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Coronavirus, lockdown restrictions and locusts are placing many vulnerable Christians, already marginalized and persecuted, in an even more severe situation.

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WHAT'S AN INSIGHT YOU CLEANED FROM INTERACTION WITH J.I. PACKER?

“We met in 1988, each brushing our teeth before speaking at a conference. He offered encouragement: ‘Think of what revitalizing journalism would do for the cause of Christ in America. It is the most needed sort of pre-evangelism. It is an aid to sanctification.’”

—Marvin Olasky (read a remembrance of Packer from Joel Belz on p. 8)
Level-headed overview. We should recognize the good the police do, considering what does not need to be reformed while assessing wisely what does.

KEVIN FONG/BEAVERTON, ORE.
The demonstrators want the police to be held accountable. But if protesters truly believe in justice, where is their clamor for accountability for rioters who destroyed the businesses and belongings of innocent bystanders?

BILL POWERS ON WNG.ORG
What should a discussion of racism look like? A genuine conversation convicts before change can start. If there is no sense of guilt, but only accusation and self-righteousness, then it stokes fires and cements the feeling that change is impossible.

JIM SCHROEDER/NEW RICHMOND, WIS.
We've seen, all the way back to things like forced busing, that top-down change doesn't work. Only a change of heart can address a systemic problem, and the riots won't help with that. In my blue-collar neighborhood there is sympathy for George Floyd but none for the riots.

Thank you to Marvin Olasky for his voice of reason in an age of unreasonable extremes. Racial injustice is deeply rooted in many places, but the injustice and extremism of violent protests makes rectifying those racial injustices harder to accomplish.

JUNE 27, P. 50—RICHARD HUTTER/ONALASKA, WIS.

Thank you for this thoughtful assessment. I work with many liberal people who focus on racial injustice as the fault of white people. Janie B. Cheaney’s column helped me remember there are other crucial issues at play.

CONRAD SHOWALTER/GOSHEN, IND.
I liked much of this column, but we do have a problem with systemic racism. Dismissals of respectful protest are destructive. Listening to quiet but powerful voices in years past might have prevented the recent rise of more violent voices.

GRANT: A MAN FOR OUR TIMES
JUNE 27, P. 28—SHARON WELLS ON FACEBOOK
This is the best miniseries I have seen, and I learned a new respect for Ulysses S. Grant.

FRANK COOK/BARTLETT, TENN.
Sadly, the same day I read your review, I read elsewhere that vandals in San Francisco had torn down a statue of him. If a president noted for his support for freedmen and opposition to the KKK is not safe, what historical figures are?

EARTH ON OUR HEADS
JUNE 27, P. 42—GWEN PEYCKE SCHNEIDER ON FACEBOOK
I appreciate this perspective. Thank you.

A TALE OF TWO SERIES
JUNE 27, P. 30—STEVE P. SANCHEZ ON FACEBOOK
This was a great review detailing the intricacies of these flawed, brilliant characters.

CORRECTION
Detroit Hughes is 57 years old (“Hands up—‘Defund the police!’,” Aug. 1, p. 46).


Projections indicate the U.S. will admit fewer than 1,900 Christian refugees from countries Open Doors monitors for persecution (“A closed door,” Aug. 1, p. 38).

An influenza pandemic forced football game cancellations in the fall of 1918 (“A pandemic amid a world war,” Aug. 1, p. 34).

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Notes from the CEO KEVIN MARTIN

A new podcast

“Legal Docket” is a mainstay of our daily podcast, and now we’ve given it a platform of its own

If you haven’t heard it already, I strongly urge you to listen to our recently launched Legal Docket podcast.

We’ve borrowed the title—Legal Docket—from the regular Monday segment of the same name on WORLD’s daily news podcast, The World and Everything in It. Judging from the overwhelming number of listener comments, Legal Docket is one of the most popular features of the daily program. It analyzes in brief every single case the Supreme Court of the United States hears each term, as well as reports on important cases that never make it to the highest court.

Our goal with the new Legal Docket podcast is to go even deeper on select Supreme Court cases. Season 1 begins with a “primer” on the workings of the court and what it’s like to argue a case there and will end with a preview of cases for the upcoming term. In between, Legal Docket will offer important insight on eight key cases, and it’ll be fun to listen.

Leading the team for WORLD’s new podcast are hosts Mary Reichard and Jenny Rough, with producer Paul Butler. Mary is a co-host of The World and Everything in It, and as an attorney, she was the pioneer who had the vision for our coverage of the Supreme Court. Jenny also is an attorney/journalist in the Washington, D.C., area who has been a correspondent for WORLD for more than a year. Paul is features editor for WORLD Radio, the voice of the weekly WORLD History Book radio feature, and producer of our Effective Compassion podcast.

As Mary and Jenny unpack these cases, they—and we—will meet some of the people behind the disputes, learn from legal experts, and hear excerpts of the actual oral arguments before the SCOTUS justices. And, as Mary says, “We’ll do what we rarely have time for on the current Legal Docket segment—we’ll break down the decisions and explain what they mean for you and me.”

That’s a key reason we’ve produced several “spinoff” podcasts from our daily program—our listeners and readers have expressed an interest in going deeper on, hearing more about, and gaining a better understanding of the issues we discuss in other formats. Legal Docket, along with Effective Compassion, The Olasky Interview, and Listening In, all provide the “more” we’re looking for.

As with all of WORLD’s podcasts, you can find Legal Docket on every major podcast platform. We’ll also be including it as the Saturday program in the feed for The World and Everything in It for those already listening to that podcast. And a few of you listen to podcasts from WORLD’s website (wng.org), so we’ll be posting Legal Docket there, too. Check it out.

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Hearing J.I. Packer again

Remembering an interview with the great theologian

IN THE 34 YEARS SINCE we published the first issue of WORLD Magazine, perhaps half a dozen names leap off the pages as truly memorable one-on-one interviews I was privileged to pursue with notable people. And of those half-dozen interviewees, none ranks higher than the British-born theologian J.I. Packer, who died on July 17.

Which makes it more embarrassing to tell you of my carelessness with that interview.

“I’ve pretty much given up interviews,” Dr. Packer had said when I called to see if he would give me an hour. “But at my age I have nothing to hide.” Because a mutual friend, a member of WORLD’s board, had suggested an interview to both of us, he was kind to say yes. In fact, he gave me two hours, and asked me to come by his house afterward, which I couldn’t do and still get to the airport on time. I slipped the cassette tape into a pocket of my briefcase and headed home.

Things had gone well.

Only the next morning did I discover the horrible reality. The cassette tape was nowhere to be found. Not in all my luggage. Not in my laundry. Not in the Sea-Tac Airport’s lost-and-found. Nowhere.

If there are a few interviewees I wouldn’t mind paraphrasing from memory, J.I. Packer would never be on such a list. Not the J.I. Packer who, as much as any scholar, had given the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy a good name. Not the J.I. Packer whose use of words, in the hundreds of books and articles he wrote over a 50-year span, was so precise and correct. No way could I—or would I—pretend to WORLD’s readers that my words were his.

More and more over the next few weeks, months, and years, I had to admit there would be no Packer interview. I had repaid his kindness with carelessness, and now WORLD readers would simply miss out on a few insights into this great mind. Here are several of his comments I knew I would never forget.

The utter simplicity of his description of his own embrace of the gospel. “I had been brought up an Anglican Church attendee. But in the Anglican Church where I was nurtured—if that’s the word to use—I was never taught anything. ... I had been evading the Lord Jesus and His call. Once that had become clear, my defenses fell quite rapidly. ... At the end of that service, we sang ‘Just As I Am,’ and by the end of the hymn, I was a believer. Out of the church I went, but back with the InterVarsity people from then on to catch up with the nurture I had been missing all through these years.” And I couldn’t forget how Packer repeated the profound three-word summary of the Biblical gospel for which he had become famous: “God saves sinners.”

Packer’s refusal to play games with the issue of Biblical inerrancy. “What I brought to the [early relationship to other believers] was Christianity according to C.S. Lewis in Mere Christianity—under the nurture of the InterVarsity people, with a touch of God too! I had added to Lewis a strong belief in the inerrancy and the authority of Scripture. Lewis didn’t believe in inerrancy. He didn’t go around denying it. But he didn’t affirm it, either.”

A third example from the Packer style that I had hoped our readers might discover is ...

“Now wait a minute,” I can hear some of you groaning in protest. “You’ve told us of Packer’s kindness in providing an interview, of Belz’s clumsy loss of the tape, and samples of what Belz wishes the original effort had produced. Where on earth is this all going?”

A tortured and unlikely tale? But only until I add this important detail: Five years after all this happened, an unusual package arrived at my office one day—with no hint of a return address. But yes, there was a tape recording inside. A transcript of almost all of the 2008 interview, slightly dated, is available free of charge to everyone in the WORLD family at world.wng.org/2013/12/ji_packer_the_lost_interview.
Old Gateway, Pyongyang, North Korea near the Presbyterian Mission Compound where the response to the Gospel and the growth of the church became legendary.

Author’s Life verse: “HE will cover you with HIS feathers and under HIS wings you will find refuge.” —Psalm 91:4

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COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Festival or tragedy: the Portland protests

Events in 1970 show us what could happen in 2020

by Marvin Olasky

‘M TRYING TO GET TO THE HEART of what’s happening in Portland—60-plus straight nights of downtown demonstrations—and is apparently spreading to other cities. How violent are they? What do protesters want and when do they want it? What’s the endgame? Here’s what I’ve put together based on stories filed by two journalists—WORLD correspondent Andrew Shaughnessy with the protesters, Mike Balsano of the Associated Press with the federal agents—and my own experience.

As night fell on Friday, July 24, thousands of protesters focused their attention on the Mark O. Hatfield Federal Courthouse in downtown Portland, Ore. It has large
DISPATCHES  News Analysis

windows and a white marble interior, but thick plywood now covered its outside, with narrow slits at the top giving the dozens of federal agents inside an opening through which to fire pepper balls.

Garbage and paint splatters covered the steps leading to the courthouse and the terrace outside the front door. Demonstrators regularly shook the black fence now keeping them away from the courthouse’s graffiti-covered walls. A Joshua might say, “There is a noise of war out there.” But a Moses might respond, “It is not the sound of victory or defeat, but the sound of singing.”

Yes, early in the evening some of the protesters blasted music from speakers on their shoulders, played trumpets, and beat drums. Some sang, danced, and batted around beachballs. Smoke poured from the “Riot Ribs” tent where cooks manned grills and handed out racks of barbecued ribs. On the fringes, the smell of cigarettes and marijuana drifted through the air.

A couple walked by, holding hands and discussing the appropriate time to change a gas mask filter. Shaughnessy spoke with another couple, the Perlbergs, who were having what Ashley Perlberg called a “date night. … If we don’t raise anti-racist kids, then I haven’t done my job.” She said, “Our system [needs to] be torn down and rebuilt. … We need to change the government.”

In the Mark O. Hatfield Federal Courthouse, the mood was grim. One federal agent told Balsano, “It’s scary. You open those doors out, when the crowd is shaking the fence, and … on the other side of that fence are people that want to kill you because of the job we chose to do and what we represent.”

Before 11 p.m. that might have seemed like paranoia. Then the noise of war began to dominate. Some protesters threw commercial-grade fireworks over the fence, injuring five federal agents. Many of the protesters cheered the huge booms and explosions of red, white, and green. Some aimed at the agents’ eyes lasers that can cause permanent blind-ness. Others threw frozen water bottles, rocks, cans of beans, and eggs.

Then came the federal response. Federal agents hurled tear gas canisters and flash-bang grenades into the crowd. Soon the billowing clouds of gas drifted down the street and protesters started to cough and choke. They gasped for breath and felt like they were drowning. As some protesters retreated and retched on the sidewalk, others ran forward, some with motorcycle body armor and gas masks on, holding in front of themselves umbrellas, sleds, and homemade plywood shields.

What do the protesters want? Many spoke of peace. One high-school English teacher, Ashley Mountain, said, “I’m here to support Black Lives Matter, to help defund the police, and help get the feds out of Portland, Ore. … I work with youth … I don’t think I can stand in front of them and talk to them about being good citizens and participating in their
society if I don’t lead as an example.” Others snorted violence. Graffiti on the courthouse walls included “Kill pigs.”

The mixture of music and melee was enticing for some, but serious injuries lurked. One firework on July 24 exploded with a boom next to a federal agent, deadening his hearing and leaving gouges and burns on his arms. A projectile apparently shot by a federal agent on July 12 left a protester with a fractured skull.

If protests spread around the country, those severe injuries are likely to be only the first fruits of conflict. Fifty years ago, on May 1, 1970, I was on the New Haven Green as protesters confronted National Guard troops. Yippie leader Abbie Hoffman was there: On a pretty spring night it seemed like fun and games. Beat poet Allen Ginsburg was there: As tear gas swirled, he sat on a sidewalk chanting Om Om Om.

On the night of July 24, 2020, an agent at the Mark O. Hatfield Federal Courthouse told Balsano, “I can’t walk outside without being in fear for my life.” Fear can kill. Three days after the New Haven demonstration where soldiers didn’t shoot, some did at Kent State University. Four young people died.

Two of Portland’s black leaders spoke at a July 20 press conference about the endgame they saw. Daryl Turner, president of the Portland Police Association, said: “This is no longer about George Floyd, racial equity, social justice reform, or the evolution of policing. This is about violence, rioting and destruction.” J.W. Matt Hennessee, pastor of the Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church, told protesters: “We love you as God’s children, but we don’t like what you are doing. Tell us where to meet you so we can have a conversation about how to work together for solutions. Take Portland off the front page of newspapers around the world.”

Their words reminded me of the first U.S. senator I ever interviewed: Mark O. Hatfield, in 1971. I was a beginning reporter in Oregon, not yet a Christian. He was, and staunchly pro-life. Hatfield gave me a book he wrote, Conflict and Conscience, that ends with a prayer he offered, at Richard Nixon’s request, during a White House service on July 20, 1969, the day astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked on the moon.

Hatfield prayed for the astronauts and then said, “O God, grant us deliverance from the rhetoric of peace when we personally are not willing to do the things which make for peace.” He prayed for wisdom and concluded with the definition of wisdom in James 3:17—“peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy.”
The class divide in college classes

by Esther Eaton

With a month of unknowns left before the start of college classes, a clear class divide has opened between the college “haves”—those institutions with deep pockets and an elite brand—and all the rest.

In short, the “haves” can afford to minimize COVID-19 risk by keeping classes online or going to a hybrid model. They have big endowments. Their diplomas confer status that students don’t want to give up. For the rest, whether Christian or secular, not fully opening will present risks that apparently outweigh COVID-19 concerns.

I compared the Top 25 institutions, as ranked by U.S. News and World Report, with 25 Christian colleges and universities, including Wheaton and Cedarville, and 25 public and private colleges such as Stetson and the University of Tulsa that have an average enrollment similar to the Christian ones.

Most schools in the Top 25 plan on hybrid classes this fall. That means students can live on campus at schools like Cornell and Yale, but their class periods will alternate between in-person and online. This cuts attendance at each lecture in half, making social distancing easier. Six schools, including Princeton and Harvard, will hold almost all classes online. The only exception in the Top 25 is Notre Dame, which plans to hold all but a few large classes in person.

Outside the privileged few, the picture changes. Many small schools attract students with the promise of tight-knit campus community. If they undercut that promise by going online, students may transfer elsewhere, taking tuition dollars with them. Even if every student stays enrolled, opening online means missing out on room and board revenue. Few can afford the loss.

