

WORLD

DECEMBER 28, 2019

2019 NEWS OF THE YEAR



HELP MEN QUIT PORN IN 2020

**OVER 1,000,000 MEN ARE IN TRAINING TO
CONQUER PORN AND WALK IN FREEDOM!**

We've all made New Year's resolutions that we quickly break. With 68% of men in the church viewing porn on a regular basis, the dominant cry in their hearts is "I will never do this again, I won't let porn control me anymore!" Most men who make a new year resolution to never watch porn again find themselves back on the same websites in no time. Willpower won't fix it!

DO IT THE RIGHT WAY IN 2020 - START A PROCESS

Trying harder only tightens the noose around your neck. Each time you fail, you increase the shame you carry, which perpetuates the cycle; you go back to porn to medicate the shame you're feeling. Committing to a process takes time because there's no quick fix. It's more than just saying "I will no longer watch porn" because it's really not about porn. You're using porn to medicate anxiety and stress in your life. You do this by accessing the internal pharmacy that you have in your brain.

Your brain has powerful chemicals that you can access when you're feeling low. Most likely, you've learned to rely on these chemicals from a very early age. When you watch porn, powerful neurotransmitters such as dopamine are released, which bond you to those images.

According to neuropsychologist Dr. Tim Jennings, "Any type of repetitive behavior will create trails in our brain that are going to fire on an automatic sequence."

The result is years of bondage. This is how you can love the Lord, but still be trapped in bondage to porn.

You must renew your mind. Dr. Ted Roberts in the Conquer Series will teach you how to biblically renew your mind and find freedom. Dr. Ted has a 90% success rate in helping men find freedom.

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Conquer Series is a cinematic 6-disc DVD set featuring in-depth teaching from former Marine Fighter Pilot and Pastor, Dr. Ted Roberts, who shares powerful tools and bible-based strategies that he has used to help thousands of men renew their mind and find freedom from porn.

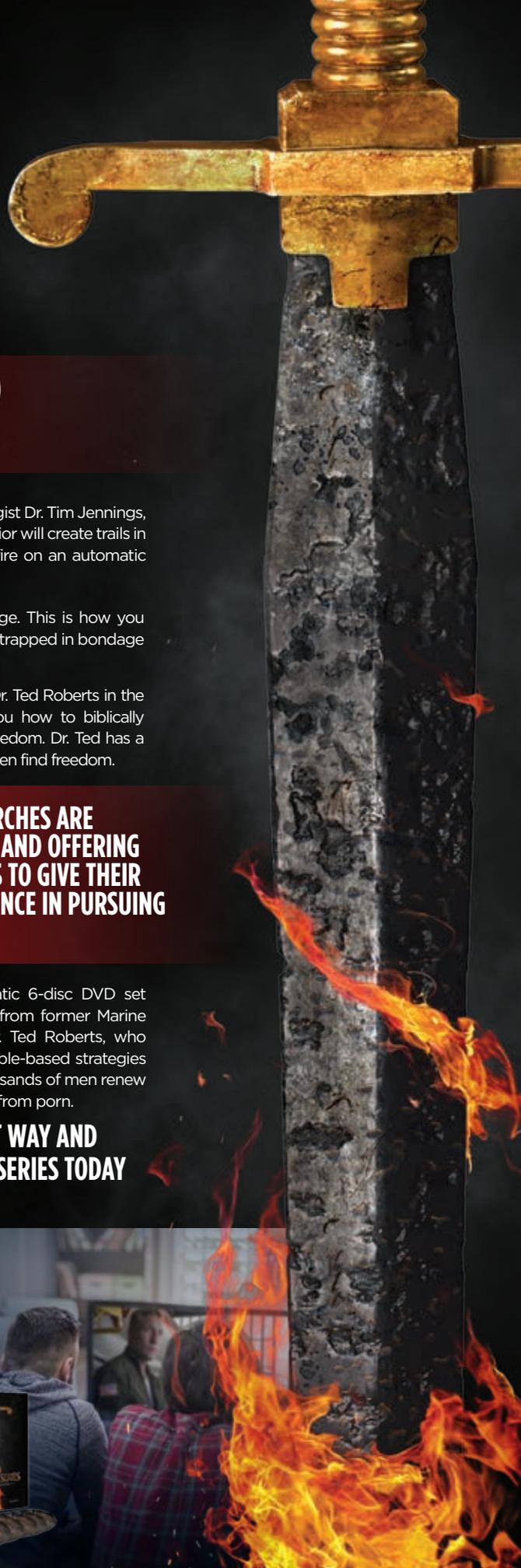
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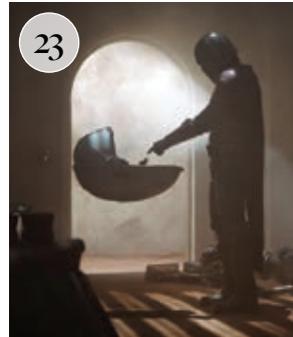
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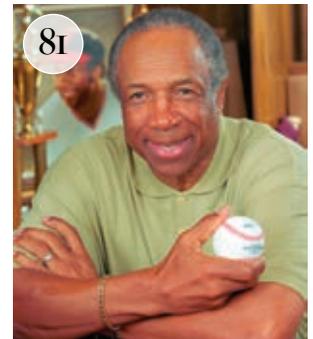
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ON THE COVER: Pro-democracy protesters react as police fire water cannons outside the government headquarters in Hong Kong on Sept. 15; photo by Isaac Lawrence/AFP via Getty Images

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Notes from the CEO

→ Ever faithful, WORLD members have been sending in year-end contributions to support our work. Along with those contributions, we frequently receive encouraging notes.

Here are a few I received just today:

“God bless you all—you bless our lives!”

“Thank you for your work for us all.”

“I love you! You bring joy to my every day.”

“Brothers & Sisters—We really appreciate your ministry! We pray this will be useful in furthering the work of God’s Kingdom. May God bless you!”

“God’s continued blessings on your work and we look forward to hearing about your endeavors during the year.”

“We are hopeful that God will continue to bless the WORLD News Group and all of those who are part of it.”

Your desire to bless us, even beyond financial support, mirrors God’s overriding impulse to bless His children.

Maybe we are more aware of that impulse during the holiday season. It certainly makes sense: The season starts with Thanksgiving, during which we deliberately recount God’s blessings in our lives. We move toward Christmas, with its celebration of God’s great blessing to us in the birth of Jesus, and its anticipation of all the blessings accompanying His return. And we generally include in the season the arrival of a New Year, with all of its remembrances of past blessings and expectation of future ones.

And it’s during the holiday season that you choose to bless us in word and deed. As God has blessed you, you have blessed us, and we are grateful for that.



Kevin

Kevin Martin
kevin@wng.org

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WORLD

“The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof; the world and those who dwell therein.” –PSALM 24:1

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Big plans

WORLD NEWS GROUP HAS MAJOR PROJECTS IN THE WORKS FOR 2020

➔ If I've heard the question once, I've heard it a hundred times: "Joel, of all the projects you've got going at WORLD, which one most deserves my financial help?" It's almost like hearing, "Of your five daughters, which has given you your favorite grandchildren?"

The truth is that—just as I delight in *all* my grandchildren—all three of our divisions are undertaking major projects that will need member support. If it weren't for your support along the way, we couldn't even *consider* these projects, let alone start them.

Now, we need you to help us get them completed.

God's World News, our news division for students, has helped millions of elementary and secondary students relate the truth of the Bible to world news. Parents often tell us that they remember reading God's World News magazines when they were kids. Now they encourage their children (and grandchildren!) to explore our content to understand current events in light of a Biblical perspective. But today, young people are exposed and accustomed to so much more media than ever before.

That's why in 2020 we are launching *WORLD Watch*, a daily 10-minute video newscast during the school day designed expressly for middle and high schoolers in traditional Christian schools and homeschools. Students are more than ever soaking up life-shaping information through video. *WORLD Watch* aims to use that powerful medium to foster the same skills and habits of discernment and Biblical critical thinking that have always applied to reading.

As we create this daily video newscast, we will ask: "Does this story help children discover God's amazing world? Do these current events explain how God is at work? Will these news issues help nudge students toward a habit of Biblical critical thinking and discernment?"

We want our answers always to be yes, yes, yes.



**Today,
young people
are exposed
and accus-
tomed to so
much more
media than
ever before.**

WORLD Watch is scheduled to go into full production at the beginning of the next school year in August, and we've got a lot of work to do before then.

Our **WORLD** division publishes the magazine you are holding, publishes daily news for your digital consumption, and produces three podcasts you should be familiar with already: *The World and Everything in It*, our 30-minute daily news program; *The Olasky Interview*, a seasonal program of interviews conducted by Marvin Olasky; and *Listening In*, a weekly interview program.

We've got big plans for WORLD in the new year. We plan to launch a 12-episode "season" of an all-new podcast, *Effective Compassion*, that will tell the stories of organizations fighting poverty in a way that is challenging, personal, and spiritual. This first season will explore the history and theological foundation of effective poverty fighting and the true meaning of the often-misunderstood word *compassion*. Later in the year we hope to roll out an additional podcast or two—stay tuned to see what shape those take.

You should also be looking for a newly redesigned WORLD Magazine hitting your mailbox next month. I've heard that it will be bigger (in terms of pages), brighter, and more readable. Sounds great!

Finally, there's **World Journalism Institute**, which offers intensive training for aspiring journalists. Many of our WJI alumni work at WORLD and, importantly, at mainstream news organizations, where they are often the only Christian presence in their newsrooms.

Along with the increasing number of journalists we've been able to train domestically, we have just completed our second year of training journalists in China, thanks to your support. This small-scale effort barely scratches the surface of the need there, but it's a start. It's something we hope to continue, as resources are available.

Perhaps you'll have one of these specific projects in mind as you consider giving to WORLD this year. Perhaps you will say, as so many of our donors do, "Just do more of what you're doing."

May I strongly urge you to make a gift in support of our work? Gifts of \$25, \$50, and \$100 will help lay a solid foundation. And, as I do every year, I'm looking also for a handful of folks who will commit to \$5,000 each year for the next three years. WORLD's mission is that important! I hope you'll share our urgency. You can use the envelope nearby or make a gift online on our secure page at wng.org/donate. ☉

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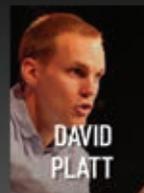
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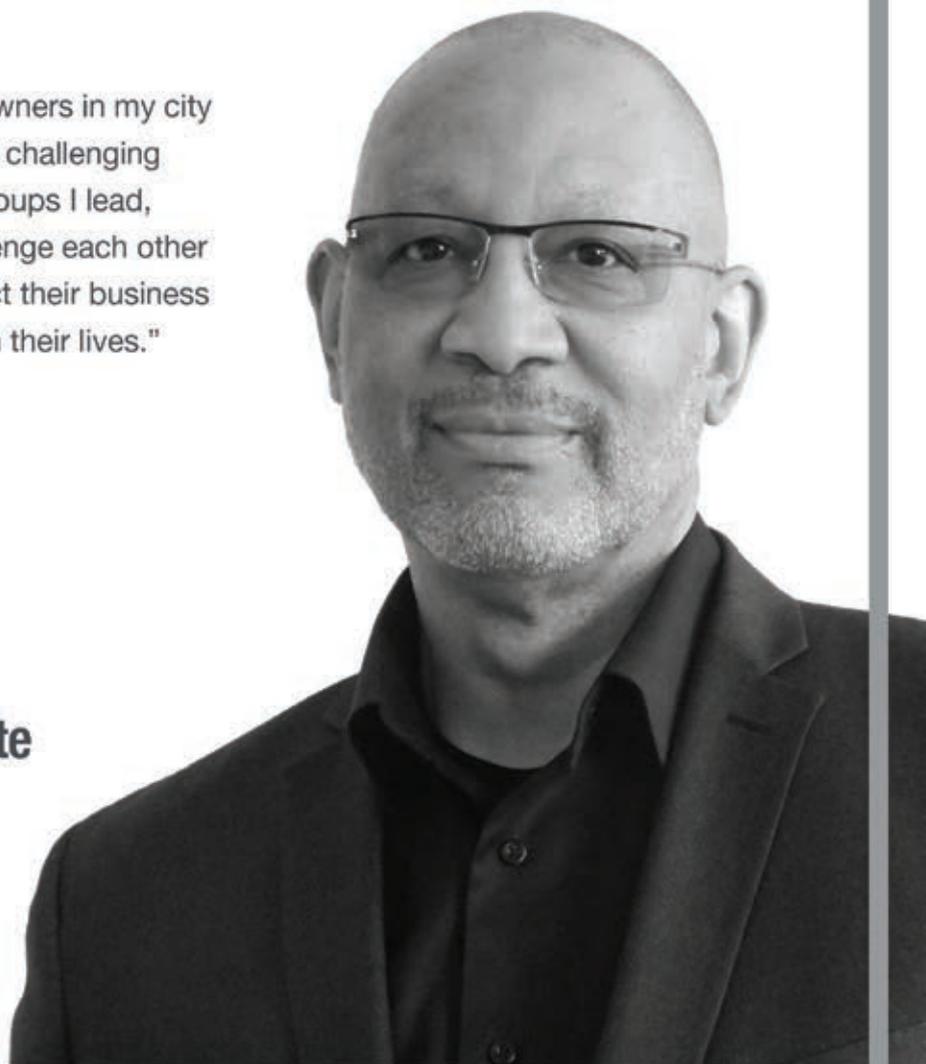
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News Analysis / Human Race / Quotables / Quick Takes

Kim Jong Un



News Analysis

Events, trends, oozes

A FORTNIGHT'S NEWS INCLUDES LONG-TERM CONCERNS *by Marvin Olasky*

→ The 14 days ending on Dec. 9 included one small step for unborn babies, with hopes of a large leap to come. In a victory for factual truth, the U.S. Supreme Court left standing a Kentucky law requiring abortionists to perform an ultrasound,

describe the results to the mother, and let her hear the unborn baby's heartbeat.

Previously, the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals had ruled there was nothing unconstitutional about a doctor making "truthful, non-misleading

factual disclosures, relevant to informed consent, even if those disclosures relate to unborn life and have the effect of persuading the patient not to have an abortion." Proponents of abortion tend to go up the ladder of abstraction with language like "right to choose" and "products of conception," but seeing and hearing not "an infant" but "my baby" makes a huge difference.

Unsurprisingly, those 14 days around the world featured some of the usual posturing. North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un once again rode a white horse up a sacred mountain,

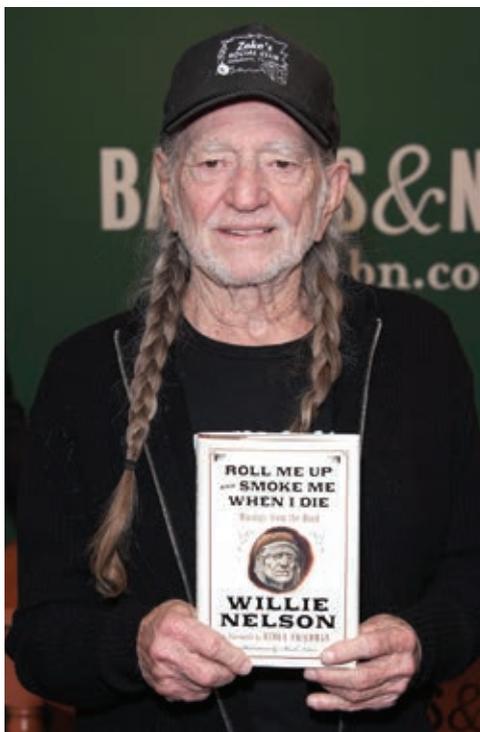
suggesting we're in for a wild ride in 2020. Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro clung to power, even as starvation stalked his country's streets and 9 out of 10 Venezuelans wanted him out. Iran's oligarchs defended their killing of demonstrators who had criticized the spiking price of gasoline.

The United States has its own weirdness, but our problems are still minor by comparison. Willie Nelson acknowledged his health and breathing issues and gave up marijuana smoking after 65 years. Actor Chris Pratt apologized abjectly for posting on Instagram a photo of himself holding a plastic water bottle. On Dec. 2, Cyber Monday, as Amazon offered discounts on voice-activated speakers, anger-activated protesters outside the Manhattan penthouse of Amazon's CEO chanted "Bezos, Bezos, you can't hide, we can see your greedy side."

In politics, Democrats passed out a 300-page report designed to bolster their claim that Donald Trump's July 25 phone call with Ukraine's president was an impeachable offense. White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham said the report "reads like the ramblings of a basement blogger straining to prove something when there is evidence of nothing." Joe Biden toured Iowa in a bus with his "No Malarkey!" slogan on the side, and retired GOP Sen. Orrin Hatch teased him by announcing other slogans: No hogwash, no balderdash, no folderol, no tomfoolery.

That fourfold hope is unlikely to achieve the fame of what the Republican base proclaimed in 1854—free soil, free speech, free labor, free men—but we live in an age of low expectations. And maybe that's the key trend of 2019: We're not basking in the aftermath of a War to End All Wars as our predecessors were in 1919, or echoing a *New York Times* headline from 10 years ago, "Poll Finds Faith in Obama." Instead, newspapers showed concern that a poor potato crop will lead to increased prices for french fries.

While our events and trends create no reason to panic, our oozes—the slow-moving, long-term changes that



Biden tours Iowa (above); Willie Nelson in 2012 promotes a new book.

women are having fewer than two children on average, well below replacement level for the general population.

J.D. Vance, author of *Hillbilly Elegy*, speculated about the connection of that ooze with another: "I've been blown away by some of the research that I've seen in the past year about the way in which pornography warps young adults' minds, and how they interact with their environment." Part of that interaction is less marriage: Vance wrote, "We made a political choice that the freedom to consume pornography was more important than public goods like marriage and family and happiness."

Marriage and family also took a hit from the American Psychological Association: One of its task forces aimed to "promote awareness and inclusivity about consensual non-monogamy and diverse expressions of intimate relationships. These include... polyamory, open relationships, swinging, relationship anarchy..." Meanwhile, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* announced that "drug

show tendencies hard to reverse—are troubling. For example, reports published in December showed the U.S. fertility rate declining for the fourth consecutive year: It reached a record low of 59 births for every 1,000 women able to bear children, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. A Pew study showed the 2018 TFR—total fertility rate—was 1.7. This means

overdoses, alcohol abuse, suicides, and a diverse list of organ system diseases” sent American life expectancy down for the third straight year.

Oozes come when bad decisions by one generation affect the next. In Pakistan, investigators reported a result of China’s one-child policy, which led to the killing of many baby girls: Desperate Chinese men bought from traffickers 629 Pakistani women. In the United States, the Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality found rates of upward mobility have sharply declined, with those who only graduated from high school facing deteriorating economic prospects. A OnePoll survey reported that the average adult in the United States wakes up grumpy 300 times per year.

Psychoanalyst Erica Komisar, writing in *The Wall Street Journal* on Dec. 5, put her finger on the biggest ooze. Her column began, “As a therapist, I’m often asked to explain why depression and anxiety are so common among children and adolescents. One of the most important explanations—and perhaps the most neglected—is declining interest in religion. This cultural shift already has proved disastrous for millions of vulnerable young people.”

Komisar offered this evidence, from a long-range Harvard study of 5,000: “Children or teens who reported attending a religious service at least once per week scored higher on psychological well-being measurements and had lower risks of mental illness. Weekly attendance was associated with higher rates of volunteering, a sense of mission, forgiveness, and lower probabilities of drug use and early sexual initiation.”

Her conclusion: “Pity then that the U.S. has seen a 20% decrease in attendance at formal religious services in the past 20 years, [and that] nearly half of adults under 30 do not identify with any religion.” But what goes down can come up. Happily, the Bible leaves us unsurprised by oozes: Jesus asks in Luke 18:8, “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” New Year’s resolution: Pray that the answer will be yes. 🙏

BY THE NUMBERS

\$34 million

The size of former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s initial advertising purchase in 46 states ahead of his bid to become the Democratic presidential nominee, according to Advertising Analytics.

44%

The share of American Christians who told researchers at Barna Group that attending church is not an essential part their faith.

220 pounds

The weight of a collection of netting, rope, plastics, and other ocean trash found in the stomach of a dead sperm whale that washed up on a beach in Scotland.

65%

The percentage, among all undocumented immigrants in the U.S. between 2010 and 2017, who traveled legally to the country then overstayed their visas, according to the Center for Migration Studies of New York.

2 out of 5

The proportion of Australian women who said they continued to feel phantom baby kicks in their wombs after giving birth, in a survey by Monash University researchers.



Members celebrate the end of the United Auto Workers strike against General Motors.

Hired

U.S. employers added 266,000 jobs in November, raising hiring to its highest level since January. Wages rose 3.1 percent compared with a year earlier, and unemployment matched the 50-year low set in September at 3.5 percent. The return to work of 40,000 striking autoworkers at General Motors helped drive the increase in jobs, as did other factories adding 13,000 jobs. Retailers added 2,000 jobs for the holiday season.

Introduced

China is introducing mandatory face scans for anyone registering new mobile phones. The new law appears to be part of its longtime effort to register the real-life identities of the country's millions of internet users. Currently, anyone signing up for a mobile phone plan has to show a national ID and have a photo taken. Internet platforms are also required to

ensure they know a user's true identity before the user can post online. Hundreds of social media users commented about fears regarding the new face-scan requirement, including worries about thieves, scam callers, and increasing government surveillance.

Surged

More than 140,000 people died from measles globally in 2018, according to official estimates from the World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Most of those who died were children under 5 years of age. Recently, the United States has suffered its worst outbreak in 25 years, and there have been emergencies in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Ukraine, and the Pacific

nation of Samoa. The WHO director-general, Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus, called the issue an "outrage" and pointed out that children should not be dying from a vaccine-preventable disease. According to the BBC, a recent surge in deaths is likely due to the difficulty in accessing vaccines, especially in poor countries worldwide. Overall, though, measles deaths have fallen by 73 percent globally since 2000.

Attacked

An Indian woman was attacked and severely burned on her way to testify against her alleged rapists in court. The 23-year-old filed a case against two



Indian activists demand justice for victim.

men months ago in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. She was traveling to the train station, according to local media, when a crowd of men grabbed her, dragged her to a field, and set her on fire. Police say they have arrested five men, including two of her alleged rapists, in connection with the incident. This case is similar to a July incident in Uttar Pradesh where a woman accused a lawmaker of rape and was later seriously injured in a car crash that killed two of her aunts. Police are investigating the crash as murder.

Resigned

Pope Francis accepted the resignation of Bishop **Richard Malone**, whose Roman Catholic diocese in Buffalo, N.Y., faces more



than 220 lawsuits filed by people claiming priests sexually abused them. Malone faces widespread criticism from his staff, priests, and the public over how he handled allegations of clergy misconduct. Malone offered to step down two years before the mandatory retirement age of 75 after learning the (so far unreleased to the public) results of a Vatican-mandated inquiry into abuse cases in his diocese. The Vatican named Bishop Edward Scharfenberger of Albany, N.Y., to head the diocese temporarily.

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'God always has a plan.'

TUA TAGOVAILOA, star quarterback for the University of Alabama and an outspoken Christian, on going down with a season-ending injury, which cost him millions in NFL draft stock. The Tua-less Crimson Tide went on to lose to rival Auburn, making 2019 the first time Alabama's football team lost two regular season games since 2010.



'A trickle becomes a stream becomes a flood. We're sort of at the flood stage right now.'

New York attorney **JAMES MARSH** on the recent extension of statutes of limitations in states like New York for child sexual abuse. The extensions could open the door to at least 5,000 new lawsuits nationwide against the Roman Catholic Church, with payouts topping \$4 billion.



'It's like taking paint away from a painter and asking them to create a masterpiece.'

Chef **ROBERT W. PHILLIPS** on the ban by Berkeley, Calif., on natural gas in new construction. Restaurateurs have filed suit to block the law from taking effect in January, saying that restaurants rely on gas "for cooking particular types of food, whether it be flame-seared meats, charred vegetables, or the use of intense heat from a flame under a wok."



'He did not destroy the art work. The banana is the idea.'

LUCIEN TERRAS, director of museum relations for Galerie Perrotin, after someone ate a banana duct-taped to a wall that was supposed to be a piece of art. A collector had purchased the piece for \$120,000.



'My goal is to get elected—but I plan to be the last American president to be elected by the Electoral College. I want my second term to be elected by direct vote.'

U.S. Sen. **ELIZABETH WARREN**, D-Mass., a Democratic candidate for president, on her hopes to abolish the Electoral College.



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SOME SAY WORDS LIKE "MALARKEY" ALIENATE YOU FROM YOUNGER VOTERS IN THE PARTY'S BASE.

I THINK IT'S THE BEE'S KNEES.

WAIT. THE BEE'S KNEES?

YEAH, YOU KNOW... WITH IT. HAPPENING. HIP.



GOT IT... LOOKS LIKE I'M LATE FOR AN EVENT WITH MAYOR PETE.

WELL, FIDDLESTICKS!

BUT ENJOY THE SHINDIG!



I THINK IT'S A PHONE SCAM. THE CALLER WANTS ME TO GIVE UP OUR PRIVATE INSURANCE.

HOW'D ELIZABETH WARREN GET OUR NUMBER?

