TIME FOR A CHANGE: RETHINKING NURSING HOME SAFETY AFTER COVID-19  
P.46
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IOS app coming soon!
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HOME IMPROVEMENTS
A wave of pandemic deaths has triggered a reevaluation of long-term elder care, as nursing homes weigh options for preventing viral spread and families look to bring relatives back home
by Emily Belz

LIVING IN LIMBO
President Joe Biden’s refugee waffling baffles refugees overseas and advocates stateside
by Harvest Prude

ISLAND DEFENSE
The United States reconsiders how to deter a Chinese invasion of Taiwan
by Angela Lu Fulton

CAMPUSS MUTINY
Seattle Pacific University students and faculty demand the school ditch hiring policies affirming Biblical marriage. Will its board become the next to buckle?
by Esther Eaton
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THE SERIES’ GREATEST STRENGTH REMAINS A JESUS WHO FEELS LIKE A NORMAL, ALBEIT PERFECT, MAN.

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ON THE COVER: illustration by Michael Hirshon

A scene from Season 2 of The Chosen
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WHAT'S IT LIKE TO WORK WITH OUTSIDE ILLUSTRATORS FOR THE MAGAZINE?

"It's thrilling and somewhat terrifying to commission art. Many times, I'm working with someone for the first time, and I try to communicate our needs while still giving the artist room to fully engage with the process. Art is not predictable, but that's what makes it so compelling.”

—Assistant Art Director Rachel Beatty

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TRANSLATION ABUSE
E. TODD RYAN/ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.
Numbers 5:27 implies that a guilty woman, whether pregnant or not, would suffer the same curse. And verse 28 indicates that infertility is the curse in mind. Even if it included a miscarriage of an illegitimate pregnancy—a big if—it was an act of God and not an act of man, as is abortion.

FINDING HOPE AFTER A FUNERAL
APRIL 10, P. 46—KNOX TABB/DULUTH, GA.
Glory to God for awakening His Bride to care for the least of these.

SEEING THE MIND BEHIND THE UNIVERSE
APRIL 10, P. 32—ROBERT G. DEMOSS/DRESHER, PA.
Thank you for the interesting and engaging interview with Stephen Meyer. However, it is not wise to infer that scientific discoveries will strengthen the acceptance of the “God hypothesis” by nonbelievers. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, our Lord taught that no amount of empirical evidence can convince an unbeliever of the truth.

ONCE MORE UNTO THE BREACH
APRIL 10, P. 72—WINONA EDWARDS/LIVE OAK, FLA.
Marvin Olasky’s column with its wonderful wisdom should be required reading in schools across the country!

POWER PLAY FOR WOMEN
APRIL 10, P. 68—RUSSELL GUETSCHOW/VICKSBURG, MISS.
An obvious solution to level the competitive playing field would be to form three separate athletic divisions: Boys would compete against boys, girls against girls, and transgenders against transgenders.

WE CAN’T COUNT
APRIL 10, P. 10—JAY SINNETT/GREENVILLE, S.C.
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does, indeed, know how to count. The CDC’s “Excess Deaths Associated With COVID-19” chart shows the expected number of deaths from 2017 through today in the United States. And it’s clear to me that the pandemic is responsible for more than 500,000 excess deaths.

TRANSLATION ABUSE
Leah Hickman did an outstanding job of presenting both sides of this issue. Such reporting restores my faith in journalism—and even more so in the younger generation.

APRIL 10, P. 40—BRENT EVANS/YULEE, FLA.

I enjoyed Resurrection up until Peter and the disciples returned to Jerusalem after Christ’s ascension. The film’s writers either didn’t read the book of Acts, or they deliberately chose to rewrite it. Interpretation is one thing, but completely changing the facts of the historical narrative is a distortion of God’s Word. As a pastor, I cannot recommend this movie.

QUICK TAKES: HONORS BY AGE
APRIL 10, P. 18—DAN OWENS/FORT WRIGHT, KY.
Thanks for the story about 118-year-old Kane Tanaka carrying the Olympic torch in Japan later this year—what a wonderful tribute! While she hopes to live to 122 and become the “oldest person ever to live,” she would still have a few years to go to beat Methuselah’s record of 969 (Genesis 5:27)!

A FAMILY TREE FROM A TO Z
APRIL 10, P. 8—DAVID JAMISON/CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA.
I enjoyed reading Kevin Martin’s account of the family tree of WORLD. I started getting the magazine shortly after coming to Christ when you were still using newsprint. And I remember getting upset when you switched to glossy paper, because I really liked newsprint! But I got over it quickly and have thoroughly enjoyed WORLD over the years. You’ve added immeasurably to my life.

READ MORE LETTERS AT WNG.ORG/MAILBAG
Summertime, and the livin’ is busier than ever

Four big programs and initiatives are keeping WORLD busy this summer

As the school year winds down, along with it, we seem conditioned to expect our lives also to slow down. But at WORLD, this is the time of year that life starts feeling busier than ever.

This year, four big things and a lot of little things add to the busy-ness: World Journalism Institute (WJI), WORLD’s new website, WORLD Watch, and an all-new podcast.

WJI: This spring, we resume in-person instruction. We are working with 26 students this year during the 16 days we spend at Dordt University. This course is the heart of the entire WJI program, and our students and staff will feel like they’re working 24/6 while they are together.

Lee Pitts, WJI’s associate dean and instructor of journalism/communication at Dordt, tells me we had more applicants to this year’s course than ever before. The students we accepted represent 22 different colleges (half of them Christian colleges).

WNG.org: I mentioned a few weeks ago that the new site would be rolled out in stages, but the first stage, and the one with the most obvious changes, is live now. If you haven’t visited, I hope you will check it out. You may find something you like that you didn’t even know WORLD does, like our 10 “Roundups,” daily news updates on specific topics. And look for ongoing website updates for the next several months. Good things are on the way.

WORLD Watch: We’ve just passed our one-year anniversary for the initial WORLD Watch offering, called News in 3. Heading into the summer months, we will continue the daily program, and we’ll be testing some new ideas in preparation for a new school year starting in August. No slowdown there.

Lawless podcast: This is a big deal. Lawless is our new “true crime” podcast (the tagline: “Not every crime is against the law”). The podcast launches in late summer, and Season 1 will tell the story of Terri Schiavo, whose life a court order ended in 2005. WORLD Magazine told Schiavo’s story in real time in the months leading up to her death, but we never have put the whole story together for our readers and listeners. Lynn Vincent, who did a good bit of WORLD’s reporting on the story back then, is writing and hosting Lawless, with a lot of help from Paul Butler’s WORLD Radio team.

Those are the big things that, along with a bunch of smaller projects and the heavy reporting load our staff carries every day, will be keeping us busy in the next few months.

Kevin Martin

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"Your word I have hidden in my heart..." Psalm 119:11
Cultural icons

Going from Gutenberg to modern-day publishing

If it was indeed the case that Johannes Gutenberg’s humble printing press was a major cultural development of the last millennium—as I suggested in WORLD’s last issue (May 8)—it seems appropriate to ask as a follow-up: What icons might future historians look back on and identify as similarly significant?

I’d like to suggest several such “markers,” but I must first confess how much my lifelong involvement in publishing shapes my perspective. Three times in my life I’ve enjoyed hands-on involvement in the operation of a Gutenberg-style printing press. So it was altogether natural for me, when Time magazine’s editors in 1999 chose Gutenberg as their “Man of the Millennium,” to say, “Right on!” They were speaking my language.

So no one should be surprised that my first choice is the Linotype machine. The common use of movable type was the great victory of Gutenberg’s era. But who would find a way to automate—probably from a keyboard—the orderly assembling of those millions of pieces of type? Through the centuries, many would try.

Credit for that success belongs to Ottmar Mergenthaler, a German watchmaker who lived in Baltimore—and his invention (1884) was both a technical and a cultural marvel. Mergenthaler is reported to have said his goal was a machine that would never wear out and would never be improved upon. Thomas Edison called Mergenthaler’s invention “the Eighth Wonder of the World.”

Well over a century later, a few of Mergenthaler’s early models are still operative—and if you ever get a chance to watch it happen, don’t pass it up. But don’t get too close to the pot of molten lead waiting to be shaped into sentences and paragraphs, one “line of type” at a time!

The Linotype’s most profound impact was on the newspapers, magazines, and books of the day. A daily newspaper’s front page, pre-Linotype, required as many as a dozen skilled typesetters. With the Linotype, that typically dropped to just one or two. Printing costs were dramatically reduced, and libraries flourished around the world.

While it took more than four centuries to get from Gutenberg’s press to Mergenthaler’s typesetter, my next culture changer showed up just 100 years later: the tiny tabletop personal Apple computer known as the Macintosh. Yes, there were dozens of other candidates seeking the public’s approval for everything from word processing to managing the family’s picture album, from keeping an eye on the church budget to organizing your family’s recipes. All this, keep in mind, was pre-internet. Folks weren’t familiar yet with the PC world. We needed some patient help—and Apple’s Macintosh gained a reputation for making things simple.

More specifically, the Mac led us in moving from a screenful of numeric formulas to the welcome concept of WYSIWYG. Very simply, WYSIWYG was the reminder that “What you see is what you get.” There’s no need to interpret anything. Before, each font or size of type was described by a number. It was the same for every picture, or any aspect of layout. But with the Mac, the design and size of what you saw on the computer’s screen was exactly what your printer produced. Well, usually.

It was a profound change in thinking. Especially for students and tens of thousands of people in creative vocations, the Mac became the standard. That’s the gist of my argument that the Macintosh deserves to be seen as a standout icon of cultural change.

But there’s more—and too much to expand on here. The newest icon, by almost anyone’s telling, is the relatively tiny cell phone. What other invention has our creative and sovereign God chosen in our current culture to bring more extensive change? We may visit that discussion in future issues.

In the meantime, you may have your own insights on the matter. Your life experience may prompt you to suggest quite different candidates for the role of symbolizing such societal change. I’d love to hear from you—and especially if your letter is 100 words or less and arrives on a Gutenberg press.
Arguably a Bible innovation as significant as Gutenberg’s moveable type.
ENGAGING OUR WORLD

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Diane Langberg

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Jonathan T. Pennington

Liberty for All
Andrew T. Walker

Preaching to People in Pain
Matthew D. Kim

The Big Idea Companion for Preaching and Teaching
Matthew D. Kim & Scott M. Gibson

Handbook on the Gospels
Benjamin L. Gladd

Available Where Books Are Sold
RESIDENT JOE BIDEN’S ADDRESS to a joint session of Congress on April 28 and Republican Sen. Tim Scott’s immediate rebuttal sounded a lot like past presidential and opposition tit-for-tats. Each laid out a lofty vision with sometimes soaring language. After the weird political theater of the past year, we might even relish a return to the ordinary.

And yet the media ecosystem that centers on Washington, D.C., keeps peddling each news blip as a last-stand issue, an outrage bigger than the previous day’s. Reaction from both the left and the right to Scott—he’s the only black Republican in the Senate, so his race is prominent in news accounts—was a perfect case study.

Outraged by outrage
Resisting the temptation of perpetual political anger

by Michael Reneau
Immediately after Scott’s rebuttal to Biden’s speech, the left unsurprisingly came after him. Plenty of cable news talking heads lobbed bombs, but some of the most vicious came from MSNBC’s Tiffany Cross: “Tim Scott does not represent any constituency other than the small number of sleepy slow-witted sufferers of Stockholm Syndrome who get elevated to prominence for repeating a false narrative about this country that makes conservative white people feel comfortable.” She also called him a “clown” and a “tap dancer.”

But on the right, Fox News host Tucker Carlson, who has climbed to the top of the network in part by peddling outrage, also sniped at Scott. Liberals had said there’s “more work to be done” on race issues following Derek Chauvin’s conviction in the death of George Floyd—and Scott, who last year drafted a police reform bill to compete with Democrats’ more extreme bill, also said that. Of course we have more work to do this side of heaven, but Carlson’s point seemed to be: If liberals say x, conservatives like Scott must say the opposite. Never, never seek consensus.

It all underscores what’s become one of the foundational laws of politics: For every outrage there’s an equal but opposite outrage. The bombast that political operatives and media personalities gin up won’t go away—it pushes up ratings! But what’s a Christian’s calling amid the Forever Culture Wars?

First, we should recognize the limits of politics. The outrage-after-outrage-after-outrage spin cycle leads to follies like Major League Baseball moving the All-Star Game from Georgia to Colorado for political reasons. Over politicization drives more and more Americans into ideological ghettos where their calls for boycotts butt up against the other side’s calls for boycotts.

Dutch theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper advocated “sphere sovereignty”: Each area of life (state, home, education) fulfills its own purpose, distinct from the other spheres. It’s a helpful distinction in the days of perpetual outrage. When we allow political divisions to creep into places they ought not, soon our opinions on things like mask mandates and vaccination become divisive virtue signals instead of areas in which brothers and sisters in Christ may lovingly disagree.

Second, we should remember that the Scriptures tell us to expect troubles. Christianity has enjoyed a relatively comfortable position in the public square for most of U.S. history, but cultural forces have tilted over the last six decades. We should pray about the rise of secularism, the crumbling of sexual mores, and the hysteria of “cancel culture,” but we should neither fear nor rage. Those trends help us remember what the Apostle Peter wrote: We are sojourners and exiles (1 Peter 2:11).

Pastor Alistair Begg recently reminded us to “choose between obedience and comfort. The next decades will not bring apathy to the gospel, but antagonism. And that’s OK. After all, that has been the reality for most of God’s people through most of history.”

Third, although we shouldn’t abandon spheres like politics, we should double down on the sphere God specifically tasked to proclaim His word: the Church. Gallup reported in March that church membership among Americans fell to 47 percent in 2020—the lowest it’s been since Gallup began tracking the statistic in 1937. That’s down from about 70 percent at the turn of the century.

Perpetual political outrage isn’t worth Christians’ time. Political engagement is. But lobbying, voting, and outraging won’t get more of our neighbors engaged with local congregations.
$39.6B
China's defense spending in 1999.

70.5%
The percentage of total military spending in East Asia for which China is responsible.

$13B
China's official military spending growth from 2020, which almost equals Taiwan's total military spending (see p. 52).

335
The number of ships in China's naval fleet. The U.S. Navy has 296 deployable ships.

$753B
The Biden administration's U.S. defense spending proposal for fiscal year 2022.

$208 BILLION
The amount the People's Republic of China announced it will spend on its military in 2021, a 6.8 percent increase over 2020. But analysts say China's real spending is much higher. The International Institute for Strategic Studies estimated China's overall 2019 spending was $234 billion, even though Beijing officially reported $172 billion.
STRONAUT MICHAEL COLLINS, the Apollo 11 crewmember who didn’t get to walk on the moon, died April 28 at age 90 of cancer. Collins piloted the command module while Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin descended to the lunar surface for man’s first walk on the moon in 1969. After traveling the 238,000 miles to the moon, Collins piloted the ship alone for nearly 28 hours while his colleagues left in the lunar lander to make history on the moon. Some called Collins “the loneliest man in history,” but he later said he enjoyed the time out of radio contact with NASA but worried about Aldrin and Armstrong. He had to successfully redock the lander onto the command module for all three men to make it back to Earth. After that historic mission, he never returned to space. Collins left NASA and eventually headed up the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum and authored several books.