Of the 25 Christian schools, 23 plan to return with in-person classes and open dorms. The two exceptions, Seattle Pacific University and Houston Baptist University, plan to allow students in campus housing but will hold hybrid classes. The last group of 25, similar in size to the Christian schools, is a mix: Eight plan on hybrid classes, and 15 plan to reopen fully in person. None plans to be totally online.

While an elite few schools wait for the storm to pass, many of the rest hope masks, tests, and student rule-following—often a challenge—will be enough to stave off outbreaks.

—Esther Eaton is a World Journalism Institute graduate and a WORLD intern
The average total pay for presidents of taxpayer-supported public universities in 2019, according to a report by The Chronicle of Higher Education. Nineteen public university presidents received more than $1 million in total pay, and another 13 received more than $900,000. One president, Dale Whittaker of the University of Central Florida, received $600,000 in severance pay in 2019 after serving on the job for seven months and then leaving amid a scandal involving the misappropriation of funds by subordinates.
John Lewis dies
The young civil rights leader went on to serve 33 years in Congress

In 1965, JOHN LEWIS WAS A 25-YEAR-OLD CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER. On March 7 of that year, police knocked Lewis to the ground and fractured his skull as he led hundreds of protesters across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala. Nationally televised images of the incident, which became known as “Bloody Sunday,” helped spur opposition to racial segregation. Lewis, who died on July 17 at age 80, later turned to politics and served for 33 years as one of the most liberal members of Congress. He announced in December 2019 that he had advanced pancreatic cancer. A horse-drawn carriage carried the former congressman’s body across the Edmund Pettus Bridge on July 26. The next day, Lewis became the first black lawmaker to lie in state in the U.S. Capitol rotunda. Lewis’ wife of more than 40 years, Lillian Miles, died in 2012. Their son John Miles Lewis survives them.

DIED

Actress Olivia de Havilland, a star during the Golden Age of Hollywood, died on July 25 at age 104. De Havilland won two best actress Oscars and was best known for her roles in Gone With the Wind, The Adventures of Robin Hood, and The Heiress. She was also known for winning a 1944 lawsuit against Warner Bros. that weakened Hollywood’s studio system and for a longtime feud with her sister, Joan Fontaine, who was also an actress. She was less well known for her successful efforts, along with other politically liberal movie stars of the time such as Ronald Reagan, to oppose an alliance in Hollywood between liberals and Communists such as pro-Soviet screenwriter Dalton Trumbo.

DISCOVERED

A group of international researchers found a British submarine that went missing during World War II near the island of Malta. The HMS Urge had 44 people on board when it vanished mysteriously during a trip to Egypt. According to CNN, the researchers say the submarine’s bow was ripped off almost completely. Besides this damage, the wreck is almost intact, sitting on the seafloor, facing Egypt. The researchers speculated that the submarine ran into a minefield off Malta. The crew members’ families are reportedly looking into building a memorial on Malta for the lost crew.

SUED

A woman who identifies as a man has sued a Roman Catholic hospital for refusing her a hysterectomy. St. Joseph Medical Center in Maryland is owned and run by a state-affiliated corporation but operates under Catholic directives that prohibit “direct sterilization” not required to cure a serious illness. The patient, Jesse Hammons, asked for the surgery as treatment for gender dysphoria, and the hospital ruled this an insufficient reason for the surgery. Hammons has filed a suit with the ACLU, claiming St. Joseph’s refusal violates the separation of church and state, since the corporation running the hospital receives state funds.
“The Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion. It says nothing about the freedom to play craps or blackjack.”

U.S. Supreme Court Justice SAMUEL ALITO, in a dissent from a decision that Nevada could ban church gatherings of more than 50 people while at the same time allowing casinos to operate with many more patrons inside.

“None of them are going to have a fresh season in the fall.”

RICH GREENFIELD, a media analyst and partner at LightShed, a technology, media, and telecommunications research firm, on the difficulties that TV networks are having in producing dramas and other scripted shows because of the coronavirus pandemic.

“It’s like being inside the small intestine of a unicorn that just ate a bunch of rainbow Skittles.”

Scrabble player JOSH BERNOFF, 61, who objects to Scrabble’s new mobile app that is filled with bright gems, baby dragon tiles, and a chat function. Scrabble is trying to attract younger users.

“If someone had to die, I thought it should be me.”

Six-year-old BRIDGER WALKER of Cheyenne, Wyo., who reportedly came between an attacking dog and his little sister. The dog bit him several times in the face, and Bridger had to undergo surgery and receive about 90 stitches.

“This is the first time in my memory that the leaders of one of our great two political parties, the Democratic Party, are not coming out and condemning mob violence and the attack on federal courts.”

U.S. Attorney General BILL BARR, in a hearing on Capitol Hill, calling on Democrats to condemn the attacks on federal property during protests in Portland, Ore.
GETTING AWAY FROM IT ALL

ONE RESOURCEFUL DEER HAS MADE A TINY, uninhabited island just yards away from Niagara Falls its home for nearly a year. Ontario Wildlife Rescue first spotted the marooned deer back in August 2019, posting a picture of the animal to the group’s Facebook page. On July 13, a Twitter user posted a video of the deer still on the rocky island. Canada’s Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry has avoided a rescue attempt out of fears that rescuers could scare the deer into the water and over Horseshoe Falls, the most famous of the three waterfalls in the Niagara Falls system. Officials with the ministry said the animal appears to be surviving on the island’s vegetation and surmised it should be able to swim across the river whenever it feels the need to do so. One commenter on the Ontario Wildlife Rescue Facebook page called the deer “a social distance master.”

UNEXPECTED GUESTS

A July 10 downpour in Perkasie, Pa., revealed a peculiar issue at the century-old home of Jason and Andrea Isabell. At first, the Isabells thought they had water running down the walls. But a closer inspection revealed the liquid was actually fresh honey. After a cursory inspection of their house, the couple found a hole with bees buzzing around near their roof. A beekeeper inspected the house the next day and estimated a colony containing up to 30,000 bees was residing in their attic and walls. The only sting the Isabells said they have received so far: the estimated repair cost of $3,000 to move the bees out.

A JOB FOR NOBODY

IBM might have a bit of trouble filling a job opening for a software developer in India. According to the job listing on the website IntelliJobs, the tech giant is looking to hire a developer with a “minimum 12+ years’ experience in Kubernetes administration and management.” The problem: The Kubernetes software program was developed and released by Google in 2014. In other words, Kubernetes has existed for only half the number of years that the job opening requires in Kubernetes experience.
GIN LIZZIE In an effort to raise money, Queen Elizabeth II has introduced a specialty gin made from botanicals from the grounds of Buckingham Palace. The Royal Collection Trust spearheaded the effort after a report indicated the Royal Household had seen a $22 million drop in tourism revenue due to the global pandemic. The gin contains mulberry and bay leaves from the queen’s back garden and sells for just over $50 per bottle. According to royal officials, the proceeds will go to preserving the sovereign’s art collection.

ADRIFT WITH FLAIR A Canadian family had to be plucked from Lake Ontario after becoming dangerously adrift on a pink flamingo-styled raft. According to police in Hamilton, Ontario, the trio launched from a park bordering Lake Ontario at 10 p.m. on July 14 carrying with them oars and an air horn. Eventually, their large, pink plastic raft drifted so far out into the lake they were unable to paddle back to shore. They phoned 911 around 2 a.m. the next day. Hamilton police found the group nearly 2.5 miles from shore and were able to tow them back to the bank.

MINIMUM 12+ YEARS’ EXPERIENCE IN KUBERNETES ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT.

TESTING THE LIMITS Competitive eaters may be closing in on what’s humanly possible in the sport of hot dog eating, according to a North Carolina sports medicine professor. James Smoliga says his research indicates that 83 hot dogs consumed in 10 minutes may be the upper limit of which the human body is capable. On July 4, competitive eater Joey Chestnut gobbled down 75 hot dogs at the annual Nathan’s Famous Coney Island Hot Dog Eating Contest. Using mathematical modeling, Smoliga published a July 15 article in the journal Biology Letters arguing that humans can only consume 832 grams per minute of what he termed “fresh matter.”

STROBE SOLUTION Farmers in Botswana will try almost anything to protect their crops against trampling elephants. So when Australian scientist Tempe Adams came to them with a plan to use disco lights to ward off the animals, a number of farmers near the Chobe National Park offered to participate in the experiment. The maize and sorghum farmers’ fields lie on a floodplain between roughly 7,500 elephants and their watering holes. So Adams rigged a system of multicolored strobe lights to flicker on and off at night. According to Adams’ research, published in the journal Oryx in July, 75 percent of the time the bright lights stopped the elephants from trampling the crops.

SPEED LIMIT TIMES 10? One Italian driver has a pretty good argument for when she contests her speeding ticket to authorities. The driver received the ticket through the mail alleging that she was traveling 436 mph through a 43.5 mph zone. The woman’s Ford Focus has a published top speed well below Mach 0.57. The ticket carried a $983 fine and would earn her enough license points to put her halfway to a ban on driving.
In the dark days of the pandemic, actor John Krasinski premiered a homemade video podcast called Some Good News (or, as it soon became known, SGN). Producing it in his living room with a title card drawn by his school-age daughter, Krasinski walked the nation through the normal highlights of springtime (prom, graduation, weddings), virtual-style. Celebrity friends contributed their talents and viewers contributed short videos, artwork, and inspiring messages. Krasinski always concluded with, “and remember, no matter how hard things get, there’s always good in the world.”

It’s hard to argue with that, especially with such a friendly, beaming countenance as Krasinski’s. And he’s right: The world was created good by a good God, and goodness still suffuses creation, from cheerful birdsong to soft evening breezes. But what about the species of mankind? Pessimism about human nature is not limited to the psalmist’s declaration that there is none righteous. The Judeo-Christian view of human failing persists throughout the West, even today.

Dutch author Rutger Bregman would like to change that perception. Humankind: A Hopeful History tries to correct the bad rap ordinary people have received from environmentalists, fundamentalists, activists, and cynical politicians.

For example, did you know that an actual Lord of the Flies situation occurred on a remote island of the South Pacific? In 1965, schoolboys from Togo decided to play hooky in a big way, “borrowed” a boat, got lost in a storm, and wrecked on a piece of rock with no means of communication. Over the next 16 months, instead of turning on each other like the characters of William Golding’s novel, they cultivated a garden and collected rainwater, organized a daily routine, and settled disputes peaceably. Since their rescue, the survivors have maintained close ties and regular reunions.

Other exhibits in Bergman’s display of positivity are Londoners displaying stiff upper lips during the Blitz and impromptu relief squads rallying at every natural disaster. Horror stories like the infamous Stanford Prison Experiment and Stanley Milgram’s “shock machine,” which supposedly prove our moral weakness, turn out to be misreported or outright frauds.

Philosophically, Bergman agrees with Rousseau that “civilization” and land ownership play the villains of our depravity story. “Evolutionary psychologists refer to [humanity’s adoption of farming over gathering] as a mismatch, meaning a lack of physical or mental preparation for modern times.” That is, humans settled down before their DNA was ready for towns and cities, and have suffered a kind of schizophrenia ever since.

His evidence that we were happy, healthy, and harmonious while chasing mastodons is unconvincing. But a bigger problem is misunderstood terms. “Good” is not so easy to define. If a matter of simple decency, most people seem fundamentally decent. That is, most of us understand appropriate behavior and adjust our actions accordingly. We want others to think well of us, and we want to think well of ourselves.

But even decency isn’t absolute; it fluctuates with social norms. So Screaming obscenities in the face of a police officer may seem like fitting behavior to protesters who are convinced that corrupt law enforcement stands in the way of justice. Abortionists justify their actions along the same lines, and who’s to say they’re wrong? Certainly not the company they choose to keep.

That’s why Jesus says that no one is good but God alone; without a standard, even “common decency” defies clear description. As does “evil.” “Cancel culture,” in essence, is the attempt to locate and condemn evil outside oneself. But corruption begins in the heart: a deeply personal and individual matter that only the Holy Spirit can reveal. And I can’t honestly address evil in society without first dealing with the self-centeredness, rationalization, and petty resentments in me.

Optimists and pessimists both obscure the issue. Yes, there is good in the world, and God’s image-bearers, whether believers or atheists, are capable of heroism, generosity, and sacrifice. Real goodness, however, is for God to define, and God’s to judge.
Blowing up at your children?  
Ashamed of your outbursts? 

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HOLLOW ACTION

The Outpost shouldn’t be just another war movie, but its intensity lacks insight

by Megan Basham
T’S A LITTLE HARD TO UNDERSTAND what made *The Outpost* one of the best-reviewed releases of the last few months. Certainly the Afghan War drama, which hit streaming services on July 3, has the kind of pedigree the critical class would be most likely to praise.

Based on an exhaustively researched book by CNN newsman Jake Tapper, it tells the harrowing true story of how 53 U.S. soldiers faced up to 400 Taliban fighters from the low ground in Nuristan in October 2009. Beyond that naturally gripping setup, it also offers a complex theme—honoring military valor while indicting the policies of unending conflicts with ill-defined “hearts and minds” objectives. That’s what put members of Bravo Troop, 3rd Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, in such a dire position.

Yet even when we grip our seats at the taut action sequences or smile at the band-of-brothers camaraderie, there’s something hollow and disconnected about the whole. It’s a strange experience seeing courageous young countrymen’s sacrifice move us so little.

Part of the problem is the characters rotate out of the story every few minutes—killed or reassigned. But it’s also that, with a couple of notable exceptions played by Orlando Bloom and Scott Eastwood, those who remain often feel interchangeable. They have quick, clichéd markers of personality—the wise-cracker, the mama’s boy—and little else.

Take one private who’s ostensibly a Christian. He speaks with the same unremitting torrent of profanity and sexual allusion as every other character. (Note: The language alone would merit a strong R rating even if it didn’t come with realistic violence.) When he tries to reassure a fellow soldier there’s some deeper meaning in the terror they’re experiencing, he’s only able to offer platitudes like “God works in mysterious ways. He has a plan.” His comrade’s response—“God’s plan is our chaos”—seems the wiser assessment of their situation.

This cultural faith, which has so little to offer in the face of death, might in itself offer some insight if we follow it to its ultimate futility. But that doesn’t seem to be director Rod Lurie’s purpose. Every time he nears the cusp of mining something more profound from these real events, he shifts to some other scene or interaction.

Eventually a moment comes that stirs viewers’ hearts with empathy and gratitude. It’s as the credits roll: Tapper sits down with the men who came back from Combat Outpost Keating to tell us about the fallen. As we see the faces of those who didn’t make it home to friends and family, we finally see they were not mere types—their experiences weren’t trite.

Sgt. Christopher Griffin was real. So was Pfc. Kevin Thomson. As their brothers’ jaws tremble, trying to restrain tears while remembering them, we remember these men we’ve never met too.

“I read somewhere in the Bible, the gates of heaven and the gates of hell are in the same spot,” says one of the heroes who survived. “So at the time of the firefight, it was the gates of hell. But watching men sacrifice themselves to protect each other, you could see the true form of what brotherhood and love is. So it became the gates of heaven as well.”
“I want to tell you about radium,” Marie Curie, the Sorbonne’s first female professor, informs her class in 1906 in Paris. “A most remarkable element that doesn’t behave as it should.”

The new film Radioactive depicts Curie (Rosamund Pike) in much the same way. Independent, almost anti-social, Curie excelled at science in an era when the laboratory was pretty much a boy’s club. She was the first woman to receive a Nobel Prize, and one of only four people ever to win twice.