CREATORS: JIMMO & MARY WALKER



MY COMMITTEE IS HEARING FROM SEVERAL CONSTITUTIONAL LAW PROFESSORS ON THE SUBJECT OF IMPEACHMENT.

GREAT! TRY NOT TO LET THEM STRAY INTO ANY ARCANE, SUPERFICIAL CONCEPTS LIKE DUE PROCESS OR THE IN-ADMISSIBILITY OF HEARSAY...



DEATH to AMERICA
OUR PROTESTERS





A jump too hard

It probably wasn't the message one father was trying to send. Part of a bridge collapsed at Disneyland on Nov. 10 after a man broke it while jumping up and down. Officials with the California park said the man had been jumping on the suspension bridge three stories above the Tarzan's Treehouse attraction to demonstrate to his children the bridge was safe to cross when a wooden plank gave way. Park officials say no one was injured in the incident, and the bridge was reopened the next day following repairs.

Christmas dressing

Dressing maker Hidden Valley has the perfect stocking stuffer for salad fans: a stocking stuffed with ranch dressing. In November, the California-based brand listed a 15-inch-long Christmas stocking filled with 52 ounces of ranch dressing on its website. The novelty gift features a spout near the toe for easy pouring. The price: \$35.



Tiny dancer

A French newborn has something to look forward to when he grows up. Frustrated by personal problems, an expectant mother spent her early-morning hours at a Toulouse, France, nightclub on Nov. 11, when she unexpectedly went into labor. "We had to react very quickly," O'Club manager Marie-Helene told *La Depeche*. "The girl was not panicked, but worried." Before paramedics arrived, the 19-year-old mother gave birth to a boy on the club's dance floor. As a birthday present, the O'Club manager has offered the newborn free admission for life.



Quacks in Dax

The ducks of Dax may quack, according to a French court. The dispute began a year ago when a neighbor made an official complaint about the noise emanating from a flock of ducks kept by retired farmer **Dominique Douthe** in the southwestern French town of Dax. But a French court threw the neighbor's noise complaint case out on Nov. 20. "The ducks have won," Douthe told the Reuters news service. "I'm very happy because I didn't want to slaughter my ducks."



Special offers

With New York state's cash bail system going away for most nonviolent offenses in January, law enforcement agencies are scrambling for methods to coax defendants to show up for their trials. According to WCBS, New York City police are considering instituting a program to offer defendants subway passes, Dunkin' Donuts gift cards, or Mets baseball tickets to lure them to court. The New York State Legislature voted for bail reform in April, leaving state prosecutors worried that defendants in nonviolent cases who are released on their own recognition won't show up for their trials.



Trouble in the air

An Indian health official has prescribed carrots to treat the effects of smog blanket-ing India's capital city of Delhi. Minister for Health Harsh Vardhan tweeted out a graphic insisting that Indians can "munch [their] way to good health with winter carrots." The Indian government has tried several initiatives to mitigate the pollution in Delhi, including prohibiting cars from driving in the city on consecutive days in 2016. The pollution has inspired private solutions as well. The proprietors of Oxy Pure opened a bar in May where they sell Delhi residents concentrated oxygen from a mask. The cost: just over \$4 for 15 minutes of air.

A festival put on ice

This winter's Christmas in Ice festival in North Pole, Alaska, has officially melted down. Executive Director Keith Fye said Nov. 20 that this year's event would have to be canceled because of a lack of ice. Sculptors typically **harvest ice**

from nearby ponds to craft a series of ice carvings that form the centerpiece of a six-week exhibition. But, Fye said, the local ponds in the Alaskan city don't have enough ice on them to make the Christmas-themed sculptures this year. On the event's website, officials thanked visitors from previous years and indicated they would try again next year.



Not even mostly dead

A British newspaper has had to issue a correction after publishing an obituary of a local community leader. The mistake was that he's still alive. Editors for *The Northern Echo* said they "apologize unreservedly" for publishing an obituary for **Charlie Donaghy** on their website. In the correction, editors said they checked three independent sources to confirm Donaghy's death. But no one from the paper asked Donaghy's family, who fired back at the newspaper, saying in a statement that "you cannot unhear or unread that your father is dead."



Bad call

Police in Ontario, Canada, have reminded local residents that phoning emergency services is for emergencies only. The reminder came after a local woman called 911 asking for a ride after she was running late for a train. "Do you guys offer emergency ride services or not?" the woman asked an annoyed 911 operator in a phone call Peel Regional Police released in a Nov. 21 tweet. The operator suggested the woman call a cab and quickly got off the call. In the tweet of the emergency call, officials added, "Calling 9-1-1 to ask the police to act as an 'emergency' ride service, to get you there on time? Yeah... not gonna happen."





The beginning at the end

THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA KEEPS HIS PROMISES AND KNOWS WHERE HE IS GOING

→ “Today is the first day of the rest of your life.” That was my introduction to motivational slogans, at the age of 19. It was a revelation: Hey! Whatever bad habits I’ve collected, whatever sins I’d slipped into, there was always a tomorrow. There was always a new start, a new resolution, a new opportunity to rise up from the ashes of defeat. Gotta learn how to fall before you learn to fly, right? Every journey begins with a single step. You never fail until you stop trying! The best way to get something done is to begin. Sometimes you win, sometimes you learn.

And sometimes you just fritter away another day binge-watching or gaming or eating too much or exercising too little. But there’s always tomorrow ... until, as Professor Harold Hill says in *The Music Man*: “You pile up enough tomorrows, and you’ll find you’ve collected a lot of empty yesterdays.”

Pile up enough motivational posters, and you can start a pretty good bonfire.

But how about this for motivation: “He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent” (Colossians 1:18b). Not, He is *at* the beginning, or fires the starting gun or springs off the block first. “The beginning” is a person, not an inspirational word or a first step. It’s word and action both, the “be” in “Let there be” (light, sky, ground, water, sun and moon, life). *He is the beginning* tumbles out in a stream of superlatives describing Christ, so brief and simple it’s easy to overlook. But wait—stop, go back, and consider what the statement really says:

He is the beginning. Every pronoun has an antecedent. This one has several: image, firstborn, head (of the body), fullness, preeminence, beloved Son. He occupies the shining center of “all things,” the direct opposite of a black hole.



I still like beginnings, but after all these years I’m wise to them. They can be slippery and insincere.

Rather than negation, He radiates affirmation, all creation circling and rejoicing in Him.

He *is* the beginning. Present tense. The gate of time stands open, and He occupies the threshold as humanity pours through on its way to eternity, blessed or condemned. He is the door, but also the deed; the object of all those prepositions (*by, through, in*) and, at the same time, the active agent. He does it. He *is* it, yesterday and forever, and always today.

He is the *beginning*. I used to love beginnings—like at the start of the school year, sharpening pencils and plotting a schedule for getting all my homework done. On New Year’s Day, savoring that last piece of Christmas fudge

before starting the diet-and-exercise program. In the hospital with a new baby, making promises no one can keep. You know what happens, though: The pencils get stubby and chewed-upon, resolutions don’t hold up even for a week, and babies grow into them-

selves, striding off in directions impossible to imagine, much less predict.

I still like beginnings, but after all these years I’m wise to them. They can be slippery and insincere, for as long as I know another one is going to come around, flubbing this one is not the end of the world. Until school is finally over. Until the nest is finally empty. Until the last New Year’s Day finally arrives and, though I may have no clue or premonition, it’s the end of the world for me.

But not for Him. By entering the womb as a tiny seed uniting with a human egg, He became our beginning. He’s good for His promises and knows where He’s going—in fact, He’s already there, talking about us. Interceding for us. Beginning with us, day after day.

Big changes are ahead for me this year, and perhaps for you as well. Big changes are ahead for our country in this already-chaotic election year. I can confidently predict that we’ll hear bad news and good news, puzzling news and smack-ourselves-on-the-forehead news. From heaven’s perspective, however, 2020 is already old news. The real news is perpetually good, provided we know the Omega and the Alpha. ☺



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In May 2019, Geneva College dedicated the theological library and papers of Dr. John H. Gerstner, renowned American theologian and leading scholar who had an impact on a generation of Reformed pastors and teachers. Dr. Gerstner's family donated his collection of works, private and published writings, study notes, video and extensive resources for public access at Geneva College.

The collection is already benefitting Geneva students and faculty as well as theological scholars interested in Dr. Gerstner's work in apologetics, Jonathan Edwards, and biblical inerrancy among other scholarly emphases. This valued collection is enriching the studies of novices and advanced theologians alike, particularly those working in the Reformed tradition.

We invite all who would like to enter the thoughts, rigor and sheer delight of John Gerstner's scholarly world to visit the John H. Gerstner Collection in McCartney Library on the Geneva College campus in Beaver Falls, PA. For more information visit Geneva.edu/gerstner.

"John Gerstner was an evangelist to academia – a respected scholar with the boldness of a reformer to speak the truth in love."

– Dr. Stephen Nichols, President of Reformation Bible College and Chief Academic Officer of Ligonier Ministries at Gerstner Collection Dedication, May 2019

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Movie

Mandalorian appeal

THE POPULAR STAR WARS SHOW IS FAMILY-FRIENDLY SCI-FI WITH A SPIRITUAL ANGLE *by Megan Basham*

➔ Except for a few sleeper hits, the streaming era has offered little by way of family viewing. By that I mean shows complex enough to entertain both parents and older children, not just kids' pro-

gramming that adults have to suffer through. Judging by its tremendous popularity, *The Mandalorian*, a new Star Wars series streaming on Disney Plus, is filling that gap.

Any fan of Clint Eastwood spaghetti Westerns

will instantly recognize the influences on the stand-alone story that takes place five years after events in *Return of the Jedi*. The fall of the Empire has inevitably left chaos in its wake. Out on the lawless frontiers of the New Republic, we meet a lone bounty hunter known only as Mando, a moniker taken from the name of his people, the Mandalorians.

Like any gunslinger worth his salt, Mando is the quickest draw in the galaxy. But we know little else about him. In fact, he's so mysterious, four episodes in, we have yet to glimpse his face.

But in classic cowboy fashion, Mando's tough exterior hides a deeper morality. In this case, it's grounded in his Mandalorian faith. When Mando finds out the 50-year-old person he's been hired to capture is actually a Yoda-like toddler, he honors the code of the Mandalorians over the code of the bounty hunter and risks his life to save the child.

The Force has always represented a vaguely Eastern grab bag of religious traditions, but it's proven flexible enough to become more personal in



the latest films. And the spiritual story arc of *Star Wars* is that of a largely secular world experiencing a religious awakening thanks to the fervent belief of a few. It seems *Star Wars* creator George Lucas understands that this faith element in his fantasy world has played an integral part in its success.

He said in a 1999 interview, "I put the Force into [*Star Wars*] in order to try to awaken a certain kind of spirituality in young people—more a belief in God than a belief in any particular religious system... so that young people would begin to ask questions about the mystery. Not having enough interest in the mysteries of life to ask the question, 'Is there a God or is there not a God?'—that is for me the worst thing that can happen."

That's not to suggest Lucas intended for viewers to see *Christian* themes in *Star Wars*. But he understood that a story with a sense of God—a sense of something providential and eternal—is a powerful draw.

The Mandalorian explores the spiritual elements of *Star Wars* further. Similar to the Jedi, the Mandalorians practice martial arts not just as a way of life but as a way of belief. Mando makes it clear that not following the strict dress codes of his faith would mean abandoning it, and his conversations with other members of his tribe suggest his people are more of a religious minority than an ethnic one.

How will this fringe religion stack up against

what has been depicted as the true faith of the galaxy far, far away? Will the miraculous displays of power by the character the internet has dubbed "Baby Yoda" challenge Mando's belief system? Will it foster doubt in the hero about the rules-based religion in which he grew up? While it's best to be cautious with the show's treatment of faith (and parents should be aware the show includes some mildly bad language and a few scary monsters), it does offer a launching point to discuss weighty faith topics with older kids.

Two weeks ago, a research firm confirmed that *The Mandalorian* is now the most in-demand television series in the world. That's across all platforms, including major broadcast and cable networks.

It seems Lucas' family-friendly combination of high stakes in deep space with a strong sense of spiritual mystery is still a winning formula. ☉

Documentary

One-Child Nation

➔ Imagine government officials barging into your home if you have multiple children, confiscating "extra" kids, then adopting them out to foreign countries. China's one-child policy caused this scheme and much worse to occur for more than 35 years, from 1979 through 2015.

Amazon Prime Video's *One-Child Nation* is a disturbing and weighty documentary investigating the devastating effects of China's birthing restrictions.

Last year, director Nanfu Wang, living in New Jersey, returned with her infant son to the Chinese village where she was born and raised. She wanted to understand how China's policy caused almost 350 million abortions, created an environment where discarding baby girls was commonplace, and tore families apart.

Wang talks intimately with her mother, relatives, and villagers whom the laws traumatized. She interviews policy enforcers and "family planning" officials, most of whom regret what they felt forced to do, but one proudly displays national awards for performing thousands of abortions and sterilizations.

Chinese culture propagates extreme bias for male offspring, without

which families fear they'll go extinct. Wang's aunt and uncle each abandoned an infant daughter. The uncle left his baby in the marketplace. He returned to find her dead, covered with flies.



Wang's aunt found a child-trafficker to take her daughter to an orphanage that paid him for his "find."

Another segment highlights a tearful artist who paints pictures of aborted babies he found labeled medical waste in trash heaps. He wants China never to forget these lives. Sadly and wrongly, Wang equates what happened with China's forced abortions to U.S. limits on abortions, saying both governments take away women's control of their bodies.

Today, no evidence of China's one-child policy outwardly remains. Instead, propaganda posters promoting "two children are great!" abound because the country doesn't have enough young people to take care of the elderly.

Rated R for graphic content, images, and brief language, including a few F-bombs in subtitles, the film elicits emotional reminders of the deep need for Christ's mercy and redemption.

—by SHARON DIERBERGER

BOX OFFICE TOP 10

FOR THE WEEKEND OF DEC. 6-8
according to Box Office Mojo

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

	S	V	L
1 Frozen II* PG	1	3	1
2 Knives Out PG-13	2	5	5
3 Ford v Ferrari* PG-13	2	5	5
4 Queen & Slim R	6	6	10
5 A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* PG	1	4	2
6 Dark Waters PG-13	3	4	5
7 21 Bridges R	3	8	10
8 Playing with Fire PG	2	4	1
9 Midway* PG-13	2	5	5
10 Last Christmas* PG-13	4	3	5

*Reviewed by WORLD

Movie

Richard Jewell

➔ Clint Eastwood's excellent new film, *Richard Jewell* (rated R for heavy language and brief, realistic violence), has a moment early on where a perfectly pressed FBI agent looks around in disgust at a mass of doughy people doing the Macarena and grouses, "I'm made for better things than this." The beautiful, young reporter trying to scrape up a story at the same Atlanta park during the 1996 Olympics shoots back, "You think I'm not?"

It's a scene that, ironically, is later echoed by Richard himself. Leaving to go work security at that event, the wannabe cop tells his mother the world owes them more from life. "Maybe it does," she replies breezily, "but this is what we've got. So go to work."

Behind its searing indictments of unethical media and governmental abuse of power, this is the theme running through the true story of how the hero of the Olympic Park bombing came to be falsely cast as its villain.

Wanting to believe we could be, *should* be, doing something better is a common failing of mankind. But how quickly we

slide into corruption when we think our looks, intellect, or credentials entitle us to the submission of the slow-witted, overweight Richard Jewells of the world.

Desperate to prove they're deserving of these better things, the FBI agent (John Hamm) and the journalist (Olivia Wilde) cut corners. Richard (Paul Walter Hauser), on the other hand, focuses on being faithful in his work.

It's telling to look at some of the angry reactions to Eastwood's largely accurate portrayal of the injustice perpetrated against the Baptist, NRA-revering Southerner. The *Daily Beast* calls *Richard Jewell* a "MAGA screed calibrated to court favor with the red hat-wearing faithful." The *Chicago Tribune* writes of it, "Trump's enemies, the press and the government, are this movie's enemies." Yet the film never mentions anything past the year 1996.

How dare you question us, the smart people, the ones destined for great things, the government agents and reporters said in Atlanta in 1996.

They're still saying it today. —by MEGAN BASHAM



RICHARD JEWELL: PAUL WALTER HAUSER • THE INVENTOR: HBO



Documentary

The Inventor

➔ The old adage that "cheaters never prosper" proves true in HBO's *The Inventor: Out for Blood in Silicon Valley*. The documentary spotlights Elizabeth Holmes, CEO and founder of Theranos, a now defunct healthcare company once valued at \$9 billion.

Holmes claimed to have invented a tabletop machine that could perform more than 240 lab tests in minutes from finger-prick-size drops of blood. Such a development would revolutionize healthcare, eliminating the need for vials of blood and lengthy test wait times.

But the device never worked. Holmes, though, insisted it did, bamboozling investors, employees, and media.

On screen, Holmes is attractive and speaks with self-assurance. She rarely blinks, her blue eyes staring intensely at the camera or whomever she's addressing. She wears the same signature all-black outfit daily: turtleneck, blazer, and pants. A glimpse into her fridge reveals nothing but water bottles.

But the real reveal is watching the rise and fall of a woman once a child prodigy, a student at Stanford, and an influencer among the rich and powerful. Holmes convinced people to invest in Theranos, join its board,

or introduce her to other elites. Her fans included former Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. She appeared on the covers of *Forbes* and *Fortune*.

As Holmes promoted her device to investors and employees as totally effective, she simultaneously dodged thorough regulatory inspections of Theranos' labs. Finally, two Theranos employees, believing Holmes was scamming the world, went public despite threats from her attorneys. Last year, a federal grand jury indicted Holmes and Theranos' president on fraud and conspiracy charges.

The documentary, rated TV-14 and containing a couple of F-bombs, tries to explain how Holmes snookered so many bright people. Possibly because of her earnestness: She created an emotionally charged story about helping the world, and sold it using her background credibility and charm.

Many interviewees in the film think Holmes still believes she did nothing wrong. Some think she knew the truth all along. Others deem her a sociopath.

Whatever the case, *The Inventor* shows our propensity to believe what we want to be true.

—by SHARON DIERBERGER

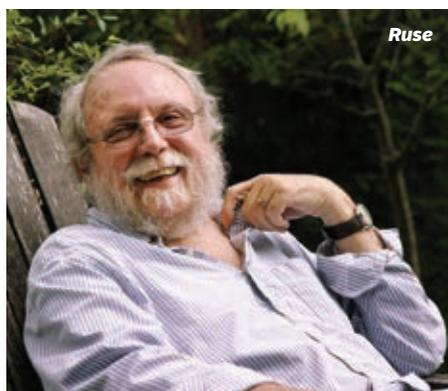
Eternity of oblivion?

A PHILOSOPHER LOOKS FOR THE MEANING TO LIFE

by Marvin Olasky

➔ At Christmas it's good for those blessed by Christ to see how the other half lives.

Michael Ruse's *A Meaning to Life* (Oxford, 2019) begins with honest atheistic despair: "You are born. You live. Then you die. If you don't think so,



then you should! We come from an eternity of oblivion. We return to an eternity of oblivion."

Ruse is not writing this abstractly: He is 79, a dis-

tinguished professor who has written or edited more than 50 books and says, "In the end, you know truly that it doesn't mean a thing."

Ruse offers this not only as his opinion but as the supposed wisdom of the ages. He quotes the 1882

version of Tolstoy saying we end up as "stench and worms." He quotes William James in 1902: "We are all such helpless failures in the last resort." He jumps to Albert

Camus, 1942: There "is but one truly serious philosophical question, and that is suicide."

Ruse, even seeing the futility of writing about

life's meaning, quotes David Hume's musings: "I dine, I play a game of backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends. And when, after three or four hours' amusement, I would return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strained, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther."

And yet, 100 pages later, Ruse is still at it, trying to see if "Darwinism as religion" will satisfy. He concludes "this is a bleak world indeed," but tries to rally on the last two pages: "In the end, I can give you a good Darwinian account of Meaning in terms of our evolved human nature. This is not a weak substitute. This is the real thing!"

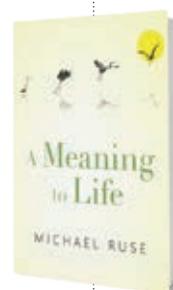
Really? To go "From an eternity of oblivion. To an

eternity of oblivion. Everlasting dreamless sleep, without the need to get up in the middle of it to go to the bathroom. Absurd if you will, although I would not call it this." Well, with all due respect, I will call it that. I'd prefer waking up in the middle of the night to never waking up.

At least I could check the Red Sox score.

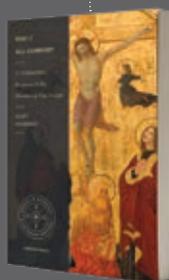
Better than that, though, will be seeing Jesus and joining others in the heavenly stands to see how all of history is glorifying God. It

will be wonderful to walk in the new Jerusalem where we need neither sunlight nor lamps, because (as the last chapter of Revelation tells us) the Lord God is our light. And maybe Ruse will have that joy as well. Although Wikipedia declares, "Ruse is an atheist," he finished his last book with some squirming: "I am an agnostic." That represents movement. Let's pray that his progress doesn't stop there.



BOOKMARKS

Scott Harrower, in *God of All Comfort: A Trinitarian Response to the Horrors of This World* (Lexham, 2019), asks how Christians can help those traumatized by massively horrendous evil (like the Holocaust) or personal suffering. He proposes study of the Gospel according to Matthew, because starting with the genealogy in Chapter 1 we learn about "a

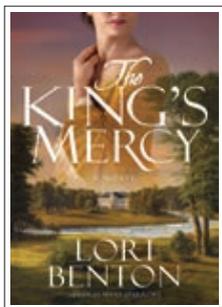


carnival of failure," including "deportation to Babylon. ... Israel's fragility and the impermanence of life are striking." Matthew goes through more than 42 generations but lists only five women, all trauma survivors: Rahab the prostitute, Ruth the refugee, Tamar who had to sleep with her father-in-law to gain justice, Bathsheba who had to sleep with her husband's murderer, and Mary who became pregnant prior to marriage.

Bruce Reichenbach's *Divine Providence* (Cascade, 2016) overviews why humans would be hurt if God eliminated evil: "The parents who step in and prevent the child from ever experiencing pain, suffering, or frustration will have a helpless child on their hands." Reichenbach recognizes the Biblical path—suffering to perseverance to character to hope—but acknowledges that natural and moral evil will lead some to turn away. He does not pretend that no mysteries remain. —M.O.

Novels from Christian publishers

reviewed by Sandy Barwick

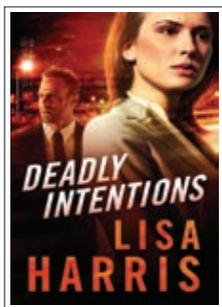
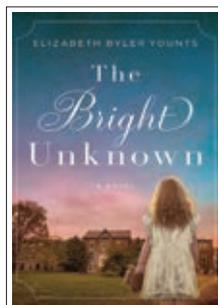


THE KING'S MERCY *Lori Benton*

It's 1747, and captured Scotsman Alex MacKinnon, indentured as a blacksmith on a North Carolina plantation, longs for freedom despite his attraction to Joanna, the owner's stepdaughter. At first opportunity, he escapes to the mountains, where he encounters Cherokee Indians. Meanwhile, Joanna dislikes owning slaves and dreams of a simpler life, but she faces constant opposition from the plantation's ruthless and sneaky overseer. Influenced by an itinerate preacher, Alex renews his faith in God and returns to the plantation to make amends. Fans of American history will enjoy the rich details in this sweeping story of tragedy, intrigue, and romance.

THE BRIGHT UNKNOWN *Elizabeth Byler Younts*

Brighton Friedrich lives her first 18 years in an insane asylum where her mother is a patient. A caring nurse loves and educates Brighton and her best friend, an albino boy named Angel. As they grow older, Brighton and Angel realize they must escape the increasingly dangerous and oppressive surroundings, but their first interactions with the outside world prove disappointing and scary. Resilience and wit help them overcome the horrible things (beatings, solitary confinement) they endured as children. Difficult to read at times, the story exposes the misguided and often barbaric treatment of the mentally ill in the early 20th century.

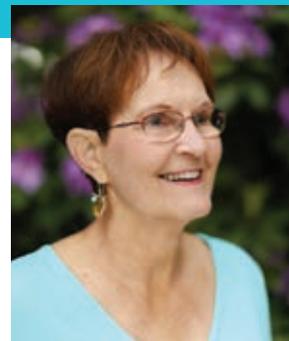
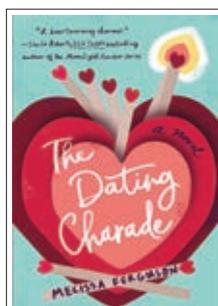


DEADLY INTENTIONS *Lisa Harris*

When several of her co-workers die in apparently random ways, Caitlyn Lindsey suspects foul play. She fears someone is eliminating witnesses to nefarious activity at her pharmaceutical lab. Caitlyn takes her suspicions to Josh Solomon, a detective whose wife was the first victim. Meanwhile, someone is trying to frame Josh for his wife's murder. Caitlyn and Josh must guard against overt threats and hidden forces to avoid becoming the next casualties. As they partner to unravel the conspiracy, their mutual admiration grows into romance. Fans of suspense will enjoy the story's fast-paced action.

