BROWN

▶ *Rated TV-PG*
▶ *Streaming*

STEVE GLEW ADMITS he sold Pez dispensers without a license. Thousands upon thousands of the plastic candy holders. He bought prototypes and rejected models from overseas factories and found American collectors willing to pay top dollar for them. The new documentary *The Pez Outlaw* casts an unremorseful Glew as a victim when the Pez company fights back.

The "hillbilly from Michigan" wears an angler's hat and sports a ZZ Top–length white beard as he recounts trips in the early 1990s to Eastern European Pez factories. There, Glew says, employees sold him rare dispensers under the table for as little as 27 cents. Directors Amy and Bryan Storkel dramatize Glew's story, shooting some scenes in *Casablanca* gray tones that convey Glew's sense of spy-thriller adventure. (Glew claims operatives followed him.)

He would return home with duffel bags full of Pez dispensers. Some, such as Bubble Man (a pink head with cheeks inflated from bubble-gum blowing) fetched more than $1,000 apiece. Glew concedes what he did was "technically illegal," but he sugar-coats his racket, saying he was providing for his family. And he knocks Pez for not registering its trademark with U.S. Customs, allowing Glew to import the dispensers without interference. His wife, Kathy, calls him a "schemer and plotter ... but a good guy."

A former Pez marketing manager provides the corporation's perspective. Glew accuses the company's "Pezident," Scott McWhinnie (portrayed unwinsomely by an actor), of trying to "stomp" him, although all McWhinnie did was protect his company's rights. The film has several misuses of God's name and mild obscenities, but interested viewers can learn how Pez finally outmaneuvered Glew.

MUSIC

Listening to the '70s as they turn 50

Collections unearth hidden treasures

by ARSENIO ORTEZA

THE MUSIC of the 1970s is turning 50. And as if from a time capsule, three compilations have recently emerged to jumpstart the process of reevaluation.

One is the anthology that the British music scribe David Hepworth has curated for Edsel Records, *Deep 70s: Underrated Cuts From a Misunderstood Decade*. Organized and subtitled by style, its four discs make the case that the '70s, to quote the liner notes, "were a grubby but glorious time for records" that "never sullied a chart" and that aren't "served up by the algorithms which rule retro radio today."

Next is Light in the Attic's *Earl's Closet: The Lost Archive of Earl McGrath 1970-1980*. McGrath, who died in 2016, was an American scene maker whose music-business connections made him a magnet for demo-shopping, would-be up-and-comers. He accumulated a crop of tapes, posthumously discovered, of which this two-disc collection is the cream. "An archival mixtape, a secret history and a journey into the heart of an era," declares the PR, and it's not wrong.

Deep 70s

Earl's Closet

Jon Savage's 1977–1979

Last is Ace Records' two-disc *Jon Savage's 1977-1979: Symbols Clashing Everywhere*, the subtitle of which comes from a 1978 Siouxsie & the Banshees single that the 46-cut set does not include. Disc 2, however, includes the B-side ("Voices"), signaling that this dive into punk shrapnel and fallout is a deep one indeed.

All three packages deliberately avoid hits. But the majority of their contents simmer, percolate, or twitch with an emotional range, vitality, and generosity at odds with Tom Wolfe's description of the '70s as the "Me Decade."

And they're also at odds with the 2020s, an era during which, between the ceding of ground to artificial intelligence on the one hand and the fear of causing career-canceling offense on the other, the human element in artistic endeavors sometimes seems destined to follow the dodo.

The collections' aversion to hits notwithstanding, a few sneak through—most notably the Sanford-Townsend Band's "Smoke From a Distant Fire," the Amazing Rhythm Aces' "Third Rate Romance," Danny O'Keefe's "Good Time Charlie's Got the Blues," and Carly Simon's "Anticipation" on *Deep 70s* (because they weren't hits in England), and, on the Savage set, Iggy Pop's "The Passenger" (now a soundtrack staple) and the Diodes' immortal "Tired of Waking Up Tired."

Many of the acts, however, achieved cult status at best, and some were never heard from again. But whether you're encountering for the first or several-dozenth time the likes of Hirth Martinez, Murray Head, and the Roches (via Hepworth); Terry Allen, Blood Brothers Six, and Johnny Angel (via McGrath); or Pere Ubu, the Adverts, and Space (via Savage), you'll hope that there's more music out there with their names on it.

And you'll be sad when you find that in some cases there simply isn't. ■

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY RACHEL BEATTY

MUSIC

New and noteworthy

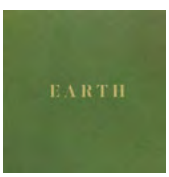
by ARSENIO ORTEZA

Synthetic: A Synth Odyssey: Season 1
RICH AUCOIN

The "rare and historic" old-school synthesizers displayed on the cover represent the refreshingly grainy, analog-era electronica you hear when you press play. Those curious about the specs can find the physical edition's back-cover notes reproduced on Bandcamp. Everyone else will simply revel in what drove their parents or grandparents to revel in Kraftwerk, Tangerine Dream, Mike Oldfield, and Isao Tomita back in the day: cool sounds! The main difference is that Aucoin boosts the beats, some of which are so infectious that even those who "can't dance" will.

Geranium Lake THE INNOCENCE MISSION

As chamber-folk types, Karen and Don Peris avoid grand gestures. So instead of celebrating the 27th anniversary of their final A&M album, the impressionistically melancholy *Glow*, with a super-deluxe box, they offer this disc of demos with rerecorded vocals (four), previously unreleased songs from the *Glow* sessions (two), and bootlegged live recordings from the *Glow* tour (six, eight on the Bandcamp edition). Seven of the original 12 songs appear in one version or another, the Holy Spirit–acknowledging "Brave" among them.



Earth SAULT

Of the six albums that this somewhat Soul II Soul-ish British collective released last year, *Earth* is the most overtly Christian. Most of the other six include references to "God" or "the Lord," but this one peaks with an eight-minute song built on John Coltrane's "Acknowledgement" riff that replaces "A love supreme" with "The Lord's with me" and that features a preacher praying for children to be "brought up and trained in the ways of our personal Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

***Western Electric* (*Extended Edition*)**
WESTERN ELECTRIC

When this album first came out in 2000, its leading light, the cowpunk pioneer Sid Griffin, had been making music with DNA traceable to the Byrds and the Flying Burrito Brothers (among others) for close to 20 years. But no style retains its bloom with the public for that long, so folks had stopped paying attention. If they pay attention now, here's what they'll most wish they hadn't been missing: "The Power of Glory" (in which a channel surfer randomly stumbles across preachers of widely varying orthodoxy), "Faithless Disciple" (with DNA traceable to "Wayfaring Stranger"), and "Everything" (the super-hooky sure shot that had been eluding Griffin—sometimes just barely—all along).

ENCORE

The second-most overtly Christian of Sault's six 2022 releases is the oxymoronically titled ***Untitled (God)***. In none of the songs does anyone mention Jesus, but the two tracks recited by women, "Guide My Steps" and "Dear Lord," could pass for modern-English psalms, and the track recited by a cheerfully devout young boy, "Rafael's Prayer," demonstrates to the considerable amusement of his (Sunday school?) classmates what it means to take 1 Thessalonians 5:17 literally.

The music of the remaining 18 selections covers the collective's usual spacey-R&B bases, with a skeletal funk serving as the backbone. But while the sequencing department deserves props for saving the two catchiest numbers ("God in Disguise" and "Life We Rent but Love Is Rent Free,") for last, the graphics department should definitely pay more attention to punctuation—there's a huge difference between "We Are Gods" (track 13) and "We Are God's" (what the collective meant). —A.O.

VOICES **JANIE B. CHEANEY**

FTX+ESG=SOS

An idealistic movement ignores our fallen nature

IT SOUNDED CRAZY TO ME, but some respectable economists and conservative thinkers endorsed it. No matter how it was explained to me, verbally or in print, cybercurrency and the blockchain seemed like imaginary money, or creating value out of thin air. Which, on second thought, wasn't unheard-of. Hadn't the Federal Reserve been doing that for years?

We dipped a toe into this digital new world some years back when my husband bought two bitcoins. Later we sold them at a hefty profit and used the money to pay off debts from less favorable investments. That was all; we got out while the getting was good and never heard of the FTX cybercurrency exchange, or Sam Bankman-Fried, until the collapse of the former and the indictment of the latter. To me that story is an interesting sideshow with broad implications. To certain millennials I know, who sank every extra dollar into bitcoin, ethereum, or baskets of assorted geeky currency, it's money swept away like dust.

Before turning 30, Sam Bankman-Fried had acquired enough panache to be known as "SFB." His shambling, hyper-casual figure appeared on the TED-talk circuit, at policy conferences, on *Fortune* magazine covers. He made a pile the old-fashioned way: purchasing cybercurrencies in lower-priced markets and selling them in higher-priced ones. He parlayed his reputation into an investment firm called Alameda Research and an exchange website called FTX, said to be worth over $30 billion.

Then SFB went bust the old-fashioned way, a variation on robbing Peter to pay Paul. With the money poured into FTX from traders who believed they were investing in the Next Big Thing, Bankman-Fried funded Alameda Research. As one observer noted at the time, "This may not be legal." Siphoning money from Alameda to support a jet-set lifestyle and beach home in the Bahamas was certainly not ethical.

When the CoinDesk website began looking askance at FTX and Alameda, investors got nervous. When Binance, the only exchange larger than FTX, looked into a possible merger, a "liquidity crunch" swam to the surface. The cyber-empire of SBF had no solid assets propping it up. As we should have learned from the financial crisis of 2007, solidity still matters.

Having declared bankruptcy and been indicted for fraud, Bankman-Fried is on probation at his parents' home in northern California, and his investors are out in the cold. Cybercurrency itself has taken a hit, dropping like a rock on all the exchanges. Buy low, anyone?

Lesson 1: Imaginary money tends to disappear. Lesson 2 is less obvious, but more consequential.

SBF's FTX embodied ESG: the new business model, a brand of social responsibility labeled environmental, social, and governance. This represents a profound shift, from maximizing profits for shareholders to expanding nebulous benefits to "stakeholders"—that is, anyone who might be affected in any way by a company's activities. Environmental policy and diversity, equity, and inclusion practices take precedence over the bottom line. Creating a better world matters more than creating a marketable service. That's the rhetoric, made explicit in a statement from the Business Roundtable of 2019 and elevated at institutions like the Wharton School.

