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SPECIAL ISSUE
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Notes from the CEO

We are about to retire the Visitor Register here in our Asheville office.

So what, right? That’s what I said before flipping to the first page and noticing the first entry in this register is dated April 20, 1998. In this way, the register is a time capsule, a history textbook, and a journal all in one spiral-bound volume.

It survived the move from an office across town to our current space. This register has stories to tell.

I see the first visits of many of our current and former staff, board members, long-time business partners—from bankers to insurance agents to lawyers to paper vendors, many of whom still work with us. (I neglected to sign the register on my first visit to the office in August 2003. But I’m glad they let me stay.)

On the “receiving” end of many of the meetings recorded in this register are dozens of employees who were part of this enterprise at the beginning, or at least close enough to the beginning to hold hero status among today’s staff.

I can use this register to recreate a timeline of the major events in our history—the development of new products, the sale of a major division, partnerships that happened and some that didn’t. I see the beginnings of ideas, both good and bad. I see a few roads I wish we had traveled and one or two I wish we hadn’t.

I see hundreds—many hundreds—of our members who just dropped in to visit. You cannot imagine how encouraging those visits are.

Mostly, I see God’s hand working through thousands of meetings and visits to bring us to the last page or two of this register, with all the history it represents. You cannot imagine how encouraging those visits are.

As I’ve said several times before, I invite you to add your name to the register. Any time is a good time to visit.
Separating little children from their parents, whether it happens as the result of a deliberate policy or only as an incidental and unintended consequence, turns out to be a pretty boneheaded political idea. It’s hard—at least in the near future—to imagine any politician at any level proposing any public program or idea that even hints at such an outcome.

Except, of course, that splitting up family units has always been a specialty of what we used to call “liberal” political interests, but which many refer to as “progressive.”

My very first exposure to the general truth of that assertion came some 70 years ago when I overheard my father talking with my mother and other folks from our church. “There’s just no way,” I remember Dad’s saying, “that we’re going to keep tolerating our children being swallowed up by those big yellow monsters—just to go and be taught an alien gospel.” Several local public schools were in the process of being consolidated into just one, and for Dad, the big buses that would haul us to a more distant town were grim symbols of a government stripping from parents their God-given rights and duty to shape their own children’s education.

Dad’s conversation about school buses helped lead over the next few months to the establishment of a Christian school that through the years shaped the lives of hundreds of youngsters. It was a boarding school, and we always struggled a bit with the irony that as such it too separated its students from their parents! But governmental influence in the huge educational structures—local, state, and federal—always seemed to be competing for influence over the students. “We can do it better than you can,” the state said condescendingly to parents again and again.

For Dad, the big yellow buses were grim symbols of a government stripping from parents their God-given rights.

On a totally different front, the state used its power and influence to move the hearts of the nation’s children from their fathers and their mothers to other loyalties. A gigantic shift in divorce laws over the last two generations has produced an “alienation of affection” that has stolen and splintered families everywhere.

No-fault divorce, opposed at first by conservatives and evangelicals, is now more and more accepted and practiced in all our circles. Divorce, as easily pursued these days in most evangelical churches as in their more liberal counterparts, has produced practical orphans in staggering numbers. The blame here lies no more with liberals than with conservatives acting like liberals.

To make our recent Fourth of July a bit more memorable, my wife and I invited a dozen neighbors to stop by, share a few goodies, and get a bit acquainted. I wasn’t surprised to conclude that none of the handful who came would be inclined to call themselves Christians. I was surprised that no one in this likable little group seemed to claim a “typical” marriage. Everyone was either living together, using two different last names, or leaving me guessing some other way. Am I wrong to worry about the children of such relationships?

But we’d be poor observers of culture and our times if, as we focus on policies and practices that separate children from their parents, we forgot the destruction inflicted on us all by the practice of abortion. Here there is no ambiguity. Abortion, of course, is the dark grand champion of all gloomy practices that separate children from their parents. Abortion is a one-way dispatch. There’s no hope of reconnecting with a distant uncle or grandmother. No chance of getting a friendly judge to hear your case. No counselor with good advice for the future. No warm clothing for chilly nights.

The Trump administration surely made itself look incompetent with its ill-conceived and extended treatment of immigrants’ children. But the parade of critics of that fiasco should have the decency to shut their mouths until the biggest offense to children gets a lot more attention. When such folks cry their eyes out for an immigrant child’s temporary separation from his or her parent, and then go on to insist that a new Supreme Court justice must pledge to support abortion on demand, take my word for it: That society is drowning in crocodile tears.
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— From the Foreword by Dr. Joel R. Beeke, Pastor. President of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary

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Muddy highness
Molly Kofahl, 4 (left), and Charles Daviskiba, 3, wear their crowns after winning the titles of queen and king at the 31st annual Mud Day at Nankin Mills Park on July 10 in Westland, Mich. The event attracts hundreds of children to the park every year to play in a 75-by-150-foot pit filled with 200 tons of topsoil and 20,000 gallons of water.

CARLOS OSORIO/AP
Netflix disgraced itself during the first two weeks of July by streaming and then refusing to apologize for Episode 7 (July 8) of *The Break with Michelle Wolf*, with its 33-year-old “comedian” host. Among her jokes: Abortion “should be on the dollar menu at McDonald’s.” (Shot of a fake dollar menu listing menu choices: Burger, Abortion, Cheeseburger, Fries.)

Another: Abortion “doesn’t have to be a big deal. It’s actually a great deal. It’s about $300. That’s like six movie tickets... God bless abortion.”

Wolf’s arithmetic isn’t great—movie tickets aren’t that much, even in New York City—but she can count to seven, which is the number of Supremes who voted for abortion in *Roe v. Wade* (1973). During oral arguments that led to the decision, young lawyer Sarah Weddington told the court she was “not here to advocate abortion” or to ask for a ruling that “abortion is good or desirable in any particular situation.” She made a legal and economic case for abortion, but at least she referred to the unborn baby as a “who,” not a “that.”

Weddington displayed a lack of faith in God and no interest in the rights of that child, but she recognized the gravity of the matter.

What’s happened in America that Netflix and other media giants can be so cavalier about killing babies? I should note that not everyone was enamored with Wolf: Some viewers commented, “I would rather snort fire ants than listen to another second of this harpy’s shrill voice... Just a bunch of bullying comments... Impossibly unfunny.” And one complainant, noting that 11 comedy writers worked on the show, asked the key question: “How on earth did this come about and be so bad with 11 writers?”

The most heartwarming story of the fortnight came out of northern Thailand, where brave rescuers risked their own lives—one did die—to save the lives of children trapped in flooded caves. That’s compassion, so it was appropriate that one of the rescuers, 18-year-old Surayut Puengpadung, was a beneficiary of Compassion International, the Christian child-sponsoring ministry, as was one of the rescued, Adul Sam-on. But the question still nags: What kind of culture in America breeds 11 comedy writers who will produce something so unfunny?

Two expressions that theologian Francis Schaeffer used a generation ago are helpful here. One is “the line of despair.” When we believe in capital-G God and capital-T truth, we have strength for today and hope for tomorrow. When we don’t, we sink beneath the line and have no real purpose except that which we manufacture for ourselves. Sooner or later it does not satisfy, and as we age we have nothing to look forward to except oblivion—and that leaves us in despair.

Schaeffer knew that cultures where most people are in despair can go on for a while without collapsing by “living off
the interest,” being good neighbors by maintaining habits their parents modeled for them. The cultural capital deposited by those parents, like principal in a bank, provides sufficient interest to keep going.

Schaeffer thought America dipped under the line of despair in about 1935, and, as he taught from the 1950s until the 1980s, we were dipping into our principal. By now, it has almost run out. Many of our leading writers, actors, and directors drink 100-proof materialism and are blatantly pro-abortion. (Lena Dunham said two years ago, “I still haven’t had an abortion, but I wish I had.”) Bitter comedians often produce mean screeches.

Today, beneath the line of despair, we self-medicate by “amusing ourselves to death” (to use Neil Postman’s expression), and neither Michelle Wolf nor her writers know where to stop. That’s the significance of the series we’re starting this issue about marijuana legalization (see p. 34). Advocates of medical marijuana make a good case, and others who look at pot jail time see how it hurts poor communities, but treating marijuana like beer and selling it in supermarkets will escalate our societal ooze toward bedlam.

The first-half-of-July news offered some ground for optimism. Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh is clearly an upgrade over Anthony Kennedy, although the result might not be a Roe v. Wade reversal (see p. 30). When Kavanaugh uses his season ticket at Washington Nationals ballgames, he’ll be jubilantly reminded that our flag still waves (see p. 38). The five regional winners in our 2018 Hope Awards for Effective Compassion competition all present the great good news of Christ to those in need (see pp. 42–63).

But the bad news ooze supports what Schaeffer wrote in A Christian Manifesto: “Our view of final reality—whether it is material-energy, shaped by impersonal chance, or the living God and Creator—will determine our position on every crucial issue we face today. It will determine our views on the value and dignity of people”—including tiny ones.

The number of Emmy Award nominations that Netflix original programs received this year, surpassing HBO, which received 108. For each of the past 17 years, HBO has earned more Emmy nominations than any other network.

The share of U.S.-initiated trade dispute cases lodged with the World Trade Organization that the United States ultimately wins, according to a Bloomberg analysis.

The number of public employees Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan fired on July 8. Most were police and military officers.

The share of American farms classified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as “small family farms” because their yearly gross revenue is below $350,000.

The number of minutes, as of July 17, that American children have spent reading while participating in the Scholastic Summer Reading Challenge.
**Discovered**
Archaeologists have discovered an ancient temple hidden under the Teopanzolco pyramid in Cuernavaca, Mexico. A 7.1 magnitude earthquake that hit the country last September heavily damaged the pyramid, and scientists discovered the temple while scanning the pyramid for damage. Researchers think it was a temple built by the Tlahuica people around 1150 to honor Tláloc, the Aztec rain god. They found an incense burner and bits of ceramic inside the ruins.

**Negotiated**
Ethiopia and Eritrea have made peace, ending a two-decade-long border war that cost over 80,000 lives. When Eritrea seceded from Ethiopia in the early 1990s, Ethiopia was left landlocked and reliant on a port in Djibouti. War broke out a few years later. This April, Abiy Ahmed, who had fought in the border war, became prime minister of Ethiopia, and he made good on promises to change relations with Eritrea. Abiy visited the capital of Eritrea and met with Eritrea’s president, Isaias Afwerki, for negotiations in July. Soon after, the two issued a joint declaration ending hostilities and promising peace for 20 years. The treaty appears to include shared port access, exchange of political prisoners, and the reopening of embassies.

**Attacked**
Rodolfo Rodriguez, 92, of Mexico was out for a walk while visiting his family in Willowbrook, Calif., when a woman he passed allegedly attacked him. The woman, Laquisha Jones, had been walking with a little girl and reportedly picked up a concrete block and began beating Rodriguez. Misbel Borjas, who was driving by, told CNN he saw Jones hitting Rodriguez in the head with the block repeatedly and yelling at him to go back to Mexico. When she saw Borjas, she threw the block at his car. Jones faces charges of attempted murder in the July 4 incident. Rodriguez, who suffered broken ribs, a broken cheekbone, and numerous bruises, is recovering at his home. Rodriguez told the media he is not angry with Jones, and he prays that God will forgive her and bless her.

**Ended**
Geneva College, a Christian college in Pennsylvania, has won a six-year legal battle for religious freedom. Geneva had refused to submit to the HHS mandate on employers to provide abortion pills in their health plans. The Alliance Defending Freedom brought the school’s case to court, and in 2016 the U.S. Supreme Court took a bundle of similar cases and handed it back down to the district courts for consideration. A federal district court in Pennsylvania made a ruling on Geneva’s case on July 5, ordering the federal government not to force religious organizations to cover abortion pills, saying this violates their rights under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Geneva College is free from all threats of penalties.

**Reopened**
The Department of Justice (DOJ) is reopening the case of Emmett Till, an African-American teenager murdered in 1955. When the case went to trial, two white men accused of abducting, beating, and killing Till were acquitted but admitted their guilt in a magazine interview a year later. Till’s death sparked civil rights protests nationwide. The DOJ says it has reopened the case after the discovery of new evidence. This could be the confession of Carolyn Donham, the white woman whose testimony led to the acquittal of Till’s murderers. Donham recently admitted she had lied in court.
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‘They are shooting at a church. The government says it respects human rights. Is this respecting human rights?’

Catholic priest ERICK ALVARADO COLE, one of the priests inside the Church of the Divine Mercy in Managua, Nicaragua, as a gun battle raged outside. The church was caring for protesters who had been wounded by government forces in mid-July. More than 300 people, mostly civilians, reportedly have been killed since protests began in April against President Daniel Ortega’s centralization of power.

‘The warning lights are blinking red again.’

DAN COATS, director of national intelligence, on cyberthreats to the United States, especially from Russia. He compared the danger to the danger right before 9/11: “Today, the digital infrastructure that serves this country is literally under attack.”

‘I’m not very religious, but it’s a miracle.’

Belgian cave diver BEN REYMENANTS on the discovery and rescue of 12 Thai soccer players and their coach trapped in a cave. Reymenants was one of the international experts key to the rescue.

‘If it were me, I’d check the soccer ball for listening devices and never allow it in the White House.’

U.S. Sen. LINDSEY GRAHAM, R-S.C., on the gift, a symbolic World Cup soccer ball, that Russian leader Vladimir Putin gave to President Donald Trump during a joint press conference. Trump came under bipartisan condemnation for suggesting at the conference that Russia had not interfered in U.S. elections. U.S. intelligence says Russia did interfere. Trump later said he misspoke.

‘To ask me about the confirmation process is like asking for the recipe for chicken à la king from the point of view of the chicken.’

U.S. Supreme Court Justice STEPHEN BREYER as the U.S. Senate prepared for hearings for Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh.
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TRUMP PICKS KAVANAUGH FOR HIGH COURT

BREAKING NEWS

WHAT AMERICA WANTS IS SOCIALISM...

WHAT VENEZUELA WANTS IS WATER AND TOILET PAPER.
Bird battle

They may look a bit like birds of a feather, but when crows and ravens flock together, havoc ensues. Researchers at the University of British Columbia blame crows for the animosity between the two bird species. In a study published in The Auk: Ornithological Advances on July 4, researcher Ben Freeman found that in 97 percent of interactions between crows and ravens, crows were the aggressive party. Teamwork, Freeman says, “gives crows the upper hand” against the larger ravens. Freeman argues that the highly sociable crows, working in small platoons of between two and five, are forcing ravens to remain in confined geographic territories across the United States.

Home on the road

Police in Dover, Del., in late June were looking for movers who decided to abandon a house on a two-lane public road. Police discovered the prefabricated home on June 26, but couldn’t arrange for movers to clear the road until the next day. According to police, the home was simply abandoned in the roadway, still bearing the yellow oversized load tape and caution flags.

Flying under the influence

Firefighters in South West England have a request for late-night beach revelers: Pour out your drinks when you are finished. In June, an animal welfare charity called firefighters to the coastal town of Lyme Regis to deal with what appeared to be drunken seagulls. “When we arrived [one] had already fallen off the roof,” firefighter Virgil Turner told DevonLive. “He was sitting shaking his head and he then tried to fly and he nearly hit me in the face, I caught him and he threw up all over me and he reeked of beer.” After getting the bird to a vet, the firefighters discovered several birds had already been thrown into a drunk tank. It wasn’t clear whether the seagulls were gulping leftover booze from the beach or getting tipsy from ingesting some other substance.

Height of bureaucracy

A Chinese woman studying to become an English language teacher has been disqualified from the teaching profession because she is too short. Shaanxi provincial government guidelines demand that male teachers be at least 5-foot-1 and that female teachers be at least 4-foot-11. Officials in Shaanxi waited until the end of the teacher’s four-year education program in 2018 to deliver the news. The Chinese press identified the would-be teacher only as Ms. Li and listed her height at 4-foot-7. Government officials have defended the height restrictions, arguing that teachers may need to reach high on blackboards in order to teach students properly.
Kit Kat story
One former WORLD reporter has learned there’s really no wrong way to eat a Kit Kat. Back in May, a picture of former WORLD Digital reporter **Evan Wilt** holding a partially eaten Kit Kat candy bar went viral on Twitter. Wilt’s girlfriend, **Weekly Standard** reporter **Haley Byrd**, had snapped the picture after Wilt—who claimed it was the first time he’d eaten a Kit Kat—took a large bite out of the bar, failing to first break the chocolate-covered wafers apart. The online teasing was merciless, with CNN’s Jake Tapper joking to Byrd that Wilt’s faux pas should be a relationship deal-breaker. But the folks in Kit Kat’s marketing department saw opportunity both to educate Wilt on Kit Kat eating etiquette and to help make the couple’s relationship long-lasting: They helped Wilt create a 3D-printed plastic Kit Kat bar, inside of which was a hidden compartment just large enough to hold an engagement ring. Kneeling in front of the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, Wilt broke open the bar and popped the question. Byrd said yes.

Making tracks
A motorist in Minnesota blitzed through 1,000 feet of fresh concrete before finally deciding to stop. The June 28 incident prompted the Minnesota Department of Transportation to post a picture of the quick-setting tire tracks as a warning to other motorists. “This is why work zones are blocked with barricades, signs, cones, etc.,” the department post read.

State authorities said they filed an insurance claim and gave the driver a ticket for driving through the wet concrete.

Bill it to the bird
A Polish charity is on the hook for a nearly $2,700 phone bill after a bird flew away with one of the organization’s cell phone SIM cards. Environmental charity EcoLogic Group attached a tracker to a white stork in 2017 to study the bird’s migratory problems. And the tracking program went well—until the organization suddenly lost contact with the tracker in eastern Sudan earlier this year. Then recently, the charity got a $2,700 bill when the tracker’s SIM card, originally designed to store cell phone data, was used to make about 20 hours of international phone calls. According to the charity, the most likely explanation is that the tracker fell off the bird over the Blue Nile Valley in Sudan and a local took the SIM card, placed it in his own phone, and began making calls.

Climate of suspicion
Decrying a supposed international conspiracy, an Iranian general claimed that Israel is stealing rain clouds from Iran. Speaking at a July 2 press conference, Brig. Gen. **Gholam Reza Jalali** complained of Iran’s changing climate. “Foreign interference is suspected to have played a role in climate change,” said the general, who heads the nation’s civil defense organization. “Israel and another country in the region have joint teams which work to ensure clouds entering Iranian skies are unable to release rain.” Later, Jalali accused Israel of snow theft. In 2011, former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad claimed Western countries had schemed to cause a drought in Iran.
Erasing Laura

OUR FOREBEARS, DESPITE THEIR SINS, HAVE MUCH TO TEACH US IF WE’LL LISTEN

Almost 150 years ago, a young couple loaded a covered wagon with their few belongings and two small daughters and traveled from their home in Wisconsin to a promised land in Kansas. Coming to a stretch of rolling prairie near a creek, the father’s practiced eye sized it up and declared to his wife, “Well Caroline, here’s the place we’ve been looking for. Might as well camp.” As the little girls bedded down in the wagon that night, they felt the stillness of “stars shining down on a great, flat land where no one lived.”

That’s how Laura Ingalls Wilder remembered the first move of a childhood that would see many moves propelled by her restless father. As the family soon discovered, the land was not quite uninhabited: Charles Ingalls’ claim happened to be on an Osage reserve, near an established trading path. The Indians frequently passed by, often demanding food and tobacco and making Mrs. Ingalls very nervous. Once he understood that he had no legal right to his claim, Mr. Ingalls pulled up stakes and abandoned his “little house on the prairie” for greener, more legitimate pastures elsewhere.

His second daughter’s autobiography was never published, but its bones formed the framework for a series of children’s novels published in the 1930s. Like all classics, the “Little House” books clothe the universal in a particular place, time, and cast of characters. That’s one reason the American Library Association, in 1954, established the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award to honor other children’s authors who reached a similar standard.

But, as earlier reported in these pages, last month the Association of Library Services for Children (a division of the American Library Association) voted to remove Laura’s name from the award because “her works reflect dated cultural attitudes toward Indigenous people and people of color that contradict modern acceptance, celebration, and understanding of diverse communities.” The problem of dated cultural attitudes has simmered for years, notably in university schools of education. In their children’s-literature classes, future teachers squirm as they reread the classics they’d loved as kids. How to explain Pa Ingalls cavorting in blackface during an amateur minstrel show? What could they say to a little girl of indigenous heritage reading the opinions of Laura’s Kansas neighbor that “the only good Indian is a dead Indian”?

Apparently the answer is to smear the books, and their author, for not being suitably “woke” in the 1930s. Anyone is free to read them—so far—but a disapproving frown now hovers over the Little House, as it does (in some quarters) over The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and To Kill a Mockingbird. The new name for Laura’s award is “Children’s Literature Legacy,” which seems artlessly ironic after erasing chunks of that legacy.