THE DATING CHARADE *Melissa Ferguson*

At 32 years old, Cassie Everson presumes she'll be single forever. Enter Jett Bentley, a sensitive, dreamy firefighter. After a few quasi-dates, they begin to imagine a future together. But when both gain custody of three children each, then hide their unexpected instant families from each other, things get complicated. The seemingly lighthearted story quickly veers into serious territory: the challenges of parenthood, the frustrations of the social services system. Although a fine debut novel, this book's title and cover art are misleading: They suggest a cute rom-com, but the story yields little romance amid some slapstick comedy.



AFTERWORD

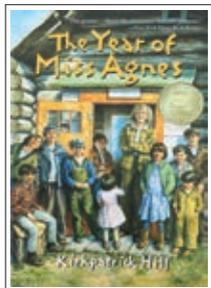
Based on true events, **Jane Kirkpatrick's** *One More River to Cross* (Revell, 2019) is the remarkable tale of a wagon train's attempt to cross the Sierra Nevada Mountains during winter. On March 1, 1844, a group of 51 men, women, and children—many of them Irish Catholics seeking religious freedom—set out from Missouri to settle in California. But as the monthlong trip stretches from summer into winter, 8 feet of snow and treacherous terrain force them to split up and abandon their wagons before reaching Sutter's Fort. Faced with starvation and desperate conditions, they complete their journey in March 1845.



Similar to other Kirkpatrick novels featuring early settlers of the U.S. West, this story highlights courageous women. Although the women on the wagon train acquiesced to the men's decisions, they showed fortitude and resourcefulness when forced to sustain themselves and their children. Two gave birth on the journey and managed to keep their infants alive. Fortitude, indeed. —S.B.

The test of time

BOOKS FROM THE PAST FOR MIDDLE GRADE AND
TWEEN READERS *reviewed by Rachel Lynn Aldrich*

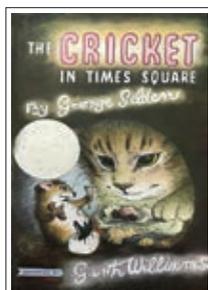


THE YEAR OF MISS AGNES *Kirkpatrick Hill*

Fred and her deaf sister Boko live in an Alaskan village shortly after World War II. Every year a new teacher comes to teach the children, but she never lasts long under the difficult conditions. Then one day Miss Agnes arrives—and she stays. The inspiring book recounts their school year with Miss Agnes, who understands the unique needs of Alaskan village life and uses kindness to positively affect the whole community. Hill interweaves into the story interesting descriptions of daily life in an Alaskan village, including how traditional skills and methods became incorporated into modern life. (2000; ages 8-12)

THE CRICKET IN TIMES SQUARE *George Selden*

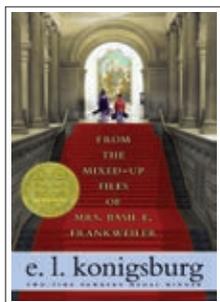
In this classic children's book, Mario Bellini discovers a lost cricket while working in his parents' newspaper stand. The cricket, Chester, quickly makes friends with the humans and other animals who occupy the Times Square subway station. But Chester is no ordinary cricket: He can play music through chirping. His skill brings fortune to the poor Bellini family and beauty to the lives of the New Yorkers who hear him. The country cricket also learns about the fickleness of fame and discovers what truly matters in life. A whimsical tale of friendship, beauty, and the universal appeal of music. (1960; ages 6-10)



FROM THE MIXED-UP FILES OF MRS. BASIL E. FRANKWEILER *E.L. Konigsburg*

The premise behind Konigsburg's story is a child's fantasy: Twelve-year-old Claudia and her 9-year-old brother Jamie run away from home to live in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Cautious Claudia longs for something to make her life different and interesting, while Jamie likes complicated plans. As the book chronicles their childlike schemes, thoughts, and misadventures, it yields keen insight into human nature. It also explores the deeper relationship that develops between a brother and sister when they work as a team, as well as the way art can reach through time to capture our

hearts. (1967; ages 10 & up)



THE LITTLE WHITE HORSE *Elizabeth Goudge*

When orphan Maria Merryweather travels to the English countryside to live with a relative she has never met, she is expecting discomfort and drudgery. But her new home turns out to be an enchanted mini kingdom in which she is the heiress. All is not well in the kingdom, though, and Maria and her new friends must exercise courage and love to chase away the darkness and heal old wounds. A beautiful and wise book with all the elements that make a good children's story—friendly animals, old stories, good food, and adventure. (1946; ages 12 & up)



AFTERWORD

A Girl of the Limberlost by **Gene Stratton-Porter** (first published in 1909) is a meandering, meditative work that sometimes feels like two or three novels wrapped into one. Elnora grew up in Indiana's Limberlost Swamp, where the hardships of life shaped her into a brave, kind, and gracious young woman. Her story unfolds as she strives to understand and heal her family's wounds.

Elnora exemplifies the kind of goodness that makes a person truly interesting: She has grit and curiosity and cares for those around her with no expectation of receiving anything in return. The book dwells on the beauty of God's creation and explores how it can teach and form the character of those who, like Elnora, take time to pay attention. The story is a slow burn, but like a lovely stroll through the woods, it is full of deep insight and quiet beauty.



—R.L.A.

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JUSTIN GIBONEY

Christian and Democrat

A POLITICAL STRATEGIST TALKS SOCIAL JUSTICE, TRIBALISM, AND THE BIBLE *by Marvin Olasky*



→ Justin Giboney is an attorney and political strategist in Atlanta. He grew up in Colorado and attended Vanderbilt, where he was a defensive back on the football team. He was a Democratic National Convention delegate in 2012 and 2016 and is co-founder of the And Campaign. Here's some of our discussion before a student audience, edited for space and flow.

How did football prepare you for politics? After I stopped playing football, I was looking for the rush of competition. Politics gave me the competition back.

You've spoken about sports tribalism. Tribalism means we join a group and develop a mob mentality. That's not so bad in sports, but it's bad in politics.

How do we have real political discussions rather than Twitter fights? Go to local meetings: city council, county commission. Listen to what the issues really are. You can have an impact on the local level a lot quicker than on the federal level, and you can see the changes. If a group of five people regularly attends city council meetings, they're going to start listening to you because they know you pay attention, and they don't want to be troubled with people who are actually paying attention.

How does the And Campaign try to focus our attention? Our goal should be love *and* truth, compassion *and* conviction, justice *and* righteousness.

Let's get specific about some "ands." We hear the term "social justice"—what does that mean when most folks use it? What should it mean when Christians use it? A lot of people criticize the term "social justice," but everyone wants social justice for the people they care about. If your kid goes to school and is mistreated, you're going to do something about it. That's social justice. If you have a family member who is unjustly imprisoned, you're going to do something about it. If you love your neighbor as you love yourself, you don't just do it for your family member. You do it for the person across the tracks. That's really what we mean by social justice.

What does social justice mean in predominantly black churches? It may mean a sermon about how the Bible applies to mass incarceration and police brutality—or how Jesus cared for people who are marginalized in society. That doesn't mean social justice is our No. 1 goal. Our No. 1 goal is to profess the gospel and carry that out, the fruit of faith.

When we hear “black lives matter,” lots of white folks ask, “Are you saying white lives don't matter? Other lives don't matter?” You can't carry on a conversation well from a posture of self-defense. If you hear “black lives matter,” it's better to be in a posture of self-examination, of humility. Then you may ask, “What do you mean by that?” Of course, every life matters, but when you're in a society where certain groups are victims of crime and police brutality more often, it's important to understand that those lives matter, too. I don't agree with everything that comes from the group Black Lives Matter, but they've done a good job of bringing the conversation to bear and saying, “Make sure you care about these people as much as you care about your own.”

Avoid the defensive crouch? Too often on both sides, we try to come out of conversations about culture and race with a perfect narrative. Nobody left a conversation with Jesus with a perfect narrative. We have to be honest and ready for self-examination, not ready to say we're angels and they're demons.

How do you respond to people saying, “You're a Democrat. How can you follow Nancy Pelosi?” I might say, “Why don't we make this a little more sophisticated and talk about the hard questions and not just the characters on the other side?” I don't see the Democratic Party as part of my identity. I see it as a tool to be used to promote human flourishing and to defend human dignity. I'm a Christian first.

But the party has moved to the left on abortion, right? The Democratic donor class became a lot more strident and aggressive when it came to abortion. You go from legal, safe, and rare, to in 2016 a celebration of this deadly procedure.

How do you fight back against that? You count the costs and worry about the consequences later. As Christians, we are called to speak the truth, to protect people, to look to the marginalized and their interests as well. When people with power don't want to do that, you simply have to oppose them. One thing I learned from reading about Fannie Lou Hamer and folks like that: You don't do it because it's easy. You do it because God told you to do it.

Conventions bring out the tribalism. What happened at the Democratic convention in 2012 when some folks wanted to remove from the party platform the phrase “God-given rights” and just leave “rights”? The far left was trying to take out “God-given,” and they were louder than the folks who wanted it in. Part of the impetus for the And Campaign was to let people know that every Democrat isn't necessarily in agreement with this adversarial posture toward religion.

‘The Bible is full of stories of unjust imprisonment and prosecution. People shouldn't suffer more, or be in jail longer, because they are poor.’

Is that difficult to do when so much of the money seems to come from the hard left, from people who do not want “God-given” in there? You hit on it. The far left of the donor class controls the reward and punishment mechanism. You are punished if you don't do what they want. You're rewarded if you do. I need to understand there's nothing I want that will make me give up my convictions. Christians need to be able to say, “I'm

doing this because it's right, not because I have some reward here on earth.”

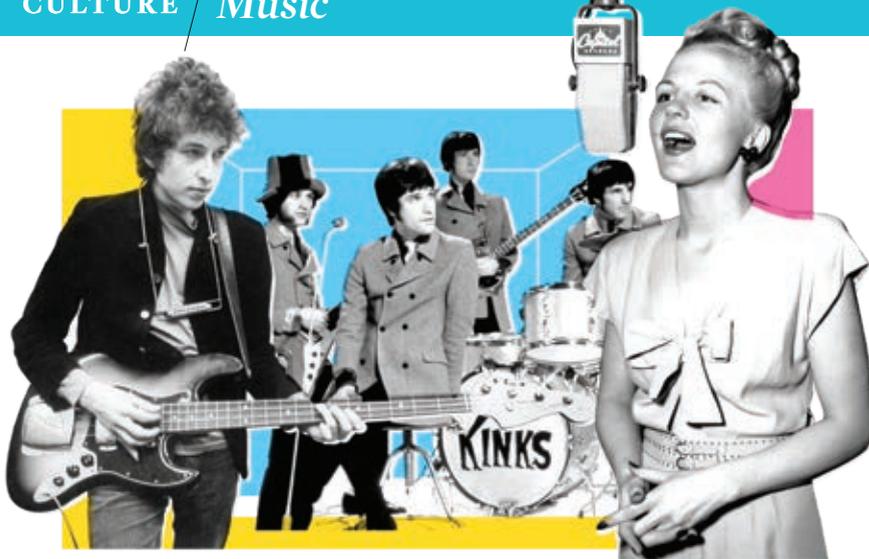
More and more kids are growing up without dads or functioning dads, and that's especially happening in the black community. It's heartbreaking. It needs more than a policy fix. While it does affect the African American community, it's affecting working-class people in general, and our permissive culture plays into that.

How do predominantly white churches build credibility with black neighbors? Show you care about people and are willing to lose political capital to help them, instead of just looking like you're out to protect yourselves.

African Americans have told me, “We're with you on abortion, but that seems to be so much a single issue for you.” What else should we be majoring in besides abortion? Criminal justice, and not leaving the poor to survive by what trickles down to them.

How does your Bible reading inform your call for reform in the justice system? The Bible is full of stories of unjust imprisonment and prosecution. People shouldn't suffer more, or be in jail longer, because they are poor. You see people who have committed white-collar crimes walking the streets, and those who steal something from a store are still in jail, not with their families, not able to work, not able to be productive citizens.

White Christians who react negatively to the term “social justice,” but want to be loving to our neighbor, should start by ... Being informed. Maybe crossing the tracks, maybe going to the African American church across town, seeing what problems they may be having. A good place to start for some churches, because this is a problem nationwide, is the cash bail system. I've never heard a good reason why somebody with money should be out of jail before somebody without money. That's particularly true because the longer a person without money stays in jail, the worse become the consequences. You lose your job. You can't take your kids where you need to take them. ☹



The past in boxes

ANNIVERSARY SETS BRING BACK ONCE-YOUTHFUL VOICES *by Arsenio Orteza*

➔ In Jack Finney's short story "I Love Galesburg in the Springtime," ghosts from a small town's past—a streetcar, a horse-drawn fire engine, a phone call from the dead—inexplicably "flicker into existence again" as a way of standing athwart progress and yelling, "Slow down!" "Galesburg's past," writes Finney, "[was] fighting back."

Something similar may explain the apparently insatiable appetite for 50th-anniversary box sets.

Among the half-a-century-old recordings being feted during this shopping season, none speak up on behalf of the past more eloquently than the Kinks' *Arthur or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (Sanctuary), Bob Dylan's *Travelin' Thru, 1967-1969: The Bootleg Series Vol. 15* (Columbia), or Peggy Lee's *Is That All There Is?* (Capitol).

As with last year's expanded *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society*, *Arthur* at 50 comes in a deluxe box and in various two-to-four-disc "bundles." But although the box contains a 37-page book, assorted swag, *The Great Lost Dave Davies Album*, and rehearsal takes, alternate mixes, and demos, the

slenderer editions have fewer distractions and therefore make it easier for fans (especially those whose appreciation hasn't been blunted by exposure to the album's previous reissues) to focus on the wonders of what was for all practical purposes the last great Kinks album.

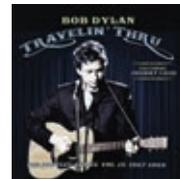


Those wonders include the much-anthologized "Victoria," "Shangri-La," "Plastic Man," and "King Kong," each a piece of evidence for the argument that while Ray Davies may never have "happened" without the Beatles, the imaginatively varied, distinctly British, and acutely nostalgic songwriterly "voice" that he found and nurtured throughout the second half of the '60s belonged to him and him alone.

As far as singular voices go, however, not even Davies could touch Bob Dylan's. And the voice with which Dylan was experimenting during the years chronicled on his new three-disc set was—and to this day remains—the most singular of his career.

Travelin' Thru begins familiarly enough, with seven alternate takes from

the stark, apocalyptically folksy *John Wesley Harding*. But beginning with Track 8 and continuing throughout Discs 2 and 3, the voice that listeners encounter is the cigarette-free, countrypolitan croon that Dylan sprang on the world with *Nashville Skyline* and that he wouldn't shed completely until *Planet Waves* four years later.



That that voice is heard in informal duets with Johnny Cash for the bulk of *Travelin' Thru* diminishes neither its strangeness nor the extent to which it tapped abilities theretofore unsuspected by Dylan's recorded performances. Hearing Dylan improvise harmonies as he and Cash run and cut up through each other's material and a smattering of country, gospel, and early rock 'n' roll should forever end the canard that the man "can't sing."

Whatever canards may have dogged Peggy Lee, not being able to sing was never one of them. And, despite having logged more than a quarter century of hits by the time she released *Is That All There Is?*, the album (featuring orchestral arrangements from a young Randy Newman) found her in peak form.

The MP3-only "expanded" edition adds only three tracks, two of which are versions of the Leiber-Stoller-

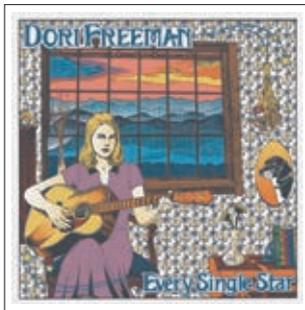


composed title track indistinguishable from the official one. But no one should complain. Based on Thomas Mann's "Disillusionment," the song could've just as easily been based on Ecclesiastes, so precisely does it express the hollowness at the heart of a life lived in vain.

And Lee, whether speaking the verses with cynical detachment or singing the refrain like a spectral cabaret chanteuse, dramatized the dilemma exquisitely. 🎧

New or recent releases

reviewed by Arsenio Orteza

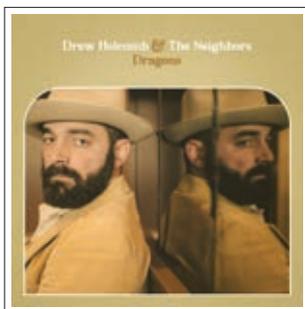
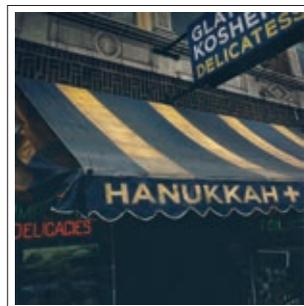


EVERY SINGLE STAR *Dori Freeman*

Rare is the Dori Freeman review that doesn't mention her producer, Teddy Thompson. And, to be fair, whatever he's doing or isn't doing certainly isn't hurting. But, frankly, the Americana-country that Freeman purveys is so pure, simple, infectious, and direct that the only way a producer could do her wrong is to get in the way. And no producer worth his salt would even dream of getting in the way of "I'll Be Coming Home" and "Like I Do," the motherhood songs of the year, hands down.

HANUKKAH+ *Various artists*

Not counting the two a cappella Jack Black tracks (one a Passover ditty) that bookend this semi-reverent tribute to the Maccabean miracle, no two cuts sound alike. Bluegrass and jazz spell the synth-pop and the dream pop, and that WASP's WASP Loudon Wainwright III (of all people) discerns in the eight nights of oil a prefiguring of the multiplication of the loaves. Each cut sounds good, with the exception of Haim's performance of Leonard Cohen's "If It Be Your Will." It sounds great.



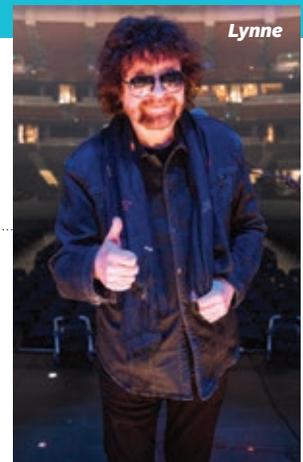
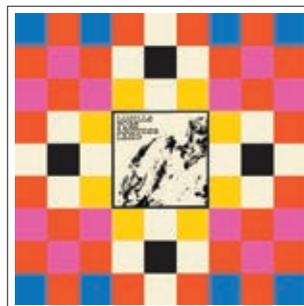
DRAGONS *Drew Holcomb & the Neighbors*

The smoothest and brightest hook among these heartland folk-rock delights belongs to "Make It Look So Easy," a husband-to-wife love song of impeccable emotional well-roundedness. The deepest wisdom belongs to "You Want What You Can't Have" and "Maybe," Beatitudes-echoing explorations of the importance of not always (and maybe not ever) allowing one's reach to exceed one's grasp. Most of the others toe the thin line between lighthearted and lightweight. Time-

saving tip for vinyl purchasers: The weighty stuff is on Side 2.

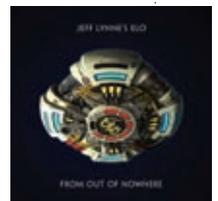
ANOTHER LAND *Lucille Furs*

Load the music of this Illinois combo into a time capsule not to be opened until everyone who could possibly know better has died, and it could easily pass not only for an authentic '60s sample of what has come to be known as "baroque pop" but also for an example of why revivalists—which is one thing that these psychedelic Furs are—kept such music alive. They have the verbal idioms down too. And when they deign to romp and stomp, their pop gives way to rock.



ENCORE

Why does *From Out of Nowhere* (Columbia), the second 10-cut, 32-minute album credited to "Jeff Lynne's ELO," feel more like vintage Electric Light Orchestra than its 2015 predecessor, *Alone in the Universe*? One reason is its sound. As a producer, Lynne (who wrote every song, sings every vocal, and plays every instrument except shakers and tambourines) has reembraced the sonic density that, as much as their tenacious hooks, distinguished ELO's greatest hits from everything else on the radio.



But, more importantly, it's easy to imagine these songs as having been staples of the vinyl-era airwaves. Which one you'll have the hardest time getting out of your head depends on whether you prefer Lynne the British Invasion melodist to Lynne the pedal-to-the-metal rock 'n' roller. Fans of both, however, will find lots to like. And for those who think that Lynne has run out of new ways to wax catchy, there's "All My Love." —A.O.



Seeds of renewal

OUT OF CHARRED GROUND IN SYRIA, FRUIT COMES

→ TEL TAL, SYRIA—We are stepping through his orchards, crunching grasses and wild thyme underfoot, rich aromas rising around us in the crisp morning air. I have come to walk these fields with Elias Antar.

I first met Elias in February after a mutual friend in Chicago, an Assyrian Christian from his village, introduced us long distance. I have begun to think of Elias, now 73, as the mayor of the villages that string along the Khabur River. Since he returned following the ISIS assault and takeover in 2015, he has not stopped cajoling others to join him. When we met again on a bright day in November, he wanted to introduce me to his pomegranate trees.

Tel Tal is one of 16 villages the Islamic State militants nearly destroyed when they invaded five years ago. ISIS attacked other villages first, giving Elias, his wife Shamiram, and other residents time to escape by boat. The fighters kidnapped 250 Assyrians and held them for months, later executing three men wearing orange jumpsuits (whom Elias knew well) in one of the infamous ISIS videos.

In Tel Tal the gunmen torched many homes and set explosives to blow up St. Odisho Church. Elias' home sits down a dirt track surrounded by open fields, and it was largely undamaged. But ISIS set fire to his fields, including his pomegranates.

When Christian and Kurdish forces retook the area a year later, Elias and Shamiram returned: "We checked for land mines ourselves and risked our lives to come back."

Elias went to work replanting his fields, reviving stands of figs, apples, and olives, and setting up beehives. From his charred pomegranate trees he took cuttings, cultivated them on his patio, and replanted his grove. For the first time, this year the trees fruited.

He steps proudly into the midst of them, each one teeming with red orbs so heavy and



Pomegranates from the time of the Greeks have been a sign of regeneration and fertility.

Elias Antar displays the fruit of his labor.

fat they look unreal, as though someone hung Christmas balls on the sprawling young branches. Elias picks five pomegranates and lays them out on a table in his courtyard where we can marvel over them as we sip coffee. He fingers his prayer beads and says with a laugh, "These are the seeds of ISIS."

Danger and fear loom heavy over northeast Syria. Smoke rises from the front lines in Tel Tamer just miles away where Turkey is fighting Kurdish forces. On the highway visible from Elias' window, Russian convoys advance in a black-green line.

ISIS sleeper cells pop up, and in the spring this year they burned wheat fields nearby. Two days before I visited Elias, the group claimed an attack that killed an Armenian priest and his father on a road about 30 minutes away. Who would plant trees and expect to see them bear fruit in so uncertain a landscape?

Perhaps one trained by adversity to fix his eyes on hope. Elias' parents arrived in Tel Tal after they were forced from Turkey during its pogroms against Armenian, Greek, and Assyrian Christians. Elias was born here in 1946. I imagine his

father cultivating these same fields, banking against odds on a bumper crop.

Most of the villagers stayed away after the ISIS attacks. From 20,000 Assyrian Christians living here before 2015, less than 800 remain. "I am challenging all those who run away by growing things," Elias said.

Pomegranates from the time of the Greeks have been a sign of regeneration and fertility. The Old Testament priests wore pomegranates made of yarn on the hems of their robes, and Solomon's Temple depicted 400 of them in its latticework. In Jewish tradition the pomegranate is a symbol of righteousness, each containing 613 seeds that correspond to the 613 mitzvot, or commandments, of the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament.

The pomegranate from Elias now sitting on my kitchen sill is a sign of hope in this Advent season of waiting. Out of the charred ashes of this world, out of dark, uncertain times, here or there, the hope of a Savior overcoming all things springs like a young tree bearing fruit. 🍎



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STATE OF DISTORTION

Chinese propaganda is targeting Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters and the churches that support them

BY JUNE CHENG IN HONG KONG

PHOTO BY VINCENT YU/AP



AT 8 A.M. ON A SUNDAY, A LINE of people outside of St. Eugene de Mazenod Oblate Primary School in Kowloon City snaked past apartment buildings, breakfast shops, and real estate offices. White-haired grandmothers in wheelchairs, young people staring at their cell phones, and parents holding tight to wriggly children waited for nearly an hour to vote for their local district councilor.

For a few days before the Nov. 24 election, Hong Kong enjoyed a rare reprieve from the often-violent protests that have characterized the city in recent months. The election was the first since the pro-democracy protests began in the former British colony in June, and activists took a break from demonstrations in order to ensure nothing interfered with the vote. They hoped Hong Kongers would turn out in high numbers and elect pro-democracy candidates, proving voters were sympathetic to the protesters' cause.

Meanwhile, in mainland China, media referred to a "silent majority" in Hong Kong who opposed the protesters and would surely vote for pro-Beijing candidates willing to reestablish order. According to *Foreign Policy*, state-run Chinese media had prepared prewritten articles lauding a win for the establishment.

