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Give the gift of clarity: wng.org/giftofclarity
### Educate With Purpose

#### What Makes Us Unique?

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| 1 | **God’s Word is Central**  
   | Celebrate the world through God's eyes. Our comprehensive preschool through high school program thoroughly integrates Bible with the study of history, geography, science, literature, art, and music while helping children learn a biblical worldview. |
| 2 | **Engages the Whole Family**  
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| 3 | **Enhances Retention with Hands-On Activities**  
   | We all remember what we learn when we experience it. Utilizing simple hands-on projects, children not only read about important concepts and places, but also discover them with fun activities such as history notebooks, timelines, cooking, nature walks, and science projects. |
| 4 | **Wholesome Classic Literature**  
   | Timeless classics and inspiring biographies that develop character are read aloud for the whole family to enjoy together. Our curriculum packages also recommend wholesome grade-appropriate books for independent reading to inspire your child’s love for learning. |
| 5 | **Structured Mornings with Flexible Afternoons**  
   | It is not all about school. We know families have other responsibilities. Our efficient yet complete schedule leaves time for life and service. Use the afternoon for trips to the library, shopping, laundry, family outings, or good old-fashion outdoor play. |

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Nurture the joy of learning for the entire family as you share inspiring read-alouds, simple hands-on projects, and gurgling science experiments. Take a family outing or plan a historic vacation. Dad is encouraged to lead family devotions using the Bible texts in the daily lessons. Our curriculum can be taught to children at several different grade levels all at the same time, resolving the issue of how to split your time among your children and keep track of many different topics.

We all remember what we learn when we experience it. Utilizing simple hands-on projects, children not only read about important concepts and places, but also discover them with fun activities such as history notebooks, timelines, cooking, nature walks, and science projects.

Timeless classics and inspiring biographies that develop character are read aloud for the whole family to enjoy together. Our curriculum packages also recommend wholesome grade-appropriate books for independent reading to inspire your child’s love for learning.

It is not all about school. We know families have other responsibilities. Our efficient yet complete schedule leaves time for life and service. Use the afternoon for trips to the library, shopping, laundry, family outings, or good old-fashion outdoor play.

Celebrate the world through God’s eyes. Our comprehensive preschool through high school program thoroughly integrates Bible with the study of history, geography, science, literature, art, and music while helping children learn a biblical worldview.

God’s Word is Central
Engages the Whole Family
Enhances Retention with Hands-On Activities
Wholesome Classic Literature
Structured Mornings with Flexible Afternoons

Most families that homeschool are on a single income. We make our curriculum affordable (often less than $2 per day per child) by incorporating reusable elements and choosing the best yet most reasonable and lasting resources.

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SEE THE WORLD THROUGH GOD’S EYES
Notes from the CEO

As the mighty grandfather clock in our lobby approached midnight on June 30, WORLD’s Fiscal Year 2019 was near an end, with 2020 on the horizon. It was a very good year, thanks to the Lord’s provision and your generous support of our Spring Giving Drive. You met the giving goal, and then some!

Most of the contributions you made came in the form of checks or credit card charges or direct payments from your bank account. It is not at all uncommon for you to send gifts of stock. Several of you have given cars. Those kinds of gifts happen often enough that we’ve got a process for converting them immediately into liquid assets we can use.

There are more unusual gifts, too. We have been happy participants in complex transactions involving real estate, businesses, retirement accounts, annuities, and a few other things even more complex. Joel Belz tells the story of a family who donated a pig to WORLD. We definitely relied on an “expert consultant” to get the most out of that contribution!

In June, we received an extraordinary donation we did not convert into cash: that stately Howard Miller grandfather clock one of our members provided to us. It chimes on the quarter-hour, same as the bells in the All Souls Cathedral across the street (using the same Westminster tune, too, although we haven’t managed to get them to chime at precisely the same time—yet).

I hear the clock’s chimes back in my office. The chimes, and the towering presence of the clock, remind us of our members’ commitment to our work, our resulting commitment to you, and our absolute urgency to number our days, right down to our quarter-hours. Like every other tool we use in our office, that clock is a gift from God, and a gift from our members, entrusted to us. We pray that we will continue to earn your trust every day.

Kevin
Kevin Martin
kevin@wng.org

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On the face of it, no book focused primarily on the subject of dying holds high promise for becoming a bestseller. Death is hardly the most appealing of all possible topics. And unless the author has actually “been there, and done that,” the book-buying public has reason to be skeptical.

If I tell you as well that this book I want you to read was written by a philosophy and ethics professor at a small college, I realize you may already be turning the page.

So let me put it this way. Even if this were a bad book, I would still consider it an important topic for virtually every WORLD reader. But Bill Davis’ Departing in Peace: Biblical Decision-Making at the End of Life is both rigorous and charming. Read it, and you’ll be a more thoughtful Christian in every facet of your life. You’ll also understand why Davis has for years been among the most popular teachers at Covenant College.

Departing in Peace calls you to disciplined and selfless thinking. That stems from Davis’ unrelenting trust in the authority of the Bible, and his assumption that his readers share that trust. He is no shallow proof-texter. Instead, through the first half of the 300-page book, Davis constructs a thorough, coherent Biblical foundation for Christians who want valid tools for dealing properly with real end-of-life challenges.

For example (and almost as a footnote), he takes the book of Proverbs literally when it tells God’s people not to make financial commitments they have no way to honor. That includes typically hefty end-of-life medical or funeral bills—even when someone’s life might be at stake.

But all that is Davis as a thoughtful professor. The value of this book comes through especially in its second half, where he applies the theory of the book’s first half. Davis tells us—in detail—six different real-life, hospital-based stories.

Here you discover Davis the humble and devoted shepherd, gently but firmly helping his fellow believers grapple with the hard issues of the dying process. This has involved countless middle-of-the-night sessions in hospital rooms and corridors, as well as service on the professional ethics committees of large hospitals.

Typical is the story of Tammy, a little girl from Kazakhstan previously adopted by a Christian couple known to Davis. Tammy becomes the fifth of the couple’s five children, but along the way is discovered to have a badly defective heart. The challenges are many and nuanced. Surgery is called for, but with relatively low expectation of success. The surgery is costly—way beyond the couple’s resources. And the decision is urgent, leaving the parents little time for thought, prayer, and advice.

As is his style with each of the stories, Davis first offers three different choices available to the decision-makers. Then he evaluates each of the three choices on the basis of the Biblical principles developed in the book’s earlier chapters. Only then does Davis suggest his own preferred answer—sometimes humbly changing his mind right here in public. Readers may well differ with his answers—but never will they accuse Davis of cheap responses. Notably, Davis shows how the Bible forces him to hang onto his career-long commitment to the pro-life position.

The book’s last four chapters offer final proof of the author’s practical bent. First comes specific guidance for filling out “advance directive” documents, spelling out your preferences as the end of your own life approaches. Next is a frank chapter on money and end-of-life issues. Then comes a visit to a modern hospital and an introduction to the pertinent people, equipment, and procedures you’re likely to find there. And finally, Davis offers his readers a list of “things to do now.”

Scripture says that “it is appointed unto men once to die.” So it’s hard for me to think of a more universally applicable package of wisdom than what Bill Davis has put between the covers of this book. If you can’t find a copy of your own, borrow one. Or ask the deacons in your church to make one available to you and your friends. ©
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Crowd control
A U.S. Border Patrol agent speaks with migrants whom American officials had taken into custody in Los Ebanos, a Texas border town next to the Rio Grande. Hundreds of people had turned themselves in to Border Patrol after illegally rafting across the river from Mexico, part of a recent wave of migrants seeking asylum in the United States.

JOHN MOORE/GETTY IMAGES
Summer hit full stride in July, but backyard barbecues faced stiff competition from indoor pursuits: Netflix released the third season of its nostalgia-fueled hit *Stranger Things* on July 4 and reported more than 40 million households streamed the show during the first week. The massive viewership broke streaming records, but a Netflix account wasn’t necessary to watch plenty of other strange things unfold during July.

In Washington, D.C., some Democratic lawmakers accused House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of being too moderate—a strange charge the congresswoman from California doesn’t often face. Pelosi hit back at four freshmen congresswomen who criticized her for passing a border bill they didn’t deem sufficient. Pelosi questioned their reach of influence beyond Twitter. One of the four freshmen—Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y.—said Pelosi’s comments were disrespectful to “newly elected women of color.”

What sounded like a silly fight revealed serious fissures in the Democratic coalition ahead of the 2020 elections, as the party battles over how far left it will go: Its leaders know that moderate and independent voters will be crucial to electoral victories. But far-left lawmakers, like the four congresswomen Pelosi sparred with, have grabbed headlines with a slew of controversial statements and proposals. Republican lawmakers likely didn’t mind the open display of disunity in the Democratic Party. But the dynamic took a stranger turn on July 14 when President Trump seemed to aim a series of tweets at the four minority congresswomen. He said they should “go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came … you can’t leave fast enough.”

Three of the four congresswomen were born and raised in America. The fourth is a naturalized U.S. citizen. In a flash, the Democratic Party was united again—at least for the moment.

Some Americans broke from politics to celebrate the Fourth of July, just as Nike scrapped its release of a limited-edition sneaker emblazoned with a 1770s American flag. NFL star and activist Colin Kaepernick reportedly complained the flag came from an era when slavery was allowed in America.

That’s true, but Betsy Ross, the Philadelphia seamstress usually remembered for her flag-making during the American Revolution, was also a Quaker—a religious group that moved to prohibit its members from holding slaves in the late 1770s. Two replicas of the flag she’s credited with creating were prominently displayed during President Barack Obama’s second inauguration in 2013.

Corporate activism reached another strange level with another limited-edition product: transgender-themed Oreos. The snack giant gave away the cookies at a World Pride event in New York City, but reported it didn’t have immediate plans to sell them in stores.
Still, Oreo’s Twitter account encouraged consumers to share the pronoun of their preferred gender and imprinted the snacks with a range of possibilities: “she/her,” “he/him,” and “they/them.” The company packaged the Oreos in the colors of the transgender flag.

Customers can buy a transgender flag on Amazon.com, but they won’t be able to buy several books by a certain author anymore: Amazon officials confirmed on July 3 they had removed several titles by Joseph Nicolosi, an author known for his writings on homosexuality.

Nicolosi, who died in 2017, advocated reparative therapy—a form of counseling aimed at helping people reduce or change same-sex attractions. The therapy has been controversial, including among some Christians who don’t think it’s the best approach to helping those who battle same-sex attractions.

But banning books based on one approach to a problem could lead to banning books based on any approach to the same problem—and perhaps any titles that hold to a Biblical view of sexuality. Christopher Yuan, the evangelical author of the recently released Holy Sexuality and the Gospel, called Amazon’s move “chilling.”

Also chilling: Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization confirmed it had increased its uranium enrichment level to 4.5 percent and had fulfilled its threat to exceed the limit set in a 2015 deal with global powers.

Meanwhile, the Russian Orthodox Church debated banning its priests from blessing weapons of mass destruction. Religion News Service reported that Russian Orthodox priests have formally blessed surface-to-air missiles, nuclear submarines, tanks, and fighter jets.

A church committee has recommended priests bless soldiers rather than weapons, but some object to the change. Vsevolod Chaplin, an influential priest, told a Russian newspaper that nuclear weapons were the country’s “guardian angels” to protect Russians “from enslavement by the West.”

A debate over whether priests should sanctify weapons of mass destruction? Stranger things have happened.
Enforced
The Trump administration announced it would implement a new rule for people seeking asylum at the U.S. border with Mexico that likely will affect most Central American migrants. Under the rule, migrants will be ineligible for asylum in the United States if they failed to apply for protection in other countries they passed through on their way to the U.S. border. The announcement is the latest of President Donald Trump’s efforts to stem the tide of Central American migrants at the southern border and likely will face court challenges. The rule builds on a provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act that says people who migrate through a safe country to the United States must first apply for asylum in that country.

Foiled
Sudan’s ruling transitional military council said on July 11 it foiled a coup attempt days after reaching a governing agreement with the civilian-led opposition. Lt. Gen. Jamal Omar, a member of the council, said in a statement that authorities detained at least 16 active and retired officials from the army and the National Intelligence and Security Service. “This is an attempt to block the agreement... that aims to open the road for Sudanese people to achieve their demands,” Omar said. The military council and the civilian opposition alliance had announced a power-sharing agreement July 5 that ended weeks of violence and stalled talks following the military ouster of longtime Sudanese leader Omar al-Bashir in April. More than 250 people had died in the clashes.

Survived
A man swept over Niagara Falls survived, according to a police report from Ontario, Canada. The police were called in to Horseshoe Falls on July 9 with a report of a man in crisis. Horseshoe is the largest of the three falls that make up the famous Niagara. The man climbed over a wall set up to protect tourists from the water and was caught by the current, falling 188 feet into the Lower Niagara River. CNN reported that police found the unidentified man down the river, sitting on the bank. He was taken to a hospital for treatment but his life isn’t in danger.

Died
Eva Kor, a survivor of experiments in Auschwitz, died on July 4 at the age of 85. The Nazis took Kor and her twin sister Miriam to the death camp in 1944, and the two became part of Josef Mengele’s pseudoscientific experiments on twins. In Kor’s memoir, *Echoes From Auschwitz*, she tells her story, including the day Mengele’s lab gave her an injection that almost killed her. She knew that if she had died Mengele would have killed Miriam as well so he could perform a double autopsy. However, the twins were the only members of their family to survive the camp. They were liberated in 1945 and emigrated to Israel. Together, the two started a nonprofit organization called Candles after reuniting over 100 other twins who had survived their suffering under Mengele.

Died
H. Ross Perot, Texas billionaire and ex-presidential candidate, died on July 9 at age 89. Perot founded Electronic Data Systems in 1962, and the company made Perot one of America’s richest men. His fame came, however, from his attempt to fly food to American POWs during the Vietnam War and a commando raid he mounted in 1979 to free two of his employees from an Iranian prison. Perot would leverage these stories and his money for attempts to win the presidency as a third-party candidate in 1992 and 1996. He finished with 19 percent of the popular vote in 1992 and was the most successful third-party candidate since Theodore Roosevelt. Perot also wrote several books on politics and economics as well as giving millions to schools and hospitals.
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**‘We’re almost extinct.’**

LIU HU, an independent journalist in China, on investigative journalists under the government of President Xi Jinping. “The government has made its citizens ignorant,” Liu said of the harassment of reporters and sources. “The public’s eyes are blind, their ears are deaf, and their mouths have no words.”

**‘I jumped right in because that’s what a pro-life woman should do.’**

Pro-life activist ABBY JOHNSON, in a Fox News op-ed, on going to the southern border to provide humanitarian relief during the migrant crisis. Johnson blasted Democratic politicians at the border who declined Johnson’s request for help unloading a truck of relief supplies: “They looked stunned that someone had the gall to ask them to actually do something, as in not just for the cameras.”

**‘You would never fit into our pack or what this team stands for.’**

U.S. women’s soccer player ASHLYN HARRIS, in a tweet about American soccer player Jaelene Hinkle, who had decided not to join the American women’s soccer team because of requirements to wear an LGBT pride jersey. “Hinkle, our team is about inclusion,” Harris stated in the same tweet in which she said Hinkle wouldn’t fit in.

**‘Congress has said that you cannot support abortion as a method of family planning. We’re just finally enforcing it.’**

ALEX AZAR, secretary of Health and Human Services, on the Trump administration’s move to prevent groups receiving federal grants, under Title X, from using the funds to “perform, promote, refer to, or support abortion as a method of family planning.” On July 11, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals refused to block the rule.