The film doesn’t play as you’d expect, either. Besides reviewing Curie’s achievements, Radioactive (rated PG-13 for backside nudity and sensuality) puts some of her unsavory moments under the microscope: She explores spiritualism and has an affair with a married man after her husband and co-Nobelist, Pierre (Sam Riley), dies.

But the film’s nucleus doesn’t hold together. Numerous forward flashes examining the posthumous fallout—good and bad—of Curie’s discoveries (e.g., twice calling the Hiroshima atomic bombing “criminal”) disrupt pacing. Unstable in focus, Radioactive zips through important personal moments in her life.

A bright spot is the Curies’ marriage. Pierre respected Marie’s intellect and loved her deeply, winning her over in spite of herself.

1898: Discovered polonium and radium with husband Pierre.
1903: Became first woman to receive Nobel Prize, this one in physics.
1911: Received second Nobel Prize (the first to win two), this one in chemistry.
1914: Developed mobile X-ray units for use in World War I hospitals.
MORE THAN THE MOB

G. Robert Blakey also served as chief counsel of a House of Representatives committee that investigated John F. Kennedy’s assassination.

HERE’S ALMOST SOMETHING CRIMINAL about watching a mobster film without Al Pacino or Robert De Niro in it. The cinematic wise guy, with his cartoonish bravado and brazen thuggery, has enthralled moviegoers for generations.

But truth is more deranged than fiction. Real-life “murderers [and] psychopaths” populated the mob, says former FBI agent Joe O’Brien in Netflix’s new three-part series Fear City: New York vs. the Mafia. Organized crime families terrorized businesses large and small into cooperation, controlling a wide swath of commerce. The documentary rewinds the tapes four decades, when the FBI finally put together a plan that would significantly cripple the Mafia.

People thought law enforcement couldn’t do anything about the Mafia,” says former FBI supervisor Jim Kossler. “It would be here forever.” I remember as a teenager believing that very thing: How can the Mob operate on American soil virtually as a sovereign enemy power?

“We prospered because we infiltrated every aspect of society,” explains Michael Franzese, a former Colombo family captain who in 1986 received a 10-year prison sentence. The Mob ran drugs, prostitution, and loan-sharking and dominated legitimate businesses—unions, construction, garbage collection, and more. Hundreds of millions of dollars flowed into Mafia coffers. Prosecutors occasionally locked up mobster “soldiers” but not bosses.

The tide turned in 1979 when Cornell law professor G. Robert Blakey, who had drafted the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) years before, taught the FBI how to use the anti-racketeering law. A key (obvious now but apparently not then) was proving the heads of the five largest Mafia families were orchestrating illegal activities (cooperating, in fact), even if they weren’t personally committing the underlying crimes. How to gather evidence? Massive surveillance.

Through grainy video and garbled audio clips, Fear City (rated TV-MA for language and graphic crime scene photos) reconstructs in striking detail several surveillance operations. In one, the FBI discovered it could remotely disrupt and restore cable service, sending an agent disguised as a repairman to bug a Mafia head’s home television set. Another time—to practice installing listening equipment—the FBI purchased a Jaguar sedan identical to one a Mob boss drove. Dismantling the Mob would take equal parts guts, ingenuity, and patience.

A matter-of-fact tone pervades the interviews. Retired goons and G-men mostly say they were just doing their jobs. The ex-mobsters don’t voice remorse, and, except for a few expressions of moral outrage, the former FBI agents seemed to regard their task merely as a chess match, albeit a deadly one. No wonder, then, the entertainment-devouring general public has a distorted picture of mobster criminality.
THAT’S SHOWBIZ

Being a child actor isn’t just glitz and glamour

by Sharon Dierberger

Would E.T. have been the wildly successful Steven Spielberg smash without Henry Thomas cast as the lonely, lovable 10-year-old Elliot who befriends the extraterrestrial? Can you imagine The Wizard of Oz without Judy Garland belting out “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” from a Kansas barnyard? Or The Black Stallion without Kelly Reno galloping across Arabian sand, clinging to the Black’s mane?

A talented child actor—believable, engaging, cute—can add the “wow!” factor that makes a movie a blockbuster. What happens behind the scenes may be no surprise but still is disheartening.

HBO’s Showbiz Kids, through interviews with former child stars and others trying to become stars, reveals the seamy side of the business, without sensationalism (rated TV-MA for adult content and bad language).

TOP 10 (WATCHED) AT HOME

FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 18, ACCORDING TO DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP. QUANTITY OF SEXUAL (S), VIOLENT (V), AND FOUL-LANGUAGE (L) CONTENT ON A 0-10 SCALE, WITH 10 HIGH, FROM KIDS-IN-MIND.COM

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WILLIAMSON: PARAMOUNT NETWORK; SHOWBIZ KIDS: HBO

Former young celebs, including Thomas, Mara Wilson, Todd Bridges, Milla Jovovich, and Cameron Boyce, reveal negative aspects of childhood stardom, like constant pressure from pushy parents. Some no longer trust people. Others lost earnings to cheats. Several say older people abused them. Evan Rachel Miller comments, “No one ever asked how I was doing.” They just asked about her career. Jovovich talks about being sexually objectified on film.

Many wonder what they missed in a “real” childhood. Wilson, star of Matilda, says she never learned to ride a bike or play kickball. She didn’t know how to schedule days or develop a work ethic because she knew only how to follow directions.

Wil Wheaton, whose teen role in Stand by Me vaulted him to fame, resentfully concludes acting was all about his mom’s needs. Once, he says, she pushed him to do a horror movie: “It was phenomenally abusive … a terrible experience.”

But when the roles stopped coming, Wheaton didn’t know what to do anymore. He would ruminate, “Please, someone pay attention to me because that’s the only way I know how to exist.”

But constant attention does not a good boy (or girl) make. Simply google some of the names to see what’s become of them. How difficult to think clearly when your identity depends on a critic’s review or a successful audition.

With nary a mention of faith, it’s not surprising these kids struggled into adulthood. Growing up, especially in the limelight, is tough enough. It’s odd, though, that filmmakers didn’t interview child stars Candace Cameron Bure or her brother Kirk, both committed Christians.

With the film’s focus on fewer than a dozen stars, we get a smattering of what the industry is like. But the focus is the sad stories about child celebrities. After watching, you may be glad your acting career ended with your church Nativity play.

蔽的观影者会看到暴力、自私、亵渎、粗俗语言、通奸，以及普遍的无道。简而言之，他们会发现许多精神死亡，没有希望的希望和肯定不新的生命在基督。从第一集的开场场景，杀人和闹事便有。—Marty VanDriel
Daniel Silva becomes Dan Brown

The *Da Vinci Code* pandemic spreads

by Marvin Olasky

We interrupt our regularly scheduled reviews to warn readers who have absorbed my annual praise for Daniel Silva’s usually exquisite novels. Like clockwork a new book featuring Israeli spy hero Gabriel Allon has appeared each July. Two summers ago I set my one-day record for steps (40,500—20 miles) while reading the new arrival slowly and relishing it. But I feel pain—fully obligated to say this: Despite Bob Woodward’s “Can’t put it down” recommendation, you should save your money and not pick up Silva’s latest, *The Order* (Harper, published on July 14).

The problem is that Silva, in book 20 of the Allon series, grabbed from the dried-up modern novelist’s bag of tricks a clichéd conspiracy tale: An ancient document, in this case the “Gospel of Pilate,” disproves the Gospel accounts—so some commit murder to sideline the truth. Gabriel declares “the writers of the four Gospels guilty of the most vicious slander in history” and says anti-Semitism exists “all because of those nine words” in Matthew 27:25—the crowd tells Pilate regarding Jesus, “His blood be on us and on our children.”

In an author’s note Silva acknowledges that the Gospel of Pilate “does not exist.” He lauds his bigoted sources, including “Bart D. Ehrman, the distinguished professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina,” and “religious scholar Reza Aslan.” He echoes their assaults with statements like “The gospels were never intended to be factual records.” Actually, Luke begins his Gospel by noting that some had compiled narratives and “it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account.” Luke searches for accuracy so his readers “may have certainty” about what they’ve heard.

Silva has sought accuracy in previous works, but *The Order* is sloppy. He emphasizes Matthew’s inclusion of the “nine words” and Mark’s exclusion: “Both accounts cannot be correct. If one is right, the other is necessarily wrong.” But the details of their accounts are similar, except that Mark doesn’t include the quotation. Silva’s author’s note says: “A reporter who made such a mistake would surely have been reprimanded by his editor, if not fired on the spot. The most plausible explanation is that the entire scene is a literary invention.” But here’s a more plausible explanation: Mark’s Gospel has 678 verses, Matthew’s 1,071. The latter is 37 percent longer and more detailed throughout. One WORLD writer includes more detail; another is terser. I don’t fire either.

Silva, unusual for him, does include one charming mystical touch. Gabriel gets the first page of the “Gospel of Pilate” from a sandal-wearing Father Joshua, and later encounters him during a Venice flood: “The priest seemed to move across the floodwaters without disturbing the surface.” Gabriel, wondering how Father Joshua made it into the Vatican’s “Secret Archives,” says, “Your name doesn’t appear on the staff directory. ... You weren’t wearing any identification that day.” Joshua responds, “Why would someone like me require identification?” Gabriel: “Who are you?” Joshua responds, “Who do you say I am?” Hmm. Joshua says, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus,” and raises a bandaged hand. Then he disappears.

Silva grew up in a Catholic home, married a Jewish CNN correspondent, and converted to Judaism. One of his characters says, “I decided I could be both a Christian and a Jew. After all, Jesus was a Jew.” As a convert myself I understand different tugs, and enjoy spy novels from a variety of perspectives—but a writer should do his homework. The better response to anti-Semitism is: add, don’t subtract. Instead of trying to eliminate a verse, read it in the context of other verses, such as John 4:22’s “salvation is from the Jews.” Yes, remember that Jesus and all His Apostles were Jews. Remember not to eliminate Matthew 19:19 and 22:39, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27, Romans 13:9, Galatians 5:14, and James 2:8: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
What we ought to be

Four books about the variety of humans

by Caleb Nelson

The Beautiful Community: Unity, Diversity, and the Church at Its Best by Irwyn L. Ince Jr.: In The Beautiful Community (available in paperback Aug. 4), Ince illustrates the foundation of multiethnic community in the triune God, its creation through the work of Jesus Christ, and its outworking in local churches as they orbit around the beauty of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He preaches racial variety in church because the Word of God demands it, the life of God grounds it, and the people of God must picture it, undoing the sin-fueled “ghettoization” of humanity that was supercharged at Babel. Although the book includes some ground-level instructions on how to achieve this diversity in a local church, it’s more of a why-to, not a how-to.

Mother to Son: Letters to a Black Boy on Identity and Hope by Jasmine L. Holmes: Holmes writes to her son Wynn, “When it comes to race, ‘just preach the gospel’ often means ‘just shut up.’” She does believe the gospel—that the good news of Christ’s resurrection is good enough for a black son to thrive on, in the United States or anywhere else. “Color will never change your status before Jesus.” But she’s also known too many white people who think the gospel explains away black pain. Holmes insists that the gospel demands Christian love and hard conversations with disciples of all colors. Don’t surrender to the stereotypes, she tells Wynn. You follow Jesus, not an earthly tribe. You cannot escape complexity. A Christian will not fully fit in any of the world’s political or racial boxes because we are made for heaven.

A Multitude of All Peoples by Vince L. Bantu: Bantu loathes the idea that Christianity is “the white man’s religion,” calling that notion “the single greatest obstacle for people coming to faith in Christ.” He shows that Christianity has always been a global religion and wants it liberated from what he calls its “white, Western captivity.” He quotes original sources and includes many of his own photographs of Christian objects and buildings created and maintained by ancient and medieval local churches in Africa, the Middle East, and East Asia. Yes, Constantine and later Roman and European rulers attempted to claim the role of Christianity’s global patron, but that’s false: Africans, Arabs, Persians, and Chinese worshipped Jesus long before Charlemagne did, and their descendants keep doing it, given “contextualized theology and indigenous leadership.”

Reformed Ethics: Created, Fallen, and Converted Humanity by Herman Bavinck, edited by John Bolt: Discovered in a Dutch manuscript in 2008 and finally available in English, Reformed Ethics by Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) is far more than a list of do’s and don’ts. It is a comprehensive account of human nature as created, fallen, and redeemed, with special reference to human moral obligations. Bavinck writes, “Ethics describes the concretizing of the kingdom of God in humanity; the origin, growth, and completion of Christ’s body”—but he stipulates that ethics is not the essence of religion, for then Christianity would be “absorbed by morality, the church by the state, worship by art.”
Dust off the bookshelf
Classics for tweens and teens
by Emily Whitten

*Watership Down* by Richard Adams: Before becoming a full-time author, British war veteran and civil servant Richard Adams invented this tale of talking rabbits for his two daughters. In 1972, he published it in book form, soon selling more than a million copies and earning a Carnegie Medal. The story of rabbits seeking a new warren will appeal to tweens and teens, but even mature readers can appreciate the skillful storytelling. Winsome characters like Hazel, the leader, and his muscle, Bigwig, display a complex view of human personality and politics. Supernatural elements (i.e., prophecy) and themes like selfless perseverance echo Adams’ Christian beliefs. *(Ages 10 and up)*

*Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast* by Robin McKinley: McKinley wrote more than 20 books, winning a Newbery Medal in 1985. She began her publishing career with this retelling of “Beauty and the Beast.” When Beauty’s father accidentally offends an enchanted creature known as the Beast, the Beast requires Beauty to live at his magical castle for a time. The story demands too much suspension of disbelief: Would a good father send his daughter to live with a monster? But many young readers will find Beauty relatable, and parents will appreciate a chaste, dutiful heroine. *(Ages 12 and up)*

*The Book of Three (The Chronicles of Prydain)* by Lloyd Alexander: This first of five high fantasy novels launches the heroic adventures of Taran of Caer Dallben. After a close encounter with the evil Horned King, Taran seeks to find both a missing “oracular” talking pig and his own place in the world. He receives help from several entertaining companions, including gollum-like Gurgi and headstrong enchantress Eilonwy. With story elements from Welsh mythology, *The Book of Three* is an educational, enjoyable stepping-stone toward more substantive fantasy like *The Hobbit*. *(Ages 10 and up)*

*A Fine and Pleasant Misery* by Patrick F. McManus: Over five decades, humor writer McManus brought belly laughs to outdoor-loving readers in magazines such as *Field & Stream*. This 1978 collection of short stories draws largely on his formative years in Sandpoint, Idaho. From first foray “Sleeping Out Alone” to fishing disasters on Sand Crick, McManus embellishes each tale with outrageous characters and hilarious plot twists. The book does contain some profanity and moral indiscretions (lying). Otherwise, his wordplay provides a breath of fresh air, whether or not readers relish the “fine and pleasant misery” of outdoor pursuits. *(Ages 12 and up)*

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Afterword

Corrie ten Boom’s *The Hiding Place* (co-written by John and Elizabeth Sherrill) covers the Dutch watchmaker’s rescue of hundreds of Jews and other refugees during World War II. After her imprisonment by Nazi soldiers, Ten Boom shares God’s love with those around her in German prisons (including Ravensbrück concentration camp). Despite terrible violence and cruelty, God’s love shines brightly in this riveting family read-aloud. See the 35th anniversary print edition by Baker Books or the 2009 audiobook edition read by Bernadette Dunne.