The dated cultural attitudes in the Little House books are a good deal more nuanced than the rationale suggests (see “A slanderous charge,” July 21). History itself is a good deal more nuanced, and beyond our comprehension. We are worlds removed from wrestling a living out of virgin prairie, facing starvation, dying from an easily preventable disease, or losing everything in a grasshopper plague with no insurance to cover the loss. Keeping one’s nose to the grindstone leaves little time for thinking outside the box of conventional attitudes.

So our ancestors were blinkered and often racist—also determined, uncomplaining, courageous, and ultimately successful in laying the groundwork for a society where their great-great-grandchildren could sit in air-conditioned classrooms and denounce them. Where buffalo and native tribes once roamed are now towns and schools, libraries and library associations. We can criticize our forebears, but we also owe them. Judging them by current ideological benchmarks reduces them to caricatures and ourselves to placards for the latest catchphrase.

The ALSC owes more respect to Laura Ingalls Wilder, who practically invented contemporary children’s literature. And it owes more respect to contemporary children, who are capable of learning from the virtues of their ancestors while avoiding their faults; it’s called discernment. There’s a world of difference between discerning and smug, and the decision of the ALSC looks a lot like smug.
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3. Ask your church to partner with us.

More Muslims have come to Christ in the last 50 years than in the previous 1400 years since Islam began and missionaries in the Middle East are asking for Bibles for Syrian refugees.
Draw your own conclusions
You wouldn’t expect one of the most charming, heartwarming films in recent memory to center on a man repeatedly trying to commit suicide. You also wouldn’t expect one of the loveliest portraits of the Christian virtue of hospitality to come out of one of the world’s most secular countries. And yet, 2015’s Swedish film, *A Man Called Ove*, based on the international bestseller of the same name, is all these things.

Ove (tremendously played by Rolf Lassgård) is a thoroughly unlikeable old coot. When he’s not leaving his neighbors nasty notes for minor HOA infractions, he’s berating them with profanity-laced insults (hence the PG-13 rating). The whole world is made up of “idiots,” according to Ove. Rather than suffer the slings and arrows of his idiotic neighbors any further, he decides to join his beloved wife in the afterlife. With each failed attempt to kill himself (the idiots interfering again), we get to know a little more about Ove in flashback. What we learn is that he’s also a man who will endure any inconvenience for someone he loves. The problem is he doesn’t love enough people. The rest of the film sets about rectifying this, gently, joyfully illustrating that a meaningful life is one lived in deep community with others.

Again and again the needs of Ove’s neighbors prod him out of his comfortable nest of despair. First it’s an Iranian immigrant who wants to learn to drive. Then it’s a paraplegic with a broken heater. Later, it’s a teen who’s been kicked out of his house for announcing he’s gay.
I read a review by one Christian critic that cited this last as a negative. I understand that reasoning, but for discerning adult viewers, I’d challenge it. Unlike so many other movies, A Man Called Ove doesn’t celebrate the teen’s revelation. We never know whether Ove approves or disapproves. All we know is that despite how utterly different they are, Ove opens his home to the boy. As Rosario Butterfield writes in her book, The Gospel Comes with a House Key, Christ-like hospitality recoils from reducing a human being to a label. And it summons those who don’t yet know the Lord into fellowship. In this respect, I’d suggest the film offers a model for redeemed behavior rather than something we need to avert our eyes from.

If there’s a villain here, it’s a group Ove calls the “white shirts”—nameless bureaucrats who continually wreak havoc on private lives with their authoritarianism. When a government worker ominously tells the wife of the paraplegic “a decision has been made” to take her husband away to live with their authoritarianism, the scene further echoes recent headlines when the bureaucrat wrongly, but with complete ministerial arrogance, insists her husband isn’t aware of his surroundings.

It could be a coincidence, but given Sweden’s reputation as the least religious nation in the Western world, it’s surprising how often churches and images that subtly allude to Michelangelo’s Creation of Adam pop up throughout the film. In the context of a funeral service, Ove’s simple observation that “no one gets out of this world alive” illustrates as clearly as any scene on film Solomon’s words that it is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting. Because mourning teaches us to measure our lives and reflect on their worth. Which is exactly what the arc of this story does.

I know there are plenty of people for whom a subtitled film feels like a homework assignment, so I don’t recommend them lightly. I only do it when they’re so good they make you forget you’re reading. A Man Called Ove is one of those. It’s so good, Tom Hanks bought the rights to produce and star in an American version. But that won’t hit theaters for at least a few years. Some regrettable language notwithstanding, you won’t want to wait that long to enjoy this gem.

**Noble Ape**

Jim Gaffigan has been married 15 years and has five kids: not the typical profile for a popular comedian. His wife, Jeannie, recently survived a brain tumor. Gaffigan drew on their medical experiences for his new special, Noble Ape, available on cable and streaming services.

Brain surgery is an unlikely topic for comedy, but Gaffigan has a gift for finding humor in tough circumstances: “Why are doctors so obsessed at comparing the size of tumors with fruit? Do they think we can’t understand centimeters?” Gaffigan also wonders why anyone would be content with less than the intensive care unit. Who wants to be in the pretty good care unit?

He jokes that, at the sight of his large family walking into a restaurant, a waitress once threw down her apron and quit. His 5-year-old’s greatest memory after traveling around China, seeing the Great Wall, the Terracotta Army, and other famous sights? “I liked when we saw that truck full of pigs!”

Gaffigan is a Catholic, but claims that he’s not a very good one: “If there were a test, I’d probably fail. Then again, most Catholics would!” He’s known as a “family-friendly” comedian, and much of his material is offensive and quite funny.

Several jokes suggest he does not take the Bible seriously, though. He ridicules hospitals named after Biblical places of healing, comparing miracles to astrology or UFOs. Viewers could fast-forward through a lame joke about St. Boniface being the patron saint of bowel issues, and the accompanying casual blasphemy.

Overall, is it funny? Some of Gaffigan’s stories were a little too meandering and long-winded, and the punch lines weren’t worth the journey. The teens and adults in my small family test audience didn’t laugh a lot during the hour-long viewing. If you’re a fan of Gaffigan’s past work, you’ll probably enjoy Noble Ape. Otherwise, you won’t miss much if you give it a pass.

—by MARTY VANDRIEL
Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee

Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee isn’t new, but it’s new to Netflix, and one of the more refreshing things available for streaming.

Rumor has it that Jerry Seinfeld is worth nearly $1 billion—making him the richest comedian in the world. And yet, this entertainment legend and car enthusiast in each episode hand-selects a vintage ride to match his guest comedian’s personality. He picks them up for a perfectly normal, sun-drenched brunch, heavily laced with shots of dripping espresso (courtesy of a coffee advertiser). Then he gets them talking about themselves.

Could anything be more simple or more sweet?

Of course, the result is goofy. On its face, the show has no real point, like the sitcom Seinfeld is best-known for, only this format is less laugh-track funny than it is thought-provoking interview. But it also doesn’t have the air of a man desperate to stay relevant. In fact, his interest is so genuine, we almost get the feeling Seinfeld would be doing this even if there were no cameras around—driving around his oldest friends and mentoring young comedians, all in the very best cars.

Comedians in Cars is a truly lovely product. Four-letter words, rarely used, are bleeped out. The closest this show comes to raunchiness in this latest season is Seinfeld’s habit of joking about male anatomy with his lesbian guests, but even that can’t spoil the fun.

Seinfeld is meticulous, going so far as to find a 1960s Jaguar for his date with Jerry Lewis, in the exact model and color Lewis once owned. (Lewis died five months later.) The respect just flows in this show. Jerry respects the guest, the guest respects Jerry, and they sit in a haze of mutual admiration for 20 minutes, sipping coffee and sending each other into stitches.

It’s neither ground-breaking nor extraordinary, but we need more shows like this in the #MeToo age. In an industry that seems to get darker and darker, it’s hard to feel invested in their pain.

Providing the backstory to the earlier Mamma Mia! (2008), this prequel explains how Donna (Meryl Streep) managed to get into the situation of being unable to tell her daughter Sophie (Amanda Seyfried) which of three men is her father. In flashback, we see a young Donna (Cinderella’s lovely, likable Lily James) conduct whirlwind romances with three handsome lads who will eventually grow into Bill (Stellan Skarsgård), Harry (Colin Firth), and Sam (Pierce Brosnan). The part of those romances that might result in the creation of Sophie thankfully happens off-screen, so the PG-13 rating is due to what’s implied.

It would be giving the screenwriters too much credit to suggest there’s a sexual revolutionary agenda here. Really, Donna’s flings are just an expedient way of shoehorning a series of lovelorn ballads into dreamy montages of white sand and blue Aegean Sea. When characters who’ve known each other for only a week sing, “We just have to face it, this time we’re through,” it’s hard to feel invested in their pain.

But in between the hokey moments, this Mamma Mia! boasts the same campy appeal as its predecessor. Perhaps no other rock group in history was as adept as ABBA at crafting those earworms that can either plague or delight, depending on the mood of the listener. The same is true with the latest movie based on their music. If the first one had you singing along, this one will as well. Just don’t blame me if you can’t get “Fernando” out of your head. —by MEGAN BASHAM

See all our movie reviews at wng.org/movies
Dissent and diversity
TROUBLEMAKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE by Marvin Olasky

Charlan Nemeth’s In Defense of Troublemakers (Basic, 2018) makes a good point—hearing diverse perspectives makes for better decisions—and makes it again and again, turning what would be a good article into a repetitive book that will have readers at first nodding, and then nodding off to sleep.

Those who keep reading, though, will get to a crucial point: An organization “might want people who vary in age, race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation... There is little evidence that it will improve performance or decision-making by itself.” To get concrete: A liberal college, newsroom, workplace, or board of directors probably will benefit by having racial and ethnic minority representation, but if the chosen members of those minorities also have liberal beliefs, their presence probably will not improve the quality of education, stories, products, or decisions.

Organizations may continue to define “diversity” in the conventional way, but Nemeth notes that one model company “searches for diversity of skill and knowledge rather than readily observable demographics,” and implies that others should do likewise. Bottom line: “The value is found in the persistent expression of a differing view, which stimulates thought about the decision at hand... The real engine for good decision-making is dissent.”

Nemeth notes that having someone play “devil’s advocate” is insufficient: The goal of such an exercise “is to get people to consider the downsides as well as the upsides of their preferred position. It appears to do the reverse. Those facing a devil’s advocate seem to be convincing themselves that they were right all along. By contrast, authentic dissent fostered the balance between the pros and cons of a position.”

To find a dollar-and-cents example of the need for troublemakers, look at some state pension funds that are hugely underfunded. In California Dreaming (Independent Institute, 2015), Lawrence McQuillan shows how “state officials have flunked funds that are hugely underfunded. In some state pension positions.”

Maybe a troublemaker yelling “stop” would have made a difference.

Or, presentation of alternative views might have made no difference, because some elected officials deliberately offered pie in the sky upon retirement as a way of buying votes. Legislators knew they’ll be out of office when the bills come due.

BOOKMARKS

Jonathan Leeman’s How the Nations Rage (Thomas Nelson, 2018) is a helpfully troubledmaking book that distinguishes between law and wisdom (or what at WORLD we call Class 1/Class 2 rapids and Class 5/Class 6 ones). Leeman notes that churches should be prophetic rather than partisan. He identifies as sub-Biblical both disengagement from the public square (Jonah’s initial resolution) and capitulation to the idolatry within it (as with the Reich Church of the 1930s).

In The Year of Our Lord 1943: Christian Humanism in an Age of Crisis (Oxford, 2018), Alan Jacobs portrays five Christian and quasi-Christian intellectuals: C.S. Lewis, Simone Weil, T.S. Eliot, Jacques Maritain, and W.H. Auden. They saw victory in World War II coming, but knew Christians were likely to lose the peace, and Weil knew why: “The errors of our time come from Christianity without the supernatural.”

Some who ignored the supernatural became murderers: In The Italian Executioners (Princeton, 2018) Simon Levis Sullam documents the genocide of the Jews of Italy. Others miss the way faith in Christ changes individuals and neighborhoods: In Uneasy Peace (Norton, 2018), NYU sociology professor Patrick Sharkey emphasizes the importance of community organizations in fighting crime and renewing city life, but he ignores Christian groups. —M.O.
FOUR BOOKS ON WORSHIP
reviewed by Caleb Nelson

THE WORSHIP PASTOR Zac Hicks
Those who choose songs and lead public worship in singing and prayer aren’t just musicians. They are pastors, because leading people in public worship is by definition a pastoral task, insists Zac Hicks (an Anglican worship pastor). He describes the ministry of leading in prayer and song from 17 helpfully imaginative perspectives: Worship pastors, he writes, are corporate mystics, missionaries, theological dieticians, morticians—and failures who need Christ. Hicks’ insights are valuable not only for worship leaders but for teaching pastors and pew-sitters.

OLD PATHS, NEW POWER Daniel Henderson
The apostles devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4). Henderson pleads with today’s church leaders to do the same. Leaders must develop a prayer culture by praying together and applying “relentless pressure over time” (more crockpot than microwave) to the congregation. Old Paths includes profiles of pastors who gave themselves to prayer and taught their churches to pray, and it trumpets the truth that “the Holy Spirit is the ‘how to.’” Anecdotes and exegesis alike confirm that the church needs fewer leadership books and more praying, preaching pastors like the apostles.

WORSHIP IN THE WAY OF THE CROSS John Frederick
Frederick has a thing for adjectives, deploying headings like “The ecclesio-pneumatic ideation of Jesus Christ.” But if you can overlook the prose, his ideas are profound. In worship, he says, we meet with God, in and with our fellow saints, and are thereby transformed into the likeness of Jesus. In other words, worship is not primarily education, encouragement, or entertainment (“cover gigs for God … in a Top 40 Christified Karaoke Chapel”). Instead, it’s the time when we encounter Christ through word, song, and sacrament, as the Spirit leads us to the Son through God’s church.

REFORMATION WORSHIP Jonathan Gibson and Mark Earngey
Gibson and Earngey trace the history of worship through the Biblical narrative and the Reformation period. Though Reformation worship varied from place to place, they discern a common focus on word and sacrament, and a common attitude of seriousness and reverence. Their purpose is not to suggest the church return to the 1500s, but rather to show her age. As heirs of six millennia of worship, those who lead a congregation must conduct a beautiful service to glorify a beautiful Savior. The book includes 26 Reformation-era liturgies, each with an essential-background introduction.

AFTERWORD
Cameron Cole’s Therefore I Have Hope (Crossway, 2018) starts with “the Worst”: His 3-year-old son inexplicably dies in his sleep. Cole discusses “provisional grace”—God gives us what we need only when we need it—and criticizes the words of purported comfort some offered him: “God didn’t have anything to do with this.” Cole says that idea “terrifies me. … I would have falsely believed in a universe with higher order … falsely believed that all of life had meaning.”

Kelly Kapic’s Embodied Hope: A Theological Meditation on Pain and Suffering (IVP, 2017) shows the importance of both hope and lament: Lament makes up more than 40 percent of the Psalms, but many contemporary churches emphasize happy or upbeat music. Christ’s work saves us from the tyranny and finality of death, but we need to learn much about confession and faith along the way.

—Marvin Olasky
Seasons of change
RESOURCES FOR DISCUSSING SEX AND SEXUAL DANGERS reviewed by Emily Whitten

WHAT’S THE BIG DEAL? Stan and Brenna Jones
What’s the Big Deal?, one of four books in the God’s Design for Sex series, offers parents a script about sex they can read with their sons and daughters ages 8-11. Stan Jones, former Wheaton college professor and administrator, brings his experience as a psychologist and a father to the series, making it both informative and heartfelt. With only 12 short chapters, families can hit the high points in just a few settings—but the book, published initially in 1995 and revised in 2007, spends too much time on AIDS and doesn’t address pornography or smartphones. It does include Scripture references, simple line drawings, and tough topics like homosexuality and sexual abuse.

THE FOCUS ON THE FAMILY GUIDE TO TALKING WITH YOUR KIDS ABOUT SEX edited by J. Thomas Fitch and David Davis
More than a decade ago Focus on the Family teamed up with the Medical Institute for Sexual Health to help parents talk about sex with their children. The result was a nearly 300-page guide offering well-researched answers to questions most families ask. Compared with the God’s Design for Sex series (above), the Q&A here isn’t as conversational and goes well beyond need-to-know basics. With so many controversial topics (like contraception and dating), it’s also likely to step on everyone’s toes at some point. A 2013 revision helps keep the book relevant for today’s Christian families.

THE YOUNG MAN’S GUIDE TO AWESOMENESS Barrett Johnson
As a counselor to young men, Johnson knows their biggest temptations when it comes to sex. Here he pushes teens to see the big picture, including the long-term effects of things like pornography and a hookup culture. He also challenges them to rise above their peers in living out God’s wisdom. Johnson does more than write well—his innovative format will hold even reluctant readers’ interest. Each chapter features frank talk about sexual dangers, a Bible study on King David, funny (yet wholesome) cartoons, and take-away points that will stick with teens.

I HAVE THE RIGHT TO Chessy Prout with Jenn Abelson
Some studies show that women constitute 88-92 percent of sexual assault victims, with teen girls at greatest risk. For advocate Chessy Prout, this isn’t just a statistic. In 2014, a senior at her high school invited Prout, then 15, to an isolated location and raped her. Prout deserves praise for her courage and resilience, but she interprets her experience in a worldly way, with explicit language and destructive attitudes about sexuality, politics, and religion. Teens participating in the hookup culture need cautionary tales, but not this one. Augustine’s Confessions conveys similar life lessons with less explicit storytelling and a better redemption.

AFTERWORD
In a fallen, #MeToo world, three books can help Christians address sexual abuse among kids and teens. First, God Made All of Me (New Growth Press, 2015) by Justin and Lindsey Holcomb, which WORLD reviewed in 2015. This picture book helps “kids to avoid inappropriate touches and seek help without guilt if they are...abused.”

Also in 2015, WORLD recommended that parents and church leaders read On Guard: Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse at Church (New Growth Press, 2014) by Deepak Reju: It “describes the way pedophiles operate and offers practical guidance.”

Finally, when abuse does happen, Christians can pick up Justin and Lindsey Holcomb’s book Rid of My Disgrace (Crossway, 2011). It lays out the spiritual and emotional effect of abuse and applies Biblical comfort to each area of need. Aimed at adults, many insights will apply to older children and teens. —E.W.
For three days leading up to the Glory of Jesus Christ Conference, Dr. Steven Lawson will explore the mandate, meaning, marks, models, mechanics, and motivation of expository preaching in his course titled “Preaching With Precision & Power.” The event is designed for men serving in or considering church leadership and pastoral roles.
Some people are talkers and some are writers: Eric Metaxas is unusual in being both. He has a daily talk show and receives both praise and criticism for his support of President Donald Trump, but has also written biographies of William Wilberforce, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Martin Luther. I interviewed him in front of students at The King’s College, New York City. Here are edited excerpts.

What is compassion? It’s simply an expression of God’s love for people, if you’re a person of faith. The reason agnostics or atheists talk about compassion is because it is one of those things that at this point in Western civilization we take for granted. The West assumes that everyone ought to have compassion for his neighbor, for someone who is less well-off. That is an assumption. Where does the assumption come from? It comes from the Christian faith. We live in the West today and everyone in the West says, “Of course you’ve got to help the poor.” We don’t argue whether—we argue about how to do it. Conservatives say, “It should be the private sector,” and liberals say, “It should be the public sector.”

You wrote about William Wilberforce, who made a big difference in England. It was a staggering thing for me to discover that, before Wilberforce, England had a view of the poor and suffering that we would today consider an Eastern religion kind of view. Karma, right? If you’re in the gutter suffering, it’s because you deserve to suffer. So if I help you, I’m messing with the way things need to be. If I am blessed and have a lot of money and health, it’s because the gods or god, or the universe, has blessed me because I deserve it.
What effect has family breakdown had on compassion?
Until very recently you took care of your family. I have to worry about my old father and my kids have to worry about me and they have to help out. There is something very healthy and exceedingly local about the family unit. Government and the social safety net have encouraged families to abdicate that role. That’s the downside of FDR’s programs. He wanted to help people—and I think the heart of big-government people is in the right place—but the legislation ends up being less compassionate.

Does delayed marriage make us less compassionate? I can say that living in New York City, where everyone tends to get married late if they get married at all, you start seeing the sadness. Many people say, “If I had to do it over, I wish I had got married. I bought the lie that the culture was selling in every magazine and every TV program: ‘No, I shouldn’t get married early and have kids. That’s just some kind of enslavement. I want to be free.’” It really rarely works out that way. As a culture we’re just beginning to see the downside of what’s been called freedom.