When Nov. 24 arrived, polling stations around Hong Kong saw enormous turnouts: By the time they closed at 10:30 p.m., a record-breaking 71 percent of registered voters had cast a ballot, up from 47 percent in 2015.

The results were even more astonishing: Pro-democracy candidates gained control of 17 of the 18

districts, winning nearly 90 percent of district council seats. Even typically pro-establishment neighborhoods threw their support to pro-democracy candidates. By the early hours of Monday morning, ecstatic Hong Kongers were popping champagne in celebration on the streets.

The results were so shocking that mainland Chinese media didn't know how to respond. Some outlets didn't mention the election results. Others returned to oft-used scripts, accusing the West of swaying the election.

The inaccurate mainland narrative about the protests and election is a prime example of how the Chinese government uses propaganda to further its interests. Communist officials, worried that

Hong Kong's democracy movement could spread elsewhere in China, have spun their own version of events and censored news in the mainland. Articles in state-run media focus on protester violence rather than on the reasons behind the upheaval or police action.

Targets of the propaganda include Protestant and Catholic churches that have opened up as rest stations for protesters. Beijing—the seat of Chinese government—has also used more indirect ways to pressure and influence Hong Kong's Christian community, including threatening to cut off ministries to mainland China.

HONG KONG'S DEMOCRACY

movement dates back to the 1980s, when the city was still under British rule. Before the handover in 1997, Hong Kong Gov. David Wilson introduced the first direct elections in 1991, with Hong Kong residents electing a third of their legislature. The Sino-British Joint Declaration promised Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy that would allow democracy to blossom in the city, giving the people a chance to elect their chief executive.

Yet in election after election, China thwarted democracy's progress. In 2014, Hong Kongers grew frustrated after Beijing announced they could vote for the chief executive only if Beijing chose the candidates, leading to the 79-day Umbrella Movement. Frustrations against the Beijing-backed Hong Kong government increased as it disqualified elected pro-democracy lawmakers and proposed the extradition bill that set off the current protests.

Police brutality against young protesters this year, along with the Hong Kong leadership's refusal to listen to most protester demands, has brought more demonstrators into the streets and provoked more violence from front-line protesters. Police have arrested nearly 6,000 people.

But in the mainland, Chinese citizens hear a different narrative: Hong



2



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4

(1) People line up to vote outside of a polling place in Hong Kong. (2) Local residents outside a polling station in Hong Kong celebrate the results of the district council elections. (3) People in Hong Kong pray for fellow protesters. (4) Pro-democracy protesters rally at Edinburgh Place, Hong Kong.

ELECTION CELEBRATION: BILLY H.C. KWOK/GETTY IMAGES • CROSS, FLAGS: KIRAN RIDLEY

Kong protesters are a small, violent group seeking independence from China—their true grievance is sky-high rent prices and a lack of affordable housing—police are the true heroes in Hong Kong, especially the officer nicknamed “Bald Lau Sir,” who became famous after pointing a shotgun at protesters.

Chinese state media paint a conspiracy of a U.S.-backed “color revolution” meant to topple the Chinese government. As proof, they point to meetings between Hong Kong democracy leaders and U.S. officials, as well as to Hong Kong protesters who wave American flags and sing the American national anthem during demonstrations.

After President Donald Trump signed the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act on Nov. 27, the Chinese government claimed the United States had “clearly interfered” with the city’s internal affairs. The act requires the U.S. State Department annually to assess if Hong Kong is autonomous enough to continue receiving preferential trade benefits and also requires sanctions on officials responsible for suppressing the city’s freedoms.

While Hong Kong residents see the protest movement as a fight to maintain promised freedoms and to vote for

their leaders, mainland Chinese instead see an anti-China movement. They focus on instances where protesters have violently attacked pro-Beijing supporters, including one man whom protesters set on fire. Images of protesters burning Chinese flags or throwing flags into the harbor are also widely shared and condemned in the mainland.

Brian Yu, a 38-year-old banker in Hong Kong from mainland China, said that Chinese censors delete from social media sites posts and articles containing facts about police violence or protester motivations. But posts that focus on protester violence remain untouched. As a result, most of his friends in the mainland have bought into China’s propaganda.

Yu (WORLD changed his name for his protection since he is a Communist Party member) said he was in second grade in 1989 when tanks rolled into Tiananmen Square to quash China’s democracy movement. Afterward, he and his classmates were forced to attend a class on Saturday afternoons about how China had been humiliated by the West and Japan and only the Chinese Communist Party was able to save China.

“That message is taught throughout your education, even when you are

getting your master’s degree,” Yu said. “Even if you didn’t want to believe it, eventually you will.”

When the internet first became available in China, Yu remembers having access to a wide range of information, and public intellectuals often wrote freely on the web. But the Chinese government began developing the “Great Firewall” in the late 1990s, and now China’s internet is closely censored and controlled. Under President Xi Jinping, China has become more aggressive in spreading its authoritarian ideology.

SINCE THE PROTESTS

began, state-owned Hong Kong newspapers *Ta Kung Pao* and *Wen Wei Po* have criticized not only protesters but groups supporting them. One target: Protestant and Catholics churches that have opened up their facilities to provide sanctuary for protesters.

With protests spreading to different neighborhoods in Hong Kong,

SIDING WITH THE WEAK

Former Cardinal **Joseph Zen Ze-kiun** has long been outspokenly supportive of democracy in Hong Kong and critical of the Chinese Communist Party. Now 87, he feels there is very little he can still do: The young people in the protest movement refuse to listen to older democracy activists. Still, he co-founded the 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund, which helps pay for bail, legal fees, and medical aid for protesters arrested or hurt by police.

Zen criticizes the Holy See’s silence about the situation in Hong Kong and interprets it as an effort to appease the Chinese government. The Vatican has long sought to restore diplomatic relations with Beijing, which have been cut off since 1951. In 2018, the Vatican and Beijing reached an agreement on how to select bishops, one of the major sticking points in their relationship.



The goal of the deal is to bring the underground church out of hiding and unite the Catholic Church in China. Yet Catholics in the underground church have faced great persecution for remaining faithful to the pope in Rome, only to have their leader ask them to join the government-sanctioned church. “They are always trying to appease the Chinese government, I don’t know for what purpose,” Zen said. “They sold our church and gained nothing in return.”

In late November, a journalist asked Pope Francis his views about the Hong Kong protest. Francis compared it to other protests around the world: “I respect peace and I ask for peace for all these countries that have problems.”

But Zen dismissed such neutrality: “In this moment, there are the persecutor and the persecuted, the strong oppressors and the weak, suffering people,” he said. “We have to be on the side of the weak.”





**Professor Ying
Fuk-Tsang at
Chinese University
of Hong Kong**

churches have invited protesters in to rest, drink water, eat snacks, use the restroom, speak with pastors, and pray. In the earlier months, the addresses and opening hours of the churches would be posted on Facebook and shared through WhatsApp.

But that practice stopped after newspapers and videos publicly attacked several churches. An Aug. 7 article in *Wen Wei Po* claimed that St. Vincent Church, which is attached to Wong Tai Sin Catholic Primary School, “became a shelter for thugs under the guise of religion” by allowing protesters to enter its building. The church allowed anyone, regardless of religion, to come in to get a drink of water, recharge a phone, pray, or talk to clergy.

The *Wen Wei Po* article also criticized a picture posted on Mother of Good Counsel Church’s Facebook page: The image showed Jesus hugging a protester with the words “Child, are you tired? Come to me.” The article claimed it showed the church condoning violent criminals.

Ta Kung Pao devoted a full page on Oct. 7 to accusing Chinese Methodist

Church in Wan Chai of harboring criminals. It said that after police released tear gas on a “rioting mob,” the “thugs” all seemed to run in the same direction toward Chinese Methodist Church, where the church provided them with medical aid, food, and a rest area. When the church was full, some then went to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, where nuns patted them on the shoulder and a priest told them, “I will protect you,” according to the newspaper.

Professor Ying Fuk-Tsang, the director of the divinity school at Chinese University of Hong Kong, said the Chinese government is attacking churches because it is aware of the large role they have played in bringing an end to communism in Eastern European countries such as Poland and East Germany. It sees Christianity as a Western religion and fears churches will take part in wresting control away from the Chinese Communist Party.

The government also knows the large influence Christians have in Hong Kong: Half of all schools were started by Catholic and Protestant

churches, along with a quarter of social services. Some state media accuse churches of indoctrinating schoolchildren with anti-China beliefs.

China has long tried to influence Protestant churches in Hong Kong by inviting them to the mainland to network with pastors from the government-approved Three-Self churches. At the same time, they try to show Hong Kong pastors how well China is doing, giving them a type of patriotic education, Ying said. The pastors then feel pressured to self-censor and think twice before criticizing the government in case it could affect their China ministry.

Catholic churches feel similar pressure. Jackie Hung, project officer of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese, said that after the incident at St. Vincent Church, parents from the attached school called to complain that protesters were allowed onto the premises. Hong Kong’s education department also sent a letter saying the school could not be used to provide shelter.

Hung’s organization, which partners with other groups to organize prayer meetings and rallies, is located on the sixth floor of a building belonging to the Holy Cross Church in Sai Wan Ho. On Nov. 11, a police officer shot a 21-year-old protester in the torso by the Sai Wan Ho subway station, minutes away from the church. Later in the day, as protesters took to the streets, some ran into the building to escape from police. But police pushed the door open and violently subdued the protesters on church property before arresting them and taking them away. Since then, the church has closed its doors to protesters.

While the Justice and Peace Commission has long supported the democracy movement through nonviolent means, it currently feels stuck between two sides, Hung said. “On the church side, they think we are radical; on the civil society side, they think we are conservative.” 🌐



Front-line focus

With U.S. troops in retreat in Syria,
American aid groups step into the gap

by **MINDY BELZ** IN TEL TAMER, SYRIA

At the 2 a.m. watch, gunshots aren't far away. Automatic rifles trade fire in rounds that echo across the old buildings of Tel Tamer. At a compound adjoining the hospital, two watchmen with Free Burma Rangers stand guard, their faces framed between a glow of red lights coming from the emergency room and green lights of a minaret from the mosque across the way.

Unable to sleep, I join them, and ask whether this much shooting is normal.

"As long as the bread factory is going, we know we're OK."

Warm light and malty aromas emanate from the three-story factory. The gunfire makes it impossible to forget this town of Christians, Arabs, and Kurds is the front line for an ongoing assault by Turkey.

As the United States began its retreat from northeast Syria in October, these Americans moved in. Free Burma

Rangers, led by Dave Eubank, is a Christian-based volunteer medic corps. In 27 days serving alongside Kurdish-led forces in northeast Syria, its team members evacuated 149 wounded and 83 dead. One of their own also was killed. Burmese medic Zau Seng came under Turkish fire while the team treated the

◀ **U.S. military vehicles withdraw from northern Syria on Oct. 21.**

▶ **A school building in Hasakah is converted into a shelter for displaced families from Ras al-Ayn.**

▼ **The Eubank family in Syria in November. From left to right: Peter, Suuzanne, Sahale, Karen, and David.**



wounded in November. An Iraqi translator working with the group was wounded in the same attack.

Fighting in northeast Syria has fallen from headlines but hardly slowed. Turkey continues to violate terms of a cease-fire. It also breaks a separate agreement reached Oct. 22, confining military operations to a mapped buffer zone extending 19 miles into Syria from the Turkish border.

Tel Tamer sits outside that buffer zone but last month became the focus of attacks by Turkish artillery, airstrikes, and armed drones—all in airspace that remains under U.S. control. The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) has pulled back from the buffer zone but vows to fight Turkey outside it.

Tel Tamer's hospital in November counted 170 dead and 600 wounded, most of them civilians. Hospital director Hassan Amin said he's never seen these kinds of casualties. Most are wounded by airstrikes and rockets, arriving without limbs or with parts of their torsos missing.

Standing by the hospital with the thud of mortar rounds in the distance, I saw six wounded individuals arrive by ambulance. Overhead came the whine of a circling drone, unfazed by enormous plumes rising from tires set on fire to create a smokescreen.

Eubank has been making daily and nightly patrols with his team to rescue the wounded, often alongside the Kurdish Red Crescent and other overworked ambulances. The team has repeatedly come under fire, including from Turkish tanks. Despite the effort, they've watched a humanitarian crisis grow with little outside help.

Local officials say at least 150,000 people—and perhaps as many as 300,000—have fled their homes since October.





Turkish assaults on the border towns of Ras al-Ayn and Tal Abyad forced residents out and emptied surrounding villages. The locals report atrocities by forces Turkey launched into Syria starting Oct. 9, chiefly the Free Syrian Army (or Syrian National Army), an opposition force now made up of Islamic militants that fought under al-Qaeda and ISIS.

Pharmacist Rashid Sheikh Sulemon saw people burned and beheaded in Ras al-Ayn before he was forced to leave with his family. The Turkish-backed forces led men into the street, he said, tied their hands behind their backs, and tortured and killed them. He volunteered for days as a medic until it became too dangerous. Members of the Free Syrian Army bombed his car and set his house on fire.

“Executing individuals, pillaging property, and blocking evidence of why Turkey’s proposed ‘safe zones’ will not be safe,” said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. Turkey’s proxy armies, she said, “are themselves committing abuses against civilians and discriminating on ethnic grounds.”

As the crisis swelled and assaults increased, most large aid groups evacuated. Caring for the displaced has fallen to local governing councils caught largely unprepared and to smaller groups nimble and brave enough to remain.

In Hasakah, local officials closed schools to convert them into shelters. They currently house about 25,000 people in 68 schools, according to Khalid Ibrahim, coordinator for the area’s humanitarian affairs office.

Families in the schools I visited had few provisions beyond thin mattresses and blankets. At Ibn Atheer school, a mother—afraid to give her name because her father

remained in Turkish-held territory—told me her family had gone 20 days without bathing and her children had lice. A man from her village who tried to go back said the houses had been burned and pillaged. “We have nothing to go back to,” she said.

Michigan-based Partners Relief and Development is working with 270 local volunteers to set up kitchens serving two meals per day in the schools. Since October the group has prepared nearly 3 million meals. The need is “overwhelming,” said Partners President Steve Gumaer. “We are the biggest organization here, but we are not a big organization. Already we’re working above capacity.”

Partners also contracted with a local factory to outfit sleeping bags with pads and water-resistant covers for those sleeping in camps.

‘Pray, trust God, listen to the locals, put yourself under their authority, tell them the truth about everything, hide nothing, be willing to risk everything, and tell them every asset we have is theirs.’ —code of the Free Burma Rangers

One camp near Hasakah, under construction when I visited in mid-November, had 700 residents. They had tents but no heat, water, or toilet facilities. By December the camp had 2,200 residents and more tents, along with pledges for more help.

The Iraq-based Barzani Charity Foundation, Mercy Corps, and others have trucked in water and other supplies. Church officials told me that Open Doors and Operation Mobilization had contributed to their efforts to care for displaced Christians. The International Red Cross and the

Syrian Red Crescent distributed bedding and water to make-shift shelters (see “Questionable Aid” at wng.org for more on the challenges for aid groups and donors in northeast Syria).

Eubank also has taken time from the front lines to make food and water distributions. Displacement will continue, he said, as fighting persists and control of the region is uncertain. “The armies are all here,” he said. “We’ve got Syrians, Russians, Iranians, Turks, ISIS, you name it.”

While the final fallout of Turkey’s advance remains unclear, Eubank says two decades of work in Burma prepared him for Middle East chaos. “There, we are in a war zone on the losing side, airplanes against us, tanks against us, greatly outnumbered, and with no outside help.”

The same code Free Burma Rangers adopted in south-east Asia applies here: “Pray, trust God, listen to the locals, put yourself under their authority, tell them the truth about everything, hide nothing, be willing to risk everything, and tell them every asset we have is theirs.”

Eubank, 59, founded Free Burma Rangers with his wife Karen in 1997 out of backpack medical work among ethnic groups battling for survival against the military regime that renamed their country Myanmar.

The Eubanks reared three children—now 19, 17, and 14 years old—hiking mountains, enduring shootouts, beating tropical diseases, and sleeping in bamboo huts (see “Jungle Cowboys,” March 19, 2016). The jungles of Burma defeated many a soldier in World War II, but Eubank’s rangers today operate more than 90 medic teams there.

The son of American missionaries in Thailand, Eubank learned Thai before English. His mother gave up a stint on Broadway, including with Julie Andrews, to join her husband, who celebrates 60 years on the field in Thailand—and his 90th birthday—this month. Eubank served for a decade with U.S. special operations forces and earned a theology degree from Fuller Seminary in California before launching his own organization.

Eubank says he had zero desire to work in the Middle East, but on a hike in Burma he received a text from a friend challenging him to put to work the rangers’ skills in the fight against ISIS.

The group worked alongside Iraqi Kurds in Sinjar fighting to dislodge ISIS starting in 2015 before hooking up with Iraq army units in Mosul in 2017. In northeast Syria they first joined Kurdish-led forces outside Kobani, and earlier this year at Baghuz the work included treating the enemy—ISIS fighters and their families who surrendered.

Burmese team members labor alongside retired Delta Force and other former U.S. soldiers. They raise their own support, but hardly fit the idea of a mission organization. Eubank wants to rekindle what Red Cross teams and chaplains once did in wartime. “Our role is to be in the humanitarian gap at the front line. And right now people don’t go to the humanitarian gap.”

During the battle of Mosul, Eubank said, “We got involved because nobody could take food in. ‘You’d get shot,’ I’d hear, and I couldn’t believe it. These families there, they’re all getting shot. Just try not to get shot.”

Eubank himself was wounded in Mosul rescuing an injured Iraqi girl. In Tel Tamer he’s had narrow escapes. Team members use armored vehicles, and many carry weapons.

Eubank is unapologetic about bringing his family. Syrian families face life-and-death risks all the time, he said. Karen and their children arrived in Tel Tamer five weeks into the mission, helping to deliver aid kits to displaced people. As they do everywhere they go, they hosted “Good Life Clubs” with games and Bible stories.

Inside the compound, the kids do school projects at a table where the team also eats meals and plans missions. They collect pets wherever they go, here giving a stray dog and a baby hedgehog Kurdish names.

Any Swiss Family Robinson comparisons break down, though. Eubank is a steely tactician and earns respect for his readiness to go where others refuse to. Seasoned war journalists stopped in at the Tel Tamer compound for updates from Eubank, who stood before a whiteboard chronicling six weeks of heavy fighting. When he interrupted his own rapid-fire storytelling with spontaneous prayer, no one seemed to mind.

One of his roles in Syria, he believes, is to document what’s happened since Trump launched a sudden U.S. pullout and made statements supporting the Turkish advance.

In November the rangers captured on video an attack at Ain Issa, a town also outside the buffer zone. With airstrikes and gunfire pounding the area, Eubank and his ambulance crew helped to rescue some of the 22 wounded and five killed, taking them to a hospital in Kobani. Eubank left to take a break from the front lines shortly after, leaving a small team of medics in place.

I was with Eubank in Tel Tamer the day President Donald Trump met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the White House. Trump told reporters, “The cease-fire is holding very well.” Eubank was away from the front line, supervising the medic Zau Seng’s cremation.

Is this your most dangerous mission? I asked.

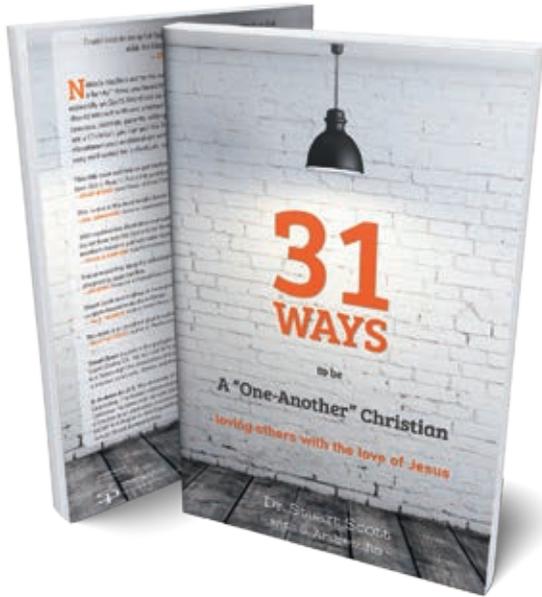
Yes, he said.

Then what made you come?

“It’s an injury to my soul what America has done,” he said, suddenly stifling emotion. “It’s like my family has hurt this family.” ☹



A Free Burma Rangers medic treats a wounded SDF soldier during an evacuation from the front lines to a hospital.



**31 Ways to be A “One-Another” Christian:
Loving Others With the Love of Jesus**

by Dr. Stuart Scott with S. Andrew Jin

“Nobody reaches out to me when I go to church.”
“This church really isn’t much of a family.”

Have you heard these kinds of comments? How sad if they are true, especially as God’s Word has so much to say about how believers should interact with one another! An array of interpersonal problems between spouses, children, parents, siblings, friends, coworkers can easily develop, but if you are a Christian, you can put the Bible’s message into practice and see how radically it transforms your relationships with others.

By carefully examining the “one another” commands in Scripture, the authors provide a Word-based understanding of what God intends for Christian relationships—showing not only what they look like, but also how to develop them.

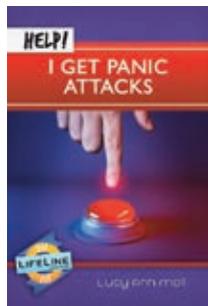
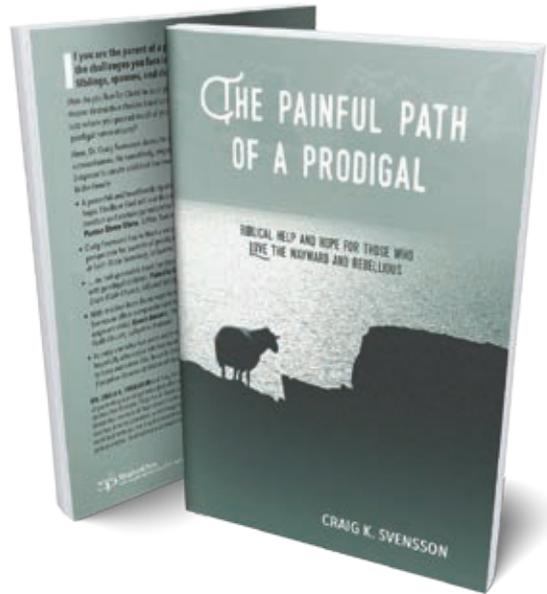
Enjoy reading and sharing this book; it’s very well suited for individuals, couples, and small groups.

The Painful Path of a Prodigal: Biblical Help and Hope for Those Who Love the Wayward and Rebellious

by Craig K. Svensson

Parents of prodigals struggle deeply with the challenges they face of relating to their wayward offspring. Siblings, spouses, and children of prodigals face similar struggles. How do you live for Christ in the midst of such personal turmoil? How do you live with a grown child whose destructive choices have transformed him into a person so much unlike the adorable little one into whom you poured much of yourself? Ultimately, how do you bear the pain if that prodigal never returns?

In this book, Dr. Craig Svensson and his wife, Sue, show how they are no strangers to such deeply devastating circumstances. Svensson sensitively, engagingly, and compassionately directs readers to Scripture as he helps create the biblical framework for addressing the trauma of having a prodigal in the family.



Healthy bodies



Healthy souls

“Hope Medical Center has been a great blessing in Quinindé because it is a space where we can comprehensively look at the person. The vast majority of patients arrive seeking solutions for their physical health problems, but we take this opportunity to reflect on their spiritual state. We see how God opens doors to share His Word through medical care, knowing that only in Christ can we find abundant life.”



DR. YENY AGILA DE PINOS
QUININDÉ, ECUADOR

The Luke Society is a Christian international medical ministry which partners with indigenous health professionals and uses medicine as a tool to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

Luke Society ministry directors are very open with patients about their faith. Many pray with them during consultations.

Trained evangelists on the staffs of several ministries. They meet with patients, read Scripture and bring concerns patients have before the Lord.

Staff devotions is part of the daily routine at most Luke Society ministries as they ask the Lord's blessing on their work that day.

Join our support team:

Supporting the work of nationals is the most effective and efficient use of donor gifts. They know the culture, language and native diseases. They are trusted in the areas in which they work and remain there to provide continuity of care. Please consider furthering the Gospel mission around the world by giving a gift to the Luke Society this holiday season.

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2019 NEWS OF THE YEAR





NOTRE DAME ON FIRE

An electrical short-circuit likely started a massive blaze at the landmark Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, France, on April 15. Firefighters stopped the fire from spreading to the 12th-century building's north tower belfry and saved both of the structure's iconic towers. French President Emmanuel Macron said a team of international experts would take part in the yearslong rebuilding effort.

GEOFFROY VAN DER HASSELT/AFP
VIA GETTY IMAGES

ASYLUM DIPLOMACY

Asylum-seekers from Central America continued to stream to the United States in 2019. The U.S. government in late October used the threat of cutting off aid to negotiate agreements with El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras so that migrants could seek asylum in those countries as they arrive in them rather than continuing to the United States. If migrants do show up at the border, the United States can deport them back to Central America to apply for asylum there.