DIED

Apollo 11 astronaut was 90

Michael Collins orbited the moon while Buzz Aldrin, Neil Armstrong walked its surface

The number of babies born in the United States declined by 4 percent last year, the largest dip since 1979, according to a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Health Statistics. The numbers dropped among every major ethnic group: Birthrates fell 4 percent for black and white women, 8 percent for Asian American women, and 3 percent for Hispanic women. The CDC said the birth figures leave the nation “below replacement levels,” which means more people are dying than being born. The lead expert on the report said anxiety about the pandemic contributed to the decline.

DIED

At least 45 people died and 150 others sustained injuries on April 30 during a stampede at an overcrowded religious festival in northern Israel. Local media estimated about 100,000 ultra-Orthodox Jews had crammed into the Galilee tomb of a second-century sage and mystic for the annual Lag BaOmer celebration. The Israeli military deployed medics and a helicopter to aid the search and rescue. Authorities are still investigating the cause. Witnesses said people had tripped on some stairs, causing others to fall and triggering the stampede. The festival was Israel’s first major religious event since the pandemic hit. The country has lifted nearly all restrictions and vaccinated more than 58 percent of its population.

JAILED

A Canadian judge last month sentenced a father in British Columbia to six months in jail for violating a gag order by speaking about his 16-year-old daughter’s treatment for gender dysphoria. Robert Hoogland has fought a two-year legal battle with school officials, mental health and medical professionals, and the provincial government, arguing they infringed on his parental rights by allowing and encouraging his minor daughter to receive cross-sex hormones without his consent. Hoogland has gone on the record in media interviews about his specific case and the trend of gender dysphoric children, girls in particular, being pushed into medical treatments and surgeries.
“Do whatever you want, but find me an oxygen cylinder. Sell my gold, but get a cylinder.”

New Delhi, India, resident USHA DEVI, begging her two sons to find oxygen for their father, who lay dying of COVID-19 in late April, according to The New York Times. A lack of organized oxygen distribution has contributed to India’s recent surge in COVID-19 deaths.

“I do not consider myself guilty of threatening, slandering, or insulting any group of people.”

Finnish Member of Parliament PÄIVI RÄSÄNEN, whom prosecutors have criminally charged with hate speech against homosexuals. Räsänen could face fines or jail time for expressing Biblical views of marriage and sexuality in a 2004 pamphlet, a 2018 TV show, and a 2019 tweet.

“It just isn’t fair.”

Former decathlon Olympian and reality TV star CAITLYN JENNER, known as Bruce before declaring himself a transgender woman in 2015, telling a TMZ reporter why he opposes biological boys who are transgender competing in girls’ sports. Jenner is running as a Republican candidate for governor of California.

“Wokeness is a problem and everyone knows it. It’s hard to talk to anybody today—and I talk to lots of people in the Democratic Party—who doesn’t say this. But they don’t want to say it out loud.”

Democratic strategist JAMES CARVILLE in an interview with Vox writer Sean Illing.

“If that shows 75 percent efficacy, then we would be very happy and jumping around.”

University of Ghana epidemiologist KWADWO KORAM, telling Nature of his high hopes for a phase 3 trial of a new malaria vaccine that could prevent tens of thousands of child deaths by malaria each year.
2 **PROWLING BEAST** Police in Greenville, N.C., responded to a suspected home invasion call on April 6 to find not a burglar prowling at the scene but a four-legged creature with horns. After searching the property, officers with the Greenville Police Department took into custody a black-and-white goat. The Animal Protective Services unit of the police department also got involved, dubbing the animal “Billy.” “When we arrived, Billy was hanging out around the windows of the house,” a police spokesman said on Facebook. “We are happy to report that Billy has been arrested and is no longer a threat.” The department noted Billy would finish his sentence under house arrest—with his owner.

3 **CHARITY TAX** A Connecticut teacher who raised tens of thousands of dollars to help neighbors during pandemic lockdowns last year has received notice he’s expected to pay taxes on those donations. Louis Goffinet of Mansfield, Conn., raised $41,000 through Facebook to help locals pay rent and buy groceries. “My original goal was to raise $200 to help one family with groceries,” he said. Then Goffinet’s fundraiser went viral. Because he had not created a tax-exempt organization, Facebook sent him a 1099 tax form indicating he owed the IRS over $16,000. Now neighbors are raising money to help pay Goffinet’s tax bill.

4 **COLD COMFORTS** For just $5,000, some hockey fans in Florida will get to spend the night with the Stanley Cup. The Tampa Bay Lightning posted the offer on short-term rental website Airbnb: According to a one-time listing that was quickly booked, a group of six could stay in a luxury suite for one night inside the team’s arena. The Stanley Cup-winning franchise will leave its trophy for the guests to admire. The team also offers a Zamboni ride, a five-course meal, and some skate time to burn off the calories.

5 **ELECTION TO FORGET** A small Missouri town held an election in April, but nobody showed up. Officials in La Russell, Mo., collected signatures earlier this year to put to voters the question of whether La Russell should join the Avilla

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**HOMES WITHOUT GNOMES**

As the weather warms across Britain, many gardeners will head to the store to pick up a garden gnome. They may be out of luck. According to some store operators, there are barely any garden gnomes left in stock. The problem is as simple as supply and demand: Garden furniture sales have increased dramatically since the coronavirus pandemic began, and the March blockage of the Suez Canal contributed to supply chain problems. “There’s definitely a shortage,” the assistant manager of one garden center told The Guardian. “We haven’t seen a gnome in six months now unfortunately.” He added that garden centers were nearly twice as busy this March as they were in 2019. Iain Wylie, the chief executive of the Cheshire-based Garden Centre Association, told the newspaper, “We’re facing a perfect storm of lockdown, everyone being stuck at home, and one thing people can do is their gardening.”
Fire Protection District. The initiative was the only measure on the April 6 ballot. But because none of the town’s 70 residents voted, the ballot initiative failed. Mayor Rick Burton didn’t vote because he was sick and in the hospital, according to his wife, who is also the city clerk. “I guess we didn’t throw up the flag and let everyone know there was an election, so nobody went,” she said.

The French navy has performed a successful submarine transection to salvage a nuclear-powered submarine damaged in a fire last year. The French attack submarine Perle caught fire and burned for 14 hours, leaving its front half ruined. So naval officials ordered one of her decommissioned sister ships, the Saphir, cut in two in March so it could be fused to the Perle. According to the French navy, the splice will require 100,000 hours of planning and problem-solving together with 250,000 hours of labor.

Roadkill: It’s what’s for dinner. Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon signed a law in April that will permit the state’s residents to collect and eat roadside carcasses. The law creates a July deadline for Wyoming’s Game and Fish Department to draft rules for harvesting roadkill. “It’s really hard to guess and estimate how much interest there will be,” Game and Fish chief game warden Rick King told the Jackson Hole Daily. “Montana has been averaging about 1,000 salvage permits a year.” According to the Wyoming Department of Transportation, drivers report about 3,000 collisions with animals each year.

After getting married in Texas, a former Oklahoma resident learned she was a wanted woman. While attempting to update her driver’s license with her new name, Caron McBride said a government official told her she had an outstanding warrant in Oklahoma. “The first thing she told me was felony embezzlement, so, I thought I was gonna have a heart attack,” McBride told Fox 25. After investigating, McBride learned the felony warrant had been issued in 2000 when a video rental store claimed she didn’t return a VHS tape of Sabrina the Teenage Witch. McBride said she’s never watched the show and said her former boyfriend may have forgotten to return the rental. The rental store in Norman, Okla., shuttered in 2008. After examining the file, the local district attorney dismissed the case in April. McBride said the embezzlement charge explains why she’s been abruptly fired from multiple jobs over the past 20 years. “This is why ... because when they ran my criminal background check, all they’re seeing is those two words: felony embezzlement,” McBride said.

If you have a fairly common name, you understand the difficulty of setting up an online account unique to yourself. Josh Swain of Tucson, Ariz., had exactly that problem, finding there were multiple people named “Josh Swain” on Facebook. So on a lark, he decided to organize a battle for king of the Joshes. But his efforts morphed into something much bigger as hundreds of Joshes—even those without the last name Swain—took up his call to battle it out in Lincoln, Neb., on April 24 for the right to be considered top Josh. They bashed one another with pool noodles, eventually resulting in the coronation of a winner—a 4-year-old named Josh Vinson Jr.
Publishing postures
Book publishers are playing a dangerous game

AFTER DARK ON MARCH 13, 2020, three plain-clothes cops broke into the Louisville apartment of Breonna Taylor, a hospital ER technician, during a drug investigation. Taylor’s boyfriend, assuming it was burglary, started shooting. In the crossfire that followed, one of the cops shot and killed Taylor.

Her story was a local tragedy until the death of George Floyd, when Breonna Taylor became a martyr to racist policing. I wrote about the Taylor and Floyd cases in a June column, pondering how small irregularities, when overlooked, can become crises. I was especially concerned about “no-knock warrants.” How was that even legal?

Some readers gently suggested I might want to look further into police procedures: the other side of the story. This is wise counsel. “The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him” (Prov. 18:17). But in our hot-take world, it can take weeks for all sides of a case to shake out. Or more than a year.

The Fight for Truth: The Inside Story Behind the Breonna Taylor Tragedy is the account of Sgt. Jonathan Mattingly, one of the three officers who broke into Taylor’s apartment, and the only one who was not discharged from the Louisville Police Department. He signed a contract with Post Hill Press, a small Nashville publisher, to tell his side.

As the book was going to press, Mattingly approached the Louisville Courier Journal for permission to use one of their photos. Two days later the Courier Journal reported on the book, and within hours cries of outrage rose on social media, leading to some serious backtracking. Post Hill Press has not, to my knowledge, canceled publication, but it’s lost a vital link in the marketing chain. As a client of Simon & Schuster Distribution Services, it depends on S&S for getting The Fight for Truth into bookstores and libraries. The furor was too much for the venerable publisher, which declared hands-off on April 15.

Earlier this year, Simon & Schuster took another stand for public decency by canceling a book by Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., after the senator questioned the Electoral College vote that handed the presidency to Joseph Biden. This allegedly put him on the side of the Capitol rioters, and therefore, “[We] cannot support Senator Hawley after his role in what became a dangerous threat to our democracy and freedom,” tweeted spokesperson Olivia Nuzzi.

Hawley’s book has nothing to do with Jan. 6. Its title is succinct, self-explanatory, and somewhat ironic, given the circumstances: The Tyranny of Big Tech. As it turned out, Regnery Press soon picked up the contract, and the book will appear this month. Ironically, again, Regnery’s distributor is none other than Simon & Schuster.

Sgt. Mattingly’s account might be self-serving claptrap, but we won’t know unless we read it. As one of four surviving witnesses, he has a singular perspective. Likewise, Hawley’s book might be political grandstanding, but he’s studied big tech, conducted hearings on it, and proposed legislation about it. Shouldn’t we read what he has to say?

Well, we can ... so far. But publishers and booksellers are playing a game without rules on a field without boundaries. Publishing in general once adhered to If it bleeds, it leads. But now: Too hot? Maybe not. There are no guidelines, only “values.” No plan of action, only reaction. Postures, rather than principles.

One more example: Amazon recently swept one critique of transgenderism (Ryan Anderson’s When Harry Became Sally) from all its sales platforms. But similar books remain. Why? When four GOP senators asked that question, Amazon vice president for public policy Brian Huseman explained, “We have chosen not to sell books that frame LGBTQ+ identities as a mental illness.” This only raises more questions. What about books that frame LGBTQ+ identities as sin? Like the Bible?

These are privately owned companies, not government entities. But exclusion by preference is sometimes worse than by law. Censorship can glamorize the forbidden. Canceling merely smothers it.
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ENLIGHTENED ENTERTAINMENT

*The Chosen* continues sound doctrine on the small screen

by Megan Basham
When I first reviewed *The Chosen* last year, I received notes from several readers concerned that the series invents dialogue and backstories for Bible characters. I also heard from a few who object to any on-screen depictions of Jesus based on the Second Commandment.

I don’t want to dismiss those concerns, but for those able to watch with a clear conscience some literary license and a dramatic depiction of Jesus, *The Chosen*’s first season offered one of the finest on-screen representations of the New Testament in memory. The first three episodes of Season 2, available on a special app from its studio, surpass it.

Writer/director Dallas Jenkins and his team continue taking creative risks that pay off by being both more entertaining and more thoughtful than your average network Easter special.

The first episode opens with the framing device of John writing his Gospel. As he considers how to begin, he reflects on how Jesus’ earthly ministry revealed Him to be both God—the Word in the beginning—and yet also man. As the story quickly returns to the timeline we left off in Season 1—the beginning of Christ’s public ministry—we see exchanges that underscore this truth.

Once again, the series is especially strong in a suit almost no other Bible-based productions even attempt: humor. When the meticulous, borderline-obsessive Matthew recounts for John his first encounter with Jesus, he goes on a bit too long about the exact time and location of the meeting. John tells him he doesn’t need to be quite so precise, to which Matthew, taking Sheldon Cooper–like umbrage, replies, “Why wouldn’t it have to be precise? Mine will be precise.”

Of course, we know that Matthew’s Gospel was indeed very precise. And finding these natural laughs is part of what makes *The Chosen* not just something we feel we ought to watch in order to support Christian entertainment, but something we want to watch.

By weaving invented vignettes with Scripture we know well, Jenkins circumvents our tendency to tune out the familiar. We’re eager to discover how a Samaritan robber’s story plays out, so we pay attention. Yet, at the same time, the little side plot is grounded in facts Scripture does offer—the enmity between Israel and Samaria and the parables Jesus told—so the themes contained within the story arc don’t depart from sound doctrine.

This goes for conflict between the characters as well. The series is careful to flesh out each disciple individually. They don’t, as we’ve often seen before, move about in a unified huddle until a point of conflict described in Scripture flares up. Here, we see tension building in scenes that are concocted, yes, but entirely relatable and largely based on the characteristics the Bible recounts.

But the series’ greatest strength remains a Jesus who feels like a normal, albeit perfect, man. His holiness is evident, and His authority certain, but His personality isn’t alien-like. We’re charmed by His easy affection for His disciples and how comfortable they are in His presence. Where wouldn’t you go to follow the man who not only frees you from sin and guilt but so obviously enjoys your company?

There’s plenty more to praise, like how the series deftly illustrates the cultural cause for misconceptions about the Messiah’s mission. But for those who don’t feel at risk of confusing Scripture with imagination, *The Chosen*’s second season offers a highly entertaining experience that may prompt viewers to reflect more deeply on the real record of Jesus’ ministry on earth.
Pursuing his own agenda
by Bob Brown

The knock against Tom Clancy’s Without Remorse, new on Amazon Prime, is that it’s “generic” and “flat.” I disagree. Except for the language—bad but not pervasively so—the R-rated thriller adds a solid installment and a fresh leading man to the franchise of movies based on Tom Clancy’s novels.