**‘I did the best I could.’**

Former U.S. Supreme Court Justice JOHN PAUL STEVENS on his legacy. Stevens, appointed to the court by Republican Gerald Ford in 1975, became one of the court’s most liberal members, reaffirming the Roe v. Wade decision and opposing the death penalty.
CULTIVATING HOMELESSNESS
**Something to crow about**

A case involving a French rooster’s crowing highlights the tension between lifelong residents of rural France and retirees looking for a tranquil home outside the city. A recently arrived retired couple made a formal noise pollution complaint against a rooster named Maurice who, they say, crows too early and too loudly in the morning. Owner Corinne Fesseau defended her bird in court on July 4, saying Maurice is only doing what roosters were born to do. Fesseau has lived in Oléron, a rural island off of France’s west coast for 35 years. She argued that backyard chickens are part of life in Oléron. A number of cockerel owners gathered outside the courthouse in solidarity. The court should make a decision by September.

**Small slug, big punch**

After a thorough investigation, Japanese rail officials say a slug was to blame for a power outage that halted rail traffic and stranded 12,000 passengers. Officials with Japan Railways said they found the slug’s electrocuted corpse inside electrical equipment next to the tracks. The power outage stopped almost 30 trains. In 2016 a weasel bit a high-voltage wire at a particle accelerator near Geneva, Switzerland, causing the Large Hadron Collider to short-circuit and go offline.

**Body count**

Nevada Highway Patrol Trooper Travis Smaka has heard hundreds of excuses to try and get out of traffic tickets. The one from July 1 ranks as one of his favorites. Smaka pulled over a minivan for driving in the high-occupancy-vehicle lane ostensibly without a passenger. But the Chrysler minivan happened to be a hearse carrying a dead body in the back. “So, he doesn’t count in the back?” the driver reportedly asked the trooper. He did not. Smaka let the hearse driver off with a warning, but reminded him that dead bodies, mannequins, and pets do not count in the HOV lane.

**Garden variety**

July 1 marked the day Hermine Ricketts was able to start gardening at home again—following a six-year legal battle and a state law. In 2013, officials in Miami Shores, Fla., informed Ricketts that she would have to stop tending her front-yard garden because of a newly passed city ordinance. Ricketts protested, saying that since her home faced south, her backyard was too shady to grow plants. Facing a $50-per-day fine, she pulled up her garden and hired a lawyer to fight city hall. But before she could wrap up her lawsuit, the Florida Legislature passed a law nullifying community prohibitions on front-yard gardens. Gov. Ron DeSantis signed the bill, and Ricketts and her husband got busy planting tomatoes, jalapeños, squash, and okra and hoping for a good fall harvest.
We all screamed
In the wake of a viral video showing a Texas woman opening a Blue Bell ice cream carton, licking the ice cream, and putting the carton back in the freezer case, a Corpus Christi, Texas, Walmart placed an “armed” guard in the ice cream aisle. The late June video of a young woman licking the Blue Bell Tin Roof ice cream in Lufkin, Texas, caused strong denunciations, and police had been talking up charges of second-degree felony tampering that could carry a prison term of 20 years. As it turned out, the suspect is a minor and therefore won’t face charges that stiff. Regardless, a Walmart store in Corpus Christi placed an employee on guard with a water gun to scare off any copycat cases in the lead-up to the July Fourth holiday.

Encroaching roaches
Scientists from Purdue University are warning that cockroaches are becoming immune to insecticide. According to a study published in June in *Scientific Reports* and spearheaded by Michael Scharf, German cockroach populations not only developed a resistance to insecticide but also picked up immunity to insecticides not used in the study. “[This] will make controlling these pests almost impossible with chemicals alone,” Scharf said. The typical German cockroach female can lay nearly 400 eggs during her 100-day lifespan.

Quick turnover
It took a Canadian man just 10 minutes to lose his brand-new supercar. Driving his 2019 *McLaren 600LT* valued at $256,500 for the first time, the unidentified driver from Coquitlam, British Columbia, was reportedly pulled over by police on June 17 for traveling 100 mph—almost double the posted speed limit. Because of the excessive speed, Canadian police impounded the vehicle for seven days and issued the driver a $368 ticket.

Led astray
An aggressive Google Maps driving direction led to dozens of drivers getting stuck in mud en route to Denver International Airport. A large crash on Peña Boulevard in Aurora, Colo., on June 23 caused GPS applications like Google Maps to search for a quicker route to the airport. Driver Connie Monsees told KMGH that she and about 100 other drivers seemed to be following smartphone directions onto a dirt road. Unbeknownst to the mapping program—or the drivers—the dirt road was impassible after recent heavy rainfall, and most of the motorists became stuck behind a few cars that had become bogged down in mud. Those with all-wheel drive vehicles were able to get through, and Monsees says she picked up a few stranded motorists and delivered them to the airport.
Oberlin’s fervor
 WHEN IDEALS HARDEN INTO IDEOLOGY, INJUSTICES FOLLOW

Liberal Arts, released in 2012, is an unassuming film tribute from actor Josh Radnor to his alma mater, Kenyon College. In the film, Radnor’s character is experiencing an early midlife crisis when he receives an invitation to the retirement party of his favorite professor. Returning to campus, he sees from the perspective of a worldly-wise Gen Xer rather than a wide-eyed freshman. The professors are cynical, the students are scary, and the attachment he forms with a quirky freshman girl doesn’t go where they expect—and yet. The adventurous mind he first acquired at college reawakens, impervious to human imperfection. It follows him back to his uninspiring job in New York (an academic job, ironically) and refreshes his soul.

Idealistic as it seems, that’s what a liberal-arts education is supposed to do. Traditionally, anyway. Now it’s hard to say exactly what it’s supposed to do, especially since Kenyon’s neighboring Ohio institution, Oberlin College, blundered into a legal hot mess.

No school has a better claim than Oberlin to the “Liberal Arts” label. Founded in 1833 by a pair of Presbyterian ministers who described the institution as “peculiar in what is good,” Oberlin was the first coed college in the United States and the first to admit students of all races. While evangelist Charles Finney served as president, Oberlin became a touchstone of the abolitionist movement. But the school’s idealism made a hard left turn in the late 20th century, leading to a rude awakening in the 21st.

During the fall semester of 2016, three African American freshmen tried to purchase liquor at Gibson’s Bakery, a family-owned business serving Oberlin students and staff since 1905. When the shop owner’s son refused their fake ID, one of the students walked out with a bottle of wine. The owner’s son pursued, the shoplifters fled, punches were allegedly thrown, and all three students were arrested.

Given their race, this looked like a clear case of bigotry to students and administration. The ensuing weeks of protests, chants, and boycotts caused significant loss for the bakery, especially after the administration canceled long-standing catering contracts. The dean of students, communications officer, and presidential assistant were all personally involved in the uproar. Finally, wounded by damage to their reputation no less than their revenue, the Gibsons sued.

In June, a jury of “townies” decided in the Gibsons’ favor and awarded a total of $44 million in damages, punitive and compensatory. Careless college activism had—finally—gone too far.

Reading deeper into the case, Gibson’s Bakery comes off as firm but reasonable and Oberlin as arrogant and condescending—even proposing, in early talks, that the bakery allow their students one incident of shoplifting before pressing charges. Would any business agree to let customers with a student ID rob them “just once”? Such details likely prompted the exorbitant award (which has been reduced to a mere $25 million). But maybe other administrators in other colleges will think twice before letting wild accusations get wilder.

Or maybe not. Gibson’s Bakery v. Oberlin College is a glaring example of what happens when ideals become ideology. Born in evangelical fervor and dedicated to the proposition that all men (and women) are created equal, Oberlin eventually let propositions crush people. The college stood for the oppressed by oppressing its next-door neighbors.

The same spirit is at work in Seattle and other West Coast cities, where ideology about homelessness runs roughshod over citizens wanting clean sidewalks. In California, ideology about zoning and the environment jack housing costs out of reach for middle-class Joes. Ideology about women’s “reproductive rights” silences post-abortive women who are riddled with guilt—not to mention silencing generations of future women. And ideology about wealth redistribution, now playing on presidential debate stages, has led to the murder of literal millions who had no wealth or vote.

While standing for godly principles, Christians mustn’t forget that Christ offers not ideology but Himself. Rather than standing for the oppressed, He meets them one by one. Instead of broad-stroking endless guilt, He identifies sin with surgical precision and freely forgives. Can we do any less?
EMPOWER PEOPLE out of poverty.
"The state of the Middle East is frequently focused on Israel. It really needs to focus on the relationship between Persia and Babylon, or in this case, Iraq and Iran."

—George Friedman, geopolitical forecaster, Season 1, Episode 1 of The Olasky Interview

A brand new podcast from WORLD Radio is here. It’s called The Olasky Interview.

Hosted by reporter Jill Nelson, listen to (you guessed it) WORLD editor-in-chief Marvin Olasky conduct in-depth interviews with prominent authors, politicians, and thought leaders. Season 1 guests include Albert Mohler, Ann Voskamp, Min Jin Lee, Ben Carson, and others.

Get the full story with The Olasky Interview. Available everywhere you listen to podcasts.
It may be a little early to trot out the old “feel-good movie of the year” designation, but it’s going to be tough to beat director Danny Boyle’s Yesterday.

Boyle is perhaps best known for Slumdog Millionaire. Here, veteran romantic comedy screenwriter Richard Curtis (Four Weddings and a Funeral, Notting Hill, Love Actually) has given him an equally optimistic script to work with.

After a worldwide power outage, struggling singer-songwriter Jack Malik (Himesh Patel) awakens in the hospital to discover he’s the only one who can remember the Beatles. “Hey Jude,” “Let It Be,” “I Want to Hold Your Hand”... no one’s ever heard of those songs before. At least, not until Jack begins playing them to the delight of his long-suffering childhood friend and manager, Ellie—the only one who’s never doubted he has genius hiding somewhere inside. But what begins in pure celebration of music soon spirals into full-blown artistic theft.

At the peak (one hopes) of our current “cancel culture,” Yesterday is almost revolutionary in its kindness toward its main characters. Without giving too much away, we all know it’s not OK for Jack to claim work that isn’t his. And, in other hands, one scene that deals with his duplicity would surely end in a moment of pharisaical condemnation. Instead, Boyle resolves it with such surprising grace and generosity, you want to weep with gratitude.

What criticism has been lobbed at Yesterday is generally due to its lack of darkness, because Jack doesn’t spiral into problems generally associated with stardom. But partying and drug use would be
beside the point. Jack’s main problem is imposter syndrome on steroids. He needs no other issue to grapple with, especially as it allows the film to get at greater and more worthwhile themes.

Yesterday acts as a subtle rebuke to other musical biopics of late, such as Bohemian Rhapsody and Rocketman, that subtly suggest only lives of artistic geniuses are worthy of our admiration. Only people who create something the whole world holds dear have really lived to the utmost. Poppycock, says Yesterday. Jack’s appeal is that he is average. He has average songwriting ability, average stage presence. His only above-average quality is his love for music and his joy in sharing that love with others.

Pop songs tap into our emotions in ways at once individual and collective. The story recognizes this without idolizing the individuals who possess the rare ability to write them well. Instead of bowing at the feet of John, Paul, George, and Ringo, it stands back in wonder at a world where such creation and shared experience is possible.

Though the language earns it a PG-13 rating, Yesterday is also one of the most chaste romantic comedies in recent memory, even as it trades on obstacles to love that feel especially modern.

I read some reviews that argued that, as Ellie, Lily James is so luminous and lovable, it requires too much suspension of disbelief for Jack not to be already in love with her. To that I can only say those reviewers must not know many millennial women. Being disregarded by millennial men focused on goals that don’t include serious relationships isn’t just plausible, it’s epidemic.

Try to think of the last big-budget romantic comedy in which an awkward “morning after” scene didn’t play a major role. Here, Ellie instead understands instinctively early on that a one-night stand with Jack will cheapen their relationship. When a later scene implies (but doesn’t show) sex outside of wedlock, the film nonetheless ties it to marriage and family, and upholds both as blessings.

Do I need to tell you how Jack and Ellie’s story ends? I won’t. It’s enough to say that it celebrates the grace of life. And with a film like that, you know we should be glad. @

### BOX OFFICE TOP 10

FOR THE WEEKEND OF JULY 12-14

according to Box Office Mojo

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*Reviewed by WORLD

**Documentary**

**Bethany Hamilton: Unstoppable**

Even as a 13-year-old, Bethany Hamilton was a determined person: She was back on a surfboard four weeks after losing her left arm to a shark. Hamilton became famous through her book Soul Surfer and the 2011 movie of the same name. While she’s proud of that film, the competitive surfer wanted to tell more of her story—warts and all. The result is the new documentary Bethany Hamilton: Unstoppable. Tom and Cheri Hamilton raised their family on the island of Kauai, with surfing a major part of their lives. Young Bethany and her friend Alana Blanchard attacked the waves with gusto and began to win local competitions. The Hamiltons filmed much of Bethany’s childhood, on the water and at home, and this archival footage rounds out her story. In one prescient scene, Bethany’s mom asks her, “Aren’t you scared of sharks?” “No!” the little girl responds. “You just pray about it.”

After Beth loses her arm to a massive tiger shark, a video shows the huge bite taken out of her surfboard. Her survival despite major blood loss is miraculous, and her recovery is quick. In one scene, as a partially disabled surfer visits Beth in the hospital, viewers can sense her young mind churning with the possibilities of getting back out on the water.

Despite the odds against a one-armed athlete, Hamilton becomes a professional surfer, winning competitions through gritty willpower and lots of practice. When she finds out she’s pregnant, she worries how she’ll be a good mom with one arm. Later scenes show her easily caring for her little boy, nursing between heats in a competition, and changing a diaper with the aid of both feet.

Unstoppable doesn’t make a big deal of the Hamiltons’ Christian faith, although we see prayer before a competition and other glimpses of their Christian walk. Viewers will leave amazed at how God can use even a tragic accident for good.

—by MARTY VANDRIEL
Movie

The Lion King

While it may not match the appeal of Cinderella or The Jungle Book, Disney’s latest live-action remake of an animated classic, The Lion King, is for the most part done well.

The PG-rated film shines with innocent humor: HBO’s fake newsman John Oliver makes the part of Zazu the hornbill uniquely his. Seth Rogen’s gravelly, low-register voice feels created especially for the part of an anthropomorphized warthog.

Yet the film stumbles slightly in the leads. As we’d expect, Donald Glover (as adult lion prince Simba) and Beyoncé (as love interest Nala) knock the songs out of the park. But they feel flat whenever they’re not singing. The Lion King is so stunningly realistic, you at times forget you’re not watching a nature documentary. But there’s a downside to this, too. Even at their happiest or most sorrowful, the animals retain the blank faces of real animals, robbing the film of some emotion.

That’s a shame given what a tremendous drama The Lion King is, almost Shakespearean in its use of classic archetypes. A reckless and proud prince fails to heed his kingly father’s lessons. Only when the prince goes into exile after his father dies at the hands of a wicked uncle does he begin to understand his father’s wisdom. In the wilderness, he faces the temptations of cowardly, worldly philosophy: Life is meaningless, we owe nothing to a larger community, and we should pursue our own selfish pleasures. Catchy as the tune is, this is what Timon and Pumbaa are really counseling with “Hakuna Matata.”

Eventually, suffering refines the prince’s character. He remembers who he is and returns home, humbled and heroic, ready to wrest his rightful throne away from the usurper who has built an army of the envious. Simba seeks traditional order not for his own sake, but for the sake of his people. As his father Mufasa advises, “While others search for what they can take, a true king searches for what he can give.” Not a bad paraphrasing of Christ’s lesson that to be great in the kingdom, you must be a servant of all.

—by MEGAN BASHAM

Losers

French figure skater Surya Bonaly placed fourth at the 1994 Winter Olympics, two places behind American sweet-heart Nancy Kerrigan. Afterward, Bonaly walked into an empty dressing room and cried, frustrated that she hadn’t medaled. Still, she pressed on to compete in the 1994 World Figure Skating Championships, landing difficult jumps and combinations. There, she faced disappointment again, earning silver instead of the gold she believed she deserved.