Like all idealistic movements, ESG fails to take fallen human nature into account. Sam Bankman-Fried was touted as the socially responsible face of business, channeling his profits into environmental causes, progressive goals, and the Democratic Party. Investors could feel good about changing the world while getting rich. It was a modern-day version of buying indulgences, until the extent of SBF's own indulgences came to light.

FTX lacked a solid monetary foundation, but ESG, now adopted by every Fortune 100 company, lacks a solid ideological foundation. The old business virtues, built on Christian ethics, were honesty, value for the money, and accountability. The new business virtues are platitudes about saving the world, forgetting that only one Person is up to that job. ■

Email *jcheaney@wng.org* ***Twitter*** *@jbcheaney*

Hotel C

lifornia

ESSAY: As Golden State progressives incentivize homelessness, a Christian mayor fights back

by Bill Wells, Psy.D.

photography by Greg Schneider/Genesis

One of the hotels in El Cajon that houses mostly homeless residents

It was a Friday afternoon, and I was driving through the city of El Cajon, Calif., where I am the mayor. I was lost in my music playlist when I was jolted back to reality by a phone call. My phone screen told me it was the worst kind of call—one from my city attorney.

The attorney, Morgan Foley, is a hardened legal veteran, but even he seemed a bit shaken. He had just received a call from the office of the attorney general of California, Rob Bonta. The AG's staff told Morgan that we were about to receive a cease-and-desist letter from Bonta himself.

I knew immediately what the issue was: homelessness. Bonta and his allies on the San Diego County Board of Supervisors want to enable it. I don't.

El Cajon (pronounced "el ka-HONE") is a medium-sized city in the metro San Diego area. When I was elected mayor in 2008, downtown El Cajon and a vast grid of surrounding blocks were a hotbed of crime, urban blight, and homelessness. In my pre-political life I had worked in mental health, first as a clinician with a nursing degree and then as a doctor of clinical psychology. Over a career of supervising mental health teams in hospital emergency room settings, I'd had a lot of experience ministering to and caring for homeless people.

I brought that with me when I took office. We hired a new city manager, rolled up our sleeves, and got to work. Partnering with city officials, social services, law enforcement, the business community, and nonprofits, we developed new homeless shelters and programs. We enlisted the city's pastors to pray, and much to the ridicule of many, we prayed with them. By 2020, any homeless person who would agree to get help had gotten it. Many became what are called "housed homeless," but they were off the streets and being cared for. Meanwhile, the streets themselves were safer and more welcoming for all residents.

Then came September 2022. We noticed a new and sudden influx of homeless people to our city—not just on the streets but taking over El Cajon hotels. I asked our police department to make some friendly inquiries with these folks, to find out where they'd come from. As it turned out, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, without consulting us, had launched a hotel voucher program that quickly overwhelmed our two-star travel-lodge type properties, turning every one of them into a homeless encampment.

I objected. At first quietly and via networking, then loudly and on television. And that last piece is what triggered the cease-and-desist phone call from Attorney General Rob Bonta's office. Cease and desist, you may know, can be a fancy legal way of saying sit down and shut up. And that was exactly Bonta's message: If I continued to fight the county to try to restore order in our streets and hotels, then the full weight of California's top law enforcement agent, in the most populous state in the Union—the fifth-largest economy in

Wells meets with the homeless on Main Street.

the world—would come down directly on me and our city. In my mind's eye, I saw Goliath in full battle array and started looking for five smooth stones.

PARADISE LOST

Decades ago, California was the destination of dreams. When my father and countless others stopped here for a brief stay in San Diego on their way to fight in the South Pacific, Korea, or Vietnam, they found warm weather, beautiful new cities and suburbs, and a natural paradise that led down through the unspoiled pine forests of the High Sierra to the glistening Pacific.

Today, though, the state is overpriced, overtaxed, and in many places riddled with crime and filth. Many large and medium-sized cities have become nearly uninhabitable—overrun by unchecked encampments of makeshift tents and ramshackle lean-tos. Drug zombies, criminals, and untreated psychotics roam the ruins and rule the places that were once the domain of the rich and powerful. The latter have not abandoned their castles of commerce, but now quickly run from car to guarded lobby, deftly dodging feces, vomit, and vermin.

Prostitution, rape, and the use and sale of drugs unfold in plain sight. Disheveled bodies lie in heaps on the streets. This is now so common that police rarely have spare resources to investigate whether these bodies are still alive.

How did we get here? Let's start with a few basic facts. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development tells us there are currently 171,521 homeless people on the streets of California. To put matters in perspective, the next closest state is New York with 74,000. Some argue California is the most populous state and the numbers reflect that. But how then can you explain second-place Texas, with just 24,000 homeless?

Well, some say, climate is the determining factor. By this logic, Arizona should be a close second, but it falls far behind California with some 14,000 homeless people, and New Mexico with about 3,000. Even Hawaii, the most meteorologically idyllic state in the union, has just 6,000 homeless.

The truth is, California is unique in the nation in that it has crafted a network of laws and policies that are so permissive they actually encourage homelessness. Meanwhile, generous social benefits enable a lifestyle of addiction, even as ill-conceived laws discourage or prevent most standard enforcement techniques cities have historically used to mitigate the practice of living on the streets. The result: People from all over the country—and the world, actually—come here specifically *to be homeless.* California's population accounts for 12 percent of the U.S. total of 334 million, but the state hosts 51 percent of the homeless.

As mayor, I worked with our City Council to tackle the problem using an approach different than the big, liberal cities. We strove to provide a modern, treatment-based network of therapeutic options, while at the same time enforcing a policy that prohibits camping on the streets. We can do this because we have three homeless shelters and as such are

shielded from the 2018 *Boise* ruling, which says you cannot prevent street camping unless you have a bed to offer. We have the beds. In fact, we spend more money per capita on homeless services than any other municipality in the region.

When we first learned about the new hotel voucher program, city manager Graham Mitchell went to assess the situation. What he found was first disturbing—then horrifying. Voucher recipients told Graham that county sheriff's deputies, and even county staff members, had dropped them off at the hotels. At one property, a drug dealer threatened to kill Graham if he didn't leave.

After that, I went to see for myself. I found parking lots filled with trash and needles. Groups of young men, and some women, wandering in front of the hotels. Many appeared psychotic, arguing with lampposts or themselves. Drug dealers haunted the hotel entrances, shooting daggers with their eyes.

Prior to this development, El Cajon police knew the names and faces of most homeless people on our streets. That's because each person is approached up to a dozen times and offered supportive housing. Now, there were hundreds of new faces. The county had not discussed with us any of their plans. When pressed, officials refused to give any information. In frustration, I called a press conference to apply public pressure over this unfair and dangerous practice. I pointed out that though my city represents only 3 percent of the county's population, it was shouldering 45 percent of this hotel voucher program. I also noted that El Cajon police arrested 89 voucher recipients in just three days, most for outstanding felony warrants.

On the advice of my city attorney, we sent letters to the hotel operators demanding they comply with their conditional use permits. In our interpretation, each had violated theirs when they brought in so many homeless that they ceased to be hotels and became instead de facto homeless shelters.

REDEFINING CRIME

Homelessness in California used to revolve mainly around addicts and the untreated mentally ill. But in 2011, the state Legislature added a new toxin: crime.

Assembly Bill 109 and, in 2016, Proposition 57 sought to ease prison overcrowding in California by simply deciding that many crimes were no longer punishable by incarceration. More than 70 crimes were redefined as "less serious" or

171,521

TOTAL HOMELESS POPULATION IN CALIFORNIA (2022)

- Data taken from a 2022 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development report on homelessness
- In 2020, 51% of all homeless people in the United States were in California

40.9

HOMELESSNESS RATE IN CALIFORNIA PER 10,000 PEOPLE (2020)

- California ranks behind the District of Columbia (90.4), New York (46.9), and Hawaii (45.6).

8,427

TOTAL HOMELESS POPULATION IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY (2022)

- 10% increase since 2020, according to state point-in-time counts

Downtown San Diego monthly homeless count

- 2020 average: **656**
- 2021 average: **961**
- 2022 average: **1,485**

Data compiled by Elizabeth Russell

"non-violent." This includes the rape of an intoxicated or unconscious person, sex trafficking, lewd acts with a minor of 15 years old and above, hostage-taking, assault with a deadly weapon, domestic violence resulting in injury, and many others.

Then, prisons began closing—two in the past two years. After that, El Cajon saw a 35 percent spike in homelessness. Sacramento politicians claim no correlation, but that defies logic. In San Diego County alone, 7,619 probationers were released into the county, with 1,077 being homeless upon release. Approximately 1 in 10 of the homeless in our region were once prisoners on early release.

Meanwhile, in 2014 voters approved Proposition 47, converting a whole menu of crimes from felonies to misdemeanors, including shoplifting of items less than $950. Recently, a group of 7-Eleven owners crowded into my office complaining that the homeless now steal from them with impunity—and with no fear of the police.

Proposition 47 also makes personal use of most drugs a minor offense, subject to a ticket or more likely no enforcement. In 2017, the legislature passed Senate Bill 180, which limits law enforcement's ability to send chronic drug abusers back to prison. And most of those not confined will refuse any rehabilitative offer to get them off the streets. I know this not just statistically, but from personal experience.

PSYCH SHIFT

You might be surprised to know that mayoring is a part-time job. Like most mayors I lead a dual life. In addition to helping to govern a city, I own a healthcare company that specializes in psychiatric and psychological treatment. From 1994 to 2016, I worked in the emergency department at Paradise Valley Hospital. It's a facility in south San Diego County so gritty that cops and paramedics call it Death Valley Hospital.

One morning at about 3 a.m., I was summoned to the ER where a disheveled homeless woman was waiting for me, along with two grumpy cops. The cops explained that a Good Samaritan called in to report an older woman sleeping under a bridge in the rain. I noticed the woman had only one leg, having lost the other just below the knee—an amputation due to poorly managed diabetes.

I spoke gently to her. Looked her in the eyes and told her I wanted to help. The woman made it clear she had no interest in help. I ordered blood tests anyway. A few questions and a look at her liver function told me all I needed to know: She was getting all her calories from vodka.

I implored her to let me get her a bed. "I'll put you on the medical floor until you get through the DTs," I said. "After that, social workers will find you a place to stay."