Families looking for other audiobook options might consider the website stories.audible.com. Launched to help kids during the coronavirus pandemic, it serves up hundreds of audiobook options for all ages at no cost. Many newer stories contain offensive material, but books such as *The Green Ember* by S.D. Smith and *The Crossover* by Kwame Alexander merit attention. Among the classics included: Sherlock Holmes stories, *Anne of Green Gables*, and *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*.  

—E.W.
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SALLY PIPES IS PRESIDENT OF THE PACIFIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE and the author of False Premise, False Promise: The Disastrous Reality of Medicare for All (Encounter). I interviewed her on Feb. 6, just after that book came out, and just before COVID-19 hit the headlines. Her analysis makes me realize that we have not only a political problem but a cultural problem affecting both supply of doctors and demand for their time.

After Hillarycare crashed and burned in the 1990s, why didn’t Republicans from 2003 to 2006, when they controlled both the White House
and Congress, do anything regarding healthcare? That is a million-dollar question. If they had come up with a good solution focusing on competition and choice, empowering doctors and hospitals, doctors and patients, I don’t think we’d be in this mess today.

Not enough poor constituents in Republican congressional districts? Most people in the Senate and House and in state legislatures find it confusing and complicated. They don’t want to get into the weeds about preexisting conditions and all that. The way to deal with that problem is for the federal government to give significant funding to create high-risk pools so those people can get affordable coverage and continuous coverage.

Both political parties and most Americans agree that our current system is very messy. Do we need to go one way or the other, toward competition or toward socialism? The Democrats’ public option idea is a stepping-stone approach to single-payer: Government would price its premiums for coverage lower than the private sector could, and therefore would crowd out private coverage. But the American people don’t understand what it means to have the government fully take over their healthcare. They should look at the Department of Veterans Affairs, an example of a true single-payer system. Long waits, rationed care, and lack of access in many cases to the latest treatments.

Beyond the political problem, do we also have a looming supply-side problem, since more than 40 percent of physicians say they’re burned out and want out? When Obamacare came into being almost 10 years ago now, it pushed mandates and regulations on doctors, including electronic health record requirements. It’s become very burdensome. My own OB-GYN retired at the end of January: just couldn’t take it anymore. My husband’s doctor retired last year, saying that with all the paperwork he couldn’t focus on the patients.

But lots of doctors support “Medicare for All.” Why? Many think it would be easier with only one entity paying them—but those who think the government would pay up quickly and efficiently, for whatever procedures they do, should think again. If we get single-payer, more doctors will retire. They’d be paid Medicare rates that are 40 percent below what they get paid for treating private patients today. The best and brightest of the country have traditionally gone into medicine, but that

flow would disappear under a single-payer system.

Why? Aren’t some people dedicated to helping others, even if they make less money? Yes, there are. But the United Kingdom right now has a shortage of 100,000 doctors, nurses, and healthcare workers. They’re not paid well, they have to work very long hours, they’re all exhausted. In the U.S., many doctors, male and female, have shut down their private or small group practices and gone to hospitals because they don’t want the paperwork and they don’t want to work long hours.

Will physicians who want regular hours and a salary be excited about more competition in the health marketplace? Well, no. You’re seeing that a lot among millennials. They’re pie in the sky. Many have not been out in the working world. They want government to provide all these entitlement programs, but they don’t realize that government doesn’t have any money. The taxpayers have the money, and taxpayers have to fund it. If the government totally took over the healthcare system, tax increases would be large, and we’d see rationed care and long waits.

Let’s turn to the demand side. A lot of anti-poverty programs worked, to a certain extent, when only those who really needed them signed up. Even if they were eligible, they didn’t want to sign up unless they actually needed the money. But after my father died, my mother in Florida was lonely, and her entertainment was going to different doctors, which worked for her on Medicare and a supplemental insurance plan. When we moved her to Texas where we live, she didn’t demand as many doctor visits. Your mother’s case is quite common—and particularly in Canada where, because it’s supposedly free, people who are lonely, people with mental issues, are always booking appointments. A doctor in Canada is seeing around 65 patients a day. That’s exhausting. One of my best friends retired from medicine at 40 because, he said, he couldn’t see 65 patients a day, couldn’t do a proper exam, couldn’t get the tests that are needed.
means people with serious conditions have a long wait time.

Are any doctors coming up with creative ways to solve that problem? In the U.K. today, under the National Health Service, the average doctor is seeing 70 patients a day. They’re now talking about setting up group appointments, with 15 people with similar conditions getting together for one appointment with a doctor. Can you imagine how that would go over in this country?

How can copay requirements help? A copay is always a good thing, because, when people have some skin in the game, they’re careful how they spend their money, how often they go to the doctor.

What else should we learn from government-run programs? Americans in Florida have relatives in Cuba who can’t get aspirin, Kleenex, all these things. It’s a terrible system, and care has to be rationed. My own mother died in Canada in Vancouver from metastasized colon cancer. When she thought she had a problem and went to her primary care doctor, she had an X-ray. He said, You don’t have colon cancer. I told her, You don’t detect colon cancer with an X-ray, you need a colonoscopy. When she went back to her doctor, he said, “I’m sorry, but there are too many younger people with issues and so you can’t have a colonoscopy.” Six months later she had lost 30 pounds and was hemorrhaging, so she went to the hospital in an ambulance. She got her colonoscopy, but died two weeks later from metastasized colon cancer. You can ration care, but it harms patients.

I’m sorry about what happened to your mom. Are Canadians sometimes too polite and patient? Some 608,000 Canadians last year came to the U.S. and paid out of pocket for MRIs, CT scans, heart stents, and hip replacements. When you’re in pain or you think you have a serious illness, you don’t want to be on a long waiting list.

We often hear that Canada has free healthcare and people are happy. In addition to long waits and rationed care, it’s not free. The average Canadian family today pays $13,311 dollars a year in hidden taxes for a healthcare system that denies them care.

So should healthcare be a right? And if so, what quantity and quality? All the Democratic presidential candidates in a debate put up their hands when asked, Do you think healthcare is a right? But isn’t a right to food more important, since, if you can’t have food, you won’t live to see the doctor? In the U.K. patients are only eligible for certain procedures if they lose weight or quit smoking. If healthcare is a right, does government have the right to say you can’t get top-notch care: You only have a right to equal care? Will the government have the ability to ban people from paying for better care—which is the way it is in Canada? If healthcare is a right, there will be an unlimited demand for healthcare, and the supply just won’t be there.
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A musical patriot

Charlie Daniels sang often about the land that he loved

by Arsenio Orteza

THE GREAT CHARLIE DANIELS was 83 when he died from a stroke two days after celebrating one of his favorite holidays: the Fourth of July. Who else but a proud, fiddle-playing lover of the Red, White, and Blue would have recorded enough patriotic songs to release a 15-song compilation titled Land That I Love as Daniels did in 2010? It’s almost as if he’d foreseen Donald Trump’s problems with getting permission to use the music of liberal rock stars for his rallies and said, Here, Mr. President. You can use these instead.

And, despite the prominence of the adjectives “country” and “bluegrass” in his obituaries, Daniels was a rock star—a Southern-rock star to be specific. Several of his biggest hits, “Uneasy Rider,” “Still in Saigon,” and “The South’s Gonna Do It,” didn’t even scrape the country charts.

It wasn’t until “The Devil Went Down to Georgia” in 1979 that country’s gatekeepers fully relented, making that song his only No. 1 hit on any chart and guaranteeing him a radio audience right up through 2001, when he responded to 9/11 with the endearingly, and characteristically, unsubtle “This Ain’t No Rag, It’s a Flag.” His inductions into the Grand Ole Opry (2008) and the Country Music Hall of Fame (2016) were faits accomplis.

Daniels loved Christmas and Easter too, and not just for sentimental reasons. A passionate Christian who published books with Thomas Nelson and recorded Dove Award–winning albums for Sparrow, he regularly included Bible verses among his daily Twitter postings, which unfailingly implored people not to forget Benghazi, 9/11, suicidal U.S. veterans, or the victims of abortion. In short, Daniels was ripe to be “canceled.”

Judging from his final tweet—“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27)—he wouldn’t have been fazed.

CHIEF AMONG DANIELS’ FOREBEARS in combining love of country (as in music) with love of country (as in the United States) was Johnny Cash, the subject of not one but two new best-ofs. Well, kind of new.

One of them, the 20-track Highwayman: The Best of Johnny Cash (Columbia Nashville), is simply the latest aggregation of Cash’s best-known songs and a rather indifferently sequenced one at that. Still, listeners using it to make their first Cash acquaintance will come away with an accurate sense of the man’s many sides.

The 24-track Easy Rider: The Best of the Mercury Recordings (Mercury Nashville) targets a more discriminating audience. Sifting through Cash’s post-Columbia output circa 1986-1991, it duplicates only nine cuts from 2011’s 36-track The Cash Collection: The Mercury Years and, song for song, provides a more flattering overview.

Nevertheless, the initial pressings come with a flaw: a brief, embedded “skip” in “I Shall Be Free.” Imperfect vinyl one could sometimes work with. But a bad byte is forever.
Classical voices

Noteworthy new or recent releases
by Arsenio Orteza

Thomas Fortmann: Gimme Twelve by various artists: Fortmann is the kind of composer about whom it’s tempting to say that he’s “still finding his voice.” On the evidence of these seven neo-impressionistic chamber pieces, however, he’s probably not looking. Other than their adherence to the chromatic scale, little unites them, resulting in a stylistic eclecticism made even more striking by the employment of five different ensembles and one solo organist to do the performing. A trio bangs and clangs its way through the 22-minute “Grafeneck 1940” while a septet animates two spirited excerpts from a chamber opera. Yet, taken individually (and “Grafeneck” perhaps excepted), the performances satisfy, particularly the Concertina Gregoriano and “The Murder of a Buttercup.”

Ernst Krenek, Piano Music, Volume Two by Stanislav Khristenko: Besides being one of the 20th century’s most formidable composers, Krenek was a gifted explicator of musical complexities—his 1939 book Music Here and Now, especially on the topic of atonality and its relationship to what came before, is a marvel of lucidity. The pianist Stanislav Khristenko, in turn, is a gifted interpreter of Krenek’s music, rendering it with a sensitivity, liveliness, and clarity that even listeners unfamiliar with the “language” will find hard to resist. Khristenko, in other words, understands Krenek’s ideas and how they developed. He even manages (with help from Peter Tregear’s liner notes) to put across that most elusive of Krenek’s qualities: his sense of humor.

God Save … by Zsigmond Szathmáry: To Brits and us their country cousins, two of these “original compositions on national hymns and anthems” will sound especially familiar as their melodies, whether going by the name of “God Save the King” or “America (My Country ‘Tis of Thee)” are identical. What keeps their juxtaposition from sounding repetitious is that the Hungarian Franz Liszt arranged one and the American Charles Ives the other—and that Szathmáry, an 81-year-old organist of exceptional sensitivity, articulates their differences with eloquence and enthusiasm. But most ear-opening of all is Davide da Bergamo’s “Sinfonia col tanto applausito inno popolare ‘Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser.” It’s not every organist about whom one thinks, “He sounds as if he’s having fun!”

Adam Wesolowski: Industrially by various artists: The title refers to the ornamental use of industrial sounds (percussive mainly) in both Silver Concerto (the second of this album’s three concerti) and Industrial Sinfonia. In the latter, the sounds of industrial machines augment the swooping strings of AUKSO—the Chamber Orchestra of the City of Tychy. In the former, dripping water and what might be pickaxes hitting silver-mine walls augment the glistening tones of the harpsichordist Aleksandra Antosiewicz and the Silesian Chamber Orchestra. Subsumed by vigorous tempi, easily processed melodies, and usually both, such gimmicks do not distract. The vigorous tempi and the easily processed melodies of Euphory Concerto and Encore Concerto are gimmick free.

Encore

Knowing where to begin with the rich and variegated legacy of the great film and television composer Ennio Morricone, who died recently at age 91, can be daunting. Not only did Morricone record over 500 soundtracks, but he also saw his most popular pieces reissued on over 100 compilations. Many of the latter are interchangeable. Two that aren’t: Virgin’s single-disc Film Music, Volume One (1987) and Rhino’s two-disc The Ennio Morricone Anthology: A Fistful of Film Music (1995).

What sets them apart, other than their inclusion of the underappreciated “Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion,” is a flow achieved by judicious track selection and sequencing (a feat especially impressive in A Fistful of Film Music, the running order of which is strictly chronological). Whether representing the Spaghetti Westerns, the Europe-only obscurities, or the international blockbusters, both collections make clear that the ability of Morricone’s finest music to stir and to elevate the emotions is by no means beholden to its cinematic sources.
Churches under attack this summer are symbols of what’s central in community life

PROTESTANTS OFTEN APPROACH the “sacred spaces” of worship a little conflicted. The Reformers prioritized the inner life of the believer over the outward rituals of the faith. They replaced the altar with the communion table, and gathered in caves when the religious authorities hunted them down.

My own church meets in a school gymnasium, and some of the most vibrant congregations I know gather in concert halls, libraries, and other repurposed venues.

With that history we’re tempted to regard attacks on historic churches as just so much delinquency in a destructive time. Let’s think again.

The July 18 fire that nearly destroyed the Catholic cathedral in Nantes is but one of the most prominent: Attacks on churches occur at a rate of nearly three a day in France, according to the French Interior Ministry.

A refugee from Rwanda who received food and housing in exchange for looking after the 15th-century Gothic structure has been charged in the Nantes blaze after he confessed to setting the church afire, but investigators have yet to uncover a motive or whether others also instigated it.

The fire that nearly consumed Notre Dame in Paris last year also remains unresolved. Workers, stymied most recently by pandemic lockdown, have yet to access the place in the vast cathedral where experts believe the fire began.

A Paris watchdog organization, L’Observatoire de la Christianophobie, tracked more than 900 attacks on churches in 2019. They include fires at other iconic Catholic structures, thefts, tagging, and spreading excrement, plus actual assaults on churchgoers.

On Sunday morning, July 19, a man wearing a military uniform and paintball mask tried to attack a full Protestant church in Seine-Saint-Denis. Passersby heard him shout, “Allahu Akbar,” and a motorist, seeing the man armed with a saber and semi-automatic weapon, ran him down and with others disarmed him before police arrived.

A growing number of politicians in France see this as a crisis the press and national leaders have ignored. Church assaults have a way of telegraphing a wider tear in the social fabric. That’s instructive background for churches in the United States, where social upheaval and a spate of summer church attacks also have received scant press coverage and little pressure for authorities to prioritize them.

The cause of a July 11 fire at the 250-year-old San Gabriel Mission in California remains under investigation. Catholic leaders had to remove statues of Junípero Serra, the priest who founded the mission, after protesters tore down Serra statues in San Francisco and Sacramento.

Along with defacing and toppling Confederate monuments, protesters elsewhere have beheaded or defaced statues of Mary and Jesus and painted anarchist symbols over churches.

The same day as the San Gabriel incident, a man set fire to Queen of Peace Catholic Church in Ocala, Fla., as parishioners prepared for morning Mass. Arson on July 5 destroyed the 100-year-old Harmony Baptist Church in rural Leeton, Mo. A man has been arrested for a July 21 blaze at Reach Church in Delaware that caused $250,000 in damage to the Presbyterian Church in America facility.

We can’t dismiss these as localized or mostly Catholic problems. Churches in contemporary and historic buildings figure at the center of community life. They are emblems of stability and faith—often the very reason they come under attack in tumultuous times.

But the semipermanent protests over racial injustice in places like Seattle, Portland, and Chicago not only seed unrest and violence: They are cries of despair. The Church is the institution ready to answer that desperation and mustn’t be banished or retreat from it. Chuck Betters, pastor of Reach Church, said, “It is actually freeing to forgive the person who committed this intentional evil and pray for them to encounter Jesus as we have.”