What happens to athletes who fail? Do they become bitter? Rise above despair? That’s the focus of Netflix’s new documentary series Losers.

The eight episodes, directed by Mickey Duzyj, each tell the story of a promising competitor who experiences defeat. Like golfer Jean van de Velde, poised to be the first Frenchman in 92 years to win the 1999 British Open. He bungled it—big time. Or ultramarathoner Mauro Prosperi, who wanted to place in the Marathon Des Sables, an endurance race in the Sahara Desert. He found himself dead last—and nearly dead.

Although secular in perspective, the series is infused with humor and hope and easily lends itself to faith-based discussions. The athletes learn lessons compatible with Biblical truths. Many end up using their skills in a manner more in line with how God created them, such as basketball talent Jack “Jack Black” Ryan, who blew an opportunity to play for the NBA but found meaningful work making kids laugh as a trick performer for the Harlem Wizards.

No need to watch the episodes in order: Simply pick the sporting events that appeal most. Only the first is riddled with scattered swearing), as former boxer Michael Bentt speaks about the emotional effects of an abusive father and a humiliating knockout. Skip it if you must, although you’ll miss this line by writer-director Ron Shelton: “People who are considered winners are, in my mind, some of the great losers of all time, and people who are called losers are, to me, some of the great winners of all time.”

Losers shows why that’s often true.

—by JENNY ROUGH
Wars on poverty
GETTING THE RIGHT AMMUNITION by Marvin Olasky

About once a month a WORLD reader asks me, “What should I read to learn how to help the poor and how not to?”


Now, my bookcase runneth over with good advice. Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert’s When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor ... and Yourself has probably received the most attention: The two authors also have out a practical guide, Helping Without Hurting in Church Benevolence. Fikkert and Russell Mask added in 2015 From Dependence to Dignity: How to Alleviate Poverty Through Church-Centered Microfinance.

Darrow Miller has authored or co-authored three excellent books: Lifework, which examines worldview and vocation; Discipling Nations, which unites worldview analysis with sound perspectives on international development; and Rethinking Social Justice: Restoring Biblical Compassion. Michael Novak and Paul Adams try to rescue the term from the left in Social Justice Isn’t What You Think It Is.

Five other books give some realism to international poverty fighting. Economist Thomas Sowell, as always, cuts to the chase in Wealth, Poverty and Politics. Wayne Grudem and Barry Asmus provide a Christian perspective in The Poverty of Nations. William Easterly’s The Elusive Quest for Growth describes adventures and misadventures, while his The Tyranny of Experts exposes how economists have often hugged dictators and ignored the poor. Easterly’s playfully titled The White Man’s Burden shows Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good.

Robert Lupton in Toxic Charity uses his decades of experience in domestic poverty fighting to show how churches and charities often hurt those they try to help—and in Charity Detox he proposes a way out. Peter Greer is co-author of two books that show what can go wrong: The Spiritual Danger of Doing Good and Mission Drift. Tim Chester’s Good News to the Poor shows how evangelism and Biblical social action should go together.

Case studies of what works include Peter Cove’s Poor No More, which examines the success of America Works, and David Apple’s Not Just a Soup Kitchen, a story of the Mercy Ministry at Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. Golden Opportunity by Cody Teets looks at careers that began at McDonald’s, and Making Neighborhoods Whole contains advice from Wayne Gordon and John Perkins.

The best Christian left book on the subject remains Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger by Ron Sider. Well-written books from the secular left include Barbara Ehrenreich’s Nickel and Dimed, Andrea Campbell’s Trapped in America’s Safety Net, Linda Tirado’s Hand to Mouth, and Matthew Desmond’s Evicted. Arthur Brooks shows in Who Really Cares that the most charitable Americans are religious conservatives.

William Voegeli’s Never Enough: America’s Limitless Welfare State shows one consequence of secular liberal ideas, and Nicholas Eberstadt’s Men Without Work shows another. Clearing Obstacles to Work by David Bass shows how philanthropists could help. Udo Middelmann’s Christianity Versus Fatalistic Religions in the War Against Poverty exposes underlying theological errors, and CityServe: Your Guide to Church-Based Compassion compiles 47 essays with varied approaches. My own contributions to the literature: Renewing American Compassion, Compassionate Conservatism, and The Politics of Disaster, all of which followed a book of mine that gained wide attention in 1995, The Tragedy of American Compassion. The 1990s was the first time in 50 years when Americans believed we had no external enemies and could focus on compassion for the poor.

That time may not come again for a long time. Patrick Garry’s Conservatism Redefined is “a creed for the poor and disadvantaged,” but conservatives now seem more accepting of ancient Rome’s martial virtues than early Christianity’s emphasis on compassion.
Four self-published or small press books
reviewed by World Journalism Institute students

**MEDITATION TIMES WITH ELMA: AN ODYSSEY THROUGH THE TROUBLED SEAS OF DEMENTIA**
*O. Keith Hueftle (The Vineyard Bookstore, 2018)*

During the last three years of her life, Elma Hueftle suffered from severe dementia. This book is a firsthand account of those years, written from her husband's point of view in diarylike style. Each entry describes Elma's changing condition. Even when Elma seemed unresponsive, Keith Hueftle talked and prayed with her, reminding her of God's faithfulness in the past and promises for the future. He includes those conversations here: “Our ‘warfare’ in this Final Season is to wait on and trust God. And as we continue to do so, He’s been doing that quiet finishing work in us.” —Macy Hrncir

**GIVE GOD AND ME A CHANCE**
*Laney Jeans (Hear My Heart Publishing, 2018)*

Laney Jeans' short book has one main purpose: to encourage readers to look beyond a disability label to see the person underneath. The book is about her daughter, Carey Jeans, born with Down syndrome at a time when doctors and teachers expected little from people with that condition. Laney's Christian faith helped her see her daughter as an image-bearer. Laney and her husband gave Carey opportunities to shine: She learned to read and memorize Scripture, play the piano and violin, and sign. She serves in church. The book's conversational tone invites readers to see Carey as a person, with strengths and weaknesses like the rest of us. —Gigi Holst

**USELESS ORGANS: THE RISE AND FALL OF A CENTRAL CLAIM OF EVOLUTION**
*Jerry Bergman (Bartlett Publishing, 2019)*

Bergman explores the science of so-called vestigial organs, such as the appendix, that seem to have no function. Proponents of evolution point to these organs as proof of their theory, but Bergman believes evolutionary assumptions have hampered scientific exploration. He covers the history of vestigial thought and then discusses common examples. Written from an intelligent design perspective, the book offers a well-researched look at various organs and their functions. Its many diagrams and extensive explanations help make the sometimes-technical material accessible to the diligent nonscientist. —Leif Le Mahieu

**PACKING LIGHT FOR THE JOURNEY OF MOTHERHOOD**
*Laura Ellis (WestBow Press, 2017)*

“Trust the Master and not the method,” Ellis writes in this Biblical guide to motherhood. She fills the book with stories of her own experience raising seven children. Ellis uses Scripture and personal stories to encourage mothers to seek Christ and forgo the self-righteous security blankets (or anxiety-inducing burdens) that often take shape in the form of rigorous family schedules, specific birth plans, and organic-food-only meal prep. Ellis is conversational and honest. She discerns gray areas in family life and offers a light but theologically sound look at maternal responsibilities. —Mikaela Stiner

**AFTERWORD**

Leya Delray's *Where Daffodils Bloom* (Ink River Press, 2018) is a World War II love story between an American soldier and an English woman. The novel is based on a true tale, with the author filling in pieces that speak of letting go of fear, hate, and distrust. Delray veers into sentimentality at times, but readers will relate to characters who don't often speak directly of God in early chapters but are part of a story that builds to poignant illustration of Biblical truths. —Sophia Rosgaard

Diane C. Jones wrote *A Dove on the Distant Oaks: Poems of Grief and Healing* (Lulu.com, 2018) after her severely disabled son died at the age of 22 and her parents died soon after. Her poems show that God “heals the broken-hearted and bandages their wounds.” The poems move from pain to healing, and many reflect the Psalms that inspired them. All show trust in the living God. —Steven Curcio

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August 3, 2019 • WORLD Magazine 23
Reading menagerie
FOUR PICTURE BOOKS ABOUT ANIMALS
reviewed by Susan Olasky

A FATHER’S LOVE Hannah Holt
In this rhyming book for young children, Holt focuses on animals where the father plays a role in raising the young. She includes penguins, foxes, marmosets, lions, toads, sea horses, falcons, wolves, and emus. In each case she highlights the breadth and quality of a father’s love. The father fox “keeps them safe by digging chutes. This father’s love runs deep as roots.” The lion cub “charges Dad with baby claws. This father’s love has velvet paws.” The book ends with images of human dads holding their babies: “Kids fall asleep with fingers curled. A father’s love could hold the world.” (Ages 3-7)

BEWARE OF THE CROCODILE Martin Jenkins
This nonfiction book about crocodiles reads like a storybook. Illustrations often stretch across two pages, leaving plenty of room to emphasize teeth. On one spread, we see the shadow of a huge croc waiting in the water for a creature to come close. “And then? Then there’ll be a sudden lunge and a tremendous SPLASH. And then? Oh, dear. What happens next is rather gruesome. In fact it’s so gruesome that we should skip the details.” That kind of humor and page-turning suspense coupled with lots of interesting information about crocodiles makes this a great book for the young nature lover or reluctant reader. (Ages 5-8)

NOAH BUILDS AN ARK Kate Banks
A big storm is coming, and a boy named Noah builds an ark in the backyard for small critters. First he removes the wheels from his red wagon and adds slatted sides, a roof, and a ramp. When he’s done, he calls in the animals: field mice, beetles, spiders, snakes, toads, and hummingbirds. When the rain falls, Noah is safe inside his house, and the critters are safe in the ark. Finally, the rain stops. A rainbow arcs across the sky. Noah and his dad say hallelujah. Pencil-and-watercolor illustrations give life to this reenactment of the Biblical story. (Ages 3-7)

HUMMINGBIRD Nicola Davies
This lovely book tells of the heroic journey of tiny ruby-throated hummingbirds, which migrate 2,000 miles each spring. Davies includes factual information in story form. A granny and her granddaughter feed the hummingbirds that flutter around them. The little girl is moving north, and so are the birds. The book traces the birds’ flight from Central America to New York, showing what they eat and where they nest. By late summer it’s time for them to make the long flight back. An index at the end helps young readers locate information. Lush watercolor illustrations decorate each page. (Ages 5-8)

AFTERWORD
Jutta Hilpuesch’s An ABC of Flowers (Philomel Books, 2019) is lovely to look at. Each page features a large alphabet letter and a close-up photo of a flower that begins with that letter. A tiny stick-figure girl, Amelie, frolics on each page. The letter Q has a close-up of Queen Anne’s Lace with Amelie swinging from it. The details in the close-up photos highlight God’s incredible creativity. I’d never noticed how each blossom on a Queen Anne’s Lace looks like a tiny pansy.

Lara Hawthorne’s The Night Flower (Big Picture Press, 2019) offers a stunning peek into desert life. At the center is the saguaro cactus, which blooms only one night each year. She explains in rhyme the life cycle of the desert and the cactus. Watercolor illustrations depict a thriving place, abounding in wildlife. When the cactus blooms, even more creatures appear. The book includes at the back additional facts, a glossary, and a “Did you spot...?” game. —S.O.
College isn’t the last step before entering the real world.

You’re already taking on the real world—right now, today.

Sure, you need a degree. But you’re the kind of person who needs more. You need to do something that matters. For Christ, the One who matters.

We get it. We promise we don’t want to shelter you from the real world. We want to help you take it on.

Because the real world doesn’t start after college.

The real world is now.

Schedule a campus visit at dordt.edu/visit. Also, check out our visit day reimbursement program at dordt.edu/travel.
In 2013 the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office denied an Oregon punk rock band’s request to trademark its name, “The Slants,” on grounds it disparaged Asian Americans. The band, led by California native Simon Tam, appealed: He says its goal was to reclaim the term from racial slurs and “inject it with pride.” In 2017, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the trademark denial violated the First Amendment and granted the band’s request. Since then, Tam has written a memoir and started a foundation to help Asian American artists.

How did you decide on the name for the band? I started having conversations with people around me. I asked them, “What’s something you think all Asian people have in common?” Over and over, the answer was the same: slanted eyes, which I always thought was interesting because it’s not true. Not all Asian people have slanted eyes, and we’re not the only people on earth to have slanted eyes. But also, we could sing about our perspective, our “slant” on life—what it’s like to be people of color. As a kid I was ridiculed for having slanted eyes, and I thought, “How cool would it be to reappropriate that, to inject it with pride and empowerment instead of shame?”

What in your life prepared you for going to the Supreme Court? A lot of my life experience has taught me to try and avoid these kinds of up-front assumptions that we make based on stereotypes of race, religion, and political identity. It’s just so easy to force people into these convenient categories. Growing up, I was the last person to be called on in English class, even though I had the best grade in the class. I was the first person to be called on in math, even though my math grades were terrible! I was beat up many times, violently attacked for looking the way I do, for having an Asian face.

Were you angry? I saw this as an opportunity to extend compassion to other people. I truly believe that behind hate, behind ignorance, there’s probably a story of pain. There’s a reason why people are hurting and why they choose to lash out at others in that particular way. I found rather than just trying to fight back violently, if you find a way to tap into someone’s humanity, we can generally move forward.

It is claimed ... the Government has an interest in preventing speech expressing ideas that offend. And, as we have explained, that idea strikes at the heart of the First Amendment. Speech that demeans on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, or any other similar ground is hateful; but the proudest boast of our free speech jurisprudence is that we protect the freedom to express ‘the thought that we hate.’

Easy or hard to arrive at that conclusion? It took me a very long time, and I had to go through a lot of different experiences to find this out. But that’s also when I realized—this probably ultimately informed my attorney at the Supreme Court—that you don’t win by shutting other people down, by censoring them. You win by having a discussion, by being able to articulate and engage. Those experiences, whether they were bullying or watching how my parents were treated by other people who could be very ignorant, helped me realize the only way to build that community we want is to treat it like a community. That means working with others and not just trying to push them away.

Any one turning point for you in this? One particular moment was when we were invited to play at the Oregon State Penitentiary. Sending an Asian American band into prison with one of the highest populations of neo-Nazis in the country—most people would think this is a terrible idea, but I just had Johnny Cash on my mind: “Folsom Prison Blues!” This could be our moment! At the end of this concert—we performed for about 2,000 inmates—someone covered head to toe in swastikas approached me. He had very large
words tattooed across his chest: “White Power.” Of course I froze. The man just said a couple of words to me that broke right through me: He asked me for an autograph, gives me this piece of paper, and says, “It’s for my daughter.”

Why did that strike you? It was then that I could see that humanity within him. And once we actually had a chance to have a conversation and talk about each of our life experiences, we both left changed that day. That was probably the most powerful experience I’ve ever had as a musician. And I realize that’s something that can’t be created through legislation. It can’t be forced. It was just taking a moment to see eye to eye as people. When I saw that this person literally covered head to toe in white supremacist tattoos took the time to talk to me, I realized anything would be possible. It’s so easy to get caught up in pessimism and assumptions, but when we actually take the time to have questions rooted in our values, I think we can truly make a difference.

When the Patent and Trademark Office denied your trademark registration, how did you know what to do next? I didn’t know what to do next. I’ve relied heavily on my attorney, but the law that the trademark office uses is so obscure that most people don’t really know what to do. We had to all of a sudden prove that we weren’t offensive to ourselves. How do you go about doing something like that? We looked at other cases as that model. We got experts, like community leaders. At one point we got dictionary experts and surveys and all kinds of folks to weigh in on this—hundreds of pages of evidence showing that we weren’t offensive to ourselves. That didn’t work. It wasn’t until a couple of years before our case was resolved that this junior attorney throws in a First Amendment argument to see where it goes. And the courts picked up on that right away. So using our civil liberties got us through.