Instead of office-chair hero Jack Ryan, it’s off-the-grid Navy SEAL John Kelly (a supermuscular Michael B. Jordan) who’s caught up in geopolitical intrigue. When Russians kill his pregnant wife and unborn child, vengeance-minded Kelly joins a mission to find the surviving gunman. The Central Intelligence Agency and the secretary of state (Guy Pearce) get involved, each seeming to have competing agendas.

Jordan delivers a sharp performance as a grieving, patriotic family man with nothing to lose. Several harrowing sequences—an escape from sinking plane wreckage, an interrogation (grilling?) inside a burning limo, a shootout in a Russian apartment building—keep the action high-rev. Interesting twists, familiar Clancy character names (Greer, Ritter) in different bodies, a respectable finale, and no sensuality make for a satisfying film with—a high body count. Don’t miss the mid-credits sequel setup.

If you liked Patriot Games, you’ll enjoy this film with little remorse.

MIXED-UP MITCHELLS
Can an unlikely family defeat a robot invasion?
by Sarah Schweinsberg

In Netflix’s new animated movie The Mitchells vs. the Machines, a quirky family’s road trip gets interrupted by a global robot takeover.

The Mitchells have little in common with their neighbors or each other. Youngest son Aaron is obsessed with dinosaurs. Mom Linda (voiced by Maya Rudolph) loves stickers and cupcakes. Father and daughter Rick and Katie are even further apart: Katie (Abbi Jacobson) loves to create short films and memes, while Rick (Danny McBride) prefers to be outdoors, hunting. He feels increasingly alienated from Katie, who spends most of her time on her phone and computer.

As Katie prepares to leave for film school, the family’s differences threaten to pull them apart. Cue a good, old-fashioned family road trip: There’s nothing like the open highway to bring a family together, right? But when that doesn’t work, there seems to be no road ahead for the Mitchells.

That is, until giant tech company Pal rolls out its latest digital assistant—a friendly robot. When a mysterious, evil overlord takes over the robots’ software, they quickly turn against their human masters.

Suddenly, it’s up to the mixed-up Mitchells to save the world, but can they accept—or embrace—their differences?

This loud and colorful comedy, rated PG, features nonstop action and humor that bridges generational gaps. It encourages children to embrace the family they were born into despite differences in viewpoints and interests.

Throughout the movie, though, Katie wears a rainbow pin, and during the credits, her mom asks her, “Are you and Jade official?”—suggesting Katie is gay. Parents must decide if the film’s entertainment benefits outweigh this tacked-on LGBT nod.

2021 OSCAR WINNER HIGHLIGHTS
Best Picture: Nomadland
Best Director: Chloé Zhao (Nomadland)
Best Actor: Anthony Hopkins (The Father)
Best Actress: Frances McDormand (Nomadland)
Best Animated Film: Soul
FAIRWAY HAZARDS
Wayward message sinks golf-centered faith film Walking With Herb
by Bob Brown

If you saw me holding a 5-iron and wearing long white pants and a fancy cap, you might think I was a golfer—until you saw me chop at the ball. Then you’d know I have little game and am clearly unqualified to give golf lessons.

Walking With Herb, about an older man who takes up golf again after 35 years, displays a faith film’s earnestness but repeatedly shanks the gospel into traps and hazards. Jesus comes up only once—in one of four misuses of God’s name. Characters occasionally quote Scripture, but hokey supernaturalism and affirmations of other belief systems should preclude Christians from recommending this film to seeker friends.

Joe Amable-Amo (Edward James Olmos) is a loving husband and father reeling from the deaths of his grandchild and son-in-law. Reversing Job’s story, the tragedies have led Joe to deny God, while his wife keeps the faith. Joe’s also a bank president under pressure to foreclose on the mortgage of a school for homeless children that his daughter, Audrey, runs.

Then, a message pops up on his computer.

“Joe, it’s God. I have chosen you for a special mission.” That mission is to enter the “Golf Championship of the World Entire,” a tournament with a $3 million prize. Fine. Soon after, though, a dog and a dove wink at each other, apparently confirming the message’s divine origin. The dog, wearing a collar with a cross and symbols of other religions, brings Joe a rolled-up note about faith. More winking doves, more dog-borne notes.

Then Herb (George Lopez), donning rainbow pants and urban camouflage, zooms in on a motorcycle. Herb’s an angel (probably) sent by “Al”—that’s Herb’s pet name for the Almighty. Herb caddies Joe’s 18-hole and spiritual revivals, even miraculously guiding Joe’s crooked putts into the hole. (Flashback to Now You See Him, Now You Don’t?) Herb quotes Buddha and the book of Romans, but double-bogeys at Hebrews 11:1.

“Faith is the belief in the right to believe in yourself,” he instructs Joe.

The tournament fills the second half of the film. Joe is paired with highly ranked golfer Archie Borthwick (Billy Boyd). Archie’s mad at the world because he’s never won a tournament.

With little fairway drama, the PG-rated Walking With Herb doesn’t work as a sports film. It sends confusing signals with odd subplots (for example, Audrey’s sudden romance with a Jewish man) and odder messages.

“For I know my redeemer lives,” Herb tells Joe, “and he stands on the golf course.” Is Herb speaking about himself? Or hyping Joe?

Fore! Consider yourself warned.
**LOST IN THE FOLD**

Problematic content besets Netflix’s lavish but disappointing *Shadow and Bone*

by Marty VanDriel

FANTASY-NOVEL-BASED FILMS have a mixed track record: It’s rare that the visual retelling can capture the world the writer created and readers imagined. The new Netflix series *Shadow and Bone* gets the visual elements largely right, bringing to life the world of author Leigh Bardugo in stunning fashion. Regrettably, the source material and added film subplots are not worthy of such lavish treatment.

Alina Starkov (Jessie Mei Li) is a lonely orphan girl whose mixed ethnicity adds to her persecution. Her friendship with an orphan boy, Mal Oretsev (Archie Renaux), is the sole spark of joy in her life.

The two friends grow up and join the army of the kingdom of Ravka (seemingly based loosely on the Russia of the Tsars). Alina is a mapmaker, and Mal a tracker. Some of the Ravkans are known as Grisha: They have various magical powers, and their rivals fear and hate them. Years ago, an evil Grisha divided the kingdom into two, his spell creating “the Fold,” a treacherous cloud of darkness inhabited by volcra, dragon creatures that make passage almost (but not quite) impossible.

Alina and Mal volunteer for a ship bound for the other side of the Fold, and in the course of this journey, Alina discovers her own Grisha powers: As the ship is attacked by the volcra and Mal is nearly carried off, she bursts out in light and flame, rescuing her companions and killing many of the volcra. Humble, lonely Alina is the long-awaited and legendary “Sun Summoner,” and soon many different factions are battling to have her on their side.

The sinister Gen. Alexander Kirigan spirits her away to his palace, hoping her powers, combined with his, will consolidate his evil plans for the kingdom. Mal is determined to save his friend and tracks her relentlessly against all odds.

It’s all a bit of a mess of storylines and plot twists: Besides internal factions, the Ravkans must deal with the Fjerdans, another nation that despises the witchcraft of the Grisha and is intent to wipe them out. (The Ravkans ridicule the backwards Fjerdans, whose values include traditional roles for men and women.) The series is hard to follow for those who haven’t read the novels on which it is based.

Although aimed at a young adult audience, *Shadow and Bone*, rated TV-14, is full of violence, with heroes and villains dying in spectacular ways. It also includes some sexual content (including homosexual love scenes) and nudity, and it glorifies the witchcraft and magic of the Grisha in a way that would give most Christian viewers pause. Parents likely will want to keep their children from viewing this disappointing production.
James Oakes’ *The Crooked Path to Abolition* (Norton, 2021) joins *Fears of a Setting Sun* (reviewed in our last issue) on our history-book-of-the-year short list. Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison burned a copy of the Constitution, calling its slavery-accepting clauses “an agreement with Hell,” but Oakes shows how “for [Abraham] Lincoln slavery was a temporary, exceptional presence in the Constitution, whereas freedom was perpetual and fundamental.”

Lincoln, we learn, believed “the Declaration of Independence was the guiding spirit of the Constitution.” Yes, a fugitive slave clause marred the Constitution, but escaped slaves should still have the right to due process. Yes, the Constitution counted a slave as three-fifths of a person, but rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness mean “freedom was the rule, slavery the exception.”

Oakes examines the Supreme Court’s tragic *Dred Scott* majority decision, which Chief Justice Roger Taney “opened with a long and distorted history purporting to show that Blacks were not and never had been citizens of the United States.” He justified enslavement by arguing that slaves are racially inferior, “so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.” But Justice John McLean dissented, arguing that “a slave is not a mere chattel. He bears the impress of his Maker, and is amenable to the laws of God and man.”

Oakes helped me see the importance of a Biblical worldview to the slavery debate and its successor, the abortion debate. (Oakes does not mention the latter: This is my practical application.) For millennia in much of the world, slaves captured in war were obviously owned by their masters, who could use, abuse, or sell them as the owners saw fit. Similarly, “products of conception” are obviously owned by their mothers now, or historically their fathers, to live or die as the owners see fit. That changes for the enslaved, born and unborn, when we understand that God is in charge.

Lincoln thundered about the *Dred Scott* decision’s impact on blacks in words we can apply to today’s unborn: “All the powers on earth seem rapidly combining against him. Mammon is after him. ... They have him in his prison house. ... One after another they have closed the heavy iron doors upon him, and now they have him, as it were, bolted in with a lock of a hundred keys.” We can also apply Lincoln’s accurate prediction about the Fugitive Slave Act to today’s pro-abortion provisions: “There are some laws that communities find so morally offensive that they will never be fully obeyed.”

Alexander Stephens, the Confederacy’s vice president, claimed faith in Christ but also claimed in his 1861 Cornerstone Speech that whites are now and forever superior to blacks. If you know anyone who still believes that, I recommend C. Herbert Oliver’s *No Flesh Shall Glory: How the Bible Destroys the Foundations of Racism* (P&R, 1959; new edition, 2021).
Is It Abuse? by Darby Strickland: Strickland provides an extensive guide for counselors to identify and help abuse victims in the Church. Writing from years of experience, she shares stories illustrating different kinds of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual), as well as mistakes she made as a new counselor. The topic is heavy and complex, but Strickland uses categories like “arrogance” and “oppression” to describe the confusing dynamics of abuse and to show how the Bible applies in specific situations. The book includes lists of questions to help counselors identify abuse, instructions for creating a safety plan with victims, and advice on how to include church elders and local authorities in the process. Strickland reminds readers that Jesus offers real hope for abuse victims and their oppressors.

Caring for the Souls of Children edited by Amy Baker: In most cases, Biblical counselors should equip parents to counsel their own children. But in situations where that is not possible, counselors must know how to communicate God’s Word to kids. Counseling children can be tough—they have different developmental stages, different attention spans, and, compared with adults, different ways of articulating thoughts. But the same Biblical truths apply, and the counselor’s job is to build a relationship with the child and communicate clearly at his level. Chapters cover common problems that bring children and teens into counseling, like friendships, anger, and body or sexuality issues. The contributors suggest questions or activities for each age, and each chapter offers “A Word to Parents” whose children are struggling in that way.

Overcoming Bitterness by Stephen Viars: Learning how to lament Biblically is the first step to avoiding bitterness, writes Pastor Stephen Viars. His book takes a thoughtful, in-depth look at what the Bible says about bitterness, including bitter circumstances and the role of “bitter tears.” Bitterness appears frequently in Scripture, and Viars says it also appears frequently in people’s hearts, though they are often unaware. Drawing heavily from two Old Testament stories, Viars helps those struggling with bitterness and those living with bitter people to see what a God-honoring response in their situation should look like. This gospel-focused resource would be a valuable tool for a counselor to read with a counselee, using the discussion and application questions in each chapter for built-in homework.

Bumps, Babies, and the Gospel by Sarah Dargue: Amid their preparation during pregnancy, Dargue reminds expectant moms to prepare their hearts: “What we’re promised in the Bible is that, in the gospel—and indeed in Christ himself—we will find all that we need to prepare for parenting.” Her short book walks through Colossians, highlighting how Christ’s character and power give hope in the difficult and sweet moments of having a new baby. The book is refreshingly God-centered, asking moms to cultivate awe and worship and avoid complaining or discontentment. Dargue writes with compassion and empathy, sharing stories from her experience as a mother and providing encouragement at every step.
**Facing challenges**

Four nonfiction books for kids and teens

by Emily Whitten

*Tell God How You Feel* by **Christina Fox:** Loneliness. Fear. Rejection. Parents and teachers often struggle to apply Scripture when kids face such challenges. In this roughly 70-page picture book, Christina Fox stands in the gap, equipping readers to find comfort and words to pray during times of distress. Readers follow brother and sister Josh and Mia through five relatable crises, including Josh’s friend moving away and Mia’s fear during a thunderstorm. The book offers insightful questions to help readers apply God’s Word to their lives and gives powerful, kid-friendly training in spiritual maturity. (*Ages 4-8)*

*Brave: A Teen Girl’s Guide to Beating Worry and Anxiety* by **Sissy Goff:** “A counselor in a book.” That is how one teen girl described this well-crafted book/workbook about anxiety. After working as a counselor for nearly 30 years, Goff understands teens. She speaks without condescension to their anxious thoughts, inviting readers to interact with her on the pages of the book. Goff combines practical tools like breathing techniques and exposure therapy with solid, Biblical truth: “In this world we will have trouble and worries. But He has overcome the world, and in that we can certainly take heart.” (*Ages 12 & up)*

*The Money Challenge for Teens* by **Art Rainer:** Seminary vice president Art Rainer says more money doesn’t mean a happier life. Instead, he presents three financial priorities for Christians: give generously, save wisely, and live appropriately. To live those out, Rainer offers a 30-step Money Challenge to reach milestones with advice like “Start giving” and “Open a checking account.” An ongoing fictional story of two teens who take the Money Challenge adds some human interest. Rainer shines brighter in his down-to-earth explanations of complex financial ideas and eye-opening facts, such as how millionaires really live. (*Ages 12 & up)*

*The Asperkid’s (Secret) Book of Social Rules* by **Jennifer Cook O’Toole:** This 2012 publication equips and encourages “Asperkids” who struggle with social skills. Through bullet-point “Need-to-Know” truths and funny stories, O’Toole shares the unspoken rules of social interaction and why they are worth learning. As she puts it, “knowing your strengths and needs is like a superpower.” Any kid lacking social skills—not just kids with Asperger’s—can find here “the playbook that everyone else has.” Some secular advice won’t hold true for Christians, and younger teens should skip the dating chapter. (*Ages 14 & up)*

*The Epic Bible* (Tyndale, 2020) movingly presents the entire scope of the Bible, Genesis to Revelation, in graphic-novel form. Since this 800-page hardback book, which features art by Marvel and DC Comic illustrators, contains close-ups of violence and references to sexual misconduct, it is best suited for older children. (For instance, we see Ehud’s sword in the king’s belly, and we read discreet text about Rahab’s past.) Astute readers will notice some differences from the Biblical text, but *The Epic Bible* includes Bible references on most pages, so readers can explore the source. *More Than a Story* by Sally Michael (Truth78, 2020) retells the Old Testament narrative with a traditional feel, including watercolor illustrations by Fred Apps. Too wordy at times, Michael’s innovative use of Bible passages and her Biblical faithfulness make this a helpful choice for families with older kids. Biblical truths in bold text, along with kid-friendly explanations and discussion prompts, increase the theological content. —E.W.
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YOU MAY NOT HAVE CELEBRATED John Brown’s birthday on May 9, but *The Zealot and the Emancipator*, by University of Texas history professor H.W. Brands, is well worth reading. Here are edited highlights of our recent interview.