PEP COMPANYS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES









HURRICANE DORIAN

The most powerful storm to hit the Bahama Islands in recorded history, Hurricane Dorian slammed into the northern Bahamas on Sept. 1 with sustained winds of 185 mph. It unleashed flooding that reached up to 25 feet in some areas. Officials reported 67 deaths, hundreds missing, and \$3.4 billion (about a quarter of the nation's annual economic output) in damage.

ANDREW CABALLERO-REYNOLDS/AFP
VIA GETTY IMAGES

DEADLY TORNADO

Carol Dean (right) embraces a friend amid the debris of her home in Beauregard, Ala. A deadly tornado on March 3 killed 23 people in the small town, including Dean's husband, David.

DAVID GOLDMAN/AP



WALMART SHOOTING

Paramedics move a wounded victim after an employee opened fire at a Walmart store on July 30 in Southaven, Miss., killing two people and wounding two others. The shooting reportedly spurred copycat threats at Walmarts in other states and was followed days later by a mass shooting at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas (see p. 66).

BRANDON DILL/AP





NO PEACE IN SYRIA

A family flees the north-eastern Syrian town of Ras al-Ain in October after Turkish forces invaded the area following a withdrawal of U.S. military forces. The invasion forced hundreds of thousands of Kurds to leave northern Syria.

DELIL SOULEIMAN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



GAME SHOW PAYDAY

Contestant James Holzhauer (left, with host Alex Trebek) bolstered the ratings of the game show *Jeopardy!* as he earned the 16 highest one-day scores in the show's history on his way to winning a total of more than \$2.4 million.

JEOPARDY PRODUCTIONS, INC.





HONG KONG ERUPTS

Police fire pepper spray at protesters during a rally in Hong Kong on June 10. Widespread protests began in June over a proposed extradition bill that would have sent people from Hong Kong to mainland China to stand trial. Protests continued after Hong Kong's Legislative Council withdrew the bill in October as demands grew to include greater autonomy for the territory. In local elections on Nov. 24, pro-democracy opposition candidates gained control of 17 of 18 district councils and won nearly 90 percent of the 452 seats.

VINCENT YU/AP

ISIS DEFEATED

Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) stand guard outside Baghuz, the last stronghold of ISIS in Syria, on Feb. 27. U.S. forces allied with the SDF to defeat the militant group, which is also known as the Islamic State, there in March. Sleeper cells remain, however, and the region has seen a surge in terrorist attacks since Turkey launched an offensive in Syria in October.

BULENT KILIC/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES







SYNAGOGUE SHOOTING

An attack during Passover services at the Chabad of Poway, Calif., synagogue on April 27 left one person dead and three wounded. The alleged shooter, 19-year-old John T. Earnest, was a dean's list student at California State University, San Marcos, and a member of Escondido Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

DENIS POROY/AP

CATALONIA ROILS

A Catalan protester throws a stone during an Oct. 18 rally for the independence of Catalonia. On Oct. 14, a Spanish court had sentenced nine Catalan separatist leaders to up to 13 years in prison, sparking protests in Barcelona. More than 500 people were injured during the protests.

PAU BARRENA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES





MARATHON SPRINT

Kenya's Eliud Kipchoge crosses the finish line on Oct. 12 in Vienna, Austria, and becomes the first person to run a marathon in under 2 hours. The International Association of Athletics Federations did not ratify Kipchoge's time because of benefits that race organizers provided Kipchoge, including other runners to pace him and a cyclist to hand him drinks.

ALEX HALADA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

DMZ FIRST

President Donald Trump meets with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in the Korean Demilitarized Zone on June 30. It was the first time a sitting U.S. president stepped foot into North Korea, and the event led to temporarily renewed negotiations on ending North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

SUSAN WALSH/AP







MUELLER REPORT

For months the media had predicted the Mueller investigation would be a bombshell that would topple Donald Trump's presidency. Instead, the report from Special Prosecutor Robert Mueller found that Trump had not conspired with the Russians to interfere with the 2016 U.S. presidential election. The report made no judgment on whether the president had attempted to interfere with the inquiry. On July 24, Mueller testified before Congress on the results of his two-year investigation.

VENEZUELA SUFFERS

Maria Rojas, 57, gets water from a street tap in Caracas, Venezuela, on April 1. Socialist Venezuela under strongman Nicolás Maduro faced a continuing economic crisis during 2019, suffering an annual inflation rate of over 10,000 percent, near-daily blackouts, and a breakdown in critical services such as running water. At least 3 million Venezuelans have left the country since 2014, and 80 percent of the households that remain have trouble finding food.

ARIANA CUBILLOS/AP







BREXIT WOES

Protesters opposed to Brexit rally in London on April 1. A stalemate in Parliament over how the United Kingdom should withdraw from the European Union dominated British politics in 2019, forcing Prime Minister Theresa May to step down and successor Boris Johnson to call for December Parliamentary elections.

ISABEL INFANTES/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

COLLEGE BRIBERY

Actress Felicity Huffman leaves a Boston federal court on Sept. 13 after a judge sentenced her to 14 days in jail. Huffman pleaded guilty to conspiracy and fraud for paying an admissions consultant to have a proctor alter her daughter's SAT answers in 2017. Huffman's case was part of a scandal involving more than 30 wealthy parents accused of rigging standardized test scores and bribing officials at prestigious schools.

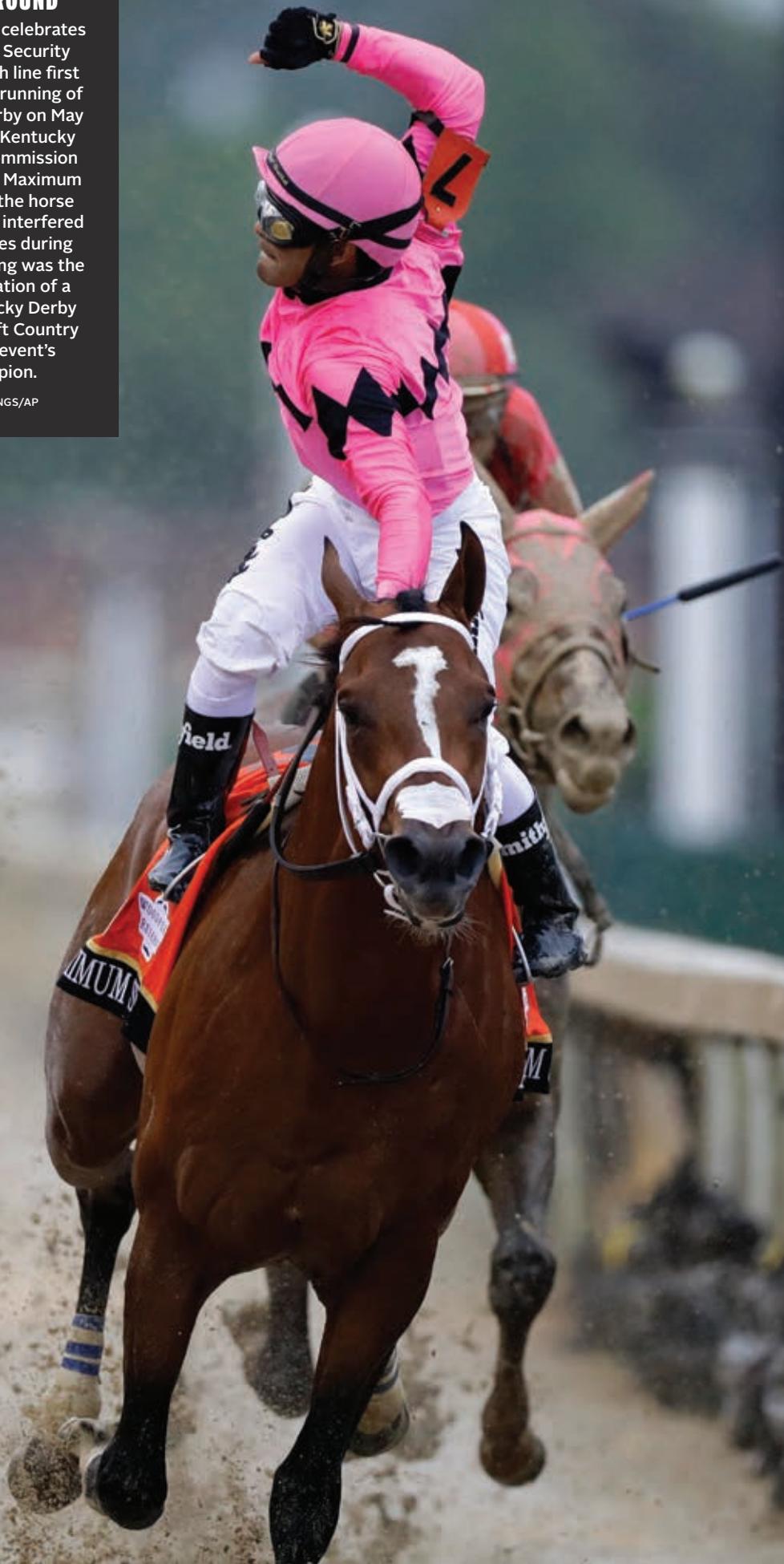
MICHAEL DWYER/AP



HORSING AROUND

Jockey Luis Saez celebrates after Maximum Security crossed the finish line first during the 145th running of the Kentucky Derby on May 4. However, the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission later disqualified Maximum Security, ruling the horse had swerved and interfered with other horses during the race. The ruling was the first disqualification of a winner in Kentucky Derby history, and it left Country House as the event's 2019 champion.

DARRON CUMMINGS/AP







EL PASO ATTACK

Mourners pray at a makeshift memorial to victims of an Aug. 3 shooting at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, that killed 22 people and wounded two dozen others. Another shooting that weekend at a popular nightlife area of Dayton, Ohio, killed nine people and wounded 26.

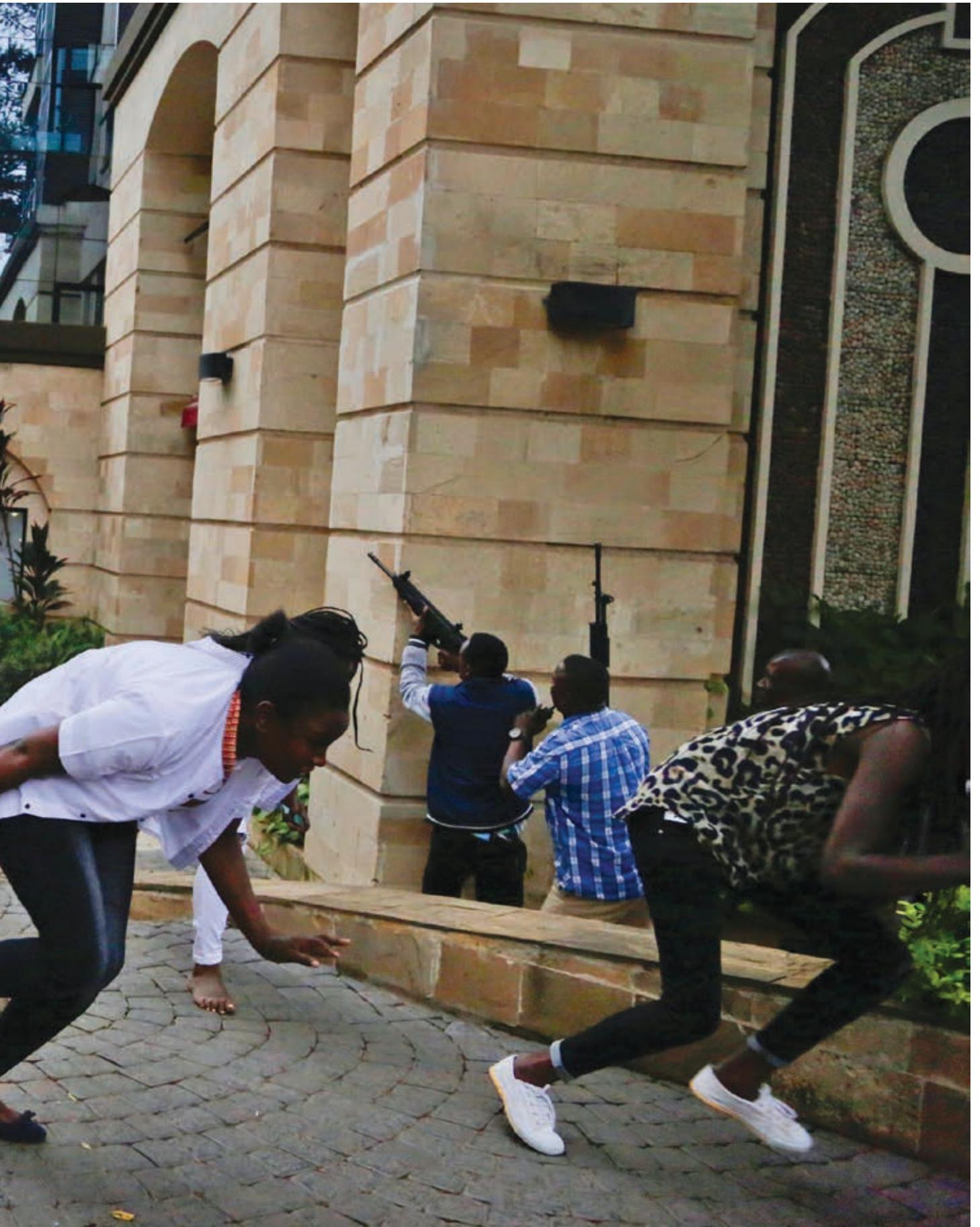
ANDRES LEIGHTON/AP

ATTACK IN KENYA

Civilians flee and security forces close in after four armed militants opened fire in a hotel complex in Nairobi, Kenya, on Jan. 15. The militants set off car bombs outside a bank and stormed the hotel, followed by a suicide bombing in the lobby. They killed 21 people, including one American and one British national, before security forces killed them. The Islamic terror group al-Shabab claimed responsibility for the attack. A U.S. airstrike four days later killed 52 jihadists at an al-Shabab stronghold.

KHALIL SENOSI/AP







DEMOCRATIC TENSION

U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn. (left, with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi), was one of four left-wing congresswomen known as “the Squad” who caused headaches for the Democratic establishment during 2019. In August, Israel barred two members of the Squad, Omar and Rep. Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich., from the country over their support for the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement.

J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

A COSTLY DEAL

One member of the Squad, U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., gained attention when she and U.S. Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass., unveiled the “Green New Deal,” a sweeping plan to eliminate fossil fuels, upgrade or replace every building in the United States, and create a high-speed rail system to eliminate air travel. One estimate places the price tag at between \$51 trillion and \$93 trillion over 10 years.

J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP





IMPEACHMENT POLITICS

Led by U.S. Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., House Democrats began a process to impeach President Donald Trump over what they say were attempts to use aid to pressure Ukraine into investigating political rival Joe Biden and his son's work in that country. In a GOP report, U.S. Sen. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., argued that the Democrats had not proven their case: "They don't like the president, so they're going to try to boot him out of office."

JOSHUA ROBERTS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

A CROWDED CAMPAIGN

A crowded field of Democrats emerged to vie for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination in 2020. By December, the front-runners were former Vice President Joe Biden, socialist U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt. (below), U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg. At an early debate, each of the candidates expressed support for including illegal immigrants in taxpayer-funded healthcare plans.

CRAIG RUTTLE/AP





EASTER MASSACRE

Relatives mourn victims of a bomb blast at St. Sebastian's Church in Negombo, Sri Lanka. A series of bombings on Easter Sunday targeted churches and luxury hotels in Sri Lanka, killing more than 300 people and leaving more than 500 others wounded. ISIS claimed responsibility for the bombings, while officials in Sri Lanka blamed breakaway members of two obscure local extremist Muslim groups.

GEMUNU AMARASINGHE/AP







CALIFORNIA BURNS

Volunteers help evacuate horses during the Easy Fire, a blaze that came within 30 yards of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Ventura County, Calif. Fires in California prompted officials to evacuate tens of thousands of residents and prompted the Pacific Gas & Electric utility to cut off power to millions in controversial deliberate blackouts.

CHRISTIAN MONTERROSA/AP



EBOLA OUTBREAK

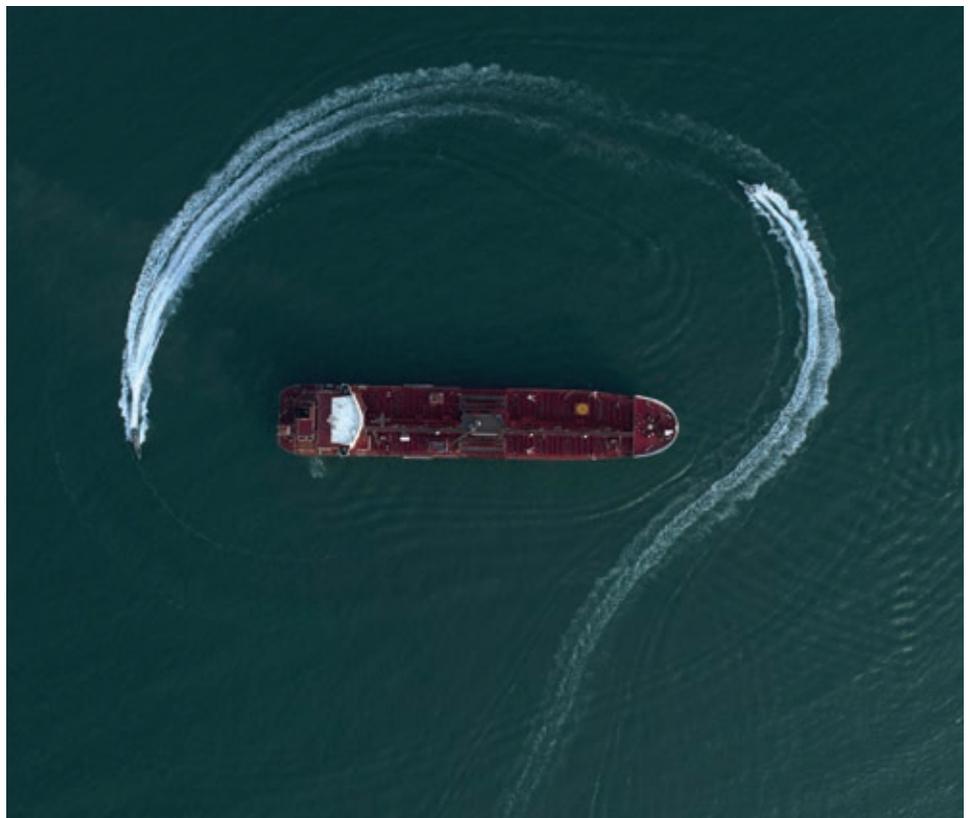
Workers in Benin, Congo, bury the corpse of an Ebola victim on July 14. With more than 3,000 reported cases, 2019's Ebola outbreak was the worst in Congolese history. The rate of new cases began to decline in October.

JEROME DELAY/AP

IRANIAN AGGRESSION

Iranian speedboats circle the British-flagged oil tanker *Stena Impero* on July 21 in the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas after the ship was seized in the Strait of Hormuz two days earlier. Iran released the ship after the British territory of Gibraltar released an Iranian oil tanker that had been seized six weeks earlier for carrying oil to Syria in violation of an international embargo.

MORTEZA AKHOONDI/TASNIM
NEWS AGENCY VIA AP





RIOTS IN ECUADOR

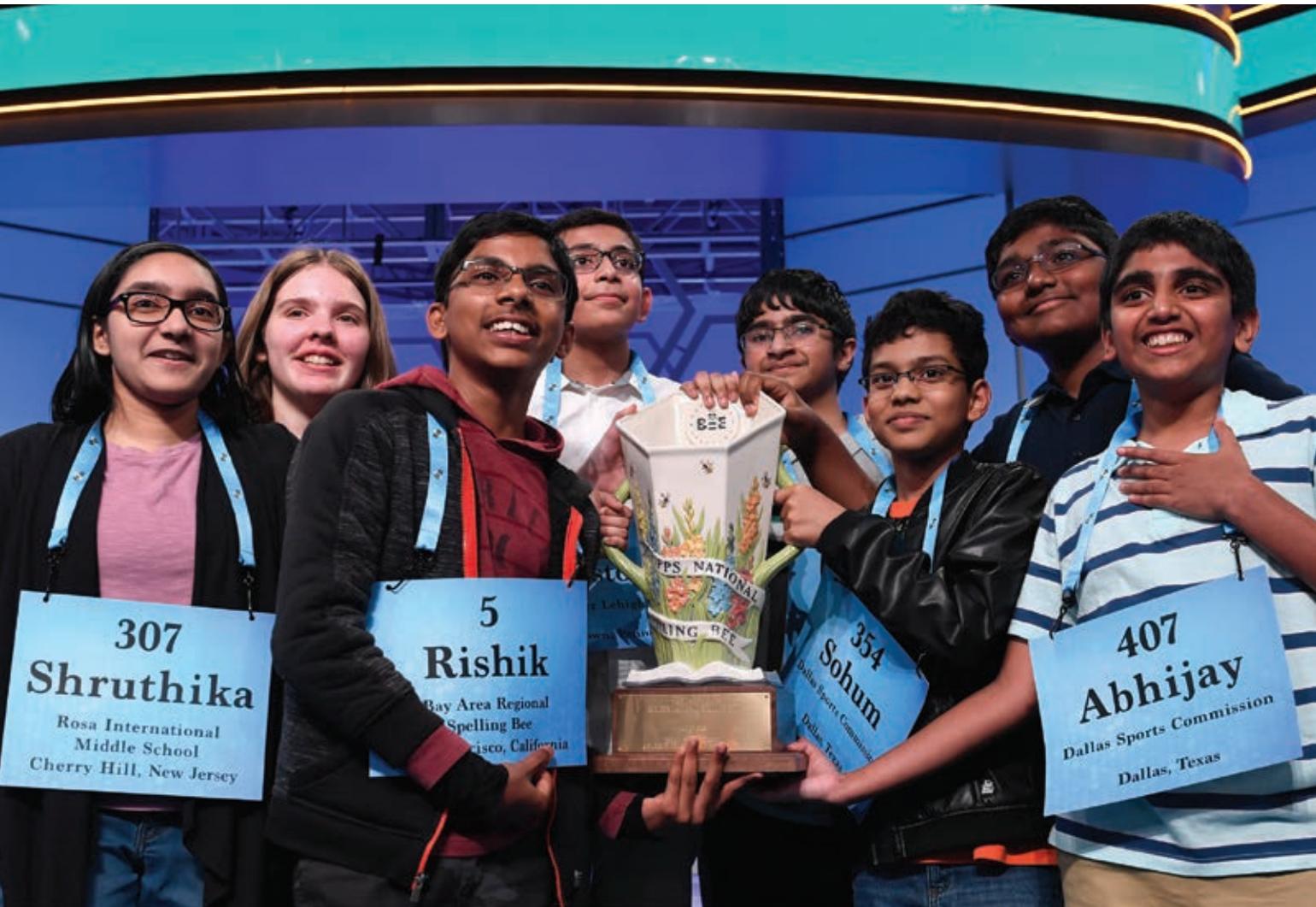
Demonstrators in Quito clash with riot police on Oct. 9 as thousands march against Ecuadorian President Lenín Moreno's decision to slash fuel subsidies. Moreno days later withdrew from an International Monetary Fund program that required the subsidy cut and pledged to cut other spending and raise taxes.

MARTIN BERNETTI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

A CROWD OF CHAMPS

The 2019 Scripps National Spelling Bee wrapped up a few minutes past midnight on May 31 with an unprecedented eight co-champions. The winners spelled 47 consecutive words correctly—including *auslaut*, *palama*, *cernuous*, and *odylic*.

SUSAN WALSH/AP



307
Shruthika

Rosa International
Middle School
Cherry Hill, New Jersey

5

Rishik

Bay Area Regional
Spelling Bee
San Francisco, California

354

Sohum

Dallas Sports Commission
Dallas, Texas

407

Abhijay

Dallas Sports Commission
Dallas, Texas



UP OR DOWN

A protester gives a thumbs-up outside a "Keep America Great" rally for President Trump in Minneapolis, Minn., on Oct. 10. By December, Democrats in Congress had introduced articles of impeachment against Trump, but polls showed opposition to impeachment growing in key swing states.

KEREM YUCEL/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

TIGER'S RETURN

Tiger Woods celebrates as he wins his fifth Masters golf tournament in Augusta, Ga. The April 14 victory was his first major championship since 2008, and it marked a comeback for Woods after years of turmoil, including marital infidelity that led to divorce, multiple knee and back surgeries, and a DUI arrest from using painkillers.

DAVID J. PHILLIP/AP



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David
Jonathan
Stephen
Paul...

...and Gloria.