When she refused, I tried to coax her: "It's cold and raining and you're sick," I said. I warned her she was going to die. The woman cursed me, then rolled out of the hospital on her Medicare-provided scooter, laughing and ranting as she went.

She'll be back, I thought. And when she comes, we'll go through it all again. I knew this because we got so many addicts and psych patients in the ER that we needed two clinicians on every shift. Like this woman, most of the homeless we saw were abusing themselves to the brink of death. Some wanted to be admitted for a brief stay. They'd get a bath, a few hot meals, and maybe some maintenance medications. After that, though, almost all heard the call of the streets—and their drugs of choice—and were back in the urban wild within a week.

This kind of thing still happens today. As a Christian, this saddens me deeply as I work to obey Scriptural admonitions to aid the poor: "And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me'" (Matthew 25:40).

But is enabling a life of addiction and psychosis, of hard living on rough streets, really helping? Or is it more compassionate to intervene, proactively if needed, when the poor and ill are unwilling to help themselves?

MAGNOLIA STREET SHOWDOWN

Within a week of learning of the county's voucher program, we also learned that El Cajon's new hotel guests were selling drugs out of their tax-funded rooms. It was clear the county had no vetting process prior to shuttling their homeless to our town. The county protested that most were El Cajon natives. But further research, provided by the county itself, showed that only one person came from our city.

How many homeless were being housed in San Diego proper or in the rich coastal communities, I wondered? Why were they being shunted to the east—and specifically to one of the few conservative areas left in the county? An answer may relate directly to another homeless battle I had recently had with San Diego County supervisors—and had won: Magnolia Street.

Magnolia runs through El Cajon and then into an unincorporated area in the County of San Diego's jurisdiction. It's a commercial street with gas stations, machine shops, mom-and-pop restaurants, and other small businesses. Since El Cajon prohibits encampments, Magnolia Street was completely clean—until you reached the sign that says "Leaving El Cajon." That sign marked a literal line of demarcation.

A few yards beyond it, a massive homeless encampment sprang up in February 2022. Tents, shopping carts, and makeshift huts littered the side of the road under a freeway overpass. Business owners along Magnolia had begun complaining of people urinating and defecating in front of their doors. The street rang with curses, screams, and fistfights. People were having sex in the open and, of course, selling and abusing drugs.

The camp was technically outside El Cajon city limits, which meant I was not its mayor. But Magnolia runs straight into our city, so we asked the county to clean up the property for the sake of those business owners just outside my jurisdiction. The county pushed back, citing the *Boise* decision as a reason for not getting involved.

My next step: I invited our local media out to take a look. I pointed out to reporters that there were zero encampments on the El Cajon side of that "Leaving El Cajon" sign. But on the county's side, Magnolia looked like a war-torn third-world country. It was a striking dichotomy, a perfect real-time picture of conservative versus progressive policies. It also ignited a media firestorm. The public began to mobilize and put tremendous pressure on the county government.

Then, the first of two horrible incidents occurred.

A young high school girl with developmental disabilities was lured into the encampment. She was sexually assaulted, drugged, and kept in that altered mental state in a van while she was trafficked for sex. Then another young girl, this time

How can we solve a problem if we fundamentally misunderstand its cause? Progressives create a paradigm that ensures any attempt to help will always end in failure.

not a minor but still a teenager, was found running naked from business to business begging for help. She cried hysterically that she'd been raped at the encampment. She later waffled on her story of assault, but security cameras did verify she was naked on the street.

The resulting press coverage and citizen protest finally forced the county to act. In late May 2022, trucks and crews descended on the apocalyptic scene, and just like that, Magnolia Street was clean again. The people of El Cajon felt it was a great victory—that is, until we found the county had cooked up what may be a secret weapon of retribution: the hotel voucher program.

The voucher program is not new. It is essentially an extension of the Housing First model developed by New York clinical community psychologist Sam Tsemberis in 1992. If homelessness is caused by lack of housing, the premise goes, we should simply give homeless people houses. Soon many private and public figures announced they could provide every chronically homeless person with permanent supportive housing, or PSH, and thus help end homelessness within a decade. Since then, all major cities have tried Housing First. All have failed miserably.

In San Francisco, each PSH unit can cost up to $750,000. In Los Angeles, voters passed a bond issue for more PSH units. The city said they would cost $140,000 each. Instead, they cost triple that, and some cost over $700,000. In many cities, landlords receive massive rents or use third-party for-profit maintenance companies to earn millions on properties for the homeless. In California, the only state to fully adopt the Housing First model, there has been, at great public cost, a 33 percent increase in permanent housing units for the homeless. That sounds great until you consider that California's homeless population has risen by 33.8 percent overall, and by 47.1 percent in the unsheltered population.

How can we solve a problem if we fundamentally misunderstand its cause? Progressives suggest that the root causes of homelessness are lack of housing, people "down on their luck," and high rents in a tough economy. Couple this with a strident devotion to the idea that any attempt to link homelessness with poor choices, addiction, or criminality, and you create a paradigm that ensures any attempt to help will always end in failure.

Here's the latest failure: California Attorney General Rob Bonta demanded that we rescind our letters asking hotel operators to comply with their conditional use permits. Being committed to the rule of law and acknowledging that the attorney general is the ultimate legal authority in California, we obeyed.

A few days later, a new complaint: An attorney in Bonta's office called my city attorney to complain that I had called Bonta a thug on TV. Our attorney was left with the impression that any similar language from me would mean serious trouble, which I felt was, well ... thuggish. Following that, we received surprisingly aggressive demands for emails, phone calls, texts, and correspondence mentioning anything related to the controversy.

Then on Sept. 23, 2022, AG Bonta's office threatened legal action. Bonta also posted a tweet touting his role in stopping us from having our hotels lower the number of homeless residents.

I'd like to tell you we will win this battle in the end. We have no doubt that El Cajon's laws are constitutional, since they are basically the same as those in any other city in California. But when a state collapses into a one-party system, laws become malleable ... fungible ... open to interpretation by those in power.

Let this be a cautionary tale for other states that say, "It can't happen here." It most assuredly can. ■

—Bill Wells is a clinical psychologist and mayor of El Cajon, Calif. *For more on this writer, see Backstory on p. 72*

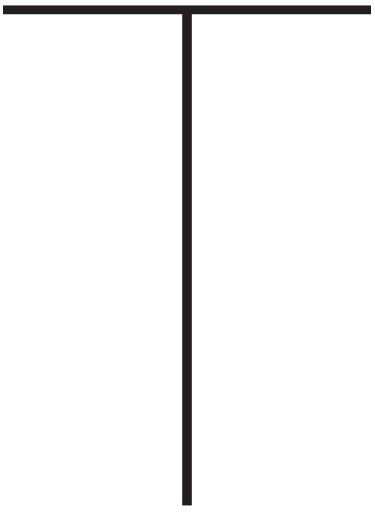
Safe delivery

Baby boxes offer safe haven—and controversy

BY GRACE SNELL

REALCREATION/ISTOCK

134



THIRTEEN YEARS AGO, A PREGNANT 15-YEAR-OLD stumbled into the ER where Heather Burner worked as a pediatric nurse.

The teenager complained of abdominal pain, so the staff checked her vital signs and sent her back to the waiting room. A short time later, the girl delivered a baby in the ER bathroom. She left him in the trash can.

The housekeeper discovered the infant 10 to 15 minutes later. Burner and other staff members started life-saving procedures on the bathroom floor. But it was too late: "We were unsuccessful in saving his little life," Burner says.

The loss was traumatic for everyone but hit Burner especially hard. Her own 15-year-old son had just had a baby with his girlfriend, and her grandson was just 2 weeks old at the time. She couldn't help but ask the question: What would have happened to her grandson if her son hadn't reached out for help?

Since 1999, mothers in the United States have abandoned over 1,600 babies just like the one Burner and her colleagues tried to save—more than half found dead. But under state "safe haven" laws, there's an alternative: Parents may surrender infants at certain locations, such as hospitals and fire stations, without fear of legal repercussions.

States aren't required to keep statistics on surrendered babies, so the numbers are hard to track. But since 2001, the group Save Abandoned Babies Foundation has pieced together what information there is from sources like state agency and media reports, as well as Google searches. According to that data, nearly 4,700 babies have survived because their parents surrendered them under safe haven laws.

Now that abortion is no longer legal in every state, pro-life activists say safe haven protections are more important than ever. One woman is leading the charge with a media-savvy campaign and a unique solution to encourage surrender over abandonment. But critics call her intervention expensive and unnecessary, insisting it detracts from the much less flashy work of reaching desperate moms and saving vulnerable infants.

Monica Kelsey's mother discovered she was pregnant at age 17, after a brutal attack and rape. It was 1972, the year before *Roe v. Wade*, and abortion was illegal in most states. So, the girl's mother took her to a back-alley abortion facility and paid $75 to terminate the baby's life surgically. But when the teenager saw blood on the operating table and floor, she refused to go through with it.

Instead, she hid her pregnancy and gave birth in April 1973. She abandoned her baby at a hospital two hours later.

The baby, Kelsey, didn't learn the truth until she was 37, when she met her birth mom for the first time. Her adoptive parents had said her birth parents were simply too young to care for her.

After hearing the real story, Kelsey struggled with her sense of self-worth: "I felt like I was that poster child for an unwanted child in America."

Later, on a trip to South Africa, Kelsey visited a church that prioritized ministering to moms like hers. South Africa doesn't have a safe haven law, so a local church installed a "baby safe" to rescue illegally abandoned infants.

On the plane ride home, Kelsey sketched a prototype of her own baby box on a Delta Air Lines napkin. She found a man willing to build it for $700.

Parents in Kelsey's home state of Indiana already had legal protections for surrendering infants under a safe haven law enacted in 2000. It allows parents, or their designated stand-ins, to give infants to emergency medical service providers

Monica Kelsey poses in 2015 with a prototype of a baby box outside her fire station in Woodburn, Ind.

without penalty. But Kelsey worried mothers wouldn't come forward for face-to-face surrenders. She believed baby boxes would solve that problem: "We're filling the anonymity role of the safe haven movement."

At the time, the state didn't have clear regulations to govern the concept. The Indiana Department of Child Services and the Department of Health refused to draft policies and protocols for the boxes. Instead, Kelsey says, they wrote her a letter saying they didn't recommend the strategy.