So how do we practice compassion? What about the common practice of giving a dollar to a person sitting on the sidewalk with a sign? I’m an advocate for fiscal conservatism. Whenever I pass some people on the street and they ask me for money, I know there are all kinds of ways for that person to get help. I don’t have to feel bad about not giving because by giving to them I am encouraging them to stand here on the corner.

In what sense is President Trump showing compassion? There are people in America who really did feel, “Nobody cares about me. I am miserable and suffering and the people running for president except for this loudmouth Donald Trump don’t even acknowledge me.” I honestly think this was an issue of compassion because you have to choose the object of your compassion. Just like it’s my responsibility first to worry about my family, it’s the responsibility of a president first to worry about the people within the borders. Once we are flourishing we can help others.

What about compassion for immigrants? If you don’t have strict control of who’s coming into your country, people come in who are responsible to no one. They are lone wolves. It’s a stretch to say Trump was saying all are rapists. I absolutely don’t believe that. We have a president right now who communicates in some ways sloppily, in some ways intentionally sloppily. He’s like an impressionistic painter.

Does evangelical support for Trump put evangelicals in a hard position? When have evangelicals not been in a hard position?

Does it put evangelicals in a harder position? Tim Tebow to me is the perfect evangelical. He is an amazing human being. He’s very bright and he cares about people who are suffering, but the culture spat on him every opportunity it had. Now we pretend, “If evangelicals didn’t have the millstone of Donald Trump around their necks, everyone would love them.” That’s a joke.

How has Tim Tebow responded to that disparagement? That’s a false comparison. We know that Donald Trump is not an evangelical Christian. He doesn’t have John 3:16 written on his eyelids. If you’re looking for me to say that one ought to behave differently than Donald Trump in public, I’ll be the first one to agree with you, but to change when we had the hanging chads in 2000. We’ve seen a fraying of the republic.

Before, when a candidate was defeated, he went away and kept quiet for the good of the republic. That began to change when we had the hanging chads in 2000. We’ve seen a fraying of the republic.

With polarization growing, how do we avoid drifting toward civil war? The body politic has never been so fragile. To give an example and get back to marriage and family, I’m not worried that if I say the wrong thing, my wife will divorce me—because I know we both believe in marriage. The problem: Some of the things have frayed to the point where I’m very concerned about the republic on this very issue.
Empathetic albums

RECENT RELEASES BRING SUBDUED INTERPRETATIONS OF FAMILIAR SONGS

by Arsenio Orteza

One of the few traditional gender-based assumptions that it’s safe to reiterate in public these days is that women have, or at any rate demonstrate, a greater capacity for empathy than men do.

But even if practically every study on the topic didn’t suggest as much, prolonged exposure to the latest albums by Joan Baez, Angélique Kidjo, Nellie McKay, and Judith Owen would.

Of the albums’ 41 total songs, none were written by the performers themselves, making the songs empathetic by definition. And 33 were written by men, raising the empathy bar, at least theoretically, for any woman who would inhabit them convincingly.

But inhabit them convincingly the women do. And they don’t make a big deal about it, settling comfortably for the most part into subdued, predominantly acoustic interpretations.

The exception is Kidjo’s Remain in Light (Kravenworks), which is both exuberant and electric. But as it’s a track-by-track re-creation of Talking Heads’ polyrhythmic, West African–inspired masterpiece of the same name, exuberance and electricity are in order.

Kidjo’s Remain in Light stays close to Talking Heads’ arrangements. Anyone familiar with the originals will easily identify the songs. But Kidjo departs from the blueprint too, altering melodies and, of course, singing and enunciating like her West African self instead of like the performance-artist-turned-rock-star that David Byrne was 38 years ago.

She also oversees instrumentation that subtly shifts the music’s balance of afrobeat and the avant-garde in favor of the former, making her version of Remain in Light an affectionate act of cultural re-appropriation.

There’s nothing subtle, on the other hand, about Owen’s balance-shifting RedisCOVERed (Twanky). Whether decelerating, and thus improving, songs that zipped past too quickly as chart toppers (Justin Timberlake’s “Can’t Stop the Feeling!,” Ed Sheeran’s “Shape of You”), or decelerating, and thus neutering, something that was just fine to begin with (Wild Cherry’s “Play That Funky Music”), she confounds expectations.

In between, there are spot-on renditions of Joni Mitchell “deep cuts,” neither-herenor-there Soundgarden, Beatles, and Donna Summer covers, and—speaking of confounding—a one-woman take of the Grease duet “Summer Nights.”

Nellie McKay’s Sister Orchid (Palmetto) could also be said to confound expectations—that is, if her previous output had made an album’s worth of Tin Pan Alley-era standards unthinkable. But coming from someone who sandwiched an album of her own compositions between tribute albums to Doris Day and ’60s rock, Hoagy Carmichael seems almost like a logical next step.

McKay takes an occasionally mischievous but mostly deadpan approach to the piano and the mic, giving the program a quietly surreal, wee-small-hours-of-the-morning vibe. On one level, she obviously loves the material and the material just as obviously loves her back. On another, though, the two are still sizing each other up. The resulting tension helps Sister Orchid resist the pull of the nostalgia in which it traffics.

Joan Baez has populated her new album, Whistle Down the Wind (Proper), with elegies and in so doing made what sounds a lot like a final statement. It may be: Her once crystalline voice now sounds weary, and she’s calling her 2018 concerts the Fare Thee Well Tour.

But, for someone who has never met a “progressive” cause that she didn’t love, Baez goes easy on the agitprop. Her anti-Trump song “Nasty Man” is absent, and her pro-Obama song (Zoe Mulford’s “The President Sang Amazing Grace”) is pretty mild.

You’d almost get the impression that her increasing proximity to the “great equalizer” could have her empathizing with “deplorables.”
NEW OR RECENT RELEASES
reviewed by Arsenio Orteza

IN THE GROOVE  Barry Goldberg
The words in the only song that has any are sung by Les McCann and—according to one source—address Donald Trump (antagonistically, of course). Otherwise, the producer Carla Olson keeps the focus off virtue signaling and on Goldberg’s Hammond B3, Joe Sublett’s sax, and the slinky R&B melodies of the covers (including those of Doc Bagby, Milt Bruckner, Johnny and the Hurricanes, and Sil Austin) and Goldberg’s own compositions. Target audience: anyone who thinks that Goldberg’s roots only go back as far as Newport ’65.

TOKYO BAY  Nick Lowe
This four-song EP (two 7-inch singles in the vinyl version) is being heralded as Lowe’s return to “rocking hard while hardly rocking” after 20-plus years of crafting crooner-friendly country-and-soul-tinged gems. But Lowe has been performing “Tokyo Bay” for at least six years, and his deep reading of Dionne Warwick’s biggest ‘Bos hit hardly qualifies as a sayonara to introspection. What’s new is the way that his Christmas-tour collaborators Los Straitjackets have tailored their surf-rock into a genuine Cowboy Outfit.

JON SAVAGE’S 1965: THE YEAR THE SIXTIES IGNITED  Various artists
Because it follows the same modus operandi, Savage’s latest musical yearbook is as enjoyable as his others, creatively sequencing songs that were hits on at least one side of the Atlantic with songs that were obscurities on both. Their common denominators are that they’re good and that they enliven Savage’s memories of himself at 12, tuning into pop-music TV shows and pirate radio to pan for gold amid, in his words, “what seemed like oceans of dreck.” “Oceans of dreck”? Now there’s a compilation waiting to happen.

BACK BEING BLUE  Kelly Willis
Willis and her cohorts deliver these enjoyably no-frills songs with one of their collective feet in country and the other in pop. Make that pre–Shania Twain (hence pre–Taylor Swift) country and pop—-the simplicity and the immediacy of the sentiments, Willis’ mellow alto voice, and the instrumentation (especially Eleanor Whitmore’s fiddle and Geoff Queen’s steel guitars) suggest zero interest in, or awareness of, the digital era. Maybe that’s why Willis’ most convincing original is the one in which she seeks release from the “modern world.”

ENCORE
Never let it be said that Omnivore Recordings oversells its product. “Guaraldi’s voice,” writes Derek Bangs in the booklet accompanying Vince Guaraldi’s The Complete Warner Bros.–Seven Arts Recordings, “is untrained at best, off-key at worst, and ill-advised in both cases.” Bangs is a Guaraldi expert, but he’s wrong. Guaraldi’s singing may have been untrained, but, at least on the two Tim Hardin covers to which Bangs refers, it’s on-key and, frankly, rather pleasant. But Guaraldi achieved fame as a jazz pianist, and, his Hardin covers aside, that’s the role he inhabits on the quirky Warner Bros.–Seven Arts sessions that he logged from 1968 to 1970. To prove that he was more than a trio-leading Peanuts composer, he played electric harpsichord and guitar, expanded his group, and covered a wide array of material. The results fit no then-popular niche. That they still don’t is one reason that they remain vibrant. Expert remastering is another. —A.O.
European leaders, newly desperate to stem the flow of illegal migrant vessels across the Mediterranean, have crafted deals with despots, paying Turkey, Libya, and Sudan large sums to hold migrants in abysmal conditions. European Union leaders want more offshore reception centers—called “disembarkation platforms” in EU-speak—to keep migrants out.

Blurred in such bureaucratic morass is the distinction between economic migrants and genuine refugees who flee their countries in the face of persecution and death. One fear voiced by insiders after the IOM vote is that international asylum procedures may be sidelined in favor of a European one-size-fits-all migrant policy. That could lead to victims of religious persecution (who are disproportionately Christian) losing grounds for asylum, becoming only a number in an overloaded system.

A better way for Western leaders might be to rethink isolation, to invest in reversing what’s driving mass migration in key places. Russia currently is the largest player on the future of Syria. Expect a Putin regime that loves to destabilize Western electorates to delight in using human trafficking to do the same. Absent Western engagement, Sudan’s Omar al-Bashir, a ruthless dictator and instigator of humanitarian disasters, somehow became a chief mediator in the latest so-called peace agreement in South Sudan.

In the end it was no accident IOM delegates voted in, after four rounds, António Vitorino as the next IOM director general. Vitorino is a Socialist Party politician and UN/EU insider. He served as deputy prime minister under Portugal’s António Guterres, the current UN secretary-general. Guterres headed the UN Refugee Agency before taking the top post, and in that post failed to foresee the 2015 migration crisis that saw nearly 1 million asylum-seekers arrive on European shores.

Notably, insiders say, not one member of the European diplomatic corps communicated support or opposition to Isaacs before the vote—a dramatic break with protocol. And not one voted for Isaacs. With the IOM vote European leaders have pulled a palace coup over key UN bureaucracies. Overall, U.S. disengagement will make it tough for the United States to steer what it long has underwritten, including migration policy. Europeans want it that way, and the IOM vote was less about any Trump wall and more about walling off Europe.
You need a new watch…the one you are wearing was made when Nixon was in office, but extravagantly-priced watches that add zeros just because of a high falootin’ name are an insult to your logic. Why shell out big money so some foreign company can sponsor another yacht race? It’s time to put an end to such madness. It’s absolutely possible to have the highest quality, precision classic timepiece without the high and mighty price tag. Case in point: The Stauer Urban Blue.

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Stauer…Afford the Extraordinary."
Despite some muted anxiety from conservatives and loud opposition from liberals, Judge Brett Kavanaugh of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit seems headed for confirmation to the U.S. Supreme Court in the next several months. President Donald Trump’s second pick for the high court, Kavanaugh, 53, would succeed Kavanaugh’s former boss—swing-vote Justice Anthony Kennedy—for whom he clerked.

Kavanaugh’s confirmation would shift the court rightward, maybe for many years, but the big question for social conservatives is how he would rule in the area of abortion. Journalists can only poke at tea leaves, because Kavanaugh has never explicitly said he would overturn Roe v. Wade—though he has hinted that the court in its 1973 ruling created an “unenumerated right” (see sidebar).

Trump noticeably left Kavanaugh’s name off his list of potential nominees during the presidential campaign, even though Supreme Court insiders considered him a top candidate. Kavanaugh’s career in Washington and close ties to establishment Republicans like George W. Bush may explain Trump’s omission. The White House added his name to the list last fall, and speculation simmered that Kennedy wanted Kavanaugh for the spot.

Now, with the selection drama behind him, Kavanaugh—the most experienced appellate judge on Trump’s short list—has almost unanimous support from movement conservatives. Endorsements flowed from leaders of the Susan B. Anthony List, Concerned Women for America, Americans United for Life, the March for Life, the Heritage Foundation, and the Cato Institute.
Some of the most prominent conservative legal beagles, the Ethics and Public Policy Center’s Ed Whelan (former clerk to Justice Antonin Scalia) and Judicial Crisis Network’s Carrie Severino (former clerk to Justice Clarence Thomas), also backed his nomination.

Conservative opposition has been minimal. The American Family Association initially opposed Kavanaugh, citing uncertainty about how he would rule on abortion and religious freedom, but then quickly rescinded its statement.

The change in position, according to AFA, came as a result of hearing a “passionate defense of Judge Kavanaugh by many we consider to be friends in the pro-life movement.” The group settled on declaring Kavanaugh to be a “four-star” nominee instead of five.

“At this time, we have no plans to fight President Trump on this nomination. He has appointed a lot of good federal judges already and we look forward to many more,” the revised AFA statement read. “We hope that our concerns prove to be unfounded.”

Kim Colby, counsel for Christian Legal Society, has spent her career writing and filing briefs at the U.S. Supreme Court, mostly on religious freedom cases. She’s also spent a career watching the Supreme Court nomination and confirmation process, and noticed the shift in the conservative legal world over the last two decades.

President George H.W. Bush’s nomination of Justice David Souter in 1990 was a surprise to conservatives. Colby recalled that the White House told conservatives to “trust us.” Souter ended up voting with liberals on the court.

Since then, the conservative institutional checks that developed in response to Souter have given Colby more confidence. This go-round, Trump’s list, chiefly released to reassure voters, also helped to give time for vetting.

“Groups that care have had fair notice to do their due diligence,” said Colby, preventing “a Hatfield-McCoy feud.”

Those conservative checks resulted in President George W. Bush rescinding one of his Supreme Court nominees, Harriet Miers. The New York Times reported that Kavanaugh, working in the Bush White House at the time, was one of the advisers fighting Miers’ nomination. Kavanaugh instead argued for conservative Justice Samuel Alito, whom Bush eventually nominated.

The East Room in the White House during Trump’s primetime announcement put that conservative legal establishment on display. Before announcing Kavanaugh, Trump publicly recognized the Heritage Foundation’s Ed Meese, attorney general under President Ronald Reagan. Also sitting in the front row was the Federalist Society’s Leonard Leo, who has been the point man on Trump’s Supreme Court picks (and who is also Catholic). The Federalist Society exists to promote conservative legal minds in the mold of Justice Antonin Scalia.

Those elite judge selectors would probably face opposition to their picks without the support of other respected conservatives outside of the process. Colby sees Whelan and Severino as additional canaries in the coal mine. If either of them has a problem with a nominee, the rest of the conservative legal world listens.

“We’ve got several, I don’t know, guardians in place now,” said Colby.

Colby liked all of the top three candidates: Judge Amy Coney Barrett, Judge Raymond Kethledge, and Kavanaugh. But she especially liked Kavanaugh’s 12-year record on a court. Barrett, a favorite of social conservatives, is new to being a judge, and Colby contended that she “needs to develop a record of judicial decisions.”

Barrett, at only 46 years old, is “so promising,” said Colby, who expects to see her on future Supreme Court short lists. Princeton Law professor Robert George said the same: He expects Barrett to be a future pick.
One speech that Kavanaugh gave last year at the American Enterprise Institute, praising Chief Justice William Rehnquist’s legacy, had many revealing moments despite its careful wording. He spoke favorably about Rehnquist’s legacy of “ensuring that religious schools and religious institutions could participate as equals in society.” He said without Rehnquist, “we never would have seen last term’s 7-2 decision in Trinity Lutheran,” a major ruling that determined religious groups are eligible for public aid.

At AEI he also talked about Rehnquist’s opinion in Washington v. Glucksberg that rejected a constitutional right to assisted suicide. Kavanaugh described that case as a contrast to cases (including Roe) of the 1970s: the “free wheeling judicial creation of unenumerated rights that were not rooted in the nation’s history and tradition.”

“The Glucksberg case stands to this day as an important precedent,” Kavanaugh said, “limiting the court’s role in the realm of social policy and helping to ensure that the court operates more as a court of law and less as an instrument of social policy.”

Edward Meckmann, attorney and the director of public policy for the New York Archdiocese, said pro-life advocates thinking that five conservatives means an overturn of Roe is “wishful thinking,” at least in the near future.

“The pro-life lawyers who pay attention to what’s going on in the Supreme Court … realize how hard this is,” Meckmann said. “The slowness and the difficulties of the process are hard for people to accept.”

But Meckmann foresees in the next few years the court hearing a significant abortion case, likely having to do with one of the bans on abortion after 20 weeks. That case would have a good chance of pro-life success, in his view.

Overturning Roe—which theoretically would send the abortion issue back to states—is not a simple matter. When the court grants a case, it agrees to answer certain questions. So one issue is the trickiness of getting the right case to the court, along with the right questions the court will consider. Chief Justice John Roberts likes finding the narrowest way to decide an issue, in order to avoid ruling on underlying constitutional questions.

Other complications: The court would need five votes. Even if there would appear to be a reliable conservative majority on the court, only Justice Clarence Thomas has explicitly said that there is no constitutional right to abortion. Justices Neil Gorsuch and Roberts in their confirmation hearings both described Roe as “settled law,” which Meckmann said was “a term of art” but “pretty strong language.”

“It’s not like you have four justices who are … waiting with bated breath to overturn [Roe],” he said, contrasting the conservative justices with the four liberal justices who were clearly “waiting” to legalize same-sex marriage.

The conservative justices might not reverse such a long-standing precedent in part because of their conservatism. Roberts, for one, has made clear his aversion to overturning precedent, though he might be establishing that reputation in order to make an exception to overturn the court’s obvious overreach in Roe.

It’s possible the justices would instead try to curtail the court’s abortion jurisprudence, for example limiting the Supreme Court doctrine prohibiting an “undue burden” on a woman’s ability to obtain an abortion.

The four liberal justices have made clear they would not even relax the undue burden standard. In the 2016 case Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt, they with Kennedy’s vote struck down a Texas law regulating abortion centers as an “undue burden.”

When President Donald Trump was campaigning, he said the justices he would select would “automatically” reverse Roe. The Federalist Society’s Leonard Leo, point man for Trump’s judicial selections, walked the statement back.

“... there are lots of follow-on regulations to abortion involving partial-birth abortion, fetal pain, and other issues that the court hasn’t fully resolved,” Leo said on the Bloomberg Law radio show in 2016. “When he talks about Roe v. Wade, that’s probably the way he’s thinking about it.” —E.B.
WHEN THE 1849ERS HEARD OF GOLD NUGGETS and dust in California hills and streams, they scrambled for mules, pickaxes, and mining pans. Now that California and Canada have legalized recreational cannabis use, and many states are rushing to do so, the 2018ers are scarfing marijuana domain names, hiring MBA grads, and staking claims for their special brew of THC-infused beer.

Sniffing the aroma of quick profit, companies like Molson Coors and Altria (formerly Philip Morris) are rushing in where angels fear to tread. Intoxicated by the prospect of tax dollars that could prop up public schools (as gambling revenues were supposed to), states are ignoring the risk of vending machines jammed with marijuana munchies—brownies, chocolate bars, gummy bears—damaging young brains.

Advertisers are framing a new generation of appeals. How about kicking back with a chilled, THC-laced, handcrafted beer with a lime garnish? (THC, tetrahydrocannabinol, is the chemical primarily responsible for marijuana's psychological effects.) How about a glass of cannabis sauvignon blanc, or a snifter of hemp-infused whiskey? What about a “marijuana vacation”—to vape granulized THC by the pool, tour marijuana fields, relish “high dining” on THC-saturated sirloin, and return to your room where a cannabis flower lies on your pillow?

The future is so bright that pot users are wearing shades. The Cannabis Industry Annual Report projects annual sales growth at 16 percent. Former Microsoft executive Jamen Shively says he will create the “Starbucks of marijuana” and “mint more millionaires than Microsoft.” Business school professors and students at Yale, Cambridge, Stanford, and UCLA are studying the budding market. Why not, when BusinessStudent.com claims “Colorado’s licensing laws are so open that Denver boasts twice as many cannabis dispensaries as it does Starbucks.”