What’s your feeling about the American legal system? Mixed. On one hand I see the opportunities to make change to make a difference. That is really powerful. Some college dropout, punk rock kid like me was able to make a difference at the Supreme Court. That’s astounding to me. At the same time, I spent eight years of my life in one court or another, and I didn’t even commit a crime. I wish justice could move a little more swiftly. But I understand there’s a tradition and there is a process. I just hope the process can be refined and improved for people like me.
Standing before you,” said Bruce Springsteen during his 2018 show Springsteen on Broadway, “is a man who has become wildly and absurdly successful writing about something of which he has had absolutely no personal experience. I made it all up.”

The Boss was referring to his penchant for writing songs from a blue-collar point of view despite his never having worked a day job, a penchant that he referred to as his “magic trick.” And he played the confession for laughs.

Still, it forced the audience, if only momentarily, to focus on his man-behind-the-curtain act as an act, to consider it, in effect, in the same way that fans of body slams and drop kicks have had to consider professional wrestling ever since its performers came clean.

For someone like Springsteen, the popularity of whose work has always owed a lot to its perception as “authentic,” such an admission courts disaster.

Western Stars (Columbia), Springsteen’s new solo album, is not a disaster. It does, however, rank among his lesser achievements. And the ever-widening, now-owned-up-to distance between Springsteen’s real life and the lives of his personae is largely to blame.

There’s also the matter of Springsteen’s singing. He has forgone his usual approach, one might call it “vocal emoting,” in favor of actual singing—of using, in other words, the voice that he might employ while auditioning for the baritone section in a community choir.

That he’s no Sinatra comes as no surprise. That he’s three years older than Sinatra was when Sinatra recorded She Shot Me Down, his last nongimmicky album, in 1981 should give one a pretty good idea of how much of a Sinatra he isn’t.

Yet, its many nondescript qualities notwithstanding, Western Stars still managed to debut at No. 2 on the Billboard 100.

What beat it out for the top spot? Madonna’s Madame X (Interscope).

As with most Madonna albums, Madame X feels too willful. Multiple era-hopping styles, rampant virtue-signaling (and sometimes piety-signaling), chronic Auto-Tune, enough Spanish for a Democratic presidential debate—they all combine to create the impression of a woman who’ll do whatever she thinks it will take to maintain her status as the world’s preeminent female pop star.

It’s an approach that may have finally run its course. Madame X’s chart position just one week after its debut? Seventy-seven.
New or recent albums
reviewed by Arsenio Orteza

SANCTIFIED SOLDIERS FOR THE TRANSFIGURATION OF LIGHT
Roy Ruiz Clayton

In the nine years since Clayton last undertook an album, his gritty street-folk has gotten loud, loose, and tough enough to qualify for a place on the rock ‘n’ roll spectrum. G. Love, Michael Franti, Rickie Lee Jones, the Blind Boys of Alabama, and the Ben Harper alumnus Jason Yates are among the ruckus raisers, but what sets the songs ablaze is Clayton’s streetwise sneer and his use of it to proclaim his allegiance, directly and indirectly, to “the army of Christ the King.” Onward, Christian soldier!

TESTIMONY Gloria Gaynor

Who ever thought that what’s surely a “Best Roots Gospel” Grammy contender would bear the Gaither Music Group imprint or that it would arrive via the woman best known for “I Will Survive”? (No, she doesn’t append another version.) With Chris Stevens doing Willie Mitchell impressions on the production end and Gaynor not upstaged by her demographics-plugging co-vocalists, the songs feel unified no matter how attenuated their connections may at first appear. The visionary payoff: Thomas Dorsey’s “Precious Lord” juxtaposed with Bob Dylan’s “Man of Peace.”

DESERTED Mekons

Tired of waiting for a good punchline to the joke that begins, “Old punks never die”? This music’s serrated edges and defiant aesthetics will make the time fly. Individual songs, meanwhile, push punk’s founding date considerably further into the past—beyond Iggy Pop (“Weimar Vending Machine”), past William Blake (“Into the Sun”), all the way back to the Child Ballads (“How Many Stars?”). Then there’s the “Ozymandias” adaptation “In the Desert.” In doubling as a requiem for the New World Order, it brings punk into the present.

FIRST FRUIT Jordan Pettay

This New York saxophonist’s debut breaks down rather tidily along jazz, R&B, and gospel lines. What kind of jazz? The kind that finds Pettay and her standard-format trio getting away with an original seven-minute Wayne Shorter tribute and a John Coltrane cover. What kind of R&B? The kind that lights up the Stylistics’ greatest hit from the inside. And what kind of gospel? The kind that comes close to doing the same for three well-known 19th-century hymns and “I Exalt Thee.”

ENCORE

Lyrics aren’t often the best reason for loving a contemporary black-gospel album. But those that Kirk Franklin has crafted for his latest offering, Long Live Love (Fo Yo Soul/RCA), practically steal the show. Entrusted almost exclusively to the sort of predominantly female chorale ordinarily consigned to the background, they come off so passionately disinterested that they neither depend on one’s familiarity with Franklin (who chimes in with spontaneous exhortations and asides throughout) nor detract from the adult-contemporary melodies and old-school-echoing R&B to which they’re set.

Choosing the most-quotable lines on a record full of quotable ones isn’t easy. But the following must surely be in the running: “I’m the reason why God made grace” (“Forever/Beautiful Grace”), “Loving You will be, / will be the death of me—it sounds crazy, don’t it?” (“Love Theory”); and “Now you must choose what I am to you, / God of all or not God at all” (“Idols”). —A.O.
A religious place

JOURNALISTS MISS A LEADING INDICATOR IF THEY IGNORE RELIGION

From remarks to the 2019 State Department Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in Washington, D.C.

Despite being a religiously based journalist writing for a religiously based magazine, I am a convert to the importance of reporting on religious oppression, telling the stories of persecuted people. I began covering wars as most any journalist would—starting in the 1990s with the Bosnian War and then the civil war in Sudan.

At Srebrenica I interviewed Bosniak survivors of the 1995 massacre, only gradually coming to understand they were Muslims ethnically cleansed from their homeland by Orthodox Serbians, their husbands killed in what was allegedly a “safe zone.”

In Sudan's Blue Nile State I encountered the Christian victims of a 20-year civil war, families burned out of their homes, at one site forced to feed their children dried corn husks—the same food they fed their goats. I watched one child there die of starvation.

Long before the attacks of 9/11 brought home for Americans religiously driven terrorism, I was learning about a stubborn evil. The United States and the West may have stripped religious ideas from our education systems, our textbooks, and our political discourse. But the rest of the globe never got the memo. The world was—and is—a religious place.

When journalists ignore religious attacks and persecution, we are ignoring a leading indicator, one that affects not only war but also politics, economics, and daily life.

Sudan is also where I learned something else about harassed religious communities: their resilience. I walked a long road with aid workers to an abandoned mission station near the front lines. When we arrived to see the building where Christians had been burned to death inside, we found a remnant of believers there, worshipping under a few trees in 110-degree afternoon sun.

Those who are willing to suffer and die for their religious beliefs have much to teach the rest of us.

These men and women had returned from a refugee camp in Ethiopia. They had walked the whole way. One of the women showed me her wrinkled Bible, which had gotten wet as she forded a river yet survived her trek.

Since that time 20 years ago I have seen this kind of perseverance so often that I expect it. Those who are willing to suffer and die for their religious beliefs have much to teach the rest of us, particularly from our comfortable remove in the United States of America. This keeps me going, now for decades: the story of what happens when all else is lost.

The reporting I did before 9/11 prepared me for what came after. My work increasingly focused on the Middle East, where I discovered ancient Christian communities holding on despite having long faced discrimination under Muslim-dominated governments.

In Iraq and Afghanistan the Christians faced new threats—direct attacks from Islamic jihadists—and without protection from local authorities or the occupying U.S. forces. Over and over U.S. leaders worked with power brokers without regard for minority voices. This is why this Ministerial is historic and important.

For short stints in Iraq I worked the Green Zone press events and was embedded with the U.S. military. I came away wanting instead to be embedded with the community. So I spent a week with an Iraqi family living in a Muslim neighborhood of Baghdad. I spent time over the years staying with pastors, sleeping sometimes in their churches, visiting targeted Christians in their safe houses. I saw how American-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan weren’t improving the lives of Christians. They were endangering them.

We journalists too often say, “What bleeds, leads.” We sometimes don’t stick around for everyday life. Communities, for instance, suffer when they lose their diversity.

As one Syrian bishop said to me, “It’s important for the Muslims to have the Christians living alongside them.” In Iraq, Christians formed the backbone of the middle class. They were the shopkeepers and professionals. Without them, Iraq is poorer. The “victims,” then, aren’t only those who are targeted.

This ground-level reporting is what allows us to report progress and the gaps in rhetoric and action—gaps evident at an event like this Ministerial. I believe the journalists’ work can upgird the high ideals of what’s happening here this week, but at the same time hold officials accountable.

Thank you.
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Early Christians emphasized *caritas*, caring for the poor, as opposed to Rome’s tradition of *liberalitas*, hosting those of equal or higher rank. Caritas is still part of Christian belief and practice, as our Hope Awards show: Secularists say they can do a better job through government action, but three decades of WORLD stories have shown the falsity of that claim.

The last Roman imperial attempt to fight Christianity came during the a.d. 361-363 reign of

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**CARITAS... WITH A DOSE OF WISDOM**

*The 2019 Hope Awards: Make contact, avoid beanballs*

*By Marvin Olasky*
Emperor Julian, who complained in a letter to a pagan high priest that Christians “support not only their own poor but ours as well.” With the letter Julian sent several thousand bushels of grain and pints of wine for the pagan priests to distribute, hoping to win the poor to his side.

It didn’t work, and Christians continued to act as scholar Demetrios Constantelos describes: Their philanthropia, love of mankind, “extended to the underprivileged, as it proclaimed freedom, equality, and brotherhood, transcending sex, race, and national boundaries. Thus it was not limited to equals, allies, or relatives, or to citizens and civilized men, as was most often the case in other ancient societies.”

The downside to this, as ancient writer Lucian of Samosata noted: Some Christians were so charitable that charlatans could easily swindle them. That remains a risk we have to take: Given our natural inclination toward selfishness, we should pray for the gift of generosity, while keeping our eyes open. We should be like the young batter in Field of Dreams who asks an old-timer what to expect on the next pitch: “Look low and away, but watch out for ‘in your ear.’”

WORLD readers during the past year nominated 200 small, Christian groups that offer challenging, personal, and spiritual help. Through internet research and phone interviewing we eventually narrowed the field to 10 contenders, two from each of our regions: Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, Southwest, and International. (Our east-west dividing line is the Mississippi River. Our north-south divider is roughly the Ohio River in the East and the 37th parallel in the West.) We then sent WORLD magazine and podcast reporters on a 3,000-mile road trip by car to eyeball the domestic contenders, while my wife and I visited international prospects. The 20 pages that follow display our results. Northeast winner Purposeful Design shows ex-addicts and homeless men how to build furniture and God-centered futures. Southeast winner Scarlet Hope ministers to women who have previously sold or exposed their bodies. West of the Mississippi, the Little Light Christian School bestows learning and love on children of prisoners, and the Watered Gardens Gospel Rescue Mission provides overnight shelter and long-term character and career development. Our International winner, 20schemes, brings Christian hope into Scotland’s housing projects.

I hope you’ll read the profiles that follow, and then go to wng.org/compassion and vote for whichever of the Final Five moves you the most. All are worthy. Voting will end on Friday, Sept. 6. We’ll announce the winner in the issue that goes to press the following week. WORLD will give the overall winner $10,000 and the regional winners $2,000 each, but the biggest prize is publicity and increased credibility. On June 29 one Hope Award winner emailed me that WORLD coverage initially led to $30,000 to $40,000 in new contributions and has now led to a $1.5 million pledge for a new building.

For consideration in next year’s Hope Awards contest, I hope you’ll tell Charissa Koh (ckoh@wng.org) about a Christian ministry to the poor in your own backyard: We celebrate those that rely not on government financing but on compassionate volunteers supervised by dedicated professionals. Please include a brief description of why a particular ministry impresses you, and include its address and website.

And, if you’re looking for ideas about something you could start in your own backyard, please go to wng.org/hope_directory and see our listing of the 105 organizations we profiled from 2006 to 2018, with their major focuses: Addiction, Babies, Community, Disabilities, Education, Family, Gardening, Homelessness, Immigration, Jobs, Legal needs, Medical, Prison, Repair work, Sex (anti-prostitution), Transportation, and Youth.

That listing also shows what it takes to start a poverty-fighting ministry: A license, a specific skill (such as auto repair), experience (such as that a mother gains), or neighborliness (a simple desire to invest time in helping others). Now, please read on: Our first article is on Southeast Region winner Scarlet Hope. ©
The youngest of 15 kids, Mary Frances grew up in a poor home in Louisville, Ky. After years of conflict, alcohol, and abuse, her parents split up. She moved in with a classmate, next to a house owned by a motorcycle gang. Frances remembers bikers whistling at the girls as they got off the school bus. When the ice cream truck came, one biker bought the kids popsicles. He bought 15-year-old Frances anything she wanted. “I would grin, you know, because I had never been singled out,” she said.

Her relationship with the handsome, much-older man grew. She felt special when he took her on his motorcycle, which others admired. He started dropping her off at peep shows and picture booths to make money, saying he cared for her. On one occasion, he picked her up—he was sweating, high, and angry—and said they were going out of town. When she asked where they were going, begging him not to take her from Louisville, he beat her face and head with his motorcycle helmet until she promised not to ask anymore.

They traveled to different cities, where he sent her to make money as a prostitute at truck stops and in hotel rooms. “He said he would put my name in lights,” Frances remembered. “Later, we come back to this one particular place, I look up and it says, ‘Girls, girls, girls.’ I don’t think I got it then, but I did later. That was my name in lights.”

More than a year later, she got free of the pimp and found herself alone in Louisville: “I had really no home or nowhere to go, no way to support myself. So, because I had been taught to survive in the industry, of course, I go there.”

She found work as a stripper. After 35 years in the sex industry—and multiple failed attempts to get out—
Scarlet’s Women’s Resource Center
Empower • Engage • Equate
one day Frances looked in the mirror and asked God: “Please take me away from here. I’ve tried everything.” She worked another shift that day because she needed more money: “I’m living in a shack in someone’s backyard. I lost my education and my marriage. In my mind, I’d lost everything... And in come these two women that I think are seeking a job, and it occurs to me, that these are the church ladies that everyone’s been talking about. And I jump up and run over.”

“The church ladies” were from Scarlet Hope, a Christian ministry that helps women in the sex industry. On Thursdays, volunteers bring meals into six Louisville clubs to befriend dancers and share the gospel. Rachelle Starr started Scarlet Hope in 2008. She met Frances three years later.

Starr was 24 when she first entered a club. She and three friends wore turtlenecks and no makeup as they paid the bouncer $10 to get inside. Their husbands kept watch across the street. The year before, Starr began searching for a mission. Her commute took her past an adult entertainment store, and Starr says she felt God calling her to help women in the sex industry. She gathered some friends to pray and fast, and in the fall of 2008 they visited a club to discern their next step. Inside, Starr asked the owner if she could bring a meal for the dancers. He was skeptical but agreed.