Kelsey's lawyer told her that left baby boxes in a legal "gray area"—nothing expressly permitted or forbade them. Kelsey decided to start installing the boxes anyway. "Christ knew who He put in charge of this organization because He knew I would never give up," she said.

In 2016, Kelsey had the first box installed in her hometown of Woodburn, Ind., where she worked as a firefighter and her husband was mayor. Then she started the search for another firehouse willing to install the second one without express government permission.

Kelsey took her cause to a Chicago radio station, where she argued baby boxes are the last defense against the worst-case scenario: "If it's a baby box or a dumpster, which one would you rather have?"

After the show, an assistant fire chief at the Coolspring Township Volunteer Fire Department near Michigan City, Ind., called her. He told her about multiple infant abandonments within a 5-mile radius of his fire station during the past decade—babies discovered in dumpsters, along fences, or in fields. "We need this box," he told Kelsey.

Kelsey's response? "Let's install it."

But that decision met with a lot of pushback. The Department of Health told them to remove it. Concerned citizens also wrote letters and emails to the department. But Kelsey and the firefighters didn't back down.

MICHAEL CONROY/AP

The box officially opened in April 2016. The following year, Indiana lawmakers expanded the state safe haven law to authorize baby boxes.

Coolspring Fire Chief Mick Pawlik was relaxing in his recliner on Nov. 7, 2017, when his pager buzzed, notifying him that someone had opened the baby box at the station. It was 10:30 p.m.

Unsuspecting people sometimes opened the box and tripped the buzzer, and Pawlik thought this was probably just another false alarm. So he headed to the station in his pajamas.

Once there, he walked slowly through the deserted hallway and stepped into a corner office. Large windows revealed an empty parking lot. He flicked on the lights and walked toward the box.

Through the ventilation holes he glimpsed something moving. Pawlik eased the box open apprehensively.

A newborn baby, wrapped in an old, bloody sweatshirt, stared back at him.

Pawlik says nothing in his training prepared him for the emotions of that moment. Adrenaline coursed through his body. He hollered for a recently arrived firefighter to bring him latex gloves so he could check the infant for injuries.

Soon, medics arrived on the scene. Pawlik and the other firefighter hopped aboard a fire rig and drove the baby to the hospital: "We're just giddy as two high school girls going to prom for the first time." The baby lay calm and quiet the entire ride.

Staff members came out to welcome them at the hospital, not an everyday occurrence, despite what you see on TV.

"But when we came in that night, they were waiting," Pawlik recalled. "They knew that we had a baby."

Since those first two boxes, Kelsey has installed 132 more in eight states. Still, only 23 babies have come through all the boxes installed by Kelsey's group. She doesn't mind the relatively low number: "We only want these boxes used if a mother in crisis doesn't have any other options."

Six months after the first baby showed up in Coolspring's box, another baby came through. Pawlik said support for the effort increased after that, but he still gets complaints, something he struggles to understand: "It saves a life. What's wrong with society? I don't know."

But critics say it's not that simple.

Chris Hicks lives in Clermont County, Ohio, where he works as a sales consultant. He's a conservative, pro-life Christian and a self-described government watchdog. Hicks keeps an eye out for things that don't look right and asks local officials a lot of questions. He says people often call him a "Don Quixote type."

"Unlike Don Quixote, if I stick with it long enough—and I will—a lot of times the windmills come down," Hicks said.

Monica Kelsey's organization, Safe Haven Baby Boxes, charges an initial $11,000 program fee to each box provider. The money covers training, signs, promotion, inspection, and hotline access. Providers also pay an annual $300 recertification fee, and another estimated $5,000-$7,500 to contractors for delivery, installation, and alarm systems.

Almost all the boxes are financed through fundraising, grants, and donations. But individual municipalities can also choose to cover the costs.

Hicks didn't know anything about Safe Haven Baby Boxes until his local fire station had one installed. He started investigating after learning taxpayer money funded it, and he didn't like what he found.

Signs provided by Safe Haven Baby Boxes explain how they work. They mention briefly that babies can also be placed with emergency personnel. And they list the number of a crisis hotline. But signs don't do anything else to explain the

Chris Hicks stands outside the Ocala, Fla., City Hall after speaking at a city council meeting.

meaning of the safe haven law or help mothers understand their adoption and custody options.

Brochures with additional information were placed inside the box—inaccessible without opening the surrender door, and, Hicks pointed out, a choking hazard for infants.

In Hicks' opinion, Kelsey's baby boxes are the opposite of what pro-lifers should be working for: "The notion that we would be behind something that could leave a woman a year or two down the line feeling like they got exploited, that they got conned into 'Put your baby in a box and slam the door' and never knew about options that could have helped them raise their own baby ... that is just morally and ethically wrong to me."

Hicks said pro-lifers should instead work to destigmatize safe haven surrenders so women feel comfortable coming forward for proper prenatal care and medical delivery.

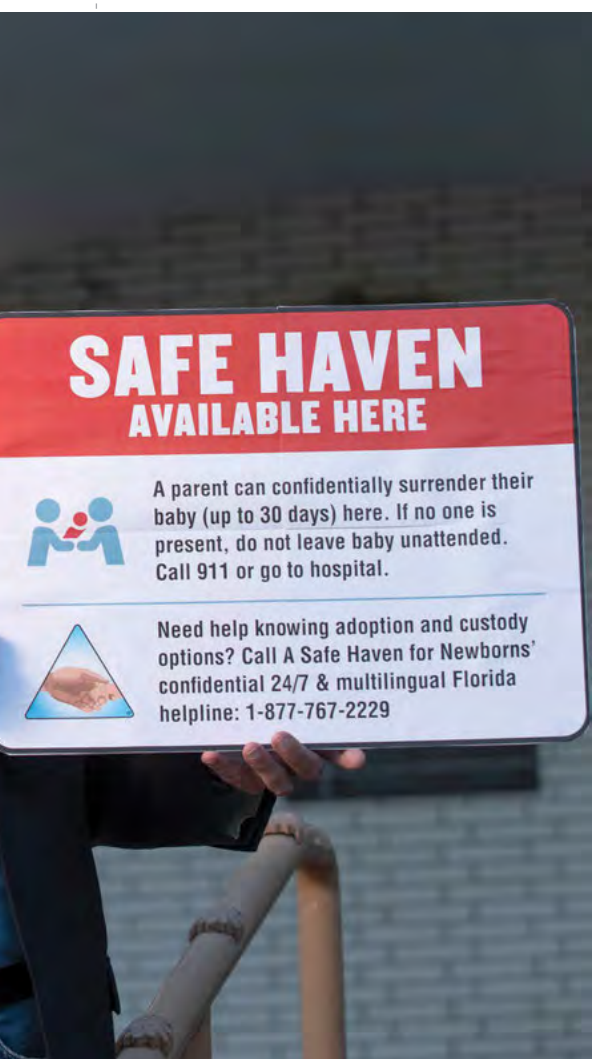


PHOTO BY GUY GERRARD/GENESIS

He took his concerns to Union Township's trustees during a meeting in June 2022, including criticisms of Kelsey's promotional materials. Kelsey, who also attended the meeting, conceded her brochure contained an error and said it had been corrected. According to Hicks, the two stood arguing in the hallway after the meeting. Hicks says he asked Kelsey to provide a copy of her updated brochure, and that she refused.

Later, Kelsey vented about Hicks to her 615,000 followers on TikTok. Hicks published videos on his YouTube channel accusing Kelsey of demonizing opponents and monetizing safe haven laws.

After that clash, Hicks ramped up his efforts to get local lawmakers to reconsider Kelsey's pitch. He spoke at a meeting of the Clermont County Commissioners and argued lawmakers should spend their time promoting $50-$100 signs instead of costly baby boxes.

But Kelsey says fundraising for baby boxes raises awareness about safe haven laws and gets people involved with their mission. She points out signs won't work unless people know what the safe haven law is to begin with. But Hicks counters that Kelsey's baby box signs don't explain the law either.

Kelsey says baby boxes are only a good option if they're all a woman has left. And she notes some women leave their babies on the doorsteps of safe haven locations.

"Now why would a mother go all the way to the hospital and leave her baby at the door? Clearly, she wanted anonymity," Kelsey said. "And so, those are the women I target."

But Hicks says Kelsey's promotional strategies violate the anonymity goal. After every baby box surrender, she holds a press conference thanking the mother for choosing life. Hicks says that puts an unnecessary spotlight on the woman's situation.

Many states have a waiting period during which a mother may change her mind and reclaim her infant. Drawing attention to a surrender too early could jeopardize the mother's ability to do so anonymously.

"When you make a lot of hoopla," Hicks said, "it makes it very hard for them to change their mind." He said Kelsey's "dumpster baby narrative" sensationalizes surrenders and distracts from simpler solutions.

Although Kelsey's group continues to make progress toward its goal of having a baby box in every state, Hicks' complaints have had some effect. In early January, the Union Township Fire Department shut down the baby box installed less than a year before due to the Ohio Department of Health's 24-hour staffing requirements. Firefighters covered it with one of the signs Hicks designed. Another Ohio box closed after several months of alarm issues, while a third was installed but never activated.

Hicks is Kelsey's most vocal critic, but he isn't the only one.

Dawn Geras is a registered nurse who helped create Illinois' first safe haven law two decades ago. Geras spearheaded a group of friends concerned about infant abandonment in their

SINCE 1999, OVER 1,600 BABIES HAVE BEEN ABANDONED. NEARLY 4,700 HAVE BEEN SURRENDERED SAFELY UNDER STATE SAFE HAVEN LAWS. 23 BABIES HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH KELSEY'S BABY BOXES.

state. They drafted a bill, took it to the Capitol, and lobbied lawmakers until it passed.

Since then, she's worked to raise awareness of safe haven laws across the country through the Save Abandoned Babies Foundation. She also serves as a board member of the National Safe Haven Alliance.

While Geras appreciates anything that saves a baby's life, she also wonders how else those resources could be spent: "What I could do with that money and how many more babies I could save across the country just by an awareness program."

Geras admits Safe Haven Baby Boxes' large media presence has helped call attention to safe haven protections. But she worries it might confuse parents into thinking they have to surrender through a box. That's especially problematic since boxes only exist in a few states.

"What about the mom downstate who's looking for a box and can't find it, and then panics?" Geras asks. "What does she do then?"