At the height of the ISIS rampage in Iraq, as I covered towns emptied and churches desecrated by its militias, one Orthodox believer explained the importance of protecting church structures this way: “If a people don’t have the history of their past, then they will not have a future. They won’t know what their origins are, where they came from, what they have to live for.”
Back in 2017 or early 2018, I traveled to the central part of Nigeria. Due to the conflict in the northeast, a lot of Christians sought refuge there. One woman set up an initiative to help them with training, jobs, and reintegration for those who were abducted. I saw firsthand how she was helping them. I also got to learn about some of the challenges she faced, like losing one of her sons in the ethno-religious crisis.

I witnessed her harnessing all that pain and using it to help people. I remember very clearly, she said, “It’s still difficult, and the scar is still there, but God is still good.” And that has stuck with me. Especially traveling to many places where people are suffering and seeing how they’re able to still live hopeful lives, her work encourages me to ask the tough questions.

I try to find the real people, to put a face with the news we hear. So if you’re praying, you can vividly remember one person or the story of a particular family.
THE COVID-19 CHASM

The pandemic divides Americans—even Christians

BY MICHAEL RENEAU

WHEN AMERICANS TURNED THEIR GAZES toward the coronavirus early this year, many speculated it would wane in the summer heat. Instead, the opposite happened: As temperatures climbed this summer, so have coronavirus infection rates. On July 24 alone, scientists recorded about 74,000 new cases. Though mortality figures haven’t risen as severely, the United States was approaching 150,000 coronavirus deaths as July closed.

Americans are divided over the coronavirus. Some take it seriously; some don’t. Some believe the measures state and local governments have taken to limit its spread are worth it. Some believe they’re overreach.

The three stories on the next six pages examine those divisions but also the ways the coronavirus has changed all our lives. Sophia Lee’s report chronicles groups—especially Christians—who disagree vehemently about how to respond to COVID-19. Lynde Langdon, Sarah Schweinsberg, and Kyle Ziemnick spoke with people in America’s heartland—away from the cities that have received so much media attention—to see how the virus has changed their lives. Finally, Leah Hickman researched ways schools, churches, and businesses have refused all-or-nothing approaches and innovated their way forward—limiting the virus’s spread but not cutting off services (and jobs) for people who need them. Her story also underscores an important point: Americans have faced such challenges before.
Some Americans take extra precautions. Some go on with business as usual

By Sophia Lee
such as John MacArthur have released statements refusing to obey government restrictions on churches and calling for others to “stand with us in obedience to our Lord as Christians have done through centuries.” Others search for ways to limit the virus’s spread while still worshipping.

Part of the polarization stems from conflicting or erroneous reports from experts. At one point, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended people not wear masks to preserve them for healthcare workers. Now its director says more mask-wearing could bring the pandemic “under control” in six weeks. The CDC has inaccurately counted results of coronavirus tests, and President Donald Trump has contradicted his own health officials.

Those who observed devastation firsthand say quarreling about whether to wear masks is a luxury they don’t have. Ifech Nwadie never imagined the first known “super-spreader” of COVID-19 would be in his rural community. The physician in Albany, Ga., paid attention to the virus’s spread through China and Europe. He worried the United States would suffer an outbreak, but “not in a million years was I think-

ing, we’re going to be hit with a massive wave in small-town America.”

The virus swept his city of 75,000 people in late February. The wave began at funerals and overwhelmed the county’s hospital. It killed more than 150 people, most of them low-income and black. Nwadie grew up in Albany and recognized many patients, and his heart ripped each time he had to call a family member to deliver bad news. He prayed for patients’ recovery. “People were shaken,” Nwadie recalled. “That’s when a lot of us sobered up about this disease.”

So it’s strange for Nwadie to watch resistance to coronavirus safety measures. When Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp reopened the state at the end of April, allowing gyms, bowling alleys, and salons to resume business, Nwadie and many other public health experts braced for another outbreak. It came mid-summer: From a seven-day average of 620 new cases per day on June 1, by late July the state’s seven-day average was almost 3,000 new cases per day. More than 3,200 people in Georgia have died with COVID-19. In Albany admissions of coronavirus patients dipped to zero at one point. But Nwadie now sees up to 60 coronavirus admissions a day in his hospital, he told me in late July. Meanwhile, though Kemp updated state guidelines to “strongly encourage” mask-wearing, he also signed an executive order banning municipalities from mandating them, saying they can’t issue restrictions stricter than the state’s.

In California, the roles are flipped: Many local leaders have resisted Gov. Gavin Newsom’s coronavirus health mandates, with some law enforcement departments refusing to enforce orders. Orange County has been one of the most vocal. It’s school board voted mid-July to recommend reopening schools without requiring masks or social distancing. County supervisors have openly questioned the county’s COVID-19 positivity rates and masks’ effectiveness. The county’s former health officer resigned after receiving death threats for issuing a mandatory mask order.

It’s also where coronavirus cases and deaths are spiking. Orange County had previously escaped the alarming outbreaks and death tolls of other counties, but it now ranks fifth of the state’s 58 counties in COVID-19 deaths per million.

Newsom ordered all places of worship to shut down indoor services and to “discontinue singing and chanting activities.” Three churches filed a federal lawsuit challenging the order.

In Garden Grove, a group of elders met to discuss what to do. Village Bible Church had been holding indoor Sunday services since June 7, keeping numbers under 100, moving chairs farther apart, and suspending communion. Senior Pastor Ron Johnson told me a couple of elders suggested defying the governor’s order and continuing to worship indoors. They debated more than four hours. They read multiple Scriptures together and decided on four principles: Love God well, love others well, honor the government as much as possible, and don’t do anything to harm the church’s testimony.

Eventually they decided to move worship outdoors. After consulting several officials, they concluded the singing ban was more a guideline than legal order. “We found a creative way to both honor God and obey the government,” Johnson said.

Meanwhile in Huntington Beach, Green made a different choice. On the fourth week of her event, the city set up large neon signs declaring the event canceled. Hundreds showed up anyway.
COVID-19 HITS THE HEARTLAND

Middle America is seeing spikes in cases and the exhaustion of fending off the virus

BY LYNDE LANGDON, SARAH SCHWEINSBERG, AND KYLE ZIEMNICK

THE COVID-19 TRACKING GRAPH for Sedgwick County, Kan., looks like the steep incline at the beginning of a roller coaster. The city of Wichita and its surrounding county went from 1,433 active cases on June 1 to 2,442 on July 28, according to the Sedgwick County Health Department. By the third week of July, the percentage of people testing positive had soared to 12.8 percent from less than 2 percent on June 1, and the county’s top physician reinstated a ban on gatherings of 15 people or more.

“We anticipated an increase as the county opened up, but the dramatic rise so quickly was unexpected,” health department deputy director Chris Steward said.

Heartland cities such as Milwaukee, Omaha, St. Louis, and Tulsa, Okla., all have graphs that look like Wichita’s. A surge in coronavirus cases is hitting Middle America at the same time as a wave of quarantine exhaustion. Individuals and organizations are struggling to cope with the tension between wanting to stay healthy and needing to connect with others physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

“There’s some serious frustration,” said Dr. Ron Ferris, who runs a Catholic family medical clinic down the street from Wesley Healthcare hospital in Wichita. “We were expecting [the pandemic] to drop off. Now we’re surging. It really is discouraging.”

Death counts for COVID-19 in cities like Wichita have not spiked as much as the active case totals have. Still, everyone seems to know someone who knows someone who had the coronavirus, and no one wants to be responsible for spreading it to a friend or neighbor.

In Webster County, Iowa, the total number of infections is 12 times higher than it was June 1. An outbreak at the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility caused part of that increase, but more than half of the county’s nearly 500 cases occurred outside the prison. Steve Roe runs a halfway house in the town of Fort Dodge where 26 men have quarantined since March. He recently started letting the residents go out to do yardwork for community members.

“We can’t live in a bubble any longer,” Roe said. “We just have to surrender all of it to the Lord.”

At the same time, Roe worries about passing the virus on to his wife and daughter, both of whom have autoimmune disorders. Throughout the pandemic, Roe’s wife has lived upstairs, while he lives downstairs, and they sleep in separate rooms. Three elderly friends have died of COVID-19.

“We just have to keep praying that God brings us through it,” he said.

Like elsewhere in the country, the pandemic disproportionately affects the heartland’s minority and immigrant communities. Data from the St. Louis County Health Department show the rate of infection among African Americans and Hispanics there is three times higher than among whites, and African Americans are dying at twice the rate of whites.

The Rev. Stanish Stanley, an immigrant from Mumbai, India, serves as the executive director of the Christian Friends of New Americans, a St. Louis-based outreach to new immigrants and refugees in the area. He noted the cultures he serves—people from Bhutan, Bosnia, Congo, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Syria, and more—rely on physical affec-
tion and close proximity to establish strong relationships much more than most Americans do.

“The virus is breaking the bond of social togetherness,” he added—a bond new immigrants count on to help them settle in their new countries. The Rev. Angel Viveros in Lincoln, Neb.—which is also experiencing a surge—echoed Stanley’s concerns. He described his Spanish-speaking congregation as “physical, hugging, loud, and encouraging” and said that since the pandemic hit, “we keep our brotherhood by Zoom, by social media, by personal letters.”

The same kind of brotherhood exists among the Burmese Karen population in Garden City, a town in western Kansas where hundreds of refugees have settled and taken food-packing jobs in the past decade. Rene Eihsue came to the United States with his wife about eight years ago from Burma, also known as Myanmar, by way of a refugee camp in Malaysia. They earned their GED diplomas, gained U.S. citizenship, and had two sons, Joseph and John.

When Eihsue first heard news of the pandemic, he began wiping down all of his groceries before bringing them in the house, shaved his head as an infection prevention measure, and took a week’s vacation in April from his job at the nearby Tyson packing plant. “We don’t have family here,” Eihsue said. “We worry a lot.”

On his first day off, he developed a headache that turned into COVID-19, which he likely contracted at work. His wife became sick, too, as did people from at least half of the 20 or so Karen families he knows in Garden City. They all recovered, but Eihsue missed three weeks of work and hasn’t recouped all of his lost wages. He said members of the Karen community have kept in touch over the phone and at work during the pandemic, but they have not gathered as they used to.

“We follow the rules of Americans,” he said.

Those rules have their own cost, which Dr. Ferris has seen firsthand in Wichita. One of his patients suffered a job loss, had a mental breakdown, and got into a car accident, sustaining serious injuries. Hospice patients he cares for are spending their dying days in isolation. Parents have stopped bringing their children to his clinic for well-child visits, and elderly people are missing appointments that would help maintain their health.

“One patient—her mother’s older—and she said, ‘Dr. Ferris, I’m going to blame you if my mother gets sick and dies.’” Ferris’ own mother contracted COVID-19 in a care facility outside Kansas City and survived. Does Ferris think authorities should loosen the precautions and restrictions?

“That’s really hard, because if you relax on your measures … you’d be blamed for not doing enough,” he said. “Each person’s going to have to make their own call.”
TAKE IT OUTSIDE

Schools, churches, and businesses find creative ways to protect against the virus without closing down

BY LEAH HICKMAN

WHEN CLASSROOMS BECAME HOT SPOTS
for tuberculosis transmission among children more than a century ago, doctors and the Providence, R.I., school board opened the first fresh-air school in an abandoned brick building on Jan. 27, 1908. Despite the cold, teachers kept the windows open through the winter. Children warmed themselves by staying wrapped in blankets with heated stones at their feet.

Within two years, 65 more fresh-air schools had opened around the country. A photo from 1912 shows children bundled up in the sunshine on a New York roof during an art class. In another from 1915, children sit, books open, at desks on the deck of a ferry boat. A hazy New York City skyline looms behind them.

Fast-forward a century, and research shows the novel coronavirus shares at least one similarity with tuberculosis: It becomes less contagious in the open air. While many Americans fight over pandemic lockdowns, some leaders at schools, churches, and businesses have eschewed all-or-nothing approaches and found innovative ways to operate while trying to limit coronavirus spread.

Like most schools across the country, Mater Amoris Montessori School in Ashton, Md., finished the 2019-20 school year with remote classes. School head Alicia Davis Enright doesn’t want to do that again: “The priority is bringing children back to school.”

So she and her staff tested an outdoor setup in June. They put up canopy tents in a grassy area on the school’s property and placed colorful furniture, bean bags, and kid-sized tables and chairs in the makeshift shelter. They intend to rent larger tents with more room for social distancing and are considering installing outdoor sinks and using tents that accommodate heaters for winter months. Reduced classroom sizes will allow students to distance if weather forces class indoors.

Schools that usually incorporate outdoor education plan to do more. Andy Zawacki, head of Arborbrook Christian Academy in Matthews, N.C., says the school has long embraced 20th-century educator Charlotte Mason’s motto: “Never be within doors when you can rightly be without.” Now the academy is investing even more money in building outdoor shelters. Parents and staff pitched in to install fabric shades so students can sit outside without exposure, and the school is awaiting approval to build a pergola to add extra cover for picnic tables where students eat lunch almost every day. Other plans include bringing electricity and whiteboards outside and possibly installing fire pits.

Some classes can’t happen outdoors, so administrators made contingency plans: Teachers will focus on keeping grades from mixing with other years to limit exposure. Arborbrook will require students ages 11 and up to wear masks indoors.

Seven students withdrew from the school because of the plans, but Arborbrook’s decision to keep teaching in person has drawn new students: The academy will nearly be at capacity for the coming semester. “We’re doing the best we can to have an educational environment that works for kids, and that means being live, in person,” Zawacki said.

Most public schools plan to implement a rotational model to their classrooms. The Cherry Hill Public School District in New Jersey is adopting a hybrid schedule for students: Half will attend school on one day, and the other half will come the next. The group that doesn’t come will work online.

Some colleges and universities are following a similar model. In June, for example, Stanford University announced plans to rotate undergraduate students each quarter, allowing half to be on campus in a given quarter while others take online courses.

Houston’s Rice University is also preparing to offer outdoor instruction (in addition to online classes). The school is installing four semipermanent tent structures as open-air meeting places where up to 50 students can meet for classes or campus clubs. It’s planning for five more open-sided tents accommodating up to 30 students each.

MANY CHURCHES HAVE PRIORITIZED meeting in person through the summer. In Chagrin Falls, Ohio, Parkside Church
attendees resumed in-person gatherings at the end of June by moving evening services outdoors. They still livestream morning services but invite attendees to come Sunday nights with blankets and chairs to the church’s lawn. Before the coronavirus, the Sunday evening service could draw 800 to 1,400 attendees. The first Sunday back, that number was around 1,300. “I think maybe there’s a little bit of ‘absence makes the heart grow fonder’ going on,” said Jonathan Cameron, one of Parkside’s pastors.

Leaders at Bethlehem Baptist Church in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota found a different solution. Each of its three campuses normally can seat about a thousand churchgoers per service, but state pandemic rules cap gatherings at 250. Bethlehem now requires attendees to register for the services online to stay under 250 and social distance once there. One campus added a service to accommodate more people.

About 1,000 people come to the in-person services each weekend. The rest continue to watch the livestreamed services—something Bethlehem Baptist started doing just as the lockdowns began in March.

**SHUTDOWNS HIT RESTAURANTS** especially hard: One report estimated 16,000 have closed permanently since March. Takeout was the only way Sammy Bajraktarevic could keep Luce, his Italian restaurant in Middletown, Conn., open during the spring lockdowns. But before outdoor dining restrictions lifted on May 20, Bajraktarevic called the Middletown City Hall about a special permit for putting a tent in his parking lot and seating more customers.