With recreational marijuana legalized in Canada starting Oct. 17, so many companies on the Canadian Securities Exchange are in the marijuana business that the trading center’s new nickname is the Cannabis Stock Exchange, with 83 of the 379 companies listed in pot-related businesses. Since U.S. cannabis companies are barred from Wall Street exchanges because of marijuana’s illegality on the federal level, shares of U.S. companies like California cannabis grower Prime Harvest, dispensary chain MedMen, and Body and Mind (maker of edibles like marijuana-infused gummy candies) trade in Toronto. Let’s look at who’s leading the push for full U.S. legalization and who’s positioning to make money on pot use: Big Politics, Big Tobacco, Big Alcohol, and Big Banking. We’ll then look at some standing in the way, including Big Pharma, for reasons involving either principal or principle.

Former Facebook President Sean Parker is probably the biggest sugar daddy for weed activists. He and his associates in 2015 and 2016 gave $8.6 million to fund Proposition 64, which legalized recreational pot in California. Hedge fund billionaire
George Soros, who funds many liberal and radical causes, gave $4 million: He also bankrolls and sits on the board of the Drug Policy Alliance, a large pro-marijuana lobbying group, and from 2004 to 2014 Soros donated about $200 million to groups challenging current drug policies, according to Forbes. Soros contends that legalization is an important step toward improving criminal justice.

Insurance interests are also potent pot funders. Peter B. Lewis, Progressive’s late CEO, spent more than $40 million on legalization efforts over three decades. (Fortune headlined a Lewis profile “Sex. Reefer? And Auto Insurance!”) His younger brother, Daniel R. Lewis, a former Progressive board member, donated $1.25 million to support Prop 64.

J.B. Woods of Greenpoint Insurance Advisors co-founded Big Marijuana’s umbrella group, the National Cannabis Industry Association (NCIA). Greenpoint claims nine years of experience providing “commercial insurance, risk identification, and solutions to hundreds of cannabis retailers, cultivators, and manufacturers within regulated markets.” NCIA now provides quarterly meetings, big conferences, and networking opportunities for its 1,500-plus members, including Bic, the ballpoint pen maker.

The Marijuana Policy Project (MPP) is another state and federal lobbying giant. In 2013, MPP’s ad on a NASCAR race jumbo screen called marijuana the “new beer” with “no calories, no hangovers, and no violence.” An MPP radio campaign surveyed pot use by national political leaders, then asked, “Is it fair to arrest three-quarters of a million people a year for doing what presidents and a Supreme Court justice have done?”

These lobbyists are finding bipartisan support in Congress. The “Cannabis Caucus” in the House includes Dana Rohrabacher, R-Calif., Don Young, R-Alaska, Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore., and Jared Polis, D-Colo. They authored an amendment that prohibits the Justice Department from spending funds interfering with the implementation of state medical cannabis laws.

Sens. Cory Gardner, R-Colo., and Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., are pushing the “Strengthening the Tenth Amendment Through Entrusting States Act” forbidding federal prosecutions in states where pot is legalized—a bill President Donald Trump said he “probably will end up supporting.”

On the business side, Big Tobacco has been eyeing the market for decades. As early as the 1970s, consultants dreamed of the marijuana market: A report to Brown & Williamson (the American tobacco company depicted in the 1999 movie The Insider) said tobacco companies “have the land to grow it, the machines to roll it and package it, the distribution to market it.” In 2009 Altria, which now includes Philip Morris International, took legal action to obtain the domain names AltriaCannabis.com and AltriaMarijuana.com—and in 2010 also obtained MarlboroWeed.com, according to DomainNameWire.com. Philip Morris claimed it “has no plans to develop or commercialize cannabis products.”
The pace is now quickening. Last year Imperial Brands, the British maker of Winston and Kool, hired Simon Langelier, a 30-year Philip Morris veteran and chairman of a medical marijuana company. In January, Altria invested nearly $20 million in Syqe Medical, an Israeli manufacturer of metered-dose cannabis inhalers. This summer Imperial Brands purchased the British biotech firm Oxford Cannabinoid Technologies. Imperial’s website now bears the marketing slug, “From tobacco to something better.”

Big Alcohol is also sashaying into the marijuana market. Last November, the U.S. distributor of Corona beer, Constellation Brands, invested $191 million in Canada’s largest commercial marijuana business, Canopy Growth Corp. Meanwhile, Molson Coors is “engaging” with Aphria Inc. and Aurora Cannabis, two other major Canadian cannabis companies.

Some of the profits from Coors beer over the years went to fund the conservative Heritage Foundation, but Molson Coors CEO Mark Hunter recently told stock market analysts, “We have a team of people working on” the marijuana market. That’s natural, says High Times: “Cannabis and hops are in the same plant family, [Cannabaceae].” One of Hunter’s star innovators has now staked his own claim in the Green Rush: Keith Villa, who created Molson Coors’ popular orange-garnished Blue Moon beer, will soon launch his own “Ceria” line of THC-infused beers.

Big Alcohol once opposed the legalization of marijuana, seeing it as a rival for those seeking a buzz—but some research suggests cannabis may increase alcohol use. The prospect of creating double highs, combined with the sobering reality that pot seems on the fast track to legalization, has now converted the industry into a “can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em” mentality. A two-decade study published in 2015 by Forensic Science International showed only 2 percent of car drivers involved in fatal crashes in 1991 had both THC and alcohol in them—but that number jumped fivefold, to 10 percent, by 2008.

Big Banking is still on the fence. The New York Times reported Wells Fargo was one of the first national financial institutions to “fish” for clients at marijuana industry conferences. It was also the “first to abandon the field” when Attorney General Jeff Sessions lifted Obama-era protections. Insurance carrier USAA exhaled after successfully arguing (on appeal in a Hawaii federal court) it need not pay for the loss of stolen marijuana plants grown for medical use, since the drug is still illegal under federal law.

But if President Trump greenlights the weed, banking institutions may no longer fear money laundering charges for accepting deposits from cannabis businesses. Some big insurers may soon be following the suit of small-time brokers who are charging ultra-high premiums for coverage. In 2014 Allstate’s Amy Allmon said the company would cover the loss of marijuana in Colorado, where cannabis is legal for both medicinal and recreational use. Still, studies on the long-term effects of marijuana use raise questions for underwriters assessing marijuana’s impact on life (potential lung cancer), auto (traffic fatalities), homeowners (fair market value of marijuana plant loss), and product liability (defective THC edibles) insurance.

Some companies within Big Pharma have already profited from marijuana’s legalization for medical use in 31 states—or 46 if counting those states allowing the medical use of CBD oils. (Only nine of those states authorize recreational use.) Medical marijuana can be used to reduce muscle spasms, improve appetite in people with HIV/AIDS, and reduce vomiting and nausea during chemotherapy. The FDA has approved three synthetic marijuana-related drugs for prescription use, and on June 25 it for the first time approved a plant-derived one, Epidiolex. That puts pressure on federal authorities to remove marijuana from their list of drugs with “no medical benefit.”

One of the synthetic drugs, Syndros (oral dronabinol), an anti-nausea solution and appetite stimulant, emerged from the laboratories of Insys Therapeutics. Insys, stating its concern for child safety, was the largest contributor ($500,000) to the defeat of a 2016 Arizona measure to legalize marijuana. But an Insys disclosure statement to the Securities and Exchange Commission stated: “If marijuana or non-synthetic cannabinoids were legalized in the United States, the market for dronabinol product sales would likely be significantly reduced and our ability to generate revenue and our business prospects would be materially adversely affected.”
Other pharmaceutical companies have also fought recreational use of pot. Purdue Pharma, the maker of the highly addictive opioid OxyContin, was a major contributor to the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids. Vicodin producer Abbott Laboratories was also a big partnership donor. Some within Big Pharma see marijuana as an unwelcome competitor—especially in states where legalized marijuana and reductions in opioid overdoses are correlated.

Whether moving quickly, slowly, overtly, or covertly, all players are jockeying and politicking for a piece of the pot pie—with eyes on the profits and costs in the periphery. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, about 30 percent of users will develop some sort of dependence on the drug, with 9 percent becoming addicted. The 2016 World Health Organization report and a 2017 National Academy of Sciences study depict marijuana as harmful and potentially addictive for up to 50 percent of users.

In 2015, 138,000 Americans voluntarily sought treatment for marijuana abuse. Online, a Reddit forum, “/r/leaves,” is “a support and recovery community for practical discussions about how to quit pot...or whatever THC-related product you’re using, and support in staying stopped.” It has 66,000 subscribers.

Teenage abuse is perhaps the most worrisome—17 percent of adolescent users turn into addicts, and three-fourths of adolescent admissions to publicly funded addiction treatment centers are marijuana-related. One study of a Colorado children’s hospital found that cannabis-related emergency room admissions for youth ages 13-21 quadrupled between 2005 and 2014, the year the state legalized marijuana for recreational use. Studies show marijuana to be dangerous to the adolescent brain, in some cases leading to permanent reductions in IQ.

The benefits of marijuana in relieving pain are clear, but it’s usually not hard to find a doctor who liberally passes out prescriptions. CNN reported that only 3 percent of Colorado’s medical marijuana prescriptions were for people suffering from cancer or HIV/AIDS. Some 94 percent cited unspecified “pain.”

And, as the Green Rush escalates, some children’s advocates are reminding us of “Joe Camel,” Big Tobacco’s 1987-1997 advertising mascot that attracted children to smoking. THC concentrate is now infused in colorfully packaged sodas, gummy candy, lollipops, and cupcakes. The cannabis industry recently sued and blocked an attempt by Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper, a Democrat, to have marijuana magazines containing cartoon ads and coupons for $1 joints placed behind counters and out of the reach of children. If government officials can’t withstand the Green Rush, can kids? 

—Caleb team members: Charissa Crotts, Juliana Chan Erikson, Jim Long, Marvin and Susan Olasky, Harvest Prude. Our next article in this series will concentrate on Big Alcohol’s marijuana involvement.
Lift every
It was a warm spring day at Nationals Park, where a major league baseball game between the Washington Nationals and the New York Yankees was beginning in a few hours. Batting practice had started, and Nationals star Bryce Harper was hitting home runs.

D.C. Washington had just arrived at the stadium, and yes, that is the name his parents gave him when he was born—in Arkansas. His grandmother wanted his initials to be “D.C.” and so his parents complied. The D.C. stands for Dwight Clyde but the only person who ever calls him Dwight is his wife.

Washington, 63, has spent his whole life explaining his name, but it and his singing chops have solidified him as a local hero in this town. Washington has sung the national anthem regularly for the Nationals for at least a decade, going back to 2007 when the team was losing many more games than it won. After the Nationals became successful, the team kept calling him to sing. Over the last seven years the Nationals have had the most wins of any team in baseball, though they’ve painfully flailed in the postseason. The fan base of the relatively new team has grown fonder and fonder of Washington. Local papers have named him “best national anthem singer.”

At the beginning of March, when the Nationals were in a nosedive, Nationals beat writer Chelsea Janes tweeted: “Guys, D.C. Washington is here. Everything is going to be just fine.” “D.C.! D.C.!” yelled a woman in the stands, trying to get his attention. The security guards slapped him on the back as he came onto the field.
He grew up in “a singing family,” singing at church and playing the French horn in high school. He became a voice major in college to dodge the French horn. After graduating, he had a 22-year career in the U.S. Army and retired as a lieutenant colonel—and now he works as a defense contractor. In a city that includes huge military institutions like the Pentagon and Walter Reed, the Nationals set a special time between innings to honor military members every game. The Washington Capitals’ regular anthem singers are both military men too (hockey does the Canadian and American anthems).

Washington regularly leads worship at his church, Immanuel Bible Church in Springfield, Va., a nondenominational church of about 2,000. Immanuel Bible is why he and his wife are still in the Washington area; they’re committed to that community.

He serves on the board of a local rescue mission, where he used to serve with former Nationals shortstop Ian Desmond. Two of his friends from Immanuel came with him to the stadium for this particular game. One of them had been in a Christian barbershop quartet with Washington.

Despite singing in front of thousands of people on a regular basis, Washington doesn’t like the spotlight. Throughout the time we spent together he kept asking why anyone would want to read about him, laughing his deep laugh.

Initially his anthem singing began with the Washington Redskins, and he sings at D.C. United games as well. But he’s a big baseball fan. Soon after the Nationals (formerly the Montreal Expos) moved to the district, Washington mailed a CD to the team’s entertainment director, Tom Davis. Davis listened to the CD and gave Washington the green light. Davis, who still manages on-field entertainment, says after Washington’s first game performance of the anthem he thought, “He’s got to come back more than this.”

But Washington was a ball of nerves at the time. He spent days repeating the words to himself, anxious that he would end up on a video highlight reel for a major mistake. The hardest part of singing the anthem, in his view, is not the range of notes but the words.

“The rhyming scheme makes no sense. ‘Oh say can you see by the dawn’s early light what so proudly we hail by the twilight’s last gleaming...’ Nothing rhymes there!” he said. “It doesn’t rhyme until the next phrase. There are lots of times when I’m out there thinking, ‘Did I just sing the first phrase, the second phrase first, or am I repeating the first phrase?’”

The other tricky part is if the stadium has a delay in the speakers—he experienced almost a full second of delay when he sang using a handheld mic in another stadium recently. The key then is not to sing with yourself, because you’ll slow down more and more and more. Nationals Park has very little delay.

Washington volunteers to sing the anthem, but the Nationals give him a few tickets to any games he sings. One time he was playing golf with his brother at a course in the city, when he got a call from Davis asking if he could do the anthem. It was an hour and a half before the game, but Washington rushed
to the stadium and showered up there before going on the big screen.

Every anthem singer has his or her own style. There’s the diva with drawn-out improvisations, there’s Marvin Gaye’s funky version at the 1983 NBA All-Star Game, and Whitney Houston’s at the 1991 Super Bowl—which Washington called “absolute perfection.”

The anthem is famously difficult to sing, and national anthem screw-ups garner more fame than successes—like Fergie’s cringeworthy, all-around disastrous rendition (24 million views on YouTube), or Michael Bolton’s moment forgetting the words and having to look at his hand where he had written the lyrics.

“I respect anybody who gets out and tries it. It’s not easy,” Washington said. “I would say to anybody who wants to do it, just do it and be done with it... I never got the sense when I see Whitney’s rendition, that she was making it about herself. That’s where people get in trouble, if they make it about themselves.”

The way Washington sings, he takes some of his cues from worship singing. It’s an anthem, after all, he said, meant to be sung together. He sings at a quick tempo, with only a few twists toward the end. His tenor is clear and unwavering.

“It’s an anthem, not a dirge!” he said. “It’s celebrating who we are as a people, as a country. So although I have some stylistic things I do, they’re in keeping with the tempo, they don’t take away from the notion that we can all sing together.”

As a worship leader he applies the same principle to congregational singing, which he says should be made up of songs that the congregation is comfortable singing, not songs that make the leaders the center of attention. The words of a song are the most important thing to him, which is why his favorite worship songs are hymns, either old or contemporary.

As batting practice continued, Washington waited on the field with Nationals staffers. Bob Carpenter, the television play-by-play announcer for the Nationals and a legend going back to his days covering the St. Louis Cardinals, approached Washington near home plate.

“You doing the anthem tonight?” Carpenter asked. Washington affirmed. “Sweet,” said Carpenter. “I don’t know if it’s a guaranteed win, but that’s a good start for us... You’re amazing. I love the way you do it, man.”

This kind of greeting continued throughout batting practice, from Nationals manager Mike Rizzo to more broadcasters. Washington avoids talking to the players unless they approach him because he thinks they need to focus on doing their jobs. The broadcast on-field reporter Dan Kolko found him, and Washington greeted him loudly, “My man!”

They chatted. “I’ll be listening, like always,” said Kolko at the end of a conversation.

Dave Jageler, who is one half of the Nationals’ radio broadcasting duo, popped over next. “You got the anthem tonight?” he said. “Awesome.”

As batting practice wound up, Washington headed to a locker room where he waits until the start of the game. He doesn’t eat before singing, but he doesn’t have much of a special routine otherwise. He and his church friends swapped stories. One, Ron Owens, said he and his wife have already told Washington that they want him to sing at their funerals, and they’ve picked the song: “His Eye Is on the Sparrow.”

“You hair will just tingle it’s so good,” said Owens.

An African-American who grew up in segregated Arkansas, Washington carefully talked over the national anthem protests in sports, where some athletes have knelt to protest police brutality. As a guest invited to sing the anthem, Washington would never protest, and he says he is “proud of being an American.” But he thinks the kneeling protest is respectful (as opposed to sitting), and that the act of peaceful protest is a very American tradition.

One time he was on the anthem singing schedule for Black Heritage Day at Nationals Park, and he got to sing what historically is known as the Negro National Anthem, “Lift Every Voice and Sing.” After “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” he sang the national anthem, then “God Bless America” in the 7th inning.

“The Negro National Anthem helped me understand how to sing the national anthem,” said Washington. He doesn’t see it as a substitute to the national anthem, but a supplement. He began reciting the song: “Lift every voice and sing, till earth and heaven ring, ring with the harmonies of liberty.” “It provides me a sense of foundation, that says even though we are not that more perfect union, don’t give up. ‘Sing a song, full of the faith that the dark past has taught you. Sing a song, full of the hope that the present has brought you.’ That informs my ability then to get out and say, ‘I am an American.’ Even though America may not always live up to the ideals.”

It was showtime. Washington walked the tunnel from the locker room to the field, flanked with team staff and behind an honor guard carrying the flag. He stood on home plate, a cameraman in his face.

“Please remain standing as we honor our country, with a performance of The Star-Spangled Banner,” boomed the announcer in the stadium. “Ladies and gentlemen, D.C. Washington.”

The crowd whooped, and the Jumbotron filled with his face. Washington sang the anthem—gorgeously, perfectly. He came back to the sidelines relieved, as the players poured onto the field. He and his two church friends exited the field to watch the game in their seats.
Go and do likewise
These Hope Award winners are worthy of votes, financial support, and even imitation

BY MARVIN OLASKY

YouTube is a great resource for ideas about backyard do-it-yourself projects: brick pizza oven, fire pit, wave pool, foam pit, putting green, mini metal foundry, mini ice rink, chicken coop, pig pen, and—the most audacious—a personal fountain of youth. ■ Our annual Hope Awards for Effective Compassion stories can also be a great resource. Stunt videos often come with a warning: “Kids, don’t try this in your own backyards.” Our Hope Awards stories come with a welcome: Local Christians can and do emulate the compassion we bring to their attention. ■ Most of the 105 groups (from 39 states and nine countries) we’ve honored over the past 13 years have programs others can replicate. Last year, for example, our national winner—Delta Streets Academy in Greenwood, Miss.—emerged from the vision and God-blessed work of one young man, T. Mac Howard. ■ Delta Streets was the first school to receive our national award. Other winners have emphasized job training, help for small children, legal aid for the poor, and paths out of prostitution. The 13 top winners have come from 12 states: Arkansas, North Carolina, Iowa, Missouri, Texas, Illinois, Washington, Michigan, Alaska, Mississippi, and Tennessee twice. ■ We’d like WORLD readers to respond to our reporters’ research in four ways. First, read on the following pages their profiles of Christians who tutor and educate students in Connecticut and South Dakota, help ex-convicts start a productive life in South Carolina, and aid refugees in Colorado. If you want to go and do likewise, you don’t need a graduate degree or a big bank account. The backyard approach doesn’t quite apply to our international winner—an anti-addiction program in Vietnam—but there as well the crucial need is a big heart. ■ Second, please go to wng.org/compassion and vote for whichever of the Final Five moves you the most. All are worthy. The ministry garnering the most votes will receive a $10,000 grand prize. Regional winners receive $2,000 each, plus lots of publicity and increased credibility that they use in their own areas to multiply those dollars. I’m pleased to say that 16,000 readers voted last year. This year voting ends on Saturday, Sept. 8. ■ Third, please email June McGraw (jmcgraw@wng.org) with your nomination of an existing Christian poverty-fighting group in your own backyard that offers challenging, personal, and spiritual help and does not depend on government financing. Please include a brief description of why it impresses you, and include its address and website. ■ Fourth, 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 100 organizations we profiled from 2006 to 2017, with their major focuses: Addiction, Babies, Community, Disabilities, Education, Family, Gardening, Homelessness, Immigration, Jobs, Legal needs, Medical, Prison, Repair work, Sex (anti-prostitution), Transportation, Youth. ■ The 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).
When Li Ling first arrived at the Denver International Airport with her husband and two young children, she felt relief. It’s a common emotion refugees from Burma like her share when they land in America: Finally, they’re far, far away from the military dictatorship of Burma (also known as Myanmar) that terrorizes ethnic minorities through forced labor, torture, and arbitrary imprisonment. Like many of her fellow refugees, Li Ling didn’t know what awaited her in this new country, but she felt safe for the first time in years.