Geras points out that person-to-person safe haven doesn't take away mothers' anonymity or immunity under law. It simply provides the opportunity for in-person help. Emergency personnel can offer moms the chance to see a doctor or a social worker. In Illinois, she says, 25 percent of women end up either keeping their babies or choosing a traditional adoption plan.

Geras is a mom of six, grandmother of 13, and great-grandmother of one. She believes a mother who cared enough not to abort her baby probably wants her child to be safe. It's important "for the mom to know that the baby wasn't just placed in a cold, sterile box, but actually into the loving arms of somebody," Geras said. "And for that somebody to say, 'Thank you. We know it took courage to come in here. You did the right thing. The baby will be OK and loved.'"

After nurse Heather Burner witnessed the death of the baby abandoned in the hospital bathroom, she decided she wanted to help moms understand their options. Today she's the executive director for the National Safe Haven Alliance.

It provides training, signs, and support for safe haven providers. Burner and three staff members also operate a hotline for moms in crisis. Burner said three babies have been found abandoned in Arizona this year. Only one survived.

The day WORLD interviewed her, Burner had just finished helping a mom get to the hospital to deliver her baby.

The woman was experiencing what Burner calls "pregnancy denial syndrome." She hadn't done anything to prepare for giving birth and found the hotline number through a Google search.

Burner helped the woman contact her family and get to the hospital. Initially, she requested safe haven. But Burner helped her explore other options, too. She ultimately decided to keep her baby.

Burner said safe haven should always be a last resort. She echoed some of Geras' concerns about baby boxes, but said she supports the idea of having boxes at hospital locations with 24/7 staffing.

Although their strategies differ, Burner said she and Kelsey are "running parallel races." And the most important thing is spreading the word about safe haven protections everywhere.

"We need to make sure that women are not driving three states over ... because that's where they think safe haven exists," Burner said. "We need them to know safe haven exists in their community, that there are locations for them to get to and to be safe, and have a safe place for their baby." ■

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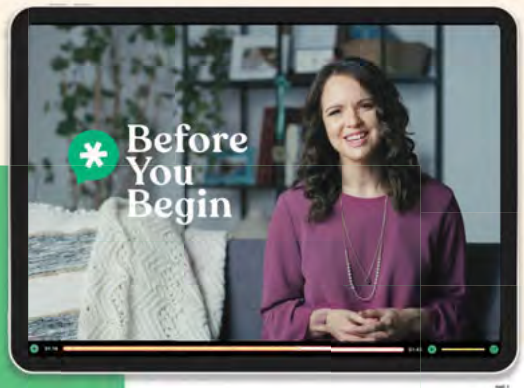

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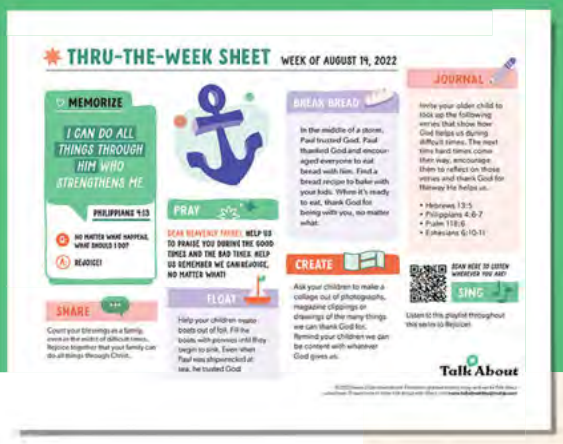

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MILITARY VETERANS DIG INTO THE PAST TO CHART NEW CAREERS IN ARCHAEOLOGY ■ BY TODD VICIAN

BACK TO THE F

Just inside an 8-foot-high wire fence running along a dusty blacktop road, Tom Freitag swings the dinner-plate-sized end of a metal detector. He walks in a straight line, his black T-shirt and brown cargo pants blending with the sandy, sparsely covered pasture beside him. Freitag is sweeping left and right, staring at an LCD screen, when the machine emits a telltale high-pitched whine. He pauses, ignoring the rumble of trucks on the road and the approach of curious cows mooing in the pasture. Freitag sweeps the spot again. When the whine rings out a second time, he pulls a small survey flag from a bag around his waist and sticks it into the ground.

Nearby, about 10 men and women go through a similar routine, using blue flags when their metal detectors find lead, and yellow flags for iron. They also dig with T-handled spades and small garden trowels in grids the size of side-by-side tennis courts. Like Freitag, they all sport American flags on the right sleeves of their T-shirts, a symbol they once wore on their military uniforms.

Under the shadows of century-old live oaks and the occasional Mexican eagle circling slowly overhead, these veterans-turned-aspiring-archaeologists are searching for lead musket balls, iron cannon shot, muskets, and swords—anything that will help identify the site of the largest and bloodiest battle in Texas history—the 1813 Battle of Medina. After leaving the military, they're also working to plant a flag in their futures.

Kyle O'Connor works at the Texas dig site.
PHOTO BY TODD VICIAN

UTURE

RIGHT: Stephen Humphreys' laptop shows the locations of lead and iron objects found in the pasture with metal detectors. FAR RIGHT: AVAR conducts a metal detection survey to search for the site of the Battle of Medina.

A nonprofit called American Veterans Archaeological Recovery (AVAR) is running this dig, and Stephen Humphreys is the organization's CEO. His boyish face and tattoos— Bible verses in Greek—seem to contrast with his credentials, which include graduate degrees in theology, archaeology, and Biblical studies. The six-year Air Force veteran founded AVAR in 2016 after participating in British-led projects while earning his doctorate in England.

Humphreys wanted to help disabled veterans. He says "rehabilitation archaeology"—adapting fieldwork to create long-term personal and professional growth—increases veterans' senses of purpose and value. And while they work, they talk. That helps them cope with anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation. Research, such as a 2018 report in *Psychological Services*, suggests peer discussions help veterans better reintegrate into society.

National Guard veteran Kyle O'Connor drove his Toyota Corolla all the way from Minnesota to this pasture, which is 25 miles south of San Antonio, to join the crew looking for the Battle of Medina site. During that historic four-hour fight, Spanish royalists routed a hodgepodge Republican Army of Tejanos, Americans, French, and Native Americans fighting for independence.

More than 200 years later, in 1968, a road-grading crew found a human skeleton south of San Antonio. Historians were excited when they discovered seven copper buttons from the early 1800s—along with a 1-inch lead ball lodged in the skeleton's neck. Historians think the man met his end after being struck by a cannon shot during the Battle of Medina. Now, about 10 miles away, Humphreys' crew spends hours scraping and sifting hardscrabble sand under the relentless Texas sun, hoping to find related artifacts.

O'Connor pulls blue and yellow surveyor flags out of the ground placed there just minutes ago and lays them nearby. Using a serrated trowel, he removes a coffee-can-sized clump of sand and dirt and sets it aside. He lowers the wand of a small, carrot-sized metal detector into the small pit he's dug and waves it back and forth, stopping when he hears it chirp. Metal fragments as small as a fingernail go into plastic bags to be cataloged and analyzed.

O'Connor, a 41-year-old husband and father of four, has wanted to be an archaeologist for as long as he can remember. He even earned a bachelor's degree in anthropology in 2006 in hopes of running archaeological digs across the globe. Instead, he joined the Minnesota Army National Guard, got married, and raised a family.

But a 45-minute Zoom presentation resurrected his dream in 2020. It featured

"OUR GOAL IS TO MAKE THEM GOOD AT THIS AND SEND THEM HOME SAYING, 'WOW, THAT WAS REALLY COOL. AND NOW I CAN DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT WITH MY LIFE THAT I DIDN'T THINK I COULD EVER DO.'"

PHOTO BY TODD VICIAN

an archaeologist discussing digs in Israel, Europe, and the United States—all manned by military veterans.

"I was thinking, I can't believe this is happening because I've been searching for something like this ever since I got out of the military—even beforehand," O'Connor recalled.

He filled out the online application for American Veterans Archaeological Recovery—which included questions about any military-connected medical conditions—and hit "send" even before the Zoom call ended.

Humphreys says the mix of mental and physical tasks involved with archaeology mirrors the sense of discovery and adventure that attracted people like O'Connor to the military—but without focusing on who they used to be.

"It's holistic," Humphreys says. "You're around other vets who have similar struggles, and you're getting to be part of a bigger-picture mission again, which a lot of vets miss."

This late-October dig in South Central Texas is the 18th project Humphreys has organized for veterans. Early on, he followed the British model in which vets joined an ongoing project and completed tasks with minimal training. But he noticed their sense of accomplishment, camaraderie, and connection with other veterans seemed to end when the tools were put away and everyone went home. Also, a few of the 220 veterans who have participated in the program told Humphreys he was playing into the "broken veteran" stereotype, rather than providing opportunities for actual long-term growth.

"It started to feel to me a little bit like that 'Tom Sawyer' kind of story where you were saying, 'Yeah, come and whitewash my fence. You'll love it. This is so great,'" Humphreys said. "The veterans were literally doing the grunt work for archaeologists, but they weren't getting the training."

So in 2019, Humphreys, a former aircraft maintenance officer, jettisoned the "one-and-done" history of archaeology-therapy programs and turned AVAR into a vocational program. Participants receive thousands of dollars' worth of experience and increasing levels of responsibility with each project. Last year, Humphreys was able to pay an hourly wage consistent with entry-level archaeology careers.

"The goal here really is not to bring them in and say, 'OK, you're busted. This will make you feel a little better for a couple of weeks, then you can go off and go home,'" he said. "Our goal is to make them good at this and send them home saying, 'Wow, that was really cool. And now I can do something different with my life that I didn't think I could ever do.'"

Kyle O'Connor is on his fourth project. He deployed to Iraq in 2005 for more than a year during some of the deadliest days of the war and retired from the National Guard in 2016. Working beside veterans again has helped him adjust mentally after leaving the close-knit community he thrived in for nearly 15 years. He is also a crew-support specialist for the organization and gets paid as a consultant. He works with the other participants, listening, offering advice, and adjusting his leadership approach depending on personalities.

Standing next to a laptop perched atop the bed of a white pickup truck, Humphreys points to a screen full of yellow and blue dots representing metal-detector hits. He says one of the dots represents a .50-caliber ball with small pieces missing, consistent with hitting something—or someone. The veterans are adding more information daily in the quest to find the battlefield, but they haven't found enough evidence to stake a flag and declare victory.