Cities across the country have turned to temporary permits like Middletown’s to help local restaurants during the pandemic. Austin, Texas, rolled out a similar permit program in June, as have Dallas and Atlanta-area cities Brookhaven and Dunwoody. Houston’s City Council is one of the latest to consider allowing restaurants to convert parking lots into outdoor dining areas.

Within a day of applying, Luce received the permit. Bajraktarevic and his staff spent 10 hours setting up the parking lot before a grand reopening on May 20. They erected a 30-by-60-foot white tent in the lot and filled it with tables and chairs. To maintain the restaurant’s luxury dining experience, they hung plants and covered tables with white cloths. Bajraktarevic said it’s attracted new clientele, even while some customers stay away: “People passing through town—there is no way they will miss it.”

On June 17, another phase of reopening allowed Luce Restaurant to start seating patrons indoors at 50 percent capacity. But business still isn’t the same. Adding the outdoor seating was “enough to keep us in business,” Bajraktarevic said. But come October, it may get too cold to keep outdoor seating. “If I can’t use the tent ... it would be much harder.”
BLOWING IN THE WIND

From the Senate in the 1970s to the presidential campaign trail in 2020, Joe Biden has a long record of going where political pressures push him—and right now they’re pushing him aggressively leftward

BY JAMIE DEAN
DECADE BEFORE JOE BIDEN’S first run for the presidency, the young politician critiqued a potential presidential candidate that Biden’s own career trajectory would echo in the years ahead. ¶ Hubert Humphrey had served as a Democratic senator from Minnesota for more than 20 years and as vice president for four years. He was contemplating a third run for the presidency in 1976. ¶ Biden, then a Democratic senator from Delaware, was wary of Humphrey. He feared the former vice president was not “cognizant of the limited, finite ability government has to deal with people’s problems.” He said he wondered whether Humphrey had “the intestinal fortitude to look at some programs and say, ‘No.’” ¶ Four decades later, now-former Vice President Biden, 77, is nearing the last lap of his third bid for the presidency. And he faces some of the same questions he raised about Humphrey early in his own decadeslong senatorial career.

Does Biden realize the government’s “limited, finite ability” to deal with deep-rooted problems transcending massive political intervention? Does he have the “intestinal fortitude” to face intense pressure to move further left than any president in history—and say, “No”?

Key pieces of Biden’s record—both distant and recent—show a presidential candidate who has positioned himself as a centrist but has been willing to shift in the direction of the prevailing political winds.

And though Biden has pushed back against some of the most extreme proposals floated by activists and some politicians, the political winds are blowing in a radical direction—and Biden appears willing to bend.

EARLY IN HIS CAREER, the political winds in Biden’s home state of Delaware blew in a notably conservative direction.

In 1972, the state favored Republican President Richard Nixon, but voters also elected Democrat Joe Biden to the Senate just a few weeks before he turned 30—the age of eligibility for serving.

Biden ran on a mix of ideas, and he won a mix of support: He opposed Nixon’s handling of the Vietnam War and warned labor unions against trusting the GOP. But he also warned against a soft-on-crime approach and spoke of dealing severely with drug dealers.

In office, he favored expanding some federal programs but swerved right when inflation escalated: Biden sponsored the Federal Spending Control act in 1977.

Showing restraint in the Senate on fiscal issues likely helped him with voters in his conservative-leaning state. (His opposition to busing in the 1970s likely also helped, though he wasn’t the only Northern Democrat to resist busing as a way to desegregate schools.)

But as Biden tried to carve out a position as a fiscal moderate, a massive reckoning loomed on social issues. The senator first took the oath of office 19 days before the U.S. Supreme Court issued its Roe v. Wade decision on Jan. 22, 1973.

A year later, Biden told the Washingtonian he thought the decision went too far: “When it comes to issues like abortion, amnesty, and acid, I’m about as liberal as your grandmother. ... I don’t think a woman has the sole right to say what should happen to her body.” But the senator staked out ground some other Democrats would claim: As a Catholic, he was personally opposed to abortion, but he supported legal access to it. He thought it should be “rare and safe.”

Since 1973, more than 61 million unborn children have died in abortions.

The role of the Supreme Court remained critical, and Biden played a key role in that dynamic as a member and then chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee. In 1986, the year before Biden took over as head of the committee, the U.S. Senate approved Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia’s nomination by a vote of 98-0.
Biden pondered potential future nominees, particularly Robert Bork, a well-known conservative judge. He said if Reagan nominated Bork for a future opening, and if Bork came through investigations like Scalia, “I’d have to vote for him.”

The next year, the winds shifted.

Reagan did nominate Bork to the high court, and this time Biden was in charge of the Senate proceedings. He was also launching his first bid for the Democratic presidential nomination.

On the day Reagan tapped Bork, Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., delivered an apocalyptic warning on the Senate floor: “Robert Bork’s America is a land in which women would be forced into back alley abortions, blacks would sit at segregated lunch counters.”

The rallying cry bolstered swarms of activists to oppose Bork’s nomination over the coming weeks.

Jeffrey Blattner, an aide to Kennedy at the time, later said one of the reasons Kennedy gave the overwrought speech was to “freeze Biden.” “He’s running for president,” Blattner said. “We didn’t want to leave him any choice.”

The pressure worked, though Biden dropped his presidential bid eight days after the hearing began. News reports revealed he had plagiarized pieces of other politicians’ speeches, including biographical portions. Biden changed the names, but kept the syntax. During a break in the Bork hearing, Biden admitted he had “made some mistakes” and said the “exaggerated shadow” had begun to “obscure the essence of my candidacy.”

Days later, Biden joined Kennedy in opposing Bork’s nomination, and the Senate rejected the nominee 42-58. Bork’s opportunity to exert a conservative influ-
ence on the court evaporated. The Senate eventually confirmed Justice Anthony Kennedy to the spot.

Mark Gitenstein, chief counsel to the Senate Judiciary Committee during the Bork hearing, told The New York Times last fall he thinks Biden should draw more attention to his role in Bork’s defeat: “I don’t think that he or anyone else makes enough of the fact that, but for Biden, Roe would be dead 30 years ago, and, but for Biden, we wouldn’t have the gay marriage decision.”

Whether Biden deserves that much credit or blame, he does now call for codifying Roe v. Wade as part of his campaign platform. He also calls for restoring Title X funding for Planned Parenthood and repealing the Hyde Amendment.

Biden, along with other Democratic senators, supported the Hyde Amendment for decades. The measure prohibits direct federal funding for most abortions. For years, Biden said he didn’t think the federal government should pay for abortions.

On most other votes, Biden was reliably pro-abortion. Planned Parenthood and NARAL endorsed him when he ran as vice president with Barack Obama in 2008. Planned Parenthood endorsed him for his 2020 bid in June, noting that when Biden left the Senate, he “had a 100 percent voting record from Planned Parenthood Action Fund.”

In a 1994 letter to constituents, Biden underscored a carve-out: He said “on no fewer than 50 occasions” he had voted against funding abortion directly: “I will continue to abide by the same principle that has guided me throughout my 21 years in the Senate: those of us who are opposed to abortions should not be compelled to pay for them.”

The winds shifted last year.

Months after he launched his presidential bid in 2019, Biden expressed support for Hyde, though the Democratic Party had abandoned the measure during Hillary Clinton’s presidential run in 2016.

Biden’s Democratic competitors pounced. Symone Sanders, an adviser to Biden, told The Atlantic she confronted the candidate: Sanders said she argued opposition to Hyde disproportionately harms poor women and women of color looking for easier access to abortion. (The irony: Abortion disproportionately harms black women and their unborn children.)

Alyssa Milano, an actress and activist, also reportedly told Biden’s campaign manager he needed to shift positions. Pressure mounted. Biden caved.

“I make no apologies for my last position, and I make no apologies for what I’m about to say,” he told a Democratic gathering in Atlanta last June. He told the group he now supports repealing the Hyde Amendment because of laws in some states restricting abortion: “If I believe healthcare is a right, as I do, I can no longer support an amendment that makes that right dependent on someone’s zip code.”

In a 2006 interview with Texas Monthly, Biden said abortion should be legal, but, “I do not view abortion as a choice and a right. I think it’s always a tragedy.”

Politicians do change their minds.

Shifting positions isn’t uncommon for elected officials, particularly over a decadeslong career. And it’s not always wrong—realizing a true mistake and changing course is commendable and good.

But the Hyde flap exposed Biden flipping on an issue he once called a guiding principle, after facing intense pressure from activists and from a party moving further left. The inevitable reality: If the party moves left, the center moves too.

How far left will Biden let the current wind take him?

Earlier in his presidential bid, Biden spoke of his hopes to become a “transitional” president—presumably serving as a bridge to a newer generation of Democrats. As he battled Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., in the Democratic primary, Biden distanced himself from...
Sanders’ democratic socialism: “People are looking for results, not a revolution.”

A few months later, he declared on his podcast, “We need some revolutionary institutional changes.”

The havoc wreaked by the COVID-19 pandemic certainly calls for more than politics-as-usual. Both candidates will have to grapple with how a country and an economy reeling from massive losses will move ahead, even after a possible vaccine or an ebbing of the virus.

Biden has outlined an economic platform some pundits say looks similar to the kind of economic populism Trump won with in 2016—including a “buy American” priority and an emphasis on infrastructure and job creation. But it’s not clear how Biden would pay for all his proposals without raising taxes beyond wealthy Americans—a question he’ll face over the coming weeks.

(Trump will continue to face questions as well, as he’s struggled to outline a second-term agenda in recent interviews.)

Meanwhile, the concern at the beginning of Biden’s career for having the intestinal fortitude to show fiscal restraint doesn’t bleed through to his proposals on other issues.

For example, while he doesn’t embrace the Green New Deal on climate change, he does propose spending some $2 trillion over four years on a climate plan that includes outfitting 4 million buildings and 2 million homes for energy efficiency and creating an office of environmental and climate justice within the Justice Department.

His campaign tapped the Green New Deal’s originator, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., to co-chair a committee to make climate change recommendations. The effort was part of a “unity task force” between Biden and Bernie Sanders and included advisers and activists tapped by both camps to give policy recommendations in six areas.

The results: not as far left as some of Sanders’ supporters might have hoped, but further left than they thought they might end up. Faiz Shakir, Sanders’ presidential campaign manager, said the report “goes beyond a status quo and goes beyond where Biden had campaigned in the primary.”

Shakir told the Vox news website that “phase two” would be “continuing to shape and alter the Biden campaign’s positions.”

On education, Biden recently told Trevor Noah of The Daily Show: “I believe there has to be more debt forgiveness for college loans, ... more opportunity to go to college for free. For free.” (He said he would pay for free college and other priorities by rolling back President Donald Trump’s $2 trillion tax cut.)

Andrew Yang, an entrepreneur who ran for the Democratic nomination, said in a recent podcast he predicted Biden would be open to universal basic income (sending monthly checks to every American), if the wind blew strongly enough:

“One thing you know about Joe is that he’s not that ideological. He’s actually fairly pragmatic. And he will certainly get on board with universal basic income if there’s a groundswell of popular support and Democratic legislators and leaders are heading in that direction.”

Biden hasn’t proposed universal basic income, but Yang’s musings underscore what some see as Biden’s willingness to move with the prevailing sentiment.

Less predictable: How much of these proposals could reach fruition, even if Democrats win the U.S. Senate by a narrow majority in November? It usually takes overcoming a 60-vote threshold in the Senate to pass major legislation.

Some Democratic senators have floated employing “the nuclear option” to require only a simple majority to pass most legislation. Other Democrats—including Biden—have long resisted that impulse.

Until recently.

Biden told reporters in mid-July that he was now open to the idea. He said he was hopeful about reaching common ground with Republicans without eliminating the filibuster: “But I think you’re going to just have to take a look at it.”
A CALEB TEAM INVESTIGATIVE REPORT BY MARY JACKSON

Pro-lifers swallow the pill

Coming to a pro-life pregnancy center near you? Some centers are offering clients contraceptives. Others say that compromises their mission.
LINDA WELLS, executive director of Eden Clinic in Norman, Okla., has worked at pro-life pregnancy centers for 22 years. For more than three decades, she has watched the number of centers swell and the care they provide to women and their unborn or newborn babies grow sophisticated. Centers that started as “mom and pop shops,” distributing free diapers and pregnancy tests, are now medical clinics with ultrasound machines, prenatal care, and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases.

Recently, Wells found another way to attract women to her center, located 22 miles from a Planned Parenthood facility: She offers contraceptives.

When Eden Clinic began prescribing birth control pills and shots last year, it broke with four decades of pregnancy resource center (PRC) history as it relates to contraceptives. Care Net’s affiliation agreement captures the historical view: “The pregnancy center does not recommend or provide or refer single people for contraceptives. (Married women and men seeking contraception information should be urged to seek counsel, along with their spouses, from their pastor and/or physician.)”

That standard allowed Christians of many stripes to work together at pregnancy resource centers because they agreed on the main thing: Abortion hurts women and unborn children. Pioneers in pregnancy care center ministry believed that differences over contraception could derail the project.

But times have changed. Now a small but growing number of pro-life pregnancy resource centers in the United States offer contraceptives. They see it as a strategic move to attract clients, build relationships, and prevent future abortions. But the move is not without costs—and some longtime supporters see a dangerous mission drift.

TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THIS new direction, I spoke to directors of more than a dozen pro-life clinics in various states that have considered or are considering the change. They say these conversations are taking place behind closed doors with board members, donors, and doctors.

Michelle Reimer, a registered nurse and director of Clear Choice Clinic in Kalispell, Mont., has for years trained pregnancy center workers from other states to provide ultrasounds and STD testing and treatment. She says the birth control discussion is not new: “It’s just finally coming into the light.” Her clinic is “strongly considering” offering contraceptives. But she understands why other clinics approach the decision cautiously: “Not everyone wants to stick their neck out.”

Last year in Texas, eight independent PRCs stuck their necks out and merged to form a chain called the Source, which in September will begin dispensing
birth control pills, some IUDs, the ring, implants, injections, and other contraceptive methods to women age 18 or older (or under 18 with parental consent).

Andy Schoonover, chief executive officer of the Source, said offering contraceptives is a “proactive approach” to draw more women into their clinics and compete directly with Planned Parenthood and abortion businesses. He says the vast majority of women walking into the Source have already had multiple sex partners. They’re either pregnant, post-abortive, at high risk for an abortion, or seeking STD testing or treatment: “The question now is how do you walk them back?”

He’s betting that offering more services, including contraceptives, will give staff members—including doctors, nurses, and licensed counselors—more ways to meet the needs of the women who come: “Ultimately our hope is to bring them back to a Biblical view of sex.”

So far the Source clinics haven’t faced much backlash. Since announcing its new direction last September, the Source has received more than $2 million in donor support, Schoonover says. The group plans to apply later this year for Title X family planning funds that Planned Parenthood relinquished after the Trump administration changed the rules last year, excluding recipients that refer for abortions.

Schoonover said dozens of pro-life clinics have asked him about replicating the Source’s business model in their states. He acknowledges that three churches, including one in Austin, stopped supporting the Source after the announcement. Others, he said, have affirmed the decision.

Landy Ligon, an elder at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Austin, had just graduated from Rice University in 1984. He moved to Austin to work at IBM and almost immediately joined the effort to launch the city’s first Protestant pro-life pregnancy center. He and other founders agreed that giving clients contraceptives would send a mixed message: “We didn’t want to say, ‘You shouldn’t be engaging in these behaviors, but here’s something to help you deal with the consequences.’”