Ten years later, weekly meals in the clubs remain the heartbeat of Scarlet Hope, though the ministry has grown to include vocational training and Bible classes. Kari Clark directs the three major outreaches and coordinates the large team of volunteers. “We’re going into hostile, hostile environments,” she said. “It’s crazy. I just can’t stress to you how this is such a God thing, because the managers and the bouncers and the bartenders, they love us.” No one at Scarlet Hope can explain why the club owners allow them to come in, other than God’s providence. Clark said one club bouncer helps them carry food in.

During the week, Scarlet Hope volunteers drive Louisville’s rough streets, looking for prostitutes. They pass out roses with their business cards and bags that contain an outfit and hygiene items like deodorant, shampoo, and toothpaste. They pray with the women and tell them Jesus loves them. Scarlet Hope also uses technology developed by Seattle Against Slavery to collect and text the numbers prostitutes place online in sex ads. Clark texts 100 women each week, telling them Jesus loves them, introducing herself and Scarlet Hope, and asking if they want to hear more. She said 30-40 percent reply, some rudely, others requesting help.

Scarlet Hope's biggest challenge is spiritual darkness. Clark described Thursday nights in the dark clubs, with flashing lights, disorienting mirrors, and loud, vulgar music. Strippers dance on stages and come down to interact with customers. The air smells like sweat, alcohol, and a strange mixture of body sprays. “The sin is tangible,” she said. “The people that you see carry what is happening in that place all over them.”

The volunteers go to befriend dancers, but loving them makes watching their work even harder. A Scarlet Hope staff member said when a dancer takes off her costume at the end of a shift, “You just see this weary, tired, lonely, empty, hopeless, defeated shell of God’s creation.” Clark says knowing when to step back is important. She gives prizes to the volunteers who follow a self-care plan that includes regular Bible reading, rest, and time on the prayer team.

Clark keeps going back because she knows she might be the only person that week to meet the dancers’ eyes and say, “I love you.” She said: “You ask them, ‘How did your doctor’s appointment go last week?’ Or ‘Did you get the bill taken care of?’ Or ‘How’s your baby?’ You remember things about them that nobody else cares about, and their face changes.” Now when Clark enters the club, the girls stop working to give her a hug or call, “Hey, church ladies!”

Women who decide to leave the sex industry face major obstacles. Most lack education and job experience, while carrying decades of relational baggage and twisted ideas about God. Many need a place to stay, so
Scarlet Hope initially offered housing to women leaving the industry. Then Starr and others at Scarlet Hope realized they couldn’t provide adequately safe housing, a detox program to help women buck drug addiction, or facilities for women with children.

So Scarlet Hope ended its transitional housing program in 2014. It partnered with other organizations to provide housing and began teaching women job skills at Scarlet’s Bakery, where large, sticky cinnamon rolls and beehive cookies are popular. On a wall a sign reads: “We don’t hire people to bake cupcakes. We bake cupcakes to hire people.” Starr notes that “God commands us to work,” so providing dignified jobs for women who once sold their bodies to survive is “priceless.”

Scarlet Hope began a Career Development Program (CDP) in 2017. During 18 months women learn to build a life outside the sex industry by learning life skills like cooking, budgeting, customer service, and parenting, all from a Christian perspective. They also receive counseling and job experience. Starr said the classes teach ladies to “relive life.” Attending classes earns them “Scarlet’s bucks,” and once a month they can trade bucks for donated clothes and household items.

So far 28 women have completed the program, with three to five volunteers coming alongside each participant. Aaron Scott, the only male staff member at Scarlet Hope, teaches CDP classes alongside his wife to show students that “not every man in this world is a predator.” Seeing a healthy marriage is important for students who have come from broken families and an abusive father: They have a hard time understanding that God the Father is not only powerful but good.

Starr, who works 60 hours a week at Scarlet Hope, is preparing to reduce her time at the ministry. She and her husband are preparing to adopt their second child. She has trained people inside and outside the United States to carry the model forward. So far, Scarlet Hope has spread to Las Vegas, Reno, and Cincinnati, and Starr meets with those directors monthly. But every week she still brings a home-cooked meal to the club to build friendships with ladies like Mary Frances.

Frances still remembers the day she met the “church ladies.” They took her next door to get her food and to talk. Starr asked whether Frances would leave the sex industry if she had a choice, and “it blew my mind,” said Frances. She went with them to church that weekend. With her 50th birthday days away, she decided that would be the last day she spent in a club.

Now, in Scarlet Hope’s job training center, Frances works every other day as the front office assistant. Buzzing people into the office, she remembers sitting at the front desk of a massage parlor that hid sex trafficking. She imagines God taunting Satan as she works now for such a different purpose. She has “faith in the future. Praise God, I survived the past, and I have a Savior that loves me every day.”
At the beginning of each school day at Little Light Christian School, kids crowd into a small room and wrestle their shoes off, leaving them in colored crates along the wall. “In the hood you can get killed for the shoes you’re wearing,” said Robin Khoury, the school’s principal. She decided to get rid of the status symbols and make the students trade their Air Jordans or high heels for Walmart tennis shoes when they arrive.

The small private school is located in a rough part of Oklahoma City, the city with the world’s highest incarceration rate. To attend, students must have at least one parent in prison. They almost all struggle in school: feelings of guilt, shame, and sadness make focusing on class or homework difficult.

In a classroom in late March, Susan Fowler read a chapter of Charlotte’s Web to her third graders. Colorful crates of books sat beside the desk, and four kids listened at desks arranged around her in a semi-circle. A few rested their chins on stuffed animals. But one student was missing: Disobedience had earned him a trip to the principal’s office. When Fowler finished the chapter and told the kids to line up for music class, Khoury appeared with their missing classmate, a little boy in a blue LLCS T-shirt. Quietly, he offered Fowler a handful of weeds with purple flowers and apologized.

Khoury, 61, founded LLCS. She has thick blond hair and purple-framed glasses. The kids rush to give her hugs or high-fives whenever she enters a room. She keeps the student-to-teacher ratio low, so teachers are able to get to know students and understand what motivates bad behavior. When a child misbehaves, Khoury has learned, sometimes they need a consequence. Other times they just need a nap.

Around 1990, Khoury left hairdressing to homeschool her children. She came to believe that God someday wanted her to start a school for poor kids.
Almost two decades passed, and Khoury volunteered with a prison ministry. There she learned kids with parents in prison consistently struggle in school. “The next day I incorporated Little Light Ministries,” Khoury said—and in 2012 she opened the free Christian school.

The couch in her office has fluffy pillows and a stuffed pink unicorn. On the desk sit piles of books, papers, and another bunch of the purple weeds from a student. A potted plant and a mini piano sit in the corner. A bulletin board on the wall displays pictures of students with prayer requests like “God, please help my mom.”

A ram’s horn on a shelf came from Israel, her husband E.J.’s home country. Now E.J. works as the school’s cook: The kids’ family situation might mean there’s little to eat at home, so the school provides two meals and two snacks every weekday. “We realized there were children who were falling out of their seats on Monday morning because they were weak, because they hadn’t had enough nutrition over the weekend,” said Khoury. So on Fridays the staff sends the 28 students home with backpacks of food from the Oklahoma City Food Bank. The school also provides uniforms, winter coats, and shoes for students.

Besides meeting material needs, staff members try to provide their students (ranging from pre-K to middle school) with a high-quality education from a Christian worldview. At LLCS, Khoury uses curricula from her homeschooling days, but the teachers also adjust to meet students’ needs. Many students never learned how to hold a pencil. The older students use Chromebooks to access lessons online and move at their own pace.

Even more than the educational quality, teachers see their mission as loving students and building relationships, a challenge when the kids come from such a different world. Khoury said she prays for God to send qualified teachers who reflect the student demographics: Half the teachers at Little Light Christian School are white, but most students are black. Most teachers are female, with one notable exception.

The third graders left Susan Fowler’s classroom and filed into the Fine Arts building. They waited for their music teacher with their backs against the hallway wall, shuffling their feet and whispering excitedly. Minutes later, a smiling Ernie Tullis—wearing a newsboy cap and a navy blue suit jacket with jeans—appeared around the corner with his class of middle-school boys. The kids shouted greetings and scrambled to find seats in the music room. Tullis grinned as he played the keyboard with ease and style. He led the kids to sing the first verse of “’Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus,” then without missing a note he told individual students to stand and sing the second and third verses solo.

The students love Tullis, and he loves them back: “I get these kids, ’cause I was these kids. I split from home when I was 16 because home was bad. Hitchhiked to New Orleans, got a job playing piano on Bourbon Street, met Jesus there.” He played piano for Christian artists like MercyMe and Michael W. Smith, as well as Aretha Franklin and Charlie Hall: “pretty much whoever would have me. We would hit the road with one, go as far as Atlanta, wind up with someone else.”

But Tullis wanted to put down roots. Two years ago, Khoury asked him to teach music at the school,
and he thought, “How can I not give back? ... How can I not give these kids a chance?” Now he teaches music class for all the students and gives individual lessons for ukulele, drums, and piano. In mid-March 2019, Tullis added the role of middle-school boys’ teacher. His days are full, but rewarding moments abound. The morning’s Bible time, for example, covered the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. When Tullis said God was in the fire, the kids asked to pray for their classmate, Semaj, whose mother was severely depressed. The kids said, “Semaj’s in the fire. Let’s pray that God will be there with him.”

After class ends at 3 p.m., LLCS offers an after-school program to keep the kids until parents or guardians can get them at 5. Activities vary each day.

On Friday kids spread across the small cafeteria, playing foosball, molding clay, and using combs and barrettes to do dolls’ hair. One 4-year-old girl, Joshia, asked to give her principal a hairdo. Khoury sat in a chair and closed her eyes, and the little girl started combing, a grin on her face. Joshia is one of the school’s two youngest students and said “Miss Robin” is her favorite thing about school.

The six LLCS teachers work hard to give kids needed affirmation. Shelby, a middle-school boy, asked Khoury to come hear him sing. He sang enthusiastically but off-key, and his friend Semaj, listening from the drum stool, covered his mouth to keep from laughing. When Shelby finished, Semaj asked Khoury to “hear my beats.” She put on headphones connected to the practice drum set. Semaj began, and Khoury flinched, then quickly smiled and complimented his drumming.

Khoury described one student who came to them a grade behind: “He was like this little volcano. If you look twice at him, he would just flip out. He would throw furniture, he’d run away, he’d get under stuff.” The teachers prayed and taught. When they showed him he could work ahead using the iPads in the classroom, he found his motivation. Now he has nearly caught up to his grade level, and the “rough patches” are fewer and further between. A fifth grade girl came to LLCS tight and guarded. Khoury said, “As she has gotten to know us, she has just started blooming in so many ways.” The girl started dancing, doing art, and having fun with the other kids.

Teachers are trained to care for kids with traumatic backgrounds, and they try to de-escalate bad behavior before it spreads. Since older kids are often set in bad habits, Khoury said in the future she plans to accept more younger kids: “Because we have limited resources, like every organization, we want to be good stewards of that. We want to target the children that we feel like we can help the most.”

Funding is another major challenge, but Khoury has a long list of stories of God providing for the school. One donor gave just the right amount to purchase the property and current school building. Khoury doesn’t always know how she will pay teachers’ salaries, but she takes it one month at a time and trusts God.

Susan Fowler said the hard part about working at LLCS is “I want to take them all home with me, and I can’t. ... It’s not my job to fix. It’s my job to help, encourage, and love them.”

LLCS

2017 income: $2,310,885
2017 expenses: $1,719,767
Paid staff: 15
Volunteers: 46
CEO’s salary: $33,946
Website: littlelightschool.org

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Let’s start with a word that sounds nefarious to Americans: scheme. In the United States, it usually means an organized plan for doing something dishonest. But in Scotland, a scheme is a neighborhood with substantial government housing—and the goal of our 2019 Hope Awards International winner is to create charity-infused churches in 20 of them.

So far 20schemes, formed in 2012, has grown churches in six schemes. In May my wife and I visited four of them to talk with leaders, interns, and neighborhood residents involved in building churches—and, flowing out of that, walking groups, reading groups, community cafés, cooking classes, weight-reduction classes, and more. At an after-school program, elementary-school students (to the tune of “Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious”) sang about sin and redemption: “Are you messy, noisy, nosey, greedy, grumpy, lazy? / Are you always causing trouble, driving grown-ups crazy? / Jesus changes Mr. Men and Little Misses too / He will take away your sin and give new life to you.”

Schemes are often their own worlds. The Gracemount scheme in Scotland’s capital city, Edinburgh, has its own capitol—a strip shopping center with a barber, a hairdresser, a fish-and-chips restaurant, a drugstore where residents get their doses of methadone, a criminal defense lawyer with numerous local clients, and a tanning salon. The Balarnack scheme in Glasgow has 3,800 residents, a third of whom are officially “income deprived,” 15 percent of whom take prescribed drugs for mental health. Both of those numbers are double the national average, and 29 percent of residents are officially “employment deprived” (triple the national average).

Local governmental councils built the schemes after WWII to move poor people from central city slums into two- and three-story apartment buildings. Some resemble garden apartments with rooftop satellite dishes and small yards. Some have a mixture of privately owned and “council” housing. They don’t
look bad from the outside, and 20schemes founder and director Mez McConnell recalls that when he stood in a Brazil slum and showed residents photos of “deprived” Niddrie, they laughed and asked: *How could poor people have nice houses and gardens?*

McConnell says, “Try telling a child from the scheme whose da’ beats his ma unconscious every night that he has it better than a child who lives in a shack in Brazil with two loving parents trying their best to provide for him.” A scheme child may have better housing and other material benefits than his counterpart in Brazil, but the Scot may not have had “a hot meal this week and he’s been living off moldy Rice Krispies and gone-off milk.”

Although schemes are now places where welfare-dependent families have lived for generations, they also have an upside. As opposed to discipleship in “gathered churches” where members drive in once a week, many scheme residents see each other daily and “community spirit” is a reality, not an aspiration.

Natasha Davidson, 29, grew up in the Niddrie scheme where alcohol flowed and illegal drug use was common, but longtime residents did not have to lock their doors or fear crime: “The people committing the crimes never done it to their own people. They always done it to strangers.”
Davidson, no stranger, now heads the 20schemes women’s ministry in Niddrie.

Her mother used drugs “and had some abusive partners,” so Davidson had “a real problem with men who wanted to display authority. If they asked me to do something, I would just not do it to prove a point: I don’t have to do it and you can’t force me.” She sees her employment in a Christian ministry as ironic because “me and my friends were known for throwing bricks at the church. We’d climb onto the roof, break the drains, throw things at windows, and sometimes target the cars of the Christians.”

Then one of Davidson’s friends wanted to go to church. Davidson did not, because she “liked partying and drinking and things like that, so to sacrifice a Sunday morning ... I liked the person I was when I was drunk.” But her friend, a single mum, “was desperate to come, so we came to church. I remember being so bored.” Even though Davidson read her Facebook feed during the service, something drew her back. She kept coming. She met Christians who “became good friends and they weren’t just fake friends” who tried to manipulate her.

Davidson says one 20schemes strength is that leaders live in the schemes they serve: “Outsiders coming into your community can make you feel like they’re going to fix you.” Another strength is the willingness to talk about sin: “I really didn’t see myself as a sinner... I wasn’t as bad as the person next to me, because so many people I knew had committed horrendous crimes.... Then to realize that actually I was a sinner and heaven and hell were very real.” A third strength is the emphasis on forming a church family: “I lost most of my friends when I became a Christian. Part of that is because they don’t like change, but my change forces them to look at their own lives.”

Davidson’s background helps: “At a lot of middle-class churches people put on their best face when they come in,” but life in Niddrie is rawer, and Davidson is able to tell those who visibly mourn, “I know this is a crappy time and I know how you’re feeling.” She says 90 percent of her work is with people coming from non-Christian homes, and it’s those she feels particularly called to serve: “I didn’t hear the gospel until I was 21 years old, and I want that to be different for our kids in our scheme.”