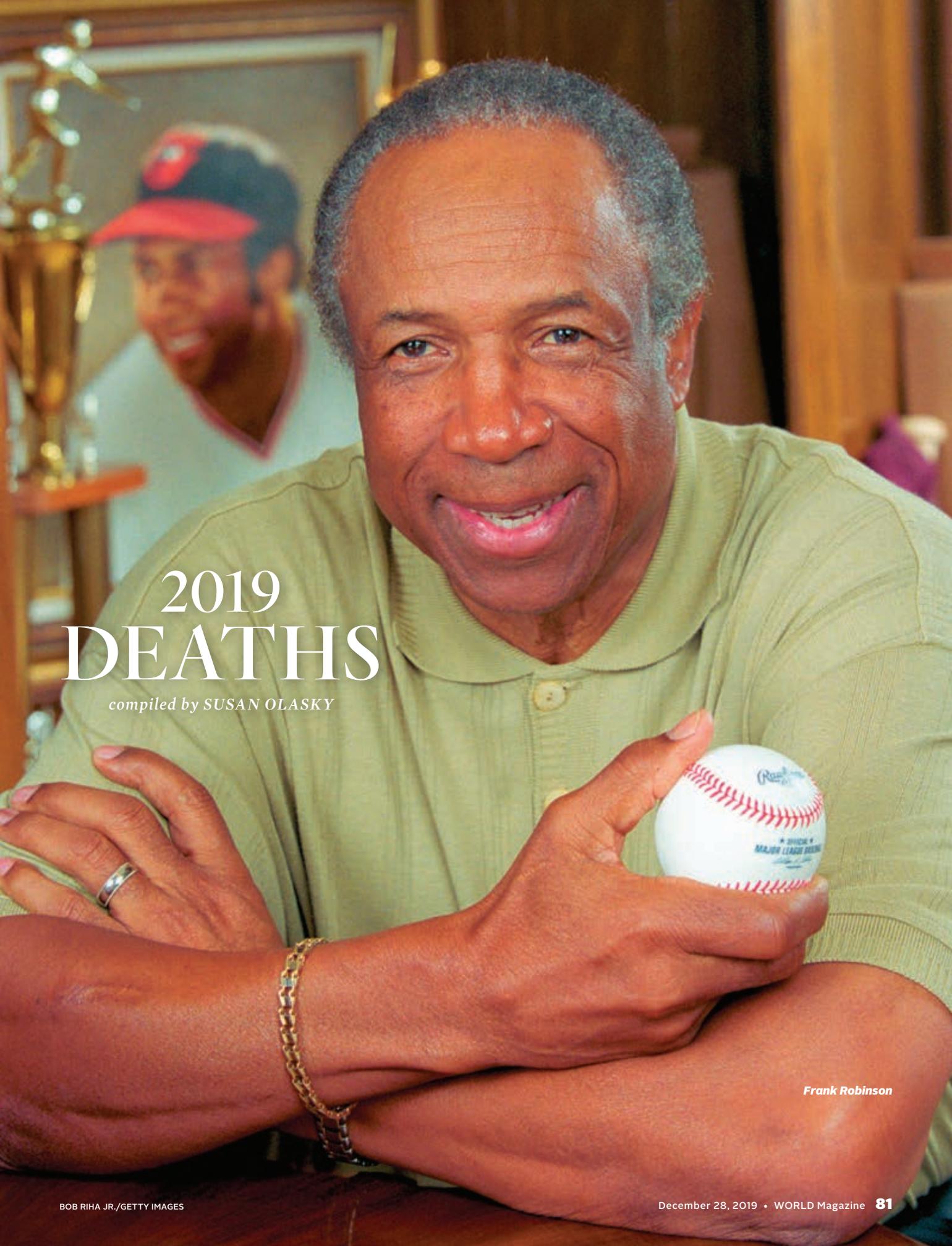
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2019 DEATHS

compiled by SUSAN OLASKY

Frank Robinson



Nick Buoniconti



Diahann Carroll



Carol Channing



Cameron Boyce

JUANITA ABERNATHY

87 / Sept. 12 / Civil rights activist who wrote the business plan for the Birmingham bus boycott and marched alongside Martin Luther King Jr. and her husband, Ralph Abernathy, despite threats and the KKK firebombing of her home. She once said, "The men ran the movement, but we were the actual bodies that made it happen."

LUIS ALVAREZ

53 / June 29 / A 9/11 first responder who spent three months at Ground Zero searching for survivors and later fought for extended health benefits for those who, like him, developed cancer and other illnesses as a result of their service.

RENÉ AUBERJONIS

79 / Dec. 8 / Actor best known for his roles on the TV shows *Benson* and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and his part in the 1970 film *M.A.S.H.*, playing Father Mulcahy.

HILDEGARD BACHERT

98 / Oct. 17 / Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany who became co-director of a Manhattan art gallery that discovered primitive artist Grandma Moses.

MICHEL BACOS

94 / March 26 / Heroic pilot of the Air France jet hijacked to Entebbe, Uganda, in 1976. After three days the plane's hijackers released non-Jewish passengers and offered to release the crew, but Bacos insisted the crew stay with the hostages.

ABU BAKR AL-BAGHDADI

48 / Oct. 26 / Brutal leader of Islamic State (ISIS) who sought to establish a caliphate in the Middle East and inspired followers to commit terrorist acts around the world.

GINGER BAKER

80 / Oct. 6 / Drumming superstar with bands including Cream and Blind Faith whose reputed bad temper led to many band breakups.

RUSSELL BAKER

93 / Jan. 21 / Journalist and two-time Pulitzer Prize winner for his often-humorous "Observer" column in *The New York Times* and the memoir *Growing Up*, which recounted his Depression-era childhood.

KAYE BALLARD

93 / Jan. 21 / Actress and comedienne who starred for two years in the TV show *The Mothers-in-Law* in the late 1960s. She was the first singer to record "Fly Me to the Moon."

BIRCH BAYH

91 / March 14 / Three-term U.S. senator from Indiana who helped draft the 25th (presidential succession) and 26th Amendments (18-year-old vote) to the Constitution, and the unsuccessful Equal Rights Amendment.

KATHLEEN BLANCO

76 / Aug. 18 / Former Louisiana governor whose slow response to Hurricane Katrina came to define her four years in office.

HENRY W. BLOCH

96 / April 23 / Franchising pioneer and co-founder of tax preparation company H&R Block, which grew rapidly when the IRS stopped offering free tax prep help.

HAROLD BLOOM

89 / Oct. 14 / Yale professor, best-selling author, and literary critic who defended the Western canon, those books he believed should be taught and read.

JOHN C. BOGLE

89 / Jan. 16 / Index fund pioneer who founded the Vanguard Group, which grew to have more than \$5 trillion under management. Bogle's philosophy of low-fee investing cut into his profits but benefited his investors. One investment manager said, "He basically chose to forgo an enormous fortune to do something right for millions of people."

CAMERON BOYCE

20 / July 6 / Actor best known for his roles in the Disney Channel's *Descendants* franchise and the TV show *Jessie* as well as the voice of Jake in *Jake and the Never Land Pirates*.

GERT BOYLE

95 / Nov. 3 / Housewife who at age 45 took over the indebted Columbia Sportswear Company after her husband died and turned it into a billion-dollar business. Boyle became famous for print and TV ads that used her age and toughness to highlight the durability of Columbia products.

ALAN BRINKLEY

70 / June 17 / Columbia University historian and award-winning author of *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression* (1983) and *The Publisher* (2010).

BILL BUCKNER

69 / May 27 / Major league baseball player for 22 years whose career became defined by an error that cost the Red Sox the 1986 World Series. Bitter Red Sox fans eventually forgave him. When he returned to Fenway Park in 2008 to throw out the ceremonial first pitch, the fans gave him a two-minute standing ovation.

NICK BUONICONTI

78 / July 30 / Hall of Fame middle linebacker who starred for the AFL's Boston Patriots and the NFL's Miami Dolphins. He was part of the defense that led the Dolphins to three straight Super Bowls, including an undefeated season in 1972.

PATRICK CADDELL

68 / Feb. 16 / Democratic pollster who helped Jimmy Carter's presidential campaign and later drifted to the right in reaction to a Democratic Party he perceived as elitist and out of touch.

DANIEL CALLAHAN

88 / July 16 / Bioethics pioneer who co-founded the Hastings Center.

JAKE BURTON CARPENTER

65 / Nov. 20 / The "godfather of snowboarding" who developed the modern snowboard and marketed the sport, which gained Olympic status in just two decades.

DIANNAH CARROLL

84 / Oct. 4 / Singer and award-winning actress who starred in *Julia*, a 1968-1971 TV series in which she played a nurse and single mother at a time when black actresses were confined to playing domestic servants.

GEORGE "POPS" CHAMBERS

88 / Oct. 12 / Singer and bassist for the 1960s-era Chambers Brothers band, whose big hit was the song "Time Has Come Today."

CAROL CHANNING

97 / Jan. 15 / Tony Award-winning Broadway actress with a raspy voice and over-size personality who played matchmaker Dolly Levi in *Hello, Dolly!* more than 5,000 times on stage. When Barbra Streisand won the role for the movie version,

Channing said, “I felt suicidal; I felt like jumping out a window.”

GUS CHAVEZ

76 / Aug. 18 / Activist who successfully pressured filmmaker Ken Burns to include in his World War II documentary the role of the 500,000 Hispanic soldiers who served.

JACQUES CHIRAC

86 / Sept. 26 / Suave two-term French president who acknowledged France’s role in the Holocaust and advocated a strong European Union. His defiant opposition to the 2003 Iraq War birthed an American backlash against French wine and cheese and turned french fries into “freedom fries.”

THAD COCHRAN

81 / May 30 / Former U.S. legislator from Mississippi who spent six years in the House and 39 years in the Senate. A Republican, he was known for working congenially with colleagues on both sides of the aisle and for earmarking federal funds for projects in his home state.

DICK COLE

103 / April 9 / Last remaining member of the Doolittle Raiders, whose surprise air attack on Japan four months after Pearl Harbor shocked the Japanese and boosted the morale of Americans.

PETER COLLIER

80 / Nov. 1 / Influential member of the New Left who moved right politically and co-wrote *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts About the Sixties*.

TIM CONWAY

85 / May 14 / Actor and comedian who starred in TV’s *McHale’s Navy* and *The Carol Burnett Show*.

He often played bumblers and won three Emmys for his work on *Carol Burnett* and one more for his writing.

JOHN CONVERS JR.

90 / Oct. 27 / African American congressman from Detroit who served 53 years before resigning in 2017 after two women charged him with sexual misconduct. He long advocated making Martin Luther King’s birthday a federal holiday.

FRED COX

80 / Nov. 20 / A star kicker for the Minnesota Vikings in the 1960s, he invented the Nerf football.

LEWIS CULLMAN

100 / June 7 / Philanthropist who made his fortune with At-A-Glance calendars and appointment books.

ELIJAH CUMMINGS

68 / Oct. 17 / Civil rights leader and Democratic congressman from Baltimore since 1996. He used his position as chairman of the House Oversight Committee to investigate President Donald Trump.

WILLIAM E. DANNEMEYER

89 / July 9 / Seven-term GOP congressman from Orange County, Calif., who earned the designation “No. 1 Taxpayers’ Friend” from the National Taxpayers Union in 1992.

DORIS DAY

97 / May 13 / Singer and actress who starred in 40 movies, including comedies with Rock Hudson (*Pillow Talk*) and Cary Grant (*That Touch of Mink*). She turned down the role of middle-aged Mrs. Robinson who seduces college-aged Dustin Hoffman in *The Graduate*, saying it “offended my sense of values.”

JOHN DINGELL

92 / Feb. 7 / Democrat from Michigan who served in the U.S. House of Representatives for 59 years (1955–2015), making him the longest-serving member of either chamber of Congress. His father served the district for 22 years before him, and his wife now represents it: Dingells have occupied that seat for 90 years.

WERNER DOEHNER

90 / Nov. 8 / Last survivor of the 1937 *Hindenburg* disaster. The accident killed 13 passengers, including 8-year-old Doehner’s father and sister, plus 22 crew members and one man on the ground.

STANLEY DONEN

94 / Feb. 21 / Film director of movie musicals including *Singin’ in the Rain*, *On the Town*, and *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*.

DR. JOHN

77 / June 6 / Six-time Grammy-winning musician and singer who developed a unique style that drew from New Orleans funk, blues, and rock ’n’ roll. His most popular song was “Right Place, Wrong Time.”

DARYL DRAGON

76 / Jan. 2 / Half of the pop duo Captain & Tennille. In the 1970s, Dragon and his wife, Toni Tennille, saw seven songs, including “Love Will Keep Us Together,” reach the Top 10 on the pop charts.

YECHIEL ECKSTEIN

67 / Feb. 6 / Rabbi and founder of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, an organization that raised more than \$1 billion from American evangelicals to support Jewish causes and the state of Israel.

DIET EMAN

99 / Sept. 3 / Dutch Christian who risked her life to save Jews from the Holocaust. She told her story in the book *Things We Couldn’t Say* and in the movie *The Reckoning* (2007).

GEORGIA ENGEL

70 / April 12 / Emmy-nominated actress who played the innocent Georgette in *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*.

JEFFREY EPSTEIN

66 / Aug. 10 / Financier and convicted sex offender who cultivated relationships with the rich and powerful, including Bill Clinton and Donald Trump.

RACHEL HELD EVANS

37 / May 4 / Former evangelical Christian who became an influential voice for millennials disenchanted with their conservative upbringings.

CAIN HOPE FELDER

76 / Oct. 1 / African American Biblical scholar who taught for many years at the divinity school at Howard University and edited *The Original African Heritage Study Bible*.

MARTIN FELDSTEIN

79 / June 11 / Influential Harvard economist who served as chairman of Ronald Reagan’s Council of Economic Advisers.

MARCO FEINGOLD

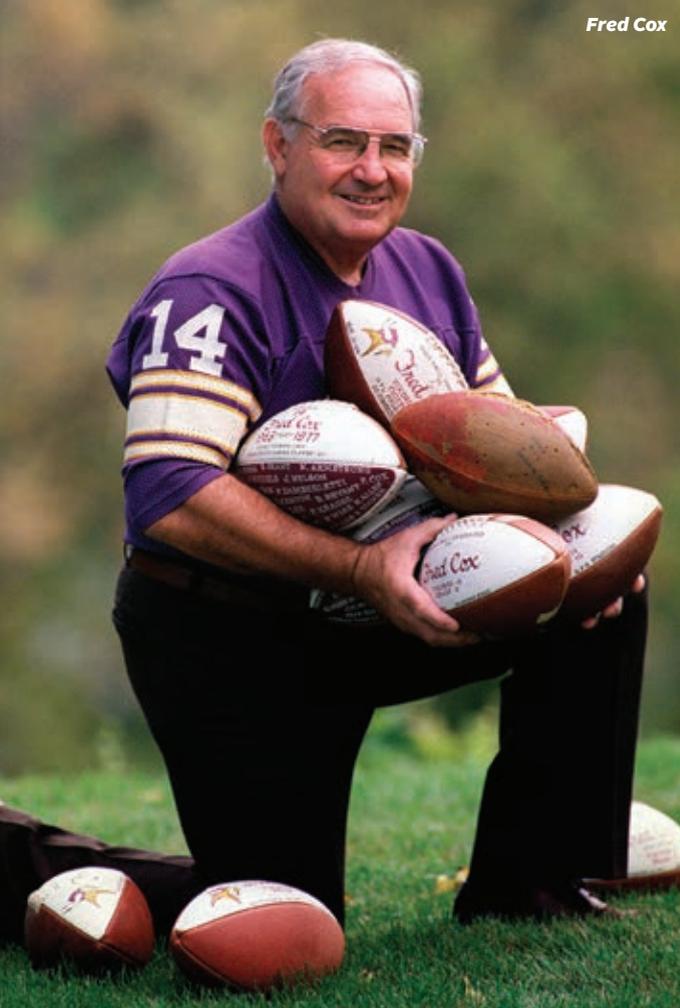
106 / Sept. 19 / Oldest living Austrian Holocaust survivor. He survived four concentration camps—Auschwitz, Neuengamme, Dachau, and Buchenwald—before Americans liberated him and other surviving Jews. After the war he ran a network that allowed 100,000 Jews to migrate to Palestine.



Tim Conway



Elijah Cummings



Fred Cox



Doris Day



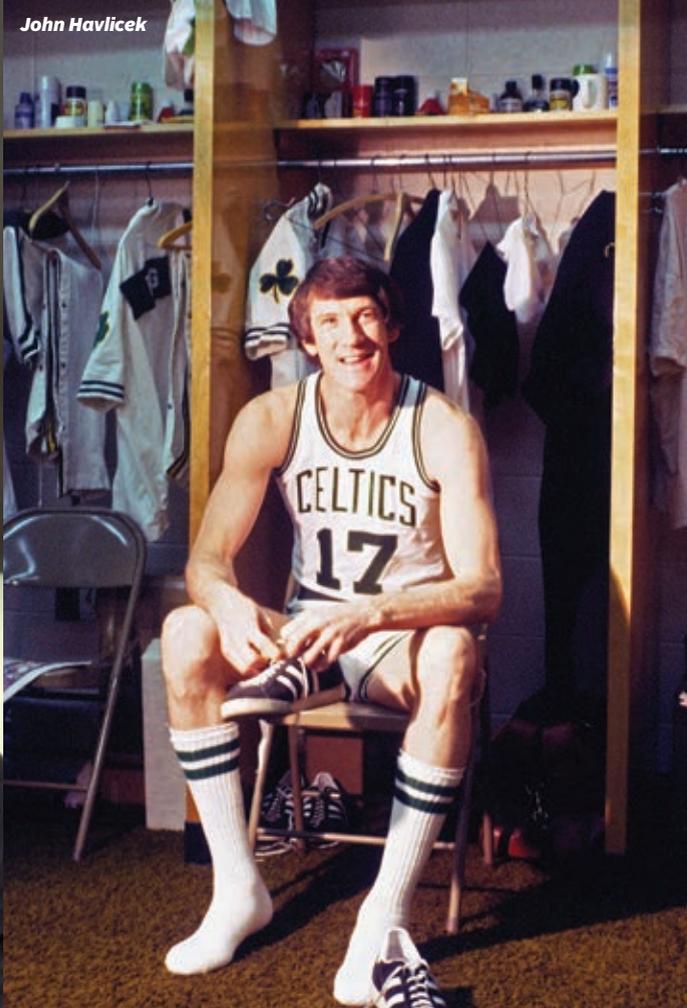
Norman Geisler



Valerie Harper



Lee Iacocca



John Havlicek

ROBERT FINLEY

96 / March 22 / Evangelist who founded International Students Inc. and Christian Aid Mission to reach foreign students studying in the United States.

ALBERT FINNEY

82 / Feb. 7 / British actor who starred in *Tom Jones* and won a Golden Globe for his portrayal of Winston Churchill in *A Gathering Storm*.

BERNARD FISHER

101 / Oct. 16 / Physician who fought established medical opinion to change the way doctors treat breast cancer: He used science to show that simple mastectomies were as effective and less debilitating than radical mastectomies.

PETER FONDA

79 / Aug. 16 / Actor and screenwriter who starred in *Easy Rider*, a 1969 film celebrating sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll. He was the son of actor Henry Fonda and brother of actress Jane Fonda.

DOROTHEA BENTON FRANK

67 / Sept. 2 / *New York Times* best-selling author of 20 novels set near her native Charleston, S.C.

ERNEST GAINES

86 / Nov. 5 / African American author of nine novels, including *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, *A Lesson Before Dying*, and *A Gathering of Old Men*. He received a MacArthur grant for his work depicting the lives of people like those he'd known on the Louisiana plantation where he picked cotton as a child.

NORMAN GEISLER

86 / July 1 / Christian apologist and founder of Southern

Evangelical Seminary who taught in higher ed for more than 55 years and wrote or co-authored more than 90 books.

MORDICAI GERSTEIN

83 / Sept. 24 / Artist and children's book illustrator whose 2003 *The Man Who Walked Between the Towers* won the Caldecott Medal. The post-9/11 book honored the Twin Towers and celebrated Philippe Petit's 1974 tightrope walk between them.

NATHAN GLAZER

95 / Jan. 19 / Urban sociologist who became disenchanted with liberalism. Though described as a neo-conservative, he said, "I consider myself pragmatic, rather than a man of the left or a man of the right."

MARIE GREENWOOD

106 / Nov. 15 / Teacher in Denver who spent her life desegregating local institutions and the first African American to receive tenure in the Denver public school system. She acknowledged that her accomplishments came "by the grace of God," which was also the title of her autobiography.

W.E.B. GRIFFIN

89 / Feb. 12 / Best-selling novelist who wrote more than 100 books—including the Brotherhood of War series—under various pen names.

VALERIE HARPER

80 / Aug. 30 / TV actress who played Rhoda Morgenstern on the 1970s-era *Mary Tyler Moore Show* and its spin-off, *Rhoda*. She won four Emmy Awards and one Golden Globe for the role of the New Yorker with the self-deprecating sense of humor.

JEFFREY HART

88 / Feb. 16 / *National Review* writer and longtime Dartmouth professor who was an adviser to the conservative *Dartmouth Review*. Hart didn't like the evangelical influence on the GOP, describing his conservatism as "aristocratic in spirit, anti-populist and rooted in the Northeast."

JOHN HAVLICEK

79 / April 25 / Star basketball player for the Boston Celtics who played on eight Celtic championship teams. Celtic great Bill Russell called him "the best all-around player I ever saw."

AL HAYNES

87 / Aug. 25 / United Airlines captain who on a flight between Denver and Chicago in 1989 used great skill to pilot his plane after an engine exploded. The plane crash-landed at the airport in Sioux City, Iowa, with 296 people on board, of whom 184 survived.

MAIDA HEATTER

102 / June 6 / Self-taught baker, cookbook author, and "Queen of Cakes" who called herself "the Chairperson of the Board of the Chocolate Lovers Association of the World."

BARBARA HILLARY

88 / Nov. 23 / A retired nurse who became the first African American woman to reach both the North Pole (at age 75) and South Pole (at age 79).

ERNEST "FRITZ" HOLLINGS

97 / April 6 / Long-serving Democratic senator from South Carolina (1966–2005) who moderated his segregationist views over time.

GERALD L. HOLMES

79 / Sept. 23 / Artist from the Texas Panhandle whose

humorous drawings of Hank the Cowdog and other fictional characters filled 74 books.

LEE IACOCCA

94 / July 2 / The only automobile executive to head two of the Big Three automobile companies (Ford Motor Co., Chrysler). He brought to market the Ford Mustang and the Chrysler minivan.

DAN JENKINS

90 / March 7 / Sportswriter for *Sports Illustrated*, *Golf Digest*, and *Playboy* who also penned the bawdy football novel *Semi-Tough*, which became a movie starring Burt Reynolds.

ARTE JOHNSON

90 / July 3 / Actor and comedian whose depiction of kooky characters on *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In* earned him an Emmy Award in 1969. He once said, "I work best when I have a false nose, a false mustache, an odd costume, a piece of hair, a bone through my nose. Give me some odd, weird thing, and that's me."

JOAN JOHNSON

89 / Sept. 6 / Pioneering co-founder with her husband of black hair care giant Johnson Products (Afro Sheen), the sponsor of *Soul Train* and the first black-owned company to be listed on the American Stock Exchange.

PHILLIP E. JOHNSON

79 / Nov. 2 / Lawyer who became godfather of the intelligent design movement after the success of his book *Darwin on Trial*. Johnson's critique of neo-Darwinian evolution paved the way for skeptical scientists to open up about their own doubts.

JOSÉ JOSÉ

71 / Sept. 28 / Mexican crooner known for melancholy love songs. Gloria Estefan said, “He squeezed our hearts with his unmistakable voice.”

HERB KELLEHER

87 / Jan. 3 / Co-founder of Southwest Airlines whose innovative approach of combining low prices and good service transformed the industry. He turned Southwest from a Texas-only airline to America’s most popular domestic one.

GEORGE L. KELLING

83 / May 15 / Criminologist who, along with James Q. Wilson, developed the “Broken Windows” theory of policing that said “one unrepaired broken window is a signal that no one cares.” They urged police to focus on relatively minor crimes—graffiti, drug dealing, prostitution—that could lead to the decline of communities.

BEN KINCHLOW

82 / July 18 / Evangelist, author, and co-host of the Christian Broadcasting Network’s *700 Club* for nearly two decades.

DAVID KOCH

79 / Aug. 23 / Billionaire businessman and philanthropist who funded free-market and libertarian causes as well as cancer research, museums, and the arts.

EVA KOR

85 / July 4 / Holocaust survivor who with her sister Miriam suffered through Josef Mengele’s experiments with twins. Eva eventually established CANDLES Holocaust Museum in Indiana and advocated forgiveness as a way for victims to reclaim their lives.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS KRAFT JR.

95 / July 22 / Creator of NASA’s Mission Control and originator of the flight director position. He said of that role, “No one can overrule me.... They can fire me after it’s over. But while the mission is underway, I’m Flight. And Flight is God.”

L. BRUCE LAINGEN

96 / July 15 / Top U.S. diplomat in Iran in 1979 when protesters attacked the U.S. Embassy, taking hostages they held for 444 days.

LYNDON LAROUCHE

96 / Feb. 12 / Eight-time presidential candidate who began as a Trotskyist and moved to the anti-Semitic and conspiratorial right.

JERRY LAWSON

75 / July 10 / Baritone a cappella singer with the Persuasions, a musical group whose fans ranged from Rod Stewart to Boyz II Men.

ALEXEI LEONOV

85 / Oct. 11 / Soviet cosmonaut who became, in March 1965, the first person to walk in space.

LI PENG

90 / July 22 / Chinese premier with the nickname “the Butcher of Beijing” who ordered in 1989 the military crackdown on pro-democracy protesters at Tiananmen Square.