"We're looking for those tiny, tiny munitions in large quantities," Humphreys said. "When you find enough of those, then you can start making an argument that this was a battlefield."

O'Connor's determined face cracks into a smile when he talks about his team's accomplishments. He says every piece they find, even tins used for modern-era target practice, advances research. He's equally proud that his children, in their early teens and 20s, are seeing him get closer to achieving his dream of becoming a full-time cultural resource manager. Recalling his many days away from family while in the military, he hopes to find full-time archaeology work closer to home. He also plans to continue mentoring other veterans.

O'Connor still has hard days, but he credits his archaeology work with helping him along his healing process: "I come here and get to hang out with veterans the entire time. It's a Godsend; I don't think I'll ever give this up." ■

JEREMY SCROGGINS/AVAR

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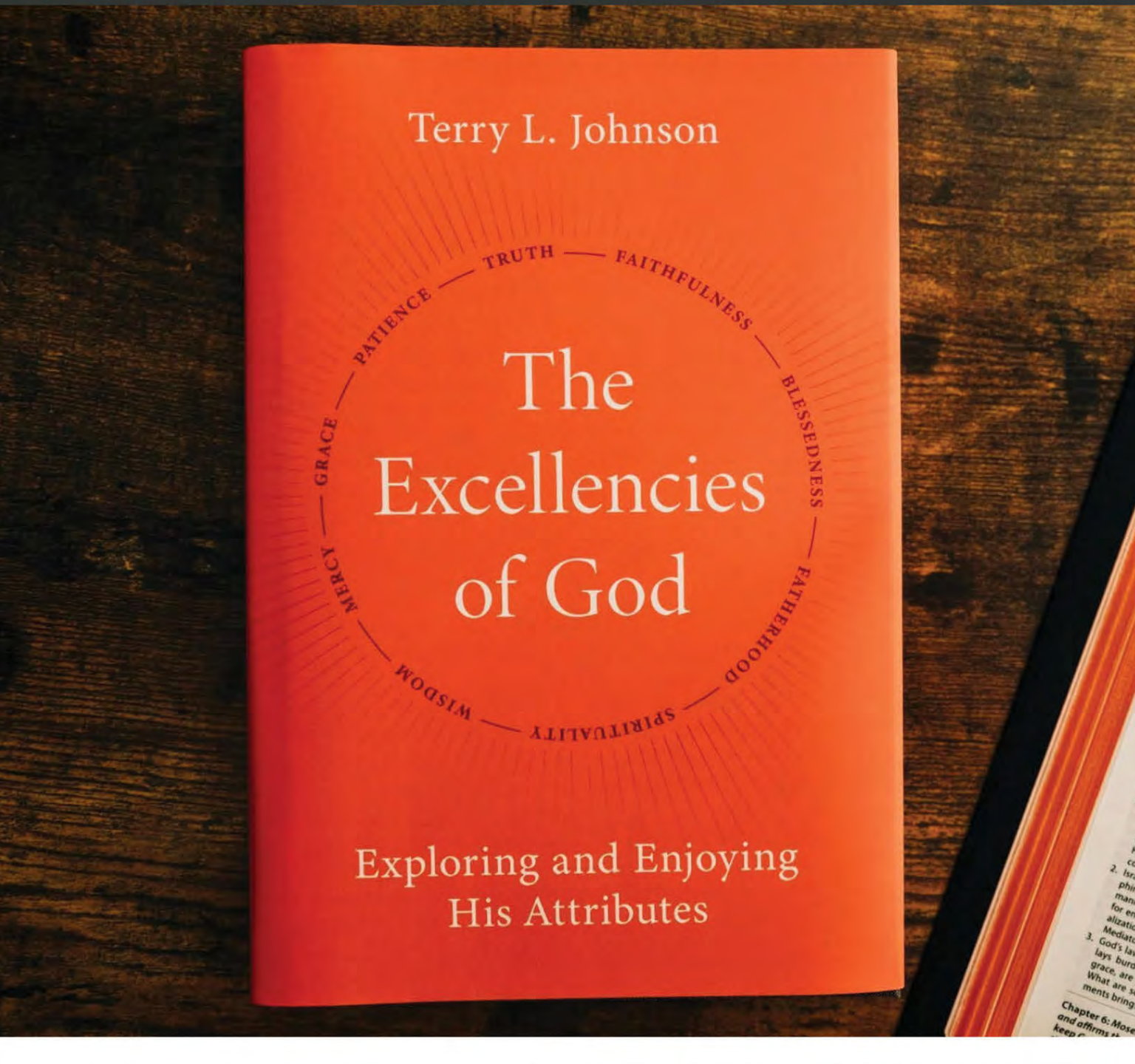

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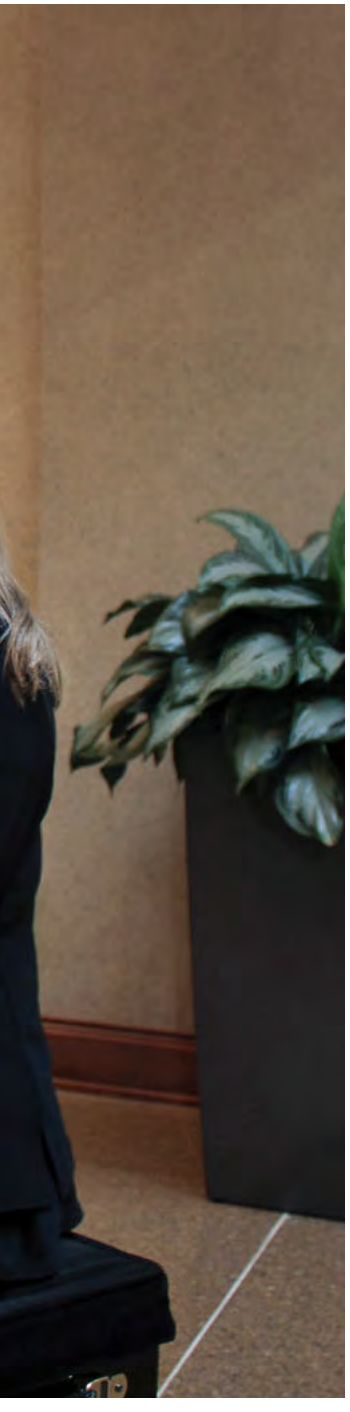

LIFESTYLE

Music is good medicine

A therapeutic harpist brings hymns and healing melodies to hospital patients in Atlanta

by KIM HENDERSON

ATLANTA'S Northside Hospital delivers more babies than any other hospital in the country, and thanks to Angi Bemiss, one of the first sounds some of those newborns hear is harp music—soothing and surprising—coming from her Dusty Strings FH32.

The longtime musician remembers when nurses in the hospital's neonatal intensive care unit first recognized her harp's potential. The NICU babies had monitors attached to their fingers, and with 10 babies to a room, Bemiss says, the alarms were nearly constant. "But they noticed after I had been playing for a few minutes, the room would go quiet. The babies were breathing deeper as their bodies acclimated to the music. The nurses were amazed."

Today, you can find Bemiss, 68, playing for babies, the elderly, surgical patients, bone marrow recipients, and others throughout Northside's facilities, something she's done since 1999 through the hospital's Healing Sounds program. Her career as a chief financial officer didn't hinder her desire to serve in this way. After she became certified as a therapeutic musician, Bemiss went to her business partners and proposed working just four days a week so she could play her harp on Fridays.

Now retired, Bemiss suits up in blend-in-to-the-background black and heads to the medical center at least twice a week. "It's about the music, not me," she stresses with a quiet smile, setting up in an atrium in Northside's Women's Center. Visitors look her way as she breaks the silence with a song called "Melissa's Circle," a piece based on a warmup exercise. "I start with it because it's easy to play, and that's good because people come up and ask all kinds of questions—is that your harp, how much did it cost, how long have you been playing?—and I am able to answer them."

While other musicians play in lobbies only, Bemiss can play at bedsides because she's a certified therapeutic musician, the only one on the hospital's roster. An iPad attached to her harp cart holds digitized scores of more than 1,000 songs, but a third of the requests Bemiss gets is for hymns already tucked away in her memory. Such music allows her to express her faith without words, she says.

Even so, a globally recognized hymn like "Amazing Grace" is off-limits in common →

Angi Bemiss

spaces because it may trigger deep emotions. Bemiss explains: "Triggering even good emotions can be inappropriate there. I've become very cognizant about not wanting someone to complain to hospital management. If I see tears in private rooms, I whisper, 'Shall I continue?' Response is 99 percent 'yes,' but it's a one-on-one interaction."

The first piece Bemiss' harp instructor taught her was Pachelbel's Canon in D, a staple he promised "could be played anywhere, for the rest of your life." She proved him right decades later in an unlikely spot—on one of Northside's oncology floors. A nurse asked Bemiss to set up outside the room of a patient who was too sick to attend her daughter's wedding that day. Moments later Bemiss looked down the hall and saw a flurry of white round the corner. "The entire bridal party had come to visit the mom, so I broke into Canon in very grand style."

"They can feel the faith that flows through her harp. It's a gift to everyone who gets to experience it."

That's one of many stories Bemiss has recorded in a log she's kept during her tenure at Northside. When she pulls the binder out and flips through its more than 300 pages, I can see some visits rate a single sentence, others a paragraph. None contain patient names because of privacy laws. The hospital auxiliary compensates Bemiss, but she adds, "I also play as a volunteer in some settings. I would never *not play* just because it isn't compensated."

Bemiss also collaborates with Northside's chaplains, including chaplain director Amani Legagneur, who believes Bemiss' music is an expression of her connection with the Holy Spirit: "That's something patients can feel no matter what their religious background is. They can feel the faith that flows through her harp. It's a gift to everyone who gets to experience it."

Legagneur has watched therapeutic music emerge as a complementary field, and she'd like to see more hospitals investing resources into it. "It's been around for a while, but people are just getting to do the science that shows neurological and physical benefits. In circumstances where patients can feel very fragmented and dehumanized, music seems to kind of pull them back together."

Bemiss says the hours she spends playing hymns are faith-building because the words course through her head and heart. That's also true for hospital staffers who listen in. Bemiss once played "His Eye Is on the Sparrow" as a busy young doctor prepared to enter a patient's room. He raised his hand to knock on the door, then suddenly turned toward her and spoke: "My grandmother used to sing that song for me." He paused to hum a few lines.