That center is now a Source clinic. After learning it planned to dispense contraceptives, church leaders asked Ligon to investigate. He met with Schoonover last November. Based on his findings, Redeemer removed its $1,000 in annual financial support, donating to another Austin pregnancy center instead. Ligon worries pro-life clinics that offer birth control will earn a reputation for a “bait and switch” message about Biblical sexuality.

Ligon and Redeemer aren’t the only ones worried about the new direction. Representatives of 13 Texas pregnancy centers, including Austin’s Agape Pregnancy Resource Center, met last fall to draft a response to the Source and other faith-based pregnancy centers that now dispense contraceptives. In their joint statement, initially drafted by Agape executive director Jo Markham, they said they were “grieved” and fear those centers will become a “stumbling block” for women physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The “most loving action” pro-life clinics can offer women, they said, is to promote abstinence until marriage and refrain from dispensing contraceptives.

Abigail Borah, director of operations and community relations at the Austin-based Heart of Texas Pregnancy Center, agrees. She hopes more clinics will expand “toward life, not stopping life.” Centers should be adding prenatal, post-natal, and pediatric care instead of contraceptives, she said. In her experience, clients visiting Heart of Texas need “space to talk … someone to help them see a better way—not the birth control pill.”

Borah and other pro-life advocates I spoke with raised concerns about whether some contraceptives, including the birth control pill and intrauterine devices, act as abortifacients. Although the American Association of Pro-life Obstetricians and Gynecologists (AAPLOG) has not taken a stance on whether pregnancy centers should dispense contraception, it warns that all contraceptive drugs and devices
“fail at a certain rate” and could lead to an unintended pregnancy or “create an environment ... that may adversely affect embryo survival.”

Christina Francis, AAPLOG’s board chairman, said the group’s 5,500 doctors hold diverse views on contraception, but uniformly oppose birth control methods with a “clear post-fertilization effect” such as “morning-after” pills Plan B and Ella. She says more research is needed on other methods: “Some methods we take a hard-line stance on, but for methods there are questions about, we simply say, ‘Here is the information we have. It’s up to you to decide.’”

She points to a further concern: Combined cases of syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia reached an all-time high in the United States in 2018, and some hormonal birth control methods increase the likelihood of transmitting those STDs. She fears pro-life clinics risk “watering down” the abstinence message: “It’s important that remains their No. 1 message to women.”

BACK IN OKLAHOMA, the new direction cost Eden Clinic church support. Pastor Ronnie W. Rogers of Trinity Baptist Church in Norman, Okla., felt so strongly that he preached an hour long Sunday sermon charging that Eden Clinic’s “new direction” is “neither consistent with Scripture nor [its] founding documents” as a “Christ-centered ... Biblically-compassionate” crisis pregnancy center. The church posted a video of the sermon on Facebook and withdrew its financial support.

Another church owned the property Eden Clinic used rent-free. When that church withdrew its support, Wells had to relocate the clinic.

The cost to the unity of the pregnancy center movement is hard to quantify. Clinics that dispense contraceptives can no longer be affiliated with the nation’s three largest pregnancy center networks—Care Net, Heartbeat International, and the National Institute of Family and Life Advocates (NIFLA).

These groups, which provide training and hold members to high standards of care, agreed in 2009 to a joint code of ethics, the “Commitment of Care and Competence,” that prohibits centers from dispensing contraceptives: “We do not offer, recommend or refer for abortions, abortifacients or contraceptives. We are committed to offering accurate information about related risks and procedures.”

Care Net and Heartbeat International have recently reaffirmed this standard in statements, podcasts, and videos. Care Net President Roland Warren declined an interview, but in a Dec. 3 CareCast podcast episode he said the group primarily opposes giving contraceptives to unmarried women. Its 1,100 affiliated pregnancy centers act as “parachurch ministries,” he noted, and should extend “compassion with truth” to those engaging in sex outside of marriage: “Christ never violated Biblical principles in order to preserve a relationship.”

Similarly, Heartbeat International’s Jor-El Godsey addressed the contraceptive controversy in an email appeal to affiliates in October to “find clarity” in their mission and “firm foundation” in the values that have upheld “the supernatural empowerment of the pregnancy help movement.”

Pregnancy resource centers for 40 years have survived the abortion movement’s harassment, media attacks, and investigations. The latest challenge comes from within. —M.J.

IMPERFECT PREVENTION

While nearly a dozen contraceptive methods exist today, many are used imperfectly and carry a 7 percent to 13 percent failure rate. Some pro-lifers I spoke to feared the distribution of birth control drugs and devices at pro-life clinics would contribute to additional unplanned pregnancies—and perhaps unintentionally, additional abortions.

According to the pro-abortion Guttmacher Institute, nearly half of the 6.1 million U.S. pregnancies in 2011 were “unintended.” Of those, 42 percent ended in abortion. Guttmacher research found that women who use contraceptives consistently and correctly account for 5 percent of all unintended pregnancies, while those who use them inconsistently account for 41 percent.

Some growing chains of pro-life clinics—like Guiding Star Project and Obria Medical Clinics, based in Minnesota and California, respectively—promote natural family planning to clients instead of birth control drugs or devices. Obria CEO Kathleen Bravo said women are increasingly receptive to a “holistic” approach to protecting their bodies and fertility. —M.J.
Volunteer I-Lin Chien (right) delivers a bag of food to a neighborhood senior.
Asian Americans face harassment and assaults because of the coronavirus. But one Asian church in Queens, N.Y., is serving its neighbors.

BY EMILY BELZ IN NEW YORK
photos by Danielle Richards/Genesis
Greg Woo, a pastor at Faith Bible Hope Center in Flushing, Queens, piled boxes of groceries into a van littered with packets of green bean seeds and surgical masks.

He looked over a list of addresses where he would deliver grocery boxes, then stuffed the paper in a loose grocery bag. Vision, rather than organization, is his strength, he said.

When the coronavirus pandemic started, Woo’s church heard from elderly members afraid of going out. They feared the virus, but they also were afraid after hearing stories of abuse Asians experienced on sidewalks or in grocery stores. One example: Police arrested a teenager for beating a 59-year-old Asian man in Harlem, spitting on him, telling him to go back to his country, and saying, “[Expletive] Chinese coronavirus.”

One Faith Bible volunteer, I-Lin Chien, a young immigrant who moved from Taiwan two years ago, went to drop off a box of groceries and a bag of fresh bok choy to an elderly woman who feared going out. They met on the sidewalk outside her apartment and chatted in Mandarin for a few minutes. Chien strapped the box onto a small hand cart, then returned to her car and waited to make sure the woman got inside safely, even though she kept turning around to wave Chien off.

“The only way she leaves the house is if we come,” said Woo. Three years ago, the woman’s son died of cancer. He had become a Christian and brought his parents to faith from Buddhism. They threw out their idols. Before the son died, Woo promised him, “Your mom will be like my mom.”

The food program started with those close church ties as a way to help people afraid of increasing coronavirus-related discrimination. But then it quickly expanded as the program spread by word of mouth to African Americans and Hispanics in neighborhoods nearby. One person would tell another in an apartment building about the food program, or recipients would tell the church about others they knew who were in need. Demand in Queens has been massive, consistent with the experience of food pantries across the country facing the economic fallout of the virus. Church volunteers now deliver 1,600 boxes of groceries a month. “We’re like a supermarket,” Woo laughed.

He began using Google Translate to say in Spanish, “We have groceries for you.” Volunteers also began delivering food to...
the growing number of homeless people they saw on the streets. As Woo dropped off a bag of groceries to an older homeless man camped out on the street, the man grinned and said to him in Mandarin, “Jesus loves you.”

Woo said this new outreach has been a gift for their church.

“The Chinese church tends to be clique-y,” said Woo, the English-speaking pastor at a church that also has services in Mandarin. “The more you are serving, the more Christ-like you are becoming. It’s not just my own kind, my own people. It’s being a neighbor. ... I think this will help some of the racism, honestly.”

**PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP** recently brought this association of Asians and the virus to the forefront again by referring to COVID-19 as “kung flu” at a rally in Tulsa, Okla., then repeated the phrase at Dream City Church in Phoenix, as the audience chanted it. Trump adviser Kellyanne Conway, whose husband is Asian American, had previously called that term “highly offensive” and “hurtful.”

This year the New York Police Department created a new category of motivation for a hate crime: racially motivated crimes included a statement about the coronavirus. Of 20 crimes in this new category as of July 5, 19 involved victims of Asian descent. Some were assaults, and some were harassment.

Compare that with 2019, when the city recorded three hate crimes against those of Asian descent. The NYPD does not report the ethnicity of perpetrators.

The coronavirus-based crimes against those of Asian descent made up the largest number of hate crimes this year other than
to a Mennonite church in Flushing, Immanuel Community. Like other volunteers, he’s experienced discrimination himself.

When the coronavirus outbreak began, the other workers at the airport told him, “Your people brought this to the United States.” His weekly hours at the airport decreased from 40 to 32, but he is chipper about it: “Now I have more time to work with the church.”

Bill Wang, who is Chinese American and goes to church with Qiu, also came to help with the food distribution. “The racism is there. But we can be better,” said Wang. “We want to be the hands and feet of Jesus to solve the problem.”

Chien, whom I saw speak Mandarin with the elderly Chinese woman in her church, has experienced harassment: When she was playing basketball one day early in the outbreak, a group of young people yelled at her about the virus and said, “Asian! Asian!”

“It hurts, but it was kids,” she shrugged. But she feels like an outsider elsewhere. “When you go out for groceries, you can feel

anti-Semitic hate crimes (54). This was despite an overall 33 percent decline in New York hate crimes.

Some assaults in the city gained a lot of attention, but most people I interviewed described harassment or treatment as if they were carrying the virus because they are Asian. Some Uber drivers refused rides to Asian passengers, and children taunted Asian children, telling them to go back to their country or to stop eating bats.

“History has shown that during times of crisis, there has always been a tendency to look for scapegoats,” said Steven Markowitz about the rise in racism against Asians. Markowitz is the board chairman of the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County, near Flushing. “The Jewish community down through history has been the subject of scrutiny and scapegoating, and we’re undoubtedly seeing the same thing right now.”

“YOU EAT THIS?” said Zhongwu Qiu, a Chinese churchgoer and volunteer in the food program, about a stick of cheese.

Faith Bible’s volunteers were going through a truck of food supplies that came from a Mennonite relief program in Pennsylvania, Christian Aid Ministries. The volunteers winnowed out things the Asian elderly wouldn’t like, such as cheese and tomato soup. Then they added fresh produce, a bag of bok choy in every box, and tofu. Woo said the elderly in his community think cheese is “gross.”

Qiu, who goes by Brenden in New York, has lived in the United States for the last seven years. He works at LaGuardia Airport and goes to a Mennonite church in Flushing, Immanuel Community. Like other volunteers, he’s experienced discrimination himself.

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“It hurts, but it was kids,” she shrugged. But she feels like an outsider elsewhere. “When you go out for groceries, you can feel
it. ‘Oh, virus!’ You can feel it the way they look at you.” Woo too said he saw people grab their kids or walk the other way when they saw him.

Peter Ong, who oversees mercy and justice ministries at his Queens church, Living Faith Community, said Eastern cultures don’t share as much about what mistreatment they might experience: “There is an expression in Chinese, that you swallow your bitterness … you rather just hide it and swallow it.”

Queens seemed safer to many Asian Americans. Woo grew up in Louisiana, less than a mile from David Duke’s Ku Klux Klan headquarters. So as a child he grew accustomed to racist comments, such as that he was Bruce Lee’s son or he could teach kung fu. He acclimated himself to feeling like an outsider.

But now living in the largely Asian Flushing, his daughter can feel normal bringing dumplings to school for lunch, for example. That sense of normalcy shifted with the virus. Asian Americans “feel that their differences are being pointed out,” he said.

Besides the harassment, it’s been a tough year for the Woo family. His father-in-law died of COVID-19, and the overwhelmed hospital initially didn’t know which refrigerated truck his body had gone into. Woo is diabetic, and his parents worried about him being more at-risk by going out to serve people and deliver groceries.

As he drove through the streets of Flushing, he stopped at one apartment building. An African American woman came out to get her groceries as cars honked behind him to move along. He pulled over a few inches to let cars squeeze by so he and the woman could talk a little. She had been tuning in to Faith Bible’s services. He told her he enjoyed her “preaching” after she left him a message praising God.

“I don’t know where it’s taken us, but we’re really breaking down walls,” said Woo. “After all, perfect love casts out fear.”

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Revisiting “the Flushing Remonstrance”

Mark Perri, pastor of a Mennonite church in Flushing, was thinking about a historical event as he helped unload the truck of food at Faith Bible.

When New York was the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam, it had a relatively diverse population, with different languages and religions. But in 1657, New Amsterdam colonial director Peter Stuyvesant began persecuting Quakers arriving in the colony, publicly torturing one and banishing others. He introduced ordinances targeting Quakers and fined those who sheltered Quakers.

Flushing town clerk Edward Hart wrote a condemnation of Stuyvesant’s actions and called for protections of people with different beliefs or backgrounds. Thirty citizens of Flushing signed the document that became known as “the Flushing Remonstrance.” None were Quaker.

“The law of love, peace and liberty in the states extending to Jews, Turks and Egyptians, as they are considered sons of Adam, which is the glory of the outward state of Holland, so love, peace and liberty, extending to all in Christ Jesus, condemns hatred, war and bondage,” the document reads. “Therefore if any of these said persons come in love unto us, we cannot in conscience lay violent hands upon them, but give them free egress and regress unto our town … for we are bound by the law of God and man to do good unto all men and evil to no man.”

Stuyvesant threw the document’s instigators in jail. But six years later, the Dutch West India Company sided with signers and overruled Stuyvesant. Some scholars consider the Flushing Remonstrance a forerunner to the U.S. Constitution’s Bill of Rights.

As Perri looked at different churches from the neighborhood unloading boxes of groceries together to deliver to Muslim, black, and Hispanic neighbors, he said about the Flushing signers, “I see this as a fruit of their labor.” —E.B.
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NESTLED BETWEEN FARMLAND, a thriving shopping and restaurant complex that sprang up adjacently, and a busy interstate, a minor league ballpark sits empty and forlorn.

Visible from nearby Interstate 5, with the advertising banners that typically cover the chain-link outfield fence taken down, the ballpark provides passing motorists a glimpse into a seemingly bleak future: The crowds that came to enjoy summer evenings here for 23

STEALING HOME TEAMS

A Major League Baseball plan to eliminate 42 minor league clubs threatens to rob fans across America of their connection to the game

by Ray Hacke in Keizer, Ore.

Volcanoes third baseman David Villar connects during a 2018 game.
seasons, watching major league prospects at one of the earliest stages of their professional baseball careers, won’t be back this summer—and may not have a next year, either.

This is Volcanoes Stadium, home of the Salem-Keizer Volcanoes of the short-season Class A Northwest League. Salem-Keizer is among 42 teams nationwide facing elimination from minor league baseball in 2021: Cities such as Great Falls, Mont.; Chattanooga, Tenn.; and Bluefield, W.Va.—to name just a few—also face losing their teams.

Making matters worse: The coronavirus pandemic that shut down the sports world back in March may rob those cities’ fans of one last summer watching ballplayers pursue their big league dreams. Major League Baseball (MLB)—which started its own abbreviated, 60-game season in late July—effectively canceled the minor league season on June 30, informing Minor League Baseball (MiLB) that big league clubs would not provide players to their affiliates in 2020.