PEGGY LIPTON

72 / May 11 / Actress who played an undercover cop in the 1960s TV show *The Mod Squad*, which earned her four Emmys.

RICHARD LUGAR

87 / April 28 / Indiana’s longest serving U.S. senator, a Republican who for 36 years in Washington worked

to control the spread of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

MANUEL LUJÁN JR.

90 / April 25 / Secretary of the interior under George H.W. Bush: He dealt with environmental crises including the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in Alaska and protests over the spotted owl that pitted loggers against environmentalists.

BILL MACY

97 / Oct. 17 / Actor on the popular 1970s sitcom *Maude* who played Walter Findlay, Bea Arthur’s husband.

GEORGE MENDONSA

95 / Feb. 17 / WWII veteran thought to be the celebrating sailor that photographer Alfred Eisenstaedt caught in the act of kissing a nurse in Times Square on V-J Day.

NORMA MILLER

99 / May 5 / The “Queen of Swing” and last-surviving original member of Whitey’s Lindy Hoppers, an all-black dance troupe that toured the world and danced in the movies *Hellzapoppin’* and the Marx Brothers’ *A Day at the Races*.

JESSE MIRANDA

81 / July 12 / Assemblies of God pastor known as the “granddaddy of U.S. Latino Protestantism.”

EDDIE MONEY

70 / Sept. 13 / New York City cop who went on to become a rock star with hits including “Baby Hold On” and “Two Tickets to Paradise.”

ROBERT MORGENTHAU

99 / July 21 / Scion of a prominent political family, he served 34 years as Manhattan district attorney and became the model for the original prosecutor on TV’s long-running *Law & Order*.

EDMUND MORRIS

78 / May 24 / Award-winning writer of presidential biographies, including three volumes on Theodore Roosevelt. His Ronald Reagan biography, *Dutch*, took Morris 14 years to write. The result was controversial because he inserted himself as a fictional narrator.

TONI MORRISON

88 / Aug. 5 / First female African American winner of the Nobel Prize and author of 11 novels, including *Song of Solomon* and *Beloved*.

ROBERT MUGABE

95 / Sept. 6 / Strongman leader of Zimbabwe for 37 years who led the fight against Britain and white colonial rule but later stamped out dissent and oversaw the destruction of his country’s resource-rich economy.

JIMMY NELSON

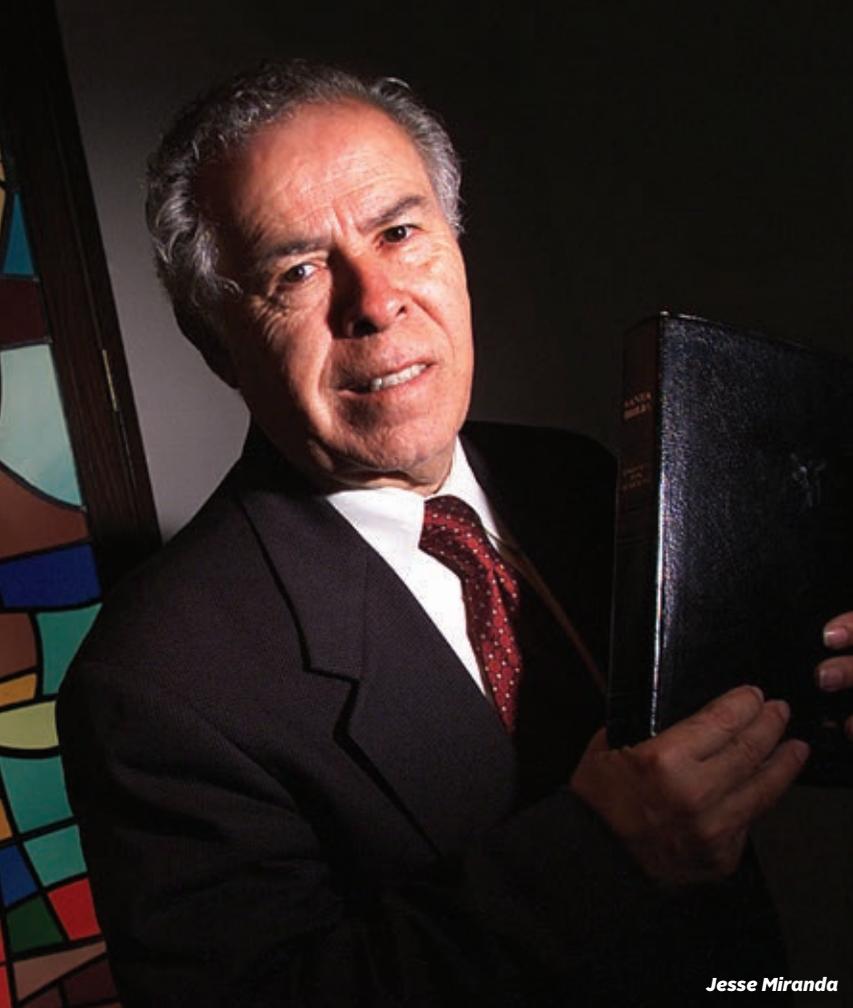
90 / Sept. 24 / Ventriloquist who appeared on TV in the 1950s and 1960s with puppets Danny O’Day and Farfel the dog. He taught many future ventriloquists their craft and made famous the jingle “N-E-S-T-L-E-S, Nestlé’s makes the very best.... Chaw-klit.”

ART NEVILLE

81 / July 22 / New Orleans musician who with his brothers formed the Neville Brothers band. Neville was only 17 when he recorded the classic “Mardi Gras Mambo” with the Hawketts.

DON NEWCOMBE

92 / Feb. 19 / Cy Young Award-winning pitcher who broke the color barrier to become the first African American pitcher in the major leagues.



Jesse Miranda



Toni Morrison



Eddie Money



Don Newcombe



H. Ross Perot



Luke Perry



I.M. Pei



Cokie Roberts

ALFRED K. NEWMAN

94 / Jan. 13 / One of 400 Navajo code talkers who helped defeat the Japanese by developing a code based on the Navajo language.

JESSYE NORMAN

74 / Sept. 30 / Trailblazing opera star who championed opportunities for other African Americans and opened in 2003 the Jessye Norman School of the Arts in her hometown of Augusta, Ga., to provide free fine arts education to disadvantaged children there.

RIC OCASEK

75 / Sept. 15 / Songwriter, lead singer, and rhythm guitarist for the '80s New Wave band the Cars. The band benefited from the growing popularity of MTV, selling more than 23 million albums in the United States.

LLOYD JOHN OGILVIE

88 / June 5 / Presbyterian pastor and U.S. Senate chaplain from 1995 to 2003.

MOLLY O'NEILL

66 / June 16 / *New York Times* food writer and cookbook author who used food as a way to write about people and culture.

I.M. PEI

102 / May 16 / Pritzker Prize-winning architect who designed iconic buildings including the Bank of China Tower, the East Building of the National Gallery of Art, and the Louvre Pyramid.

MARIA PEREGO

95 / Nov. 7 / Italian creator of the big-eared mouse puppet Topo Gigio, a favorite on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in the 1960s. The stiff Sullivan acted as straight man to the mouse, who ended appear-

ances with a line that became famous: "Eddie, kiss me good night."

H. ROSS PEROT

89 / July 9 / Billionaire businessman and philanthropist who ran for president in 1992, earning 19 percent of the vote, the most ever for an independent candidate.

LUKE PERRY

52 / March 4 / Actor who played heartthrob Dylan McKay on the 1990s TV show *Beverly Hills, 90210*.

T. BOONE PICKENS

91 / Sept. 11 / Oilman, corporate raider, advocate for shareholder rights, and philanthropist who gave more than \$1 billion to charities, including his alma mater Oklahoma State University. He once said, "I firmly believe one of the reasons I was put on this Earth was to make money, and be generous with it."

DAVID POWLISON

69 / June 7 / Pioneer in the Christian counseling movement who influenced generations of pastors and Christian counselors through his work at the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation.

ANDRÉ PREVIN

89 / Feb. 28 / Composer and musician who won Oscars for the film scores of *Gigi*, *Porgy and Bess*, and *My Fair Lady*. The genre-busting musician played jazz piano, conducted symphony orchestras, wrote operas, and won 10 Grammys.

HAROLD PRINCE

91 / July 31 / Broadway director and producer who won 21 Tony Awards over his long career for plays including *Fiddler on the*

Roof, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and *Evita*.

CHARLES A. REICH

91 / June 15 / Yale Law professor who celebrated the 1960s counterculture in the best-selling *The Greening of America*.

ALICE RIVLIN

88 / May 14 / Economist who was founding director of the Congressional Budget Office and later served as Bill Clinton's director of the Office of Management and Budget.

CONIE ROBERTS

75 / Sept. 17 / Washington insider and journalist who became one of NPR's "founding mothers." She later worked for ABC News and published many books about women in history.

JAMES I. ROBERTSON JR.

89 / Nov. 2 / Professor, Civil War historian, and author of the 900-page *Stonewall Jackson: The Man, the Soldier, the Legend*. He once told C-Span's Brian Lamb, "History should be the most exciting subject of all because it's the story of human beings, God's most unpredictable creatures."

FRANK ROBINSON

83 / Feb. 7 / Hall of Fame baseball player for the Cincinnati Reds and Baltimore Orioles who became the first African American to manage a Major League Baseball team. He is the only player to win MVP honors in both the American and National Leagues.

ARMANDO RODRIGUEZ

97 / Feb. 17 / Pioneering educator and advocate of Mexican American civil rights who served Presidents Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan.

SEMYON ROZENFELD

97 / June 3 / Last-surviving escapee from the Sobibor concentration camp. He was one of only 60 Sobibor prisoners to survive World War II: "I was not afraid... because I didn't have time to think about fear. I only thought about life."

WILLIAM RUCKELSHAUS

87 / Nov. 27 / The first administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and the deputy attorney general under Richard Nixon, he resigned rather than obey the president's order to fire Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox.

JAN RUFF-O'HERNE

96 / Aug. 19 / First European woman to describe how Japanese soldiers had turned her into a "comfort woman," repeatedly raping her over a three-month period when she was a 21-year-old prisoner of war. Her story helped bring international attention to the plight of the 200,000 women, mostly Korean, who suffered abuse by the Japanese during WWII.

LIANE RUSSELL

95 / July 20 / Pioneering geneticist whose study of the effects of radiation on unborn children led to warnings against X-ray use on pregnant women.

DENNY RYDBERG

74 / May 16 / The 23-year president of Young Life who expanded the organization's reach from 25 to 101 countries.

CHARLES SANNA

101 / March 13 / The inventor of a process to make shelf-stable coffee creamer for the military. He used it to create Swiss Miss, the first instant hot cocoa mix.

LAMIN SANNEN

76 / Jan. 6 / Muslim convert to Christianity who taught theology for decades at Yale. He authored or edited more than 20 books on Christianity and Islam, including *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*.

RAY SANTOS

90 / Oct. 17 / Classically trained Latino musician and teacher who arranged the music on movie soundtracks (*The Mambo Kings*) and pop albums (Linda Ronstadt).

HERBERT SCHLOSSBERG

84 / May 31 / Christian historian who chronicled the relationship between Western history and religion in the seminal *Idols for Destruction* and two scholarly books about Victorian England.

MARJORIE WEINMAN SHARMAT

90 / March 12 / Author of more than 100 books for children, including the Nate the Great series about a boy detective.

JOHN SINGLETON

51 / April 29 / Writer and director of 1991's *Boyz n the Hood*, a low-budget film that earned Oscar nominations for best original screenplay and best director, the first in the latter category for an African American.

SEYMOUR SIWOFF

99 / Nov. 29 / An accountant who loved sports and rescued from near bankruptcy the Elias Sports Bureau, a compiler of sports statistics for newspapers and wire services. Elias became the official record keeper for most major leagues and helped transform sports into data-heavy enterprises.

BERNARD SLADE

89 / Oct. 30 / Writer who created popular '60s and

'70s TV shows including *The Flying Nun* and *The Partridge Family*.

MARILYNN SMITH

89 / April 9 / Golfer who co-founded the LPGA and won 21 tour events and two major championships.

BART STARR

85 / May 26 / Green Bay Packers quarterback who led his team to five league championships and victories in the first two Super Bowls.

JOHN PAUL STEVENS

99 / July 16 / Supreme Court justice who became a mainstay of the court's liberal wing even though appointed in 1975 by Republican Gerald Ford. The bow-tie-wearing Midwesterner was the second-oldest and third-longest-serving justice when he retired.

RUSSE TAYLOR

75 / July 26 / Voice of Minnie Mouse and other Disney characters since 1986. In 1991 Taylor married Wayne Allwine, the voice of Mickey Mouse.

PETER TORK

77 / Feb. 21 / One of the four bandmates in the 1960s TV show *The Monkees*. He was an accomplished musician but rarely sang on the band's signature hits like "The Last Train to Clarksville" and "Daydream Believer."

CHARLES VAN DOREN

93 / April 9 / Urbane academic who participated in the 1950s television quiz show scandals. He pleaded guilty to perjury, lost his job and TV contract, and earned the nation's scorn.

GLORIA VANDERBILT

95 / June 17 / Heiress, socialite, artist, and fashion designer who as a child was

the subject of a vicious custody fight that played out in the media and earned her the nickname "poor little rich girl."

SANDER VANOCUR

91 / Sept. 16 / Television journalist who covered Washington politics for decades.

PAUL VOLCKER

92 / Dec. 8 / Former Federal Reserve chairman who played a key role in stabilizing the American economy in the 1980s. While at the Treasury Department, he was the chief architect of the country's abandonment of the gold standard.

CLAUS VON BÜLOW

92 / May 25 / Socialite who made headlines when prosecutors charged him with trying to murder his heiress wife, Sunny von Bülow. A jury convicted him but an appeals court overturned the verdict.

SUZANNE WHANG

56 / Sept. 17 / Actress best known for being the voice-over host of the HGTV series *House Hunters* and for her recurring role as manicurist Polly Chae on the NBC series *Las Vegas*.

JACK WHITAKER

95 / Aug. 18 / Emmy-winning sportscaster for CBS and ABC who broadcast Super Bowls, golf championships, Olympic games, and Secretariat's Triple Crown victory at the Belmont Stakes.

WARREN W. WIERSBE

89 / May 2 / Pastor, Bible teacher, and author of more than 150 books, whose sermons were featured on Moody Radio and the Back to the Bible radio ministry.

JOSEPH WILSON

69 / Sept. 27 / Diplomat who cast doubt on Bush administration claims about Saddam Hussein's nuclear weapons program, a move that led to the unmasking of Wilson's CIA-agent wife, Valerie Plame.

"JUMPING" JOHNNY WILSON

91 / Jan. 11 / Harlem Globetrotter basketball player who was Indiana's first African American "Mr. Basketball."

MAC WISEMAN

93 / Feb. 24 / Bluegrass musician whose biggest hits were "Jimmy Brown the Newsboy" and "The Ballad of Davy Crockett."

JOHN WITHERSPOON

77 / Oct. 29 / Actor and comedian who starred in a variety of TV shows and movies, perhaps best known for his role as Willie Jones in the movie *Friday* and its sequels.

HERMAN WOUK

103 / May 17 / Pulitzer Prize-winning author (1952) of *The Caine Mutiny*, he wrote giant bestsellers about WWII (*The Winds of War*, *War and Remembrance*) and other books that drew from his Jewish upbringing (*Marjorie Morningstar*).

LESTER WUNDERMAN

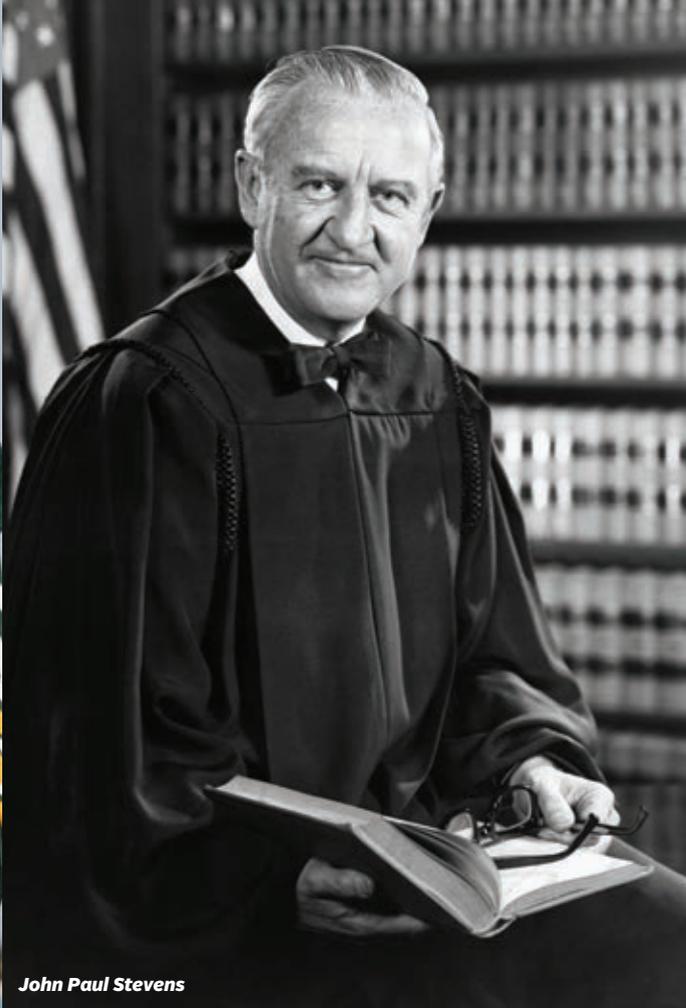
98 / Jan. 9 / Hall of Fame advertising executive and "Father of Direct Marketing." Wunderman created the subscription club model (Columbia Record Club) as well as the consumer loyalty program, newspaper insert, and the toll-free 1-800 customer service number.

FRANCO ZEFFIRELLI

96 / June 15 / Italian director whose lavish movie productions of *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Taming of the Shrew* introduced a new generation to Shakespeare. ☉



Bart Starr



John Paul Stevens



Gloria Vanderbilt

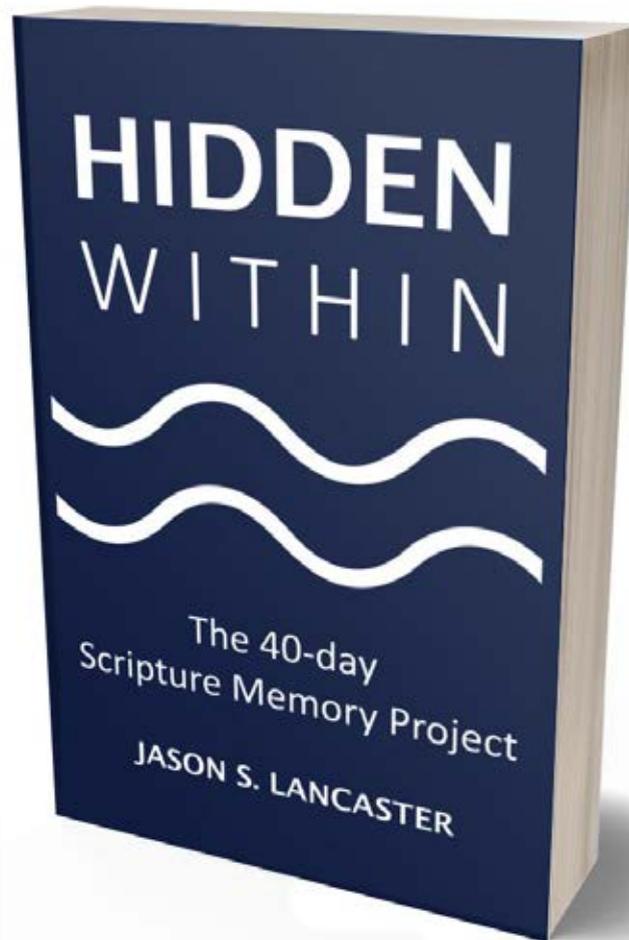


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Religion

Anniversary of a crackdown

ONE YEAR AFTER A POLICE RAID, MEMBERS OF A PROMINENT CHINESE CHURCH WRESTLE WITH PAST TRAUMAS AND ENDURE ONGOING THREATS *by June Cheng*

➔ Late in November, a Chinese court sentenced Qin Defu, an elder at the influential Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, to four years in prison. The charges, according to lawyer Zhang Peihong, were “illegal business operation” for printing and distributing 20,000 books for church use.

Early Rain Pastor Wang Yi will likely be tried soon: He has been detained for a year on suspicion of state subversion. Wang, a former legal scholar, has been outspoken in criticizing the Chinese government for persecuting Christianity and even called Chinese President Xi Jinping a sinner in need of repentance.

Dec. 9 marked the first anniversary of the crackdown on Early Rain, when police shut down the unregistered church and arrested more than 100 church leaders and members. In the past year, members have faced continued monitoring and harassment from police, with more than 300 people arrested in total. Despite the loss of their building, Early Rain members continue to gather in homes for Sunday worship and train up new leaders to take on the pastoral and preaching load.

During the initial wave of arrests last year, police detained Wang, his wife, and the church’s four elders, as well as deacons, seminary students, and other involved members of the church. Authorities released most of them soon afterward and sent those who were not natives of Chengdu back to their hometowns.

Others remained detained for weeks or months: Wang’s wife, Jiang Rong, was only released in June. Although she is now reunited with her son, the two live under house arrest and cannot communicate with Early Rain members. Police have released the other three elders—Li Zihu,

Matthew Bingsen Su, and Li Yingqiang—on bail pending trial and sent them back to their hometowns.

Authorities would not allow Zhang Wang's self-appointed attorney, to represent him, claiming he had too many ties to the church. Wang, whose health and mental state are good, was able to appoint two other lawyers to defend him, according to Zhang's Facebook post. Zhang estimates Wang will be sentenced to at least 10 years in prison, as he had taken responsibility for the "illegally" printed books in the church.

Titus Wu, a church leader at Early Rain (WORLD has changed his name for his protection), said that since much of the church's leadership was behind bars, other members had to step up into leadership roles. Small-group leaders took on extra responsibilities shepherding group members as they opened their homes on Sunday morning for worship with preaching done through videoconferencing.

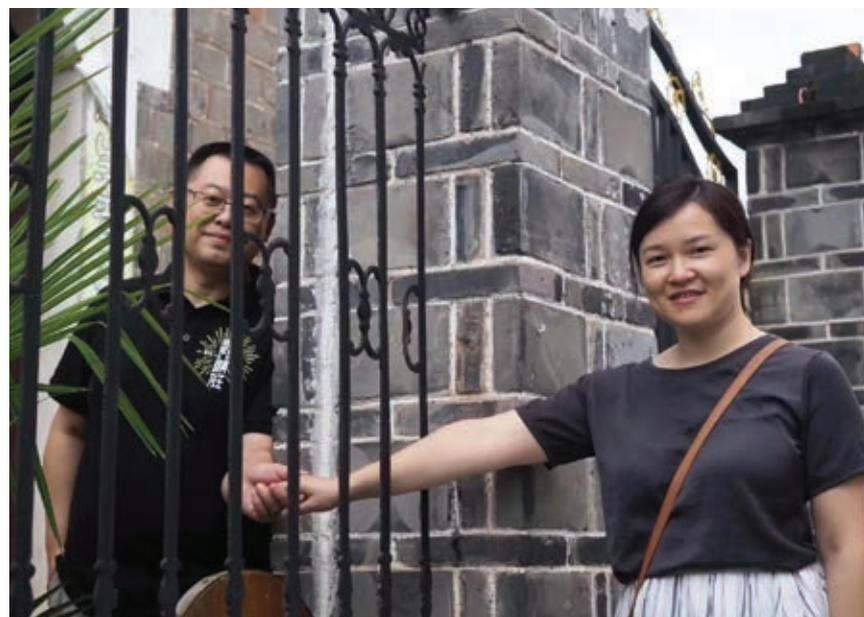
Police have shut down some of these weekly gatherings and pressured landlords to kick church members out of their homes. In some cases, police posted security guards outside church members' homes 24 hours a day to track their movements. One Early Rain member, Tang Chunliang, recalled that he and his wife were among 44 people

'In this we see that the darkness is real, but grace is greater.'

arrested in February for holding a meeting in his home.

After the couple's release, police forced them to move multiple times, according to the church's Facebook page. Police and community monitors (low-level government agents) filled the lock on their front door with glue, turned off their water, sprayed graffiti threats on the wall by their front door, and sent tattooed thugs to intimidate them. A month after they moved to their most recent apartment, the landlord told Tang that community monitors were forcing him to kick them out. They not only threatened to take away the

Wang Yi with his wife, Jiang Rong



landlord's apartment but also pressured his family members.

When Tang went to the police to ask why he was being forced to move again, they told him it was because they feared he would hold another "illegal gathering." They added that the couple could not live in that district because they were "key persons of interest."

Although some people have left the church due to the persecution, Wu said that about 400 people still watch Early Rain sermons through videoconferencing each Sunday. Meeting in small groups has taken a toll on many of the church members, who miss gathering together corporately on Sundays. The only time they've been able to enjoy larger-scale fellowship has been during weddings and funerals.

Without elders or pastors, church members have gone months without communion, Wu said. They plan to invite an elder from another church to perform the sacraments for Early Rain.