Many other 20schemes staffers have similar backgrounds. Paul McLoughlan, the 20schemes church planter in Bingham and Magdalene, grew up in a scheme and became a Christian in 2006 while in a Christian recovery center for addicts: “My life had become a mess due to my shallow, hopeless lifestyle.” He knew he had to change: “The way I was going it was going to be a short life.”

McLoughlan is now married with a 4-year-old daughter and another child on the way. His target area is in the bottom 5 percent according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, which measures problems including addiction, broken homes, and mental health issues, but McLoughlan says “the most alarming issue is that there’s no gospel witness in the area. The people are hopeless and no one points them to Jesus.”

20schemes has a two-year training program for interns, some of whom sport impressive tattoos. Intern Sam Wilkins has all the words of Luke 18:7 tattooed on his arm because he was “falling away from Christ” and needed “a constant reminder ... that God will always bring about justice.” All the interns meet every Wednesday for classes in the 20schemes “Ragged School of Theology,” which steers clear of both liberation theology and prosperity gospel chatter as it promotes Biblical understandings of marriage and parenting.

One reason 20schemes attracts helpers from hard places: Mez McConnell himself survived abandonment by his mum at age 2, an assault conviction at age 12, and a knife fight and homelessness at age 16. He’s now 46 and has learned that “Scotland’s schemes need the gospel. It is only in Jesus that the leopard can...
change its spots.” McConnell should be familiar to WORLD readers because our issue last Dec. 29 contained a Q&A with him headlined “Good news for wretches.” He argued that only a realization of our sin before a holy God sets us on the road to change: Handouts are a detour.

McConnell also welcomes workers from middle-class environments when they are willing to relocate. The grandfather of Gracemount Pastor Andy Prime was pastor of Charlotte Baptist Chapel, a prominent church in Edinburgh. Prime’s father was an elder there. Prime went to seminary, worked at the big church for four years as an assistant and then an associate pastor, and thought that was his long-term calling. In 2012, though, he married a woman who had set up a youth basketball club in Gracemount, and Prime caught the desire to help but not control: “The gospel helps us avoid that kind of superhero complex where we think that we’re the answer to people’s problems.”

Prime says such thinking arises from “a misunderstanding of what poverty is. People from the outside may think that the biggest poverty in an area like this is material: If people had more money it might be better.” He describes the tension those with money face in trying to help the children of an irresponsible dad: “You know his kids don’t have new clothes. His house is a mess. We could go and buy his kids clothes and we could paint his house, but I also know he smokes about 400 pounds’ worth of cannabis every month and cigarettes on top of that. If we do everything for him, we’re just facilitating his drug use.”

Prime says the only solution is through Christ: “A dad needs to invest in his kids rather than his drug addiction, and that’s only going to happen when the Lord changes his heart and he responds to the gospel.” The good news is that people can change, affecting not only themselves but a whole community: Emily Green, a women’s gospel worker from a middle-class background, remembers “having goose bumps thinking that when one person in a scheme becomes a Christian it can affect the whole.” Her work has increased her own faith in Christ alone: Evangelism in the schemes has “no gimmicks, no flashing lights: We’re going to preach the gospel and trust that’s enough to save people.”

Helpers now come not only from both sides of the tracks but both sides of the Atlantic. Jason Nelson came from a middle-class background and was a youth pastor in Laramie, Wyo., but—attracted by Mez’s vision—he moved with his family to Scotland last year and will pastor a 20schemes church. Intern Carrie Selby, 60, moved from Dallas two years ago: Frequently asked why she came thousands of miles to live in a troubled housing project, Selby says the Bible does not speak of “retirement.” Noting that most people who join church-planting efforts are in their 20s, Nelson asks, “Who will reach the older generation of Scotland who are desperately in need of hearing the gospel before it’s too late?”

Ten other Schemers we interviewed reflected Mez McConnell’s message of opposition to social workers who tell the poor they are not responsible for their condition and “need to love themselves more.” McConnell remembers his parole officer’s prediction that he “would be in the prison system for the rest of my life. … He gave me no hope that I could change my life. And then I met Christians for the first time who confronted me about my sin and told me to throw myself on the mercy of Jesus.”

So what is a scheme? According to 20schemes, it’s a place dominated by people “who have been on social security handouts for generations.” It has “a criminal underbelly that deals in street drugs, prescribed medication and stolen goods as a matter of course.” The result: “Far too many people in the schemes are ruled by fear. To some they are places of terror, to some places of hopelessness, but to many millions more they are ‘home.’”
Logan Fields, 22, couldn’t make himself break into his dad’s vacant house, so he slept in the backyard. Freshly released from prison, Fields was alone in the small town of Joplin, Mo. His dad was attending a funeral in Texas, and his mom had moved while he was in jail. His girlfriend had picked him up only to leave him in a Walmart parking lot. He texted a former burglary partner for a ride, then wandered into the Joplin Public Library to feel the air conditioning and wait.

Fields grew up in Pittsburg, Kan. At 17, he’d been to juvenile detention five times and become addicted to Xanax. Before turning 22, he went to jail 18 times. But his mom was influential in the community: “I’d go sit 48 hours, a week, or a month, and I’d get out and the charges would be dropped to something minuscule like disturbing the peace,” he said. In 2017, a drunken Fields earned three felony warrants in one night. He started robbing houses and dodged the police for three months before landing back in county jail, where he said he knew every guard by name.

There his dad brought an application for a recovery program, the Forge Center for Virtue and Work. With no better options, Fields applied and met Forge Director Jamie Myers after his release. She said the program consisted of four three-month phases, and he could graduate with a good job and independent life. Instead, he called his girlfriend to pick him up. But when she left him in the parking lot again, another night in his dad’s backyard convinced Fields to join the Forge. He almost quit one month in. After two months he quit, then came back. Myers recognized real change when Fields apologized for speaking rudely to James Whitford, the ministry’s founder.

At a gospel rescue mission, men have a chance to escape the spiral of drugs, homelessness, and joblessness. But it isn’t easy, and many do not make it to the end.

**BY CHARISSA KOH in Joplin, Mo.**
“That was a good, good exchange,” Whitford remembered. “I think I called Jamie right after that. I was like, ‘Logan just apologized! Man, that’s great progress.’”

Whitford started working with men like Logan Fields almost 20 years ago. He and his wife Marsha rented a room in a Red Cross building to offer necessities to Joplin’s homeless. They called their day center “Watered Gardens” after Isaiah 58:11, a verse blessing those who help the poor. A church helped pay rent, and Whitford worked as a physical therapist three days a week to pay the utilities and support his family.

“We had a lot of compassion and a lot of heart, but not a lot of thought behind what we were doing,” he said. The same people kept coming, and the Whitfords recognized their donations at rummage sales and thrift stores. They realized people took items only to sell them and get the same thing from another ministry. To address this, they started a local Charity Tracker network, using a program that logs who got what services where so local nonprofits can work together.

Another shift followed. Whitford read Toxic Charity by Robert Lupton and realized Watered Gardens should challenge people to escape poverty, not enable them to stay there. The shelter added a “Worth Shop,” where people can do simple tasks for a set time to earn what they need. Working 15 minutes buys four thrift shop items. An hour earns someone groceries for a week. Twelve hours a week will earn someone a bed in the shelter (they offer 30 beds for men and 10 for women).
Three years ago, Watered Gardens created the Forge Center for Virtue and Work, the program Logan Fields joined. Six men go through the program at a time, and they prove they’re ready to change by living at Watered Gardens’ shelter and working in the Worth Shop for three months before phase one. Fields started working in the kitchen 20 hours a week, but he could not get along with the volunteers, so he moved to maintenance. Fresh from a violent life, he became angry easily and almost didn’t last: “Everything went smoothly for about a month until I got back in my own head,” he said. “I thought, ‘Oh, I can handle this. I’ve been clean for two months now. I can rock and roll.’” He argued with Jamie Myers until she cried. But when he turned to leave, she asked to pray with him. “Immediately, as soon as she got done praying... I understood things differently,” he said. Fields finished his first three months in the shelter.

After three months, the staff let him move into the Forge dorms (a donated church building down the road from the shelter). Phase one was education. Fields began taking classes eight hours a day, covering topics from Bible study to health to legal living. The next phase focused on work readiness, and the staff connected him with MSW Restaurant Furnishings, a local employer willing to hire him. After that, the transition phase brought freedoms and responsibilities: Fields moved out of the dorms into a house with two classmates a mile and a half from the Forge dorms, but he must pay rent while managing a limited allowance.

The final phase is independence: He will use the money he’s saved to move into his own place (he’s hoping to find a two-bedroom place so his son can come stay sometimes). He will be responsible to pay all bills, keep track of his money, and meet with a mentor each week for accountability. To graduate, he must have his own home, a full-time job, and medical insurance with no government assistance.

Jamie Myers said the program’s graduation rate is around 5 percent (not bad for an intensive program like Forge). “I remember once... there were six guys who came to phase one. Not one of them graduated a year later,” she said. “There are a lot of guys who, 45 days sober, 45 days clean, they think, ‘Hey, I got this.’ Usually they end up back at the Garden, high, drunk, whatever, because nothing changed.” She tapped her chest. “If there’s not change here, you’re not going to change your thoughts and your behavior. And so I tell guys, ‘There’s a whole lot of Jesus in this program. So if He’s not your thing, this is probably not where you want to land.’”

One Monday morning in April, 35 staff members and volunteers gathered in a long room in the Outreach Center for daily devotions. They sipped coffee from plastic foam cups and followed along from Bibles set on the small square tables. After the lesson, all bowed their heads and individuals took turns praying. One man prayed for a Forge student: “I don’t know what’s going on with Jay or the things he’s going through, but I’ve been down a similar path, Lord. I just ask that you’d be with him. Fill his heart with love, Lord, and show him there are people who care for him, and the road he’s going down is not a good one.”

After the prayer time, they opened for the day, and people wearing backpacks and frayed clothes shuffled inside to get coffee. Shelter residents and local people in need checked in at the Worth Shop, stated their needs, and received job assignments for the day. People gathered around tables to break down donated goods for recycling or to craft merchandise from old shopping bags. In the Outreach Center, people did odd jobs: mopping the floor, taking out the trash, rolling cigarettes, or sweeping the chapel upstairs. James Whitford noticed an unfamiliar face in the crowd and sat down to get to know the first-timer, a man named Seth.

That afternoon, Jocelyn Brisson, shelter director, greeted newcomers and shared the rules with them. At 61, she has wavy brown hair, rings on each hand, and a tattoo on her neck. She grew up on Skid Row in Los Angeles and raised her son on the streets, taking welfare checks and addicted to drugs. She moved to Missouri in 1996 and, after a couple of stints in prison, came to Watered Gardens for court-ordered community service. Over time, Whitford’s wife Marsha befriended her and convinced her to come to chapel.
That night, Marsha and James shared their testimonies. Brisson said she thought, “Holy cow, these people are just regular old people. They had issues too.” Even after her community service hours were done, she continued volunteering at Watered Gardens. Six months after hearing Marsha’s testimony, Brisson heard Whitford give a chapel sermon, and she realized, “There was a whore and there was the criminals that were in the Bible that were Jesus’ followers, you know? And I thought, ‘Well, if Jesus was hanging out with these people, surely He’d hang out with me too.’”

She became a Christian and got clean at age 50. She earned a bachelor’s degree, a master’s degree, and certification as a substance abuse counselor. Eventually, she gave up her welfare benefits and added her food stamps card to a wall in the Outreach Center with rows of other obsolete cards.

“It’s been my mission in life to let people know that me, the adult homeless person… works at a homeless shelter. Me, the addict strung out for 38 years, is now a substance abuse counselor. Me, the felon… has a master’s in criminal justice,” she said. “God has used all that stuff: Being a shelter manager here, I can give people hope.”

Whitford believes effective charities are work-oriented, outcome-driven, and privately funded. He created the True Charity Initiative program as “a coalescing of some of the hard knocks and the learning curves that we went through.” Individuals, churches, and nonprofits can learn through its seminars and online modules how to provide help that works. He envisions a network of nonprofits that are True Charity Certified.

Though effective, the model at Watered Gardens is not easy: Initially, Missouri law required the ministry to buy workers’ compensation insurance for every client who worked in the Worth Shop, even for as little as 30 minutes. Whitford worked with local politicians to change state law so nonprofits could do such “work exchange” with the poor. Besides logistical challenges, volunteers and staff must get to know residents to learn if they are unable or unwilling to meet standards. Some things will get people kicked out: failing to pass a urinary analysis, rudeness, and physical abuse, for example. Staff members feel heartbreak when people they worked to befriend slide back into their old lives and don’t come back.

But Logan Fields did come back. So far, James Whitford’s instincts are proving true: The apology marked a turning point. Now six months from graduation, he works full time at All Seasons Signs, sees his son once a month, and shares his testimony at homeless camps. His last arrest was May 25, 2018, and he is clean for the first time since he started using drugs at age 14. On April 1, Fields called his brother for the first time in more than a year to say happy birthday. He plans to stick around Watered Gardens after graduating because he’s seen too many classmates fall back into old habits: “It’s either stay connected or die for me, for real,” he said. His first week out of the dorms, he came back to the Forge every night to play cards with the students there.

A faded tattoo is visible on his left hand: an eight ball of meth. Fields said the six laser removal surgeries hurt worse than getting beat up or hit in the head with a baseball bat (and he would know). He said the pain is better than one day explaining his old life to his 3-year-old son. But Jamie Myers is optimistic: “He’s got decades now, statistically, to live a good life, to be a good man, instead of what he doesn’t want his son to know about.”

Watered Gardens

2017 income: $1,365,527
2017 expenses: $1,017,094
Paid staff: 20
Volunteers: 224
CEO’s salary: $80,166
Website: wateredgardens.org
No building in Indiana’s capital is taller than the Salesforce Tower, with its 49 floors and recognizable twin antennae. It overlooks Monument Circle, where a 284-foot obelisk, the Soldiers and Sailors Monument, centers the city. Shops and restaurants line the brick street, with horse-drawn carriages lingering nearby. The monument draws tourists, and the tourists draw panhandlers.

Jesse Slaugh spent a year homeless in Indianapolis, regularly camping at the foot of the Salesforce Tower. He had become a Christian in a California rehab center years earlier, but he relapsed into drugs and alcohol when his brother died. Hoping for a fresh start, he moved to Indiana to be near friends, but fights with his girlfriend landed him in jail. Homeless and unfamiliar with the city, Slaugh tried to learn the streets and which way the buildings faced. He soon discovered Monument Circle, a main tourist attraction where he could “shake a cup” to get what he needed. He slept at Wheeler Mission, the largest and oldest homeless shelter in Indianapolis, and there met David Palmer.

Palmer, a marketing consultant, served on the board of the mission from 2002 to 2012 and sometimes led Bible studies there. “How are you doing?” he asked residents. They often said they could not find jobs. After praying and googling, Palmer came up with an idea to help them. With no carpentry background, he and some friends used wooden pallets to build some furniture and asked for feedback. The affirmation they received convinced Palmer that working with wood could be the answer.

Purposeful Design became a place where men leaving addiction, prison, or homelessness find a job, friendship, and discipleship. Jesse Slaugh joined the team soon after it began in 2013, with six men making specialty tables in a church building. The first year, they made
$37,000 (“which we loved, because we thought at the time it might be zero,” said Palmer), and sales continue to grow. The most recent year brought in $1.5 million, and the nonprofit business earned loyal customers like Purdue University and pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly. Purposeful Design even furnished the first six floors of the Salesforce Tower.

Last year, the nonprofit relocated to a warehouse in northeast Indy, nearer most of the workers. Now visitors enter a high-ceilinged, woody-smelling lobby with gray walls and linoleum floors. One wall displays bright photos of workers saying how Purposeful Design helped them change: “I used drugs and sold them. Then I had an encounter with a man named Jesus,” says one placard. Another reads: “God picked me up, sanded me off, put a new coat of stain over me, and set me back on the shelf.”