The longer-term threat to the Volcanoes (an affiliate of the San Francisco Giants) and other minor league teams, however, doesn’t involve the pandemic. It involves paychecks.

Big league teams provide and pay the players, coaches, and training staffs of their minor league affiliates. Players at the lowest levels make as little as $275 per week and only during the 2½ months of the regular season. Minor leaguers thus demanded a wage increase when the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, the minors’ governing body, began negotiating a new agreement with MLB—the current one expires in September.

MLB owners agreed to increase player salaries starting in 2021 but didn’t want to pay so many of them—especially since so few ultimately make it to the majors.

Hence, MLB clubs’ desire to ax 42 teams.

Chief among the arguments MLB owners have raised to justify their posi-
facility upgrades that MLB or the San Francisco Giants request. In recent years they added a 1,000-square-foot weight room and an indoor hitting facility.

The Volcanoes’ problem is that the team is one of two low Class A affiliates of the Giants, and the team’s other one, the Augusta GreenJackets of the South Atlantic League, play in a sparkling 2-year-old ballpark. That makes the Volcanoes expendable in the MLB’s eyes. (The MLB wants each of its teams to have only one low Class A affiliate.)

But some think MLB hasn’t considered the cost of severing ties with small-town, rural America—specifically the cost to its future. Participation in youth baseball is declining for a variety of reasons. Minor league teams let youngsters connect with up-and-coming pros, collect their autographs, and see how action-packed the game can be.

MLB also stands to lose fans who root for the players who come through their towns—and often live with local host families while they’re there—long after they’ve moved up the ladder. “A lot of the guys stay in touch with their host families,” said Bob Bush, a longtime Volcanoes supporter who has worked for the team for the past seven seasons. “Some of them go so far as to arrange for their host families to come see a game after they make it to the majors—and they do it at their own expense.”

Such connections are especially vital in places that are far removed from major league markets, such as Keizer, a town of 36,478 that is 3½ hours away from Seattle, home of the nearest MLB team.

The Volcanoes, and 41 teams like them, are still around for the time being. There is at least a chance that they’ll still be around come 2021: Clark has written letters in support of the team, and Keizer’s representative in Congress, Kurt Schrader, is part of a bipartisan group of legislators who have gone to bat against MLB’s plan.

Mickey Walker remains both optimistic and determined. “I really do feel we have a track record of success here,” he said. “We’ll do whatever needs to be done to make sure baseball’s going to be around. It’s in the Lord’s hands after that.”

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**THE BALLPARK EXPERIENCE**

Just beyond Volcanoes Stadium’s right field fence, behind netting set up to protect passing cars from home run balls, stands a 35-foot-tall sign featuring an electronic message board. Typically, the message board proudly touts to drivers headed southbound on Interstate 5 the Volcanoes’ longtime affiliation with MLB’s San Francisco Giants, announces upcoming games, or invites fans to purchase season tickets.

Now, the message board announces that the ballpark is available for rent on Airbnb.com: For as little as $1,000, fans can rent out the ballpark, bring 16 or more of their closest friends, use all of the ballpark’s facilities—field, clubhouse, batting cages—and equipment, and even spend the night. Food and beverages from the park’s concessions stand cost extra.

Volcanoes CEO Mickey Walker got the idea after learning that the Pensacola Blue Wahoos, a minor league team in Florida, was renting out its ballpark on Airbnb to generate income during the coronavirus pandemic. The gambit is paying off: “We’ve had quite a few bookings already in the first three days,” Walker said. “We’ve also gotten inquiries from many dozen who haven’t quite booked yet but are close.”

Renting out its ballpark is an ingenious way for the Volcanoes to make money when they’re not hosting baseball games—especially since the Northwest League season only lasts from mid-June through early September, not counting playoffs. Still, said Walker, “we’d rather have professional baseball there, no doubt about it.”

—R.H.
OIS TAYLOR SAID SHE WOULD MARRY anyone but a pastor.

Growing up as a pastor’s kid, Lois saw her dad working long hours of ministry. She perceived her mother, who was always at home, as isolated and lonely. At church, people expected her mom to do particular ministries just because she was the pastor’s wife. Lois remembered her mom also believed she couldn’t have friends in the church, as that might look like favoritism.

Working as a student editor of the yearbook at Cairn University near Philadelphia in 1976, Lois met and fell in love with another yearbook editor, Gary. Two years later, they married. But as it turned out, Gary wanted to become a pastor.

Gary, who was also a pastor’s kid, had expectations for ministry very different from hers: He enjoyed church, led Sunday school for teens, and sang in the choir. He was excited to enter pastoral work and had come to Cairn to study music and Bible.

After Gary attended seminary, the couple moved to rural Pennsylvania, and Gary began pastoring a small Baptist church in a county that did not yet have a traffic light. With his Type A personality, Gary did his best pastoring a laid-back country church, even though he had come from the city. Five years later, the Taylors moved to another church, First Baptist of Morrisville, where Gary worked to overhaul the church budget and establish a team of elders.

Initially, though, Lois struggled in her role as a pastor’s wife. When congregants criticized Gary—critiquing his preaching or blaming him for declines in attendance—she felt it most deeply. She worried congregants would disapprove of her, too, or would try to force her into ministries she didn’t want to do.

She also felt, early on, that Gary did not spend enough time with the family. One day, she became upset and told him, right before he left to chair a church planting meeting, “You don’t care about me. All you care about is doing ministry.”

That day, instead of going to the meeting, Gary decided to stay home with Lois. She realized then that she was more important to him than his work.

And over time, Lois adjusted to other aspects of pastoral life. She learned not to take criticisms personally, and to her surprise, people didn’t try to force her into specific ministries. She worked in ways that fit her gifts and interests, such as teaching Sunday school and children’s Bible clubs. Lois also gained friends at church: Someone told her, “You are closer to some but friendly with everyone,” which is her goal. The biggest challenge, she says, is to invest deeply in people who later leave.

After 31 years at First Baptist of Morrisville, Gary, who also serves as an Army chaplain, says he has deep relationships with families in the church and has seen multiple generations walking with God.

Lois believes the joys of pastoral life far outweigh its challenges: “I know this is where God would have us, and He has us together.” She and Gary have been married 42 years, and she says it’s “a joy to serve with him.”
FROM SOUND TO SIGHT
New sound recognition technologies can help the deaf
by Liz Rieth

As Ashraf Hossain drives his blue SUV through the pedestrian-filled streets of New York City, he checks his rearview mirror every few seconds, scanning his surroundings. He tries to keep his eyes on the road, but he has to keep looking back: If he doesn’t, he might miss the sound of an approaching siren. Hossain, born deaf, has to rely on his eyesight to know when to pull over.

When Hossain’s parents realized their young son was deaf, they moved to New York from Bangladesh for better deaf education. Today, with hearing aids, Hossain can hear some noises—though the noises are garbled. He can only distinguish what direction they come from, not what they are. Until recently, he relied on his eyes to interpret the distorted noises.

Now, when an emergency vehicle siren goes off, a notification pops up on Hossain’s phone, alerting him to the noise and identifying it. Hossain’s iPhone does this through a new sound recognition feature in the iOS 14 operating system. It’s an example of how new technologies can assist the deaf and hard of hearing.

Hossain is beta testing iOS 14, which Apple plans to release to the public this fall. The sound recognition feature (users can enable or disable it) continuously listens for certain sounds and notifies users with a pop-up alert when those sounds may be nearby. Hossain gets alerts for 14 sounds, including that of doorbells, smoke alarms, crying babies, barking dogs, and meowing cats. Already, the technology has helped him multiple times when he couldn’t tell he’d left a faucet running in his apartment.

“Before this kind of technology, I felt like I was missing a lot,” Hossain told me by American Sign Language in a phone interview facilitated by an interpreter. Hossain said the technology is showing him an array of background noises he never realized were there.

Hearing basic noises such as doorbells or alarms is taken for granted by most people. For the deaf community, those sounds are generally inaccessible, noted Howard Rosenblum, CEO of the National Association of the Deaf. He said sound recognition technologies are pivotal to promoting autonomy for those with hearing challenges—around 5 percent of the world’s population, according to the World Health Organization.

Typically, deaf and hard of hearing people must purchase specialized doorbells or alarms for daily life. These expensive devices alert users with flashing lights or vibrations.

However, that can change with technologies like Apple’s. And other companies offer similar features: Amazon’s Alexa voice assistant offers a home security system that sends a notification to the user’s phone when it detects smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms, or glass breaking. Google’s Pixel smartphone monitors for sounds and motion to identify if the user is in a car crash.

While Hossain said the new iPhone feature isn’t 100 percent accurate (it occasionally gives him apparent false positive alerts), he already depends on it heavily. The portable nature of the iPhone allows him to take a normally expensive technology on the go—including through the streets of New York.

—Liz Rieth is a World Journalism Institute graduate
Statues falling

Our own sons are destroying our country’s monuments

For Christmas 1961 my mother bought me a nun’s suit from the St. Anthony Messenger magazine.

To St. Joseph’s Church I would make my pilgrimage, pry open the heavy wooden portals; dip fingers in holy water fonts; part the stained glass doors across the narthex; genuflect when reaching the communion rail; kneel before flickering votive candles; and beg with the earnestness of a 9-year-old zealot that the impassive Virgin oblige me with the sign I sought—a raised eyelid, the slightest finger movement.

She declined.

But not all love of statues is idolotria. Those bronze and stone sculptures in our public spaces serve a purpose. Some honor causes that we shouldn’t honor, but the better ones offer dazzling verticals that relieve the monotony of unbroken horizontal planes. They hearken to past triumphs or defeats that lift our eyes from the tyranny of present troubles. To say nothing of a practical value: “Yo! Where can I find Oregon Steaks?” “Head east on Bilger at the Christopher Columbus statue in Marconi Plaza, then hang a left on South 10th Street.”

In his short story “By the Waters of Babylon” (1937) Stephen Vincent Benét depicts a postapocalyptic place where every concrete reminder of the past has been razed to rubble. A young boy on a coming-of-age journey crosses the “forbidden river,” the great “Ou-disun” (New York’s Hudson River), east of which there be ghosts. He stumbles upon broken blocks of stone with partial inscriptions. One, “the shattered image of a man or a god … made of white stone” who “wore his hair tied back like a woman,” reads, “ASHING.”

By August of 1944, Hitler’s war would sputter on for another nine months, but the Allies were steadily advancing toward Paris to join the Resistance after the Normandy invasion. Seasoned German Gen. Dietrich von Choltitz, military governor of the beleaguered French capital, received a cable from the Führer ordering the city be kept by any means possible—or left a field of ruins.

Stunned, von Choltitz shared the “field of ruins” letter with his aide, Col. Hans Jay, on the balcony of his headquarters in the Hotel Meurice on the Rue de Rivoli. He recalls years later: “In front of us the Tuilleries lay in sunshine. To the right was the Place de la Concorde and to the left the Louvre. The scene merely underlined the madness of the medieval command.”

Explosives had been placed in Notre Dame, in the Chamber of Deputies, in the Dôme at Les Invalides, and were planned for the Arc de Triomphe and Eiffel Tower and bridges over the Seine. Field Marshall Walther Model, the only other officer to receive Hitler’s order, did not pass it on. Von Choltitz contacted friend Lt. Gen. Hans Speidel and reminded him that though Hitler had given the order, Speidel would be held responsible by history. Speidel fell in behind von Choltitz as fast as Joram’s watchmen behind Jehu (2 Kings 9:14-26).

The same afternoon, von Choltitz got a phone call from Luftwaffe commander Otto Dessloch. After cagily feeling each other out (the Gestapo were likely listening), each learned that the other was in agreement about the insanity of bombarding the monuments of Paris. Also of the mind that Paris must be preserved was Otto Abetz, ambassador to the Vichy government. Phoning von Choltitz to say goodbye before his departure, he asked if he could do a final favor, then himself came up with the idea to pen a letter to Foreign Minister Ribbentrop complaining of von Choltitz’s “brutal behavior in Paris”—thus assuring that the military commander would not fall afoul of the Führer.

Thus a few among Germany’s top officers, having seen their own Berlin reduced to smithereens, thought it not a pleasure to inflict upon their victors a like ravaging, rather sparing bronze and stone and marble of the Paris that they could not hold.

If Germans spared France final ignominy, how can it be, I ask myself, that fourscore years after that dust has cleared, our foes need not bestir themselves to topple our great monuments—for our own sons are glad to do it for them?
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The demise of compassion
A political history of the last 20 years

July 31 marked 20 years since a Philadelphia evening beckoned well for both Republicans and a grand old country that needed a new birth of freedom and compassion. Instead, these 20 years gave us big-donor tax reform, war, recession, Black Lives Matter, and ego.

The button shown here was one many delegates and audience members wore at the 2000 Republican National Convention in Philadelphia. I was there on July 31. The button reflected the campaign slogan of president-to-be George W. Bush. He pledged to “encourage an outpouring of giving in America. ... We will give people who don’t itemize the same treatment and incentive as people who do, rewarding and encouraging giving by everyone in our society, not just the wealthy.”

How? Bush was specific: “We will provide for charity tax credits—credits which will allow individuals to give a part of what they owe in state taxes directly to private and religious institutions fighting poverty in their own communities. Individuals will choose who conducts this war on poverty—and their support won’t be filtered through layers of government officials.”

Sadly, the Bush administration in 2001 dropped that key decentralizing component of compassionate conservatism. The reason, as far as I’ve learned: Charity tax credits would mean less revenue for the IRS. Big GOP donors wanted something else that would also cost the Treasury: an end to the estate tax. That took priority.

Then came war in Iraq. Democrats would fund it only if Republicans expanded welfare. The deal ruined the reputation of compassionate conservatism, transformed from a small government measure to a euphemism for big spending. Part of falsely labeled “compassion” was making home loans to people who couldn’t afford them. The collapse of that housing house of cards led to the financial disaster of 2008 and the election of Barack Obama.

Some believed the election of a black president would ease racial tensions. The opposite happened, especially as big media played up tragic results of bad policing without reporting improvements in some cities. “Black lives matter” became a good and true slogan, but the Black Lives Matter organization pledged to “disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure” by creating “villages that collectively care for one another.” BLM also pledged to “foster a queer-affirming network. When we gather, we do so with the intention of freeing ourselves from the tight grip of heteronormative thinking.”

That was obviously a red light to anyone aware of how the Bible right from its beginning embraces the norm of marriage and family. The first two chapters of Genesis teach: “God created man in his own image ... male and female he created them. ... Be fruitful and multiply. ... A man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

This emphasis undergirds the consolation prize God gives Adam after his tragic sin: “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.” Men and women work hard to prosper their families. Economic collectives have never succeeded. When communist governments implemented them in the Soviet Union and in China, tens of millions lacked bread and starved to death.

The BLM movement is utopian and un-Biblical. So are the leftists who now dominate the Democratic Party and complain about both capitalistic and “heteronormative” thinking. The Bible promotes private property as described by Micah: “They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid.” Jesus promotes marriage and says God from the beginning made humans “male and female.”

In 2016 compassionate conservatives gained no traction, since Team Bush had first glorified and then ruined the brand. In crucial primary elections a plurality of Republican voters gave up on persuasion and placed their hope in intimidation. In the general election, facing a deceitful candidate who emphasized “village” over family and business, Donald Trump won. In 2020 we are two nations. Power, money, and compassion abide, but the greatest of these is compassion, which neither major party candidate promotes.
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