That was 2015. Today, Li Ling is a fresh widow at age 27: Her husband died three months ago when a piece of giant machinery at his workplace crushed his head. The moment Li Ling heard the news, fear and worry seized her: She has three children under the age of 5, so she cannot work. Not that she has many employment prospects, anyway—she doesn’t speak any English and has minimal education and no marketable skills. How would her family survive in this foreign country? How will she pay the monthly $800 rent for her one-bedroom apartment when she has no foreseeable income?

Li Ling is one of thousands of refugees from Burma whom the Colorado Burma Roundtable Network (CBRTN), a Denver-based refugee support group, seeks to help by providing relief, training in life skills, and Christian discipleship. It’s the only group in the area that has focused primarily on refugees from Burma since its founding in 2007, when the number of Burmese refugees entering Colorado spiked from 19 in the previous year to more than 300.

At the time, resettlement agencies were scrambling to deal with the flood of Burmese refugees showing up at the airport wearing little more than flip-flops and longyis (a long, traditional skirtlike garment)—appropriate for Southeast Asia’s tropical climate but not for the Rocky Mountains’ unpredictable hails. These newcomers didn’t speak English and didn’t even know how to flush a toilet or use an ATM. Many grew up in bamboo huts without modern amenities such as electricity and American supermarkets with their dozens of cereal options—yet they had to find a job within the few months before their cash assistance expired. Meanwhile, caseworkers were understaffed and overworked, with

Colorado group helps Burmese refugees who often arrive with nothing and ‘just need a little help, and they fly on their own’ BY SOPHIA LEE in Denver, Colo.

PHOTOS BY BEAR GUTIERREZ/GENESIS
no time to give individual attention to these refugees.

That’s where CBRTN stepped in to fill the gaps. CBRTN began with a mission trip to the Thailand-Burma border, where thousands of Karen (an ethnic minority in Burma) refugees live in destitute camps. CBRTN President Jack Johnson, a retired teacher and Air Force veteran, visited those refugee camps in a truck loaded with rice, sugar, and condensed milk. Sometimes he crossed the river to Burma in a long boat stacked with chickens for the IDPs (internally displaced persons) who hide among thick jungle ranges. Seeing the devastating poverty and injustice there, he prayed, “Father God, how do we continue this work going forward?”

Then Karen Baptist Pastor Ler Mu Martin, who had fled Burma during the bloody 1988 pro-democracy uprising, alerted Johnson that the mission field would soon arrive on his own backyard. Waves of Burmese refugees were swarming into America, he warned, and “they’re going to need a lot of help.”

So Johnson, Martin, and several local Christians decided to create CBRTN with a dual mission: to help both the persecuted ethnic minorities in Southeast Asia and the incoming refugees in Colorado. CBRTN relies only on private donations, but Johnson said he has never once begged anyone for money: “Every time there’s a need, somebody calls and provision just appears, magically. It’s fun to watch God work.”

And the needs are constant. Each year, CBRTN sends mission groups to Thailand and sometimes Burma, where they work with local missionaries and Christian groups to supply food and medicine and to preach the gospel in remote villages. CBRTN also supports an orphanage for young women in Thailand.

Meanwhile in Denver, local volunteers—none of them paid—help pick the refugees up at the airport, give them English and driving lessons, help them open bank accounts, drive them to markets and doctors’ appointments, and supply whatever needs arise. For example, Marilyn Perlman, a retired CPA, helps the refugees do their taxes. When refugees ask if they can pay her, she suggests they donate to CBRTN instead—and many do.

Another volunteer, Susan Rairdon, a homeschooling mom whose four kids are now grown, taught ESL classes and housed six young refugees in her own home to homeschool them so they can earn their high-school diplomas. Two of them received scholarships that paid for their transcript and graduation expenses. Those lessons expand these refugees’ career options beyond low-paying, physical labor jobs.

Lah Say, a 27-year-old Karen woman born in a Thailand refugee camp, learned English from Rairdon every Saturday. She then graduated from college with a degree in public health, scored a job at a children’s hospital, and now studies for a master’s degree in social work. Lah Say said CBRTN was a blessing to her at a time when she felt alone and isolated, so she wants to “be a blessing back.” She joined a local leadership council so she can be a voice for refugees, created a program that helps other refugees gain employment at her medical campus, and goes on mission trips to minister to human-trafficked Burmese women in Thailand.

Thang Thung, a 26-year-old Chin who as a 14-year-old boy trekked through jungle forests and almost died during the brutal journey to Malaysia, landed in Denver in 2015 without any English skills. Once painfully shy about his inability to speak English, he now readily engages in political and theological conversations in confident English. After earning his high-school diploma, Thang Thung found a job as an electrician and recently received approval for his citizenship. He’s planning to visit his home village soon—the first time he’d be back in 12 years—and hopes to help his native people build a coffee farm.

Both Lah Say and Thang Thung came to the United States with barely any skills or education. Now they’re active helpers in their community. “They’re like birds,” Rairdon said. “They just
Andrew Thang, a 57-year-old, stocky-built Chin pastor, has the uncanny ability to make even the most doleful refugee break into giggles with his wide smiles and jokes. Ever since he professed faith in Christ at age 13, Thang said he knew he wanted to live for Jesus. He attended seminary in Calcutta, India, and became a missionary to Buddhists in Burma—but the villagers became unhappy when he won converts, and a friend warned him that the government had him marked on its blacklist. Thang fled to Malaysia with his family, applied there for refugee status, and flew to Denver in 2009 with one prayer: “Lord, anywhere I go, I’ll work for you.”

Thang soon worshipped with multiple refugee families in the area. He learned basic English during his years in India, so after meeting Johnson he offered to help translate to refugees. In 2011, CBRTN began paying him a monthly stipend of $800 to minister to refugees full time. Thang said that’s when he knew God had answered his prayer: “God sent me here to a great country so I can continue working for the glory of God.”

Now, Thang daily drives throughout the Denver metropolitan area carrying his backpack and whiteboard, knocking door to door. He befriends people of all ethnic groups—Karen, Kachin, Karenni, Shan, Mon, even Bamar, the majority people in Burma whom Thang once hated. Each day he visits up to seven refugee families, sometimes just popping in to say hello and tickle a wide-eyed baby, other times to pray, help someone buy groceries, or read the mail. His phone rings with calls for help, earning him the nickname “Burma 911.”

I followed the pastor from house to house for three days, and saw the various kinds of problems that refugees face: job insecurity, alcoholism, domestic violence, trauma, loneliness, depression, cultural division between the parents and children. The needs shift as the refugees settle in: War is no longer an issue, but “there’s spiritual war here,” one refugee said. Refugees no longer fight to survive, but they’re still engaged in a battle for their souls.

Thang said not all refugees hunger for God, especially as they gain material wealth. Some refugees call him for benefits but close the door when he talks about Jesus. When they face suffering again, their hearts soften. A Chin family of six avoided Thang until last December, when a car accident left husband and father Zo Ram, 38, paralyzed in an electric wheelchair. The day we visited him, Zo Ram’s legs had atrophied to the size of a child’s, and his wife had to wipe his face and clean his ears for him. He had to quit his work as a carpenter and doesn’t know if he’ll ever walk again. Now Thang visits the family once or twice a week to do Bible studies. As Thang prayed, Zo Ram closed his eyes and repeatedly said “Amen” in a soft voice.

On a Wednesday morning, we visited Li Ling, who still looked shell-shocked at the death of her husband. She spoke little, biting her hair and looking down at the mat whenever someone mentioned him. Whenever her children cry about missing their father, she misses him terribly too. She doesn’t know what to do except cry out, “God, give me strength.”

Recently, a fellow Burmese refugee, a single mother of three kids, donated $120 to CBRTN for “whoever with the greatest need.” Thang delivered that check to Li Ling, and said CBRTN will help Li Ling pay for a lawyer so she can get workers’ compensation because, according to his co-workers, her husband had never received proper safety training.

Before saying goodbye, Thang said, “Some people always say, ‘Just don’t worry.’ But when someone we love dies, we cannot control our feelings. God understands that, and only He can give us strength.”

Li Ling nodded, her eyes still averted, her fingers twisting the check.

Thang went on: “If you do nothing but stress and worry, you will go crazy.” He pointed up: “But Jesus. Jesus. You depend on Him. Only through Jesus, you can still sing hallelujah.” He spread his arms: “Look to Jesus. Give thanks to Jesus.” Then he raised his hands into a benediction and prayed aloud for Li Ling and her family. As he prayed, tears rushed down Li Ling’s face, and her shoulders shook as she sobbed.

“They all need Jesus,” Thang said as we walked out of Li Ling’s apartment complex. “For me, I’m just happy to share the Word of God. CBRTN opened this door for me to plant seeds. How long it’ll take to grow, I don’t know. That’s up to God. I just work for His glory.”
Growing up in a rough North Philadelphia neighborhood with his single mother, Bill Beattie was a prime candidate to drop out of high school. But with mentoring from his chemistry teacher, he graduated high school and then college. With mentoring from his youth pastor, he devoted his life to Jesus.

When he was older, Beattie became a successful mining executive based in Danbury, Conn. He was at a high point in his career, having left Union Carbide and started his own thriving company, when everything changed. He and his wife were canoeing the Zambezi River in Africa and capsized. Another boat quickly rescued his wife, but Beattie was stranded in the water. The others nearby saw a crocodile plow toward him—but it turned away at the last moment. Once on dry land, Beattie was certain that God had saved his life, and for a specific purpose.

Beattie thought about the teenagers he knew in Danbury, many of them lost and without fathers as he had been. He thought about the mentors who had brought him through school and brought him to Jesus. With a buy-in from local churches in Danbury, he and a few other men started a mentoring program for four teenagers in 1997.

The businessman already had metrics in mind: He would measure success in long-term relationships. Twenty years later, he and other mentors have achieved it. He refers to his first mentee from 20 years ago, Charneil Bush, as family. When the two first began meeting, Bush’s mom was incarcerated and struggling with addiction, and the boy was having a difficult time. Bush ended up graduating high school and college and is now working on his master’s degree.

“Mentoring was a solution we could get to very quickly,” Beattie said, noting that Christian business executives like himself could have enormous influence through mentoring and still continue their day jobs. Those were long days, though. In the early years, he would host organization meetings in his company’s boardroom at 6:30 in the morning.

The plan was to add five teenagers and five mentors a year if the program went well—and it did. That handful of mentoring relationships became Pathways Danbury Youth Ministries, a six-year program that now serves 50 middle-school and high-school boys and girls with one-on-one mentoring and tutoring.

The mentoring program spun off a Christian middle school for boys, which Beattie started with Cedric Rice, a former IBM executive who worked on the original NASA Space Shuttle in 1969. Rice, through his church, was an early mentor in Pathways and had become friends with Beattie.

Beattie and Rice’s connection also represented the melding of two churches: the largely black New Hope Baptist in downtown and the suburban Walnut Hill Community, one of the largest evangelical churches in the area.

Rice became the principal of the school while also teaching math and science—a job he continues today at age 70. The school, where all the students are below the poverty
line and many are in single-parent homes, has a 96 percent graduation rate.

Of the first 11 boys who started at Pathways Academy a decade ago, five had fathers in prison. All but one of the boys graduated high school, and all the graduates went on to college or technical programs.

“That one always troubled me,” said Rice. The boy was a straight-A student but left Pathways after the first year because of discipline issues. “In this business you don’t win all the time. But when you win, what a great feeling it is.”
The business executives spun off or “acquired” more ministries as families in their church circles had needs. Now they have eight partners, providing pediatric healthcare, counseling, addiction recovery, housing, and meals. That larger organization Beattie developed that oversees all these programs is Jericho Partnership.

“I enjoy seeing things happen,” said Beattie about the business DNA in Jericho. “We have a bias for action.”

Named for the Good Samaritan parable that takes place on the road to Jericho, Jericho today manages eight ministries, thousands of volunteers, and 26 local church partners. Thirteen of the church partners are in the city, and 13 are in the suburbs, and they cross racial and economic lines.

Partner churches give Jericho $5 per member and have a seat on the organization’s advisory board. Local pastors help Jericho staffers know specific needs in the city and how to address the many cultures in a place where a third of the population is Latino.

Even with Jericho’s up-front Christian identity and close alliance with local churches, its ministries have won the enthusiastic support of the longtime mayor of Danbury as well as the local public schools superintendent.

“When they got momentum, they were a home run,” said Danbury Public Schools Superintendent Sal Pascarella, about Pathways Academy.

The big old warehouse that houses Jericho Partnership in Danbury was once a furniture showroom. It’s renovated now, but its maze of rooms still feels like a showroom for the ministries at work there.

Walk into the lobby of the Jericho building and hang a left. Through the door is a waiting room for Samaritan Health Center, a pediatric clinic for the uninsured where a Spanish-speaking mom is cradling a baby. Toys and books are scattered around, along with newspapers in Spanish. In 2016, about 2,000 uninsured children received healthcare through the clinic.

Around the corner is Hopeline, a pregnancy resource center for women with unexpected pregnancies. The center performed 566 ultrasounds in 2016 and estimates that it saved about 300 unborn lives.

Through another door are counseling services. Upstairs is the adoption agency Bethany Christian Services. Open another door: Pathways Academy is the Christian middle school serving 39 boys this year, almost all of whom are black or Hispanic.

Beware of your emotions if you walk directly from the pediatric clinic to the middle school, past Christian doctors caring for babies and into a language arts classroom full of seventh-graders earnestly taking a spelling test. A sign in the classroom carries the school’s tagline for the “men of honor” they are cultivating, spelled in the acrostic of “Christ”: Courteous & Respectful,
Hopeful & Confident, Resourceful & Goal-Oriented, Inspired & Close to God, Sexually Pure, and Trusting in the Lord.

When the bell rang in the middle school, each boy filed out of Lakeema Moore’s language arts class and shook her hand. Down the hall, the head of the mentoring program, Horace Hough, was getting ready to take his high-school senior boys to the mall to buy suits for graduation.

Jericho hosts all of these ministries in its building rent-free, which is a big gift in an expensive city like Danbury. Downtown the organization also has a transitional home for homeless women and children, and a homeless shelter. Given the dizzying number of Jericho projects, the group posts its annual financial audits online for transparency.

Jericho’s specialness comes from hosting all of these ministries under one roof. Girls at the Hopeline pregnancy center who might need support can walk down a hallway to the teen mom ministry YoungLives. The Pathways Academy boys can get immunizations at the pediatric clinic, and counseling. Boys from the school have started going to Young Life (also in the showroom warehouse), and boys from Young Life have enrolled in the school.

Jericho President Carrie Amos says all of this overlapping builds “covenant” relationships. Next to the Jericho building is a liquor store. A mother of three boys in the Jericho programs was living in an apartment above the store. A few years ago she overdosed and died. Jericho paid for her funeral and stuck with the boys. The third boy is about to graduate high school.

“We want to help them understand that they can do all things through Christ who strengthens them,” said Rice, the math teacher and former Space Shuttle brainiac. He stood in the Pathways middle-school lobby between classes, wearing a letter jacket with a big “P” on it. Many of Jericho’s leaders, like Rice and Amos, are people of color like the children they are serving.

After school many of the academy boys walked a few doors down to the tutoring program, which was gearing up with about 50 students. Portraits of Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King Jr., and George Washington hung on the walls.

This tutoring program has classrooms dedicated to different subjects, with tutors specializing in particular subjects to help students with their work. The students rotate through the rooms depending on their work.

When they finish, some play basketball on a dusty court out back with Kih and Robert Best. The Best brothers went through the program themselves when they were in middle school and high school, and now tutor.

Inside, Jada Ortiz, a senior in high school, stood in the bathroom doorway, wearing her graduation suit for the first time. She has been in the girls’ mentoring program for six years, after her public school counselor first suggested it to her. The girls’ program is named Naomi, for the Biblical character and mother-in-law who guides Ruth.

Jada wasn’t sure about the skirt’s fit and called for advice from Michelle Ross, who runs Naomi. Did the skirt need tailoring? Ross thought it looked good. The girls often scoff at the idea of suits, Ross said, but then when they put them on—they’re making duck lips,” a selfie face. Jada plans to go to a local community college.

All the girls in the six-year Naomi mentoring program have gone on to colleges or technical schools. Ross’ tagline is “Leading girls to Christ through relationships,” which mirrors Jericho’s central theme. This isn’t theoretical; one of the Naomi mentees moved in with Ross when the girl’s mom suddenly moved away from Danbury during her senior year of high school. The girl graduated—the first in her family to do so—and has stayed with Ross while she figures out next steps.

Ross is one of many leaders in the program following Beattie’s model of long-term relationships. Beattie’s first mentee from 20 years ago, Charneil Bush, related a story at a Jericho dinner in 2016. By many measures a Jericho success story, Bush had in the last year gotten laid off from his job. Three months passed without a new job, and he grew depressed and suicidal. In that moment Beattie was the first person he called.

“The impact of mentoring is always knowing what home looks like,” said Bush, crying. His old mentor prayed with him over the phone and then asked what he could do to help.

Reflecting on that phone call, Beattie described Bush as having “broad shoulders” but says that it’s difficult to be “a survivor in a family that’s dysfunctional.”

“He has a strong faith in God, but we all need encouragement at times,” he said. “I’m still mentoring him and he’s still mentoring me.”

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(1) Kih (left) and Robert (right) Best play basketball with boys they tutor. (2) Mathematics teacher Cedric Rice keeps an eye on students during a test at Pathways Academy. (3) Naomi mentor Nanette Aponte with her mentee, Paris Ortiz-Torres, 15.
In Sun Surveillance’s modest warehouse in Spartanburg, S.C., a pair of men lean over a long table filled with pliers and drills, working on small circuits and other electrical components for solar-powered, wireless surveillance cameras.

Companies and government agencies purchase the high-tech cameras mounted on aluminum poles to monitor property and safety. Ironically, nearly all the men working on the surveillance systems have done prison time: They are now graduates of Jump Start, a Christ-centered prison and re-entry ministry for men and women.

“God definitely has a sense of humor,” says Steve Wyman, a former South Carolina inmate and now a seven-year employee at Sun Surveillance. “Here’s this Christian company that’s a security business, where the majority of employees are ex-offenders.”

The idea is simple: Help inmates get started on productive lives when they’re released from prison. But the process is lengthy and intensive, and it hinges on an uncommon practice: After working with inmates inside local prisons, Jump Start continues direct ministry to the same people once they’re released.

While many worthy prison ministries offer classes and Bible studies, they often refer inmates to other Christian groups and resources once the prisoners are released. Jump Start offers help on both sides, beginning with a 40-week program for inmates in 16 different prisons in South Carolina.

Participants who do well and graduate are eligible for the ministry’s re-entry program once they’re released. The Spartanburg-based program includes transitional housing, job placement, and Christian mentoring.

Such help is crucial. In a study of 30 states, the U.S. Department of Justice reported that within five years of release, 75 percent of inmates were rearrested. In South Carolina, 30 percent of released inmates return to prison within five years. But Jump Start reports less than 4 percent recidivism: 2,100 men and women have graduated from its 40-week program in prison over the last 10 years, and only 70 have returned to prison.

John Pate, the warden at Allendale Correctional Institution in Fairfax, S.C., where Jump Start is one of a slew of character-based...
programs, thinks the ministry’s success comes from offering inmates a future on both sides of the prison walls.

“A man has to have a purpose,” Pate says. “A man needs hope.”

Roman Cannady didn’t always have hope. Growing up in poverty with a single mom, Cannady turned early to the streets, amassing 11 felonies by the age of 16. He remembers a life of “getting high, partying, drinking, and getting all the women I could.”

That lifestyle eventually landed Cannady in prison, where he noticed something unusual in a rough unit filled with gangs: a small group of men who seemed happy. “I wanted that,” he says, “even though I didn’t want other people to know I wanted it.”

Cannady learned the men were part of Jump Start. The program offered Biblical teaching that held out the possibility of knowing God and living a meaningful life. That made sense to Cannady, who began attending: “I thought, ‘Why would I want to come out worse than when I came in?’”

Sadly, many inmates do.

This April at Lee Correctional Institution in Bishopville, S.C., seven male inmates died violent deaths during an all-night, brutal prison riot. But in the same prison, another set of men meets each week to discuss how to kill their sins—by cultivating godly sorrow, pursuing Christ, and serving others.

Other lessons in the Jump Start curriculum include Biblical teaching on building healthy relationships, working hard, respecting authority, accepting responsibility, and learning how to serve other people.

Some prisoners get a chance to serve fellow inmates as small-group leaders: Jump Start staff and volunteers identify inmates with leadership potential and train them to lead discussion groups during the next 40-week study.

Cary Sanders—the inside program director and a former inmate who graduated from Jump Start—says that by the end of the 40 weeks, about 30 to 40 percent of the participants have dropped out. But for those who stay and finish well, another possibility awaits: help on the outside, if they need it.