The workshop is large and open, with shelves of tools and tables of wood boards waiting to be cut, sanded, or glued together. The room smells like sawdust, though plastic hoses attached to the machinery keep the air clear. Along one wall are a pingpong table and pool table. The men play so frequently they are considering forming a competitive pingpong team. Fans whir, the sander squeals, and Zach McClintock, wearing protective glasses, jeans, and a blue and white striped shirt, guides a rotating saw blade through a board.
To get hired, a man must be able-bodied, clean and sober, and ready to follow instructions. Experience with power tools is preferred but not required. McClintock had zero experience when he came to ask for a job, but he bumped into Justin Christian, the production manager, on the way in. That day the workshop was understaffed with several orders to fill, so Christian asked, “Can you sand?” and sent him to the workshop. Once hired, McClintock learned the basics: selecting raw material, measuring, cutting it to size. Simple projects followed, then the more advanced: He made a wooden cutout of Indiana, now hanging on the wall of Christian’s office.

McClintock came to Purposeful Design for carpentry experience after a descent into addiction: “All my entire check, everything I was working for, was being turned around and going to drugs. I wasn’t even feeling good from it anymore because the shame and guilt was just overpowering it. And my tolerance had increased so much that the only reason I was doing it was to not get sick.”

Now he has worked at Purposeful Design for a year and a half and stayed clean six months longer than that. The accountability and friendship from co-workers—about 50-60 have worked at Purposeful Design—are consistently helpful: “Everyone’s always quick and eager to say hello and ‘I love you’ and care for you and asking if you’re OK.” He said some of the men “won’t hesitate to tell you you’re being stupid.”

McClintock doesn’t claim to be a Christian, but he regularly attends the Bible studies and asks questions. “When you have good mentors who don’t shut down questions, you think, ‘Maybe this is for me,’” he said. Staff members recently bought him a copy of Evidence That Demands a Verdict, a book by apologist Josh McDowell, and he plans to read it.

The lunchroom is narrow, with windows along one wall and cabinets, a sink, and a Keurig coffee maker along the other. Two handmade tables are in the middle. Twelve paperback Bibles neatly line one windowsill for weekly Bible studies. Each morning, the workers circle up and pray, and at 10:30 have a devotion in the lunchroom. Managers do not make employees participate, but most do. Beyond that, discipleship happens through the intentional relationships staff members build with craftsmen.

“We’re not here just to teach woodworking or offer a paycheck but to get under the skin,” David Palmer said. “That begins with heart change. Otherwise... we feel like we’re putting a Band-Aid on a terrible wound.”

Vince Hicks is lead finisher at Purposeful Design. Finishing is the trickiest part of the carpentry process, most men agree, and Hicks earned his role through four years of work. At 27, his imposing height and thick black beard would be intimidating without his gregarious grin. He wears his short dreadlocks bundled into a tuft on top of his head.

After getting baptized at 18, Hicks said, he “went out, did crazy stuff, lived on my own for a little bit.” Things spiraled when he moved in with a woman, Daphne, and her two kids. He struggled to find and keep a job. They became homeless. He fell into legal trouble and was “just struggling, using still, and I’m drinking and partying.” At 21, he and Daphne had split up, and Hicks was living with his cousin. One weekend he came home at 3 a.m. to get drunk and watch a movie with his cousin and their friends. A scene in the movie caught his attention: He felt God telling him life was about Jesus, not Hicks, and if he really loved Daphne, he should marry her.
Hicks went to Daphne’s apartment: “That moment defined my faith life. Because all the things I told her, she was willing to forgive me.” Daphne had been learning about God’s character through Heart Change University, a program Cindy Palmer, David’s wife, had started. Two or three days later, Hicks bought an engagement ring. Two months later he and Daphne were baptized and started attending Nehemiah Bible Church.

Hicks met David Palmer just before Purposeful Design began. Palmer offered him a full-time position, and Hicks has been working there since the beginning: “I just feel like everybody’s family... It’s been a real good ride.”

Through working at Purposeful Design, Hicks said, he learned to accept his mistakes without seeing himself as a failure. One of his early projects was to distress a pair of tabletops. The managers said to put a few nicks in them to make them look aged and weathered. Hicks got carried away: “I started to bring rocks and asphalt from outside, and then I got bigger hammers, bigger nails, bigger chains, and I just, I almost destroyed these tables.”

One of the managers was frustrated with Hicks, but the other took him outside and told him he appreciated the effort and creativity—then explained how to do it right next time. “I’ve screwed up a lot,” Hicks recalled, “but they have had patience with me and showed me how to get the outcomes I’m looking for, and they did it without getting angry.”

One April afternoon, 15 men and three women—black and white, young and old—crowded around two tables in a classroom at Purposeful Design. Most looked at Bibles and took notes in binders as the animated teacher, Bill Moore, exhorted them to fight sin. Moore is a local businessman and one of 45 volunteer instructors who teach at the School of Woodworking and Discipleship. Palmer started the school last year to offer one month of life skills classes and carpentry training. The goal is to prepare students for the next step, whether that’s work, counseling, or school. Most students leave connected with a full-time job, and in the future, Purposeful Design will hire mainly from the graduates.

As the ministry’s director, Palmer doesn’t work in the craftsman shop himself, but he knows the workers by name and greets them every day. Hicks said, “I’ve never met somebody who has been consistent in smiling as much as he’s been. Dude’s been smiling since I met him.” But everything isn’t smiles: Earlier this year, the ministry changed its policy to zero tolerance for drugs and alcohol. Staff members realized giving multiple chances to men who showed up high or drunk was hurting the business, hurting the individuals, and hurting their watching co-workers.

Palmer said the new policy lost Purposeful Design three employees, but he’s seen others improve, getting tough on themselves to keep their jobs. The staff now does random drug and alcohol tests on the production floor, and fires those who fail. “I honestly can say I’m in the war on drugs,” said Hicks. “It affects me when guys don’t show up, when we hear about our brother that’s fallen back into what they’re dealing with. But it just brings the reality that we’re all one bad decision away.”

Palmer says quality control, market value, and timeliness remain constant challenges. Purposeful Design hires “instead of the cream of the crop, the bottom of the barrel,” and always has the challenge of balancing business goals with relationship goals. Palmer described some of the high-tech equipment Purposeful Design uses, then said, “We could go more high-tech, we could add more equipment and fewer men. But we’re here for employment and training and to help them.” Rehab programs normally have time limits, but men can work at Purposeful Design as long as they need to: Hicks and Jesse Slaugh, who started soon after the business began, are still there.

A table Slaugh built himself resides on the second floor of the Salesforce Tower, where he used to panhandle. The table is 12 feet long and 4 feet wide, made of expensive multicolored zebra wood from Africa. “It’s beautiful!” Slaugh exclaimed. Now he is a production manager, responsible for leading, mentoring, and keeping the craftsmen on task. The job has provided accountability and mentors for Slaugh: He is now married with a 4-year-old son and is preparing to purchase a home not far from Purposeful Design: “I will go from homeless to homeowner in five years. It’s by God’s grace, not through me.”

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Purposeful Design

2018 income: $1.4 million
2018 expenses: $1.3 million
Paid staff: 8
Volunteers: 50
CEO’s salary: David Palmer would not disclose his salary, but said it’s less than he made before and he is not the highest-paid employee.
Website: pdindy.com
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Britton Kendall pulled out all the stops throwing her first ever kid’s birthday party. She made tonkotsu ramen from scratch, allowed a silly string war inside the house, and handed out personalized certificates after a Super Smash Bros. video game tournament.

It was 15-year-old Alberto’s first birthday party, and he picked out everything, including a Luigi cake. Britton, 36, and her husband Todd, 37, became foster parents to Alberto (WORLD isn’t using his real name at the request of his caseworker) last October. At Alberto’s request, the partygoers included a few Kendall family members and three couples, in their 20s and 30s, from their church.

The Kendalls planned on throwing kids’ birthday parties a long time ago. Instead, like 1 in 8 couples nationwide,
they have waded their way through infertility—15 years of it. Couples in their circumstances are often drawn to billboards and online ads paid for by fertility clinics selling expensive procedures like in vitro fertilization, surrogacy, and donor eggs and sperm and promising babies.

But the Kendalls have become foster parents instead. Nearly 443,000 children are in foster care. The number has risen 10 percent in the last five years, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services expects it to keep climbing amid the nation’s opioid crisis. Many states are struggling to meet the demand: At least half have seen a steady decline in available foster homes between 2012 and 2017, according to a study from The Chronicle of Social Change.

“We’re looking at how to attract people, and for those willing to go through the fairly arduous process ... how to support them,” said Irene Clements, director of the National Foster Parent Association. Within the first year, she said, up to 50 percent of foster parents “give up and say, ‘This is too hard.’”

Todd first recalls thinking he wanted to become a foster parent in high school after he heard a Christian camp counselor talk about his experience with it. Todd and Britton met as teenagers and new believers at a Bible study in Santa Barbara, Calif. Before marriage, a pastor performing premarital counseling likened abstaining from birth control as newlyweds to “standing in the middle of the freeway,” Britton told me with a laugh.

The Kendalls attended an introductory foster care meeting in 2016 with another infertile couple from their church. That couple had been on an adoption agency’s waiting list for two years. Then, Britton heard about Royal Family Kids’ Camps (RFKC), a national Christian-run nonprofit that partners with churches to provide local foster children with a week of over-the-top love and fun. Camp activities include a pajama party for girls, a knighting ceremony for boys, a petting zoo, woodworking classes, a zip line, and a high ropes course.

In 2017, the Kendalls enlisted their church to join Sonoma County’s recently launched RFKC. Britton says camp “changed my whole idea of what it could mean to enter someone’s life midstory, even for a short period of time. You meet kids that you would change your whole life for.”

The Kendalls initially requested children ages 6-12. Most foster parents prefer younger children over teenagers, believing they will have experienced less trauma, Clements told me. The Kendalls took in Alberto after a trusted Christian friend who works at a foster agency told them he thought it was a great fit.

Ten months later, they recounted their many firsts. For the Kendalls: their first time attending parent night at school, their first Christmas morning with a kid, their first mother’s and father’s days, their first time making Easter baskets and hosting an egg hunt. For Alberto: his first time building a sand castle, his first trips to Costco and to a fancy restaurant, his first time doing laundry, his first time attending church, his first time watching The Princess Bride and Napoleon Dynamite.

The Kendalls and Alberto also live in the reality that he may leave. Foster care is often temporary, and social workers strive for reunification with a child’s family if possible. For Alberto and the Kendalls, reminders come as they meet weekly with a caseworker and monthly with a social worker. Alberto has visitation with his family at least once a month, and his case goes before a judge every six months.

Throughout the Kendalls’ journey, they have talked frankly with other congregation members, and they now bring foster care to the forefront. “Our young friends at church are Alberto’s old friends,” Todd says: Some are even becoming foster parents. Britton says, “The joy has far outweighed the pain of watching my friends have children ... or scrolling through my Instagram feed and only seeing babies.”
As she tells it, Detroit was practically dead for two days, passed out on the sidewalk of Skid Row. She remembers ingesting some kind of drug—it could have been crack, powder cocaine, or meth. She wasn’t picky when it came to getting high.

She doesn’t remember much until the moment someone shook her shoulder and said, “Detroit, it’s been storming. Did you know?” That person tried to lift the blanket off her, and Detroit remembers snarling, “Leave me the [obscenity] alone!” Snatching the blanket back over her head, she heard a loud, wet, heavy whoooosh as the rain-soaked blanket fell and hit the ground with a thud.

That’s when she came to her senses. She remembers peering out with dazed eyes: “I realized then how out of it I was. I was dead. I was spiritually gone.” Although she often prayed for others, at that moment, for the first time in a long while, she prayed for herself: “God, I just ask for one thing: I need some peace. That’s all I want.”

That was 12 years ago. Detroit is now 10 years sober, housed, and fully groomed with bright-colored fingernails and flat-ironed hair. As a 56-year-old black woman living on and off Skid Row since 1981, Detroit has a lot to say about homelessness. And each time, she expresses frustration and grief about what’s happening in homelessness. Or rather, what’s not happening. She doesn’t think many so-called “experts” in the field actually speak for people like her.

Among activists, nonprofits, and government officials, the dominant narrative about homelessness is that it’s a housing crisis issue. There’s some truth to that: The lack of affordable housing in Los Angeles didn’t push her into homelessness, but it is making it very hard for formerly homeless people and low-income people to stay housed.

But one thing Detroit repeatedly says: “People fall into homelessness when they lack something in one or two or all of these three things: spiritual, mental, or physical health. People say we’re homeless because we don’t have housing. That’s not true. Homelessness and housing are two separate issues.”

For Detroit, homelessness began with a mental and spiritual issue. Since age 15, she had suffered from depression and suicidal thoughts. At age 18, she voluntarily entered a mental hospital, but that hospital closed down after President Ronald Reagan cut funding to state mental health programs, and Detroit was out on the streets with nowhere to go.

It wasn’t that she had no one to turn to. Throughout her 38 years living on and off the streets, she at times would show up at the doorstep of a family member who reluctantly took her in until she wandered back to Skid Row: “It’s not true that most of us don’t have anywhere to go. It’s just that we don’t know where to go in our mind, where to go that’s safe—safe from ourselves.”

And so, operating out of a spiritual and mental dysfunction, she stayed stuck in physical impoverishment year after year, until 12 years ago when, finally feeling so deep in a pit that she couldn’t crawl out without supernatural help, she cried out to God. She had tried asking for help from psychiatric hospitals. She had tried every drug she could get on the streets. She had tried getting help from family members. “I had tried everything,” Detroit told me, “but I didn’t try God.”

So that day 12 years ago on the sidewalk of Skid Row, soaked and shivering from a storm, Detroit thought for the first time, “This is something for the spirit. My spirit is dead and my flesh is weak.” That was a step she needed to take to overcome homelessness.

“The spirit is like your heart,” Detroit says, “and if your heart’s not beating—baby, you dead!”
Kolkata (once known as Calcutta) is infamous for Sonagachi, one of the largest red light districts in Asia. About 10,000 women, trapped in the sex trade, live within a labyrinthine tangle of streets. Many are victims of human trafficking, young village girls lured to the city by false promises of a job or marriage, then sold on the doorstep of a brothel. Others enter the pain factories out of desperation and poverty.

Each night, thousands of men flood into “the Gach.” The women crowd the doorways and line the streets, smiles and makeup pasted on. Yet right in the middle sits an unassuming building where women sew saris into blankets and stitch hope into their lives. This is Sari Bari, a business founded in 2006 by Sarah Lance—formerly a volunteer at Mother Teresa’s Home for the Dying—and Kristin Keen.

Lance and Keen aimed to build a self-sustainable business that could provide freedom and alternative employment to women trapped in the sex trade or at high risk of being trafficked. “I was profoundly afraid of being a hypocrite,” Lance explained. “I really wanted my faith to be active.... We’d been visiting [Sonagachi] for about five years, listening to the women and what their needs were. And what we heard over and over again was: ‘I want a different job.’”

Kolkata’s pervasive “shame culture” means that the families of trafficked girls will often not accept them back for fear of becoming outcast themselves. Most trafficking victims have little or no education or skills: Left with no alternative, they stay in brothels just to survive. A viable business that hires these women is an opportunity to escape. Lance and Keen wrote up a business plan, did market research, and developed a product line—bags and blankets made from saris. Sari Bari began with three women learning to sew in Kolkata’s smaller Kalighat red light district.

In the years since, Sari Bari has opened two production units in Sonagachi and a prevention unit in Canning, a major trafficking source area. It now employs around 110 women from the red light areas, and also operates a nonprofit trust. A social worker provides mental health and medical support. Employees receive preventative care checkups, health insurance, and three-fourths of school- ing costs for their children.