"The way I look at it," Bemiss says, "a different doctor walked into that patient's room." ■

Bemiss talks with staff members in the Northside Hospital chaplains' office.

PHOTO BY KIM HENDERSON

EDUCATION

Classroom conflicts

Discrimination complaints hit a record high

by LAUREN DUNN

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT of Education received a record number of discrimination complaints from schools and colleges last year. During the 2022 fiscal year that ended in September, the agency's Office for Civil Rights fielded almost 19,000 complaints over alleged violations of federal law protecting students and adults from discrimination, according to a *New York Times* report. The rise, which broke the 2016 record of 16,000, could suggest either an increase in discriminatory treatment or an expansion of polarized views on sexuality and race into classrooms.

The most common complaints centered on the treatment of students with disabilities. Resolved cases in states like Colorado and Arizona referenced reports of students with special needs being relegated to run-down trailer classrooms or facing disproportionate discipline, the *Times* said. Some complaints described racial bullying of black and Asian students. The Education Department will release its annual report detailing the findings later this year.

Some analysts blame the increase in complaints on escalating political disagreements. Multiple complaints came from conservative groups such as Parents Defending Education, which has outlined concerns that school events such as a "Students of Color Field Trip Opportunity" further racial discrimination. The year saw an increase in complaints that referenced discrimination over gender identity or sexual orientation.

Civil rights complaints had shrunk during the Trump administration after officials established stricter reporting requirements.

SCHOOL NURSES WANTED

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, some school districts are struggling to staff nurses' offices. School officials in Massachusetts said almost 300 school nurse positions—or over a tenth of the state school nurse workforce—remained vacant at the beginning of January.

The problem comes amid a more widespread shortage in the nursing profession. In 2017, a survey by the National Association of School Nurses found that a quarter of schools did not have a school nurse before the pandemic. As schools returned to in-person learning, contact tracing requirements contributed to burnout in the field.

According to the Wisconsin Association of School Nurses, some school nurses in the state are responsible for up to 4,000 students. Wisconsin's state Department of Health Services last fall announced an $8.3 million grant toward school nurse and other health employee staffing.

—L.D.

ILLUSTRATION BY KRIEG BARRIE; NURSE: ISTOCK

SCIENCE

Solar-powered cleanup

A novel system breaks down plastic waste

by HEATHER FRANK

USING THE SUN for energy, researchers at the University of Cambridge have pioneered a system that converts plastic waste into useful chemicals. The system is the first solar-powered technique to simultaneously convert plastic and the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide into useful products.

During photocatalysis, a material (the catalyst) absorbs enough light energy to make a chemical reaction occur. In the Cambridge team's system, a solar-powered reactor uses the mineral perovskite to absorb sunlight.

In initial testing, the system converted plastic bottles into glycolic acid while converting carbon dioxide into syngas. Syngas, primarily a mixture of hydrogen and carbon monoxide, can be further processed to generate heat, electricity, diesel, and hydrogen gas. Glycolic acid doesn't require further processing to be used in industries ranging from cosmetics to textiles.

Publishing their findings Jan. 9 in *Nature Synthesis*, the scientists reported that their reactor's production rate was 10-100 times greater than that of traditional photocatalytic reactors. With an estimated 400 million metric tons of plastic waste generated globally each year, a method for reducing the surplus could prove pivotal.

A solar-powered reactor for converting plastic and greenhouse gases into fuels

WHY OBESITY HITS MEN HARDER

York University scientists may now understand why men are more than three times as likely as women to die from obesity-related diseases—including cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Their research, published in the Jan. 20 issue of *iScience*, points the blame at genetics.

The scientists compared the genetic makeup of endothelial cells, which make up the blood vessels in fat tissue, of male and female mice. In an earlier study, they'd found that obese female mice produce more blood vessels to provide oxygen and nutrients to fat tissue than do their male counterparts.

The new research revealed distinct genetic differences between male and female mice. Genetic processes associated with generation of new blood cells were higher in the female mice's fat tissue, whereas genetic processes associated with inflammation—a trigger for disease—were higher in the fat tissue of the male mice. *—H.F.*

CHOCOLATE: MAKES MOUTH HAPPY

Why is chocolate so delectable? Scientists at the University of Leeds have discovered that's partly due to its fat content. When chocolate melts in the mouth, fat on the treat's outer surface creates a film around the tongue and mouth that makes the chocolate feel deliciously smooth. The researchers, publishing their study Jan. 12 in *ACS Applied Materials & Interfaces*, hope to develop low-fat chocolates that still taste luxurious. *—H.F.*

REACTOR: REISNER LAB; CHOCOLATE: ISTOCK

Muslims leave after participating in their weekly Friday noon special prayer at the Al-Islah Islamic Center mosque in Hamtramck, Mich.

JEWEL SAMAD/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

RELIGION

Weighing sacrificial rites

Religious animal sacrifice may raise hackles, but legal experts say it's protected under the U.S. Constitution

by EMMA FREIRE

THE DETROIT-AREA CITY of Hamtramck, Mich., made headlines in January for an odd reason: Its city council voted to allow religious animal sacrifice on residential property.

Among those welcoming the vote was the Michigan chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations. Muslims traditionally slaughter animals during Eid al-Adha, or the Holiday of Sacrifice, which commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac, as described in Genesis 22. Hamtramck is majority Muslim, with many residents tracing their roots to Yemen and Bangladesh.

In Hamtramck, the issue came to the forefront last year when the city updated its animal ordinances and recommended adding a ban on animal slaughter. When the proposed ban provoked a backlash from residents, the city council changed course, instead putting forward a new ordinance explicitly permitting animal sacrifice, according to the *Detroit Free Press*.

The ordinance passed on Jan. 10. Councilwoman Amanda Jaczkowski had previously supported a ban but changed her vote after getting advice from the city attorney, who said banning animal sacrifices would invite a civil rights lawsuit.

Strange as it sounds, it's not the first U.S. conflict over animal sacrifice—an issue legal experts say is rooted in constitutional rights. A 1993 Supreme Court decision upheld the right of the Santería religion—an African diasporic religion that developed in Cuba—to conduct animal sacrifice.

The killing of animals is legal in various secular contexts. Thomas C. Berg, a professor at the University of St. Thomas School of Law, noted that under the Constitution the government is permitted to restrict religious practices in some cases. "But if the law in question allows similar behavior for nonreligious reasons, then it must allow religious behavior as well unless banning it is absolutely necessary," he said.

Another example of animal sacrifice in America is the Orthodox Jewish tradition of Kapparot, which involves sacrificing chickens on the eve of Yom Kippur. In fact, a halal butcher (one who prepares meat according to Islamic law) in Hamtramck slaughtered 800-1,000 chickens for a nearby Jewish congregation in 2015. The slaughterhouse normally used by Congregation Bais Chabad was unavailable, so they chose a halal butcher instead. The U.S. Department of Agriculture tried to block the arrangement, saying the butcher first needed to be kosher certified. But the agency granted an exception after the Jewish congregation complained the butcher couldn't be certified in time for the religious holiday.

At the Jan. 10 Hamtramck council meeting, residents and animal-rights activists expressed concerns about animal cruelty and sanitation risks.

Ashley Byrne, a spokeswoman for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), appeared on Fox News to condemn the vote: "We have to think about the fact that children are often exposed to these religious rituals. These animals' throats are slashed and their heads are manually torn from their bodies." She added that many Muslims and others who formerly engaged in animal sacrifice have developed alternatives.

Hamtramck is relevant to Christians, Berg noted, because the same First Amendment rules that protect religious sacrifice also protect Christian foster-care agencies and wedding vendors: "First Amendment protections for different faiths stand or fall together." ■

VOICES **ANDRÉE SEU PETERSON**

Death of a salesman

Reflections on the passing of my father

AFTER RETURNING FROM FRANCE and the big war in 1946, my father was a furniture salesman and carpeting installer in the family business all his life. He never thought of being anything else.

Then God gave him another life. He and Mom moved to Pennsylvania in late 2000 after my husband died, and our church offered a 78-year-old out-of-work floor covering mechanic a custodial job, allowing him to continue in it for two decades. I believe that kept him alive, like that leaf the old artist painted on the brick wall outside his bedridden neighbor's window that produced in her the will to live ("The Last Leaf," by O. Henry).

My childhood memories of my father are scant because he was always at "the store." I do recall looking up at him shaving in the bathroom. I must have asked why we go to Mass on Sunday, because he answered, without looking away from the mirror or interrupting his strokes: "The way I figure it, if God is real, then it's smart to believe in Him; and if He's not, we haven't lost anything." By which I understood that God is a fire insurance policy. In colleges they call it "Pascal's wager."

By the time my father died on Dec. 27, his faith had passed into something more substantial, though I don't know when and where that happened. His theology was still poor, so that I couldn't (or wouldn't) even say "Amen" to some of his mealtime prayers. ("Oh Jesus, thank You for doing it all for us. I'm gonna pay You back.")

So it was a little surprising when at breakfast recently my father said to me, matter-of-factly: "I was talking to God in my bed this morning, and then God started talking to me, and He talked for a long time." This was atypical speech, and I probed as to what God had said. He hemmed and hawed, and finally offered only, "You need to obey," which I dismissed as an inauthentic part of the story meant to get me off his back.

"Did you hear an actual voice?" I asked.

"Yes."

"What was it like?"

"It was gentle."

I noted the date. Dec. 16, 2022.

Ten days later my father slumped down on the sofa with a massive stroke, and with his eyes glassy and pulled involuntarily to the left, he gurgled, "I gotta get up, I gotta get up." But this time he couldn't get up, and it was the ambulance people who carried him up to his bed, where he died the next day, his 98-year-old albatross of a body finally failing him.

My daughter-in-law, who was in attendance, took me aside afterward and said that at the moment my father died she received a vision of a place flooded with bright light, and large gates opening up, and my father standing there saying, "Wow." Which is something he would say.

At the church, where I did cleaning with my father until the day before Christmas, my boss Ed once told me that when you want to straighten out the chairs in the sanctuary after the Sunday worship, if you give a nudge to one chair at the end of the row, all the others will straighten out too, since they're all connected with hooks on the side.

That's the effect my father's death had on me. God nudged him, and it instantly straightened out a lot of crooked things in my life. For days afterward I walked around in intense fear of the Lord and spiritual clarity, such as I have experienced only a few times. I liked that, and wanted to keep it, and asked my husband why God doesn't let us hold on to it. He said that maybe God wants us to choose to trust and obey Him even when the intensity fades.