**Who impresses your students more: Zealot John Brown (1800-1859) or Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)?** They can’t get enough of John Brown.

**Why?** Young people are more inclined to see issues in black and white.
Pragmatic politicians like Lincoln made compromises to accommodate other people’s beliefs. Lincoln insisted on adhering to the Constitution.

**Ex-slave Frederick Douglass came around to thinking Lincoln did as much as he could do within the constraints he faced.** It takes some work to get my students to that point. Maybe they come to understand that Lincoln had a more subtle appreciation of the issues than John Brown did, even though they still like that certainty in John Brown.

**When you’ve taught a class of retirees, could they not get enough of Abraham Lincoln?** That’s right. The older students have a greater appreciation of the complexities of life. With the younger students, I suggest that one day they’ll be 67 years old, and perhaps then they’ll find it easier to appreciate those complexities.

Lincoln’s “beau ideal” of a statesman was Henry Clay. Why? Clay was the model of how you pulled together people with very different views and managed to help the Republican model move forward. He recognized that the genius of American republicanism was that you don’t have to solve all the big issues at one blow—you take a whack at them now and another whack and eventually you get past them.

Lincoln during his one term in Congress in the 1840s proposed the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. What traction did he get? He had no seniority, no clout, so nothing happened. But he recognized that a big stumbling block in the minds of slaveholders was, “I spent a lot of money on this labor force, and you’re going to make that go away.” Lincoln then and early in the Civil War proposed that the federal government pay slaveholders for their slaves. That precedent worked when the British eliminated slavery. To Lincoln, it made perfect pragmatic sense—the cost of war was far greater than the cost of instantly buying all the slaves.

Lincoln spoke of slavery not as a Southern problem but an American problem. Why did it matter that some people in the North believed, “You Southerners are evil. We’re righteous”? Part of the problem was opposition on the part of abolitionists to the idea of compensating the slave owners for their loss in property. They said if anybody was to be compensated it should be the slaves for their labor.

**What about the question of where ex-slaves would go, since many whites did not want freed blacks to live next door?** Lincoln as president brought a gathering of African American ministers to the White House and said, *I’d really like it if you could get behind colonization, the back-to-Africa idea.* That scheme never took off because the African Americans were more American than they were African.

The Supreme Court’s decision in the *Dred Scott v. Sandford* case, which led to war, puzzles me. Chief Justice Roger Taney pushed for it, but earlier in his career he opposed slavery. Taney concluded that the executive and legislative branches had not succeeded in dealing with the question of slavery, so now the judiciary could take a whack at it.

**Was Dred Scott the worst decision by the Supreme Court to that point?** Far from settling the slavery question, *Dred Scott* blew it up. It caused Northerners, including Abraham Lincoln, to think that if slavery can’t be barred from the federal territories, the same logic that Taney employed would say that slaveholders can take their property into Northern states as well, so slavery will be re-imposed on New York, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. This was the great alarm that prompted Abraham Lincoln to give the “House Divided” speech, saying that this republic won’t and can’t be half slave and half free—it must become all one or all the other.

Some critics say Lincoln was more concerned with how slavery corrupted whites than how it harmed blacks. With Lincoln you always have to make allowances for his audience. He knew black people weren’t voting, so whenever he gave a speech he pitched it to the self-interest of his audience. When Lincoln was speaking to white people, he was more likely to emphasize the corruption of American democracy than the well-being of black people. Lincoln was an extremely skillful politician. He certainly sympathized with the sufferings of the slaves, but he didn’t think that, by itself, would get past the opposition of white slaveholders.

"Pragmatic politicians like Lincoln made compromises to accommodate other people’s beliefs. Lincoln insisted on adhering to the Constitution."
The U.S. avoided war with the Soviet Union by adopting a “containment” theory: Don’t let communism expand, and eventually it will wither. Lincoln had his containment theory: No slavery in new states. Could it have worked, or was a civil war inevitable? I like the containment analogy, because by the 1850s what made slavery profitable in a place like Virginia was the hope of expansion of slavery in places like Texas and maybe beyond. The cultivation of plantation crops was a money loser in Virginia by this time. What made slavery profitable in places like Virginia was the growing market for slaves. If slavery could no longer expand, eventually the market for slaves in places like Texas, Arkansas, and Mississippi would become saturated, the value of slaves in Virginia would fall, and people would say, Slavery is just not worth it.

Some slaveholders had a sensitive conscience? A few like John Calhoun notoriously said slavery was a positive good, but a whole lot of people in the South knew that was not so. They saw slavery as a necessary evil. In 1800, slavery was practiced pretty much everywhere on earth. In 1900 slavery existed almost nowhere. Even in the West Indies, even in Brazil, slavery had ended. So something was going on in the world between 1800 and 1900—changing views of how people should be considered—but only in the United States during this time period was a major war required to end slavery. So it does seem America could have come up with a way of ending slavery without this huge war.

How much did the war accomplish? It ended slavery, but 20 years later the same whites who had been running the South before the war were back in charge. The ending of slavery didn’t overturn the social system in the South. When slavery ended as part of the Civil War, for at least a century there was resentment. People who make decisions on their own take ownership in a way that they don’t if the decision is imposed upon them.

It seems that some slave owners and leading Southern politicians demanded that the North not only tolerate slavery but praise it. Many Christians now tolerate LGBT culture but resent that they’re supposed to praise it. Is that a valid analogy? There’s something to that. I also think that while slavery was the precipitating issue, a hard core in the South—known as “fire-eaters”—was essentially looking for a reason to leave. If the point was to preserve slavery, the South did it really badly, and anybody could have seen this. Henry Clay predicted that if the South left the Union, even if the Northern states let them go, slaves would start pouring in from South to North. Southerners would say, You have to help us bring back the slaves. The North would reply, Hey, we’re not doing that. Forget it. The South would be obliged to declare war on the North.

If William Seward had attained the GOP nomination and been elected president, would he have let the South go? If someone else was president, things might have gone very differently. Some abolitionists, like William Lloyd Garrison, had argued that the North should secede from the South, and that way the North would no longer be responsible for slavery in the South. That wouldn’t have done the slaves any good, but at least it would have eased the consciences of the abolitionists. People like Lincoln feared the United States would become like the disunited states in Mexico and countries in Central America, always at war with each other.

So Lincoln and others essentially thought that if you didn’t go to war now, you’ll go to war later—which makes the Civil War, like World War I supposedly was, a war to end wars? That was exactly a common strain of thinking among Lincoln and others in the North. They also feared the British would meddle, playing off one America against the other. To go back to your Cold War analogy, this is what Richard Nixon tried to do in playing the Chinese off against the Soviets.

Given Henry David Thoreau’s general pacifism, I was surprised to learn he was such a fan of John Brown. It didn’t surprise me that much, because I haven’t esteemed Thoreau since I found out that while he wrote Walden he was going home to his mom for lunch. A lot of abolitionists realized they were just talkers. Like many intellectuals, they swooned over people who did more than talk. John Brown had the courage of their convictions, and they were in on it vicariously.

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Music we almost missed
Two new albums highlight rarely heard classical compositions
by Arsenio Orteza

HE WYCLIFFE COLLEGE PROFESSOR of historical theology Ephraim Radner generated a buzz among classical music aficionados in April with *First Things* article “Music That Is Never Heard.”

Framed with two poignant anecdotes—one about the doomed German Jewish composer James Simon, who “scribb[led] out a piece of music” even as he awaited the train to Auschwitz, and another about the Comanche composer David Yeagley, who died in 2014 “surrounded by boxes and boxes” of music to which he’d devoted himself but “that no one had seen and no one will hear”—the essay explored with sensitivity and wisdom the ultimate meaning of musical trees that fall in uninhabited forests.

In the context of Radner’s ruminations, the latest albums by the pianist Samantha Ege and the Habemus (string) Quartet seem especially providential.

Not everything on Ege’s *Fantasie Nègre: The Piano Music of Florence Price* was in danger of going unheard. Florence Price’s 10-minute *Fantasie Nègre* No. 1 in E Minor, based on the melody of the spiritual “Sinner, Please Don’t Let This Harvest Pass,” has been known since Margaret Bonds premiered it decades ago. But the nine Price compositions constituting the album’s other 44 minutes, discovered in 2009 (56 years after Price’s death), came perilously close.

Price made history in 1933 when the Chicago Symphony Orchestra premiered her Symphony No. 1 in E Minor and made her the first black American woman to have one of her symphonies performed by a major ensemble. This accomplishment and several first-prize contest finishes aside did little to stem the neglect to which being a woman of color in the pre–Civil Rights era consigned her.

Ege discovered Price while an undergraduate, eventually making the composer the focus of her Ph.D. It’s therefore no surprise that Ege’s self-penned liner notes percolate with intimate erudition. But they’re a shadow compared with the full-bodied effervescence of her playing.

“Price,” writes Ege, “had faith that a very beautiful and very American music could emerge from [America’s] melting pot.” And whether capturing the ever-shifting flashes of Price’s four *Fantasies Nègres* or the briefer sparkle of her “Snapshots” and “Untitled Sketches,” Ege more than justifies her heroine’s convictions.


It’s a quality that Whispering Colors’ nine pieces (by eight still-living composers) possess in abundance, their predominantly legato phrasing serving as a metaphor for the unity that once existed between serious music and serious listeners and that can exist again.
Stirring second acts

Noteworthy new and recent releases
by Arsenio Orteza

**Beautiful Scars** by Merry Clayton: Contemporary black-gospel recordings, even those by relatively big names, don’t always boast the highest production values. But when you see the Motown imprint, you know that no expense has been spared. Clayton’s name is as relatively big as names come (she achieved instant stardom as the guest belter on the Rolling Stones’ “Gimme Shelter”), but there’s nothing relative about the size of her voice or the sincerity of her belief. Whether covering the Soul Stirrers or singing faith-based survivor anthems written for her by Diane Warren, Coldplay’s Chris Martin, or Terry Young (of Bob Dylan’s Saved fame), she’s even more convincing than Aretha Franklin in a Baptist church.

**Forever Only Idaho** by Harrison Lemke: Lemke may not agree (musicians, who can figure ‘em?), but this concept album “about the Coeur d’Alene High School graduating class of 2006 in 2018” is not only his best album so far but also his best album by far. His figures of speech remain fresh (trucks that barrel down highways “like pain down a nerve,” not bad), his eye for detail sharp (a sunset “going to pieces in the lake,” nice). And while he hasn’t abandoned his perfectionism-forestalling lo-fi aesthetics, his hooks and instrumentation (neither of which has ever been richer) meet them halfway and sometimes more. So what that he borrows his catchiest riff from Lou Reed? It’s not as if Reed’s going to be using it anymore.

**Four Seasons** by Frank Rober scheuten Hiptett: The recipe is simple but not simplistic: Begin by setting the tone for each section with an elegantly swinging reeds-piano-bass-drums jazz rendition of one of Vivaldi’s Four Seasons concerti, follow it with an assortment of Roberscheuten originals, throw in a few seasonally appropriate standards (“It Might As Well Be Spring,” “Autumn in New York,” “Winter Moon”), let Shaunette Hildabrand (whose voice pleasantly evokes the Big Band era) write lyrics for and sing on five numbers, and, voilà, instant thematic unity. So why no “Summertime”? Probably because it has already been recorded over 1,100 times—and because making it swing would’ve taxed even this combo’s considerable talents.

**Sundial** by Carl Verheyen: You’d never guess from this solo outing that Verheyen had ever played guitar in any incarnation of Supertramp. The high-octane rock-fusion instrumental “Kaningie” and the quiet mellow-jazz instrumental “Sundial Slight Return” aside, the focus is on Verheyen the pop singer-songwriter/interpreter. And for a 67-year-old, he sure sounds a lot like a guy in his 30s. Blue-eyed soul (an unnecessarily hurried sprint through the Rascals’ “People Got To Be Free”) and blue-eyed blues (“Clawhammer Man”) are beyond him, but his version of “Michelle’s Song” is so winsomely spot-on that the question of why Elton John never released it as a single looms larger than it has at any other point in the last 50 years.

**Permanent** by Steve Rudolph: Ozarks, the Wild at Heart of the Ozarks. The Mekons, a leather-clad Ireland. The Levellers, the unmeta, underground eye for detail that brings it all together. Steve Rudolph’s Permanent is a perfect example of how to put together a set that is both beautiful and unexpected, yet completely in line with what you’d expect from a musician who has been making music for over 30 years.

**The Four Seasons** by Robert Paterson: Unlike Frank Rober scheuten’s Four Seasons, the American composer Robert Paterson’s The Four Seasons bypasses Vivaldi altogether in favor of art-song-for-Pierrot-ensemble set-tings of season-based verse by a Who’s Who (and sometimes a Who’s That?) of 20th- and 21st-century poets. The liner booklet of the American Modern Ensemble’s new world-premiere recording, in containing all 21 texts, could practically double as a mini–Norton’s Anthology.

But what makes the recording an example of a form-and-content marriage made in heaven is the music. Paterson obviously put as much care into crafting melodies that analogize their respective poems’ images, rhythms, moods, and themes as he did into selecting the poems themselves. Most impressively of all, the melodies free the classically trained singers (one per season naturally) to enunciate intelligently and intelligently enough to render the reproduced texts (almost) superfluous. —A.O.
Prone to wonder

Embracing the mystery of sad news cycles


McKelvey taps into the news-induced anxiety of absorbing “more grief, O Lord, than we can rightly consider, of more suffering and scandal than we can respond to, of more hostility, hatred, horror, and injustice than we can engage with compassion.”

I thought of this prayer recently when news broke of a local tragedy: Robert Lesslie, 70, a beloved physician in nearby Rock Hill, S.C., was murdered in his home on a sunny afternoon, along with his wife, Barbara, 69, and their two visiting grandchildren, Adah, 9, and 5-year-old Noah.

National news picked up the story: Former NFL player Phillip Adams fatally gunned down the family and two repairmen working outside before returning to his parents’ nearby home and killing himself. Police haven’t indicated a motive.

Hundreds showed up for a prayer vigil at a park three days later. Lesslie had treated residents in the area for decades, and he later founded a local hospice center. (Even the police spokesman announcing the murders said Lesslie had been his pediatrician when he was growing up.)