The business has struggled but stayed afloat. Instead of employing the best-qualified people, Sari Bari intentionally employs women with no skills, no literacy, small motor skills challenges, and trauma—and still tries to pay well and make a quality product people want to buy. Normal (but tough) business decisions, such as firing an employee, take on enormous weight, since jobless women are likely to return to the sex trade.

It’s not a business model for the faint of heart, yet it is possible. And the potential for transforming women’s and...
children’s lives is remarkable: Lance says, “After 13 years, we’re now seeing kids in college.”

Sari Bari and other Kolkata social entrepreneurs call their companies “freedom businesses.” Freeset, the largest and oldest of the bunch, has operated a factory in Sonagachi since 2001. It now employs more than 250 women from the red light area, printing T-shirts and making bags and scarves from jute and used saris.

The newest freedom business, Loyal Workshop, opened in 2014 and employs 18 women in Bowbazar, Kolkata’s second-largest red light area. Two years ago Lou and Andy Gane, with their two kids, left comfortable suburban life in New Zealand to live and work in Kolkata. Lou runs Loyal’s sales and marketing. Andy does the accounting: “We wanted to reorient our lives towards people on the margins,” Lou says.

The exacting business requires use of a laser cutter: The smell of burning leather fills the tiny cutting room as the machine’s mechanical arm, following preprogrammed instructions, slices lengths of eco-tanned leather into precise shapes. One staffer sorts the pieces into packets—every component needed to make a particular product—and hands them to the women, who stitch them into satchels, belts, and wallets.

Potential employees also have to reorient their lives: The key question for them to answer is, “Are you prepared to fight for your freedom?” Some women had to pay off debt to a brothel owner before they could even begin working at Loyal. Others struggle with alcohol or drug addiction. Most aren’t used to working regular hours every day, and many need to find new housing outside of the dangerous red light area.

Along with teaching the women a trade, Loyal helps the women walk through these day-to-day challenges by providing budgeting classes, group therapy, and English and Bengali literacy lessons. Every woman Loyal employs has a deeply traumatic personal history. Taking that into account, part of the company’s business model centered on finding a product that didn’t require hard and fast deadlines.

The work itself is also part of the healing process. Rather than operating a production line, with each employee doing a repetitive task, each woman stitches a product from start to finish. With their own two hands, women who once thought they were worthless can create something beautiful and valuable. It helps them realize that they too are beautiful and valuable.

Lance says she loves the look on a new employee’s face when she gets her first paycheck and glows with pride. Some eventually become assistant managers, trainers, and production managers, but it’s never easy. “I can’t even count how many times I wanted to quit,” Lance said, “but I’m deeply committed to these women and their freedom journey.” Lance knows that “God created us for work. Whether it’s [sitting] at a desk or stitching a cloth, there’s something empowering about it. It’s important.”

It can all seem like just a drop in the bucket. According to the 2018 Global Slavery Index, nearly 8 million people are living in some form of modern slavery in India.

But in Kolkata, Lance has learned to “celebrate the baby steps [and] walk away feeling hopeful that this is happening in the world.”

‘God created us for work. Whether it’s [sitting] at a desk or stitching a cloth, there’s something empowering about it. It’s important.’

—SARAH LANCE
Not forgotten

[June 8, p. 38] Thanks for Jamie Dean’s article. We lost my husband to Lewy body dementia at age 56. In that dark time our church was a bright light for us. The pastors’ weekly visits, the deacons’ aid, and the congregation’s prayers all helped to bear us up. The church was a constant reminder that Christ is our only comfort in life and in death.

—ROXANNE IVARSON / Lakewood, Colo.

Churches must minister to the needs of caregivers and individuals with dementia. God’s image remains imprinted on their hearts despite the ravages of the disease.

—RHONDA ANDERSON / Plymouth, Wis.

I wept when I saw this article. I cared for both my parents from a dual diagnosis of dementia in 2010 until their deaths in 2012 and 2016. I never doubted God was with me even when I cried out to Him in pain, uncertainty, and sorrow, but our church didn’t seem to understand.

—CYNTHIA TULLY on wng.org

Thank you from the bottom of this dementia caregiver’s heart. I cannot do it alone. I’m grateful that our church stepped up when we got the diagnosis, and many have continued as things worsened at an alarming pace.

—ROSA EDWARDS on wng.org

My husband has been living the Alzheimer’s nightmare for nine years now. Old friends just haven’t come to see him. One told me that after visiting others in similar situations he had nightmares that it was going to happen to him. I realized it was fear, basically.

—VIRGINIA H. SALZMAN / Tucson, Ariz.

A scandal afoot?

[June 8, p. 66] Jenny Rough did a great job reporting a potentially volatile issue in a fair way. Even if the pastors received those expensive shoes as gifts, wearing them publicly is enough to arouse resentment.

—KAREN DAVIS / Exton, Pa.

There’s no excuse for this. For a true pastor, the more people you reach the longer the list grows of things you could do with an extra thousand dollars, such as helping a desperate young family with medical bills.

—SUZANNA PETERSON McDOWELL on Facebook

As a pastor’s wife, I feel this tension all the time. How will our congregation view our new vehicle? Our kids’ clothes? Our vacation? We want to be good stewards but not slaves to others’ opinions. Only God sees our hearts. Still, I’ve never considered buying a pair of thousand-dollar shoes.

—KATIE POWNER on wng.org

Looming gallows

[June 8, p. 72] I wish our young people would understand the things Marvin Olasky knows from experience about socialism. This is a dangerous time. May we preserve the freedom, opportunities, and capitalism that made this country great.

—LOUISE E. DESCLOS / Nashua, N.H.

How many causes have been hijacked by evil men? And how many men began with altruistic motives only to find themselves on the other side when the day is done? It is dangerous to ignore the realities of history.

—BOBBIE KEITH on wng.org

I appreciated the observation that tyranny seems inevitable after a revolution because the most ruthless people fill the power vacuum. It is like the parable of the unclean spirit who leaves a person but then returns with others even more wicked, so that “the last state of that person is worse than the first.” So it goes with evil generations.

—MEL HEUBERGER on wng.org

Heart to heart with Laci Green

[June 8, p. 50] Our culture teaches that to disagree is to be hateful. Thank you for modeling respectful engagement with a neighbor without compromising the truth of Scripture.

—STEVEN LANGE / Louisville, Ky.

This is awesome! Sophia Lee spoke with a so-called enemy in a kind, rational, vulnerable, and nonjudgmental way. If only our politicians could do the same.

—CHRISTINA WILSON on wng.org

The secret heart

[June 8, p. 20] Thanks to Janie B. Cheaney for reminding us of original sin. Everyday events teach us this obvious fact: Sinners all are we!

—STEPHEN LEONARD / Vidalia, Ga.

The heroes in those terrible shootings truly acted in a Christ-like manner. Thank you for acknowledging them.

—JENNIFER EASON on Facebook
Hearts gone cold
[June 8, p. 8] Joel Belz rightly highlighted the self-deception in Susan Smith, who drowned her children, and in those who promote abortion. Our culture goes to great lengths to reframe a child as a lump of tissue, yet the presence of post-abortion emotional issues is evidence that we know it is wrong.

—CHRIS BENNETT / Quarryville, Pa.

Saladin’s men
[June 8, p. 7] Good to see somebody who understands the Muslim threat to our country.

—HOWARD TULL / Baton Rouge, La.

I teach English to Somali refugees, devout Muslims all. Last week Ayan, seeing me newly wheelchair-confined, promised in her clumsy (but improving!) English to pray to Allah for my speedy recovery. Am I naïve for not believing that praying for my recovery is the deception and wanting me beheaded is the reality? Most of us never get close enough to the heart of a Muslim to see what’s there, and this column will only encourage fear and anger.

—STEVE LAZICKI / Faribault, Minn.

D-Day plus 75 years
[June 8, p. 63] This is such an amazing and inspiring story. What a different world it could be if, like the heroes of D-Day, we stopped sniping at one another and joined together to fight against evil and for the freedom to flourish.

—SUSAN WILLIAMS on Facebook

Eisenhower understood how important the D-Day invasion was strategically, committing to it despite frightful uncertainties. He was devoted to the men, spending hours with the 101st Airborne paratroopers before they boarded for a mission that advisers warned could be a catastrophe. To us today the victory seems inevitable. We don’t consider other possible outcomes, and so we will never understand the resolution required to live through this history.

—NOLAN NELSON / Eugene, Ore.
Matty’s book

A FRESH AND PERSONABLE LOOK AT BASEBALL AND LIFE IN 1912

Needing escape from the disappointing escapism of midsummer 2019 Philadelphia Phillies baseball, I read of happier times two hours north as obligingly recorded by the pitcher for the pennant-winning turn-of-the-20th-century New York Giants.

The name might be new to some, but as journalist John N. Wheeler writes in his 1912 preface to *Pitching in a Pinch,* “Introducing a reader to Christy Mathewson seems like a superfluous piece of writing and a waste of white paper. Schoolboys of the last 10 years have been acquainted with the exact figures which have made up Matty’s pitching record before they have heard of George Washington, because George didn’t play in the same League.”

So fresh and personable is this inside baseball book that once in a while I had to remind myself of what Mathewson didn’t know: He didn’t know about World War I (he would later suffer a chemical gas accident in training, which would cut his life short). He didn’t know about the Black Sox Scandal of 1919. He men-

tions the Singer Building as the tallest in the world (the 41-story Lower Manhattan office skyscraper would be torn down in 1968 to make way, eventually, for One Liberty Plaza). Ty Cobb is referenced on scattered pages as merely “the Detroit outfielder,” a man and not a god.

Here is how Mathewson mentions *en passant* the British luxury liner whose sinking by a German U-boat would turn popular sentiment toward America’s entry into “the war to end all wars.” Speaking of Fred Clarke’s purchase of Marty O’Toole for the Pittsburgh Pirates for the unheard-of sum of $22,500 in 1911, Mathewson writes:

“The newspapers of the country were filled with figures and pictures of the real estate and automobiles that could be bought with the same amount of money, lined up alongside of pictures of O’Toole, as when comparative strengths of the navies of the world are shown by placing different sizes of battleships in a row, or when the length of the *Lusitania* is empha-
sized by printing a picture of it balancing grace-
fully on its stern alongside the Singer Building.”

But ignorance runs both ways, and I had to redress large gaps in my knowledge of contem-
porary cussing lexicology for depicting the likes of famed Giants manager John (aka “Mugsy,” aka “Little Napoleon”) McGraw. Describing a game situation in which third-base coach Arthur Wilson misjudged a hit and stopped the runner on second from going all the way home, Mathewson writes that McGraw “promptly sent a coacher out to relieve Wilson, and his oratory to the young catcher would have made a Billingsgate fishwife sore.” (The allusion is to London’s traditional fish market, and the wives of fisher-
men famed for being loud and foul-mouthed.)

In this regard I appreciate Mathewson’s restraint in not over-
sharing. And indeed, “the Gentleman Hurler” and Hall of Famer was re-
puted by his colleagues to be well mannered and is credited with elevat-
ing the status of America’s national pastime at a time when it was still associated with ruffians. Recalling a Saturday pennant game against Pittsburgh at Forbes Field, he tells without superfluous explicitness how the Pirates’ Fred Clarke protested a call at home plate. “Brennan was dusting off the plate and paid no attention to him. But Clarke con-
tinued to snap and bark at the umpire as he brushed himself off, referring with feeling to Mr. Brennan’s immediate family, and weaving into his talk a sketch of the umpire’s ancestors.”

The Christian life is better than baseball but should be at least as practical as baseball. *Pitching in a Pinch* reminded me how the brief human strut on this stage should be focused on victory, should engage all the mind, and should make the most of what we’ve got and not lament what we ain’t got.

A case in point is Mordecai “Three-
Fingered” Brown, pennant-winning pitcher for the Chicago Cubs who parlayed a physical deformity acquired in “an argument with a feed cutter” into a hard-breaking curveball that batters were lucky to get a grounder off of.

Did I mention that Christy Mathewson, who sat out Sunday games, is one of us? And you can ask him any stats your heart desires when we meet up yonder in that diamond in the sky.®
Zenger invitation
JOURNALISTIC TRAINING FOR TEACHERS, PROFESSORS, AND MISSIONARIES

Twelve times my wife and I in our living room have shown small groups of WORLD readers how to become WORLD writers. During a week of 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. reporting, writing, and editing, the students ranging in age from 27 to 72 have improved their understanding, story sense, and writing. I’ve just checked our masthead on page 4 and seen that 31 are now WORLD correspondents.

Our next World Journalism Institute mid-career course is scheduled for Jan. 9-15, 2020. Application deadline is Sept. 1, and several spots are still open: See worldji.com. But my main reason for mentioning this now is a potential expansion of WJI. We’re thinking about multiplying our efforts in a way that may produce a small benefit for WORLD but will, we hope, produce a large benefit for the evangelical church generally.

We’re thinking of having up to three new one-week mid-career courses. One, during the summer, would be for high-school teachers: Susan and I would teach them about journalism in a way that would allow them to set up journalism clubs or good school newspapers. A second, also during the summer, would teach college professors how to write in a journalistic way so they could put their ideas before a wider audience. A third, in spring or fall, would teach missionaries how to write letters and reports from the field that their supporters will read not out of a sense of duty but with excitement and pleasure.

The idea for these three new WJI opportunities is not mine: I’ve periodically received letters from teachers, professors, and missionaries asking us to start such courses. Susan and I would like to give it a shot. All 100 of our mid-career students during this decade have paid their own way, but since teachers, professors, and missionaries generally don’t have large salaries, we hope to offer scholarships.

At this point I don’t know for sure that we’ll be offering these courses: I want to see if there really is a demand for them. If you’re a teacher, professor, or missionary, and what I’ve written quickens your pulse enough that you’d be eager to commit a week to learn under tough Olasky tutelage, please email me: molasky@wng.org. Feel free to place this opportunity before tough-skinned others.

Those who run the race will become Zenger Fellows, named after John Peter Zenger, a courageous Christian editor who in 1734 went to jail for criticizing New York’s corrupt royal governor. A jury found him not guilty on Biblical grounds: He told the truth.

WANTED: LONG-MARRIED LOVERS
When I received a sweet note from WORLD reader Anne Phillips, I noted her email address—youtoanne@——.com—and could not resist asking about its origin.

Here’s Anne’s reply: “So glad you asked. Been dying to tell someone. Played second fiddle to a wonderful big brother (sympathy with Jesus’ brothers). Then married a man thought by my family to be too good for me. Sixty-two years ago while painting our first home my grandma raved about my husband’s good work. Belatedly she realized I thought by my family to be too good for me. Sixty-two years ago while painting our first home my grandma raved about my husband’s good work. Belatedly she realized I had worked just as well, and she added ‘You, too, Anne.’”

Reading that reply reminded me of two good series WORLD ran online more than a decade ago. They celebrated perseverance in marriage (40 years or more) and in ministering at a specific church (30 years or more). We had one problem: Interviewees did not want to tell our reporters of any problems they had had. But, as former world-record mile runner Jim Ryun told me in 2009 after celebrating his 40th anniversary, “Marriage is the bringing together of two very selfish people who have to learn a lot about giving, and if you put Jesus at the center of that process He will help you.”

I’d say the same about the 43 years of marriage Susan and I have had: Without Jesus we wouldn’t have made it. So, if you’ve been married for more than 40 years, or have pastored in the same place for more than 30 years, and if you are willing to disclose to WORLD reporter Charissa Koh how you overcame difficulties, please email her—ckoh@wng.org—and include your telephone number.

Charissa will be particularly interested in your story because her dad—pastor of the same Georgia church for 24 years—performed her wedding ceremony on July 13.
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