In retrospect I'm thinking that maybe what my father said at breakfast—that "you have to obey"—was true after all, and directed not to him but to me. ■

Email *aseupeterson@wng.org*

OLD WESTERN CULTURE

COMPLETE LECTURE LIST

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THE GREEKS

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1. Introduction to Old Western Culture
2. The Backdrop to the Iliad
3. The Anger of Achilleus
4. The First Critical Turning Point
5. The Deception of Zeus
6. The Second Critical Turning Point
7. The Death of Hektor
8. The Telemachy
9. The Court of Alkinoös
10. Odysseus Tells of his Wanderings
11. The Homecoming of Odysseus
12. Legacy of Homer in the West

DRAMA AND LYRIC:
1. Development of Theater
2. The Period, Poets, and Presentation
3. The Agamemnon
4. Libation-bearers and Eumenides
5. Oedipus the King
6. Oedipus at Colonus
7. Medea and Trojan Women
8. The Frogs and The Clouds
9. Sappho, Pindar, and Theocritus
10. Lyric Poetry: Hesiod
11. Quintus of Smyrna, The Fall of Troy
12. The Argonautica

THE HISTORIES:
1. Overview of Greek History
2. Intro to Herodotus
3. Stories of Egypt and other nations
4. Beginning of Persian Wars
5. The Battle of Thermopylae
6. Salamis and End of the Persian Wars
7. Intro to Thucydides
8. The Early Years, Pericles, the Plague
9. Mytiline, Exile, Revolution, and Melos
10. Sicily and the Downfall of Athens
11. Xenophon: March of the Ten Thousand
12. The Lessons of Greek History

THE PHILOSOPHERS:
1. Intro to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle
2. The Apology: Socrates, Paul, Wisdom
3. The Crito and Phaedo
4. Phaedrus: Dialectic of Desire
5. The Republic: Understanding Morality
6. The Forms influence on Christendom
7. The Metaphysics: Aristotle & Aquinas
8. Cosmos in Antiquity and Middle Ages
9. The Ethics: Happiness the End of Man
10. Aristotle: The Ethics: Friendship
11. Aristotle: Poetics: Oedipus and Austen
12. The Lessons of Greek Philosophy

YEAR 2
THE ROMANS

THE AENEID:
1. Overview of Roman History
2. Introduction to the Aeneid
3. Rome is an Idea
4. Fall of Troy and Wanderings of Aeneas
5. The Tragedy of Dido
6. The Underworld
7. The Broken Truce and Shield of Aeneas
8. The Tragedy of Nisus and Euryalus
9. Juno's Surrender, and Death of Turnus
10. Metamorphoses I
11. Metamorphoses II
12. The Epics of Lucretius, Lucan, Statius

THE HISTORIANS:
1. Livy: Philosophy of history, monarchy
2. Livy: Beginning and Heroes of Republic
3. Livy: Threats to the Republic
4. Tacitus: History philosophy and Tiberius
5. Tacitus: Claudius
6. Tacitus: Nero
7. Jugurthine War, Catiline Conspiracy
8. Julius Caesar: The Gallic wars
9. Plutarch: Demosthenes and Cicero
10. Plutarch: Alexander and Caesar
11. Cicero: Against Verres, Against Antony
12. Overview of The Historians

EARLY CHRISTIANITY:
1. The Roman Background of Christianity
2. The Jewish Background of Christianity
3. The Didache
4. The First Letter of Clement
5. Roman World in 2nd and 3rd Centuries
6. Ignatius and Polycarp
7. The Apologists
8. Justin Martyr
9. Irenaeus of Lyons
10. Clement of Alexandria and Origen
11. Eusebius I
12. Eusebius II

NICENE CHRISTIANITY:
1. Constantine and The Council of Nicea
2. The Nicene and Post-Nicene Age
3. Athanasius's On the Incarnation
4. Athanasius's Life of Anthony
5. John Chrysostom
6. Augustine's Confessions I
7. Augustine's Confessions II
8. Augustine's City of God I
9. Augustine's City of God II
10. Augustine's City of God III
11. Augustine's City of God IV
12. Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy

YEAR 3
CHRISTENDOM

EARLY MEDIEVALS:
1. Historical Overview of Christendom
2. Benedict's Rule and Monasticism
3. Transition to the Middle Ages
4. Procopius and Gregory
5. Maximus the Confessor
6. Celtic Christians
7. Beowulf
8. Bede I: Early History of England
9. Bede II: The Coming of Christianity
10. Bede III: The Confirming of Christianity
11. Lives of Charlemagne and Alfred
12. John of Damascus

DEFENSE OF THE FAITH:
1. Historical Overview of High Middle Ages
2. Anselm's Ontological Argument
3. Anselm's Monologium I
4. Anselm's Monologium II
5. Anselm's Why God Became Man I
6. Anselm's Why God Became Man II
7. History of the Kings of Britain I
8. History of the Kings of Britain II
9. The Golden Legend
10. Historical Overview of the Crusades
11. The Conquest of Constantinople
12. The Life of St. Louis

THE MEDIEVAL MIND:
1. Introduction to The Medieval Mind
2. Aquinas' Compendium I
3. Aquinas' Compendium II
4. Aquinas' Compendium III
5. Introduction to Dante
6. Dante: The Inferno I
7. Dante: The Inferno II
8. Dante: Purgatorio I
9. Dante: Purgatorio II
10. Dante: Paradiso I
11. Dante: Paradiso II
12 Conclusion

THE REFORMATION:
1. Intro to Renaissance and Reformation
2. Canterbury Tales I
3. Canterbury Tales II
4. Canterbury Tales III
5. From Premodern to Modern Times
6. Predecessors to the Reformation
7. Luther and 16th Century Reform
8. International Calvinism
9. The Reformation in England
10. Spenser I
11. Spenser II
12. Spenser III

YEAR 4
EARLY MODERNS

RISE OF ENGLAND:
1. Introduction to Early Moderns
2. Introduction to Shakespeare
3. Shakespeare's Sonnets
4. Shakespeare's King Lear
5. Shakespeare's Richard III
6. Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice
7. Metaphysical Poets: John Donne
8. Metaphysical Poets: Herbert & Marvell
9. Introduction to Milton
10. Paradise Lost I
11. Paradise Lost II
12. Paradise Lost III

POETRY AND POLITICS:
1. Introduction to Enlightenment
2. Alexander Pope I
3. Alexander Pope II
4. Edmund Burke I
5. Edmund Burke II
6. Romantic Poetry I
7. Romantic Poetry II
8. Victorian Poetry, Democracy in America
9. Edgar Allen Poe
10. Victorian Poetry I
11. Victorian Poetry II
12. Victorian Poetry III

THE ENLIGHTENMENT:
1. Intro: What Is the Enlightenment?
2. The Scientific Revolution: An Overview
3. Galileo Moves the Earth
4. The Galileo Affair
5. Descartes & Skepticism
6. Descartes' Search for Certainty
7. Did Descartes Succeed?
8. Descartes & the Scientific Revolution
9. Isaac Newton Takes the Throne
10. Hume: Taking Skepticism Seriously
11. Kant's Answer to Hume
12. Reid & Genuine Enlightenment

THE NOVELS:
1. Introduction to The Novels
2. Jane Austen I
3. Jane Austen II
4. Charles Dickens
5. Fyodor Dostoevsky
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A chat with Bill Wells

On politics, music, and treating all people with compassion and respect

by LYNN VINCENT

DR. BILL WELLS SAYS his long years as a mental health clinician have helped him tackle the homelessness problem in El Cajon, Calif., where he is mayor. But I wonder whether that experience also helps him remain sane in a political landscape where an overwhelming majority of public officials not only deride Biblical values, but actively and consistently seek to undermine them.

Wells wrote this issue's cover story about the Golden State's homelessness epidemic and how powerful politicians in the state capital have tried to dismantle conservative solutions that were actually working in his own town. A Republican and former El Cajon City Council member, Wells was appointed mayor in 2013 when the serving mayor resigned. He was then elected in 2014, and reelected in 2018 and last November—the latter time with 71 percent of the vote. That tally is kind of astonishing since most El Cajon voters are registered Democrats. I asked Wells about his time as mayor.

What's it like to be a conservative in California politics? Being a conservative in a place like California can be challenging, but I'm constantly reminded of how many people of common sense and good values still live here. Because left-wing politics are so pervasive, there are remarkably few conservatives willing to speak out on conservative issues. This often gives me an opportunity to be a lonesome voice in fighting against things like draconian COVID-19 restrictions and ridiculous homeless policies, while fighting for religious liberty and other important issues.

People are exiting California in record numbers. How is that reflected in your own city? Even though people have been fleeing California in recent years, the population in El Cajon has actually increased by a small amount. Interestingly though, there has been a major shift in demographics. Over the past 20 years we have seen a huge influx of people from the Middle East, specifically Chaldean Catholics. Most of these people fled Iraq after suffering horrible religious persecution. They are great neighbors and have greatly enhanced our city.

You're a clinician who decided to run for mayor. What inspired you to do that? My journey from clinician to politician began with an injustice I had endured from the government. I was so disheartened and angry that I ran for office and have since spent my time committed to the idea that I would champion anyone who was in a position of powerlessness. I wanted to do what I could to make sure people were treated with justice and respect. I have always kept that as my core value.

What is your favorite part of mayoring? What's your least favorite? My favorite part of being a mayor is the outpouring of love and support I get from people all throughout the region. My least favorite part is having commonsense solutions stifled by the overwhelming leftist majority.

I understand you're a musician. Tell us about that. Music and being a musician have been the one constant in my life. I play piano, sax, and guitar, and I had a brief career as a professional musician. At some point I decided to pursue a less unstable way to make a living, but I have never stopped performing.

Where do you play? Over the past few decades, I have concentrated on playing music at church, but I have also played in pop rock, swing, and jazz groups. Over the past few years, I've helped put on a series of benefit concerts for various charities, primarily the East County Transitional Living Center (a Christian homeless shelter) and the Home of Guiding Hands (a developmental disability service organization). This has been such a joy for me.

What's next for you in politics? I have decided to open an exploratory committee to run for the U.S. Congress. I think I'll have a lot of support, but I have to start this journey to really know. ■

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