Lesslie was an elder at First Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP) in Rock Hill, and he authored a handful of books about watching God’s providence at work in the trials of the emergency room. He volunteered as a physician for Camp Joy, an annual Christian camp for people with special needs, and Barbara led lively Bible studies for the campers.

Last spring, Lesslie and grandson Noah stood outside Westminster Towers, a Rock Hill retirement and nursing home community, and played bagpipes to elderly residents quarantined to their apartments. Among the hymns: “Be still my soul: when dearest friends depart, and all is darkened in the vale of tears.”

Bagpipers played at the funeral for all four Lesslies in April, but not just sad songs: “Come, Thou Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing Thy grace.” The classic hymn includes a line about why we need God’s mercy even when we’re aware of His grace: “Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love.”

As sinners we’re prone to wander from God, but as grievers we’re also prone to wonder about God’s purposes: When hardship strikes close to home or in the grueling news cycles unfolding before our eyes, we sometimes wonder: Why this disaster, why this illness, why this pandemic, why this turmoil?

In the Scriptures, Job wondered the same thing: Why did God allow so much calamity to befall him suddenly? His friends offered unsatisfying answers aimed at neatly summing up God’s ways (still a modern-day temptation), but God pressed Job to consider a different kind of wonder—the wonder of His creation and power and might: “Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his?”

Even in suffering, such wonders point to what G.K. Chesterton wrote in his meditations on the book of Job: “The secret of God is a bright and not a sad one.”

Lesslie was pondering that secret just months before his own sudden death, as he wrote about heaven. He imagined someday “walking with Barbara in a field of lush, green grass, surrounded by gently rising conifer-cloaked hills. The words of Jesus will echo through that glade—‘Behold, I make all things new.’”

And he wrote about the greatest reality awaiting those who trust in the resurrected Christ: “One day, when I depart this body and find myself in the presence of the Lord, my time, however it will be measured, will be filled with the praises and the wonder of Jesus.”

Whether we’re prone to wander from God, wonder about His purposes, or wonder at His mercy and power, the prayer we need is all the same: “Here’s my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for Thy courts above.”
“Whatever the news, the purpose of the Lord will stand.”

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LIVING IN LIMBO

President Joe Biden’s refugee waffling baffles refugees overseas and advocates stateside

BY HARVEST PRUDE

PHOTOS BY LARRY MCCORMACK/GENESIS

Joseph Madogo, a refugee who came to the United States from the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2016, has been waiting for his wife to be admitted to the United States. She’s stuck in Burundi until the United States allows in more refugees.
The administration was still operating under President Donald Trump’s 2020 presidential determination, which allowed a historically low 15,000 refugees into the United States and enacted strict geographical limitations. Those limitations excluded many of the most vulnerable refugees from Africa, including religious minorities like the Madogos, who are Christians.

After another week of inaction, the State Department canceled Diane’s flight—and those of 714 other refugees. Madogo broke the news to Joseph: “He was super sad.” It was too late to give up an apartment he and aid groups secured for her, so Joseph moved in “in hopes that she would come.”

Then, on April 16, Biden signed a presidential determination that kept the refugee ceiling at 15,000—the lowest ceiling since the creation of the refugee program. Biden rescinded some geographic limitations on refugees, but the government had already canceled Diane’s flight. Nothing had prevented Biden from loosening the categories in time to keep the flight.

The broken promise shocked refugee advocates, evangelicals passionate about the issue, and even members of Biden’s own party. Matthew Soerens, U.S. director of church mobilization and advocacy for World Relief, called the move a “gut punch.” Fierce backlash caused a backtrack weeks later: On May 3, Biden raised the cap to 62,500. But the broken trust and the uncertainty prolonged resettlement agencies’ difficulty recovering from the program’s cutbacks during the Trump years and weakened the United States’ global leadership on the issue. And the delay left refugees in camps battling COVID-19 and food shortages.

“The sad truth is that we will not achieve 62,500 admissions this year,” Biden’s statement about reversal said. He blamed it on the “damage of the last four years,” a reference to the Trump administration’s policies. But he did not acknowledge his own actions exacerbating the issue.

ON MAY 2, BASUZE MADOGO WENT TO BREAK BAD NEWS TO HIS BROTHER

Joseph. Joseph’s wife Diane, who had fled the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2005 and is a refugee in Burundi, would not be coming to the United States after all. At least not yet.

Madogo, a caseworker for World Relief, fled with his family from the DRC during the First Congo War when he was 9.

Madogo remembers food shortages and other hardships in a Tanzanian refugee camp: “no proper medication, no schooling. Conditions are very bad.”

In 2002, Madogo moved to Mozambique with one of his brothers, where he would spend nearly 10 years. Eventually, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) granted Madogo refugee status, which is how he got to the United States in 2014.

Joseph followed him to the United States in 2016. Then this year World Relief assigned Madogo Diane’s case. When she got government clearance to come to the United States, he delivered the good news to his brother.

But at the end of February, refugee agencies learned that if President Joe Biden didn’t soon sign a presidential determination to allow more refugees into the United States, the U.S. State Department would cancel their flights.
The Biden administration’s rationale for the delay didn’t make sense and left advocates searching for answers.

“Even with people who didn’t vote for him but nonetheless are in agreement with him on refugees, it’s hard to see what they’re doing,” Dr. Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, said after Biden’s initial delay.

While the most plausible answer may be a botched political calculus, the Biden administration’s real reasons still remain a mystery.

AGENCIES AND NONGOVERNMENTAL organizations that work with refugees had reason to believe refugee caps would change swiftly under Biden. On the campaign trail, Biden promised to reset the cap to 125,000. In February, after taking office, Secretary of State Antony Blinken notified Congress the administration would seek to resettle half that number, 62,500, for the remainder of the current fiscal year ending Sept. 30.

Hours after the April 16 announcement, the White House backtracked. In a statement, press secretary Jen Psaki said Biden would raise the cap before May 15. But she said that due to “the decimated refugee admissions program we inherited, and burdens on the Office of Refugee Resettlement, [Biden’s] initial goal of 62,500 seems unlikely.”

But Biden’s initial delay in making any move on the refugee ceiling seemed to catch even his own State Department, which had already booked flights for refugees, by surprise.

“I cannot express to you how simple this piece of paper is,” Elizabeth Neumann, who served as a senior adviser in the Department of Homeland Security under Trump, said of the declaration. “I have written many executive orders ... a lot of the things the president signs can be very complicated. This is not one of those things.”

She and others think the delay was politically motivated. They told me they heard nothing from contacts in the administration that indicated any kind of security concern delayed Biden’s move.

“It seems clear this was a political decision at the level of the president,” Soerenes said. “There’s not a lot of reason to think [the Department of Health and Human Services] was raising red flags either.”

Galen Carey, vice president of government relations at the National Association of Evangelicals, was on an April 16 call with White House
THE CONFLATION OF ASYLUM-SEEKERS at the southern border with refugees overseas surprised refugee advocates because it was the same rationale the Trump administration used to cut the ceiling from 45,000 to 15,000 in four years. But the excuse is a misrepresentation of how the processes for asylum-seekers and refugee resettlement work: They are separate programs with distinct, congressionally appropriated funding streams.

“Anyone who works with the refugee program knew immediately that was not accurate,” Soerens said of the Biden administration’s rationale. “I don’t know if the people from the White House are themselves confused or if they are intentionally playing on a topic that is sure to confuse the average American.”

Refugees differ from the asylum-seekers trying to gain entry at the U.S. southern border. Asylum-seekers at the border often seek entry into the United States due to violence or economic hardship and—until

officials. He said the administration remained “tight-lipped” about why and how it arrived at the decision. But it seemed clear to Carey that some of Biden’s advisers “thought this would be a political liability to the president so they convinced him to go back on his promise.”

Both Politico and The Washington Post reported that administration officials feared conservative news outlets would paint Biden raising the cap as him pushing an “open border” policy.

“I think they were afraid in the public mind that the two things would be linked,” Carey said.


Keeping the Trump-era cap did draw approval from some quarters. Former Trump administration senior adviser Stephen Miller suggested Biden made the move because he was concerned about the 2022 midterm elections. Miller tweeted that the refugee cap should be “reduced to ZERO.”

Biden blamed the decision to keep the ceiling low on the surge at the U.S.-Mexico border and said the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), within the Department of Health and Human Services, was too overwhelmed with unaccompanied minors to handle refugees.

“We couldn’t do two things at once,” Biden later said. “But now we are going to increase that number.”
the Trump administration’s Migrant Protection Protocols policy—usually await the adjudication of their immigration cases in the United States. But refugees typically leave their countries due to religious or ethnic persecution. They can only enter the country after government vetting and approval. Refugees, Neumann and others told me, are the most vetted population admitted to the United States.

ORR is responsible for unaccompanied children and for part of the refugee resettlement program. But those programs have two distinct budgets. ORR is also the last segment of the federal government to interact with refugees.

The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) at the State Department primarily runs the refugee program. Coordinating with the United Nations, PRM receives refugee applications and begins vetting applicants. Homeland Security conducts security interviews. The whole process can take years.

When PRM clears refugees for resettlement, the State Department books their flights. New arrivals find and pay for housing, handle paperwork, and acclimate to the country for 30 days. The State Department also works with nine nongovernmental refugee agencies, such as World Relief, to ensure someone can meet refugees when they land.

It isn’t until 30 days after the refugees arrive that ORR steps in: For up to eight months after refugees arrive, ORR works with resettlement agencies to provide some assistance (funding for living expenses, interpretation, and employment) to refugees that helps with integration once they are already stateside. Churches and other volunteers also help in this process.

Funding wasn’t the reason for Biden’s delay either. “They do have enough funds to help refugees once they get here,” Jenny Yang, World Relief’s senior vice president of advocacy and policy, said. “They still do have enough funding to help refugees post-arrival. So it’s not really an excuse that’s holding a lot of water.”

Funding levels for the refugee program within the federal government have not significantly changed since the Obama administration. But the nongovernmental refugee agencies receive grants per refugee. Soerens and others acknowledge it will take time to build the refugee program back up after the Trump administration scaled back refugee arrivals: More than one-third of the country’s nongovernmental resettlement agencies’ offices closed during the Trump administration, with hundreds of workers losing their jobs. Trump also introduced more rigorous vetting requirements and restrictions on who could qualify for relief, slowing admissions to a crawl.

But Soerens and others say raising the ceiling is the first step toward rebuilding. There are already 35,000 refugees near the end of the State and Homeland Security departments’ vetting process. Some may need to have an updated health screening: Refugees must test negative for COVID-19 before stepping foot on a plane.

Conservatives and Christians have plenty of reason to be critical of the Biden administration. Many working on refugee issues had hoped they could work with the administration at least on that point. The last few weeks have eroded some of that optimism, though.

“They assumed that whatever problems they might have had with Biden, that he would correct the problems of the last administration on this one issue—refugees,” Moore said. “They’ve seen that’s not necessarily the case.”

Biden’s waffling convinced refugee advocates, such as Carey, that they need to keep pressuring the administration: “[Politicians] respond to how the wind is blowing, so we need to keep blowing the wind in the right direction.”

But even a higher limit for this fiscal year leaves questions. Carey called Biden’s disclaimer about not actually hitting the 62,500 number “disheartening.” He continued: “We would like to see them work as hard as they can to get as close to the number as we can, and they have not been willing to say how many they actually think they can resettle.”

Meanwhile, refugees who have been waiting for years to be reunited with family members said they will not stop praying.

“Even worse, persecutors and tyrants around the world have a signal that they can continue to use violent means against vulnerable populations.”
A WAVE OF PANDEMIC DEATHS HAS TRIGGERED A REEVALUATION OF LONG-TERM ELDER CARE, AS NURSING HOMES WEIGH OPTIONS FOR PREVENTING VIRAL SPREAD AND FAMILIES LOOK TO BRING RELATIVES BACK HOME

by Emily Belz

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL HIRSHON
They eventually planted roots on a block in Brooklyn, where they have been for five generations, and opened a brick oven bakery on Atlantic Avenue making pita. When the family hosts a block party, about 300 relatives come from the surrounding area.

Until last year Norman Arbeeny, then 88, was a fixture on the block, according to his son Daniel Arbeeny. Norman would hang out on his stoop, talking to everyone, and he was spry enough that he made deliveries for his son’s HVAC company.

Then, around Christmas 2019, he started having a series of health setbacks.

The Arbeeny family members trace their New York City roots back to the mid-1800s, when their Syrian forebears escaped Ottoman killings and immigrated to America.
He went to a hospital and later, when he needed a bedsore procedure, a nursing home. His nursing home stay came at the peak of the coronavirus pandemic in New York City—but the nursing home, like many others, wasn’t equipped to handle patients in a pandemic. Crazy with worry and barred from visiting, the family did what they could to get Norman out of the nursing home when the bedsore treatment was finished. They arranged 24-hour care at home and hoped he hadn’t contracted the virus.

But once home, Norman became congested and lethargic, and his doctor ordered a COVID-19 test. Hours before the positive results came back, Norman died at home in the middle of the night.

The Arbeenys lost four family members in a week to the virus—including an uncle in Brooklyn and a cousin in a nursing home on Staten Island.

“It’s hard to describe,” Daniel said of his family’s losses. Still, he’s thankful that he and the relatives who cared for his COVID-positive dad didn’t contract the virus. “Through it all, the Lord was really keeping us.”

The coronavirus has killed more than 183,000 people in U.S. long-term care facilities, according to an estimate from the Kaiser Family Foundation—about one-third of all U.S. COVID-19 deaths. In Canada, 80 percent of COVID-19 deaths were nursing home residents. In response, nursing homes are moving to alter designs and improve staffing in their institutions to reduce the transmission of airborne diseases, and families are changing how they arrange care for elderly relatives. Many families are taking difficult measures to arrange at-home care for relatives if they can, hoping to reduce not just disease risk but the isolation many nursing home residents have felt over the past year.

Still, some families and nursing home personnel see indifference from Americans about caring for the elderly and planning for circumstances that require institutionalization.

“Where the rubber meets the road is when you’re busy, and they’re old and they’re dying,” said Daniel Arbeeny. “If anything has to change, we need to value life. And we don’t.”

The nursing home industry is aware that Americans want reassurance about the safety of their institutionalized loved ones in future pandemics. Some ideas, like redesigning nursing home buildings to reduce the circulation of airborne diseases, were already in progress before the pandemic.

“Every provider wants to prove that they are doing what they need to do to prevent something like this from happening again,” said Stuart Barber, an architect who designs nursing homes with the Charleston, S.C., firm McMillan Pazdan Smith. But changing or building new facilities is expensive, and “margins were tight to begin with,” he said.

Over the course of 2020, the U.S. nursing home occupancy rate has dropped by about 10 percent—a decline experts attribute to deaths, a drop in new admissions, and families removing loved ones from facilities. Fewer nursing home residents means less revenue for nursing home companies that want to make facility improvements. Nursing homes also lost staffers burned out from pandemic stress or able to make more money elsewhere. Those workers might be costly to replace. The industry also expects stricter government regulations as a result of the pandemic.