In July, Early Rain member Liao Qiang fled with his family to Taiwan to apply for asylum in the United States. Liao and his daughter Ren Ruiting told the Associated Press they were detained during the crackdown, and after their release police forced them to report their whereabouts whenever they left home. According to Ren, police told her that her safety could not be guaranteed if she disobeyed. As a result of the family going public, police placed travel restrictions on members of the church back in Chengdu, making it difficult for them to travel overseas.

Early Rain set up a recovery and counseling ministry for church members who faced longer detentions. The church also created a Bible study for those in recovery, providing a safe environment for people to talk about their experience. Some members share encouraging stories of evangelizing inside prison cells and standing firm by the grace of God. But others wrestle with feelings of guilt for confessing or denouncing the church while under duress. They question if the church will accept them again.

Wu understands their struggle. But he says, "In this we see that the darkness is real, but grace is greater." ☉



Politics

Controversial compromise

BILL AIMED AT BALANCING LGBT AGENDA AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM GETS SOME SUPPORT BUT ALARMS BOTH SIDES *by Harvest Prude in Washington*

➔ A Republican congressman on Dec. 6 introduced sweeping legislation he says will balance the rights of religious and LGBT people, advancing a controversial religious freedom approach.

The Fairness for All Act (FFA), introduced by Rep. Chris Stewart, R-Utah, would make sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) protected classes under the federal Civil Rights Act.

The bill would prohibit anti-LGBT discrimination in employment, housing, education, and public accommodations. That includes retailers, banks, and healthcare service providers. The bill also seeks to protect a measure of religious freedom, exempting churches and religious nonprofits from the anti-discrimination rules. But for-profit business owners would be subject to the rules, unless they have fewer than 15 employees.

Some LGBT and religious groups oppose the measure, saying they are skeptical such an approach will make headway in Congress.

Stewart's bill marks a new phase in a yearslong process: It's the first time advocates of this approach have convinced a legislator to introduce such a bill in Congress.

The FFA approach has made inroads among some religious groups. Most notably, the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCCU) and the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) endorsed FFA last year. Following a backlash, NAE has since backed away from its advocacy and was noticeably absent from the Dec. 6 press conference.

The main religious freedom groups driving the effort forward—the CCCU, the 1st Amendment Partnership, and the Center for Public Justice—have

Rep. Chris Stewart (center) speaks at a news conference about the proposed Fairness for All Act.

partnered with the American Unity Fund (AUF), a politically right-wing group that

pushes LGBT rights. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the biggest proponent of the approach. The bill has also won the support of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

CCCCU President Shirley Hoogstra said in a statement to WORLD that the bill balances “the rights of the religious and LGBT communities in a comprehensive, balanced, and enduring way.”

Stewart's bill harkens back to the “Utah Compromise,” a nondiscrimination law with religious exemptions that passed in the state in 2015.

“Neither side has to lose in order for the other side to win,” Stewart, who is

Mormon, said at the Dec. 6 press conference announcing the bill.

Andy Crouch, a CCCU board member, said in an email to *WORLD* that FFA is a legislative response to the Equality Act, which contains no religious exemptions: “We urgently need a clear alternative to the Equality Act that protects the freedoms and dignity of all Americans. Just having it in the public record as a legislative alternative is worthwhile.”

The Equality Act would prohibit people of faith from claiming the protection of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) in litigation, effectively ensuring that an LGBT person’s claim of discrimination in the public square would win by default. In May, House Democrats unanimously voted to pass the Equality Act with the support of eight Republicans. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has indicated he will not bring the act to the chamber’s floor for consideration.

The FFA approach is controversial among both major LGBT and religious groups. LGBT-rights organizations such as the Human Rights Campaign and Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against

Defamation (GLAAD) oppose the bill. GLAAD tweeted, “Let us be crystal clear. We will NEVER compromise away the protections of every LGBTQ person from discrimination in order to satisfy those who wish to use religion as a weapon for discrimination.”

Leading religious conservatives have long opposed the idea of FFA. In 2016, more than 75 Christian leaders issued a statement calling the plan a “serious threat.” Signers included Princeton University’s Robert P. George, Southern Baptist leaders Albert Mohler and Russell Moore, Jeff Myers of Summit Ministries, several top Catholic bishops, and Franklin Graham of Samaritan’s Purse.

Last month organizations including the Heritage Foundation, Family Research Council, Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, and Concerned Women for America sent an opposition letter to Republican House leaders. They say the bill does too much to extend SOGI protections to public accommodations—something the Utah Compromise did not touch.

Greg Baylor, a former CCCU board

member and the leading higher education attorney for Alliance Defending Freedom, said he has “serious concerns about the harms [the bill] would inflict on a variety of vulnerable populations.” He explained that it would allow biological males to compete in girls’ sports and have access to girls’ locker rooms and bathrooms.

Some debate whether the bill would protect conscience rights of medical professionals who object to participating in transgender transition procedures or drug treatments. In response to my questions, Stewart’s office said the bill keeps RFRA in place and includes an accommodation allowing medical professionals to decline participating in transgender transitions. But groups like the Heritage Foundation say those protections aren’t explicit enough.

Jamison Coppola, legislative director at the American Association of Christian Schools, said any attempt to enshrine SOGI into federal law “[uses] the government to force one side to act in ways inconsistent with their deeply held beliefs.”

As of Dec. 6, eight Republicans had co-sponsored Stewart’s bill, but no House Democrats pledged support. Supporters did not say they had someone to introduce a twin bill in the Senate.

With the release of the bill, supporters also announced the formation of the Alliance for Lasting Liberty, co-chaired by Tim Schultz, president of the 1st Amendment Partnership, and Tyler Deaton with AUF. The group exists to push for the advancement of FFA legislation.

In an email to *WORLD*, Stewart said he is “anticipating a long conversation about this in the House of Representatives. This is not a bill that will be passed into law in 2019 ... introducing the bill is just the start of an important process.”

CCCU President Shirley Hoogstra speaks about FFA.



Sports

Dead lift serious

A POWERLIFTING MOM FROM MINNESOTA WANTS TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF FEMALE ATHLETES

by Sharon Dierberger

➔ It sounds like a skit from *The Carol Burnett Show*. A man sporting long hair enters a women's weightlifting competition and handily wins, besting all his female competitors.

The mock scene is funny. The real one is not.

The scenario troubles Minnesota powerlifter Beth Stelzer. And it's why she started Save Women's Sports, a nonpartisan organization advocating for the preservation of biology-based standards for female sports competitions. Not only in powerlifting but in women's sports throughout the world, women are increasingly finding themselves competing against biological males.

In February, chanting protesters led by JayCee Cooper, a male powerlifter who identifies as female, interrupted the USA Powerlifting Minnesota Women's State Championship. The raucous protesters demanded that self-identified "transgender females" like Cooper be able to "share the platform" to compete against women.

They created such a disruption that when 34-year-old competitor Stelzer went home and processed what had just happened, she decided to take action. Several weeks earlier, Cooper had obliterated the competition in the United States Powerlifting Association Minnesota women's championship by lifting 150 pounds more than the woman who would have won.

Save Women's Sports counts as allies conservative and liberal groups as diverse as Concerned Women for America, the Heritage Foundation, Family Research Council, Alliance Defending Freedom, Women's

Liberation Front, and Feminist Current. It also rallies parent coalitions and individuals.

The Save Women's Sports website highlights obvious biological differences between the sexes, underscoring male competitive advantage. Even if males who compete as females reduce their



testosterone levels, studies show testosterone production during puberty gives males long-term advantages, including greater skeletal size and muscle mass, less fat, and larger heart and lungs.

Even with testosterone suppression, most men can't reduce levels comparable to females, or keep them in that range, according to the medical journal *Endocrine Practice*.

Stelzer says biological males are competing as females in swimming, wrestling, track and field, cycling, soccer, softball, powerlifting, and other sports, robbing females of opportunities,

medals, scholarships, records, sponsorships, and even participation. "I never would've started powerlifting if I'd known I'd have to compete against males," she told me.

She warns that if Congress passes the Equality Act or if the Supreme Court redefines "sex," those decisions would destroy Title IX, part of the landmark Education Amendments of 1972 that ensured females equal opportunities in athletics.

"If we allow biological males to compete in women's sports, there will be men's sports, there will be coed sports, but there will be no women's sports," Stelzer says. She urges parents of younger athletes to find out their school's policies, inform like-minded parents, talk with school board members about concerns, and insist males shouldn't compete against females or use the same restrooms.

Emily Zinos of Minnesota Family Council says Minnesota's gender inclusion policy allows a high-school boy to complete a one-page form saying he's a girl. He can then play on girls' teams. Because of supposed gender fluidity, the child can change sexual identity at any time. Schools don't tell parents about gender changes unless parents ask, and schools decide whether opposite sexes can use the same locker room and shower facilities.

So far, the USA Powerlifting and 100% RAW Powerlifting Federation are the only sports organizations Stelzer knows of that restrict biological males from competing as females.

For speaking out, Stelzer has received death threats and harassment. She says that's why girls and women are often afraid to address the issue publicly: "Transgender activists have invaded women's social media... They'll put your name and private information online, call your employers. They're ruthless."

Still, Stelzer is concerned that if people don't speak up, females will be injured competing against males in contact sports.

"I'm just a small-town mom and housewife who cares," Stelzer says. "Biology matters. This isn't bigotry." ●



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Surrendering to the state

[Nov. 9, p. 32] The actions of Bethany Christian Services mirror the very weak response of so many churches to cultural pressure. Bethany's leaders will one day be held to account for these decisions. I pray they will see the error of their ways.

—SVEN TRENHOLM on wng.org

We were cradle care parents with Bethany for 10 years and adopted our youngest child through the agency. How disappointing to witness their lack of conviction. We have recommended them to others in the past, but no longer.

—NANCY STIVERS SMITH on Facebook

Praise God for St. Vincent Catholic Charities' stance against government policies requiring placement of children with same-sex couples.

—PAT DIPALMA / Blairstown, N.J.

A cruel withdrawal

[Nov. 9, p. 7] An awful day. America just up and left allies in Syria to let an enemy rip them to shreds. This is going to destroy American diplomatic credibility, ruin the progress made against ISIS, and leave a lot of dead Kurdish Christians at the end of it.

—JOHN KLOOSTERMAN on Facebook

Given the number of armed factions in Syria, a comprehensive cease-fire seems remote. The alternative of a Syria under Bashar al-Assad dominated by Russia and Iran would be unpleasant, but should we accept an evolving, indefinite mission to support one of the remaining factions?

—NOLAN NELSON / Eugene, Ore.

I'm something of a noninterventionist, but this isn't nonintervention, particularly when you redirect the troops from the border to protect oil fields and send 2,000 more troops to Saudi Arabia.

—NATHAN CARPENTER on Facebook

Calling it quits

[Nov. 9, p. 30] With limited resources, the U.S. military cannot sustain an endless presence in the Middle East and be ready for potential conflict with a near-peer competitor like Russia or China. No matter how long we stay, when the U.S. military redeployes, the power players will resume fighting due to long-standing ethnic feuds and the pervasiveness of Islam.

—PAUL JAEDICKE on wng.org

Thank you, WORLD, for nonpartisan truth-telling. You are remaining true to your calling, not to a political agenda.

—JARRETT MEEK on Facebook

Prayers for NPR?

[Nov. 9, p. 5] I completely agree with Joel Belz that NPR's values are heavily tilted against the values of the Bible. Our tax dollars should never support this propaganda.

—KATHY CONNORS / Medina, Wash.

I listen to NPR once in a while, until I get disgusted that I'm helping support it. It operates as a religious organization, and the religion is secular humanism.

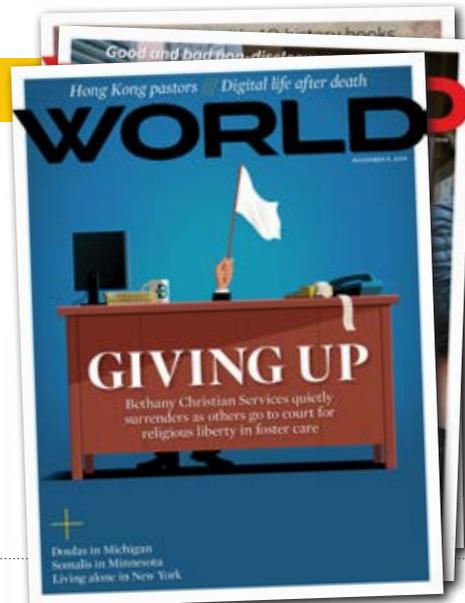
—CHRISTINE HANCOCK on Facebook

I enjoy many of NPR's programs. I don't think it's accurate to call it an "arm of government" because it gets a small percentage of its funding from government.

—CHRIS WORLEY / Alexandria, Minn.

Anatomy of the problem

[Nov. 9, p. 63] I wholeheartedly accept Andrée Seu Peterson's invita-



tion to "Rage, rage against the dimming of the light." Gender is a gift from our Creator. No amount of woke-ness can purge the DNA given us at conception. We are all created in His image, a fact against which the nations rage and the heathens plot in vain.

—DARLA DYKSTRA / Kansas City, Mo.

I can identify with being on the "cultural caboose." I don't even know what being "woke" means. I remember when the gender reveal was when the smiling father handed you a stogie with either a blue or pink band.

—RICK ROSETTO on wng.org

Life trajectory

[Nov. 9, p. 56] Thank you for the update on Dr. Joe McIlhane. Because of those old *Focus on the Family* programs I bought his book *Sexuality and Sexually Transmitted Diseases*. I still have it, and his warnings have largely gone unheeded. A large part of my work as a lab tech is STD testing. The assumption is that everyone is sexually active and needs to be tested, and many are positive.

—CAROL BLAIR / Gladewater, Texas

Cosmic conflict

[Nov. 9, p. 26] Thank you for this interview with John Peckham. Educated American adults think "blaming the devil" is archaic and foolish. The younger generation is obsessed with horror, fantasy, and the macabre—even down to kindergartners—but at least it prepares them to

take the supernatural at face value. It is up to believers to expose the works of Satan while demonstrating the power of God.

—LEAH BEECHER / Avoca, N.Y.

Why does God allow evil? He created us to love and be loved by Him. Love requires a choice; without the option to reject God's love, it's not love, it's programming.

—BOB RENCKLY on wng.org

State of servitude

[Nov. 9, p. 64] I appreciated Marvin Olasky's sobering warning about socialism leading to another form of slavery. Under a socialistic system we would look in a new light at Paul's instruction to regard masters as "worthy of all honor" so that "the name of God and our doctrine will not be reviled." May we defend the principles

of sound governance and emulate Christ despite election outcomes.

—HOWARD OWENS / Flintstone, Ga.

'We were always together'

[Nov. 9, p. 55] As a young married person, it's tempting in the face of busy days (work, kid, kid's laundry) to look forward to those happy golden years of retirement to spend with your spouse. This profile is a reminder to young couples that the future is not guaranteed and we ought to enjoy one another now.

—PAULINE MARIE FERRILL on Facebook

Little Mogadishu on the Mississippi

[Nov. 9, p. 58] As a Minnesota resident and a sometime participant in the Somali Adult Literacy Training program, I'm very grateful for your coverage on the Somali community here. It

captured well their entrepreneurial spirit and their determination to live in safety.

—STEVE LAZICKI / Faribault, Minn.

Corrections

Greg and Robin Reynolds spent 40 years in the ministry and now live in New Hampshire. Greg continues to preach frequently ("Married to the minister," Nov. 23, p. 59).

Read more Mailbag letters at wng.org

LETTERS and COMMENTS

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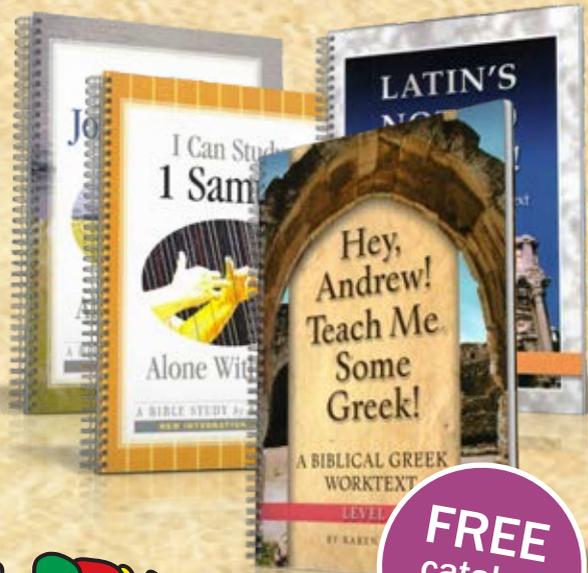
Even my two year old walks around the house singing her Greek alphabet.

Elizabeth

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Dr. Dan Wilson



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In the moment

WE CAN ALWAYS FIND A REASON TO PUT OFF SERVING THE LORD

➔ Our house of four is down to three with the death of my father-in-law on Nov. 18. He was an old man, full of years, and ready to meet the Lord he had served all his life. Death was just a doorway—on our side of it, a bed in a tiny upstairs room with lotions and oral care sponge swabs on the nightstand; on the other side of it, “innumerable angels in festal gathering” and “the spirits of the righteous made perfect” (Hebrews 12:22-23) and the face of God:

“As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness” (Psalm 17:15).

Meanwhile back at the ranch, the topical Bible Rolodex in my mind began recalling words of Jesus: “Leave the dead to bury their own dead.” What on earth?

A little context please. Jesus is “going along the road” and has three encounters with would-be followers. The first is a volunteer: “I will follow you wherever you go.” Jesus, rather than lunging at the rare offer, taps the brakes: “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests. But the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Luke 9:57-58).

In the second case Jesus is the initiator: “Follow me.” The addressee is amenable but eminently reasonable: He needs to bury his father first. His father is probably not dying, mind you, else Reasonable Man would be home already. But, well, his father is getting on in years and surely hasn’t much time—maybe 10, 20 years tops. Let me make sure Dad is comfortable in that last season and I’ll get back to you, Lord. This is where Jesus makes that most rude of statements: “Leave the dead to bury their own dead.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer would not have balked. He used the technique himself. The German pastor and martyr of the Third Reich told one of his students (*Bonhoeffer*, Eric Metaxas) that every sermon needs a “jolt of heresy”—not

meaning actual heresy, to be sure, but some fresh way of putting truth that startles. Jesus was the master here. And what better time than when the subject of death comes up naturally in conversation to make a necessary point.

Point being, we live and move among the walking dead. While some churches have lost the appetite for mentioning hell, Jesus talked about hell more than anyone in the Bible, and more than He talked about heaven. Soon He will “be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on

all those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his might”



Someone in your family, on your street, doing your dry cleaning, repairing your car, is sleepwalking toward that precipice.

(2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Yes, this will happen.

And someone in your family, on your street, doing your dry cleaning, repairing your car, is sleepwalking toward that precipice, yet there is always something more important at the moment than alerting them. If it’s not a funeral, it’s a wedding. If it’s not a wedding, it’s a birthday. If it’s not a birthday, it’s a Christian conference highlighting the plight of second-generation Koreans (such as I just attended). All First World problems by comparison.

I met a man with a car ministry to missionaries in Belize who shared his story. While in Bible school, he and two fellow students had made a solemn mutual pledge to serve the Lord full time upon their graduation. Fearing God, the car guy kept his pledge, notwithstanding the initial challenge of impecuniousness. The other two, both Reasonable Men, came up with grand schemes to make a ton of money first, so as to have more to offer God when the time came. Postponing obedience, both never got around to honoring their commitments, and came to a chillingly bad end.

Which brings us to the last of the rude sayings of Jesus on that same day on the road, to a third would-be disciple: “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62). ☹



High speed pursuit

FINDING OUR ONLY COMFORT IN LIFE AND DEATH

→ The Heidelberg Catechism, published in 1563, poses a good question to contemplate as 2019 heads toward history: “What is your only comfort in life and death?”

Last month, aboard a ship steaming from Casablanca, Morocco, to Dakar, Senegal, I read two thought-provoking novels featuring West African protagonists who found no comfort.

One novel, often called the most important work of fiction in English by an African in the past century, is Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Achebe’s father expressed faith in Christ, and Achebe later said, “It was extremely useful that we prayed and read from the Bible and sang hymns night and day.”

Nevertheless, Achebe positively portrayed African tribal culture and criticized Christianity’s overturning of that culture. Okonkwo, the protagonist of *Things Fall Apart*, is a strong man who scorns Christian love for the weak. Always wanting to look tough, Okonkwo kills his adopted son and an official. Okonkwo’s tribal religion gives him no comfort. About to be arrested, he commits suicide.

My wife and I walked the ship’s deck off the African coast and memorized the first part of the Heidelberg Catechism’s answer about our only comfort: “That I, with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ, who with his precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil.”

I turned to the second novel, Graham Greene’s *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), which is also on many Top-100-in-the-20th-century lists. The protagonist, Major Henry Scobie, a Roman Catholic believer in Sierra Leone during World War II, breaks his vows to wife and country.

Scobie follows Catholic rituals, but they do not give him comfort. Foolishly worried that his faithful servant Ali will expose his adultery and corruption, Scobie says the words that get Ali killed. Then, like Okonkwo, Scobie commits suicide.



**‘Is anyone spared mortal terror?’
Yes, if we know that Christ’s sacrifice pays for our sins, and that God gives us assurance of eternal life.**

The African Renaissance Monument in Dakar

Susan and I memorized the rest of Heidelberg’s explanation of our only comfort: God “so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head: yea, that all things must work together for my salvation. Wherefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me heartily willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto Him.”

And yet, many in Morocco and Senegal, like many in America, look for comfort elsewhere.

Many Muslims in Casablanca gain comfort in worshipping alongside 105,000 others in the Grande Mosquée Hassan II, the largest mosque in Africa. It opened in 1993 with a 689-foot-tall minaret topped by a laser that shoots beams toward Mecca.

Twelve million donors gain comfort from certificates showing they helped pay for the \$700 million mosque, which is supposed to last for centuries—but structural deterioration required an investment of another \$60 million only a decade after the grand opening.

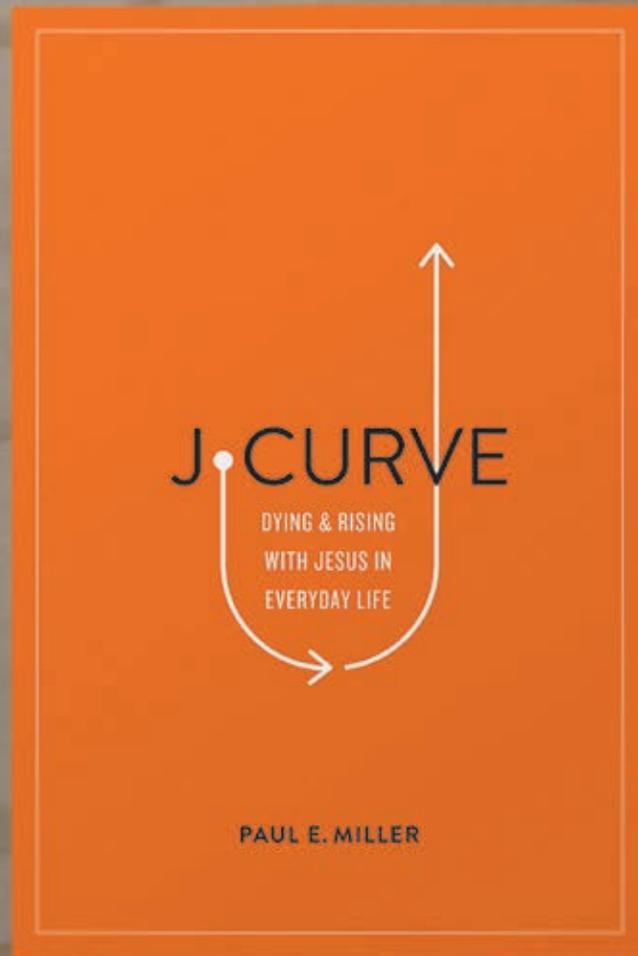
Muslim grandiosity is also coming to Dakar. Senegal’s capital already boasted the Grand Mosque of Dakar, but on Sept. 27 the new Massalikul Jinaan mosque opened: Carrara marble exterior, gold-leaf interior, giant chandelier with 2,000 lights, five minarets. More comfort in life and purportedly in death.

Imams in 2010 denounced new secular competition in Dakar: the 161-foot-tall African Renaissance Monument. The \$27 million statue, Africa’s largest, displays a bare-chested man and a scantily dressed woman. It is purportedly a tribute to Africa’s “greatness, stability, and durability,” although the half of Senegal’s population that is illiterate, desperately poor, and mostly unemployed might dispute that characterization.

The statue, built by North Koreans, is not the only comfort politicians offer tired, poor, huddled masses yearning to be free. China paid \$34 million to help construct in Dakar a Museum of Black Civilization that opened last December. Senegal President Macky Sall this year announced a \$400 million high-speed train project that “is driving us at great speed into modernity.”

As we left Dakar’s harbor, I read another work of fiction, *The Lemon Table*: Author Julian Barnes describes how we drive at great speed toward death. He asks, “Is anyone spared mortal terror?” Yes, if we know that Christ’s sacrifice pays for our sins, and that God’s loving sovereignty gives us assurance of eternal life. Mosques, trains, statues: All weak tea. ☹

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