After release, many inmates return home to family or friends. (Only about 20 percent of Jump Start participants go to the transitional housing after their release.)

Some have nowhere to go. Others don’t want to return to an environment where they might face temptation to go astray again.

But finding housing and work isn’t always easy. Even securing identification to apply for a job—tracking down Social Security cards and birth certificates—can be a daunting process. Landing a job can be even harder. Some companies won’t hire applicants with felony records or backgrounds that include violent crimes or sex offenses.

Don Williams, a former inmate and a co-founder of Jump Start, says it took years to establish a group of employers willing to hire Jump Start participants: “Many times I’ve left an employer in tears because of some of the attitudes toward men and women with a checkered past.”

Williams caught a break with Chris Phillips of Sun Surveillance. Phillips co-founded the surveillance camera company and had been looking for a ministry opportunity to help
He's also dedicated to his church, where he works with the youth group and tries to encourage young men to avoid the trouble he experienced: “It's hard because I really, really want them to get it and sometimes they don't. But sometimes they do and it's humbling. It's very humbling.”

In the first months after release, Jump Start participants live in a 16-bed transitional home in downtown Spartanburg. (Six women live in a separate location.) After 30 to 90 days, the men move to a handful of smaller transitional homes around town.

Williams helps them find jobs, and another staffer provides transportation. Local churches welcome them to worship and donate items like furniture, clothing, and cleaning supplies. One local church offers dental services. Others send members to train as mentors.

Each month, participants meet with program directors to review their progress. Jump Start staff members meet with representatives from local agencies—parole and probation, mental health, vocational rehab—to review cases they have in common.

On a warm afternoon in a temporary office space above the gym in a local church, Don Williams and re-entry coordinator Chris Pritchard sit across from James Reynolds. He's had a tougher time with re-entry and struggles with health problems and keeping a job.

Pritchard encourages him to keep asking for shifts at a local Dollar General and presses him about spending money on cigarettes when his income is low. He also asks about Reynolds' spiritual life. He goes to church but admits he hasn't been reading his Bible lately. Pritchard recommends an easier-to-understand translation and asks Reynolds to let him know what he thinks when he's read it. They'll meet again soon.

Darrin Smalls has had more progress. He gives Pritchard his monthly budget sheet, showing how much money he has in checking and savings accounts, any debts, and a basic breakdown of how he's spent his money.

Smalls, who left prison last year, runs a stacking machine and cleans press rollers at a large printing company. He says he’s two steps away from the top-pay level for his position. Smalls admits his work sometimes gets in the way of spiritual disciplines. After working a 12-hour shift, he's often ready for bed. “Can I make a suggestion?” asks Pritchard. “Could you get up 30 minutes earlier?”

“I get up at 4:30 in the morning,” Smalls says. “That'll work.”

After his release from prison, Cannady entered the transitional housing program and started working for Foust. He says he loves his work and is thankful for the program and how Christ has changed his life: “Now I’m married. I’ve got children. I’ve got responsibilities. ... I’m dedicated to God first, and then to my wife and family.”

...
The early morning prairie sun reflects off the yellow school bus that brings children to a tan, aluminum-sided school building at the end of a residential street.

The bus’s doors part, and boisterous children pour out wearing dresses, T-shirts, and polos in the school uniform colors of blue, green, or red. Backpacks bounce as the kerfuffle pushes through the front door, heads down the hallway, and turns a corner into the white-tiled gymnasium that doubles as a cafeteria.

Kitchen volunteers dish steaming biscuits washed in white gravy and sausage onto Styrofoam plates. Teachers sit at the head of each lunch table admonishing children when they try to excuse themselves or forget what those napkins are for. Two second-grade girls discuss what they’ll name their daughters someday: Sarah or Sierra.

That’s breakfast time at Windswept Academy on the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation, where local people are suspicious of outsiders and Christian schools, for good reason. Government policy from the 1880s through the 1930s used private schools to force the Lakota (also known as the Teton Sioux) to assimilate. But Windswept’s mission is to provide Christ-centered affordable education—and to succeed it has to overcome that history and build trust with the local community.

Ann and Ilhami Konur founded Windswept in 2009. The school opened with only 12 students in a house where bedrooms doubled as classrooms. The Konurs had lived in Virginia, but they were familiar with the reservation because their church made regular mission trips there.

The couple fell in love with the small town of Eagle Butte and the fourth-largest reservation in the United States: Home to 8,500 people, the reservation sweeps west from the Missouri River for 60 miles over treeless plains. Cattle, creek bottoms, ranch houses, and a privately owned buffalo herd dot the landscape.

The Konurs saw how poverty and substance abuse challenged the reservation. They realized that annual, one-week Bible schools weren’t making a long-term difference in the lives of children and their families, and Ann Konur began dreaming at night of a school that would be involved in the day-to-day lives of families.

In 2006, the Konurs left Virginia and moved to South Dakota. Three years later they opened the school. In the beginning years, Ann and one other teacher taught while Ilhami traveled and raised funds. “We were fearless because we were so green,” he said.

Raising money was easier than winning trust. The Lakota still remember how some Christian schools forced children to cut their hair and punished them if they spoke their Native language. When Windswept first opened, rumors circulated that the school doled out corporal punishment. An angry

Christian school brings the gospel—and respect for Lakota culture—to Cheyenne River Indian Reservation

BY SARAH SCHWEINSBERG in Eagle Butte, S.D.

PHOTOS BY ALEX GARCIA/GENESIS
A member of the community saw Ilhami one day and told him he could have “run you over so easily.”

Over the past decade, Windswept Academy has earned acceptance in the community by honoring Lakota culture and caring for the community’s children. Tribal elders have given the Konurs and others at the school three star quilts—a symbol of honor and respect. And four years after that man threatened Ilhami Konur, he approached both Konurs at the grocery store and shook their hands.

They’ve also earned the support of churches in the community and around the

Students say a morning prayer (above) at Windswept Academy; Amy Holley leads a girls’ Bible study.
country. Sixty churches have raised money and sent teams to build the school. First came a small gymnasium, then an elementary wing, and, this past year, a high-school wing. In nine years, the school has grown from 12 to 92 students.

Sometimes the school still missteps and cultural miscommunications occur. This year, Windswept created a fundraising video that offended some members of the tribe by focusing too much on the problems on the reservation. The school took the video off the internet and didn’t try to defend it. When conflict occurs, Windswept chooses to apologize and move on. “They’ve had a lot of bad experiences with Christians,” headmaster Clint Holley said. “I can’t change the way my ancestors treated them in the past...but what I can do is do right from this point forward. And that’s what we’re trying to do.”

After the biscuit-and-gravy breakfast, Holley flashes the lunchroom lights off and back on. The room goes quiet and students jump to attention, hands over hearts. Holley leads them in the Pledge of Allegiance and prayer. Then teachers line their students up and march off to their classes.

Students sit at wooden desks in small classrooms. The school caps class sizes at 12 students so teachers can give students individualized attention and develop closer relationships with them and their parents. That attention to students has translated into a 94 percent attendance rate, and students are scoring at the national average on standardized tests. Holley says the school doesn’t want to create a “class society” by only serving families that can afford private education. Thanks to donations, tuition is $50 dollars a month, which helps cover breakfast and lunch costs. If a family has more than two children, it pays no more than $100. Almost all of the students are Native American.

The school incorporates cultural education into the school day. Lakota elders come and teach children about Lakota culture. One elder told students how she was born in a teepee. Students learn basic Lakota greetings and words like mazaskanskan for clock and wowapi for books. Teachers attend nonreligious community powwows. When a history textbook portrayed Native Americans in a disparaging way, Amy Holley, Clint Holley’s wife and a teacher at the school, called the publisher, which edited out the offending material.

Teachers work to give students world-expanding experiences. This year, teachers took students on field trips to see the Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse monuments, Christmas trees in the state Capitol, and an air and space museum. On Friday nights, Windswept teachers along with some public school teachers hold a game night at a local church where students play egg toss and have baking contests.
Teachers rotate driving bus routes before and after school. During the school day, one intern serves as the only teacher’s assistant for the whole school. After school, teachers help mop hall floors and take out trash and sometimes stay as late as 7:30 p.m. correcting papers and planning lessons.

Windswept has also earned the trust of the community by caring for children in difficult circumstances. The Lakota language doesn’t have a word for orphan. The tribe believes if a child has no parents, then another family member will step in.

One year Clint Holley began questioning why a little girl kept leaving school for multiple grandmother funerals: He wondered, How many grandmothers can one person have? When he asked the girl’s parents about the funerals, he learned the “grandmothers” were actually great-aunts. The Lakota culture treats any blood relative or community member as an immediate family member. “You are family because you are Lakota,” Holley explains.

Most of the school’s teachers come from the East Coast, but they have adopted this idea of family. During the last decade, every Windswept teacher has temporarily cared for—or taken custody of—a student when parents or grandparents asked for help.

The Holleys have cared for seven children and today have custody of four. Their goal is always to reunify children with parents. One little boy lived with them for three years. The Holleys helped the boy’s mother get into rehab. Each weekend they made the six-hour round trip so he could visit her. Today, she’s clean of drugs, has a job, and has her son back.

The Holleys are now helping one father regain custody of two sisters in their care. He needs to show the tribal court he’s fit to parent, so they are helping him take parenting classes and find a job.

Burnout is a problem. Many teachers only stay for two years because they are far from their homes on the East Coast. Replacing those teachers is a challenge. Ann and Ilhami Konur say they hope more local teachers eventually will want to be a part of the school’s mission, but, in the meantime, Ilhami says, “I know God provides everything we need.”

At lunchtime, the school’s few high schoolers set the table with napkins, silverware, and cups. Once students hit seventh grade, many leave for the public school because they want to play sports, and Windswept doesn’t yet offer any. The high schoolers who do stay say it’s because they love their teachers, friends, and learning about the Bible: Amy Holley and another teacher hold 30 minutes of Bible study each day.

Zianne Edwards is a sophomore. Ann Konur began picking her up for Sunday school when she was 7, and eventually she started attending Windswept. She says Ann Konur and Amy Holley helped her leave an abusive home and enter a Christian foster home. Teachers helped her “keep my relationship with God” through that time.

Jasper Pesicka transferred to the school three years ago. He became a Christian believer a year later and says he stays because of his teachers: “They take each individual kid, and they spend time with them. They say they love you all the time. You don’t really get that anywhere else.”

Another student said teacher support and school-provided counseling helped her overcome depression. A grandparent told the Holleys there’s “a lot less cussing in the house” since his grandchild started attending.

Teaching a love of Scripture extends down the grades. Parents Kelly and Clay Lawrence said the school has given their seventh-grade son Henry a love for the Bible. During his wrestling practice at the public school, Henry started sharing the gospel with a teammate during the 10-minute warm-up run. Clay said the teachers “care about not just how they’re doing at school, but how they’re doing away from school.”

Next year Windswept will have its first graduating class. Headmaster Clint Holley says he hopes the education students receive here will allow them to pursue dreams and that their faith will give them the tools to lead their community. “I would love to see people be able to raise a family, stay here and raise a family here, be successful, make a difference, and transform our nation into a godly nation. The Lakota nation.”

MONEY BOX
2016 tuition income: $17,750
Other 2016 income: $427,702
2016 expenses: $313,550
2018 budget: $400,000
CEO’s salary: $0
Website: windsweptacademy.org

August 4, 2018 • WORLD Magazine 59
Vietnamese flags wave from houses on either side of a newly paved road 27 miles outside Hanoi. Past a small lake stands the Aquila Rehab Center, a Christian drug rehab center with several buildings, a garden, dirt clearings, and a spectacular view of leafy trees, grassy fields, and verdant mountains cloaked in mist.

In the covered courtyard, two dozen men gather around a mobile pull-up bar, challenging each other to do 30 pull-ups. Others are waking from afternoon naps, reading their Bibles on their bunk beds, or chatting. One drug addict, who arrived the day before from Australia, sits in a daze as the pastor speaks with him. Still others mop the floors or take care of bonsai trees in the garden.

Amid this activity, the Aquila Center is accomplishing something the Vietnamese government can’t: helping drug addicts get off drugs—and stay off. The founder, Pastor Nam Quoc Trung, was an addict himself who through Christ found both salvation and freedom from his 16-year addiction. The center currently houses 60 men and 30 women. Despite serious trials, including the destruction of the original center, death threats, and the continued inability to register legally, the Aquila Center has helped more than 100 addicts leave behind a life of drugs. Its success has even the government asking for advice on reforming addicts.

Trung, the son of a high-ranking government official in Hanoi, is a serious-looking man with jet-black hair and the suave air of a race car driver. He started using drugs recreationally as a teen, but soon his life revolved around getting that next high. To procure drug money, he stole from his parents, pawned furniture, and robbed people on the street. Once he held his own 1-month-old daughter for ransom, only bringing her home after procuring money from his wife and parents. “I lost my human character,” Trung remembers. “I was like an animal.”

Exasperated, Trung’s parents sent him to government-run rehab centers that treated addicts like prisoners, yet every time he left, he’d quickly return to drugs. In 16 years, he entered rehab 14 times. The last time he made up his mind that he’d never go back, so he stopped using drugs but instead drank copious amounts of alcohol, gambled, and caroused with prostitutes in front of his wife and children.

In 2006, Trung ran into a friend he used to do drugs with and found the man was now clean—he had gone to a Christian rehab center and professed faith in Christ. Seeing the change in his friend, Trung agreed to
enter the rehab center. Without access to women, alcohol, and drugs, he had nothing to do but read the Bible. After two weeks, he found he no longer used bad words. As he continued reading, he stopped telling lies. He found he had power over the bad thoughts in his mind.

Shocked, he realized that the power of God had done what years of willpower and rehab could not. He professed faith in Christ, and he felt fully forgiven, loved, and made new. Trung spent so much time reading that a friend at rehab called his wife to tell her he was out of his mind: All he did was read the Bible.

During his time in rehab, his wife, parents, and other relatives also professed faith in Christ. His mother was so grateful to have her son back that she spent all her remaining money building a six-story house in the city of Hanoi to use as a...
house church. Today, six house churches, including one headed by Trung, meet in that house.

In 2009, Trung decided to build a rehab center in Bac Giang province north of Hanoi. In 2012 the government hired 100 thugs to ransack the center, breaking windows, kicking down doors, and destroying furniture and possessions.

Foreign consulates offered to publicize what the government had done, yet Trung felt God calling him to accept the persecution quietly, so he refused their offers.

The persecution didn’t end: A few months later, someone set Trung’s car on fire as it was parked outside his house. Stunned, Trung and his wife knelt down to pray and suddenly felt a wave of peace. “I consider this a precious experience,” Trung recalled. “When I made the decision to turn away from retaliation and to continue to walk with God, God opened the way for my ministry to work inside government rehab centers two months later.”

That’s when the Hanoi government invited him to share his testimony with addicts in the rehab center where he once stayed. Afterward, officials allowed him to bring the Light for a Path ministry into 17 government rehab centers in northern Vietnam. Through music, testimonies of former addicts, and a gospel presentation, a total of 20,000 addicts heard the gospel. The mayor of Hanoi befriended Trung and today invites him to speak to the city’s police officers and public security officials.

In 2015, Trung bought a piece of land outside Hanoi and built a new drug rehab center with a kitchen, office, chapel, and sleeping quarters for 60 men. Two floors of the building are available for other underground Bible schools to use for classes.

Every day at the Aquila Center, the men wake up at 6 a.m. and start the day with morning devotions before breakfast, followed by a group Bible reading. Each person has his own responsibilities around the center—landscaping, cleaning, or cooking—as well as work in the neighborhood, including visiting poor families and helping them with construction work.

In the afternoons, they meet in small groups for Bible studies and prayer meetings, then play sports. After dinner, they have free time before an evangelistic Alpha course and group prayer until their 9:30 p.m. curfew. Trung estimates the men and women at the Aquila Center spend six hours a day in the Word. The addicts know beforehand that Aquila is a Christian center, yet many nonbelievers come because they are desperate for help.

In one of the dorm rooms, Samuel Vu grins as he describes the new prayer group he started that meets twice a day at 5 a.m. and 5 p.m. to pray for those suffering from mental illnesses. Vu was a Christian before coming to Aquila, but said he only gave 30 percent of his life to Christ. Outwardly, he seemed successful as a university professor, but he felt his life was meaningless and he started using drugs: heroin, prescription drugs, and crystal meth. He ended up in a government rehab center where he heard the gospel with fresh ears through the Light for a Path ministry. After his release, he came to the Aquila Center, where he’s stayed for a year.

“I feel there is so much meaning in my life now,” Vu said. “I just want to do every small thing to please the Lord.”

The Aquila Center is the largest of 60 Christian drug rehab centers in Vietnam and the only one helping female drug addicts. The women live in Trung’s house church and a nearby building. Trung noted that women are much more difficult to help: Beyond recovery from drug addiction, the women also need healing from deep emotional and physical wounds from years of abuse. They also have easier access to drugs: When men run out of money, it’s difficult to get more drugs. But plenty of pimps are eager to supply women with drugs in exchange for their bodies.

Women also don’t have the same familial support as men do. Vietnam is a very patriarchal society, so typically if a son gets involved in drugs, parents will look for ways to help him get clean, Trung said. But if their daughter gets involved in drugs and prostitution, parents will kick her out of the house. So the families of men who join the Aquila Center pay $80 a month to cover food, but the rehab is free for women.

Kim Loan Thi Huynh, a Vietnamese-Australian, graduated from the program a year ago and now serves at the center. Although she lived in Australia, her family tricked her into entering the Aquila Center by telling her they were taking her on a two-week trip to Vietnam. When they arrived, they brought her to the Aquila Center and took her passport so that she couldn’t leave.
They were exasperated: Huynh started doing drugs at age 18 after her father’s death. The more she used, the more her life spiraled out of control.

Rehabs in Australia didn’t help. Doctors diagnosed her with bipolar disorder, and for years she went in and out of mental hospitals. At 38, 20 years after she first started using, her life became a routine: She would inject crystal meth, drink alcohol all day, vomit, then take more drugs. Life had no purpose, Huynh thought, and she envied friends who had overdosed.

Huynh’s mother, then a Buddhist, heard about Aquila Center from a Christian friend and decided to send her daughter there. In 2016, Huynh entered the center. After a few days, she decided to commit suicide with the prescription drugs she had packed in her suitcase. Later when she told friends in the medical profession how many pills she took that night, they all said she should have died. Yet instead, she came to. “When I came back, I didn’t know what else to do, I can’t die,” Huynh said. “I still didn’t want to be here but I can’t go, so that’s when I reached out to God and gave Him my heart.”

She surrendered and started copying what the women around her were doing: reading the Bible, praying, and attending church. Within a week, she felt the dark world in her head lightening. Her insecurities and people-pleasing desires dissolved into peace and joy. Staff at the center took away her prescription medicines, but she soon found that she didn’t want them. Her bipolar disorder was also suddenly healed, and today she’s known for her joyful spirit.

“When my dad died, I felt like I had no value, I felt like my heart was empty,” Kim said through tears. “But today as I grow with God, I know how much value I have.... I have all that [I once lost] and more, heaps more.”

After 10 months, Huynh returned to Australia to share her testimony at Christian conferences and make amends with those she had hurt. Impressed by Huynh’s life changes, Huynh’s mother professed Christ and was recently baptized, and late last year Huynh returned to the Aquila Center to help other women struggling with addictions.

Trung hopes to expand Aquila Center in the future. Looking out over the dirt clearings by the center, Trung pointed out where he wants to build another dormitory to house more drug addicts, as well as a house of prayer for house churches all over the city to use. Next to the garden, he wants to build an orphanage for the children of drug addicts.

He also hopes to partner soon with local groups that can provide vocational training in cooking, motorbike maintenance, and handicrafts. Once the men leave the center, many return to their hometowns, and Trung works with local churches in different provinces to make sure they stay on the straight and narrow path. Trung said more than 90 percent of them stay in the church after leaving.

Over the Tet holiday in February, while most of the country gathered with family to celebrate the Lunar New Year, Trung stayed at the Aquila Center to oversee the laying of the foundation for the new dormitory. Most police take the week off, so Trung wanted to get the work done before they noticed and tried to interfere. For now, the center can only finish the foundation because it does not have the money to build the rest of the building.

Because the government does not allow the Aquila Center to register legally, the center can raise money from churches and friends but not businesses. Trung said that even though he is grateful the mayor tacitly supports his center, he wishes the government would allow it to register as a rehab center, raise funds like other groups, and expand as they wish.

“When the government asks about the secret to our success, I say that we have Jesus Christ,” Trung said. “Without Christian drug centers, all these men and women would continue to be a drain on society, but instead they are now contributing to society.”
The Hope Awards each year recognize outstanding nonprofits, but a for-profit family business shows another way to help.