Retrofits of existing buildings, which are often 60 or 70 years old, are of “higher cost and much less benefit,” Barber said. But building a new facility is also difficult, because a nursing home would have to buy another piece of land, build, move residents, and then decide what to do with the old facility. He’s seen such a plan work well if the old facility is on lucrative land next to a hospital, but otherwise it puts institutions in a tough financial situation.

Barber is waiting for more research on the particular transmission patterns of the virus that causes COVID-19 to see how the pandemic might alter his work. For example, in some situations, putting infected residents in an isolation unit was good, and in others it made the outbreak worse. The way a facility handled isolation units mattered.

“This is certainly not a new thing to most facilities. They have flu outbreaks every year,” said Barber. “It has to do with the amount, right? It’s typically isolating...
the single case or two cases if they are able to. Once it gets past that, everything breaks down.”

Some in the industry are pushing expensive HVAC retrofits that Barber isn’t sure are as cost effective as other measures. He has pushed clients to wait for more research on transmission and HVAC, because those additional filtration systems can always be added later.

Even before the pandemic, nursing homes were trying to create facilities that feel less institutional and more residential. That means more private rooms, which have an added benefit of infection control, and fewer large congregant areas.

But for quality of life, residents need not only infection control but communal spaces, Barber argues. He recently talked to a nursing home provider who told him, “The worst part of the last year for those residents was a complete lack of meaningful interaction with anybody.”

Barber advocates for the “household model,” redesigning institutions into pods serving 20 to 30 residents instead of 100. Facilities would have fewer hallways and more front doors, and communal spaces within the pods. Nursing staff would be concentrated in the 20-person pods rather than serving an entire facility, so dedicated staff for a “household” would feel more like family members, said Barber. He thinks that also might help with staff retention.

Post-pandemic, he suggests more “nooks and crannies” for people to have visitors instead of a large dining hall and making visiting areas with separate entrances so visitors don’t have to walk through residential areas.

FROM DR. BRIAN KRIER’S PERSPECTIVE, the best preventative for pandemics hitting nursing homes is good staffing. Krier, a family doctor serving nursing home patients in Monroe, La., saw the coronavirus sweep through local nursing homes “like a forest fire.”

The government rates nursing home quality based on health inspections, staffing (that is, staff hours per resident), and various other quality measures. “The nursing homes that had the highest ratings were only protected by the coronavirus based on their staffing rating,” Krier said. “You’d think more people coming in, more chance of the virus, but it’s the care.”

The coronavirus overwhelmed nursing home staff where he was in northern Louisiana, both with the actual toll of the virus and the amount of additional paperwork staff had to do. Facilities struggled to retain employees, who were “emotionally burned out,” he said, and the government was in many cases paying more for unemployment benefits than they made at their jobs.

“My biggest beef about how everything worked: There was not a source you could call saying, ‘Hey, we need some nurses’—whether it’s the National Guard or state nursing. We were making calls trying to get people,” he said.

As we talked, Krier was walking into a meeting about improved training for nursing home staff. He thinks more training gives employees confidence and improves retention. And nursing homes are trying to bring in more nurse practitioners and physician assistants for regular visits during the week. But the homes need physicians.

Krier estimates he and two other doctors see 90 percent of the nursing home patients in his area. A longstanding problem is that most doctors don’t want to do patient visits at nursing homes: One reason is that it’s inefficient for a doctor to travel to many different patients at different nursing homes in an area. But that lack of physician care is a bigger problem as nursing homes are getting more seriously ill people from hospitals, Krier said.

He’s wary of using telehealth to solve that problem. For the geriatric population, he believes doctors need to see their patients as they get up to walk to the bathroom, or hear their lungs. “In telehealth they’re all neatly placed in a wheelchair,” he said. He continued seeing his patients in person throughout the pandemic: “Praise the Lord, I never got sick.”
BECAUSE OF THE PANDEMIC, Dr. Krier has seen families go to greater lengths and expense to move family members out of long-term nursing home care. He has about 200 nursing home patients, and in a normal year he sees perhaps one family take the extensive measures necessary to move a relative from a nursing home to in-home care. This year, six families did so.

It’s difficult, and sometimes impossible, for families to find the necessary living space, care, and money for a relative needing around-the-clock help with eating, bathing, incontinence, and medical needs. But more are willing to try.

Edward Brehme, 88, was in a Georgia assisted living facility for rehab during the pandemic because of a fall. One or two members of his family at a time were allowed brief, masked visits, and since Brehme was mostly isolated, his great-grandchildren wrote him notes.

He healed up and was able to return to his Florida home, but he now requires constant care, which his family is attempting to provide. Pandemic or no, Brehme wants to stay at his home, with familiar surroundings and his dog. Brehme’s daughter Lori Knuteson has temporarily moved from Georgia to care for her dad at his home while the rest of the family searches for a long-term solution.

The planning is daunting: “We don’t know if it’s financially and logistically feasible,” said Scott Knuteson, Brehme’s grandson. Brehme is a Navy veteran, but even with special benefits for his service in the Vietnam War, his family is facing a “maze” of paperwork to arrange in-home care, his grandson said. They wish there was a professional advocate or central clearinghouse to help them figure out benefits or programs that might help. One sister has committed herself to researching and handling paperwork.

Brehme married Lori Knuteson’s mom in 1962, when she was a widow with eight children. Later, he was a caregiver for her for years as her health declined with ALS. His children feel it is their turn to honor him and do whatever they can to provide him with care at home, but it might prove impossible. For now, the siblings will rotate providing care.

End-of-life care isn’t something Americans “often think about or want to talk about,” Scott Knuteson noted. “It requires a lot of time and planning ... to care for your loved one in their own home.”

Funding for in-home care

New York City recently announced $58 million in new funding for the elderly to have more in-home care and neighborhood services, with the goal of being an “aging-in-place city.” This trend is happening in big cities and in rural counties—like Nelson County, N.D., which recently obtained state funding to provide more in-home care, including bathing, to seniors. President Joe Biden’s proposed infrastructure bill also provides billions of dollars in new funding for in-home care. In-home options are not always possible given a person’s medical condition, home setup, or support from family. But when possible, it’s usually what patients prefer and is less expensive than nursing homes. —E.B.
The United States reconsiders how to deter a Chinese invasion of Taiwan

by Angela Lu Fulton

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY RACHEL BEATTY
produce—pale green loofahs, sliced pineapples, ripe tomatoes—in open-air markets as scooters whiz by. Hip young people line up outside hole-in-the-wall ramen restaurants. Middle-aged women cradling their impeccably groomed dogs gab with friends at well-lit Western cafés.

The latest Chinese provocations spur endless discussion on political talk shows each night, but they haven’t perturbed the Taiwanese population who have lived under the threat of invasion for the past 70 years. Pastor Alexander Wu of Taipei’s Pearl Church noted that his grandparents were part of the Nationalist army that came to the island with Gen. Chiang Kai-shek in 1949, so he grew up knowing an attack was possible. Wu said an invasion doesn’t feel like a pressing issue: He doesn’t have an emergency pack ready, nor has he discussed with church leadership what they would do if an invasion comes. “The possibility of an invasion doesn’t quite play in the overall scheme of my ministry in Taiwan,” Wu said. “I take each day at a time … whether there’s an invasion or not, what matters is whether I’m faithful or not.”

As China emerges as a global superpower, many eyes turn to Taiwan, a mountainous island the size of Maryland and Delaware 100 miles off the southeast coast of China. Formerly under military rule, Taiwan is now a robust democracy with freedom of speech and religion. It has the world’s 21st-largest economy and is the world’s top producer of the semiconductor chips ubiquitous in modern electronics. For the United States, Taiwan is also strategically placed to prevent China’s dominance in East Asia.

Beijing has long aimed to “unify” Taiwan, by force if necessary, and now the risk is rising as the PLA’s capabilities grow. Nobody knows what would cause Chinese President Xi Jinping to invade Taiwan, so lawmakers hope to deter China by ensuring both Taiwan and the United States are prepared for an attack.

**TAIWAN HAS ALWAYS BEEN** the linchpin in relations between the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the United States. Facing defeat during the Chinese Civil War in 1949, the Nationalist army escaped to Taiwan where Gen. Chiang Kai-shek claimed to rule China’s legitimate government, the Republic of China (ROC). The PLA planned an invasion of Taiwan in 1950, but the Korean War grabbed Beijing’s attention.

As the United States sought to normalize relations with China in the 1970s, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai made diplomatic relations contingent on ending recognition of Taiwan. Under President Jimmy Carter, the United States officially switched diplomatic relations to the PRC in 1979. With its market potential and promised investments, Beijing has since enticed all but 15 countries to break off ties to Taiwan.
The PLA would face an ROC army outfitted with sophisticated U.S. weapons, a greater familiarity with the land, and a greater will to defend their homes. With U.S. intervention likely, for years it seemed the death toll of an invasion would be extremely high and possibility of success low.

TODAY, THE CALCULUS HAS CHANGED. China is closing in on the United States as the largest economy in the world and has heavily invested in ships, warplanes, missiles, and weapons for the sole purpose of invading Taiwan. China now has the world’s largest navy, tripling in size in the last two decades. Last year, its defense budget was 15 times that of Taiwan.

China is building capabilities to prevent U.S. forces from coming to Taiwan’s aid (see sidebar). In war-game simulations of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan, the United States loses again and again.

Adm. Philip Davidson, Washington’s top military officer in Asia-Pacific, told the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee in March that China could launch an invasion of Taiwan in the next six years. He noted China is quickly supplanting the United States’ role in Asia, making it difficult for U.S. forces to deter Beijing.

China may also be growing bolder since it has faced few international consequences as it commits genocide against Uyghurs in Xinjiang and quashes Hong Kong’s freedoms. China’s economic heft has bought silence from even democratic countries dependent on Chinese trade.

“The international community has not stood up to Beijing by now, why should anyone in Beijing believe the democracies will fight hard to defend Taiwan?” asked Easton, senior director at the Project 2049 Institute. “Recent history may lead the [Chinese Communist Party] to miscalculate.”

Xi Jinping has been clear on his ambitions. In a 2019 New Year’s speech, he said unification of Taiwan and
China was “an inevitable requirement for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people,” a goal he pledged to realize by 2049, the centennial of the founding of the PRC. Xi called for a peaceful unification under a “one country, two systems” framework like in Hong Kong, but stressed Beijing would use force if necessary.

Most Taiwanese recoil at the idea of living under Beijing’s rule, especially since China reneged on “one country, two systems” in Hong Kong. They overwhelmingly reelected U.S.-friendly President Tsai Ing-wen in January 2020. A Pew study found 66 percent of Taiwanese view themselves as Taiwanese, while only 4 percent consider themselves Chinese (the rest see themselves as both).

While China has always tried using a mix of carrots and sticks to draw Taiwan into its fold, the emphasis is now on the stick, said Russell Hsiao, executive director of Global Taiwan Institute. Hsiao doesn’t believe a full-on military invasion is likely in the short term. He thinks China will continue to pressure Taiwan in other ways.

China offers high paychecks and benefits to entice Taiwanese talent and companies to work in the mainland. Internationally, it steals Taiwan’s few remaining diplomatic allies and prevents it from joining international organizations. China has also launched disinformation campaigns, bought out Taiwanese media to print Chinese propaganda, and directed cyberattacks on Taiwan’s government offices and semiconductor industry.

China’s bullying became abundantly clear to the world during the coronavirus pandemic. While China covered up the origins of the coronavirus, Taiwan sounded an early alarm and kept its total death toll low. Still, China threatened to punish any country that supported Taiwan joining a World Health Organization meeting last May.

“There’s been a heightened awareness of Taiwan as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and a greater sense of urgency on the part of the United States and like-minded countries to allow Taiwan to meaningfully participate in an international capacity,” Hsiao noted.

**AS THE UNITED STATES** finds itself at odds with an aggressive China, it’s drawn even closer to Taiwan. The Trump administration stopped the practice of bundling weapons sales to Taiwan—intended to prevent Chinese provocation—and instead made multiple sales totaling $15 billion over four years. Less than two weeks before President Joe Biden took office, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo lifted self-imposed restrictions that barred visits between U.S. officials and their Taiwanese counterparts.

The Biden administration has continued to strengthen the U.S.-Taiwan friendship by inviting Taiwan’s representative to meetings of international organizations.

What would a China-Taiwan-United States clash look like?

The defense of Taiwan is one of the most challenging military problems for the United States.

Since the 1990s, China has embarked on a modernization campaign that has transformed its military from a land-centric defensive force to an advanced technology-centric force capable of projecting power within the East Asia region and beyond. One of these advances is a “carrier-killer” missile, specifically designed to either destroy U.S. aircraft carriers or at least keep them far enough away to remove their effectiveness. China’s eastern coast bristles with an array of ballistic missiles that can target not only Taiwan but also Okinawa and Guam, two islands that host a variety of U.S. bases.

But the United States possesses key advantages. Stealth fighter jets, such as the F-22 and F-35, and stealth bombers can penetrate sophisticated air defenses. The United States has also invested heavily in anti-ballistic missile technology it can deploy from land and naval vessels.

Taiwan also has its own formidable defenses. Taiwanese pilots fly F-16s supplied by the United States as well as Taiwan-produced fighter jets. Taiwan also has an arsenal of missile systems, tanks, and submarines.

—by William Denham, a WJI mid-career course graduate and a retired U.S. Air Force colonel. He is currently an independent contractor training Air Force fighter pilots.
sentative, Hsiao Bi-khim, to Biden’s inauguration—the first since the United States broke diplomatic ties with Taiwan. On NBC’s Meet the Press in April, Secretary of State Antony Blinken stressed the United States had a “serious commitment to Taiwan being able to defend itself.” Later that week, former Sen. Christopher Dodd and former Deputy Secretaries of State Richard Armitage and James Steinberg visited Tsai in Taipei.

During a White House visit in April, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and Biden called for “peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait,” the two countries’ first mention of the issue in a joint statement since 1969. Taiwan’s survival is vital for Japan’s national interest: From Taiwan the Chinese could easily blockade Japan, as 80 percent of its container ships travel through the Taiwan Strait. With Taiwan as Beijing’s “unsinkable aircraft carrier,” the PLA navy would have access to the greater Pacific and wield enormous power over all of East Asia.

Some analysts believe it’s time for the United States to end strategic ambiguity and openly state it would come to Taiwan’s aid in the event of an invasion. Richard Haass and David Sacks of the Council on Foreign Relations argued in a Foreign Affairs op-ed last September that ambiguity is no longer enough to deter China. Clarity would reduce the chance for war in the Taiwan Strait and reassure the United States’ regional allies, they said.

Haass and Sacks argued the United States should prioritize preparations for a Taiwan invasion, station more air and naval forces in the region, and pass a law that would impose severe sanctions on China if it attacks Taiwan. The United States could also help Taiwan maintain a strong democracy through aid with election security and cyber defense.

Others fear that such a move would provoke China to attack or embolden Taiwan’s leaders to formally declare independence. Still, Congress has bipartisan support for sending U.S. forces to intervene if China were to invade Taiwan.

WHILE ANALYSTS AND LAWMAKERS debate the threat of a Taiwan invasion from a 30,000-foot level, Wu is thinking about what it could mean for him, his wife, their five kids under the age of 10, and their golden retriever.

Wu has the luxury of dual Taiwan and U.S. citizenship and could quickly take the first flight out of Taiwan should an invasion occur. But he feels called to stay and care for those who can’t leave.

Lachlan McIntosh, the Taipei director of the mission organization Youth With A Mission (YWAM), also said he would stay if an invasion occurred. He’s lived on the island for 14 years and now oversees 60 YWAM staff in Taipei. “I don’t feel the call God gives us is only when things are good,” McIntosh said. “I hope to continue to be here, to support the Taiwanese people and share Jesus with them in the midst of a tough time.”

In the past few years, the Chinese government has kicked YWAM missionaries out of mainland China, and several of those families have relocated to Taiwan. While the group doesn’t have a specific contingency plan for invasion, it has encouraged staff to know their local emergency locations, register with their embassy, and have all important documents in one place should they need to pack up in a hurry.

Spiritually, he’s preparing his staff by helping them understand that the Christian life will be hard but the gospel hope remains no matter what happens—whether that means the death of a child, persecution, or an invasion. McIntosh noted it’s important to prepare people now when things are secure for difficult times to come.

Among local Taiwanese, there is also a strong desire to fight for their freedoms as China’s authoritarianism threatens their way of life.

“Taiwanese people will not run away,” Wu said. “They would hold to this land, and for generations this land has been occupied by different nations. As a people they’ve been resilient.”
On a cloudy afternoon in mid-January, students, alumni, and professors of Seattle Pacific University (SPU) stood in the street outside the university president’s house. They waved streamers and pool noodles to mark 6 feet of distance between them and called through masks into megaphones. Organizers handed out sheets of paper with a QR code that led to contact information for the school’s board of trustees and a script to rattle off demands. ¶ When the protesters dispersed, SPU’s student newspaper, The Falcon, reported they left rainbow-lettered signs in the street along with chalk messages for the president: ¶ “Everyone is made in God’s image.” ¶ “You’ve waited too [obscenity] long.”
The Free Methodist Church founded SPU in 1891 as a seminary. Its leafy campus, a 10-minute drive from downtown Seattle, hosts about 3,600 students, and it recently cut tuition 25 percent in a bid to grow enrollment. Before COVID-19, students could attend Tuesday morning chapel in a wood-paneled Methodist church just off campus.

SPU is still officially affiliated with the denomination, but the Free Methodist Church’s control over SPU has waned. In 1992, the school’s articles of incorporation required 60 percent of SPU’s trustees to be members of the denomination. That dropped to 50 percent plus one by 2002, and in 2005, just five of 12-15 trustees had to be members of the Free Methodist Church. By that point the board participated in a faculty vote, and 72 percent voted “no confidence” in the board, according to several news outlets. The school declined to comment to me on the vote.

Christian schools often worry about external threats from the government and secular opponents. But SPU also faces a threat from within. A slide in hiring practices and increasing acceptance of various sexual orientations has become a full-on mutiny as the board struggles to lead a school it no longer fully represents. Those who support the board’s decision say it hasn’t done enough to hold faculty and students to Biblical doctrines, which is the same reason other Christian schools have drifted from Biblical standards of sexuality.

The protesters wanted SPU to drop its policy of hiring only full-time faculty who affirm the school’s statement on human sexuality, which specifies Biblical marriage as between a man and a woman. After seeking comments from students and faculty, the board responded in April, announcing it would keep the policy. Days later, 90 percent of the faculty participated in a faculty vote, and 72 percent voted “no confidence” in the board, according to several news outlets. The school declined to comment to me on the vote.

In 1994, John West took a job teaching political science at SPU. As the board shifted away from Free Methodist Church control, West says, it also moved to a hands-off approach to the hiring and tenure process. West, who left SPU in 2006 to work at the Discovery Institute think tank in Seattle, said he eventually saw an email from a faculty distribution list boasting that the theology department didn’t have any members of the Evangelical Theological Society because that organization requires members to uphold Biblical inerrancy. West says a student once came to his office distraught that a theology professor had assigned a book arguing that God doesn’t know the future, without providing a counter argument.

Students have protested the school’s statement on human sexuality on and off for years. In 2001, The Falcon reported, the school altered lifestyle expectations in its student handbook, switching an entry in the list of prohibited activities from “homosexual activities” to “homosexual sexual activities.” For years the board ignored letters asking it to ditch its current statement on sexuality altogether.

But in January, a lawsuit restarted the fight. Former adjunct nursing professor Jéaux Rinedahl sued the school, claiming it declined to hire him for a full-time position because he is married to a man. In its response, the school denies both the position was open when Rinedahl applied and that he was rejected because of his marriage. SPU’s response says it hired a more qualified candidate.

SPU spokesperson Tracy Norlen wrote in an email, “Employees are asked to abide by conduct standards in the Employee Handbook, which hold traditional views of marriage between a man and woman,” but she declined to comment on the lawsuit. Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, religious schools can consider religious background or affiliation in hiring. If Rinedahl’s account is accurate, it seems SPU applies this hiring ability to full-time, but not part-time, faculty.

After Rinedahl filed the lawsuit, a “letter of lament” written by faculty in opposition to the hiring policy gathered 1,400 signatures. The growing demands for the policy’s removal prompted the board to reconsider the policy, and its April decision to keep it kicked off another round of protests. Video of one evening gathering shows a few dozen people gathered on a central campus lawn. They sat on blankets, carried battery-powered candles, and planted a row of miniature pride flags into the lawn. One wore a pride flag as a cape. A man and woman sang the band Gungor’s song “Beautiful Things,” and
students and a professor gave speeches opposing the hiring policy. But not everyone is protesting the board’s choice. Reed Davis, an SPU professor of political science, said he favors traditional marriage but has spoken up less as the campus has grown more hostile to his position. Some students also support the board: The Falcon published a student letter urging the board to maintain its position and strengthen its hiring policy. But it blamed the board for drift: “The board has also erred in requiring faculty to accept behaviors only, not doctrines,” the letter said. After the board’s decision, students including senior Lincoln Keller received an email from associate professor and interim philosophy chair Leland Saunders. “I’m shocked and heart-broken by this news,” Saunders wrote. “This decision by the Board effectively reaffirms SPU’s commitment to discriminatory policies and practices.” One of senior Sophie Saxton’s professors devoted half a class to letting students “grieve” the board’s decision. The letter also claims teachers have set aside class time for students to promote activism against the board’s policy, but students who disagree stay silent, fearful of public shaming. Saxton, a theater student, has avoided speaking up in support of Biblical marriage, worried she wouldn’t get cast in plays. Keller signed the letter and estimated based on conversations at honors program meetings that two-thirds of students agree with the protesters, while others hold the Biblical view of marriage but are largely afraid to speak up.

SPU may be the most striking example, but it isn’t the only school facing internal conflict. In Grand Rapids, Mich., Calvin University has also seen clashes recently. On March 9, student Paul Dick and some friends set up a folding table on a main campus lawn. A crowd quickly gathered, eyeing the blue banner Dick had made to hang off the front of the table: “LGBTQ IS SIN. THE BIBLE SAYS. Change my mind.” Dick said the crowd cheered when a gust of wind blew over a poster of Bible verses, and some students brought pride flags and blared rock music. About an hour after Dick’s group set up, university officials arrived to shut down the demonstration. They cited COVID-19 safety concerns and said the group had received approval for an apologetics event, not an LGBTQ discussion. Afterward, students and alumni debated the event in op-eds and comment sections of the school newspaper, Chimes. Like SPU, Calvin University began as a ministry training school for its denomination, what is now the Christian Reformed Church. Both Calvin and CRC maintain that homosexual activity is sinful but that homosexual orientation is not. And unlike SPU, Calvin’s denomination still gets final approval over board members, just over half of whom are required to be CRC members. But some say Calvin’s efforts to encourage diverse ideas and welcome
LGBTQ students has undercut that stance. Alumnus Glenn Bulthuis has long tracked what he considers liberal events the school hosts—the band Fun, for instance, performed at Calvin during a 2012 tour intended to encourage students to vote for LGBTQ rights. Ryan Balili, who taught physics at Calvin from 2015 to 2019, received an email from the assistant registrar in 2017 telling him a student in one of his classes was nonbinary and preferred the pronouns they/theirs/them. “You are encouraged to respect their pronoun usage, and refer to them in the appropriate way,” the email said.

When I asked the school whether it instructs professors to use students’ preferred pronouns, a representative wrote to me the email Balili got wasn’t school-sanctioned: “Professors are not directed to refer to students by their preferred pronouns.” Instead, administrators encourage the faculty member and student to talk with each other about the issue: “We want for the faculty member to understand the student and where they may be in their own process, and we want the student to respect the faculty member’s position.”

In October 2020, the Christian Reformed Church published a report proposing that the denomination classify its stance on same-sex marriage and gender identity as already “confessional”—in other words, declare that its stance on sexuality ranks just below apostolic creeds in authority and is not open to change. One-third of Calvin’s faculty signed a letter opposing the announcement, Chimes reported, though it noted that not all disagreed with its contents. Some worried about potential loss of academic freedom on the topic if the denomination declared its stance confessional.

After eight years on Calvin’s board, Allan Hoekstra resigned in 2020 and said in a statement to me that school administrators had avoided bringing faculty with un-Biblical views on sexuality to the board for review. Current board chair Bruce Los responded through a university spokesperson, “This statement is simply not true.” When Calvin students elected a student body president who then came out as gay in a Chimes article last fall, Hoekstra wrote that the students’ votes “bear clear witness to the instruction and guidance they are receiving during their time at Calvin.”

Micah Watson, an associate professor of political science at Calvin, defended the school. He pointed out that students don’t have to agree with the school’s beliefs and may differ publicly even as the administration upholds the denomination’s stance on sexuality. And while some think the school goes too far in embracing LGBTQ people, others think it doesn’t go far enough: Calvin consistently appears in the Princeton Review’s survey results for schools most hostile to LGBTQ students. “We get hit by both sides,” Watson wrote in an email. “I think it’s pretty exciting and sharpening for students and faculty to disagree with
each other about important ideas within a larger Christian framework.”

But other Christian schools have eventually buckled after internal pressure against their sexuality statements. In 2004, Eastern Mennonite University took heat for firing professors over homosexual behavior, but the university’s president promised that the school would not cave. In 2015, after years of advocacy from students and faculty, Eastern Mennonite University and Goshen College dropped their hiring ban on staff and faculty in same-sex marriages. They withdrew from the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities to avoid splitting the organization.

In 2018, California’s Azusa Pacific University, like SPU founded by the Free Methodist Church, removed its ban on “romanticized” same-sex relationships, retaining only its universal ban on extramarital sex—much as SPU had done in 2001. Students had complained that the policy unfairly singled out homosexual students. After Azusa Pacific’s board of trustees said it hadn’t approved the change, the school reinstated the ban, only to drop it again.

Under President Joe Biden’s administration, Christian schools worry they’ll lose federal funding if they keep their policies. The Equality Act, which passed the House but awaits Senate approval, would add sexual orientation and gender identity to classes protected from discrimination in housing and employment, potentially opening religious schools to discrimination charges. A class action lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Education filed in late March accused 25 Christian colleges, including SPU, of discriminating against LGBTQ students.

At SPU, students and alumni aren’t waiting for legal challenges. Student government joined an alumni coalition to demand the board eliminate the policy by May 1 or face sanctions. The list of seven threats included withholding donations, seeking negative media attention, attacking fundraising events and enrollment, and asking local officials to condemn the school publicly, some of which they had already begun.

Senior Carl Cederborg also doesn’t plan to donate to SPU, though for different reasons. Cederborg signed the letter urging the board to keep its statement on sexuality. He’s grateful for his professors and peers and said their frequent challenges to his orthodoxy and politics ultimately strengthened his faith. But he’s frustrated by SPU’s campus culture of assuming that people who disagree with prevailing opinions on politics and sexuality are bigoted or close-minded. He said he wouldn’t want his child to attend the school.

Whether or not sanctions succeed in damaging the school, and even if the board maintains its stance, former professor West worries that SPU has already watered down its Christian witness in Seattle. “How do you get to a self-proclaimed evangelical Christian university that suddenly more than 70 percent of the faculty reject a Biblical view of sexuality? You get that when you don’t have an intentional hiring policy,” West said. “It leaves a really gaping hole in Seattle.”

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**“UNDER PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN’S ADMINISTRATION, CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS WORRY THEY’LL LOSE FEDERAL FUNDING IF THEY KEEP THEIR POLICIES.”**
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“A HOP OF FAITH”

Kickboxing helped Amy Bream, born with one leg, accept her body as God created it

by Abi Churchill
In a Nike “Sport Changes Everything” commercial, 27-year-old Amy Bream balances on her prosthetic leg, then rotates her 5-foot-2 frame to deliver a swift kick to a heavy bag. She’s the definition of a confident athlete, sparring with a trainer in a boxing ring, lifting weights, and doing pull-ups on gym rings.

But Bream didn’t always feel this confident in her body. She remembers as a 7-year-old standing in front of her sister’s floor-length mirror, inspecting her outfit before heading to church with her family in Boiling Springs, Pa. Turning around slowly, she saw a little girl with brown hair, a flower-covered pink Easter dress, and a prosthetic leg. “You look like an idiot,” she told herself.

Bream, born with a rare birth defect called proximal femoral focal deficiency, has no right hip and only part of a right leg. The birth defect took the Breams off guard: All the sonograms showed a perfectly normal baby girl. But from the moment she was born, they were adamant about teaching her that “this is not a mistake. Jesus loves you and created you this way.”

Bream never doubted that God had a plan for her life. Still, the questions crept in: Why me, out of all people? In middle school, she would cry on her bed at night, wishing she could be normal. In high school, she wore jeans at the beach to cover her leg, sweltering on the sand while her siblings played in the water. Wherever she went, it seemed like people stared at her.

“I love my body because Jesus loves me,” Bream would tell herself. But when she looked at herself in the mirror, she tried to move her leg out of view. “What would it be like to have two legs?” she wondered.

At Messiah College in Pennsylvania, she majored in commercial music. When she played the piano and saxophone, she always crossed her real leg over her prosthetic leg in photos. No one questioned it—until her brother-in-law called her out during her senior year. “That’s the stupidest thing I’ve ever heard,” he responded when Bream said she avoided shorts.

“People react to you,” he said. “If you’re confident, people will see you as confident and not even make the leg a subject.”

Bream was taken aback, wondering if it was just her own fear holding her back. So she forced herself to wear shorts and dresses in public, bracing herself for stares. After graduating and moving to Nashville to work in marketing, she got a new prosthesis without a cosmetic cover, leaving the metal leg exposed. For the first week, she wore long pants over it.