BY RUSS PULLIAM IN INDIANAPOLIS

photos by Charlie Nye/Genesis
FIFTEEN years ago Tom Morales wasn’t planning to build a $100 million staffing business.

He had lived the American Dream and wanted to share it with immigrants for the second half of his life. The Purdue University grad had climbed the corporate ladder at companies such as Procter & Gamble and Union Carbide. He was looking for a way to give back to the growing Hispanic community in Indy: “I knew there was more to life than just being successful in corporate America.”

Now the Morales Group lobby in this growing city looks like an immigrant welcome center. The lobby wall features the word “welcome” in several languages. A four-panel painting shows a welcome stance from several cultures. A partially constructed Lego set shows how employees can earn a homebuilding trip to Mexico. Water bottles rest under an “enjoy” sign that also says it in Spanish: “idisbruta.” One or two employees greet each applicant.

Next stop behind the lobby: the application room, with booths and computers. Job candidates fill out their forms on the computers. On one wall is an 8-by-10-foot world map. Then comes an interview in the customer service bullpen. Flags from 30 countries hang from the ceiling. Paintings on the wall display scenes from Central and South America. One of them, La Pasado, shows the hope of Hispanic immigrants.

About 100 Morales employees can accommodate more than 20 languages in interviewing. They wind up dealing with immigrants from about 25 countries. Top managers come from Mexico and several Central American nations. “Our workforce is from all over the world. A lot of them are refugees,” says co-founder/owner Morales. “They have the willingness to take any job. They see it as an opportunity.”

His staffing company has become a major Indianapolis player in the city’s temp employment business. The company offers a temporary workforce for businesses that either don’t have full-time employees or use temps on a probationary basis until they are hired. Morales has staked out a niche in temp employment for immigrants.

Morales’ father Manuel often challenged his successful son: “When are you going to give back?” His father also set the example, informally welcoming Hispanic immigrants to Indy from the 1960s until his death in 2003.

Launching into the second half of his life, the younger Morales set up a resource center with a social work emphasis. He helped some Hispanic immigrants with food or housing, but one of them gave him some divinely inspired direction: “Mr. Tom, thank you for trying to help my family with this resource center. What I would really like you do is to get me a job. I’ll take care of the rest.”

The result has been a closely held, family-controlled business that integrates Scripture into the core of the business in several ways, yet in a style of subtle common grace as opposed to Bible verses on the walls.

With 100 full-time employees, Morales had a payroll of about 11,000 associates in 2017. About 40 percent move into full-time positions with the companies where they start on a temporary basis.

The others work for Morales Group, assigned to temp jobs week to week. Wages range from $9.50 to $16 an hour, depending on job skills. Example: A business would pay Morales $13 an hour per employee, with $10 going to the associate. Then the additional $3, called a markup, is used by Morales to pay for business taxes, workers’ comp, and Morales company administration. Morales negotiates each markup with the hiring company. Revenues were close to $100 million in 2017, with net profit of about 6 percent.

The Morales launch caught a wave of expansion of the temp business in the American economy. Businesses used independent contractors for about 9 percent of the workforce in 1995, with the number rising to 15 percent by 2015. Large businesses sometimes outsource half of their workforce or more to staffing agencies. Sometimes businesses need seasonal employees. Other times they improve their profit margin by cutting employee costs.

“Never before have American companies tried so hard to employ so few people,” Wall Street Journal reporter Lauren Weber wrote last year.

The company tries to maintain a human touch in a fast-moving business. “If it weren’t for associates, we wouldn’t be in business,” says account manager Hansel Garcia. “Each candidate needs to be treated with dignity...
and respect. We try to put ourselves in their shoes, remembering they may be living paycheck to paycheck.”

The personal touch offers an edge in the growing field of temp employment. Big players such as Manpower, Kelly Services, Adecco, or TrueBlue are publicly traded with an emphasis on quarterly earnings. The larger publicly traded companies tend to miss a segment of the market that works through personal word-of-mouth connections that Morales has in the growing immigrant community in central Indiana.

PEDRO RODRIGUEZ came to Indianapolis earlier this year from Miami, going homeless for a few days, sleeping in the bus station, washing dishes at a downtown restaurant. He found shelter for a couple of weeks at Wheeler Mission for the homeless, then learned about the Morales Group. There he found not only work but also some help getting an apartment. Now he has a Huffy bike to get to places off the city’s bus routes and is working in manufacturing through Morales.

“It’s been a surprise to me to find a family here at Morales,” he says through a translator: “Nothing in life happens by coincidence.” He fled from Panama to Costa Rica in 1990, later landing American citizenship with his mother because she was born on American soil in the Canal Zone. “Everything has a purpose. When you are a believer and ask God, He always answers back.”

Word-of-mouth referrals are the key to immigrant labor. “We have been a real magnet for the immigrant,” says Morales. “Diversity is very broad even in the Hispanic community. You have the differences between Argentina or Brazil or Ecuador and Bolivia. Then there’s Mexico and Honduras.”

Alan Omar-Abbas, 22, came to Indiana from Turkey, where he was a refugee from war-torn Syria. When terrorists attacked his hometown of Aleppo, he and his family fled across the border to Turkey in 2013. “We went two weeks without food,” he said. “They bombed the school I had attended.”

He found factory work in Istanbul and became popular with fellow workers because he played so well on their intramural soccer team. With United Nations refugee status, he was assigned to Indiana in 2016.

He thought his soccer skills could open doors to play professionally. Instead his multilingual skills have opened doors for him to work in recruiting, translation, and team leadership with Morales Group. He knows Kurdish, Arabic, and English and is learning some Spanish. He still hopes to play pro soccer, but he is working through night classes on his GED certificate and wants to maintain a plan B beyond the soccer field.

Like Omar-Abbas, Sang Zothang found his language skills opened doors. He fled Burma at age 13 with his mother and family, reaching Malaysia. There they applied for asylum in the United States, getting sent to Indianapolis. With 300 other Burmese refugees, Sang finished high school and found some refuge in a growing Baptist church of Burmese refugees. He became a Burmese interpreter for a business client of Morales and is now a coordinator of client services: “I never get tired of helping my people.”

The company has developed partnerships with 15 Indianapolis charities and community centers that help immigrants and refugees get oriented to a new country. Partners include some churches with ESL ministries and immigrant outreach as well as the Immigrant Welcome Center and Burmese American Community Institute. These partnerships turn out to be a good business practice, as Morales gets plenty of references for people looking for work.

One Morales partner, Jay Height of the Shepherd Community Center in Indy, thinks the Morales long-term approach was more common a generation or two ago but now
stands out as unusual: “You don’t treat employees as commodities, but as being made in the image of God.”

Inc. magazine has now named Morales one of the 200 best places to work in the private sector category. In recent years the company also has been one of Indiana’s fastest-growing private businesses, with revenues jumping from $20 million in 2010 to almost $100 million in 2017. The company has expanded to some smaller cities in Indiana, as well as to Louisville.

A newer division at Morales, Acción (Spanish for “action”), provides both a temp force and management. Acción branch manager Ben Slaughter says most of the work is low-skilled but “our team leaders are very skilled in people leadership. We’re not just talking about how many people you need, but how we can help operations be more effective.”

Another expansion for Morales: workforce development, or moving employees up the ladder to better-paying jobs at businesses that want more skilled labor. Vanderbilt grad Kofi Darku has taken up that assignment for the company, in part because his parents came from Ghana.

and demanded excellence: “In Ghana school is not free. There were repercussions if I did not do well.”

A low unemployment rate in Indiana could help open doors for Darku’s assignment, which he likes to identify with an acronym, ABC. “Right now it is easy for someone to get Any job, but we want to help them get a Better job, then develop a Career, ABC,” he says.

The company is doing well now, but Tom Morales remembers the earlier lean years, when lending institutions would not give him a line of credit. His company was new and small, with little collateral. He sometimes had to turn to friends for personal loans: “The biggest difficulty was making payroll. I knew that many of the associates lived from paycheck to paycheck for what they needed to buy food and pay rent in order to survive.”

The big spurt of growth in recent years offers another challenge: how to know employees personally. “It’s like coming down to the kitchen in the morning at home and seeing someone that I don’t know, sitting there and drinking coffee,” Tom Morales notes. “You become a bit more distant and can’t know everyone,” but he still tries to keep in mind sick children of employees or other hardships he hears about.

Businesses owned by Christians sometimes dedicate a substantial portion of profits to missions and charities for the poor. Morales does that, and also keeps the Bible at the heart of the business by welcoming strangers, putting them to work (2 Thessalonians 3:10, “If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.”), and helping the needy (Proverbs 19:17, “Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed”)

Morales also evaluates employees in part on their volunteer community service. Employees can earn a working vacation—an annual short-term mission trip to build homes at a mission in Mexico—if they fulfill 25 hours of community service a year. Last year 28 employees built two houses through the Homes of Hope ministry that partners with Youth With A Mission (YWAM). Tom Morales’ daughter, Dori Hobbs, and son-in-law live in Mexico and serve with the Homes of Hope ministry.

As a business looking beyond the traditional bottom line, Morales has been able to retain top employees and avoid excessive staff turnover, especially among employees who sometimes seek significance more than financial reward.

Account executive Cynthia Hobbs, whose parents moved from Mexico to California before she was born in 1987, said the charitable emphasis has kept her with Morales: “I don’t want to be just part of a money-hungry business that only wants to grow, grow, grow. We’re in a world in which everyone is looking out for themselves. I did not expect to find a place like this.”

In a sense the Morales Group is pursuing two bottom lines: traditional profit plus a welcome to immigrants entering a high-stress, fast-paced industry. “It’s a tough balance,” says Monique Charlebois, director of human resources. “You’ve got orders to fill quickly. If you have associates working too slowly, you have to help them pick up the pace.”

Charlebois says she learned patience by living in four countries by the time she was 10: “I didn’t feel like I belonged anywhere.” She now finds significance at Morales in “helping a client create a habit of continuous learning. Some of our clients are still working on a high-school diploma because they came from Syria and all their documents are in some rubble.”

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Florence Pwana saw a disturbing but unsurprising sight when she walked into an empty makeshift tent at the Shuwai 2 camp for internally displaced people. The camp rests along the outskirts of Maiduguri, capital of Nigeria’s Borno state. Hours earlier, a resident at the camp helped to deliver a baby in the tent, and some of the camp’s residents showed Pwana the exact location where the woman lay on the floor, traces of blood still visible.

Shuwai 2, which is not registered under the state government, has no health dispensary: the nearest health facility is about 60 miles away. Pwana, a volunteer project officer with the Traffina Foundation for Community Health, said the birth attendant had no prior experience besides handling her own births.

In the town of Bwari along the outskirts of Abuja, Nigeria’s capital, Traffina volunteer Janet Yunana witnessed similar events. Yunana said local birth attendants sometimes lay expectant mothers on the floor or on plastic bags during delivery. “We’ve seen a woman who gave birth on her own, and she was using a broken bottle to separate the cord from her and the child.”

According to the World Health Organization and the UN, Nigeria has the fourth-highest maternal mortality rate and the third-highest infant mortality rate in the world. At least 50 percent of the country’s estimated 190 million people live in rural areas. In many of these regions, many women give birth either alone or with the aid of attendants whose qualifications are their own home deliveries.

Health workers trying to tackle the crisis realized blocking off these traditional birth attendants (TBAs) would only leave more women without assistance. Some are opting instead to train the TBAs as a midpoint solution until Nigeria’s healthcare system becomes efficient.

Lois Ahmed, one of the traditional birth attendants in Bwari, became the first to be trained at a Traffina event in Abuja.

**Nurses on the fly**

**SOME RURAL WOMEN IN NIGERIA GET TRAINING TO AID MOTHERS IN LABOR**

by Onize Ohikere

Florence Pwana at a Traffina event in Abuja
go-to birth attendant in her community after she delivered five of her six children herself. Ahmed said she began to offer her services long before her Kogo village received a government-run primary health center.

Most times, her method is simple: Once she receives a call, Ahmed checks if the cervix is “open” and begins the delivery. When the baby emerges, she cuts the placenta, then cleans and feeds the baby. Ahmed urges mothers to go to the clinic by morning. If a woman who calls her still has some time before labor, Ahmed sends her to the hospital.

The details of the TBA process vary. Jumai Solomon, another TBA, said she uses a razor blade to cut umbilical cords. Pwana said she has seen other TBAs use a piece of thread, which could either get contaminated or loosen, in place of a cord clamp.

Despite the risks, TBAs are often the closest help for women when labor begins. Delivery costs also affect women far from any subsidized primary health center: “Some of them don’t have money to open hospital cards, purchase medicine, or pay for the bills, so they prefer to go to a TBA,” Pwana said.

Understaffing at some primary healthcare centers is also a problem. A single-story center with only three full-time staff members serves the village of Peyi and two other villages within Bwari. The limited staff means the clinic closes at night. Dr. Haruna Isa, the clinic’s director, said women who go into labor at night would rather call a nearby TBA than contact staff at the health center.

Expectant mothers also choose where to deliver based on trust. Pwana met women who fear what doctors at hospitals would do to their children. Dr. Abraham Idokoko, a Nigerian public health analyst, said people sometimes view hospitals as a bad omen. “We have a very religious community,” he said. “We don’t look at the physical aspect first.”

Groups like Traffina Foundation considered these factors and modeled a response. The foundation has trained at least 115 TBAs across Nigeria. The foundation holds community awareness sessions on issues like HIV/AIDS and how mothers could transmit it to their children. Traffina involves community leaders, including area council chairmen and traditional and religious leaders, into their campaigns to help counter health misconceptions.

Dr. Kemi DaSilva-Ibru believes TBAs can serve another important role. DaSilva-Ibru in 2016 set up the Women at Risk International Foundation (WARIF) to respond to cases of rape, sexual assault, and trafficking among young girls and women in communities across Lagos and other states. She says TBAs act as “gatekeepers” of communities since women often trust them more than health professionals. Last October, the foundation started to train 500 TBAs to recognize the signs of gender-based violence, how to offer responses, and the process of referring emergency cases.

The training has started to bear fruit: TBAs made up 20 percent of the phone calls reporting abuse cases between October and December. Idokoko sees the efforts to train TBAs as a necessary but temporary solution. The process is not foolproof: Dr. Isa said some TBAs remain hesitant to identify themselves. “They’re afraid they would not get clients again.” Idokoko said part of the long-term solution could include a revamp of the primary healthcare system, which is in dire need of human resources.

In a 2016 investigation, the Nigerian International Center for Investigative Reporting revealed that a majority of Primary Health Centers built across Nigeria between 2014 and 2015 remain unopened or lack adequate drugs and staff. “The government, particularly the local governments, should aggressively drive the implementation of Primary Healthcare according to the books in a truly bottom-up approach,” Idokoko said.

Back at the Primary Health Center in Peyi, Ahmed said she has attended a total of three workshops. She learned more about her limitations in helping with deliveries and continues to grow her relationship with her community’s health centers: She sometimes assists the nurse during labor in the short-staffed health center. Ahmed said her priority remains learning “how to perfect the delivery.”
Space-age slingshot

STARTUP HOPES TO LAUNCH SATELLITES USING A CATAPULT by Michael Cochrane

Big players in the aerospace and technology sectors are now major investors in a radically new approach to launching small payloads into outer space: space catapult.

SpinLaunch Inc., a Silicon Valley startup founded in 2014, recently announced it had raised $40 million, in part from venture capital firms affiliated with Airbus and Google.

“We are very intrigued by SpinLaunch’s innovative use of rotational kinetic energy to revolutionize the smallsat market,” said Wen Hsieh, a general partner at Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, another investor, according to Bloomberg Businessweek.

Since the dawn of space flight, large booster rockets have been the only way to launch payloads into orbit. SpinLaunch would use an electromagnetically powered centrifuge to accelerate a small rocket containing a payload to speeds approaching 5,000 miles per hour. The launcher would then release the rocket, allowing its momentum to carry it into orbit.

Catapulting a payload into orbit could be more efficient than using conventional rocket boosters, which require large amounts of fuel. In a conventional rocket launch, typical payloads constitute less than 5 percent of the launch vehicle’s total mass. A catapult system could radically lower the cost per launch.

“SpinLaunch is targeting a per-launch price of less than $500,000,” founder Jonathan Yaney told technology website Techcrunch. “All existing rocket-based companies cost between $5 million and $100 million per launch.”

Yaney claims the “core technology has been developed, prototyped, [and] tested,” and says the major challenges will be scaling up and constructing the launch systems.

Some physicists have cautioned that a potential challenge will be overcoming the resistance of the atmosphere once the catapult launches its payload. Still, some aerospace experts unaffiliated with the project have come away impressed.

“It’s a very good approach in my opinion,” Simon “Pete” Worden, the former director of NASA’s Ames Research Center, told Bloomberg.

HOT BOTS

Robotic firefighting technology could soon make one of the world’s most dangerous jobs a bit safer.

In two separate research projects unveiled last month, scientists showcased a track-mounted robot that can navigate smoke-filled environments to assist fire rescue teams, as well as a robotic fire hose that can fly through burning buildings to extinguish fires.

SmokeBot, developed by a team at Sweden’s Örebro University, uses gas sensors, radar, a laser scanner, and a thermal camera to see through smoke and dust, detect gas leaks, and plot maps of the areas through which it navigates.

The robot’s developers worked closely with rescue units in Dortmund, Germany, where SmokeBot functioned as “eyes” for rescue teams, leading them in search and rescue operations.

Researchers from Tohoku University and the National Institute of Technology in Japan recently demonstrated their own firefighting invention, a snakelike robotic fire hose that can maneuver through windows and other gaps in a structure.

The 6.5-foot prototype contains sets of steerable nozzles along its side that fire high-pressure jets of water downward, allowing it to “fly” through a building. The “head” module has more freedom of movement and can direct the main water stream more precisely, according to IEEE Spectrum. The researchers envision a system where multiple robotic segments could be connected to extend the hose’s length as needed. -M.C.
A green farming movement
AGROECOLOGY: SENSIBLE IDEA OR COSTLY GREEN INITIATIVE? by Julie Borg

Agroecology, a back-to-nature farming approach based on ecological science, is growing into a movement proponents hope will transform the way we grow food. “Farming the land as if nature doesn’t matter has been the model for much of the Western world’s food production system,” wrote agroecology advocates Daniel Moss and Mark Bittman in The New York Times recently. “The results haven’t been pretty: depleted soil, chemically fouled waters, … a worsening of public health and more.”

While the definition of “agroecology” varies, it can include using compost as fertilizer, attracting both pollinators and pest-consuming predators, and using nutrients from the farm as fertilizers and pesticides rather than costly chemicals. Other practices include regenerating the soil by growing complementary crops and multicropping or using local seed varieties rather than costly patented types.

But some observers caution that certain practices advocated by the agroecology movement could, if widely adopted, drive up food prices for the world’s poor.

For some in the green movement, “agroecology” means minimizing greenhouse gas emissions, according to James Wanliss, a senior fellow at the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation. “They may define this not in terms of price, yield, or mouths fed but rather in terms of some nebulous goal of saving the planet from carbon dioxide,” he said in an email.

Wanliss agrees that agricultural innovators have developed beneficial and ecologically friendly changes in recent years. He noted that no-till farming, in which farmers leave the biological layers undisturbed rather than turning the soil for each growing season, “is marvelous for the biota, excellent for erosion control and soil conservation, and is helpful in controlling some diseases.”

But the agroecology approach may only work for people who want to run a hobby farm. On a large scale, it would require greater amounts of land, produce lower yields, and increase the price of food globally. That defeats the ultimate goal of agriculture, said Jay Lehr, science director at the Heartland Institute: “Modern agriculture is about feeding the world at the lowest cost.”

ANTI-CANCER VIRUS
Glioblastoma, a common and aggressive brain malignancy, afflicts 12 to 15 percent of brain cancer patients. Most patients who get surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation treatment survive only 15 or 16 months. But a team of Duke University researchers recently completed the first clinical trial of a treatment that may improve the odds.

The scientists removed a gene from a poliovirus and replaced it with a gene from a harmless cold virus. They then infused the modified poliovirus into malignant tumors in the brains of 61 patients over a five-year period. The virus can infect and kill brain cancer cells and trigger the patient’s own immune system to attack tumors directly.

Twenty-one percent of the patients who underwent the treatment survived more than three years, compared with a 4 percent survival rate among people who did not receive the treatment. The researchers reported the results in The New England Journal of Medicine in July. —J.B.