Her doctor instructed her to exercise with her new leg before the week was up. So she put on shorts, drove to a boxing gym—and made a beeline for the bathroom. “Tell me everything’s going to be OK,” she begged a friend over the phone. “You did this for a reason,” her friend said. “This is going to be worth it. You have to go back outside.” Bream forced herself to walk out of the bathroom. As she boxed with the rest of the class, she found she was enjoying herself.

Developing confidence took a while. Bream kept showing up at the gym, doggedly determined to reach new goals. First it was kickboxing, then barbells, then running.

Bream didn’t just push herself in the gym. As soon as her alarm went off each morning at 6:30, she would repeat positive affirmations aloud. “You are beautiful just the way you are,” she’d mumble. Some mornings those words didn’t sound true. But the more goals she reached in the gym, the easier it became to believe them.

Today Bream is a coach and manager at the Title Boxing Club in Nashville where she first learned to box. She was initially hesitant when the owner offered her the job. “If you want your life to change, you gotta change,” he told her. “You’ve got to take a leap of faith.” “A hop of faith,” she joked back. —Abi Churchill studies journalism at Patrick Henry College
SORROW ON SWISS STREETS

The Port’espoir ministry brings kindness and spiritual hope to prostitutes in Switzerland

by Jenny Lind Schmitt in Lausanne, Switzerland

ON A FRIGID FEBRUARY NIGHT, most residents of Lausanne, Switzerland, are indoors, keeping warm in their homes. The only people out on the streets of a Sévelin district neighborhood are prostitutes, sex buyers, and volunteers from Port’espoir, a local ministry reaching these women. In French, the ministry’s name means Bringer of Hope.

Prostitution has been legal in Switzerland since 1942. Port’espoir co-founder Vanessa Randewijk had no experience with ministry to prostitutes when she first felt God was calling her to meet with women working the streets. “But since this is supposedly a job, I figured they should have a coffee break from that job.” She took thermoses of coffee, tea, and hot chocolate and started to get to know the women. That was in 2013. Soon she met volunteers from a nearby church who were also ministering to this population, and together they founded the ministry.

On that February night, Randewijk meets Anna and offers her a cup of hot tea. The young woman wraps her cold hands around the steaming cup, shyly answering questions from Randewijk and ministry co-founder Olivier Raess. Anna is from Nigeria and has been in Switzerland for two years. Some of her answers are vague, making it unclear if she came here by choice, so Raess tells her about a nearby social agency that helps victims of human trafficking. After Raess prays for Anna, she rejoins a group of compatriots up the street. Sidewalk corners painted in red delineate where the women are allowed to prostitute themselves.

Most of Switzerland’s prostitution takes place in brothels—euphemistically named “salons”—but Lausanne law also allows street prostitution as a historic business that has been practiced since the Middle Ages. What was once a last resort for Swiss women has overwhelmingly become an end destination for women from poor countries. That often includes women whom pimps lured to Europe with promises of jobs in hotels, then forced onto the streets.

Randewijk says the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the problems associated with legal prostitution. Prostitutes pay taxes and social security, but since the government considers them independent contractors, they weren’t eligible for unemployment or job retraining.
when brothels and street prostitution were both halted during the first pandemic lockdown. Brothels were among the first businesses allowed to reopen, while restaurants and cinemas remain closed. And because demand was low, buyers demanded lower prices and sex without condoms.

This neighborhood in Sévelin district is usually crowded with street prostitutes, according to volunteers. COVID-19 and the freezing temperatures this winter have driven business indoors or online. A woman from Romania says although she needs the money, she will stay outside for only two hours because of the cold. Her friend Camille tells Randewijk a bit of her story: She has three small children who stay with her mother in Romania. Her father has health problems and doesn’t work. She plans to return to visit when she has enough money and is grateful when the Port’espoir volunteers pray with her for them. Then she goes back to waiting for the next customer. The johns drive up and down the street, eying the women.

Raess and Randewijk say it’s sometimes discouraging to continue without seeing much change. But the ministry has built relationships with some of the women. Together they celebrate birthdays and holidays. “We are called to bring hope. To be the friend that that woman needs at that moment,” Randewijk said. “We want her to connect with who she was when she was not a prostitute and show her care because God says she’s worthy of that care.”

Before his involvement with Port’espoir, Raess said, he was leaving a prayer meeting one night when he felt the Holy Spirit leading him to give 50 francs (about $50) to a prostitute and to tell her that Jesus loved her. Unexpectedly, she asked about his church, started attending, professed Christ, and turned her life around. That memory encourages him, even when results are less dramatic.

“When I don’t have the motivation, I just have to remember that it’s a calling,” said Raess. “It’s not about doing good works, or because it’s fun—because oftentimes it isn’t—but to remember that God wants to meet this girl more than I do. ... It doesn’t depend on us, it depends on God.”

S EUROPE AND ASIA STUMBLE in vaccinating their citizens, America has leaped ahead. The United States in mid-April was averaging more than 3 million doses per day: President Biden had promised 100 million vaccines in 100 days, but the second hundred million shots had been distributed by day 92.

Yet lingering questions about the vaccine threaten to slow that progress just as they become available to all comers. Below I answer some common questions regarding the vaccines available in the United States.

**Do the vaccines work?** The vaccines used in the United States work very well. Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines provide 80 percent protection two weeks after the first shot. After the second shot, protection increases: A
large U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study of vaccinated front-line workers found the two mRNA vaccines to be 90 percent effective in preventing any infection. An Israeli study showed the Pfizer jab to be 97 percent effective “in preventing symptomatic disease, severe disease, and death.” Researchers found the Johnson & Johnson vaccine 72 percent effective in preventing moderate to severe COVID-19.

If they work, why do some vaccinated people still get sick? You may have seen reports about people getting COVID-19 even after receiving the vaccine. For instance, in January, Iona College basketball coach Rick Pitino tested positive for COVID-19 “days after he received the first of two doses.” However, that was too early for the vaccine to have helped him. Like all vaccines, the COVID-19 jabs take time to work—about two weeks—as the immune system needs to learn what the vaccine is teaching it.

As of April 26, some 9,200 Americans had contracted COVID-19 after full vaccination. That number sounds large until one considers how many Americans had been fully vaccinated: 29 percent of the country, or 95 million people, at the time of the report.

How does the coronavirus affect vaccinated people differently than nonvaccinated people? Even in cases where the vaccines don’t fully stem infections, they can prevent suffering—and death—as the vaccines give the immune system a head start against the virus. Of those 9,200 “breakthrough” cases, 9 percent were hospitalized and only 1 percent died. This is an improvement as nearly half of the infections were reported in people aged 60 and up, the highest-risk group. Without vaccinations, the fatality rate in those over 80 years old was 8 percent.

Cases of COVID-19 contraction after vaccines are not only likely to be less severe but also less contagious than normal cases. The amount of virus found in nose and throat swabs in a large Israeli study was far smaller among patients who had been vaccinated. Remember $R_t$, the “effective reproductive number” discussed early in the pandemic, where an $R_t$ of 1.0 means that each sick person infects an average of one other person? Vaccines push the $R_t$ down in two ways:

First, it’s very hard for vaccinated people to get COVID-19, and second, they appear to be much less contagious when they do. If I’m vaccinated, can I have a cookout with nonvaccinated friends and family? Given what we know by this point, it’s low-risk for fully vaccinated people to spend time around nonvaccinated friends or family. If you’re organizing a group of nonvaccinated people who don’t normally have contact with each other, a cookout (or other outdoor activity) is a great way to limit their risk of infecting each other compared with meeting indoors.

If I’m vaccinated, should I still wear a mask? The CDC announced in April that fully vaccinated people should continue to wear masks in indoor public spaces or crowds. However, they do not need a mask when outdoors or indoors with fully vaccinated people or with unvaccinated people from one other household.

Personally, I’ve set my P100 mask aside but haven’t stopped wearing masks entirely yet. Not because I’m still at meaningful risk, but because I want to encourage patience among those who haven’t had their shots yet. Apart from that, life is resuming all around me, and inside my own household too: Having had our vaccines, we have cut both our own risk and the risk of those around us dramatically. Once a given person is fully vaccinated, the “new normal” looks more and more like the old normal. —Do you have a question for Dr. Charles Horton? If so, please send your name and question to editor@wng.org

First, it’s very hard for vaccinated people to get COVID-19, and second, they appear to be much less contagious when they do.
When nothing lasts long enough

God’s cosmic winks inspire us to long for more

LIKE IT WHEN NOBODY’S HOME when I’m writing because I can play the same song over and over and no one is bothered. Type a few sentences, swipe the cursor left. Type a few more sentences, swipe the cursor left.

While weeding at church, I played Mason Williams’ “Classical Gas” all morning, interspersed with “Oye Como Va” (Santana), “O Happy Day” (Edwin Hawkins Singers), and “Rhapsody in Blue” with Adrian Brendle soloing on the piano. It’s very annoying that I can’t get the original expansive version of Williams’ guitar piece and that some philistine with no regard for emotions thought he could abridge it without doing it violence.

Nothing lasts long enough.

Morning, for one, doesn’t last long enough. It’s the best time of day but seems like no sooner have I poured my coffee than the brand-new-possibilities sun on the rim of the eastern sky is muscled out by the I-mean-busine$$

I wait all year for the purple wisteria across the street from Daryl’s Pastries to return, the way it cascades over the fence like a bacchanalian feast in the gardens of Babylon. And then it lasts, what, two weeks? Do you realize how many times you have actually looked at luscious lollipop-red tulips in your lifetime? If you’re my age, maybe a couple hundred measly days out of … 25,670?

Summer doesn’t last long enough (although, better in Pennsylvania than Canada where, as they say, there are two seasons—winter and July).

The thrill of nature doesn’t last long enough. C.S. Lewis notes, “Nature ‘dies’ on those who try to live for a love of nature. Coleridge ended by being insensible to her; Wordsworth, by lamenting that the glory had passed away. Say your prayers in a garden early, ... and you will come away overwhelmed by its freshness and joy; go there in order to be overwhelmed and, after a certain age, nine times out of ten nothing will happen to you” (The Four Loves).

The futility of trying to hold onto what refuses to be held was expressed in a letter I received from a Texas inmate describing his conversion. He wrote, “I never found true happiness no not in many different drugs, drinks, sex, nothing could stay long enough. I always kept trying until I gave Christ my heart.”

It was profound. The main problem with this present existence is that its pleasures are evanescent, and we spend our lives trying to recapture them. In vain. “I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. ... I also gathered for myself silver and gold. ... I got singers ... and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man. ... All was vanity and a striving after the wind” (Ecclesiastes 2:4-11).

I think God does it on purpose—the futility of grasping morning, wisteria, or a thrill from nature. These are the wink, the tease, by which He plants an ache that only heaven’s joys can quell. Who would care for heaven otherwise?

Love, we’re told, does last. And all that’s done in love (1 Corinthians 13:8).

The character we choose to build will last, and this fourscore sliver of eternity is our sole chance to do that in. Some will enter heaven safe but singed, with hay and stubble drawn behind (1 Corinthians 3:14-15). Others, bringing gold, will reap rewards and crowns and heavenly adventures that no eye has seen, ear heard, nor any heart of man imagined (Matthew 25:14ff; 1 Corinthians 9:24; 2 Timothy 4:7-8; Revelation 2:26).

“Only one life, yes only one, / Soon will its fleeting hours be done; / Then, in ‘that day’ my Lord to meet, / And stand before His Judgment seat; / Only one life, / twill soon be past, / Only what’s done for Christ will last” (C.T. Studd).
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Thinkin’ about Lincoln
A nation’s slow poisoning

On a surprisingly snowy April 20, a visit to the Springfield, Ill., presidential museum showed me that Abraham Lincoln’s time in the White House was, for him, almost always winter and never Christmas.

Lincoln was a proud man who had to put up with enormous scorn. Cartoonists depicted him as a clown, an ape, or a vampire. Others drew him as Abraham Africanus or a Jew—both despised minorities.

Lincoln throughout his career met insults with wit, not scorn of his own. In one speech he explained the need to be careful in policy pronouncements. Here’s part of the transcript: “If I saw a venomous snake crawling in the road, any man would say I might seize the nearest stick and kill it; but if I found that snake in bed with my children, that would be another question. [Laughter.] I might hurt the children more than the snake, and it might bite them. [Applause.]”

The slogans of the political left are now in bed with our children, and older Christians need to battle those snakes with compassion rather than contempt.

Lincoln in that speech also explained why he firmly opposed expansion of slavery into new territories: “But if there was a bed newly made up, to which the children were to be taken, and it was proposed to take a batch of young snakes and put them there with them, I take it no man would say there was any question how I ought to decide! [Prolonged applause and cheers.]”

When I was 20, I esteemed John Brown—see our Q&A on page 32—but at 70 I appreciate Lincoln. He understood his task as one of changing public opinion, not just attacking evil in a way that would feel righteous but produce a counterattack. His wisdom can influence not only our policy goals but our prayers: Ah, Sovereign Lord, please end all abortion right now—but if not, please keep abortion from spreading via telemedicine and mail-order pills.

The equation of slavery and abortion is not far-fetched. It’s wrong to give a human being life-or-death authority over a slave or an unborn child: That’s treating a person as property. Sometimes we need to see photos of a slave’s back cross-hatched by whippings, or an unborn child torn apart.

Lincoln brilliantly dealt with the issue-evaders of his era: “You think slavery is wrong, but you denounce all attempts to restrain it. … We must not call it wrong in the Free States, because it is not there, and we must not call it wrong in the Slave States because it is there. We must not call it wrong in politics because that is bringing morality into politics, and we must not call it wrong in the pulpit because that is bringing politics into religion.”

Now, those who decry abortion come under attack for “bringing morality into politics” or “politics into religion.” But silence on abortion victimizes not only the unborn. We are consuming a poison similar to the poison of slavery. Two generations before the Civil War, George Mason warned whites: “Practiced in acts of Despotism & Cruelty, we become callous to the Dictates of Humanity. … Taught to regard a part of our own Species in the most abject & contemptible Degree below us, we lose that Idea of the Dignity of Man.”

American politics has always been a contact sport, but the drawings of Lincoln displayed in his Springfield museum show how just before the Civil War it was a collision sport, as it is today. Quick poison for the unborn, slow poison for our nation.

After four miserable years, with Lincoln often sitting in the War Department’s telegraph office as casualty totals from battles arrived, the news of Union victory in April 1865 was so cheerful that Lincoln took his wife to Ford’s Theater. Then he was dead. Before leaving Springfield, my wife and I visited Lincoln’s tomb. Only one other person was there. Maybe Lincoln is now out of style. God help us.
Why are our political leaders the most neglected mission field in America today?

I’ve wondered about this for quite some time. When I served as U.S. Secretary of Energy in Washington, D.C., nothing prepared me better for the work that needed to be done for our nation than the hour I spent every week in the Capitol Ministries White House Cabinet Bible Study. Our political leaders desperately need God’s Word and yet they are all but forgotten when it comes to evangelism and discipleship. Let’s fix that. I am spearheading this bold effort to reach political leaders with the Word of God throughout America! Please join me.

RICK PERRY
FORMER SECRETARY OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
FORMER GOVERNOR OF TEXAS

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