JOINT SOLUTION
One in 10 people will suffer from arthritis at some point in their lives, but 3D bioprinting technology may one day offer a long-term treatment. Researchers at University Medical Center Utrecht in the Netherlands are developing a method that would use a patient’s own cells to print new cartilage, Horizon magazine reported. Implanting in a joint in place of damaged cartilage, the printed tissue would mature to become identical to the original, healthy cartilage. —J.B.
The battle for the House has dominated discussions about the fall midterm elections. But, as the debate over the nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court shows, control of the Senate could matter more to the country’s direction. The polls paint a very mixed picture as to which party will enjoy Senate control next year.

Republicans are favored to gain some Senate seats because Democrats hold most of the seats up for election. Moreover, President Donald Trump carried 10 states that Democrats currently represent, compared with only one Republican-held seat that Hillary Clinton won. The sheer weight of numbers points to some Republican gains even if the national mood tilts decidedly toward Democrats.

The polls so far, however, paint a much more nuanced view. Democratic candidates currently lead in the one Clinton-carried state, Nevada, and in two Trump-carried states, Arizona and Tennessee. Seven of those 10 endangered Democratic incumbents also lead in the polls, and in no state does any Democratic incumbent trail by an insurmountable margin.

There’s reason, though, to think these polls are high-water marks for Democrats. In 2014, six Democratic incumbents led their GOP challengers based on the average of all polls taken in July. Five of those six lost in November. In 2012, Republican incumbents or other candidates in nine contested seats either led or were within 1 point in July. They won only two of those nine seats on Election Day.

Indeed, only Nevada’s Jacky Rosen is a near lock to flip a GOP-held state. Incumbent Dean Heller is receiving around 40 to 41 percent in the most recent polls, and only one previously elected incumbent since 2006—Pat Roberts of Kansas—has won after polling so low in July.

These data show two things: Campaigns matter, and so do a state’s demographics. Current Democratic incumbents Claire McCaskill and Joe Donnelly won their races in 2012 after their Republican opponents self-destructed from ill-considered comments about rape and abortion. More tellingly, however, most of the other races where early leads faded involved an incumbent or former governor running against a candidate who was not as well-known. As the races heated up and more voters learned about the challenger, that person rose in the polls, presumably on the backs of consolidating support among voters likely to support a candidate from that party.

Thus, in 2012 Elizabeth Warren came from behind to best GOP incumbent Scott Brown in Democratic Massachusetts, while in 2014 numerous Republicans came from behind in heavily red states like Alaska and Louisiana or purple states like Colorado and North Carolina.

That latter factor works heavily in the GOP’s favor this fall. Tennessee, for example, went for Trump by 26 points. Former Gov. Phil Bredesen leads the GOP’s likely nominee, U.S. Rep. Marsha Blackburn, by an average of 5 points so far, but she has never run a race in the GOP’s heartland of eastern Tennessee. Once she starts to advertise there, Bredesen’s built-in advantage from being a well-known state figure will fade. He might still win, but the race is highly likely to tighten before the end.

Very few Democratic incumbents in Trump-carried states should feel safe despite the early poll advantages. Since 2006, only incumbents who consistently receive at or near 50 percent in July head-to-head matchups have won the vast majority of their races. So far that is good news only for West Virginia’s Joe Manchin and Ohio’s Sherrod Brown, each of whom has received over 50 percent in every public poll since May. The other Democratic incumbents will have to fight hard against the pull of their states’ Republican tendencies.

Elections should never be called this far from Election Day, but the data show that Republicans are likely to retain Senate control.

Red-state challenge
INCUMBENT DEMOCRATS MAY NOT HAVE BIG ENOUGH LEADS NOW TO KEEP SENATE SEATS by Henry Olsen

Bredesen campaigns in Humboldt, Tenn.

DREW ANGERER/GETTY IMAGES
France, the second-youngest team in the FIFA World Cup tournament, beat Croatia 4-2 on July 15 to win the cup for the first time since 1998. Croatia had won each of its three previous matches either during the 30 minutes of extra time when the first 90 minutes ended in a tie, or past that in a shootout.

The scrappy Croatians couldn’t beat either the skillful French or new technology. This World Cup was the first to use the controversial video assistant referee (VAR), and the referee on the field consulted VAR before reversing his original call and awarding France a key goal on a penalty kick by Antoine Griezmann.

Croatia’s appearance in the final was just one of the plot twists in the tournament. World Cup competition includes 32 teams, and this year’s first shock for Americans came when the United States team, ranked 25th in the world, failed to qualify. U.S. viewership of the 2018 competition was 42 percent lower than in 2014, when the U.S. team did play. Volkswagen and other companies created commercials featuring fans from different countries trying to convince Americans to support Brazil, Belgium, Switzerland, or others.

Soccer fans were surprised when England’s new coach, Gareth Southgate, left off the team two of the country’s best players, Joe Hart and Wayne Rooney, when he felt they were not a good fit. England defender Danny Rose told reporters the team after that knew Southgate meant business. This year the team won its first penalty shootout in a World Cup, and the jaded English started watching the games religiously—even in theater audiences and wedding ceremonies. In the end, the English team that had not seen a semifinal match for 30 years came one game short of the final.

Moscow provided the venue for the Croatia vs. France final. Mandžukić quickly went from fame to shame: France’s first goal came when the ball bounced off him. He made up for that with a goal late in the match, but it wasn’t enough. Mbappé scored another goal and Paul Pogba also drilled a low shot into the net.

The next World Cup will be fought for in Qatar in 2022. The Women’s World Cup tournament is in France next year.

—Charissa Crotts is a World Journalism Institute intern
Remembering the 709 crackdown

CHINESE HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYERS REMAIN IN DETENTION ON THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF THE ‘709 INCIDENT’ by June Cheng

Three years ago, on the night of July 9, human rights lawyer Wang Yu returned home after dropping off her son and husband at the airport in Beijing. Arriving at her apartment, she noticed a group of men hanging around outside. Later that night, the electricity went out, her internet connection was cut, and the men broke into the apartment and led her away in handcuffs to a secret detention center, where she endured torture and interrogations. Police released Wang a year later—only after she agreed to a televised confession.

Wang was the first of more than 300 lawyers, legal assistants, and activists detained throughout China in what is now called the “709 Incident,” named after the date Wang was taken. Human rights lawyers, many of whom are professed Christians, stood up for the vulnerable in China against government policies and corporations. Seeing these lawyers as a threat to complete control, the Chinese government silenced them by placing the most prominent lawyers into “residential surveillance at a designated location.” The lawyers say they endured beatings, psychological torture, threats against family members, forced feedings of unknown drugs, and sleep deprivation while detained.

Most of the human rights lawyers have since been released on bail. Today, 17 lawyers remain imprisoned and at least a dozen have lost their licenses and can no longer practice law.

Family members of one detained lawyer, Wang Quanzhang, have not been able to speak to him since his arrest three years ago. He had defended Falun Gong religious practitioners, victims of land seizures, and political prisoners. He taught Chinese villagers about their land and legal rights, helped found the rights group Chinese Urgent Action Working Group, and worked at Beijing Fengrui law firm, where Wang Yu also worked.

Wang Quanzhang’s wife, Li Wenzu, has made dozens of freedom of information requests on her husband’s behalf. In April, on the 1,000th day of Wang’s detention, she started a 100-kilometer (62-mile) protest march from Beijing to Tianjin’s No. 2 Detention Center, where officials last said he was held. But police stopped her from completing the march and briefly placed her under house arrest. On July 13, Li said she’d finally heard from a trusted source that her husband was alive and “in reasonable mental and physical health,” according to Radio Free Asia.

In a statement released on the third anniversary of the 709 Incident, the China Human Rights Lawyers Group noted, “Politics that do not respect human rights are evil, and economic growth supported by low respect for human rights is a false Chinese dream.” The group added: “China has just entered an era when the awakening of rights awareness is conflicting with the increasingly suppressing political atmosphere. We human rights lawyers are fortunate to live in it and to witness it at the right time.”

JAILED FOR ‘SUBVERSION’

A court in central China on July 11 sentenced Qin Yongmin, one of the country’s prominent pro-democracy activists, to 13 years in prison. The Wuhan City Intermediate People’s Court on its website said it found Qin “guilty of subversion of state power.” Qin, 64, has already spent 22 years in detention. Chinese authorities last arrested him in 2015, when he led the China Human Rights Watch group, known for criticizing government policies online. One of his lawyers, Liu Zhengqing, told the AFP news agency that Qin was in “despair” and “angry” at the Chinese government following his sentencing. “[We] will definitely appeal,” Liu said.

Qin’s sentencing came one day after the Chinese government allowed Liu Xia, widow of late Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo, to leave China for Germany after eight years under house arrest. —by ONIZE OHIKERE
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‘Acts of defiance’

June 9 This is one of the most informative articles I’ve read anywhere about the North and South Korean peace efforts. This is the kind of article that brings my family back again and again. We will be praying for the Korean Peninsula in a whole new way now.

—HOLLY McMillan on wng.org

Excellent insight into the work done for these sorely mistreated people. I’m sure many saints are clinging to dear life in North Korean prison camps.

—V.S. Kluth on wng.org

‘Open letters’

June 9 This column really encouraged me. I have been disappointed that American Christians let the 2016 election become a dividing line. It was a difficult election; as challenges to Christianity mount in our culture, we need to focus above all on Christ and His Word.

—Daniel McPherson on wng.org

As you pointed out, we all know what a victory for Hillary Clinton would have meant. Supporting Trump does not mean condoning everything he has said or done. I was too young to vote in the last presidential election, but I plan to vote next time to help reelect our president.

—Madison Smith / Columbia, S.C.

This column is a disgrace. You get Scripture right and present a pretty good view of most things, but you have really missed the boat with Trump the Great.

—David A. Vallado / Colorado Springs, Colo.

World’s harping about our president’s shortcomings puts you in the company of his sworn enemies. It’s time for you to get off your moral high horse and stop aiding and abetting the enemy!

—Keith Bateman / Bradenton, Fla.

Our first citizenship is in heaven, not on earth. We should care whether our voices as Christians are a stumbling block or not. This was the first election ever in which I just could not pull the lever for either candidate.

—Marie Aldrich on Facebook

‘No secret formula’

June 9 How in the world could anyone write about corruption in the political world and not mention Trump? You told us he was morally unfit for office, and now you can’t seem to summon the slightest criticism of his administration.

—Darrell Lackey / Gustine, Calif.

Besides government officials, corporate officials too often hoodwink their investors, regulatory officials, and the public; worse yet is corruption within church ministries. The Old Testament prophets railed against all these abuses.

—Allen Johnson on wng.org

‘Lost in Space’

June 9 The pilot of the original Lost in Space shows what the series could have been before the writers made it buffoonish: a strong two-parent family motivated by faith and exploration. This latest version includes 2018 existential angst, including a feminist mother and a semi-detached, guilt-ridden father. The new version is just “Modern Family in Space.”

—Russ Hepler on Facebook

Even as a child I thought the original Dr. Smith at times detracted from the thrill of the adventure. I like the new Smith and enjoyed the cameo appearance by the original Will Robinson. I hope Netflix keeps it coming but holds the cheese.

—Douglas Heck on wng.org

‘Six days in June’

June 9 Too many conservative Christians mistakenly equate the modern state of Israel with the Old Testament kingdoms and conclude that America has a Biblical imperative to be an unquestioning supporter of Israel. The United States should support Israel when our national objectives coincide, but George Washington rightly warned us about permanent foreign alliances.

—Robert Hellam / Seaside, Calif.

I was 8 during the Six-Day War, and it was sad to see America turn its back on Israel. One day all will see that the great I Am never stopped loving Israel.

—D.W. Brown on wng.org

‘Neighbor and friend’

June 9 Our four children grew up with Mr. Rogers. Neither he nor the show was perfect, but compared with Sesame Street and other children’s shows, it was light vs. darkness. I look forward to the documentary.

—Steve Shive on wng.org

I discovered Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood as a 22-year-old mother and watched it with my toddler. One day, I heard, really heard, Rogers tell...
me that he liked me just the way I was. No one had ever told me that before. His words were the beginning of much healing to me. I have loved him ever since.

—JANET BELL / Punta Gorda, Fla.

‘Infertility remedy’

JUNE 9 Besides the moral objections, expense, and low success rate, IVF is a miserable process. I’ve seen women become emotional wrecks, especially when, after going through all that repeatedly, they still don’t get pregnant or they miscarry. I’m glad that gentler and less expensive treatments that don’t commodify children are becoming more widespread.

—JENNY BETH GARDNER on wng.org

‘A half-full glass’

JUNE 9 I loved Marvin Olasky’s column encouraging us to praise God for both glitches and miracles. Nathan Lents’ comments about a mutation in one of our distant ancestors reminded me of Adam and original sin.

JULIE SHIELDS / Douglasville, Ga.

‘Justice on pause’

JUNE 9 I agree with Mindy Belz that members of ISIS should go on trial, but I worry that they won’t because too many in politics are politically correct or afraid Islamic activists might cause mayhem.

—DAVE DAHLKE / Port Orchard, Wash.

‘Down-and-out by the river’

JUNE 9 The progressive mindset glorifies drug use and sexual immorality, and the results include a growing homeless population. How sad that we are cowed into believing that all we can do is scramble to address or avoid the results of sin, rather than leading people to forgiveness, life, and healing in Jesus.

—STEVEN ARNOLD on wng.org

‘Who is this Han?’

JUNE 9 I stood in a line that snaked around the block to see the original Star Wars, but I almost didn’t see Solo because of your poor review. I’m so glad I went anyway. I had no difficulty melding the young Han Solo with the elder.

—CHRISTINA WILSON on wng.org

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DON’T COMPROMISE THE GOSPEL WHEN WITNESSING TO MUSLIMS

Inside the Dome of the Rock, Caliph Abd al-Malik’s seventh-century Muslim shrine in Old City Jerusalem, if you crane your neck and study the ceiling, you will read a circular 730-foot-long ribbon of Arabic words with a message to Christians: “The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of God. ... So believe in God and his messengers, and say not ‘Three’. ... God is only One God. Far be it removed from his transcendent majesty that he should have a son.”

I don’t hear wiggle room in that declaration: God has no son. Period, end of discussion. Muslims know their “gospel” and stick to it.

I did hear wiggle room in Philadelphia recently at the Christian conference on hospitality to Muslims. Not at first. The morning session was OK. (My journal entry from the missionary speaker: A woman’s peculiar power in Muslim lands is the power of weakness—her under-the-radar access to various social spheres, and her capacity to be nonthreatening. Good stuff.)

The afternoon session was a very lengthy exegetical Bible study on the parable of the good Samaritan. I felt I already knew that: God enjoins hospitality. But the conference was winding down, and we had spent all day setting the table and never getting around to serving the dish I had come for: Granted that we should be hospitable to Muslims, what exactly should we say to them once they’re over for dinner? Or another way of putting it might be this: The Apostle Paul made himself all things to all men in order to save some (1 Corinthians 9:22). Though hospitality is good in its own right, I see a means-to-an-end goal in Paul: Since the salvation of souls is paramount, and God’s heart is to enfold more and more people into His kingdom, let us use any means we can toward that end—neighborliness, English tutoring, line cook, surgical technologist. A physical therapist I know of in Morocco didn’t go there because he liked kebabs and calamari but to “save some.” A hospitality seminar without speaking of gospel could almost be a Unitarian affair.

Finally, in the last half-hour of the conference, as I was starting to wonder how much the parking garage damage would be (it was $35), the missionary whipped out a list of dos and don’ts for evangelizing. Some were good, if intuitive: Dress modestly, don’t introduce someone as your “girlfriend” because your Muslim interlocutor will assume you’re sleeping with her.

But then there were also these bits of advice on his list: “Avoid talking about ‘being free from the law.’ “Avoid using the parable of the prodigal son.” And, finally, the one that most stuck in my throat: “Avoid using the term ‘Son of God’ for Jesus. Robust explanations typically do not resolve the deep misunderstandings Muslims have of this title.”

Nabeel Qureshi, the late Pakistani-American convert to Christianity and author of Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus and No God But One, graciously cautioned against this approach, a methodology of Muslim evangelism known as the Insider Movement. Its practitioners’ hearts are in the right place, he said. Their desire is to spread the gospel faster by removing all unnecessary stumbling blocks. But the doctrine of Jesus as Son of God is a necessary, not unnecessary, doctrine. If some stumble over it, the fact is that some have always stumbled over hard teachings about Jesus (John 6:60–66; 1 Peter 2:8).

At what point does contextualization become another gospel (Galatians 1:8)? This is the question that must be wrestled with. Qureshi responded in a blog to someone who asked it: “Where I draw the line is when we compromise the gospel. Which is why we must be absolutely clear what the gospel message is: God incarnate, Jesus, died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead on the third day as the firstborn of the resurrection that God may be glorified through our eternal salvation. ... The moment Jesus’ deity is compromised then we are preaching a false gospel.”

Muslims do not compromise their gospel. The inscription on the ceiling of the Dome is non-negotiable. Why should the bearers of the true and holy gospel sell the store?
This year is the 50th anniversary of Richard Scarry’s terrific picture book, *What Do People Do All Day?* It’s also the 70th anniversary of Candyland, which Eleanor Abbott designed in 1948 after she contracted polio in San Diego and sought something to delight the children in her hospital ward.

Candyland still sells about 1 million copies per year: It’s for ages 3 and up, and especially appropriate for members of Congress, since it requires no reading and minimal counting skills. The 1967 edition of Candyland that I recently played with a granddaughter includes these instructions: “Due to the design of the game, there is no strategy involved. Players are never required to make choices, just follow directions. The winner is predetermined by the shuffle of the cards.”

I appreciate theological predestination, but Candyland’s “predetermined” outcome regarding winners and losers sounds like something from a plaintive Bernie Sanders speech. Furthermore, movement to that predetermined outcome is super-erratic: A child or politician can be moving steadily through the red, green, blue, yellow, orange, or purple spaces, only to pull a card that drops him all the way back to Peppermint Stick Forest. That happens in life, as Job realized and cancer victims learn, but it’s atypical.

Compare Candyland’s teaching to the economic wisdom of Richard Scarry (1919-1994), a writer and illustrator who published 300 books that have sold more than 100 million copies worldwide. He drew charming pictures of anthropomorphic animals (including cats, rabbits, dogs, and goats) who live in Busytown where everyone works. Everyone is both giver and taker.

One story in *What Do People Do All Day?* begins, “Farmer Alfalfa grows all kinds of food. He keeps some of it for his family. He sells the rest to Grocer Cat in exchange for money. Grocer Cat will sell the food to other people in Busytown. Today Alfalfa bought a new suit with some of the money he got from Grocer Cat. Stitches, the tailor, makes clothes. Alfalfa bought his new suit from Stitches. “Then Alfalfa went to Blacksmith Fox’s shop. He had saved enough money to buy a new tractor. The new tractor will make his farm work easier. With it he will be able to grow more food than he could grow before. . . . What did the other workers do with the money they earned? First they bought food to eat and clothes to wear. Then, they put some of the money in the bank. Later they will use the money in the bank to buy other things. . . . Grocer Cat bought a new dress for Mommy. She earned it by taking such good care of the house. He also bought a present [a tricycle] for his son, Huckle. Huckle was a very good helper today.”

Richard Scarry showed that good economics and good writing go together. Children at first believe in magic: Food, clothes, and houses just appear, but Scarry fills *What Do People Do All Day?* with the active voice. He teaches that people who work hard make things appear, as in this story about building a new house: “Huckle lived with his Mommy and Daddy in a part of Busytown where there were no other houses nearby. . . . Then one day a man came and dug a hole in the empty lot next door. . . . Jason, the mason, made a foundation in the hole for the house to be built on. His helper mixed cement to hold the bricks together. Sawdust, the carpenter, and his helpers started to build the frame of the house. Jason started to build a chimney.”

Note the active voice even regarding stuff that becomes invisible: “Jake, the plumber, attached the water and sewer pipes to the main pipes under the street. They put in water pipes. . . . The electrician attached electric switches and outlets to the wires. Sawdust nailed up the inside walls. The walls covered up all the pipes and wires.”

Scarry occasionally lapses into the passive: “Water is used to put fires out.” But he’s enormously superior to Venezuelan Marxists who never realized that oil revenues and other products don’t just appear magically: They have now bankrupted what was the wealthiest country in South America. Will our grandchildren vote to live in Candyland or Busytown?

Richard Scarry showed that good economics and good writing go together.
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Dr. Erwin Lutzer, pastor emeritus at The Moody Church, answers this important question by drawing parallels between the people of ancient Judah and the church in America today. In The Church in Babylon, he shows Christians how to impact the culture without being spiritually destroyed by it.

Be on the lookout for The Church in Babylon (with Study Guide and DVD) by Dr. Erwin Lutzer coming August 2018.

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Monthly costs:
(Ranges based on age, household size, and membership level)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership Level</th>
<th>Costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>$100-$220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Person</td>
<td>$200-$440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+ People</td>
<td>$250-$495</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As of June 2018

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